C/Harm City: The Drama of the Baltimore Street in Three Acts

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C/Harm City: The Drama of the Baltimore Street in Three Acts

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C/Harm City:
The Drama of the Baltimore Street in Three Acts

A dissertation presented

by

Samantha Diane Hawkins

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Abstract

This is an ethnography of homicide and its effects in inner-city Baltimore based on over 14 months of fieldwork in the city, much of it in support groups, at community meetings, candlelight vigils, on street corners, and in the living rooms of parents whose children had recently been murdered. The study demonstrates how violence shapes healing processes, unapologetically creating a "new normal" for the residents of Baltimore. It argues that collective pain and the experience of grief engender a crisis of meaning for homicide survivors, perpetrators, the police, and the public. Trauma born of grieving desensitizes, shifts moral compasses, and weakens familial bonds, allowing the everyday assaults of institutionalized racism and economic inequality to become even more acute. What is more, the study shows, violence can create circumstances that lead to further dispossession and poverty. What results is a reproductive cycle of violent death, its politicization, its affect and its effects. *C/Harm City* analyzes how the narratives and memories of violence interact with efforts to mitigate it—through criminal justice, retribution, and activism. It offers a descriptive analysis of the social and cultural implications of violent crime in Baltimore as experienced, and communicated to me, by city residents. As such, it offers a case study of the ways in which collective trauma and its emotional economy may come to structure a social world.

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Acknowledgments

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Prologue

One week prior to moving to Baltimore for fieldwork in 2018, I received a call from my father while at the hairdresser. I shall never forget it. “Eddie is dead,” he sobbed. No precursor, no wind up. What else was there to say? We went back and forth for a bit. I, unbelieving, asked, “What do you mean he’s dead?” My father, through heaving cries, repeated, “He’s dead! He’s dead!” Tears welled in my eyes and began to stream down my face. Without words, the hairdresser—a total stranger— turned off the blow dryer, laid down her brush, and helped lift me from the chair. She pulled me into her chest. I sobbed.

Samuel Edward Hawkins IV, aka Eddie, aka Scooter, aka Dab Daddy, aka Fast, was my younger brother. He was found in a vacant home in Baltimore City, dead of an overdose. He was 22 years old. After arriving in Baltimore to begin my fieldwork, I spent my first night in the city writing a eulogy to be read at his funeral. That week, I delivered it to an overflowing church, fielded strangers’ comments on online obituaries, and buried him. In the weeks that followed, I tried desperately to piece together what his final days were like: a crashed car, an arrest, a hospital visit, then back to jail, then released? I read over reports from the medical examiner and discovered his kryptonite: cocaine and fentanyl. Then there was the information from the detectives and the morgue. His body was looted after death, his necklace, phone, wallet, and Timberland boots taken. I never did—and still don’t—have the heart to request the police report.

Eddie was one of 758 fentanyl-related deaths in Baltimore, and 1,172 total unintentional opioid-related deaths in the city, in 2018. That same year, there were 309 homicides. Reading those numbers, even years after his passing, is chilling. They represent a lot of untimely death and a lot of grief. Over the 14 or so months I conducted fieldwork, I learned more about that than I imagined possible. I often reflect back on my preliminary fieldwork experiences, prior to

Eddie's passing, especially how I viewed death, grief, and loss differently then. One memory stands out: In 2017, as part of my preliminary fieldwork in Baltimore, I attended a 24-hour grief counseling training mandatory for all volunteers at Roberta's House, the grief support non-profit that provided access to my informants throughout this research. Part of the training involved homework assignments to present the following day to the group. This particular day we were tasked with "unpacking" our own grief. We were told to bring a photo of a loved one who had passed away so that we might share our bereavement experience with the other trainees.

I left dumbfounded. I hadn't experienced a loss that seemed significant compared to those of the other volunteers. They had seen death in its most inexplicable forms. Among them were social workers at inner-city high schools that had lost three students in a single year and parents who felt moved to give back to Roberta's House after its grief support groups had provided solace following the homicide of their sons. Unlike my fellow volunteers, I hadn't yet felt cheated by death. There was no one to blame for the losses I had experienced. In fact, up until that point, every loss I had encountered had been expected—the people were sick, old, or both. My paltry experience foreclosed an understanding of death. It was merely a passive reality. I didn't *know* its disruptive or intrusive qualities.

I thought for a while about why sharing personal experience with grief was a requisite part of training, before concluding that, to help those who are mourning, one must first understand what it means to mourn. While I don't know if I still maintain that perspective, at the time it signaled to me that my research would be a challenging, if not impossible, undertaking given my positionality. I worried: Would my unfamiliarity with grief be alienating—or worse, damaging—to those around me? Would the data I gathered be inauthentic? Would a lack of perspective hinder my analysis?

The night of Eddie's death, I sat on the floor amongst cardboard boxes stolen from a liquor store's recycling—now filled with my belongings—and wrote. I wrote not because I wanted to, but because I saw it as my responsibility as an anthropologist; because I was the mediator through which all data I would collect and theories I would craft would pass. I wrote because I felt I needed to capture the moment when my understanding of grief changed. I imagined the unknown road ahead: a year processing newfound vulnerability, while safeguarding the emotions and memories of survivors who were brave enough to share their loss with me. "Hopefully [experiencing and reflecting on grief] will be cathartic in the end, instead of just painful," I wrote. "Maybe my own experiences can inform those of others and vice versa; maybe grief is communal."

As it turns out, grief is nothing like I thought it would be. It is, as one might expect, sadness and anger, frustration and disappointment. But just as it is disbelief, it was also relief. I feared that Eddie's addiction would be fatal, and, at last, it turned out to be. I could release the worry and the anticipation. As I did that, its space filled with questions, things left undone, and pain imagining the loneliness of how death came to be. Grief, I would learn, is always there. And yet, it manages to re-announce itself, sporadically pushing through to the surface in waves, cresting and falling, crashing then calming. As you journey through it you wonder whether it has fully penetrated your awareness: "Is this grief? Am I mourning?" Even joyful moments became peppered with a similar overture: "Am I still grieving if I am happy?" This thought is followed by guilt.

I can't say if one must grieve to understand grieving, or if grief can ever be known in all its aspects. Even amongst the survivors with whom I worked, many would insist that each loss was individual, that different relationships create different grief experiences. Time after time,

parents would explain that there was nothing worse than losing a child. Just as I hadn't known what it would be like to lose a brother, I can't begin to comprehend the loss of a spouse, a parent, a son, or a daughter. Nor can I imagine what such a loss would feel like if that person were murdered. There are, simply put, crucial differences.

Differences aside, grief is unsettlingly common in Baltimore City. There is an understanding of its pain that has become so routine that it serves as the basis for identity. Consider the social media profiles of so many of my interlocutors, each bio marked with numerous RIPs followed by a nickname (e.g. Restinpeace Porky; longlivejuan). Death is also communal. It brands space both visually in the form of graffiti and makeshift altars, as well as in the way people distinguish one street block from the next. For each loss, there are those who live on to carry the memory through the stories they tell, the cremation ashes they wear as a necklace, or the rap songs they record. Grief becomes a way of life. I know that for me it did; it informed my reading of my fieldwork experiences and many day-to-day interactions with others. Perhaps this is why, on that initial training, we were asked to unpack our own grief—because in Baltimore City, grief is shared. It connects the bereaved by virtue of its pain. Individual homicides and accidental deaths are themselves joined through networks of dealers and users, gang relationships and retaliatory killings, all relayed in hushed whispers at church or gossip on porch stoops. Grief becomes shared with the city in police reports, court cases, and paperwork for burial assistance. It infiltrates places of work, where survivors hold back tears to keep their jobs, and doctor's offices, where grievers-turned-insomniacs are written prescription after prescription to sedate them. As much as grief is private and solitary, it is also public and collective.

Weeks prior to starting this research, I had come to terms with my anthropological limits. I could conduct a cultural analysis of homicide survivorship and its structural components. To the best of my ability, I planned to report, to make comprehensible, the experiences of my interlocutors. I hadn't expected to live that experience alongside them. My repositioning granted me a new kind of access—not to informants, spaces, or topics, but to an emotional understanding that provided new, different analytical dimensions. Suddenly, I had my own independent, yet shared grief. The sort of authoritative work that some associate with anthropology that I hoped to mimic as a graduate student seemed impossible. Instead, what followed was an empathetic inquiry into myself and my interlocutors' lives. I investigated my own grief as much as I did theirs, trying to discern how individual losses come together to make up the collective consciousness of one of the deadliest American cities, and how such losses may, in part, underlie Baltimore's inability to heal—and, ultimately, to change. I begin with this note to remind the reader that homicide is intensely personal. Just as every sudden, untimely death that occurs in this city is. But it is my hope, as I wrote on the night that I received news of Eddie's death, that this vulnerable, individual understanding might add depth and ground to what is, and should be remembered as, an emotionally-inflected account of death, grief, and survivorship among a population of Americans.

Preface

It is not possible to write about homicide survivorship in Baltimore without discussing violence. Like fellow scholars of violence, I face the challenge of accurately representing the stories relayed by interlocutors and my experiences, while remaining sensitive to the impact of the material. There is the hurdle that, for most accounts, it was only logistically possible to offer a partial perspective, either that of survivor or perpetrator, in conjunction with publicly known information.[1] This leaves depictions of such encounters inherently incomplete,[2] if the reader is looking for an empirical truth. Then, there is the question of how to write about violence: do moves into literary prose inappropriately romanticize and aestheticize? All of these factors I debated and internalized when writing this narrative.

In the field of anthropology, there is an added burden, one that, for decades, dissuaded anthropologists from studying violence, worrying that their interlocutors might fill the "savage slot" (Trouillot 2003). Its disciplinary history is alleged to have legitimated racism and exacerbated Western stereotypes of barbarism (see also Baker and Patterson 1994; Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004). Urban ethnography is particularly at risk for reproducing the discipline's colonial roots: designing research studies in ways that exploit disenfranchised and vulnerable groups, pushing analyses that reproduce racial hierarchies, or narrating experiences in such a way that it creates a pornography of another's pain. As Ralph (2015:450) warns, there are

[1] This is due to limitations primarily on accessing perpetrators, the majority of whom are not prosecuted and, for those who are, some deny having committed the crime. Further, logistically, due to the limited scope of this research it was not possible to establish and maintain relationships with those who were incarcerated in addition to working with survivors.

[2] Arguably, all accounts are incomplete; anthropology, as a discipline, is an exercise in incompletion. Clifford Geertz, in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973:29), urges readers to consider how cultural analysis is by its nature unfinished: "Worse than that, the more deeply [cultural analysis] goes the less complete it is.… Anthropology, or at least interpretive anthropology, is a science whose progress is marked less by perfection of consensus than by a refinement of debate. What gets better is the precision with which we vex each other."

"high stakes" for how urban ethnography is written, and even greater considerations when that research involves something as charged as violence.

Geographer James Tyner (2012), following the philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey (and, later, Weber (1947) and Simmel (1910)), proposed that inquiries into violence employ *verstehen,* a German concept that marries deep understanding and empathy. Sociologically, it has been used in the pursuit of an interpretive understanding of social action. "*Verstehen* seeks to understand why people do what they do, in terms of their own personal theories; it is an appreciation of context rather than an attempt at prediction" (Tyner 2012:5). *Verstehen* might best be utilized as an analytical perspective (see also Tucker 1965:164): "To understand social action… we must go inside the social *situation*…. We must project ourselves into the *situations* we are investigating. We must learn the values and the aims and the hopes of human beings as they operate within a particular situation" (MacIver and Spitz 1969:17). This text is grounded in the assumption that to begin to understand violence and grief, we have to try to intimately grasp its experience for the individuals both who suffer and who perpetrate violence. This requires the reader to suspend judgment and imagine what it would feel like to encounter these people, share their experiences, and make decisions based on the context in which they are entrenched. I encourage her to approach the vignettes in the following chapters remembering, as Bourgois and Scheper-Hughes (2004:2) note, that "violence is present (as a capability) in each of us, as is its opposite–the rejection of violence…. [Violence] is a human condition."

Violence in Baltimore is often wrongfully described as senseless. There is not a single example in the pages that follow that could be characterized as such. Each act carries with it meaning for the actor and certainly is meaningful for victims and observers. It should also be made clear that we are not predisposed to aggression because of our genes, race, or hormones;

violence is fundamentally social. It is informed by relationships and history, structures and constraints, expectations and emotions, and "can never be completely dissociated from instrumental rationality" (Schroeder and Schmidt 2003:3). Also implicated are the institutions and brokers that create and preserve systems of inequality and injustice (Ralph 2015), which in turn make violence and the participation in illegal economies to meet one's needs understandable: Baltimore's police force is riddled with corruption, grossly understaffed, and mistrusted, which thereby leaves some city residents unprotected and with little recourse in the aftermath of crime. The hyper-criminalization of inner-city residents who are systematically targeted, surveilled, and managed is a form punishment unto itself (Comaroff and Comaroff 2016:45).

In order to capture my fieldwork experiences ethically and accurately, I made some deliberate choices in my narrative strategy. First, I strove to stay true to the visceral, phenomenological experience of violence and grief. Most of my vignettes are literary reconstructions that, I hope, might inspire a different kind of anthropological insight. Literary, when used here, refers to a style of storytelling intended to convey and prioritize emotional effect. If anthropology is concerned with exploring what it means to be human, stories of sociocultural life would be bereft without incorporating affect and its relational and communicative aspects (Lutz and White 1986). Further, I worry that discussing emotion in an abstract, social-scientific manner would reduce it to "emotion talk" (a concern shared with Allard 2016). The fault line between literature and social science is not as rigid as one might presume, however:

> …Sociology's dominant disciplinary methods and theoretical assumptions constantly struggle against the fictive. By fictive I mean not simply literature but that complication [of] the ensemble of cultural imaginings, affective experiences, animated objects, marginal voices, narrative densities, and eccentric traces of power's presence. For

> sociology, the fictive is our constitutive horizon of error; it is what has been and must be exiled to ordain the authority of the discipline and the truthful knowledge sociology can claim to produce (Gordon 2008:25).

In this spirit, I have tried to use narrative to render visible that which academic discourse and reflection often fails to accomplish, specifically the way violence and grief are experienced, which invariably exceeds and obscures the factual grounding that gives rise to it. "The sphere of artistic representation is crucial for understanding how violent spaces are socially constructed and for observing their relation to subjectivity and the imagination" (Colombo and Schindel 2014:8, after Das 2000). The vignettes were selected for a variety of reasons—to convey mood, capture the environment, illustrate how people talk about death, showcase my own experience, and, importantly, share what it is like to live amidst violence. Rather than focusing on acts of violence themselves, I attend predominantly to how they affected others. To maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of my informants, when necessary, I altered details about their lives and losses while striving to stay true to their experiences. At the same time, the voices throughout the text are unchanged. In reconstructions, care was taken to recreate conversations so they remained consistent with shorthand notes and in-the-moment transcriptions, interview recordings, and oral fieldnotes recorded during or immediately following encounters, and longform fieldnotes written after.

When relevant, I have personalized the account and offered insights into my struggle with the city's violence, as well as my fear, mourning, and pain. The intention of this is threefold: first, to support a deep, compassionate understanding for readers; second, to humanize the fieldwork experience; and most importantly, to offer a comparison between my grief experience and that of my informants. I am mindful that this may open me up to criticisms of being self-indulgent—to which, I respond that, as an anthropologist, I assume the roles both of the means of

data collection and of analyst. And, despite my desire to remain an unbiased and reliable reporter, I, like my interlocutors, am the subject of my own past experiences and emotions. If our own experience is the crucible of meaning, by definition we cannot fully understand another's experience. I have endeavored, as Geertz (1973) has encouraged, to create meaning out of many interlocking streams of consciousness, conventionalizing where they meet.

Critical to my positionality and experience is also that I am a White[3] woman working alongside, predominantly, Black homicide survivors. "In the United States, grief theory has relied largely on the experience of the dominant White culture to explain how Americans grieve in general. Cultural sub-groups, most notably African Americans, have received little attention from grief theorists, though researchers have recurrently indicated the pitfalls of assuming that African-American grief mirrors that experienced by Caucasians" (Laurie and Neimeyer 2008:174). I want to stress that my personal experience does not replicate that of my informants. One might assume that bereavement and grief might differ in Black communities by virtue of social and cultural factors. So, against my positionality, I ask to what extent? Does it differ by the density of its interconnectedness, the stressors that negatively impact mental health treatment and medical care (see also Diala et al. 2000), and/or religious participation and spirituality (Taylor, Chatters, & Jackson 2007)? How does historical trauma and tragedy shape how grief is experienced and expressed? The factors that make bereavement unique here were evident throughout the project itself, and, at times, were made even more apparent when I could turn to my personal experience as an anecdotal, comparative sample. Ultimately, however, there is much

[3] I chose to capitalize both Black and White to, first, acknowledge that race is a social construct, a man-made entity, not a natural feature. Additionally, capitalizing White avoids framing it as standard or neutral. I follow the American Psychological Association's style rules which reason that "it is important to call attention to White as a race as a way to understand and give voice to how Whiteness functions in our social and political institutions and communities." See: "The Case for Capitalizing the *B* in Black," Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Atlantic,* June 18, 2020: https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/06/time-to-capitalize-blackand-white/613159/ Accessed August 18, 2021.

common ground to be found in grief. By including notes and stories that offer context for my own biography, I encourage the reader to view me as an informant of sorts, a character to be considered alongside others in the text. The vignettes to follow invoke the principles of *verstehen* and compel a participatory examination of this social world.

Empathy and perspective alone, however, are not enough. Where *verstehen* met its limits, I point to the systems and actors that mediate inner-city life, hold power over experiences of grief, and often are complicit in the everyday, structural violence that harmed my interlocutors. In my fieldwork, I also found surprising agents—like Tyree—who served time for violent offenses and whose present activities teeter between crime, activism, and community building. The background and occupations of these individuals would relegate them to the familiar dichotomies of "decent/street" (Anderson 1999) or "dirty/clean" (Goffman 2014) that have become analytical foundations in urban ethnography, but whose simplistic categorization would not do justice to the complexity of their circumstances. Following the call of Venkatesh (2015:15), I apply a critical lens and strive to meet the need for an urban ethnography that testifies to the "shades of gray" present in the inner-city. I titled this work "C/Harm City," a play on a city slogan, to speak to the nuance of experience. Because as much as my research centered on tragedy and death, I also discovered an endearing resiliency, humor, and practice of care in the communities in which I worked. Writing about homicide is writing about survivorship and life after death, just as writing about injury also mandates writing about healing. It would be a disservice to talk only about one, with no mention of the other.

ACT ONE: Antemortem

Introduction

Good morning, angel.

Are you there?

It's been eight months, and I miss you so bad.

It's warm and sunny here so I know heaven is even more beautiful.

I can't wait to get there with you.

Mommy loves you.

Rest in peace, baby.

If you can, please let me know you're there.

The message above, sent from a mother's Instagram to her deceased son's account, was read aloud by Paulette, today's support group facilitator. The author, Tiffany, a woman whose son had been gunned down and killed earlier that year, looked on. She had wanted to read it herself but struggled to make it through. As Paulette finished, the other women at the table—all survivors—remarked on how beautiful it was. They offered words of praise, letting her know that they shared in her grief:

"That's so nice. He hears you," one assured.

"Yes, he does," another agreed.

"I was just feeling some kinda way," Tiffany said dismissively.

"No, no. You have to do what makes you feel good. You have to express yourself," Paulette soothed her.

"You know," one of the survivors across the table began, "I wrote something too. It came to me, and I don't even know what it meant but I put it down." She opened her grief journal and read:

The broken are the more evolved. Only from pain will greatness come.

…

There is a term used in the grief community to refer to people who are impacted by a murder and live on, affected by the loss: homicide survivors. When I was first introduced to it, it felt dark. 'Survivors' emphasized a continued existence, rather than a state of being or quality of life. Survivorship seemed to be just that: surviving. You weren't dead. And, in homicide survivorship, it meant that someone else was. The term seemed to underscore that, unlike the deceased, you still had your own life, a life that would forever be marked by loss.

Roberta's House, the grief support non-profit that I worked with throughout the duration of my fieldwork, uses 'homicide survivor' frequently to refer to its clients. Initially, I wondered if the grieving independently internalized a sense of survivorship before it was assigned to them, or if they just adopted the term as representative of their situation. No matter, once you entered through the door (or, more often than not, once a grief support advocate, similar to a social worker, came to your home to respond to a homicide you recently experienced), you were named a survivor. In some cases, I encountered mourners who were surviving in the crudest sense of the word. They remained alive, breathing and heart beating, but felt dead, their will to live taken by grief, their consciousness surrendered to an altered reality found in drugs and alcohol. There were those I encountered whose lives became consumed by pain, sadness, and rage. Others found the motivation to continue on by focusing on their responsibilities to their living children, family, and community. Some denounced their faith, while others became more spiritual. They

all struggled with how to live after death. Homicide became a means of forced transformation for those left, living on.

What does it mean to survive? In the inner-city, survival takes many forms. There is, of course, surviving the violent crime that threatens communities and typically claims over three-hundred lives per year; and there is also survival by ensuring one's basic needs are met in terms of housing, healthcare, and food.[4] There is surviving interactions with the police, and, for my interlocutors, there is trying to endure loss and adapt to post-homicide life. Homicide survivorship becomes even more taxing by the fact that it can compound. One loss can layer upon another and, with it, the trauma and affect to which they give rise; it was not uncommon to meet parents who had more than one child murdered. Some victims are beloved, other relationships are more complicated. While each loss registers uniquely, murder in the city does not occur in vacuum. Far from it. Researchers estimate that each Baltimore homicide directly impacts 10 people, meaning that over 30,500 Baltimoreans have felt its effects in the last decade, not to mention the impact of previous decades.[5] For communities already struggling to survive, an added form of survivorship makes daily life all the more difficult. Murder shapes the lifeblood of communities in Baltimore. My research, simply put, explores how.

…

This dissertation is an ethnography of homicide, grief, and survivorship in Baltimore City. I consider the experience of death and injury, revealing the destructive and productive potential of the emotional economy of trauma that accompanies the impoverishment of the urban

[4] According to a 2016 United Way report, over 47% of Baltimore City families were determined to be in 'survival mode,' unable to afford basic necessities (Patch 2018).
[5] Acknowledging, of course, that some people are affected more than once by losses caused by homicide. See: "Relatives of Baltimore murder victims struggle with grief," Andrea K. McDaniels, *The Baltimore Sun,* December 20, 2014: https://www.baltimoresun.com/health/bs-hs-homicide-survivors-20141209-story.html Accessed December 15, 2020.

scape, fuels violence, and impedes healing. In inner-city Baltimore, I argue, individual acts of violence aggregate to produce—in my informants' term—a "numbing" effect, one that saturates the social environment and life within it. Homicide is omnipresent: it is visible across the landscape, where makeshift memorials mark the sites of police or gang killings and yellow crime scene tape redirects traffic. It is heard in the rumble of surveilling police helicopters and the echo of sirens. Most significantly, it is *felt* by its residents. Fear, rage, pain, and sadness sediment, structuring identities and behaviors. Violence constitutes an everyday "normal" wherein the grief-stricken yearn for those lost to the streets and the enraged seek vigilante justice in the absence of a reliable police force. Many feel more or less immobilized by the fear of retaliation or further crime – constant reminders of the fragility of life.

The weight of despair is evinced by current events and statistics that speak to the reality of inner-city life. There is a twenty-year life expectancy gap between two neighboring communities in Baltimore—divided only by a highway—demarcating the affluent from the most impoverished and White from Black.[6] Since 2000, the city has seen ten different police commissioners; about 70 percent of citizens leaving prison re-offend within three years of release.[7] After a five-year old girl was shot in November 2018, Maryland Governor Larry Hogan stressed that the "number one issue facing" Baltimore was violent crime. At the time, other city officials reflected on the violence, stating: "The criminal conduct of a few causes enormous tragedy and grief to families;" and "The impact is on everyone. No one is immune from the

[6] "20-Year Gap In Life Expectancy Between Richer, Poorer Areas Of Baltimore," Devin Bartolotta, CBS Baltimore, July 6, 2017: https://baltimore.cbslocal.com/2017/07/06/life-expectancy-baltimore/ Accessed January 24, 2019.
[7] "Baltimore is mired in violent crime. Could part of the solution be found in reclaimed wood?" Aamer Madhani, *USA Today,* June 10, 2018: https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2018/06/10/baltimore-violent-crime-abandoned-homes-us-forest-service/607076002/ Accessed August 18, 2021.

violence in Baltimore."[8] Understanding homicide and its impact, therefore, is of critical importance to the economic well-being of the city and the public health of its inhabitants. It is also of wider contemporary relevance, given that violence increased in as many as three-quarters of U.S. cities between 2014 and 2017, with Chicago and Baltimore evincing the largest gains.[9]

Drawing from the literatures on the anthropology of mourning and grief, criminality and urban violence, I offer a phenomenologically grounded account of violence that also considers its political, historical, and legal underpinnings. As Sharma (2013:868) notes, "the pre-established social, cultural, political, economic and legal structures of the lived-world form the pre-objective understanding, or the manifold horizon, of the sense structures of the individual." That said, the emotions of sorrow operate as living truths that necessitate their treatment as legitimate subjects of social analysis. Taken together, I explore the interconnection of dynamic processes that comprise the reproductive cycle of violence, politicization, its effects, and its affect. Key questions structured my inquiry: What does it mean to experience homicide – personally or second hand? Why does grief in inner-city Baltimore take the shape it does? How are social, historical, and political processes made meaningful in the aftermath of violence?

Over fourteen months of ethnographic fieldwork in inner-city Baltimore, working with diverse populations deeply affected by homicide, my study of violence coalesced into three related concerns: 1) Characterizing the nature of life in an urban atmosphere of omnipresent death; 2) Analyzing the emotional economy of trauma as it circulates among those impacted by

[8] "'Baltimore needs to have a comprehensive crime plan,' Gov. Hogan says after 5-year-old is shot," Melody Simmons, *Baltimore Business Journal,* November 20, 2018: https://www.bizjournals.com/baltimore/news/2018/11/20/baltimore-needs-to-have-a-comprehensive-crime-plan.html Accessed August 17, 2021.

[9] "The Geography of Urban Violence," Richard Florida, Bloomberg CityLab, August 21, 2018: https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-08-21/mapping-urban-violence-in-the-u-s Accessed August 17, 2021.

homicide, while paying attention to the structural basis of poverty, mass incarceration, disinvestment, and racism; and 3) Problematizing the failing justice system – police, prosecutors, and judges – as it engages on the local level with survivors and perpetrators of homicide. Only when considered holistically, from the inner experience of the individual to the external forces of inequality and discrimination, can we understand the ways that violence creates new modes of being in the inner-city.

First Impressions

Roberta's House is in an unremarkable brick office building in the Charles Village neighborhood of Baltimore. It is located six streets north of the infamous North Avenue, the street where a CVS Pharmacy was looted and burned during the Freddie Gray riots and where, as a child, I was warned to avoid due to its high crime rate. The building is adorned with a bright yellow hanging sign with purple lettering reading "Roberta's House" and its signature butterfly—a symbol of transformation—printed on it. Sandwiched between a daycare facility and doctor's office, the entrance doesn't stand out. But, inside, behind the automated locking door and reception desk, is a welcoming, bright community center that provides grief support services in the Baltimore area. Yellow, purple, and orange paint cover the walls and a room piled with bean bag chairs serves as one of the central hubs between classrooms and offices. As clients walk down the halls, each staff member they pass makes eye contact and smiles. "How are you doing today?" they ask, genuinely interested, and then take the time to wait for a reply.

Roberta's House was formed from a bereavement care program that the March Funeral Homes began in 1982, when they recognized that underserved communities in Baltimore lacked grief support programs. What started as support groups in various locations across the city

expanded to include 14 separate projects and programs that run year-long, offering support to all ages and for all losses, from moms grieving the loss of pregnancy to those affected by homicide. In 2017, 3,055 people were served through their programs, of which 83 participated in the Homicide Transformation Project (HTP), a 10-week adult peer support group facilitated by a clinician for those who had lost someone due to a homicide, and 580 were homicide survivors served through the Survivors Advocacy home visitation program. Additionally, 143 participants attended Rays of Hope (ROH), a support group for families with children ages 5 to 17 who are grieving a homicide. The survivors I met through the advocacy program, HTP, and ROH came to be many of my interlocutors.

If you ask a local politician—as many reporters have—what their top concern is for the city, they will likely say homicide. By and large, public attention falls on the killings themselves, homicide statistics, and police reports. Crime reduction campaigns turn towards policing and criminal justice strategies to combat violent crime. Rarely, however, is an effort made to investigate the environment and circumstances wherein these tragedies unfold, and to learn what it means to live on after, or amidst, violent death. Roberta's House picks up where the media cameras turn off and long after condolences have ceased being extended to families. "Tragedy routinely strikes the neglected neighborhoods of Baltimore City. When it strikes, Roberta's House tends to the survivors left behind," wrote Annette March-Grier, the President of Roberta's House, in its 2017 Annual Report. Many who are involved with the center credit it with saving their lives by providing them the compassion and support to move through loss and reinstate a sense of normalcy. Each support group begins and ends with a spoken refrain, thrice repeated, a reminder of the consideration that Roberta's House strives to provide all it serves:

I care for you. You care for me. We care for each other.

I care for you. You care for me. We care for each other.

I care for you. You care for me. We care for each other.

…

Zina, a guarded woman and one of the four survivor advocates, sat expressionless on a couch in one of the center's many reflection rooms. She alternated between looking at me and jotting things down on her legal pad. It was my second meeting with the Survivor Advocacy team and today we're planning how to incorporate my research design into their home visits and the center's support groups. Paulette, the director of the team and, frankly, my advocate, urged us to get started while she attended to another appointment. Zina began. "How are you? How are you? How are you?" she tersely rattled off, not affording me the chance to respond. When I finally manage to, she pursed her lips, painted a glittery blue that matched her blouse, and pulled her cat-eye shaped glasses from atop her headwrap down onto her nose. She returned to her notepad.

I turned to the rest of the group and smiled nervously before beginning to explain my qualifications and interest in pursuing this research—a speech that I had rehearsed in the center's parking lot more than once before our meeting. I described the goals and its potential impact, then shared the materials I designed with the IRB to give to participants. While Paulette was confident in my research and ability, the advocates were less enthusiastic. But unlike our first meeting where my proposal was met with complete silence, this time I was flooded with questions: How large should my caseload be? What should they tell survivors in advance of my visit? Have I been to these neighborhoods before? They were thoughtful and important questions. I did my best to answer honestly, reassuring them that I could do whatever visits they made available to me, and, yes, I had worked in the inner-city for many years before as a

volunteer at a community center in Reservoir Hill; my work with Baltimore Ceasefire also brought me to many underserved areas. I began to explain the best way to introduce my research to participants ahead of arrival before Zina interrupted.

"I'm gonna be blunt with you. The reason we're asking all these questions, and why we want to know how to warn our clients that we're bringing you is that many of our clients would be hostile to a Caucasian woman coming into their homes and asking questions. We are protective of our survivors and don't need them to feel uncomfortable," she explained. I nodded understandingly. She described how, for example, they occasionally call single moms and Muslim women to let them know if a male advocate might be attending a home visit. Pointing to her headwrap, she noted that she tries of be mindful that some families may not interpret her head covering correctly and, as a result, immediately addresses it: "I tell them, 'I'm not a Muslim, I'm a Baptist woman, and I could pray you under the table! I just wear this crown like the queen I am." In what I interpreted as another example of how cultural differences impact survivor visits, Zina shared a story about a recent meeting with an Arabic family: how she was asked to remove her shoes in their home and mistakenly assumed that the son would speak for the mother. "The son paid for most of the funeral expenses and talked the majority of the time. But, at one point I needed to address [both the mother and son]. I told him, 'I have some questions about emotional support so I'm going to ask your mother these. If you'd like to answer for her, that's completely okay. I understand.'" The mother shot back: "I can speak for myself, thank you."

I nodded on silently, trying to interpret the story in the context of my situation and looking for an indication that Zina had finished, careful not to interrupt. When that time came, I took the opportunity and acknowledged her concerns, agreeing that her caution was

understandable. I expressed my gratitude for their consideration, noting that, as a White woman, I would not have the same access to these communities and survivors without their support. I let the advocates know that, if they thought it would be better for survivors, I was comfortable with them disclosing my race prior to my visit.

The door opened. Paulette walked in and sat down. "Where are we?" she asked.

Doreen, another survivor advocate spoke. "We've come up with a process for notifying clients."

"And that is?" Paulette replied. Doreen began to explain, at one point mentioning that the advocates would let the survivor know that they were bringing a Caucasian woman to the visit.

Immediately, Paulette cut in. "I don't think that is necessary at all. Why would we tell them she is Caucasian?" A chorus sounded off amongst the advocates, all of whom spoke at once to explain. Paulette spoke over them all, firm yet diplomatic: "No. We will not do that. How would you like it if you went to a rural area to visit people and Sam had to preface your interactions by saying 'you know, she is a Black woman.' It presumes that we know there is some bias. We don't tell people that someone is gay before they visit. If it's an issue, it's an issue, and we address it. Who knows, folks would probably be more likely to talk to a White woman than a Black one. You don't know. And don't tell me it's a safety issue. White folks are in our communities and they don't get shot."

Zina chimed in: "But won't they be less likely to say things in front of Sam than they would in front of us?"

"Well, that's just how it's going to be then."

Reflecting on Paulette's explanation, Doreen replied. "I guess it could be seen as discriminatory if we mention it."

I used the moment to try to ease the tension in the room and acknowledge my Whiteness again. “Look, I understand that people may receive me as a White woman very differently than they would someone of the same race for a variety of reasons, especially given historic and contemporary traumas and exploitation of the Black community—"

“—We don’t want to generalize now,” Paulette cut in. “That’s the one thing I’ve learned. Don’t assume anything about anyone.” Turning back to the advocates, she reassured them. “This is going to be good for us. This is good for the clients. This will bring about change and help them. I hope that Sam’s work will shed light on what we do. It could help us get grants, and I hope it will help the city get the funding that it desperately needs.”

I concluded the meeting by thanking the advocates again for their support and help. I reminded them that they themselves are a wealth of information for me given their experience helping survivors process grief and adapt to a new way of life. As we closed the meeting and filtered out of the room, Zina appeared to finally relax and approached me. “You know,” she started, “I was really against this. I was so sure that this wasn't going to be a good thing and Paulette was bringing in another person who wouldn't understand this, but I'm on board. I know there are families that I definitely can't bring you to, but there are families that you can visit. They'll surprise you. It'll look like a dump outside and be in the worst area but inside it's amazing. I have another family who is a lot to handle -- and you'll see that. I think it's important. I want to give you a full range of who is there." She extended her arm for a handshake. I took it.

I think back to a phone call my mom and I had a week prior. “I was thinking,” she mused, “maybe you should wear a hat to your visits.” “A hat?” I asked, confused, “Why?” “To hide how White you are.” I laughed and told her that there was no hat that could hide how White I am. It just is what it is.

…

I don't know if Paulette's direction to not warn survivors was taken, although I suspect that it wasn't. The advocates were a protective and head-strong crew who took their jobs seriously. They cared deeply for each survivor they met. The level of compassion they showed others was astounding, especially considering the emotional weight of their work that often led them to take clearly announced Mental Health Days. If they thought it important that a survivor know that I was White, I am confident they would have alerted them to the fact. I too worried about my Whiteness, although for different reasons than the advocates. I wasn't concerned that participants wouldn't talk to me or feel comfortable having me in their homes (which, as far as I'm aware, was never raised as a problem by any survivor). What I worried about was that there were aspects of my positionality that I wasn't mindful of and, as a result, my work might take on a harmful, voyeuristic quality that perpetuated damaging stereotypes and anti-Blackness. I feared that, in writing about violence and communities of color, I might reinforce uninformed narratives of "Black-on-Black crime" and the myth that Blacks are criminally inclined.

My hope was that with the critical, yet compassionate, insight of the advocates, I might be better equipped to analyze my cultural positioning as a White woman and access "the cultural knowledge [needed] to accurately interpret and validate the experiences" of my informants (Tillman 2002:4). I wanted to work with the advocates and my interlocutors to develop a methodology designed to represent their experiences accurately and project their voices. In participating in the home visits, I looked to go beyond what W. E. B. Du Bois (1903:154) considered "car window sociology:" an analysis of a cultural group in which the observations are so superficial, they could have been made by lazily looking out the window of a train car, not

making the effort to learn in depth about the community studied. I demanded of myself an "explicit self-aware meta-analysis" (Finlay 2002:209) to understand how my positionality as a White woman influenced the researcher-participant dynamic, as well as knowledge production. If someone wanted to talk about race, I welcomed the conversation and made myself available for feedback. In many ways, I feel fortunate that my different position was so visible that it necessitated dialog with the advocates, who were kind enough to help me make sense of the experiences and narratives I encountered in my fieldwork.

Over the course of my tenure working with the survivor advocates, they became more comfortable with my presence, and conversations about how survivors would receive me eased. The advocates took time to translate cultural idiosyncrasies that they thought would be (and sometimes were) lost on me. I specifically recall Zina sitting me down for a stern talking to shortly after I arrived, during which she instructed me to call her Miss Zina in every interaction thereafter. I was young enough to be her daughter, she explained, and as an older woman she deserved to be referred to with respect. While I had heard clients around the center refer to the advocates as Miss, it never occurred to me to incorporate the honorific into my own speech – I figured we were all coworkers, working on the level of a first-name basis. From that point forward, however, everyone became Mr. or Miss.

Extra care was taken to help ensure my well-being on home visits, this on top of the already stringent safety protocols the advocates adhered to. One afternoon before a visit, Paulette pulled me aside to remind me to dress down and conservatively ("not even jeans with a hole"), noting that, as a White woman, I would already stand out and should avoid anything that might attract unwanted attention. During visits, the advocates would wait on the street or in their cars for me to arrive and quickly usher me into the survivor's homes. Many times, they would drive

directly in front of me or follow behind to make sure I made it to the highway without getting lost. All of this indicated an ethic of care that was bestowed upon me because, I think, I was an outsider (and, therefore, vulnerable) in the neighborhoods we were working in. It was this compassion and care that helped shape my own research strategy. There is mistrust, especially among some members of the Black community, of research; this, stemming from mistreatment in historical studies like that of the Tuskegee syphilis study, as well as from contemporary socioeconomic and health inequalities (Scharff et al. 2010). This is compounded by the vulnerability that comes with grief and with living amidst and talking about violent crime. In thinking about my role as a researcher, I hoped to follow the standards demonstrated to me by the advocates. I would think critically and purposefully about my positionality and its impact; I would work to protect my interlocutors from harm and aim to offer analyses that might help others; and, most importantly, I would demonstrate care.

On the Universal Information Sheet I drafted with the IRB and gave to each research participant, there is a question titled: "Will being in this study help me in any way?" The answer's first sentence is unambiguous: "There are no benefits to you from your taking part in this research." Although the response goes on to detail how the research might inform social policy and shed light on the experience of crime, I internalized that, for survivors and the advocates, there was nothing to gain in offering me access, sharing their stories, and letting me into their homes and lives. Each day I felt humbled by the opportunity to listen and work alongside them. I was even more floored by the compassion they showed me, both as an outsider, but also as a fellow griever. Arthur Kleinman writes in *The Soul of Care* that caregiving "is perhaps the most ubiquitous activity of human beings, and it can be the most demanding, at times discouraging one. It is also the existential activity through which we most fully realize our

humanity…. Care can offer wisdom for the art of living" (2019:4). Care became a bridge between others and me, as well as myself and others. A researcher's positionality and lived experience are, ultimately, inescapable. There is something to be said, however, for the deeply human experiences of grief and care in strengthening connection in spite of difference. While I could not offer a stipend or other incentive to participants, I could easily and readily offer care. So, it was with care that I conducted my research and wrote this text, mindful of the limitations of my position and ever seeking to expand my perspective, yet grounded in the universal humanity of grief and loss, the existential moments that remind us what it means to be human.

"It's Baltimore"

"13 Shootings in Baltimore over Weekend: 3 Dead, 11 Injured," reads a headline from *The Baltimore Sun*. It's a familiar refrain for residents of the city—appropriately nicknamed "Body-more, Murdaland"—who are so inundated by its violence they've become, in my informants' term, numb. While the U.S. has seen a significant reduction in violent crime over the past quarter century, falling 49 percent between 1993 and 2019,[10] many inner-cities continue to endure astounding rates. Two percent of U.S. counties account for 51 percent of the nation's murders[11]; unsurprisingly these encompass major cities where violent crime is on the rise.[12]

[10] "What the data says (and doesn't say) about crime in the United States," John Gramlich, Pew Research, November 20, 2020: https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/11/20/facts-about-crime-in-the-u-s/ Accessed August 17, 2021.
[11] From the Crime Prevention Research Center's 2014 analysis – the most recent year that a county-based breakdown is available.
[12] "Violent Crime is on the Rise in U.S. Cities," Josh Sanburn and David Johnson, *TIME,* January 30, 2017: http://time.com/4651122/homicides-increase-cities-2016/ Accessed January 24, 2019.

Many residents in Baltimore lament the statistics that shroud the city in negativity. Its murder-per-capita rate tops charts as the deadliest major city[13] in America—far surpassing fellow deindustrialized cities like Chicago and Detroit—and twenty-third globally.[14] In 2019, 57 people per 100,000 were murdered, a total of 348 homicides.[15] It was the deadliest year in the city's history, despite falling violent crime rates in other big cities. Local statistics within Baltimore are even more grim: Within one mile of my apartment—located in one of the city's safer neighborhoods—more than 248 people were victims of gun violence between 2014 and 2018; at least 84 were killed.[16] For many of my informants, gun violence occurred in multiples of this figure. One of my informants' homes fell in an area where at least 711 shootings occurred during the same period, resulting in 246 deaths. This figure, while alarming in itself, also neglects to include other methods of violence (e.g. stabbings, blunt force trauma, asphyxiation, etc.) that accounted for 12 percent of homicides in 2018 and countless other assaults.

City spokespeople anticipate fielding annual media questions in early December when the body count hits 300, a number that has come to signal yet another disastrous year. Looking at crime statistics alone as a diagnostic of local health would offer a dismal portrait of the city, one that, in some regards, is not wholly inaccurate. But statistics fail to capture the full picture of crime in the city and in many communities. Jean and John Comaroff (2016:145) critique the use of "quantifacts" in public discourse, noting that, contrary to the common belief that these figures

[13] I define major cities as those with a population above 500,000 people. Of all the American cities, regardless of population, St. Louis ranks number one with a murder-per-population rate of 61 homicides per 100,000 residents (USA Today 2018). It is fifteenth deadliest in the world.
[14] "Not so fast with the praise for Baltimore's handling of homicides," *The Baltimore Sun,* June 30, 2021: https://www.baltimoresun.com/opinion/readers-respond/bs-ed-rr-0705-your-turn-homicide-rate-20210630-niwpkxqmozewzjjxojjeui4guq-story.html Accessed August 18, 2021.
[15] "2019 closes with 348 homicides in Baltimore, second-deadliest year on record," Tim Prudente, *The Baltimore Sun,* January 1, 2020: https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/crime/bs-md-ci-cr-2019-homicide-final-count-20200101-jnauuumukbdh3edsyypspsm3he-story.html Accessed August 18, 2021.
[16] See: https://www.thetrace.org/2018/12/gun-violence-interactive-shootings-map/

displace visceral experience into numbers, they may instead translate distant crime into first-person feeling. This spreads fear and insecurity, as well as furthers a misrepresentation of the actual violence amongst the public, specifically where it occurs and to whom. This was, in some ways consistent with what I encountered in my research. In what I would estimate to be the majority of interactions I've had with people who aren't from the area, the first things they ask when learning I'm from or working in Baltimore is, "Is it like *The Wire*?" or "That's a really dangerous place, right?" The vernacular currency by which city officials speak about crime, as well as the impact of popular entertainment portrayals of its violence, has deeply penetrated perceptions of the city far beyond its borders. Even county residents living in non-violent areas would refer to the homicide count to explain their apprehension of entering into the city or justify their desire to move even further away.

Philippe Bourgois (2003:34), writing of the crime statistics in New York's El Barrio, emphasizes a different challenge of enumerating violence: that reducing it to a "statistical expression" fails to grasp the extent to which it pervades daily life, especially when that intrusion is disproportionate to the actual danger faced by residents. It is true, as he points out, that the vast majority of violent crime is committed by and inflicted upon a finite group of individuals, who are somehow involved in illegal drugs or underground economies. Beyond the immediate victims and perpetrators, however, are dozens of others affected—witnesses, survivors, and, as the Comaroffs emphasize, the masses whose understanding of and experience in the city is shaped by the circulation of these quantifacts. As such, Baltimore's obsession with quantified metrics of violence cannot be dismissed. It plays a substantial role in public life. Even amongst the survivors I worked with it was internalized; most knew the homicide number their loved one claimed in the year's running total. On that note, however, it is critical to keep in mind that crime

statistics fail to grasp the humanity that each number represents or capture the experience of life-and-death for many city residents. To construct a generalized imaginary of Baltimore as some wild urban ghetto overrun by violence is reductionist and inaccurate.

