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FROM WISCONSIN TO EGYPT AND BACK AGAIN: A COMMENT ON BRIDGETTE BALDWIN'S ANALYSIS OF THE SHADOW WORK THESIS¹

DAVARIAN L. BALDWIN*

INTRODUCTION

“It’s like Cairo has moved to Madison these days.”²

In 1996, filmmaker Michael Moore headed to Wisconsin to shoot scenes for his latest documentary, *The Big One*.³ Wisconsin captured Moore’s attention as the founding home of the nation’s largest temporary labor agency, Manpower, Inc.⁴ With low-wage, no benefit temp labor as such a lucrative enterprise, Moore sought to investigate the hidden costs of President Bill Clinton’s much celebrated “Economic Miracle,” especially for everyday, working-class citizens.⁵ In various parts of the film he attempts to sabotage vari-

* Davarian L. Baldwin is the Paul E. Raether Distinguished Professor of American Studies at Trinity College in Hartford, Conn. Above all, I want to thank my wife and colleague Bridgette Baldwin for producing such an amazing project that evaluates welfare reform from the perspective of the mothers themselves. I am inspired by her insightful scholarship which obviously makes this commentary possible but also pushes us all to rethink the profound relationships between racial formations, gendered divisions of labor, and the neoliberal economy; a set of realities that have shaped the U.S. labor market much longer than we have been willing to acknowledge. Underneath facile notions of self-reliance and government dependency, it is the experiences of welfare mothers that can help us think anew.

1. See Bridgette Baldwin, *Shadow Works and Shadow Markets: How Privatization of Welfare Services Produces an Alternative Market*, 34 W. NEW ENG. L. REV. 445 (2012) [hereinafter Baldwin, *Shadow Works and Shadow Markets*]; Bridgette Baldwin, *Wisconsin Works? Race, Gender and Accountability in the Workfare Era* (Jan. 1, 2010) (Ph.D. dissertation, Northeastern University) [hereinafter Baldwin, *Wisconsin Works?*], available at http://iris.lib.neu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1019&context=law_pol_soc_diss.

2. Don Walker, *Paul Ryan: ‘It’s like Cairo moved to Madison,’* JSONLINE ALL POLITICS BLOG (Feb. 17, 2011), <http://www.jsonline.com/blogs/news/116420589.html>.

3. THE BIG ONE (Miramax 1998).

4. *Id.* See generally MANPOWERGROUP, <http://www.manpowergroup.com/> (last visited May 24, 2012).

5. THE BIG ONE (Miramax 1998). See generally *The Clinton Presidency: Historic Economic Growth*, NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION, <http://clinton5.nara.gov/WH/Accomplishments/eightyears-03.html> (last visited May 24, 2012).

ous corporate executives with impromptu and piercing questions about their massive layoff practices during a time of reported prosperity.⁶ But one of the most memorable scenes of the film is when Moore strolls into the Wisconsin State Capitol in Madison with two local disc jockeys and a group of welfare mothers and their children.⁷ The mothers are carrying pails and mops seeking to clean the then-Governor Tommy Thompson's office.⁸

In this sensational piece of performance politics, these working class black women were trying to assert their desire to work. This attempt to associate welfare mothers with a *desire* to work challenged the compelling claims of Wisconsin's trendsetting welfare reform⁹ arguments that welfare had long been a vacation for hustling "queens" who juked the system for paychecks without work and hence generated an ethos of laziness and dependency for their children. This state capitol scene from a documentary film was a captivating episode of pushing largely invisible welfare mothers to the center of economic debate; as an index not of laziness or depravity but of a large segment of America's working class being ground under by an "Economic Miracle" that was hardly reaching a then-newly documented and rapidly growing segment of America's labor force: the working poor.

Flash forward fifteen years and Wisconsin's public sector workers were once again storming the Wisconsin State Capitol, not necessarily asking for pay raises or even pay stabilizations but simply hoping to maintain their rights to engage in collective bargaining.¹⁰ Pundits, activists, and observers (including Michael Moore) were awash in amazement—it seemed like the first time, in a long time, that citizens seized their right to public protest and sought to chart a new course for Twenty-First Century politics.¹¹ While some saw a new future, others reflected nostalgically that the seas of mass agitation awash over Wisconsin's State Capitol in February of 2011

6. THE BIG ONE, *supra* note 5.

7. *Id.*

8. *Id.*

9. For a more detailed description of the Wisconsin Works (W-2) program, see Baldwin, *Shadow Works and Shadow Markets*, *supra* note 1.

