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Airing the Ungeographic: *Anacostia Unmapped* and Black Geographies of Gentrification in Washington, DC

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Abstract

In 2019, Washington, DC was the fastest gentrifying city in the United States (Helmuth 2019). Once known as a Chocolate City, tens of thousands of Black residents have been displaced in recent decades. Anacostia, a predominantly Black neighborhood east of the Anacostia River in Washington, DC, is one of the areas intensely impacted by gentrification. This article examines the use of storytelling as resistance to gentrification in Anacostia, through the radio show *Anacostia Unmapped*. Through oral history analysis, I demonstrate how Black residents of Anacostia use storytelling to create alternative maps of their communities, countering dominant maps that erase them. I argue through radio, residents share and create Black geographic knowledge, despite narratives of gentrified modernity assigning them as ungeographic. I analyze three vignettes from *Anacostia Unmapped* to demonstrate how residents unmap cartographic exclusion and housing displacement, and remap geographies of care and intimacy. My analysis of *Anacostia Unmapped* shows how the medium of radio produces space at varying scales, forefronting residents' sense of place outside of the visual and cultural aesthetics of modernity, and narrating Black relationships to the city at intimate scales. I extend scholarship on Black soundscapes and gentrification, arguing the stories aired on *Anacostia Unmapped* are sonic maps of retention, resistance, and care. My work also brings an examination of racial power to Euro-centric scholarship on radio geographies.

Keywords

Washington, DC, black geographies, oral history, gentrification, Anacostia, public radio

Introduction: East of the River Recordings and Remappings

My man DC just turned 21
Nickname was Blackjack
Finally got his GED
In high school
Wasn't fond of class or backpack
Skin was darker than burnt toast
IQ smarter than most
He lived East of the River
Hangs out with his friends
VA and PG
–John A. Johnson "My Man DC"

Playwright John A. Johnson transports us to his home of Anacostia through his poem "My Man DC." Featured on the radio anthology, *Anacostia Unmapped,* Johnson presents an alternative map of Washington, DC: locating *his* city in Black skin, east of the Anacostia River, and kin to the predominantly Black Prince George's County, Maryland. Here in the first half of his poem, he documents the features of his home before the rapid changes caused by gentrification. Dating back to the late 1990s and early 2000s, gentrification has displaced over 20,000 Black people in Washington, DC, with residents in Southeast DC neighborhoods, like Anacostia, being intensely impacted (Richardson, Mitchell and Franco 2019). Johnson's poetic personification of DC as a young Black man joins several broadcasted stories of Black placemaking in Anacostia, Washington, DC. The independent radio project of *Anacostia Unmapped* is an audio archive of Black experience, including interviews with elders and young adults telling joyful and troubling stories of their lives in the city, emphasizing the intense displacement residents face.

Between 2000 and 2013 Washington, DC was the most intensely gentrified city in the United States, and by 2019, Washington, DC had the most rapid rate of gentrification in the country (Helmuth 2019). This has resulted in a decreased Black population and an increased white population, as Black residents are displaced (Morello and Keating 2011). Homeowners and public housing tenants alike face looming expulsions from their homes due to influxes of higher income residents increasing the prices in their communities. Anacostia is one of the neighborhoods most affected by gentrification in the city. Reese describes the majority Black neighborhood as representing "city and national policies that upend Black communities and of increasing gentrification" (Reese 2019, 52). Gentrification, often framed as urban renewal, is a racialized process that deepens racial divisions and displaces Black people to the peripheries of the revitalized urban space (Perry 2004). Summers attests to the racialized displacement of renewal in Washington, DC, noting Black people have been displaced by mainly wealthy, white newcomers (Summers 2021). She argues "the spaces are 'redeveloped' according to the aesthetic demands of a new population, and rendered habitable (again)" (Summers 2021; 43). In Anacostia, community members note seeing more young white couples walking their dogs, luxury condominiums, and artisan coffee shops in their neighborhoods, despite its longstanding reputation in whiter areas of DC as being unsafe (Williams 2001). Residents, like John A. Johnson, chronicle this transformation in their communities through the radio show *Anacostia Unmapped*.

In this article I examine the relationship between radio storytelling and Black residents' resistance to gentrification. I present the audio program of *Anacostia Unmapped* to argue that radio, and Black soundscapes, can be used as an alternative map for Black places, remapping the racial-sexual hierarchies that exclude and displace them. *Anacostia Unmapped* airs stories from residents that counter dominant narratives that leave them off maps, demolish their homes, and neglect their histories. In the section that follows, I outline my theoretical grounding in McKittrick's (2006) conceptualization of the ungeographic, and draw on this framework to discuss the Black geographies of gentrification and sound. Next, I introduce the neighborhood of Anacostia in Washington, DC and the radio program *Anacostia Unmapped*. I describe the production of the show and my methods of analysis. I then analyze three vignettes from *Anacostia Unmapped* that broadcast cartographic erasure, housing displacement, and community land care. I conclude with a reflection on Black sound as resistance to gentrification and propose deeper engagement between radio geographies and Black geographies.

