

JAY CEPHAS —

# Racial Capitalism and the Social Violence of Extraction in Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor's *Race for Profit*

THE CITY IS THE BASE WE MUST ORGANIZE AS THE FACTORIES WERE ORGANIZED IN THE 1930S. WE MUST STRUGGLE TO CONTROL, TO GOVERN THE CITIES, AS WORKERS STRUGGLED TO CONTROL AND GOVERN THE FACTORIES OF THE 1930S.[1] —FOUNDING STATEMENT FROM THE ORGANIZATION FOR BLACK POWER, 1965

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[1] Grace Boggs and James Boggs, "The City Is the Black Man's Land," *Monthly Review* 17, no. 11 (April 1966): 35–46.

In the 1960s, an African American majority began to emerge in many northern industrial cities in the United States, resulting in part from the mass migration of Black southerners to the north in pursuit of higher wages and in part from the flight of white urbanites to the suburbs in the face of racial tensions. By 1965, Washington, DC, and Newark, New Jersey, boasted Black majorities, with Detroit, Cleveland, Baltimore, and Philadelphia soon to follow. Leading civil rights activists Grace Lee Boggs and James Boggs saw this emerging Black majority as a new opportunity for building social movements. Despite being continuously excluded from the formal political and economic structures of the city, the Boggses identified urban African Americans as perhaps the strongest political and economic force in the country. The Boggses argued that the primary mechanism of containment deployed to limit Black political power—that is, the restriction of Black Americans to the substandard living conditions of the "black ghetto"—could, in their eyes, serve as a source for collective organizing. Yet, as noted in their 1965 founding statement for the Organization for Black Power, the problems of the black ghetto—segregation, economic isolation, and poor housing, among others—had to be addressed differently than Jim Crow in the South because the racism structuring Black life in the North was "based not upon legal (de jure) contradictions but upon systematic (de facto) contradictions." [2]

These "systematic de facto contradictions" serve as the basis for Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor's *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership*. More than simply surveying the myriad ways racism pervaded inner-city housing, *Race for Profit* examines the "critical turn" away from the exclusionary practices of redlining that defined

[2] Boggs and Boggs, "The City Is the Black Man's Land," 41.

African American access to housing from the 1930s through the 1960s and toward the seemingly inclusionary practices of the 1970s that centered on encouraging homeownership for low-income African Americans. While this turn has been explained as part of the affirmative liberal response to civil rights demands, Taylor instead frames the policy shift as a form of “predatory inclusion,” one that granted African Americans access to the real estate market but on the basis of continued exploitation. Black Americans were sold substandard, dilapidated housing at inflated costs with exorbitant fees, all of which made it impossible for them to reap the promised economic benefits of homeownership. “In the strange mathematics of racial real estate,” Taylor writes, “Black people paid more for the inferior condition of their housing.”<sup>[3]</sup> This “race tax” meant that while homeownership served as a primary means of building wealth for whites, it served as a means for extracting wealth from Black communities. The predatory real estate practices and homeownership initiatives detailed in *Race for Profit* demonstrate that the convergence of Blackness and urbanization that the Boggses identified as a new base of political power was possible precisely because it constituted a base of economic value—the growing urban Black majority was a prime source of capitalist extraction.

Extracting value from racialized bodies is a core component of racial capitalism. But what exactly is “racial capitalism”? Despite having a longer history, the concept of racial capitalism has only recently entered the mainstream, first in the context of the emergent Black Lives Matter movement in 2013 when George Zimmerman was acquitted of murdering Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida, and then again in response to the heightened racial awareness following the brutal murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers in 2020. As the term has circulated in public discourse, its meaning has focused on either describing how individual capitalists are racist or on how the capitalist system as a whole is racist. The former approach pins racial practices on individuals, which suggests that solving racially based problems entails making those individuals less racist or replacing those individuals with non-racist individuals. The latter attempts a more structural understanding of racial practices but tends to position racism as an appliqué to a fixed and otherwise rational system.<sup>[4]</sup>