10. See Monica Davey and Steven Greenhouse, *Public Workers in Wisconsin Protest Plan to Cut Benefits*, NEW YORK TIMES (Feb. 16, 2011), <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/17/us/17wisconsin.html>; Todd Richmond, *Filmmaker Michael Moore Rallies Wis. Pro-Union Protesters* MSNBC (March 6, 2011), http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/41932578/ns/politics-more_politics/t/filmmaker-michael-moore-rallies-wis-pro-union-protesters/#.To_SsXO1kYs.

11. *Supra* note 10.

harkened back to the labor politics from a half century earlier . . . in more ways than one.¹²

But at the same time, the story at the state capitol was not just a struggle over the national agenda. It was global. Some were comparing the events in Wisconsin to the “Arab Revolt” spreading its tentacles from Tunisia to Yemen, Algeria to Egypt. Even Representative Paul Ryan (R-WI), mocked, “It’s like Cairo moved to Madison these days.”¹³ While Ryan meant this comparison to be derogatory, he could not control the momentum of vision that situated America’s heartland within world affairs, where the narratives of political influence went both ways. In fact, on Twitter and YouTube, activists in Cairo are seen holding up signs that read “Egypt Supports Wisconsin . . . One World, One Pain.”¹⁴

I looked on in amazement at the dizzying spectacle of public political action in my home state of Wisconsin, seeing groups of archetypal white guys in flannel shirts and trucker hats arguing on both sides of the various political issues. In revealing interviews and blog entries I saw the same guys making poignant links between their struggles under the state’s draconian policies of fiscal austerity and the conditions of people who many would have imagined as their enemy after the attacks on September 11th. At least for that one moment on the state capitol steps, flannel shirts did not necessarily mean anti-government while “Arab” was disentangled from the uniform marker of enemy combatant. Amazing new connections were being made.

Yet I couldn’t help but ask: Where were the welfare mothers who arguably set this working class siege on the state capitol in motion almost fifteen years ago? After the Michael Moore film had broken the silence about this vital segment of the state’s working poor, why are they invisible once again, relegated to the shadows of this grand reimagining of citizenship, labor, and politics? But while invisible once again, how was their agitprop siege on Wisconsin a

12. *Supra* note 10.

13. Eric Lach, *Paul Ryan On Wisconsin Protests: ‘It’s Like Cairo Has Moved To Madison’* TPM (Feb. 17, 2011), <http://tpmdc.talkingpointsmemo.com/2011/02/paul-ryan-on-wisconsin-protests-its-like-cairo-has-moved-to-madison-video.php>.

14. It should be noted that some have questioned the “authenticity” of this widely circulated image. But to date suspicions have remained speculative and not conclusive. Mike Lux, *Egypt, Wisconsin, and the Future of Our Democracy*, HUFFINGTON POST (Feb. 18, 2011), http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mike-lux/egypt-wisconsin-and-the-f_b_825185.html; Cord Jefferson, *Amazing Photo: Egyptians Turn Out to Support Wisconsin Counterparts*, GOOD (Feb. 19, 2011), <http://www.good.is/post/amazing-photo-egyptians-turn-out-to-support-wisconsin-counterparts1/>.

foreshadowing, an index of our current times and the limits of the labor consciousness being made in the present? Could the angst of state workers in 2011 have been prevented had state citizens listened to the calls for health care, public works projects, and quality jobs and skill training programs sought by welfare mothers fifteen years earlier? What if Wisconsin's state workers had seen welfare mothers as part of the larger labor struggle?¹⁵

