

TRAPPED IN THE M.A.A.D. CITY:

Colonizing Compton

by Hal Triedman

Hal Triedman is a first-year undergraduate student who is undecided in his concentration, but loves history, music, and computer science. He is particularly interested in spaces and contexts where these disciplines intersect, and how those intersections have unexpected results. In the future, he hopes to apply computer science to the real world in order to create real social change.



Racism did not end with the Civil Rights Movement. Rather, it evolved into a form of internal colonialism, which, in this context, will be defined as the localized, unequal, and materially extractive racial power dynamic that exists within marginalized spaces throughout the United States. Despite the tenuous claims our country makes of equality between white and nonwhite people and the dominance of colorblind ideology, modern disparities between races and the physical and social spaces they inhabit are staggering. The average salary of a Black American is between half and two-thirds of that of a white American, and on average African-Americans own only ten cents for each white dollar.¹ Discrimination and segregation dominate most aspects of American life, including dimensions of housing, education, and criminal justice.² Through enforcement of this segregation, white power structures can utilize racist precedents to directly profit from social problems created by the structures themselves. For example, artificially constricted housing in Black neighborhoods leads to high rates of rent, which reinforces a system that leaves many residents homeless while funneling rent payments to landlords who are predominantly white. Indeed, the extractive processes of colonial capitalism are alive and well.

Rather than expropriating the labor of a geographically diffuse

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black population through slavery or sharecropping, modern structural racism concentrates poverty in small areas and uses the resultant social dysfunction to justify the maintenance of oppressive and extractive systems. Here, poverty is drawn along racialized lines; therefore, race serves as the marker between exploiters and the exploited, and contemporary ghettoization enables processes of extraction. These extractive systems—which operate across lines of race—characterize the modern ghetto as a space of internal colonialism.³

Kendrick Lamar's album *Good Kid, m.A.A.d. City* (also referred to as *GKMC* in this paper) is a trip through one of these exploited spaces. The fractured narrative follows Lamar at age 16 through one harrowing Sunday in Compton. Throughout the day, he comes into contact with different forms of oppression, including police brutality, gang violence, depression, and substance abuse. These appear to Kendrick to emanate from the city itself. After his friend Dave is killed in a gunfight (in the narrative of the album), Lamar begins to come to terms with the colonized nature of the city's space and his own psyche. He begins to understand that this colonization is inextricably linked to the color of his skin. By the close of the album, he begins to reconcile with his roots, and proudly declares, "Compton, Compton/Ain't no city quite like mine."⁴

In *Compton* and throughout *GKMC*, Lamar follows in the tradition of George Lipsitz' Black Spatial Imaginary: he humanizes and creates out of habitually devalued space. However, he describes more than just the physical space of Compton, weaving his own work into the complex tapestry of West Coast 'gangsta rap.' By telling Compton's stories in vivid detail, he combats simplistic narratives of the city and provides proper context for the psychosocial drives that underlie the ghetto's cultural norms. Lamar therefore goes beyond a spatial reclamation of Blackness to engage in a reclamation of Compton's history, culture, and psyche. The prism of Kendrick Lamar's semi-autobiographical narrative in *Good Kid, m.A.A.d. City* lays bare the reality of his surroundings, and allows his audience to begin to understand

how the internal colonization of a U.S. ghetto produces the collective psyches of the ghetto's Black residents.

