Black Lives Matter - Long Island (BLM-LI)

Description: #BlackLivesMatter was started as an outcry against the murder and dehumanization Trayvon Martin. The movement was started by 3 women Patrisse Cullors, Opal Tometi, and Alicia Garza. This movement is for black liberation. We are against racist police violence and the criminalization of our black and brown citizens.

We understand the structural and systematic racism that plagues this country which disproportionately affects black people and black communities. Black Lives Matter is a unique contribution that goes beyond extrajudicial killings of Black people by police and vigilantes. It goes beyond the narrow nationalism that can be prevalent within some Black communities, which merely call on Black people to love Black, live Black and buy Black, keeping straight cis Black men in the front of the movement while our sisters, queer and trans and disabled folk take up roles in the background or not at all. Black Lives Matter affirms the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, Black-undocumented folks, folks with records, women and all Black lives along the gender spectrum. It centers those that have been marginalized within Black liberation movements. It is a tactic to (re)build the Black liberation movement.

It is our duty to fight for our freedom.
It is our duty to win.
We must love each other and support each other.
We have nothing to lose but our chains.

-Assata Shakur

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Cover Art by E.A.
A Litany for Survival :: Audre Lorde

For those of us who live at the shoreline
standing upon the constant edges of decision
crucial and alone
for those of us who cannot indulge
the passing dreams of choice
who love in doorways coming and going
in the hours between dawns
looking inward and outward
at once before and after
seeking a now that can breed
futures
like bread in our children's mouths
so their dreams will not reflect
the death of ours;

For those of us
who were imprinted with fear
like a faint line in the center of our foreheads
learning to be afraid with our mother's milk.
for by this weapon
this illusion of some safety to be found
the heavy-footed hoped to silence us
For all of us
this instant and this triumph
We were never meant to survive.

And when the sun rises we are afraid
it might not remain
when the sun sets we are afraid
it might not rise in the morning
when our stomachs are full we are afraid
of indigestion
when our stomachs are empty we are afraid
we may never eat again
when we are loved we are afraid
love will vanish
when we are alone we are afraid
love will never return
and when we speak we are afraid
our words will not be heard
nor welcomed
but when we are silent
we are still afraid.

So it is better to speak
remembering
we were never meant to survive

Recommended Reading List: (not exhasutive)

Assata Shakur, Assata: An Autobiography
Angela Davis: From Ferguson to Palestine, Are Prisons Obsolete?
Audre Lorde, Sister Outsider
Franz Fanon, Wretched of the Earth
Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation
Michelle Alexander, The New Jim Crow
Marvin Surkin and Dan Georgakas, Detroit: I Do Mind Dying
Cedric Robinson, Black Marxism
Walter Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa
Manning Marable, How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America
Orlando Patterson, Slavery and Social Death
CLR James, The Black Jacobins
Cathy Cohen, “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?”
Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Words of Fire
Combahee River Collective, “A Black Feminist Statement”
Enrique Dussel, Twenty Theses on Politics
Patricia Hill Collins, Black Feminist Thought

for more recommendations, and articles to read, check out our tumbler!
RACIAL CAPITALISM (CONTINUED)

The pipeline to prison is often built with penalties against ordinary citizens of color for minor infractions. Exorbitant court fines and tickets serve not only to defray the costs of municipal operations: when directed at economically vulnerable populations, they can often mean the effective incarceration of entire communities. In Ferguson, Missouri in 2015, “court fines deriving from motor vehicle violations were 21% of revenue, accounting for the equivalent of more than 81% of police salaries before overtime.” Not paying these fines or appearing in court leads to arrest warrants, and in December 2014 the Ferguson police “department had 16,000 outstanding arrest warrants, mostly for minor offenses. 95% of traffic stops were directed at Black drivers.” “According to the US census bureau, while there are 1,182 African American women between the ages of 25-34 living in Ferguson, there are only 577 African American men in this age group. More than 40 percent of Black men in both the 20-24 and the 35-34 age groups in Ferguson are missing.”