Remapping Radio: Black Geographic Knowledge from the Ungeographic

Using oral history and autoethnography, *Anacostia Unmapped* traces an alternative map of Washington, DC from the point of view of the ungeographic. McKittrick (2011) describes alternative maps as creative survival tools of Black geographies, including fugitive and maroon maps, food and nourishment maps, and family maps and literacy maps. Black geographic maps go beyond two-dimensional cartography and are knowledge guides of Black survival. They oppose Euro-centric dominant maps which displace and conceal Black social lives, assigning Black people as ungeographic and philosophically underdeveloped (McKittrick 2006, 2021).

Using McKittrick's (2006) conceptualization of the "ungeographic," I locate the program *Anacostia Unmapped* as within the ungeographic: a subaltern remapping of Black social lives in Washington, DC. In describing the ungeographic, McKittrick (2006) contrasts the seeable with the unseeable, analogizing the former with the geographic, and the latter with the ungeographic. I interpret the ungeographic as both a descriptor and a site: Western science describes Black social lives as ungeographic and underdeveloped, and the ungeographic is an often-displaced locale of marginalized knowledges. In contrast, "geographies of domination" are the seeable installations of racial-sexual power. European masculine colonial conquest represents these geographies which objectify and erase "subaltern subjectivities, stories, and lands" (McKittrick 2006, x). Geographies of domination are transatlantic slavery, while the ungeographic is the episteme of the captive bodies. Subaltern knowledges and imaginations within the ungeographic are maps to more just and free geographies. On the liberatory potential of marginalized racial-sexual knowledges, particularly those of Black women, McKittrick (2006, xix) writes:

> I suggest, then, that one way to contend with unjust and uneven human/inhuman categorizations is to think about, and perhaps employ, the alternative geographic formulations that subaltern communities advance. Geographies of domination, from transatlantic slavery and beyond, hold in them both the marking and the contestation of old and new social hierarchies. If these hierarchies are spatial expressions of racism and sexism, the interrogations and

> Remappings provided by Black diaspora populations can incite new, or different, and perhaps more just, geographic stories.

Through learning from people and places that racial-sexual hierarchy determines to be ungeographic, we begin to unmap matrices of power and remap the legibility and value of Black social lives.

Capitalist gentrification processes displace Black social lives and Black cultural landscapes, replacing them with modern aesthetics. Wynter associates the concept of modernity with a colonial, white, wealthy expression of Man who subjugates his counterpart: Black humanity (Wynter 2003). Aesthetically, modernity signals to Western imperialism and sanitizes histories of violence against marginalized cultures, often erasing their presences (Perry 2004, Taylor 2009). This rewriting of place treats Black landscapes as places of nowhere: simply raw materials for development, while white residents and places make the space useful (Moulton and Salo 2022). Modernizing space as part of a larger capitalist and imperial project is often justification for gentrification. Capitalist growth drives displacement by disposing Black people and their cities as wastable for financial profit (McKittrick 2011, Gilmore 2007, Perry 2013). As Black neighborhoods gentrify, Black culture is siphoned towards marketable sites and the creators of Black history are displaced (Summers 2021). Bledsoe and Wright describe the relationship between displacement, anti-Blackness, and capitalism, arguing that racial capitalism sees locations tied to Blackness as without legitimate use and occupation (Bledsoe and Wright 2019). They write (Bledsoe and Wright 2019, 16):

> in the midst of efforts to accumulate surplus value through real estate development via the gentrification of Black communities, municipalities attempt to appease Black communities and capitalize on Black cultural/spatial expressions by hemming Black histories into museums as they eradicate the makers of Black history.

Bledsoe and Wright note the cultural displacement that occurs with gentrification. They address the municipalization of Black history and culture against a backdrop of intense gentrification in Washington DC, mentioning the National Museum of African American History and culture built in 2016. In 2020, the DC Department of Public works created the Black Lives Matter Plaza in response to the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, an installation of pro-Black culture which activists critiqued as performative amid racial violence (Ieronimo 2020). Despite city efforts to commemorate Black culture, Black residents still suffer, with longtime residents being priced out of their homes (Grieser 2022, Avni and Fischler 2020).

