5 Why Are the Two Cities Important to Consider in This Context?

These most recent events in the cities of Washington and Minneapolis and their characteristics show the importance of the two cities within the triangle of BLM/black lives, geography, and democracy in the US. Both cases are multidimensional, and much information can be extracted about implications and direct impact on the three variables. However, despite their current relevance, the events are far from the only reason why especially these cities prove helpful for further analysis and demonstration. The aspects mentioned in the preceding chapters are clearly visible in both Washington and Minneapolis. They might not differ from other cities in the US at first sight, but deeper consideration is strongly encouraged.

5.1 Washington, D.C. – Black Lives, Police, and H Street Corner

First, it can be said that Washington in a way has what seems to be a different history of police violence based on race, although it certainly exists. When the city was majority black, Ronald Weitzer (2000) conducted a study showing that the Washington Metropolitan Police Department (WMPD) had the highest percentage of black officers in the US, with 69 % at the time of study. This number was provided by statistics of the Bureau of Justice in the late 1990s (Weitzer 2000, p. 132). It should evoke thoughts of the cultural empathy argument in 3.2. of this thesis. Further, Black chiefs were at the administrative forefront for many years until the study, more exactly since the late 1970s (Weitzer 2000, p. 132): On January 13, 1978,

Chief Burtell Morris Jefferson became the first African American chief of WMPD and one of the founders of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives, or NOBLE (Williams & Kellough 2006, pp. 813, 815; see NOBLE online presence). Through his impactful career and leadership, he wanted to connect the police force and society in Washington to "fairness, openness, and equality of opportunity" (Williams & Kellough 2006, p. 813). His "deep resolve, dedication, and sheer determination" (Williams & Kellough 2006, p. 815) granted him two other offices for which he was the first African American, prior to becoming Chief of Police: the chief of detectives of the Criminal Investigation Division in 1974, and the assistant chief of field operations two years later. During that time, Washington, DC was named among the safest big cities in the country (Williams & Kellough 2006, p. 815).

In the period from Jefferson's ascendence to the Weitzer (2000) study, WMPD did not have too many issues with intra-institutional "corruption, racism, or brutality" (Weitzer 2000, p. 133), the author asserts, rather with its formation and training practices. This is shown by several ratings of residents: As shown on page 133, polls in 1993 and 1997 by *The Washington Post* with non-specific questions brought about mostly positive answers. Being asked about honesty and integrity, about half of each race responded with good or even excellent – 53 % of Whites and 45 % of Blacks. Police assigned to their neighborhood were credited with satisfactory work by 81% of white and three quarters of black residents. Additional overwhelming numbers appeared in the ratings of how they did their job in the city: An astounding 67 % of Whites and even 70% of Blacks affirmed with the same attributes as in the previous question (Weitzer 2000, p. 133). However, this should not disguise that police brutality is an issue in Washington and was back in the mid-20th century: Available data from 1966 reveal this historical connection. Many Blacks (54 %), but only 27 % of Whites said that race is the reason for a different treatment. Black respondents also said that there is a high probability for rude rhetoric as well as more search and control practices. The most striking numerical disparity manifested itself regarding police brutality: 45 % of the Blacks stating race as a reason for different interactions with police also thought their race is more likely to encounter police brutality. Only

a mere 15 % of Whites said so back then (Weitzer 2000, p. 133). Moreover, Leen et al. (1998) observe that Washington's number of police shootings turning fatal was highest of other urban spaces in the country at the time (Weitzer 2000, p. 133).

The Weitzer (2000) study reveals the omnipresent Black/White cleavage and explains the relationship of police treatment, skin color, and class level in a certain neighborhood. It lacks geographical accuracy as it uses census tracts approximated to neighborhoods, and precision as actual neighborhood names are not used – a circumstance the author himself has not further specified in the introduction or elsewhere in his work. However, he makes clear that class plays a role in police treatment, and many white Washingtonians continuously describe skin color as going along with criminality: Even if one is Black and from a neighborhood with more well-being, it is not guaranteed one will not also be treated differently by police, as it is all determined by one's race – Black (Weitzer 2000, p. 140). What rather happens is police can probably not connect a luxurious car to Black people, while some jewelry and specific clothes are associated with criminality. This perception clearly poses credibility issues (Weitzer 2000, pp. 139, 140).

Moreover, a substantial number of crime suspects constitutes of Blacks; thus, many Whites claim bad police treatment is undoubtedly explained as skin color for them serves "as a proxy for criminal propensity" (Weitzer 2000, p. 136). The process of "naturalizing discriminatory treatment" (Weitzer 2000, p. 137) by assuming how likely it was that Blacks committed a crime was, still is a strategy of many Whites. They think police would act in a justifiable manner if officers would treat Blacks in a certain way. Police officers seeing a person run away from a place in the city might assume he or she has just committed a crime there (Weitzer 2000, p. 137). Whether this is the case or not is usually prompted by generalization, commonly decided by skin color at first glance. Further, many Whites say it is a natural thing for police to stop a Black citizen who does not look like being from around the area, a BOP – so-called "*rational discrimination*" (Weitzer 2000, p. 137, italics in original). This effect is recognized among African Americans in Washington as well: They say because of things like gang violence and several types of crime, it is

obvious police treats them differently – and indeed worse – than Whites. What worse treatment means is clear, although Weitzer (2000) does not explicitly mention it here: Police do not drive through the neighborhood as much, they arrive late after emergency dial, they treat people unfairly, and/or they verbally and physically harass them (see Weitzer 2000, p. 139). More exactly, officers would regard whatever Black person as a suspect to be held accountable, until accusation is cleared because of contradictory proof (Weitzer 2000, p. 137).