Ferguson is merely a snapshot of the national trend. Across the country 1.5 million Black men are in prison—roughly one out of every six black men, and black folks are incarcerated at a rate 5 times higher than that of whites. Perhaps the history of racial capitalist imperatives explains why the US has such staggering incarceration rates relative to other nations: Americans go to jail over 11 million times per year, and “the US criminal justice system holds more than 23 million people in 1,719 state prisons, 102 federal prisons, 2,259 juvenile correctional facilities, 3,283 local jails, and 79 Indian Country jails as well as in military prisons, immigration detention facilities, civil commitment centers, and prisons in the US territories.” The US has the most incarcerated people in the world, housing 22% of the world’s prisoners while the US only has 4.4% of the world’s population. Companies both inside and out of the US vie for obtaining prison contracts for the use of cheap prison labor, which makes mass incarceration a global economic strategy for increased profits. “In the 1980s, the variety of corporations making money from prisons is truly dizzying, ranging from Dial Soap to Famous Amos cookies, from AT&T to health care providers...In 1995 Dial Soap sold $100,000 worth of its product to the New York City jail system alone...When VitalPro Foods of Montreal, Canada, contracted to supply inmates in the state of Texas with its soy-based meat substitute, the contract was worth $34 million a year.”

The movement for Black lives has issued a clarion call around the crisis of state-sponsored violence in our country. But this phenomenon will never be adequately understood and reversed until it is articulated with the history of chattel slavery, waged exploitation, and imprisonment generated by the logic of racial capitalism. As Michelle Alexander writes: “Today, a criminal freed from prison has scarcely more rights, and arguably less respect, than a freed slave or a black person living free in Mississippi at the height of Jim Crow.” As a generation, we can either watch our sisters and brothers continually slide in a retrograde motion behind our ancestors, or we can dare to interrogate institutions like the police, the prison system, and the private ownership of the means of production that make it impossible for Black people to breathe.

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Playlist for the Revolution***

Kendrick Lamar, Alright, Blacker Da Berry
Mos Def and Talib Kweli, Thieves in the Night
Denmark Vessey, Dr. Martin Lucid Dream
Sa-Roc, Heaven on Earth
Max Roach and Abbey Lincoln, Driva Man, Freedom Day
Stahhr the Femecee, Resistance
Vic Mensa, Shades of Blue
Dead prez, I'M A African, Police State
Jeru the Damaja, Invasion
Killer Mike, Reagan
Micranots, The Willie Lynch, Analyze
Janelle Monae, The ArchAndroid
Ana Tijoux, Vengo
Flor De Toloache, Mariachi Flor de Toloache
Charles Mingus, Mingus Ah Um
Nina Simone, Black Gold
Duke Ellington, Black, Brown, and Beige
Billie Holiday, Strange Fruit
Marvin Gaye, What’s Going On?
Stevie Wonder, Hotter Than July
Thelonious Monk, Criss Cross
Erykah Badu, New Amerykah Part One
Common, 'A Song for Assata'

& more....(just check out the tumblr)
Marsha was born New Jersey, and after being estranged from her family in her late teens, found her way to New York City’s Greenwich Village.

Participated in the Stonewall Riots, often credited with throwing the first brick during the police raid on the Stonewall Inn.

Founder of STAR House (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries) along with Sylvia Rivera (also a member of the Young Lords), aiming to house homeless LGBTQ youth, funded by her and other members’ sex work.

Sex Worker throughout her life. Often picked up by NYPD officers, arrested, and forcibly medicated by court orders. She would randomly be released, and would spend weeks on the street strung out by the force fed “medication” and other questionable “treatments” (possibly also including electroshock therapy).

Ostracized from the Gay community despite being a central figure to early gay liberation and resistance in NY because she did not fit the respectability and assimilationist policit that ended up co-opting the “gay rights” movement for “marriage equality” and inclusion in the military.

Religious. Eclectic belief system “covered all of her bases” Her faith practice often found her in Churches, Temples, and in the park, praying prostrate in a velvet dress throwing glitter towards the altar AND/OR demanding articles of clothing be sacrificed to Neptune/Her Father by throwing them in the river.

Homeless, lived with friends, often slept under flower shop benches. She wore flowers in her hair.