While the DC government memorializes Black culture, Black soundscapes are disenfranchised. Gentrification processes criminalize Black spaces and sounds to transform the neighborhood culture away from Blackness (Ramírez 2020). Despite gentrification processes being noisy—sounds of construction, increased traffic and loud restaurants—Black sonic cultural expression, like music and dancing, are criminalized and labeled disturbing (Summers 2021, Werth 2019). Werth describes the suppression of Black sound in gentrifying Oakland through city policies driven by moral panic. Rap, drumming, and car parties—modes of Black public recreation—were labeled as nuisances and associated with violent drug economies to enforce a raced and classed order of the city, ultimately limiting what Werth calls the "spirited resistance" of Black sound. (Werth 2019). Summers writes on the

suppression of go-go music in DC, with high income residents calling the police on locals playing the home-grown DC sound on speakers. Locals responded to the censorship with the activist movement #DontMuteDC (Summers 2019). The retention of Black soundscapes in gentrifying neighborhoods is a practice of cultural resistance. Scholars in Black geographies have richly theorized Black soundscapes as conveyers of Black knowledge. Woods describes the blues as an organized Black indigenous intellectual system representing Black working-class reality (Woods 2005). Graham-Jackson and Moeller further assert that Black people produce various scales through auditory placemaking, including music and sound (Graham-Jackson and Moeller 2022). In Washington, DC, Black people use their sound aesthetics to confront capitalist dispossession and reclaim their belonging to their city (Summers 2021). Summers puts forth a lens of "reclamation aesthetics," which she describes as "an analytic through which we can understand Black political and placemaking practices as a response to contemporary socio-spatial inequities." (Summers, 2021, 33). She analyzes go-go music in DC as a subjugated knowledge of alternative maps and stories. Summers' work focuses on the ungeographic of DC; she demonstrates how Black sound is a map to liberatory possibility and emplaces cultural legacies that gentrification seek to overwrite.

Radio programming can create soundscapes of Black resistance. Radio is spatial, from the soundwaves it transmits through airfields, to the scales of community it represents and connects (Kincaid 2022, Weir 2014). Radio can be used to strengthen communities through identity formation and collective struggle (Moylan 2022, Fanon 1967, Watson 2023). Within Geography, the medium of radio has often been studied through a lens of European geopolitics (Kincaid 2022, Weir 2014, Watson 2023). My research sees radio as a medium for Black sound reclamation aesthetics. My work shows how radio broadcasts Black sound aesthetics as alternative maps from the ungeographic. Radio can air remappings of resistance and reclamation of visibility when gentrification processes displace Black culture. When we learn from the ungeographic, we employ a liberatory imagination to our fields, like learning how remapping radio can lead us to more just geographies.

In the following section, I introduce the neighborhood of Anacostia in Washington, DC, and the radio show *Anacostia Unmapped*. I explain my research methods and describe the production of the show, including its funding sources, producers, and episode structure. Through detailing the production of *Anacostia Unmapped* I prepare for my analysis of storytelling from the ungeographic.

Launching *Anacostia Unmapped:* The Beginnings and Formations of the Show

Anacostia is in the Southeast quadrant of Washington, DC, east of the Anacostia River that crosscuts the city. The Anacostia waterway is the eastern branch of its better-known counterpart, the Potomac River, and residents frequently refer to it as the "Forgotten River" (Buerger 2012, Sabol 2017, Duncan 2018). The DC neighborhoods east of the Anacostia River are continually overlooked and left off maps: Anacostia was previously referred to as the "Remainder of the District" (Johnstone 2018, Williams 2001). The community project of *Anacostia Unmapped* combats this erasure; residents use storytelling to create alternative maps of their neighborhood, countering dominant maps of exclusion. When analyzing the radio show I looked for the ungeographic: social lives and knowledges suppressed by racial-sexual hierarchy. While *Anacostia Unmapped* centers Black voices, I listened for experiences of multiply-marginalized residents, particularly Black women and elders. I selected episodes

for analysis that centered on the cultural and housing impacts of gentrification, including perspectives on public housing, home ownership and historic land stewardship. I draw on archival material from the Anacostia Community Museum and the Library of Congress, to contextualize the embodied stories from *Anacostia Unmapped* with their historic moments. Anacostia residents use radio to broadcast their cultural knowledge from the ungeographic, and the sounds they create are maps of retention, resistance, and care.

Anacostia Unmapped launched in 2016, airing stories on American University's WAMU 88.5 to the Washington, DC and Baltimore metropolitan areas. WAMU introduces the project as "about land: Who has it, who wants it, and what happens when it starts to change hands." They raise the question of "who gets to tell stories about this?" and answer with "people who live and work in the Southeast D.C. neighborhood" (Simpson 2016). The radio station prioritizes a commitment to the local community, as the leading public radio station in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area. WAMU states their vision is to connect Washingtonians to the world and each other by being the most trusted local radio station, and diversity, equity, and inclusion are among their core principles. The stories of *Anacostia Unmapped* joined other Black voices on WAMU including announcements from Heather Taylor, and the long-running program *Kojo in Your Community* by Kojo Nnamdi. Further, in the 2010s the radio station increased their employment of Black editors which journalists attribute to subsequent expansion of Black and Latinx listenership by 2017 (Beaujon 2017). *Anacostia Unmapped* aired in partnership with the Association of Independence in Radio's "Localore: Finding America" series and We Act Radio, a social justice media company based in Anacostia. Localore works with independent producers at local radio stations with outside producers to "help stations become better neighbors" by telling neighborhood stories (Falk 2015). Other stories under Localore funding explore life in Appalachia and the impact of climate change on Alaskan natives' communities.

