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# “IT’S THE ’HOOD. BUT THAT MEANS IT’S HOME!”: AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMINIST CRITICAL GEOGRAPHIC WANDERINGS IN THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF SPACE AND PLACE

## Abstract

*This article pursues an African American feminist critical geographic approach in locating experiential geographies that help shape people’s perceptions of city life. I center the culturally symbolic site of Detroit bus stops as point of ethnographic departure. With my choreography as strategy approach to ethnography, I hang out at the site of the bus stop itself, finding perceptions of city life are shaped by people’s subjective-geographic understandings, and reflect the paradox of place. In other words, people’s perceptions exist both within and beyond built environment and prefigured assumptions of group membership. However, the philosophical, the choreographic, and the paradox do not substitute for historical-materialist, political economic analysis. Rather, I suggest that people’s subjectivities and philosophical stances be considered alongside the political economic in an anthropology of cities. Demonstrative of such an approach, I offer several ethnographic sketches and some of the nuances that emerge as I wander bus stops in Detroit. Ultimately, I argue for an approach to urban anthropological research that prioritizes people’s complex subjectivities alongside onto-historical context. [cultural anthropology, urban anthropology, feminist studies, African American studies, critical geography]*

## INTRODUCTION

As we stand in the fresh February evening and wait at the #14 bus stop at the corner of Woodward and Warren Streets in midtown Detroit, Jamilah Smith and Rachel Ellis, two African American women, share thoughts around their experiences of public transit there. They each mention a simmering anxiety they experience while waiting at bus stops and even while riding the bus itself. Smith, in her late twenties, says she has lived

in Detroit all her life and has ridden the #14 bus for six years. She wears elaborate makeup and is quietly self-assured. Smith’s friend, Ellis, tells me she’s a career schoolteacher and has lived in Detroit all her life as well. In her mid-fifties, Smith has a demure smile that contrasts with her direct demeanor.

The “you-never-know” feeling, Smith explains, radiates from the possibility she might be misunderstood. Smith’s youth, her high heels, her presence standing around waiting could be misperceived of as “sex worker,” Smith worries, instead of correctly read as a person “waiting for a bus.” As we talk, Smith often glances down Warren Avenue, her city-seasoned eyes quickly searching out the forthcoming bus. “Headphones!” Smith exclaims. The large pair of Beats by Dre headphones she wears, Smith explains, is not only a material object of hip-hop culture, but a strategic choice. The headphones, she says, are central to deflecting unwanted attention. “Headphones stop people from bothering you! Seriously. As a woman, when you’re at the bus going to work or school, you don’t want to be talked to every few minutes by a guy looking for a date! So, the headphones, they are a way of saying ‘stay back’ without having to say anything at all,” Smith concludes.

Ellis likewise reflects Smith’s concerns. As we shiver in the blustery air, Ellis says, “I won’t wait on the bus alone at night either. As a single woman—noooo! And the things that happen on the bus! We’re not protected on the bus. There are cameras at the bus stops and on the bus, but there are still things that happen...” Smith switches her attention from the material strategy of the Beats by Dre’s to the concerns with evening bus riding she shares with Ellis. Smith says, “I won’t wait for the bus alone at night. I’ve been riding the bus for six years. And in six years, I’ve never waited alone at night. I’ve lived my whole life in Detroit, and

it's a pretty safe city. But I don't wait for the bus alone, ever."

Like many of the African American women who shared their experiences of waiting for and riding buses in Detroit, travel companions Smith and Ellis reflect a street-smart awareness. However, there is no simple, singular point of view to be distilled. The women don't claim to be strong nor weak; overconfident nor wholly fearful. On the evening that we speak at the #14 bus stop, Smith and Ellis say that they planned to ride across town together to avoid waiting and riding alone. Smith and Ellis's experiences and reflections demonstrate how women bus riders' experiences on the ground intersect with and complicate the historical-materialist context and the built environment. In this article, I take a choreographic approach to sidewalk ethnography, searching out the paradox of place (Stovall 2018) on the streets and sidewalks of bus stops in Detroit.<sup>1</sup>

#### **MAPPING AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMINIST CRITICAL GEOGRAPHIC WANDERINGS**

What is an African American feminist critical geography? It is an analytical approach to theorizing and investigating place and space, attuned to the inseparability from places and spaces of political-historical-economic-sociocultural constructions of classed, abled, gendered, sexed, sexualized, racialized, and/or cultured hierarchies. Such an approach, I argue, also requires attention to registers of philosophy—continuously teasing apart individual subjectivities in spite of stratified subordination. Alongside my critical approaches to choreography as strategy and the paradox of place (Stovall 2018), the theoretical scaffolding for my African American feminist critical geographic ethnographic approach is informed by geographers Ruth Wilson Gilmore (2002) and Katherine McKittrick's (2006), critical, intersectional approaches to theorizing place and space; philosopher bell hooks's (hooks 1984, 2013) and political activist Angela Y. Davis's (2011) critical, intersectional approaches to African American feminist theory and practice; feminist theorist Sarah Jane Cervenak's (2014) centering of African American women's philosophical wanderings; and anthropologist John L. Jackson, Jr.'s approach to thin ethnographic encounters in urban anthropological research (2013).

Angela Davis asserts that "Black feminism emerged as a theoretical and practical effort [to demonstrate] that race, gender, and class are

inseparable in the social worlds we inhabit" (2016, 3). Likewise, Gilmore (2002, 1) theorizes that intersecting vectors of "race, gender, class, and power" map "fatal couplings of power and difference" (22), controlling access to resources, capital, and political power. In the production of spaces and places, Gilmore shows that, "centering attention on those most vulnerable to the fatal couplings of power and difference signified by racism develops richer analyses" (Gilmore 2002, 22) of particular geographies and of social life.

Jackson calls for an attention to "the inward states of the psyche, the interior landscaping of the spirit" (Jackson 2005, 71). In addition to the anthropological poetics of his ethnographic goal, like Davis, Gilmore, and McKittrick, he remains attuned to political-historical-economic-sociocultural backdrops that render consolidations of power. As such, an African American feminist critical geography considers positionality and subjectivity within territories of intersecting oppression (Davis 2016). Considering African American subjectivity and intersectional oppression, McKittrick theorizes,

Objectified Black female sexualities represent the logical outcome of a spatial process that is bound up in geographic discourses, such as territory, body/land possession, and public property...Black women's own experiential and material geographies, consequently, indicate a very complex and difficult relationship with space, place, and dispossession.

(McKittrick 2006, 78)

I argue that McKittrick's attention to "geographic discourses" via "experiential and material geographies" (McKittrick 2006, 78) mark bus stop conversations as rich nodes at which to consider people's perceptions. As such, the ethnographic material discussed in this article is mined at the site of the culturally symbolic category (Gieryn 2000; Holleran 2015) of the bus stop. Bus stops, in Detroit, are located within classed, racialized, gendered, and sexualized "geographic discourses" (McKittrick 2006, 78).