I. SHADOW WORK, SHADOW MARKETS, AND THE NEW LABOR CONSCIOUSNESS

Just on a visual level, the contrasts between 1996 and 2011 were striking. On one hand, you had a unionized, largely white-collar, white, and gender-mixed political bloc. On the other hand, there was a world of marginally documented, working poor, non-unionized, black women. But such contrasts and the inability to make solidarity links within the state are not simply a matter of visual cues or even something like racism, but speak to an inability to imagine the full scope of the socio-economic landscape and especially its racial and gendered contours. One could say that the socio-economic conditions facing welfare mothers in 1996 were becoming common conditions by 2011. In fact, the inability to imagine solidarity on the ground in Wisconsin, between welfare mothers and now all workers, as much as imagine links abroad with Egypt, works to the detriment of a more robust labor consciousness. The long term "wages" of racially exclusive housing mortgages and work promotions afforded white workers from times past, the subsequent racial organization of cities and suburbs, and the resulting racially coded and contrasting moral claims of hard working versus laziness prevented "legitimate" state citizens from seeing welfare mothers, migrant farmers, teachers, and firefighters as part of the same socio-economic arc. Now the very success or failure to win this sort of statehouse battle for working class America rests with an ability to re-imagine the socio-economic landscape in de-industrialized spaces like Wisconsin, where W-2 mothers are not only central but served as the "canary in the coal mine" for our times.

15. Also consider the amazing work of welfare mothers as early as the 1970s. It was welfare mothers in Las Vegas who established the first library, medical, day care, and job training centers and senior citizen housing for city's poor. See ANNELISE ORLECK, *STORMING CAESAR'S PALACE: HOW BLACK MOTHERS FOUGHT THEIR OWN WAR ON POVERTY* (2006).

In my mind, Bridgette Baldwin's savvy reworking of Ivan Illich's notion of "shadow work"¹⁶ gets us pretty far towards the larger goal of remapping labor relations and the possibilities for a new labor consciousness within the current economy. Illich provides a small window into the larger world of labor without *visible* factories through his articulation of "shadow work."¹⁷ Again, shadow work contains a series of uncompensated labor acts; from commuting to work and the preparation activities tied to shopping to the stresses of forced consumption (think about shopping for private or even public magnet education) and many of the activities labeled "family life".¹⁸ On one level, Illich offers a sharp critique and identification of undocumented and uncompensated labor, identifying how work for free underwrites everyday life points us towards a clearer understanding of the current economy.¹⁹ But at the same time, it's equally telling that Illich doesn't highlight the very classed (access to disposable income) and gendered (consumption and family life—still) nature of shadow work. He asserts an almost universal or evenly dispersed engagement with forced consumption—but some people simply just can't afford to buy into the consumer economy in the same ways. Illich also goes to such great lengths to stress the gender-neutral status of shadow work, even though most of the drudgery of labor in preparation for consumption takes place in the traditionally gendered sphere of the home.²⁰

When bringing Baldwin's analysis of W-2 mothers into the discussion,²¹ we are confronted with the limits of shadow work's defi-

16. See *supra* note 1. See generally IVAN ILLICH, SHADOW WORK 99-116 (1981); IVAN ILLICH, GENDER 45-60 (1982).

17. See generally *supra* note 16.

18. See generally *supra* note 16.

19. See generally *supra* note 16.

20. Illich says,

Shadow work is not women's exclusive domain. It is as clearly genderless as wage labor. Unpaid work to upgrade industrial production is done by males too. The husband who crams for an exam on a subject he hates, solely to get a promotion; the man who commutes everyday to the office—these men are engaged in shadow work.

ILLICH, GENDER, *supra* note 16, at 53. However, I would argue that just because both men and women engage in a kind of work does not mean that the work is "genderless." Even in the example provided above, who is preparing the meals and helping the children with homework when the husband crams for the exam? Are there a proportionate number of men and women at this hypothetical job competing for the promotion? Is the exam the sole requirement for promotion; where do the other (gendered) requirements of "relate-ability" to clients or the literal "old boys' networks," factor into promotion decisions? See generally *supra* note 16.

21. See *supra* note 1.

dition—as unpaid labor in preparation for *consumption*. What about those who engage in forms of unpaid labor in preparation for *production* or at least the consumption of a “good worker” identity? W-2 mothers demonstrate, at the most extreme level, how many are constrained within a social contract that in fact underwrites the irrationalities of a capitalist marketplace. It’s the racial and gendered relegation of welfare mothers to a world of uncompensated production that holds the economy together. What I see as Baldwin’s trenchant interrogation of this central shadow, within shadow work, circles around two key nodal points: (a) the Community Service Jobs (CSJs) that underwrite (b) the shadow market of sub-contracted W-2 agencies.²²