I. How the City Went m.A.A.d.: The History of Structural Racism in Compton

Throughout *Good Kid, m.A.A.d. City*, Kendrick Lamar employs the motif of a “dark room” and references “these walls” while discussing Compton. These are apt descriptions of the oppressive physical and mental space of the ghetto in three important respects. The first is that “walls” imply a feeling of being trapped or incarcerated in both the physical and psychological sense, which reflects the fact that, regardless of where Black people might go, they are relegated to ghettos by housing (among other structurally racist) practices. The second is that the setting itself is unnatural; it's not the darkness of night from which Lamar is attempting to break free, but rather the artificial darkness of a room or a cell, which is imposed by state-sanctioned tactics of command and control policing. Finally, the third is the notion that the darkness itself connotes a lack of clarity or a sense of non-enlightenment, which is complemented by the implication that the lights *could* come on. Lamar isn't looking to leave the ghetto, but instead seeks to indict the colonialist practices that created it. These two simple images comprise a novel reanalysis of the ghetto psyche. Only by better understanding the history of the construction and enforcement of the ghetto can we contextualize Lamar's “walls.” To do so, we will examine Los Angeles' and Compton's histories of housing, gang formation, and policing, and link these histories to broader systems of structural racism.

HOUSING

Spatial segregation and the creation of ghettos is a major root of structural racism as it currently exists in the United States. The processes that drive people of color away from certain neighborhoods

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to others allow for the concentration of racialized poverty, the formation of large-scale disparities in federal funding for schools, racialized policing of communities of color, and the social alienation of these communities. Gangs form—particularly among young people of color in the aftermath of migration—as a reaction to the kinds of economic, social, and spatial marginalization that result from living in ghettos.⁵ Throughout *GKMC*, Compton’s space and culture play the role of backdrop and impetus to act. Violence, both imagined and performed by characters throughout the story, appears to be a product of the city itself. Thus, the history of how Compton became a space of racialized poverty in Los Angeles, as well as how ghettoization contextualizes the rise of gangs, is critical to understanding Lamar’s definition of the ghetto psyche.

Founding to WWII: Compton as a White Suburb

With the end of Reconstruction and the rise of Jim Crow in the 1880’s, Los Angeles emerged as a popular destination among Blacks looking to leave the south. By 1910, more than half of the Black people in California lived in Los Angeles. Regardless, segregation and discrimination were rampant. In fact, to describe the city, W.E.B. DuBois wrote, “to be sure Los Angeles is not Paradise, much as the sight of its lilies and roses might lead one at first to believe. The color line is there and sharply drawn.”⁶ Between 1900 and 1920, the Black population of Los Angeles increased sevenfold. Yet it was confined by spatial boundaries and had to absorb the new population into the neighborhood of Watts. Through WWII, practices of exclusionary zoning and restrictive covenants in Los Angeles forced the vast majority of people of color into just East Los Angeles, Watts, and Little Tokyo, or 5% of the available land.⁷ In addition, through the beginning of the 20th century Black workers were relegated to the lowest-paying occupations and excluded from the burgeoning oil and motion-picture industries.⁸

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Through this early period, Compton was a white, upper-middle-class suburb. However, the influx of Black migrants in Watts led many middle-class Blacks to move to Compton. In 1939, the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) stated in a report that Compton property values were in jeopardy due to “subversive racial elements from [the] north,” referencing both Watts and West Compton, which was segregated until the World War II employment boom.⁹ Parallel to discriminatory WWII practices, the non-enforcement of health zoning codes produced the dilapidated, vermin-infested warehouses and junkyards common to those neighborhoods. Overcrowding and poor infrastructure in communities of color exacerbated the effects of floods, ineffective municipal services, and the pervasive use of unsanitary outhouses.¹⁰

In the 1940s, 100,000 Black people moved to Los Angeles. As blockbusting practices led Angeleno neighborhoods such as West Compton to transition from middle-class-white to middle-class-Black, public outlets for expression and recreation like playgrounds and public swimming pools effectively disappeared. In that same decade, racial tensions started to flare up, as exemplified by the “Zoot Suit” riots of 1943 that targeted both Latinx and Black people. In a response of defensive localism, Black street gangs began to form in the late 1940s. At the same time, the formation of white gangs produced friction with Black gangs during periods of increasing school integration. These turf wars created local gangs, but these did not represent the modern conception of a street gang: their goals were strictly related to securing and maintaining an (ethnically homogenous) territory rather than making money by engaging in traditional vice (e.g. gambling, selling drugs, etc.).¹¹