At many bus stops in contemporary Detroit, bus riders experience particular late-neoliberal forces of privatization and individualization of common resources (Collins, Williams, and Di Leonardo 2008); each factor a key characteristic of contemporary city governance. Furthermore, these sites are rich frames where performances are, in addition to being gendered, sexed, sexualized, and

racialized, “inextricably tied to class-based markers of difference” (Jackson 2001, 202). Historical context confirms this reading.

Detroit’s 1943 Rebellion, a result of decades of onto-historical, legislated discrimination against African Americans across housing, employment, and education, unfurled following a rumored, contentious encounter on a public bus (Stovall 2015). A government report indicated that a city bus leaving Belle Isle was thrown into chaos after a young African American man and a young European American woman had a fleeting, consensual, social dance encounter on the bus. European American men riding the bus reportedly forced the bus driver to pull the bus over. After which, the men reportedly threw the young man over the Belle Isle bridge railing and into the Detroit River below. The drop from bridge to water: approximately one hundred feet (Boris 1998; Catledge 1943; Stovall 2015). Historical, racialized violence on public transportation in Detroit makes the site of the city bus and its bus stops fraught spaces.

At the time of this writing, approximately eighty-one percent of Detroit’s 673,104 residents are African American identified and approximately fifty-two percent of people are women identified.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, African American women in Detroit are in the majority of the overall population. However, paradoxically, in broad discussions of contemporary Detroit, the ways that racialized, classed, gendered, sexed, and sexualized hierarchies impact African American women’s lives are often underdetermined (Roberts 2014). In addition, low-income people and African American people are often underdetermined in the public discourse narratives of Detroit’s future while in reality, African American people and low-income people form the majority of the city’s population (Stovall and Hill 2016). Finally, the majority of public transportation riders in Detroit are working class and low income.

In 2014, the median annual income of Detroit public transportation riders was \$13,293, tracking below Detroit’s median household income of \$26,429 and median per capita income of \$15,562.<sup>3</sup> Journalist Mike Maciag described the feedback loop of transit systems and economics, writing “To a certain degree, rider demographics are tied to what the system offers.”<sup>4</sup> In other words, Detroit’s public transit system, with its majority working-class riders, will struggle to offer reliable, high-quality transit to the people who need it most.

While Detroit’s civic leaders wax platitudes about the region’s planned transportation

upgrades, including the streetcar known as the M1 Rail, or the Q-Line, and the addition of on-board cameras to existing buses to enhance bus safety, the actual status of the city’s public transportation system remains precarious.<sup>5</sup> Overall, systemic failures include disrepair of buses and bus stops, lack of bus stop amenities such as seating and shelter, and poor reliability of transit routes for Detroiters from far reaches of the city and suburbs traveling to work, school, and shopping.<sup>6</sup> Of transit systems facing such challenges, Maciag writes, “perhaps the most significant challenge for systems looking to broaden their demographic bases is winning over the largely underserved segment of potential riders who have other means of getting around—known as choice riders.”<sup>7</sup>

However, the notion of attracting new, monied riders in order to fix systemic issues faced by existing, working-class and low-income riders is contentious. This model presents an ethical and economic dilemma. Such an approach relies on intersections of access, resources, and privilege—and paradoxically, lacks attention to intersectionality across racialized, gendered, and classed dimensions in its quest for choice-rider dollars. Choice riders live in high-density neighborhoods and travel to desirable city places such as shopping areas, restaurants, markets, and universities. This means that such routes are more profitable and easier for city planners to map and optimize.<sup>8</sup> The search for choice riders also means that riders with no other alternatives for transit, who absolutely need to get to work in a distant suburb, for instance, have fewer choices themselves.

In 2015, the *Detroit Free Press* publicized the story of the tenacious Detroiters, James Robertson, a man for whom the inadequacies of the bus routes in the city was a daily reality. Robertson walked over twenty-one miles to work each day due to enormous gaps in his bus route.<sup>9</sup> He would start his day hours before his shift at a suburban Detroit auto parts supplier began, in order to make it to work on time. The public responded to Robertson’s story with enthusiastic empathy—crowd fundraising \$300,000 for Robertson—and publicly admonishing Detroit’s inadequate public transit system.<sup>10</sup>

As Robertson’s story made national news, so did a public discussion of Detroit’s flawed local and regional transportation systems.<sup>11</sup> Debates emerged around related issues of interest, like bus benches. Noticing a dearth of bus benches across the city, a pair of Wayne State University students, Kyle Bartell and Charles Molnar, began

fashioning bus benches, complete with built-in bookshelves, out of wood salvaged from abandoned or demolished homes.<sup>12</sup> Bartell and Molnar's bus benches are symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1984) of Detroit's trademark stamina and doggedness—if residents need something that the city doesn't provide, the people of this city build it, and the resulting objects will ooze the grit of the city itself.

Moreover, Detroit is internationally known as The Motor City; the luster and gleam of Detroit muscle has long captured the hearts of Americana: Jay Leno collects Ford Mustangs; Jay-Z has a record entitled *Little Red Corvette*, and nearly all dwellers of a certain age of the United States of America know the chorus to *Bye, Bye, Ms. American Pie*, at the center of which is a certain Detroit-steel-muscle-breed known as the Chevy. Since 1994, Detroit's *Woodward Avenue Dream Cruise* has attracted an estimated twenty to thirty thousand classic cars and over one million people every year in sweltering Detroit-August.<sup>13</sup> The *Dream Cruise*, a procession of tweezed, pruned Detroit steel up and down Woodward Avenue from Eight Mile Road to the northern suburb, Pontiac, Michigan, demonstrates both Detroit's love of cars and its fraught, regionalist divisions.<sup>14</sup> Eight Mile Road is the city-suburb divide—a racialized, classed, regionalized economic border that exists both in the imagination, and in reality, regarding

both public and private transit, employment, education, and housing. People in Detroit talk about “bleeding GM (General Motors) blue” (or the color of Ford or Chrysler corporate logos, depending on familial allegiance). In other words, Detroit is a car city. For people in the middle class and upwards, public transit in Detroit is underdetermined in people's lives relative to major cities around the world. There is much historical context around the contentious Detroit choreography between cars and public transit.

Scholars write that in this post-industrial rust-belt city, saluted as the automotive capital of the world, mass transportation has been deliberately eschewed (Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2016; Gallagher 2013; Sugrue 2014) and that urban sustainability won't happen without a suturing of the class-based transit gap across the region (Vojnovic and Darden 2013). Urban theorists posit that Detroit's post-war Fordist design features, such as the freeway system, were deliberately unfriendly to accessible mass transportation (Ryan and Campo 2013; Whitt 2014) in an effort to support the interests of Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler—known as the Detroit Big Three Automakers—and to support regionalized segregation. The swirling forces of classed, racialized, and racist geographies of bus stops in Detroit can't be ignored. In Figure 1, an image of the coming M1 rail figured prominently next to a new national



Figure 1. Signage announces the coming M1 rail in front of the HopCat Restaurant (out of the frame of the image). Kitty-corner across the way, the #53 Woodward at Canfield bus stop can be viewed amidst the construction barriers and blockages. Photo courtesy the author, March 2016. [Color figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]



chain restaurant—a visual representation of the search for choice riders. Who are the choice riders and where will they come from? And, the question that I'll explore here: what do African American women—the demographic majority of this city's population—think about all of this?