Respondents were clear on police treatment issues in Washington, emphasizing that racially motivated detrimental practices deeply penetrated neighborhoods in the last few years. In one case specified by a resident, police treated two women on the opposite side of the street differently than a Black man living on one side (see Weitzer 2000, p. 141). This happens frequently, causing black Washingtonians' frustration and desperation. Speaking about emotions, they said, is important as psychology plays a substantial role in police-citizens relations in Washington (see Weitzer 2000, p. 139) – something seen in 3.2. in a general context. People's cooperation and respectful behavior is crucial to avoiding conflicts between the two parties. Furthermore, listening to the orders of officers is another factor favorable for de-escalation (see Weitzer 2000, p. 139). Especially after the attack by officers in front of the White House, however, de-escalation seems to be a substantial challenge to Washington's law enforcement and supportive out-of-district agencies.

The other factor that strongly manifests itself in the American capital is disparities in healthcare. A 2016 report about the issue has been put together by Christopher King, Maurice Jackson, and several NHS students (King 2016, introduction/acknowledgments). The report indicates that African Americans in Washington are six times more likely to die because of irregularities for diabetics, and three times more likely to die of prostate cancer (Georgetown University 2016; King 2016). Further, male life expectancy among them is 15 years lower than for Whites, and African American families are three and a half times more likely to live below the poverty line. The greatest disparity prevalence, meaning the most substantial geographic concentration of disparities, can be found in the Southeastern part of the city (Georgetown University 2016; King 2016; Appendix, Images 13, 14).

Besides these basic needs, African Americans in Washington differ substantially in issues concerning later life: higher education, work, and income. In the African American majority Ward seven, the unemployment rate is at a high 19 percent, whereas in Ward three – a majority-White area – this rate is as low as 3.4 percent. This already indicates what the report shows in the beginning, that Washington is "noticeably segregated by ward" (King 2016, p. 5). Blacks in Washington only earned 40,000 dollars as median household income at the time, whereas the value was at 115,000 dollars for Whites. This segregation along ward boundaries could already be observed one year earlier (see Appendix, Image 6). Concerning higher education, then, the report says that less than a quarter of Blacks 25 years or older have a Bachelor's degree (Georgetown University 2016; King 2016). It is maintained, however, that higher education is crucial to "have health insurance coverage, higher paying jobs, and greater freedom to make choices for social advancement and healthy living" (King 2016, p. 9). Obviously, this is a critical indicator for democratic quality in Washington.

King laments that the focus in the past was more on systemic or system-related issues than on society and its multifaceted nature. Much less, however, city officials and organizations have considered the health effects on African Americans. Therefore, he explains, "[w]e need to change the conversation and view policies, practices and resource appropriations across the city through a health equity lens" (Georgetown University 2016). The report King and his associates published goes beyond this, however, but keeps the relation to health. It contains several important policy recommendations such as economic incentives, racial equity analyses, affordable housing provisions, training, and strategies for developing skilled jobs (Georgetown University 2016). These are what could be called intersectional adaptive policies. In other words, social dynamics and the needs of residents must be considered more deeply. To achieve this goal, these policies and connections must be enforced rigorously (see King 2016, p. 1). It is evident that groups occupied with designing the city must be incorporated here, for instance those planning the city's overall appearance or those who specialize in the respective areas.

The report, as indicated, also mentions how to combat other issues: Black people in Washington do not earn much but must pay much at the

same time for their housing, which creates little income or money they can use to make a living. One issue here is that they cannot make sure to consume healthy food, as seen in 3.3. This results in dietary irregularities and can lead to severe nutrition-related diseases. Income is a substantial factor when considering areas labeled 'food deserts,' such as Wards seven and eight (see Appendix, Images 6, 13-15). Those areas are a problem, as food accessibility is strongly impaired or not present at all (King 2016, p. 9). An important analysis by Randy Smith (2017) of the DC Policy Center in mid-March 2017 tries to congregate several factors linked to this problem, found on the Center's website with an interactive map (Smith 2017). He contends that previous studies focused too much on accessibility to specific grocery stores, while excluding supermarkets. This is a spatial explanation, but for Smith, factors such as income and possession of vehicles constitute the more important variables as they address the consumer's side. Money means purchasing power and ability to meet consumption needs, while a car decreases time and effort (see Appendix, Image 14). In the analysis, which quite obviously consists of a conglomerate of geographical determinants, Smith (2017) finds that "about 11 percent of D.C.'s total area" (Smith 2017) could be termed a food desert. Among the areas are "Historic Anacostia, Barry Farms, Mayfair, and Ivy City" (Smith 2017; Appendix, Images 9-12). Thus, many say that policies must be developed that focus on food provision particularly for Black residents, automatically contributing not only to people's well-being, but to improving an undignified situation – another step toward a more democratic and equal Washington.

