“Community Control:”

Residential Carcerality in Greensboro, North Carolina

Late in 1967, Mrs. Thelma Hall faced a stark choice. Administrators for the Greensboro, North Carolina Housing Authority (GHA) had informed Mrs. Hall that should she refuse to "undergo a tubal ligation operation"—i.e., sterilization—they would evict her from her home. Mrs. Hall lived in an apartment in one of the GHA's few public housing buildings open to African Americans. If evicted, she would have to search for housing among the few white-owned and overpriced homes open to black renters. Moreover, at the time of the GHA's notice, welfare was the only source of income Mrs. Hall—separated from her husband—earned and used to feed her seven children. Should Mrs. Hall refuse sterilization, the Housing Authority would not only evict her, but would render her ineligible to receive welfare payments and therefore unable to feed her children. Mrs. Hall responded to the Greensboro Housing Authority in February 1968. Backed by her friends and activist colleagues in the United Neighborhood Improvement Team (UNIT), she filed a lawsuit against the GHA, charging them with "exerting undue pressure on upon her to undergo" sterilization under threat of eviction should she refuse.[1]

On July 17, 1968, Mr. Horton, the owner and chief operator of Horton Realty Company, showed up unannounced to the properties he owned in Eastside Community, Greensboro, North Carolina. Mr. Horton walked from door to door, careful to knock on "each of his [Eastside Community] tenants[']" homes on the 300 block of Gillespie St. Residents who were home opened their doors in hopes of receiving long-awaited repairs; instead, they found their landlord livid, gun glistening ominously in his holster. That Wednesday, Mr. Horton subjected his residents to an onslaught of verbal abuse. He felt outraged that any of his tenants had dared form the Eastside Community Improvement Council. Even worse, the Council had the gall to request Mr. Horton attend a meeting to discuss the untenable state of his property. Mrs. Jeffers, Mrs. Pennix, Mr. Gant, and Mrs. Byrd led the council. It operated as an independent neighborhood

[1] "Unit Investigates Sterilization Complaint," *Carolina Peacemaker* (Greensboro, NC), April 20, 1968

group in UNIT, the African American Greensboro community organization that had stood behind Mrs. Hall in support just months before. That summer, the Council had strategically omitted their names from the letter of request to Mr. Horton. Thus, Mr. Horton, not knowing who was involved, walked from door to door and threatened each tenant with arrest should they attend the called-for meeting. Given his close relationship with city police officers and sheriffs, Mr. Horton had the connections to carry out his threat. Unconvinced that he had effectively intimidated his residents, Mr. Horton ran all tenants' visitors off the property and entered empty homes unauthorized to ensure their lessees were truly absent. Perhaps unsurprisingly, few community members attended the meeting that UNIT had called.[2]

UNIT's rejection of public and private abusive property-owning represented just one part of a larger critique that Greensboro's low-income black women, the most active and vocal members of UNIT, levied against the city's low-income black housing. Through their work in UNIT these women dominated Greensboro's racial justice organizing. Though women were the primary GAPP and UNIT organizers and leaders, their ideas and words were often filtered through the male figureheads of the organizations. In an interview, activist Willena Cannon recalled that gender tensions and attempts to deal with them flared up during some of the community meetings that GAPP members held. Joyce Johnson also remembered: "the core fabric of organizing efforts were women. The public spokespersons might have been men more often, but that was consistent with the larger culture and larger processes of socialization." Though newspapers and fliers often referred to the activists and their plight in masculine terms, women played central roles in both the grassroots organizing and the intellectual development of these organizations. These women's experiences enabled them to theorize about and reject abuses at the hands of housing authorities as systematic assaults on their humanity and

[2] "Gun Totin' Landlord Reacts to Meeting Invitation," *Carolina Peacemaker* (Greensboro, NC), July 27, 1968.

citizenship. Together, UNIT and their allies within Greensboro's black community argued that the city's housing both geographically and economically entrapped low-income black residents in spaces of physical and psychological punishment that transformed their neighborhoods into a form of state imprisonment. The residential component of the carceral state about which UNIT women theorized I call *residential carcerality*. These women, working as UNIT activists[3] in Greensboro from 1966-1973, saw themselves as subjects of the emergent carceral state, immobilized by the law, coercion, and socio-economic vulnerability in ways analogous to those explicitly imprisoned. They contended that in a system of residential carcerality, racially proscribed housing imprisoned poor and working-class black families, rendering poor black women's behavior and movement easily surveilled and policed through discriminatory pricing, housing regulations, and at times physical violence. This they faced alongside "traditional" police brutality. Thus, United Neighborhood Improvement Team promoted their theories of prison-like residences in order to garner governmental and citizen support and mobilization so that they could transform their neighborhoods into spaces of empowerment or what they called, "community control."[4]

In the past fifteen years, the interdisciplinary field of carceral studies has emerged as a means of systematically interrogating the rapidly expanding prison population and concurring culture of punishment. Academics including Heather Thompson, Loïc Wacquant, Jonathan Simon, Ruthie Gilmore, David Garber, and Bruce Western provide important insights into what they and others have called the punitive turn through arguments from a range of disciplines

[3] The Greensboro Association of Poor People (GAPP) was founded as a larger umbrella organization that subsumed UNIT and its members in 1968. GAPP continued UNIT's neighborhood-centered activism model in much of their work.

[4] Without negating the influences of Loïc Wacquant and his idea of the "carceral continuum," this paper avoids the ahistorical, general, and male-centric nature of Wacquant's thesis. Loïc Wacquant, "From Slavery to Mass Incarceration: Rethinking the 'race question' in the US" *New Left Review* 13, Jan/Feb 2002. Interviews with activists Willena Cannon, Joyce Johnson, and Claude Barnes, March 2013.

including political history, sociology, and cultural studies.[5] Their work demonstrates that beginning in the late 1960s, federal, state, and local governments implemented polices and practices that increasingly criminalized low-income people of color and their behaviors as well as the spaces they inhabited. The modern carceral state, then, is the result of the American government's investment in increasingly punitive criminal justice that disproportionately targets low-income people of color, which the scholars above have helped to define as the punitive turn.

Despite the significant and insightful scholarly analyses of the punitive turn to date, most have largely ignored black women.[6] Instead, they have focused on poor and working class black men of the urban North. To be sure, men constitute a far higher percentage of prisoners overall and the overwhelming rate of low-income black men whose lives have intersected with the criminal justice system demands analysis. Yet, women's labor—both economically and biologically speaking—has been essential to the reproduction of the carceral state. Women have

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[5] *The Punitive Turn: New Approaches to Race and Incarceration*, ed. Deborah McDowell, Claudrena Harold and Juan Battle, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013). Exploring black women's place in the emergent carceral state through an analysis of UNIT and GAPP activism, this essay necessarily engages with the literature on mass incarceration and the American carceral state. Scholars in this field have typically examined the experiences of low-income males of color in northern urban environments. Histories by Cheryl Hicks, Kali Gross, Heather Thompson, Michelle Alexander, and Khalil Muhammad, to name a few, analyze the origins and operations of mass incarceration. Khalil Muhammad, *Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Heather Thompson, "Why Mass Incarceration Matters: Rethinking Crisis, Decline, and Transformation in Postwar American History." *The Journal of American History* 97, no. 3 (2010): 703-734