*Race for Profit* offers some direction for a more nuanced understanding of racial capitalism. While the term “racial capitalism” never appears in *Race for Profit*, the book helps us move beyond generic understandings of racial capitalism as the convergence of racial ideology with profit to contend instead with the intricacies binding racialism, economic value, and capitalist extraction to the institutions and spaces within which these activities occur. Taylor reveals the falsity of fair housing legislation’s claim to “unlock the market’s true potential in creating social stability and middle-class status and facilitating the accumulation of personal wealth.”<sup>[5]</sup> She also, perhaps more importantly, demonstrates how such inclusion “would be conditional, contingent, and tiered.”<sup>[6]</sup> The intention of this essay is to frame and reassess the meaning of racial capitalism through Taylor’s rendering of “predatory inclusion” in the real estate industry.

[3] Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 11.

[4] See Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, “Rethinking Racism: Toward a Structural Interpretation,” *American Sociological Review* 62, no. 3 (June 1997): 465–480.

[5] Taylor, *Race for Profit*, 17.

[6] Taylor, *Race for Profit*, 17.

Capitalism is, at its basis, racial.

Taylor's analysis of postwar real estate practices insists that racism was not just an unfortunate feature of capitalism but the very grounds upon which the system was built and maintained. Emphasizing this racial basis of capitalism gets closer to the fundamental meaning of racial capitalism—primarily that it describes neither the racially driven actions of individuals nor the basic existence of racism within the larger economic system. Rather, understanding the racial basis of capitalism requires defining the system of capitalism as one built upon a system of racialization, with racialism serving as both a core requirement and a core production of the system. Thus racialism—that is, a structuring of individuals into discrete and absolute categories of “antagonistic differentiation”[7]—is a constitutive substrate of an economic system, capitalism, that relies on racialization (that is, “the extension of racial meaning to a previously racially unclassified relationship, social practice or group”[8]) to produce social inequalities. In this framing, “racial” is not a modifier to an existing capitalist framework; rather “racial capitalism” stands as a more accurate descriptor and definition of the system that we typically refer to as “capitalism.”

Racial capitalism is a political and economic term rooted in the Black radical tradition. It is a description of things as they are and have been, and it is also a framework for understanding those things.

The concept of racial capitalism has been central to Black intellectualism since the 1980s, when Cedric Robinson outlined the racial basis of capitalism in the opening chapter of his extensive genealogy of Black radical thought.[9] Robinson notably articulated capitalism as an extension of, rather than a break from, the European feudal order in that it reproduced medieval practices of differentiation as a means of structuring societies. Robinson argued that racialism was absorbed into and served to structure the emergent system of capitalism, whose aim was “not to homogenize but to differentiate—to exaggerate regional, sub cultural, and dialectical differences into ‘racial’ ones.”[10] In a system that depends on placing people within rigid, necessarily hierarchical and ideally mutually exclusive social categories, race is but one of those categories. The racialized system does not exclude other forms of subordination or oppression but in fact relies on them to do its work.[11] It is dynamic in that it transforms over time and shifts how it uses racialism—but it always uses racialism.[12]

Taylor's analysis throughout *Race for Profit* reveals the mechanisms of racial capitalism deployed by the real estate industry and uses racial capitalism as a framework to understand the relationships between federal, state, and city governments, the private sector, and individual real estate brokers, mortgage bankers, and insurance underwriters who both explicitly and inadvertently set up Black homeowners as a captive reserve for exploitation. Taylor poignantly states that “transmogrifying real estate into homes and then again into financially accruing assets depended on the alchemy of race, place, and the perceptions of the buying public.”[13] This “alchemy” suggests a relationship that is both intricate and elusive, nevertheless binding racialization

[7] Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Durham: University of North Carolina Press, 2000 [1983]), 10.

[8] Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge, 1986).

[9] Robinson, *Black Marxism*.

[10] Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 26.