Further, to return to the affordable housing debate, it surfaces as natural that home ownership means a secure financial situation, the possibility of being wealthier and getting involved in general discourse and neighborhood projects. However, in Washington's Wards seven and eight, not many African Americans own their homes. Thinking about the mentioned elements, they are inextricably linked to a democratic understanding – especially in the American context of the Constitution's 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.' The circumstances described in the last paragraph, however, limit these very characteristics of a functioning democracy, most poignantly the possibility of and right to political and societal

participation. To improve the situation for African Americans and, more importantly, to be an example for the American democracy, Washington city officials must draw on King (2016) and put together an "explicit and cross-sectoral agenda" (King 2016, p. 10). By taking various areas and scenarios into account, and by formulating clear goals, they can perform an important task for enhancing the city's and the national democratic quality and stability.

A specific area in which all these realities are easy to observe is the H Street neighborhood, as Brandi Thompson Summers (2019) illustrates in her book *Black in Place: The Spatial Aesthetics of Race in a Post-Chocolate City* (Summers 2019, p. 144; Appendix, Image 8). Given the scope and scale of this thesis, not every topic of this book can be described in its adequate detail. Nevertheless, Summers (2019) provides a useful look into the racial, historical, and political dynamics of this area.

In the 1970s and 1980s, H Street was an area being there for its predominantly Black residents, because the "now demolished H Street Connection strip mall" (Summers 2019, p. 143) still existed. Therefore, Washington's nickname the *Chocolate City* was so popular in these days, "a name conferred by a popular funk song […] and proudly embraced by Washingtonians" (NYU Washington D.C. n. d.). Today, Summers (2019) says, it is mostly considered a post-Chocolate City, where amenities are there. However, these are places that do not or cannot adequately fulfill the duty of caring for citizens (Summers 2019, pp. 143, 144). The H Street Connection mall was pushed away by a PPP-inspired building named *Avec*, a substantial development project benefitting residents and visitors, but not all people (see Summers 2019, p. 147). Thus, the City of Washington largely has incorporated what earlier in this thesis was termed exclusionary geographies into its social situation and appearance. Rashad Shabazz (2015) describes Summers's term *spatialized blackness* as follows: It is about how "mechanisms of constraint [are] built into architecture, urban planning, and systems of control that functioned through policing and the establishment of borders [that] literally and figuratively created a prison-like environment" (Shabazz 2015, cited in Summers 2019, p. 144). Put differently, characteristics of Washington actively confine Blacks to certain areas and thus limit geographic mobility. Shabazz (2015) implies

that particularly strong WMPD presence and Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) surveillance cameras all over the city are two important pillars of this (see Summers 2019, pp. 154, 155).

This situation is partly the outcome of a demographic and economic dynamic in the H Street neighborhood: While professionals possessing substantial knowledge came into the city, people who have lived in the area for a long time began to leave. Those who came were mostly Whites, those who left mostly Blacks. What happened was that new residents had new needs that planners and others wanted to address. Rather elegant, high-price consumption options opened, while the basic services were on the road to decline. Ironically, those basic services were precisely those many Blacks heavily relied on (Summers 2019, p. 148). At the Corner, two markedly different "spatial imaginaries" (Summers 2019, p. 148) not only come together, as the author herself says, but clash: That of Whites is predominantly connected to positive perceptions – well-being, glamor, experience, innovation, and the economy – while that of Blacks is associated with poverty and other stereotypical elements discussed before. Thus, once again, not only segregation but the ethical and economically motivated cleavage of inclusion versus exclusion is referenced (see Matsueda & Drakulich 2009, p. 166).

The entire corridor of H Street, Northeast is synonymous with transportation. Trains that operate both inside and outside city limits, the Metro, several buses, and cars are on the streets here every day. Streetcars in Washington, apart from enormous implementation and maintenance costs, have serious implications for the living of Black people in the city (Summers 2019, p. 149). While free of charge, most residents only describe it as a non-beneficial marketing issue (Summers 2019, p. 150). And on top, it mostly benefits white residents because of convenience, while the bus is there for black residents (Summers 2019, p. 152). This Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) has many positive aspects, among them transportation development, financial benefits, and environmental sustainability (Summers 2019, pp. 150, 151). However, there is the described economic and market-driven motivation to the detriment of lower-class people, many of whom black. By establishing more and more opportunities for those who can afford it – Whites – Black people face economic and soci-

etal discrimination. Moreover, since Blacks depend on seamless transportation networks, it is an attack on their freedom of movement (Summers 2019, pp. 151, 152). The text says that the public transit sector is "not more segregated than neighborhoods, jobs, or schools, but in a society where race is coterminous with space, transit vehicles are sites where segregated worlds collide" (Summers 2019, p. 151). This pressure for extensive developmental projects, Summers (2019) says, is driven by the wish to connect creativity to the city, automatically evoking thoughts about the 'creative class' thesis by Richard Florida in his 2003 book *The Rise of the Creative Class* (Summers 2019, p. 151).

Moreover, what can be observed at the Corner is that Blacks are actively visible, but not for an extended time. The Corner already since 2013 is a "space of transition" (Summers 2019, p. 152): Blacks are intentionally made more visible in this short span than in previous times (Summers 2019, p. 153). Much like numerous service providers, those agencies Blacks depended on ceased to exist on the corridor, namely the D.C. Economic Security Administration (DC-ESA) and the Family Services Administration (FSA). Thus, the corridor is now a place where Black people are no longer staying, but only transiting. Those residents become BOPs through transit, eliciting a tendency toward *othering*. What transportation of people and the entire sector do to Blacks in Washington is to render their bodies "ephemeral" (Summers 2019, p. 152).