[6] Kali Gross's and Cheryl Hicks's scholarship discuss the construction of black female criminality in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century urban North. Hicks and Gross contend that low-income black women themselves played a significant role in constructing their own representations—both criminal and respectable. They argue that black female criminality should be thought of as a product of government law enforcement practices and policies, newspaper crime reports, and black women's own actions and self-representations. Similarly, black women's activism and intellectual work critiquing the increasingly punitive dimensions of housing and law enforcement and social service administration informed the boundaries of landlords and public institutions' operating mechanisms and practices. In order to understand how the punitive turn functioned and the extent to which it was or was not a concerted approach to low-income populations of people of color both male and female, the ways in which black females have been criminalized in spaces beyond prisons and by people outside of traditional law enforcement, scholars must engage black women's insights on their experiences within the carceral state. My paper builds on these works and shows how working-class black women incorporated themselves into narratives of the carceral state at the start of the Black Power era. Kali Gross, *Colored Amazons: Crime, Violence, and Black Women in the City of Brotherly Love, 1880-1910* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Cheryl Hicks, *Talk With You Like a Woman: African American Women, Justice, and Reform in New York, 1890-1935* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

borne and raised the children arrested. Moreover, currently, African American women represent the fastest growing population of incarcerated peoples. The absence of analysis of black females' experiences within the punitive turn from the late 1960s to the present therefore fails to understand a critical component of the means through which the punitive turn has reproduced and grown to implicate increasing numbers of both men and women within and outside traditional spaces of imprisonment. Furthermore, without analyzing the gendered workings of the punitive turn one cannot grasp the mechanisms through which men and women are differently or similarly incorporated into the carceral state or whether (and if so, how) the punitive turn implicates families with an intergenerational dimension. The arguments put forth by UNIT and GAPP activists trouble the separation of the punitive dimensions of low-income housing from the criminal justice system. The insights of the women[7] who experienced the punitive turn on the ground provide a necessary and critical vantage point from which to begin analysis of the historical functioning of the punitive turn as it emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

This study begins in 1966. Three years earlier, the successful organizing of at times thousands of black Greensboroans had forced the city to desegregate a number of facilities, hire two black policemen, promise to end racial discrimination in low-income housing, and open ten public schools for desegregation in the ensuing academic year. In 1966, however, the city constructed 1437 new family housing units and only 77 of them were in black residential areas. Moreover, women founded UNIT in 1966 and continued their work beginning in 1968 as the Greensboro Association of Poor People, or GAPP.[8] GAPP organizer Claude Barnes wrote of the

[7] The central focus of this paper lies in the perceptions of the UNIT participants who developed an innovative critique of the state[7] for what they felt was their oppression within a system of imprisonment. While a more in-depth and systematic analysis of the state's policies and practices would likely add to claims of the state's system of residential carcerality, such is beyond the scope of the current piece. I gesture somewhat loosely at such policies and practices primarily to give context to the struggles faced by the women within the study. I plan to examine state documents in further work, but the women's experience is the critical concern of this piece.

[8] Critically, UNIT members's neighborhood-centered activism model informed GAPP activists' work.

period, "Without question the housing issue was the most pressing concern of the Black community." Barnes and other activists marshaled the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to support their struggle for black Americans' demands for full citizenship rights, including housing rights and freedom from police brutality. UNIT activists could and did marshal this legislation in the pursuit of their demands. This study stops in 1973, when GAPP members shifted from organizing the poor to ideological discussions of strategies for improving the plight of black people across the globe.[9]

Home to two of the premier historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) of the country as well as a sizable black population, Greensboro served as a meeting-place for racial justice activists and intellectuals across the country and thus as a key site for imagining new activist strategies.[10] Durham, another hub of activism, was a mere fifty miles down I-85. The two cities represented a critical "axis" of exchange at the creative forefront of political and intellectual activism critiquing the American racial state in the 1960s and 1970s.[11] GAPP and UNIT members operated within this milieu; they held community meetings in Greensboro that often included student activists in the Youth Organization for Black Unity (YOBU) from North Carolina Agricultural and State Technical University as well as Durham activists. In these meetings participants debated and discussed the best theoretical and tactical approaches for achieving racial and economic justice with in their communities and the country.

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[9] William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*: *Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Struggle for Black Freedom*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980) 161; Claude Barnes, "A Consideration of the Relationship Between Ideology and Activism in the Black Nationalist Movement: A Case Study of the Rise and Fall of the Greensboro Association of Poor People." (Masters thesis, Atlanta University, 1981).

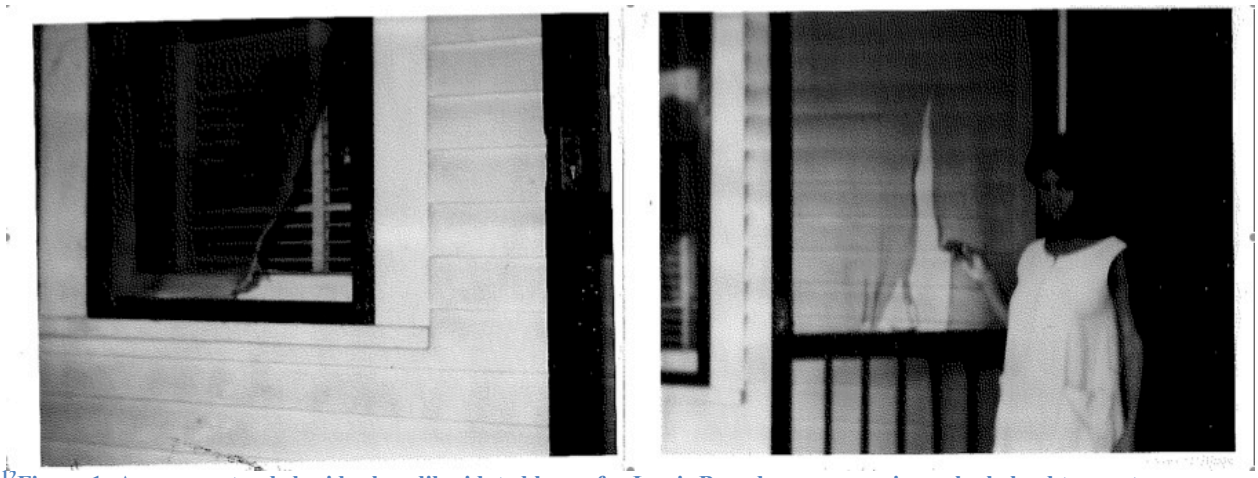
[10] Chafe's work *Civilities and Civil Rights* documents that the sit-in movement of 1960 took off after four students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University refused to leave until served at the lunch counter of the local Woolworth's on February 1, 1960. Christina Greene also documents the importance of Durham as an activist hub in, *Our Separate Ways: Women and the Black Freedom Movement in Durham, North Carolina*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005.

[11] Barnes, 8.

The organizing materials GAPP and UNIT organizers used to mobilize protest campaigns as well as the *Carolina Peacemaker* and the *African World* served as key vehicles through which the activists circulated their intellectual work. These texts serve as critical primary sources for analysis of UNIT and GAPP members' critiques of housing as a space of imprisonment. The *Peacemaker*, started in 1967, was the leading black newspaper of Greensboro and the Piedmont region. UNIT and GAPP organizers trusted and collaborated with journalists John Marshall Stevenson and Richard Vission as well as other members of its editorial board. Though sometimes the paper found itself at odds with the more radical vision that GAPP and UNIT members espoused, members saw it as an ally and were often given space to rebut statements or offer editorials in the paper. The *African World* was the intellectual mouthpiece of Student Organization for Black Unity (SOBU), a black activist, Black Power organization founded on the campus of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (NC A&T) in 1967 out of YOBU. They used this paper to formulate alternatively strident and nuanced critiques of racial justice in America and across the globe with other black power thinkers and frequently discussed housing, police brutality, and global colonialism. Many of SOBU's members were also active in UNIT and GAPP as organizers, leaders, and intellectuals who participated in the frequent meetings held in Greensboro and Durham to discuss methods for dismantling racial injustice in the city, state, country, and world. Thus, the *Peacemaker* and *African World* journalists' sources for their articles were the activists who's work lies at the heart of this piece. I will use these newspapers as mediated sources for the activists' work and ideas in addition to self-conducted oral histories and UNIT and GAPP organizational materials to examine the words and actions of low-income black female activists. In the highly politicized environment of Greensboro, low-

income black women fought the housing discrimination they faced both with their political activism and their intellectual analysis.