At the space and place of the bus stop, I trace working-class African American women's perceptions of public transit in Detroit. Analyzing a range of ethnographic accounts, complex expressions of individual African American women's perceptions of bus riding in Detroit are shaped by women's particular lived and conceived realities of the city (Bridge and Watson 2003) rather than the built environment alone. In *Real Black*, Jackson writes that penetrating the complexities of city life in Crown Heights is a praxis of,

showing that race is more than just what relegates people to selfsame versions of impoverished objecthood, to little more than racial things that are externally narrated and scripted out of any form of agency or subjectivity. (Jackson 2005, 28)

In *Behind the Gates*, for Low (2003), an attention to subjectivity, as in Jackson's work, results in complicated ethnographic data. Low (2003, 65) found among dwellers of a gated condominium neighborhood in Dallas, “a feeling of being solidly and emotionally together against (an imagined) attack from the outside.” Subjectivity is, for Jackson and Low, a forceful vector that does not simply reveal the beauty of subjects, but the messier perceptions common to the human condition.

To follow, I offer ethnographic accounts illustrating the complex relationships among individual philosophy, subjectivity, and physical environment, and how studies of place and space in anthropology can work to better mediate such complexities. Critical geographer Jacqueline Nassy Brown's treatment of the imagination in the context of racialized geographies provides structural support for my argument. For Brown, political geographies begin first in our minds. Racialized articulations of space and place, such as the African Diaspora, to Brown, exist conditionally, where “the mapping of racial signifiers onto geographical ones lends such terms the illusion of referring to physical rather than social locations” (Brown 1998, 291). In other words, “there is no actual space that one could call the ‘African Diaspora,’ despite how commonly it is mapped onto particular locales” (Brown 1998, 291). Brown's analysis,

rather than negating the geographic stakes of African Diaspora, opens up the Diaspora to broad possibilities—possibilities machined by a Diaspora's complex subjects.

To follow, searching out if, and how, the anthropology of the city is enriched through an African American feminist critical geographic approach in fraught spaces and places, like bus stops, I take to the streets. At six bus stops in two Detroit zones, I hang out, take photographs, and speak with women about their experiences riding and waiting for the bus. I begin with the notion that cities dance (Jacobs 1961; Lefebvre 1991), that a city is rhythmically unfurling (Lefebvre 2004), and that a city is a choreography of sociocultural, political, economic forces (Lepecki 2013). While the idea that cities dance is spliced throughout social sciences literature, what about an approach to ethnography of cities beginning with attention to choreography as strategy (Stovall 2018)—an attention to performance? Drawing from my six-years-running, six-volume, twenty-plus video episode meditation on city life in Detroit, *Liquor Store Theatre* (2014–ongoing), in which I stage performances and conversations in the sidewalks of eight liquor stores as points of departure for neighborhood ethnography (Stovall 2016, 2018), I deploy the above principles.<sup>15</sup>

In the bus stop fieldwork considered in this article, however, I do not stage performances. In this bus stop fieldwork, I am interested in deploying my choreography as strategy approach (Stovall 2018) in a realm in which performance is not an explicit strategy. I demonstrate the flexibility of my approach, taking to the streets, getting next to informants on the sidewalks, considering the choreographic and the visual, and searching out contentious spaces in which to talk to people, in a way that differs from but draws on my *Liquor Store Theatre* project's distinct approach to contemporary art practice and urban anthropological research (Stovall 2018). To follow, I shall discuss what women on the streets taught me.

## RIKKA HIMES & DETROIT'S GOOD DIRECTION

### #34 Gratiot @ Mack: McDougall Hunt on a Sunday evening

The #34 bus stop lacks amenities. There is, in fact, no sign indicating that this is a #34 bus stop. Unless you already know, you wouldn't know. There is no city-supplied bus bench, let alone a shelter from the elements. This is what I shall call a forgotten bus stop—apparently forgotten or

ignored by the Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT), but still shaking with droves of people that use the bus stop every day. This bus stop, I can muse day in and day out, as it's right in front of my Detroit studio loft. The weathered but sturdy bus bench fashioned by Todd Stovall faces the whirring street. Traffic flies up and down Gratiot. Before taking any photographs, I tell the bus stop patrons what I'm doing and ask if they mind me snapping shots. The people at the bus stop nod in agreement and offer me permission to carry on with my photographs. The speed of the Detroit steel blurring by is mind-numbing and dizzying as I begin taking photographs of the bus stop on this warm winter day. Vertigo sets in as I try to focus my shots, cars slicing through the frame.

The afternoon sun is starting to slide away, like a sunny-side-up egg skating across an oily-hot cast iron pan, it glances back and back. There is a self-identified trans woman named Rikka Himes, in her early forties, and another woman, perhaps an athletic eighty-something, waiting for the bus on this day. The second woman avoids eye contact in the way I've observed as the "don't bother me" but-I'm-not-going-to-tell-you-so sort of way. I've slowly grown adept at reading such bus-stop sign language, and I try to respect the quick aversions of eyes, quick flashes of the shoulder, fast turns of the gaze, and, as Jamilah Smith foregrounded, the inserting of headphones. There are also two men standing nearby. Himes's face is framed with shiny earrings and a black cap, and she's carrying an armload of well-worn books. She is dressed in femme attire including high heels and a purse. She's delicate and bone thin, with a shimmering complexion and a striking smile. The passing cars kick up dust and sun beams as they stream by. Himes tells me I should interview her, because I'm researching bus stops, before I even ask to do so. I smile, produce the voice recorder from my coat pocket on command, and tell her I would love to. She laughs out loud, amused with my precision. "Wow, you are prepared!" She quips.

As we stand chatting in the late afternoon sun, Himes describes herself as a "Professional Detroiter" who grew up on the "deep east side" of the city and owned a hair salon in the city for "over twenty-five years."<sup>16</sup> Himes tells me that she's pursuing a master's degree in psychology because "at the salon, I was counseling people. Helping with gender issues, and gay folks you know. So, I said let me go back to school..." Her voice trails off. I ask her opinion of public transportation in Detroit. Her response indicates a

focus on what she imagines as most important as it relates to transportation—that is, her purpose for taking the bus.

"I live downtown now, but I always come back to the 'hood," she tells me. "Yeah, the east side... It's the 'hood. But that means it's home! When I say 'hood, I mean home. It's a good thing. You come down and give back," she says, clutching her books as the wind pushes by. "So, the buses, they get me where I need to be. Fine by me," she tosses. Himes traverses east and west, between her current residence downtown, the area where she grew up on the deep east side, her university, and her employer. As she said, she "gets where she needs to be." For Himes, Detroit's public transportation system is effective, she insists. The built environment surrounding the bus stop is not a determining factor in Himes's conceptualization of DDOT's efficacy, or of Detroit's overall direction as a metropolis. As shown in Figures 2 and 3, the bus stop where I spoke with Himes is distressed. The surrounding built environment, with my Detroit studio loft and various buildings in differing stages of occupancy, abandonment, and development, is in flux. I ask Himes what she thinks about Detroit at the present moment.

"I see progress," Himes replies, nodding and pacing a bit against the chilly air. "I see progress," she repeats. She grows quiet.

