If These Row Homes Could Talk

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Abstract and Keywords

This chapter sets the foundation for the rest of the book. It outlines the major faces of political agency and highlights the contents of the subsequent chapters. In addition, it describes the methods and data employed to construct the analysis and sociopolitical history of the Black Seventh Ward and Philadelphia over the course of the twentieth century. This chapter also addresses and conveys the major strands of thought and argumentation in the existing discourse, and posits the major contributions of this book.

Keywords: W. E. B. Dubois, the Philadelphia Negro, race relations, black politics, urban America, Black Seventh Ward, political agency, Philadelphia

THE SMELL OF cooking food, the noise of dishes dropping, pots clanging, and the idle chatter of the hungry were the likely sounds that followed a young man and his wife as they sought refuge in their quaint quarters located at 700 Lombard Street in the heart of Philadelphia's Black Seventh Ward in the fall of 1896 (see Figure 1.1–1.2). The young man, a burgeoning black scholar named William Edward Burghardt (W. E. B.) DuBois, and his new wife, Nina, dropped their belongings to the floor just above the local cafeteria, likely looking around to take their first deep breath in their new home. It had been a bit of journey for the DuBoises, having traveled to Philadelphia from Wilberforce, Ohio, and their hopes were high for the potential prosperity the move from rural Ohio to urban Pennsylvania represented.

Much like many black Americans in the late nineteenth century, the DuBoises' arrival in Philadelphia was no accident. The DuBoises, like scores of black Americans in the wake of Emancipation and Reconstruction, sought new opportunities that urban Northern cities such as Philadelphia, New York, and Boston seemed to hold in store for them. While DuBois differed from the average black migrant during this period, having received his PhD from Harvard University just a few years prior, he was not unlike them in that Philadelphia for him represented an opening of the "door of opportunity…just a crack, to be sure, but a distinct opening."[1] The opportunity that had called him from rural Ohio was from Samuel McCune Lindsay, a white sociologist and professor at the University of Pennsylvania, requesting that DuBois come out and take up a year-long study of the "Philadelphia Negro" and the myriad problems believed to be engendered by this segment of Philadelphia's population.

Often dressed in a sharp, well-fitted suit, DuBois was dapper and took his job seriously. He knocked on the doors of the various row homes along Lombard and South Streets inhabited by Black Seventh Warders, conducted interviews, and wrote in a daily journal to keep track of everyday life in the neighborhood. The Black Seventh Ward, while anchored by the hopes, **(p.4)** dreams, and aspirations of black families such as the DuBoises, was no easy place to live. DuBois described the environment surrounding his small room at 700 Lombard as a dangerous one, with "an atmosphere of dirt, drunkenness, poverty, and crime," adding: "Murder sat at our doorsteps, police were our government, and philanthropy dropped with periodic advice."[2] It would, however, provide him with a social scientific laboratory rife with the social ills, disputes, conflicts and possibilities that he would channel a year later into a book aptly titled *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (*TPN*) published in 1899 by the University of Pennsylvania Press.

In the book, DuBois charged that the problems of the Philadelphia Negro were mere symptoms of the years (centuries for that matter) of prejudice, enslavement, and discrimination under which black Americans had lived for so long. He charged both black and white Philadelphians specifically, and Americans more generally, with the combined duty to enact a series of changes that would help provide access and resources (social, economic, and political) to the Philadelphia Negro. However important and powerful such a proclamation was it would largely fall on deaf ears, and when the post at the University of Pennsylvania did not manifest into something more permanent the DuBoises packed up and left Philadelphia. No longer a "Philadelphia Negro," DuBois would later follow up his ideas and observations in *TPN* from his new intellectual hub at Atlanta University in Georgia.

Today, the neighborhood is neither black nor referred to locally or administratively as the Seventh Ward. Most all the black churches, stores, and social clubs that once lined blocks of Lombard and South Streets are also gone.

How and why did this racial shift occur over the course of the twentieth century? Where did the institutions go? Where did the people go? What happened to the "Philadelphia Negroes" of the Seventh Ward? What were the critical historical events that facilitated or frustrated shifts in the racial geography of the Black Seventh Ward? What insights might we glean from DuBois's analysis and observations? These questions are not just specific to the Black Seventh Ward; they are instead indicative of the mysteries embedded in urban change and reflect the rise and decline of urban black neighborhoods across the United States over time. As the Seventh Ward is not only one of the oldest urban black neighborhoods, but also the first to be documented and analyzed in urban research, examining it offers an opportunity to follow cultural and political changes in an urban black neighborhood over what might be imagined as the "life course" of a black enclave—from the creation of a black neighborhood comprising an emergent free black contingent to the enclaves now constituting contemporary black Philadelphia.