[11] Bonilla-Silva, “Rethinking Racism: Toward a Structural Interpretation.”

[12] Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua, “The New Nadir: The Contemporary Black Racial Formation,” *Black Scholar* 40, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 38–58.

[13] Taylor, *Race for Profit*, 9.

to modes of capitalist accumulation. Taylor makes clear that the “racial logic” structuring these transactions was not invented by one particular agency or institution, but rather reflected “a political economy generated out of residential segregation.”[14] For example, Taylor notes that in order to implement fair housing, the federal government would have needed to acknowledge that exclusionary practices, like redlining, were racially determined. The federal government did not. It instead insisted that these past practices were “a problem of location and not of race” and thus ignored that those geographies and conditions were tied to the race of the inhabitants.[15] This denial paved the way for reinforcing rather than eradicating race-based practices in real estate, precisely because racism “was the glue that held the American housing market together.”[16] Previously redlined neighborhoods were designated “subprime,” marking Black potential homeowners as higher risk and thus subject to higher interest rates and other unfavorable lending terms. Whereas this risk excluded Black homeowners entirely under redlining, it now included them with Federal Housing Administration loans that made them more attractive to mortgage banks because the loans were guaranteed by the federal government, ultimately making foreclosures profitable.

[14] Taylor, *Race for Profit*, 11.

[15] Taylor, *Race for Profit*, 17.

[16] Taylor, *Race for Profit*, 17.

As foreclosed homes were released back to the market, the same homes could be resold to a new crop of Black buyers who, due to the poor conditions of the housing and the associated inflated fees, would inevitably default on their mortgages. This cycle channeled value in the form of dollars away from Black homeowners and into the pockets of bankers, lenders, and real estate agents. It also channeled value in terms of desirability out of the Black inner city and into the white suburb: “The physical characteristics of urban housing made accessible to the Black buying public helped to establish value in both urban and suburban markets. The physical distance between urban housing and suburban housing was amplified through developing social conceptions of an idealized ‘white neighborhood’ and a despised ‘Black ghetto’; a desire for inclusion in one and avoidance of the other added to or detracted from the value of a given property.”[17] Taylor’s framing of these racialized real estate practices as a “predatory inclusion” positions them not as an unfortunate gloss over an otherwise beneficial system but as the political economy of neighborhood segregation—and the fundamental aim of this political economy was, as Taylor asserts, to “transform race into profit.”[18]

[17] Taylor, *Race for Profit*, 175.

[18] Taylor, *Race for Profit*, 11.

Racial capitalism is a theory that links ideology to material conditions and individuals to structures.

There is a tension throughout *Race for Profit* between the race of potential homebuyers, the racism of individual mortgage brokers and real estate agents, and the racial practices of the larger apparatus within which they operated. Taylor pins the blame for racialism on the system as a whole and also describes situations where the racism of the system persisted even without racist individuals and where the racial attitudes of individuals kept the system going even after racial practices were explicitly outlawed. Rather than faulting one or the other, Taylor reveals the intricate relationships between structures and individuals that are instrumental to maintaining the workings of the overall

system. Thinking through this theoretical framework—that is, the racial basis for capitalism—reveals how racialism does not exist purely at the level of ideas and attitudes but is manifested through material practices.[19] It reveals how the relationship between individual racism and institutional racism is necessary for translating the ideology of race into effective conditions, such as the buying and selling of homes. For example, Taylor argues that no measures were taken to identify or fire racist individuals from either the government institutions or from the private sector agencies that were rife with racialized practices, even after certain racialized practices were prohibited by law. She notes that even after the 1948 Supreme Court decision that banned the enforcement of racial covenants, “the FHA remained committed to the practice of residential segregation as a way to preserve the value of property it had insured.”[20] Similarly, fee appraisers, who were part-time real estate agents hired by the FHA to appraise houses in the new urban market, underwent training that “explicitly linked housing and neighborhood values to their proximity to nonwhite ethnic groups and African Americans.” In fact, she suggests, there seemed to be no analysis or even understanding of where or how racism was present in the system, despite its overt racial practices. That the system did not seek to purge racialism from its ranks or protocols reflected, to some degree, a recognition that the racialism of real estate practices was tied to the profitability of the industry—that is, that the racial ideology shaping the real estate industry was tied to the material production of property and homes—and therefore to eliminate it (if that were even possible) would be counterproductive to the system, which was intended to extract profit.