A part of the performance group Hot Peaches, singing never quite on pitch but with presence and passion. A figure larger than life, oft revered as a goddess or saint of Christopher Street. People knew her in the streets, and in the theater.

HIV+, engaged in early HIV/AIDS activism through ACT UP and other orgs.

Her death was never properly investigated, ruled a suicide, case was closed immediately. Her death is largely believed to be a homicide that the police failed to investigate because of her status as a homeless, black, trans, sex worker. In 2013, her case was reopened.

entire Black family. If working conditions for (mostly) men in factories were terrible, the plight of Black women who were largely employed as domestic workers was not much better (in 1940, 60% of Black women were domestic workers and 16% still worked in fields and in 1960 at least 1/3 of Black women still worked as domestics). While activism around the early women’s suffrage movement claimed to emancipate women, only middle class White women saw many of these benefits; and as more and more White women worked outside the home, non-White women and immigrants were largely employed to take their place in the home. We must understand clearly that, from Jim Crow to Northern ghettoization, the social and economic problems Black people faced have never been satisfactorily addressed by the exclusive push for legal recognition. As the conditions of Black labor in the industrial North demonstrate, “formal equality” in a racial-capitalist system most often translates into shared forms of exploitation of both classes of non-White workers.

While the 60s are largely remembered for their radical fervor and militancy, with Nixon’s presidency in 1968 we begin to see a “conservative backlash” to the changes in public consciousness about racial justice in the United States. As Taylor writes, “from the anti-war movement to the struggle for women’s liberation, the Black movement was a conduit for questioning American democracy and capitalism.” Following these post-Vietnam challenges, the Republican party mobilized what they called a “southern strategy,” which was a move to grab the poor and working class White democrats disillusioned with the Democratic party after the war. This meant they wanted to appeal to the resentment of lost jobs due to deindustrialization and play up racist rhetoric around “who was taking whose jobs.” Famously Nixon called this group of disaffected potential Republicans “the silent majority” who were not represented by the “vocal minority” of the 60s freedom movements. As in the postbellum South, this is a tactic of divide and conquer used against those who might begin to build coalitions to challenge the status quo.

The collective actions—particularly those by Detroit factory workers and federal postal workers—grabbed the attention of Nixon and those on the right because they directly affected the national economy as well as revealed the hypocrisy of the rhetoric of the “silent majority.” Under Nixon’s regime, many of the gains for public welfare that the freedom movement pressured Johnson to enact were dismantled, but because of the real increasing wage gap and unemployment in the United States, it had to be done under the guise of “restoring law and order” to a nation in “shambles” after the Vietnam war.

Using the rhetoric of “law and order” would become the strategy not only of the openly conserva- tive Nixon, but also the later strategy of Reagan and Clinton, as Taylor writes, “using racial codes and innuendo to build a case against programs that benefit poor and working-class whites, while under- mining the potential for solidarity among those who have the most to gain by uniting and the most to lose by continuing to be divided.” Instead of using explicitly racist rhetoric to enact enhanced public control and welfare cutbacks, Nixon cited rising crime rates and played on the fear that if the country was spiraling out of control to justify increased spending on police and public surveillance. Just before Nixon took office and right after Martin Luther King Jr. was murdered, L. B. Johnson passed the “Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1965,” which Nixon and later presidents were able to utilize to integrate the FBI into local law enforcement and increase the spending on police. In less than a decade after the bill’s passing the federal government spent $7.8 billion increasing law enforcement agencies and prisons.

Shifting from openly racist rhetoric to colorblind “law and order” rhetoric where “criminals are punished” allowed the government to justify putting down political unrest, while at the same time giving the illusion that the United States was a “post-race,” meritocratic, and progressive country—even when “over the course of the 1970s, a Black man’s chance of being murdered was six to eight times greater than that of a white man.” And if the United States is a place where if you work hard you will succeed and institutional racism has been dismantled, then any social problems are only the problem of the individual and there is no need for social welfare programs—enter the 1980s the legal system through Clinton and the dismantling of public welfare.