"Community Control:" Low-income Black Greensboro's Critique of Punitive Housing



[12]**Figure 1: A woman stands besides her dilapidated home for Lewis Brandon, an organizer who helped to create a photographic catalogue of the injustices of the housing system in Greensboro.**

"Community control," in the words of Greensboro activist Joyce Johnson, represented the critical goal of UNIT and GAPP activists of the late 1960s and early 1970s. In fact, these organizations were among the vanguard of Black Power organizers in asserting their right for community control alongside more well-known Black Power initiatives for community control in Northern cities including Chicago, Newark, and New York City. Various experiments with community control in places like Ocean Hill-Brownsville, New York City and Boston, Massachusetts, as well as the Kawaida Towers residential plan developed by Amiri Baraka and the Committee for Unified NewArk (CFUN) in Newark, New Jersey sparked heated debates, racial violence, protests, court cases, and widespread academic inquiries by social scientists and lawyers. Historian Komozi Woodard argues that Baraka and CFUN understood community control as a tool for addressing "housing, education, unemployment, and police brutality"—the same issues that GAPP and UNIT activists emphasized in their struggles for racial justice.

[12] Lewis Brandon personal photo, Greensboro, late 1960s-early 1970s.

Though some historians have argued for Black Power emerging from both the South and the North, historians have neglected to explicitly discuss the concept and implementation of community control in Southern cities such as Greensboro. However, GAPP's organizing materials as well as former GAPP activists' assertions in subsequent interviews demonstrates that they were in conversation with many northern activists and played an essential role in developing and using community control.[13]

Greensboro's low-income women and their supporters in GAPP and UNIT examined their inability exercise their citizenship within private and public low-income housing and developed an experience-based critique of their oppression. Accordingly, GAPP activists fought against federal, state, and local governments' investment in racist practices and policies. Urban renewal, for example, was "continuing a process in which land and institutions are ripped from *the control* of Black people…[who are] forced to crowd into teeming cities, ghettoes and projects." Nelson Johnson, president and key spokesperson of GAPP, "said [in reference to urban renewal that] the city is making progress in removing slum housing, but it is moving at a snail's pace in learning how to treat low income residents, especially those in public housing." He continued, "'People are required to give up a great deal of their personal freedom to live in these structures." Furthermore, as one YOBU article in the *African World* argued, "Blacks [are] caught in the double trap of being forced into poor housing and then of being punished for being

[13] Newspaper coverage, academic inquiry, and debate over the legitimacy of community control focused on the urban North during the late 1960s and early 1970s and examined various attempts by black communities to assert and implement community control in the areas of law enforcement, housing, and education. Komozi Woodard, *A Nation Within a Nation: Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) and Black Power Politics*, (Chapel Hill: the University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 291; Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power*, (Chapel Hill: the University of North Carolina Press, 1999) argues forcefully that Black Power emerged "from the same soil" as the Civil Rights Movement. Armando Navarro, *The Cristal Experiment: A Chicano Struggle for Community Control*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998) discusses community control in a south western context within the Chicano movement, but only briefly and only gestures at Black Power. Claude Barnes, "A Consideration of the Relationship Between Ideology and Activism in the Black Nationalist Movement: A Case Study of the Rise and Fall of the Greensboro Association of Poor People." (Masters thesis, Atlanta University, 1981); Interviews with Joyce Johnson, Claude Barnes, Lewis Brandon, February and March, 2013.

there."[14] These articles show that activists in Greensboro argued that low-income housing functioned as a space of punishment and entrapment.

For GAPP activists, then, anti-black housing discrimination in Greensboro and nationwide negated tenants' rights and freedoms as American citizens in ways somewhat analogous to that of prisoners, also overwhelmingly black. The "Tenants, like prisoners…are fighting the contradictions that are the realities in the so-called 'land of the free.'" Significantly, "The existence of slums and the oppressive relationship between landlord and tenants is the same throughout for Blacks in America."[15] Though they fought a local struggle, Greensboro's activists saw themselves within a community of Black Americans engaged in a national struggle for freedom rights and autonomous lives as citizens. UNIT and GAPP member's contention that "poor housing" functioned as a profound system of spatial imprisonment and physical and psychological punishment.

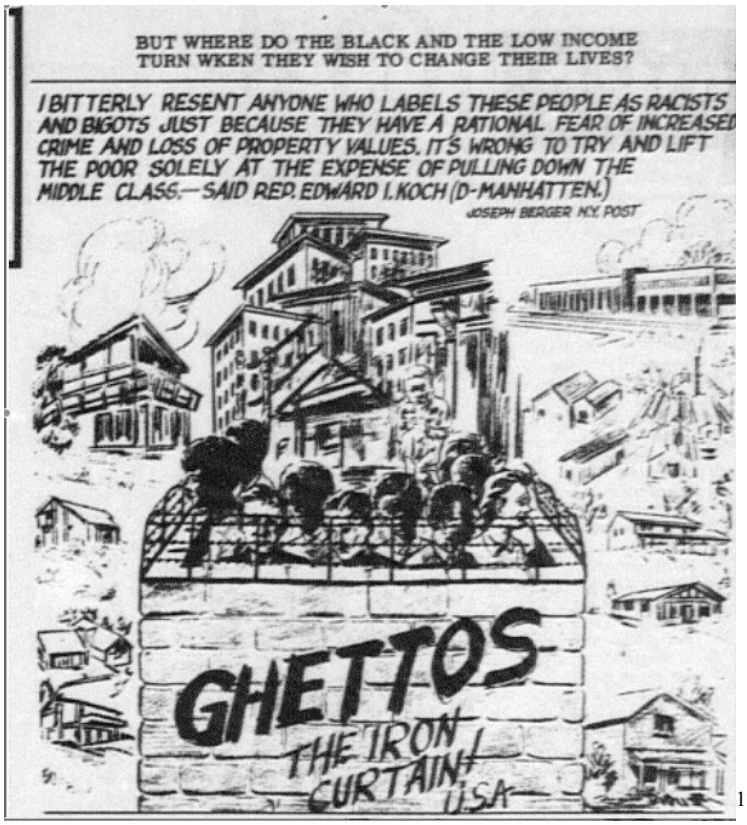
A cartoon featured in the *Carolina Peacemaker* demonstrates the extent to which UNIT and GAPP organizers understood low-income housing to function as a form of punitive imprisonment. The cartoon is framed by the question, "but where do the black and the low income turn when they wish to change their lives?" Below this question the cartoonist quotes Manhattan Democratic Congressman Edward Koch saying, "I bitterly resent anyone who labels these people as racists and bigots just because they have a rational fear of crime and loss of property values. It's wrong to try and lift the poor solely at the expense of pulling down the middle class." The primary image in the cartoon centers around a concrete structure that traps a host of closely-packed people. The entrapped people's heads are visible, and they look outward above iron bars, seeing suburban homes and a building that resembles a school. Behind them are

[14] "Slum Areas Disappear," *Greensboro Record* (Greensboro, NC) October 18, 1971.

[15] "Thousands March for Fair Housing Projects," *African World* (Greensboro, NC) October 28, 1972; "Slum Areas Disappear," *Greensboro Record* (Greensboro, NC) October 15, 1971.

densely packed city high-rises. “GHETTOS” is written on the front of the concrete structure in block letters atop “The Iron Curtain!” And “USA.” The “iron curtain” message written onto a prison-like structure signifies two primary meanings. The first and most obvious is the comparison of U.S. housing policies to the Communism of the Soviet Union, America’s greatest enemy and supposed diametric political opposite. This comparison cuts against an image of the U.S. as a democratic nation of equals. As in the Communist world, the American state does not allow all citizens to participate in government nor the opportunity for social mobility. Residents of American ghettos are not free. Trapped behind American iron curtains, they are unable to participate in a supposedly democratic meritocracy; they cannot access education, move around the nation freely, nor earn an income based on individual capacities. The cartoon thus critiques American capitalism as a system that engenders inherently unequal power relations and access to education and employment, particularly disadvantaging the poor and non-white. Thus, it undermines elected officials’ critiques of communism on its head.[16]

[16] Editorial Cartoon, *The Carolina Peacemaker* (Greensboro, NC), Dec 18, 1971.



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The iron bars of prison, similar to those depicted by the cartoon atop the concrete structure, present a second way to look at the "Iron Curtain" in relation to urban ghettos. The people in the image are imprisoned within the structure, a form of punishment that turns the urban centers of America into prison-like spaces. The trapped people can access neither education (the school) nor "the middle-class," as defined per Representative Koch. The image expresses the argument made by Greensboro's activists: low-income urban housing served as a form of prison.