Being especially visible, the author explains, serves as a legitimating reason for "spatial containment and regulation" (Summers 2019, p. 153) as well as several control mechanisms. The author spoke to Washington city officials and they frankly told her spatial contain- or confinement lets people stay where they are. Poor people and Blacks should rather not interfere with the routines of business owners and other (richer) people at the Corner (Summers 2019, p. 159). Not only does this invoke the principle of segregation and reinforce the rich/poor and Black/White cleavages. It most poignantly demonstrates political and social inability of city officials and institutions to deal with the problems of crime and poverty – the very elements that in people's eyes seem to render Blackness itself a crime.

Further, the entirety of buildings in a city like Washington, and its characteristics, became a variable "to privilege white freedom and mobil-

ity while controlling and containing blackness" (Summers 2019, p. 154). Processes that caused this mismatch were "social and physical transformation, and neoliberal restructuring" (Summers 2019, p. 154), in other words gentrification. Connected to this, the author stresses that limiting black mobility is linked to professional tracking, or surveillance – an element of White "politics of fear" (Summers 2019, p. 146), as Sharon Zukin calls it. Several mechanisms serve to negatively impact how and where Blacks move around in an area (see Summers 2019, p. 154). Being black, and intense White fear of that, is the reason for surveillance in Washington, whereas the deeper motivation is "racism and antiblackness" (Summers 2019, pp. 155, 157). This technology inevitably creates a sentiment of power (Summers 2019, pp. 155, 156). As this signifies intrusion by authorities of any kind, Black people's right to privacy and individualism is seriously limited (see Summers 2019, p. 146). George Lipsitz (2011) further notes that the "desire to move freely across space formed an important part of the Black spatial imaginary, but it has rarely been easy to translate hopes of moving freely into the ability actually to do so for African Americans" (Lipsitz 2011, cited in Summers 2019, p. 153). This quote alludes to both social exclusion and the absence of political representation. The denial of those rights to African Americans has caused a powerlessness hampering inclusion and progress toward a free, democratic society in Washington. Further, the correlation between race and space becomes apparent, a vice-versa one: Race is spatialized, and space is racialized (Summers 2019, pp. 148, 154). The undertakings of sectors dealing with residential mobility thus actively undermine basic human rights, and therefore are a threat to democratic quality in the city of Washington.

A problem Summers (2019) identifies in Washington is that despite being visible, Black people are rather not actively recognized by others. She includes an important observation by science fiction, fantasy, and non-fiction writer China Miéville (British Council n. d.). In *The City and the City,* the work referenced by Summers (2019), he brings up the metaphorical approach of "unseeing": two elements in geographical space are not separated in a physical sense, but through norms, the legal sphere and traditional conceptions of life and society (Summers 2019, p. 161). Consciousness of differences in a positive way though would be

important to encourage a social climate favorable for democratic inclusion. However, many people walking on the streets are often not willing to see those differences, because they link negativity and fear to them. Elijah Anderson says people see others, but they tend to let the mind be dominated by the mere fact of difference in skin color: white and black. This results in building psychological blockades (Summers 2019, p. 161; for person, see Yale University n. d.). If the former group is afraid and unaware through this unwillingness to see difference, then interaction between those people is limited to nonexistent (Summers 2019, p. 161).

Thus, to go a step further, a central mechanism can be detected here: For a societal climate, especially in a country as polarized as the US, unwillingness to see difference has a clear impact, as it disrupts an important equation: Active recognition drives interaction, and interaction drives commitment, for example to achieve political and social change. Unseeing, then, is a substantial problem for this endeavor, especially in Washington. The trend of non-recognition is pervasive and perpetuated through contemporary beliefs and structures. Further, it prioritizes Whites and neglects Blacks with regards to providing services and other resources. Thus, this has a far-reaching impact on democratic quality, as the fight for justice is undermined by those blind and unwilling to see the facts (see Summers 2019, pp. 161, 162).

Residents, Summers (2019) observes, are not willing to see color, "or in some cases, people" (Summers 2019, p. 163). What this means, the author clearly notes, is that the most favorable condition for people willing to unsee Blacks is that they do not see them. According to the author, actively noting the presence of poverty and hardship "disrupts the narrative of urban progress" (Summers 2019, p. 163). This economic thinking challenges the mission for equality in cities like Washington, as emphasizing economy and amenities is a common practice to make them appealing for others, not for disadvantaged residents. Thus, it bluntly devalues the very citizens who face continuous discrimination in different sectors, and struggle to find their place in urban society. Ironically, those people others wish not to see are certainly visible (see Summers 2019, p. 162). The most uncomfortable reality, however, is that people exist in the same space, in the same very city of Washington. Whites though tend to actively over-

look even bare displays of inequality, such as homeless people sitting on the streets (see Summers 2019, p. 163). Therefore, the BLM Movement has taken to the streets to voice discontent about ever-present economic opportunism and oppression, as outlined earlier in the thesis.

