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## TERRITORIAL MARKERS: A CASE STUDY OF THE PUBLIC ART OF BRONZEVILLE

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From “Art Parties and Territorial Markers: Art Networks in Urban, Ethnic Communities”  
(Grams, Forthcoming)

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# **TERRITORIAL MARKERS: A CASE STUDY OF THE PUBLIC ART OF BRONZEVILLE**

Art producers working in localized ethnic urban communities produce public art and cultural facilities that function to mark and identify local territory. These producers rely on network relationships based in shared local purposes to attract and involve participants. In this paper, which is drawn from a two-year study of urban art production in Chicago, I have identified how art producers worked together through a network structure using largely public resources. I have categorized the networks that produced these territorial markers as either empowerment or gentrification networks. The empowerment networks enabled local people to stake historic, political, or social claim to the area; gentrification networks sought to transform local cultures and increase the value of local resources by attracting outsiders. The simultaneous existence of these two network types created a productive tension that enabled access to new resources while preserving a sense of local ownership. To illustrate the role of territorial markers in a local community, I provide here a case study of the production of the Public Art of Bronzeville in Chicago in the 1990s with particular focus on the monuments on Martin Luther King Drive that were dedicated in 1996, in conjunction with the National Democratic Convention. The King Drive project was part of local activity stimulating nearly 10 years of building, renovation and restoration, and involving more than \$100 million in public funds invested to build cultural facilities and public art. Yet, while property values have skyrocketed in this former ghetto, tourists are not pouring into Bronzeville and there is limited recognition of area's importance to Black history. There is limited infrastructure to enable public access to local culture, leaving artists and collectors interested in local art to engage in private activities in home-based studios and home-based galleries in Bronzeville, or leave the community to attend publicly announced art events.

## **Typology of Art Production Networks**

I focus my analysis on the art production network, that is, the social relationships involved in producing art. These are repeated and enduring interactions involving trust, reciprocity and shared local interests. Rather than being a diffuse or disorganized world, an emerging market or an informal organization—all lesser forms of a more developed system—networks are efficient arrangements through which producers make art. The network structure based upon trust and reciprocity, rather than a hierarchical organizational structure, enables efficient identification and exploitation of local resources; survival of individual art producers; and innovation that empowers marginalized racial and ethnic cultures (Burns and Stalker 1961, Blau and Schoenherr 1971)

In “Art Parties and Territorial Markers” (Grams forthcoming) I have identified a total of six network types based on their local purposes: empowerment networks, aesthetic networks, autonomy networks, gentrification networks, problem-solving networks and youth service networks. By organizing a typology based on local purpose, I showed how a network fits into an urban landscape. As such, this ethnography shows how social and cultural boundaries are constructed within localities. Local purposes of these networks include: 1) to mark and identify local territory, 2) to cultivate shared preferences, values and meaning about cultural objects, 3) to increase access to occupational opportunities for artists, 4) to increase value of local resources, 5) to solve a local issue or problem, or 6) to involve youth in educational activities (*see Appendix A: Typology of Local Art Production Networks*). In this paper, I discuss only the empowerment networks and the territorial markers that were produced through the Public Art of Bronzeville.

### **What are Territorial Markers?**

I use the term *territorial markers* to codify the function of public art in local communities. Territorial markers exist in the form of locally-produced public art, plaques and cultural facilities, and provide public evidence of a local cultural community. This

function contrasts with public art typically produced and supported by, for example, the Department of Cultural Affairs in Chicago, which mobilizes resources to enable tourists and nonresidents of a local area to identify landmarks or “locators” that facilitate their way throughout the city. “Locators” produced by the Chicago Percent for Art Program featured works by nationally or internationally known artists and therefore linked the metropolitan area to an international art world, whereas local producers exploit local values and aesthetic preferences to stake claim to local space. The production of territorial markers nonetheless involves mobilization of political and cultural capital. Territorial markers in local ethnic communities serve to publicly redefine values, histories, struggles, and hopes of increasingly powerful members of middle-class ethnic and racial communities, while allowing community members to maintain the power base established through historic struggles of their racial and ethnic communities.

Dedication of the “Public Art of Bronzeville” by Mayor Richard M. Daley just after the 1996 Democratic Convention revealed little of the processes that led to its creation. The mayor said, “The King Drive gateway project is the keystone of an ongoing program to rejuvenate the Bronzeville Area” (*Chicago Tribune*, September 11, 1996). Spanning 1.5 miles, it includes the *Monument to the Great Northern Migration* by Alison Saar; a 15-foot bronze statue located in a circular median at 26th Street and King Drive; the *Bronzeville Walk of Fame*, composed of 91 bronze, diamond-shaped plaques embedded in the sidewalk between 26th and 35th Streets commemorating more than 104 current and former Bronzeville residents and each bearing the phrase “City of Chicago, Richard M. Daley, Mayor”; a 14-foot-by-7-foot bronze *Map of Historic Bronzeville*, identifying the historic area and historic sites located within it; recognition panels providing a design motif as decorative fencing; 22 sculptural park benches; and the restored World War I *Victory Monument* and bronze *Doughboy* atop the monument commemorating Black service in the war located on King Drive just south of 35th Street.

