

CLAIMING THE RIGHT TO THE CITY THROUGH INTERGROUP DIALOGUE The Tools for Social Change Initiative in Geneva, NY

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In the wake of police killing Cory Jackson, an unarmed Black man—and the subsequent acquittal of the officers—residents of Geneva, NY witnessed a rare and fleeting moment of dialogue between the city’s underclass and political elite. Public anger and anguish over the death of yet another young Black man operated to open up space where the city’s traditional politics of disenfranchisement and racial isolation could be named and possibly reimagined. In response to the public protests, the U.S. Department of Justice initiated a series of “intergroup dialogues on race” to help the city facilitate conversations about longstanding grievances and divisions that Cory Jackson’s killing stirred up (Shaw, 2012a). The proceeding months witnessed the declension of the protests and the U.S. Department of Justice initiative. Despite significant voluntary participation from Black, White and Brown residents, despite the official compliance of city officials, and despite a widely heralded series of postdialogue initiatives—including

volunteer “task forces”—the political goals of integrating Blacks and Latinos into the city’s economic and political structure faded. Ironically dialogues focused on “racial healing” functioned to silence the aspirations of Genevans to reclaim some of the city’s political machinery for Black and poor residents (e.g., Shaw, 2011).

This article explores our intervention into these failed dialogues and initiatives against a backdrop of an individuated reading of racial equity activism, indicative of what Spargens (1999) calls “civic liberalism.” Yet, we argue, intergroup dialogue remains a safe space in which to conceptualize institutional racism and could be retooled to develop collective thinking. This essay explores our development and execution of a model of community education, known as *Tools for Social Change*, in Geneva, NY that uses the intimacy of intergroup dialogue to develop political collectivity. Drawing on our curriculum, reflections on our facilitation and participants’ narratives we illustrate

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our attempts to center collective power-building that is first initiated through individual relationship-building. Unlike traditional intergroup dialogue, our sessions began with a framing of the rights denied to Black and Latino city residents (e.g., sustainable jobs, equitable housing, access to banks, city council, day to day in store harassments, police violence, etc.). We use intergroup dialogue to buffer and process the stress and discontent that surface. In turn, we are making moves, of varying success, toward an education on the rights to self-determination, collective rights and collective transformations. Through our dialogues and community organizing we have: identified and built political machinery for the first Black candidate to run for city council, hosted the first 2015 city council and mayoral candidates forum—with questions designed and facilitated by our multiracial, multiclass coalition, and organized a campaign to disrupt the corporate and political construction of a food desserts on Geneva's north side. Ultimately, our project works to resist the individuating of social actors, through intercommunal trust-building and collective activism to achieve political representation for urban residents. We believe that our measured successes, provide a model of dialogue and community building that may serve as a productive resource for employing interclass, interracial alliances in the fight for the right to the city. Moreover, this project is not intergroup dialogue, it is not service learning and it is not traditional grassroots community organizing—it is simultaneously all of these things. Furthermore, it may be a way forward for communities that have been systematically isolated and suffocated within their own cities.

METHODOLOGY

The research for this essay draws on methods commonly attributed to participatory research, which emphasizes participation and action. Moreover, it is research that seeks to understand the world by changing it, collaboratively and reflectively. As Bergold and Thomas (2012) note “in contrast to nomothetic research,

which can be carried out under almost any social conditions, participatory research requires a democratic social and political context.” As cofacilitators of the weekly dialogues, the authors are uniquely situated to engage in and reflect upon the construction of meaning within the group process. Our own situatedness, as three men, one Black, one South Asian, and one White and all employed at one of the most economically prominent institutions in Geneva—Hobart and William Smith Colleges—underscores how visible our identities were in the group and how much our voices likely shaped the direction of the group. Therefore, we have included our personal reflections and observations among those of the other participants. Yet, there were hundreds of other voices that comprise our data pool and therefore this story also moves well beyond us, especially given the democratic character of the Tools for Social Change leadership structure. To tell the story, therefore, we have drawn primarily from four categories of data acquisition: (1) Jeremy Wattles kept notes of the weekly dialogue, noting the identity and precise language of each participant. While we have sought and received permission to quote these participants, their names are absent, though their social identity is noted. (2) Participants developed a series of written documents in small groups which we collected and coded, (3) group emails and posted comments and reflections on social media were collected and coded, (4) Lastly, our essay begins and ends with the story of a widely discussed tragedy which left a trail of public discourse in newspapers, blogs, social media and meeting minutes for city council and city hall. Each represents a different feature of the Cory Jackson story, and each has been coded for this project.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS— THE LEGACY OF THE KILLING OF COREY JACKSON

