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Introduction

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Since their emergence, the U.S. suburbs have been many things to their boosters and critics—exclusive idylls for the elite, sites of production and labor repression, spaces of unrestricted expansion for working-class homesteaders and postwar developers, beneficiaries of federal largesse, and crucibles for new ideologies of gender, class, race, and property. But however imagined and reimagined, the suburbs have seldom been seen as seedbeds for progressive social and political movements. In popular media and academic literature, narratives of suburban conservatism often overwhelm those of inclusion, to the point that suburban life itself appears inimical to social and economic justice.

Narratives of exclusion are important, as they demonstrate how structural inequality and metropolitan space have constituted one another. This is particularly clear, for example, in the case of those postwar suburbs where developers excluded people of color from new subdivisions and residents adopted an anti-urban politics of defensive localism (Danielson 1976; Weir 1994). Yet, reducing suburbs to spaces of structural inequality has consequences for how we judge their history and prospects: We risk minimizing the achievements of suburban activists and underestimating the potential for political change. Linking past and present is particularly important in suburbs where victories have been won incrementally, through the slow development of networks, institutions, organizations, and advocacy groups.

It is time to bring these historical and continuing struggles for social justice to the foreground. Recent research has broken with commonplace assumptions that the suburbs are socioeconomically and politically homogeneous (and that these characteristics are mutually reinforcing). In a postwar era that saw developers propagate mass-produced tract housing across the suburban landscape, popular culture and academics alike emphasized suburban uniformity rather than difference. Popular critiques, such as William H. Whyte's *The Organization Man* (1956) and Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), portrayed gendered

pressures to conform that reflected the sameness of the built environment (Baxandall and Ewen 2000; Hayden 2002). Although such characterizations may have been simplistic, they were no less tenacious for it.

Social scientists and historians have added nuance to this narrative, the classic postwar examples being Bennett M. Berger's *Working-Class Suburb* (1960) and Herbert J. Gans's *The Levittowners* (1967). Both cast doubt on the power of location and the built environment to determine the social and political lives of suburbia's inhabitants: According to Gans, Levittown's suburbanites continued to fulfill the social aspirations that they had brought with them, while Berger observed that blue-collar culture and politics had persisted among workers who had moved to suburban Milpitas, California. But in the years that followed, three prominent discourses—focused on party affiliation, racial segregation, and class character—repeatedly depicted suburbs as places where political realities had foreclosed the possibility for change. Even when diversity was acknowledged, it was not a diversity that presented significant opportunities for social justice organizing.

In their effort to understand the electoral implications of suburban growth, political scientists of the 1960s and 1970s studied the Republican alignment of the suburbs and debated whether suburban location affected the politics of suburbanites (Gainsborough 2001). Researchers found that little suburban-place effect existed: Socioeconomic characteristics, rather than location, determined party affiliation. Their findings did little to alter mainstream perceptions of suburban politics. This was partly a matter of timing: As the studies were being published, conservatives adjusted to racial discourses that had been refined through the process of suburbanization itself, a strategy that would yield sweeping victories in the 1980s and 1990s (Edsall and Edsall 1991; Kruse 2005; Lassiter 2006). By this point, it *was* possible to observe a distinctively suburban politics, albeit one that varied considerably between metropolitan areas (Gainsborough 2001). Perhaps more significantly, the question of which causal factors underlay suburban conservatism seemed inconsequential for practical purposes, given mainstream generalizations of suburban race and class homogeneity. If one viewed the suburbs as affluent and white, did it matter whether location or race and class explained their conservative politics? The growing racial and economic divide between city and suburb—as represented in media, popular culture, and academic writing—seemed to render the question moot.

In their efforts to integrate all-white suburbs, activists likewise emphasized the prevalence of suburban racial homogeneity and political support for segregation. During the 1960s and 1970s, open-housing advocates denounced the exclusionary practices of suburban developers, officials, and homeowners, while governmental bodies, such as the Kerner Commission and the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, increasingly blamed the suburban "white noose" for exacerbating racial conflict. Strong government actions to further the goals of integration—for example, HUD's efforts under George Romney or New Jersey's inclusionary housing mandates—were often met with suburban resistance (Bonastia 2006;

Kirp, Dwyer, and Rosenthal 1997). Conservative public officials were learning to finesse the distinction between local rights to race and class segregation. But to many, the development of racially coded discourse signified, if anything, a hardening of the divisions between city and suburbs.