(p.5)

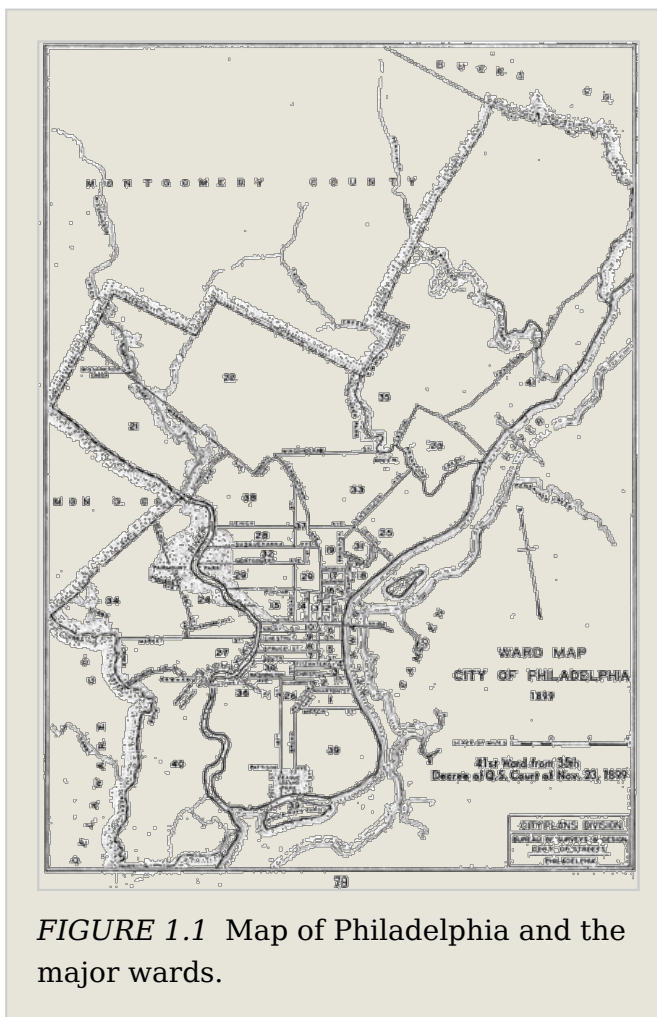**(p.6)**

FIGURE 1.1 Map of Philadelphia and the major wards.

(p.7) While DuBois's time as a Philadelphia Negro was perhaps short lived, those who were unable and/or unwilling to leave the city embarked on a journey that would forever change Philadelphia. From many of the row homes wherein DuBois observed and interviewed, black residents forged paths of change, progress, decline, and dispersion that are, at their core, essential contours of contemporary Philadelphia. For example, in 1916, nearly two decades following the publication of *TPN* and the departure of the DuBoises, black Philadelphians staged a boycott of local white-owned businesses in the Seventh Ward located on South Streets just a few yards from the doorstep of 700 Lombard Street, where the DuBoises once lived. Angered by the alleged price-gouging practices of white businessmen and the general unfair treatment of black customers, black Philadelphians embarked on a boycott of several months against the South Street Businessmen's Association, refusing to patronize the various white-owned business along South Street. Seeking to exert their influence on the finances of the white businesses comprising the South Street Businessmen's Association, Black Seventh Warders pooled food and other resources in an effort to bring attention to the injustices they faced during their daily round.

Although the boycott would end with moderate success at best, it would give rise to a mantra of economic self-sufficiency. Such a mantra would spur on a period of

FIGURE 1.2 Photographic reproduction of Philadelphia Seventh Ward map. (Published in: W. E. B. DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1899], facing page xx: "Distribution of Negro Inhabitants Throughout the Ward, and their Social Condition."

Source: http://www.library.upenn.edu/datasets/images/census/1899a.jpg.

revitalization in the Black Seventh Ward, resulting in the development of many black-owned and operated businesses along South and Lombard Streets, including theaters, banks, and social clubs. It was, indeed, an unprecedented experiment in the creation of indigenous institutions relying almost exclusively on black patronage.

Less than a decade later, however, the Black Seventh Ward would again become the site of contention. This time, though, black anger would be directed at other black Philadelphians, namely black banking duo Edward C. Brown and Andrew Stevens. Waiting in long lines, and bearing a terribly cold rainstorm in mid-February of 1925, black depositors withdrew their savings *en masse* from the two black banks Brown and Stevens owned and managed. This banking collapse greatly impacted the financial livelihoods of many black Philadelphians, and the hardships it induced were compounded by the stock market crash just four years later in 1929, when the nation began its downward spiral into the Great Depression.

As was the case for citizens across the United States, the decades following the Great Depression were trying ones for black Philadelphians. The Black Seventh Ward was a shadow of its former self, and by the time the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson much of its population **(p.8)** dispersed across newly emergent black neighborhoods in North, West, and South Philadelphia. The death of black residents in a tenement collapse in the Black Seventh Ward just before Christmas in 1936, and more than twenty years of urban renewal (from 1950 to 1974), had rocked the neighborhood, leaving little trace of the vibrant black area in which DuBois once lived and researched. By 1990, the area that had once been the center of Black Philadelphia had become a faint memory, kept alive mostly through Odunde (pronounced Oh-Dune-Day), an African-American Festival held annually along South Street, and the revitalization efforts of a working-class black activist Alice Lipscomb.

Fast-forward to early evening on March 20, 2010, just a few yards from where 700 Lombard had stood, young black teenagers are running east and west, north and south in an effort to disperse following a violent flash mob. No longer standing, 700 Lombard Street would provide only a thruway for Philadelphians seeking refuge from the heavy police presence out in full force to respond to the mobs of black teenagers who broke out into seemingly spontaneous acts of collective violence against local store-owners and shoppers along South Street. Though the flash mobs give the impression that there is a strong black presence in the area, the neighborhood today is split between commercial businesses and upper-middle-class white residences; all that remains of the Black Seventh Ward are murals and placards indicating a black world that once thrived along Lombard and South Streets.