This cartoon was hardly alone in drawing connections to systems of oppression across U.S. and the globe to make a point about local inequality. In 1971, the *African World* featured Keith Woodard's searing critique of urban renewal policies as a form of "negro removal," a process in which, "Black people are forced…into…ghettoes and projects which are looking more

[17] Editorial Cartoon, *The Carolina Peacemaker* (Greensboro, NC), Dec 18, 1971.

and more like reservations or concentration camps each day." The *African World* ran the article just one month after the American Indian Movement (AIM) seized the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C. for the U.S. government's "Trail of Broken Treaties." Significantly, the American Indian Movement's major goal was sovereignty—a legal form of community control. Cherokee activist Joseph Muskrat remarked in the *Chicago Defender* that despite the legal statutes that ensure American Indians' tribal sovereignty over their land and management, the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs' practices and mismanagement of funds limited this sovereignty. Muskrat said, "'The Bureau controls not only the social aspect of [the Indian's] life—for example, what should be taught in school and how they shall be taught—but they also control his physical environment.'" The activists therefore understood low-income black neighborhoods and homes, like homes on reservations, to function as spaces in which the state attempted to control non-white peoples both psychologically and physically.[18]

In addition to the AIM, prisoners' rights and prison riots figured largely in the national media during the period of UNIT and GAPP activism. In 1971, thirty-eight inmates of the Menard Penitentiary in Illinois released a protest paper in which they explicitly compared their experiences to concentration camps. They wrote, "since our doubled confinement in this replica of a 'concentration camp' we have been shot with pepper gas, kicked and beaten, …and [been] recipients of other 'cruel and unusual punishment,' mental as well as physical." The *African World* remarks and the cartoon provide evidence of GAPP and UNIT activists' sense of solidarity with other American freedom struggles as well as a sophisticated analysis of how systems of oppression function concurrently and intersect both nationally and globally.[19]

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[18] Keith Woodard, "How Social Agencies Ruin Black Homes," *African World*, (Greensboro, NC) Nov. 27, 1971; "Indian Unit Said To Waste Funds, *Chicago Defender* (Chicago, IL) April 5, 1969.

[19] "'Menard 38' say prison inhumane," *Chicago Defender*, (Chicago, IL) Dec. 15, 1973.

In addition to comparing low-income housing to international systems of oppression, GAPP and UNIT members related their housing critique to other unjust domestic policies and practices. Racially unjust, un-free neighborhoods and residences affected health, family dynamics, the ability to get a good education, the ability to accumulate wealth, and the ability to be financially independent. *Carolina Peacemaker* journalist Richard Vission, in an in-depth running series of exposés on housing, "The Disgrace of Housing of Greensboro," interviewed a number of low-income black Greensboroans and described the environments in which the state and landlords forced them to live. Thinking about housing's connection to education, he laments that such an environment oppresses black children as it "doesn't…inspire [a child] to grow up" or aspire to prestigious careers. Moreover, the network of human enforcers, according to Keith Woodard of *The African World*, represented a "parasitic class, which includes the landlord, the grocer, and the bill collectors who feed upon the deprivation of poor Black people. It is the social worker who is paid to enforce rules and regulations needed to maintain this bureaucracy." Landlords, in fact, were "tyrants" who attempted to profit from forcing black people into "oppressive living conditions." Unsurprisingly, black renters did not receive their landlord's (whether private or public) despotism passively. "Tenants have proved themselves unwilling to accept" such conditions and were becoming a "force with which the landlords and their lackies must deal."[20]

Part of the critique UNIT and GAPP organizers levied demonstrated the particular ramifications of a system of residential carcerality for women and mothers, showing how punitive systems operated through specifically gendered means. Significantly, in Greensboro, it was "often the case in limited-income families [that] the mother heads…the household."

[20] "Urban 'Renewal' Removes Black Homes," *African World* (Greensboro, NC), Sept. 16, 1972, emphasis mine; Woodard, "How Social Agencies Ruin Black Homes;" "Thousands March for Fair Housing Projects."

Accordingly, conversations about low-income housing necessarily implicated women. In 1971, the *African World* ran an article by Keith Woodard entitled "How Social Agencies Ruin Black Homes." The article featured an interview with black social worker Beth Duval. In the article, they discussed the hardships of black motherhood in public housing and the policies that criminalize black mothers and black mothering. Woodard argues that public housing requirements "are ultimately aimed at keeping mother and child separated." Duval affirmed that though one would expect the government to try to keep mother and child together, "the case worker" is supposed to "pressure the mother into surrendering all legal claim to the child." Thus, the state's policies often worked to undermine low-income black women's legal claim to their children. Such negation of women's claim to their children implies that the state found poor women criminal in their mothering simply because they were poor and received government aid. For Duval, public housing was critical component of a "social welfare system…not designed to benefit poverty victims."[21] This article argued that social welfare programs, public housing regulations in particular, were not, as some Democrats believed, a liberal gift bestowed on a downtrodden peoples. Instead, SOBU and GAPP members contended that social welfare policies including public housing implemented another means of punishment that specifically targeted black women.

Residential Carcerality on the Ground in Greensboro, North Carolina

"She would like to see *the prisons* she and her neighbors live in torn down; she would love to escape but cannot find another place she can afford." This quote, from Richard Vission's "Disgrace of Housing of Greensboro" series, shows tenants' sense of entrapment in terrible conditions or residential incarceration. Of the corporate slums, he wrote, "Pots and pans

[21] Woodard, "How Social Agencies Ruin Black Homes;" Jo Spivey, "Springview Courts: Bus, Bug Complaints Met By Action," *Greensboro Record* (Greensboro, NC), Nov. 4, 1971.

are…helpful…under leaks when it rains…. Tenants seldom even bother to ask the realtors for repairs, for they must sign a rental agreement which calls for them to pay for all repairs, and the buildings are so cheap that repairs are always needed." In the introductory article of the series, he speaks to a single mother of six, whose home he writes represents a "typical dwelling." She lived in a doorless three-room shack and had to buy her own appliances and furniture. To pay for rent and utilities (which did not include hot running water) in some of Greensboro's worst housing, she had to work two jobs. Vission wryly adds that while the government tells people to spend twenty to twenty-five percent of their income on housing, for most low-income black women in Greensboro that is not possible. Rent prices and rental agreements that placed the financial burden for appliances, utilities, furniture, and repairs on low-income black tenants often forced black women in Greensboro to spend a full forty percent of their income on housing alone. This was particularly problematic in winter months when cheaply made buildings allowed the cold to seep in as though unfiltered.[22] Thus, GAPP activists argued that the lack of available black housing and the exorbitant costs of rent trapped many low-income black women and their families in unsanitary and unsafe housing conditions and under the control of landlords often unwilling to make repairs.

The critique that informed GAPP and UNIT activists' call for "community control" demonstrates that in Greensboro, GAPP organizers theorized that low-income black male's experience of incarceration translated, albeit imperfectly, to low-income black women's residential areas—to residential carcerality. Clearly, residential carcerality for black women in urban ghetto environments did not fit the traditional, male-dominated carceral state in a one-to-one correspondence, nor did they argue that it did. The Greensboro Housing Authority maintains

[22] Vission, "The Disgrace of Housing in Greensboro," emphasis mine, Jan. 13, 1968; Vission, "The Disgrace of Housing in Greensboro," *Carolina Peacemaker* (Greensboro, NC), Jan 20, 1968.

that their handbook for public housing policies and practices of the time no longer and exist and have been thrown away. Without them, what remains clear is that black women felt that the policies and practices imprisoned them and their families in public housing. GAPP members contended, therefore, that in Greensboro, privately owned and publicly subsidized rental apartment units replaced cells and were policed with varying efficacy by rent collectors, landlords, housing authority officials, and social welfare workers. Realty companies, lenders, city councils, Federal Housing Authority policies, practices, and mortgage-approval provisions, policemen, sheriff departments, and courts representing all levels of government further contributed to these women's spatial entrapment. Moreover, as in the "traditional" carceral state, everyday citizens also played a role in policing black women's bodies. Vigilante justice groups like the Ku Klux Klan[23] and ad hoc perpetrators of racial violence fiercely protected color boundaries and the maintenance of a white supremacist state when individuals tried to move beyond proscribed racial residential areas.