Within urban studies, suburbia's class character became more prominent, as many scholars began incorporating (or responding to) Marxist theory in the 1970s and 1980s. Some portrayed suburbs as bourgeois retreats (Fishman 1987), while others saw suburban homeownership as capital's co-optive attempt to buy off the working class (Harvey 1985). Both types of suburbs supposedly shared a conservative politics, determined by their class character. U.S. cities, by contrast, were the vibrant hearts of activism, whether of class-based or New Left varieties (Castells 1983). According to some, the diversity and radical traditions of the city attracted college-educated baby boomers in a virtuous circle of liberal politics (Ley 1996).

Cities were thus set in sharp contrast to suburbs marked by their conservatism. This characterization held true in many cases, but when painted in broad strokes, it failed to distinguish between different groups of suburban places and residents, glossing over the people of color, working-class whites, and progressive leaders who made the suburbs their home. As diversification of the suburbs has grown—along with new forms of political organization—racial and ethnic difference has become impossible to ignore. Hispanic, non-Hispanic black, and non-Hispanic Asian populations represented 5.4, 6.0, and 1.6 percent of the suburban population in 1980; 9.0, 7.5, and 3.6 percent in 1990; and 11.7, 8.2, and 4.1 percent in 2000 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1982, 1992, 2001; due to changing Census geographic definitions and metropolitan boundaries, these figures are suggestive rather than definitive—see also Denton in this volume; Frey 2011b). Similarly, the histories of social justice organizations—for example, fair housing and advocacy groups, such as the Suburban Action Institute (Danielson 1976; Geismer 2010; Kushner 2009)—have often been disregarded in accounts of the suburbs' role in conservative ascendency. But many suburbs never became (or have not remained) the Republican strongholds that the New Right envisioned, and their continuing importance as electoral swing districts invites a reconsideration of suburban politics more generally.

Capturing this demographic and political diversity is a goal shared by two fields that have emerged concurrently: the new suburban history and the new regionalism. The new suburban historians have drawn attention to long-overlooked African American and working-class suburban communities (Harris 1996; Wiese 2004) and investigated the ways that race, class, and gender identities were reworked in community life (Freund 2007; Kruse 2005; Murray 2003; Nicolaides 2002). They have examined intersectionality and its relationship to suburban space, finding new common threads in the suburban experience—particularly the perceived importance of homeownership and localism for ensuring the survival, autonomy, and sometimes privileges of otherwise marginalized populations. Many of these scholars have also insisted on the importance of

placing their community studies within shifting political economies at and above the metropolitan scale (Kruse and Sugrue 2006). In Robert O. Self's analysis of postwar Oakland, for example, the responses of local actors to these changing regional conditions shape the spatial implications of growth liberalism within particular communities (Self 2003).

There are striking parallels between these histories and the work that a subset of "new regionalists" began to produce in the early 1990s. Most broadly, new regionalists attempt to study economic shifts and solve policy problems at the metropolitan level. Their solutions include forming public-private partnerships to promote regional competitiveness and pressing for Smart Growth initiatives that reconcile the revitalization of older suburbs with environmental conservation (Downs 2005b; Hanlon, Short, and Vicino 2010; Olberding 2002). Within this broader movement, one group of writers advocate regional planning—in the arenas of housing, transportation, and economic development—to reduce metropolitan inequalities. Public officials and journalists were early promoters of this "equity regionalist" approach (M. Orfield 1997; Peirce, Johnson, and Hall 1993; D. Rusk 1993), although a growing number of academics have contributed research along the same lines during the past decade (Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2004; Pastor 2001; Weir, Wolman, and Swanstrom 2005).