While my partner Jason and I confronted crime on more than one occasion (detailed in Chapter 5), I feel confident in saying that we never objectively faced any mortal threat, nor were we ever deliberate targets of crime. Rather, we, like many of our neighbors and a handful of my survivors' decedents, were affected by its spillover. Our neighborhood was truly quite charming. During the day, people would sit out on the stoops of their homes, greeting passersby and sharing impromptu drinks. Summertime was filled with block parties and the laughter of children, who'd sprawl over the sidewalks drawing stick-figure masterpieces in chalk and open fire hydrants to create makeshift sprinklers for a quick cool-down. At night, the streets were illuminated by strings of lights that draped from one block of rowhomes to another. On more than one occasion I remarked that the neighborhood felt like a movie set. Community figureheads like Butch—a colorful man in his late 60s who, after a few drinks, would insist that Butcher's Hill ought to be called Butch's Hill—infused the neighborhood with personality and comfort. Even the most violent areas had a magical quality. In the sweltering heat, snowball stands would pop up outside rowhomes offering residents a cheap and refreshing snack. Young boys would stand on street corners, offering bottles of water or a quick windshield clean to cars in exchange for a dollar or two. Boomboxes throbbed with the latest hip-hop songs, a rhythm for pedestrians' step.

Apart from the occasional crime scene tape, flood lights, RIP graffiti, or homicide memorial, the violence of the city was often camouflaged by its enchantment. For outsiders, a carefully mapped drive through the city could disguise any sign of disinvestment. On my first day moving into my third-floor walk-up apartment, I was on three separate occasions offered a

casual, unexplained indicator from residents that, although some areas might look otherwise, "It's Baltimore." First, was my cousin-in-law who, while helping us move, alerted me to car keys left on the porch stoop: "Sam, I'm gonna move these to the truck bed," he signaled, "It's Baltimore, after all." Not even a half-hour later, the building maintenance man came by to deliver our house keys. "I know you guys are about to be moving things in and out, but make sure you lock up all the way. It's Baltimore, you know?" He showed us how to maneuver the bolts—three of them on the front door, then two on the apartment interior. Five locks to enter and exit the apartment. Then, later when talking to my father—a conversation I was reluctant to burden him with just days after my brother's death—I mentioned the filthy condition of the insect-infested apartment (which was later treated as a tick infestation), to which he replied, "Yeah, well, it's Baltimore." The refrain was a local warning to stay attuned to the harder realities and not get caught up in the charm of Charm City.

How Baltimore came to be referred to as Charm City is storied – the moniker was completely aspirational.[17] In 1975, there was a meeting of the region's top advertising executives who sought to improve the city's reputation, following the desperate request of the mayor to "come up with something to promote the city. And do it now! I'm worried about this city's poor image."[18] They suggested promoting the city as "charming," a nickname that hid the neglect and

[17] In what seems to be a pattern in aspirational nicknames, in his 1987 inaugural address, former Baltimore Mayor Kurt Schmoke introduced a new motto, "The City that Reads," which became (and still is) engraved on benches throughout the city. According to the 2019 Reading Trial Urban District Snapshot released by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), only 13 percent of Baltimore City students performed at or above a National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Proficient level. At a Basic level, only 36 percent of students met or exceeded the standards. The only school district measured in the report with a lower average score in the United States was Detroit. Notably, "The City that Reads" is commonly twisted to make reference to Baltimore's homicide rate, mocking it as "The City that Bleeds." In a separate, arguably aspirational branding campaign, Mayor Martin O'Malley declared Baltimore to be the "Greatest City in America," another slogan that lingers on park benches. See: https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/subject/publications/dst2019/pdf/2020016xm4.pdf

[18] "How the city's nickname came to be," Gilbert Sandler, *The Baltimore Sun,* July 18, 1995: https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-1995-07-18-1995199190-story.html Accessed August 18, 2021.

abandonment of the warehouses and industries that left the inner-harbor and downtown area derelict. While ads ran in local papers depicting many local trademarks that held significance for residents, like steamed crabs, marble porch steps, raw bars, Babe Ruth, and the Preakness, at the time the campaign did little to improve attitudes towards the city, and officials ultimately didn't have the funding to sustain it.

Somehow, however, the nickname stuck, and Baltimore developed a genuine feeling of charm. I've thought about and asked many people to help me identify what makes Baltimore charming. I should note before going into these theories that many of my informants hate Baltimore. They refer to it as a "hell hole" and a "rat trap." Most of them want nothing more than to leave the city and move far away. Baltimore takes much of the blame for deaths they've suffered, the crime they've been victimized by, and the financial and interpersonal situations that make an escape untenable. Baltimore is not a "Charm City" for a large segment of residents and if you are able to find it charming, know that there is a privilege associated with that. But, even for my interlocutors, I would posit that Baltimore offered a glimpse of its lure through the affinity with fellow survivors and the sense of community that they were able to create through Roberta's House. In talking with dozens of people and in my own estimation, the appeal of Baltimore is found in its residents. There is a sort of realism and groundedness that inspires people to live in the moment, practice gratitude, focus on what really matters, and build strong community bonds. There isn't the hesitancy to make a connection[19] or offer a helping hand, and conversations rarely hint of pretension.

I hypothesized that, perhaps, living in a historically blue-collar city and amidst crime cultivated this atmosphere. Care and community become critical qualities for survival. I think to

[19] Admittedly, these connections do tend to fall along racial and socioeconomic lines.

the neighborhood police-work that became a staple in both more affluent communities, like the one I was living in, and less well-off ones, like those four blocks north of my apartment, where many of my informants lived. In Whiter and wealthier areas, residents had specialized online community groups to, among other things, warn one another of crime and to set up networks of personalized security cameras. When a crime occurred, the police were notified, but waiting for them to gather evidence or track the culprit and then report back requires patience.[20] As an alternative, community leaders would notify local camera owners to search for the perpetrator, so he might be tracked through the area. In a similar neighborhood on the East side of the city, there are weekly "police walks" with an off-duty cop, where residents would help patrol and get to know local officers. The neighborhoods of my informants had a less formal style of residential policing, but one that was nonetheless present. Wrongdoing was met with "let me get my brothers to take care of it," and while the police might still be called, they were less likely than in more affluent areas to attend to the issue. These neighborhoods have community walks similar to the police walks—called Unity Engagement Men's Movement Walks—led by local rap artists, returning citizens, and religious leaders, looking to speak with young men and promote peace. Crime necessitates community.

Daily confrontations with the city's struggles with poverty, addiction, crime, unemployment, and disinvestment (to make no mention of individual struggles) led people to move through the world and value things differently. Now, I don't mean to dismiss or cast a silver lining on the despair and tragedy that consumes daily life for hundreds of thousands in the area. I do, however, want to give credence to the new understanding of "It's Baltimore" that I've inherited after fourteen months, from May 2018 to July 2019, working and living in vastly

[20] This is not uncommon for many residents. When Jason and I were victims of arson during fieldwork, we never received any follow up from the detectives.

different areas of the city. Baltimore might signal crime and neglect for many—deservedly so—but it also symbolizes resilience and a strength of character in the face of the enormous vulnerabilities and unimaginable tragedies that affect its residents.

Murder, Baltimore Style

Beckett and Sassoon (2004:26) identified four key factors, each interrelated, that underlie the strikingly high homicide rate in the United States: 1) An abundance of guns causing assaultive behavior to be far more deadly; 2) High levels of inequality—both racial and economic—especially in the form of concentrated poverty, which fosters a context that supports violence; 3) The presence of an illegal drug economy that leads to turf wars and violent disputes; and, finally, 4) A "code of the streets" that prioritizes respect and justifies violence as a means to obtain it. Rebecca Carter (2019) has demonstrated that the significance of these factors in her study of homicide in New Orleans; they are equally relevant in Baltimore.

Despite having some of the strictest gun laws in the country,[21] Maryland struggles with an abundance of illegal firearms on the streets. Many of these weapons, a study by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) found, came from out of state; 53 percent of the guns successfully traced in this study did. By comparison, the U.S. average for out-of-state gun imports is 29 percent.[22] Illicit firearm ownership remains a challenging problem in Baltimore, where an "overwhelming majority" of guns used are illegally possessed.[23] A police spokesperson for the department emphasized in 2018 that "the weapon of choice for 'bad guys'

[21] Maryland was ranked the sixth of all 50 states in terms of gun law strength and given a 2019 overall grade of A- for its gun safety policies by the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence.
[22] Data pulled from a Baltimore Sun interactive data website, this sourced by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives: http://data.baltimoresun.com/gun-trace/?2017
[23] "2017 homicide data provide insight into Baltimore's gun wars, police say," Kevin Rector, *The Baltimore Sun,* January 3, 2018: https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/crime/bs-md-ci-2017-homicide-data-breakdown-20180103-story.html Accessed August 18, 2021.

in Baltimore is the handgun," an analysis that remains pertinent.[24] 87 percent of the 348 people killed in 2019 were murdered with a firearm.[25] That same year, there were 5,160 violent crimes involving a firearm—specifically robberies, shootings, homicides, and assaults—investigated by the Baltimore City police, or over 14 violent firearm-related crimes daily.[26]

Baltimore's legislative history of racial and socioeconomic inequality dates back to 1911, when it was the first U.S. city to enact racially restrictive housing covenants, a move that went against federal legislation at the time. At the turn of the century, Baltimore was a haven for many Blacks who travelled northward to escape the racial hostility and aggression of the post-Civil War Reconstruction era American South. Resting right below the Mason Dixon line and the country's northern-most southern state, Maryland was a top destination for those moving during the Great Migration. "In the decade between 1910 and 1920, Baltimore's Black population increased by almost 28 percent, making Baltimore the city with the fourth-largest number of Blacks—after Chicago, New Orleans, and Washington, D.C.—in the United States. During the next ten years the number of Baltimore's Black citizens increased by 31.3 percent" (Hayward 2008). Baltimore's population grew from 508,957 people in 1900 to 733,826 in 1920.[27] With urbanization came a housing scarcity. Up until 1911, the city's residential neighborhoods were not segregated (there was not even a "Negro quarter"). New-coming Blacks and immigrants settled into the cheapest housing in town. The absence of a sewer system fostered unsanitary

[24] Rector, "2017 homicide data provide insight into Baltimore's gun wars, police say."
[25] Prudente, "2019 closes with 348 homicides in Baltimore, second-deadliest year on record."
[26] Data pulled from Open Baltimore's BPD Part 1 Victim Based Crime Database: https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiNTM0NTQwMjctZmIwOC00M2JkLTkzNzAtNmExM2U2MzU2NzRlIiwidCI6IjMxMmNiMTI2LWM2YWUtNGZjMi04MDBkLTMxOGU2NzljZTZjNyJ9
[27] See page A-6: "Demographic Trends in the 20th Century: Census 2000 Special Reports," U.S. Census Bureau, November 2020: https://www.census.gov/prod/2002pubs/censr-4.pdf Accessed August 18, 2021.

conditions and soon Baltimore's first "slums"—whose deplorable conditions were representative of the larger social inequality that Blacks in Baltimore were continuing to face—emerged.

The crowding of the city with those desperate for job opportunities in Baltimore's booming industry was an issue of concern for established middle and upper-class elites. Those who could afford to flee the cramped rowhomes and muddy inner-city streets did so, moving outwards towards the northern and western city limits into more suburban areas. Opinions of Baltimore's slums quickly became connected to the populations that lived in them. A 1907 *Housing Conditions in Baltimore* report drew a putative connection between Blacks and the filth of the slums. It stated, "the 'low standards and absence of ideals' among Negroes was 'held to some degree accountable for the squalor and wretchedness' which characterized the alley neighborhoods" (Power 1983:297). A mass community meeting to address the movement of Blacks out of the newly formed slums led to the introduction of a bill, later passed by the Baltimore City government, that limited their spread to White city blocks: "No negro can move into a block in which more than half of the residents are White. That no White person can move into a block in which more than half of the residents are colored…" (ibid. 299).

The Residential Segregation Ban remained in effect until 1917, when the Supreme Court decision in *Buchana v. Warley* nullified a similar decision in Louisiana, striking down Baltimore's law as well. The decision reaffirmed the right of buyers to sell to whomever they choose, regardless of race. It did not, however, end discrimination faced by minorities in securing equal access to resources and opportunities in the city. Covenants were designed to keep Black buyers out of certain housing markets, a then legal alternative to the segregation ban. These covenants entailed racially restrictive clauses in deeds that prevented homeowners from

conveying their property to minorities. While these covenants were declared completely unenforceable in 1968 by the U.S. Supreme Court,[28] the injustices of housing bias came to manifest themselves in other forms.[29] After the housing crisis of the Great Depression, the federal government created the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) in 1933 to assist in the refinancing of home mortgages to prevent foreclosures. Loan appraisals were based on risk-level, with the majority of "red-lined" areas occupied by Blacks and Mexicans. The effect was a policy that legally allowed mortgage lenders, developers, and sellers to discriminate against people of color.[30] In another form of discrimination, real estate purchasers would inflame racial tensions in White neighborhoods, ultimately inspiring White homeowners to flee and sell their homes well below market value. The developers then sold the properties to Black families at prices far higher than they had paid, a scheme that came to be known as blockbusting. As a result, even Blacks with a high, reliable income were restricted by where they could live compared to their White counterparts. The battle for equality has continued to worsen over the decades, with the legacies of redlining, blockbusting, and White flight leading to racially homogenous neighborhoods which still remain segregated. Beyond housing discrimination, many Blacks confronted institutionalized racism as they were victimized by the job market, and in educational and infrastructural policies that replicated the effects of segregation long after its legal end. Each of these techniques of oppression built on ideologies and practices from prior

[28] There were a series of different court battles from 1917 onwards, each followed by racial covenants being written in a new form until 1968, when the federal Fair Housing Act declared them all unconstitutional.
[29] "Racist language is still woven into home deeds across America. Erasing it isn't easy, and some don't want to," Nick Watt and Jack Hannah, CNN, February 15, 2020: https://edition.cnn.com/2020/02/15/us/racist-deeds-covenants/index.html Accessed January 3, 2021.
[30] "Baltimore has long, sad history of housing bias," *The Baltimore Sun,* February 13, 2019: https://www.baltimoresun.com/opinion/readers-respond/bs-ed-rr-housing-discrimination-letter-20190213-story.html Accessed January 3, 2019.

decades, further weakening the potential for future generations of Blacks to overcome the deeply ingrained cycle of inequality.

At its peak, Baltimore was a thriving manufacturing center with one-third of all residents working in industry. It reached its highest population in 1950 with nearly a million people living within the 92-square miles of the city limit.[31] The economy was fueled, in part, by Bethlehem Steel in Sparrows Point, a massive mill that, at its height in 1959, employed 35,000 people.[32] With the decline of industrialization, following the globalization of manufacturing work, the plant reduced capacity and the number of workers it employed, eventually closing in 2012. From 1970 to 2000, the loss of manufacturing jobs, among other issues, resulted in the decline of the city's population by nearly one-third, dropping from 906,000 to 651,000. Since 2000, Baltimore has continued to hemorrhage population, with a loss of over 66,000 people. While many moved to the suburbs, a significant number never left at all. Of the population loss, more than 1 in 12 can be attributed to murder.[33]

Early segregationist policies and practices concentrated many Black Americans in poor areas and removed all opportunity. In the absence of work and in the presence of serious disinvestment, Baltimore's lower-income communities have become entrenched in underground drug and weapons trafficking, and street gangs have flourished. The drug economy took off in the 1960s with an early emergence of the heroin epidemic. Agar and Reisinger (2002) link the boom to a disrupted illegal drug supply chain; this followed the Kennedy administration's attack on organized crime and the mixed feelings of hope and despair that accompanied the early civil

[31] See: https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/baltimore-md-population
[32] "The rise and fall of life and steel at 'the Point,'" Joe Nawrozki, *The Baltimore Sun,* December 22, 2002: https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-2002-12-22-0212220119-story.html Accessed January 3, 2020.
[33] Between 2000 and 2020, Baltimore had 5,693 murders and saw a population decline of 66,700 residents. 8.5% of the lost population can be attributed to homicides. Data pulled from the *Baltimore Sun*: https://homicides.news.baltimoresun.com/

rights movement.[34] Drugs further took hold in the early 1980s with the advent of the crack epidemic. Crack cocaine, a highly addictive and fast acting substance, gained popularity on the street and in homes, keeping many residents in its grip well into the late 1990s.[35] Throughout this time, widespread heroin use raged on. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHS) and the State of Maryland, there are approximately 47,000 to 53,000 individuals in Baltimore City who need but have not received treatment for addiction, a figure that the Concerted Care Group estimates could be half the real number, since the data gathered through polls relied on landline telephones that many residents do not have.[36] With a thriving off-the-books drug economy come battles over supply and turf, these further reinforced by

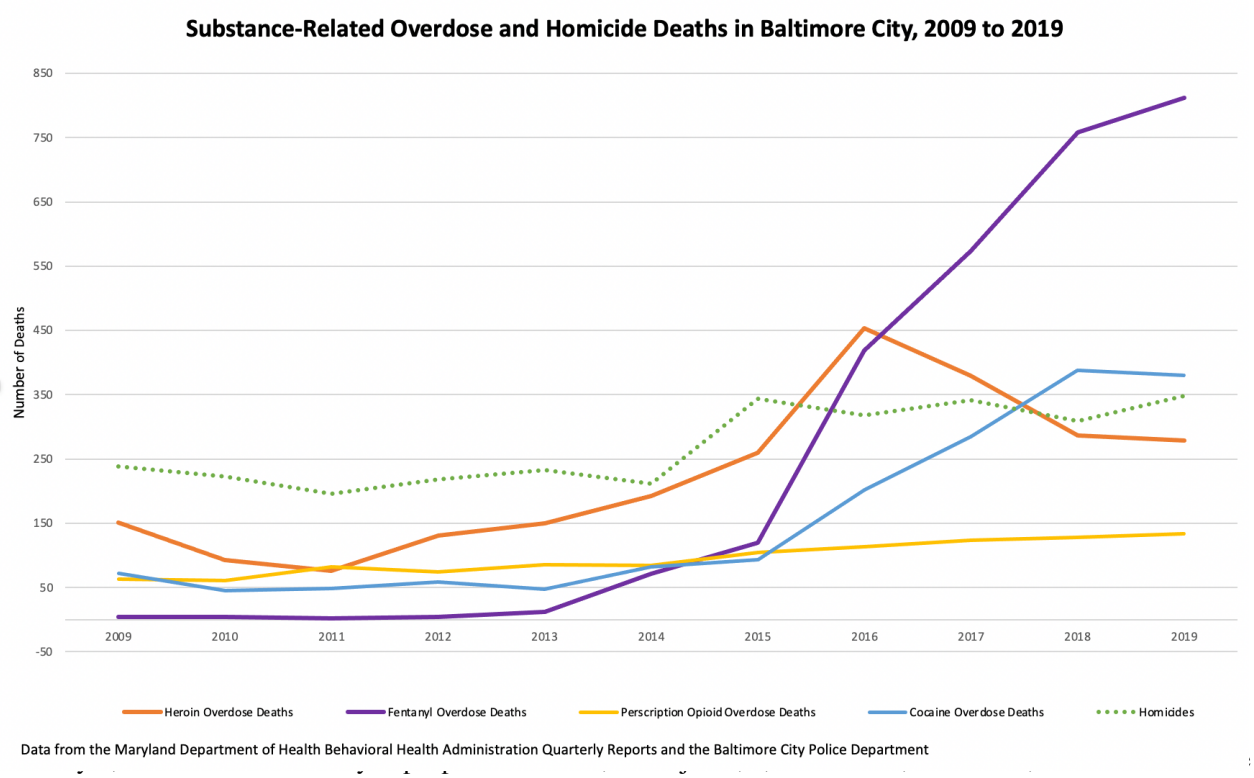

Figure 1. Correlation between substance-related overdose deaths and homicides in Baltimore City, 2009 to 2019.

[35] "Crack epidemic's legacy in Baltimore," Dan Rodricks, *The Baltimore Sun*, April 18, 2012: https://www.baltimoresun.com/opinion/bs-xpm-2012-04-18-bs-ed-rodricks-crack-20120418-story.html Accessed August 26, 2021.

[36] "Drug and Alcohol Rehab Resources in Baltimore, Maryland," Sandstone Care: https://www.sandstonecare.com/maryland/baltimore-drug-rehab Accessed August 26, 2021.

retaliatory violence. Over the past ten years, there has been a clear association between an increase in fatal substance abuse deaths and homicides (see Figure 1).

In September 2019, President Donald Trump took to Twitter to criticize the living conditions of the city, calling it a "disgusting, rodent and rat infested mess," and declaring that "No human being would want to live there." Indeed, the conditions of some inner-city neighborhoods are far below the standards many would wish on their fellow human beings. Many of my interlocutors and their families live with realities of lead paint poisoning, with intermittent or inadequate access to water,[37] and without easy access to healthy food, reliable transportation, or stable employment opportunities. These conditions reinforce the perception that their lives do not matter. A pause here: What is deeply implicated in a sense of personhood and humanity—and what Beckett and Sassoon (2004) acknowledge to be a key trait of inner-cities with high levels of violence—is respect. While this is a category that doesn't necessarily factor into this account thus far, it is a subtext of the entire topic of the value of Black life and death.

"Respect" has commonly been used by urban ethnographers to refer to the "code of the streets," or the set of rules, that governs behavior in impoverished, inner-city environments. It speaks to a recognition of status and reputation, to being "granted the deference one deserves."[38]

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[37] In June 2019, towards the end of my fieldwork, nearly 300 residents in the Poe Homes in southeast Baltimore went without water. The city's solution was to transport a few truckloads of bottled water in and, on the fifth day of the outage, encourage residents to stay elsewhere. Residents resorted to opening a fire hydrant to carry bucketloads of water to run their toilets, clean with, and shower in. See: "Poe Homes residents use buckets of hydrant water while officials work to repair valve," David Collins, WBALTV, June 21, 2019: https://www.wbaltv.com/article/residents-forced-to-use-hydrant-water-while-officials-work-to-repair-valve/28122173# Accessed August 18, 2021.

[38] Anderson's concept of respect is heavily and importantly linked in violence. He argues that the norms of urban survival demand that young men demonstrate their willingness to use violence in responding to physical threats or challenges to their dignity (see also Heitmeyer et al. 2019); "The Code of the Streets," Elijah Anderson, *The Atlantic*, May 1994 Issue: https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1994/05/the-code-of-the-streets/306601/ Accessed January 9, 2021.

There is more than one way to read respect, however; yes, it is a discursive trope, but for me it has a deeper, existential meaning. It addresses the question of a claim to humanity that goes beyond its relation to offensive and defensive violence. Each of my informants was searching for humanity, to be treated like a person who matters. In reflecting on their killed loved ones, they asserted that the dead were human beings who deserved to be shown the forms of address and recognition that others are offered. One of my interlocutors whose son had lain dead for hours in the street remarked at how disrespectful it was for him to be left there. “What if a car woulda come?” she asked. To leave his body to be crushed underneath the tires of some unsuspecting driver’s car was a defilement of the person himself. Respect is a signifier of Black humanity. Scholars who treat the concept superficially, and associate it simply with "urban culture," themselves show disrespect to its real meaning.

Reverend Michael, a bereavement minister who has worked closely with gang members and perpetrators of violent crime, stressed to me: “Sam, it is as though people are screaming for help and they're hurting deeply and that screaming for help gets masked by the desire for respect.” The Reverend recognized the role that respect plays in the inner-city but signaled that it is secondary to the larger phenomena of hurt, trauma, and suffering that residents grapple with. For so many of my informants, the circumstances surrounding their lives (and the deaths of those closest to them) make it plain that their lives lack value. Throughout my work, the repeated calls for respect seemed to be symptomatic of their lived experience and the dehumanization of urban Blacks.

Going beyond the four overarching factors Beckett and Sassoon laid out, during my ethnographic research I stumbled upon an additional determinant that leads to violence in Baltimore: systemic failures to solve homicides—only a third of Baltimore homicide

investigations are closed[39]—and deficient institutional practices that fail to meet the needs of survivors. These widen the cycles of violence. As I will illustrate in the chapters that follow, inadequate forums for healing, combined with a police force and justice system that fails to deal with crime, actually leads to unrestrained and uncontrollable aggression. Even those who do not actively seek extrajudicial revenge understand that they are not protected by the police department. A study of Baltimore's underground gun market revealed that over 80 percent of participants who had been involved in the criminal justice system and who did not presently have access to a gun wanted to acquire one for safety or protection (Crifasi et al. 2020:78).

Further, according to my informants, violence and trauma also create conditions that produce impoverishment. While many studies illustrate the converse—i.e. that poverty produces violence (see for examples Crutchfield and Wadsworth (2003))—this is a claim that I cannot dismiss. I met survivors who were fired from work for openly grieving, both because they were absent too often or their tears unsettled White clientele who subsequently complained. Interlocutors speak anecdotally of watching rowhomes that were murder locations become vacant within months and their adjoining homes go derelict within a year; Baltimore has almost 17,000 vacant homes that blight its streets.[40] Burial expenses[41] cripple struggling families who have already lost a source of income. Some of these stories are elaborated upon in the chapters below. All of them signal the existence of a pervasive cycle in which violence begets violence and creates an ecological context that fuels future violence and further poverty.

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[39] "Baltimore ending the year with 32% homicide clearance rate, one of the lowest in three decades," Jessica Anderson, *The Baltimore Sun,* December 30, 2019: https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/baltimore-city/bs-md-ci-crime-policy-20191230-zk2v2auuhbgq3f7zsh3t7rt6cm-story.html Accessed January 17, 2021.

[40] "After years of failing to get Baltimore's vacants below 17,000, city launches a new push to reverse the trend," Ian Duncan and Christine Zhang, *The Baltimore Sun,* March 15, 2019: https://www.baltimoresun.com/politics/bs-md-ci-vacant-demolition-20190214-story.html Accessed January 3, 2021.

[41] In Baltimore, the funeral compensation fund for homicide victims (also know as the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board) is only accessible if it can be proven that the victim was not killed in the commission of a crime.

Theoretical Positioning

The study of violent crime as a form of world-making in its own right is fairly new to the discipline of anthropology (Comaroff 2010:4). While studies of urban unrest have relied predominantly upon tracing crime to its origins in structural and institutional racism and systemic inequality, the factors that underlie the phenomenology of violence to the individual are less clear. This project emerges from and expands upon three areas of social science scholarship: the study of inner-city violence; the anthropology of mourning and grief; and the analysis of narrative, meaning, and memory. While these fields each have their own theoretical literatures, I bring them together in an effort to locate the affective matrix that tethers structural inequality to the experiential trauma of urban violence.

Inner-City Violence

Ethnographic accounts of U.S. inner-cities can be traced back to the late 1960s when scholars (Liebow 1967; Hannerz 1969) first focused on the "ghetto" as a research site. Poverty became the primary lens through which social scientists viewed these urban locales, addressing social mobility and education (MacLeod 1987); disorder [42] (Wilson 1987; Anderson 1992); socio-spatiality (Duneier 1992; Abu-Lughod 1994); deindustrialization (Walley 2013; Fernandez-Kelly 2015); mass incarceration and intensive policing (Bayley & Shearing 1996; Ralph 2020); race (Wilson 2009); and housing costs and eviction (Desmond 2016).[43] Save for the past three decades, notably absent from these studies were participant-observation based accounts of violence and its effects. Bourgois (2003:14) attributes this omission to

[42] The treatment of the ghetto as a space of disorder has been heavily criticized by later scholars (e.g. Wacquant 1997; Gregory 1998).
[43] The references here are merely examples. Each of these clauses has many other possible citations.

anthropology's functionalist paradigm that "imposes order and community on its research subjects" – and to methodological difficulties. His work with East Harlem drug dealers (1996; cited as 2003) and, later, San Francisco addicts (Bourgois and Schonberg 2009), showcased the capacity of critical ethnography to capture the individual experience of structural oppression. Qualitative fieldwork has since emerged that details the conditions of urban marginalization and its pernicious effects—poverty (Anderson 1999; Jones 2009; Contreras 2013), disability caused by violence (Lee 2012; Ralph 2014), material hardship (Duneier 1999; Venkatesh 2006, 2008), and brutality on the part of law enforcement officers (Rios 2011; Goffman 2014; Desmond et al. 2016).

I write against Anderson's (1999) binary divide of "decent" and "street," and those who characterize violence merely as an "irruption or explosion… juxtaposed to restraint or peace" (Jeganathan 2000:42). This project joins the anthropologies (e.g. Wacquant 2002) that problematize the intersection of crime and disorder to reveal these classifications as idealistic tropes and political calls, rather than useful categories. Instead, I illustrate that inner-city violence, itself, is an *ordering* concept – it has a logic, a flow, and those who perpetuate it are socially conditioned to do so. Distinctions of order or disorder, decent or street, are ultimately meaningless when applied to the impact of violence: the pain of loss and trauma is indiscriminate. More attention is thus required to plumb the suffering. How and why do people in these environments turn to violence? How do they perceive order or disorder, and to what effect? I explore the patterns of socialization that occur as a product of marginalization, arguing that the personal trauma and sense of loss that accompany homicide, especially its visual experience, itself constitutes a motivation for and gives meaning to acts of violence—and perceptions of dis/order.

Mourning and Grief

While cultural practices and rituals surrounding bereavement have been a staple of anthropological studies of death, grief itself has historically been largely left to the fields of psychiatry and psychology. In the last thirty years, beginning with Scheper-Hughes' (1992) seminal work, *Death Without Weeping,* and Kleinman et al.'s *Social Suffering* (1997), anthropologists have begun to interrogate the experience of mourning. Still, relatively little has been done on the survivorship of violent death outside of the contexts of political violence/state terror (Aretxaga 1997; Butler 2006; Rojas-Perez 2017), civil war (Theidon 2014), and mental health (Frank 1995; Kleinman 2013). These texts highlight the rupture that follows loss and the upheaval mourners experience as they try to adapt to a new identity, transformed social environment, and altered connections. Das (2000) brings together case studies of how collective violence can alter individual subjectivity and how its immediate experience can transform identity. Ralph (2015), working backwards, shows how the perception of mourning behavior may signify larger social principles. In his study of the untimely deaths of men in Chicago, he illustrates how the characterization of the perpetual condition of grief as "madness" reflects the dehumanization of Black lives. Souza (2016:16) emphasizes that in the United States today, however, there is a lack of rituals and norms surrounding death in comparison to "communal societies." Many of the aforementioned ethnographic works examine societies in which ritual helps individuals negotiate living through grief. This work shows that while there is an absence of social practices to assist with mourning, homicide survivors find themselves living through a different set of ritualistic practices in their experiences with the criminal justice system (e.g. visits from detectives, court hearings, autopsies). Notably, none of these parallel rituals address

bereavement. I consider how managing one's one grief, as well as navigating the criminal justice system alongside pain, can impact reintegration and adjustment to the social world following loss.

As I analyze local responses to trauma, I respond to Filc's (2004:938) call for greater dialogue on how "the experience of violence is voiced." Expanding on the work of Rosaldo (1989; 2014)—whose theorization of rage and emotion motivated anthropologists to broaden their understandings of what constitutes social knowledge (Behar 2012)—I interrogate when and how grief manifests itself in aggression, paying attention to the expressive and differentiated forms its phenomenology takes. Why is it, to draw an example from my fieldwork, that the grief-informed fury that overpowers a bereaved mother—inducing her to hurl herself in front of street traffic—empowers the friends of her deceased son to avenge his death and seek homicidal retaliation? And, crucially, what is it about the nature of homicide-induced grief that, in this context at least, also makes its recourse destruction – of oneself or another? I address these questions in a broader inner-city context, arguing that the management of grief, in all its stages and forms, may also result in the management of conflict.

Narrative, Meaning, and Memory

Scholars have long explored the making and manipulation of memory as a political tool. Matsuda (1996:14) asserts that it is "a point of judgment" through which the past is re-spoken and re-cast out of shards and remnants. Memory has the capacity to shape the future (Werbner 1998)— a tool that, when instrumentalized, can reinforce social inequalities and reimagine local knowledge (e.g. Zerubavel 1997). In high voltage environments like the inner-city, memory is charged with the power to restructure selfhood and identity, or fashion a conception of past

experience and communicate it to others (Radstone & Schwarz 2010). Equally important is its antithesis: forgetting. Nietzsche (1957:8) reminds us that, just as there is power in memory, there is also power in forgetting, particularly of "what [one cannot] subdue."

Memory is always a reconstruction, enlivened by narrative. For homicide survivors, perpetrators, and the general public, narratives of violence have a story-telling potential of their own that offer social explanations for the world as lived, and convey the emotional weight of blame, guilt, and contrition. When they are recounted—in both senses of the term—moments of violence can carry within them subtle social aetiologias, moral valuations, and culturally situated meanings (Feldman 1991). Take, for example, two competing accounts given to me, one by a woman whose son was fatally stabbed, the second by a man who had killed another, also using a knife. The woman associated violence with dedicated intent, both in the physiological process of the act, and its objective:

> *"I'm still tryna think of what [my son] could possibly have done to have somebody stab him. They didn't shoot him from afar – no. They stabbed him. If you stab someone you gotta feel all of that. You gotta feel the knife goin' in. You gotta hear it. He wanted to really hurt him."*

By comparison, the man—who had just served twenty-five years in prison for a deadly stabbing he had committed as a 14-year-old—framed his response as immediate and incomprehensible, a force that exceeded signification:

> *"What happened? 3 seconds of anger and rage. It was frantic. It just happened. There were lots of emotions, and I just couldn't take it back."*

When is violence narrated as intentional, following its own rationalities, and when is it blamed on uncontrollable, unthinking rage? Throughout the project, I traced divergent narrative constructions of motivation and meaning through layers of circulation – between victim and perpetrator, across neighborhoods, and through social media — to reveal how they reflect

cultural truths – and the actions and explanations to which they give rise. Further, I examine how opposing responses to homicide are informed by racially inflected power structures, those with deep historical roots – as well as by some dehumanizing media portrayals of inner-city life. Thus a White, middle class Baltimorean, from a well-off neighborhood, celebrates a murder on social media: "*Your son was a POS [piece of shit] and got what he deserved. Let this be a warning to others*." By contrast, the oft-heard refrain from Black mothers: *"[My] son wasn't perfect, but he didn't deserve to die*."

I argue, in sum, that the narratives constructed around otherwise untranslatable, unspeakable moments are crafted to structure future behavior and attitudes (see also Lutz and White 1986) in such a way as to assert in/humanity of victims, to safeguard the character of perpetrators and/or survivors, to communicate losses as grieve-able to others (Butler 2009), and to make sense of, even justify, past misdeeds.

Methods

As previously noted, statistics, crime reports, and media reporting alone cannot capture the full experience of homicide, survivorship, and life amidst violence. Anthropology has relied on participant-observation techniques since the 1920s to showcase the non-quantifiable and offer a first-hand perspective on the activities and relationships our informants engage in. Some of the most telling research experiences are intimate, vulnerable, and deeply personal moments. Most of my work took place at such times and in such spaces—at candlelight vigils or sacred space rituals on housing project street corners (these, located at the site of a murder), in over 40 support groups, in the living rooms of survivors sometimes not even a week after they received news of their loved one's death, at Mother's Day events for the parents of murdered children, and at the holiday celebrations in one of the prisons just outside of Baltimore. I became involved with local

activists' social justice organizations, including No Shoot Zone, Deep Forgiveness, and Looking Out for Little Johnny, all of which were led or co-led by formerly incarcerated individuals who had served time for perpetrating violent crimes, two of whom were imprisoned for murder. I was closely involved with Baltimore Ceasefire and attended community meetings, interviewing core members and leaders, and participating in Ceasefire weekend events and protests. I spent hundreds of hours talking directly with homicide survivors and advocates, as well as police department officials (e.g. police department advocates, officers, and homicide detectives), residents, bereavement ministers, crime reporters, funeral directors, and landlords. In case there is any question, nearly all of my informants were people of color. During my fieldwork, I only met one White homicide survivor. Significantly, my own bureaucratic experiences following Eddie's death—assisting with funeral preparations; attending court hearings for his outstanding crimes months after his death; helping my parents navigate the police and medical examiner systems to access autopsy and toxicology reports; retrieving and disinfecting the crashed car; and processing my own grief—also informed my work.

The majority of my research was spent shadowing advocates of Roberta's House as they conducted regular home visits with the next-of-kin over the year following a homicide and led support groups with the families. These allowed me an opportunity to witness the progression of grief, learn about the conditions of street justice, retaliation, and forgiveness, and examine the structural barriers to healing and mourning. Homicide survivors, my largest study population, made homicide intelligible for me by describing the events leading up to it and their experience navigating between the obstacles of the criminal justice system and the allure of extrajudicial retaliation. They demonstrated how social meaning and realities are crafted in a community governed by violence. I also had the opportunity to speak with men who had either committed a homicide or who were charged with its attempt in Baltimore. They relayed to me the intimacy of killing and

palpability of rage, the collective forces that culminated in violence or murder, and their own process of restoration and reconciliation.

In addition to traditional, in-person methods, I monitored the current climate of fear and frustration through digital community groups focused on neighborhood-specific issues, crime and homicide throughout the city, voter concerns, and activist awareness and resource connection. I documented public comments and responses to current event issues and tracked the dissemination of news information, public perception, and social behavior in the aftermath of violence. Many anti-violence activists utilize Facebook Live to reflect on inner-city violence, dispossession, and the criminal justice system. They use the technology to share crime scenes, memorialization, and, at times, in-progress criminal activity with an online audience. Data from these online repositories has been instrumental in shaping a holistic picture of the attitudes of city residents, as well as informed my interview questions and theoretical grounding as I conducted my research.

Lastly, I attended panels presented by Johns Hopkins University and Hospital as well as the city government related to gun violence interventions. Whenever possible, I was present at speaking engagements by homicide survivors, perpetrators, and victims in my efforts to understand the representation of violence, its narratives, and hypotheses for change as voiced in high-visibility, public spaces. My participant observation also facilitated recruitment of interlocutors for interviews. My goal was ultimately to seek out a diversity of perspectives and, as I went, articulate my conclusions to those entrenched in Baltimore's inner-city to place my findings at risk, ensuring that the theories I developed addressed the experiences and perspectives of my interlocuters. In all methods, the suspension of moral judgment—one of the core tenants of anthropology's cultural relativism—is critical. In attending to the issue of violence with an open mind, I realized the extent that the consequences of trauma and the moral ambiguity of survival permeate the city.

Homicide as Cycle

Homicide, by definition, allows for the assignment of blame to an individual and the prospect of justice. It is never an uncomplicated loss; survivors must deal with the intrusion of police investigators, criminal prosecutors, judgment by the courts, the fear of retaliation, and often the stigmatization of murder. Homicide exists in a space of unpredictability. What begins as an act of violence may or may not escalate to a mortal conclusion. Not infrequently, the outcome is beyond the control of its perpetrator. It is the finality of violent death and its ever-present looming possibility, I have found, that structures the conditions of life in inner-city Baltimore. For those involved in the street "game," its existential threat is rivaled only by fears of imprisonment. In both cases, the consequences of losing a loved one – through their internment in a prison cell or a casket in the earth—come with the absence of resources of care, financial support, and protection. Survivors are not only mothers left without sons. They are partners left alone, children deprived of a parent, and siblings who will forever need to clarify the number of brothers or sisters they have when asked. These excisions are significant in that they require a reconstitution of normalcy. Children growing up without a parent are left to seek out other role models and families who have lost a provider must find a way to compensate for lost income. Throughout this transition, there is the frustration of waiting for investigations to produce leads that result in the arrest of the perpetrator–a process that, for the majority of Baltimoreans, will not come. Rather than hope that reluctant witnesses come forward or wait on the criminal justice system, some choose to take justice into their own hands. The cycle of violence continues in a routine fashion – its statistics numbing and its losses agonizing.

The perpetual reproduction of violence, trauma, and fear has consequences at the societal and individual level, but also at the structural and institutional levels. My findings show that these phenomena make communities more susceptible to the everyday assaults of poverty, mass incarceration, disinvestment, and racism. The drug and illegal firearm trade has been well documented by scholars as providing a non-state alternative to accessible employment and security (Jütersonke et al. 2009). In Baltimore, inconsistent public transportation and limited distribution of work opportunities in low-income neighborhoods make selling drugs an appealing way to make money. This is further reinforced by the absence of fathers in many families due to mass incarceration and the tropes of masculinity that position teenage boys as the "head of household," tasked with providing for their families.

In the final months of my fieldwork, I began to test how structural conditions impinge on experience by incorporating points of comparison from those on the periphery of the inner-city—largely the White middle class. Crime and violence are not absent from these communities. They too are affected by the looming, palpable sensation of potential violence, numbness, and trauma, but it is experienced in a different way. As I continued my inquiry, I looked to see what effect race, class, and neighborhood have in breaking violence's cycle, as witnessed in the inner-city. Throughout my research, I stumbled upon failures of and misconduct within and beyond the criminal justice system that led me to conclude that it is—despite the best intentions of many—incompatible with healing. Although these lapses are often unintentional, they revictimize grieving families. For example, I learned of instances where police, rather than calling an ambulance or waiting for a medical examiner, wrongly pronounced victims dead on site. Medical examiners and officers often deny family members access to the deceased, even for identification purposes – opting instead to identify from a photo or tattoos. Families often wait up to two weeks

after death before they are permitted to see their loved one. Such procedures, at a minimum, exacerbate the pain of those already suffering.

I have witnessed the incompatibility of the criminal justice system, as practiced, with restorative justice; in one case, I heard from a convicted murderer who described writing letters to his victim's family, expressing regret and sorrow, that went undelivered for decades. According to the family, all they wanted during that period were answers. Finally, I have listened to interlocutors condemn the lack of witness protections in the city. The murder trial of one survivor was delayed for weeks as prosecutors tried to convince an observer to testify. Out of fear, she amended her statement and refused – the alleged perpetrator went free. While this study offers insight into the forces that shape marginalization in the inner-city, illuminating the social dynamics that silence community members and propel street justice, it also offers a sympathetic portrayal of the burdens under which the justice system operates. That system is burdened by ideological pressures on prosecutors and judges to fight the "war" against crime and governing agencies are run by overworked and underpaid staff. Understanding cycles of violence and trauma, structural inequalities, and patterns of mourning and narratives about loss, however, make it possible to better understand violence and locate ruptures in the criminal justice system and other intended sources of assistance.

In an effort to avoid the "intellectual voyeurism" (Bourgois & Schonberg 2009:297) often leveled as a disciplinary criticism and to voice the concerns of my interlocutors, I believe it is necessary to propel this work into critical public debate, linking theory to practice. I offer in the conclusion political and institutional recommendations that might alleviate the suffering of survivors. Recognizing that nearly all the stakeholders in inner-city Baltimore are victimized by its trauma in one regard or another, I address the above concerns, among others, and solutions

that my interlocutors and I believe will help break the cycle of violence, pain, and justice in which so many are caught.

Overview

I have structured this text to capture the cyclical nature of grief and violence, as well as to carry the reader through the liminal experience of mourning a violent death. In anthropology, liminality has typically been assigned to ritual practice, a rite of passage, or initiation indicating transition from one sociocultural state to another; the term, literally means "being-on-a-threshold," in "a state or process which is betwixt-and-between the normal, day-to-day cultural and social states" (Turner 1979:465). For my informants, liminality is not part of a ritual sequence. Rather, they are caught up in liminality, of being in-between, struggling to come out on the other side of grief. Originally theorized by the Belgian folklorist van Gennep (1909), liminality was determined to have three distinguishing stages: (1) Separation (the preliminary), characterized by a period of distance from a previous way of life; (2) Threshold (the liminal), where subjects encounter a period of ambiguity and limbo as they fluctuate between past and present ways of existing in and relating to their social world; and, finally, (3) Reaggregation (the postliminal), when the subject begins to return to everyday life, but in an "altered state of consciousness or social being" (Turner 1979:467). While I have argued that homicide's ubiquity in Baltimore defines the quality of everyday social life in the inner-city, this should be treated distinctly from homicide survivorship, in which someone is personally affected by one or more killings. When considered separately, I believe there is a strong argument for survivorship as a liminal experience. Further, thinking with a model of liminality can help distinguish how individual grief from homicide is separate from, yet interacts with, the routine urban experience

of violence, and vice versa. The following text is laid out in three sections—antemortem, mortem, and postmortem—to set boundaries and frame the experience of grief so that each phase may be scrutinized in its own right, in addition to considering the sociocultural grief experience as a whole.

Act One captures the pre-liminal qualities of homicide survivorship. Here, in the introduction, I outline briefly the historical and institutional burdens that my informants bear in addition to their bereavement. While these are carried through the entire text, it is important for the reader to first establish the baseline of struggle in order to understand what else accompanies a homicide.