The rhetoric of law and order conceals the true function of the prison-industrial complex, which is to make use of the vast pool of Black and Brown labor left by the flight of capital from America’s industrial centers to cheaper, less-regulated labor markets overseas. Prison work represents a reversal of the delicate gains won by American organized labor in the earlier half of the 20th century. From a 1997 pamphlet on the prison industrial complex written by Linda Evans and Eve Goldberg:

For private business prison labor is like a pot of gold. No strikes. No union organizing. No health benefits, unemployment insurance, or workers’ compensation to pay. No language barriers, as in foreign countries. New Leviathan prisons are being built on thousands of acre of factories...Prisoners do data entry for Chevron, make telephone reservations for TWA, raise hogs, shovel manure, and make circuit boards, limousines, waterbeds, and lingerie for Victoria’s Secret, all at a fraction of the cost of free labor.
and the spring of 1963, [got] 20,000 men, women, and children arrested. In 1963 alone, another 15,000 were imprisoned, and 1,000 desegregation protests occurred across the region, in more than 100 cities. In response to this mass political protest, JFK promised to sign a strong civil rights bill, which because of his assassination did not actually come to fruition until LBJ took office and signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which formally dismantled Jim Crow segregation laws. Following continued black political protest and in particular Martin Luther King’s campaign with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the famous march from Selma to Montgomery—the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was signed. This law was supposed to mandate federal review of all state and local voting regulations to ensure that people were not racially barred from their 15th amendment right to vote.

While the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act are normally given as the foci of civil rights organizing in the 60s, economic issues and a critique of capitalism were just as central for its most progressive voices. Given the history of the convict lease system, the highly racialized and gendered nature of domestic work, and the fact that Black workers have been and continue to be the last hired and first fired, it should be no surprise that labor conditions and a larger critique of capitalism have been central in radical Black politics. As Martin Luther King put it in 1966, you can’t talk about solving the economic problem of the Negro without talking about billions of dollars. You can’t talk about ending the slums without first saying profit must be taken out of the slums. You’re really tampering and getting on dangerous ground because you are messing with folk then. You are messing with captains of industry. Now this means that we are treading in difficult water, because it really means that we are saying that something is wrong with capitalism.

It was these kinds of remarks about the need for restructuring society that especially made MLK a target and shortly after these remarks led to his assassination. It was on the heels of the development of a “Poor People’s” coalition movement including poor Blacks, Appalachian Whites, Mexican Americans, Puerto Rican Americans, and Native Americans that the ensuing era of mass incarceration would begin after “Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968” signed by LBJ—purported as a response to the assassination of MLK.

Only weeks after MLK was assassinated, Black workers at the Detroit Dodge Main plant staged a wildcat strike against inhumane working conditions. Following this, workers formed DRUM, the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement. This spurred many other Revolutionary Union Movements to begin at other automobile manufacturing plants, which eventually organized themselves under a larger coordinating organization called the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. While 2.5 million African Americans in 1968 belonged to the national trade union the AFL-CIO, they were not represented in the leadership of the union nor were their interests made a priority. To give you some perspective of the increasingly intensified exploitation of auto workers, whose constituents were disproportionately black, and thus able to be seen as “justifiably exploitable”—in 1948, some 550,000 auto workers had produced a little more than 3 million vehicles, but in 1970 some 750,000 auto workers had produced a little more than 8 million vehicles. Management credited this much higher productivity per worker to its improved managerial techniques and new machinery (or “automation”). Workers, on the other hand, claimed the higher productivity was primarily a result of their being forced to work harder and faster under increasingly unsafe and unhealthy conditions. This was the yield of a national production process that killed more auto workers per year than soldiers killed or injured during the war in Vietnam, according to an important study done in 1973, called the Health Research Group Study of Disease among Workers in the auto industry, which drew from data from the National Institute of Occupation Safety and Health. These auto jobs tended to pay between $3.60 and $3.94 per hour. In the period between 1946 and 1969 wages had only increased by 25% while profits increased 77%. The industry moaned about its cycle of booms and busts, but in 1970 General Motors remained the nation’s (and the world’s) largest manufacturing enterprises. Ford was the third largest. And Chrysler, “the weaker sister,” was fifth.

