

A five-hundred-year story of exclusion, containment, powerlessness and profit from the first Jewish ghetto to present day America.

***Ghetto: The Invention of a Place, the History of an Idea* By Mitchell Duneier**

Review and Reflection by Paul Scully, Executive Director of Building One America

Mitchell Duneier's book *Ghetto: The Invention of a Place, the History of an Idea* is an important and powerful contribution to the national story of race, place, and inequality in America. Where others have documented the power struggles, policy failures and political motivations behind America's enduring legacy of racial apartheid, Duneier documents the history of the American black ghetto as a social, psychological and physical construct. He follows the work of African American scholars Horace Cayton, St. Clair Drake, Kenneth Clarke, and William Julius Wilson as each of these intellectual luminaries interact with the world of academia, politics, culture, national policy and the ghetto communities of Chicago and New York. Their stories provide a layered narrative that is one more lens - and an important one - through which to view the history of racial segregation in America and to better understand its impact on American society as a whole, including our current political dysfunction, policy failures and our inability to respond effectively - or even speak coherently - about the intersecting issues of racial justice and economic inequality.

Duneier provides us with crucial insights from each of the primary figures, adding depth and dimension to the earlier work of their colleagues as well as contemporary scholars. In some cases, Drake, Cayton, Clark and Wilson fill significant gaps and blind spots from the work of some of the most influential thought leaders of their time, including Cayton and Clark's University of Chicago mentors Robert Park and Louis Wirth, as well as Gunnar Myrdal and Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Most notable are Clayton and Drake's challenge to the belief in the voluntary nature of segregation of blacks in post-Jim Crow northern cities. They document and reveal "racist exclusionary policies of neighborhood improvement associations, anti-black federal housing programs, court rulings, and national real estate organizations" as the *outside* structural forces that make the northern ghetto a unique institution of reconstituted Jim Crow oppression of black Americans. But Clark goes even further identifying both power and profit as driving forces that perpetuate and preserve the ghetto politically, economically and psychologically, calling it "the institutionalization of powerlessness".



St. Clair Drake



Horace Cayton

Duneier says that while Clark "presented the ghetto as a colony, he had never explicitly examined how the ghetto had become a site for the pursuit of profit by capitalist entrepreneurs." But a later chapter profiling Jeffery Canada of the Harlem Children Zone (and Promise Academy Charter

School) provides us with some clues. Duneier is beyond fair in describing the herculean (and for all I know sincere) efforts of Canada to show that poor black children can achieve and that the ghetto can be transformed from within without challenging the external forces of segregation, or even naming (“No Excuses”) the broad geographic patterns of inequality and deep concentrations of poverty. Duneier points out, however, that Canada’s board of directors includes some powerful and enormously wealthy Wall Street donors who ultimately pull the strings and who clearly have a stake in Canada’s hypothesis that Kenneth Clarke and the Warren Court were all wrong and that separate *can* be made (or at least appear) to be equal.



Mamie and Kenneth Clark

One of the most powerful string-pullers on Canada’s board is 3-time billionaire Kenneth Langone. Langone, the co-founder of Home Depot and a former director of the New York Stock Exchange, may be the ideal personification of the intersection of racial animus, corporate greed, oligarchic arrogance, and philanthropic paternalism. Langone has bragged of his role in bringing down former governor Elliot Sptitzer, not for prostitution, but as a vendetta for “what he’s done to me and the havoc he’s caused in the New York business climate”.¹ He has expressed a visceral hatred of Barack Obama, calling the first black President of the United States “unpresidential”, “petulant”, and “divisive”. And he is a major cash bundler and cheerleader for some of the biggest union-busting governors in the United States including Scott Walker and Chris Christie - who he personally led the effort to draft to run against Obama in 2012.