This case study of the Public Art of Bronzeville illustrates how territorial markers are produced. This particular project also illustrates innovation in streetscape design, Black history, community-based art, public art and community development. The

circuits producing this art were largely public: Participants included an array of public officials including aldermen, commissioners, bureaucrats, public and private agency employees, consultants, and artists. The creation of this public art was accomplished through strategic access to large caches of external public funds. They created the name and historical narrative linking the area to the racially segregated but economically diverse Black community that was once contained on Chicago's South Side. By placing "Blackness" as a central theme into public discourse in the form of permanent public art objects, these territorial markers exist at the nexus of struggles over cultural meanings and the social and economic future of this local area. They created a social and political identity for the growing population of educated, middle-class professionals establishing new residences in this area, and they marked the territory as historic property of the Black community. The resources used and the local concerns that enabled its existence illustrate how public art deployed as territorial markers redefined a community, reconnected the community to an historical narrative, and enabled community revitalization.

### **What is Bronzeville?**

The Public Art of Bronzeville defines the near south side of Chicago as a place of significance to Black history. In the post-Civil War United States, "bronzeville" was a generic term referring to a predominantly Black town or area. Interviews, tours and Web sites connecting Chicago's historic Bronzeville to present economic development efforts drew predominantly on one sociological study and one book of poetry. "Bronzeville" was the place described by St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton in *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* ([1946] 1962) and by Pulitzer Prize-winning poet and former Illinois Poet Laureate Gwendolyn Brooks in *Blacks* ([1945] 1987). Bronzeville existed in the first half of the 20th century in the area south of 26th Street, north of 51st Street and east of what it is today the Dan Ryan Expressway. According to Drake and Cayton,

The Negro community in Chicago began as a haven or refuge for escaped slaves. It emerged a century later as Black Metropolis inhabited by the grandchildren and great-

grandchildren of slaves. In the years between, it had become a citadel of economic and political power in the midst of Midwest Metropolis—an integral part of the city political machine and a reservoir for industrial labor and personal and domestic servants (1962:755).

While Bronzeville was never a city with corporate boundaries, Drake and Cayton's narrative highlighted Bronzeville as "a city within a city". Bronzeville as a place on Chicago's South Side was created as a result of two Great Migrations of Blacks from the American South into the area. The first wave came during World War I, from 1914 to 1918, to fill industrial jobs available in part due to limits on immigration during the war. A second migration took place during and after World War II. Over this 45-year period, Chicago's Black population, which was contained in this area by segregation laws, increased by 100 times, from 30,150 in 1900 to 337,000 in 1944 (Drake and Cayton [1945] 1961:8). Availability of jobs meant expansion of the Black middle class and the creation of a cultural consciousness of Bronzeville in the early 20th Century. According to Drake and Cayton, "the middle class way of life" meant stability, education, disciplined public behavior and people who knew the ropes in the urban world, wanted to get ahead, and were decent ([1945] 1961:715). A series of poems in *Blacks* ([1945] 1987) by Brooks titled "A Street in Bronzeville" described the lives of everyday people living in Bronzeville. Among her topics: old *marrieds*, kitchenettes, Sadie and Maud, domestic workers, a Negro hero and "Bessie of Bronzeville Visits Mary and Norman at a Beach House in New Buffalo [MI]."

In the area, high-rise public housing built in the decade 1950-1960 was followed by a quarter-century of economic disinvestments. The Black working and middle classes moved further south and west. The area became known as Chicago's worst ghetto. The only university located in the area, Illinois Institute of Technology, threatened to move in the 1980s if there was not major investment by local, state and federal agencies. The city's Black population continued to expand throughout Chicago's south and west sides, leaving only 7% of Chicago's 1,053,739 non-Hispanic Blacks living in Bronzeville (2000 U.S. Census). At the end of the century, Bronzeville's population was relatively small compared to the 1940s, but still predominantly African American (89%). In 1940,

Bronzeville's population was 337,000; in 2000, it was 73,088 (2000 U.S. Census). With the majority of its population living with household incomes below \$10,000, vacant lots and high-rise public housing defined the area.