[19] Barbara Jeanne Fields, “Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the United States of America,” *New Left Review* 181 (May/June 1990): 95–118.

[20] Taylor, *Race for Profit*, 35.

Racial capitalism is a system that valorizes racialized bodies.

Central to Taylor’s narrative are the numerous Black women who were targeted by real estate agents and mortgage lenders pressuring them into buying houses—sometimes sight unseen—under false pretenses and highly unfavorable terms. The voices of these women are rarely quoted directly in the text, presumably due to a dearth of sources, but their position in this matrix of real estate, racialism, profit, and exploitation is key. Black women were disproportionately the heads of their households, and were thus targeted by mortgage lenders for inclusion in low-income homeownership programs. Contrary to the practices of racial exclusion that characterized earlier housing programs, beginning in the 1960s, Black women were viewed as “desirable customers,” Taylor notes, precisely because they were unlikely to keep up with the mortgage payments. The investment risk linked to their likely default allowed these Black women to be charged outrageous prices for substandard houses, be subject to higher interest rates for those shoddy homes, and then be railroaded through foreclosure (with little if any recourse) when they could not keep up with the payments. On the surface, these women and the houses they bought appear to be highly undervalued in a system reliant on both increasing the value of commodities and offering owners the opportunity to reap the benefits of that increased value. However, as pawns in a system of racialized exploitation, these Black women were positioned not as potential beneficiaries of value but as the source of value itself.

Taylor shows how Black homeowners were incredibly valuable to the real estate industry precisely because their properties were so undervalued, and their properties were undervalued because the homeowners were Black. In this circular racial logic, the more the Black women in Taylor's narrative were kept in poverty, away from resources, and unable to maintain their houses, the more economically valuable they became to the real estate industry. Racial discrimination as "good business" depended upon the erosion of Black women's social value to exploit them for greater profit.[21] As the social value of Blackness was depressed, the economic value of Blackness increased. Blackness conferred specific value to the exchange of property, suggesting that Black people were conceived as neither the consumers nor the recipients of value in this exchange; rather, they were the value.

[21] Taylor, *Race for Profit*, 6.

If we distinguish between economic value and social value, then racial capitalism is revealed as a system of valuation that exploits Black bodies as a form of capital. Capital is an asset necessary for production that is defined by its ability to self-valorize—that is, to create value for itself seemingly out of thin air. Self-valorization is crucial because it means that capital can accrue value over time without being transformed in any meaningful way. Conventional forms of capital such as land, buildings, machinery, and natural resources increase in value over time primarily due to their relation to production. Capital then, as value, "brings forth living offspring, or at least lays golden eggs." [22] The Black female body under slavery literally yielded offspring as a means of producing surplus value in addition to reproducing labor. In reproducing the labor force, Black women's bodies helped increase the property and value of the plantation, a condition that Thomas Jefferson directly acknowledged: "I consider the labor of a breeding woman as no object, and that a child raised every 2 years is of more profit than the crop of the best laboring man." [23] This double laboring on the part of Black women, whereby they reproduced both the labor force and the property of the plantation, underscores the hidden high economic value of Black bodies.

[22] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol 1 (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 255.

[23] Cheryl Harris identified this quote from Thomas Jefferson in a letter to John Jordan dated December 21, 1805. See Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (June 1993): 1720.