Post-WWII to Watts: Possessive Investment in Whiteness

Half of the home loans taken out in Southern California in the 1950s were provided by the GI Bill or the HOLC. This meant that the

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racially exclusionary criteria used in securing those loans (in Southern states the GI Bill was implemented along racial lines, and the HOLC practiced rampant redlining¹²) ensured that government money for tax deductions predominantly flowed into white suburbs, rather than into highly concentrated pockets of poverty consolidated in chiefly black neighborhoods. These policies, detrimental to people of color in Southern California, led to the segregation of the Los Angeles metropolitan area.¹³ This neighborhood segregation was compounded by urban sprawl and the primacy of freeways.¹⁴

Meanwhile, in 1950, 93% of Compton's residents were white. As many suburban areas were deeply invested in the educational, financial, and social privilege conferred by whiteness (and were therefore reliant on a tacitly white supremacist ideology¹⁵), white Comptonites used any means necessary to keep Compton segregated. They lobbied to pass zoning restrictions segregating the city in 1949.¹⁶ They utilized restrictive covenants that racially discriminated against nonwhite buyers—typified by realty signs that read 'For Sale: Highly Restricted'—even after these practices were ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court.¹⁷ They even resorted to violence and persecution: in 1953, five real estate agents were arrested and multiple white home-sellers from Compton were beaten by other residents for selling property to Black families.¹⁸

These strategies point to a cutthroat mentality to defending Compton's property value (and hence value within the white spatial imaginary) against the perceived threat of people of color. As the strategy of creating, and profiting from, Black ghettos took root in the minds of white Angelenos in the mid-50s, high-rise public housing proliferated in the center of Black neighborhoods. This functioned to concentrate poverty, cement strict lines of segregation, and nurture the proliferation of gangs. However, these were not the small-time turf defenders of the late 40s. These new gangs often engaged in traditional "vice" (gambling, prostitution, minor drug-dealing, etc.); by the late 1950s, gang violence in Watts had reached epidemic levels.¹⁹

Watts to the War on Drugs: White flight and Transition

The Watts Uprising—six days of rioting and unrest in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles caused by allegations of police brutality—motivated white residents to flee Compton en masse. The ill effects of their money leaving with them were not felt until the late 70s and early 80s when banks closed, the tax base eroded, businesses left, and schools began to fall apart.²⁰ Many segregated Angeleno neighborhoods quickly transitioned from explicit “whites only” policies to implicit “non-whites only” policies in just a few years.²¹ After Congress passed the Fair Housing Act (1968), the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (1975), and the Community Reinvestment Act (1977), federally-backed home loans finally became available to low-income and minority communities at an equitable rate. However, conventional private loans soon became the main means of financing home purchases and facilitated white flight out of Los Angeles in the late 1970s and early 1980s.²²

In 1960, Compton had a white population of 21,076 and a Black population of 13,946. In the decade following the Watts Uprising, the Black population quadrupled while the white population stayed the same.²³ Previously racially segregated neighborhoods developed class segregation as middle-class Blacks moved into formerly white neighborhoods. Meanwhile, white homeowners became landlords who, emotionally and financially divested from Compton, charged high rates of rent, oversaw the deterioration of their property, and shut down businesses.²⁴ By the 1970s, Compton was a city of color, and Black people constituted the new majority.²⁵

For several years following the Watts Uprising, the social mantle that had once been carried by gangs was taken on by the Black Power movement, which constructively organized within the ghetto against the internal colony status that it had assumed in an attempt to lighten Lamar’s “dark room.” COINTELPRO (a series of

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projects coordinated by the FBI to disrupt radical American political organizations and discredit their leaders) and LAPD's Public Disorder Intelligence Division's quickly cracked down on Black Power organizations in 1968-69. This coincided with a resurgence of gang violence in the 70s: immediately after the Black Power movement fell apart between 1970 and 1972, the first Crip sets formed throughout the city and secured a high level of social dominance. In response to the violent emergence of the Crips, several rival gangs encompassing South-Central Los Angeles and Compton merged to create the Bloods between 1973 and 1975.²⁶