Chapter One, "Anticipation, Premonition, and Revelation," explores the ways that living amidst conflict prepares residents for the seemingly inevitable violence that may befall their loved ones. By preparing for death, I argue, residents live in a disorienting temporal timespace where violence configures the experience of reality. The present is defined by an engagement with the past and the potential of the future (Mattingly 2019; cf. Husserl 1964). Following Carr's (1986) argument that time is "narratively structured," I explore the moments leading up to death itself and the descriptions by survivors of how it was that they—and their deceased loved ones—knew that it was imminent. I share their tales of premonition and suggest that death and its revelation rupture any previous temporality. As Heidegger affirms, "the death of others that we witness is their transformation to the state of a being utterly present…from which their lucid, or oblivious, future and possibility-ordered existence has utterly vanished" (Lingis 2009:231).

Act Two marks the formal beginning of the grief experience, characterized by the upheaval of survivors' social situations and the emotional toil they undergo grappling with that change. In looking at how private mourning is intertwined with public institutions and systemic

failures, I begin to demonstrate the cycle of violence, pain, and retaliation that is informed by grief and abetted by the moral and material economies of the inner-city.

Chapter Two, "Numbness, Rage, and Baltimore's Pain Problem," explores the grief experience following homicide. Two key reactions, numbness and rage, structure the emotional pulse of many survivors. I analyze methods of grief management, specifically how rage, borne of homicide, is often linked to initiatives to enact further harm. I also explore how the psychic damage of violence produces feelings of isolation for community members and survivors. This, I argue, has critical consequences of creating emotional distance between one's own lives and those murdered, and normalizing killing. Finally, I consider how the individual affective economy of grief informs the collective consciousness of the city.

Chapter Three, "Empathizing with Killers," offers three reconstructions that investigate multiple dimensions of the material and moral economy of murder. I describe what is collectively deemed necessary to survive in the urban economy, and how these material circumstances might produce aggression, as well as explore what it means to exist in a community where residents are just trying to get by. In doing so, I consider how inner-city violence can be understood as a form of labor and production. Additionally, I explain the moral calculus that is worked out in the aftermath of violence and evaluate the moral continuum on which homicide is the ultimate punishment, as well as the ultimate crime to be punished.

The final act, Act Three, addresses what it means to move through grief and the obstacles both the city and its survivors encounter as they try to heal. In Chapter Four, "The Afterlife of Death: Grieving and Memorialization," I discuss the expansion of necropolitics to struggles over post-mortem memory, the last vestige of human life open to control and contestation. Based on two case studies of Baltimore homicides, I argue that the memory of their victims, Marcus

Brown and the Dawson family, is physically manifest in spatially grounded memorialization processes that reflect two extremes of the state's valuation of black life: at one end, its recuperation in the name of community and American nationhood; at the other, the obliteration in death of the racialized non-citizen, whose loss is perceived and portrayed by government as collateral damage in the cause of producing and protecting civil society. The memorialization of violent death in the inner-city, in short, is an emergent practice of aspirational sovereignty in the battle between state and non-citizen over personhood.

Chapter Five, "The Haunt of the City," illustrates how meaning and memory layer upon the urban topography, adding a density to the city streets for those who link experiences or knowledge of violence to them. I sketch a portrait of Baltimore's culture of fear and examine how it engenders vulnerability for residents. Using haunting as a frame, I explore how history and subjectivity intersect to shape social behavior and how violence's "haunt" is reproduced through social media, enabling its visibility and the sense of its ever-presence.

In my conclusion, I propose policy initiatives for the city government and procedural changes for institutions that serve as touchpoints following a homicide, including the police, detectives, medical examiners, and funeral homes. It is here that I return to the possibility of healing and hope to offer a grounded reminder that, in the absence of change, this devastating cycle of violence will continue to dominate Baltimore.

Storytelling and Survival

The stories of those who live on, transformed by homicide and working daily to get through its pain, deserve to be told. While what follows is a crushingly sad account of the grief carried by many Baltimore residents, I am confident that it is an accurate and important one.

There is much abstract talk in academia and beyond about how Black lives matter, but I hope to provide something more immediate and grounded. I offer a cultural depiction that exists at the convergence of the theoretical and the visceral, the structural and emotional. An informant once told me, "I never cared who the shooter was or [why they were shooting], I was just looking for bullets." The significance of such a statement has stuck with me and informed my writing. My intention is to address, but never overcomplicate this text with structural explanations because, for so many living in the inner-city, these do not factor into their interpretation of what they're living through.

As an alternative, I offer stories—testaments to the meaning and matter of Black life—shared by survivors. There is a power in storytelling. I learned this in the homicide support groups I sat in, where survivors described to others how their loved ones were taken from them, the effect it had, and what they've learned from trauma. Storytelling's impact was reinforced each time I shared an experience from my fieldwork with someone unfamiliar with Baltimore's violence. These tales allow us to process what we've been through, while also helping others make sense of tragedy. They create bonds and unify people under a common understanding of how a politicized and distant topic like violent crime can resonate far beyond an initial act of killing. Stories humanize and personalize the characters within, while attending to the voice of the storyteller, their positioning, and the significance of their experience.

This is a text about death; it is also very much a reflection on life. The voices contained it are alive. They are grieving and suffering, but they are also trying and surviving. After all my long months of research in Baltimore, I still cannot pinpoint what it is that keeps people going in the face of immense and recurrent tragedy, although I suspect it has something to do with an appreciation of life and a deep-felt commitment to one's family and community. Many

anthropological texts dealing with urban violence and suffering fall back on the trope of hope. To do so here would be false. This is not to say that there isn't widespread hope for Baltimore to overcome its plague of violence or for these survivors to see better days as they move through their grief. Simply, for them, hope is at least one step beyond survival. This text is limited to the immediate experience of grief and survivorship. My informants have faith that they will rediscover hope in some distant future (hoping for hope, per se) and trust that somehow their adversity will lead to something greater. Presently, however, hope falls short. To frame their suffering through its lens would not accurately represent their experience.

This should not preclude you, the reader, from fostering your own hope and igniting action to change the conditions in the city. As Paulette believes, broader understanding of and attention to the experience of violence in Baltimore can have an impact on the circumstances in which residents live. It can bring funding from federal agencies, support for volunteers, and legislation that improves how institutions and their workers interact with underserved communities. Until then, however, residents take one day at a time, pushing through in an honest attempt to survive, speaking about hope, but not always understanding fully what it means or might look like.

Chapter 1 | Anticipation, Premonition, Revelation

Aaron and I met in North Baltimore for our first home visit with Dorothea in March 2019. Aaron, the only male survivor advocate, hadn't met her before. We arrived at her home with limited information: Dorothea was an older woman who had buried her son 11 days prior[44]. Climbing the brick stoop out front of the rowhome, Aaron pulled out his phone to open the Center's safety app, which all advocates were required to use. The app monitored GPS location and timed visits, prompting the user every 15 minutes to check in. If the system timed-out, the police would be sent, and supervisors alerted. Aaron clicked through the interface, ending on a screen-filling, portentous red button labeled "PANIC," before slipping the phone into his pocket.

Creaking open the screen door, he rapped on the wood. Minutes went by as we waited on the stoop for a response, taking the opportunity to survey the neighborhood: a public housing lot across the street, a broken blue light camera dangling from the street pole, and nearly every building window covered from the inside to shield interiors from the gaze of passers-by. This, a tactic to prevent would-be robbers from scoping out homes. A voice called out above us.

"Hello?"

Our heads turned towards the sky. Looking down at us was a wrinkled woman craning her head out of the second-floor window. I had never seen a rowhome in Baltimore City from that angle. "Who are you?" she called down, her sunken eyes squinting suspiciously. We introduced ourselves before waiting again for her to come downstairs and unlock the door.

[44] There are two main ways that Roberta's House came to be connected with the survivors they supported. First, the Baltimore City Police Department's Homicide Survivor Advocates who would notify Roberta's House advocates of homicides and next of kin. The advocates would then reach out to whoever they had contact information for and offer to extend resources to any additional family members or connections who needed grief support. The second method was through community outreach and a word-of-mouth network that survivors would refer each other to resources and groups provided by the Center.

Locks clicked one after the next. The sliding of a chain. The thump of the deadbolt. The soft, final flick of the doorknob's catch. Eventually, the door opened. An atrophied woman, no taller than 5-foot, stood before us in purple Ravens pajama pants and a tank top. She beckoned us inside, skeletal fingers curling mechanically, each joint visible as it rolled beneath thin skin. Deep in the center of the cave-like home was a massive sectional couch that took up almost the entire room. We sat down, sinking into it. Dorothea grabbed a pack of cigarettes from the counter. She pulled one out, massaging it precariously before offering us a smoke. We declined. She shrugged and lowered herself onto one of the cushions, reaching for a votive candle holder to use as an ashtray.

The home was like so many I had visited: a dark interior that felt like a tomb, windows blacked out with thick curtains. A metal bat rested beside the front door frame, collecting cobwebs. In the center of the room stood a near-full industrial garbage can topped with empty alcohol bottles and a pizza box. Dorothea apologized for the noise. In the background, cats whined and faint sounds of clawing echoed through the walls. Scotch-taped to the wall was a crumpled funeral program that someone had gone to great lengths to smooth flat. Most memorable, however, was the four-by-four-foot poster board leaning atop the television console. It bore a photoshopped image of a young Black man with massive angel wings and halo, emerging from heaven's gates amidst globular white clouds and blue sky. His black hoodie and puffer jacket offered a sharp contrast to the ethereal imagery. He smiled a coy, gold-grilled grin, eyes cast off into the distance.

"Is that your son, Jamal?" Aaron asked. Dorothea sucked on the cigarette, exhaling a puff.

"Mhmm."

“What kind of person was he?” Dorothea croaked out a short response. He was a good boy, a fine young man. It was clear she wasn’t quite in the mood to chat, not yet at least. We started with the formalities of the visit: research disclosures and Aaron’s confidentiality documents. Most introductory visits took the same format: Advocates would run through an assessment to gauge the survivor’s well-being and see if, in Aaron’s words, they’d been “maintaining themselves.” First were health questions. Did Dorothea have a support system? When was the last time she saw a doctor? Had she been eating? Dorothea would acknowledge each question and summarily drift off, looking around the apartment, clearly distracted. We struggled to get any answers.

She mumbled to herself. “I just took it outta my pockey-book [sic] when I left the funeral home and put it in my drawer and now I don’t know where it’s gone. I had taken my medication and I guess I fell asleep. And now I don’t know where it’s gone…” she muttered, repeating herself. “Where’s it at? I don’t know. I know where I put it when I left the funeral home but it’s not there…” Her voice faded.

“What’s that?” Aaron asked.

“The papers. I just had them.”

“The funeral program?” I asked, trying to piece it together.

“No. The life insurance papers.”

Aaron assured her that he could contact the agency and replace them, so long as she could remember the company’s name. Dorothea seemed temporarily satisfied with that solution. Aaron attempted to refocus the meeting, inquiring about how she was coping. “Miss Dorothea, what would you say is the biggest obstacle for you right now in your grief process?”

She sighed audibly with a sound that could only be described as a combination of defeat, despair, and exhaustion. She looked at us with a pained expression. “Losing both my sons,” she answered.

Aaron responded coolly, unwavering, without a hint of surprise in his voice. “I see. What was your other son’s name? Did you lose him the same way?”

Dorothea told us the name of her first son, Anton, before going into the details of his death in 2017. “You know Preston Street? You know where that is? They was out in the alley up near there and they shot him. He was running for his life and they gunned him down.” We waited for a moment to see if she wanted to elaborate but her voice trailed off again. There was silence. Aaron returned to the questionnaire. There were more than 7 pages of questions to complete:

- How would she rate her health? Good, fair, or poor?
- Did she have any health concerns?
- Is she receiving any other assistance right now?
- What medications did she take and did she take them regularly?
- What was her doctor’s name?
- Did she have health insurance?

Dorothea did her best to cooperate and responded briefly to each inquiry before her voice would grow faint and disappear. Aaron persisted to elicit the answers he needed.

“Miss Dorothea, how are you meeting your basic needs? Are you getting food in the house?”

“Whatever my children’s father brings home. He brings food and cigarettes. I’m just starting eating. I’m still grieving from my first son getting killed. All I do is just smoke and drink

all night. And my kids, they tell me I gotta eat. So if I get something I try to swallow a few bites." Her response confirmed my suspicions given the remnants in the trash.

"How much do you smoke?"

"Well, he brings a pack—"

Aaron interrupts. "So you smoke a pack a day?"

"Well, [my son's father and I] share them," Dorothea explained, "So I don't really get to smoke the whole pack. Just 10 cigarettes lately—"

"—Have you ever thought about quitting? Would you like help?" Aaron seemed desperate to make it through the questionnaire. I understood the push for expedience given the assessment's length but wondered if Dorothea did. There would be time at the end to focus on her losses, I supposed.

Thirty minutes later, Aaron had tackled the main topics and moved on quietly to transcribing the names of Dorothea's medications from the dozen pill containers on the counter, pen scratching against his notepad. A cat's arm emerged beneath the basement door, claws spread as it searched the air for someone or something to cling. More meowing. I took advantage of the break in questioning to ask Dorothea about her sons. Dorothea, who had for most of the visit responded with single sentence answers, seemed to regain interest when presented with the opportunity to talk about Anton and Jamal.

She began with her response to Anton's death and how she was unprepared for the both the emotional and financial impact of his loss. "When it hits your door," she explained, "it's different from when you're hearing bout it but it hasn't hit your door." The loss of income from her Anton's death had put Dorothea financially in a tough spot and, following the advice of

family, she took out life insurance policies on her four other children. She dreaded the possibility of losing another child yet figured it would be better to prepare herself for the worst.

Hoping to escape the memories of Anton's death, Dorothea moved to a different area of the city. The change in neighborhood did little to assuage her mounting fear of violence and concern for her childrens' welfare. Jamal would try his best to reassure her when there were gunshots outside: "I'd say, 'oh God, Lord Jesus. They shooting. I don't know what to do bout these kids. This world is going to come to an end,'" Dorothea said. "And my son he just sitting there, and he said, 'Mommy you ain't out there. And my sisters ain't out there. Ain't nobody out there we love. Mommy, stop worrying yourself. Every time you hear the guns, you get so scared. Stop worrying yourself like that.' That's what he told me. And I told him, I just can't help it." Dorothea started to cry. "With [the death of] my first son, Anton, my daughter tried three times to kill herself[45]. And she was the one who first found out about Jamal."

Jamal was 31 when he was killed, leaving behind two young children, ages 4 and 6. The mother of his children[46] struggled with a drug and alcohol addiction, resulting in Jamal and Dorothea assuming primary guardianship. The morning of his death, Dorothea received a call from her daughter. A firefight had occurred a few streets up and something serious had happened to Jamal. Dorothea rushed to the scene. Crime tape closed off the street, but there were only police there. They told her to go to the hospital. Arriving at Johns Hopkins, she walked into the lobby and immediately collapsed. "I remember going in the door and that's it. I must have passed out or whatever. I didn't know what was happening and I hadn't talked to no one. When I woke

[45] Hearing of her daughter, Aaron left additional resources from Roberta's House for Dorothea to pass on. Dorothea said she would encourage her to attend a support group, however, I do not know if she ever did.
[46] It was unclear if Roberta's House had reached out to the mother to offer grief support, however, given her substance abuse that kept her out of contact, as well as the lack of a legal relationship to Rickie (i.e. marriage) that would have constituted next of kin status, it was unlikely that outreach had successfully been made.

up, I was in the back of the emergency room and they said my heart was racing. I had already felt that my son was gone before I even talked to anybody. I just felt that."

In the emergency room, the doctor let the detectives know they could talk with Dorothea and tell her that her son had been killed. "When they told me Jamal died, I think my pulse was up at 190. [The doctors] wouldn't let me go and I begged them to let me go. I didn't want to stay in a hospital bed knowing my son was in there." After receiving medication to calm her, Dorothea was released. She went home, headed straight to her room, and lay there for days.

The visit ended with a short discussion about what Dorothea's family planned to do with Jamal's children[47] – where would they live? Who would care for them? Aaron presented Dorothea paperwork to sign confirming our visit and passed her a folder with brochures for city resources for homicide survivors. I thanked her for her time. Exiting the row home, sirens echoed a few blocks down. "We'll catch up with you next month," Aaron told her.

"Alright. Watch yourselves out there," she replied.

. . .

Advocates administered home visits with two goals in mind: to help survivors process their grief and map a path forward. Attention was placed on the future and what was to come. Similar to how medical doctors focus on prognosis and treatment, home visits focused on helping those who were grieving to "get through." Most of Roberta's House's homicide work, be it in support groups, home visits, or community events, emphasized next steps that survivors would take following a death. Kim, one of the group leaders, introduced new survivor cohorts[48]

[47] In the absence of their mother, Dorothea and Jamal had shared responsibility caring for his children. It seemed that the custody of the children had never been legally determined, but rather was a casual decision made based on the mother's level of interest and responsibility. Now, without Jamal, Dorothea would have to decide if she would take on guardianship, if her other children would be able to help raise them, or if the mother was fit to help.

[48] Homicide support groups at Roberta's House occurred throughout the year, each lasting approximately 10 weeks. Each group, led by one facilitator with the occasional assistance of guest speakers, formed a "cohort" of 7 to 15 survivors who met consistently during that time. Survivors who missed numerous group meetings were requested to

to this objective as, "Life [after experiencing a murder] is changed forever. We're here to help you figure out your new normal." Despite the future-oriented focus of Roberta's House's programs, survivors often utilized their time with the advocates to process the past. They gravitated towards revisiting events leading up to their loved one's death, trying to understand if there was anything they could have done differently, and searching for meaning in tragedy. Each survivor constructed a narrative surrounding their loss. Biographic details and moral determinations fleshed out a chronology of key events preceding a murder. First-person accounts of loss were themselves an exercise in world-making. Grievers reinterpreted memories through a lens that made a violent death inevitable, leading them to reflect on moments and events that indicated its grim imminence. In listening to dozens of survivor accounts, patterns emerged in the temporality of the recounting and construction of predeath experiences. Narratives highlighted a lived experience of futurity in which the emotional logic of survivors' relationship to death was located in its preconditions.

Existential concern is a constant for inner-city residents. Many of my interlocutors contemplated the risk of violence and prepared themselves for the probability of their loved one's murder in advance of it happening. The degree to which, at the time, they were cognizant of or able to articulate how possible futures shaped the everyday present varied. In hearing survivors revisit past events and interactions postmortem, however, it was clear that anticipatory experience played a pivotal role in modulating daily life and relationships. Even the advocates

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leave the cohort and reenroll in the next support group, when they were able to attend regularly. Even after the group meetings concluded, many survivors maintained touch with others they met in their cohort and Roberta's House scheduled reunions for homicide survivors to help them keep in contact. At any given time, Roberta's House had three to five different cohorts meeting, these groups scheduled at different times of the day and/or different days of the week. Some groups were adult-only whereas others were geared towards family counseling and included children. After my fieldwork concluded, Roberta's House introduced a men-only homicide support group geared towards addressing the gendered nuances of grief.

would allude to the anticipatory quality of living amidst violence, noting that it was "just a matter of time" for homicides to occur and that many survivors "expect it." The intertwining of temporal orientation with an expected course of events creates the structure that underscores the anticipatory present, or the way that time is experienced by survivors in the days, weeks, and even years leading up to death. This time is defined by an engagement with the violent past and the limited possibilities of a future.

Distinct temporal dimensions emerge prior to death that play a unique role in this process—anticipation, premonition, and revelation—each a condition of the possibility of what follows. For example, anticipation, or the configuration of the present by way of expectations concerning what is to come, attunes people to the precarity of the future, creating the circumstances that facilitate premonition, or an intuition that something will happen imminently. Passage into revelation, or the uncanny knowledge that something tragic has occurred (this, not simply the occurrence itself), is temporally possible by its relation to premonition, just as premonition is in relation to anticipation. As signs of death's imminence, forms of symbolic behavior and experience that break away from the anticipatory norm, unfold, they sediment into moments of an experiential chain foretelling death. When it finally occurs, survivors are confronted with the realization that their loved one has, in fact, been killed. What had been feared, imagined, talked of, and dreaded materializes, and the protentional features of experienced time dissolve, leaving survivors to settle into a radically present now.

This chapter explores how the future manifests in these three predeath dimensions for survivors, with deep focus on anticipation, which allows for premonition and revelation to come about. While most residents living amidst Baltimore's violence will experience anticipation, only for a proportion will this give way to a premonitionary response, and thereafter to revelation,

which even fewer will encounter. In each moment, these temporally related, horror encroaches. Residents experience states of increasing inevitability, knowing that something terrible is more and more likely to emerge at the end of the continuous present. As much of this dissertation illustrates, homicide's impact extends beyond the timespace of a singular death. The pages that follow describe its effects before it occurs, specifically, how the expectation of violence shapes the everyday for Baltimore residents who orient themselves toward, and prepare for, tragedy. It also demonstrates how this does not occur in a vacuum but is collectively experienced as those residents anticipate alongside or on the behalf of others (Stephan and Flaherty 2019:11).

The chapter concludes with a discussion of premonition and revelation, occult forms of hyperbolic anticipation. As signs indicate death's nearness, the generalized sense of anxiety felt by loved ones becomes temporally accelerated, moving anticipation beyond immanence into a dimension of imminence. While the domain of anticipatory experience derives from a rational, forward-thinking mindset, these pre-homicide events and perceptions escape explanation. They extend beyond the rational. This is not to say that they are irrational, but rather that they *exceed* rationality, perhaps belonging to a theological realm, or the realm of the uncanny, as some survivors claim. Allowing that undiscovered "latent predictive powers exist in the universe" (Fraser 2021:1), I focus not on explaining them but on highlighting the processes by which residents forecast and respond to impending possibilities of violence.

Anticipation

Hazel began writing obituaries for her son Booker when he was 18 years old. Since he was a boy, friends and family members would tell Hazel that Booker wasn't long for this world. "He'll never see 15," they told her. When he had his 15th birthday, they reminded Hazel to cherish every moment of his life: "He'll never see 18." Booker lived to be 18, and the number

changed again: “Never 20.” He made it to 20: “Not 25.” Hazel knew that her son hung out with a dangerous crew and understood the risks that followed. She had accompanied him to many funerals for his peers who, as others had forecast for him, died young. Each passing year seemed to be an unexpected gift; she continued hoping for more time with her son but worried that her luck would soon run out. On his 18th birthday, Hazel sat down and wrote Booker’s obituary. “We’re told a parent should never have to bury their child. They shouldn’t be the one preparing their obituary,” she told me. But she nonetheless wrote one, highlighting his accomplishments and joyful spirit. Each year thereafter Hazel would update it, thanking God for the blessing of more time and worried increasingly that this would, finally, be Booker’s last. Booker was 28 when he was murdered. The only thing that needed to be changed from his obituary was removing two grandparents from the names of survivors. They had died the previous year.

The present for those living amidst Baltimore’s violence is best understood as a relationship between collective pasts and the foreshadowed future. Daily life is marked by a profound and unsettling awareness of dark possibilities—most notably, imagining and expecting homicide. The expectation of a violent future informs the ways in which people navigate and apply meaning to the here and now. As Hazel’s pragmatic assessment of the risks that followed Booker’s lifestyle, as well as the internalized trauma of neighborhood bloodshed, led her to shift her view of her son’s life and longevity. The narrative she constructed assumed that it would be abruptly truncated. During my research, I became attuned to the fact that precarious, seemingly inescapable futures influenced the worldviews and relationships of my interlocutors. These, shaped by community knowledge and experience, also draw from a collective history of violence that informs action and behavior in the moment. Hazel, expecting her son to be killed, wrote

obituaries in anticipation of his death. The timespace in which she operated was subsumed by a future-orientation that, as Augustine has noted, simultaneously looks forwards and backwards.

Edmund Husserl's (1964) phenomenology of temporality provides a foundation for understanding the anticipatory present. Husserl breaks perception into three aspects: retention, or the milliseconds that our consciousness register as the present moment; the immediate present; and protention, or the expectancy of what follows. To use a simple example commonly referenced by Husserl, listening to a melody relies on the interrelation of these three dimensions. The notes in a musical piece are not heard individually, but rather as a sequence that references the just-elapsed chords and leads the listener to expect what they are about to hear, like the resolution of a note or chord from sounding dissonant to more stable, or unfinished to resolved. The dual-oriented timespace in which one listens to music can be extended to social domains, where temporal cognition mediates experience and shapes everyday action. Anthropologist Alfred Gell (1992:237) elaborates:

> The basic cycle [of temporal cognition] runs from perception (present) to memory (past) to anticipation (future), and so on, in an endless round. It is the continuous activity which we ourselves engage in, generating images, matching them with perceptual input and locating them at coordinates on our internalized maps of the world, which persuades us that future, present, and past are rushing by with an uncontrollable dynamism of their own.

Two components here, the past and the future, are critical to understanding how Baltimore residents interpret and engage with the present.

First is the referential orientation that the present has to the past events and histories. For Hazel, as with many survivors, this is partially comprised of a superficial recognition of risk that accompanies belonging to a vulnerable population as well as living in a disinvested, high-crime community. Acknowledgement of potential alone, however, does not lead to the temporal reconfiguration she or others experience as anticipation. Far greater than an abstract

understanding of the socio-political factors, lived experience foregrounds the "horizons of aspiration" (Stephen and Flaherty 2019:3; see also Appadurai 1996, 2003). The sensuous experience of living amidst a cacophony of potentially lethal gunshots, as in Dorothea's account, underscores the dangers that exist on the streets, outside the protection of the home. Additionally, for some, the past is weighted with undeniable evidence of a loved one's involvement in crime. This evidence can come from firsthand experience, but for most survivors I met, this knowledge was secondhand. Guns or drugs found among personal items, or overwhelming testimony presented in criminal trials were sufficient to register an increased likelihood that violence would befall others. "There some bad children out there and if you live by the sword, you die by it. If you be doin' some terrible shit, karma'll catch up with your ass," one survivor summarized.

Just as violent histories structured the expectation of a violent future, the absence of prior knowledge to predict disaster equally alters the anticipatory response. Survivors who weren't aware of their loved one's involvement in crime, or whose loved ones didn't lead a high-risk lifestyle, didn't share the same sense of danger. In instances when "good" people were killed, the consequences for survivors were worldview-shattering. A mother of three sons, one of whom was killed, explained the distinction as such:

> When you live somewhere your whole life you get accustomed to it, and you hear about everybody around you getting killed, getting shot, and all the crime, and you see it and it's whatever. But, when it knock on your door, you really open your eyes to it. My [deceased] son, he really was a good kid. He went to church every fucking Sunday. If he was a rotten child, I'd say it. I have some rotten ones. My two youngest are locked up right now. Rotten as shit. And I used to always think I'd get a phone call about my youngest son because of the things he do out there. I never, never, never thought this would happen to my other son.

Among the most influential pasts that inform anticipation—the if, when, and likelihood of a disastrous future—are the visibility of life-shattering violence and loss locally, as well as

exposure to collective grief, hope, and fear. “Since murder been coming and knockin’ on everyone’s door, I knew it was gonna come and knock on my door because I knew my son’s lifestyle,” one survivor expressed. I asked if she had expected her son’s murder, to which she replied: “It surprised me a little bit, but it’s everybody in my neighborhood. Look cross the street, [one neighbor] lost her son.” Pointing to a house down the street, she continued:

> Right there, she lost her son, round the corner they lost two sons. Right here near my son’s family house, they lost Tim. Miss Julie, Carey Street, she lost her son. It’s right here! [Murder] is here! So I know it’s a possibility my son be out there and it might come knockin’ at the door so I said to myself, don’t be so surprised. It’s like everybody I know, it came to them, but it [hadn’t] come to me... I always knew it was a possibility.

While past knowledge and experience offers residents the source material for forecasting violent futures, the way that residents engage with the past further shapes their anticipation. Mothers, in reflecting on Baltimore’s violence prior to experiencing a homicide, described looking at others whose children had been murdered and trying to understand what they were going through. They imagined their own son or daughter and considered how they would respond when, not simply if, they were killed. As noted in some of the quotes above, many said they knew that eventually death would come “knocking,” a reference to the arrival of a homicide detective at a survivor’s home to announce tragic news. Violent histories, pulled from different sources, serve as a data set and reference point that informs consciousness in the present moment. An overwhelming volume of evidence indicating a deadly future (or suggesting otherwise) grounds the perceptual field in which consciousness registers the present moment and indexes future possibilities. Day to day life in the inner-city, as such, is shrouded in the precarity of what might be, constructing a milieu of contingency, worry, uncertainty, and, occasionally, hope.

Equally critical to the role the past plays in constructing the anticipatory present is the element of protention, or what is expected to follow, and how it influences action. Hazel’s annual

updates to Booker's obituary illustrate how normative is her engagement with the protentional aspect of consciousness. She has a sense that violence will come in due course and awaits its arrival. To prepare for an uncertain, threatening future of which others warn her, Hazel began to arrange for dealing with Booker's death. While she never shared her intention behind writing the obituary—whether she felt motivated to get ahead of the funerary process, or was grieving ahead of the loss—such preparatory behavior indicates a "collective way of addressing the anxiety of uncertainty, and of forestalling or altering something that threatens a radical revision of the present" (Bryant and Knight 2019:48). Hazel did not passively await death but mobilized it as an impetus for action.

The likely instinct for most when confronting the prospect of an untimely death, would is to find ways to subvert it. The actions available to inner-city Baltimore residents to forestall violence is often constrained by structural limitations. Many families lack the financial resources and/or network to move out of the city, or ideally out of state. One survivor, for example, sent her son across the country to live with distant relatives in an effort to preserve his life. When he ultimately returned to Baltimore, he was killed. Relocation also introduces a new problem: finding alternate means to provide support and security for remaining family members. Another limitation, the distrust of the criminal justice system, along with fears of being labeled a snitch, dissuades many from contacting police. In the absence of options to assure futurity, survivors cautioned loved ones that deadly consequences came with certain lifestyles: "I kept warning my son, his big brother kept warning him, everybody was warning him, but he never listened. Well, experience is your best teacher." Others turned to the community for support, one woman reaching out to her pastor for guidance: "When I go to church, I asked him, how do I pray for [my son]? I don't know how to handle him. They said tell God to take him away." She prayed

that her son would be incarcerated, knowing that his odds of surviving while in prison were far greater than on the street. Her wishes came to fruition. But upon release, he also was murdered. "[Death] still came to my door."

Even when there is little to be done to prevent or delay death, anticipation still reigns, carrying consequences for social life, both intended and unintended. The most obvious form is the act of waiting.[49] Mothers sequester themselves indoors, as Dorothea did, dreading a phone call or nearby gunshot that might signal the end of their child's life—and, with it, the actualization of a devastating, imagined future. Waiting, however, is not equivalent with giving up on action and committing to the inevitability of death.[50] Similar to Mattingly's (2019:19) account of the complex temporal forms that hope takes on for parents awaiting the death of a child diagnosed with a terminal illness—e.g., the idea that a life well lived might compensate for a short life—comparable nuance is visible in the vernacular phrasing of Baltimore residents and survivors. Expressions like "only the good die young," a reassurance that commonly accompanies RIP graffiti, offer a form of aspiration that exists within loss. Hazel's description of each additional year with Booker as a "gift" or as "luck" suggest that she hoped to extend her waiting. Despite Booker living many years beyond expectation, she did not stop updating the obituary, even though she wished for a different fate. She pushed onwards, moving forward with actions consistent with the delay of an untimely death, rather than the removal of its possibility. The relationship between hope and anticipation with respect to violence is at times incongruous, as evinced above. But this incongruity is understandable when we accept the possibility of the "paradoxical cultivation of multiple and mutually exclusive futures" (Mattingly 2019:20). While

[49] There is an important anthropological literature on waiting and suspended youth that, while is not directly relevant here is worth noting (e.g. Inhorn and Smith-Hefner 2020; Honwana 2013; Masquelier 2013; Singerman 2007).
[50] For a comparison in an alternate ethnographic context, Sylvia Tidey (2019) explores anticipation and existential endings in Bali, Indonesia amongst the *Waria*, Indonesian transgender women.

anticipation may serve to make the expected future sensible, it can also highlight the ambiguity of present circumstances and the contradictory ethical demands of engaging with it.

Both Hazel and Dorothea's consciousness in the present fall on a temporal continuum between what happened before—collective violence and its predictors—and what they expected would happen. Even prior to their sons falling victim to violence, their family members experienced its effect through its foreshadowing. These manifested in ways that went beyond preparation, as well. Parents and guardians were attuned to household architecture, mindful of what rooms within a rowhome the children slept to best safeguard them from stray bullets. Some tasked their older children with the responsibility of looking after younger siblings while they were away at work, ensuring that they stayed out of trouble. Even non-profits and community centers in the area offered programs intended to offset tragic outcomes, ensuring that young people were engaged and supervised after school hours. There are a range of strategies, these a form of symbolic practice, that addressed the pragmatics of keeping young people alive as long as possible despite the violence that they were surrounded by.

In interviewing survivors about the impact that violence and its anticipation had on their day-to-day present, even when unable to articulate specifics, many nonetheless acknowledged that it affected their behaviors, perspectives, and relationships pre-death. This suggests a phenomenology of vague experience, of the things that we sense, that exists at the edge of consciousness. Perhaps the translucent quality of anticipation here—where specificity and language fall short, yet there remains a locatable presence in absence—is partially attributable to violence's omnipresence. Bloodshed in the city is common and adapted to as an everyday part of life. Residents have routines wherein precautionary practices, like covering the windows of the home or locking doors after entry, are built in for their own safety and security. These, however,

can be more broadly experienced and not all would fall into a characterization of anticipation. When these security efforts are motivated by an immanent expectation, rather than a mere possibility, of disaster, do such activities enter an anticipatory domain.

Ultimately, "regardless of whether disasters actually come to pass, they have already had their impact on our present lives. Crucially, the future increasingly not only defines the present but also creates material trajectories of life that unfold *as anticipated by those speculative processes*" (Adams et al. 2009:248). The varied forms anticipation takes are both an effect of omnipresent violence and a feature of it. As will also be highlighted in future chapters, violence extends beyond the temporal or spatial boundaries of an aggressive act. Here, even before a homicide occurs, its powers are at work reconfiguring the substance of the moment, turning it into a space for intervention and hope, or even paralyzing those unable to enact change.

Preparation and Readiness

Hearing the effect of violence-not-yet-happened on the present, I questioned where its bounds were. When I first encountered the future-orientations of survivors associated with the expectation of loss, I hypothesized that people would also begin grieving in anticipation of death. This, however, did not seem to be the case. Those I worked with were devastated when death occurred, grieving just as deeply as they would have had they not experienced the anticipation that shaped their lives leading up to it. Reflecting on my own case, in the weeks leading up to my brother's passing, when the warning signs were undeniable, there was a clear distinction between readying myself for his death and being ready for it. For example, I took time to process our relationship, trying to see if there was anything I could reasonably do to ward off the inevitable. Realizing that there was nothing, I shifted my interactions with Eddie to be more tempered,

deliberate, and loving. In our final conversations, I took care to treat each exchange as the last, avoiding doing or saying anything I might regret. I ended each with "I love you."

When the phone call came announcing Eddie's death, it underscored the finality of the decisions I had made. There was no undoing the circumstances that led up to the termination of his life. While I had attempted to prepare myself to be at peace with my incapacity to influence his situation, when he died, those preparations did not ready me for his death. This is an important distinction. Anticipatory behaviors prior to the deaths detailed in this chapter were not merely manifestations of anticipatory grief, or "the resilience developed as a result of coping with losses earlier in life" or "when one mourns in advance of expected death" (definitions from Nesteruk 2017:1019, 1022).

If the grief process ultimately is a reckoning with loss, anticipatory grief suggests disinvestment from an individual, as well as the closure of aspiration, of the hopes and dreams, held for them. What I encountered, and what I also saw homicide survivors experience, was a process far more complex than just grief: anticipation involves a reconfiguration of how an individual orients him- or herself to another person, to a community, to the social world. It implies living in the past, present, and future, thus to cope, plan, and reorganize social life, and, yes, mourn too. More than the passivity of coming-to-terms with loss, in sum, there is an impetus for action that accompanies the anticipation of untimely death. The awareness of Eddie's impending end initiated a process to prepare myself to cope with his absence. A similar reorientation occurred with both Hazel and Dorothea, regardless of the obvious differences in our situations. Recall how survivors purchased life insurance for their children, tried to relocate them out of state, wished for their incarceration, sequestered themselves at homes in fear, or how Hazel began writing Booker's obituary prior to his passing. Consistent across all survivors I

spoke with, however, as well as my personal experience, was that no preparation made in anticipation of death readies one for the existential reality of loss and the temporal and affective shifts that comes with it.

The experience of losing a loved one, especially a child, to an untimely, sudden death is unknowable except for those who have experienced it. Despite the extraordinarily high homicide rate and visibility of violence in Baltimore City, nothing readies an individual for the loss that follows: "It's different when everyone else is getting killed, but when it come around to you it's like you finally understand. Like, homegirls of mine have lost sons, and I was like dang, I ain't really never lose nobody like that. That is, until I lost mine. I felt like I lost my life. My heart was broken." Some survivors acknowledged that they couldn't relate to the experience of other survivors given the variability of homicide (e.g. the age of the individual, whether the perpetrator is caught, the manner of death).[51] To boot, parents, like Dorothea, who had lost more than one child to homicide also articulated the difference in experience from one to the next. Losing one, they explained, in no way readied them for the loss of another.

One woman, following the murder of her son, compared the emotions she was feeling postmortem with those she experienced in anticipation of his death: "I want to be numb again, I shouldn't be feeling this. I cried for two days straight. My daughter said, 'that's okay, now you can start doing your grief process.'" She described preparing for his death by mentally disconnecting herself from its prospect in the months leading up to it. One might read this as a refusal of anticipation or, perhaps, an anticipation of its own sort because of death's unknowable quality. Behaving as if her son was already dead and resigning herself to his future, she had hoped, would prepare her for the loss and protect from the pain of grief. Preparation for her, and

[51] I discuss this more in Chapter 2, in my discussions of hierarchizing grief.

other survivors, offered a sense of security by allowing them to focus on what was within their control. This, a form of reassurance in the profoundly uncertain, insecure future-present. Ultimately, however, the surprise that she still experienced feelings of grief reinforces how her efforts to mimic the alienation that follows loss did not offset its impact. As conversations with the woman unfolded, she spoke to the difference between trying to move through life thinking and behaving as if her son were dead, versus the experience of knowing he was. With the latter, the possibility and potential of an alternative ending was eliminated. Knowing that her son had been killed committed her to the truth, dissolving future scenarios of both hope and fear, and replacing the conceptual possibility of death with its reality. Her daughter, commenting that now, in her son's death, she could begin grieving astutely captures the difference articulated above, that between anticipation and anticipatory grief, preparation and readiness.

Premonition (or When You Know Death is Coming)

"I knew my son knew [he was about to be killed] because two days before that he told me he had a dream that he got shot up. And he woke up and had a really bad headache. That day he just stayed in the house. The next day after that he got killed. He knew, or he felt it. He sensed it."

Listening to family members and friends recount the days and weeks leading up to a violent death, a peculiar and inexplaicable pattern emerged: survivors described premonitions of impending death. Slight shifts in behavior, unusual questions, nightmares, or telling comments indicated to survivors that the soon-to-be deceased knew their fate and attempted to prepare those around them for what was to come. These anomalous events, which would later come to be read as foreknowledge of death, registered as out of the ordinary, a break from the everyday

patterns of behavior that they had come to expect from their loved one. After death, as survivors began to reflect on events leading up to it, they integrated these predictive events into their narratives of loss and applied a prophetic meaning to them. While the premonitions varied, they consistently underscored a moral commitment to providing financial security and stability to family.

Unexpected requests regarding life insurance, for example, were often taken as a sign that the deceased was aware of death's nearness. One survivor recounted her son asking days before his death, "You got a policy on me? Should something happen I want my son taken care of." A second survivor recalled a similar inquiry a month before her son's murder: "He asked me, 'Ma, did you pay my insurance?' I said, boy, why you asking me about that? I put it behind me." A day before his death, the man told his mother that he had a dream in which he was killed. "He told me that if something happens to 'tell my kids I'm gone away to college.' I asked him, what is going around? He never told me but he must've known something."

Some stories told by survivors suggested that death was known, perhaps even delayed, in the moments leading up to it. In one support group, a woman described how the men whom she suspected of killing her son sat in a car outside the home, waiting for him to come outside. "He stalled them as best he could until his girlfriend came home," she told, suggesting that he had wanted her to see who he was leaving with. When she arrived, he left without saying goodbye, without taking his phone or IDs. "He never leave out the house without a phone, or kissing me, or sayin' I love you!" his mother exclaimed, applying significance to the break from routine. When detectives found her son's corpse, they couldn't identify him. The girlfriend, on the other hand, was able to name everyone in the vehicle. Without firm evidence as to who was responsible, however, the police couldn't make an arrest.

Beyond stories indicating that the deceased knew they were to be killed, some mothers also described a palpable sense that something tragic would happen to their child in the days and weeks leading up to death: "I had a funny feeling that kept me up all night, the same way I did with my other son [before he was killed]." A noteworthy distinction here being that this sort of premonition was experienced prior to their loved one being killed and interpreted as indicating that something disastrous had happened. Looking back on these moments, survivors processed and applied meaning in retrospect too, interpreting events as a communication of loss made possible only by the bond formed between mother and child. Paulette, the director of the homicide support programs at Roberta's House, described this as a "deep connection… that is what we do as mothers: we touch them, we soothe them, we listen to them when they call us. We know when our children need us. It's a level nobody else can go to."

Premonitionary knowledge as expressed and communicated in instances of violent death goes beyond rational explanation. It is an uncanny phenomenon that appears to exist when the past meets the future in liminal space, a moment of dissonance that brings together the known and the unknown. Thinking through the structuring of anticipatory time, premonition is made possible by a similar process whereby historical, expected patterns of behavior are disrupted—a portent of death. Fraser (2021:7), in his study of death premonition amongst rural African American families, elaborates on the role of such stories in articulating the experiential knowledge that indicates the nearness of violence:

> Premonition inquiry allows storyteller and listener to reflect on the powerful interplay of ordinary experiences and the surprising and unpredictable hidden under the surface of everyday life. Flush with the intimate and specific details of individual biography and family life, premonition stories also offer evidence of and provoke inquiry into the possibility of destiny mapped outside of human control and awareness and yet mediated through human perception, decisions, and intentions.

Critically, premonitions of death—whether retrospective or occurring in the here and now—illustrate how foundational the inner-city's dual-oriented timespace is to its present. Time is, as Greenhouse (1996:1) emphasizes, "what makes things happen, and what makes acts relevant in relation to social experience, however conceived." Exchanges that may have seemed unusual are reassessed in retrospect, recast as a premonition, and made meaningful when construed as an attempt by the deceased to prepare loved ones for what was to come.

Given the limited and/or failed efforts by survivors to alter violent futures, it is also worth considering the role that premonition may play in alleviating feelings of guilt and responsibility for survivors. For a expectation of violence to exist reinforces fatalist perspectives that death was inevitable, an event of fate, or a divine action. Further, the mystery and intrigue that surrounds such stories can serve to assuage some concerns about how the deceased approached death and to reinforce attributions of bravery, stoicism, and fearlessness. If, for example, the deceased had preknowledge of violence, would they not have done something about it, had it not been preordained? Rather than focus on whether the deceased attempted to avoid their fate, survivors emphasized how knowledge of impending death led them to prepare those around them for it. Inquiries about life insurance for their offspring, efforts to create narratives surrounding the ideal of attending college, and arrangements for others to witness the offenders (presumably for future identification in the interest of obtaining justice), led survivors to connect narratives surrounding death with positive moral characteristics and commitments.

The plausibility of premonitions of death, experienced by both victim and survivor, is clearly uncertain. For family members and friends who cannot avoid its painful reality, reflections on the past through present knowledge may offer an opportunity to find insight, relief, and comfort. Regardless of the frameworks of analysis applied to make sense of premonition

stories, they ultimately remain inexplicable. There are kinds of cognition that elude theory and experiences that belong to the domain of the senses and affect, rather than to that of rationality. In thinking through dying as a liminal experience, premonition offers a productive lens to understand the temporality of death and the experience of anticipatory time. Premonitions would not be characterized as such if the forewarned event did not play out. Their exploration, therefore, helps to reveal how survivors navigate the ambiguities that follow untimely, sudden death, as well as how such uncertainties influence experiences of the present and narratives of the past.

Revelation

"Premonitions come from around us or from within, but revelations? They come from God," Reverend Michael, the bereavement minister who oversaw some homicide support group meetings and offered a sounding board for many of my theories, told me. I had come to him that afternoon to get his take on the stories shared with me by survivors about the events leading up to the killing of their loved ones. We discussed anticipation and premonition, how these moments seemed to lead into the next, each an encounter in an experiential chain of preconditions. What seemed to follow premonition, however, had me baffled. At or around the time of death, a handful of survivors—all mothers who had lost children—described hyperreal, even occult, experiences during which time they instinctively knew that their child had been killed; in many cases, without being informed as such.