In this book, I argue that the sociopolitical history of the Black Seventh Ward demonstrates that urban black residents were not mere victims of the structural changes impacting American cities like Philadelphia throughout the twentieth century; nor were they mere passive bystanders watching the city change from the windows of their row homes. Rather, as I will show throughout the book, black Philadelphians were agents of urban change, or *citymakers*, albeit sometimes purposeful and inadvertent, but facilitating and frustrating patterns of urban change nonetheless. The importance of this point cannot be overstated, as without an understanding of how a largely migrant black population, such as the Philadelphia Negro, moved from a "problem" populace when DuBois began his study in 1896 to perhaps the most powerful voting bloc in Philadelphia is critical to contextualizing the causes and consequences of structural changes in urban America including public housing policy, deindustrialization, urban renewal, and the rise of the black mayor.

Reiterating and elaborating upon this argument in subsequent chapters, I hone in on the historical moments foreshadowed in this opening. Four, in **(p.9)** particular, serve as the empirical foundation of the book: (1) the collapse of two black banks, Brown & Stevens and Cosmopolitan Bank, in 1925; (2) the tenement collapse which killed nearly a dozen black residents in the Seventh Ward in 1936; (3) the nearly twenty-five-year-long black-led protest against urban renewal, namely the proposed construction of the Crosstown Expressway through the Seventh Ward (1950 through the early 1970s); and (4) the election of W. Wilson Goode as Philadelphia's first black mayor in 1983. To a lesser extent I make use of a fifth historical moment, the flash mob on South Street in March 2010, as a lens through which to summarize and examine the implications of this study of the Black Seventh Ward and draw some final conclusions.

Instead of focusing exclusively on the debates black Philadelphians had over economic self-sufficiency, housing reform, urban renewal, or political representation, I also connect the effects of the historical moments encompassing these debates to the shifts in Philadelphia's politics and racial geography over time. Although each historical period I examine in this book is significant in its own right, my goal here is to bring these periods together in one place to fully evaluate their relationship and uncover their combined effects. Revisiting the cultural, economic, and political history of the Black Seventh Ward affords us a richer and fuller understanding of the origins and conditions of urban black residents and neighborhoods today. To make clear and deepen the central claim of the book, I rely not just on the descriptive power of the historical moments I examine, but DuBois's observations in *The Philadelphia Negro* and an analysis of the *political agency* of black Philadelphians as well.

The Black Seventh Ward

Philadelphia, like other cities across the United States, became a key destination for black migrants following Emancipation and through the Great Migration. Along with Chicago's Bronzeville, Pittsburgh's Hill District, Los Angeles's Watts, Washington DC's U-Street/Shaw neighborhood, and New York City's Harlem—hubs for migrant blacks as they moved out of the Jim Crow South—Philadelphia's Seventh Ward emerged as a neighborhood with one of the largest concentrations of blacks during the Great Migration. As DuBois explains in *The Philadelphia Negro*, the Black Seventh Ward was born out of the race riots of the mid-1800s, beginning as a safe haven for blacks as whites instigated a series of race riots that lasted days at a time over several years. As a result, many indigenous black institutions (e.g., churches, markets, **(p.10)** and social clubs) were centered in the Seventh Ward. By 1896, when DuBois began his study, "[T]his long and narrow ward, extending from South Seventh street to the Schuylkill river and from Spruce to South street" contained "a fifth of all Negroes" in Philadelphia.[3]

At its peak, the Seventh Ward contained close to 15,000 black residents and was the predominant site of many of the goods, services, and cultural institutions for black Philadelphians. Although the Seventh Ward was both a black and white neighborhood, the area bounded between South and Lombard Streets from 7th to 25th Streets was a distinctive black enclave unto itself (see Figure 1.2).[4] Much like the Black Belt of Chicago, famously examined by sociologists St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton in *Black Metropolis*, the black South/Lombard Street area of the Seventh Ward was in many ways *a city within a city*.[5]

While the Black Seventh Ward never contained more than twenty percent of the total black population, given the density of the indigenous institutions in the neighborhood and its function as the major port of entry for southern black migrants into Philadelphia, an examination of this neighborhood provides an important sociological, political and historical window into patterns of change in the larger city and Black Philadelphia.

Much like DuBois, I also discovered that the Black Seventh Ward offered important sociological insights into the factors impacting urban change, and provided a way to uncover the historical actors and events that animate contemporary understandings and debates about the economic and political advancement of urban minorities, public and affordable housing, and the consequences of urban renewal and gentrification. Like DuBois's *The Philadelphia Negro*, this book draws its analysis from a combination of archival resources. In particular I make great use of archival data, large-scale data sources (e.g., US Census Reports), oral histories, photographs, and daily news sources to generate a historical narrative and detailed picture of the neighborhood and its residents.[6]

My analysis is structured around several "critical junctures" or crucial historical moments that emphasize the decisions made by a range of black actors at specific choice analytic points that in my view determined the path of particular policies, changes, and reforms.[7] To be clear, the critical junctures I base my analysis upon are not meant to be exhaustive. Rather, such historical moments provide a means to uncover and analyze the variety of black actions and attitudes impacting on and interacting with structural changes throughout the twentieth century. Given the hundred-year period I cover, a discussion of the social history of the Black Seventh Ward vis-à-vis these four critical **(p.11)** junctures provides a cohesive and succinct way to discuss the empirical and theoretical importance of changes in the neighborhood and Philadelphia over time and how the agency of urban black residents impacted such changes.