More "civil" white Greensboroans also fought the mobility of low-income black women and attempted to forestall scattered-site public housing through appeals to the City Council and through legal channels. Proponents of such appeals understood that scattered-site housing would physically move low-income women into public housing adjacent to wealthy enclaves. Throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, residents of various wealthy neighborhoods including the Friendly and Lawndale zones, among others, appealed against the rezoning of their area for multi-family homes. Citing typical concerns that reeked of racial coding about "property values," "safety," schooling, and "overcrowding," citizens signed multiple petitions to prevent the

[23] In fact, North Carolina was the state in which the Klan was most active. The KKK continued to have a significant population and presence in Greensboro throughout the 1960s and 1970s, and orchestrated a protest against a peaceful Communist Workers Party march on November 3, 1979 in which the Klan murdered five marchers. David Cunningham, *Klansville, U.S.A.: The Rise and Fall of the Civil Rights Era Ku Klux Klan*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

developments. Particularly incensed residents unsatisfied with their petitions' failures followed up with court cases that, although ultimately unsuccessful, helped to delay the implementation and completion of scattered site public housing (along with funding problems) until the 1980s.[24] Significantly, the city held Council meetings open to the public about the construction of public housing in which black Greensboroans clearly stated the stakes that scattered-site multifamily homes represented. In one such meeting, prominent black Bishop and activist, Rev. Cecil Bishop, noted that moving into rezoned areas could "break…the cycle of poverty," and promote economic and perhaps political mobility for African Americans.[25]

The implementation of Federal Housing Authority policies both before and after the Fair Housing Act of 1968 orchestrated subtle and powerful ways of entrapping black families within slums and public housing projects. Historian Nathan Connolly shows that FHA redlining policies in place before the enactment of FHA 1968 rendered "Negro" rental units highly profitable for white landlords and rent collectors, who exploited housing shortages created by the state-enacted color line by charging exorbitant prices for poor-quality homes, or rent-gouging. "The owners of Negro rentals in…Miami," for example, who often acquired their property through FHA approved loans specifically for Negro rental units, "garnered an astounding *27 to 33 percent* return on their investment every year." Rent gouging was common in Greensboro, too, as UNIT and GAPP members knew all too well. According to *Peacemaker* journalist Richard Vission,

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[24] Barbara Ross, "Lawndale Zoning Plan Protested," *Greensboro Record*, (Greensboro, NC) January 28, 1972; "Rezoning Request Altered," *Greensboro Record*, (Greensboro, NC) October 12, 1972; "About Us: GHA Timeline 1941-," *Greensboro Housing Authority,* accessed April 19, 2014, http://www.gha-nc.org/about-us/our-history/timeline.aspx.

[25] "Identify Slum Housing Kingpins," *Greensboro Record*, (Greensboro, NC) November 10, 1971. Reverend Bishop served on Greensboro's Human Relations Commission and participated in struggles for racial justice, though sometimes took a slower approach than GAPP members would have wanted.

some Greensboro landlords made up to fifty percent of the cost of home construction each year in rent.[26]

Even after the April 1968 passage of the Fair Housing Act and Section 235, supposed to end redlining and provide low-income housing loans, respectively, private housing in the ghettos of Greensboro and elsewhere maintained their function as spaces of regulation and exploitation. Historian Andrew Highsmith demonstrates that Section 235, in effect from 1968-1973, worked in practice to promote federal backing for usurious loans to low-income people of color to buy houses. Lenders with a history of usury in dealings with low-income people of color received federal funds through Section 235 provisions in order to finance sub-prime mortgage financing for low-income black people previously shut out of home ownership through redlining. Frequently, these lenders provided raw deals for poor-quality houses only in all-black or racially transitioning neighborhoods, further entrapping new black homeowners within circumscribed spaces and tenuous financial straits. Though white Greensboroans effectively delayed the building of multifamily homes in their residential areas for over a decade, in 1969, Greensboro's "city council permit[ted] zoning changes to allow commercial and multifamily construction" in eighty percent-black, formerly white middle-class Woodmere Park. Before this decision was made, the area was one of relatively high homeownership in the black community.[27] Thus, white lawyers, residents, and realtors who used their financial, legal, and political capital to forestall the construction of low-income public housing in their areas contributed to continuing racial and classed residential segregation in the city.

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[26] Richard Vission, "The Disgrace of Housing in Greensboro," *Carolina Peacemaker* (Greensboro, NC) Jan. 13, 1968.

[27] Andrew Highsmith. "Prelude to the Subprime Crash: Beecher, Michigan, and the Origins of the Suburban Crisis." *Journal of Policy History* Vol 24 Issue 4 Oct. 2012 p 572-611; Chafe, 160.

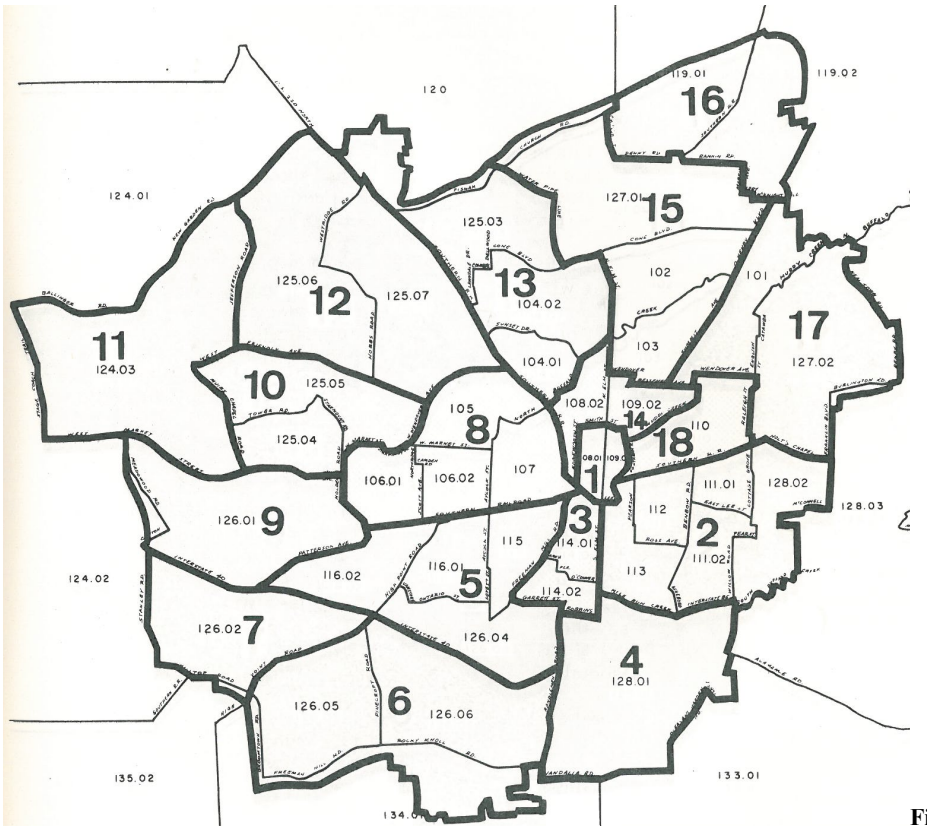


Figure 2: 1970 Census Tract analysis areas. "In 1960, 92.5 percent of the Negro population lived in six Areas: 1, 2, 3, 4, 17, and 18. Only 20.4 percent of the whites resided in these Areas in that year. By 1970, 93.4 percent of the Negroes and only 11.4 percent of the whites were in the six Areas." Moreover, during that time, the percentage of housing owners declined in areas 1, 2, 3, 4, 18, and 19 following the dislocations of urban removal or "negro removal."[28]

The lack of black housing in Greensboro and across the urban South (combined with the laxity of many FHA officials) enabled landlords not only rent gouge, but also to ignore repair requests. Moreover, in Greensboro as throughout the South, landlords often forced tenants into contracts that made tenants responsible for the cost of repairs and furniture. In his book on Greensboro, historian William Chafe argues: "The…problem [in housing] was the inability to move out.… Although blacks comprised 26 per cent of the [city's] population, they lived in an area covering only 14 per cent of the city's physical space." Thus, especially pre-1968, poor and working-class black women's available housing options were limited both by a lack of options for black housing, as well as by their inability to accumulate wealth and move to less dilapidated

[28] D. Gordon Bennett and Charles R. Hayes, Population and Housing Characteristics of Greensboro, 1960 to 1970," (Greensboro City Planning Department Report, Greensboro, 1970), 3, 12, 32.

due to the profiteering of their landlords. The city's housing policies and the redlining practices of its realtors, sanctioned by the federal government, served to round up black families and poor black women in particular.