While Langone may be the textbook case of how racism, power and the profit motive conspire to maintain the modern ghetto, he is by no means alone. Just as Naomi Klein describes in her book *The Shock Doctrine*, the ghetto is a place of perpetual crisis and sporadic disasters. Klein reveals how crisis and disaster are not only opportunities but a deliberate strategy for making money.²



Kenneth Langone and Governor Christie.

Many philanthropic business elites see the ghetto as a place to “lend a hand” while they or their friends feed from the trough of what Clark called “a place of impotence and despair”. There are countless ways in which our racially divided society creates lucrative opportunities to exploit poor and working people using the ghetto and racial segregation as a political anvil to drive the plundering.

¹ Langone was a co-defendant when Spitzer prosecuted former NYSE CEO Dick Grasso in 2004 over pay packages. In 2005, Langone was quoted in New York Magazine saying: “One way or another, Spitzer is going to pay for what he’s done to me and the havoc he’s caused in the New York business climate.”

² Klein’s book traces the origins of what she calls “Disaster Capitalism” where “free market policies” dominate through “the exploitation of disaster-shocked people” back fifty years to the University of Chicago under Milton Friedman. While much of her book is about foreign intervention, one of the last chapters “Disaster Apartheid” documents how private companies seek to “strip mine” public sector opportunities in poor and segregated communities.

Billions are made in the privatization of public sector institutions for government services and supplies, including prisons, for-profit colleges, as well as the charter school industry that received 4 billion from federal taxpayers since 1995. There are hundreds of millions of dollars made in the ghetto's poverty housing market. And there was more than a trillion dollars in middle-class wealth lost to the subprime mortgage industry; disproportionately impacting black borrowers and families steered to resegregating low capacity suburbs.

We hear much about the high levels of unemployment, underemployment and illicit business activities of "urban" Americans. But the ghettos of places like Chicago, New York, Washington DC, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Detroit also supply a very large and easily exploitable black working-class. Many of these workers are the sons, daughters, and grandchildren of unionized public sector and manufacturing workers. They are the descendants of the great migration now working in non-union, low-wage, and often, part-time service and retail jobs throughout their metropolitan areas. These people are the surplus labor force that A. Philip Randolph prophetically warned would "wind up not only as unskilled and unemployed, if not unemployable, but as the forgotten slum proletariat in the black ghettos of the great metropolitan centers of the country, existing within the grey shadows of a hopeless hope."

The insight of Clark on the role of profit in the creation and maintenance of the ghetto and the perpetuation of powerlessness of its inhabitants, which Duneier tells us was written about in his final and unfinished manuscript, is perhaps the most important contribution to the historical narrative about the nature and structure of the modern American black ghetto. And it echoes the insights of Dr. Martin Luther King who, in reflecting upon the fierce resistance to desegregation during the Montgomery Bus boycott, wrote, "the underlying purpose of segregation was to oppress and exploit the segregated, not simply to keep them apart."

As a community organizer who has worked for many years on campaigns with local civic and civil rights leaders to reveal and attack structures of racial isolation, economic inequality and concentrated poverty, I have felt the hard boot-heel and determined power of ghetto profiteers and their bureaucratic, philanthropic and political front-men when we challenged the segregation patterns of HUD and regional housing authorities in Philadelphia and surrounding suburbs during the Obama Administration. After five years of organizing, our group – a largely inner suburban, bipartisan and multiracial coalition of constituency leaders from congregations, school districts, local elected office and labor unions - finally got HUD Secretary, Shaun Donovan - with the President's support - to personally back a housing mobility program that would encourage Section 8 voucher holders to move from high poverty neighborhoods into "high opportunity" neighborhoods (low poverty suburbs with good schools and a high tax base). But



Valerie Jarrett addressing 700 BOA leaders in 2009. She pledged President Obama's full support to BOA's efforts to promote a "fully inclusive society"

only weeks after Donovan's departure to become OMB director, even this small, incremental pilot program was sabotaged and twisted beyond recognition by regional HUD officials and the local housing authorities.