For analytical purposes I have attempted to distill each historical period covered in order to uncover and attend to some of the major lessons, stakeholders, and outcomes of that time. However, this is not at all to suggest that these historical periods represent an exhaustive or complete view of Philadelphia twentieth-century history (or of Black Philadelphia for that matter). As sociologist Eric Klinenberg demonstrates, in his analysis of Chicago's deadly heatwave in the summer of 1995, a focus on moments of crisis and conflict helps to specify the relative importance of human agency, while also making visible the structural conditions and power relations that foster the inequalities embedded in American cities.[8]

The Four Faces of Political Agency

If the tool for understanding and examining urban change in this book is political agency, then what does such agency look like? How do citizens, in this case, black Philadelphians, express this agency and to what end? Who are the key players using such agency and what outcomes are produced because of this behavior? In this book, I focus on the concept of *political agency*[9] to encapsulate what I see as the key attitudes and actions that impact and thus contextualize a variety of key structural changes occurring in Philadelphia and the Black Seventh Ward during the twentieth century. Throughout the book I will focus on what I see as the *four faces* or expressions of political agency—*framing*, *voting*, *mobilization*, and *migration*. To be clear, my conception of political agency is also rooted in some important assumptions about urban America. Such assumptions are interwoven throughout my elaboration of political agency so as to demonstrate the connections. In what follows, I will briefly discuss these faces while also foreshadowing some of the dynamics that are more fully discussed in each of the subsequent chapters of the book.

The first face of political agency can also be thought of as what sociologist David Snow and his colleagues refer to as *framing*—the concise and punchy articulation of a social issue or reality into political terms that are used by citizens to forge alliances and seek social change on a variety of fronts. This first

face is where we find culture expressly involved, often in the form of rhetoric or discourse. Indeed, as Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. **(p.12)** Cloward remind us in their classic book *Poor People's Movements*, framing can be an essential tool for "people whose only possible recourse in struggle is to defy the beliefs and rituals laid down by their rulers."[10] The ability of citizens to construct narratives, symbols, and phrases to identify themselves, as well as stakeholders, power, oppression, resources, and inequality, is perhaps the bedrock of political agency.

Richard Iton's *In Search of the Black Fantastic*, for example, demonstrates that black rhetoric and discourse vis-à-vis literature, music, and performance have been powerful tools to articulate black politics and elicit support to address a variety of inequities experienced by black Americans. We also find the importance of discourse as a common and significant expression of political agency in the work of historians such as Robin D. G. Kelley on the actions and attitudes or "infrapolitics" of Southern working-class and poor blacks during the Jim Crow era, and the analysis of social revolutions in countries like Russia by sociologist Theda Skocpol.[11] As I will show in this book, black Philadelphians created powerful rhetoric to generate collective and individual action to address a number of issues of both local and national significance. For example, when urban renewal plans targeted the Black Seventh Ward for expressway construction, black Philadelphians created a powerful discourse that thwarted the expressway plans by positing the roadway as exemplifying "Philadelphia's Mason-Dixon Line," and emphasized that such construction would physically separate blacks and whites, while also producing deadly air pollution.

Voting and *mobilization*, the second and third faces of political agency, spring from framing. Drawing on Albert O. Hirschman's classic typology of "voice" and "exit," both voting and mobilization reflect primary responses of individual agents to structural conditions.[12] When citizens want political change in a representative democracy, such as that in the United States, voting is the formal path to enacting or achieving such change. To be sure, black voting has a complicated history, rife with stories of threats, and of unfair poll taxes levied almost exclusively on black voters, systematically weakening the impact of the black voter (perhaps finally eliminated by the Voting Rights Act of 1965). Myriad scholars have revealed that voting and the process through which voters make decisions regarding the casting of their ballot are fundamental components of civil society generally and modern democracies more specifically.

Discussions of black politics in the post–civil rights era are perhaps the most instructive. Recent research in this area has focused on the role of the black vote and the marked shift from a largely Republican voting base to a **(p.13)** Democratic one among the black electorate. Inquiry in this area has focused on the political attitudes of blacks in the period of "new black politics," an era of postsegregation and increased black electoral representation.[13] In this research

scholars have focused particularly on the prominence of what political scientist Michael Dawson refers to as the "linked fate perspective," a political framework that presumes that black people share a common fate. The linked-fate perspective has been shown to influence voting behaviors, particularly the strong support of the Democratic Party among black Americans, while also impacting mobilization efforts and the creation and maintenance of a black political community.[14]

As scholars have shown, however, the pervasiveness of such a perspective does not mean that black attitudes are homogeneous, as the operationalization of the perspective varies among black people dramatically.[15] Acknowledging that the mobilization of indigenous resources often occurs under the guise of a linked-fate perspective, scholars have uncovered the intraracial processes involved in mobilizing a black political constituency.[16] Political scientist Cathy J. Cohen, for example, complicates the notion of linked fate by demonstrating that within black political agendas segments of the population are further marginalized for the sake of a supposed consensus, constituting what she refers to as "secondary marginalization."[17] As we will see in the story of the Black Seventh Ward, black political attitudes are tied to the mobilization of resources, particularly indigenous resources such as the black press, churches, schools, and social clubs, influencing voting practices and outcomes.