In 1990, after a steady trickle of middle-class Blacks moved into the area to restore the remaining mansions and greystones, a consortium of organizations came together to develop The Mid-South Strategic Plan. The subsequent redevelopment focusing on attracting the Black middle class back to the area, which their "Restoring Bronzeville" plan hoped to accomplish, had the potential to create a third Great Migration to the area. The plan focused on reviving the area's cultural history and economic diversity. The idea of adopting the name "Bronzeville" for the area, and producing cultural monuments and cultural facilities as part of this plan were framed upon aesthetic and cultural practices embracing Black heritage, Black accounts of history, and the tradition of community-based public art focused on Black empowerment. One promoter describe the area's history as representing "The jewel of the Southside...second only to Harlem in providing a legacy of cultural gifts to America and the world" (Soul of America.com 2004). Like the Emerald City or Mecca, the name "Bronzeville" was to be a symbol. It referred to a specific place and time where Black life, culture, business, and politics thrived as if it were its own city; it was to represent Black cultural and economic autonomy.

### **Empowerment Networks**

The production of the King Drive Monuments represented a turning point in the area's history. Who was involved, how the knowledge was constructed, and how the public art came to exist on King Drive could be understood by looking at several empowerment networks. Included were circuits of teachers constructing legitimacy for Black accounts of history, circuits of historic preservationists connecting this knowledge to the significance of the area, circuits of community planners writing a strategic plan focused on "restoring Bronzeville," circuits of community advocates urging the

importance of the plan to the community, and circuits of artists and arts administrators linking ideas in the work to local artistic traditions. These circuits were not part of a single planned and systematically organized development process one might consider typical of “an ongoing program to rejuvenate”<sup>1</sup> a community. Rather, the process was one in which chance and weak links led various individuals to pieces of information and opportunities necessary to further a personal or group agenda. When the idea was carried as far as it could be carried, another individual or group with an alternative agenda—one that might even have competed with the previous individual or group—picked up the idea and helped move things towards the next phase of the development. In each phase, there was little certainty about what was going to happen next. Each step of development illustrated how an idea traveled through social networks of weak ties to someone who both needed it and used it to accomplish a task at hand. It was because of this network structure—through which ideas developed and were carried out—that the innovation occurred at all and that no single person really knew how it all happened.

Involvement by both local and non-local participants, use of external funding and other external resources, and access to ideas external to the locality challenge traditional claims of local art as “authentic.” However, a broad network of diverse participants connected through art production circuits—focused on local projects and accessing the opportunity, power, and resources only available through the locality— provides the aura of authenticity to such innovative, big-budget territorial projects. Many people who were ultimately important to the existence of the art that identified and marked this territory were therefore participants in the art production process. However, I found that many were not even aware of their roles as collaborators in the construction of these territorial markers. These markers were not simply products of the excess cash in government budgets in the 1990s. In addition, they are products of the local history and local practices to resist cultural domination.

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<sup>1</sup> Quote by Mayor Richard M. Daley at the dedication of the public art on September 10, 1996, as reported in the *Chicago Tribune*.

## **Creation of a Historic District at the Core of Economic Development**

Ground zero for the project revolves around Tim Samuelson, a white, young English major at Roosevelt University who became an architectural preservation enthusiast mining the South Side for pictures and artifacts of structures by noted architects Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Sullivan and the like. His additional interest in ragtime music led him to discover Joe Jordan, a composer who made \$40,000 from “Lovie Joe,” a song that was used to introduce Fanny Brice at the Ziegfield Follies. Jordan was also one of the first Black entrepreneurs to build an office building in Bronzeville, and this knowledge led Samuelson to trace similar structures. Samuelson landed a job approving building permits for the Chicago Commission on Landmarks and used his position to propose the Black Metropolis/Bronzeville Historic District. He proceeded, as he described it, to “do an end run on the system.” The commission approved his proposal, but it was rejected by the Chicago Department of Planning because it centered on decrepit buildings in which there was little public interest in preserving. However, it was then accepted onto the National Historic Register. The district existed on paper, but as crumbling, neglected buildings in Chicago’s Black ghetto.

The idea of creating an historic district honoring the significance of Black Metropolis/Bronzeville became the seed for a circuit of people interested in community development. Among the next efforts were those spearheaded by the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) and First National Bank of Chicago (now Bank One) and separate efforts spearheaded by the Chicago Department of Planning; and the Clinton administration. They formed two separate planning groups involving local community members. In 1989, IIT and Bank One assembled the South Side Partners, a committee of 19 community members to advocate for “capital investment in communities adjacent to IIT.” This suspended the school’s threat to leave this area. Meanwhile, in 1990, the McCormick-Tribune Foundation awarded the City of Chicago a \$300,000 grant to

prepare a comprehensive community development plan that would “reflect the needs and wishes of the community surrounding IIT” (Campbell 1993). The grant led to the assembly of the Mid-South Planning Group, involving the South Side Partners as part of its assembly of 81 local residents and community leaders, five city agencies, seven consultants from an architecture firm, and two real estate consultants. Among the people who were members of both the South Side Partners and the Mid-South Planning Group were Sakoni Karanja, executive director of the Center for New Horizons, a Bronzeville social service agency, and a MacArthur Genius Award Winner; Leroy Kennedy from IIT; and Gregory Washington from the Grand Boulevard Federation.