In Taylor's account, the Black female body continued to lay such golden eggs as the mere presence of Blackness was enough to shift the value of real estate. Taylor uses blockbusting as a pinnacle example of this. She details the case of a land speculator in Chicago in 1962 who described buying properties from white homeowners at the lowest possible price and then reselling those same properties to Black homebuyers at the highest possible price and at inflated interest rates. While the buy low/sell high principle reflects conventional capitalist strategy, critical here was the tactic of using the threat of racial turnover in the neighborhood to scare the remaining whites into selling their properties. The presence of even a single Black homeowner on their block would lower the property values for the remaining white homeowners, who, in their panic to leave, sold at ever lower prices. The devaluation of property due to the arrival of Black homeowners was presented as a natural effect of the real estate market, demonstrating how "racial discrimination continued to add value to racially exclusive suburbs" even after the end of redlining.[24] Thus while the market explicitly constructed value, it communicated that value as both natural and as rooted with the object of value itself (here, Blackness) rather than that value being assigned by the larger system. Taylor argues that

[24] Taylor, *Race for Profit*, 7.

this “social construction of ‘value’ in the housing market” presented valuation as embodying a kind of inalienable scientific truth.[25] This naturalization of the association between Blackness and value assured that “‘race and risk’ were forever linked in the public consciousness.”[26]

[25] Taylor, *Race for Profit*, 147.

[26] Taylor, *Race for Profit*, 118.

Racial capitalism is spatial. It stores racialized value in bodies and geographies.

When legal theorist Cheryl Harris described the existence of white-passing Black people in a racialized society as “not merely passing, but *trespassing*,” she demonstrated how racial transgressions are almost always spatial transgressions as well.[27] Such racial trespassing reflected the defense of whiteness as a form of property, a notion that was inherently linked to the defense of land ownership and the inalienability of property rights in the United States. The relationship between race and property has a long history with roots in the subjugation of Black and Indigenous people—Black people themselves were “objects of property,” and Indigenous genocide was predicated on presumed white rights to native land—revealing that ideologies of race and property are co-constituted.[28]

[27] Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” 1711.

[28] Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” 1716.

This property relationship reveals that racial capitalism depends on spatiality—the space of bodies as well as the space of land, which is abstracted into notions of “property” and “real estate.” Historically, the line between whiteness and Blackness has been a critical demarcation determining who owned property versus who was considered property themselves.[29] While Black people might no longer be considered forms of property under the law, the property relationship continues to structure racialism in that the racial line determines who profits from sources of value versus who functions as a source of value.

[29] Harris, “Whiteness as Property,” 1721.

The violence following housing desegregation, characterized by “mobs of angry whites” who in one case “rioted and burned crosses on the front lawn of a Black couple,” demonstrates how the most critical racial issues are almost always about space—defending space, who has access to it, and who controls it. Both blockbusting and white protests against integration recognized—and indeed were reacting directly to—the role of Black bodies in shifting property values. Defending the economic value associated with those spaces meant defending property relationships rooted in inalienable—and spatial—rights of whiteness. Taylor suggests that the government was hesitant to uphold laws requiring desegregation and equality precisely because those laws conflicted with the (constructed) value of property. This spatialization of racial value resulted in what US senator Walter Mondale in 1967 referred to as the “golden ghetto,” a condition whereby the influx of new money into central cities generated, as Taylor argues, “profits for banks and real estate brokers... while shattered credit and ruined neighborhoods were all that remained for African Americans who lived there.”[30] Taylor offers a critical counternarrative to the oft-told tale of the “urban crisis” of the 1970s. The crisis she details did not stem solely from white flight and a lack of investment in inner cities but also from a steady flow of dollars into urban neighborhoods for the sole purpose of turning over housing to extract profit.

[30] Taylor, *Race for Profit*, 4.

Extraction is necessary in order to realize the racialized value stored in bodies and geographies.