Applying Dawson's and Cohen's insights to the local context, black neighborhoods, such as the Black Seventh Ward, are perhaps best understood as linked to one another. Therefore, the decline of one urban black neighborhood influences the rise and politicization of another. Events and debates shaping one urban black neighborhood reverberate throughout the city, particularly in other black neighborhoods. As we will find in the story of the Black Seventh Ward, the decline of that neighborhood influenced the rise of other black neighborhoods in Philadelphia indicating a pattern of interdependency among urban black enclaves.[18]

As social-movement scholars such as sociologists Doug McAdam, Aldon Morris, Charles Tilly and Francesca Polletta, and historians Thomas Sugrue, Martha Biondi, and Rhonda Y. Williams have shown, the third face of political agency, *mobilization*, is often manifested in marches, rallies, private meetings, riots, and/or the creation and establishment of indigenous institutions. For example, when the deaths of nearly a dozen Black Seventh Ward residents occurred due to the collapse of a poorly managed tenement, black **(p.14)** activists' mobilization on the issue of housing reform facilitated a lasting policy of race-specific housing policy and construction, wherein working families across race outside of the Seventh Ward would benefit the most. Mobilization is not always the result of a concerted plan. Indeed, violence—like the race riots Sugrue describes and those that sociologist Darnell Hunt examines in South Central Los Angeles in the wake

of the Rodney King verdict in April of 1992—demonstrates that mobilization is not always premeditated and can have unexpected consequences such as riots.[19]

Although riots are not the topic of examination in this book, the unplanned mobilization of black Philadelphians is. For example, when city officials began to condemn areas of the neighborhood in the wake of the devastating tenement collapse, outraged residents' individual protests combined into a larger campaign against the city's actions. These conceptions of voting and mobilization as they pertain to black Philadelphians are based on my assumption that urban black neighborhoods represent substantial points within the larger nexus constituting the "black community," containing important indigenous resources that are mobilized or demobilized for political ends. As political scientist Adolph Reed reminds us:

> The group as a coherent entity with an identifiable standpoint, in this case the generic "black community" (or any given black community, for that matter), is a reification that at most expresses the success of some interest networks in articulating their interpretations and programs and asserting them in the name of the group.

In other words, the so-called "black community" at its core is constitutive of a diverse group of interest networks, most often (but not always) based at the neighborhood level, whose combined impact gives rise to the boundaries and politics of the larger black population.[20]

Migration is the fourth face of political agency. As the old adage goes: "People vote with their feet." In other words, the movement from one place to another is often a political act reflecting the needs or desires of those who move. Further, as sociologists John Logan and Harvey Molotch have noted, migration can be an expression of the class status of a citizenry. As they show, those who are poorer migrate more often. However, the existing notion of migration is quite broad.

In my view, there are two broad types of migration, *primary* and *secondary*. *Primary migration*, like that described by historians' (and most recently in Isabel Wilkerson's) discussion of the Great Migration, involves the movement **(p.15)** from one city/town/state to another city/town/state some distances apart. *Secondary migration*, on the other hand, involves within-city movement. That is, residents move from one neighborhood within the city to another in the same city. While both are critical expressions of the larger sense of migration as a face of political agency, the focus of this book will largely be on secondary migration. Indeed, as Hirschman reminds us, "withdrawal or exit" is a "'direct' way of expressing one's unfavorable views" of the state and institutions.[21] That is, leaving a place is constitutive of agency.

Often disempowered from the political process in Philadelphia, black Philadelphians responded to structural changes in public housing and urban growth and decline by leaving the Black Seventh Ward and taking up residence in emergent black sections in North, West, and South Philadelphia drawing new boundaries in the racial geography of Philadelphia, thus reshaping the political districts of Philadelphia over time. Here, the major assumption is that neighborhoods often are a major tangible cultural, socioeconomic, and political resource. A neighborhood is a reflection of its residents, shaped by the relationship between its residents and the city. If its residents lack access to mainstream resources and are politically and socially marginalized, then so too is the neighborhood in which they live. This assumption, then, emphasizes the importance of marginalization and racial domination. That is, a neighborhood is a container for local and indigenous resources as well as a place of residence. However, like all resources neighborhoods are limited. Neighborhoods are socially and politically constituted physical areas of the built environment, and as such can contain only portions of the total resources of a city and a given population; neighborhoods are commodities, and are often the tool used by federal, state, and local agencies to designate resources, especially those tied to social welfare programs.