After three years of weekly meetings and two facilitated retreats, Mid-South produced the draft of a comprehensive community strategic plan. The Mid-South Strategic Plan, with its central theme “Restoring Bronzeville,” focused on land-use development that should occur because of, as it stated, “the rich cultural history the Mid-South enjoys... a number of buildings and neighborhoods are designated architectural and historic landmarks” (Campbell 1993:16). The plan also noted, “Many Mid-South structures are listed on the National Register of Historic Places” (Campbell 1993:29), but did not cite Samuelson or the report by the Chicago Commission on Landmarks.

This circuit interested in community development completed the Mid-South Plan in September 1993—just in time for an assembly of bureaucrats and politicians organized under the Chicago Department of Planning and Development to apply for funds in a new federal program announced by the Clinton administration to be announced the following month. The Empowerment Zone (EZ) program

was established in the Fall of 1993 under the Federal Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act and is the capstone of the Clinton Administration community revitalization strategy. The program is designed to empower people and communities across the United States by inspiring Americans to work together to develop a strategic plan designed to create jobs and opportunities in our nation's most impoverished urban and rural areas (City of Chicago 1998).

The EZ designation meant that Chicago received a \$100 million Social Service Block Grant (SSBG) to implement strategic plans for three local community areas. Among these were Bronzeville, Pilsen, and North Lawndale. EZ status meant that each

community received priority consideration for other federal programs and direct assistance from federal officials to facilitate implementation of their EZ Strategic Plan. In addition, a range of tax incentives designed to stimulate private investment and job creation would be available to qualified businesses.

Bronzeville was declared part of Empowerment Zone No. 3 in 1993. Its EZ status has played a particularly important role in the production of artwork and cultural facilities as territorial markers identifying the area with historic Bronzeville. The availability of EZ funding fueled initiatives by local groups to compete for funding. Meanwhile, while the Mid-South Plan played an important role in winning the EZ status, it was officially adopted by the Chicago Department of Planning and Development as the plan for the area. This meant that few of its goals actually have been carried out. For example, the plan identified 43rd Street as the site for a Blues District because it was the location of the historic Checkerboard Lounge and the home of Muddy Waters. Instead, local initiatives spearheaded by Alderman Dorothy Tillman invested in building a 47th Street Blues District, near her office. Muddy Waters' house has remained largely abandoned as an historic site, and the Checkerboard Lounge was closed in 2003 only to be moved to Hyde Park by The University of Chicago. Furthermore, the EZ process was anything but easy. The complex grant application process essentially meant that only groups already successful playing the game of government grants could compete. Projects that were funded were the result of people skilled in writing federal grants and involved in broad networks through which information traveled, enabling them to identify opportunities and provide solutions to stumbling blocks in the application process.

Needless to say, the city's commitment to "Restoring Bronzeville" waned. The next circuit to take up the effort was a circuit of community activists under the heading of the South Side Partnership, which saw its role as one to "maintain [the city's] accountability to the residents of Bronzeville through focused implementation of the Mid-South Plan" (Illinois Institute of Technology 1999). In addition to IIT and Bank One, the South Side Partnership included large nonprofit social service agencies, several community groups, and local hospitals and universities. Among these were

representatives from Centers For New Horizons, Lugenia Burns Hope Center, Chicago Urban League, Elliott Donnelley Center, Gap Community Organization, Grand Boulevard Federation, Mercy Hospital, Provident Hospital, Michael Reese Hospital, the Mid-South Planning and Development Commission, Partners In Community Development, The University of Chicago, and STRIVE/Chicago Employment Services, plus a program officer from John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

Following conventions of civil rights activism that argued for “our fair share” of public resources, the South Side Partners exerted political pressure resulting in a \$10 million allotment from the “McPier” authority to rehabilitate King Drive through funds generated from sales taxes. According to Sakoni Karanja, director of the Center for New Horizons, “Someone got the idea that some of the money generated for the McCormick Place project should be going to our community.” The MCPier funding included \$500,000 for a “design element” for the streetscape that would later become the Public Art of Bronzeville. From the city’s perspective, this was a streetscape project and was represented as a logical appropriation to improve the major transportation feeder from the South Side to McCormick Place Convention Center. In addition, the project fit the city’s community redevelopment strategy “Life Along the Boulevards,” centered on re-investing in the rehabilitation of network of boulevards that connect city parks.