Early in the morning of Friday, May 20, 2011 Cory Jackson and two passengers sat in a vehicle that had been stopped by the Geneva Police

Department (GPD). Police were seeking to question Jackson regarding a robbery that occurred earlier that morning. When ordered to exit the car, two occupants did so. Jackson did not. Officer Carmen Reale, who would later claim he “saw Jackson turn toward another officer with what appeared to be a weapon” fired his gun, shooting through the rear window and hitting Jackson in the head. Three days later, at Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, NY, Corey Jackson died. No gun was ever found on Corey Jackson’s person or in the vehicle. The GPD placed Reale on administrative leave until the Ontario County Sheriff’s Office finished its own independent investigation into the shooting (Hibbard, 2011a).

The larger narratives employed immediately after Jackson’s killing are telling, in terms of their scope and their competition for legitimacy. The police department rejected any charges of racism and referred to the killing as an isolated event where their officer followed protocol (Hibbard, 2011a). In the ensuing weeks Corey Jackson’s family and local residents publicly raised important questions: (1) Given that Jackson was in the back seat of a coupe, how could he comply with orders to exit the vehicle with his hands up if he had to bend down and reach forward to move a lever on the seat in front of him? (2) Since Jackson had nothing in his hands, what was it that “appeared” to be a weapon in the officer’s eyes? (Hibbard, 2011a). Many Black community members were angry at Jackson’s death, but also saw this event as tied to a larger structural issue of racial discrimination. Patrisha Blue, an active member of the local NAACP and longtime community activist, said “There have been too many unanswered questions in Geneva. And they all point to Black people and how we are treated in this city.” Lucile Mallard, president of the Geneva NAACP, urged that an independent agency above the Ontario County Sheriff’s Department handle the case, while Blue called for a citizens’ investigation (Hibbard, 2011b). The local newspaper also added its voice to the debate by

running a long article on June 11, 2011 titled “Corey Jackson’s Past,” which reported in detail Jackson’s preceding criminal record. While this article did quote leaders in the Black community, the newspaper chose to spend much more time on the individual killing, Jackson’s past, and the police response, rather than following up in depth on the wider claims of police harassment (Hibbard, 2011c).

On July 5, 2011, the Ontario County Grand Jury justified the shooting. The district attorney, Michael Tantillo, said that the grand jury “listened to about 15 witnesses, including five civilian eyewitnesses to the events and after hearing all of the evidence gathered in this case ... determined that the shooting of Corey Jackson, while certainly regrettable, was justified under the law.” Chief Pane expressed sympathy on behalf of GPD to “those who loved and cared for Corey Jackson,” and hoped to “move forward and ensure that Geneva is a vibrant and peaceful community” (“Update: Grand Jury,” 2011). That ended the criminal inquiry into the killing of Cory Jackson.

RENEWED HOPE

This, however, was not the end to the questions of structural injustice and racism raised by concerned citizens in the Black community. Montrose Streeter, assistant vice president of student affairs at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, contacted the U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service, and Linda Ortiz was assigned the case. In the following weeks, Ortiz led a “Summer of Healing” Intergroup dialogue (IDG) program. Based on a curriculum designed through the Clinton administration, IDG first develops common ground through group storytelling, then builds to discussions of systemic racism and finally encourages participants to take action in their community. The Geneva IDG included the following stakeholders: The city of Geneva, the Geneva NAACP, the African American Men’s Association, the Courtyard Apartments Tenants’

Association, members of the faith community, the Concerned Citizens' Committee, and the Geneva Human Rights Commission. These stakeholders would subsequently form the Community Compact Steering Committee, with the intent of meeting regularly to drive the reconciliation process forward. First, the Summer of Healing took place, and after several weeks, the mediation dialogue culminated in a signing ceremony of an official memorandum of understanding on September 6. With much fanfare, news outlets referred to the agreement as "Geneva's Magna Carta" and "Geneva's Road Map to the Future" (Cotterill, 2011). The agreement, which would be reviewed in 2016 after 5 years, called for the following:

- development and implementation of a citizen police academy;
- improvement of the citizen complaint process and follow through on complaints;
- police undergo[ing] cultural awareness;
- timely police responses to African American communities;
- increased effort for [hiring] African American police officers in Geneva;
- work to recruit African American[s] for civil servant positions;
- the Human Rights Commission will develop a process to engage community leaders and city officials to better address racial and bias based conflict; and
- create a steering committee of community groups, police, and the Human Rights Commission to oversee the implementation of agreed upon action steps (Cotterill, 2011).