Women shared other-worldly, dream-like visions and hallucinations where their sons came to them. Others, like Dorothea from the reconstruction at the beginning of the chapter, described medical anomalies, like losing consciousness when her child supposedly passed. One

survivor recounted a state of sensory override that she entered into, equating it to a feeling of spiritual death: "I zapped up. A part of you dies. A part of you *literally* dies." She had discovered her son's lifeless body and fell into a fit of hysteria, dissociating from reality. When police arrived at the scene, two ambulances were called—one for her and one for her son.

Recounting these tales to the Reverend, he was unphased. They were revelations, he explained, and he had both seen and heard them before in his ministry. His experience is supported by the ethnographic record, in which there is a rich and culturally diverse history of uncanny, even hallucinatory experiences, as well (Menezes and Moreira-Almeida 2010; Luhrmann 2011; Bilu 2013). These have been documented to be even more common among the bereaved (Grimby 1993). "As many as 80% of those who have lost loved ones report seeing, hearing, or feeling the touch of the dead person even among Euro-American populations, in which speaking to the dead is not normative" (Laroi et al. 2014:S214). Up to this point, each temporal dimension—from anticipating death, to encountering premonitions—seemed to lead naturally into the next in an experiential chain of preconditions. In this progression, though, these moments in the production of horror seemed even more inexplicable. Premonitions, I rationalized, were, at least, partially understandable in the context of retroactive meaning-making and reflection. The notion that death could also reveal itself to the survivor, indicating to them what was to happen or had happened in the transition from imminence to presence, was beyond cognition. Indeed, it was, the Reverend agreed. He encouraged me to embrace the enigmatic quality of these communications, noting that some things are beyond our comprehension.

To be sure, there are some encounters are simply inexplicable. Independent references to such occurrences by different survivors, especially those with no connection to one another, however, demand consideration. The Western, "scientific" imperative to recast human

experience within domains of order and rationality would misrepresent the experience of survivors. Unlike anticipation or premonition, these revelatory accounts belong to a metaliminiality, one that isn't necessarily between phases of time but realms of being. Revelations, it seems, exist somewhere yet to be understood or validated, between the theological and the rational.

Thinking through such encounters in terms of predeath anticipatory experience—even if in the absence of their explanation—we can frame revelation as a temporal moment in which anticipation reveals itself and the imagined future dissolves into the present. Heidegger (1996) affirmed that the death of others we witness is their "transformation to the state of a being utterly present, on hand, *Vorhanden*, from which their oblivious, future, and possibility-ordered existence has utterly vanished" (Lingis 2009:231). As discussed in analyses of anticipation and premonition, violence effectively transforms the consciousness creating a multi-temporal orientation (i.e. the simultaneous forward and backward looking) in the present. The revelation of an anticipated death disrupts consciousness from this, bringing the present moment to a temporal state like that of the corpse theorized by Heidegger, in which the continued imagining of a possibility-ordered future becomes, itself, an impossibility. The hopes and fears attendant on death's indefinite quality—that although we know it is certain for all, we do not generally know when—vanish with its occurrence.

Life in Death

What comes of the present moment when anticipation recedes and the future arrives? With no future-orientation to propel time forward, how is it to be experienced? These questions loom in the weeks after death. "Bereavement becomes a (temporality limited) liminal space in

which the deceased is afforded a temporary ongoing social presence…. The temporality of bereavement is culturally enforced in order to maintain the orientation of the living towards *life* and away from death…. Bereavement [is socially construed as] a 'time out', but one that gives way to a timely recovery" (Kenny et al. 2019:62). To survivors, though, bereavement does not seem conveniently bracketed as time away from normal life, to which they will inevitably return. Instead, homicide demarcates a line in time for survivors. To reiterate Kim's affirmation, "Life is changed forever." All future possibilities that made the present meaningful before death are replaced with a time-conscious emptiness. In place of thinking anticipatorily, grievers focus on the living present,[52] effectively pausing the protention of consciousness' temporal flow. Presence, instead, fills with the weight and pain of grief's emotions.

[52] The breaking from this multi-temporal orientation to the present is further reinforced in the language used to discuss grief with survivors. Consistently they would remark how irritated they were by friends and family who, to check in and connect, would ask, "how are you doing?" Variations of one survivor's response – "Of course, I'm doing terribly. My child was just murdered, what do they expect?"—were common reactions to such a question. Grief advocates and volunteers were aware of how it could enflame those struggling. One word added to the end of the question, however, entirely changed how survivors received it: "How are you doing *today*?" During my time working at the center, no survivor objected to that inquiry. By adding 'today,' counselors acknowledged that, even though death is a traumatic, painful thing to experience, that it has variation. It isn't single-noted sadness, but a varied, complex chorus of emotions that shifts moment-to-moment and day-to-day. 'Today' grounds the question in the timespace of the present.

ACT TWO: Mortem

Chapter 2 | Rage, Numbness, and Baltimore's Pain Problem

"They done made a freestyle rap about how they killed my son. And the anger part still hasn't arisen yet in me. My other son wants answers quicker than the detectives will bring. And to be honest, I'd be okay with that. For his killers to get locked up? That's too easy," Kiyanna mused shaking her head. Tears dripped, painting watery lines down her cheeks. We sat in the basement of a church, gathered around a folding table in fellowship – not of religion, but homicide.

"That's too easy for them." She repeated, "Because they'll still be able to see their family and talk to them on the phone. That's too easy. I feel that them suffering like I'm suffering would do me justice."

The room hummed as the other women audibly murmured closed-lip 'mhmms.' Raven, the group leader, cut in: "What do you mean *justice*? Who would be suffering? You mean his mother be suffering?"

"Yes, I don't care," she replied stone-faced, not bothering to wipe the teardrops collecting along her jaw. "Babies, mothers, grandmothers, whoever. I don't care. I'm not discriminating—from eight months to eighty-eight, it wouldn't even matter to me. It wouldn't. And I could be peaceful because now they are going to have to walk about with that pain in your heart like I'm wearing it. And it's not just me, it's my sons, his son, his nieces and nephews–"

Raven interrupted. "So you're saying you wouldn't mind if someone took the life of the man who took your son's?"

"Me, him, and whoever else! I wouldn't care! I wouldn't care. But it's too easy for them to sit in jail."

Raven maintained her composure but did not hesitate in her retort. “Well, I think it’s too easy for them to be dead.”

“No–” The volume in her voice grew with frustration. Kiyanna shook her head back and forth, causing the bubble of tears to break away from her chin at last, spattering her shirt with a dark line. “Not them. Leave *them* alive, leave them! Take their loved ones who they cherished. That’s just how I feel. Take their loved ones. Let them see–”

“That would make you the same as them.”

“It don’t. They’ve done opened up a can of worms that they wasn’t ready for. You have the balls to not only kill a child, but then you brag about it? You make a rap of it?” She reached down to the table and grabbed a plastic fork from the nearest Styrofoam plate, smearing off the leftover lasagna. She held it up like a trident, tomato sauce coated on the side. “My baby wasn’t even as big as the prongs on this fork.”

Without breaking eye contact, she snapped the tines one by one causing them to go flying in the direction of other group members. No one flinched. She continued, the cadence of her voice rising and falling with each sentence as if reciting poetry: “You can blow and he will fall over. He wasn’t that big at all. It didn’t take that many gun shots. And then you leave him in the middle of the road. What if a car woulda come, Miss Raven?”

A woman at the end of the table let out a wail. She sobbed audibly into the arm of her hoodie, breaking away only for sporadic gasps of air. Kiyanna ignored her: “I never woulda been able to see my baby. And I begged the detectives when they came to the house to let me see him. I told them, I don’t care if you say he dead. Let me see him, let me be the one that say he dead. I begged them. I called the undertaker downtown and asked them, ‘can I please come see my son? I know y’all have him. He didn’t make it to the hospital ‘cause no one found him ‘til the next

day. Can I come see my son?' They said no, so when they got him to the funeral home, I asked the funeral director: 'Just please, please just someone let me see him before the day that I bury him. It'll ease my pain!' And she said, 'Ma, please, I need you to stay as far away from here as possible. I cry every time I go to work for your babies. You stay home, you send somebody else who can handle it to come here, and I'll deal with 'em.' So that's what I did."

The woman in the back howled again. She groped at the desk behind her for a box of tissues, unable to see through the water that filled her eyes. Kiyanna and the other women sat quietly. They didn't acknowledge their own tears or each other's. A pregnant silence enveloped the room.

It lasted only a few moments before Kiyanna snapped, shouting as she pounded on the table, seemingly addressing her son's killers. "You have the balls to make a freestyle rap?! About how you killed somebody?! Then yes! You need to suffer! And should I have a conscience? NO! Why should I have a conscience about what happens to your family members when you showed and proved that you didn't have a conscience by taking my son? I will take it to my grave. I will make it right with that man someway, somehow. And I will not feel nay pity for whoever it may come by. Like I said, baby or grandmother, I don't care. That's how I feel. Sitting in jail is too easy. He can see his people. He can talk to them on the phone. He can get commissary, wear the latest style shoes, buy TVs. I can't get that. They took mine and they took me."

Raven jumped into the conversation, addressing Kiyanna with a calm firmness that made her a gifted social worker and group leader. "Listen now, I feel you. Of course, I don't agree with any more killings, but I understand how you feel. You're not the only person who feels like that. I just would not encourage you or any of your family members taking a life because you still will

have lost someone. You have every right to feel the way you feel. Again, I don't encourage anybody to act on it, but you have the right to feel the way you feel." Raven took a moment to breathe before addressing the woman crying in the back. "Sounds like that brought out some anger for you, Amaya."

She sniffled and wiped her face before speaking for the first time today. "I mean, what does justice look like? You know what I'm saying?" Her words slurred together, and she slowly began to compose herself. "Okay, yeah, you's gettin' locked up, but that's not enough! Even if they find out who killed my son and he's locked up? I want somebody to rape his ass—excuse me, y'all—but I want someone to rape his ass every day. I want these people to *suffer* because I'm hurtin' and I'm always gonna hurt. That was my son. I'm still tryna think of what he could possibly have done to have somebody stab him. They didn't shoot him from afar – no. They stabbed him. If you stab someone you gotta feel all of that. You gotta feel the knife goin' in. You gotta hear it. He wanted to really hurt him."

She paused before looking in Kiyanna's direction.

"What Kiyanna said just made me think. It's not enough! Everyone trying to make light of this, but there's nothing good here. You really get this, you say things that we think, but are afraid to say. I feel like I can just relate. I'm not the only one that feels like I'm hurting and somebody else needs to hurt too. I don't care what happened – you coulda fucked with my son, you coulda whipped his ass! You didn't have to kill him."

Grief and Its Misconceptions

Across popular culture and my informants, there is a common vocabulary for the gut-wrenching experience of loss that is grief, derived from two systems of classification: the

Kubler-Ross model of grief (colloquially known as the five-stages) and the medical diagnostic categories of "normal" versus "complicated" grief.[53] The former is understood to be a progressive series of emotions—denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance—that the bereaved move through when the unthinkable happens. The latter categorizes the bereavement experience into the normative, in which the mourner moves forward from their loss in a few months, and complicated, in which grief is debilitating and prolonged. While both the stages model and medical diagnosis of grief are far more comprehensive[54] than their mainstream applications suggest, these concepts have been adopted widely to summarize how people cope with death and dying, neatly reducing grief into a prescriptive taxonomy.

Survivors, support group leaders, and counselors with whom I worked referenced these categories casually. Survivors would ask when they could expect to move from one stage to the next or wonder why they skipped one emotion in the series: "I don't think I'm ever gonna stop with denial. I keep waiting for the police to come tell me they made a mistake… I look around on the street hoping I'll see my son…. I keep calling his phone wishing he would pick up." In support groups, the concepts of normal and complicated grief were occasionally used to illustrate the nuances of homicide survivorship. It was common for survivors to vocalize bereavement in these terms, explaining that what they were going through "wasn't normal." Perhaps the most pernicious consequence of the stage model is misunderstanding its final stage, acceptance, which

[53] First developed by Horowitz et al. in 1993.

[54] Kubler-Ross's 1969 text, *On Death and Dying*, where the five emotions are described, outlined a process that terminally ill patients go through in coming to terms with their own impending death. The five-stage model was originally not intended to be applied to the bereaved, nor were the stages meant to be interpreted as sequential, bounded, or predictive. As Kubler-Ross neared the end of her life, she produced a follow-up text *On Grief and Grieving* (2005) with David Kessler in which she detailed how the stages of death could also be applied to bereavement. Today, "Kubler-Ross's theory is taken as the definitive account for how we grieve." See: "Good Grief," Meghan O'Rourke, *The New Yorker,* January 24, 2010: https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/02/01/good-grief?utm_source=NYR_REG_GATE Accessed August 17, 2021.

offers the illusion that there is an end point to grief. Counselors and advocates push survivors to think about what acceptance truly means, explaining that grief has no definite end but is an ongoing process. Acceptance isn't a place where you arrive. Grief, they stress, will always be present, it just becomes more infrequent and less resonant as time goes on.

Scholars have pushed to move beyond a stage model of grief (Stroebe et al., 2008; Hall 2014), but its lay invocations persist. For homicide survivors, these constructions are a source of confusion and frustration when their lived experience doesn't align with Kuber-Ross's paradigm. Where do guilt, shock, numbness, pain, helplessness, and loneliness fall along grief's milestones? What should be made of conflicting emotions, like anger towards the deceased while also feeling crushed by the sadness of loss? Is grief not normal if it is drawn out over years as a criminal investigation and trial unfolds? Popular conceptions of what bereavement *should* look like cause already marginalized mourners to feel further alienated by their grief. This is not to say that lay constructions, like adaptations of the five-stage model, are entirely unproductive. In the absence of a vocabulary regarding how to relate to another's grief experience, the model offers language to talk about mourning and universalizes bereavement as a unifying human experience. What was apparent throughout my fieldwork, however, was that, on both individual and collective levels, there are unrealistic expectations of what those grieving a murder will experience, how long their pain will last, and how long-standing the impact of trauma often is on those around them.

Grief borne of homicide differs in comparison to that of other losses. Raven, the group leader, affirmed this regularly: "All homicides are complicated." Unlike a natural death, murder is sudden and unexpected. It carries a stigma, and questions surrounding blame circulate. Responsibility for the loss is assigned to both living and dead—to the victim, family members,

the murderer—and thoughts of punishment and revenge surface. There is a third party upon whom also to assign blame and the possibility for answers to explain the "why" behind the killing. In addition to grieving the loss of the deceased and grappling with how they died, mourning is further complicated by entanglements with the criminal justice and legal system. Trials and police investigations can be traumatic as survivors recount gruesome details or hear witness testimony. They also can offer hope that prosecution will bring a sense of justice. Many criminal trials, however, fail to result in a conviction, oftentimes due to the crippling fear that keeps witnesses from coming forward to police. Even a guilty verdict, however, does not guarantee that survivors will feel justice. This is a painful realization for many—punishing a perpetrator with a prison sentence, or even through a retaliatory killing, will not bring the deceased back to life. Publicity surrounding some homicides can exacerbate the pain of mourning. Some survivors are hounded by the press, and many are subjected to the informal reporting of social media, where Instagram pages like MurderInk publicize violent death in the city (see Chapter 5).

Grieving a homicide is a complex, multilayered experience. Intrusive structural entanglements, the graphic nature of the loss, and possibilities for revenge compound the stress and pain of bereavement. Despite the commonly accepted model, there is no roadmap for grief, especially in the aftermath of a homicide. Grief scholars and medical professionals have noted that there is no evidence that grief progresses in a series of stages or at a certain pace (Friedman and James 1998). "At the most obvious level, scientific studies have failed to support any discernible sequence of emotional phases of adaptation to loss or to identify any clear end point to grieving that would designate a state of 'recovery'" (Neimeyer 2001:3). After decades of rejecting stage-models, the growing consensus among bereavement psychologists is that grief is

best understood as a complex adaptive process in which the mourner must come to terms with a substantial life change. In doing so, the griever undergoes a process of "meaning-reconstruction" as they searche for significance and "attempt[s] to reaffirm or reconstruct a world of meaning that has been challenged by loss" (Neimeyer 2019:80; see also Neimeyer 2006).

While there is no quintessential process of mourning that fits any relationship, manner of death, or two people, over the course of my fieldwork it became evident that, as survivors confront loss and the substantial reconfiguration it brings, two common reactions emerge: rage and numbness. Each of these is a node in a repertoire of responses, sometimes serially related and distributed through time and, at others, merging into one another with no spatial or temporal logic. Together, they configure a geography of pain in which survivors grapple to make sense of the unthinkable, processing tragedy in a context of structurally produced helplessness.
This chapter travels through these points and examines the narratives survivors map onto them.

Rage

Few words capture the intensity and complexity of grief in the aftermath of violence. The rush of emotion dominates the body. These feelings, Durkheim (1965:407) writes, "denote a state of effervescence which implies a mobilization of all our actives forces, and even a supply of external energies."[55] Fifty years earlier, Freud (1918:209) described grief as "our complete collapse when death has struck down someone we love" part of a "cultural and conventional attitude toward death." Grieving a violent death is a totalizing experience of chronic, debilitating pain. "Whatever pain achieves, it achieves in part through its unsharability, and ensures this unsharability through its resistance to language," writes Scarry (1985:4). In the absence of ways

[55] Durkheim here was broadly referencing collective emotion in states of ritual fervor.

to articulate and share it, rage swells until it erupts, as Kiyanna's and Amaya's did in their impassioned (but benign) outburst, or sometimes, tragically, in violent retaliation. In some instances, it incapacitates mourners, and in others it overwhelms as a force that goes beyond emotion, propelling the griever to harm.

Few ethnographic texts are as successful in capturing the emotional force of survivor's grief (and my own experience relating to it[56]) as Renato Rosaldo's "Grief and a Headhunter's Rage" (1989:1):

> If you ask an older Ilongot man of northern Luzon, Philippines, why he cuts off human heads, his answer is brief, and one on which no anthropologist can readily elaborate: He says that rage, born of grief, impels him to kill his fellow human beings. He claims that he needs a place "to carry his anger." The act of severing and tossing away the victim's head enables him, he says, to vent and, he hopes, throw away the anger of his bereavement.

The text, which came to set the tone for reflexive ethnography (Rosas 2021), describes Rosaldo's struggle to understand the cultural practice of headhunting among the Ilongot in the Philippines. In an influential and personal admission, Rosaldo confesses to not being able to grasp the intensity of bereavement and his informants' emotional experience until his wife passed away in a tragic accident. After her death, Rosaldo ended his efforts to seek a deeper explanation for headhunting, concluding that grief and rage in bereavement are *sui generis,* that they "are only able to be experienced and apprehended, but not explained" (Robarchek and Robarchek 2005:207). Rage was the motivation for the Ilongot to headhunt: "In all cases, the rage born of

[56] In the prologue, I describe one of my first field encounters at Roberta's House in their grief counseling training. At that time, I hadn't experienced the sort of grief that volunteers in the training, some of them homicide survivors, described. They would reiterate that one "never understands a death unless they've experience it." More than a year later, when I began fieldwork just days after my brother's sudden death. I understood that empathy can only go so far in comprehending bereavement. Following my loss, the way I related to the grief of interlocutors shifted, just as Rosaldo's did. I had a baseline through which to understand the frustration with how others react to a death, and a baseline to locate the variety of emotions in bereavement. While not an equivalent experience to that of Rosaldo or my informants, it facilitated the development of my rapport and allowed for more thoughtful engagement.

devastating loss animates the older men's desire to raid. This anger at abandonment is irreducible in that nothing at a deeper level explains it" (Rosaldo 1989:18).

Some scholars have challenged Rosaldo's claim that the experience of grief and rage are unexplainable and thus exempt from further cultural inquiry. Robarchek and Robarchek (2005:210), for example, in their study of Waorani raiding, claim that even this behavior is understandable as it is, in part, motivated "by what they want to achieve in their world as they perceive and understand it." Purpose and intention, in other words, form the basis for action; this is informed by individual and cultural assumptions, as well as the social order of their environments. My fieldwork suggests that rage as a sociocultural experience among Baltimore's homicide survivors exists somewhere between these scholars' theories.

As described in the previous section, there is no uniform presentation of grief. Rather, there is a geography of emotion that survivors may experience as they adjust to the reality of their irreparably changed lives. Rage, notably, as Rosaldo suggests, when analyzed as an emotional experience, escapes explanation. But as a force that impels a behavioral response, rage it becomes comprehensible. In Baltimore during my fieldwork, rage was rarely contained. It was almost always directed toward an objective that, as Robarchek and Robarchek argue, was in some way a product of how survivors hoped to influence their new reality. It is thus better understood as a source of momentum that drives action. Often, the response had injurious potential.

Self-Harm

Suicide was commonly discussed in support groups as a desire survivors experience because of their anger. Conversations regarding self-harm, however, fell at the intersection of the

emotional—what, internally, survivors felt impelled to do—and the social—or the culturally defined framework of acceptable actions and implications of self-destructive behavior. Take, for example, Brittaney who, following the murder of her son, found herself overcome at unexpected moments with the urge to run into traffic. Little things would trigger her,[57] causing her to go from feeling alright, "smiling and laughing," to "doing a 360… I didn't get that forewarning." The first time Brittaney felt the impulse to hurt herself, she froze and stayed inside the fast-food restaurant she was at. She sat down at a table and cried for 30 minutes before she felt confident that she could return home safely. When she shared the experience with her sister, her sister was concerned. "If you run out into traffic, you're going to die," she implored. Brittaney responded in frustration, "No, you're not understanding. My mind is saying you're not gonna die, somebody gonna come and put their brakes on. You gonna get hurt but you're not gonna die. You're just gonna be laid up in the hospital enough so people can tend to you, and the thought of [my son] will be gone. I wanna hurt for him."

One evening at the homicide support group, Brittaney shared how since telling her sister, she had started to receive phone calls from different mental health organizations that were concerned for her. "I don't want to hurt myself," she said again. "There's just this feeling that comes over me, with no control or warning…" "The rage," Raven, the group leader, suggested. Brittaney agreed: "Yes, the rage. It says run out in the traffic so you can stop hurting for this baby, so you can get peace within yourself." Despite personally knowing what rage feels like, in articulating it, Brittaney emphasized its behavioral component, how it had the power to influence her actions. She also explained the justification behind the seemingly irrational act—she wanted to hurt for son, she wanted the deep grief she felt to be replaced. It is clear that, as Rosaldo

[57] When asked Brittaney couldn't describe what the things were triggering, but she knew that some external happening or internal emotion caused the significant emotional change.

claims, there are experiences which are untranslatable, sometimes even for those who have experienced them. Rage, for Brittaney, was a force that pushed her to act in a way that might have produced further injury. What exactly that force is, why it occurs, or how to predict when it will emerge are beyond explanation and, as such, she was limited in her representation of it. Acknowledging these limits, we are nonetheless able to see how rage opens new opportunities for analysis, specifically in how it defines the behavioral context within which survivors seek to inflict harm.

Retaliation

For Brittaney, the impulse to cause harm was directed internally. Some survivors, however, respond to rage with an intense desire to hurt others. While it was rare for female survivors to retaliate, some admitted to preparing for the opportunity: "I have a two-by-four that I keep in the back of my truck. That's for my son's father. Then I have a shotgun with two bullets, one for each of my son's killers," one woman described. Months later she saw the father of her children, whom she believed was partially responsible for her son's death.[58] It was the opportunity she had prepared for. She went to the truck bed to get the two-by-four but, when the time came to confront him, she realized that the father was in such bad shape that "it wasn't worth it." He was devastated, she explained, and it was evident that guilt was eating him up inside. "His life right now? It's probably worse than death," she concluded before returning the weapon to her truck. It is important to highlight that the behavioral response, while propelled by the emotional force of grief, is not a decision based solely on that grief, but rather on the totality

[58] The cultural force of rage is often accompanied by an impulse to redistribute pain and grief amongst those who contributed to a loss. When that impulse turns to action, violence reproduces itself in a vicious cycle of suffering for those affected.

of information and possibilities for recourse (see also Robarchek and Robarchek 2005:223). Perhaps if the police department was more successful in assuring survivors that they were doing everything possible to locate killers, or if the legal system improved its prosecution rates, survivors might be less likely to channel their rage into aggression.[59] Rage and grief are, in their emotional experience, irreducible. In the pursuit of understanding what motivates survivors to inflict harm on themselves or others, the cultural force of circumstance cannot be overstated, just as the sociocultural context that positions violent recourse as a legitimate response must also be acknowledged.

When the desire to inflict harm upon oneself or others was brought up in support groups or in the presence of the advocates, they were quick to remark that violence wouldn't take the pain of grief away. "It'll just give it to someone else," they'd explain. Advocates acknowledged that homicide survivors have all been traumatized by their experience,[60] and "trauma goes deep." The anger survivors experienced, however, must not be translated into action: "It's okay to feel the way you feel, it's not okay to act on it." Rather, survivors were encouraged to release the emotions they were feeling and instructed to not to cage them internally. When survivors allowed anger, frustration, or sadness to be suppressed for too long, it ultimately resulted in a damaging release. "If you hold it in, it'll make you sick. If you're angry, be angry. You gotta stop being so bitter. You gotta just let it go. Stop holding revenge in your heart. Leave those [killers] to God," Raven would implore of survivors. Roberta's House had strategies to ensure that survivors wouldn't feel judged in their sadness, anger, or other feelings. Little practices, like leaving tissue boxes on tables but choosing not to hand those crying a tissue, helped normalize

[59] There is no being sure of this, however. Sometimes rage and revenge exceed the logic of criminal justice.
[60] In addition to the trauma of grieving a homicide, many survivors had other traumatic experiences that they struggled with, including: housing insecurity and homelessness; domestic abuse; sexual abuse, rape, and molestation; PTSD from witnessing violence; parental abandonment; and incarceration.

expressions of grief. In one story shared with a support group, Raven described her frustration watching a doctor at Johns Hopkins hospital attempt to console a homicide survivor who was sobbing uncontrollably. The doctor kept saying, "don't cry, don't cry." Raven shook her head, disappointed. "I just wanted to jump in and say, 'would you please stop saying that?! Let the woman cry! She's gotta feel what she's gotta feel! That's the hardest part.'"

Medicating Grief

Patterns emerged in relation to the use of substances and medications to help the bereaved express or cope with their emotions. These fell along gender lines. Many women mourning the death of their child were prescribed pharmaceutical drugs to help offset the physical symptoms of grief, such as a lack of sleep, sadness, and anxiety. Despite there being scarce research on the effectiveness of such drugs to treat complicated grief (Bui et al. 2012; Gang et al. 2021), many female informants were nonetheless medicated to help them cope. Often, however, the prescription drugs would fix one problem but, in doing so, create another. One woman explained, "I don't sleep at night, and [the medications] help me sleep. But, with the medicine, now I really don't eat. My appetite is sucky right now. I can go two days without eating." Other survivors shared this frustration. A medicine prescribed to treat one physical effect of grief could introduce additional side effects. Some doctors would try to offset these with yet another prescription: "Since [my son's] been called home [to God], I don't sleep a lot. I went to the doctor, they prescribed me all kinds of things, but they have awful side effects. I have weird dreams. I can't see the doctor for them though because he'll try to prescribe me more medications."

Brittaney, who struggled against the desire to harm herself when she would be overcome with fits of rage, turned to doctors to help with her anger. But medication brought little relief. "There aren't enough pills in the world that can close down them voices," she explained, "I just be stuck!" Medication is viewed among female survivors as a panacea for their anger. When it isn't effective, they question the dosage or frequency that they take it. "Since I lost my son, my memory is shot. My anger became uncontrollable, I just explode with my marriage. It's about to not become a marriage anymore. That's why I had my medications increased. I've just been lashing out at everybody," one woman shared. I asked another how she handled the anger that accompanied bereavement: "How do I deal with the negative feelings? I bottle it all up inside and pray that I don't explode. So I take my medication every day now so that I don't." Throughout fieldwork, I got the sense that the drugs prescribed to women for their grief further complicated the healing process. Pharmaceuticals introduced additional side effects that worsened some physical manifestations of grief and numbed survivors to the pain they were experiencing. Contrary to the wisdom shared by many at Roberta's House that emotional release is critical in mourning, medication seemed to simply mute anger and numb survivors to their pain. It did not remove it, they explained.

I cannot recall any male survivors who described being prescribed medication to help cope with grief. Even within the same family, strategies for its management fell along gendered lines: "My son is so mad. He played [football], that's the only way he can let his anger out is to hit something. My daughter is on the same meds [as I am]. I never knew we were all grieving together." Interlocutors described men managing bereavement through self-medicating with drugs and alcohol. These substances, they'd explain, would help men express rage and grief: "a lot of [male survivors] are high, they're working through all of this rage." A study by Pilling et

al. (2012) supports the link between male bereavement and an increase in alcohol use; bereaved men were found to have an elevated risk of alcohol related problems for one to two years after the loss, whereas no difference was found in the drinking habits of bereaved women. Advocates and survivors often drew attention to the role that drugs and alcohol played in violence. They suggested that, in addition to drugs serving as the major commodity in street economies that persist through violent enforcement (Reiss and Roth 2000), they both drive aggression as well as provide a way for men to numb themselves to the intensity of soon-to-be-committed violent acts: "They wouldn't go through with it if they weren't high."

Alcohol in inner-city Baltimore, as it is almost everywhere, is associated with violent crime. One study showed a 2.2 percent increase in the count of violent crimes for each one-unit increase in the number of alcohol stores in a neighborhood, adjusting for "neighborhood disadvantage, percent minority, percent occupancy, drug arrests, and spatial dependence" (Jennings et al. 2013:62). Another more recent study (Trangenstein et al. 2018) found an even stronger association—"every 10 percent increase in alcohol outlet access is associated with a 4.2 percent increase in violent crime in the surrounding area."[61] In a third study researchers found that publicly visible alcohol ads in liquor stores were associated with "30% higher levels of homicide and 15% higher levels of aggravated assault, forcible rape and robbery. In Baltimore, this translates to roughly three additional homicides, aggravated assaults and robberies each year within 1,000 feet of the outlets that hang externally visible alcohol ads."[62]

[61] "Baltimore Liquor Stores Linked More to Violent Crime than Bars and Restaurants," Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, September 26, 2018: https://www.jhsph.edu/news/news-releases/2018/baltimore-liquor-stores-linked-more-to-violent-crime-than-bars-and-restaurants.html Accessed August 2, 2021.
[62] See "Alcohol ads visible outside Baltimore's liquor stores linked to increased violent crime," UNC Gilling School of Global Public Health, January 21, 2020: https://sph.unc.edu/sph-news/alcohol-ads-visible-outside-baltimores-liquor-stores-linked-to-increased-violent-crime/ Accessed August 2, 2021.

Numbness

Not all survivors responded to homicide with rage or any of the five-stage model's emotions; some just became numb. The psychological trauma and overwhelming pain for them manifested in a withdrawal from emotional expression. These survivors described feeling deadened—"dead" and "dead to the world"—by the loss, as if it were they who were killed. One woman spoke of how, at her son's funeral she watched on as others outwardly grieved: "Everybody says I was so strong.[63] Everyone one else was breaking down and all that, but I never did that. They never saw me do that. I guess I was just so numb." Advocates at Roberta's House described numbness as a safety mechanism, a way for survivors to protect themselves from the pain of loss. Being numb, they explained, was a way to avoid the shock.

The challenge of numbness as a grief response for many survivors is that it isn't legible to others. Wendy, a mother whose son was killed in a drive-by shooting, spoke of the frustration she felt as others reacted to how she mourned. "I felt numb, hell, I still am numb," she explained. Wendy's friends commented on her muted response by saying how strong she was and how it seemed she was doing alright. "They tell me, 'I can't believe you're on the phone talking to me right now. If that happened to my son, I would be a mess.'" The insinuation that she felt fine infuriated her. By not outwardly grieving, did it mean she didn't care for her son? Of course not, Wendy explained. But, "am I supposed to be on the floor dying like every moment of my life?" she asked rhetorically. "I guess I'm supposed to commit myself in the psych ward or the hospital or something." External reactions to her bereavement made her feel further disenfranchised. She already struggled with an emotional overload, she didn't feel the need to show others her pain, turning her suffering into a performance. Mills and Kleinman (1988:1012), in their study of

[63] Liao et al. (2020) have noted the association between the figure of the "strong Black woman" and negative psychological outcomes.

battered women, describe a similar affective state. While numbness may suggest being numb to feelings, it quite the opposite: "Our interviews… suggest that although numbness may protect the individual from experiencing particular feelings, numbness itself is an *overpowering* feeling-state." The authors argue that it is experienced as intense feeling and a suspension of reflexivity, or the capacity to "make indications to [oneself] and [one's] situation" (ibid.). The inability to change one's circumstances, combined with the attempt to protect oneself from the pain of loss creates a situation where survivors become numb.

It was unclear in my research, and to grief scholars, what conditions would produce one emotional response for survivors rather than to another. Occasionally, those dazed by numbness would experience breakthrough outbursts of sadness and rage. Some experienced sadness so deep and prolonged that it turned into depression. Others moved between a range of emotions, with no notion of what to expect from one day to the next. Universally, however, I found that mourning a homicide was profoundly isolating.

The Isolating Effect of Homicide

At a moment when social support is critical for the bereaved, many homicide survivors find themselves excluded and alone. Homicide not only pains the mourner, it upsets the equilibrium of social relations. Two factors in particular contribute to social isolation following a murder: first, in the absence of knowing how to engage with the bereaved, many avoid interaction; second, survivors become suspicious of their networks, especially in instances where family or friends are believed to have committed or been complicit in a death, fueling feelings of mistrust.

Rage and numbness, both extreme affective states, present challenges to outsiders unable to relate to the emotions as presentations of grief. Brittaney's sister could not understand the rage that urged Brittaney to harm herself, ultimately straining their relationship. Wendy's friend minimized her grief, making her feel stigmatized for not displaying a more overt reaction. Both responses to grief, equally intense, were misinterpreted; those closed to the grieving failed to legitimate and acknowledge their emotional pain. Survivors often struggle to balance experiencing and expressing grief in a culturally accepted and legible way. One survivor, for example, described internalizing hers for fear of how others would react. The practice was ultimately unsustainable: "I'm tired of trying to hold it in to make everyone comfortable," she said. When asked if there was anyone in her social network who she felt like she could express herself to, she replied: "Is there somebody I can talk to? Nope. Nobody want to talk about it." The discomfort and uncertainty around how to discuss homicide causes some to remain silent about it. They refuse to acknowledge the loss as a way to avoid speaking about it and pretend as if it did not happen: "I know he's gone, but we don't got to forget about it. They hurting my feelings not talking about him."

Rituals surrounding funerary practices exacerbate feelings of alienation. Immediately following a death, survivors are surrounded with family and friends who help with arrangements. But once the ceremonial gatherings end, they are left to grieve alone. Oftentimes this is when they finally reckon with the emotions that had been suppressed in the bustle of funeral preparations. "After the funeral, everyone disappears," a survivor shared. "They don't see you screaming, embracing your child in their urn." While not distinct to homicide funerary practices, this is particularly difficult for survivors as it compounds other behaviors that exclude and stigmatize.

Criminal investigations and assignments of blame can further strain relationships for survivors. Suspicion around who is responsible for a death adds to feelings of separation. In Chapter 3, I describe one instance of this in which a woman, following the loss of her child, felt as if the streets had gone silent. Previously, gossip would abound when a murder happened in the community, but when it affected her, no one would say anything about the loss. Especially given that the incidence of murder in Baltimore is limited to a small population, survivors become suspicious of those around them, even more so if they believe they know who is responsible: "Your friends are not your friends, you know, you can't trust people. No one. Who you think are your friends are the main ones that will take you out. They'll set you up and take you out."[64] Many survivors thus distance themselves from their social networks, unsure of who to trust or confide in.

Hierarchies of Loss

Perhaps most isolating for survivors is the pain they experience. It seems to be incomprehensible to those who have not shared their loss. In my initial months of research, it seemed that isolating behaviors also could be seen in how homicide survivors related to one another and their losses. Comments in support groups would suggest an evaluation of which bereavements were more devastating and whose pain was more significant. Frequent comparisons between survivors' losses and that of others, suggested a hierarchy of loss. Consider the following statements:

- *"I'll say this, y'all so lucky to have grandkids. Unlike you, my baby didn't leave no babies behind"*

[64] Statistically, it is unclear if this is true. Nonetheless, many survivors suspected that close relatives and friends of their loved ones were responsible for their deaths.

- *"I know you lost your brother and that pain is awful, but it ain't nothing like losing a son"*
- *"At least my son got to have some kids. Your son was so young – 19, 17, that's bad!"*
- *"You got to hold your son one last time. I had to wait two weeks for the funeral."*
- *"My son didn't deserve that, he had just turned 18 and matter of fact he had just got back from [out of state]. He ain't even been here—back in Baltimore—that long."*

Each of these quotes hints at ways of categorizing those killed, a relationality applied to the tragedy and trauma of homicide. There is a power, as Foucault (1971, 1973, 1977, 1978) has noted, of "classification to shape intellectual and social reality" (Snyder 1984); classification signifies importance. As I came to explore how tropes of severity regarding loss became more or less conventionalized amongst grieving survivors, I found that these hierarchies are themselves reflective of systems of power and the valuation of individual lives.

For a classificatory system to work, there must be oppositions and distinctions. These appeared in the criteria of categorization, the perspective of the classifier, and the context wherein such a classification arises. Gradings of loss such as age, relationship to the deceased, how the survivor was informed of the death or, put differently, the traumatic nature of its reveal, and whether or not the deceased had children that survived him or her, were frequently referenced in group meetings. Superficially, these assessments might suggest that some homicides are, simply put, more egregious than others. But, as I continued in my research, I came to understand them as providing insight into the survivors' worldview of how the cycle of life and death *ought* to unfold. Certain killings went against the natural order of things and, as such, were deemed more lamentable by survivors. The younger a victim, for example, the greater the tragedy.[65] He or she didn't have the opportunity to live a long, fulfilling life. Similarly, a

[65] Which, of course, is the case with almost all homicides, regardless of location.

mother or father burying their offspring is viewed as equally unnatural. Comparisons between classifications of loss (i.e. what is more or less tragic) expose how survivors believe death *should* occur. It reveals the inconsistency of expectations (and their violations) surrounding life and death and the reality of homicide in the inner-city.

Perhaps more important than the categories of classification are the act of distinguishing one's own loss from another's, in and of itself. In differentiating, survivors assert the singularity of their loved one. They resist the public tendency to lump their loss within a statistical group of nameless victims. Homicide in the city might be an everyday occurrence, but its experience, to survivors, is extraordinary. Although there is a pervasive feeling of resignation amongst the public,[66] suffering for survivors is not anaesthetized, regardless of how grief is portrayed. Indeed, many struggle to reconcile their pain with widespread attitudes towards violent death. Survivors assert how unknowable their experience is, even to one another. The individuation of loss and the emphasis on its inaccessibility offer a form of resistance to prevailing public discourse surrounding Baltimore's violence.

In public discourse there is a typification surrounding homicide that speaks little to the impact of killing itself on survivors but echoes public attitudes regarding who is truly a victim and thus worthy of remembrance. This is particularly visible in newspaper coverage. "Three men die overnight in Baltimore; homicide count passes 180" or "Friday evening homicide adds to Baltimore's grim total" are quintessential headlines from the *Baltimore Sun*. News briefs about killings rarely personalize violence and instead note quantitative details about the incident—the age of the victim, date, location of violence, number of the homicide in relation to the year's running total. In an interview with a former *Baltimore Sun* crime reporter, I inquired as to why

[66] Interestingly, this is also accompanied by feelings of outrage and terror.

certain stories, certain victims, received more personalized coverage. I was told the answer was that they needed to be "compelling." When pushed further, the reporter listed qualities that a victim might have that would categorize them as such: gender, age, multiple victims in a family, context, and culpability. Also, this includes race and socioeconomic status, which interact with these categories, although she did not mention them. In the reporter's words, compelling stories consisted of anything "more newsworthy than 'Johnny from wherever killed over a battle for a bag of crack.'"

While individuating, the act of hierarchizing loss is not entirely isolating—certainly not in the same manner described in the previous section. Rarely would homicide survivors explicitly state that another survivor didn't understand their experience—or that their situation was worse than another's. More often, classification would function empathetically, like when a grieving mother would point out that the conditions of her son's death were more favorable than the conditions of another (e.g. "At least my son got to have some kids"). Individuation served to recognize a fellow survivor's pain and the injustice of their loss. While grief may seem unknowable, they use this knowledge as the foundation on which to establish connection and community. In emphasizing classifications of loss, whether consciously or unconsciously, survivors appeal to the nuances of how death *ought* to occur. In highlighting how their loved one's loss deviated from this, they craft a narrative that justifies anger. This outrage serves to re-assert the moral principles by which the cycles of life and death are believed naturally to function. Finally, classification serves as a performative act of humanization. By acknowledging qualities of the deceased that go against the natural order of things (e.g. "Your son was too young to die"), survivors, in effect, reassert the identity of *who* was lost. Further, such statements affirm the tragedy of the death and lay claim to the individual as an individual, someone who is

more than a statistic or a nameless body forever linked to the street corner where they were killed. It is, in sum, a declaration that the nature of their absence is more deeply felt than how the public has become conditioned to view homicide.

Baltimore's Pain Problem

"Baltimore has a pain problem. We, as a collective have not learned to cope with pain. Our children are enraged. Adults are masking pain and trauma. It's not true we don't have resources in our community -- we aren't treating the problem, just the symptom. Why are our children so angry? Why are they so detached?"
-Letrice, Baltimore Ceasefire Co-Founder

Homicide structures the emotional pulse of the inner-city, both individually and collectively. Death inspires a search for meaning and a reconstruction of one's worldview after it has been shattered. "Neimeyer, Prigerson, and Davies (2002) suggest that the ability to reconstruct a personal world of meaning rests on fitting traumatic loss into an underlying assumptive base on which the self-narrative depends" (Armour 2003:521). For survivors, reactions to loss are varied and intense, with rage and numbness frequent responses to homicide's affective state of violation. In an effort to make sense of loss and reconfigure their social world, survivors do what they can to cope—medicating, isolating, and asserting the value of their loved one. Just as reactions of rage are individually felt, they also manifest collectively in similar ways: the former expresses as outrage and the latter as resignation. The psychic damage of inner-city violence affects across scales, sedimenting into what Letrice articulated as the Baltimore's pain problem. Similar to how survivors struggle to find meaning in loss and adapt to their new normal (or, really, new *abnormal*), residents as a whole and politicians wrestle with where to direct frustrations surrounding violence.

By and large, city residents are desensitized to homicide, especially when its victims belong to marginalized groups, like low-income Blacks who are beleaguered by racist

stereotypes of criminality and seen as less than human. At a community meeting one man summarized this: "In Baltimore, they're dying so often that people don't care. They move on." It takes sensational deaths, whose victims are seen as deserving of popular sympathy, before the public is inspired to take note.[67] How, then, are survivors to process, respond, and heal when the inner-city largely anonymizes, quantifies rather than qualifies, brushes over loss as if it doesn't matter, and worse, casts blame on victims? The mourning process alone is difficult enough for survivors. But it is made even more difficult when the prevailing narratives surrounding murder perpetuate the dehumanization of its victims.

In grief, however, survivors nonetheless find ways to push back against the collective consciousness of resignation. As illustrated in the example of classifying grief, survivors resist the dehumanization of their loved ones and reiterate the emotional darkness of loss. By asserting the significance of their loss and speaking of its uniqueness, they remind others of the geography of pain that they must navigate in their bereavement. In doing so, they construct a narrative that pushes back against the widespread numbness in Baltimore to proclaim that the life of their loved one, even in death, matters.

[67] It is no surprise that the rallying cry of Ceasefire activists is that residents "Don't be numb!"

Chapter 3 | Empathizing with Killers: The Material and Moral Economy of Murder

The first snow of the year had just begun to fall, dusting the balconies and roofs of the Butcher's Hill rowhomes. Pops of gun shots reverberated through the dense, early evening air. Minutes later, sirens echoed through the cityscape; red and blue strobing police lights danced along the shadowed alleys. I flipped on the police scanner – man shot during an armed robbery of the Baltimore Spirits liquor store. The second armed robbery there in two months. The neighborhood community groups on social media started to buzz.

"Anyone else hear what sounded like four gunshots fifteen minutes ago?"

"Anyone know what's going on on outside [a nearby restaurant]? Lots of cop cars."

Not long after, I took the dogs out for their nightly walk in the park, just north of the shooting. Police cars blocked the intersection and yellow crime scene tape enclosed the corner. Underneath the golden haze of the streetlight, freshly fallen snow sopped up puddles of blood. Forensic teams searched the street for evidence, stepping carefully over the personal effects of the victim—hat, glove, and stray dollar bills—tracking pink footprints along the powdered sidewalk. Onlookers gathered behind the taped partition, and I whispered a silent prayer. After waiting for many moments, unsure of what to say or do, I headed back, climbing the hill a few blocks.