No one has yet been able to tell me who and how this money was appropriated. According to Mike Lash, then Director of Public Art for the city, “It must have come out of project development in Zoning. The Hyatt [McCormick Place hotel] and new Donnelley [access] was being done, and they must have given some directive stating that you ‘have to provide better transportation to McCormick from the South Side feeder,’ something like that.”

Once the money was appropriated, there was no mechanism to distribute it or manage an art production effort. According to Lash, “We were hired to run a Percent for Art-type program. This was a test balloon, as it was not really a ‘Percent for Art’ project,” which applied only to the construction of buildings. Rather, Lash said. “it was to be a community-based public art project.” The Chicago Percent for Art program,

created by municipal ordinance in 1978, required 1% (now 1.33%) of the construction cost of public buildings to be budgeted for the purchase of artwork. However, it did not apply to transportation infrastructure or street beautification projects like the King Drive Project.

### **The Public Art Program**

The Public Art Program of the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) assembled the next circuit of people who the empowerment effort who would then oversee the selection and production of art for the King Drive renovation project. The Public Art Program would manage the creation and installation of the art. At this point, the network of people involved in the project had grown to include participants from the federal government's Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the city's landmarks commission, and the Chicago Departments of Transportation, Economic Development, Education, Health, and Public Safety, as well as 81 local community members.

The Public Art Program then convened an additional committee, involving nine community representatives. Of these new network participants, only two had taken part in the Mid-South Plan: Jeff Johnson, property manager at Prairie Shores Apartments, 2851 South King Drive, and Susan Campbell, from Wendell Campbell Associates, the Black-owned architectural firm that wrote the strategic plan and designed the streetscape project. Among the other committee members were local residents, members of the Gap Neighborhood Association, (which had won historic landmark designation for its residential homes); the principal of Dunbar Vocational High School, 3000 South King Drive; the librarian for the M.L. King Branch; and Kerry James Marshall, a Black painter and MacArthur "genius award" winner whose studio was in Bronzeville. The committee was involved in decision-making regarding the content of art projects and the final selection of artists, with Barbara Koenen, project manager for the Public Art Program, guiding the process.

According to Koenen, “Originally, it was going to be one big, expensive piece, like a Richard Hunt sculpture [Hunt is a noted Black Chicago sculptor]. That kind of top-down management of some single design element, directed by the architecture firm, is typical in streetscape projects. I am not sure who said it, but someone said you can get a lot more art than one piece of art for \$500,000.” Koenen credited Alicia Mazur (Berg), then a preservation planner (who later became the Commissioner of Planning and Development for the City of Chicago,) with making the suggestion that ultimately meant activating the community through the development of art. “From my mind, the art was to bring history and the potential vitality of Bronzeville into the public sphere,” said Koenen.

### **Representation of the community**

The Public Art Program interpreted “community-based” to mean involving the community representatives in the art planning and selection process. According to Lash, the Public Art Program’s role followed its role established through the Percent for Art Program. He said,

We bring the group together, seven people. We find out what their needs and wants are. This community thought they needed a gateway. They immediately thought of the Puerto Rican flag [that marks the entrance to Humboldt Park]. “We need a transition element,” they said. They wanted a gateway, but we don’t like that kind of thing [like the Puerto Rican arch]. It’s not art, it is contrived, not timeless. But the main thing was the cost. King Drive is a double boulevard. The Doughboy [*Victory*] monument was built in 1926. It holds the same power and sway today as when it was opened. The Alison Saar monument does the same thing. Bronzeville isn’t about a country. It is about a neighborhood. It’s about Diaspora, the Gap, redlining, and the Great Migration. That is what public art should do. It is for the community. [Bronzeville] wanted people to know there was culture and history here. They wanted to give a sense of the culture and history.

For the Public Art Program, “representation of the community” usually meant including representatives from the community on the advisory committee. But in this situation, the boundary was expanded to involve the community in the interpretation of the history of the community through the creation of its public art.

Koenen managed the community-involved art selection process and the creation and installation of artwork as part of the King Drive project. She said, “The main elements of the public art—the map, the Walk of Fame, the park benches and the monument—were all based on success stories from other cities. The committee had been selected, but I assembled them for the first meeting.”