"What's progress?" I ask.

"Progress means it's getting better. Change means that things are just different, but I see progress... A good direction."

Himes's bus pulls up alongside us, shrieking air brakes powering the bus to a stop. We bid goodbye, and she tells me we need to talk again sometime. I agree, and I hope we meet again sometime in this little slice of Americana. As her bus rides off, I consider our conversation.

In spite of Himes's particularly fresh perspective, the #34 bus stop and the built environment surrounding it reflect interlocking forces of deindustrialization and suburbanization of manufacturing industry, regionalized segregation and racism, and legislated housing, employment, and education discrimination. However, Himes's philosophical stance—her interior subjectivity—dictates her perspectives. Himes seems to view her movements in the city as effective. Therefore, for Himes, the transportation system in the city is effective. Whether her ultra-positive stance is put on could be debated—but the here and the now of



**Figure 2.** View of the #34 bus stop at Gratiot and Mack Avenue. The bus bench was crafted by Todd Stovall. Notice there is no city-provided signage indicating this is a bus stop. The author's studio loft is the building on the far right of the image directly behind the bus bench. Photo courtesy of the author, March 2016. [Color figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]

her responses and reflections demonstrate a possible limitation on scholarship of cities that overdetermines physical environment and underdetermines people's interiority and personal perspective.

Himes's confidence, saying the buses are "fine by me," wearing high heels, make-up, and ultra-femme-gendered clothing, is contrary to social science literature concerning the safety of trans women in public spaces. Himes's confidence is based on her own interiority—her perspective—of her positionality in the city. And yet, as public health scientist Louis F. Graham wrote, "Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities face extreme social, legal, and institutional discrimination in the U.S., and youth are particularly vulnerable" (Graham 2014, 275).

Graham wrote of his ethnographic work with young African American trans women in Detroit, "(African American) trans women are subject to intense gender and sexuality policing, having conformity forced on them masked as rehabilitation" (Graham 2014, 281). Still, like Himes, the trans women in Graham's ethnographic study are complicated. The women who inform Graham, for instance, deploy their interior subjectivity to create possibilities and resources for one another. Graham recounts an innovative practice of radical hospitality common among his participants, writing of an ethnographic informant named Darla,

Darla remembers trans women who made generous offers to her if she had no place to live: "if you ever needed somewhere to come, you can come there." Remarkably, these offers were made to women early in their transition, even when those women were near-strangers. (Graham 2014, 283)

Cervenak theorizes "philosophical wanderings" as sites of "daydream, fantasy, rambling and meandering, meditation and prayer, privately inspired philosophical acts, and revelations," which allow for the possibility for people to produce "free black worlds" (Cervenak 2014, 23). Writing that African American feminist theory informs "engagement with wandering's complexity and radical possibility" (Cervenak 2014, 11), Cervenak addresses people's subjective musings as a valid research site. In other words, beyond (but not negating) prefigured, constructed categories such as ethnicity, ability, gender, sex, sexuality, socioeconomic class, or the built environment, philosophical wanderings offer critical sites of ethnographic inquiry.

Connecting Himes's philosophical wanderings in the public space of the bus stop to Darla and her contemporaries' labor to make a safe world for themselves in the private space of the home, I trace a thread. Subjective, philosophical wanderings and interior subjectivity are not whimsical optimism. This interior subjectivity represents African American cis-women and trans women's profound vision of how things should be. It is a vision that all people, including African American cis-women and African American trans women, have the right to enjoy safe, comfortable, functional public spaces like bus stops, and secure, easy-living private spaces like welcoming



**Figure 3. View from the #34 bus stop at Gratiot and Mack. The vacant Goeschell Building is pictured in the view. Photo courtesy of the author, March 2016. [Color figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]**

apartments. I shall offer that Himes's philosophical wanderings land in the realm of a radical praxis.

Without prompting toward discussion of gender politics, Himes speaks of her pursuit of a master's degree in psychology as a way of formalizing her informal counseling practice with queer, gay, and trans people for over twenty years as a beauty salon proprietor. Growing up on Detroit's deep east side, "near Eastpointe," Himes informs me, she graduated from Cass Tech before opening and running her salon while working her way through an undergraduate degree at a local university.<sup>17</sup> In spite of her relentless front of positivity in our discussion, Himes doesn't hold illusions that the neighborhoods in which she lives and works are utopic. Her quip that "this is the 'hood" but that this "means it's home" is a complicated tapestry of the most American of notions. And yet, the realities around Himes don't result in opinions easily linked to assumed group membership or identification tensions. Her words vibrate and resonate after the #34 pulls off and its black velvet fan of exhaust evaporates. Himes tells me she wants to work with "All populations. The low to the high. Gay folks: all people need help." Himes's theoretical and practical positionings in the landscape of bus stop and city reflect the ethnographic realities of the "agency and interiority of one's interlocutors" (Jackson 2005, 24). I offer that we work to be ever attuned to this interiority.

#### **DONNA BRIDGES & 313-933-1300**

##### ***#53 Woodward @ Alexandrine: Midtown on a Tuesday afternoon***

At the time of this field work, the bus stop at Alexandrine and Woodward floats in a gritty space between traffic and M1-streetcar to be. Gosamer orange and white plastic construction barrels are the only thing between the bus riders and the passing, sprinting Detroit muscle that flies by us. The construction's sheer power is striking. Giant chunks of concrete and steel are unearthed and drilled, just twenty feet or so away from the bus stop. There is no bus bench, or a shelter. One wonders what a differently-abled person might do in order to wait for this #53. At approximately 1:45 p.m., a bus comes by and picks up a woman who had been waiting but not in the street at the floating bus stop. She had been cleverly (unlike myself) standing on the sidewalk on the corner, of the nearest intersection, waiting for the bus in an informally designated alternative bus stop. The woman had revised the transit planning team's idea of where people should stand. The artifact noise from the nearby construction site is relentless, pounding, and insistent. It's so loud, but paradoxically, so relentless that you can almost grow numb to it after a while. At 1:54 p.m., another #53 comes by and a few people amble off.

I speak with a middle-aged woman, Donna Bridges, who amicably agrees to be interviewed. Bridges is statuesque and outgoing. She wears



sporty clothing, including a baseball cap and a track jacket that hangs loosely from her lanky frame. She has a rhythmic cadence to her soft voice. She tells me she's been riding the bus for all of her adult life; that she's a "city person" who doesn't particularly enjoy driving or riding in cars. When I ask Bridges whether Detroit's transportation system is effective, she immediately expresses ambivalence—it's complicated, she says. Bridges says that while her buses are generally on time, her experience of waiting and her sense of personal safety are compromised because of what she calls particularly "annoying" details.

"What's most annoying about the bus system?" I prod.

"Have you ever tried to call that number?" Bridges tosses, pointing up at the bus stop route sign. Indeed, a Detroit transit general information telephone number, "313-933-1300," is listed on the sign.

"No," I admit, feeling brightly green.