Following the five days of unrest in Detroit in 1967 that left forty-three people dead and large swaths of the city burned to the ground, Michigan governor George Romney addressed the public, saying: “A strategy for a new America requires us to stop looking at the people of the slums as a drag on our society and see them rather as an untapped asset.”<sup>[31]</sup> While Romney may have thought he was shifting the conversation on race to focus on embracing rather than excluding Black people, Taylor notes how explicit and seemingly unapologetic Romney is in articulating the role of Black Detroiters in the city’s economy. Their role as fully integrated members of society was not predicated on their ability to reap the benefits of the capitalist system but rather on how they provided value for that system. To Romney, the problem seemed to be that the (Black) reserve of value had not been sufficiently tapped.

[31] Taylor, *Race for Profit*, 94.

An intricate web of extraction exists to redeem the value stored within the bodies and geographies that make capitalist profit possible. Taylor notes an effective “race tax” for Black people—another byproduct of the federal failure to enforce civil rights policy—whereby goods cost significantly more in poor urban neighborhoods. Testifying to this condition, Taylor cites an article from *Ebony* magazine: “Black dollars buy less, are harder to acquire, and are eaten up faster and in larger bits by usurious and fraudulent practices than white dollars.”<sup>[32]</sup> In these instances, the extraction of value from Black bodies demonstrated not just “racial hatred” but that “a political economy had emerged and was structured around the captive African American market.”<sup>[33]</sup> The “golden ghetto” paradigm reveals the urban crisis as not just a crisis of race but also inherently a crisis of value.

[32] Taylor, *Race for Profit*, 50.

[33] Taylor, *Race for Profit*, 52.

Value was extracted from Black communities by leveraging the value of Blackness against the value of limited real estate to produce additional revenue opportunities for landlords out of limited land. Taylor discusses how, prior to the “predatory inclusion” policies of the 1960s that focused on Black homeownership, landlords in Baltimore in the 1950s continuously subdivided already dilapidated apartments, even converting bathrooms into bedrooms and building outdoor “crappers,” to produce additional rooms for rent. Minimal investment in this substandard housing allowed for maximum extraction of value, and that value was maximized precisely because the inhabitants of the apartment were Black. These practices were examples of the dual housing policies from the 1930s through the 1950s that preceded “predatory inclusion”: homeownership for whites (with accumulating value for the homeowner) and “extractive or predatory tenancy” for Blacks (with zero value for the tenant).<sup>[34]</sup> In the “extractive or predatory tenancy” situation, the Black tenant served as the value itself, which in turn would benefit only the landlord. Under the “predatory inclusion” of Black homeownership initiatives in the 1960s and 70s, extraction occurred as foreclosed homes were returned to the housing market, allowing banks, lenders, and brokers to profit repeatedly from the same property.

[34] Taylor, *Race for Profit*, 28.

Extraction is necessarily violent.

The accumulation of land, labor, and other resources under capitalism and the extraction of value from those resources depend on and produce forms of social violence. Such social violence is not an unfortunate side effect of extraction or the result of rogue actors in an otherwise lawful system but a necessary tool for reaping the benefits of capitalist accumulation. Extraction itself is a form of social violence, which includes material inequities and uneven power distributions as well as physical harm, all of which serve to fracture the social well-being.[35] This fracture, described by Jodi Melamed as a forced “social separateness,” is both an instrument and an effect of a unified capitalistic order.[36] It is a tool of “antirelationality,” a term Melamed puts forth as a means of capturing Ruth Wilson Gilmore’s “seminal definition of racism”: “a technology for reducing collective life to the relations that sustain neoliberal democratic capitalism.”[37] Social violence additionally has a spatial component in that it is rooted in determining, as Katherine McKittrick asserts, not just who is subject to its destruction but where that destruction occurs.[38]

The social violence of extraction obscures the valorization of Black bodies for profit and the ways that these bodies function as forms of capital. It does this by projecting the violence of extraction onto the subjects of extraction themselves. Taylor notes how Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) officials portrayed the Black women householders who ultimately defaulted on their mortgages as “unsophisticated buyers” who were “domestically dysfunctional” even as they emphasized that the dilapidated conditions of Black neighborhoods resulted from Black deficiency rather than from the external extraction of value from those neighborhoods.[39] The same forces that segregated and enclosed Black people into certain neighborhoods and that withheld resources from those communities also claimed that Black people were unfit to be homeowners by pointing to those neighborhoods as evidence, all the while extracting enormous profits from them.