So, if black folks now had access to urban industrial jobs, the majority of their actual life prospects were not much improved from working in fields—no matter what location, north or south, field or factory. Black labor was super-exploited and has consistently been the backbone of North American capitalism as a source of cheap labor double-weave only reserved for “expedient” populations, whether black, immigrant, or just poor. And according to Angela Davis, in “The Meaning of Emancipation According to Black Women,” the racial-capitalist production process engulfed the
are found to what Frantz Fanon called the “zone of nonbeing.” As always under racial capitalism, the poverty and political dependency of Sierra Leone and Haiti have certain economic, social, and psychological implications for US Blacks: thus, we cannot successfully confine the struggle for the validity of Black life to North American shores.

II. JIM CROW, OLD AND NEW

After Reconstruction and the creation of the Freedmen’s Bureau, Southern conservatives sought to “recast” the South and reverse any gains towards racial equality, leading to the birth of the Ku Klux Klan, which used terrorist methods to frighten anyone who wanted to take advantage of Reconstruction. The KKK was eventually successful in driving out federal troops and federal enforcement of federal civil rights legislation. Instead, “vagrancy laws and other laws defining activities such as ‘mischief’ and ‘insulting gestures’ as crimes were enforced vigorously against blacks.” The effort to criminalize these petty “crimes” led to the rise of a convict lease market where prisoners were auctioned off to the “highest bidder” to work off their fines and debts to the courts and jails.

The convict leasing system put the recently freed black right back into labor camps and the same Southern plantations and corporations they sought to leave. Working conditions as a convict were just as harsh as under slavery, and it was not common to completely work off your “debt”—given the very low wages, absence of legal rights—and be returned to whatever freedom was granted to you. Ironically, this unfree condition was enshrined in the 13th amendment, which abolished slavery, except as punishment for crimes. During this Southern “Reconstruction” period after the Reconstruction era, the convict population grew ten times faster than the general population. This new convict labor system was a new way of organizing racial capitalism such that extremely cheap labor could be taken from black communities with close to no compensation, keeping southern plantations and corporations afloat.

Accompanying Southern Redemption tactics were new ideologies that aimed in different ways to mitigate the extreme effects of racist reaction. While educated White liberals from the north saw the struggle to re-instantiate formal rights for African Americans and saw that as the primary means to attain racial equality, the newly formed Populist party focused on class inequalities as barriers to racial integration. It was the Populist party that most southern African Americans felt had their interests in mind rather than the paternalistic and formalistic northern liberals. Populists wanted to bring solidarity between the poor Whites and Blacks against the powerful and rich party was a major threat to the dominant Southern oligarchy. Segregation laws became tools of the politically powerful and wealthy whites that wanted to drive a wedge between poor and working class people along racial lines. This new legal order, known as Jim Crow (after a minstrel show character), eventually undermined the radical potential of the Populist party as the poor whites thought they had something to gain by supporting segregation. Legal scholar and activist, Michelle Alexander, reminds us of the horrific social consequences of this strategy of the Southern capitalist class...

By the turn of the 20th century, every state in the South had laws on the books that disenfranchised blacks and discriminated against them in virtually every sphere of life, lending sanction to a racial ostracism that extended to schools, churches, housing, jobs, restaurants, hotels, restaurants, hospitals, orphanages, prisons, female homes, morgues, and cemeteries.

While most people cite the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision calling for the desegregation of schools as the beginning of the end of segregation, Jim Crow actually showed signs of weakness earlier. Because of major industrialization in the northern US following the end of slavery, the first “great migration” of southern blacks to the north followed WWI in response to 5 million jobs alone in the war factors needing workers. This was a new mass exodus during and after WWII, bringing more African Americans to the North and the West Coast. As African Americans got jobs in urban areas, a Black middle class emerged, mushrooming the membership of organizations like the NAACP. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, the NAACP was highly successful in their legal campaign to get Jim Crow laws off the books, and in 1920 had 90,000 members. While such organizations often struggled for full inclusion in the (consumerist) American Dream, Black American culture traditions as a living mythology. Following WWII, many returning Black GIs were struck by the hypocrisy of being asked to risk their lives to protect a country that systematically denied them their rights and humanity. This led to increasing criticism of “American exceptionalism,” in other words, a criticism of the rhetoric of the US as the “democratic” leader of the “free world,” which was manifestly not the lived reality of the majority of non-white citizens.