Community leaders publicly hailed the promise of the road map. Representing the Concerned Citizens of Geneva, Patrisha Blue told local media that the city's agreement to allocate funds "is critical for the recruitment of African American and even Latino police officers." Blue continues "It's absolutely essential, because if we had that kind of popu-

lation on the force right now, I don't think we would be here, because I think the situation on May 20 could have been resolved in another way. If there was more cultural understanding or someone felt that they could actually relate to someone who's on the force, but when you look at a police force and your relationship has always been adversarial and there's nobody you can identify with, that's not a good starting place" (Cotterill, 2011). Karen Baer, then executive director of the Geneva Human Rights Commission (GHRC) affirmed the democratically potential of the road map which involved widespread community input, dialogue, and buy-in (Cotterill, 2011).

A Community Compact Steering Committee began meeting regularly during the fall of 2011. By late October, in addition to the goals stated in the original memorandum of understanding, the GPD had developed a new mission and value statement with a focus on "respecting the rights of all, regardless of race, creed, religion, sexual orientation, color or national origin," and voiced their commitment to ensure "every citizen with whom we interact is treated with dignity, compassion, and a sense of professionalism." Other initiatives included an effort to encourage police to attend cultural events, and GHRC "healing circles," also called "Community Dialogues on Race," based on the IDG model of discussing race and racism, in hopes that dialogue would "develop common values and allow participants to express their own interests while working together to improve race relations" (Shaw, 2011). The GHRC, a city funded initiative, was a lynchpin for the reconciliation process. While the other stakeholders were invested in the process, many of them were volunteering their time as community members or had other remits within city government. But for the GHRC, backed with meaningful funding and a small, committed staff, this work fit in exactly with their stated mission of advancing human rights, addressing injustice, and pushing back against discrimination (Cotterill, 2011).

A DREAM DEFERRED

A year later, amidst mounting national protest against police murders of unarmed Black men, and a call for structural reform, Geneva witnessed a series of deathblows to the promise of the Community Compact. On October 7, the *Finger Lakes Times* reported that the Geneva City Manager, Matt Horn, had proposed a \$20,000 cut to the GHRC budget for the 2013 fiscal year, as compared to a budget of \$55,000 in 2012. Karen Baer reacted, saying “The city has signed on to the Community Compact in the aftermath of the 2011 Cory Jackson shooting, and that commits us to do several programs to promote understanding and respect in the community. The loss of \$20,000 will literally mean many of the Community Compact’s activities will be unfunded, including the high school dialogues we are ready to begin.... It looks like we are targeted” (Shaw, 2012a). Horn countered, claiming that the newly proposed \$35,000 allocation would be 10% higher than the 2010 budget, and that recent large increases in GHRC funding were unsustainable. “I have been, and continue to be, a huge supporter of the work of the commission and, in particular, the Community Compact,” Horn said. “These are resources that are invaluable to our city” (Shaw, 2012b). Despite the intentions of Horn and the city council, their stated support for the GHRC and Community Compact, and the financial realities, this financial decision, made in the wake of a recent community tragedy and in the larger context of the incipient Black Lives Matter movement and protests of police killings of unarmed Black men, lacked foresight. It would have dramatic negative consequences for the progress made by the Community Compact. Nevertheless, the budget went forward with the cuts, and on January 10, 2013, Karen Baer agreed to take a “nearly 70 percent pay cut.” The GHRC chairman Richard Thomas wrote to the city manager: “it is under protest that we offer, and our director accepts, this level of compensation in an effort to continue to honor our current contractual and statutory obligations performed on

behalf of the city.” Of course one of those contractual obligations was the Community Compact. Although her position was reduced to a part-time salary, Baer voluntarily remained on staff full time (Shaw, 2013a). This lack of critical resources proved to be unsustainable, however. The city’s gutting of the GHRC budget took its toll, and after another 6 months, in July of 2013, Karen Baer stepped down as the executive director and took another position in nearby Tompkins County (Shaw, 2013b). Her position remained vacant. Meanwhile, 4 months earlier in March of 2013, the Community Compact had ceased its monthly meetings (Bassage, Calderon, Cragg, Davenport, & Doris-Pierce, 2014). The reconciliation had stalled out. Again, we do not know what opinions and decisions reside within minds and hearts of the city manager and city council, but for some residents it seemed as if, just at the moment when dialogue and sustained focus on structural change in city government were most needed, the city of Geneva decided to cut the legs out from under the GHRC, a key stakeholder in the healing process and crucial to driving forward the compact goals.