Welfare reform became an act of privatizing public resources that depended on the iconography of the “Welfare Queen.”²³ This queen had little to do with actual people but served as a highly racialized and gendered analog for the collapse (or abandonment) of a fully functioning social welfare state. A sharp contrast was posed by the lazy, contemptuous, hustling welfare queen who reproduced an ethos of dependency and a “something for nothing” attitude in their children.²⁴ At the same time the liberal state is caricatured as an effeminate governmental body duped by white guilt and general sentimentalism. While welfare reform is posed as a hard line, tough love, policy of paternalism that demanded personal responsibility in exchange for any social aid. Here, a shrinking state budget required self-help and sacrifice. This conceptual framing of welfare reform is instructive for the ways in which it pushes Illich further to think about how consuming this ethic became a way to prepare for not just a new kind of consumption (welfare reform) but the production of a reorganized governmental order (pro-capital/anti-labor neoliberalism).²⁵

22. See Baldwin, *Wisconsin Works?*, *supra* note 1. See generally JASON DEPARLE, *AMERICAN DREAM: THREE WOMEN, TEN KIDS, AND A NATION’S DRIVE TO END WELFARE* (2004).

23. See generally DAVID ZUCCHINO, *MYTH OF THE WELFARE QUEEN: A PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING JOURNALIST’S PORTRAIT OF WOMEN ON THE LINE* (2007); RACE AND THE POLITICS OF WELFARE REFORM (Sanford F. Schram, Joe Soss, & Richard Fording eds. 2003); KAREN SECCOMBE, “SO YOU THINK I DRIVE A CADILLAC?”: WELFARE RECIPIENTS, PERSPECTIVES ON THE SYSTEM, AND ITS REFORM (1998); JILL QUADAGNO, *THE COLOR OF WELFARE: HOW RACISM UNDERMINED THE WAR ON POVERTY* (1996).

24. See generally *supra* note 23.

25. See generally *supra* note 23.

Welfare reform depended on the logic that welfare mothers were *both* unwilling and incapable of asserting a hard work ethic, establishing an ethos of reliability, or establishing a “team player” approach to labor. In my modest mind, the very consumption of the racial and gendered construct of the Welfare Queen, and the uncompensated labor required for that caricature, makes way for a new or at least reorganized mode of production. It is this Welfare Queen construct that prevented workers in Madison in 2011 from recognizing the workers who were in Madison fifteen years ago and yet still allowed them to find solidarity in Egypt? The point is that racial and gendered scripts have generated a shadow work that prevents us from seeing the profound links between welfare mothers and, say, schoolteachers. The irony should be noted that the very claims of laziness, hustling, opportunistic, and greedy behavior, etc., that were thrown at welfare mothers during reform are the very same invectives hurled at “white” collar public workers on Wisconsin’s state house steps.²⁶

The racial and gendered premises of the Welfare Queen set up a profound shadow labor world where CSJs provided compensation, but not for labor. Here, compensation was based on the premise that anyone on welfare is there because they are either incapable or, in fact, resistant to work. Compensation (not wages) became a paternalistic (white father) method for instilling a work ethic in largely black women who presumably don’t have one.²⁷ Within this apprenticeship system, W-2 participants volunteer at various non-profit organizations around the city. These service jobs claim to provide work experience, yes. But they also relegate largely black women to low-skilled labor that subsidizes an industry and provide no means to upward mobility.²⁸

In my mind, this CSJ construct is the face of shadow work that Baldwin brings to the table;²⁹ an almost free extraction of labor power that depends on a race and gender matrix for constructing labor value. This very notion of an apprenticeship system has eerie resonances with apprenticeship systems during Abolition periods in the West Indies and the United States South. These systems also

26. See generally JILL FRASER, *WHITE COLLAR SWEATSHOPS: THE DETERIORATION OF WORK AND ITS REWARDS IN CORPORATE AMERICA* (2002).

27. See JOE SOSS, RICHARD C. FORDING & SANFORD F. SCHRAM, *DISCIPLINING THE POOR: NEOLIBERAL PATERNALISM AND THE PERSISTENT POWER OF RACE* (2011).

28. See JANE L. COLLINS & VICTORIA MAYER, *BOTH HANDS TIED: WELFARE REFORM AND THE RACE TO THE BOTTOM IN THE LOW-WAGE LABOR MARKET* (2010).