During this time of widespread debate on urban renewal and integration in Greensboro and across the country, black residents of Greensboro continuously pushed the boundaries of segregation and called attention to the ways in which they faced the punitive turn functioned in their racially circumscribed neighborhoods. From January through March of 1970, GAPP organizers helped to orchestrate a rent strike by tenants of AAA Realty, owned and operated by "notorious slumlord" Kay Agapion. AAA tenants had been complaining of maintenance and upkeep issues including consistently late responses to maintenance claims, roaches, and a lack of storm sewers. After AAA Realty posted eviction notices on dozens of the tenants' doors for failures to pay rent, the AAA tenants organized and sought the advice of GAPP. They decided to make their claims in front of the city magistrate before officially calling a strike, and in the meantime began paying their rent into an escrow account (as opposed to paying the Agapions) that GAPP leaders and the tenants' attorney oversaw.

On January 14th the tenants met to present their cases as a group to Agapion and the magistrate. When the tenants showed up for their scheduled meeting, they were directed upstairs to the magistrate's office, a verifiable "cubby hole," nine by thirteen feet. There they found the agistrate, Agapion, and Human Relations Committee member Louis Brooks, their supposed representative, ready and waiting. The tenants had planned to present their cases as a united front with the help of GAPP leader Cecil Rouson to the magistrate. However, the magistrate denied their request and instead insisted he see them one at a time with Agapion and Brooks. Thus, Rouson shared the statistics tenants had gathered and then the tenants testified bravely, one-at-a-

time, to their horrific conditions in front of the magistrate, Brooks, and Agapion in the tiny office. The cramped nature of the office must have augmented the tenants' sense of the space as hostile and isolating. It was much harder to express the way in which AAA Realty's practices punished tenants as a community when the community's members denied the ability to raise their concerns as a community before the magistrate. Moreover, the tenants knew that Agapion had family members and friends within the courts and law enforcement, which likely heightened any anxiety. Perhaps unsurprisingly given the turn of events, the magistrate ruled that the tenants had to pay their rents. He told Agapion that she and the company *should* make the needed repairs.[29] In this "cubby hole" the community of tenants experienced the state's use of spatial politics in stark effect; bearing witness in momentary isolation the magistrate's office—a space of literal and metaphorical state entrapment—they had to individually assert their claim to rights as a community of tenants and with strident critiques of Agapion and dilapidated, dangerous low-income black slum housing in Greensboro in front of the local government.

The lack of support from the Magistrate did not deter the tenants, however, who began striking with the support from various black organizations in Greensboro. Significantly, then-president of GAPP Nelson Johnson remembers that black women tenants both led the strike and did the primary organizing work. By March, Agapion's intimidation tactics through "with selected evictions, court injunctions and padlocking," were successful in reducing the number of strikers from 250 to 120. At this point, frustrated by their ineffectiveness and the continuing maltreatment by the Agapions, the AAA tenants and GAPP organizers changed their tactics and began to damage properties of evicted residents after they moved out. According to activist Claude Barnes, "In less than one week over fifty AAA apartments were methodically destroyed

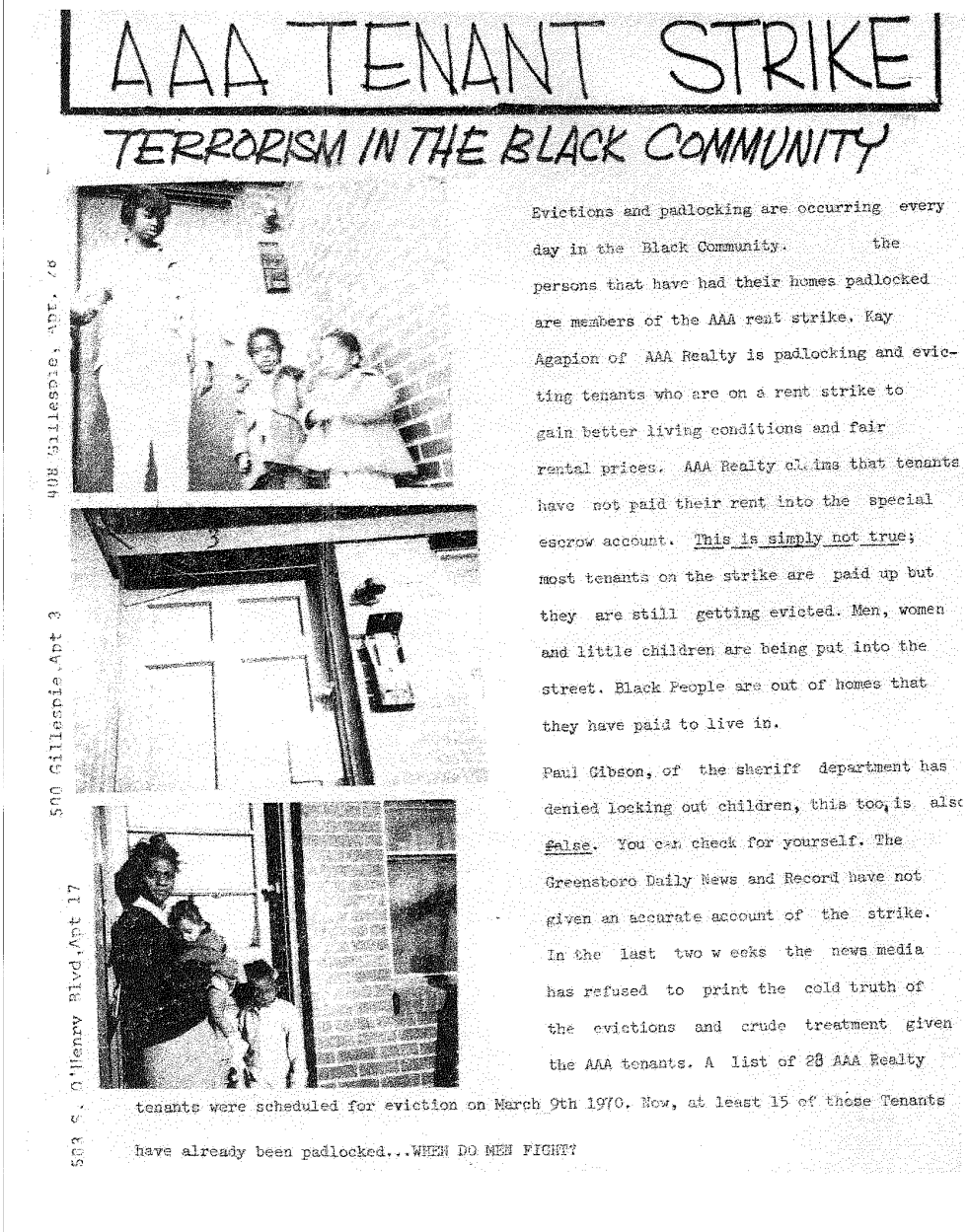
[29] "Rent Strike Threatened: GAPP Under Fire By Human Relations Commission," *Carolina Peacemaker* January 10, 1970; Ralph Johns, "The Side the Publice Never Reads: Poor People Getting Runaround," January 17, 1970; Interview with Claude Barnes and Lewis Brandon, February 15, 2013.

and over $90,000 of property damage was recorded. The strike gained momentum and additional support from a few influential sectors of the white community." Following this change in strategy, AAA settled out of court with the tenants, whose protests were later backed by a judicial decision requiring landlords maintain their property according to specific building codes. After months of persistent organizing and critical support by GAPP members, the strikers effectively won their strike and a number of key demands, including repairs to individual homes as well as the neighborhood, and thus won a measure of community control.