The War on Drugs to Good Kid m.A.A.d. City: Neoliberalism at Work

Between 1978 and 1982, as neoliberalism started to become a dominant philosophy in the United States, there were several plant closures in communities of color in Los Angeles and 70,000 layoffs. The child poverty rate in Compton lay just over 40%, and the combination of deindustrialization, unemployment, and poverty produced skyrocketing gang participation. By 1982, there were 155 gangs in L.A. County, encompassing 30,000 active members. By the mid-90s, there were almost 300 gangs in Los Angeles, with a membership of 35,000. Gang life was pervasive in both social and economic dimensions, and was oftentimes the only means of securing money, social capital, or protection from other gangs. Given the profound disinvestment from South-Central Los Angeles as a productive cultural and economic space, these social formations make sense despite the madness and violence found on the street-level.²⁷ By the 1990s, the rise in crack and drug-related gang activities made Compton infamous as the supposed "murder capital of the nation," and the rise in gangsta rap immortalized the city in American myth.²⁸ At the same time, federally subsidized housing continued to be disproportionately clustered in high-poverty communities of color. This contributed to overcrowding and the concentration of poverty; FHA loans, though offered to more

low income people of color, continued to fund white flight to the suburbs.²⁹ In 2017, Compton is 58% Latinx, and tensions are black-brown rather than white-nonwhite, with each group blaming the other for Compton's decline.³⁰ Regardless of tensions, the city suffers from the effects of a large-scale colonial exploitation derived from racialized historical precedent.

Between 1990 and 2000, predominantly white neighborhoods in Los Angeles became more diverse, but none lost their characterization as predominantly white. By any meaningful measure, Los Angeles is still segregated.³¹ In 1998, a Black home loan applicant in Southern California was 56% as likely as a white applicant to receive approval; this disparity was much more pronounced in the suburbs and diminished in metropolitan areas, which illustrates the contemporary reproduction of segregation.³²

Compton's continual processes of ghettoization and extraction wreak havoc on the psyches of its residents. As ghettos are spaces that manifest poverty, population turnover, crime, fear of crime, noise, and overcrowding, the experience of living in an American racialized ghetto dramatically increases the likelihood of developing mental illness. Experiments prove that the *experience* of racism—on both individual and structural levels—is strongly correlated with poor performance, anxiety, depression, and substance abuse.³³ The extension of spatial devaluation to personal devaluation is exemplified in *GKMC*, and is illustrated by Lamar's ruminations on depression, addiction, and death. *Good Kid* invokes imagery of suicide ("Got animosity buildin', it's probably big as a building/ Me jumping off the roof is me just playin' it safe"), and includes a verse about how he wants to shut himself in and take Xanax and psilocybin mushrooms so that he can forget about the violence that surrounds him. *Swimming Pools (Drank)* depicts his history of alcoholism due to feelings of inferiority. Finally, in *Sing About Me*, Lamar contemplates his own death, and emphasizes his self-hate ("Everyday that glass mirror get/tougher to watch"), feelings of imminent doom, and acceptance of death. While Lamar never

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claims to speak for the whole of Compton, the thread of inferiority, mental illness, and self-hate he bares to the world characterizes every character he depicts in *GKMC*. Moreover, these psychological markers stem from the fact that their identities derive from the deprived world that surrounds them.

Los Angeles' history of ghettoization has damaged Compton deeply by concentrating poverty, creating and fueling gang violence as we know it, and irrevocably colonizing the psyches of its residents. But this phenomenon is larger than any one city—the historical forces that produced ghettoization in Compton functioned on a national scale. Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton's *American Apartheid* illustrates how in every major city, "improvement organizations" propagated restrictive covenants and zoned Black citizens into segregated neighborhoods that turned into ghettos. Real estate agents across the country who sought to profit from blockbusting steered Black buyers into carefully picked neighborhoods in the midst of racial transition and gave out duplicitous loans designed to default. HOLC practiced redlining in nearly every major city and the GI Bill funneled returning veterans into housing areas on the basis of their race. Compton is not a historical anomaly; terrifyingly, it's the historical norm. The history of the ghettoization of Compton points to the fact that powers of white supremacy are invested in the construction of this oppressive system, and that these powers must employ constant coercion to maintain it in both spatial and mental dimensions.