During this subsequent fallow period, there was a systemic staging down of the GDP’s role in four major steps. First, officer Reale retired after more than 2 years on administrative leave with full pay. New Police Chief Jeff Trickler reported in March of 2014 that Reale had retired as of January 24. Trickler noted that the GPD had taken a “long look at the incident” and though Reale had declined several requests to be interviewed, the chief said on his behalf that it had “affected Scott. I don’t think any law enforcement officer wants to be involved in an incident where they take a life” (Hibbard, 2014). Second, the Citizen Police Academy ceased activity after its highly publicized first session. Lastly, superficial gestures of reform, such as a citizen complaint form on the city of Geneva’s website and a one-time cultural sensitivity seminars for city representatives and the Geneva Police Department replaced systemic redress of police culture or the deep divisions between city government

and the Black community. Ultimately, there is little evidence to suggest earnest efforts by the establishment to include African Americans in public life: no overt efforts recruit or train Blacks for civil servant positions, severe cuts to the Geneva Human Rights Commission and the cessation of activities by the Compact's Steering Committee.

This declension corroborates what we have laid out in our tracing of the aftermath of the Corey Jackson killing: that despite an initially promising reconciliation process, there is much unfinished business. This lingering feeling of disappointment became more apparent as the summer of 2014 arrived. Though many Black men have been killed by law enforcement or racist White citizens for many years, the media coverage in the summer of 2014 might be called reporting on the Summer of Killing, in juxtaposition to the hopes for the 2011 Summer of Healing. Between July 17 and November 23, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, Kajieme Powell, Akai Gurley, and Tamir Rice were all killed by police in controversial and suspicious circumstances. Ferguson, Missouri saw massive peaceful protest met with heavily armed police riding surplus military tanks, as well as an intense media focus on some violent protest. People in Geneva and at Hobart and William Smith Colleges took part in their own Black Lives Matter protests, and Corey Jackson's name emerged again as a touchstone for the community (Mallard, 2014). We must ask a basic question that has been asked far too often—if Corey Jackson was a White man, would he still be alive?

Four years have passed since Corey Jackson died and the community still feels the pain of that tragic event. The time for grieving is largely over, yet there is a persistent sense of dissatisfaction and hurt. Many in the community believe that the potential for healing that the Department of Justice dialogues and the Community Compact offered did not come to fruition. This is part of the unfinished business of building a better community that Tools for Social Change seeks to address. A key reason for this persistent feeling of injustice and hurt

is that Geneva, despite its rural nature and size of just over 13,000, is a microcosm of the larger country. With over 28% of the community identifying as persons of color as of the 2010 census, this killing in Geneva is inextricably situated within the larger context of police violence (United States Census Bureau, 2015). It seems clear that episodic, short-lived, superficial, or corrupted approaches to tackling centuries long problems of racism and mistrust of law enforcement are ineffective. Politicians and civil servants in Geneva have to do better. Even if their only sin is one of indifference, ignorance, or false empathy rather than immorality or racism, that is sin enough to damage the community. We believe that our intervention into this community conversation, through intergroup dialogue and community education, has potential to shift the structures of power and the mechanisms of public accountability for the benefit of all Genevans, and applies to the wider national and global discourse on marginalization, race, racism, and the right to the city.

ADDRESSING DECLINING ENFRANCHISEMENT IN CITIES

In recent years, the work of progressive scholars and activists has exposed the growing power and pervasive influence of a capitalist world economy and the resultant neoliberal restructuring of urban governance (Brenner, 1999; MacLeod & Goodwin, 1999; Mitchell, 2003; Purcell, 2003). They have argued that social, economic, and political restructuring had led to radical changes in urban planning and governance with power and control being transferred from individual citizens and their governmental representatives to a variety of organizations with little or no direct accountability to the local populace (i.e., corporation, private holdings, and other nonstate institutions). A resultant competitive ethic has come to dominate local policy making. Efficiency and economic development have become both means and final ends of local policy (Amin,

1994; Leitner, 1990; Mitchell, 2003; Painter, 1995; Purcell, 2002). In this context, local citizens and their interests have been marginalized and excluded from decisions that shape their cities and their embodied experiences.