In this way, my concern with political agency seeks, in the words of political scientist James C. Scott, to make the state and structure "legible." As Scott reminds us: "[F]ormal schemes of order are untenable without some elements of the practical knowledge that they tend to dismiss."[22] Indeed, structure can be hard to see analytically and empirically. In my view, agency represents the practical knowledge of which Scott speaks; and political agency provides a fruitful way to gauge the interface between individual agents and state-sanctioned actions, procedures, and policies. Here, then, agency is not situated as more important than or superior to structure. Rather, agency is situated as an empirical and analytic lens to gauge the range of attitudes and actions of black residents as they came up against structural changes over time. **(p.16)**

Overview of the Book
The story that follows begins where DuBois's *The Philadelphia Negro* ended. Each chapter begins by bringing us to the scene of a crucial historical moment that in my view both defines the period of change in the Black Seventh Ward while also contextualizing the socioeconomic and/or political structural conditions at the time. I then work backwards from the scene to piece together, through historical narrative, the world of the Black Seventh Ward, and to identify the major players, institutions, and debates that provide a sense of the stakes and political terrain. I focus in particular on the relationship between the structural conditions of the time and the actions and attitudes of black Philadelphians in response to or in anticipation of such conditions.

As we will discover in the story that follows, over the course of the twentieth century black Philadelphians experienced periods of structural opportunity while also navigating the continued lack of access due in large part to discrimination. In this book, I attempt to reconstruct the historical period through the lens of four historical moments to amplify the impact of the political agency of black Philadelphians over time. As a result, I am able to identify and analyze each of the four faces of the political agency of black Philadelphians over time as they related to questions of urban change under the themes of economic self-sufficiency, public housing policy, urban renewal, gentrification, and the post–civil rights context.

Chapter 2 begins this historical journey back into the Black Seventh Ward, focusing in particular on the rise and fall of black banks during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. How have black efforts to combat economic disenfranchisement impacted the urban landscape? In this chapter, I detail how the collapse of indigenous black banks impacted the financial livelihood of black Philadelphians. Developed largely in response to the lack of access blacks had to mainstream banks and credit, black entrepreneurs Edward C. Brown and Andrew Stevens established and managed two banks that relied heavily on black capital. The collapse of these financial systems and subsequent loss of access to economic resources resulted in a multiclass migration of blacks from the neighborhood and an economic depression preceding and magnified by the Great Depression. Subsequently, the Black Seventh Ward transitioned into an overcrowded neighborhood with a high concentration of poverty due to the influx of southern black migrants who replaced long-time black residents but failed to find comparable employment opportunities. Essentially, this chapter investigates and analyzes the mobilizing efforts and rhetoric that were key expressions of black political agency impacting socioeconomic structural conditions.

 (p.17) In chapter 3 I take up a discussion of an issue that has long been key to examinations of urban black residents—public housing. Did urban black residents impact public housing policy and housing reform in Philadelphia, and, if so, in what ways? In this chapter I discuss how the particularly poor housing conditions of the Black Seventh Ward gave rise to the mass development of race-based public housing policy and construction in Philadelphia. In this discussion, I reveal the inadvertent ways that black residents in their quest for housing reform generally, and affordable housing specifically, were complicit in the demise of the Black Seventh Ward and the shifting institutional geography of Black Philadelphia and the racial geography of the city. This chapter, then, focuses in particular on framing, mobilization, and migration as key expressions of political agency impacting housing reform and public housing policy.

Much like public housing, urban renewal has also been key to understanding and examining urban black life and urban change. Did urban black residents in Philadelphia challenge urban renewal plans, and, if so, how did such opposition impact patterns of urban development and change? How did black activism against urban renewal impact urban transportation plans developed under the guise of urban renewal? In chapter 4, I consider the conflict emergent in the Black Seventh Ward as city leaders pursued highway construction plans created from the urban renewal goals for the area. Specifically, I detail how urban renewal efforts in the Black Seventh Ward gave rise to a powerful interneighborhood and interracial alliance established and led by black residents that left an indelible mark on Philadelphia's transportation system, specifically highway construction and public transportation.

Ultimately, I situate urban renewal vis-à-vis the Crosstown Expressway as a critical juncture that amplifies the interdependent relationship among black neighborhoods and the impact of the agency of black residents on urban landscapes. I argue that although urban renewal plans for the Black Seventh Ward virtually destroyed its historic black community, the decline of that area helped to reinforce and extend the prominence of emergent black neighborhoods in North, South, and West Philadelphia. Further, I contend that black-led activism against the Crosstown Expressway demonstrates the important ways in which black residents impact patterns of urban development, particularly urban transportation. Examining the social history of urban renewal in the Black Seventh Ward through the lens of the debate over the Crosstown Expressway, I emphasize the important and lasting impact black residents, entrepreneurs, and leaders have on larger patterns of neighborhood change and the racial geography of the city. In essence, in this chapter I focus on the **(p.18)** relationship between structure as expressed through urban renewal, and political agency, namely mobilization and migration.

How have black political victories in post–civil rights Philadelphia impacted patterns of urban black development specifically and urban growth more generally? In chapter 5, I trace the contemporary racial geography of Philadelphia and the Black Seventh Ward, in the wake of W. Wilson Goode's historic election as Philadelphia's first black mayor, focusing specifically on the last two decades of the twentieth century. I reveal that in the post–civil rights context the combined political efforts of various neighborhood councils and leaders facilitated efforts to preserve the cultural legacy of the Black Seventh Ward, especially around the South Street area. The political enfranchisement of black Philadelphians, as indicated by Goode's historic victory, demonstrates how contemporary and historic black neighborhoods changed as the relationship urban blacks had with the local power structure shifted in the post–civil rights era. Whereas chapter 4 focuses on mobilization, namely activism against urban

renewal, this chapter focuses on black political rhetoric and mobilization in post–civil rights Philadelphia.