"Well," she replies, "The 933-1300 number for bus route information is no longer giving updated information... Yeah, it's been out of service for a month... And this is a big problem if you can't get online to check the schedules." Bridges jokingly suggests we actually test call the number to see if it has been fixed since. I am intrigued by her suggestion. I pull out my phone and we do a test call together right there. Bridges is correct—at the time of that fact-checking, the number, which you can just make out in Figure 4, is not functioning

with bus route information. The number seems to work when you first dial, but upon selecting through the touchtone options, you are soon informed by an automated voice that the hotline has "no updated route information."

"Why did you say this was such a problem for you? The 933-1300 number, I mean?" I press.

"I catch the bus alone early in the morning, going to work... I live deep west. If I can't call the number to check on my route, I might be out there twenty, thirty, forty minutes or more alone waiting to make sure I don't miss the bus..." She sighs and raises her eyebrows in exasperation.

Me, pedantically asking the obvious, "How does that make you feel, waiting alone?" "Unsafe!!" is Bridges's emphatic response. "This is a deep west side neighborhood—no foot traffic early in the morning... And I'm just out there... Everything could happen when you're just out alone in the neighborhood. You hear about all these early morning abductions... and things..." she shakes her head. "So yeah, I don't feel safe if I can't call that number and see when to go stand and wait. So, I know if it's coming at 3:15 [a.m.] I can be out there at 3:12 and I'm good. Instead of thinking it's coming at 3:15 and I'm out there from 3:12 until 4:15!"

Bridges's reflections demonstrate the power of individual subjectivity, again, in shaping perceptions. Although I meet Bridges in Midtown Detroit, a rapidly developing and gentrifying zone, and her #53 bus generally runs on time, her view

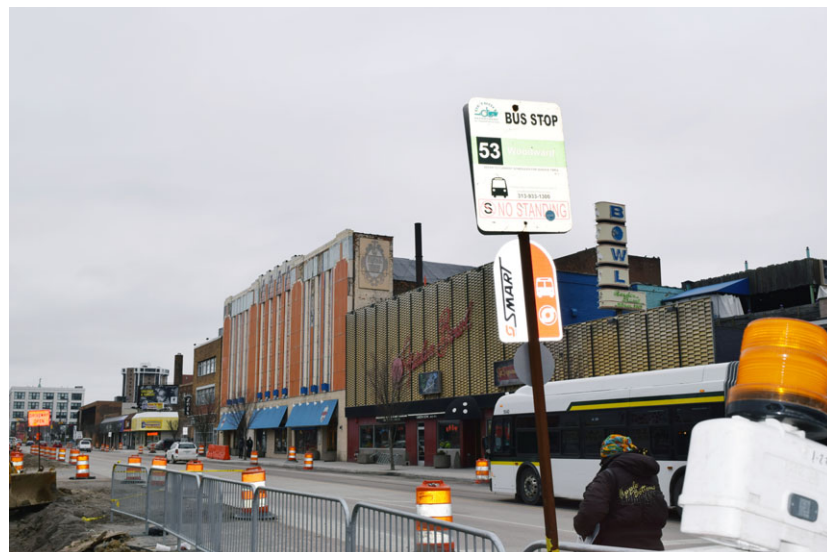


Figure 4. View from the #53 bus stop at Alexandrine and Woodward Avenue. You can just make out the 933-1300 number Bridges refers to. Photo courtesy of the author, March 2016. [Color figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]



**Figure 5. View of M1 construction-related flooding from the #53 bus stop, Woodward and Canfield. Photo courtesy of the author, March 2016. [Color figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]**

of compromised personal safety in her deep west neighborhood makes her concept of transportation in Detroit deeply ambivalent. More than the actual experiences, the annoyance, and the risk associated with not knowing when her early morning bus will arrive, shape her experience and perceptions. By referring to the interior or to the individual experience, I don't dilute Bridges's concern about violence. Rather, I highlight the fact that her concerns, in this case, are shaped as much by the unknown as they are by the surroundings of the moment. Bridges also reflects concern about the M1 construction and the impact it's had on routes. "What do you think of Detroit, right now?" I ask.

"Well, this construction has things pretty helter-skelter. And I don't really understand the point of it. You tell me the streetcar is going to Pontiac, and I'll say, that's a positive direction. But here—I don't know what a streetcar will do..." Bridges smiles in the sharp spring air. "The bus times are getting better overall—but this mess out here, it doesn't make sense for a street car to go less than a few miles... When we have this huge city that isn't connected all the way yet. It's nothing against the streetcar. But they seem so focused on that, all the millions of dollars of construction, and we can't even call 933-1300 for route updates..."

Indeed, the M1 streetcar is an attempt to attract choice riders. Here, I am keen to Bridges's

conceptualization of the streetcar, rooted in her own meaning making. In developing equitable public transportation strategies, and in planning cities in inclusive ways, the "experiential geographies" (McKittrick 2006, 53) of cross-sections of people must be prioritized. How does the pursuit of choice-riders impact the *majority* of transit riders? As Bridges's bus pulls up, I promise to write about the problems with the 933-1300 number as she requests, and we bid goodbye.

#### **ANNE CRAIG & WAITING FOREVER**

##### ***#53 Woodward @ Canfield: Midtown on a Tuesday evening***

The flow of pedestrians is steady on this day at the #53 bus stop at Canfield. There is, again, no bus bench. No shelter from the elements. This bus stop seems to be floating in time and space; there's M1 construction-related flooding going on, and water has backed up against the edge of the makeshift bus stop, as you can see in Figure 5. There are the same orange and white plastic barrels as lone buffer between autos and humans. Two men walk up. We stand in the construction-strewn Detroit shale, glittered with litter and cigarette butts, the cold air tinged with the crushing traffic exhaust, the early spring air challenging me to remain outside. The cars blur by just beyond construction barrels. The global flows of capitalism funding this M1 project seem to have

paradoxically slowed the flow of bus riders. This bus stop is surprisingly quite empty, although the streets are full of life.

An older man carrying a small bag of groceries, wearing a baseball cap and a weathered expression on his face walks by and takes a standing spot at the bus stop. An older woman rides by in a wheelchair, assuredly controlling her electronic chair while listening to earbuds. She seems to float over the city's dust- and grit-covered sidewalks. A woman with vivid orange hair walks by hurriedly toward the bank. A muscular man wearing a thick black vest walks by. Another man, shorter and thirtish, walks by wearing large rimmed glasses. An older woman smoking a cigarette and wearing a long trench coat paces while waiting for the bus. A middle-aged woman, Anne Craig, approaches from the direction of the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit. She agrees to speak with me.

Craig is tall with a whip-quick intellect. Her full, thick hair is in locks and falls far down her back. She has an air of knowledge about her—some kind of depth of knowledge that I can't put my finger on—that asserts itself through her cynical quips and the layers of Detroit-winter clothing she's donned today. When I ask Craig if Detroit's transportation system is effective, she laughs and tosses back, "No!!"

"Why not?"

"You have to wait forever!" Craig returns, as though it's self-evident.

"I haven't heard this description yet, tell me why?"

"Well, I live on the wrong way on the route, you see. All of this, you see"—Craig gestures at the M1 construction we're wading in—"this isn't for people who live my way. I live southeast. M1 won't even touch that. So, they're cutting routes going back southeast. So, I end up waiting forever, half the time..."