Throughout the strike, sheriffs and the courts constituted a direct target of the AAA strikers and their allies. Their fliers showed black women and children in the doors of dilapidated houses. This was fitting, as the majority of strikers and organizers, as well as residents, were low-income black women. The fliers and picketing signs used in four peaceful marches of protest read: "THE COURT AND THE SHERIFF HAVE HELPED AAA REALTY PUT OUR MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN OUT OF THEIR HOMES," "TERRORISM IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY," and "THE COURT FAILS TO PROTECT THE STRIKING TENANTS." Sheriffs tasked with the role of serving eviction notices literally enforced the Agapions' ability to get rid of tenants' who demanded respect and whose behavior threatened Agapion control of their properties. In fact, one article discussing the strike in *The African World* featured a picture of a sheriff putting an eviction notice on the door of a tenant. Particularly because the Agapions' had friends in law enforcement, tenants could count on little legal support—which they discovered after weeks of trying to use legal channels to address their mistreatment went by unsuccessfully. During the strike, these sheriffs helped the Agapions "terrorize" the black residents, padlocking them out of their apartments before their rent was due or after it was put in the escrow account. As this flier demonstrates, Greensboro's low-income

black activists knew that landlords' ability to circumscribe their behavior and mobility depended on the support landlords received from law enforcement. Again, such immobilization blurred the boundaries for GAPP activists between public and private in residential carcerality. Mrs. Joyce Johnson remembered that in areas of low-income housing, the police would "patrol that area under the banner of 'keeping the peace' but there was a lot of arrests of folks for being intoxicated or whatever, and it was just buried."[30] Furthermore, as the incident with Mr. Horton indicates, landlord violence sometimes allowed them to restrict the actions of their tenants. Thus, the response of state actors and the private landlords at the center of the strike demonstrates why GAPP members saw a blurry line between public and private in residential carcerality enforcement and maintenance.

[30] Richard Vission, "Disgrace of Housing in Greensboro," *Carolina Peacemaker* (Greensboro, NC) Jan 13, 1968.Interview with Joyce Johnson, March 2013.



AAA TENANT STRIKE

TERRORISM IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

408 Gillespie, Apt. 78

500 Gillespie,Apt 3

503 S. O'Henry Blvd,Apt 17

Evictions and padlocking are occurring every day in the Black Community. the persons that have had their homes padlocked are members of the AAA rent strike. Kay Agapion of AAA Realty is padlocking and evicting tenants who are on a rent strike to gain better living conditions and fair rental prices. AAA Realty claims that tenants have not paid their rent into the special escrow account. This is simply not true; most tenants on the strike are paid up but they are still getting evicted. Men, women and little children are being put into the street. Black People are out of homes that they have paid to live in.

Paul Gibson, of the sheriff department has denied locking out children, this too, is also false. You can check for yourself. The Greensboro Daily News and Record have not given an accurate account of the strike. In the last two weeks the news media has refused to print the cold truth of the evictions and crude treatment given the AAA tenants. A list of 28 AAA Realty tenants were scheduled for eviction on March 9th 1970. Now, at least 15 of those Tenants have already been padlocked...WHEN DO MEN FIGHT?

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Figure 3: In 1970, GAPP and the AAA Tenant strikers used this flier to build support throughout Greensboro in their fight for community control against AAA Realty. The bottom of the flier appeals to men to fight; Nelson Johnson remembers standing alongside the women at protests and meetings and feeling as though it was the young men's responsibility to demonstrate their solidarity and support for their black sisters, mothers, and friends. The fliers highlight black women's plight in particular, showing recognition of the gendered nature of both the effects of housing injustice and the eliciting of sympathy.

Public housing units for African Americans kept poor and working-class black women within spaces that were more easily regulated than in private housing. A 1971 report on the

[31] GAPP document from office collection.

status and effectiveness of public housing management in Greensboro by outside consultants noted that the lack of centralization in GHA policies meant that individual project managers had sole responsibility for "the taking of applications, tenant selection, rent collections and accounting, purchasing, maintenance, personnel recruitment, selection, admin, and evictions." Moreover, the rules of public housing projects went hand-in-hand with "sliding rent scales," that made "it…difficult to escape," for, "If a man gets a job which pays $50 a month more than his previous one, he can be sure the city will raise his rent $50, thus it is impossible to get ahead." Mrs. Johnson recalled, "It was transitional for whites but it was a staying place for black Americans." Part of the problem black residents faced in leaving was that GHA employees were responsible for determining who would be well-qualified for social mobility out of the projects and into home-ownership. Yet, as of the 1971 report, "behavior[al] objectives related to the goals [of home ownership] with sufficient specificity have not been developed." The lack of standardized goals could work against which residents were seen as suitable and ready for upward mobility and likely added to black resident's experience of public housing as "a staying place."[32] Given these realities, a critical aspect of the GAPP and UNIT members' critique of housing was that black tenants of public housing could not move. GAPP activists' arguments hinged on the fact that low-income black housing—whether public or "private"—in Greensboro precluded decent housing and included intense regulation of one's actions and the likelihood of never being able to save enough to move away from the rules of white authorities. In other words, they felt that the state trapped them in a system of residential carcerality through the practices, rules, regulations and administrative enforcers of landlords and the Greensboro Housing Authority.

[32] Vission, "The Disgrace of Housing in Greensboro," Jan. 13, 1968. Joyce Johnson (activist) in discussion with author, March 2013.

Significantly, the attempts of public and private low-income black housing administrators to control tenants in Greensboro demonstrate the gendered effect of public housing practices. Mrs. Johnson explained, "when public housing came along, partly because the government supported better structures many times and the cost was less" people were excited about it. "But," she noted, "then the other thing that happened, the community fabric, the independence started going down because you were in government housing." Whereas in private housing women could more easily assist family members and others in the community who were temporarily without housing, in public housing the fear of eviction often prohibited such acts. Eligibility qualifications also discouraged women with partners from marrying and living in a two-income housing. Johnson noted, "you had to register people in the house not on your 'list' almost like they were illegal aliens. Because of the history of slavery and our families being just disrupted, many of our families on the books are single-parent homes. But," Mrs. Johnson continued, "people had children some kinda way, some of the fathers wanted to be fathers but some the of the initial rules in the housing projects–married families had less possibilities of getting into housing projects," which she notes added to the familial disruption of low-income black families. The experiences of Mrs. Hall having to fight against pressure to undergo sterilization and the social worker Ms. Duval demonstrate some of the specific tactics the GHA employed in targeting female residents of low-income public housing in Greensboro.[33] Though more fluid than the control within prison systems, GAPP and UNIT activists argued that the policies and lack of privacy amounted to a system of social control within residential carcerality that regulated the behavior of all of its residents and specifically targeted black women through bodily and familial regulations.

[33] "Unit Investigates Sterilization Complaint," *Carolina Peacemaker* (Greensboro, NC) April 20th, 1968; Joyce Johnson (activist) in discussion with the author, March 2013.

Public housing project administrators had a more direct route to regulation of their tenants' behaviors than their private counterparts through the qualifications for tenancy and the "ever-growing" list of rules regarding income, family size, marital status, employment status, general behavior, legal record, and more to which Mrs. Johnson referred. Thus, *Peacemaker* journalist Vission learned from "Tenant after tenant…that [fear] was the key to understanding the projects. Fear instead of freedom." Two primary themes emerge as sources of fear for residents: a lack of privacy, and seemingly unending list of rules and regulations—both of which speak to a lack of control of their homeplaces.[34] Both underscore the lack of community and individual control as the overriding problem and the basis of tenants' critique of residential carcerality. "'No one feels at home in the projects,'" because "the manager has the right to inspect any apartment any time and when even the exterminators have pass keys and come into a home when the occupants are out – or when they are in and indisposed."[35] In ways reminiscent of traditional punitive institutions, "tenants of the projects have rules for everything except breathing [and] few will risk breathing for fear the city might decide to restrict this." The long list of rules and the ability of the housing authority to make new ones at a moment's notice made public housing a system that "discourages individual decisions… for fear they might be breaking some rule."[36]

Again, within the tenants' notion of residential carcerality, punishment for breaking rules could be swift and have lasting ramifications. Evictions for those on welfare often meant having to find a place to stay with family and friends, living a scattered existence fighting homelessness.