Urban progress in Washington, as mentioned above, is a threatening reality to Black people in the city. Christopher Mele observes that Blacks are not considered when talking about urban development. Rather, they are individualized and somewhat integrated into the greater economic context, either as sole participants or as obstacles for further growth and restructuring (Summers 2019, p. 158). There is a framework that is centered on development and progress, and it clearly goes to the detriment of Black people and their well-being. Those that plan the appearance of cities like Washington selectively choose what parts of Blackness they wish to portray, which are most often rather celebratory characteristics and instances (see Summers 2019, p. 165). Within this developmental process, there are simply rather vague attributions to Blacks, but effectively, 'Black Lives Matter' in the economy, too. Policymakers in the economic realm must acknowledge that isolating Blacks from those possibilities is morally and ethically insupportable. When Blacks do not have access to public services – or even grocery stores for food – a fundamental human and constitutional right is hurt (see Summers 2019, p. 158).

Besides extensive surveillance, spatial and social confinement of Black people in Washington, some people are actively celebrating diversity by putting up pictures of African American figures, as shown in the previous paragraph. This creates a sense of authenticity regarding Blackness. Summers (2019) says such depictions of diversity "fill the void" (Summers 2019, p. 165) left by not recognizing the unequal character of the city. By portraying this as being linked to authenticity, the author repaints the common unclear picture in societal beliefs: People see images or other elements as representational, and often do not think about deeper meanings and implications. However, those portrayals are not properly contextualized. Much less though, Summers (2019) implies, they are a warning to eager developers and others that the very inequalities fought against in the decades before are pervasive and persistent. Merely including those black bodies into the cityscape is not adequate, as this does not change

anything. This is the same discrepancy as explained in 3.2.: Just as mere statistics about police brutality do not change reality, neither do these acts of trying to aestheticize Blackness while completely ignoring "mundane Black life" (Summers 2019, p. 165).

A process mentioned in previous paragraphs, found in Washington, is gentrification. This is a social dynamic resting on income-based residential mobility, starting in the 1990s out of political motivation. Several policies were implemented to draw high(er) income residents to the different neighborhoods (see Summers 2019, p. 154). Putting those policies into effect encouraged a professionalization and improved infrastructure for people with resources (see Helmuth 2019, p. 747). Thus, it arguably relates to the Black/White cleavage observable in the city, as Blacks with lower incomes must make way for wealthier residents (see Helmuth 2019, pp. 746, 747).

Historically, Washington has been a *Chocolate City*, but now it has rather moved beyond that time. Therefore, the article by Allison Suppan Helmuth (2019) is entitled *Chocolate City Rest in Peace* – the name of a photograph put up in a coffee shop in one of the city's neighborhoods. This shows congruence with Summers's (2019) articulation of 'post-Chocolate.' The article illustrates the phenomenon of space-claiming described earlier. This is the action of making certain areas a "white space," to say it with the words of sociologist Elijah Anderson (Anderson 2015, cited in Helmuth 2019, p. 749), and therefore "exclusive space" (Helmuth 2019, p. 750). Here, the triangle of spaces by Lefebvre (1991) and Gottdiener (1993) proves helpful not only for understanding the process, also certain individual variables. If it is known what elements, perceptions/concepts, relations, and actions bring about this "exclusive space," people can more easily counteract the phenomenon. The triangle links "the *physical*, *mental*, and *social* dimensions of space" (Helmuth 2019, p. 750, italics in original), all resting on cultural influence as well as perception capability (see Helmuth 2019, p. 750). Therefore, it is an important piece of evidence to consider when talking about urban planning and the inclusion of black residents.

The transitional development over time, brought about by gentrification, was so severe that nine years ago, Washington's share of African Americans dropped below 50 percent – for the first time in five decades

(see Helmuth 2019, p. 748). However, some neighborhoods with minority residents could integrate into the broader city framework. Integration is a fundamental principle when thinking about racial justice, and there needs to be more equity in city services that historically suffered – and still today suffer – from segregation. If neighborhoods are "income-diverse and racially integrated" (Helmuth 2019, p. 748), there is a higher potential of beneficial outcomes for those with lower income, and a possibility to transcend societal boundaries spurred by difference. Hence, such neighborhoods cannot only improve the social climate in Washington but are an important contributor to guaranteeing rights and therefore a democratic order. However, authors warn that sociological scholarship in the post-CRM Era has shifted its focus to people in certain neighborhoods. They lament that this could direct attention away from deeper and multifaceted meanings of soci(et)al inequality. To take this worry a step further, it has a threatening impact on democratizing a racialized society in urban spaces. If one does not look at the complexity of lived experiences and daily realities of Black people in American cities like Washington, the mission of upholding human rights and a healthy democracy becomes more demanding. This holds for Washington as city, and on a national level.

5.2 The Capital's Bloomingdale Neighborhood

Gentrification and exclusion processes were particularly visible in the Bloomingdale neighborhood examined in *Chocolate City Rest in Peace*, located in the Northwest quadrant of the city (Appendix, Image 7). At the beginning of the 2000s, it was mostly African American while in the 2010s, White people began moving into the city, making the population share of African Americans dwindle. African Americans in the middle-class could indeed make money by selling property, but the majority of African Americans, in general, could not achieve that (Helmuth 2019, p. 751). The problem with this exclusionary social behavior on the Whites' part is that the more structural nature often remains covered by reassuring rhetoric and other mechanisms to disguise difficult realities

(Helmuth 2019, p. 752). Participating in many social activities and trying to integrate into the neighborhood's network, the author spent four months in observation of social practices. She understands herself not only as a researcher, but also as a Bloomingdale resident (Helmuth 2019, p. 753). This gives the work and the experiences a substantial degree of authenticity and reliability.