To counteract this growing disenfranchisement of urban populations, academics and activists have appealed to Henri Lefebvre's concept of the right to the city (Amin & Thrift, 2002; Dikec, 2001; Friedmann, 1995; Harvey, 2008; Holston & Appadurai, 1999; Isin, 1996; Mitchell, 2003; Sandercock, 1998; Sassen, 2000; Smith, 1993). Drawing from Lefebvre's *The Right to the City* (1968), *Space and Politics* (1973), Lefebvre's *The Critique of Everyday Life* (1948), and *The Production of Space* (1991), they have argued for the right to the city as way to restructure economic, social, and political relationships and to promote more democratic control of the production of urban space. However, these appeals have too often failed to provide a careful comprehensive exploration and evaluation of what constitutes the right to city (i.e., what type of right it is, who may hold this right, etc.) and what this right entails for political, economic, and social relations within the city.

URBAN SPACE AND THE RIGHT TO THE CITY

In what follows we provide a brief account of Lefebvre's work on urban space and the right to the city. Lefebvre's extensive body of work on the production of space is central to his conception of the right to the city. Space for Lefebvre is more than the three dimensional realm in which objects are located and events occur. Lefebvre's concept of space includes perceived, conceived, and lived space (Lefebvre, 1991). Perceived space is "the relatively objective, concrete space people encounter in their daily environment" (Purcell, 2002). Conceived space is theoretical representations and mental constructions of space (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 38). Lived space is the dynamic combination of perceived and conceived space. As such, it

contains not only an individual's lived experiences of space but also the social relations and basic elements of social life (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 39). Consequently, producing urban space involves the production or reproduction of lived space (i.e., the lived experience of space of urban inhabitants) and social relations.

The right to the city thus conceived is "a transformed and renewed right to urban life" (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 158). It contains two key rights: the right to appropriation and the right to participation. The right to appropriation demands that those who experience urban life must have the ability to fully and completely use, access, and occupy urban space to meet their needs (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 179). This stands in stark contrast to capitalist private property and commodity-based conceptions of urban space merely as a means to the accumulation of capital. The right of participation requires that those who experience urban life make direct central contributions to all decisions that produce urban space. This challenges the neoliberal model of participation in which the agency and voice of the citizenry are diluted and filtered through various institutions and decision-making processes controlled by political and socioeconomic elites (Purcell, 2002, p. 103). Taken together the right to appropriation and the right to participation make the right to the city a promising way to reframe urban politics, policies, planning.

However, the promise of the right to the city is tempered by both its ambiguity and vagueness. It is unclear what type of right is the right to the city. Lefebvre (1996) claims that the right to the city encapsulates many more traditional rights (p. 174). In the literature a radical openness has been advocated and the right to the city has been claimed to be, among other things, a socioeconomic right to transportation, a right to equitable and affordable housing, et cetera (Marcuse, 2009). It has also been presented as a right to political identity and citizenship (Dikec, 2005), a right to a communal good, and a negative right (i.e., a right to be free from harassment, brutality, and surveil-

lance) (Mitchell & Heyman, 2009). While these and many other conceptions of the right to the city demonstrate its capaciousness, they also makes it difficult to articulate how the right to the city might look like in practice (Attoh, 2011, p. 675; Purcell, 2002, pp. 102–103). Of particular concern is how the right to the city will deal with situations where traditional rights claims come into conflict with one another. For example, both homeless city inhabitants and those who own property should have a central voice in urban planning under the right to the city. However, homeless city inhabitants' demand for access to public space may conflict with property owning city inhabitants' demand to determine what happens in their neighborhoods. The right to the city does not appear to provide a clear path forward.

In addition it is unclear for whom the right to the city is a right. Lefebvre indicates that those who have the right to the city are *citadins* or those who inhabit the city and/or contribute to the body of lived urban experience (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 158). Again, a flexibility and radical openness have been advocated in interpreting this claim. In the literature, the status of *citadins* has been conferred to a diverse set of groups. Racial and minorities (Dikec, 2005), the homeless (Van Deusan, 2005), women, the politically or economically disenfranchised (Marcuse, 2009) have all been the focus of right to the city claims. While the flexibility and openness of the right to the city makes it possible to link together the claims of these various constituencies, limiting conditions do not seem to be present. Specifically, it is unclear who does or does not qualify as contributing to the body of lived urban experience or lived space. Also, as mentioned earlier, it is unclear how unifying the potentially opposed right claims these various groups would work in practice.