POLICING

Since the conditions of material deprivation within the ghetto render it nearly unlivable, the internal colony of the ghetto is an inherently unstable social formation. It takes a system of control and an oppressive atmosphere of ever-present acts and threats of violence to preserve the extractive system of social disorder that defines the ghetto. In the narrative of Compton traced by *GKMC*, this violence

falls upon both the gangs and police.

Contrary to the behavioralist, culture-of-poverty narrative of “Black-on-Black” violence that is usually imposed on mainstream stories of gangs, Lamar contextualizes gang violence in psychological and spatial terms; the systemic and senseless violence comes from the LAPD, which has a history of highly invasive, repressive, and extractive policing. Throughout *Good Kid, m.A.A.d. City*, Lamar expands on these points by providing examples of his distrust of the police. He elucidates how the state not only forces dispossessed people of color into deprived spaces, but also uses force to keep them there. Los Angeles has historically pioneered sophisticated and centralized technological methods of policing their citizenry. The massive mobilization of force deployed during the Watts Uprising of 1965 and the Rodney King Uprising of 1991 is indicative of the invasive level police involvement in L.A. communities of color. LAPD uses a highly technological system (e.g., a seamless integration of helicopter and ground-level policing) to economize their version of command policing in order to enforce spatial power relations, and has blazed the trail for technologically advanced systems of control in nations across the world.³⁴ Over its racialized history, Los Angeles has consistently sought to centralize and consolidate state police control over Angelenos, with a particular focus on Angelenos of color.

The modernization of the LAPD started in 1956, when the department recognized the effectiveness of helicopters in establishing social control in the Korean War and began to purchase helicopters in an attempt to economize police work and outgun criminals. This was four decades before the beginning of the Department of Defense’s 1033 Program (started in 1997), which allows the Pentagon to transfer surplus military supplies to police forces across the country and has led to the nation-wide militarization of police forces throughout the country (as illustrated by events in Ferguson in 2014).³⁵

In 1967, after the political mobilization of Black gangs for the cause of Black Power, the LAPD created the world’s first SWAT team.

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Its first deployment was at the Black Panther Party's Los Angeles Headquarters in 1969 and constituted part of the post-Watts police militarization and repression of radical Black politics.³⁶ The systematic destruction of the Panthers contains at its heart the truth of the state's racial ideology: it does not want the ghetto to be fixed. The ghetto is easier to control when it is broken, and fixing the ghetto would entail a true racial reckoning with the horrors of modern racism.

Rates of gang violence surged as police raids and COINTELPRO misinformation wreaked havoc upon Black organizing communities, and reached unprecedented levels by the mid-70's. The LAPD, in response to both this rise in gang violence and the burgeoning crack epidemic of the early 80's, formed the Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums (CRASH). CRASH was a specialized gang unit notorious for holding an extremely violent vision of frontier justice, which the unit enforced on a daily basis in neighborhoods like Watts and Compton. Their motto read as follows: "We intimidate those who intimidate others."³⁷ Though CRASH was disbanded in the late-80's amidst public outcry against their tactics, the LAPD's ideology of normalized violence endured. Steve Herbert's ethnographic survey of LAPD notes that officers "cannot even understand, much less staunch" the deeper reasons or motives behind gang violence.³⁸ There was, and continues to be, a complete empathic disconnect between communities of color and state actors who police them.

Rampant police brutality, inflicted on residents of color in Los Angeles, continued throughout the 80's and 90's. There were many officers in the department who "repetitively [used] excessive force against the public and persistently [ignored] the written guidelines of the department regarding force."³⁹ Pressure stemming from brutality erupted into the mass protest and rioting in 1991, after a video went public showing policemen beating Rodney King, a Black motorist. In the aftermath of the assault on Rodney King, William Bratton, who oversaw the implementation of New York Police Department's stop-and-frisk policy, rose to the position of commissioner of the LAPD.