After a year into the program, HUD officials and their consultants glibly reported that all the funding, allocated explicitly for moving poor families out of poverty, was used to assist exactly zero of the 122 families who signed up for the program to move to a high opportunity community. All were moved to the same or similar neighborhoods in Philadelphia or in rapidly resegregating neighborhoods in inner

suburbs. Many actually went to worse neighborhoods with higher poverty rates and more low-income students.³



Above and left, HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan addresses nearly 1000 leaders in Pennsylvania vowing to launch the "Housing Opportunity Program"

After that defeat, which left local pro-integration leaders feeling betrayed and demoralized, there was much finger pointing about the role of "poverty pimp" politicians, intransigent or lazy bureaucrats, and racist NIMBY suburbanites in the failure of the project. But I believe far more important than these obstacles was the powerful confluence of interest exemplified by developers and political donors like Israel Roizman. Roizman is a major builder and manager of low-income, Section 8, housing developments in ghettos throughout the northeast including Newark, Camden, Baltimore, Wilmington, Buffalo, Paterson, Atlanta and Washington. Roizman himself is a resident of Lafayette Hills, a fabulously wealthy and nearly all white suburb of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. Montgomery County is where the resistance to the mobility program was chiefly led and directed by that county's housing authority director. Roizman is a right-wing Republican but most of his many political contributions, with the exception of those to New Jersey Governor Chris Christie⁴, go to liberal Democrats in cities and states where he makes enormous profits from taxpayer dollars that flow to him for inflated development fees, lucrative management contracts, and a steady stream of Section 8 rental dollars. As a major political donor and bundler, he has been the single biggest financial backer to Montgomery County Chairman Josh Shapiro who controls the county housing authority, and hires and fires its director⁵. Shapiro is now running, with big backing from Roizman,

³ An April 25, 2015 report to HUD by David Rusk analyzing the results of the program called the results: "business as usual" and "a great lost opportunity" that only "perpetuated past patterns" of segregation "while making zero placements in high and maximum opportunity suburbs".

⁴ In March 2015, The Courier Post reported Roizman was to receive \$57 million in a taxpayer funded deal from the Christie Administration to rehab 175 Section 8 units in Camden that he already owns and has allowed to become run down. He will receive 7.6 million in development fees for a project that will average \$324,000 per home - enough to purchase a 4 bedroom home in Mount Laurel NJ for each of the 175 low-income families.

⁵ In fact, Shapiro is Roizman's largest recipient of political donations in the state and Roizman is, by far, Shapiro's biggest contributor. Despite Mr. Roizman's personal preference for the Republican Party, his

for Attorney General of Pennsylvania. If he succeeds, he will replace the recently deposed Kathleen Kain who was compared to Elliot Spitzer by Pennsylvania's business leaders for being too "hostile" to business ⁶ until she was politically crucified in a similarly salacious and sensational scandal.

As a book, *Ghetto's* most important contribution to addressing racial justice today is that it is a story about a place, an idea, and a definable, challengeable *and dismantlable* structure. In today's justifiably angry, but often vague and confusing dialogue about racial injustice, the phrase "institutionalized racism" is thrown about with little consensus on what it is or how it can be attacked, let alone dismantled. Duneier tells us that the American ghetto is a real institution and a racist and racialized structure. He reminds us that scholars, and not incidentally black scholars, named it (drawing on their experiences and observations in Europe before and after World War II). They documented its existence not only by observing its inhabitants but also through the study of the myriad of external forces that made it and kept it real. Duneier writes how Cayton and Drake described how restrictive covenants (unlike barbed wire, cross burnings or bombings) were "invisible to the eye and created the illusory impression that the segregation it created was based on happenstance, market forces, or individual preferences" that "could only be detected by its overall results" And they showed that it was *not* race neutral. It was aimed exclusively and often explicitly at African Americans. And as the American ghetto morphed and metastasized through suburbanization and gentrification after the civil rights movement, as documented by Clark, Wilson, and later Douglass Massey, we see that it isolated and concentrated poor African Americans even more disproportionately while still affecting the lives of almost all black Americans regardless of their upward mobility.