The author notes the attachment to the neighborhood among both races, White and Black, and both types of resident, gentry and long-term, is significant. If the financial situation permits it, they would like to continue spending their lives here. However, there is evidence of serious tensions between the two, for example in facial expressions or hand gestures. It is what Helmuth (2019) calls the effects of "social friction" (Helmuth 2019, p. 755), describing a society that suffers from breaking foundations. The irony is that in general, these neighborhoods are integrated, but this pattern nonetheless persists (Helmuth 2019, p. 755). What is difficult is that often this behavior by Whites is not adopted because of a certain person, but because of this person's race and class. The author describes that a Black man would "feel ignored, unrecognized, and presumed to be up to no good" (Helmuth 2019, p. 756) when interacting with racial counterparts. The alleged problem, a white woman says, is not that they have actively done something wrong or horrible, but that they are there, in a *particular location* (see Helmuth 2019, p. 757). The problem proves extensive in scope for Whites, and they tend to include a growing space into this reasoning.

What this means is Whites employ what one could call a hyperbolic generalization: When they are in a situation in which their assumption was true, they extend the frame of meaning to every individual, every spatial setting, and every social situation. An important term in this regard is used by Sophie Trawalter and Andrew R. Todd and their co-authors Abigail A. Baird and Jennifer A. Richeson (2008): They name this process "selective perception" or "selective attention" (Trawalter et al. 2008, cited in Helmuth 2019, p. 757, further p. 769). This is a case example that stereotyping, and racism, aggressively penetrate society in Washington. Residents feel uneasy and try to find variables to base their arguments on, however 'outlandish' those may be. The problem alluded to here is that

such perceptions, through participation, can enter the political realm. This puts a healthy social environment and the democratic order in general at risk. If decisions are made to the detriment of poor Blacks, the systemic nature of anti-black resentment and racial inequality is difficult to combat.

As Helmuth (2019) shows on page 760 of her article, not only communication, movement, or other rather abstract socio-geographic variables are a factor in race relations in Washington: Interestingly, even design and materials have implications. Some shops and restaurants have transitioned to use "rural and rustic elements" (Helmuth 2019, p. 757), letting them appear less 'urbanized' or 'city-like.' Race comes in here because the city is often correlated with Blacks who are financially powerless (see Helmuth 2019, p. 760). The inclusivity of space in Washington and elsewhere depends on people's own conceptions and experiences. Notably, a coffee shop that the author attended has changed its design and social framework, attracting more African American customers. Thus, how the physical space is constructed dramatically impacts people's perceptions, especially in a racialized context. The walls of the coffee shop were indeed painted white, but the pictures were no longer of Whites, but of Blacks and other *non*-Whites. Hence, the concept of whiteness has lost a prominent share of its uneasy significance for some people, resulting in changing thought patterns, and reducing potential for prejudice (see Helmuth 2019, p. 761).

Yet another example the author presents here is parking for Sunday church service in a Historically Black Church (HBC). In an essentially white space, but with black institutions, disputes around parking were apparently fueled by racial considerations (see Helmuth 2019, p. 762). Thus, racialized conflicts about the right to space unfold among visitors and residents of the neighborhood. For Whites, it is not only about legal issues, that only residents are granted access to the HBC, but about public safety – leading back to stereotyping and hyperbolic generalization (see Helmuth 2019, p. 763). However, some people in Bloomingdale frame the issue as if it would not at all be connected to race, but it is – at least, a resident says, in parts. Many believe the real motivation is that those people are not from Bloomingdale or even from the District, but from suburbs which are knowingly located in other states: Virginia and Maryland. How-

ever, if parking opportunities are extended – to the benefit of both shoppers and residents – those Blacks only visiting might face limited access (see Helmuth 2019, p. 763). Another resident talks about racial tension, but in a more detailed explanation, race suddenly does not appear anymore. He refers to the legal issue again, but does not mention Blacks or Whites: Rather, he describes who he thinks abides by the rules and who does not, automatically invoking a racially motivated stereotype of 'good and bad.' The author reminds the reader that this can be called – according to Mica Pollock (2005) – "'color-mute'" (see Helmuth 2019, p. 765).

5.3 Minneapolis – Yet Another Example of Multifaceted Racial Tensions

As it was indicated in the beginning of this chapter, Washington is not the only American city in which threats to social well-being, racial equity/equality and most certainly democracy can be observed. Minneapolis in the state of Minnesota also has a deep-rooted history of racialized disparities it tries to combat. Much like Washington, it has faced and still faces problems in the housing market and service provision for its Black population, a circumstance making it a center for contemporary BLM activism. However, the reasons and origins are to be detected in its developmental process over the last decades.

The first major sector important to consider in Minneapolis is the housing market and its significance for Black people. Combs (2018) mentions the three types "exclusionary zoning, restrictive covenants [and] redlining" (Combs 2018, p. 51), which methodically all had the aim of denying housing opportunities to Blacks in Minneapolis. They resembled rules and informal statutes explicitly stating where Blacks could live and where they could not, marking those areas which were accessible. Through this mechanism, it was made sure Whites and their families were placed higher in the social hierarchy, offering them a whole set of additional opportunities systemically denied to Black residents.