At the top, I surveyed the park. The pagoda towered over fields of untouched white snow; its Victorian gables coated in a crisp white frost. Icy horizontal streaks painted lines against the foggy purple canvas of the winter sky. The soundlessness seemed at once respectfully solemn and eerily lonely. A gust of wind with its raspy howl pushed me on my way. I walked along as the snowflakes layered upon the concrete, descending like the man had to the frozen earth.

That night, a popular crime reporter published an article detailing the shooting that gained traction in the online group. Comments poured in:

"Stack em up. Trash comes on Tuesday."
-25 likes, 2 haha

"Bye Felicia! GTFO [Get the fuck out] of our neighborhood."
-12 likes, 1 haha

"Survival by any means necessary"

"Unfortunately, somehow the property owner will end up being the 'bad guy'"
-1 angry, 3 likes, 4 sad

Some responded:

"No. Can't let that narrative even begin. This old school attitude these business owners[68] exhibited is exactly what this neighborhood needed at this exact moment. In the same week that several neighborhood establishments were robbed at gunpoint these guys shut it down. If they need anything (lunches, community impact statements, whatever, we have to support them). What they've done here can't be understated. You see somebody saying otherwise, send them to me."
-51 likes, 4 love

"Agree 100%. We can't let the 'bleeding hearts' take this over. These guys are heroes, end of story."
-17 likes, 3 love

Many of the criticisms took issue with the article's reference to the robber as a "victim" because he was killed in the commission of a crime.

"He was a suspect confronted during the act of a crime, him getting shot for doing so does not make him a victim."

*"Victim… I think not… that F**KEN S.O.B. WAS THE SUSPECT. I hope he had his nuts shot off. Then he can be the tier bitch in prison."*
-4 likes

"I don't understand the tears, and if there are tears, I hope those are for the business owners and clients who had to go through it. Those robbers would not feel bad if they shot someone… I am glad this robber will no longer walk the streets, or rather will no longer walk at all. He is no victim, he is a robber, a terrorist, a punk. I won't be surprised if the store owner will be facing charges. Twisted System!"

[68] Referring here to the owners of Baltimore Spirits who shot the deceased.

-19 likes

"Next up: the 'victims' mom is about to go on tv talking about how sweet & nice her son is and say he'd never do something like this! He was the most gentle, loving son ever!"
-8 likes

Few defended the victim, although some remarked on the depravity of the comments:

"He was a human being. Why celebrate the death of another?"
-1 like

"I've never seen so many people happy about the lost [sic] of life. It's kind of disturbing!"
-5 likes, 1 haha

In a rare comment, a member of the victim's family chimed in:

"I've been watching this thread for the last several hours. Jon [the victim] had a troubled life and never really coped with the death of his father (he was also killed on the streets). I know it's easy to judge but it really is a repeating cycle in the African American community that's tough to break. A lot of times these robberies happen out of desperation. He was on the streets. I've been helping to take care of his son (my little cousin) for the last 2 years. What he did was wrong. I'd be upset if someone stole money from me too. However, the punishment for theft should not be death. If the investigation show that the owner of the store did not shoot because his life was in danger but rather because he wanted to recover the stolen money, then he should absolutely be charged…. People can change. Unfortunately, Jon will never get that opportunity. That's really all I have to say here."
-6 likes, 7 loves, 1 wow

Days later, details surrounding the shooting were released: Two armed gunmen entered the family-owned liquor store that evening and attempted to rob it. The cashier, in response, shot one robber who then fled, ultimately collapsing a few blocks away on a street corner. He was transported to the hospital where he died.

In an interview with *The Baltimore Sun,* the 35-year-old cashier sobbed: "God created him too. I have to answer for that. I have to answer for it! For the rest of my life, it's going to be on my conscience."

His uncle chimed in, shouting from across the shop, “You had to do it, man!”

“We do feel remorse. I didn’t want this to happen.” He continued on, noting how he feared for his safety. A bullet-proof vest, handgun strapped to his belt, and his bail agent’s badge—his second job—pinned to his chest reinforced the concern. A patrol car was stationed outside the store for days following the shooting.

Police waited nearly a month before releasing the name of the decedent. News detailing his previous criminal history spread quickly: The States Attorney’s Office gave him a plea deal for an armed robbery conducted in 2015 – he was to serve 20 years, with 14 suspended. He served three years before his release. Months later a warrant was issued for a parole violation, one month prior to the liquor store robbery. Unreported were those he left behind – a son and his fiancé, pregnant with Jon’s daughter. She was born eight days after his death.

…

I never expected to feel empathy for killers—especially after bearing witness to the agonizing grief of the survivors I came to know. In listening to their stories, however, I was surprised to find that a good number remained convinced of the value of life (“I don’t care who you are or what you did, you don’t deserve to die for it”) and acknowledged the complex context in which both victim and perpetrator are often trapped. As mentioned in the Preface, senseless violence in the inner-city is a myth. Instead, it operates within a logic, an environment of scarcity, and a climate of injustice where residents feel they have no recourse to deal with crime through the state or judiciary. Violence is also deeply relational, influenced by a sense of social accountability, understandings of respect, and pervasive mistrust. It becomes its own form of exchange and often is necessary to survive in the urban economy. That survivorship (not necessarily of homicide survivor, but of inner-city resident), also reflects on the morality of

being and the calculus by which homicide, the ultimate form of privatized capital punishment, is worked out. Throughout my fieldwork, I was frequently made aware of the circumstances that surrounded murder and violence, many of which made its commission understandable. Of course, this is not to say that it should in any way be condoned, but that compassionate consideration of context can be productive in making sense of the roots of and motivations behind lethal violence.

One of the co-founders of Baltimore Ceasefire, an activist organization committed to alleviating violence in the city, insisted at a gun violence panel hosted by Johns Hopkins University and Medical Center that, "if there was research on violence, it would show that the people in Baltimore are not savages." Caricatures of violent offenders that "allow ourselves to create a safe distance between what they did and what their actions say about who we are as a people, and what we allow to endure" reduce perpetrators to uncomplicated portraits of evil.[69] As such, it's imperative to break down attitudes and stereotypes that we attribute to murderers, this by challenging ourselves to consider the 'why' of violent crime.

Lieutenant Colonel Dave Grossman, author of *On Killing*, is correct that the vast majority of scholars who theorize homicide (and take on the ambitious task of locating its rationale) are the equivalent of virgins studying sex: we have no personal experience to inform our explanations (Grossman 2009:2). While we can consult first-hand accounts, as I have done, we will never truly begin to comprehend the "intimacy and intensity" of killing. It is possible, however, to articulate the material and moral circumstances that make violence instrumental. I do not want this chapter to be read as a directive to the reader to excuse or take pity on those committing violent acts. In fact, some acts of violence detailed below are truly heinous, so much

[69] "Empathy for a Killer?" Sam Chaltain, *HuffPost*, August 1, 2012.

so that residents have claimed that a street code, which historically restricted certain forms of aggression, no longer exists. I do hope, however, that as a reader you might try an experiment in empathy, recognize the circumstances of street life in the inner-city, and imagine how they might influence behavior. I mean no disrespect towards survivors or the hundreds who are annually killed in the city; it is, simply, important to remember that, just as survivors have felt the impacts of violence, so too have the families and friends of perpetrators, and so have the killers themselves. Thomas Abt, in *Bleeding Out* (2019:34), acknowledges that "shooters are not just perpetrators; they are overwhelmingly the victims of violence as well. 'You meet these kids who have been through some real shit,' said former gang member and current educator Erik King. 'Foster care, molestation, beatings. They have this empty look behind their eyes, and you can tell they're willing to do anything. With these young men, past is prologue."

Murder may be an ultimate punishment, a means to silence someone forever, but rarely does it put an end to conflict, ameliorate grief, or undo past injustice. Violence creates "losses on both sides," Ceasefire leaders say. In Baltimore, there has never been an all-out street war. The violence, instead, finds its balance as killing is met with killing ("blood for blood"); there is no battle to be won, just temporary losses to avenge and grievances to try to make right. This system of exchange taxes all, including future generations who grow up with absent male family members due to incarceration and violence. This was emphasized to me when I met homicide survivor Darryl Green and the man who killed his brother. Darryl stressed to me that survivorship is also experienced by perpetrator's families: "Same way my mother lost her son? [His mother, referring to the perpetrator] lost hers too for 25 years." Incarceration has a similar effect as death in removing men from their families, creating social and economic voids[70]. These

[70] Incarceration and homicide, while sharing similar social consequences, are not comparable in terms of the grief and pain survivors experience. Many survivors, as noted in Chapter 1, recognized the blessing of incarceration in

losses, both from incarceration and death, continue to fuel the cycles of poverty and violence, as well as hurt outcomes for young people in the inner-city.

Returning to the thesis of this chapter, I argue that there are two dominant economies, part of the reality of everyday life in the inner-city, in which murder is intertwined: the material and the moral. The material, or the gap between what is needed to survive and the availability of or access to those resources, situates violence as a more or less legitimate form of labor and production in the city. The moral, or the relationships and norms that dictate interpersonal behavior, positions physical altercation as a responsibility and a more or less proper way of responding to challenges to one's dignity or network. In considering these dimensions, I offer two reconstructions, in addition to the one above, that might serve as vehicles for empathy, allowing the reader to witness at second hand how these moral and material circumstances can lead to feuding. To overcome the plague of violence, we must first understand it, where it comes from, why it manifests itself, and how universally it harms.

A System of Purposeful Design

> *"The lifestyle of a dealer is just as addictive as the drugs you're selling. Being a drug dealer fucked me up. But it was my only opportunity."*[71]

It is no mystery in Baltimore City that violence is linked to the illegal drug economy. My interlocutors would often remind me of this: "We all know the drug trade is the catalyst for all this violence in our city." While there are numerous ways to trace the evolution of the city's drug

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comparison to the finality of death. More than one of the mothers I met with admitted to having had tipped off police or refusing to post bail for their own children. They hoped that if their child remained in jail it would protect them from retaliatory killings. Data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics supports this: Between 2010 and 2018, homicides in Maryland state prisons ranged from 40 to 62 per year, with an average annual mortality rate of 12 per 100,000 (Carson 2021).

[71] A quote from an interview, conducted in July 2018, with a former drug dealer who was incarcerated for violent offenses.

trade, there is one specific line joining it and violence that is particularly illustrative: employment. Nation-wide deindustrialization and the loss of manufacturing jobs, in combination with racist housing policies and practices that effectively left black neighborhoods without access to opportunity (and, for that matter, basic needs), motivated many young people to enter into business for themselves. The enterprise? Narco-capitalism. For decades, it has not only persisted, but thrived. Studies estimate that in 2015, Baltimore City's annual spending on heroin alone, generated by an estimated 19,000 heavy-heroin users, was at least $165 million.[72] In a city where "there are practically no-entry level jobs for people with less than a bachelor's degree that pay a family-supporting wage ($22 per hour)," access to a multi-million-dollar sub-economy just beyond the porch-stoop is hard to pass up (see also Anderson 1999).[73]

The allure of the drug market as employer, however, is not merely limited by the lack of jobs or opportunity. Rather, it has been forced upon many Black men whose criminal background exclude them from legal forms of employment or welfare support. How so many residents today have come to be embroiled within the criminal justice system is, in large part, linked to the policing practices that gave rise to mass incarceration in major American cities (Wacquant 2002; Alexander 2012; Hinton 2016). One of Baltimore's most misguided attempts to increase public safety, which ultimately perpetuated the city's drug economy and violence, was Mayor Martin O'Malley's crippling implementation of "zero tolerance policing" in the late 1990s and early 2000s.[74] The technique, first developed by New York City's police commissioner William Bratton in 1994, emphasizes fighting urban disorder and crime by

[72] This figure is deemed by the Baltimore Metropolitan Council even to be low, considering it does not account for occasional users. See "Heroin creates crowded illicit economy in Baltimore," Jean Marbella and Catherine Rentz, *The Baltimore Sun*, December 19, 2015.
[73] "Barriers to Employment Opportunity in the Baltimore Region," Baltimore Metropolitan Council, Opportunity Collective, June 2014.
[74] See also "O'Malley's tainted legacy," *The Baltimore Sun*, August 12, 2016: https://www.baltimoresun.com/opinion/editorial/bs-ed-omalley-doj-20160813-story.html Accessed July 27, 2021.

arresting and prosecuting those who commit petty crimes (Bratton and Dennis 1997). Low level offenses, such as jaywalking, loitering, teen drinking, drug dealing, and panhandling, led to the arrest of individuals by police departments who went on the offensive to combat crime. The goal of the tactic, inspired by criminology's broken windows theory, was to create a climate of law and order that would discourage more serious offenses through informal social control (Garland 2001). Police officers' performance evaluations were based on the number of arrests made; an officer who made a high number would be well-positioned for promotion. Sargent Louis Hopson, a thirty-five-year Baltimore Police Department officer recalled the tactics used in zero-tolerance policing in an interview with *The Baltimore Sun*: "In preparation for Wednesday and Thursday statistics meetings, officers instituted 'Jump Out Tuesdays,' where they'd arrest clusters of inner-city residents for no reason at all."[75] Some claimed that Jump Out Tuesdays weren't limited to Tuesdays at all, that "jump-out Tuesdays used to be, in fact, jump-out Tuesdays and jump-out Thursdays. Now there are jump-outs every day, called 'daily initiatives.'"[76] The number of arrests skyrocketed in Baltimore as a result of this practice, these being reflective more of police behavior than a rise in criminality. In 2005, Baltimore documented over 108,400 arrests, a sixth of the city's population at the time.[77] That same year, it was estimated that more than half of Baltimore's Black men in their 20s were either incarcerated or under criminal justice system supervision.[78]

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[75] "The Mayor Who Cracked Down on Baltimore," Nick Tabor, Jacobin Magazine, May 14, 2015: https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/05/omalley-baltimore-clinton-democratic-primary-president/ Accessed July 27, 2021

[76] "Every day can be 'jump-out Tuesday,'" Gregory Kane, The Baltimore Sun, August 12, 2006: https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-2006-08-12-0608120029-story.html Accessed July 27, 2021.

[77] Tabor, "The Mayor Who Cracked Down on Baltimore."

[78] "Study: 1 in 5 young black city men in jail," Ryan Davis, *The Baltimore Sun*, March 15, 2005: https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-2005-03-15-0503150071-story.html Accessed July 27, 2021.

Zero-tolerance policing has had lasting consequences for the Baltimore community and across the world. Residents who couldn't pay bail were kept in holding cells for weeks on end, causing them to miss work and school. For those prosecuted for petty crimes, documentation of the incident on their criminal records prevents them from gaining many forms of employment—"criminal records exclude a fifth of job seekers in Baltimore City from most job opportunities"[79]—and deny the right to vote, or access veterans benefits, food stamps, and welfare. For low-income Blacks, incarceration effectively results in civic death. Poverty, a lack of opportunity, and little social capital create the circumstances in which illegal economies can flourish. Without any means of securing stable, well-paying, honest labor—not to mention any reliable system of protection from the police—many inner-city residents turned to illicit entrepreneurialism and the protections of a gang to survive. "As in many US inner cities beset by public and private sector disinvestment, the drug economy has filled the economic vacuum and become the most readily accessible 'equal opportunity employer'" (Karandinos et al. 2014:3).

Systematic disenfranchisement has gone beyond the inner-city's employment crisis and mass incarceration to work in concert with the hyper-segregation of run-down neighborhoods. Sociologist Loic Wacquant (2002) has examined state-sponsored attempts that, since the founding of the United States, have worked to confine and control Black Americans. These "peculiar institutions"—namely, slavery, Jim Crow, the urban ghetto, and the carceral system/hyper-ghetto—have extracted labor from and ostracized Blacks to "minimize contacts with Whites" (ibid., 55). Wacquant theorizes the space of the ghetto as being built from four major elements: 1) stigma; 2) constraint; 3) territorial confinement; and 4) institutional encasement. The ghetto effectively warehouses low-income, Black residents, protecting the

[79] "Barriers to Employment Opportunities in the Baltimore Region," Baltimore Metropolitan Council, Opportunity Collaborative, June 2014.

social body and ensuring that it needn't encounter its marginalized members. "The resulting formation is a distinct *space*, containing an ethnically homogeneous *population*, which finds itself forced to develop within it a set of interlinked *institutions* that duplicates the organizational framework of the broader society from which that group is banished and supplies the scaffoldings for the construction of its specific 'style of life' and social strategies" (ibid., 50). In inner-city Baltimore, the drug economy and gangs have emerged to meet the needs otherwise unmet by dominant social organizational frameworks that provide gainful employment, autonomy and dignity, and police protection.

"There is a whole system designed to destroy the most powerful being on Earth: The Black man," one of my informants insisted. "Everything that we look at, everything that we accept, everything that we learn in this society is designed to destroy the Black man. Everything…. They want you to accept us being murdered in front of your eyes." His diagnosis of the systematic marginalization that constitutes everyday life for many Black Americans, especially those living in the inner-city, holds truth. The conditions that predispose residents to negative life outcomes are themselves linked and, as demonstrated below, spatially concentrated. Consider a comparison[80] of two Baltimore neighborhoods, less than a ten minutes' drive apart or three miles' distance:

Figure 2. A Comparison of Two Baltimore Neighborhoods

	Upton/Druid Heights	**Greater Roland Park/Poplar Hill**
Total population	10,071	7,620
% of Black residents	93.3%	6.9%
Median household income	$15,950	$104,482
% unemployed	22.3%	2.3%

[80] Data is derived from Baltimore City's 2017 Neighborhood Health Profiles, compiled by the Baltimore City Health Department.

% of families in poverty	60.1%	4.9%
% of land covered by food desert	26.3%	0.0%
Hardship index[81]	82	16
Non-fatal shooting rate[82]	15.5	0.0
Homicide rate[83]	7.7	0.0

In addition to being heavily segregated, these neighborhoods illustrate the stark inequality that has accumulated over years of racist and unjust policies and practices. Upton/Druid Heights, like so many Baltimore neighborhoods, is not singularly burdened by poverty, violence, or unemployment. "Can we acknowledge that all of this is by design?" one of my informants, an activist, implored. "We have the tools and resources and knowledge to fix [violence in Baltimore] but the people that have the power to do something work elsewhere." To her point, the city government has overwhelming and disproportionately spent public funds on policing and in the development of white communities.[84] This, in turn, has further disadvantaged low-income people and populations of color and created the backdrop for diminished social mobility. Many residents in such neighborhoods are trapped by poverty and/or gang ties and lack the means to break out. They make do with what they can.

The circumstances of life in neighborhoods like Upton fosters the dependency of many residents on the drug economy and subsequent confrontations with violence. But many of the survivors I worked with didn't connect their limited options and the need for existential and

[81] "The Hardship Index combines information from six socioeconomic indicators - housing, poverty, unemployment, education, income, and dependency. Please see Technical Notes for details on the Index and how it was calculated. The Index ranges from 100 = most hardship to 1= least hardship" (Neighborhood Health Profile 2017).
[82] "The number of non-fatal shootings per 10,000 residents (all ages) per year. Data are based on the location of the incident, not the residence of the victim(s)" (Neighborhood Health Profile 2017).
[83] The number of homicides that occurred per 10,000 residents (all ages) per year. Data are based on the location of the incident, not the residence of the victim(s).
[84] "How Larry Hogan Kept Blacks in Baltimore Segregated and Poor," Sheryll Cashin, July 18, 2020: https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2020/07/18/how-larry-hogan-kept-black-baltimore-segregated-and-poor-367930 Accessed January 14, 2020.

economic survival with the bloodshed that befell their loved ones. Instead, they blamed themselves for their circumstances:

> *"If I had been more successful my kids wouldn't have to live in this fucking rat trap called Baltimore City. People worry about the wrong shit. You worry about Jordans and clothes and video games instead of worrying about your children's safety. They talk about the police shooting us, but one police shooting a year versus 400 Black people killing other Black people a year. I'm tired of it, I don't want to live around my own people anymore. I don't want to associate with them. I'm irritated, I'm disgusted with our behavior. It's fucking terrible."*[85]

Violence as Labor

Jasmine, a homicide survivor, hands me seven CDs in white paper envelopes to review for my research. "This is the evidence used in his conviction?" I ask, unsure. "This is the *whole* case," she clarifies. It seems hard to believe. Movies and television dramas portray criminal discovery and court records as a spectacle wherein hundreds of files are contained in dozens of overflowing boxes, not in a few flimsy discs. "Are you sure I can take these with me?" I needed her confirmation a second time in case I had misunderstood. I hadn't. Before leaving her apartment, I questioned her again, the gravity of the transfer hitting me: "Do you have another copy of these?" I was hoping for a fail-safe. There weren't duplicates, however; this was all she had. I mentally planned to copy and return them immediately.

The reason for the visit to Jasmine's home was like so many others – she had lost her son to homicide a few year's prior. And yet, Jasmine's situation was unique. The files that she handed me were not case files from her son's murderer's trial. Rather, they contained witness testimony, court records, crime scene photos, and discovery for her other son, Donte, convicted of murder and serving decades in prison. "He's innocent," she'd implore, "they didn't have a case." I agreed to look over the files and, if ever able, I would pass them on to someone who

[85] Deadly force by police was rarely mentioned by my informants and, for most survivors, was not as significant a problem as street violence.

could give his case a second look.[86] Jasmine struggled with the loss of her youngest son, Rickie, a funny, shy boy who unlike his brother, "don't do stuff."[87] Death was an unimaginable consequence for any wrong he could have done: "If he was paralyzed, you know, I could understand that. But to take his life? I just want to know, why did you hate my son so bad that you had to kill him? And then [his friends] let him lay on the ground for 30 minutes before anybody call an ambulance?" Donte, in phone calls from prison, would express his frustration with Rickie's death. "He said, Ma, I feel like it should have been me," Jasmine relayed. "And I said, 'don't say that!' He was like, 'but Ma, Rickie a comedian, Ma. He laugh all the time, Ma. He a little nerdy boy.' It really bothers me."

Donte's incarceration was just beginning. Unless overturned, he would serve a large portion of his life behind bars after a witness linked him to a murder in Baltimore. State's attorneys touted his conviction as a victory for crime fighters in the city. A top hitman of a deadly Baltimore gang, they claimed, had been taken off the street. After Rickie's death, a transfer was made for Donte to be moved to a new facility. His new prison, cell, and bunk had once been that of his late brother,[88] an unlikely coincidence. When Donte would look up at the ceiling, he'd see where Rickie had engraved his name into the board. His memory haunted Donte. Jasmine couldn't make sense of the transfer. She called and spoke to prison officers who claimed to be as perplexed as she was. "[The guard] was saying that he don't understand why they up and moved him. I was like, 'did my son do something?' He was like, 'no.' That it was a

[86] Unfortunately, as of this writing, I was not able to locate an organization that would consider the case or accept my referral. For example, the well-known Innocence Project only considers case where the alleged perpetrator could be exonerated due to DNA evidence; this, unfortunately did not appear to be available in Donte's case. Other organizations require that the request to review a case must be submitted by the convicted individual.
[87] I took this to mean that he didn't participate in violence. His mother, comparing her two sons, explained that if Rickie encountered a conflict, he could "make peace and walk away," whereas Donte was more aggressive.
[88] Rickie had served time in prison for weapons possession, theft, and drug possession, among other offenses.

shock to all of them. I don't know why they move him." Donte phoned home distraught. "Ma, why would they do this?" he'd ask.

Since the transfer, Donte's health has deteriorated. Social workers would phone Jasmine, letting her know that he'd "passed out again." His asthma was bad, but guards, Jasmine reported, would not let him seek medical treatment. "He may be in there for murder, but he still him, you know what I'm saying?" she insisted. Donte requested a second transfer to escape his bunk and its memories, as well as be located closer to the city, where Jasmine could visit without needing to rent a car or request a ride. To my knowledge, that transfer was never made.

Driving to my next scheduled home visit, the discs vexed me from the passenger's seat. Never before had I been in possession of something so valuable. They contained a man's life – it wasn't the sentimental memorabilia of a decedent I was accustomed to handling. These—like her son—were very much alive. They were of consequence to his future and Jasmine's. This was her chance to save her only living son. Moreover, they represented trust and faith. Throughout fieldwork, I internalized a deep sense of responsibility to the survivors I met. I don't know why Jasmine trusted me but, in that moment, nothing seemed more important than trying to do right by her. Arriving at the next home, I slipped the discs into my folder and clutched it to my chest. I didn't dare leave them in the car for someone to steal.

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Baltimore's drug economy is largely localized to multi-block territories controlled by gangs that oversee operations in a section of a neighborhood. Part of what safeguards the success of street dealers in securing this space—ensuring crews have a monopoly over operations and protecting them from robbery (or worse, prosecution by police)—is having the firepower to eliminate threats. There is a well-established and strong connection between the drug economy

and violence.[89] In my fieldwork, I found that violence is such an integral part of its operations that it served as a form of labor unto itself. Crime, particularly violent crime, is not normally thought of as work in the ordinary sense. But, for many in the inner-city, where there is an absence of legal employment options for which residents are eligible, it is monetized. Drugs are bought wholesale and sold at a markup with costs and revenues associated with buying and selling, and profit retained from the differential. Violence, like drugs, is a commodity, something of material value, which can be bought or sold at a price. Those who peddle violence view it explicitly as a form of work (see Sullivan 1989; Shakur 2004; Richardson and St. Vil 2015) and have families that rely on their financial contribution. A note: there is a sophisticated literature on criminal economies, gang accounting, and organized crime (of particular mention for the inner-city context is Levitt and Dubner 2005: Chapter 3). My concern here is not with criminal economies per se but specifically with violence as a means of production. This is not captured by a labor theory of value, but by a labor theory of violence that yields both negative and positive value. There are two primary dimensions of violence as labor in Baltimore City. The first is directly income-producing, like guns for hire or contracted killings; it yields money for perpetrators. The second is indirect, wherein force is employed to protect oneself or secure future economic prospects. In both, deeply intwined are the moral worlds of perpetrators, discussed below, in their identity and personhood.

No one flinches in homicide support groups when a "hit," or contract killing, is brought up. The notion of paying another to take a life is far from a fictionalized concept; survivors I knew had loved ones killed by someone "putting" or "taking" out a hit on them. One I worked

[89] While this section goes on to discuss how involvement with illegal drugs can increase exposure to and engagement in violent acts, it is worth noting the converse here, that those who are victims of violence or survivors of homicide are, in turn, predisposed to use drugs (see Chapter 2). The two are linked both ways through shared risk factors.

with told me that someone had contracted her own death prior to killing her son—"I guess I had talked too much."[90] The price of a life? I was told it could be as little as $2,000 but typically went for $5,000.[91] "[The] normal and understood rate for a contract killing in Baltimore is $5,000," the charging papers for alleged hitman Derrick Smith read.[92] But money isn't the only form of payment for killing. Liquid assets, like watches, guns, and drugs, which are easily converted into cash, can be exchanged as compensation. While personal profit motivates some contracted killings, allegiance to an aligned gang and securing its financial operations also are significant motivators for violence: "All the [gang] thinks about is money," one gang member stated. He went on to describe how the gang he was affiliated with created an atmosphere of obligation of dealers to crew leaders by manufacturing debt. Higher-ups, he claimed, would steal from the drug stashes given to their own dealers and then hold the dealers accountable for the loss. The dealer would then be responsible for generating the money owed to the "organization," thus creating a sense of indebtedness. Outstanding debts within the gang tended to lead initially to threats of violence, whereas those outside were more likely to result in force.

Movies and television shows portray contract killing as carefully devised and calculated acts carried out by professional assassins. In Baltimore, however, hitmen largely do not live up to this image. Based on informant interviews, newspaper reporting, and court documents, it appears that while some hitmen are prolific, they are less sophisticated in execution and there isn't a need to be. Structural components of the city and its criminal justice system reinforce this. There is a culture of fear that dissuades witnesses from coming forward to share information about a crime.

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[90] It was never made clear to me how this was canceled, or how she was able to avoid such a fate.
[91] See also "Baltimore hit man who killed for $5,000 pleads guilty," Justin Fenton, The Baltimore Sun, September 23, 2016: https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/crime/bs-md-ci-hitman-sentenced-20160923-story.html Accessed January 17, 2021.
[92] "Accused Baltimore hitman has 'a number of contract murders' under his belt, court document says," Van Smith, *The Baltimore Sun*, June 4, 2014: https://www.baltimoresun.com/citypaper/bcp-blog-21058-20140408-story.html Accessed January 17, 2021.

The state's attorney's office is overloaded, causing them to strategically select which cases (and crimes)[93] to prosecute. And the understaffed police force means that not all forensic evidence for a crime scene might be collected or that there might be hours-long delays before an investigatory team arrives. Further, one of the significant considerations in committing lethal violence is surprisingly bureaucratic: the police jurisdiction. It is more rational to commit a homicide in Baltimore City than in Baltimore County:[94] the homicide closure rate is higher (82%) in the county,[95] compared to 32% in the city.[96]

Armed robberies offer a less lethal but still extractive form of violence. For some, robbery demands an adherence to certain principles. Poor black families from one's own neighborhood shouldn't be stolen from (see also Prudente 2019). In any case, White, wealthier communities are more lucrative sites. Another commonly accepted rule is not to rob those affiliated with your inner circle. For those whose livelihood was supported entirely by money earned through crime, these standards are sometimes less strictly observed; even family members of fellow gang members are fair game. Rogue behavior like this, which deviated from accepted norms on the street, struck fear into residents in the community.

Economist Steven Levitt (2005:101), using data collected by sociologist Sudhir Venkatesh on gangs in inner-city Chicago, explored the financial records of the notorious Black

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[93] In a bold move in 2021, State's Attorney Marilyn Mosby announced that she would make a formerly COVID-19 policy of dismissing criminal charges for minor crimes permanent. Nonviolent criminal cases of "attempted drug distribution, prostitution, trespassing, open containers, and minor traffic offenses" will all be dismissed. See "Marilyn Mosby declares war on drugs over, formalizes policy to dismiss all possession charges in Baltimore, "Tim Prudente, *The Baltimore Sun,* March 26, 2021: https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/crime/bs-md-ci-cr-mosby-stops-drug-prosecutions-20210326-7ra6pn2a4zcexnj6hmfv4wj6li-story.html Accessed July 28, 2021.

[94] "Accused Baltimore hitman has 'a number of contract murders' under his belt, court document says," Van Smith, *The Baltimore Sun*, June 4, 2014: https://www.baltimoresun.com/citypaper/bcp-blog-21058-20140408-story.html Accessed January 17, 2021.

[95] "Homicides in Baltimore County down more than 30% in 2020, but shootings spike," Taylor Deville, *The Baltimore Sun,* January 15, 2021.

[96] "Baltimore ending the year with 32% homicide clearance rate, one of the lowest in three decades," Jessica Anderson, *The Baltimore Sun*, December 30, 2019.

Disciples gang. Among the expenses are the itemized costs of violence, including payouts from the gang to family members of victims. “The gang not only paid for the funeral but often gave a stipend of up to three years’ wages to the victim’s family.” When Venkatesh asked why the gang chose to do this, the response of the gang member was: “That’s a fucking stupid question… their families is our families. We can’t just leave ‘em out. We been knowing these folks our whole lives, man, so we grieve when they grieve. You got to respect the family.” Payouts for the death of gang members signify a flip-side to the productive capacity of violence. They illustrate the negative side to the labor of violence and the violence of its labor. Nancy’s Munn’s *The Fame of Gawa* (1986:3) explores how qualitative experience informs the way in which a community creates value, thereby producing the social world:

> Value creation ... is a complex symbolic process, both a dialectical formation of the symbolic system of meanings constituted in sociocultural practices and an ongoing dialectic of possibilities and counter-possibilities – explicit assertions of positive and negative value potentials – through which the members of the society are engaged in an effort to construct and control themselves and their own social world.

Thinking through homicide-as-work in the context Munn’s theory of value, we are able to consider how violence results in simultaneous positive and negative value transformations. Violence can be lucrative for earners, but it comes at a cost to the gang (as in the Chicago example) and, devastatingly, to the family. Either must recoup lost wages and burial expenses, to make no mention of the emotional toll of loss. Gang members, unlikely “survivor” figures, described “breaking down” at the news of a member’s killing, or lashing out during funeral services (“You n----s better not come outside ‘til I get some answers!”).

In contrast to Venkatesh’s Chicago research, I can only remember one instance in which one of the survivors I interviewed described receiving money from the affiliates of her deceased son. Survivors are heavily burdened by the cost of killing, some having to “keep [their child] on

ice" at the morgue "until [they] could afford to pay for the funeral." I attribute this difference to the fundamental makeup of gangs in Baltimore compared to those of the Windy City. Chicago is noted for gangs of a large scale and elaborate internal organization. Gang culture in Baltimore is smaller and less-established, with fewer major-name gangs directed by kingpin leaders. "Baltimore's different," Dante Barksdale,[97] outreach coordinator for Safe Streets Baltimore, an anti-violence organization, explained. "This is not a gang town. This is a city of blocks and housing projects."[98] While subsets of the Bloods, Crips, and Black Guerilla Family exist, they are generally localized by neighborhood into geographical "regimes," "bubbles," and "crews." Even gang names reflect the block-centric quality of street organizations: "The C.B.S. group" is named after the streets of Calhoun, Baker and Stricker; the "N.F.L." gang refers to the streets of Normandy, Franklin, and Loudon in the Edmonson Village. The small scale of these groups leads some residents, whom police departments might classify as belonging to a gang, to resist such a categorization. The "gang" is effectively just a neighborhood group with which residents engage in criminal activity.[99] Compared to Chicago's gang scene, Baltimore's crews are nonetheless ubiquitous, even if they are more localized. Smaller groups such as these have less formal organization, influence, and resources with which to compensate losses, like the wages of killed members.

Just as there is a direct form of violence as labor, there is also an indirect form in which force creates revenue-generating opportunities, like the trafficking of illegal weapons or the

[97] The day that I wrote this, January 17, 2021, unbeknownst to me, Dante was shot in the head and killed in the Douglas Homes housing project hours earlier. He was an asset to the city of Baltimore and his loss will be mourned. May he rest in peace.
[98] See "'Baltimore's Different': Gangs, Youth, and Stopping Violence," WYPR, November 27, 2019: https://www.wypr.org/show/future-city/2019-11-27/baltimores-different-gangs-youth-and-stopping-violence
[99] To reiterate an earlier point, a "gang" is not necessarily how members refer to themselves, but in police talk, the press, and academia, the term is frequently used. I use the term gang and crew interchangeably through much of this text.

recruitment of minors for gang activities. The illegal gun trade dominates Maryland, which has the highest rate of out-of-state crime gun "imports" in the country.[100] Baltimore's location along the I-95 highway, colloquially known as the "iron pipeline," allows for easy transportation of weapons northbound from southern states with fewer purchasing restrictions. "A new semiautomatic Glock 19 that goes for $600 can net a couple hundred dollars of profit on the Baltimore streets."[101] In another example of indirect labor, hitmen and violent offenders recruit young people—"little goons"— to kill on their behalf. The allocation of violence work to youth, in particular teenagers, is strategic. These young men are not only blinded by their admiration of the gang and desire to please, they are also likely to receive a reduced sentence by the judiciary if caught and prosecuted. The trend of enlisting kids in drug organizations in Baltimore is attributed to kingpin Maurice 'Peanut' King who offered youth mopeds and beepers to run money and drugs in the 1980s.[102] Peanut recently was released from prison after serving 37 years, but his legacy of enlisting middle and high schoolers in illegal operations continues. It is not uncommon to hear of 13, 14 and 15-year-olds enlisted in the commission of violent crimes and murders.

Violence as a form of work carries little cachet outside of the inner-city. For those who deal in the industry, however, there is the potential for sizeable profit along with the clout that comes with being feared. The absence of legal opportunities for employment for those living in the city (especially those with criminal records) creates a void that the drug economy and gang

[100] "The Iron Pipeline – Nearly Two-thirds of Baltimore's Guns Come from Out of State," Ron Cassie, *Baltimore Magazine*, n.d.: https://www.baltimoremagazine.com/section/community/iron-pipeline-gun-violence-out-of-state-traffickers/ Accessed January 16, 2021.
[101] Cassie, "The Iron Pipeline."
[102] "Heroin creates crowded illicit economy in Baltimore," Jean Marbella and Catherine Rentz, *The Baltimore Sun*, December 19, 2015. Accessed January 17, 2021; "Peanut King: After 37 years in prison, a giant of Baltimore's drug trade returns to face his city's ruins," Tim Prudente, *The Baltimore Sun*, December 5, 2019. Accessed January 17, 2021.

involvement fill. Murder in the inner-city, however, is infrequently a cut-and-dried business transaction. Values that adhere in one's personhood, like respect, loyalty, and masculinity, legitimize and fuel violence (Stewart and Simons 2006, 2010). Just as there is a material dimension to the economy of violence, there is also a moral economy.

The Moral Economy of Violence

"Anthony Taylor Jr. was killed over the color red," the first line of a *Baltimore Sun* article reads.[103] Taylor, a member of the Young Gorilla Family, a gang in Baltimore's Barclay neighborhood, had been warned by fellow members not to wear the signature color of their rival, the Bloods. An argument ensued before it was ended with a single blast from a 12-gauge shotgun. Taylor's best friend, a hotel valet and community college student who "was not involved in a gang," was then fired upon and killed. The report explains: "Though Baltimore crime has long been fueled by loosely formed neighborhood crews, increasingly organized groups have found new reasons to kill – such as showing a red bandana on the wrong street." Was Taylor *really* killed over a color? Or was he killed for going against his fellow gang members, perhaps even endangering them? Was he killed for disrespecting his crew or being insubordinate?

It is common for outsiders, including members of the press, to reduce violence to its most literal interpretation, this with the unfortunate consequence of furthering the narrative of senseless bloodshed. This allows misinformed stereotypes of young black men living in the city—as aggressive, thoughtless, and criminal—to persist. It also obscures further the actual

[103] "Gang problem hemorrhaging," Gus G. Sentementes and Annie Linskey, *The Baltimore Sun*, April 15, 2007: https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/baltimore-city/bal-mezz3-gen3-test-story.html Accessed January 15, 2021.

causes of violence, making efforts to curtail it less productive. Letrice Gant, one of the Ceasefire co-founders, speaking generally, explained: "The media doesn't get it. A lot of people are losing their lives over principle. I hate the way the media narrates it. It's not that a man died over a PBJ,[104] it's the principle." Letrice's reference to the principle behind a killing is what I relate to murder's moral economy. Moral economies give a sense of what values frame individual self-construction and personhood. These values are revealed in the interplay between cultural norms and economic activity; they inform "the local ethics for interpersonal and criminal violence in their relationship to external fields of power and economic forces" (Karandinos et al. 2014:2). The values at the core of the inner-city's moral economy inform interpretations of conflict. The murder over, supposedly, a bandana may be seen as a clash between the norms that structure the practices of the gang—like signs of solidarity and deference to leadership—and the motivations of the individual, among them, the desire for autonomy, control, or individual expression.

The concept of moral economy was originally conceived by E. P. Thompson to explain peasant revolts in 18th century England (Thompson 1971). Countering the reductionist view held by economists, Thompson argued that the riots were not a reaction to hunger but were, instead, "informed by the belief that they were defending traditional rights or customs; and, in general, that they were supported by the wider consensus of the community" (1971:78). Violence and survival in the inner-city, ironically, draw from the same moral economy that structures social relations, determines appropriate conduct, and constitutes the character and ethical inclinations of its actors. The same qualities, like loyalty, that may lead a person to perpetrate an act of violence can simultaneously create a social network that affords protection from violence.

[104] PBJ is short for a peanut-butter and jelly sandwich. Also: at the time, I was unfamiliar with the specific murder she was referencing, but it is likely that of 23-year-old Korryn Gaines who was shot and killed by Baltimore County police in 2016.

Within the domain of violence itself, the moral economy both informs and imposes restraints on aggression. My analysis revealed three major imperatives at the heart of the moral fabric of personhood as it relates to inner-city killing: control, respect, and group and familial loyalty.

Control

"The reality of living in our city [is that] we have no control of it," one of the survivors explained to me. Feelings of powerlessness are expected; powerlessness is systematically manufactured and maintained in inner-city neighborhoods by institutional racism, injustice, and inequality. Residents are disempowered and disadvantaged by the societal abandonment that few of my informants found words to explain. On multiple occasions, when they described life in in their world, they spoke of their own lack of control. Powerlessness manifests in actual, damaging ways: residents who work in other neighborhoods and take city transit are at the mercy of whether bus drivers will stop in their community, potentially resulting in missed work.[105] Those who want to leave and move to the suburbs are constrained by high housing prices, and children who are born into dilapidated rowhomes face exposure to toxic lead paint, which has been linked to "violent crime, brain damage, and ADHD."[106] In an urban climate with few opportunities and options, involvement in illegal drug economies and gangs affords many people, young men in particular, a chance to take ownership over their future. One informant summarized this phenomenon: "Young guys can't be told nothing – they need to feel like they have some autonomy over their life."

[105] It was common for bus drivers in Baltimore to skip stops in high crime neighborhoods. Additionally, the buses themselves are notorious for violence. In October 2020, a well-known bus driver was gunned down during his shift.
[106] "Lead: America's Real Criminal Element," Kevin Drum, *Mother Jones*, January/February 2013 Issue: https://www.motherjones.com/environment/2016/02/lead-exposure-gasoline-crime-increase-children-health/ Accessed January 20, 2021.

In a separate study, three scholars interviewed 150 Black young people living in West Baltimore's highly distressed public housing. They too acknowledged the unyielding structural burdens that, to avoid getting "caught up" in street life, needed to be actively resisted. "Rejecting the street leaves young men with few concrete alternatives. Although many [young people in the inner-city] would agree with the youth who said of drug dealing, 'you can't win in that lifestyle,' few have the tools and opportunities to easily, or effectively, pursue another, more conventional path to adulthood" (Edin, Rosenblatt, and Zhu 2015:230, 249). Violence offers a means for an individual to control the inner-city environment and its actors—or, at least, an appearance of control. American writer William S. Burroughs once said in an interview, "No one owns life, but anyone who can pick up a frying pan owns death."[107] This concept is particularly relevant for Baltimore, where living circumstances in the inner-city are constrictive, and criminal and violent activity are unpredictable. Rather than focusing on engaging defensively, an offensive approach to disputes and conflict may ensure a more favorable outcome for an individual caught up in a situation of conflict.

Snitching, or the practice of informing the police about a crime, is a mortal sin in Baltimore's inner-city.[108] The response to it—firebombing, contract hits, the intimidation of witnesses' families, or (at best) social banishment—falls within the domain of personal autonomy and control. "If you are labeled a rat, that puts a timeclock on your life. You literally can start counting down the days you have left" one of my informants explained. While many associate violence committed in response to snitching predominantly as reactionary, my research revealed it to be far more proactive. Individuals who appear to be a threat to one's own

[107] "Whoever Can Pick up a Frying Pan Owns Death," Alan Ansen, first published in Big Table 2, Chicago, 1959.
[108] Well-known across the city is the locally produced DVD released by Rodney Bethea, *Stop Fucking Snitching* (2004), which encouraged acts of witness intimidation and reminded residents that tipping the police off to crime would be met with violence.

livelihood or the economic prospects of the gang are liable to be killed; behaving in a way that might suggest police engagement, creating unnecessary drama, or having access to criminally damning information all led to murders mourned by the survivors I worked with. One explained the circumstances behind her son's killing: "They took his life because he 'knew too much.' He was tryna leave the gang. I blame the police too because they set my son up. They lock my son up after a funeral to make it look like he was snitching. Sent them to my house, had them standing outside my home for everyone to see. They apologized after the fact, but I just want justice and a better police system." Rather than wait and see if the actions of another person will result in an upheaval of one's economic prospects or freedom, it is thought preferable to take control of the situation, anticipating the result. A letter between two gang members detailed this interaction clearly: "Now it's time 2 play chess with da last breath. Every move now gotta be premeditated 4 moves ago or we gone be like every other gangsta dat we all know, out back wit life[109] or D.O.A. [dead on arrival]."

Respect

Nearly 30 years ago, Elijah Anderson (1999) theorized the code of the streets,[110] of which respect was at its heart. The code, a system of informal rules governing violence, has since eroded in Baltimore City: "The Code doesn't exist anymore" one former gang member said at a community Ceasefire meeting. Interpersonal violence in Baltimore historically operated under some generally accepted restrictions, such as: women should not be killed, nor should children; and certain spaces, like funerals and vigils, should be protected from violence. These rules, however, are no longer adhered to as fervently as they once were. During my period of

[109] Meaning imprisoned for life.
[110] Anderson, "The Code of the Streets."

fieldwork, all of these were violated, sometimes multiple times. With each killing, Tyree,[111] an activist known for anti-violence graffiti and a convicted murderer, responded with a Facebook Live address to gang members in Baltimore. Following the murder of seven-year-old Kester 'Tony' Browne[112] and his mother, Tyree erupted, enraged:

> *I said stop snitching, but guess who I wasn't talking about?! You know how grandma and them be them block-watchers? Ever seen them nosy old women looking out the window? I wasn't talking about them. They have the privilege to tell. They not breaking law, they not out there in a gang. To my rap buddies, you did a crime in front of this person and they can choose to tell if they want to. You don't get to kill them. Seven-year-old child was murdered for being a witness. You don't get to do that. Civilians!*

In a separate incident, there was a shooting during a burial of an 18-year-old homicide victim at a cemetery on the outskirts on the city. The deceased's brother and another funeral goer were killed.[113] Mourners scrambled through tombstones, fleeing to cars as the men who were shot fell to the ground. The father, speaking to reporters days later, said, "I don't know how to feel or what to feel right now. I didn't even get to bury my son, now my other son gone."[114] Tyree responded on social media with frustration:

> *I have to literally ask people to not shoot around a site that people are already dead in, homie. The shooter probably got somebody in his family buried in that graveyard. You straight disturbed society; you straight disturbed the dead… I don't feel no good about putting a motherfucking [graffiti tag encouraging non-violence] around a graveyard. I get no pleasure in that. It makes no sense to even comprehend me going to a graveyard to do [that]. I mean, everybody there they already fucking shot! …There is nothing that I*

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[111] See Chapter 3 for more information about Tyree.