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[34] bell hooks' well-accepted construct of the homeplace as a space in which black women could create an environment with "a radical political dimension," along with the existing corpus of works related to black women's residential activism imply that housing policies self-consciously targeted black women. bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. (Cambridge: South End Press, 1990), 42.

[35] Richard Vission, "Disgrace of Housing in Greensboro," *Carolina Peacemaker* (Greensboro, NC) Feb. 17, 1968.

[36] Vission, "Disgrace of Housing in Greensboro," Jan 13, 1968.

And yet, to abide by those rules was to cede one's freedom and status as a full-fledged adult citizen. Vission's articles showed that housing authority administrators violated tenant privacy and ownership over their home spaces fairly often through unannounced visits to tenants' apartments. This kept tenants on their toes and more likely to adhere to at least the rules they knew of and could remember. Working-class and poor black families who relied on public housing were therefore literally economically and spatially trapped within spatial boundaries in which their daily actions faced constant regulation. Therefore, community control was perhaps least accessible in public housing projects. The lack of privacy and list of rules and regulations operated inextricably to police the behavior of the low-income black people it targeted; housing authority officials' and maintenance men's ability to appear at-will in tenants' apartments ensured that the residents, with little options outside of the federally funded housing, would often behave according to the wishes of the housing authorities.

In addition to delineating differences in low-income public and private housing for black Greensboroans, Vission noted the injustices tied to all low-income black housing beyond the structural space of the house. UNIT and GAPP activists therefore understood the "parasitic class" of enforcers as both human and structural within low-income housing of Greensboro. In his articles, Vission drew from the tenants' understanding of how housing policies operated in tandem with other means of impoverishment. "The people exploited [were] exploited in countless ways" in all black ghettos of the city, surrounding both public and private slums, he remarked. Grocery store prices ran higher in ghettos, and "the owner of…[the Washington St. community] store actually controls many people's lives' [sic] he collects rents, cashes checks …and extends credit until much of the money in the community goes directly into his pocket and then out of the neighborhood." Moreover, sewage running in the street after rainstorms starkly

displayed the poor drainage of these neighborhoods, sometimes referred to tongue-in-cheek as "balky bottoms" for that very reason. Worst of all, Vission writes, "People are treated like rats."[37] By creating settings that greatly limited one's capacity for learning, maturing, and accumulating wealth, the state ensured that low-income black women and their families remained trapped in the urban ghettos across generations, constantly facing the exploitative and dangerous settings of their homes. Such environments therefore constituted a critical component of GAPP members' critique of the state's complex, multidimensional punishment of residents of the urban ghettos of Greensboro.

For GAPP and UNIT organizers, shortened life-spans arguably represented the most egregious form of punishment of life within residential carcerality. Vission writes, he "would be willing to bet that the life expectancy of a resident of Eastside or Washington St. is at least ten years less than that of the landlord who lives on the other side of town and forces the poor to suffer… That is murder: landlords are helping to kill people…and the city is guilty of complicity because its laws protect the rich landlord, not the poor tenant." This shortened life-span he based not only on an inability to pay for healthcare but also on the hazardous environment of the neighborhoods.[38] The state's entrapment of low-income black women and their families within ghettoized spaces thus constituted the most pernicious form of the "greater impact" of "invisible punishment" not only of black women but of their children and neighbors, reproducing systems of carcerality both residential and traditional.[39]

Critically, GAPP activists situated the punishment of the state vis-à-vis housing (as in the case with traditional carcerality) alongside other forms of racial discrimination. UNIT and GAPP

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[37] Richard Vission, "The Disgrace of Housing in Greensboro," *Carolina Peacemaker*, (Greensboro, NC) Jan. 27, 1968.

[38] Richard Vission, "The Disgrace of Housing in Greensboro" *Carolina Peacemaker* (Greensboro, NC) March 2, 1968.

[39] Alexander, 184-186.

members' housing activism occurred in conjunction with their efforts for better wages for cafeteria workers and Kohn's Mill workers (most of whom were black) as well as in efforts to address educational disparities and discrimination. Activists in Durham founded Malcolm X Liberation University (MXLU) in 1969 to provide an education that emphasized black studies and black empowerment as well as critical thinking skills to black Americans of all ages. In 1970 it moved to Greensboro to be run by GAPP and SOBU leaders, in large part because of the critical activist, intellectual base of the city within those two organizations. There it reached the lives of many black Greensboro youth and organized educational community events including the 1972 African Liberation Day celebrations that drew thousands to Washington, D.C. in order to learn about and show support for Black Power and Pan-Africanism. GAPP's programs also included an educational day care. GAPP members' work with MXLU and African Liberation Day demonstrates their critique of community control as part of a global vision for equality, also evident in the "Iron Curtain" cartoon. As Joyce Johnson remarked, "the housing projects were similar to Bantustans in South Africa in terms of rules and regulations. On top of trying to help people, we tried to help them make the connections" to a global freedom struggle. Thus, Vission's words and GAPP activists' theoretical and organizational efforts show that UNIT and GAPP members contextualized their critiques of housing and efforts for community control with an eye to national and global forms of carcerality.[40]

Conclusion

The theoretical critique and activist organizing of UNIT and GAPP participants in their struggles for community control call for a re-reading of the punitive turn to incorporate low-income black women. Their words and actions suggest that the punitive turn functioned beyond the traditional forms of imprisonment within the criminal justice system, as low-income black

[40] Joyce Johnson (activist) in discussion with the author, March 2013.

women of Greensboro faced residential carcerality within the urban ghettos of their homes. According to GAPP activists, residential carcerality worked to immobilize women within the spatial confines of the ghettos through: discriminatory FHA policies enabling white landlords' and city housing authorities to rent gouge and thus limit black women's ability to accumulate wealth; circumscribed housing options for black women through segregation both *de jure* and *de facto*, and securing such boundaries through enforcement by lenders, renters, police and sheriff departments, and virulently racist and "civil" white Greensboroans; and through discrimination in areas such as education and employment.

GAPP and UNIT members argued that the state attempted to control their mobility and behavior through the regulations and qualifications for public housing projects, determining who had access to marginally better housing on the front end of tenancy applications as well as throughout one's tenancy. However the entrapment Greensboro's low-income black populations felt in private housing enabled landlords and rent collectors to enforce certain behavior by unannounced visits of maintenance men, and sometimes, even "gun-totin'" landlords. It is no coincidence that some of the strongest critiques residential carcerality developed by GAPP and UNIT members focused on such attempted assertions of control given their investment in a notion and a lived reality of community control in Greensboro and beyond.

Based on the arguments of low-income black women activists and their allies in Greensboro, residential carcerality seems to have represented the primary means by which arms of the state at various levels exploited and excluded low-income African American women in Greensboro from mainstream society. Yet significantly, Greensboro's poor black women also faced more traditionally envisioned state punishment at the hands of police and the criminal justice system. With the exception of one prison, 63 percent of female prisoners were black,

though black people in general represented only 23 percent of the population.[41] Moreover, newspaper articles and events within the city demonstrate that the police targeted black women in specific ways, and GAPP and UNIT activism certainly addressed issues of policing and police brutality as it applied specifically to women in the community. Just as their UNIT and GAPP members' activism and critiques of housing call on historians and those seeking to understand the carceral state in America to pay attention to low-income black southern women, so too, do their experiences within the criminal justice system. Though residential carcerality may have impeded their ability to achieve community control or community empowerment in contemporary times, let us restore a measure of their control by listening to their thoughts and gleaning their insights on how they wanted to empower their (and our) communities.

[41] "Findings from 1972 *The Greensboro Report* by The N.C. Criminal Justice Task Force From Hearing Conducted in Greensboro, North Carolina, August 12, 1972," (GAPP Organizing Document, Greensboro, 1972).