Particularly the second practice in Combs's (2018) quote, the University of Minnesota (UMN) reveals, was prominent in Minneapolis, but also in

the other example city of Washington (University of Minnesota n. d.). As an alternative termed "racist property clauses" (Miller 2020), covenants forbade houses to "be sold, conveyed, leased, or sublet, or occupied by any person or persons who are not full bloods of the so-called Caucasian or White race" (Ingraham 2020; University of Minnesota n. d.). The first of these covenants in Minneapolis came as early as 1910 – a time when the city was "not particularly segregated" (University of Minnesota n. d.). It occurred what one could call a residential and ethnic distortion: While the number of African American residents rose steadily, more Minneapolis areas would become *entirely white*. Thus, covenants propelled "sequestering entire communities into neighborhoods that were disinvested, policed and segregated" (Milner 2020). The argument and its rhetoric quickly transcended boundaries and found their way to become markers of economic and financial motivation. People selling homes as well as managing officials saw the benefits for their endeavors, proceeding to accept the practice (University of Minnesota n. d.). Later, the American Veterans' Committee (AVC) dismissed the covenants as "unnecessary, undemocratic and un-American" (Delegard 2015), having recognized the imminent threat to American democracy. However, despite the Shelley v. Kramer case in 1948 ruling covenants unconstitutional, and the prohibition of racialized housing practices in Minnesota in 1953, it lasted until 1968 that covenants were made illegal by the Fair Housing Act (University of Minnesota n. d.).

The ironic reality which troubles city and country is that historical covenants might have disappeared, but they have simply changed their appearance to live on in Minneapolis through so-called single-family zoning (Grabar 2018; Rosalsky 2020). This model consents to "residential structures with up to three dwelling units" (Mervosh 2018). Like in the early and mid-20th century, it is a way of legalizing to preserve the presence of Whites and *Whiteness* in certain neighborhoods in the Southern, Southwestern, and other parts of the city: It can be found in Nokomis, Longfellow, Northeast, and Southwest Minneapolis (Kaul 2019; Appendix, Images 1-4). To make this past and continuous existence visible, some geographers and policymakers in Minneapolis have engaged in projects and processes to show the importance of the practice.

Mapping Prejudice, for example, is a project co-founded Kirsten Delegard, wishing to provide cartographic visualization of covenants (Miller 2020). Ryan Mattke, Penny Peterson, and Kevin Ehrman-Solberg started the endeavor in 2016 with a software that could scan digitized records of Minneapolis homes. Deed scans revealed much rhetoric associated with covenants, and according to Nathan Connolly, "[i]t's very powerful to show these deed restrictions creeping out across the landscape of Minneapolis, like an organism or disease" (Miller 2020). Similarly, the Prologue DC research group identified some 15,000 restrictive covenants in the American capital (Miller 2020).

Another is that the Minneapolis City Council has by 12-1 ruled out the practice of single-family zoning, albeit met by some public contestation (see Mervosh 2018). Policymakers constructed a tool named *Minneapolis 2040* that could help addressing affordable housing and the disproportionate rate of Blacks who are not homeowners, but renters (see Ingraham 2020). If the visualization of the gap between black and white homeownership rates in Ingraham's (2020) article is considered, it is at a percentage of 50. More concisely, the rate for Blacks is around 25%, whereas it is significantly higher for Whites – 76% (Ingraham 2020). Further, Uptown Minneapolis resident Peggy Reinhardt observes young people unable to buy houses costing some $400,000, and elderly people with housing but no financial security. These are the two extremes found in Minneapolis (Mervosh 2018).

5.4 Minneapolis 2040 Plan and Other Policy Guidelines

Minneapolis 2040 as a concise and comprehensive policy collection not only incorporates housing. According to the website, it is a set of 100 policies in different areas for improving the quality of life in the city, especially for Black residents. The areas include housing, politics, food, and transportation (Welcome to Minneapolis 2040, n. d.). Besides the actual planning process, the website gives detailed information on the plan's topics, goals, and policies as well as its implementation. It is hoped the plan will resolve, or at least contribute to resolve, what some people might

call a paradox, and *The Washington Post* a "long-simmering disconnect" (Ingraham 2020). It is not only a reality in Minneapolis but in the entire state of Minnesota (see Johnson & Russell 2019): While Minneapolis is credited for its high-score livability, the city is also an epitome for a tense and racialized social situation.

Put differently, it sticks out among the country's cities because of a high prevalence of racial disparities. As the article *The Miracle of Minneapolis* by Derek Thompson (2015) shows, considering residents under 35 at the time, the city is in the Top Ten in college education, high income, and low poverty – from residents' ages 18 to 34 it has the highest employment rate *in the nation* (Thompson 2015). Thus, it can be noted that there is prosperity in Minneapolis. However, it is almost entirely reserved for Whites because of these exclusionary circumstances, most prominently income. Three years ago, in 2018, a black family's median income was 36,000 US dollars, whereas a white's one was placed at 83,000 dollars. The gap is an astonishing 47,000 US dollars, which makes Minneapolis rank top in the nation for this kind of disparity (Ingraham 2020).