[112] Tony and his mother were killed in the commission of a drug-related robbery. He was shot "multiple times in the head and mouth to prevent him from communicating with law enforcement." See: "Man charged with killing woman in 2015,then shooting her 7-year-old son to death to keep him from talking," Justin Fenton, The Baltimore Sun, September 23, 2020: https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/crime/bs-md-ci-cr-jennifer-kester-browne-killing-charges-20200923-p3eafhkfdnbs7nmmgcc6hhpzke-story.html Accessed January 18, 2021.

[113] The perpetrator was not known, although the police did not rule out the possibility of a retaliatory shooting. The mother was taken to the hospital immediately following the shooting for chest pain. See "Man about to bury brother fatally shot before service began; second man dies," David Collins and Vanessa Herring, WBALTV, September 14, 2018: https://www.wbaltv.com/article/man-about-to-bury-brother-fatally-shot-before-service-began/23120160# Accessed July 28, 2021.

[114] "Father of funeral shooting victim: 'I didn't even get to bury my son,'" Keith Daniels, WBFF, September 13, 2018: https://foxbaltimore.com/news/local/father-of-funeral-shooting-victim-i-didnt-even-get-to-bury-my-son Accessed July 28, 2021.

can tell someone whose homie was murdered at his brother's funeral. What am I gonna say to him? See, that's bigger than paint.

Less than a week prior to the cemetery shooting, gunmen open fired during a balloon release, where children were present, at a street vigil commemorating another homicide victim's life. A 19-year-old was struck.

Patricia Hill Collins (2004) has argued that the hardships experienced by generations of urban, poor residents have led them to obtain dignity and respect through linguistic and embodied performances (Stuart 2020). Scholars, such as hooks (1995), have noted that the majority of these displays do not lead to violence. Similarly, my informants emphasized that only a small minority—"maybe three percent of black men in the city"—perpetrate violence. Unfortunately, however, it is still perpetrated with deadly consequence. While the code in its "old-school" form has waned, the demand to be treated with respect remains a dominant force in the inner-city. "Respect means something different to the kids nowadays," a man who grew up around Baltimore's gangs explained to me. "[These kids] don't have the language to articulate [respect], though. They just gotta avenge it. It's like if someone hurt you, you gotta hurt someone or you're soft. Women and children used to be off limits – this generation is crazy!" The waning of the imperative of respect in recent years, my informants suggest, is partially linked to complications brought on by the digital world.

Social media, in particular the perception of their disconnectedness from real life and their anonymity, has facilitated the functioning of young people in two domains of existence. In the virtual, respectability is presented through displays of toughness and success (e.g. photos of young men posing with guns, money, or drugs), and responsive posts, comments, and reactions that provide opportunities for challenge. "You know I've never been called a clown by a man in person?" one informant explained. "A man has never stood in my motherfucking face and called

me a clown or a bitch. Never stood in my face and said fuck you, or none of the kind. Somethin' about this social media shit make a cocksucker feel like Rambo." Anderson emphasizes the importance of presentation of self in demanding respect: "Its basic requirement is the display of a certain predisposition to violence."[115] On the street, facial expression, clothes, gait, and language communicate this in an interpretable way within the code. Young people today, however, also present digital identities and must manage how they engage with others in a more public context, thus increasing the visibility of such efforts to assert dominance, showcase masculinity, and gain respect.

According to Forrest Stuart (2020:192), an ethnographic researcher studying the impact of social media on gang violence in Chicago, these media fuel violence by providing an additional means for gang members to surveil rivals and plan attacks. But its "challenges remain confined to online space and do not generate offline violence." Other researchers (e.g. Patton et al. 2017; Pyrooz et al. 2015) have argued that the virtual supplements and aggravates violence. Urbanik and Haggerty (2018:1343) suggest a parallel presentation where the "code is dis-embedded from its originating physical location to circulate on new media platforms, and occasionally becomes re-embedded onto those same streets, but with different inflexions and implications." My experiences in Baltimore are not consistent with Stuart's claim. I did hear from survivors and residents about conflict that started online and moved to the street. In one example, a survivor described a fight that took place close to her home: "I saw two guys in an alley fighting where one pulled a gun. Word got around and it turns out they were beefing over an Instagram video!" Regarding respect of the moral economy of murder, however, Stuart makes the important point that the street code before the invention of social media is *not* perfectly

[115] Anderson, "The Code of the Streets."

replicated in the digital world. More research is certainly needed to investigate how precisely social media inform violence and vice-versa. For my concerns here, it is clear that respect translates into the digital world, empowering users to be more vocal in their challenges of one another, this with the potential to intensify violence.

Loyalty

Residents are quick to stress that "retaliation culture in Baltimore is strong." This is predominantly due to an equally pervasive sense of social accountability to protect those to whom loyalty is given: family, friends, and fellow gang members. Grieving survivors, for example may threaten to call upon trusted male family members to avenge a loss through violent retaliation. "While a glance at the evidence seems to show that gangs cause violence, a deeper look also reveals the opposite: violence causes gangs" (Abt 2019:144). Group loyalty is practical; it provides a crew to turn to for protection. More than just protection, gangs provide interconnection and a relationship network that, in the inner-city, is greatly needed. This is particularly evident in one neighborhood statistic, the percentage of children in single-parent households. Consider the two neighborhoods mentioned above, Upton/Druid Heights and Roland Park/Poplar Hill. In the former, 93.5% of children under the age of 18 live in single parent households; in the latter, only 17.9% do.[116] One informant casually acknowledged the correlation between the presence of male figureheads and gang involvement: "A lot of youth, they don't

[116] For data from Greater Roland Park/Poplar Hill: "Baltimore City 2017 Neighborhood Health Profile: Greater Roland Park/Poplar Hill," Baltimore City Health Department, Revised June 2017: https://health.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/NHP%202017%20-%2022%20Greater%20Roland%20Park-Poplar%20Hill%20(rev%206-9-17).pdf
For data from Upton/Druid Heights: "Baltimore City 2017 Neighborhood Health Profile: Upton/Druid Heights," Baltimore City Health Department, Revised June 2017: https://health.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/NHP%202017%20-%2053%20Upton-Druid%20Heights%20(rev%206-9-17).pdf

know who their fathers are, so they turn to the gang." Another described it as "relationship poverty."

An anecdote conveyed to me seems to reinforce the significance of such absences: A survivor whose son had been murdered was preparing to attend his funeral. Before he entered the church, the preacher came up to the man and told him that God had called him, the father, to deliver the sermon. Overcome with grief, he didn't know if he could do it. But he managed to find the courage to stand up and speak to a church packed with, he claimed, over 500 Black Guerilla Family members in the audience, each of them ready and waiting to avenge his son's death.[117] He began: "How many of you had a father in your life growing up?" There was silence throughout the church. "Stand up if you didn't have any male figurehead in your life growing up," he asked. 400-some of the gang members rose. The man cried at the pulpit, explaining to the audience that he blamed himself for his son's death because he was in prison the whole time his son was growing up. When his son died, the man was finally trying to do right by him, but the fact that he wasn't around haunts him. While I was unable to confirm this story, the weight of such an absence was consistent with other accounts I heard. Some female survivors described how they adapted their behaviors as parents after not having their fathers be a part of their childhood: "You set the example through your dysfunction. My father wasn't there for me, but I made sure I was there for my children."

Informants explained to me that the gang provides a sense of kinship: "It's about relationships, about being connected to somebody. Gangs are a relationship. Young people are intentional about what they do." An expansion of one's network brings added responsibilities to protect those in your crew. The result is a double-edged sword of sorts. On the one hand, the

[117] The figure of 500 Black Guerilla Family members seems unlikely given the sociology of Baltimore gangs, however this was the number reported by my informant.

violence in a neighborhood necessitates that residents find ways to protect themselves, and the gang meets that need. "When you live around violence there is no opting out. A reputation for meeting violence with violence is a shield. That protection increases when you are part of a crew with that same mind-set."[118] On the other hand, gangs fuel aggression by committing acts of violence to even the score following a loss they incurred. Each loss, like that of Jon (in the opening vignette) or Snoot (below), subtracts yet another individual from resident networks, and, in their cases, leaves behind children who, like the majority growing up in Upton/Druid Heights, will be raised in a single parent household.

Beyond loyalty to the gang, allegiance to family elders and women is particularly prevalent among young men. As expressed by my female informants, many of whom had children involved in street life, young men feel a deep sense of accountability to protect them (see also Karandinos et al. 2014:7). My female interlocutors knew this and used it to their advantage. They knew they could rely on male family members to repay suffering they experienced. All they needed to do was make the call.

Female survivors, specifically mothers, seemed to fall into two general groups as it related to calling upon the familial loyalty of gang members. First are mothers who are kept completely in the dark about any gang activity or involvement. Some of them, even months after the loss of their sons, refuse to entertain even the suggestion that their child had been involved with the street. Second are mothers who become connected to (or, minimally, familiar with) other women in the city affected by and aware of violence. While still not fully informed about the goings-on of the gangs, they keep a close eye on social media, tracking gang allegiances and

[118] "Beyond the Code of the Streets," Ta-Nehisi Coates, The New York Times, May 4, 2013: https://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/05/opinion/sunday/coates-beyond-the-code-of-the-streets.html Accessed January 20, 2021.

murders, and paying close attention to those who attend events and funerals. One of these such survivors explained that the "streets would talk" about every murder that went down until her son was killed, "then [she] didn't hear one word." These women, kept out of the loop about their own losses,[119] frequently have enough insight to get a sense of who is responsible. A handful of my survivors understood the power they had to intervene and effectively sentence a believed perpetrator to death. "Every trigger-puller [has] got a mama that he loves," one woman told me. Even Donte, a supposed hitman, would break down on the phone talking with his mom.

The influence of female heads of family was made clear in a home visit I attended where a mother tried to explain to me the circumstances that led up to the killing of her two sons, each a few months apart. Both of their deaths, she believed, were retaliation for a homicide that occurred outside her former home years prior. Her sons, however, could never have committed that murder because they were incarcerated at the time. The suspicious location of the crime, as well as the lingering police car posted outside her home, gave others in the community the impression that her sons were culpable. The mother of the man killed had, as her dying wish, asked her living sons to seek revenge: "She was doing drugs and all, but on her dying bed she told them to kill both of my boys. That's what she said on her dying bed. That's what she wanted – to put them in the ground. And [her sons] killed both of my sons."

Interdependence

It's an unseasonably warm winter day. I drive out to a suburb twenty minutes' north of Baltimore, trading the blinding reflection of concrete sidewalks and brick walls for grass-filled

[119] Why the women were not given information surrounding their own children's killing was unclear. Some survivors suggested that others thought they were shielding them from the knowledge to allow them the space to grieve, as well as any protecting them from any repercussions that might come with "knowing too much."

yards, dampers on the sun's dazzling glow. I'm meeting Cheryl, one of the homicide survivor advocates, to visit the home of a mother whose son was murdered. Driving out of the city, it's hard not to feel a sense of calm. Much of my fieldwork has been conducted in unpredictable environments. And—like usual—while I don't know what I'm walking into, the County's[120] promise of security is welcome.

I park alongside a row of townhomes and phone Cheryl, only to realize that she is already inside. The porch door opens and she waves me in. As I cross the threshold, a boy no older than four, greets me. Running over in his matching aqua shorts and striped shirt, he wraps himself around my legs in a hug, grinning.

"Meet Oren," Cheryl says with a chuckle. A woman with short natural hair and long fake eyelashes enters the room. "And this is his grandmother, Taniyah," she signals towards the mother of the deceased who, sitting down on the couch has become enveloped in its plush red leather. The house smells so intensely of incense that I imagine a fog of it floating around us.

Cheryl wastes no time, sharing with me that Taniyah hasn't heard from the police since her son was killed. It had been four months. I shake my head in disapproval. Nor had she received word about the status of his belongings—a ring, cellphone, and money— that he had on him when he died. I mention that, because the investigation remains open, it is possible the police are still holding them as evidence. Cheryl confirms with her that no one had been arrested yet. No one had.

I feel a tickling on my side and look down. Oren had slipped his little hand into my jacket pocket, searching for a trinket to play with. "What're you looking for?" I ask. Cheryl reprimands him. He giggles. Unaffected by the exchange, exhausted, or both, Taniyah buries her head into

[120] The County refers to Baltimore County, the suburban district surrounding the city.

her hands. As Cheryl goes through the motions of a visit—distributing informational brochures, organizing paperwork—I try to catch up on the details of her loss. While this is Cheryl's second in-person visit with Taniyah, it's my first meeting with her. In an effort to not be too intrusive, I stick to short, closed questions that could be expounded upon, if she wanted.

"How old was your son?" I ask.

"30," Taniyah says. Cheryl glances up from searching through a folder, documents removed and strewn across the coffee table. She mentions that this isn't the first homicide Taniyah had experienced. She also lost another son.

"Yeah, but this one is hurting especially hard." A thick, pregnant silence fills the room. Even Oren looks around knowingly, sensing his grandmother's sadness. He shifts in his seat, the crackle of leather overcoming the void with his audible uneasiness.

Cheryl's voice cuts through tense air. "Tell Sam how you found out about his death."

She begins. "I got a phone call and there was no answer. Turns out it was some [unknown] woman who found the phone on him and just started dialing numbers to tell someone [the owner had been shot]. A couple minutes later, my daughter was calling me because she found out. I drove as fast as I could to Sandtown and arrived twenty minutes later." For the first time the entire visit, she spoke long enough to reveal a touch of a Caribbean accent. She stared at me, eyes searching, almost pleading. Her cadence quickened:

> I begged them detectives to let me see my son. To see if it was him. They wouldn't even talk to me until I proved with ID that I was who I said I was. Then they still wouldn't let me come near the body. I told them I drove all the way down from the County to see my boy. And the officer? He ask me, 'If you live in the County, what is he doing down here in Sandtown?' He is my grown son. I don't tell him what to do or where to go. They made me pull up a pic on my phone, and they took the phone to his body and the police officer compared the pictures. My boy lay on the pavement for three hours. Not a single ambulance came. No doctor showed up. The police tried to tell me he died instantly, because he was shot in the face, close up. Well what do police officers know about

> pronouncing someone dead? I didn't get to see him until the funeral home. And now they say if I want to know what happened, I have to pay $25!

"For the crime report?" I question.

"Yeah. That's if I can get it. They might not even release it!" Taniyah recoils, retreating back to her hands and the soft seat.

"Do you know what happened?" Cheryl asks. "Was he having beef with someone?"

Taniyah cries quietly.

> My son, he sold chips and candy in the city to support his kids. I know he was in the game, but he did what he had to to support his children. That's what they all did. They all are tryna get by. That night, he was in Sandtown selling candy and chips with another guy. They started having a disagreement about something that happened the night before. Seemed to me like Snoot [Taniyah's son's street name] was saying he wasn't comfortable with how something went down and wanted to do something about it. Then I hear that the guy brought up something about the $100 Snoot owed him. Snoot said he would get it to him Friday like they agreed. And I guess the other guy got all irritated and worried, saying 'oh you gonna snitch?' That man shot him right off the porch.

She sobs, and Cheryl gets up to hold her. "It's okay to cry. Let it out." Taniyah wipes her eyes with her long glittery purple and gold nails, a nod to the Ravens playoff game the weekend before. Cheryl hands her a tissue. "There, there. We don't want to mess up your eyelashes." Oren, who had at some point during the previous exchange taken my phone, let it fall to his side. His smile slowly fades as he sees his grandmother's discomfort. Taking note, Cheryl remarks to me, "Children are so sensitive. Can't you see how it affects him?"

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The story of Snoot's death and its impact on Taniyah and Oren highlights the interdependence and mutually constitutive relationship between the material and moral economies. From the material, drug dealing offered a Snoot the means to support himself and his family. In the absence of other options for employment, he did "what he had to do," according to

Taniyah. Control, respect, and loyalty intersect here, creating the moral circumstances that not only led Snoot to participate in the criminal economy, but also ultimately led to conflict, over debt and disloyalty, that gave way to his killing. The moral economy and its local ethics function in tandem with the material circumstances and structures of power that constrain residents. At the center of the moral are relationships—between extended family, friends, fellow gang members—that are informed by a standard of conduct. Values shape the behavior of individuals and influence their participation in violence and interpretations of conflict. Together, the material and moral mutually reinforce each other, situating and balancing structural constraints and social needs.

Cause and Effect

"Violence is based on cause and effect. There is no grace. There is no favor, as such. It's cause and effect. So, if you violate certain laws, certain standards, principles that people live by... If you violate them, the tendency would be to get even. Back to the eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth."[121]

The economies of murder help us to understand not just why people engage in violence, but also why some become its victims. The quote above, uttered to me by the Reverend, captures the exchange-like quality that surrounds killing in the city. Morally, violence largely operates according to a logic that is assumed all residents know and abide by. Materially, it fills a gap left from decades of disinvestment and the present combination of "trauma, poverty, conflict," an interlocutor noted. "Problems don't just add up, they balloon out." Using the frames of moral and material (criminal) economies as analytical tools, we are able to make sense of the financial pressures placed on Jon, killed by the liquor store owner during the botched robbery, and the feeling of absence his child will likely encounter as he grows up. Similarly, we can empathize

[121] Quote from an interview with Reverend Michael, May 2019.

with the man who, fearing for his own life, killed Jon and suffered regret. His need for self-protection ran up against a robbery, possibly committed to support Jon's soon-to-be child—or, perhaps, to make good on a debt. The incident, clearly, involved both material and moral impulses on both sides.

For many in the inner-city, drug dealing is a job; Snoot, we learn, was killed in the line of work. For some, murder is also a job; Donte was charged with being a professional killer and is serving a hefty sentence in prison as a result. In both cases, we see the importance of family. Snoot dealt drugs to support his son and was allegedly killed over a debt of $100. Donte turns to his mother in prison for support when he feels burdened by the guilt he feels over his brother's death. Seeing how strong the feelings of kinship and sense of obligation to one's family are, it's not difficult to imagine how this can translate to taking on incredible bodily risk to avenge offense or physical violence. Overlaps between the material and the moral, alike for Snoot and Donte, are ever-present. Daily existence in the inner-city is rife with such transgressions and while, for the purposes of illustration, I have drawn a division between the two, in practice, negotiating life and the value of violence implicates both.

Finally, just as these criminal economies are productive in generating both positive and negative value, we must remain mindful of the questions they raise. Does it make someone morally less culpable if they suffer from the deficits—e.g. the loss of male role models or early, traumatic exposure to aggression—created by economies of violence? What do we make of the negative reciprocity effected by a deathbed homicide wish? Does a city's history of disenfranchisement and neglect justify participation in illegal, even violent, markets? There is no question that violence creates losses on both sides, for both victim and perpetrator, or that each act of violence continues to turn the cycle of homicide. In such an atmosphere, the lines between

victim and perpetrator blur, and moral acceptability and unacceptability enter a gray area. To practice empathy suggests that there exists a separateness that needs to be overcome (Keane 2011). It makes sense that we distance ourselves ethically from those who commit acts of violence, but this doesn't mean that we should do so emotionally, cognitively, and imaginatively. Understanding violence in Baltimore City ultimately requires a dialogue that denounces murder but does not disengage with the murderer.

"It doesn't matter if the victim took someone's life the day before. No one deserves murder."
-Baltimore Ceasefire Leader, Letrice Gant

ACT THREE: Postmortem

Chapter 4 | The Afterlife of Death: Grieving and Memorialization

Within twenty-four hours of a homicide, the Family Bereavement Center (FBC) in the State's Attorney's Office receives word of the death, opens a "case," and reaches out to any available next of kin to offer coordinated support, partially from Roberta's House, for survivors. These services include information about grief counseling and help from other city agencies and non-profit organizations, guidance about judicial proceedings, and court escort services. Significantly, the service that provides the greatest financial relief for survivors is the FBC's Burial Assistance Program, which offers up to $5,000 in burial aid for families of the deceased. In a city where 1 out of every 2,000 residents is murdered each year,[122] and nearly 24% live below the poverty line ($24,300 for a family of four in 2016[123]), the need for such a program is self-evident, given that the average cost of a funeral, burial plot, internment, and grave marker in Baltimore totals nearly $11,000.[124]

Most families of Baltimore homicide victims, however, never see the FBC's aid. Many elect not to apply, or a ineligible, due to restrictive stipulations that limit support: since the creation of the program decades ago, only once has there ever been a waitlist. The victim must not have been engaged in any criminal activity at the time of his death, as determined by the homicide investigator's report filed 24 hours after the murder. Although rulings on this count can be appealed to a board at the State's Attorney's Office, a good number of families take matters

[122] "Baltimore's homicide rate is down from 2015 — but up over every other year on record," Kevin Rector, *The Baltimore Sun*, December 21, 2016: https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/crime/bs-md-ci-homicides-shootings-20161221-story.html Accessed August 4, 2021.
[123] See "2018 Maryland Poverty Profiles," Maryland Alliance for the Poor: https://mda.maryland.gov/about_mda/Documents/SNAB/Maryland-Poverty-Profiles_2018_1-15-2018_T.pdf Accessed August 4, 2021.
[124] "From Gunshot to Grave: The high cost of murder in Baltimore," Karen Houppert, *The Baltimore Sun*, January 12, 2016: https://www.baltimoresun.com/citypaper/bcpnews-from-gunshot-to-grave-the-high-cost-of-murder-in-baltimore-20160112-story.html Accessed August 4, 2021.

into their own hands, being desperate to see the deceased buried properly, expeditiously, and respectfully. In a grim ritual that plays out almost daily, needy kin scrimp every penny they can, soliciting donations door to door, fundraising online, and signing contracts and payment plans with funeral homes. For some the fees remain unaffordable. Not a few bodies[125] are left unclaimed at the morgue to avoid burial costs. These are turned over to the State Anatomy Board to use for research and, when medical science is finished, they are cremated. The state holds a ceremony once a year to bury the ashes.

All of this raises several questions about the reckoning of life, death, and the right to memorialization: What influence do city government and civil society, respectively, have in the determination of who is worthy of remembrance and who is not? How, for poor, racialized inner-city Americans, does the recognition of, and respect for, their dead speak to the value of black lives and the moral economy of their communities? I address these questions through two cases of the construction and destruction of violent death memorials on the streets of Baltimore. In both, memorialization occurred in the public domain, at the initiative of 'civil society'—that is, of concerned survivors[126]—under the purview of city government. These cases offer striking insight into who is or who is not deemed worthy of remembrance, how, and why; also, into what instances of homicide should be erased from collective consciousness and which should not. In discussing them, I seek to show how the material memorialization of violent death serves to produce and reinforce social hierarchies, classifying people according to the notions of citizenship and belonging that prevail within a contemporary political community; in this case, a

[125] Across the state of Maryland inclusive of all forms of death, there were 729 people during the fiscal year 2015 left unclaimed. See Houppert, "From the Gunshot to the Grave."

[126] In a memorable exchange, one survivor described planning to visit the site of her son's murder a few months after his death to lay some flowers in remembrance. The memorial that was originally erected had disappeared over time, whether this was the doing of the city, weather, or another actor, it's unclear. When she arrived at the street, a new memorial had already been placed: "I stopped at the store to grab a rose to put where [he] was killed, but when I got there, new balloons were already there. I guess someone was already thinking of him too."

political community situated in inner-city America. The exercise of sovereignty through the struggle over memorial sites is a *systemic* theme of everyday life in Baltimore. It gives meaning, in different ways for different factions of the city's population, to public life, sui generis.

Necropolitics and the state of exception of which it speaks, thus extends beyond biological life, into the realm of its post-mortem traces. The expropriation and destruction of memorials to the dead is a manifestation of pure biopower; even more, it links biopower to necropower, each the condition of the other's possibility. Recommissioning Giorgio Agamben's (1998) characterization of the distinction between *zoe* and *bios*, or bare life and qualified life, respectively, I argue that the two do not constitute a binary opposition – as is often supposed – but two ends of a continuum which motivate the effort to mobilize, sustain, and extend sovereignty. In the following two case studies, I interrogate the two poles of this continuum, captured in the struggle to make memories "live" or "die." Memorials, which have an almost infinite capacity to be instrumentalized for purposes of political iconography, are cultivated, transformed, and sanctified by city government and civil society, sometimes together, sometimes against each other—all the more so when those memorials are created by private citizens. On the other hand, memorial sites that speak to street sovereignty—that is, the claim for control over publics and public space in opposition to the state—and work against the purposes of normative government are typically destroyed. Because they often challenge authority, their annihilation—and efforts to protect them against it—become the object of struggle between the sovereignty of the state and the sovereignty of the street. The first case study, of the Dawson family firebombing, illustrates the potential for memorialization to advance sovereign objectives and values of both the state and the street.

The Dawson Firebombing

Fire billowed out of the windows of a row home in the East Baltimore neighborhood of Oliver, smoke funneling up into the autumn night sky. Fire trucks blocked the intersections as neighbors gathered in the streets. Angela "Angel" Dawson, 36, husband Carnell Dawson Sr., 43, and their five children, ages 8 to 14, were trapped inside the house, engulfed in flames. At 2:30am in the morning of October 16, 2002, Darrell Brooks, a local drug dealer, had kicked in the Dawson's front door, sloshed a pickle jar filled with gasoline down the stairs, and set the home ablaze. The attack, neighbors claimed, was revenge for years of Angel's long, ardent crusade against crime and drug trafficking, a lethal consequence of the city's "Stop Snitching" mentality.[127] In the four months prior to the murder, Angel and other family members had placed 35 calls to police to report neighborhood drug dealers loitering outside the house, yelling crack prices to passers-by.[128]

By daybreak, flowers, candles, stuffed animals, and balloons had appeared outside the three-story home, alongside massive heaps of charred debris. Dark, soot-covered formstone above the windows spoke of the destruction the night before, a grim juxtaposition with the colorful mementos that rose up below them. Similar to the method of commemorating most inner-city homicides, a spontaneous memorial was erected near the site of death. At Preston Street, however, teddy bears were substituted for the usual 40-ounce bottles of malt liquor, and a giant printed card declaring "you [The Dawsons] will never be forgotten" replaced graffitied epitaphs (Figure 3).

[127] "Fire Kills Mother and Children at Home," Jeffery Gettleman, *The New York Times*, October 17, 2002: https://www.nytimes.com/2002/10/17/us/fire-kills-mother-and-children-at-home.html Accessed August 4, 2021.
[128] Gettleman, "Fire Kills Mother and Children at Home."

Figure 3 - Dawson home in the days following the firebombing (2002). Photo: Peter Barry

The week following the Dawsons' death saw candlelight vigils, a funeral attended by 2,000 people, and a proposal to bury the family in the "Fallen Heroes" section of the Dulaney Valley Memorial Gardens Cemetery, an area dedicated to police officers and fire fighters who fall in the line of duty.[129] City officials were quick to politicize the deaths. Mayor Martin O'Malley submitted a press release demanding government action, introducing new city reforms, citing the tragedy. At the press conference, he touted the accomplishments of his crime fighting "Believe" campaign, a public relations project to rebrand the city as one in which residents proudly took ownership of their neighborhoods to help end drug-related crime. O'Malley named

[129] "Man dies a week after fire at home," Tom Pelton, Laurie Willis, Laura Vozzella, *The Baltimore Sun*, October 24, 2002: https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-2002-10-24-0210240250-story.html Accessed August 4, 2021.

the Dawsons as its first sacrifice: "The Baltimore 'Believe' campaign unfortunately now has its first martyrs…. It is because of the courage of families like the Dawsons that Baltimore has for three years in a row led the nation in the reduction of violent crime."[130] The mayor's rhetoric was accompanied by documentation of forty-nine initiatives taken by city agencies to improve the Oliver community (Steele 2007:98). The case of the Dawsons also offered a compelling story to city officials as they applied to federal and state funding programs – Rep. Elijah E. Cummings gained $3 million in assistance following the tragedy to help police fight crime and support victim assistance programs.[131]

Figure 4. Dawson home two years after the firebombing (2004). Photo: Google Maps

[130] "Mayor calls Dawsons 'martyrs', ask for help on anti-crime effort," M. Dion Thompson, *The Sun*, November 12, 2002.
[131] "Baltimore family remembered," *The Washington Times,* October 19, 2003: https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2003/oct/19/20031019-115105-3889r/ Accessed August 4, 2021.

Over the course of the next year, the memorial faded into the cityscape. Memorabilia from the site slowly disappeared. The dilapidated building stood largely unchanged, an enduring reminder of the tragedy but one virtually indistinguishable from any other on a blighted block in Baltimore with abandoned homes and homicide memorials. Two years later, in 2004, few artefacts remained (Figure 4). Many were replaced over time to form a small shrine on the metal porch. Two large, white teddy bears were stacked atop one another, sandwiched between the singed porch door and plywood boarding labeled "1401 – No Trespassing, Private Property, No Loitering." A black-and-white bumper sticker with the word "Believe" branded the rusted porch stairs – an ironic allusion to O'Malley's crime-fighting platform. While the memorial shrunk

Figure 5. Dawson Safe Haven Center (2007 to Present). Photo: Google Maps

over the years, the state's memory of the Dawson family did not. A committee was formed in the cause of making a permanent memorial, inscribing the tragedy into the consciousness of city residents "forever." The Dawson Safe Haven Center, a $1.2 million project funded by community leaders and government officials, whose object was "to help children with their studies while keeping them away from the temptations of the streets," opened in April 2007 (Figure 5).[132]

Since then, the center has been carefully maintained and overseen by politicians, government agencies, and community members. Each takes ownership of the site, contributing to its maintenance and ensuring that it is secured as a hallowed piece of public property. Following the ten-year anniversary of the murders, a candlelight vigil was held once again to commemorate the loss, celebrate progress that had occurred in the neighborhood—including the renovation of over one-hundred vacant homes—and stress the importance of continued vigilance and civic engagement for residents. At the ceremony, Deputy Housing Commissioner Reginald Scriber concluded, "It was in our best interest to…memorialize the Dawson family because they stood for something…for the principles that they were not going to let the people infringe in their neighborhood or out in their area because of drug activity."[133]

Scriber's statement epitomizes the extent to which the Dawson family became emblematic of civil society, community, and American nationhood. The deep connection and obligation they demonstrated through their attempts to protect their neighborhood from an occupying "enemy" of drug dealers, standing their ground in the face of danger, are conceived of

[132] "10 years after Dawson killings, uneven results in Oliver," Ian Duncan, The Baltimore Sun, October 13, 2012: https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/baltimore-city/bs-xpm-2012-10-13-bs-md-ci-dawson-murder-ten-year-20121013-story.html Accessed August 4, 2021.
[133] "Dawson Safe Haven Center turns tragedy to triumph," WBALTV, October 17, 2012: https://www.wbaltv.com/article/dawson-safe-haven-center-turns-tragedy-to-triumph-1/7077177 Accessed August 4, 2021.

as the ultimate moral act. Angel and Carnell did not choose to be rooted in an environment of violence and crime, but they nonetheless established a sense of fraternity with other members of the community, and held to its political values, even at the expense of their own lives and the lives of their children, the fundamentally innocent. For Scriber to proclaim that the memorialization of the Dawsons was in "our best interest,"[134] i.e. in the best interest of the city government, speaks to the symbolic specificity of the tragedy; this by underscoring the utility—"our best interest"—of sacralizing the "sacrifice" of these lives to sovereign governance. Death in the cause of the biopolitical management of life.

The Killing of Marcus Brown

Hardly any other homicides in Baltimore are extended the same extraordinary attention from civil society and city government. At the opposite end of the spectrum is the memorialization of 20-year-old Marcus "Markco" [sic] Brown, a young man gunned down in broad daylight and left for dead on November 17, 2010 in the neighborhood of Midtown-Edmonson. Unlike the Dawson homicides, for Markco there were no ceremonies, no city-wide press conferences, and certainly no national news headlines. The anonymity of his death was stark. He lives on largely as a statistic, one of many homicides in the district. In the absence of media and political attention, however, Markco, in death, was gifted with a three-foot by two-foot spray-painted rest-in-peace (R.I.P.) graffiti on the side of a ramshackle residential building, surrounded by broken windows, at the intersection of West Lafayette and Appleton Streets, a public reminder of his death one block north of the murder site. The earliest documentation of its appearance was in August 2011, 10 months after his passing, by a Google Maps Street View car camera which serendipitously captured it during a drive through the neighborhood (Figure 6). To

[134] This also hints at a rather utilitarian view of putting their deaths to the purposes of city government.

Figure 6. Appleton Street – "RIP Markco" is spray painted between the bottom fourth and fifth windows. The garage graffiti reads "Free Dirty & Vicious." (October 2011). Photo: Google Maps

the public, "R.I.P. Markco" is meaningless. Only through personal knowledge of the man, and/or a careful triangulation of homicide reports and crime records with street memorials, might it signify anything or anybody specific. The R.I.P., in sum, signifies generically. The unknowing passer-by sees the memorial and is invited to reflect upon the hopelessness of this inner-city, ravaged by violence, crime, and inequality. He or she is unlikely ever to know the suffering of Markco as he bled out onto the sidewalk. The following spring, "R.I.P. Markco" was whitewashed from the building's brick walls (Figure 7). The ghost of the writing, however, remains in areas of the wall's discoloration. The erasure of the text effectively erases Markco's public memory—and with it, an icon of urban devastation. But, in August 2012, exactly a year from its original documentation, the graffitied memorial reappeared on the whitewashed wall[135] (Figure 8). This time, "R.I.P. Markco" was joined by six other R.I.P.s, anonymous handles, in

[135] It is unclear who, exactly, was responsible for removing the graffiti in this instance.

Figure 7. Appleton Street – "RIP Markco" is no longer visible as it has been whitewashed from the building. The graffiti on the garage has also been covered. (April 2012). Photo: Google Maps

Figure 8. Appleton Street – RIP Marcko returns in blue spray paint between the first and third bottom window, along with other RIPs. (August 2012). Photo: Google Maps

bright blue paint. Within weeks it too was removed, whitewashed again from the architecture of public memory (Figure 9). As with the previous removal, traces of the blue paint crept through the creases in the stone. For those who knew what once marked the landscape, the layering of spray-paint, paint, and whiting is a dark, even sinister, palimpsest of the battle for remembrance waged on the wall.

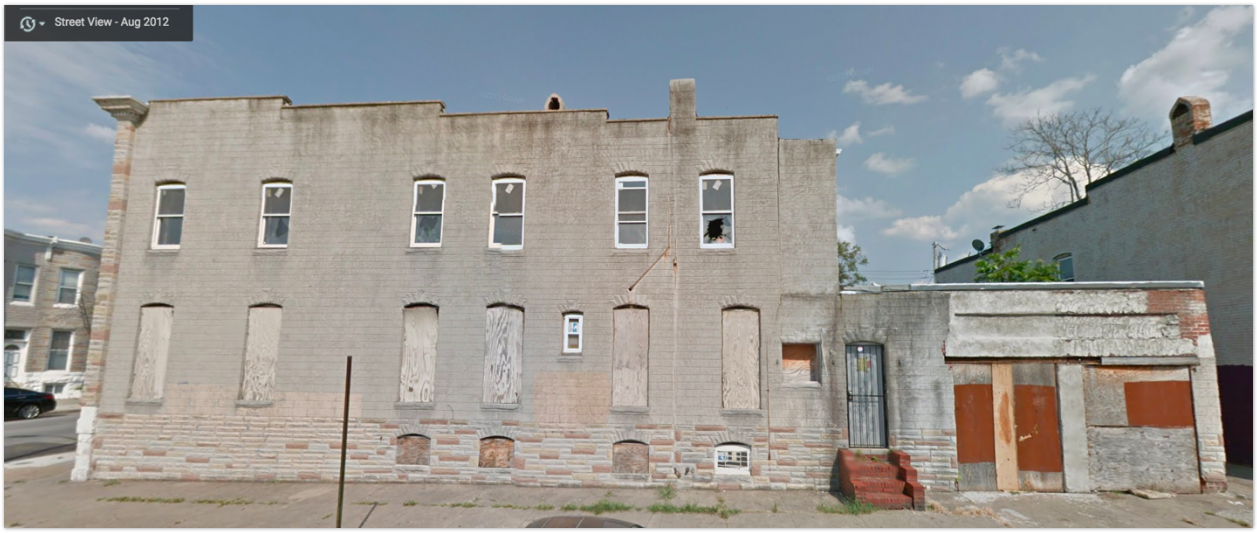

Figure 9. Appleton Street – The blue RIP graffiti has again been whitewashed from the building, leaving only a discolored outline and some faint blue paint marks where it once stood. (Late August 2012). Photo: Google Maps

Managing Public Affect

These two cases offer a reflection on the nature of sacrificial life, sovereignty, and governance in inner-city America. The Dawsons and Markco Brown speak to the two ends of a continuum of everyday life in Baltimore. At the one extreme, exemplified by the Dawson family, is an explicit sanctification of a memorial, an effort to "make memory live." The family it represents reflects an ideal, middle class conception of respectable citizenship and community. Their homicides register as a failure of the state to uphold its end of the social contract and protect its subjects. The Safe Haven Center is a product of civil society acknowledging the tragedy that occurred and creating a space for civic engagement in their honor. The use of the Center to celebrate the restoration of vacant homes or other neighborhood initiatives reinforces the commitment of the state to sustain their public memory and the narrative of the good citizen. The street, however, does not keep the Dawson's memory alive. The memorial shrine that marked the tragedy gradually withered away. From the vantage of the street, the Dawsons could be viewed as collaborators with an oppressive, racist state (embodied in the cops). And while

many memorialized the horrific violence that took their lives, the street does not maintain the shrine, effectively preserving them in its public memory.

At the other extreme, in the case of Marcus Brown, is an attempt by civil society to "make memory die": to obliterate the memorial and, with it, the presence of the racialized non-citizen—presumptively a black, youthful, hypermasculine, antisocial criminal—whose killing, far from being sacrificial, to evoke Agamben again, stands for nothing more than bare life, bare death, disposability, exclusion, and extinction. In the example of Markco's memorial, a battle is waged on the wall between the state and street. His public memory is maintained through the spray painting of a RIP tag whenever it had been removed. In doing so, a claim is laid to the sovereignty of the street, reinforcing its values in the desire to remember Markco after his death. The repainting emphasizes that he was a member of the community whose family and friends strive to keep alive.

Unlike taking the life of a living person by the state sovereign—in this context the Baltimore police—the preservation or destruction of memorial sites can, technically and legally, occur with almost complete impunity; one cannot "make live" or "make die" that which is not biologically alive to begin with. Nonetheless, death and afterlife offer insight into the production of sovereignty through the regulation of post-mortem memory, determining that which (and, thus, who) is worthy of remembrance, and who is not, who is merely killed and erased. Thus it is that the management of public affect by means of necropolitics is itself a political currency. Strict control of these memorial sites, delineating which deaths should remain in public consciousness—and how they may be made meaningful as evidence of individual and collective trauma—is critical to the sustenance of sovereignty.

The "martyrdom" of the Dawsons, then, functions as a frame for something larger than individual loss. It evokes the value of sacrifice to public goals and deference to community values. The Dawsons represent the foundational values of the social: reproduction, property, family, and community. Their legacy was redefined—or, rather, appropriated and recommissioned—through their political *bios*, a heroic tale of the moral citizens who confronted crime, supported city policing initiatives, and refused to be intimidated by enemies of the civil society. Rather than leave the city, as police had suggested they should do, they stood their ground and looked towards the state, not the streets, for security. For those who took ownership of the tragedy, the only way to make it meaningful was to ensure that their memory lives on through the sense of community they were committed to protecting. For the city, to ensure that these citizens continue to advance and support its political agenda, there were considerable political returns to be derived from crystallizing this affect in the form of the memorial and civic action surrounding it. What is more, the Dawson tragedy provided the substance for an opportunistic claim by authorities to further zero-tolerance policing, thus to reap millions of dollars in federal funding. The transcendence of that tragedy, of the death of an iconic family, conduced the reproduction of existing forms of state sovereignty.

The direct threat to this sovereignty is its counter, a street sovereignty that mimics, paradoxically, the authority of the state not just to determine who lives and who dies, but to define "who matters and who does not, who is *disposable* and who is not" (Mbembe 2003:27). The de-legitimization of memorial sites produced in this vein, then, is the ultimate stake for drawing the line between the citizen and the criminal, which is what the likes of Markco are presumed by polite society to represent. Whereas the Dawsons belong to the norm-governed, civil collective defined by "great American values," Markco Brown exists within a nightmare,

alternative sovereignty devoid of morality, construed as a form of social annihilation. His memorial *reflects* pure, depoliticized *zoe,* bare life that demands to be excluded. He represents the quintessential non- or anti-citizen, the "enemy" of state sovereignty, or, as the police statement following the Dawsons' murder broadly referenced, "the people that have poisoned our cities and corners."[136] It is his life which can be extinguished but never sacrificed, being beyond the sphere of proper public life. To "respectable" civil society, the specter of his Midtown memorial persists only in its repeated erasures and reincarnations, the materialization of inclusive exclusion and meaningless corporality. The repeated expunging of his R.I.P. illustrates the denial of political life and social capital to segments of Baltimore's population and activities associated with them. Their erasure suggests the removal of protections from both them and their memorials, their right to symbolic remembrance, and, writ large, excommunication from the social. His death is not read as a loss, because there was never any sense of his belonging, of self-possession within civil society (Butler 2006:20).

The two cases, patently, are dialectically and semiotically entailed in each other: neither makes sense except in relation to the other. The struggle over sovereignty here expresses itself in the creation and/or desecration of the memorial, itself an articulation of political world-making. The Dawsons exemplify the purity of the political *bios,* citizenship, and community, supporting the project of state sovereignty until their deaths. But to those who killed them, they stood for collusion with an oppressive state. Their memorial was allowed to wither and fade by the street; it was the state that ultimately created a center to memorialize them. Markco stands for the diametrically opposite, the lonely, anonymous death of the illegitimate non-citizen, a figure

[136] Gettleman, "Fire Kills Mother and Children at Home."

associated with the sovereignty of the streets. And so it is that the city seeks to erase Markco and his memory, casting the Dawsons as martyrs in the fight for civil society.

No Shoot Zones and Graffiti Activism

To this day, the Appleton Street building where Markco was first memorialized continues to be a site of violence and its marking. As time has passed and more killings have occurred on the block, new RIP memorials have appeared. These are supplemented with graffitied activism. In March 2019, an 18-year-old woman was shot and killed here, and two other men were wounded. A week later, a 27-year-old man was found shot dead on this same street inside a rowhome.[137] Following their murders, Tyree, a local activist who returned to the city after

Figure 10. Appleton Street – "No Shoot Zone" spray painted on the garage boards. (May 2019). Photo: Google Maps

[137] "Man shot inside West Baltimore home — same block of triple shooting last week, police say," Jessica Anderson, *The Baltimore Sun*, March 18, 2019: https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/crime/bs-md-ci-appleton-shooting-20190318-story.html Accessed July 31, 2021.

serving time in prison for murder and who also informed my research[138]—recall that you were introduced to him in Chapter 3—spray-painted "No Shoot Zone" on the boarded-up garage (Figure 10). He also added a memorial to Taylor on the street corner outside the home (Figure 11). Tyree has marked hundreds of murder sites in the city as No Shoot Zones and has a few thousand online followers of his No Shoot Zone (NSZ) organization. He calls the graffiti "disruption work" that's intended to remind residents of the blood that has been shed on city blocks, urging them to stop the violence.[139] The purpose of it is to be seen, to remind the living[140] of the toll that murder has taken on the city and urge residents to stop shooting. Like RIP graffiti, the No Shoot Zone markers are also regularly removed.

When I met with Destiny, one of Tyree's NSZ "staff members,"[141] we drove through the Edmonson neighborhood and she pointed out murder locations near her home which Tyree had designated as No Shoot Zones. Signaling to a convenience store, Destiny explained that there a young man was shot in the head. Tyree had placed a NSZ in his memory and, weeks later, it was

[138] I was never able to interview Tyree, although he connected me with other people who assisted the No Shoot Zone effort, including Destiny, who I met and interviewed, and shared access to his multi-hour-long Facebook Live videos where he would livestream spray-painting and discuss Baltimore's violence. The extent of our interaction was through Facebook chat or written comments that he would reply to in his livestreams. When I expressed my hope to interview Tyree to Destiny, she sighed and said, "Honestly, I think you're going to have a hard time getting in contact with him and some other members of our staff. When I told them you were from Harvard they were a little intimated. A lot of our staff doesn't have a formal education…. Tyree told me, 'I'mma let you make [teaching Sam about NSZ] your project."