Equity regionalists and policy-oriented suburban scholars have seldom been in direct dialogue with new suburban historians, likely owing to the disciplinary and methodological divisions between them. But although they are considerably more prospective and policy-oriented than the new suburban historians, these equity regionalists explore many of the same themes. Like the historians, they regard the working class and people of color as more than mere outliers in homogeneous suburbs, instead identifying them as likely beneficiaries (and thus key constituencies) for regional policy. As the historians recognize the varied relationships between localities and the national and regional political economies of the postwar period, so do the equity regionalists, who differentiate between suburbs that enjoy greater or lesser levels of investment and job growth within the post-Fordist service-sector economy. For equity regionalists, these differences among suburbs—their demographic diversity, economic inequality, and variegated challenges—are the critical starting points for coalition building.

New suburban history and equity regionalism thus expand the horizon for suburban politics. This is a vision of the grassroots that no longer precludes a social-justice agenda, from the housewives who mobilized against atomic weapons during the 1950s to the modern-day organizers who strategically draw together environmental and equity goals (Murray 2003; Pastor, Benner, and Matsuoka 2009; Ziskind 2003). Suburban conservatives certainly remain politically powerful in many communities, and recent studies document their historic leadership of the New Right (McGirr 2001). Still, these new directions in suburban studies also reveal progressive potential in places once dismissed as reactionary. This collection reflects these complexities and tensions as it bridges the new suburban history and new regionalism.

It is nonetheless important to realize that we have hardly left the exclusionary suburb behind. In Part I of this volume, Nancy Denton and Joseph Gibbons show that today's suburban households resemble their urban counterparts more closely than they do the mythic suburban families of postwar pop culture. For example, despite the suburbs' image as a redoubt of "traditional" family life and gender norms, Denton and Gibbons find that most suburban households are not composed of married couples with children (see Anacker 2011 for a discussion of suburban neighborhoods with same-sex couples). And yet, although they note that racial and ethnic diversity have grown, Denton and Gibbons observe that segregation levels have fallen only slowly in the U.S. suburbs. Diversity, in other words, does not necessarily indicate integration. The suburbs are defined—and perhaps have always been defined—less by their homogeneity than by their social and spatial fragmentation, with jagged edges that may follow municipal boundaries or cut across them, leading to an unequal, socially stratified peace or open political conflict.

Where conflict does occur, it can challenge the way that many of us perceive suburban publics and their desires for "privatopia" (McKenzie 1994). Lucas Kirkpatrick and Casey Gallagher describe how the housing crisis has opened new residential development—originally planned for upper-middle-class homeowners—to subsidized tenants in Antioch, California. The ensuing moral panic is at once continuous with past suburban efforts to defend race and class privilege and contingent on changing racial formations and emerging crises in the circuits of capital. It also draws the community into the intensive surveillance of the private spaces of suspect subsidized renters. Social stratification thus determines both which suburban publics are recognized and who may lead private suburban lives.

But suburbanites have also defended suburban public spaces against exclusionary practices that accompany privatization. June Williamson examines protests that erupted in Silver Spring, Maryland, when security guards in an open-air commercial complex detained a photographer and demanded that he stop taking photos from what had once been a public street. Photographers mobilized online, organizing a rally and march through these semipublic spaces on Independence Day, 2007, during which speakers stood upon a soapbox to address the crowd, recognizing the historical value of public space as a site of political speech, artistic expression, and social interaction. The importance of public space as an arena where marginalized groups use their visibility to press claims for recognition, rights, and distributive justice is becoming all the more important as suburbs diversify. As Williamson points out, local protests may herald emergent movements for a "right to the suburb," similar to those commonly associated with the city (Carpio, Irazábal, and Pulido 2011; Mitchell 2003; Parlette and Cowen 2010).

These movements build upon a deeper history of activism, both within the suburbs and across their urban and rural borderlands. Part II begins with Anne Galletta's case study of Shaker Heights, Ohio, where conflict was essential for

achieving integration in a Midwestern suburban high school. Iterative debate between student groups, parent groups, and the administration resulted in more inclusive local school policies over the course of three decades. This contentious public sphere stands in marked distinction to Kirkpatrick and Gallagher's Antioch—where only certain suburbanites are recognized as legitimate members of the "public"—and to Williamson's Silver Spring, where private property managers sanitize and control public space.