In sum, the right to the city presents a potentially promising way to reframe urban politics and space, resist disenfranchisement of those who experience urban life, and unify the claims and rights of *citadins*. However, practi-

cal considerations present problems which overshadow that promise. What is required is a way to resolve the practical concerns regarding the right to the city without compromising its radical flexibility and openness. In what follows we argue that IDG can fill such a role.

DIALOGUE AT THE CROSSROADS

To address these practical concerns we initiated IDG as a strategic resource to build interracial solidarities and take collective action. We argue that as a standalone solution IDG is inherently limited, but when framed as a tool to cultivate an awareness of the appropriation of and participation in urban spaces in terms of race, class and the commons. IDG's curriculum is widely accessible and its liberal undertones appeal to a wide audience. Postdialogue interviews indicate that participants often leave wanting to engage more actively in the civic life of their communities in ways that promote racial understanding (Zúñiga, Lopez, & Ford, 2012). Often participants revise their beliefs about their community, and are more interested in engaging with the systemic and daily acts of White racism that inhabit their communities. We see great potential in connecting IDG to a more radical interpretation of civic engagement. Yet, there are fundamental limitations to using intergroup dialogue for radical politics. While IDG offers a compelling model for changing social and racial attitudes, its conventional design is ineffective at directing participants toward radical social action. The liberal origins and evolution of IDG provide insight as to why.

IGD can be traced back to Allport's (1954) theory of intergroup contact. Often referred to simply as "contact theory," the idea is that "cross-racial contact" can produce more positive racial attitudes when members of different groups interact with each other "under specified conditions, namely when they have equal status in the situation, get to know each other well and cooperate with each other toward common goals, and when their contact is sup-

ported by relevant authorities” (Zúñiga et al., 2012). Putting the problem of “equal status,” aside for the moment, Allport’s idea gained traction in 1997 when the Clinton administration’s “Initiative on Race” called for “a great national conversation on race and reconciliation” (Clinton, 1998). According to Yu and Taylor (1999), it was not an effort to embrace conservative voices on or an attempt to engage voices of Black nationalists, it was rather “to be a non-confrontational discussion of issues long ignored or feared for their potential to disrupt the social fabric of communities.” The administration made public pronouncements, chartered a committee and developed a curriculum to “encourage dialogue on racial divisions and diversity in communities and schools” (Yu & Taylor, 1999, p. 474). The curriculum was circulated through politically liberal non-profit organizations and churches, and regional ancillaries of the Justice Department, such as local human rights commissions and public schools.

Following the Clinton years IDG is primarily run through either local nonprofits or, most prominently, through initiatives in higher education. IGDs in higher education have been pushed forward by initiatives at the University of Michigan, the Ford Foundation’s “difficult dialogues” project, the American Association of Colleges and Universities, Everyday Democracy (formerly called Study Circles), the International Institute of Sustained Dialogue, and the National Conference on Community and Justice. While there is variation between the curricular design of IGD in higher education versus community organizations, they share multiple learning objectives, such as: “develop a language and capacity for dialogue,” “reflect upon and learn about self and others” and “identify and plan individual and collective actions” (Zúñiga, Gurin, & Nagada, 2008, p. 3). Moreover, the sequence moves from interpersonal understanding to social empathy, to discussion of structural inequity and finally a commitment to social change. Research from the University of Michigan illustrates the transformational impact of IDG

on the racial attitudes, race literacy and personal commitments by White participants to “become allies” to people of color. The success of IDG is often attributed to the culture of fellowship and respect that cultivated through group storytelling and dialogue (Zúñiga, Nagda, Chesler, & Cytron-Walker, 2007). Additionally, IDG sessions are run by trained facilitator with specific aims at providing people of color an opportunity to bear witness to oppression and Whites to bear witness to privilege (Zúñiga et al., 2008, p. 3).

Yet, there is little evidence that political will and resources for “collective action” are effectively developed through IDG (Yu & Taylor, 1999). Moreover, the curricular design of intergroup dialogue does not provide substantial support for developing the kind of legal, philosophical and pragmatic features of organizing that are elemental to politically organizing communities (e.g., Alinsky, 1971). The most popular models of community-based and college-based dialogue reserve collective action for the final session, where the group makes commitments for what they want to do with what they have learned. The formal curriculum ends with this last session and dialogue facilitators are not formally trained in any practices for implementing the group’s future goals. It is essentially the edge of the cliff and participants are asked to draw on their previous experience in group dialogue, and their own imagination, to propel themselves over the gulf to the other side.