Just as southern whites released a violent backlash after the Reconstruction era and the dismantling of chattel slavery, there was a newfound White supremacist rigor following the Brown v Board decision and its impending federal imposition on southern states. Public violence and bombings of both private houses and churches increased against black populations. In response to the increased antiblack violence following the Brown v Board decision, there was another rise in radical black political activism which resulted in civil disobedience and protests that “between autumn 1961...
foredooms the racial-capitalist system. Before unpacking the implications of all this for today’s Black Liberation Struggle, let’s take a look at how the two sides of this antagonism have developed historically.

On the side of a White capitalist order that adheres to what, in more recent times, has come to be known as Herrenvolk democracy, the state ensures the relative privilege of even the most exploited segments of labor as long as they belong to the race of the politically dominant group. By integrating poor White farmers into the market economy as overseers and redirecting their class frustrations into racial violence against Blacks, and by plowing much of their own profits into the emerging nexus of industry and banking in the North, the Southern slaveocracy merely followed the more general pattern of New World slave systems—all of which supported the rise of industrial capital in their respective mother countries, while racially dividing the domestic working class as a whole. Everyone seemingly benefited from the labor of Blacks but Blacks themselves. However, as the Free Labor movement indicated in its better spin on Whiteness had long-term negative consequences for the employability and wage levels of poor Southern Whites in the newly acquired territories of an expanding American republic.

The preeminent historian of Black uprisings, revolutionary theorist and organizer CLR James, gives us some sense of the conditions that pushed Blacks to spontaneous mass rebellion. His description is of conditions in Haiti, but the comparative brutality of slave regimes throughout the Western hemisphere is a question of kind (of agricultural regime) and not degree (of harshness):

Their work began at day-break; at eight they stopped for a short breakfast and worked again till mid-day. They began again at two o’clock and worked until evening, sometimes till ten or eleven... Worked like animals, the slaves were housed like animals, in huts built around a square, planned with provisions and fruited. Instead of (of these) fish they eat, they masters gave them half-a-dozen pints of coarse flour, rice, or paste, or pease, and half-a-dozen herring. Worn out by their labours all through the day and far into the night, many neglected to cook and ate the food raw. The ration was so small and given to them so irregularly that often the last half of the week found them with nothing.

This is the picture of more than just economic exploitation. The slave system aspired to claim the entire being of the enslaved African. It denied her protection from the courts, and so naturally her labor-power was sucked dry with no recompense. But it also blocked all legal means of advancement beyond the slave’s station, even after her manumission; the convention of many historical slave systems, the legal possibility of assimilation, was rarely faced with the problem of slaves deemed unassimilable by virtue of their birth, and never of the problem on this scale. The Black sociologist Orland Patterson refers to slavery as a form of social death, in which the basic protections afforded to the bodily and psychological integrity of human beings are systematically denied to human beings branded as property. Robinson provides a long history for the development of this condition, from the emergence of the Christian nationalisms of the Portuguese state against the backdrop of African Muslim domination, to the collective amnesia of European modernity with respect to the high civilizations produced by colonized peoples. This can be seen as the process of producing the Negro, a person without history and thus without agency, who is singularly suited to the worst forms of labor.

Fighting against this myth, the Black radical historiography I’ve been describing has always insisted militarily on the agency of Black peoples. While the popular understanding of Emancipation’s causes gives most, if not all, the credit to the military superiority of the Union, Robinson reminds us that in this case, as in all cases of Black rights and self-determination, the military was central. He notes that in Black Reconstruction, DuBois makes the widespread abandonment of plantations and the participation of Blacks in armed struggle against the Confederacy the decisive elements in the Union victory. The smaller-scale strategies of everyday enslaved Africans ranged from marronage (the establishment of Maroon communities), to individual flight, to sabotage of tools and work slowdowns, to uprisings on the orders of Bono and work slowdowns, to uprisings on the orders of Bono and work slowdowns, to uprisings on the orders of Bono and work slowdowns. The use of such means by slaves, the production of tracts, agitated, and sometimes took up arms on behalf of the members of their race in shackles. None of this is to minimize the contributions of William Lloyd Garrison, John Brown, or the Union soldiers. It’s to highlight what’s been covered over by Eurocentric school curricula.