I nod and listen. This explains why I haven't heard exactly this description. I live *the wrong way on the route*, Craig says.

"The other thing is, whoever makes up the bus schedule apparently doesn't coordinate with connecting buses. If I'm coming to one point, where the bus is supposed to be at 5:20, why is it taking off at 5:17 before I get there? See, that's what I'm talking about. Nobody coordinates. Because, if I have a connecting bus, that I know is going to be there right at the time I get there... But it leaves a few minutes ahead of schedule... I miss the next connection because I'm late for the

first, without knowing it... Where is the coordination? Then I will have to wait until 6:17 or 6:20 for the next one. See... The southeast part, we're not a priority now..."

"Why is that about the southeast, do you think?" I ask.

"Because the M1 construction rerouted several buses. Like the Oakland route doesn't go down where it used to go. There's a senior citizen building down on Brush Street (in a small, near-downtown neighborhood southeast of Midtown Detroit). So, the senior citizens have to walk an extra few blocks to get on the Oakland bus if that's where they're trying to go. It rerouted a few buses. And the Mack bus also got rerouted. No one goes south down Woodward... Everyone goes north. Which is really not a problem for most people, but some of the buses have changed. Now the buses that used to come every half an hour, they come every hour now. So that's what I'm saying. If you miss that connection—it's an hour until the next one. They only run once an hour. So, the M1 is changing things and yet, here we are!"

In Craig's case, the built environment, including the nearby museum, a fine-dining restaurant, several upscale-casual restaurants, and a regional beer-and-burgers chain, does not guide her impressions. Rather, the reality of her bus routes as deprioritized due to urban process shape Craig's perceptions.

Craig muses that her routes were not a priority because of the reduction in bus service (and it would be difficult to argue with her analysis). As a result, Craig views DDOT as wholly ineffective and her view of the transit system is characterized poignantly as "waiting forever." Again, I argue that "experiential geographies" (McKittrick 2006, 53) shape perceptions as much as physical environment. Craig presents concrete evidence—her descriptions of her experience are supported with her references to empirical changes to bus service. However, the simultaneous changes to the physical environment, including more amenities around the bus stops, and the fact that Craig is waiting and riding in one of the most affluent neighborhoods in the city, does not figure central in her perspective. For Craig, the changes that matter to her are the ones impacting her lived experience in the city—living on the "wrong side" of the M1 and its shifting bus routes.

In considering the ethnographic accounts of Himes, Bridges, and Craig, this article pursues two



main strategies. First, I encourage an attention to interiority and subjectivity through my analysis. The method of doing so—the writerly ethnographic and the still image—offers a parsing-through of individual experiences amid an intersectional approach. Second, I am interested in a visual archive of the contradictions of the built environment alongside the ethnographic (Figure 6).

I locate links to interiority, images, and thoughts in philosopher Slavoj Žižek’s dream theorizing. Žižek writes,

The theoretical intelligence of the form of dreams does not consist in penetrating from the manifest content to its ‘hidden kernel’, to its latent dream-thoughts; it consists in the answer to the question: why have the latent dream-thoughts assumed such a form, why were they transposed into the form of a dream? (Žižek 1989, 295)

Žižek, on Marx and Freud’s analyses of dreams and commodities, offers that both philosophers move beyond the surface—beyond commodities and beyond dreams—into the realm of what Žižek calls “the secret” (1989, 295) or the underlying reason why. In this article, I’m interested in the “the secret” Žižek posits as beyond the realm of formalized commodities and physical environments. I shall argue that the space of

interior subjectivity, bracketed by Low (2003) and Jackson (2005) previously, is a location where Žižek’s theoretical intelligence makes an ethnographic landing.

### PARADOX OF PLACE

Prioritizing lived experience, subjectivity, and the philosophical in women’s experience of space and place, “physical materiality and imaginative configurations allow us to engage with a narrative that locates and draws on Black histories and Black subjects in order to make visible social lives.” (McKittrick 2006, x). Dialoguing with McKittrick’s discussion of the imaginative, imaginaries in anthropology may supersede cultural constructs (Castoriadis 1986; Strauss 2006) due to problematics of fixed, homogenous, and static notions of culture (Anderson 1983; Strauss 2006).

I offer that mental models of meaning making (Anderson 1983) are more useful when they are not applied to large groups of people; but rather, on a personal level (Strauss 2006) of individual subjectivity. More to the point, the idea of philosophical wandering (Cervenak 2014) by which African American women create their own understandings that are beyond the physical, allows an ontology of space and place—what I name the paradox of place (Stovall 2018)—that can bend expectation and yet remain attuned to intersectionality. That is, an understanding of space and place where subjects are keenly aware of, but not



Figure 6. Women bus riders and additional people waiting at the #53 bus stop on Woodward at Warren. M1 construction has shifted the bus stop into the street. Photo courtesy of the author, March 2016. [Color figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]



wedded to or limited by, the multidimensional politics of the environment. Building on McKittrick and destabilizing the mythical notion of women as objects, this article re-centers African American women as individual, subjective, nuanced, and complicated. I am interested in moving African American women's complex subjectivities into sharp relief and addressing the lack of attention to intersectionality (Roberts 2014) in scholarship of cities.

Anthropology's well-established genealogy of space and place literature (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003) studies and theorizes people and geographic interaction. This literature finds that the political-economic-historical-socioculturally constructed environments in which we live both shape human experiences, and are shaped and reshaped by people (Gilmore 2002; Lefebvre 1991; McKittrick 2006). As such, the intersections of time, embodiment, and cultural systems (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003) make space and place an ideal point of departure for studying human social life. Because space and place are, indeed, socially constructed and reproduced (Lefebvre 1991), they provide apt frames of analysis.

The bus stops analyzed in this project represent portals through which people's experiences on the streets of Detroit may be accessed—but not assumed homogenous on the basis of perceived group membership. In Detroit, bus stops are a cultural symbol (Holleran 2015) that depicts symbolic

power relationships (Bourdieu 1989) in a particular post-bankruptcy, twenty-first-century moment in time. In the Detroit case, the broken-down bus stops quote trends of shifting urban governance like privatization and financialization. Urban theorist Jane Jacobs wrote, “there is no point in developing public transportation during an era of city erosion” (Jacobs 1961, 369). Jacobs' notion is interesting to consider in the realm of Detroit, where sections of the city's transportation grid remain underdeveloped while others experience heavy investment. How city investment decisions land for women on the gritty, shale-and-dust coated streets of a shifting city, as seen in Figure 7, is central to my questions.

The ethnographic accounts presented in this article demonstrate the wealth of sensory experience, context, and the subjective details that emerge through ethnography at these bus stop field sites. I was interested in documenting ethnographic surprises (Fortun 2012; Soukup 2013) that complicate our notions of social life in cities. By this, I refer to particular contradictions that may be present between, and at the interstices of, public discourse around contested topics, and actual thoughts and experiences of those closest to the action, like the women I hung out with in this article. The surprises lend to the critical moments in an anthropological research process, as you listen closely and hear not what you expect to hear but what your informant wishes to say or not say. It is



Figure 7. Close-up view of the textures-on-the-street created by M1 construction, rains, and a winding-down Detroit winter. March 2016. Photo courtesy the author. [Color figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]

a choreography—choreography as strategy (Stovall 2018)—between the research effort and the phenomenological registers of oneself and the participant (Deeb and Marcus 2010; Katz and Csordas 2003).