We argue that the objective of “collective action” is fraught with fundamental limitations. The dialogues were not designed with clear political or social justice mechanisms. Prior to the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal, the president’s administration leveraged the Justice Department’s resources to bolster legal justice issues arising out of community dialogues (Yu & Taylor, 1999). However, after the affair broke in 1998, it limited the moral energy of the Presidency, thereby diminishing IDG’s political support (Yu & Taylor, 1999). Moreover, IDG has never enjoyed a sustained, explicit vision for preparing or supporting the

collective action of participants for racial justice in their communities. Yet we argue that IDG has the potential to do just that.

REPURPOSING IDG TOWARD A FIGHT TO RECLAIM GENEVA

What follows is a summary of our strategic repurposing of IDG. This summary provides an outline of how IDG served as a resource to provide disenfranchised communities with both the hope and the collective will to fight for the right to Geneva. Tools for Social Change was formed by the authors: two professors and an associate director for service learning, in February of 2015 as local activism in solidarity with #BlackLivesMatter reached its peak. After several months of planning and dialogue with Black church leaders, civil rights warriors and local activists, we committed to the unfinished business of Cory Jackson's death and the struggle of the city's underclass. In concert with participants, we aimed for an IDG program that could propel political action through three phases. First, as a structured race dialogue between a cross-section of Genevans; second—situated in the oldest Black church in the city—as a site to interrogate the political geography of the city; and finally to craft a series of political actions that move toward a radical reclamation of the city.

The first phase involved the traditional model of IDG curriculum, which is a four-stage scaffold. The initial stage involves forming and building group relationships by creating a safe space for participants to share their experience with identity, difference and community. The next stage explores lived realities of White privilege and racist oppression through structured activities and dialogue. At the following stage participants identified features of racist exclusion and division within Geneva and the ways in which some participants are complicit beneficiaries while other participants are subordinated by these divisions. Finally, participants begin exploring

ideas for 'community solutions,' including alliance building and advocacy work.

Overall this first phase served to build trust between Black and White participants and created space to examine narratives of lived space, the role of institutional racism in the operation of the city, and the complicity of Whites who benefited from the system. Yet, recently history reminded us that if we were to harness this newly formed group fealty to elicit a deeply shared sense of interracial solidarity and responsibility to fight for a better city we would need to go beyond the traditional IDG curriculum. This necessitated our next phase, in which we intervened into a set of issues that are not typically addressed during IDG 'community solutions' dialogues.

Here is an important space for Lefebvre's radical vision to offer insight into how to direct the political imagination of IDG participants toward a more rigorously democratic set of possibilities about the city. Specifically we introduced activities and dialogues that related directly to the political meanings of space in Geneva. We framed questions of privilege and oppression, in terms of how Geneva is occupied and who is occupied upon. For instance, participants engaged in a series of small group sessions to explore their vision of community and the ways in which Geneva did or did not meet that vision. Specific public sites were identified as having the necessary capacity to facilitate shared community: parks, the lake, commercial centers, schools, recreation centers, residential associations, churches etc. However, the groups also identified a nexus of exclusionary policies and mores that are expressed through commercial, governmental and private practices. For example, one breakout group, led by a male Latino participant, addressed the collusion of the city government, the homeowners association and the chamber of commerce to map the city's "corridor" to isolate communities of poverty and color while centering the vineyards, the colleges, and the lakeside as well as the commercial centers that primarily serve students, tourists, and the wealthy lakeside community.

Another breakout group, led by a White, working class, high school student identified the imbalanced representation of food sources in the city. He noted that there was a Super Walmart, Costco, Wegmans, and TOPS supermarket within a 2-mile radius of each other on the west side of Geneva. By contrast there are no supermarkets on the largely Black and Latino, north side of Geneva. A third group, led by an elderly Black participant, identified the fact that the police, school board, and city council have no people of color, in a city that is one third non-White. In sum, we participated in a telling and witnessing of the historic corruption of the commons in the service of capitalism and White supremacy.