African American soldiers view corpses at Buchenwald death camp

Moreover, the book dispels the popular notion that that the source of the pathologies, generational poverty and joblessness prevalent in the "black community" are simply relics of past discrimination and that these seemingly chronic and unfixable problems are the residual vestiges of oppression rooted in Jim Crow and slavery.

Duneier writes that the ghetto is not "simply a segregated place that was at one time created by racist forces. Rather, it is a phenomenon of ongoing external domination and neglect." Decades of discrimination and segregation *have* had a profound impact on retarding present day wealth *and* the relative political power of those still trapped in ghettos, as well as those who made it out. Concentrated powerlessness, like concentrated poverty, is especially vulnerable to abuse and exploitation and tends to deepen

lopsided support for Democrats has to do with the market and subsidies for affordable housing developments. Democrats control most of the cities he operates in and the continued flow of section 8 vouchers dollars, approvals, and subsidies for his properties. After Joe Biden lost the primary in 2008, Roizman became a major donor and regional bundler for Barack Obama.

⁶ News — Commonwealth Confidential - Biz community backs Freed for AG, fears 'Spitzer-like' crusade: OCTOBER 31, 2012 www.philly.com

exponentially when segregated and isolated from the opportunity structures of society. But it is our *present day* practices and policies, not those of the past, that define and sustain the ghetto. And it is a set of power arrangements, institutions, and interests that sustain it, in part, by the perpetuation of myths and distortions, including the denial of the ghetto's very existence.

We are taught not think of power as something real and measurable but, like wealth, it is. When we recognize its role we can better understand how and why it operates either to oppress or liberate. We can better understand the identity and self-interest of oppressive institutions and the individuals who benefit and profit from them. If, as Clark says, the "pathologies" of the ghetto are "tied directly to the residents' powerlessness" than it is just as important to understand the power, motivations and the pathologies of those who are enriched by and derive even more power at the expense of the segregated, oppressed and exploited.

Characters like Langone and Roizman (and many others in the top 10%) are heavily invested in structures of white privilege like the ghetto in order to maintain their class privilege and political dominance. Their investment comes in the form of both pragmatic political contributions and paternalistic philanthropy. One ensures that government policy never actually addresses racially driven structures of inequality (and especially the ghetto profit centers) and the other helps to obscure or mask these structures and to stifle any real debate about solutions like integration. At the same time we are offered a myriad of alternatives that are simply warmed over versions of social service, self help, community development, anticrime and uplift programs recycled over the past 40 years from both the conservative right and liberal left. Whether it is more private sector acquisitions, expanded bureaucracies or bigger not-for-profits, they are all predestined to fail because none address the external structures of opportunity. But the blame for failure will always fall on the residents, students, teachers, parents, and local black politicians providing even more fodder and political leverage to exploit and plunder with more state takeovers, privatization of public services, charter schools and expanded policing while the pundits babble on about "racial healing", "community policing", and another "national conversation on race".



Perhaps the most important job of the ghetto itself, and why we keep it with us, is its role in maintaining the deep level of racialized political polarization in our society that only serves to preserve and expand economic and class inequality. Jason DeParle, in his book *American Dream*, wrote "poverty and disorder of the inner cities lacerate a larger civic fabric" calling it "a poison in the national groundwater that is producing a thousand deformed fruits".

The enduring existence of the black ghetto among the working-class and lower middle-class white Americans has only reinforced the worst stereotypes and most primitive racist fears providing political support for massive police budgets in "frontline" suburbs and increasing the size, political power, militarization and unaccountability of urban *and* suburban police forces.