There he developed a centralized computer system to further expand officers' ability to conduct surveillance on citizens. However, by relying on this newly developed system, officers further lost touch with the nuances of the communities they policed. These officers began to bluntly categorize groups of people as "good" or "bad," and aggressively moved against the latter.⁴⁰

The increasingly violent, militaristic habits of the LAPD in the post-Rodney King era reveal this disconnect to a powerful degree. Despite many community outreach efforts intended to build trust between residents of ghettos and police by providing necessary social services, the police still operate brutally based on structural assumptions of Black criminality. For example, SWAT raids, historically used for the repression of Black politics, have increased from 3,000 per year in the 1980s to more than 40,000 per year in 2017.⁴¹ Military policing has exacerbated a moralistic, "good guys vs. bad guys" narrative to justify police action, regardless of what that action entails or how it might affect citizen populations.⁴² The LAPD's toxic culture of masculinity, race, and morality, coupled with its capability for command policing, underscores the damage done to communities of color on an everyday basis.

II. Brutalizing the "Good Kid"

Lamar highlights the absurdity of violence in Compton in *Good Kid*. In the song, he first is beaten up by a couple of gang members who think that his nonalignment with any gang in the region is equivalent to membership in a rival gang. As he drives away from the encounter, he is pulled over by the police and interrogated—even after he asks the officers for help, he is beaten up again. In both verses, the actions of the aggressors are identical despite the supposed opposition of the gang members and the police. For instance, the motif of "red and blue" is used to stand for the colors of both the rival Pirus and Crips and the flashing lights of a police cruiser.⁴³ In both situations, Lamar's truthful

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and desperate protestations that he is not a gang member are ignored, because the space he inhabits dictates to others that he must conform to society's expectations for him. The result in both cases is brutal and oppressive: the aggressors step on Lamar's neck, which connotes the suffocating power of place to define identity and induce violence.

Lamar's interaction with the police is an illuminating example that clarifies how police power works, particularly in the context of the spatial dynamics in the LAPD. Though the policemen start by "[promising him they] can help," the dynamic of the interaction soon shifts and they are "[holding Lamar] against [his] will." They ask him to "lift up [his] shirt," hoping that a tattoo of affiliation will prove their assumption that he is a gang member and allow them to take the "pleasure" of "[putting Lamar] through gang files." Though their assumption is wrong, they still claim to "know that he's down"—that he is engaging in the gang lifestyle—because he is a Compton resident and continue to beat him.

At the same time, Lamar is editorializing the interaction. Encounters like this are so common for him that he "can never pick out the difference and grade a cop on a bill," and he feels that "every time [police] clock in the morning... [they] just want to kill/all [his] innocence." Though Lamar has a "purpose to persevere as a better person," his lived experience indicates that these personal aspirations make little difference, as the police fear him nonetheless as a Black man from Compton. The social disconnect of the LAPD, derived from their long history of technological policing, does not allow them to perceive Lamar's humanity. The LAPD's legacy of brutality allows him to explore the ways in which their violence towards the population of Compton is systemic, extractive, and based in racist ideologies of control.

Police violence, and the brutality of the criminal justice system as a whole, is once again a phenomenon that takes place on a scale far larger than Compton or Los Angeles. Michelle Alexander shows in *The New Jim Crow* how the War on Drugs has created a racial caste system