29. See *supra* note 1.

argued that the formerly-enslaved needed to work for a period of time, in a relatively uncompensated fashion, to *benefit* from the exposure to a proper wage labor work ethic! The acts of sorting hangers, putting together glue packs and being exposed to rat feces and dust at food pantries constitutes, within the new shadow work matrix, a valuable extraction of labor power for the social engineering it provides.³⁰

As the Twenty-First Century moved along, this shadow work was further contained within its own shadow market of sub-contracted agencies, where both for-profit and non-profit organizations now compete for contracts to administer the welfare programs once handled by state agents.³¹ Again, the act of privatizing welfare agencies contains its own gendered logic that the self-sustaining and self-regulating logic of the market will engender an unsentimental mode of competition where the best work will receive the best compensation. For example, consider that the self-contained laws of the market will generate its own efficiency and productivity. But Baldwin so powerfully points out that the very organization of the sub-contracting welfare system places coercion, not freedom, at the heart of the capitalist logic of market competition.³² Here, a single non-profit or for-profit agency wins a contract that gives them total control over a single zone (in the largely black and female market of Milwaukee County). Therefore, welfare mothers cannot “shop” for the best services and they must patronize the agency assigned to their zone. And so this privatized system actually produces a monopoly-capitalist social arrangement. The tripartite relationship between W-2 mothers, the state, and these subcontracted agencies creates a shadow market, where the agency’s profits are generated by their ability to manage mother’s relatively uncompensated labor. Beyond a reserve labor force, the labor of mothers struggling with welfare reform underwrites whole public-private economies.

In the end, Illich’s identification of a shadow realm of consumption—and, by extension, production—is a powerful commentary and foreshadowing of our present times. But it is Bridgette Baldwin’s close reading of the actual economic terrain of mothers surviving welfare reform that powerfully demonstrates how class still matters and how shadow work is hardly gender neutral. Here

30. See generally SETH ROCKMAN, *SCRAPING BY: WAGE LABOR, SLAVERY, AND SURVIVAL IN EARLY BALTIMORE* (2008); JENNIFER MORGAN, *LABORING WOMEN: REPRODUCTION AND GENDER IN NEW WORLD SLAVERY* (2004).

31. See generally Baldwin, *Wisconsin Works?*, *supra* note 1.

32. See generally *supra* note 1.

we see gender and race providing the material infrastructure for the ways in which we make sense of class (whose labor is valued) and the methods by which labor power is extracted without compensation within a shadow market (welfare = bad work ethic).

Just imagine the worldview of radical possibility that could have been produced if the white-collar workers descending on the Wisconsin State Capitol in 2011 spoke directly to the welfare mothers who were there almost fifteen years earlier. Baldwin's examination of the welfare queen, CSJs, and sub-contracting welfare agencies makes visible a new vision of shadow work immersed within a hardly documented shadow market.³³

How does the functioning of W-2 and black women surviving under the stereotypical shadow of "Shaniqua and Taliqua" stereotypes force us to go beyond the labor imaginings of Ralph Kramden, Archie Bunker, Homer Simpson, or even Norma Rae?³⁴ The new face of labor is documented and undocumented. They are in the classroom and the office cubicle, yes, but also in the sweatshop, the prison, and the community service job. We must establish a direct engagement with today's capitalist relations in a nation where large-scale manufacturing continues to decline. What are the implications of delving deeper into the shadows of shadow work and how can such an examination more accurately map the conditions and contours of laboring in our times? Coming to terms with the W-2 mother is essential for any robust labor consciousness; her experiences provide a map for a more humane future, a future that is being assembled as we speak.

II. POSTSCRIPT: ARAB SPRING AND THE OCCUPATION HARVEST

More than a year has passed since the second "March on Wisconsin." And in new and unanticipated ways, expressions of disaffection have not gone away. In fact, demands for a new democracy persist. The Arab Revolt has blossomed into an Arab Spring.³⁵ While on the home front "spoiled" state workers in Wisconsin are

33. See generally *supra* note 1.

34. See MICHAEL ERIC DYSON IS BILL COSBY RIGHT?: OR HAS THE BLACK MIDDLE CLASS LOST ITS MIND (2005). Most images of the working class ideal (as opposed to caricature), even in comedy, have been mostly white men and to some degree white women. See the television shows *The Honeymooners* (Ralph Kramden), *All in the Family* (Archie Bunker), *The Simpsons* (Homer Simpson), and the movie *Norma Rae*.