The never-ending shell game of land-use driven by flight, abandonment, sprawl, gentrification and resegregation has allowed the boon to the residential and commercial building industries to march forward unabated, enriching lenders, developers, brokers contractors, builders, managers and owners. And when the housing market collapsed under the weight of all this “running from the ghetto”, those in the financial sector caused one of the greatest transferences of wealth in history from the poor and middle-class of all colors.



Jeffery Canada with Bill Gates

Duneier unmasked the continuous and almost unbroken thread of the failure of philanthropy, think-tanks and academic institutions to support those who expose the ghetto or directly challenge status quo segregation. Starting with the University of Chicago’s complicity in the creation and maintenance of restrictive covenants on the south side of Chicago and ending with hedge fund billionaires pushing and directing charter schools in Harlem.



Students at one of many 100% racially segregated charter schools.

My own experience has been that the foundation world lives by an ABI (anything but integration) philosophy. Many, including executives at Ford, Rockefeller, William Penn, MacArthur and the Brookings Institution have been challenged in recent years by the work of Douglas Massey, Sheryll Cashin, Myron Orfield, John Powell and organizers like myself to look more deeply at regional

and place-based structures of inequality, concentrated poverty and racial disparities. These foundations have been called on to alter their funding patterns to, as David Rusk⁷ says, “change the rules of the game” by removing regional obstacles to opportunity and inclusion through housing, fiscal and school policy instead of pouring endless dollars into traditional “in place” community development efforts or the latest “inside game” program of self-help or “empowerment” while another generation stays trapped in the ghetto.

As a result of such engagement many of these foundations and think tanks produced and funded studies, conferences, and wonderful publications that explored broader regional strategies for combating urban decline including those addressing concentrated poverty and segregation. But my experience has been when it comes to actually putting significant money where their mouth is, they, often in tandem with liberal allies in government, inevitably revert back to an anything but integration (ABI) “inside game” approach over policy changes to eliminate, or at least reduce the incentives for, segregation. Not because it is more expensive to do so. Foundations have spent hundreds of

⁷ In his 1999 book *Inside Game/Outside Game: Winning Strategies for Saving Urban America*, David Rusk, argues that programs aimed at improving inner-city neighborhoods--playing the "inside game"--is a losing strategy. Achieving real improvement requires matching the "inside game" with a strong "outside game" of regional strategies to overcome growing fiscal disparities, concentrated poverty, and urban sprawl.

millions of dollars on urban revitalization and poverty alleviation with little to show for it. And it is not because it is too unpopular, politically prohibitive, or controversial to seek meaningful structural solutions. Nothing is more unpopular and racially charged than urban social programs that cost billions and produce no discernible or lasting results.

My colleagues and I have begun to wonder if institutions such as universities, think tanks and foundations, many of whose fortunes and endowments were gained through the exploitation of working people, union busting and even (for some) the slave trade, are capable of supporting work that not only challenges privilege and exclusion but ultimately would require the unified power of, and be a benefit to, a broad multi-racial, working and lower middle-class constituency.⁸

To be fair, the foundations mentioned above have at least paid lip service to issues of spatial isolation and, from time to time, provided some funding to organizations and projects dedicated to exposing and challenging racial segregation and concentrated poverty. But usually this is framed within their broader “sustainability” priorities, which tend to be heavily skewed toward the environmental or the anti-sprawl side of the regional equity agenda. And it has been a small fraction of their domestic grant giving in stark contrast to the enormous sums they continue to spend on programs based on a wishful thinking strategy of urban revitalization and bootstrap community development.⁹

This brings me to several conclusions about what it will take to effectively challenge and ultimately abolish the ghetto:

1. The ghetto is a real structure, not a vague and undefinable notion. Although it mutates and morphs, it is a physical space that can be seen and understood. It is constructed by policy and maintained by power being pitted against powerlessness.

2. To expose the ghetto we need to understand those policies that created it and those that continue to maintain it. But we also must have an analysis of the powerful interests that seek to sustain it, particularly those who profit from the “institutionalized powerlessness” that it generates.