As an artist and activist who had worked on several art projects designed as “community empowerment” projects, Koenen, now in the role of a bureaucratic functionary, wove together activist art conventions from the community-based mural movement with bureaucratic conventions typical of the Percent for Art program. The result was “The Public Art of Bronzeville.” It is an *atypical* product of the program according to Jon Pounds, director of the Chicago Public Art Group (CPAG) that specialized in “community-based” art projects, and who was an occasional critic of the public art produced through the program. Pounds acknowledged that this project was the exception, not the standard approach for the program. “In most public art commissions handled by the Public Art Program, there is not an expectation of dialogue with the community. There is minimal community engagement only at the lowest level, where one or two community members are invited to participate in the viewing and selecting of slides presented by the program staff,” Pounds said.

Koenen acknowledged that she used a dialogical framework typical of CPAG, artist Laurie Palmer, the artist collective Temporary Services, and Mary Jane Jacob’s “Culture in Action,” which all see art as an opportunity to engage the community. “It was *my* mission, not the mission of the Public Art Program,” Koenen emphasized. For Koenen, the Public Art of Bronzeville is “probably the most significant public art in Chicago, but few people know about it.” The project included the intent, the process, and imagery typical of activist murals produced in the Bronzeville area in the 1960s and ’70s.

Unlike the activist murals of CPAG, this community engagement emerged through the bureaucratic process. The committee included nine community members—now outnumbering the other panel members—two art representatives, four city government representatives, and a project coordinator who worked for the Public Art

Program. The committee looked at slides that, as Lash pointed out, “Barb slogged to meetings at Griffin Funeral Home” on King Drive. The primary involvement by community representatives was the identification of the types of art and artists to be included in the project, and then in the approval of artists’ proposals. One important discussion was about what name to put on the community that was to be illustrated in the 14-foot-by-17-foot bronze map of the area. The debate was between Black Metropolis or Bronzeville. “I was lobbying heavily for Bronzeville, while some people wanted Black Metropolis. To me, Black Metropolis sounded heavy-handed, unempowering, like the Fritz Lang movie,” Koenen said.

The committee wanted to highlight the work of nationally known and locally known Black artists. At least one committee member identified a local artist unknown to the Public Art Program, who ultimately was chosen to create a bench. The committee also played an important role in who was to be featured on the *Walk of Fame*. It solicited nominations from the community at large, compiled a list of people to be honored, and made the final selections to be featured on the bronze plaques. There was no systematic historical research done to inform the selection process. Direct interaction with the artists was nonetheless limited once the artists were chosen; Koenen and Lash could recall only two such interactions. One interaction involved the *Monument to the Great Northern Migration*, when artist Alison Saar presented a miniature wax model of the traveler who represented all the “souls” who migrated to Chicago. Originally, the traveler’s hand was outstretched in a way that one committee member negatively interpreted as “begging.” Saar took the arm and twisted it up so it looked like he was waving and asked, “How about this?” The committee approved this new pose. In another instance, committee members unsuccessfully tried to get one artist to make a bench out of a metal that would not rust.

## Unveiling the Largest Public Art Piece in Chicago

Two nationally known Black women artists who live outside of Bronzeville were commissioned by the city to create the *Monument* and the *Walk of Fame*. As already mentioned, Alison Saar from Los Angeles designed the *Monument to the Great Northern Migration* and Geraldine McCullough from Oak Park, a Chicago suburb, designed plaques used in the *Bronzeville Walk of Fame*. Gregg LeFevre, an artist from upstate New York, designed the map of Bronzeville, with the support of a cadre of local researchers. Fourteen other artists, nine from the greater Chicago area, created sculptural park benches and decorative fencing referred to as “recognition panels.” Of these, two artists, Apache Wakefield and Kimberli Johnson, were Black artists from Chicago’s South Side. Unlike most community-based, community-engagement art projects, these artists had little direct interaction with the community or the community representatives. In fact, some of the artists never even came to Chicago.

The 15-foot statue that is the *Monument to the Great Northern Migration* was made of cast bronze. It depicts an optimistic male traveler facing north toward the Chicago Loop, hand raised, and carrying a suitcase bound with rope. The diamond-shaped plaque just north of the statue reads:

This bronze monument depicts a man wearing a suit of shoe soles rising from a mound of soles. The soles, worn and full of holes, symbolize the often difficult journey from the south to the north. It commemorates all the African American men and women [souls] who migrated to Chicago after the Civil War. [attribution:] Alison Saar, Sculptor. City of Chicago, Public Art Collection, Richard M. Daley, Mayor. 1996.

The monument has served many purposes. It is the gateway to Bronzeville from the Chicago’s McCormick Place convention center; it was among the mayor’s beautification projects installed in time for the 1996 Democratic National Convention; it identified the area as an important historic area; and it emphasized the cultural contributions of Blacks who migrated to Chicago in the early 20th century. According to Saar, it represented the creative spirit that Blacks brought to Chicago. “Though the case appears to be bursting with its contents, upon closer inspection it is empty... except for the creative spirit and

culture brought from the South. The man's eyes also reflect each individual's personal hopes and aspirations for a new life in a new land," the artist said.