35. Rashid Khalidi, *The Arab Spring*, THE NATION (Mar. 21, 2011), <http://www.thenation.com/article/158991/arab-spring>. See also VIJAY PRASHAD, ARAB SPRING, LIBYAN WINTER (2012).

no longer alone. Veterans wanting benefits, janitors seeking justice, and “illegal aliens” expecting human rights, have joined them on the front lines.³⁶ At the same time, today’s “Help”³⁷ have jumped off the screen seeking respect and fair labor standards;³⁸ the evicted are fighting foreclosures;³⁹ “sluts” are walking against the unrepentant sexual assault on women’s bodies;⁴⁰ prisoners are hunger striking for humane conditions;⁴¹ and “deadbeat” college graduates are searching for a future.⁴²

College graduates are in debt and can’t find jobs while General Electric paid zero taxes on five billion dollars in profit in 2010.⁴³ Opulent wealth sits in sharp contrast with the growing ranks of the unemployed and uninsured. And what was once a couple hundred became thousands occupying various Wall Streets, Main Streets, and college campuses all over the country. Occupy Wall Street’s “ground zero” has been renamed Liberty Square and encompasses not only the Wall Street area, but privately owned Zuccotti Park as well.⁴⁴ The makeshift media center has been powered by MacBook

36. Kristina Wong, *Occupy Veterans Movement Growing Across U.S.* ABC NEWS (Oct 31, 2011), <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/occupy-veterans-movement-growing/story?id=14848003#.T6qluXNUPjk>; Pat Galbincea, *Service Employees International Union Stages Rally on Public Square Seeking ‘Justice for Janitors’* CLEVELAND PLAIN DEALER (September 28, 2011), http://blog.cleveland.com/metro/2011/09/services_employers_internation.html; John Genovese, *Protestors in Custody After Arpaio Protest Outside School*, ARIZONA REPUBLIC (March 20, 2012), <http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/local/articles/2012/03/20/20120320arpaio-phoenix-student-protest-abr.html>.

37. See THE HELP (DreamWorks 2011).

38. See National Domestic Workers Alliance, *Meet Today’s Help*, GRASSROOTS GLOBAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE, <http://ggjalliance.org/es/node/810> (a two-minute video).

39. David Sands, *National Conference to Fight Foreclosures Will Call For 2-Year Moratorium*, HUFFINGTON POST (March 31, 2012), http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/03/30/national-conference-to-fight-foreclosures-evictions-moratorium-now-detroit_n_1392624.html.

40. Jessica Valenti, *Slut Walks and the Future of Feminism*, WASHINGTON POST (June 3, 2011) http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/slutwalks-and-the-future-of-feminism/2011/06/01/AGjB9LIH_story.html.

41. Lateef Mungin, *Thousands of California Prisoners on Hunger Strike*, CNN (Oct. 4, 2011, 2:36 AM), <http://www.cnn.com/2011/10/04/justice/california-prison-hunger-strike/index.html>.

42. See Newt Gingrich, Comments at the Iowa Thanksgiving Family Forum (November 19, 2011), available at <http://www.2012presidentialelectionnews.com/2011/11/video-watch-the-full-iowa-thanksgiving-family-forum/>.

43. David Kociniewski, *G.E.’s Strategies Let It Avoid Taxes Altogether*, N.Y. TIMES (Mar. 24, 2011), <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/25/business/economy/25tax.html>.

44. Karen Matthews, *Wall Street Protest Functions Like a Small City*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Oct. 7, 2011), available at <http://news.yahoo.com/wall-street-protest-functions-small-city-205251674.html>.

pros, cameras, and gas-powered generators.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, participants have organized a “People’s Library” made up of donated books, have instituted a “People’s Microphone” of word of mouth communication because of a ban on audio amplification, and use the consensus-decision making process at general assemblies every evening.⁴⁶ Some dismiss this as a prolonged party weekend for kids playing Woodstock, while others see the potential second coming of social movement politics. Most are unclear about the leadership structure or the clarity of message coming from the “Occupy” movement, but see that a general sense of discontent with corporate greed, unemployment, and governmental withdrawal from social services has been converted into collective action.⁴⁷