In addition to hanging out with participants, visual documentation is a critical strategy. In the case of Detroit bus stops, the particularly surreal physical environment of some bus stops at the time, due to M1 construction, is contrasted with some bus stops having superior amenities and some having no amenities at all. Photography provides a glimpse of the space and the place to the reader that is otherwise limited by words. In the tradition of urban ethnographic research, the visual (Di Leonardo 1998; Stovall 2018; Wacquant 2004) alongside ethnographic accounts help bring research to life for the public. In addition to texts and words, a visual experience of being on the street is made partially accessible after the fact. Moreover, the opportunity to experience in my own body (Katz and Csordas 2003) the process of waiting, watching, and experiencing is critical to this work. In the affective labor (Hardt and Negri 2005) of being there and taking photographs as potential informants stood by (and after they had approved I do so), I visually archive some of the capital flows mediating urban spaces (Zukin 1993, 2011) at a moment in time.

Visual documentation, as well, requires self-reflexive critique. The anthropological theoretical shakeout of the late twentieth century saw cultural anthropologists (Clifford and Marcus 1986) calling for self-reflexivity and questioning the production of ethnographic knowledge. This critique was necessarily challenged by feminist anthropologists warning of the ironic elitism of Clifford and Marcus's timing, at a moment when more anthropologists from underrepresented groups were being recognized and entering the canon and discipline (Abu-Lughod 1991). The resulting disciplinary conversations around ethnographic generalization, subjectivity, and the politics of culture have made anthropological research more reflexive, sensitive, and subtle than before. Critique of politics of culture spans all forms of research and documentation, including photography and film. The politics of the making of an image must be considered. Moving from visual to moral, a critique of possible taken-for-granted assumptions about perceptions, such as the economic legitimacy of the M1 Rail, might be asserted. In this case, I focus on women's perceptions of city life and their own experiences—not on the transit systems

themselves. Further research could analyze the regional debates and political-economic figurings of Detroit's transit system itself, including the economic morality (Jung and Newman 2014) of the M1 Rail and related transit system projects.

This article searches out two Detroit zones. The first zone, called Midtown and located two miles north of downtown, is the neighborhood in which Wayne State University, a large, public research university is located. The second zone, an east side neighborhood called McDougall Hunt, is the site of my *Liquor Store Theatre* project (Stovall 2016, 2018) and also the site of my Detroit studio loft. The selection of these two neighborhoods is strategic—they are demographically and economically contrasting. As such, the sites provide a dynamic, vibrant view of the city in the current moment, in different phases of investment or re-investment (Smith 1979) known as gentrification and/or development.

The Midtown zone, known as the Cass Corridor prior to re-branding, is close to one square mile in area, with a population of about 7,700 residents, a density of approximately 8,200 people per square mile. This level of density is significantly higher than the Detroit average of about 5,000 people per square mile. At the time of the 2010 United States Census, the median annual household income in Midtown was approximately \$21,000. In 2013, the median monthly rent in the area was \$521.<sup>18</sup> Another factor in the Midtown zone, at the time of this writing, is the streetcar construction. The new streetcar system, called the M1 Railsystem (M1), was not a project of DDOT.

DDOT ran the buses and was publicly funded and operated. M1, operated by a not-for-profit entity, was a public-private project that was set to lay 3.3 miles of circular track along what was referred to locally as the Woodward Corridor.<sup>19</sup> M1 was considered problematic by critics as the \$140 million project would not significantly improve transportation for many current bus riders.<sup>20</sup> The 3.3-mile circular track streetcar, which opened in 2017, was to stop running at 10:00 p.m., leaving many critics to wonder who exactly the project would benefit.<sup>21</sup> At any rate, the physical impact of the M1 construction was tremendous in the Midtown zone, as you can see in Figure 8. In particular, along the #53 route that traversed Woodward Avenue, the bus stops themselves were disrupted.

McDougall Hunt is an east side Detroit neighborhood about 2 miles east of downtown Detroit.



**Figure 8.** View of M1 construction and passing traffic from the #53 bus stop at Woodward and Canfield. Photo courtesy of the author, March 2016. [Color figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](http://wileyonlinelibrary.com)]

Occupying an area of about 0.4 square miles, with just over 1,000 residents, the density rate in the zone of 2,600 people per square mile was well under the city average of 5,000 per square mile. The 2013 median household income of this zone of \$13,000 reflected the economic challenges, including private and public disinvestment faced by this zone. Different people with different perspectives imagined and experienced space and place in various ways. Himes, whom I spoke with in the McDougall Hunt zone, had markedly more positive ideas of public transit than Bridges and Craig, whom I spoke with in the more affluent Midtown zone. Ultimately, people's perceptions and experiences of cities are complicated, and I offer that to access these complexities, ethnographers must connect theory, method, and practice in dynamic ways, too.

## CONCLUSION

Through laboring at six Detroit bus stops, conducting interviews with thirty-three women bus riders, and taking over two hundred photographs with a feminist critical geographic approach to sidewalk fieldwork, I located complicated philosophical and interioric perspectives. In this research, I prioritize the role of the philosophical and the interior in African American cis-women and African American trans women's understandings of city life. However, without extensive interaction with my key informants, I can't trace the

backstories that contribute to shaping women's dynamic, always-shifting interiors. I shall continue to assert that while anthropologists seek to prioritize interiority of our subjects, we must understand and admit we can never fully know the interior of a person. The framework of these ethnographic encounters, therefore, is at once admittedly and deliberately thin (Jackson 2013).

Although I contend that people's philosophical, interioric positionings be increasingly considered in anthropology of the city, I don't think this work should be deployed to broad-brush cultural groups or to undermine political-historical-economic materialism. I maintain that the political economics of urban marginality (Wacquant 2015), bus-stop amenities or lack thereof, personal safety and risk, and other complicated factors of under-resourced environments are critical. I am interested in expanding anthropological undertakings of intersectional, subtle, ethnographic approaches. Here, I find that African American cis-women and African American trans women who might be incorrectly perceived as homogenized group members experienced the city quite variously and individually. I shall argue for nuanced and intersectional theorizing and practicing, where the unknown and the interior among our informants is both acknowledged and prioritized.

Through attention to such nuance in sidewalk ethnography, we may conduct enriched ethnographic research. Himes, as a trans woman,



is more likely to face violence in public spaces (Jauk 2013) than the cis-gender women interviewed. However, Himes denies an overdetermination of concern for her personal safety; and, on the day I spoke with her at the bus stop, the other bus riders did not single Himes out, and in my perspective, she was recognizably a trans woman. Acknowledging the importance of what is said and not said, however, Himes's lack of interest in discussing safety could be read as deliberate avoidance. Himes may have, in fact, been understating her own fears out of a concern for her personal safety so urgent that she wishes to conceal it. Still, in the interview, her perceptions of Detroit as moving in a positive place are centered by her own philosophical and empirical wanderings—toward her master's degree, her goal of helping people “low to high,” and her pathways to and from the neighborhood in which she grew up. Himes isn't in a utopic world. Rather, she says “I love it all” to describe her perceptions of Detroit. She includes both the political economic reality of “the 'hood” and the philosophical register of “home” in her abstract, theoretical description.