While the creator of *Anacostia Unmapped,* Katie Davis, lives in Washington, DC, she admittedly had never been to Anacostia like many of her fellow white Washingtonians (Davis 2016). Davis had worked for National Public Radio as a producer, reporter and host, yet struggled to recruit the three local producers from Anacostia to the project. With some friends backing her credibility, however, Kymone Freeman, John A. Johnson, and Schyla Pondexter-Moore joined the project, three Black Anacostians who are artists and activists. The theme of the radio project rose organically as displacement and unaffordable property values were the main concerns of the community. The three local producers of the project, Freeman, Johnson, and Pondexter-Moore, conducted the interviews with longtime residents of Anacostia, which were published as oral history stories. Episodes focus on family histories, local landmarks, Black Washingtonian culture, and experiences with gentrification.

The episodes are structured with an introduction by Katie Davis, one of the few white voices heard on the show. Her voice prompts listeners to recognize *Anacostia Unmapped* for the edited show it is, as the final product of intimate interviews can feel like listening in to a personal conversation among familiars. Heavy jazz or DC's own go-go back her opening remarks and the music transitions episodes to a space of Black sound. The interview-based stories are interlaced with local music and poetry, including performances from the producers. Behind the audio of the main interviews in the episodes, listeners hear children playing, honking horns of DC traffic, and chants of protests. The underlying audio brings listeners to recognize Anacostia as a lived-in community, a home for generations of residents

and not empty land for taking. The layers of sonic cultural expression in the radio episodes construct scales of community from the home to the street, and to the neighborhood. Broadcasting local soundscapes creates nuanced senses of belonging, a sentiment *Anacostia Unmapped* shares on air and on the show's internet archive (Moylan 2022). While the stories on *Anacostia Unmapped* are composed of interviews, listeners do not hear the unedited conversations. The final broadcast is a tightly curated production by editors, interviewers and producers, with funding from public and private sources. Behind each published story is intention: *Anacostia Unmapped* is a purposeful platform for residents to chronicle the changing of their neighborhood. The cartographic title of *Anacostia "Unmapped"* playfully reappropriates Anacostia's assignment of ungeographic; residents telling their own stories on the radio show refuses and undoes the dominant map which excludes them.

Below, I examine three vignettes from *Anacostia Unmapped* to analyze the relationship between radio storytelling and gentrification. I argue radio stories can be used as alternative maps that counter the erasure of Black communities and forefront Black experiences that are overlooked and deemed ungeographic. The first vignette I analyze, "The Lion and the Map," centers on the cartographic exclusion of Anacostia from maps of DC. I open with this story to frame how residents respond to Anacostia's experiences with erasure. I follow the theme of housing displacement in the second vignette, tracing residents' experiences through three radio episodes I read together. The final vignette, "Love for a Landmark," focuses on how residents maintain an overlooked historic site in their neighborhood. I use this story to discuss community care and knowledge sharing among Anacostia residents. Through *Anacostia Unmapped,* residents assert their homes are not vacant land waiting to be settled but are valued spaces of Black community.

Cartographic Exclusion: "The Lion and the Map"

On an episode of *Anacostia Unmapped* Kymone Freeman, playwright and co-founder of We Act Radio, shares how dominant narratives of DC exclude the Southeast quadrant. In "The Lion and the Map" Freeman discusses a rental posting by *DCist,* a news outlet which self-describes as "the unofficial homepage of the District" as of 2024. The article listed one bedroom apartment prices across DC neighborhoods. The article's map, however, excluded all neighborhoods east of the Anacostia River. In turn, it included wealthier and whiter neighborhoods in Virginia. Over a bass heavy jazz instrumental, Freeman recaps his encounter with the racist cartography: "I look closer at this map. I notice there's no Ward Seven or Ward Eight on this map. Anacostia has fallen off the map–and all of East the River [sic] too. But somehow Arlington, and Alexandria, have found their way into DC," (Freeman 2016 at 1:05-1:15). While the publication and article claim to represent the city of Washington, DC, several Black neighborhoods were erased. Geographies of domination work to erase Black subjectivities, and excluding Black neighborhoods from maps enforces racial hierarchies. Freeman's story and later call to action frame *Anacostia Unmapped* as an alternative map, combatting the concealment of Anacostia.