Since the steps and recommendations are written down, the necessity of codified steps in the political process is underlined. Plans that exist on paper are much more useful than mere words for bringing forward concerns and desires. Hence, it would be best to motivate urban organizations and institutions – including the federal government – to clearly document policy objectives that might be brought up, and to include them into their agenda. As Sarah Mervosh (2018) underlines, this is crucial as the city itself and its institutions emphasize their own strategy of commitment to an issue. Thus, they actively support steps toward a more democratic urban environment in Minneapolis. Further, looking at the website highlights the eminently central relationship between geography and democracy: The former contributes to the latter. Policies are oriented toward residents in urban space – which undoubtedly includes African Americans – and their human rights. Thereby, the plan echoes the demands of BLM and other social and environmental justice organizations. Hence, the *Minneapolis 2040 Plan* is an accurate example of the relational triangle black lives, geography, and democracy in the city.

As outlined, the *Minneapolis 2040 Plan* includes a wide range of adaptive food policies. This is because there still is a similar reality found here as in Washington: Residents of certain neighborhoods, particularly Blacks, do not earn sufficient money. This scarcity or even absence of financial resources complicates acquiring foodstuffs as transportation and grocery store accessibility are substantially limited. Thus, many people are constrained to purchase their food in the convenience stores (or bodegas) found in many cities, including Minneapolis – typically small stores that do not offer a meaningful selection, let alone one of healthy products (Union of Concerned Scientists 2016, p. 11).

However, in the last few years, city politics in Minneapolis have increasingly addressed the issue of food inaccessibility through decision-making and initiatives. In 2008, the Minneapolis City Council made important food provision guidelines a city-wide law, which became known as the *Minneapolis Staple Food Ordinance*. This law requires a food categorization in those convenience stores, ensuring the availability of basic products like "eggs, grains [and] milk" (Union of Concerned Scientists 2016, p. 11). Moreover, the offer must include "five types of fresh produce" (Union of Concerned Scientists 2016, p. 11) to fight possible health problems. Thereby, the 'City of Lakes,' as Minneapolis is also known, became "the first city to regulate food stocking requirements in food stores" (Union of Concerned Scientists 2016, p. 11).

The city's health department (MHD) assessed the program in 2009, and as resource scarcity for the convenience stores became apparent, the *Healthy Corner Store Program* (HCSP), a support and assistance program, was launched a year after this initial assessment. HCSP is a public-private-partnership (PPP), comprised of the MHD, several community organizations, and owners of the city's convenience stores. The program wishes to make fresh food provision a beneficial market concept for the city, which is why it addresses both the customer's and the owner's perspective. One the one hand, it equips owners with sufficient knowledge about fresh food and related market techniques like selling (Union of Concerned Scientists 2016, pp. 11, 12). More specifically, the mentioned market techniques include adequate positioning within the building, advertisement, and better visual orientation (Union of Concerned

Scientists 2016, pp. 11, 12). This makes the owners more comfortable and aware, thus serves to create incentives to make products appealing to customers. They, on the other hand, actively perceive a change in product availability, and therefore might be more motivated to change dietary routines (Union of Concerned Scientists 2016, pp. 11, 12).

5.5 Chapter Summary

In the presentation of these elements, it becomes clear that both Washington and Minneapolis are eager to improve the lives and daily situations of their Black residents. Administrative, economic, and political organs have recognized that to recreate and maintain a democratic order, these pervasive, multidimensional problems need to be handled accordingly. Cities like Washington and Minneapolis are important not only for social and geographic, but also for political reasons: They are "the right level of government for making a meaningful change" (Benjamin 2020), says Andrea Benjamin. The strength of city governments can be measured in a sense: If the mayor is the "executive of the city" (Benjamin 2020), the decision-making powers are with him or her and the city council – which is the case in both cities. Mayor Muriel Bowser (Washington) and Mayor Jacob Frey (Minneapolis) are heads of their cities, while Bowser is also the governor and county executive, since the District of Columbia has not received state status, or not yet if public debates are considered (Government of the District of Columbia n. d.). Not only do both mayors have some overlapping goals and policies, but their duties show they have the responsibility to lead their cities toward more visible racial equality. This is evidenced by the separation into official and customary duties, for instance. Official concerns the governing side, such as review, approval, signatures, or appointments. Customary is rather representative, connected to the city's people and their needs as well as recommendations (City of Minneapolis n. d.). Hence, for Washington and Minneapolis, responsible mayors taking customary duties seriously are indispensable when they wish to put democracy first. In other words, mayors take a crucial position in the triangle black lives, geography, and democracy in both cities.

Considering these facts and strategies now leads to call both cities catalysts for active resistance, as the chapter's heading states. Alternatively, it can be rephrased to become catalysts of social justice activism, to be more precise. After the killing of George Floyd and the attack on protesters by police in front of the White House, the US and the two cities were shaken yet again. Those people engaging in the urban protests seek to change the situation not only for them as Washingtonians and Minneapolitans, but for the whole country. This was evidenced by initiatives in the Bloomingdale neighborhood and the work of organizations and the government. Residents and politicians in both cities have during the last few years started developing plans to cope with difficult realities for Black residents. These included, as this chapter has shown, the visualization of restrictive covenants, recommendations for police officers in tense situations, as well as city policy strategies like *Minneapolis 2040* and the *HCSP*. All these approaches address the very topics all Black Americans would like to see improved and corrected as soon as possible: law enforcement relations and the criminal justice system, racist thought patterns, and accessibility problems.