3. We must identify and build enough power amongst those constituencies and institutions that are harmed by its continued existence. The most obvious of those are poor and working-class African Americans. But an anti-ghetto power-base must be bigger and

⁸ Some of the fortunes were tied directly or indirectly to industries and industrialists whose massive profits were made through big oil, steel, chemical and automobile manufacturing and related industries. These are industries that benefited from the dismantling of public transportation systems and the mass consumption and use of the automobile, which expanded with urban sprawl fueled by white flight, segregation, and the creation of the modern ghetto.

⁹ Many other large philanthropic donors, especially those of recent decades whose fortunes were amassed in technology and finance don't even go near the issue of segregation, preferring instead to mirror the politics of the major political parties including school choice for conservatives and for liberals: climate change and issues that have a greater focus on identity politics such as immigration and gender. While criminal justice has received more attention from both conservative and liberal donors in recent years, rarely does it include the kind of context that would implicate the ghetto as a real and actionable issue or a root cause of oppression and poverty.

more powerful than residents of the ghetto who are, as Clark points out, some of the most powerless people in America. And it must be bigger and more powerful than *only* African Americans or even “people of color”. It must include significant strata of white America - working and lower middle class white people who derive the least benefit from the ghetto and whose interests are most in conflict with it.

Gunner Myrdal was right that “the Negro Problem” as Duneier writes: “lay in the minds of white Americans, who controlled American society”. But he was wrong in thinking “white prejudice could be decreased and discrimination mitigated” just “through mutual interaction” motivated by the goodwill, reasonableness and morality of white America.

Duneier speculates that a flaw with William Julius Wilson’s “colored blind” approach to attracting multi-racial support for policies that would help poor whites as well as blacks was a miscalculation based on a misreading of the interests of white people. He writes: “For whereas the black middle class has a sense of shared peoplehood with the black poor, middle-class whites may not identify closely enough with poor whites to support initiatives on their behalf either”. If this is true, and I think it is, it’s a miscalculation with enormous political and policy consequences.

Both Myrdal and Wilson’s analysis reveal a deep misunderstanding, or a denial, of class and the very different economic circumstances and class interests of different classes of white people. And it does not explore the degree to which whites of different classes derive benefit from, or are harmed by white privilege and the racialized structures in our society.

Martin Luther King, in addressing the AFL-CIO in 1961 said black Americans “are almost entirely a working people,” and despite civil rights gains this is still largely true, especially compared to whites. The white population is well represented in every class



King addresses the AFL-CIO Convention in 1961. President George Meany is taking notes.

strata of our society including 96.2% of the top one percent. But it is the white working-class and lower middle-class that we should be engaging out of self-interest and not the elites out of guilt, morality, or even reason.

Both Dr. King and A. Philip Randolph understood this. This is why they worked with determination, despite the

ignorance and prejudices of many poor and working-class white Americans, to gain the

support of the most powerful leaders of the American labor movement. They appealed to their economic and institutional self-interest while exposing the hypocrisy and moral corruption of segregation. As a result, they built a multi-racial movement, largely backed by the multi-racial power of organized labor led and directed by black civil rights leaders like King and Randolph. It was a movement powerful enough to end Jim Crow and powerful enough to advance the interest of all working people – which, for a time, it did.



A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963.

Hopefully this book will help to spur a national conversation about the ghetto instead of another divisive and frustrating “conversation on race”. No matter how much elites try to reform, romanticize, decorate, or hide it, the ghetto is something that middle and working-class Americans of all colors will agree is a bad thing. Most of them will admit it does them no good and certainly does no good for the people who live there. For most white suburban Americans who do not live in exclusive enclaves (as well black Americans who are also motivated by self interest) the ghetto is seen as a harmful thing for their communities and families. It drives down home values, drives up property taxes, hurts the regional economy, undermines their schools, and produces crime and dysfunction. But what they often don’t see is how it damages their own economic fortunes and erodes their political power as workers, voters, taxpayers, consumers, and homeowners.