Washington, DC is divided into eight diverse wards, with the Anacostia River separating Wards Seven and Eight from the remaining six. Wards Seven and Eight make up the majority of the Southeast quadrant of DC. When *Anacostia Unmapped* first aired in 2016, Wards Seven and Eight were 94% and 91% Black, respectively. By the 2020 Census, the Black population in the two wards declined by three percent (Kids Count Data Center 2022). In

contrast, Arlington and Alexandria are majority white cities in Virginia with median household incomes of over $100,000, more than double the median household income in Wards Seven and Eight (United States Census 2022). Including wealthy, white, cities in Virginia on a map of Washington, DC while excluding Black neighborhoods reinforces dominant maps that center white modernity and subjugate Black spaces.

In response to the omission of communities in Wards Seven and Eight from the map and article, Freeman wrote a letter to the "editor, associate editor, contributing editor, Jesus and the Twelve Disciples, and three more white people'' looking for an explanation (Freeman 2016a at 2:26-2:30). The *DCist* apologized, and Freeman learned the mapmaker used the Anacostia River as a boundary, and apartment listings for neighborhoods east of the river could be found on another website, which Freeman referred to as "the colored section" (Freeman 2016a). The erasure of neighborhoods east of the Anacostia River from the main *DCist* article is what McKittrick refers to as spatial domination that erases subaltern lands (2006). The exclusion of the Blackest wards of the city from narratives of Washington, DC work to efface Black people as legitimate residents of space. The white modernity of Washington, DC, sees the racialized spaces of Wards Seven and Eight as ungeographic, causing the areas to be literally left off maps.

Freeman closes this story by advising Anacostia residents about the importance of oral history for community retention. He instructs, "until the lions have their own historians, the tales of the hunt will continue to glorify the hunter. Until we in Anacostia tell our own stories, draw our own maps, create displacement free zones, we too will be silenced" (Freeman 2016a at 4:37-4:55). "The Lion and the Map" is the inaugural episode of *Anacostia Unmapped*, and Freeman's feature frames the subsequent stories of geographic erasure and the importance of storytelling to the audience. McKittrick (2021, 7) affirms the potentialities of storytelling to Black liberation, writing:

> our stories of Black worlds and Black ways of being can, in part, breach the heavy weight of dispossession and loss…because these narratives (songs, poems, conversations, theories, debates, memories, arts, prompts, curiosities) are embedded with all sorts of liberatory clues and resistances.

The project of *Anacostia Unmapped* is a response to Freeman's call for residents to draw their own maps, tell their own stories, and resist displacement. Through storytelling, residents unmap geographies of domination that exclude them. While their community is assigned as ungeographic and irrelevant to dominant cartography, Anacostia residents use radio to share knowledge from their community.

Next, I analyze housing displacement in Anacostia for homeowners and public housing tenants. In these stories, residents share their relationships with their homes while gentrification looms. Residents create an alternative map of their under-threat homes, opposing narratives that their neighborhoods are vacant lands to be settled.

Gentrification in Barry Farms: "Go See Miss Teresa Howe Jones," "Barry's Farm to Barry Farms" and "Bus Stop"

As one of the most intensely gentrified cities in the country, Washington, DC has seen an increase of high-income potential residents seeking homeownership, with many of these buyers pursuing homes in historically Black neighborhoods. As land developers survey

neighborhoods looking to purchase property, Black residents in Anacostia combat the capitalist consumption of their housing through community support networks. *Anacostia Unmapped* producers introduce community housing activist Teresa Howe-Jones as the person neighbors seek if they need "anything" done. Using her phone call list containing two thousand names, Ms. Howe-Jones helps neighbors troubleshoot tenant problems in Anacostia. With a voice indicating decades of experience, the 83-year-old community figure introduces herself to interviewer Kymone Freeman: "I'm home grown, here east of the River. I've lived in the same house I live in now [for] forty-five years. I raised my family here. And I plan to stay here until they put me somewhere," (Freeman 2016b).

Ms. Howe-Jones shares the threat gentrification poses to her staying in her home; she receives multiple calls a week, almost daily, from developers wanting to purchase her house (Freeman 2016b):

> We have aggressive gentrification. I get calls every day, or every other day, I'm certain to get them every week. 'I want to sell your house at [redacted].' If I sold this house, which I'm not going to do, I could not buy another house in the District of Columbia at the same caliber of this house…Now, I don't know how we put brakes on this stuff…[they make deals] to bring white people into the area because they want it back. No doubt about it, I don't care how you look at it, it's blatantly clear. I don't know how we stop the gentrification. Change is alright as long as it's change that is beneficial to everybody, and the change that's happening out here is not.