To conclude this section, we can see the importance of the principle taken up by #BlackLivesMatter: Black globalism recognizing the interconnections among the struggles of African descend-
of huge profits by imprisoned workers. The large-scale criminalization of Black subjects, a lucrative alternative to massive social investment in Black communities ravaged by anarchic corporate and governmental policies, singles out the prison industry as the most recent bulwark

I. THE GLOBAL DIVISION OF LABOR AND ITS BLACK RADICAL CRITIQUE

From its crude beginnings in the plunders that accompanied the Portuguese Voyages of Discovery, and the slave-supported merchant activity of the Italian city-states, to the rise of the prison-industry complex in the 20th century, the relationship of the capitalist world order to the masses of non-white peoples is best characterized as a relation of underdevelopment, a long-term intervention in another society's process of social and economic growth that reverses its course. The Guianese historian and revolutionary Walter Rodney understood this obverse, development, as part of the natural activity of the human species: at first facing a hostile, mythologized world, human societies tend gradually to master their environments and humanize nature as far as is necessary to sustain their specific ways of life. This capacity for development is distributed unevenly among the species. However, Rodney notes that historically it is realized very unevenly: the African civilization of ancient Egypt, which attained a high level of social stratification, economic development, and technical innovation, stands in stark contrast to the contemporary hunter-gatherer societies of the British Isles and southern Africa.

Rodney finds it necessary to make this point because of the tendency of Eurocentric historians to attribute the relative lack of material development of colonized peoples to what we might call their lack of internal dynamism. Unlike many European states, Africa had not properly passed into the capitalist stage of technical development by the initial encounters of the 15th century; by the late 19th century, this fact, compounded by the effects of the slave trade on the continent, will be distorted into evidence of the inherent backwardness of African peoples, of the impossibility of their keeping pace on their own with a rapidly modernizing world. From this flawed standpoint, it became possible for a capitalist class puffed up by historic profits from slavery and colonial monopolies to imagine themselves members of a world racial vanguard, and thus to characterize European world domination as a benevolent project—the largely altruistic project of civilizing nonwhites and, failing that, making the best possible use of their labor.

But the evidence amassed by Black radical historians tells a very different story. Far from improving the material conditions and strengthening the social coherence of African and diasporic communities, the related systems of slavery and imperialism have had largely disintegrative effects on the nonwhite societies under their charge. At the same time, they have reaped massive profits for European merchants, planters, and captains of industry, profits that were integral to the rise of modern industrial cities like Liverpool and Bristol. To paraphrase Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael), of the two antagonists, it was not the African who was in need of civilizing. We will now briefly describe how these systems of domination, colonialism and slavery, are mutually implicated.

The dynamic of underdevelopment is especially evident in the African context where, to the degree that technological modernization took place in the colonies, it was primarily oriented to profit maximization for European companies and then to the various human needs of the technicians, bureaucrats, and White workers who coalesced around the imperative of expanding the imperial markets. Colonialism, Rodney claimed, promised liberation from pre-capitalist conditions but instead delivered a system that siphoned off African peoples' labor and natural resources, while reducing the numbers of schools, social institutions, and even average nutritional levels on the continent to far below precolonial levels. Most importantly for understanding the American slave system, in the pre- and proto-colonial periods, the human resources of an entire continent were ripped from its villages, towns and cities by the millions—a crippling blow to societies already fragmented and technologically disorganised relative to the nascent colonial powers. And partly on the basis of this kidnapped labor, the European nation-states would develop navies, armies, and military technologies that dramatically streamlined the colonial wars of conquest. The process of African colonization—and, by implication, the contemporary powerlessness of the indigenous peoples of the continent—is thus intimately connected with the Triangular Trade that brought Blacks to the US.