Using the South Street flash mob of March 2010 as a springboard, chapter 6 considers the lessons we might draw from the storied Black Seventh Ward, political agency, and urban change in Philadelphia over time. Further, this chapter recaps the dynamics captured in the substantive chapters to elaborate on the patterns of urban and neighborhood change discussed throughout the book. I reflect on the major lessons that the socioeconomic, cultural, and political history of the Black Seventh Ward and Black Philadelphia teach us about urban and neighborhood change and the role of the political agency of black residents, leaders, and activists in such change. **(p.19)** **(p.20)**
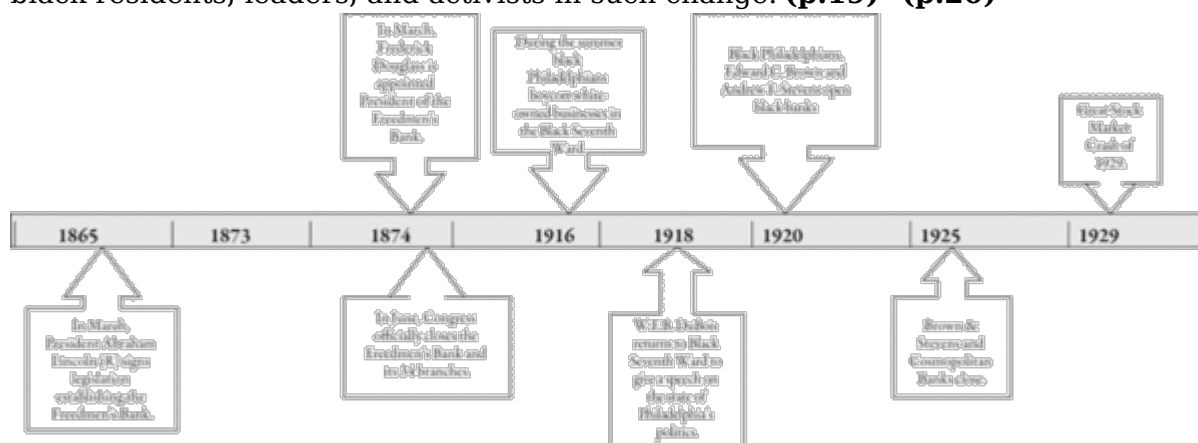
Notes:

(1.) W. E. B. DuBois, *The Autobiography of W. E. B. DuBois: A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life for the Last Decade of Its First Century* (New York: International Publishers, [1967] 2007), 192.

(2.) DuBois, *Autobiography*, 195.

(3.) W. E. B. DuBois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1899), 1.

(4.) DuBois, *Philadelphia Negro*; Roger Lane, *William Dorsey's Philadelphia & Ours* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Roger Lane, *Roots of Violence in Black Philadelphia, 1860–1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986); Robert Gregg, *Sparks From The Anvil of Oppression: Philadelphia's African Methodists and Southern Migrants, 1890–1940* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993); Gary B. Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720–1840* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); Theodore Hershberg, ed., *Philadelphia: Work, Space, Family and Group Experience in the 19th Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981). Throughout this book I use the phrases "the Black Seventh Ward" and "South/Lombard street area" interchangeably.

(5.) St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). See also James Weldon Johnson, *Black Manhattan* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), and Blair Ruble, *Washington's U-Street* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010). In his analysis of black Harlem, Johnson also characterizes the area as a distinct area unto itself. Scholars of the urban South have also extended this characterization, arguing that in southern black communities, what emerges as a result of the racial geography and racial history of the South are black communities that constitute *separate cities*. For further discussion of this concept and southern black communities, see Christopher Silver and John V. Moeser, *The Separate City: Black Communities in the Urban South, 1940–1968* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1995).

(6.) The archival data I use are from a combination of holdings from the following locations: Philadelphia's City Archives, Temple University's Urban Archives, the Free Library of Philadelphia, the University of Pennsylvania's archives, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, and the Library of Congress. These data include reports, memos, and studies conducted by local and neighborhood organizations, such as the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, the Redevelopment Authority, and the Housing Association of Delaware Valley, community organization participation records, records from local churches and schools in the area, and old leases and deeds. I also make use of nearly 250 previously collected oral histories. I also rely heavily on photographs and local newspapers, which include both mainstream and black press in Philadelphia, such as the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *Christian Recorder*, the *Evening Bulletin*, the *Public Ledger*, and the *Philadelphia Tribune* (a black newspaper founded in 1884) and the *Philadelphia Independent* (a black newspaper founded during the 1930s).