Social violence obscures the high financial value of Blackness as well as the mechanisms of value extraction. Taylor draws our attention to a statement President Richard Nixon made in 1971 regarding his administration’s approach to fair and open housing. In his statement, Nixon made clear to distinguish between racial discrimination and economic integration, arguing that racial discrimination was clearly prohibited by law but that economic integration was a matter of “free choice” and that housing issues that heretofore had been framed in terms of race were, in fact, “not racist but largely driven by economic concerns.”[40] In so doing, Nixon shifted the national housing discussion away from racial integration to focus instead on economic integration.[41] Cloaked in the garb of democracy and choice, Nixon’s new discourse on economic integration positioned class as a proxy for race, which by removing explicit mentions of race from public discourse and replacing them with economic concerns served to create a form of social separateness. Not only did the new discourse on economic integration deny the existence of race and racialism in structuring access to affordable housing but it also obscured how those systems extracted value based on race.

[35] Sociologist Arthur Kleinman describes social violence as encompassing the uneven and unjust distribution of disease and premature death, undue exposure to exploitative political and economic power, as well as physical violence to the body. See Arthur Kleinman, “The Violences of Everyday Life: The Multiple Forms and Dynamics of Social Violence,” in *Violence and Subjectivity*, ed. Veena Das, Arthur Kleinman, Mamphela Ramphela, and Pamela Reynolds (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

[36] Jodi Melamed, “Racial Capitalism,” *Critical Ethnic Studies* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 76–85.

[37] Melamed, “Racial Capitalism,” 78. Melamed here references Gilmore’s definition of racism as “the state-sanctioned and/or extra-legal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerabilities to premature death, in distinct yet densely interconnected political geographies,” emphasizing the final clause as “antirelational” in that it “identifies a dialectic in which forms of humanity are separated (made ‘distinct’) so that they may be ‘interconnected’ in terms that feed capital.” See Ruth Wilson Gilmore, “Race and Globalization,” in *Geographies of Global Change: Remapping the World*, ed. R. J. Johnston et al. (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), 261; and “Melamed, “Racial Capitalism,” 78.

[38] Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

[39] Taylor, *Race for Profit*, 167–168.

[40] Taylor, *Race for Profit*, 125.

[41] Taylor, *Race for Profit*, 95.

Physical space became a proxy for race here as well. Taylor notes how the naturalization of values associated with race shifted from bodies to places and how even the language of urban planning was invoked in this transfer. She cites Cleveland mayor Carl Stokes, who, referring to suburban America in 1971, said that it “no longer talks about spics, wops, ni—ers but talks about density, overcrowding of schools to achieve the same purpose.”<sup>[42]</sup> The built environments of cities and suburbs—houses, parks, schools, and streets—naturalize ideologies by enveloping us, literally and conceptually, in the ideas that structure the status quo. In Taylor’s account, the social and economic values associated with racialized bodies were transferred to the homes those bodies occupied, then those values were extended to entire neighborhoods, until eventually “urban” meant Black and poor, and “suburban” meant white and middle- or upper-class. Because the source of urban value (Black bodies) also devalued white property, Black spatial value was bounded by locational constraints in a way that white spatial value was not. This locational constraint continues to inform urban real estate development, including gentrification, which is essentially a process of re-isolating Black value by creating white enclaves.

[42] Taylor, *Race for Profit*, 128.