Smith and Ellis, who were interviewed at the most amenity-rich bus stop surveyed in this work, report being concerned with their safety, although they were traveling together. Bridges's ambivalent experience is shaped as well, by her concern with what might happen as she waits alone on the deep west side. I do not diminish these concerns; however, I reflect upon the complexities of experiences of space and place. Craig's negative perceptions of the city were based on her positionality—deprioritized based on geography—in what she saw as the new M1 streetcar “choice-rider” hierarchy. Craig's perception aligned with her particular reality of the day to day, in that her bus routes were recently cut. Craig's, Bridges's, Smith's, Ellis's, and Himes's cases each provide ethnographic moments in which subjectivity connects with politics of space and place.

The thirty-three African American women bus riders who hung out with me in this thin description (Jackson 2013) sidewalk ethnography, and the African American women whose ethnographic encounters are profiled here, shared nuance that I hope is reflected in these pages. More to the point, I hope that with this work I will encourage nuanced, African American feminist critical geographic ethnographic approaches (Davis 2016; Gilmore 2002; hooks 1984, 2013; McKittrick 2006).

Moreover, multimodal attention to interioric (Jackson 2005) philosophical wanderings (Cervnak 2014) and paradox of place (Stovall 2018) broaden the possibilities of urban anthropological research. And at the same time, the complexity of human existence challenges us to continuously critique theory, method, and practice.

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## NOTES

1. Choreography as strategy is an analytic for method and practice that takes a performance studies centered, broad-spectrum approach to understanding movement, flow, and process across geographies, historical periods, and people. The analytic provides foundational support to my fieldwork, moving from bus stop to bus stop, searching out informants on the streets and sidewalks in areas of the city connected to my own daily choreography. Paradox of place is an analytic for the critical, philosophical, and historical-materialist ethnographic investigation of geographies. With the paradox of place approach, I offer that an attention to both empirical and phenomenological registers of spaces and places is required to best analyze conditions and systems, and to generate social theory. With an approach interested in both the subtle and the concrete, I offer a more sophisticated analysis of reality emerges.

2. See: “Annual Estimates of the Resident Population: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2017: 2017 Population Estimates.” In “American Fact Finder: Community Facts.” *United States Census Bureau* website. Accessed September 5, 2018. <https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>. See also: “Quick Facts: Detroit city, Michigan.” *United States Census Bureau* website. Accessed September 5, 2018.



<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/detroitcitymichigan/PST045217>.

3. For data on the median annual income of Detroit public-transportation riders, see: Maciag, Mike. 2014. "Public Transportation's Demographic Divide." *Governing Magazine: The State & Localities; Infrastructure & Environment* website. February 25. Accessed September 4, 2018. <http://www.governing.com/topics/transportation-infrastructure/gov-public-transportation-riders-demographic-divide-for-cities.html>. For data on Detroit's median household income and median per capita income, see "Quick Facts: Detroit city, Michigan" in note 2.

4. See Maciag (2014) in note 3. Note that the M1 Rail, or QLine, was under construction at the time of this fieldwork. At the time of publication of this article, the M1 Rail's Phase One construction project was complete.

5. See Maciag (2014) in note 3.

6. Henderson, Stephen, and Kristi Tanner. 2015. "Region's Transit System Can't Get Many to Job Centers." *Detroit Free Press* website. February 22. Accessed September 4, 2018. <https://www.freep.com/story/opinion/columnists/stephen-henderson/2015/02/22/detroit-bus-transit/23775245>.

7. See Maciag (2014) in note 3.

8. See Maciag (2014) in note 3.

9. Laitner, Bill. 2015. "Heart and Sole: Detroiters Walks 21 miles in Work Commute." *Detroit Free Press* website. February 10. Accessed September 4, 2018. <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/oakland/2015/01/31/detroit-commuting-troy-rochester-hills-smart-ddot-ubs-banker-woodward-buses-transit/22660785/>

10. Winfrey, Carton. 2015. "Fund-raiser for Detroit Commuter Reaches 300K." *Detroit Free Press* website. February 5. Accessed September 5, 2018. <https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2015/02/05/robertson-update/22926493/>

11. See note 6.

12. "Sit on It Detroit: Bus stops with free books." *BBC News* website. March 12, 2015. Accessed September 4, 2018. <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/magazine-31594061/sit-on-it-detroit-bus-stops-with-free-books>.

13. Phelan, Mark. 2017. "Dream Cruise Revs Up For Bigger And Better Show For 2017." *Detroit Free Press* website. July 30. Accessed September 4, 2018. <https://www.freep.com/story/money/cars/mark-phelan/2017/07/31/dream-cruise-revs-up-bigger-and-better-show-2017/518536001/>

14. Pontiac is a working-class northern suburb about twenty-five miles from downtown Detroit.

15. Stovall, Maya. 2015. "Maya Stovall on Liquor Store Theatre, In Conversation with Biba Bell." *Critical Correspondence, Conversations. Movement Research* website. May 19, 2015. Accessed February 15, 2019. <https://movementresearch.org/publications/critical-correspondence/maya-stovall-in-conversation-with-biba-bell>.

16. Deep east and deep west are geographical vernacular terms used by many Detroiters to describe their proximity versus east and west-running avenues, inner-ring suburbs, and downtown Detroit. At 139-square miles, Detroit's expansive geography is divided east-west by Woodward Avenue, and north-south by Eight Mile Road. The further east or west that one is, versus Woodward Avenue, and the closer to inner-ring suburban city limit, results in a use of the term. Near east or near west refers to the neighborhoods close to the border avenues or the downtown area.

17. Eastpointe is an inner-ring, working-class Detroit suburb in Macomb County. Cass Technical High School is an elite public magnet high school in Detroit, requiring an admissions test for entrance and maintenance of a minimum GPA. Cass Tech is considered among the top three public high schools in the city, the others are called King High School and Renaissance High School.

18. See "Quick Facts: Detroit city, Michigan" in note 2.

19. DeVito, Lee. 2016. "Let's Be Honest, Detroit's M-1 Rail is Shaping Up to be a Streetcar that Leaves Much to be Desired" *Metro Times Detroit* website. January 18. Accessed September 4, 2018. <https://www.metrotimes.com/news-hits/arc-hives/2016/01/18/lets-be-honest-detroits-m-1-rail-is-shaping-up-to-be-a-streetcar-that-leaves-much-to-be-desired>.

20. Burns, Gus. 2015. "Delayed Detroit M1 Rail won't be ready for passengers until 2017." *MLive.com* website. August 5. Accessed September 4, 2018. [https://www.mlive.com/news/detroit/index.ssf/2015/08/delayed\\_detroit\\_m1\\_rail\\_wont\\_b.html](https://www.mlive.com/news/detroit/index.ssf/2015/08/delayed_detroit_m1_rail_wont_b.html).

21. See note 19.

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