Mike Lash, then director of Chicago's Public Art Program, said, "The sculpture is both loved and hated." It is loved because it commemorated the African Americans who migrated to Chicago. It placed Blackness into public discourse in the form of a permanent monument. It linked the South Side of Chicago to Black history. The sculpture was hated in part because its folksy appearance lacked the nobility and glory typical of monumental commemorative sculptures. Charles Bowen, a Bronzeville collector and one of Daley's closest advisors, said, "It could have been more dignified." The "souls" that cover the traveler appear to be scales or feathers—reminding some local critics of the historic torture of Blacks who were tarred and feathered. The sculpture also could be interpreted as an image of a man who is facing the downtown Loop and Chicago's north side, and putting up a hand in effect say "stop." Stop to unwanted visitors, particularly developers—a symbolic gesture representing the interests those who seek to claim the area for African Americans.

The 91 plaques that made up the *Bronzeville Walk of Fame* commemorate Bronzeville residents who "have made a significant contribution to the community" (DCA circa 1996). The 17-inch, diamond-shaped bronze plaques were embedded in the sidewalks and medians along King Drive every 200 feet between 26th and 35th Streets. Among the named are Margaret Burroughs, founder of the DuSable Museum; St. Clair Drake, University of Chicago scholar and co-author of *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* ([1946] 1962); jazz pianist and singer Nat "King" Cole; Vaudeville comedy team Butter Beans and Susie; Chicago city councilman and later congressman Oscar De Priest; author Langston Hughes; author Richard Wright; Major Robert H. Lawrence, Jr., the first Black astronaut; journalist and activist Ida B. Wells; boxer John "Jack" Johnson; Carter G. Woodson, scholar and organizer of Negro History Week in 1926; and Theresa Needham, owner of Theresa's Blues Club.

The *Historic Bronzeville Map*, a 14-foot-by-7-foot bronze slab inset in the King Drive median at 35th Street, highlights landmarks, historic buildings and places of

significance from the 19th and 20th centuries including “The Stroll,” an entertainment district along South State Street, and the nine landmarked buildings that comprise the Black Metropolis-Bronzeville Historic District. Inset in the map are relief artifacts including records, sheet music, instruments and club banners recalling famous people, historic sites and events in Bronzeville. The naming of the map “Bronzeville” instead of “Black Metropolis” led to the area’s official adoption of the name “Bronzeville.”

## **Conclusions**

When students in my graduate course “Excavating Cultural Policy” at the Harris School of Public Policy undertook further investigation of the governmental policies that enabled the production of the Public Art of Bronzeville, each interview subject was asked, “Was there a cultural policy in place that informed the project?” Every respondent said, “No.” They highlighted that it was particular individuals, working together in a surprisingly collaborative way that led to the existence of the project. Subsequently, each respondent offered what his/her understanding of this policy was and how one might be framed for future projects. Their responses are the topic of a paper in progress, possibly for next year’s conference. However, in short, they reiterate appropriate funding; shared belief in community interaction; a better strategy to involve the community; a better strategy to sustain the knowledge-building and understanding of the historic content relevant to the community during and after the production process; and a better strategy for ongoing maintenance of the public art itself.

The story of the Public Art of Bronzeville represents the increasing influence of the Black middle class. Black scholars such as Manning Marable ([1995] 2000) speak of the “paradox of desegregation” and call for strategies that enable greater involvement by the Black middle and upper classes in the struggles of the Black working class, poor and unemployed. The Public Art of Bronzeville did not represent the growth or expansion of local cultural activity as much as it represented how circuit participants identified and mobilized local cultural capital in innovative ways to claim local territory while attracting

external resources to improve the local economic structure. The reality of distributing large amounts of public funds in Bronzeville created funding territories according to political wards and districts. As central players in the distribution of Enterprise Zone grants and other government funding in Bronzeville, Chicago aldermen focused on areas closest to their own offices and constituents, without consideration of the potential benefits of clustering activity. The values established through local art production networks, as evident in the collecting circuits, were exploited to access these funds, with little trickle-down to local artists. Residents who don't see how the investment made a difference in local cultural life criticized the distribution of funds on the basis of wards and through ward bosses. One critic said the renaming of the area "Bronzeville" was "an affectation by promoters." He said, "This is the South Side. When you say you are going to the South Side, you don't mean Hyde Park, you mean the Black community" because historically, usage of the words "the south side" meant going to the Black community.