I am not naïve. I have heard many white people say, “just drop a bomb” on Camden, Detroit, or Gary. There are still many white people who are harmed by the ghetto who would never support polices that promoted regional integration and fair housing as solutions. But there are many others and, I believe strongly from my experience, there are *enough* white people who, for self-interested motivations, are our natural allies on dismantling the ghetto.

Because racial segregation is dynamic, the rapid demographic changes and resegregation of suburbs in recent decades brings the real and imagined threat of the ghetto literally much closer to home for millions of white working-class and lower middle-class residents in most metropolitan areas. For many of these families today, the options for flight to a second or third generation of sprawl suburbs has been closed off or narrowed considerably, both because of downward economic pressures and because of the shifting nature of segregation away from overt and legally challengeable discrimination by race to economic and exclusionary zoning by class¹⁰. Exclusionary zoning is the mutated offspring of the restrictive covenant. While a proxy for race, it has caught many more white families in its net than the earlier, more racially explicit forms of housing discrimination.

Duneier starts and ends with reflections on the European origins of the ghetto as both an idea and a word. The fully cognizant, premeditated motivations and horrific consequences of the Nazi ghetto defy any comparison to the American ghetto of the 20th Century and today except that they were both based on a purely racial (not religious or class) ideology. The medieval ghetto designed to wall off Judaism to “protect” the larger Christian society was also a real physical and political structure supported by state and church policy and compulsory private practices. And while it lasted centuries it was always a definable and actionable social structure that could be rationalized and reinforced or



¹⁰ The use of municipal codes to limit or forbid lot sizes and housing units that would accommodate low and moderate income residents. This was another mechanism used in the 80s, 90s and still today to subvert the fair housing laws that ended the use of restrictive covenants, just as restrictive covenants were used to get around explicit racial segregation of the Jim Crow years.

eventually challenged and abolished. The latter didn't happen until 1796 when Napoleon Bonaparte marched into Italy and opened the ghettos of Venice, Verona, Padua, Livorno, Ancona and Rome. And later, in 1811 when he abolished the Frankfurt ghetto making Jews there and in Hamburg, Lübeck and Bremen full citizens with full civil rights.

The ghettos of medieval Europe, like the ones here in the United States, were real. And because they could be seen, named, and understood, the laws and physical structures that sustained them could eventually be removed. But this could happen only when enough power was brought to bear against the entrenched institutions of the church and aristocracy whose leaders maintained and derived profit from the ghetto and held power through the hatred, fear, and stereotypes that the ghetto helped to produce. Napoleon did not abolish anti-Semitism (obviously, that stayed around to reemerge with brutal ferociousness over the next hundred and fifty years) but no rational person today will tell you that the Jewish ghetto was a good idea. Nor will they tell you it was a bad idea to abolish them either to mitigate or avoid an anticipated backlash of racial hatred and resentment or because they lamented the loss of community or a culture that, while worth preserving, did not justify the conditions of oppression and pain that that culture was an expression of.

Napoleon was able to abolish the ghetto because he had militarily defeated the Prussian and Austrian armies. But it was also because he had no political dependency on, or economic stake in the local rulers, clerics, and businessmen who supported and exploited the ghetto. If he had, instead of opening the gates, he might have called for a peninsula-wide conversation on religious tolerance and edict on racial healing, some better community policing and an interfaith prayer vigil. If Nelson Mandela and the ANC did not have the support of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the Communist Party, and a host of international anti-colonial allies, he might have been running a wonderful community development corporation in Soweto supported and widely praised by the elites of the Apartheid state as a model of self help and self improvement. Martin Luther King, without A. Philip Randolph and a significant faction of the American labor movement, might have been running the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) as a social service organization that looked a lot like Jeffery Canada's Harlem Children's Zone.