The homeowner is determined to stay in her house and advocates for all residents to remain in their homes. Ms. Howe-Jones, along with other contributors to *Anacostia Unmapped*, protest the demolition of public housing. Using storytelling, they share the lineage of Black belonging in Anacostia, which for many residents is rooted in the under-threat public housing communities. A significant housing community is Barry Farms, which in 2014 was scheduled to be rebuilt as mixed income housing. Barry Farms has been a home for Black DC residents for centuries, and gentrification threatens the existence of the long-standing neighborhood. The *Anacostia Unmapped* contributors use radio storytelling to forefront their home's historic importance to Black communities.

Barry Farms is a historic site. In early Reconstruction, the Freedmen's Bureau established Barry Farms as a neighborhood for newly emancipated enslaved people. The area was designated for Black people to own land and businesses after the Freedmen's Bureau purchased the land from white plantation owners, the Barry family (Hutchinson 1977). Emancipated Black families purchased land and lumber for between $125 and $300 to build their homes, and in the 1870s, the neighborhood grew to have multiple public schools for Black children, churches, and community centers. The strong community Black people built here gave them resilience against economic depressions and unstable labor markets, and Barry Farms lots were profitable for landowners (Hutchinson 1977, James 2011). In 1940, DC built public housing projects in the neighborhood of Barry Farms specifically for low-income Black families and wartime workers, further concentrating the area as a Black space (James 2011).

In 2014, the DC government announced they were removing all hundreds of residents from Barry Farms to demolish the buildings and rebuild them as mixed income housing. The

renovation project entitled The New Communities Initiative was designed to "revitalize severely distressed subsidized housing and redevelop neighborhoods into vibrant mixed-income communities'' (Government of the District of Columbia Office of Planning 2015). Despite government promises of repatriation post project completion, residents feared they would not be able to return to their homes once construction finished. Promises of return, nonetheless, would only be fulfilled after enduring the projected ten-year displacement until the new homes were available for resident occupation (Holland 2015). The redevelopment project aims to rebuild modernized buildings after knocking down the original Barry Farms housing complexes. Urban development projects, such as in Barry Farms, seek to transform Black spaces from underdeveloped and ungeographic into modern neighborhoods (Perry 2004). These gentrified modern areas, however, often erase the existence of the communities they displace. In discussing gentrification in Bahia, Brazil, Perry writes "today, visitors can sit on benches in the waterfront park admiring displays of Bahian 'modernity' in the form of abstract art without any remnants of the more than 75 families that were relocated to a neighbourhood in the periphery" (Perry 2004, 817). Black residents in DC face similar displacement under modernizing redevelopment projects.

The *Anacostia Unmapped* episode "From Barry's Farm to Barry Farms" chronicles the historic transformation of Barry Farms and its present jeopardy. Residents assert their right to housing stability, using the radio program to amplify their voices. Barry Farms resident, Paulette Matthews, shares her perspective of the scheduled Barry Farms renovation (Pondexter-Moore 2016):

> They're trying to uproot us, and I don't feel as though we are plants. We are human beings and we should be able to stay here, and we should be able to make decisions on what's going to happen to us and when will it happen to us. We plan not to leave. Not unless we get things placed in writing, we are trying to stay right here where we're at. Because if we move, we already know that they're not coming back. They don't even keep records of where people go once they move them to these different developments for them to make new developments, so we're not going anywhere.

In Paulette Matthews' assertion that she and her community members are not plants to be uprooted and transplanted, she resists geographies of domination that displace her community. Through the platform of *Anacostia Unmapped,* she challenges the DC government's promises of housing continuity, distrusting that the city will let her stay in her home. While the DC government views Barry Farms as "severely distressed subsidized housing" that must be transformed, Matthews views the community as her home of over twenty years, where she is determined to remain rooted (Government of the District of Columbia Office of Planning 2015).

The DC government demolished the Barry Farms buildings in 2019 and relocated all residents. In 2022, DC began rebuilding the housing developments with the hope to complete the project in 2030 (Government of the District of Columbia 2022). Despite the early demolitions, the New Communities Initiative renovation project highlights the following guiding principles: "The Opportunity for Residents to Return/Stay in the Community to ensure that current residents will have a priority for new replacement units in effort to remain in their neighborhood" and "Build First, which calls for the development of new housing to begin prior to the demolition of existing distressed housing to minimize displacement." The

retention of original residents, however, is not guaranteed, a fate residents like Paulette Matthews were wary of. On *Anacostia Unmapped,* Matthews shares her ultimate dream for Barry Farms: development without displacement.

On and off the air, Anacostia residents organize for anti-displacement housing justice, including *Anacostia Unmapped* producer and contributor, Schyla Pondexter-Moore. She is featured in an episode entitled "Bus Stop" that includes audio from a community protest against commercial development bus tours in Southeast, DC. On the radio episode, Pondexter-Moore projects her voice through a megaphone, leading a crowd in a call and response chant: "this is our home, and we will not be removed from our home!" (Pondexter-Moore 2016b). The protestors' proclamations fade into a sit-down interview with Pondexter-Moore (2016b) where she describes the bus tour scene:

> They decided they wanted to ride through our city to do a space finding tour. Space finding tour. And that's disrespectful in what it's called. It's not space, these are our homes, this is where we live, this is where we thrive, this is our community.