(7.) The approach I take to examine and analyze the social and political history of the Black Seventh Ward over time is perhaps best described as what scholars have referred to as a "path-dependent approach." Making clear the usefulness of critical junctures, James Mahoney offers critical junctures as an analytic and narrative tool that "demonstrate[s] the power of agency by revealing how long-term development patterns can hinge on distant decisions of the past." Mahoney adds that critical junctures enable "historical researchers to avoid the problem of infinite explanatory regress into the past," thus suggesting that critical junctures are a tool for pinpointing significant moments in history while also helping the researcher avoid seemingly endless discussions of the past. See James Mahoney, *Legacies of Liberalism: Path Dependence and Political Regimes in Central America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 7. For further discussion on critical junctures and their analytic usefulness, see also Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, eds., *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives* (New York: Free Press, 1967), and Ruth Berins Collier and David Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena: Critical Junctures,*

the Labor Movement, and Regime Dynamics in Latin America (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

(8.) See Eric Klinenberg, *Heat Wave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

(9.) Though there has been much debate about the notion of "agency" as perhaps having been overused, due to the lack of the concept and terms applicable to that of urban minorities in some social science literature the concept retains significant relevance. Further, the notions of power, involvement, and intentionality embedded within the broader concept of agency are particularly helpful for examining relations between urban and neighborhood change and the actions and attitudes of urbanites. The literature on agency is vast and quite rich. However, there have been two major strands in this area. That is, agency as a form of delegation and agency as a sense of free will. Perhaps influenced most heavily by sociologist Max Weber, the work on agency has revealed that the actions and attitudes of "everyday" men and women have both an empirical and theoretical significance, especially to understanding structure and structural change. See for example: Margaret Archer, *Being Human: The Problem of Agency* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001); James S. Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (New York: Free Press, 1964); Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1959); Arlie Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: The Commercialization of Human Feeling,* 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Hans Joas, *The Creativity of Action* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action: A Study in Social Theory with Special Reference to a Group of Recent European Writers*, Vol. 1 (New York: The Free Press, 1968); Charles Taylor, *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers I* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Linda M. G. Zerilli, *Feminism and the Abyss of Freedom* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Jeffrey C. Alexander, *The Civil Sphere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Albert O. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970); Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische, "What is Agency?" *American Journal of Sociology* 103, no. 4 (1998): 962–1023; Susan P. Shapiro, "Agency Theory," *Annual Review of Sociology* 31 (2005): 263–84; Julia Adams, "Principals and Agents, Colonialists and Company Men: The Decay of Colonial Control in the Dutch East Indies," *American Sociological Review* 61, (1996): 12–28; Julia Adams, "1–800-How-Am-I-Driving?: Agency in Social Science History," *Social Science History* 35, no. 1 (2011): 1–17; Kevin Fox Gotham, "Toward an Understanding of the Spatiality of Urban Poverty: The Urban Poor as Spatial Actors," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27, no. 3 (2003):

723–37; and Marcus Anthony Hunter, "The Nightly Round: Space, Social Capital and Urban Black Nightlife," *City & Community* 9, no. 2 (2010): 165–86.

(10.) Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Poor People's Movements: Why they Succeed, How they Fail* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), 2.

(11.) See Richard Iton, *In Search of the Black Fantastic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Robin D. G. Kelley,*Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, 1994); and Theda Skocpol, *States & Social Revolutions*: *A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, & China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

(12.) Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*.

(13.) See Michael B. Preston, Lenneal J. Henderson, Jr., and Paul L. Puryear, eds., *The New Black Politics: The Search For Political Power*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1987); Katherine Tate, *From Protest to Politics: The New Black Voters in American Elections* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1993); Albert K. Karnig and Susan Welch, *Black Representation and Urban Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Carol M. Swain, *Black Faces, Black Interests* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); Melissa Harris-Lacewell, *Barbershops, Bibles, and BET: Everyday Talk and Black Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); and J. Phillip Thompson, III, *Double Trouble: Black Mayors, Black Communities, and the Call for a Deep Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

(14.) See Adolph Reed, *Race, Politics, and Culture* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986); Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: Free Press, 1984); Preston, Henderson, and Puryear, eds., *New Black Politics*; Tate, *From Protest to Politics*; Karnig and Welch, *Black Representation and Urban Policy*; Thompson, *Double Trouble*.

(15.) See Michael C. Dawson, *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African-American Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Charles P. Henry, *Culture and African American Politics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); and Cathy J. Cohen, *The Boundaries of Blackness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

(16.) See Dawson, *Behind the Mule*; Cohen, *Boundaries of Blackness*; Adolph Reed, *Stirrings in the Jug: Black Politics in the Post-Segregation Era* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); and Mary Pattillo, *Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

(17.) Cohen, *The Boundaries of Blackness*.

(18.) See Reed, *Race, Politics, and Culture*; Aldon Morris, *Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*; Preston, Henderson, and Puryear, eds., *New Black Politics*; and Thompson, *Double Trouble*.

(19.) See Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930–1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982); Thomas Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Aldon Morris, *Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*; Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1978); Francesca Polletta, *Freedom is an Endless Meeting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Darnell Hunt, *Screening the Los Angeles Riots* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003); and Rhonda Y. Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

(20.) In my analysis I take cues from recent discussions around the concept of "black community," deploying the term sparingly to characterize the population I examine. See for example, Reed, *Stirrings in the Jug*, 15–16; and Pattillo, *Black on the Block*.

(21.) Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, 17; Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns* (New York: Vintage Books, 2011).

(22.) James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 6–8.