The chapters that follow consider histories that diverge from the defensive homeowner and school politics that played key roles in defining modern conservatism (Freund 2007; Kruse 2005; Lassiter 2006; McGirr 2001). Aaron Cavin describes how a Mexican American community on the rural fringe of San José mobilized against destruction in the face of encroaching development. Observing that regional investment had distributed its benefits unevenly, organizers challenged the premise that new capital and consolidation would benefit all of Alviso's residents. Robert Gioielli introduces blue-collar Chicagoans whose Alinskyite organization resisted expressway construction and demanded action on pollution that posed an immediate threat to their neighborhoods. Although differently positioned within metropolitan space, class structures, and racial formations, these groups are similar in several respects. They were certainly not the foot soldiers of the New Right, but nor were they the upper-middle-class suburban liberals whose fiscal priorities and individualist ideology shifted the Democratic Party away from redistributive policy (Geismer 2010). Both Alvisans and Chicagoans relied on an analysis of political and economic power that extended beyond the scale of the neighborhood, and both turned common associational instruments of suburban exclusion—community and political organizations—toward progressive ends. And their efforts to control land use, infrastructure, and the distribution of environmental harms prefigured later environmental justice movements (see Pulido 2000; Rome 2001; Silver and Melkonian 1995).

The contemporary movements described in Part III demonstrate that although the struggle for inclusion continues, it takes place under new conditions. Demographic and economic change is transforming the built environments, local governments, and layers of meaning that once defined suburban space. As they age and become differentiated, suburbs are now understood variously as destinations for international migration, rich repositories of prewar and postwar history, and areas of growing poverty and deteriorating infrastructure (Coplin 2008; Lucy and Phillips 2006; Mattingly 2001; Singer, Hardwick, and Brettell 2008). At times change has deepened inequality, as in the case of immigrants who have experienced violence when visible in public space or exploitation and disenfranchisement when rendered socially invisible (Duncan and Duncan 2004; Frasure and Jones-Correa 2010; J. Gordon 2005; Mahler 1995). The authors and cases in this section, by contrast, identify progressive responses to changing patterns of migration and settlement and pinpoint opportunities for moving beyond mere diversity to more substantive inclusion and integration.

Two California cases highlight how cross-cutting class identities and the politics of land use create new opportunities for organizing Latino and multiethnic suburbs. Manuel Pastor's chapter focuses upon the majority-Latino "Gateway Cities" of Los Angeles. Despite their superficial similarity, these suburbs do not fit any simple model of immigrant spatial, social, and political assimilation. Instead, their diverse histories and class compositions produce a range of political environments: More affluent areas share homeowner politics with the region's white suburbs, while less affluent areas are more receptive to pro-immigrant and environmental-justice social movements and as such are important sites for regional coalition building.

To the north, the politics of Richmond, California, turn on its changing economy, institutional history, and multiethnic character. Alex Schafran and Lisa Feldstein trace local progressive activism from the struggle for African American representation during the 1960s to the rise of an environmental-justice coalition and the election of a white Green Party mayor in 2006. These recent events mark the convergence of several factors—the growing rift between older, business-allied and younger, environmentalist African American leaders; the emergence of Laotian residents as an effective political force; and an intensifying conflict between residential, commercial, and industrial land users. As they diversify, more suburbs may come to resemble Richmond, where a history of minority incorporation has produced a political landscape of multiethnic elite regimes and reform coalitions, each woven together by complex identities and interests.

The growing recognition of layered histories has inspired new efforts—both at the grassroots and within the academy—to preserve the sites, archives, and remembrances of suburban communities of color. Postwar development has frequently taken place on agricultural greenfields that appear "empty" from the vantage point of the built-out suburb (even when valued as "open space"; Rome 2001). Yet, these areas were a mix of farmland and other industrial sites, small towns, and formal and informal housing, including the home and work spaces for people of color and the white working class (Cavin, this volume; García 2001; Wiese 2004). Douglas Appler's case study documents archaeological work and community engagement at one such suburban site near Fort Ward in Alexandria, Virginia, which previously had been preserved and presented to the public as a site of solely military significance. Local government and residents have begun to document the history of a nearby nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century African American community. Through the recognition of multiple meanings associated with the park, residents and archaeologists have developed a more inclusive suburban history.