Taylor argues that the language of race in public discourse was increasingly omitted in favor of language about economic difference. But a consideration of the role of the built environment in transferring racial ideas reveals that it’s not just that the language of race had been omitted, but that perhaps the language of race was no longer needed to convey explicitly what space could convey implicitly. The social and economic values embedded in racial constructions had been effectively transferred to the material conditions of their respective urban and suburban environments. Now that urban housing and suburban housing carried within them embedded ideologies of race that necessarily evoked terms of value, language no longer needed to do the work of social violence. Rather space, in the form of buildings, land, and neighborhoods, served as a container for the naturalization of racist ideology into sustainable and immutable forms.

Historiography is complicit in the (violent) reproduction of racial capitalism.

In detailing the conditions and effects of racial capitalism, Cedric Robinson asserted that “bourgeois historiography” was responsible for the idea that capitalism and racism are two distinct conditions—that capitalism is a naturally meritorious system and that racism is an unfortunate quirk belonging to some individuals within that system.<sup>[43]</sup> He argued that this historical rendering benefited the bourgeois class because it allowed for the condemnation of seemingly negative aspects of the system while retaining the elements of the system that benefited that class, which would include the historians writing its histories. For Robinson, the writing of history by people uncritically embedded within its systems would serve only to reproduce the ideologies of the historical moment under question, as those writers of history sought to preserve their own social and intellectual positions. To acknowledge not just the intertwinement but the concordance of capitalism and racism would implicate the present moment—and its present actors—in a particular and discomfiting way.

[43] Cedric J. Robinson, “Capitalism, Slavery and Bourgeois Historiography,” *History Workshop*, no. 23 (Spring 1987): 122–140.

The Black women at the center of Taylor’s discussion of “predatory inclusion” help uncover a larger system that challenges the “bourgeois” account that Robinson warns of. Though these women remain somewhat distant in the text—Taylor has few direct quotes from them as she engages primarily with the archival records of large institutions and agencies—their presence nevertheless mediates the interplay between the institutions, policies, and individuals constituting racialized housing practices. The few times we do hear directly from these women—such as in the disturbing accounts of the rat infestation in urban housing at the start of the book—we get a close look at the nature of the extractive violence to which they were being subjected. Thelma Earl laments how despite being bitten by rats, “I never reported it because I was afraid an eviction would happen,” and Loraine McTush describes staying awake all night to protect her children because the rats “get into the bunk beds... I am miserable and afraid.”[44] Their ability to speak to those injustices—even at a distance through Taylor’s text—serves as a testament to how the very system of social violence that would fracture communities can also create conditions out of which we might generate new knowledge.[45]

[44] Taylor, *Race for Profit*, 16.

[45] Jodi Melamed discusses the bonds that are forged out of social violence in “Racial Capitalism.”

For Cedric Robinson, this is the meaning of the Black radical tradition—the episteme from which his articulation of racial capitalism first emerged was a knowledge-way that reformed connection among African-descended people who had been otherwise socially or intellectually isolated. The reconnection was based not only on shared experience and understanding but on experientially based knowledge that allowed for theorizing the present conditions in a new light and, hopefully, offered some insight on how we might construct something different for the future. This theorizing offered more than just the exchange of ideas, as, for Robinson, “collective resistance takes the form of (re)constituting collectives.”[46] It is this potential of the reconstituted collective that Grace Lee Boggs and James Boggs saw in the urban concentration of Black people in the 1960s. If this concentration could serve as a base of economic value for capitalist extraction, then it was already a base for extraordinary political power.

[46] Robinson, “Capitalism, Slavery and Bourgeois Historiography,” 80.

For Robinson, the (re)writing of history in light of the experiences and knowledge of the Black radical tradition was critical to countering the otherwise historiographic reproduction of systems of domination. The framework of racial capitalism was crucial to that rewriting because it took as a premise an entirely different understanding of the social and economic system underscoring their historical narratives and thus such a radically altered framing would inherently produce alternate histories of that system. *Race for Profit* strikes me as a similar kind of rewriting, one that peels back exclusionary practices, the “urban crisis,” and other typical ways of categorizing racist housing practices to reveal how deeply racism was embedded in the system of real estate practices and how that system depended on racialized ways of being in order to extract profit.