[139] To ensure the meaning behind the NSZs were communicated with those in the community, Tyree would speak with residents near the spray-paint. He would introduce himself with a handshake and pass out dollar bills to young people, before sharing about NSZ and proselytizing his message of anti-violence: "When y'all walk past [the NSZ graffiti], salute that."

[140] Recall here that in Chapter 3, Tyree described the struggle over whether or not he should erect a NSZ in the cemetery where a shooting killed two people: "It makes no sense to even comprehend me going to a graveyard to do a NSZ. I mean, everybody there already fucking shot!"

[141] Tyree refers to those who help facilitate his spray-paint activism, whether by giving car rides to different homicide sites or helping manage his social media presence, as being a part of the No Shoot Zone "staff." While "staff" suggests a degree of development, Tyree's efforts were largely off-the-cuff and most of the graffiti was done by him alone.

Figure 11. Appleton Street – RIP graffiti reaching "Taylor" with hearts, "Us 4 Us," and "No Shoot Zone #144." (May 2019). Photo: Google Maps

removed. He repainted it, but it was covered again. The struggle over urban enclosures extends beyond suppressing individual memorials to, it seems, any reminder of the violence created by those outside of civil society, even if they are a part of local efforts to deter it. Like RIP graffiti, NSZs are a product of street sovereignty, a threat to state's control over narratives and efforts to deter violence and crime. They challenge the careful management of public affect. As a result, they are erased: "When I put one up, the city usually covers it up. It's propaganda. They want us to keep killing each other,"[142] Tyree explained in a Facebook Live video.[143]

[142] The Dawson memorial suggests otherwise. However, from the perspective of Tyree and my other interlocutors who struggle with police response times, community disinvestment, and decades of racism, it is understandable why they he might believe this.

[143] The removal of NSZ or RIP graffiti has nothing to do with it being vandalism or the defacement of city streets, Tyree insisted. He points to the sidewalk where there are painted markers indicating underground utilities as support for his theory: "government spray-paint," he calls it.

While the impact of NSZs in reducing violence is unclear,[144] their erasure further illustrates the disallowance of political life for the city's marginalized members. The call to action for residents to end violence in certain areas also compels the city to act. Removal is an act of statecraft: the city is drawn to assert control over space, to manage the meaning of public messaging in it. And in doing so, they reinforce the distinction between those authorized to participate in the political and those who are not, those who have social capital and those who do not. The back-and-forth process of creation and erasure of NSZs or RIP graffiti highlights the dialogic quality of graffiti (see also Stewart and Kortright 2015), as well as the capacity of urban space to serve as a site of resistance. The tenacity of both state and street in reclaiming urban space, a nearly ten-year battle on Appleton Street, emphasizes the importance of this struggle and, ultimately, the commitment of both actors to claim or denounce political and social capital.

While the examples of Markco Brown and the Dawson family represent extremes, much of the everyday memorialization of homicide on the streets of Baltimore falls into a middle ground, an entanglement of bare and political life. What results is a profound commentary on Agamben's notion of the political meaning of life and the construction of the social out of death. It is less the manifestation of an opposition between two modes of being in the face of sovereignty, of *zoe* and *bios*, and more the struggle to make sense, to exercise sovereignty, and to enjoy political capital in the struggle over urban space and forms of life within it. Therein lies the war of political sociality in the American inner-city, wherein the management of meaning and the capacity to define reality is, ultimately, the key to sovereign power.

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[144] During my fieldwork, shootings occurred frequently in areas designated as NSZs. Tyree claimed in such instances that the tags had been removed by the city. This is unlikely in every occurrence, although removal was common. One day, in a bout of frustration, Tyree threatened to stop replacing the No Shoot Zones and making new ones: "[The city] will be like, 'what happened?' Well, they stopped the No Shoot Zone. Two months later, when there's 300 murders and they'll realize all the painting has been covered up and there's no more going up. It's wasted on this city."

Chapter 5 | The Haunt of the City

From fieldnotes:

March 2019

I want to get out of the city. I don't feel safe anymore. The fear is crippling. I'm ashamed I feel so scared. A few weeks ago, Jason was caught between a fleeing robber and a security guard. Thank God he is okay. The convenience store next to our gym was robbed at gunpoint in broad daylight. It's a police-heavy area with tons of foot traffic. Just recently, a mugging turned into a shooting a few blocks over. How is this happening? I used to have this false idea that living in a certain area of the city insulated you from the violence, crime, and fear. No. I used to think that time of day mattered. No, it doesn't.

Yesterday a man drew a gun across the street from my apartment while I was parking – 10am on a Saturday morning. We made eye contact and, for seconds, we both stared. He didn't flinch. Didn't try to hide the weapon. Like the rabid animal that doesn't run when you approach. It shows no fear; it's sick. Without breaking my gaze, he cocked and aimed it at the third-floor windows a few rowhomes away. I floored the gas pedal and drove off. I have never looked at someone and seen such cold intent. Everywhere feels like a warzone.

I called mom later: "Just think if that incident hadn't happened," she insisted, "you wouldn't feel so down. If you had been one minute later or earlier [you wouldn't have known about it]." That unpredictability and element of chance is anxiety-producing. You can't help but wonder if you barely missed something catastrophic. You don't know if something is about to happen. Everything gets second guessed. And it's mostly invisible where the crime does happen.

I went bowling next door to the corner where the Baltimore Spirits robber bled out. The memorial that was there was gone. It didn't look any different, but I saw the ghosts. Not actual

ghosts, but the scene replayed on the pavement as if I had seen it unfold. You start to feel the violence and the crime, the haunt of it, its apparitional quality. If I can, I look at the homicide maps of the locations for the home visits I'm going on ahead of time. For tomorrow's visit, three people were murdered on the adjoining block last year alone. When I go tomorrow, there will likely be no sign of them. Maybe a memorial. But I will know they were there.

You can't live where you don't feel safe, yet so many do. The illusion is gone for me. Everyday there are surveillance videos posted to the community page of assaults on the neighborhood's streets and videos of robbers checking car doors, house windows, and rowhomes at night to see if they're unlocked. Posts about people robbed sleeping in their beds, waking up to find their car stolen and other items gone. I think how lucky they are to be ok. And then, I watch people walk Baltimore's streets as if they don't see the specters, as if they can't feel the palpable haunt of this city. I don't know if they are numb to it, have never encountered it, or are just as deluded as I was. Part of me envies them. Part of me wants to warn them.

Introduction

Ten days after I left Baltimore, a 79-year-old woman was lured into a rowhome in an adjacent neighborhood by a man asking for help assembling a table. She was raped and assaulted, suffering a broken leg. Miraculously, she survived.[145] When interviewed, the woman dismissed the event explaining, "I feel bad for the guy. I'm glad it was me and not some girl because it would've ruined the rest of her life."[146] Violence and its trauma, even for its victims,

[145] To boot, she managed to convince the assailant to call her an Uber to the hospital, making her escape.
[146] This speaks to the sympathy that some have for those committing acts of crime, like the Baltimore Spirits robber from Chapter 3. "'She Woke Up Thinking It Was A Bad Dream' | Man Wanted In Sexual Assault Of 79-Year-Old Woman In Canton," Kelsey Kushner, CBS Baltimore, July 10, 2019: https://baltimore.cbslocal.com/2019/07/10/man-wanted-in-sexual-assault-of-79-year-old-woman-in-baltimore/ Accessed August 4, 2021.

are routine in the city. It is, as Lawrence and Karim (2007:5) describe, "part of the air and one learns how to breathe it without being asphyxiated. One no longer seeks to eliminate it, nor even to understand it."

Rereading my fieldnotes, I am bothered by how little I thought in the field about what happened after I fled the man with the gun. Further, I am struck by how—like the woman mentioned above—little meaning I, myself, applied to disturbing events. At the time, I felt fear and existential worry. I was concerned for my safety, that of my partner, and, more generally, of my interlocutors. Each first encounter with violence or the threat thereof I could dismiss as exceptional, but by the time I left Baltimore, few could be. It took truly heinous acts of aggression, like the rape of the elderly woman, to shock me.[147] The space of the city and my orientation were normalized by bloodshed and its effects. While I spent little time in the field processing my own experiences and traumas, I focused instead on my informants, seeing if they gave greater thought to the deeper structures of the violence that surrounded us. They consistently shut down any line of question pertaining to this: "You'll make yourself crazy asking why."

Michael Taussig (1987), in his study of colonial violence amid Colombia's rubber boom, explores the potential of violence to destabilize reality through the "culture of terror," in which the threat of aggression dominates a vulnerable community. Applied to Baltimore, violent encounters craft a powerful space of terror. Mostly peaceful residents shut themselves away in

[147] For my informants, truly disturbing crimes also tended to be those that violated "the code of the street," and often were seen as blatantly "disrespectful." In a community meeting one evening, a recent murder was discussed as the ultimate violation of the code: a 70-year-old woman with no history of drug use was killed in a high-rise apartment building after being given (in their term, "fed," although it is unclear how it was administered) heroin and fentanyl until she overdosed and died. Talk on the street suggested it was in retaliation for her frequent reports to police of drug activity in the neighborhood, although I could not confirm this. See also: "Death of 70-Year-Old Woman Ruled Homicide By Narcotic Poisoning," CBS Baltimore, August 3, 2018: https://baltimore.cbslocal.com/2018/08/03/homicide-by-narcotic-poisoning/ Accessed August 5, 2021.

their homes, safeguarding themselves from the threat of the street. Resentment of those participating in the illegal drug economy and in gangs breeds to the point of dehumanizing those involved,[148] reinforcing racist divides, and offering the affected the justification for segregation, gentrification, and police brutality, with all their negative consequences.

Elaine Scarry (1985) uses torture as a lens to magnify the power dynamics inherent in inflicting pain. "Intense pain is world-destroying," she writes (28). Teresa Caldeira (2000:366) elaborates further, emphasizing the unmaking of meaning that accompanies such world-destruction. While I am not entirely convinced by Scarry's claim, violence[149] is certainly world-altering. It reconfigures meaning and reconstructs the social environment of the affected. The latter are subjugated to its power, dominated by feelings of insecurity. As such, violence must not be thought of as a momentary act; it is continually felt through its fear-inducing and traumatic properties. Like torture, it "converts…every conceivable aspect of the event and the environment into an agent" (Scarry 1985:28). The temporal and spatial moments when violence occurred, whether experienced firsthand or second, are defined by what happened. Memories of the events leading up to it are seen, retrospectively, as unfolding toward a devastating conclusion. Individuals come to associate spaces where violence occurred with it. When violence defines an environment, everything about that space seems a part of it. Revisiting places of violence triggers emotional and traumatic responses for many residents, leading them to avoid some blocks of the city. Violence, thus, claims power both in the moment of conflict and in its aftershocks, among these, the production of place.

[148] This, also depicted previously in Chapter 3 through comments directed towards the slain robber in the Baltimore Spirits shooting.
[149] While my focus in this chapter is on violence, the grief that it produces is also world-altering. Survivors must adapt to a new normal that does not have their loved one in it.

Just as the anticipation of violence structures behavior (Chapter 1), so too does its memory and the awareness of its ubiquity. Psychologists may stress its traumatic effects, but they extend beyond the individual to an entire social world. Given that violence is perceived to be everywhere, leaving its damaging traces on everyone, I came to think of it as having a spectral quality: a "haunt" of sorts, a powerful constitutive force that exists in multiple temporal dimensions. It is at once felt in the present by harkening back to traumatic memories of the past – including those experienced secondhand—and by anticipating fear-producing future injury. This haunt is cast over the street, the stage on which the drama of violence is usually played out, transforming the experience of city life in its wake. As a deathscape—overflowing with the morbid meaning of torment—it has invisible but known boundaries. City streets have a density to them, a layering of memory and emotion, remembrance and anticipation, that, projected upon their topography, is legible only to those familiar with its specters.

I use the term haunt to capture this affective process in which various inchoate emotional states are congealed, connecting personal experience and the pathological public sphere. It derives from a past that has a dark, symbolic loading and forebodes the future. Its materialization is cast onto the cityscape, occulting the relationship between traumas past and the possibility their reemergence in the future. As a note: I use the term 'haunt' rather than 'haunting' to appeal to its simultaneous function as a verb and a noun. The haunt is an active, unfolding affective process but it is also an object, a *form* of violence unto itself. It speaks to a particular spectral realism, "a mode of representing socially produced absences… the only way to accurately represent a world marked by the invisibilization of certain lives" (Carballo 2018:313).

This chapter explores the production and reproduction of violence, its excesses and its overflows—its haunt—dissecting how fear and trauma layer upon, and shape, space. Sketching a

portrait of the city's "culture of fear," I draw attention to the feelings of submission and vulnerability it engenders for survivors—and, more generally, for many of its residents. Next, I introduce you to Rose, whose harrowing loss of her son outside her home has irreparably changed her orientation to her neighborhood. In seeking to explain her desire to relocate away from the death site, I use the concept of the haunt to frame how violence is internalized. Specifically, I explore its capacity to reterritorialize the space of the street into a place of suffering and its spectral return in which violence and pain threaten to recur. Finally, and significantly, I examine the processes by which the haunt is actively reproduced through digital media that enable its visibility and inculcate a sense of its ever-presence.

Violence and Its Experience

Bourgois (2003:34), reflecting on his own field experience in New York City's Spanish Harlem, notes how "street culture's violence pervades daily life [in the inner-city] and shapes mainstream society's perception of the ghetto in a manner completely disproportionate to its objective danger." Consistent with his claim, Baltimore's crime statistics (see Introduction) are deceptively foreboding and fuel the contagion of worry and fear,[150] especially among those outside of the city.[151] Nearby county schools cancel fieldtrips downtown to visit the Maryland Science Center over such statistics, citing "escalating violence" in the city, a move intended to

[150] Statistical pattern is the basis upon which outsiders project fears of falling victim to violence. Residents, however, encounter the haunt, or the phenomenology of violence, where materiality generalizes into a sense of its potential. Violence takes on an experiential dimension of something that is ever-present in the local world, even though it isn't.

[151] These statistics are internalized by the families whose deceased loved ones are enumerated. At one of the early meetings of the homicide support group, the fatality count of the year was brought up: "My son is 285," one woman mentioned. "Mine's 74," another said. Every woman, save one—this group was entirely female—knew the number that their loved one claimed in that year's running total. *The Baltimore Sun* consistently reports killings not by the names of the victims, but by their location and time of death, as well as the number that each represents in the yearly rate. Both of these things, I believe, are indicative of the profound dehumanization that accompanies a public numbness towards violence, also a product of the culture of terror (see Chapter 3).

"limit risk to students and staff."[152] Such cancellations have undeniably racist undertones: there are over 79,000 Baltimore City public school children, 92.5 percent of whom are non-White;[153] one county school district which cancelled its visit had over 25,000 students, 82.1 percent of whom are White.[154] By contrast, no cancellations of Baltimore City public school classes occurred over crime concerns. When the county school cancellations first were announced, city officials and critics quickly underscored the exceptionally low probability of any harm coming to school tours at the museum, located in the tourist-heavy Inner Harbor.

Baltimore's deadly violence is not random. For the most part, it is clustered among a small segment of the population. Studies (e.g. Papachristos et al. 2015; Corsaro and Engel 2015) and statistics have shown that the majority of city residents are unlikely to fall victim to it. Nonetheless, there is a widespread discrepancy between the ubiquity of violence and the perception of it. Even for those who are not directly targets of violence, there is a significant likelihood of being touched by its effects and affect if you live in the city. The haunt of violence, rather than its statistical presence, contributes to the perception of its everydayness and the phenomenology of fear.

During my fourteen months of fieldwork in inner-city Baltimore, Jason and I, like Bourgois,[155] were never mugged or assaulted. This is not to say, however, that we didn't experience violence, it was just at a different scale than what has been discussed. Early on in the

[152] "White Children Not Safe in Violent Baltimore, School District Says," Beatrice Dupuy, Newsweek, November 29, 2017: https://www.newsweek.com/has-baltimore-become-too-violent-one-maryland-school-district-thinks-so-725752 Accessed August 5, 2021.
[153] See "2020-21 Student Enrollment," Baltimore City Public Schools: https://www.baltimorecityschools.org/district-overview
[154] See "2020 Maryland School Report Card," Maryland State Department of Education: https://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/Graphs/#/Demographics/Enrollment/3/17/6/06/XXXX/2020
[155] I borrow from Bourgois' (2003:34) descriptive framing here.

field, Jason was attacked by a dog[156] and, in another incident, our truck was set on fire in a series of overnight arsons.[157] While violence and violent crime may be less common than generally believed, it is nonetheless impactful. Our experiences reconfigured feelings of security for us, as they do many residents. "Part of the reason is that violent incidents, even when they do not physically threaten bystanders, are highly visible and traumatic" (Bourgois 2003:34). Crime transitions from being faceless and anonymous to something intimate and felt. Consider some of the acts of violence that I witnessed during fieldwork, in addition to the encounter described in the opening notes:

- A group of teenagers stopping street traffic and attacking vehicles and drivers, beating cars with wooden planks, and attempting to smash in windows.
- A young woman mugged at gunpoint on our block as she was walking her dog. She rushed into the corner bar that I happened to be in, in search of safety. The bartender quickly called police and locked the doors. Inside, she pressed her back up against an interior wall and melted down it onto the floor, crumpling into a ball where she sobbed in fear.[158]

[156] An off-leash dog bit Jason's wrist and its owner fled the scene immediately. Unable to confirm the vaccination status of the animal, we spent the day between the police precinct reporting the injury and Johns Hopkins Hospital treating it with a series of rabies shots.

[157] Unlike the other vehicles affected, ours was the only salvageable. Yet, it was also the only fire that the police deemed to merit an investigation. One of the fire chiefs who responded to the crime scene told us that an arson like this would usually never receive any police attention in Baltimore. Resources are too scarce to allocate to investigating property damage, he explained. We were the third residents to report the arson, signaling to the department a pattern of crime (and accruing damages substantial enough for a prosecutor to be interested). The crime scene team, however, declined to collect physical evidence as the arriving police officer had relocated burned items within the truck and opened its doors, removing usable fingerprints. He too assumed there would be no investigation. To date, we have not once been contacted by the detectives about the case.

[158] Walking back to my apartment after the incident, I audio recorded my reflection on what had happened: "Safety is not something you value until you need to value it. And shit, I value it now."

- A man beating a woman at a bus stop, then dragging her, screaming, down the street by her hair.

I highlight the above to draw attention to the public nature of violence that many residents encounter, as well as to emphasize its visuality and disturbing quality. These lend "a sense of an omnipresent threatening reality that extend[s] far beyond the statistical possibility of becoming a victim" (Bourgois 2003:34). The ubiquity of fear in the inner-city, a space of violence, is greater than it should be given that violence is episodic and segmented. The discrepancy between feeling and actuality, however, doesn't make the fear or its internalization any less real.

The palpable force of violence that overflows in its affect and effects from a given interaction is well-captured in an analysis of the etymology of the term. Beck (2011:348) explains that violence has both transitive—signifying a subject-object relationship—and intransitive aspects—indicating a potential of the subject that relates to its structural qualities. By definition, it is "the exercise of physical force so as to inflict injury on, or cause damage to, persons or property; action or conduct characterized by this; treatment or usage tending to cause bodily injury or forcibly interfering with personal freedom" (Ibid., cited within from the Oxford English Dictionary). This transitive characterization of violence "evokes an image of transgression, of an integral space that is broken in a situation or interaction" (Ibid.).

The Latin origin of the word offers further insight: violence, from '*violentus,'* meaning 'vehement, force' shares a direct root, '*vis,'* with '*violare'* meaning 'violation.' It may be inferred from this that violence as a concept extends beyond bodily injury. Rather, it is the use of force to infringe upon what is essential to one's dignity, individual autonomy. Focusing on the act of physical violence alone "fails to realize the full dimension of what it is to do violence"

(Garver 1971:246) and obscures the force of its inscription upon a social structure. Perhaps the most damaging element of violence is "what is left when we subtract a violent act from an act of violence" (Harris 1980:14), or the remainders contained in memory, bodily injury, psychological trauma, and the pain of loss.

Of course, violence in Baltimore is nuanced. My informants could be broadly grouped into numerous categories[159] by the type of injury they experienced: violence mimicking that which occurs in non-state societies (e.g. revenge killing); interpersonal criminal violence (e.g. armed robbery, homicide, assault)[160]; and organized private violence (e.g. gang conflict, killing subordinates and/or dependents in drug operations). Similarly, violence can be sorted into lethal and non-lethal categories—or, as some of my interlocutors might consider "successful" and unsuccessful attacks.[161] Attending to the difference in forms of violence, or to its physical consequences, however, risks overlooking its unifying feature: That it is a disturbance that restructures one's understanding of, and engagement with, the social world.

Each incident of violence that I encountered in the field—be it experienced personally, as an observer, or secondhand through the stories of my informants and news media— cultivated a feeling of powerlessness that progressively transformed how I viewed and interacted with the city. The house across the street where I faced the man with the gun was no longer, and never could be, anonymous and un-signified. The image of the Baltimore Spirits robber (see chapter 3) bleeding out on the concrete would forever brand its corresponding corner. By the time I left Baltimore, the streets were freighted with dark remembrances upon which fear and anxiety

[159] These, in part informed by Eisner's (2009) classifications.
[160] For the purposes of this chapter, which focus on fear and trauma surrounding street violence and its socio-spatial restructuring effects, I am not addressing domestic violence or forms of injury that take place in private domains.
[161] This introduces questions regarding the motivation behind certain types of violence which, while important, are not relevant to my argument here.

overlapped, affecting how I moved through the city. Violence has a disciplining effect on the production of the city's space and its place as a deathscape.

My experience was not unique. One evening, while participating in a sacred space ritual for a recent killing on a notoriously violent street in the city, members of the Baltimore Ceasefire program and I walked the street, inquiring as to the exact location of death so that we might burn sage and pray for the victim, cleansing the street.[162] A woman who lived on the block directed us to a storm drain towards the end of the avenue. She didn't stop there, however; she proceeded to offer a tour of the street drawing our attention to each of its murders. "Right there," she pointed, "that's where Tilly died." "And there," she directed me towards the opposite end, "that's where them two boys got shot in the head."[163] We walked on down the block, passing the shell of a house marked for demolition. Weather-worn stuffed animals marked with RIP were duct taped to the front door. "That's where they got Naz. He got shot at the goddamn bar on that corner and collapsed down here. I blame most of these killings on that place. Too many fights that turn into deaths, all started by alcohol. We know to stay in when it's open."

Even though "direct" victims of homicide are contained to a small population, their deaths are exhibited to and felt by a much broader audience,[164] as evinced by this local woman. To witness or bear the personalized knowledge of suffering in Baltimore is, in a way, a mode of violence unto itself. Beck (2011:349-50) proposes renaming traditional designations of "victim" and "perpetrator" to include a third category that better elucidates the social dynamics of violence: "target," the damaged body associated with powerlessness; "performer," the actor who

[162] The act of "cleansing a space" speaks further to the capacity of violence to constrain urban space. Sacred space rituals were attempts by city residents to reverse the effects of this.
[163] In Chapter 1 this same practice of spontaneously describing the street by the locations of killings was reported in the case of a different survivor.
[164] This audience contains not only homicide survivors, but also those who witness violence and/or have been exposed to graphic crime scenes across the city. It also includes those who may not have been exposed to violence directly, but who have heard stories of it and, as such, have had their lived experience of space altered.

commits an injuring act, this associated with domination; and "observer," the beholder who witnesses and internalizes, another position where violence is experienced. Those exposed to and living with violence are. Also victimized by its effects, effects that both precede and follow an act of aggression. This is how my informants, other local residents, and I came to be socialized by a phenomenon that was extraordinary yet everyday, relatively rare yet omnipresently felt. We could feel its haunt.

The Power of the Haunt

Cheryl's knuckles rapped against the blistering white paint of the door at the end of the hallway. We're in West Baltimore today at the apartment complex of one of her long-time survivors. A woman in pajamas answered, short curly hair knotted in cloth. Cheryl surveyed her attire. "Well, at least you've got some clothes on this time!" she chuckled before opening her arms to embrace the woman in a full-bosomed hug. Entering, Cheryl turned to me, "last time I saw Rosie, she was in lingerie. Looked like she had just got through having sex!" Rose snorted and bent over laughing, emitting what could only be described as the marriage of a wheeze and a cackle. "That's true, that's true!" Cheryl's big, tell-it-like-it-is personality was the perfect icebreaker. Brief introductions were made, and we stepped into Rose's home.

The apartment was eerily dark for a midday visit. Thick curtains cloaked the windows and a dim overhead light cast scarlet shadows across the living room. Three pastel-colored balloons, deflating and sad, limped against a side table, ribbons tangled beneath a clutter of photo frames. Impulsively, I opened my mouth to offer small talk: "Did you have a party?" I was about to say.

I caught a glimpse of the coffee table and stopped the words before they left my mouth. Dozens of dead flowers in funerary vases crowded the surface, their petrified petals shriveled and lifeless. An internal voice chastised me for being so eager to mask, in a thoughtless question, my apprehension of our first meeting.[165]

Surveying the urns, I remembered the decaying arrangements that littered the kitchen counter in my family home following Eddie's death. I wondered if Roses' flowers had once smelled as putrid as those. Today, however, there was no discernable odor besides musk. A funeral program on the table showed the date her son Micah died — eight months' prior. Eight months since the flowers, given in a celebration of life, began to fade and droop. Eight months of decomposition. Survivor's homes serve as fragile hold outs from the street's deathscape. Yet many possess a ghoulish quality. Judging from the flowers alone, I expected Rose to be stuck in the past, frozen in time like the mausoleum of a room.

Today's agenda consisted of brainstorming solutions for a few issues pressing Rose: where to purchase a tombstone for her son's grave[166] and her desire to move.

"Too many bad memories?" I asked.

"I'm right across the street."

Cheryl followed up. "If you step out the door, you can see where her son was killed. Right there. And then, there's a store right up on Central that she used to go to sometimes. A few

[165] The balloons, I surmised, were the remnant from a street memorial for her son. However, I never confirmed this with Rose.

[166] Buying a tombstone is a surprisingly complicated (and costly) process depending on the location of burial. Memorial parks, as opposed to cemeteries, offer the illusion of being a park and must have grave markers, often plaques, that lie flush with the ground. Some cemeteries have restrictions on tombstones, including the size of the stone and where it can be placed. Families who experience a sudden death and may not be able immediately to afford a headstone need to have the foresight to anticipate what type of marker (e.g. tombstone, plaque, mausoleum, or otherwise) they will wish to purchase later. Until a stone is placed, a yellow flag marks the location of the deceased.

weeks later, the Arabian guy, the Arab, he was killed too. She found out while walkin' down to get some cigarettes—"

"—sent me into a tailspin right again," Rose jumped in.

"So, yeah, it's a lot of tragedy on top of tragedy that keeps on going."

Rose continued. "It's just terrible up here. This part of the city, this area. Right up there is the convenience store, where they killed Taleb—"

"—that's the Arab guy" Cheryl cut in.

"It's drugs, and it's violence. This is a terrible area. You come on in here to my house and it's all peaceful and quiet. On this block it is. It was. But I can't walk up that street. If I go, I have to go up [a different street] and come around. Walking up there—"

"—It retraumatizes you." Cheryl, again.

"Yes it does! It retraumatizes me. So, I can't. The best I can do is get away from here so I can walk and not keep dwelling on how they killed Micah. Right. There. And then Taleb! Cause I can't heal like that. I can't heal like that. This area is off the chain."

Cheryl, assuming the role of cultural translator, began to summarize the neighborhood's crime for context, although none was needed. She concluded, "…it's just straight up—"

"—druggggggggs! It's hell! It's hell up here. I was on television when they killed Taleb and the TV people asked me, 'what do you have to say about this?' and I said, 'this is a HELL hole.'"

Since the murder of Taleb, a curfew was implemented in the neighborhood. Stores and bars used to remain open late into the evening. Now, they close at midnight and police are stationed in the parking lot, questioning those who come around. I asked Rose if she thinks things have improved since the curfew.

"Well, yeah. It helps because roaches ain't come out. When you cut the light on, the roaches run. So up there is a bunch of roaches—that's what I call 'em. Them is roaches. I wish I had taken my son out away from here. Now they doing what they should have done to start with. I still should've known better to send him to that 24-hour store."

"Wait. We need to catch Sam up." Cheryl interrupted Rose's swelling rant.

"I don't want to pry." I explained, careful not to overstep my bounds.

"Oh, you can pry! It's good to talk," Rose reassured me.

"If you're uncomfortable you don't have to—" I began.

"Ask."

"Well, how did you find out about your son's death?"

Not sparing even a moment to breathe, Rose accelerated into a dramatic story told so quickly that I was barely able to shorthand the details. She described sending Micah on his bike to the corner store for a pack of cigarettes and a soda. Lying in bed, she heard four gunshots—"I thought, what in the world?!"—and moments later there was shouting outside the house. Someone banged on the door. It was Goofy, one of Micah's friends. "RAP RAP RAP" Rose sounded, striking her fist against an invisible door. Mimicking a young boy's voice, she squeaked, "Miss Rosie, Miss Rosie, they got 'em!" She looked at me, deadpan: "And right there, I knew it was my son that got shot."

Rose paused briefly. She had run out of the house to her son, laying face up on the sidewalk, his body stiff and completely straight, "like somebody had positioned him," his bicycle strewn in the grass. Rose stood over Micah and commanded, "Get up. Get up, shorty, get up." When he didn't move, she fell beside him, checking for breath. "I seen his eyes and they were gray. My son didn't have gray eyes. My son had brown eyes." Rose marveled, unbelieving, at

how Micah fell. How could someone be shot off a bike and lie straight? She described holding him and noticing what appeared to be a vein protruding from the back of his skull, presumably a piece of brain matter ("the insides of his head"), from the bullet's entry point. "Whoever shot him shot him from behind." Rose's anger grew at the prospect, fueling her momentum, "Why did you kill my baby? Why did you kill my son?" she pleaded as if the perpetrator was with us. "What could he have possibly done to make somebody want to kill him?" Rose pivoted, directing her frustration towards "that boy Goofy" who knocked on her door – how did he get there so quickly? What did it mean when he said 'they' got him? Who is 'they'? He must have seen something. How dare he have broken bread in her house and now refuse to talk?

"Do you think it could have been an accident?" I suggested, refocusing the conversation.

Rose threw an arm up dismissively. "How can an accident be four shots? An accident is one shot."

Cheryl rebutted, "Maybe someone else there getting shot at, you know?" Rose acknowledged the possibility. Her son was, after all, "one of the good ones."

Unlike many homicide survivors, Rose was offered financial assistance from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board (CICB) following Micah's killing, a point of pride she and Cheryl were quick to highlight. "Both of my survivors today got paid out," Cheryl would beam. The CICB is a state-funded program that offers financial assistance to victims of crime.[167] The decision as to whether funding is given depends on the perceived innocence (or, in Cheryl's words, "corruption") of the victim, as determined by an investigation based on the responding detective's crime report. Based on accounts of dozens of survivors, I found that many families

[167] Recall from the beginning of Chapter 4 that the Family Bereavement Center, as part of the Maryland State's Attorney's office, refers survivors to a reimbursement program to offset burial costs; this is that program. Most homicide survivors given CICB support are only eligible for a maximum of $5,000 to aid with burial costs.

were ineligible for support because their loved one was judged to have been killed while "committing a criminal act," broadly defined. Having a joint of marijuana in one's pocket or a weapon were grounds for rejection. Receiving CICB aid was seen as a favorable moral appraisal of the deceased, an affirmation of the "decency"[168] of the victim.

Rose sighed. "Well, nothing that can be done to change it at this point. I should've known better. Crooks and thieves hang out all night long. My father used to say, after two o'clock, only thing open is—"

"—bars and legs," Cheryl said with a grin, catching Rose's eye.

"Bars and legs." Rose smiled at their camaraderie. "Anyway, now with the curfew, roaches got to move. I wish I could too."

"Any idea where you'll go?" I asked.

Rose laughs. "It don't matter as long as it's away from here. Don't matter as long as it's away from this Central Avenue. Period." Cheryl took the opportunity to explain the conflict Rose was facing with her landlord. She desperately wanted to move, but he was unwilling to allow her to break her lease without financial penalty—a consequence she couldn't afford. Together, they had been working with pro-bono lawyers to make a claim that Rose has PTSD from the violence of the neighborhood and murder of her son. This, they hoped, would qualify her as having a disability that the landlord couldn't accommodate. Once released from her lease, she faced the

[168] Here, I borrow Elijah Anderson's (1999:35) conceptual categories of "decent" and "street" to highlight a moral juxtaposition frequently brought up in my fieldwork – whether the decedent's lifestyle was a key factor in the killing, and/or whether murder was a justifiable consequence of previous behavior. Wacquant (2002:1488) has criticized Anderson for the polarity of these categories, emphasizing how the terms reduce value systems to static conditions. While I agree with Wacquant's analysis, here the terms are productive in capturing the "evaluative judgments that confer status on local residents" (Anderson 35). My fieldwork revealed a tension between status judgments of decent/street—or, more appropriately, whether the decedent "had it coming"—and moral appraisals of whether or not the individual lost was a "good" or "bad" person (i.e. did he "deserve" to die). These two classifications, while similar in language, represent the nuance in valuation and draw attention to the inner-city rationalities surrounding murder.

challenge of securing affordable housing. At 60-years-old, Rose was not yet considered a senior citizen in Baltimore City, where subsidized independent senior housing is only offered for those age 62 and older.[169]

"Your granddaughter still live with you?" Cheryl inquired about Micah's daughter.

"Oh, yes. She sleeps all day – six, seven o'clock. Then she rise like a vampire. Between those hours—" Rose rolled her eyes back in her head theatrically, extending her arms outwards like a zombie and contorting her voice, "—she riiiiiiiise. That's a damn vampire!"

We all broke into laugher, allowing it to crescendo as Rose continued to mime, half-hiccupping with laughter as we attempted to gather our belongings. Considering the apartment, a vampire granddaughter didn't sound so far-fetched.

"You're a trip," Cheryl chuckled. "You know, when I first met Rosie, I thought she was high! But she hasn't gotten high for—how long has it been?"

Rose let out a cackle. "Oh shoot, oooh ohh oooh. Wow, how long has it been? I guess fifteen years."

"That's incredible. What got you clean?" I asked.

"Micah."

"And that's what keeps her clean now," said Cheryl. "And," she added jokingly, "moving forward I'm keeping you clean too. You get dirty, I'mma knock you out!"

More laughter. My cheeks hurt from smiling. "C'mon Sam," Cheryl beckoned as we exchanged warm goodbyes.

[169] Fortunately for Rose, if she is successfully classified as having a disability, she would be eligible for more housing options. In the surrounding wealthier counties there are greater options for subsidized housing for younger seniors.

Stepping out onto the porch, my eyes burned, struggling to adapt to the sun's brilliance. Wind chimes danced beneath the porch roof, welcoming in the spring with a melodic tune. I admired the towering oak trees, their gnarled trunks, and virgin leaves, a budding canopy moving with the breeze. Trees of this age and stature were a rarity in the city. My vision, finally adjusted, settled on the street corner where Micah was killed. The site was totally nondescript. There were no markers or evidence that this was where he died. Knowledge of its absence, its unseen history, made the space even more potent. I imagined Micah's body prone on the concrete, like Rose had described. I saw her crying over him, pleading that he get up.

I climbed into my car, attempting to cast the thought from my mind and waited for Cheryl so I might follow her safely out of the neighborhood. As she searched her bag for keys, my gaze wandered back to the rear-view mirror to consider the ancient trees again. They too were survivors of a sort. I wondered if Micah took his final glimpse gazing up at the autumn foliage colored in breathtaking shades of berry and gold. Perhaps it had been too late in the fall. Maybe he left this world with that riot of color confettied around him. Surely, they weren't a mushy, earthen brown. The tree had probably witnessed a lot of violence underneath its canopy over the course of its lifetime, I thought. Did the fresh, spring leaves that adorned the tree today know of Micah? Had the elderly trunk and its trauma-knotted roots imparted to them their deciduous wisdom? Cheryl started her car and pulled into the cul-de-sac. We drove off while the street and its trees faded into the rear-view.

. . .

Like Rose, many of my interlocutors are plagued by an unnamed but known 'something' that lingers after violence. They speak of an unresolved torment that goes beyond an expression of grief, the trauma of a tragic memory, or empathizing with the suffering of another. They

describe a reorientation of perspective and change in behavior, largely inspired by fear and a new grasp of both the potential and reality of violence. The haunt is made elementally of its manifestations, its reverberations, and its trauma. But its spectral *return* is what makes it haunting. This is what radically transforms the social world of the inner-city. Consider Gordon's (2008:8) description of ghosts: "The apparition is one form by which something is lost, or barely visible, or seemingly not there to our supposedly well-trained eyes, makes itself known or apparent to us, in its own way, of course. The way of the ghost is haunting, and haunting is a very particular way of knowing what has happened or what is happening." Knowledge of violence and its internalization alters the experience of being in the city. The haunt, I argue, has a disciplinary power over the production of the space of the street, a form of control that echoes long after the initial impact of an aggressive act. This manifests in the conditioning of behavior—e.g. what routes to travel, what blocks to avoid, the desire to relocate—as it pertains to the space of the street.

It is difficult to articulate the phenomenon of ghosts or haunting outside of realms of the occult. How do you explain the experience of sensing the specters of violence? How do you describe its overwhelming nature to someone who cannot see, nor feel, it? Writing this chapter, I grappled with these things, wondering instead if omitting them would offer a more accessible portrait of the experience of survivorship and violence. To redact the haunt, however, would amount to describing the consequence of tossing a stone into a pond as "sinking to the bottom" with no mention of the ripples that radiate outwards from its impact. Violence's remainders—namely, trauma, pain, and fear[170]—surge through survivors, unsettling their reality, mutating everyday experience. Returning to the definition of violence as a violation of one's autonomy

[170] The material consequences of violence, such as loss of income and familial support are significant and addressed in other chapters.

and well-being, we see how the haunt is not only a symptom, but also an agent of aggression. It wreaks its damager long after the physical act that caused it and its transformative effects may be felt for years. A street corner or bus stop, previously unremarkable, become spaces of memory and, hence, of terror. Rose's narrative makes plain that these places become so animated that to encounter them is to ricochet through time between the subjective experience of the past, the present moment, and fearful anticipations of the future. This is not dissimilar from experiences of pre-death temporality outlined in Chapter 1. Distinct, however, is how the haunt is actualized by the space of the street as the site of violence and death.

The Space of the Street

Space within the discipline of anthropology is often conceptualized, geographically, as a physical location. History, cultural memory, trauma, people, and events imbue it with significance. In the process, this creates *place,* or "framed space that is meaningful to a person or group over time" (Thornton 2008:10). Place is defined by social relations: it is not something that merely exists, but something produced by society. Critical to its making is the creation and recreation of meaning through human action and interaction.

The space of the inner-city is one of violence. Or so it appears to those who live in the county and watch nightly news reports of shootings. It is also clear internationally to viewers of *The Wire* who know little about Baltimore beyond its notorious crime statistics. Visitors to it are warned to use caution on the street. As residents encounter criminal violence, a collective sense of its omnipresence begins to cloak the cityscape, defining places as those of death, injury, threat, and harm. "Geographers and other social scientists have come to see 'place' as 'a crucial actor in producing affects because, in particular, it can change the composition of an encounter'"

(Tyner (2012:18, citing Thrift 2012)). At the beginning of my fieldwork, for example, the rowhome across the street from my apartment was indistinguishable from any other. After encountering the man with the gun—described at the beginning of this chapter—the stoop where he stood was differentiated in my memory. That event changed the way I came to see the neighborhood and the area surrounding my home. It contributed to the sense of insecurity that I increasingly came to feel. Rose also experienced a transformation of place following the murder of her son outside her home. Her reading of the street was reconfigured. It was now the place of her son's death and rife with gruesome memories. Accordingly, she fundamentally altered how she moved about her neighborhood, avoiding the corner, its trauma, and the misery it represented.

Without cultural meaning, the streets of Baltimore are simply spaces. Even though it is common knowledge that violence plagues them, without anything personal or memorable to distinguish one block from the next, violence exists only in the abstract. Through this lens, we can further understand the logic behind the erasure of RIP graffiti and the removal of memorials described in chapter 4. Those memorials brand city streets as places of death, differentiating and personalizing them, signifying the events that literally took place there. The impact of viewing RIP graffiti as an outsider, however, is substantially different from that of a survivor witnessing a loved one bleeding out on the pavement. For the former, even in its personalization, it signifies generically; it belongs to the domain of the ordinary, where understandings of violence are nonspecific. For the latter, on the other hand, it is extraordinary, denoting the devastation that survivors speak of as indescribable—unless you have also lost a loved one to homicide.

What makes the haunt so destructive is the fact that "…anticipation, fears, and morbid dreads are specters from the future that haunt our present, as do fragments of history" (Zeitlyn et

al. 2020:500). Past violence is made affectively present in everyday life, bringing together force, domination, and memory. There is the reminder that violence that *is* still very much there; its threat looms despite no longer being visible. The street is read for its disastrous potential. Here, death, which in other contexts may feel foreign, is known. It is possible here because it been here before.

Questions of absence or presence are, in themselves, inquiries into spatiality. By viewing the cityscape through a spectral lens, it is possible to understand how violent pasts become "socially, spatially, and infrastructurally fixed" (Varley and Varma 2018:631). Over time, the street becomes thick with memory and meaning. It is imagined as inseparable from conflict. For some residents, the experience of inner-city space falls into one of two polarities: the street and the home. The boundary between inside and outside, between safety and insecurity, was frequently referenced. One survivor summed up this metaphysical (and, obviously, also physical) opposition as being either "in or out… and when I'm in, I'm in."[171] Consider this excerpt from a prison letter given to me by one of my informants. In it, two Baltimore gang members describe a verbal altercation that transpired while attending a funeral for a friend who was murdered: "Me and Noonie got into it and he goes, 'none of you n-----s better come outside 'til I get some answers.' I told that n---- he's a bitch ass n---- and I'm outside every day." The letter-writer reinforces the vulnerability of the street, implying that being outside is an act of bravery or courage despite its risk. The street ("outside") is synonymous with threat and exposure. This also allows us to infer that its foil, the space of the home ("inside"), is a place isolated from violence.

[171] Meaning that she would settle in, safeguarding herself within the walls of her rowhome, away from the danger and trauma of the street.

This is not to say that the home cannot be or is not a place of violence,[172] but thinking of it as a space of safety is an imaginative necessity in a world dominated by danger and insecurity.

The response of many to the street's association with threat is fear. This is a chronic rather than an acute reaction, however (Green 1995:105). Heidegger emphasizes the importance of the existence of fear in the present moment: "the temporality of fear a forgetting that awaits and makes present. In accordance with its orientation toward things encountered within the world, the commonsense interpretation of fear initially seeks to determine the 'approaching evil' as what it is afraid of and to define its relation to that evil as expectation" (Heidegger and Stambaugh 1996:342). In fear, the self is forgotten, and action is immobilized. The individual is preoccupied entirely with the immediate threat. Fear is "a way of being present in the world…[and] a world you fear is a place where you can never feel completely at home" (Svendsen 2008:43). It is understandable why so many shelter within brick rowhomes. Outside they are enveloped by the criminal economy and its macabre affect. The streets, as Heidegger writes, "radiate harmfulness."[173] Perhaps one of the most damaging effects of fear is its dominance; it constrains behavior and prevents healing. Think back to Rose's account: While she did not talk about fear directly, she cited the trauma of living across the street from where her son was killed. Healing amidst the haunt of his memory and the city's violence is, she explains, an impossibility.

"What distinguishes fear from anger, sorrow, or joy is not the object in itself but the interpretation of it" (Svendsen 2008:35). As an object of fear, the space of the street has conditioned individuals to read it as a threatening place. Critical its haunt is the uncertainty and

[172] Domestic violence and other forms of injury do occur in these spaces; but they are most often distinct from street violence and beyond the scope of my research.
[173] Cited in Svendson (2008:43).

unpredictability of violence that occurs along its surfaces. Local people know intimately of that violence suffered on the street previously. Their knowledge obliterates any reassurance to the contrary.

Adapting to the Haunt

For many, there is no possibility of escape from the city due to issues of, among other things, financial cost, employment, family obligation. “I wish to God I had the money to leave this damn city. If I wasn’t such a failure in my life, I could’ve afforded to move my children somewhere where they ain’t have to worry about 20 shootings a day,” one survivor explained. The haunt is an everyday reality that many, ultimately, cannot avoid. As a result, residents respond to it by reorienting themselves to the streets and to conflict so they can endure it. Anthropologist Ivana Macek (2001:210) describes a similar phenomenon in her ethnographic study of experiences of war in Sarajevo: “When war became a way of life, the notion of fear changed its character, becoming a subdued background of life, necessary to live with.” Michael Taussig discusses terror similarly, as a state of “stringing out the nervous system one way toward hysteria, the other way numbing and apparent acceptance” (1989:3).