Partitioning off one area in the Black community for wealthier members is not consistent with civil rights-era social movement politics. Margaret Burroughs, the founder of the DuSable Museum of African American History and a resident of the Bronzeville area since the 1940s, asserted this perspective:

Some people have been referring to Bronzeville marking out certain areas—this street and that street. I think wherever Black folks live in Chicago is Bronzeville and is community. Because what happened is that, I guess in the days of the first migration, when Black people came from the South in the middle '20s, which is when my family came, they were leaving the South for jobs in steel mills and stockyards and all, and so they got off at the Illinois Central train at 12th Street. And they got off at 12th Street, they moved, just kept moving further and further south. Whites fled and Blacks moved, followed them, [and] finally got to livin' wherever they are now. I consider community wherever my people are.

Burrough's view frames cultural practices by race as an empowerment strategy for those that have been subordinated to the dominant culture in the U.S. Chicago's Black community has built a powerful voting bloc and a successful lobbying group for "our fair share of the public goods." However, it has not been able to build and sustain concentrations of cultural or business activity since the ending of segregation and the dissolution of Black Metropolis. After nearly 10 years of building and \$100 million of

investment, tourists are not pouring into Bronzeville, and artists and collectors go to private activities in home-based studios and home-based galleries in Bronzeville or leave the community to attend publicly announced art events. Once, collector Patrick blamed the problem on “kiss the ring” tactics of power brokers that have led to large-budget cultural facilities. He asked,

What do they think is going to happen? People are just going to show up? You need to have the small places for the big place to survive.... [The aldermen] want to control things. They really lost the opportunity. If they would have allowed the people to use their entrepreneurial skills, [Bronzeville] would have been done by now. All those empty spaces, all those buildings, that district on 43rd, would have been done by now. They are blocked by the “kiss the ring” concept. That is, if you don’t get the alderman involved, get their sponsorship, if you don’t give them a piece of it, it doesn’t happen. That money should have been used to encourage entrepreneurs to do it. Those who had the business skills would have anchored the rest.

Collective efforts arising from the civil rights movement focused on the racist barriers to employment and pursued a strategy of securing “representative numbers,” i.e., proportionate numbers of Black workers in large industry and in government jobs consistent with the population. Accomplishing social change has meant that Black community members exerted a single voice. Entrepreneurialism represented individualistic effort rather than collective effort and therefore was not an imperative in the community culture. This is in stark contrast to the Mexican-American and the Chinese-American communities in Chicago that are centered upon small-business entrepreneurial activity. However, local leaders who have embraced “Restoring Bronzeville” increasingly are constructing this restoration to mean building a vibrant, local economy through entrepreneurial activity, particularly reminiscent of historical Black trading practices. Many community leaders are looking to contemporary local art production as the model for how these larger goals can be achieved.

On a positive note, the process of producing the artworks on King Drive not only engaged local residents in selecting artists and researching subjects, it also re-animated the history of the Black community while connecting the development of Bronzeville, for better or for worse, to Chicago’s citywide planning and cultural efforts and to federal

community revitalization efforts. By my assertion that it represents Innovation, with a capital “I,” I have showed how, in every step of development process, someone either had to break a rule or create a new rule or policy to enable this project to proceed. The series of works employed an amalgamation of conventions drawn from history-writing practices, community-organizing practices typical of civil rights efforts, and two distinct public art production practices. As a final note, and I say this as someone whose first career was as an artist showing my work through the national alternative gallery system, the artists named in the brochure produced by the Department of Cultural Affairs were the last participants in a production process of the Public Art of Bronzeville. As I have shown, the production involved a broad, but loosely connected, network of people who were brought together through their shared interest in this local area. Their efforts activated and empowered the local community through the production of art. The result is the existence of a place called “Bronzeville” on Chicago’s near South Side.

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## Appendix A:

<b>Typology of Art Production Networks</b>			
<b>Network Types</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Human Resources</b>	<b>Financial Resources</b>
<b>Empowerment</b>	To establish ownership and hegemonic control of local terrain	Political figures, citizens, other political actors, and artists	Public funds
<b>Aesthetic</b>	To cultivate values and meanings about cultural objects	Collectors, artists, performers, audience members	Personal funds of middle and upper class art buyers
<b>Autonomy</b>	To increase access to artistic opportunities	Cutting edge artists, and small business owners	Personal funds of entrepreneurs
<b>Gentrification</b>	To increase value of local resources	City bureaucrats, real estate developers and agents, business owners, property owners, artists	External Investments
<b>Problem-solving</b>	To solve a local issue or problem	Community volunteers	Donations
<b>Youth Services</b>	To involve youth in educational activities	Administrators, instructors, families, parents and students	- Public Funds - Personal funds of middle class parents

**Figure 1: Photograph of the "Monument to the Great Northern Migration," sculpture by Alison Saar.**

