

# YOUNG ACADEMICS

American Studies

1

Leo Kempe

## Fighting against AtroCITIES

The Relational Triangle of Black Lives,  
Geography, and Democracy in the U.S.

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With a Foreword by Prof. Dr. Ulrike Gerhard

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## Foreword

Leo Kempe has developed a very strong argument in his thesis why black lives matter on a socio-spatial scale. By using the case studies of Washington, D.C., and Minneapolis he analyzes three different spaces of injustice in cities (racism, police violence and injustice, accessibility) to reflect upon the importance of the Black Lives Matter Movement as an urban social movement. With this he hypothesizes that racism is strongly related to urban space and urban development, while cities also open up new frameworks or pathways to overcome such discriminations in order to contribute to American democracy, best described in the theoretical concept of the Right to the City. With this strong argument, Leo Kempe has developed a very ambitious and sophisticated Bachelor thesis topic that lies at the crossroad of Urban Geography and American Studies.

*Prof. Dr. Ulrike Gerhard  
Supervisor and First Reader*



## Abstract

Black lives are connected to geography and politics, particularly in the United States, its cities and neighborhoods. Often initiated by Whites, detrimental practices of racialization, alienation and opportunity deprivation can be observed on various scales. Importantly, these realities are connected to human rights and thus a fundament for democracy. This thesis uses a triangulation of the three variables Black lives, geography and democracy to answer the question of how the first two influence democratic stability in the United States. In the context of the Black Lives Matter Movement, it focuses on racism, police violence and accessibility problems for Black people, taking the cities of Minneapolis, Minnesota and Washington, D.C. as illustrations. These proved to be relevant because of the murder of George Floyd and the anti-discrimination White House protests, respectively. Theoretical orientations from Black Geographies and social justice activism facilitated assessing the two cities' contribution to democracy, and it is concluded that through relational analysis we can better understand the significance of the three interdependent variables for the country.



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## List of Abbreviations

(Information: Only those used more than once are included).

ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
AJPH	American Journal of Public Health
AP	Associated Press
BLM	Black Lives Matter
BOP	Body/Bodies Out of Place
BWC	Body-Worn Camera
CRM	Civil Rights Movement
DC	District of Columbia
DLA	Defense Logistics Agency
EIS	Early Intervention System
HBC	Historically Black Church
HCME	Hennepin County Medical Examiner
HCSP	Healthy Corner Store Program
LEO	Law Enforcement Officer/Official
MHD	Minneapolis Health Department
MPD	Minneapolis Police Department
MSP	Minnesota State Patrol
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NHS	School of Nursing and Health Studies (Georgetown University)
NYU	New York University
PPP	Public-Private-Partnership
SSRC	Social Science Research Council
UMN	University of Minnesota
US	United States
WMPD	Washington Metropolitan Police Department