The excerpt below from my audio fieldnotes is emblematic of this. Recorded in a car ride home from a support group meeting with Jason, I had responded to a recent alert from Citizen, a crime monitoring app, about an armed man in the neighborhood: “ARMED SUSPECT LOOSE - 0.2 MILES AWAY – SHELTER IN PLACE; STAY SAFE; USE CAUTION.” Climbing into the car, I asked Jason if he had also received the notification:

Jason: I didn't see it because I was driving, but I saw the helicopter whip a 180. It was clearly in some kind of emergency mode, in that there was activity, and that's something you don't understand until you see it. Which it's weird enough that you have helicopters circling ahead usually, and so I was noticing that I was numb to the helicopter until I saw it – like, at night you can see an active helicopter by the searchlights. But this was daylight! And it's like, oh my goodness, that's someone doing evasive action[174] to catch a perpetrator. And that's just on my way to pick you up. And I was just cruising with my windows down, kind of leisurely passing what I thought was a reasonably calm afternoon.

Sam: It's a warzone. And, frankly, we don't really think about it that much. We do, but we don't. When I saw the notification I thought, "okay, so I'm going to wait inside until I see Jay to pick me up." It wasn't like 'oh my God, what is this place?' I just know not to step out until my ride is right there--

J: --Because in a survival sense, there are real practical applications to being grounded in the moment and not outraged by the moment. Honestly, the only references I had to what I was seeing—which was a helicopter 200 feet off the ground doing gnarly turns—was action movies. And I kind of just took in the moment and drank it in as the visuals I was seeing I would only otherwise see in CGI [computer generated imagery] and video games.

[174] "Evasive action" is not exactly a representative description, as the helicopter was not at risk of colliding with anyone or anything. In using this phrase, Jason was attempting to make a comparison to the fast and precise movement of the helicopter.

S: Right! I have to be like, "oh no, Sam. You are in Baltimore City right now; you are not in an action movie." But [in the moment] it also feels like, "oh, there's a shooter a few doors down. Maybe I'll stay inside."

J: If you break it down, we're not in a declared warzone, but we're in a place where there's gunfire and death. What's the difference if you look at the objective facts? Someone in Syria could attest to gunfire and death on a daily basis. It's a political question if you're at war or if you're just under fire.

The violence of the inner-city and the accompanying deep fear is routine. "[This] is what fuels its power. Routinization allows people to live in a chronic state of fear with a façade of normalcy at the same time that terror permeates and shreds the social fabric," Green (1995:108) writes of the chronic fear experienced by women during Guatemalan massacres. What further burdens the survivors I worked with is that terror is compounded by grief and trauma. Together they sediment into the residual effect of violence, its haunt. Coexisting in such a climate requires pragmatism. If residents cannot leave, they must find ways to adapt. Rosie shifted her walking routes to avoid confronting the place of her son's death. Others described changing their methods of transportation to bypass or quickly move through dangerous or traumatic blocks. In other cases, my informants restricted the times that they would leave places of security, like their homes, to avoid encountering certain people or moving through certain spaces (e.g. taking advantage of the timing and stops of bus routes). One informant admitted to not being able to escape the memories of violence and sense of fear omnipresent in her neighborhood. She felt cornered within the space and had no options to relocate or change her behavior. Instead, she

opted to dull her fear, pain, and trauma through substance use: “I can’t get on my feet here,” she shared. “There’s nothing but pain for me. Moving and change would help me with my grief more. That’s not an option, though. Smoking dope, that’s the only thing that takes away the pain and emotions.” Even with small adaptations, however, the underlying shadow of the haunt remains, ever-present, even at a lowered intensity.

Thinking about the loss of my brother, I can recall being told by my mother the location in the city where Eddie was found dead. She mentioned driving by the block to see where he had left this world. When she named the street, I was not able to place its location. “Look it up [on a map],” she suggested. I instinctively resisted. Even so, early on in my fieldwork I sensed the power that marking a space as a place of loss, especially such a personal and painful loss, had on one’s experience of it. For my own healing and the sake of future fieldwork experiences, I could not know. I worried that I, as Rose would later do, would avoid that area of the city or, worse, be drawn to it. Either way, I figured it would affect how I experienced the city and exacerbate the grief I was feeling. Looking back at my decisions, I see that my choice to disallow myself the opportunity to link Eddie’s death to a city street helped prevent me from being further socialized into grief and the city’s culture of terror.

The (Re)Production of the Haunt: Social Media and Crime-Tracking Technology

Violence’s reverberations, like memory and bereavement, eventually fade with time and distance without a stimulus to re-establish its presence. In addition to the highly visible acts of violence that play out on the city streets, social media and other technologies remind of its recurrence and gruesome reality. Its haunt, a product of its power, doesn’t only rely on its occurrence for its affect to be sustained. Social media sites and digital applications that circulate

information about crime have flooded the Baltimore market. In addition to online community groups that foster dialogue about neighborhood crime (also referenced in chapter 3), Instagram accounts like MurderInk, websites such as the *Baltimore Sun*'s Homicide Maps, and the phone app Citizen have increased awareness of criminality and contributed to the feeling of its omnipresence. In addition to providing real-time alerts—sometimes so rapidly that police are not yet on scene—MurderInk and Citizen locate violent crime through digital maps. Red dots overlay street corners, marking areas of conflict and death through geocoordinates. These technologies provide an eye through which users may watch as felonies unfold; there are live streaming functions in the Citizen app that increase the reach of graphic encounters. This, in turn, shapes how citizens view and navigate the street, how they understand Baltimore's neighborhoods and the scope of insecurity, how they experience crime, and how they view its perpetrators. One survivor summarized the influence of the app by likening it to daily news: "People look at it like it's the regular news, like you wake up and look at MurderInk to see who got killed that night."

In the case of crime tracking mobile apps and accounts, the question arises: where is the information sourced from? MurderInk—notorious for posting about killings in advance of police presence and, in cases of homicide, of family notification—is one of Baltimore's most controversial reporting forums. A handful of survivors I worked with first learned of their loved one's murder from it. Reading that your child has been killed on an anonymous social media site remains unimaginably awful to me and was devastating to my interlocutors. In multiple homicide support groups, survivors discovered at their first meeting that they knew of each other and their decedents because of MurderInk's coverage.[175] Beyond its posts, public comments and

[175] While the owner is unknown, it is heavily speculated amongst survivors that the poster is affiliated with the police department due to its immediate, on-the-scene coverage. Alternatively, it could be that the account's

widespread use allow the community of viewers to distribute knowledge of violence and construct a narrative that goes beyond homicide to explore issues of identity, valuation, accountability, and justice. It fosters a collective consciousness surrounding grief, violence, and suffering.

Similar to MurderInk, Citizen sources crime data from police and fire department radio transmissions—these, almost always, responding to 911 calls made by citizens—and, upon publication, relies on information crowdsourced through the app. In New York City, monetary compensation is offered to those who track and livestream crime; $200 to $250 a day.[176] Users are notified of the location of "safety threats"[177] and are then able to comment on incidents, capture videos and photos, and post updates supposedly in order to spread awareness and make neighborhoods safer. In doing so, they author a powerful discourse of fear, normalizing and disseminating it. They create and circulate the knowledge that is then used to self-regulate behavior.

By engaging with these accounts and apps, city residents become active participants in upholding the system of power that violence authorizes across Baltimore. Even a cursory glance at Citizen's map gives the impression of a Gotham-esque city overrun by crime where no block is safe. Residents rightfully criticize the app's propensity to over-report: not every 911 call reports a legitimate safety concern and often personnel on these lines are themselves trying to

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popularity is how the owner is able to source information. Like Citizen, residents can message the account with insight into violence in the city.

[176] It would not be surprising to see this extend to Baltimore City. See "Vigilante app Citizen is paying people to livestream crime scenes and emergencies," James Vincent, The Verge, July 27, 2021: https://www.theverge.com/2021/7/27/22595648/citizen-app-crime-scene-paid-live-streamer-nyc-la-emergencies Accessed August 7, 2021.

[177] "Murder! Muggings! Mayhem! How an Ex-Hacker is Trying to Use Raw 911 Data to Turn Citizen into the Next Billion-Dollar App," Steven Bertoni, *Forbes Magazine*, August 31, 2019: https://www.forbes.com/sites/stevenbertoni/2019/07/15/murder-muggings-mayhem-how-an-ex-hacker-is-trying-to-use-raw-911-data-to-turn-citizen-into-the-next-billion-dollar-app/?sh=6eea574c1f8a Accessed August 11, 2021.

understand what is going on. While Citizen often updates incorrect information and calls upon users to authenticate unverified crime reports, the app's immediacy privileges reporting over validation. Similar to how crime statistics "reduce and translate a mass of faceless felonies, awful incidents that occurred elsewhere, into the objects of first-person feeling: fear, revulsion, revenge, and pain" (Comaroff & Comaroff 2016:145; see also Haggerty 2001), these technologies harness crime's visuality[178] and spatiality. In disseminating images and videos of brutality, they fuel fears surrounding violence and reinforce feelings of vulnerability. Residents live "obsessed with death" such that "they [see] danger everywhere," both on the street and now, in their homes through the screens of smartphones and computers (Taussig 1984:493).

Violence and its reproduction are manifestations of power whose practices, exacerbated by the haunt, form subjects. Just as the student learns to be a pupil, the inner-city resident is disciplined in such a way that she learns fear and responds accordingly in how she accommodates to it and moves about the city. While Foucault has argued that violence itself is a totalizing form of power, its haunt disciplines. Fear becomes a prison unto itself: residents live in a panopticon governed by the potential for violence. The Citizen app, a window to crime, allows us within the prison of fear to be both warden—consuming information through an obsessive consumption of crime-tracking and surveillance-style applications—and prisoner, controlled by the paranoia it produces. "The individual is an effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the element of its articulation. The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle" (Foucault 1977:36). Technology offers a

[178] Of course, there are other ways that residents are reminded of violence through its spatiality and visuality, most notably by the presence of R.I.P. memorials, altars, and shards of moments of death (e.g. bullets in walls, crime scene tape, blood on the street), but also from news media, social media sites, and encounters on the street.

sense of control, an illusion of one's ability to resist the threat of violence, but in doing so reproduces its haunt, multiplying its power and influence over residents' lives.

Conclusion | When Death Becomes Your Oppressor

Roberta's House hosts their annual volunteer appreciation banquet at the March Life Tribute Center, a funeral home in the suburbs north of the city, at the beginning of summer each year. The event honors the people who make the center's programs possible, and who are the first line of support for many of Baltimore's bereaved. Not only is the dinner well-attended by Roberta's House volunteers and staff, it also draws the attendance of city leadership. This year, 2019, then Baltimore City Council President and now Baltimore's mayor, Brandon Scott, kicked off the celebration with a toast:

"We know how much weight and pressure the pain of loss puts on us. And in Baltimore, we're all feeling it…. I know there are some ladies in here tonight who like diamonds. If you like diamonds, say ay!"

The hall erupted with hoots and cheers, followed by laughter. The councilman smiled.

"Well," he began anew. "If you know anything about diamonds, you know they come from pressure." A 'Mmmhmmm' rippled throughout the room.

"That's what the volunteers of Roberta's House are. They're diamonds. They take the weight and the pressure of a city that's in turmoil and strife, that is struggling to survive each and every day, and help young people, old people, families deal when they're in the deepest despair. They're not afraid to put aside their title, how much money they make, where they went to high school, what corner they came from, what street, what church they belong. And that's why I'm here tonight: to say thank you on behalf of the entire city of Baltimore."

Applause echoed and the advocates, surveying the volunteers, beamed. Cheryl turned my way and winked.

"We cannot say how much it is worth the work that you volunteers do. But, *you* know. You know when you look in the eyes of those families, those young people who are dealing with their pain. Who you help come to terms with their anger, finding a place for peace. What you do? That's peacework. And with you, we will only continue to grow and save many more people in Baltimore."

. . .

At the beginning of this text, I wrote about how homicide is transformative, how it forever changes worldviews and experiences of the everyday for survivors. Grief and trauma cannot be "gotten over," but must be moved through. Those affected need time, support, and an environment in which they can heal. Crime necessitates community; healing in the aftermath of violence mandates care. As Mayor Scott notes, a large dimension of peacework is, in fact, grief work.[179] As illustrated throughout this text, violence weakens social bonds, causing survivors to isolate themselves, seek retaliation, feel unsafe, disconnect, and mistrust others. In processing grief in collective settings, survivors not only begin their own emotional reconciliation, but reorient themselves to the world. Together they discharge anger and pain, rewrite their identities, and reconstruct past narratives so they can conceptualize a new future and plan a path forward. Homicide itself is transformative, but the experience of healing is equally metamorphic. Think back to the icon of Roberta's House: a butterfly. It reminds survivors that they can emerge from loss, pain, and grief. This is also possible for Baltimore. Crucial to realizing such a change, be it at a collective or individual level, however, is a deep engagement with the traumas that have occurred. James Baldwin (1955:597) wrote, "I imagine one of the reasons people cling to their

[179] For examples of how grief work was an important part of peacework strategy in both Mozambique and South Africa, see Errante (1999).

hates so stubbornly is because they sense, once hate is gone, they will be forced to deal with their pain." Violence in Baltimore is a cycle fueled by the emotional economy of grief and pain. To break such a cycle, people must heal, and communities need to be rebuilt. The city and its institutions must be trauma-informed and sensitivity-trained, and take a victim-centered approach to support this effort.

Luckily, the first steps towards city-wide healing—the acknowledgment of the importance of such a strategy—have begun. In February 2020, the Elijah Cummings Healing City Act was signed into law. The act created the Trauma Informed Care Task Force that guides city policies and procedures to be trauma responsive. "Oftentimes, when we discuss violence in Baltimore, we talk with sadness and regret for the victims, and we focus on the consequences of the perpetrators; but we rarely spend time talking about the trauma that impacts the community," Mayor Bernard C. "Jack" Young said at the signing.[180] Organizations like Healing City Baltimore, founded in response to the Elijah Cummings Healing City Act, have led advocacy efforts to build community and strengthen relationships, while addressing racist practices that have manifested generational poverty and trauma.[181]

In July 2021, Mayor Scott introduced Baltimore's first Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan. The plan[182] has many worthwhile healing-informed ideas—like expanding victim services, implementing a shooting response protocol, and investing in conflict mediation—for how to combat violence in the city. Interestingly (and surprisingly), it recognizes the need to address trauma that affects victims *and* perpetrators: "Every shooting or violent

[180] "Mayor Young and Councilman Cohen Launch Trauma Informed Care Task Force," March 12, 2020: https://mayor.baltimorecity.gov/news/press-releases/2020-03-12-mayor-young-councilman-cohen-launch-trauma-informed-care-task-force Accessed August 21, 2021.
[181] See: https://healingcitybaltimore.com/
[182] View it here: https://mayor.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/MayorScott-ComprehensiveViolencePreventionPlan-1.pdf Accessed August 22, 2021.

incident leaves behind a web of trauma—for the victim, as well as bystanders, families, neighbors, and even the perpetrators of violence." This is significant. As I have noted, the distinction between victim and perpetrator is, in many instances, a matter of context, timing, and circumstance. Should events have unfolded differently, a perpetrator might be the victim or vice versa.[183] Some perpetrators, ultimately, become victims too. In an interview with WYPR,[184] Dante Barskdale, outreach coordinator for SafeStreets emphasized the trauma that join both:

> A lot of [people] are traumatized. Do you know how many kids in this city have witnessed homicide? It's probably 85% of them. That's trauma, bro! We're talking trauma, mental health… You can't talk about [violence and blame] until somebody hunted you with a gun. Because 344 murders happened last year? All of those people who committed those homicides weren't bad people, bro. I'm not saying it's alright to go shoot nobody, I'm saying every shooter is not a bad person. Some of them been pushed in the corner. What I'm saying is we don't know what we would do if we were put in these situations. Some of these people are in dreadful situations. The victims are perpetrators and the perpetrators are victims. Most dudes who shoot people been shot before.

Inner-city violence is part of an ongoing cycle of trauma, fear, and anger, all fueled and complicated by structural and institutional failings. For Baltimore's endemic violence to end, the cycle must break. Not only does this require people to care about violence and resist resignation, but for those addressing violence and its predeterminants to bring to it an ethic of care. "Who are we surrounded by in this city?" One of my informants asked, rhetorically. "People who have hurt and killed, and people who have been hurt. It's not a binary. This city needs to heal." The mindset in which victim and perpetrator are distinct and supported only according to the moral

[183] Carter (2019:201), in her study of homicide in New Orleans, quotes an informant from a homicide support group there who reinforces this: "So many of our children today are killing one another, the moms are going to meet face-to-face." I didn't encounter this phenomenon—of two mothers linked by the violence inflicted by one child on the other's encountering one another—in the support groups I attended. But it had occurred before, according to Roberta's House group facilitators. Violence in the city is cyclical; some perpetrators are later themselves victims of the violence they once participated it. A trauma-informed approach to violence acknowledges the psychic and emotional damage that being exposed to violence has on all residents, even those committing acts of violence.

[184] Listen at 44 minutes: https://www.wypr.org/show/future-city/2019-11-27/baltimores-different-gangs-youth-and-stopping-violence Accessed August 21, 2021.

category in which they are placed, must end. Both are victimized by the violence in the city and the violences of the city.

Homicide, its trauma, and impacts compound the already crippling injustices experienced by residents. Violent death becomes, as one informant described, yet another oppressor. Restoration begins with acknowledging the traumas that affect residents, providing survivors the tools and spaces to heal, and honoring the humanity of those killed. Healing, however, is not sustainable unless the underlying causes of violence—systemic racism, failed policing, disinvestment, neighborhood neglect, and poverty—are also addressed. As a closing gesture, I elect to finish this text in a normative voice, to suggest short and long-term solutions that might help alleviate the suffering of many and prevent further bloodshed.

The Path to Healing

The violence that has occurred for decades across Baltimore can't be undone, but it is not too late to provide survivors and impacted community members the tools to work through it. Programs that offer spaces where survivors can process bereavement's complex emotions in a peaceful way are critical to this mission. In addition to processing grief, survivors are also able to establish healthy coping skills and develop a network of peer support. Similarly, support for those traumatized by witnessing or living amidst violence needs to be prioritized. Initiatives like the Baltimore Trauma Response Team, which responds to crime scenes and counsels those impacted, are a good first step; especially, considering that aggressive or violent behavior in the inner-city has been linked to trauma and PTSD (Gillikin et al. 2016). Yet, as of July 2021, this

team, comprised of 25 volunteers, has yet to receive city funding.[185] If we can agree that those exposed to and victimized by violence are more likely commit acts of violence (they are), the need for healing-centered interventions should be obvious: grief support and trauma response are public health preventative services. They deserve to be generously funded.

Not only do these programs and the organizations that run them merit support, programs that increase access to these services, making it possible for survivors to prioritize healing, do as well. Vouchers for ride-hailing and taxi services eliminate the obstacle of a lack of access to reliable or safe transportation. Funding for childcare services during group meetings or therapy can allow parents to focus their attention on mourning. Services that provide survivors with a meal alongside counselling ensure the bereaved needn't worry about cooking, shopping, or locating nutritious food,[186] lessening yet another stressor.[187] Home therapy visits can help those unable or unwilling to leave their residence access much-needed support. It is not enough for there to be programs that help homicide survivors cope with loss or residents process trauma, people need to be able to integrate these services into their lives.

Beyond bereavement and trauma, survivors and victims are often emotionally impacted by postmortem processes and investigations. Each touchpoint—from the crime scene on the street to the doorstep where detectives alert the family, then on to the hospital, morgue, funeral home, police department, and court—has the potential to retraumatize, worsen pain, and fuel

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[185] "Head of group involved in Baltimore's trauma response questions why they're not funded," Rielle Creighton, Fox Baltimore, July 17, 2021: https://foxbaltimore.com/news/city-in-crisis/head-of-group-critical-in-baltimores-trauma-response-questions-why-theyre-not-funded Accessed August 22, 2021.

[186] One in four Baltimoreans lives in a food desert. See "Baltimore residents who live in food deserts can now take a subsidized Lyft ride to grocery store," Talia Richman, *Baltimore Sun*, November 18, 2019: https://www.baltimoresun.com/politics/bs-md-pol-lyft-grocery-access-20191118-6wf65ioac5dh5hwjcq3trxzmsm-story.html Accessed August 26, 2021.

[187] Shockingly, only Rays of Hope, the family homicide support group at Roberta's House, provided attendees dinner. Kim, the leader of the adult-only Homicide Transformation Project and a survivor herself, purchased or made weekly dinner for participants, paying for the costs out of pocket.

rage. It goes without saying that law enforcement in the inner-city is a precarious endeavor, given its history of corruption and brutality toward unarmed citizens, which have understandably led to the mistrust of police. That said, how officers respond to homicides is crucially important to repairing confidence, improving residents' sense of security, and preventing retaliatory violence. The manner and method by which the police force handles each individual investigation ultimately determines whether victims feel justice can or cannot be achieved through established channels. They are, potentially, a stopping point for retaliatory killing.

Detectives and police are admittedly grossly understaffed[188] and overburdened. Many are, frankly, burnt out. Officers face the additional challenge of investigating crimes with witnesses who refuse to speak and a crime lab with a backlog of 11,000 fingerprints that is "a year away from processing evidence in 'real-time.'[189] When survivors call to check in on the status of the case, they often receive few answers. No one wants to hear that a case has gone cold, just as no officer takes pride in telling a victim that they have exhausted all leads. Beyond these understandable limitations, however, survivors disclosed to me encounters with detectives—like never being notified of a murder despite being the next of kin, or six months of unreturned phone calls from the officer assigned to their case—that indicate opportunity for improvement. One survivor described detectives encouraging her to gather intel in her community to aid the investigation: "[They] want me to do [the detective's] job and find my son's killer?! I have to move my grieving to the back burner because them detectives can't do their jobs." Another told me of officers refusing to refer to the deceased by name, but only by the street on which he was

[188] A monitoring board reported the department is short 392 officers. See "Baltimore's police officer shortage - How many officers is the city looking for?" Alexa Ashwell, Fox Baltimore, July 23, 2021: https://foxbaltimore.com/news/local/consent-decree-calls-for-more-officers-bpd-confirms Accessed August 26, 2021.

[189] "Baltimore police confirm crime lab has backlog of 11,000 fingerprints, is a year away from processing evidence in 'real time,'" Justin Fenton, *Baltimore Sun,* August 24, 2021: https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/crime/bs-md-ci-cr-conway-crime-lab-20210824-styzg6aszzeu3jychdcp3sbnxi-story.html Accessed August 26, 2021.

killed—an act that further dehumanizes and fosters disconnection. Across the board, there is an overarching lack of sensitivity training that would benefit all. The police department must shift to a victim-centered approach in which victims' well-being is prioritized at all stages in an investigation. Processes need to be established that improve transparency into officer efforts and increase communication with victims.

"The police are not the problem in Baltimore," Ceasefire co-founder Erricka Bridgeford said regarding the city's violent crime. "If we dismantle the police and city hall, we still going to have problems in Baltimore." While officers largely aren't the perpetrators of violence, their engagement with residents can effectively drive conflict. Similarly, other institutions can hamper healing process of victims—like medical examiners and funerary directors who deny families the opportunity to see the deceased, even for identification purposes. It is unacceptable for a parent whose child has been killed to not be able to confirm for themselves the identity until a funeral, this sometimes weeks later. I draw attention to these instances not to diminish the efforts of professionals in these industries,[190] but to highlight how important the interactions survivors have following a death are to their future healing, and the trajectory of the city. The buy-in of these individuals and institutions to a trauma-informed approach is critical.

Baltimore would benefit from further research in this regard, specifically a team that can map the journey and experience of victims of violence, identifying the moments and stakeholders who can further support healing and those that injure anew. Further, trauma support is equally important for members of law enforcement and social services, who often experience vicarious trauma working with victims and survivors of violence. It is common for compassion to exhaust

[190] On the contrary, antiviolence activists have many allies in both the police, medical, and funerary professions. Many of Baltimore's funeral homes are involved with anti-violence efforts and organizations, and ought to be commended for their contribution and support of victims.

when responders witness violence and/or hear of painful experiences on a regular basis. Measures must be taken to combat occupational stress and trauma for front-line and care workers so that they have the emotional wellness and temperament to support residents.

A City Bereaved

Bereavement psychology suggests that families make sense of loss by telling the story of the deceased (Nadeau 2008:521). "We need to create stories to make order out of the disorder and to find meaning in the meaningless" (Gilbert 2002:236; as cited in Gibson 2019:143). While Roberta's House and other grief support organizations assist survivors in reconstructing meaning in their own, independent lives, little if any effort has been made city-wide to imagine what bereavement looks like at a collective level. Rather than selectively remembering and commemorating violence's victims, city agencies and institutions have the influence and resources to support victims' search for significance and the authority to legitimize their losses. Baltimore is defined by its violence; it is thus well-positioned to take ownership of tragedy and change the narratives it tells surrounding it. Just as violence can divide, it can also unify, if allowed.

For too long the city has ignored the toll of homicide and made it invisible on the landscape. Even the way crime rates are discussed in the media and police press briefings reflect this attitude. Murder is discussed in yearly counts and per capita rates and depersonalized as conflict that occurs with deadly consequence in certain neighborhoods and blocks. Perhaps as a product of this, ambivalence has taken hold of many residents, especially those in wealthier and Whiter neighborhoods who have the privilege of limiting their exposure to it. Hiding, ignoring, and depersonalizing tragedy hinders the affected as they process loss and trauma. Foote (1997),

writing on the American tendency to resist recognizing how pervasive violence is, explains: "…Many more events could and should be openly acknowledged in the landscape as a step toward a more encompassing view of the roles played by violence and tragedy in American society. Casting light on many of the forgotten sites may be one way of pushing back the shadow that violence and tragedy have cast over the American past." While Foote's focus is on the memorial landscape, his call to action can be expanded beyond urban space to narratives of violence more generally.

"We forget where we came from and don't tell the youth," one man shared at a community meeting on violence prevention. "We're not speaking life into people, we're speaking death. The narrative being spun is so negative." The man's point is worth noting. At present, city violence initiatives focus solely on future prevention, with little attention paid to the losses that have occurred. This hasn't worked; for the past six years, more than 300 people have been murdered each year. And while recent survivor-centered and trauma-informed efforts are a step in the right direction, Baltimore needs to lean in further. City leaders must prioritize a collective approach to bereavement and meaning reconstruction. The benefit of this is two-fold: First, it honors and preserves the memory of those who have been killed; it recognizes their humanity. It shows that their lives matter and so do the lives of those continuing to survive in the inner-city. Second, it forces a common framing by which competiting attitudes, experiences, and understandings of inner-city violence must be reconciled. Violence will inevitably be moralized and politicized, but city leadership can work to create a shared history that makes space for remembrance, prioritizes healing, and celebrates life. Baltimore's identity, at least as it pertains to homicide, is presently characterized by discouragement, despair, and division. "By creating the sense of a shared past… [institutions] foster the sense of a common present and future, even a

sense of a shared [city-wide] destiny" (Young 1993:6). Focusing narratives on the toll violence takes and on the humanity of its victims offers an offensive approach to those attempting to distance themselves from the problem. It takes something independently experienced and privately felt and propels it into the public as an issue that demands collective attention.

Collective meaning reconstruction towards healing will, minimally, require three commitments from city leaders and institutions: changing how violence and victims are discussed in city communications and media; creating public space for commemoration and mourning; and bolstering social support and services for victims and survivors.

Narrative Reconstruction

A recently published study by White et al. (2021) scanned news reports of all homicide victims in Chicago in a single year to measure trends regarding newsworthiness and the recognition of "complex personhood" of the deceased. The researchers found that homicides which occurred in predominantly Black neighborhoods received less news coverage than those in White neighborhoods, and that the coverage of people killed in largely Black neighborhoods was less likely to discuss these victims as multifaceted human beings. The authors suggest the difference is a reflection of dominant cultural narratives about minorities and minority neighborhoods: "Because society stereotypes Black and, increasingly, Hispanic residents as inherently criminal… news organizations treat homicides in Black and Hispanic neighborhoods as relatively normal, unremarkable, and, as a result, unworthy of extensive or humanizing news coverage" (White et al. 2021: 345). While a comparative scan of Baltimore's news has not been conducted, I am confident that it would produce a similar finding.

Rather than bucket victims into homicide counts and statistics, residents would benefit from the city and media individuating those killed. White et al. highlighted indicators that emphasized humanity, such as if the dead were portrayed as a partner, parent, sibling, neighborhood, friend, or community member. "There really is something that we intuitively feel when it's just a name, it's just a number, versus when the roles, the value their life had to other people was fully explored," one of the paper's authors explained.[191] The vocabulary used to talk about victims and their communities impacts their valuation and reinforces the normalization of violence given the racial makeup of where they were killed.

Baltimore Ceasefire leaders often criticize the media for their coverage of Ceasefire weekends when residents are called to pause killing and agree to be peaceful. "Hearing reporters say there's 'no murders yet' is like a dagger to the heart. That's not our narrative, we are not waiting for someone to be murdered," one of the organization's founders shared. Ceasefire weekend, its founders implore, should be treated as a celebration of life. "It's not a failure if someone is shot." The expectation of violence frames conversations around it, further routinizing its occurrence and reproducing racial ideologies. While feature stories on inner-city violence are deemed as less than compelling (see Chapter 2) and thus denied news coverage, the stories of victims need to be told, both by the media and city leaders—they must not only say their names, but also talk about *who* they were. Studies (Lundman 2003; Meyers 1997) have consistently shown that media exposure influences how we understand the social world, as well as how we act on those understandings (White et al. 2021). The language used to discuss Baltimore's

[191] "When Does Murder Make the News? It Depends on the Victim's Race," Beth Schwartzapfel, The Marshall Project, October 28, 2020: https://www.themarshallproject.org/2020/10/28/when-does-murder-make-the-news-it-depends-on-the-victim-s-race Accessed August 22, 2021.

victims of violence must resist one-dimensionality to avoid further reinforcing prevailing cultural narratives and stigma.

Public Memorial Space

While the language used to describe victims of violence in Black neighborhoods dehumanizes and anonymizes, the removal of homicide memorials effectively erases victims from public memory. It also makes the violence that has shaped inner-city neighborhoods effectively invisible, despite how deeply it is felt by locals (see Chapter 5). The makeup of and changes to memorials in Baltimore—the different levels of engagement and investment, the varying reasons that they are erected and/or destroyed, the patterns of aesthetic composition—demonstrate something significant about material claims to space and identity. The re-inscription of erased memorials by inner-city residents is a response to structural disinvestment, institutional oppression, and inner-city predation (see Chapter 4). It is an assertion of personhood and citizenship, an effort to move local memory into public history.

Not only do memorials have the power to shape city, state, and national ideologies, they also provide comfort to survivors. "The acknowledgement by the world of [victims'] pain and suffering, and of the horrors they have experienced, can help individuals and groups heal" (Staub 1999:321). Further, memorials function as both a reminder of past violence and a warning to future generations. Recall the earlier statement by an informant that the inner-city's history is forgotten. Memorialization provides a means by which to reconcile this. "In a way, memorials provide the sites where groups of people gather to create a common past for themselves, places where they tell the constitutive narratives, their 'shared' stories of the past. They become communities precisely by having shared (if only vicariously) the experiences of their neighbors"

(Young 1993:6-7). While the notion of community-making out of such tragedy may seem dark, we must remember that the collective consciousness of the inner-city is already formed by violence. Rather than continuing to expunge markers of it, forcing survivors to shoulder the memory-burden and fueling the disconnection felt by those affected by conflict, supporting memorialization efforts aids the creation of community and a bonded, urban public sphere.

To be clear: this is not a call for top-down memorialization, which often fails to meet the needs of survivors and their families.[192] Rather, it is a directive for those at the top to be attentive to the importance of mourning and to support local efforts to remember. Memory-work is happening at the grassroots level in Baltimore and marginalized communities are demanding their place within the history of the city. Groups are working to assert their concerns and desires, insisting upon recognition, and defending their interests as victims of violence and neglect – city leadership needs to listen. Homicide memorials, graffitied or otherwise, deserve a presence on the street's memoryscape. Following the directive of Mayor Scott, in May 2021 the Department of Public Works ceased erasing graffiti from private property and focused its efforts solely on its removal from public assets like light poles and statues.[193] While a good start to the objective of letting graffitied memorials live on (although, the intention behind the mayor's instruction is likely unrelated), stopping the erasure of RIP graffiti is not equivalent to preserving it. Neighborhood spaces should be dedicated where it can exist, protected from whitewashing and erasure. As an idea: it is clear that residents want to mark places of violence and memory. When this occurs on private property, there is the potential for its removal by property-owners. Perhaps

[192] "Can memorials heal the wounds?" Ana Milosevic: https://europeanmemories.net/magazine/can-memorials-heal-the-wounds/ Accessed August 28, 2021.
[193]"DPW Announces Restart of Graffiti Removal Services," Press Release, May 7, 2021: https://publicworks.baltimorecity.gov/news/press-releases/2021-05-07-dpw-announces-restart-graffiti-removal-services Accessed August 22, 2021.

the city's light poles—currently prioritized for graffiti's removal—might serve as the protected locations for memorial art or the inscription of the names of those who have been killed on their corresponding block.

Further, survivors, victims, and, even more broadly, residents would benefit by the creation[194] of spaces for recollection that provide sanctuary. Grief gardens, urban green spaces for meditation and remembrance,[195] for example, could dually function to transform vacant lots and hollowed-out homes and provide a therapeutic experience for the aggrieved.[196] Green spaces are proven to help people to live longer (Rojas-Rueda et al. 2019).[197] As a memorial space, they could also prevent premature death in a different way, by helping survivors process and cope with loss. Ultimately, for collective bereavement efforts in Baltimore to be successful, it is crucial that the decision for what form they take, and how (or if) existing memorials are adapted to a new form, comes from the community. Survivors and victims know their commemorative needs. It is their history, conception of selfhood, and identity that memorialization has the power to restructure and communicate to others (Radstone & Schwarz 2010).

For those who view such memorials and spaces—records of homicide—as a threat, fearing they might scare off potential residents,[198] a reminder that violence itself is concerning, not the exposure of it. Moreover, impromptu memorialization will inevitably continue by residents in the absence of other efforts to remember. Rather than focusing energy to mute the

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[194] And, importantly, the maintenance of these spaces.
[195] Notably, Roberta's House's new facility, completed in May 2021, located on East North Avenue has plans for a similar meditation garden. See: "A place for health grieving," Jacques Kelly, *Baltimore Sun*, May 8, 2021: https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/baltimore-city/bs-md-kelly-roberta-20210508-hzhso5yskveixcvhgzlol4hoay-story.html Accessed August 28, 2021.
[196] For a study that highlights the therapeutic benefits of gardening for the bereaved, see Machado and Swank (2018). As a further benefit here, urban community gardening also is proven to help relieve food desert problems (Wang, Qiu, and Swallow 2014).
[197] See also: "Why cities need more green space than ever," Mark Nieuwenhuijsen, Network Nature, March 19, 2021: https://networknature.eu/why-cities-need-more-green-space-ever Accessed August 28, 2021.
[198] Thus, contributing to Baltimore's massive population decline.

bereaved, attention should be placed on amplifying their voices, sharing the stories of those lost, and facilitating the creation of a public sphere that denounces aggression and remembers its fatalities. Baltimore's notoriety for violence and despair has the potential to be reoriented through the adoption of life affirming practices and values, and the prioritization of healing.

Victims' Assistance

Admittedly, remembrance only goes so far in helping the bereaved cope with loss and adapt to their changed reality. The city must assume the financial burden of assisting those who have been affected by violence. The most direct way for this to happen is for the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board's (CICB) Crime Victim Compensation policies to be overhauled and the support the fund offers to be expanded. As noted throughout the text, violence creates the circumstances that lead to greater impoverishment. Those affected by violence must weigh coping with trauma and grief with its financial toll. Many families, for example, cannot afford to lay their loved one to rest or pay for grief counseling. Those who live traumatized by violence often lack the financial assistance to cover necessary psychological support. Survivors lose pay (and even employment) due to lost work time from bereavement and trauma. Those who were dependent on the financial contributions of the deceased must find alternatives to recoup this income, else risk further impoverishment.

Additionally, there is the added burden of handling the aftermath of violent crime. A stressor that few consider is that homicides which occur on private property are the responsibility of the owner to clean up, who also incurs the cost. Family and friends of the deceased are often left mopping up after bloodshed, a traumatic experience in its own right. Medical bills for emergency surgeries, ambulance rides, and hospital stays further position survivors at a financial

disadvantage. Should the deceased have outstanding criminal charges or legal entanglements, family members are required to pay for and furnish death certificates to the court for charges to be dismissed. This, in addition to the costs (e.g. time off of work, transportation and/or childcare fees) of attending the trial of the alleged killer. Further, victims whose property was damaged or who simply no longer feel safe in their own homes must shoulder the cost of changing locks, replacing doors and windows, putting in alarms, and moving their residence.

At present, many families are ineligible for financial assistance following a crime due to restrictions based on criminality and proximate causality. Several families do not even apply for assistance for fear of rejection. Others are not aware that aid exists. Residents would benefit from the CICB doing away with such ineligibility criteria, or for the city of Baltimore to create a separate assistance board that is blind to the circumstances of a killing. Morality must be divorced from victims' assistance if the cycle of violence and poverty is to be broken. Should Baltimore embark on a path towards collective meaning reconstruction, it must prioritize assistance for crime victims and survivors. Every possible support needs to be provided to help residents heal.

The Limits of Healing

"Grief's affective potential in America lies in its ability to mobilize social and political action, and to orchestrate productive change" (Doss 2010:115). It is my hope that as Baltimore moves towards healing, it taps into grief's productive power to empower long-term systemic transformation. Just as remembrance is only one part of healing, healing is simply one aspect of a much larger process needed to support survivors and victims of violence, as well as to prevent future conflict. Make no mistake about this: Bereavement programs and trauma-informed

policies are nothing but sideshows if not also met with structural change and reparation. One resident, when asked who can affect change in the city, replied: "Us! Superman ain't coming, the cavalry ain't coming. We are the cavalry. We need more soldiers. If not us, than who?" Others have shared this sentiment, emphasizing that "until the men in our communities stand up and stop this, the madness will continue." While residents have remarkable power to influence inner-city violence, its root causes and related challenges must also be addressed for cessation to last.

It is the responsibility of the city and its institutions to correct the centuries-long injustices that have disadvantaged inner-city neighborhoods. The solutions to Baltimore's inequality must be as radical as those that segregated the city.[199] "We need policymakers who are risktakers, we need to think outside of the box."[200] Professor Lawrence Brown's proposed reparations for Baltimore's black neighborhoods is an example of one such solution. Brown has suggested allocating 10 percent of the city's budget (approximately $300 million) to such efforts, dividing it amongst the communities hardest hit by redlining decades-prior and which continue to feel the ongoing effects of historical trauma. The funding would be used according to community needs, but would include removing lead paint, addressing housing insecurity, violence, substance abuse, and other critical issues (see Brown 2021). Presently, more of the city's budget is spent on police than on "health, housing, arts, parks, community development, workforce development, and civil rights combined."[201]

[199] "Are Reparations Baltimore's Fix for Redlining, Investment Deprivation?" Brentin Mock, Bloomberg CityLab, February 14, 2019: https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-02-14/the-black-butterfly-new-deal-for-equity-in-baltimore Accessed August 28, 2021.
[200] Quote from a community meeting on Baltimore's violent crime, June 2018.
[201] Mock, "Are Reparations Baltimore's Fix for Redlining, Investment Deprivation?"

Other solutions, some glaringly obvious, are also critically necessary. Witness protection in Baltimore City,[202] for example, falls devastatingly short. Witnesses who had been reassured that they would not be required to testify are strong-armed by prosecutors who offer an ultimatum: "you can come voluntarily, or we'll send [someone to take you to court]."[203] Should a victim testify, oftentimes their name is included in the discovery presented to defense attorneys in preparation for trial. Defendants know prior to their court date who will testify, providing ample time to eliminate the witness. For those fearful of retribution, it takes a credible, provable[204] threat to merit city aid. The Baltimore Police Department's Victims and Witness Assistance and Relocation policy limits assistance to only those who face an "imminent threat of serious bodily harm."[205] In 2018, the Baltimore state's attorney's office claims to have relocated 120 victims, witnesses, and their families to safer housing, spending nearly $650,000 on victims and witness services that year.[206] That's $56 per person served. With the city's two-decade-old stop snitching mentality now finding new digital spaces to terrify would-be witnesses and publicize those who have assisted police,[207] it is more important than ever that city agencies boost their support of witness protection programs and aggressively go after those who fuel intimidation in the city, virtually or in-person.

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[202] The witness protection program that many think of is a federal program and, as such, only supports witnesses who testify in federal court. State and city witness protection programs exist, as well, but they generally offer less extensive protections because of their inability to issue documents like social security cards.
[203] "Baltimore women called to testify in recent cases say their fears were largely ignored," Juliana Kim, *Baltimore Sun*, September 4, 2019: https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/crime/bs-md-ci-cr-witness-intimidation-20190903-3gjbgkqe6fd7dcxosshna7mhtu-story.html Accessed August 28, 2021.
[204] Kim, "Baltimore women called to testify in recent cases say their fears were largely ignored."
[205] See Policy 805: https://www.baltimorepolice.org/transparency/bpd-policies/805-victim-and-witness-assistance-and-relocation
[206] Kim, "Baltimore women called to testify in recent cases say their fears were largely ignored."
[207] "Baltimore already had a witness intimidation problem. Now it's moved to extortion accounts on Instagram," Justin Fenton and Phillip Jackson, *Baltimore Sun*, November 25, 2020: https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/crime/bs-pr-md-ci-cr-witness-intimidation-20201125-d4vx7vyagfhqhoxb7icphzkzku-story.html Accessed August 28, 2021.

Increasing the presence of beat officers in city neighborhoods, encouraging them to familiarize themselves with residents, and ensuring that they are mindful of the safety implications of where they park their vehicles and station themselves[208] would also help to deter crime, build rapport, and reestablish trust with residents. Funding for gun violence research—which was unfunded by the CDC until March 2018 due to fears of financial penalty based on provisions in the Dickey Amendment[209]—both in Baltimore and nation-wide would also support crime prevention efforts. And finally, the persistence of inner-city poverty, joblessness, and neighborhood blight fuel hopelessness and despair. It is no surprise that some neighborhoods are dominated by the open-air drug economy and its accompanying conflict.

"Murder does not get to have the last say, our resilience does," some residents say. It's an admirable attitude that would benefit all if more widely adopted. But resident efforts do not replace the need for those in positions of influence and power, especially in the city government, to correct historical wrong-doings and allocate money and resources to building back up the neighborhoods and populations it devastated. City governments exist to serve the residents living in their jurisdiction. It is thus the responsibility of the city of Baltimore to support those victimized by trauma and violence, to commit to a collective bereavement approach that remembers those killed, and to expand its assistance programs so that anyone victimized by crime is not also harmed by its financial consequences. Further, it must address the causes of violence and urgently implement policies and practices that can affect change. Through no fault of residents, generation after generation of Baltimoreans have been raised in neighborhoods with

[208] Survivors described their loved ones being targets of violence due to police presence outside of their homes, leading residents to believe they had snitched.
[209] "Why so few scientists are studying the causes of gun violence," Marissa Fessenden, *Smithsonian Magazine,* July 13, 2015: https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/cdc-still-cant-study-causes-gun-violence-180955884/?no-ist Accessed August 28, 2021.

deplorable conditions and widespread crime. Parents are conditioned to expect that they will lose their children to violence, and many teens anticipate dying an early death. Without immediate intervention and substantial investment from the city to make a sustainable change that targets violence's origins, its cycle will continue to turn.

A Final Note

I hope this ethnography motivates readers to think about inner-city violence differently, and its impact more empathetically. Homicide is far more complex than statistics or media portrayals depict. It affects huge networks of people; its force is so powerful that it has come to structure the emotional pulse of the inner-city. The devastating and world-altering grief that survivors so courageously shared affirmed for me, as I hope that their tales do for you, that the lives of those lost have value. People do not mourn meaningless losses. Jamal, Anton, Jon, Rickie, Snoot, Markco, and Micah – your lives mattered, as do the lives of countless others who die on Baltimore's streets. While their public memory may be erased and their stories rarely, if ever, shared in a newspaper obituary, they live on through those who survive. They are honored at parties held on the anniversary of their deaths, acknowledged with flowers lain on makeshift memorials, and kept close to survivors' hearts, their ashes carried in pendants around their necks. The bereaved remember them in the stories they share, and the misdoings they reference as a warning to others of things not to do. Despite feeling eclipsed by darkness, enraged and exhausted by grief's emotional toll, the aggrieved love more intensely, both those who are still with them and those who aren't. While gone, the dead survive in the memories of those who cherish them, as those individuals themselves struggle to survive.

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