It is in this light that we began our third phase, which called upon participants to shape a politically conscious coalition that stands with those who have been cut out of the city's politics and economics. In this final phase, participants take what they have learned through dialogue and employ it in one of a series of working groups that participants helped design. These subgroups are populated by participants in ongoing dialogue with one another who aim to pursue political ends that advance people's access to cultural, economic and political reproduction throughout the city. The subgroups tackle issues like food deserts, political representation and college-high school student race dialogues, while keeping an eye on the superficial character of previous initiatives indicating a need for enduring democratic policies. These working groups have achieved new political leverage points through broad based organizing. For instance, participants supported the successful election of the first Black candidate to city council in the city's 200 year history. Participants have also organized three citywide dialogues with candidates, during which candidate running for public office were confronted with direct questions about racial and economic isolation in front of hundreds of local residents (Shaw, 2015).

The voices of participants echo germinal moves into a new way of thinking and being in

political community. A few examples include: A White, female participant attended the dialogues to build a better sense of community but had "never been that interested in politics." She has since joined a subgroup working to elect the first Black candidate to city council and for "the first time in my adult life" rejected her family's political commitments, instead advocating for an interracial alliance that did not narrowly serve the interests of her social class. "I have the right to my own beliefs," she asserted. Beliefs that were forged out of shared dialogue and work. A Black, male participant who has worked for years in isolation on disability rights issues in the city has now begun to operate as part of the collective because *Tools for Social* change is "owned" by the participants, and is not beholden to the interests of the establishment order. In the words of an elderly White male participant "We don't owe anybody anything except for ourselves." Moreover, in a space where participants determine the foci, *Tools for Social Change* operates as a kind of collectively-appointed right of participants to convene and transform their community.

In this collectivity, a new set of public priorities are being shared across race and class. For instance, during our candidates forum, a Black mother participated in the open dialogue to articulate a sophisticated critique of the city council's use of "bad parenting" tropes to justify high dropout rates in the high school. She spoke directly to government insiders, many of whom had never ventured onto the north side of Geneva until that evening, and articulated a series of common rights necessary for her child's survival—all of which were in some way being denied to the city's poor community of color. The gathering erupted in supportive voices who articulated, from their own social location, why the denial of equitable services had collective impact. Remarkably, just a few weeks prior, many of the White middle class participants would not have known how (or why) to intervene against "self-help," individualizing narratives. Yet, the process of trust building and shared public work moved the

collective dialogue to give voice to the commons.

CONCLUSION

After the killing of Cory Jackson a recurring phrase—"unfinished business"—was invoked by many community stakeholders who felt the lingering pain from this violence and its aftermath. Community members, especially those in the Black community, often voiced their sadness and frustration with the lack of social progress in the aftermath of this event. Tools for Social Change has repurposed this cry. "Unfinished business" is now a statement of hope and a call to action. When Cory Jackson's father and brother attended one of the weekly dialogue sessions, few of us could sum up words that felt worthy of their presence. Cory's father eased that burden by encouraging us to keep doing this work because it gave his family and this community hope. One of the most striking features of that moment was the composition of the room. Over weeks and months we had become a gathering of working and middle class Blacks, middle and working class Whites, college students, working class and middle class Latino(a)s as young as 7 and as old as 82 in common conversation and for common cause. We had stumbled onto a "third way" to build civic capacity across race and class. Rising out of the unactualized potential of the Community Compact and Department of Justice dialogues, Tools for Social Change provides an innovative model community building and collective action. Through the strategic repurposing of IGD new pathways to the right to the city have been created for diverse groups Geneva residents.

Certainly our shared work is not without its limitations in terms of the radical possibilities of the right to the city. By facilitating our activism through intergroup dialogue we are aware that we tread into a political and pedagogical medium that has been, and can again be, co-opted as a liberal project. Moreover, IDG is promoted in higher education as a source of

"personal development" and its emphasis on personal storytelling can be used to center the individual and privilege subjective meaning making over the need to collectively and radically conceive of social justice. Therefore as we continue our work, we continually seek modes of resistance against liberal co-opting. Novelist Ursula K. Le Guin (1974) reminds us that "You cannot buy the revolution. You cannot make the revolution. You can only be the revolution. It is in your spirit, or it is nowhere." In that spirit, we do not present this model as fixed, final or proprietary (all of Tools for Social Change's curricular and organizing material is open sourced) but as a process. We continue to pursue and participate in a process of sharing narratives of lived space, which can establish bonds of trust and solidarity, in order to confront the reality of structural inequality, and provides creative space to build collective power to reclaim the commons. This essay aims to enter into conversation with activists and intellectuals who are interested in innovative approaches to advancing the right to the city, and to test both their limitations and possibilities.

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