It was the general spirit of discontent and the brutal response of the New York Police Department that brought members of the Rebel Diaz Arts Collective (RDACBX)⁴⁸ from South Bronx down to Wall Street. While RDACBX members were drawn to the excitement, they were equally repelled by the glaring absence of their community’s concerns in the Occupy Wall Street vision.⁴⁹ They asked how could there be a protest against unemployment, corruption, and governmental abandonment without their community represented? “Where was the hood? Where was the poorest congressional district in the USA, from the South Bronx at?”⁵⁰ Beyond just a demand for representation, many in the South Bronx contingent couldn’t relate to the “hippie” styles of protest that didn’t reflect their experiences but they remained hopeful about the

45. *Id.*

46. *Id.*

47. *Id.*

48. See THE REBEL DIAZ ARTS COLLECTIVE, <http://rdacbx.blogspot.com/> (last visited May 24, 2012) (“The Rebel Diaz Arts Collective (RDAC-BX) is a Hip-Hop community center in the South Bronx. Through performances, educational workshops, and multi-media training, [the group aims] to provide a safe space for cultural exchanges.”).

49. See RodStarz, *Reflections on #OccupyWallStreet*, THE REBEL DIAZ ARTS COLLECTIVE (Sept. 28, 2011, 11:23 PM), <http://rdacbx.blogspot.com/2011/09/reflections-on-occupywallstreet.html>. Please read, with a sense of humor, the poignant essay, Greg Tate, *Top 10 Reasons Why So Few Black Folk Appear Down To Occupy Wall Street*, THE VILLAGE VOICE (Oct. 19, 2011), <http://www.villagevoice.com/2011-10-19/news/greg-tate-top-ten-reasons-why-so-few-blackfolk-appear-down-to-occupy-wall-street/>. See also Rinku Sen, *Race and Occupy Wall Street*, THE NATION (Nov. 14, 2011), <http://www.thenation.com/article/164212/race-and-occupy-wall-street>; Kenyon Farrow, *Occupy Wall Street's Race Problem*, THE AMERICAN PROSPECT (Oct. 24, 2011), <http://www.prospect.org/article/occupy-wall-streets-race-problem>.

50. RodStarz, *supra* note 49.

possibilities and even thoughtful about the racial meaning of these new politics. RodStarz of Rebel Diaz reflected:

we are witnessing a first generation in which massive numbers of young white people are no longer experiencing the economic benefits of the capitalist system. Their working class parents have had their homes foreclosed, their school loans can't be paid because they too now are unemployed or underpaid in the shrinking job market. Their reality has gotten closer to what black and brown folk have lived for many years.⁵¹

Once again it is the standpoint position of poor black and brown citizens that allows us to see the full expanse of Illich's shadow market. According to these young people from the South Bronx, the travails of uncompensated labor may be increasingly universal but it is experienced directly along the already existing social hierarchies of the day in ways that the Occupy vision of social justice is simply missing.⁵² As one young black person reflected, "I ain't about to go get arrested with some muhfuhkuhs who just figured out yesterday that this shit ain't right."⁵³ The absence of people of color's concerns or a specifically urban political vision within the new discontent has even spawned an "Occupy the Hood" offshoot in cities across the country.⁵⁴ There are no guarantees.

Even as middle-class white citizens lose access to the benefits (long assumed to be entitlements) of free markets and state power, their increasing numbers as victims of police brutality, unemployment,⁵⁵ poverty etc. are still at *aspirational* levels for African Amer-

51. *Id.*

52. *Id.*

53. Tate, *supra* note 49.

54. Rosie Gray, *Occupy the Hood Aims to Bring More Minorities Into the Occupy Wall Street Fold*, THE VILLAGE VOICE BLOGS (Oct. 7, 2011, 3:09 PM), http://blogs.villagevoice.com/runninscared/2011/10/occupy_the_hood.php.

55. I mention police brutality alongside unemployment here, because it wasn't until images of pepper sprayed white students and indignant hand cuffed celebrities were displayed all over the media that policing became a major concern in larger Occupy political visions. Yet at an Occupy Harlem event the New York Police Department's (NYPD) notorious "stop-and-frisk" practices had long come under harsh scrutiny. Matthew Deluca & Jose Martinez, *NYPD's Stop and Frisk Tactics Protested in Harlem*, N.Y. DAILY NEWS (Oct. 21, 2011), http://articles.nydailynews.com/2011-10-21/local/30326087_1_latino-protesters-frisk-cornel-west. Reports reveal that the NYPD carried out over 600,000 stop-and-frisks in 2010 and over half Black, nearly a third Latino, and yet 86% were found innocent. *Stop and Frisk Practices*, N.Y. CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION, <http://www.nyclu.org/issues/racial-justice/stop-and-frisk-practices>. Policing, like welfare reform, becomes another example of how the social and economic experiences found in communities of color serve as a foreshadowing index of the conditions