Pondexter-Moore notes feeling like developers were on a safari tour in her neighborhood, looking for land to purchase and ignoring that people may have an existing relationship to the places they seek. The experience she describes addresses white modernity seeing Black spaces as ungeographic and in need of capitalist development. Bledsoe and Wright (2019) explain the connection between anti-Blackness and global capitalism:

> [anti-Blackness] leads to Black populations being conceptually unable to legitimately create space, thereby leaving locations associated with Blackness open to the presumably "rational" agendas of dominant spatial actors. Black populations, then, serve as the guarantor of capitalism's need to constantly find new spaces of accumulation.

Black relationships to space are ignored because geographies of domination determine Black space to be ungeographic and subsequently displace and erase Black livelihoods and knowledges. Residents use *Anacostia Unmapped*, however, to speak from the ungeographic. While their homes are demolished for modernization, residents assert their homes do not need to be modernized to have value. From the porches of their homes developers see as lucrative property investments, Anacostians insist they are not leaving. Their broadcasts of rootedness are alternative maps that undo geographies of domination that deny Black claims to space. In turn, Black residents of Anacostia use storytelling to create alternative maps of resistance, Black history, and community care.

In the final section, I examine how Anacostia residents caretake a historic landmark in their community. Gentrification in DC displaces Black communities, and the *Anacostia Unmapped* episode, "Love for a Landmark," highlights Black land stewardship in Anacostia. Elder residents discuss generations of historic land maintenance in their neighborhood, and in doing so, guide listeners towards pre-existing geographies of liberatory care in neighborhoods under threat of gentrification.

Embodied Care for the Cedar Hill House: "Love for a landmark"

While the monuments of the National Mall are most popular in Washington, DC, Anacostia has its own historic landmark. The National Mall honors United States politicians

with histories of genocide and enslavement, like Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson, celebrating the United States' anti-Black settler history. In contrast, the prominent landmark in Anacostia is the home of Frederick Douglass, formerly enslaved abolitionist, writer, and orator. Residents in Anacostia have an intimate and embodied relationship with the Douglass estate, called Cedar Hill. In the *Anacostia Unmapped* episode "Love for a Landmark" residents share how Cedar Hill is a valued part of quotidian life in Anacostia. Through maintaining the community landmark, Anacostia residents impart intergenerational lessons of care and Black memory. *Anacostia Unmapped* contributor, Jason Fuller, begins the episode with a brief biography of Douglass before introducing community elder Sandy Allen. Allen has lived in Anacostia for 73 years, and recounts her childhood experiences with the Douglass house (Fuller 2016 at 0:56 to 1:30):

> When I lived on Morris Road, Frederick Douglass House always had a big yard with fruits and vegetables in it. Really when the farmers–they had pear trees and the orchards more or less. Believe it or not, we used to run down and take, as kids, and pull pears off the pear trees. And my brother and Arrington Dixon and his brother all belonged to the Scout Troop that met in Frederick Douglass' house.

In Sandy Allen's feature on *Anacostia Unmapped*, she shares how she and her neighborhood friends had an intimate relationship with the Frederick Douglass house. Particularly, the estate's fruit and vegetable gardens were legacies of abolition feeding her childhood community. Reese discusses Black Washingtonians' relationships to land and food as shaped by history and memory, and at Cedar Hill histories of Black liberation are provisions for Black youth (Reese 2019). As the land of the former abolitionist provided for the community, the residents of Anacostia in turn cared for the land. Sandy Allen mentions Arrington Dixon in her story, who was a member of the Boy Scout Troop that held meetings in the Douglass house. He shares his relationship to Cedar Hill on *Anacostia Unmapped* (Fuller 2016 at 2:02 to 2:39):

> We used to come here because there was a Cub Scout pack that was run by our Den Mother, Mrs. Parham, who was the caretaker of Douglass' home and these grounds. And we used to come here and spend lots of time, one, having a good time with meetings and projects, but also engaged in cutting grass sometimes, and shoveling snow. Even getting into the building itself and jumping up and down on the bed–and maybe even breaking a few things in the process. But in those days we were young, you know eight, nine, years old, and we didn't really realize the significance of the home and Douglass.

Later in his account, Arrington Dixon emphasizes the moral grounding he received in Cub Scouts, crediting it to walking on the ground of Frederick Douglass. Dixon and his scout troop tended to the landscape of Cedar Hill under the guidance of Den Mother Mrs. Parham, one of the caretakers of Douglass' estate.