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in the United States that rewards police departments that engage in invasive and extractive policing (practices pioneered by LAPD) while punishing and stigmatizing people of color. Alexander details two processes that particularly relate to the narrative of *Good Kid, m.A.A.d. City*. The first is the heightened individual discretion of police officers, christened by Supreme Court decisions over two decades. Alexander writes, “In the years [from 1982 to 1991], the Court has heard argument in 30 Fourth Amendment cases involving narcotics. . . . All save two involved a search or seizure without a warrant or with a defective warrant. And, in all except three, the Court upheld the constitutionality of the search or seizure.”⁴⁴ These Court decisions sanctioned the exercise of power by officers over anyone deemed “suspicious” (under wide, ambiguous criteria), as seen in *Good Kid*. The second is the successful political campaign for mandatory minimum drug sentences, which criminalizes and stigmatizes users with a medical problem while removing them from society at a high cost and for large amounts of time. Compton residents are acutely aware of mandatory minimums: on *Money Trees*, Jay Rock raps “Drop that work [some drugs] up in the bushes/Hope them boys [the police] don’t see my stash/If they do, tell the truth/This the last time you might see my ass” in reference to the potential jail time a Black man faces for charges of drug possession.⁴⁵ The criminal justice system in Los Angeles and in the U.S. as a whole—from the police to the courts to the prison system—constitutes a new form of racialized social control.

In *Real*, arguably the most introspective song on the album, Lamar analyzes the behavior of both his friends in Compton and of himself and begins to understand that the dominant white supremacist narrative of the ghetto has taught them to hate their surroundings and by extension themselves. *Real* reserves passing judgment upon the space that killed Dave—and that is its own kind of forgiveness. With this song, Lamar takes a step towards breaking down his internal walls and freeing his mind.

As stated at the beginning of this essay, *Good Kid, m.A.A.d.*

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City ends with *Compton*, a celebration of Lamar's city. "Ain't no city quite like mine," he raps, even though Compton's dark history of discrimination, racism, and violence is really the history of every city in the United States. One gets the sense that Lamar is referring to something more. When he sees the city, he feels hope and life and a sense of wonder: hope nearly forced out of him by failed systems of governance, life nearly beaten out of him by gang members and cops, and a sense of wonder nearly squeezed out of him by the crushing grief of a best friend's death. His sense of wonder prevails, in part, because when he looks at Compton and embraces it despite its flaws and tormented past, he starts to love himself, too.

Edited by Daniel Schreck

ENDNOTES

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³ In this essay, the term *ghetto* refers to areas, typically in or adjacent to urban centers, which are mostly inhabited by people of color who have little access to income or capital. Due to their lack of physical, financial, and cultural resources, these areas often manifest severe social problems and are therefore themselves seen as problems.

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¹¹ Brown et al., 214-215.

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¹³ Aldana and Dymski, 3.

¹⁴ Brown et al., 217.

¹⁵ George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia, Temple UP, 2006), 1.

¹⁶ Parker, 13.

¹⁷ Ibid, 14.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Brown et al., 216; 218.

²⁰ Camarillo, 284.

²¹ Aldana and Dymski, 2.

²² Ibid, 4-5.

²³ Parker, 15.

²⁴ Ibid, 26.

²⁵ Camarillo, 278.

²⁶ Brown et al., 219-21.

²⁷ Ibid, 222-24.

²⁸ Camarillo, 284.

²⁹ Aldana and Dymski, 6-7.

³⁰ Camarillo, 285.

³¹ Benjamin Mueller, "Housing Discrimination Hasn't Disappeared," *Los Angeles Times*,

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³⁵ Ruth Wilson Gilmore and Craig Gilmore, "Beyond Bratton," in *Policing the Planet: Why the Policing Crisis Led to Black Lives Matter*, ed. Jordan T. Camp and Christina Heatherton (London: Verso, 2016), 176.

³⁶ Ibid, 177.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Herbert, 51.

³⁹ Robert Reinhold, "Violence and Racism are Routine in Los Angeles Police, Study Says," *New York Times*, July 10, 1991, accessed December 6, 2016, <http://www.ny-times.com/books/98/02/08/home/rodney-report.html>.

⁴⁰ Herbert, 52.

⁴¹ Gilmore and Gilmore, 181-83.

⁴² Herbert, 54.

⁴³ GKMC, *Good Kid*.

⁴⁴ Alexander, 19.

⁴⁵ GKMC, *Money Trees*.

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