Planning, politics, and history thus intersect in suburbs that have become immigrant destinations and sites of remembrance. The same holds true for distressed suburbs, where built environments that once offered housing, jobs, and status have deteriorated. Small local governments that once promised government responsiveness, a desirable mix of taxes and services, and autonomy from

the city now face limited tax bases that hamper attempts at revitalization. The last two chapters take a closer look at these maladies and explore possible remedies.

JoAnna Mitchell-Brown considers the potential of the community-development corporation (CDC) model by examining its role in the inner suburbs of Cincinnati. She finds that area CDCs have been moderately successful in extending their work beyond their traditional urban constituencies and developing affordable housing, even in the wake of a foreclosure crisis that has littered the region with vacancies. They have won public support for affordable housing by building partnerships with both the public sector and other nonprofit community-development groups. Like most modern CDCs, their potential is limited: They prioritize bricks-and-mortar construction over community organizing, grapple with limited organizational capacity, and operate in an era of shifting funding priorities and adverse market conditions. But by taking a regional multisite approach, they have begun to build capacity in suburban areas where the need for equitable redevelopment has seldom been acknowledged.

A regional framework is also central to john powell and Jason Reece's proposal for redirecting fair-housing practices. Bringing the volume full circle, powell and Reece argue that the meaning of "the suburbs" has changed and that the old city/suburb dichotomy no longer neatly demarcates segregation and inequality (and, of course, never completely did). Many who once imagined that "the suburbs" offered uniformly higher levels of opportunity now recognize some suburbs as places of decline and disadvantage. For people of color, this means that their mere presence in the suburbs may be a far cry from real social and economic equality, not to mention political power. In addition to promoting fair-housing enforcement, advocates must work to connect residents of low-opportunity neighborhoods to places of opportunity, regardless of whether those neighborhoods are located in the city or suburbs.

The historical diversity of the suburbs is thus relevant to current struggles for social justice, including those of the equity regionalists. This is the case not just when prior periods of activism have laid the groundwork for organizing but when the histories of segregated suburban communities of color, growth liberalism, and postwar development patterns structure the field of possible suburban futures. At the same time, suburbs are never completely bound to their pasts but continue to change as they become more diverse and take on new roles within reconfigured regional and national economies. These changes can bring about reactionary backlash, as they did in Antioch, but they also produce new opportunities for progressive activism. This volume thus ends on a hopeful note, with a call for analysis and action.

It also took hope, analysis, and action to bring this volume to fruition. Most of the papers collected here were originally presented at the Diverse Suburb conference at Hofstra University in October 2009. It was a massive undertaking and only possible with the help of a small legion. Among those who made indispensable contributions of time and energy were National Center for Suburban Stud-

ies Executive Dean Lawrence Levy and Administrative Director Ina Katz, the Hofstra Cultural Center staff (particularly Athelene Collins), Hofstra President Stuart Rabinowitz, Provost Herman Berliner, and the university administration, the Community Advisory Committee, my colleagues in the Sociology Department, stalwart advisor Katrin Anacker, the conference's sponsors, and, of course, the presenters and panelists. The Selection Committee read abstract submissions and provided authors with their earliest feedback, Dan Gerstle helped with the references, and Dan Rubey and Marc Silver made useful suggestions along the road to publication. Mick Gusinde-Duffy at Temple University Press was my champion and shepherd, and together with three dedicated reviewers provided incisive feedback that improved the volume immeasurably. Thank you to Upal and my parents for your unfailing love and support, orthopedic and otherwise.

Finally, I would like to thank the contributors. Their essays reimagine suburbs that have never been as uniformly quiescent, or as allergic to progressive politics, as many have imagined them to be. Progressive organizations have endured, even when struggling to respond to economic distress, racial tension, aging infrastructure, and inequality and polarization. Despite such challenges, the suburbs are more than ever places of possibility. In the case studies presented here, these possibilities hinge as much upon the patient, passionate, and often thankless efforts of suburban activists as they do upon broader-scale shifts in demographic composition and party enrollment. I have met many of these activists in the course of my research and have not given them enough recognition in my writing. I hope that this volume stands as a small tribute to their work.