Through this episode of *Anacostia Unmapped,* residents outline generations of Black land stewardship; these stories of Black community care are anti-displacement maps that foreground the value of Black spaces. Residents caretaking Frederick Douglass' estate implement an alternative map of DC monuments that traces Black liberation, nourishment, and intimacy. While *Anacostia Unmapped* denounces gentrification in DC, it also exemplifies

"new, or different, and perhaps more just, geographic stories" through broadcasting how Black people care for their land (McKittrick 2006 xix).

After Frederick Douglass' death in 1895, his wife Helen Pitts cared for the Cedar Hill house and fought for it to become a national memorialized site. Over half a century later in 1962, Douglass' house was designated as a National Park (National Park Service 2021). After the death of Pitts and before the National Park recognition, various groups tended for Cedar Hill including the National Association of Colored Women. Arrington Dixon's Den Mother, Mrs. Gladys Parham, was a member of the National Association of Colored Women and took care of the house for over thirty years (Washington Post 1983, Terrell 1962). After state neglect, Black women led the restoration of the abolitionist ancestor's home, with the help of neighborhood children. Caring for the ancestral land was a liberating process of reciprocity: caretakers were physically and spiritually nourished at Cedar Hill, and in turn maintained the integrity of the landscape. Through the stories about the Frederick Douglass house, *Anacostia Unmapped* illustrates a Black intimate relationship with historic landmarks. Feminist geographers have long theorized the geographic "intimate" to describe embodied social relations such as birthing and eating (Mountz and Hyndman 2006, McCutcheon 2019, Smith 2012, Faria 2017, Vasudevan 2021). Allen and Dixon recall eating fruit from the orchard at Douglass' estate, playing in Douglass' bed, and cleaning his home as children; intimacy and care were the basis of their land stewardship.

Through sharing Allen's and Dixon's relationships to the Frederick Douglass landmark in Anacostia, *Anacostia Unmapped* cements the rich relationships Anacostians have with their neighborhood. The oral history episodes assert Black neighborhoods are spaces of community, and gentrification threatens generations of care practices. The stories of Black women taking responsibility for maintenance of Cedar Hill are examples of Black geographic remappings of place, and the radio airing of "Love for a Landmark" guides listeners to look to Black places for more just geographic stories.

Conclusion: Airing the Ungeographic and Black Geographies of Radio

2015 finally got a sit-down restaurant
Where he can eat some breakfast
DC is serving more Vanna Whites and less
Kiki Shepards
DC fell in love with her diamond-like features
And the curves on her 8 wards
But like every relationship things get bumpy
Like roads before street cars
DC's girl would start beefing
DC went vegetarian
He never called her female dog
Like veterinarian
Although deep down inside
He was redder than Nats' caps
His heart was broken like iPhone screens
But he played it like it was cool
Cooler than January and February

My man DC.
–John A. Johnson "My Man DC"

In the second half of Johnson's poem "My Man DC," his map transforms to depict gentrification in the city. His rhymes reveal that DC, once embedded in Blackness, now prioritizes protecting white diamond-like wealth. As the city develops, Black residents are not able to enjoy its new amenities; while the neighborhood gains a sit-down breakfast restaurant, more white residents are served than Black residents. The exclusion of Black locals brings broken hearts and anger to Johnson's personified character of Washington, DC. This poem-map details the consequences of gentrification for the Black population of DC over time. Anacostia, a historically Black neighborhood in the city, has experienced these consequences as displacement affects both homeowners and public housing tenants. This displacement is coupled with cartographic erasure, as Black neighborhoods in Washington, DC are excluded from maps of the city. Still, longtime residents have rich and intimate relationships with their home of Anacostia.

Anacostia Unmapped chronicles the changes in the city from the perspective of longtime Black residents. By listening to *Anacostia Unmapped* through the analytic of Black Geographies, I explain how residents' stories are alternative maps broadcasting Black livelihoods, despite modern geographies of domination working to erase them. Their stories speak from the ungeographic: the physical spaces and overlooked founts of knowledge that reside east of the Anacostia River and that are exiled by racial hierarchy. From the Freedmen's Bureau neighborhood of Barry Farms to its current presence as public housing, and the communal caretaking of Frederick Douglass' home, Black residents create thriving communities despite racial and economic oppression. In 2018, residents continued the anti-displacement storytelling project with *Anacostia Unmapped 2.0,* a curated multimedia and mixed media art installation featuring local artists on display through August and September. Anacostians persist in asserting their voices despite geographic silencing.

My work brings an analysis of radio to existing scholarship on Black soundscapes and gentrification. Moreover, through putting Black geographies in conversation with radio, I contribute a critical examination of racial power to the Euro-centric field of radio geographies. *Anacostia Unmapped's* prestigious funding sources and accompanying institutional recognition strengthened the reach and archiving of the program. The precedent of the show opens doors for further scholarship on DIY soundscapes unrestricted by funding contingencies and real-time, ephemeral, collaborative soundscapes as anti-displacement efforts.

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