ican and Latino communities.⁵⁶ Simply put, white deprivation remains a step up.⁵⁷ For example, all Americans are currently facing harsh unemployment numbers at a staggering 8.1%, as of April 2012.⁵⁸ But it shouldn't be surprising that the highest rates of unemployment in the nation are faced by African Americans in Milwaukee County (22.3% in 2010),⁵⁹ the home of those welfare mothers who stormed the Wisconsin state house asking for quality jobs fifteen years ago. Still, the more often "average" Americans are even threatened with a *Black Like Me*⁶⁰ existence, perhaps the less poverty will be seen as a moral failing or the product of deviant cultural (read: racial) behaviors, but impoverishment will be understood as the product of unchecked capitalism. White privilege may require that capitalism completely collapse in order to generate an honest critique of the current climate. Then collapse still might not be enough, made clear when future captains of finance and speculation at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton Business School mocked Occupy protestors with the chants of "Get in our bracket" and "Get a Job!"⁶¹—sound familiar?

Threats to white racial privilege have created a powerful rupture but the old habits of privilege can resurface like the return of the repressed ("get a job") and shape the new political possibilities. We must now look with more depth at how the racial and heavily gendered caricature of welfare mothers as lazy deviants and products of a dysfunctional culture underwrote the callous capitalism of

that we may all face. It's in these racial communities where we see capitalism in its rawest form; unhinged from white privilege.

56. See Mazher Ali et al., *State of the Dream 2011: Austerity for Whom?*, UNITED FOR A FAIR ECONOMY (Jan. 14, 2011), http://www.faireconomy.org/files/State_of_the_Dream_2011.pdf.

57. See Naomi Wolf, *How I was Arrested at Occupy Wall Street*, THE GUARDIAN (Oct. 19, 2011, 12:05 PM), <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/oct/19/naomi-wolf-arrest-occupy-wall-street> (describing how a middle-aged, white female reporter was treated well when she was arrested at Occupy Wall Street).

58. See *Labor Force Statistics from the Current Population Survey*, U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, <http://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LNS14000000> (last visited May 24, 2012).

59. Algernon Austin, *High Black Unemployment Widespread Across Nation's Metropolitan Areas*, ECONOMIC POLICY INSTITUTE (Oct. 3, 2011) (providing data on black unemployment and stating that the black unemployment rate in the Milwaukee area was 22.3% in 2010, a total that ranked as second-highest in the nation).

60. See JOHN HOWARD GRIFFIN, *BLACK LIKE ME* (1961).

61. Zaid Jilani, *Students At Elite Wharton Business School Mock 99 Percent Movement: 'Get a Job! Get a Job!'* THINK PROGRESS (Oct. 21, 2011) <http://thinkprogress.org/special/2011/10/21/350747/video-students-at-elite-wharton-business-school-mock-99-percent-movement-get-a-job-get-a-job/>.

“work first” and “tough love.” At what costs did Americans of all racial backgrounds sign on to an “at least that’s not me” outlook when it came to welfare mothers, in exchange for the few spoils of capitalism and democracy that we are all now losing? How did the “tough love,” privatization approach to welfare reform foreshadow the current fiscal austerity approaches to governance we all now face?

The very working people that now suffer from attacks on collective bargaining, the dismantling of social programs, decreased contributions to healthcare, the failure to create a large-scale jobs program—combined with increased tax cuts for the wealthy—are the ones who called for fiscal austerity when the targets were welfare mothers. We have been here before. As we now look at the powerful demands for the redistribution of wealth, political accountability, and jobs, we have been here before. When we also consider the relegation of “the hood” to the shadows of this new consciousness, yes, we have been here before. Once again our movements are rightfully referencing Tahrir Square in Egypt, and yet the welfare mother and her hood remain socio-economically central but conceptually marginal to the discontent expressed by a growing number of Americans, because she has been here before too. And therefore in the hard labor of building a new political consciousness, we ignore her at our own peril.