Like colonialism, slavery in the Western Hemisphere was characterized by hyper-exploitative practices that severely underdeveloped the diasporic populations it produced. According to Eric Williams, the historian and first Prime Minister of Trinidad, by the 1680s African labor began to supplant low-wage White labor in the colonies for the cultivation of cash crops. From the middle to late 17th century, the total exports of the colonies of Virginia and Maryland increased by six times; Williams attributes this to the low overhead of plantation enterprises that used unpaid labor in the tobacco fields. The early economic success of the US colonies, so essential to their later independence, is thus inseparable from their character as slave societies. Meanwhile, as Williams reminds us, the Black populations of these states increased from one-twentieth to one-fourth during the same period. Taken together, these facts—the fabulous wealth and power of the slaveocracy, alongside the exponential growth of the Black population in response to the demand for ever-greater profits in the international cotton and tobacco industries—illustrate the fundamental contradiction that Robinson believed...
RACIAL CAPITALISM
FROM SLAVERY TO MASS INCARCERATION

Capitalism is the private ownership of the means of production: its end, as Marx reminds us, is the valorization of value, or the production of profit for the owners, and not the human beings whose needs it only incidentally and very irrationally meets. Political scientist Cedric Robinson, in his controversial work Black Marxism, conceives of racial capitalism as a modern world-system built primarily on the hyper-exploitation of African labor— the maintenance of an enslaved and/or destitute Black labor force that generates massive profits for the (predominantly White) capitalist class. In particular, he takes slavery in the Western hemisphere to be the necessary precondition for the dizzying advances in industry, finance capital, and world trade that tilted the axis of geopolitical power from the European empires to the North American capitalist states in the twentieth century. He further claims that, since the devaluation of Black labor draws its legitimacy from the dehumanization of Black persons, the racial capitalist regime necessarily sows its own destruction: the racial construction of the “Negro” as a subhuman instrument in need of White leadership, or as a genetic threat to White purity, so thoroughly pervades antiblack societies that it spontaneously generates the resistance of the Black masses on social, political-economic, and aesthetic fields of battle. Racial capitalism bears a fateful enemy—the Black radical standpoint—within the bowels of its general production process. It remains a question whether the recent uprisings in Ferguson and Baltimore were the latest expressions of this basic contradiction.

This collaborative essay will attempt to trace Robinson’s thesis through the works of theorists in the Black Radical and Civil Rights traditions, providing a brief history of the development of the racial-capitalist order along with an analysis of its implications for the attempt of organizations like #BlackLivesMatter, Dream Defenders, and Black Youth Project 100 to rebuild the Black Liberation movement—a movement shattered by the Cold War Machiavellianism of Hoover’s FBI, and Nixon’s and Reagan’s crass racial opportunism; a movement dissolved in the confluence of deindustrialization, the War on Drugs, and the hyper-exploitative labor practices that fuel 21st-century mass incarceration. Drawing on Angela Davis, Walter Rodney, Michelle Alexander, and Eric Williams, inter alia, we will try to demonstrate the validity of Robinson’s thesis by showing, first, how the racialized division of global labor emerged, with attention to the necessity of slavery for the rise of the modern European bourgeoisies; as well as the simultaneous explosion of a Eurocentric historiography and popular worldview that inscribed Blacks outside the spheres of Progress, Reason, and Humanity. But we will also extract the core of Black cultural and political resistance generated by the pressures of our social alienation. Exploring Black patterns of resistance from manumission to slave uprisings, from tract writing to fleeing and fighting Confederates, we hope to provide a broad historical context for our contemporary movement’s principle of Unapologetic Blackness.

The second section will follow this logic through the period after American Reconstruction, when new forms of legal bondage and extra-legal terrorism colluded to keep Blacks in a general state of semi-slavery. Moving North, we will discuss the hyper-exploitation and eventual abandonment of transplanted Black labor by industrial capital that took place alongside the struggle for formal equality in the Civil Rights Era, and pose the question of the limitations of liberal approaches to the Freedom Movement. Finally, in the rise of the prison-industrial complex out of the ashes of Northern industry, we will see the mobility of degraded Black labor in the production of the racial division of labor, of huge profits by imprisoned workers. The large-scale criminalization of Black subjects, a lucrative alternative to massive social investment in Black communities ravaged by anarchic corporate and governmental policies, singles out the prison industry as the

I will not have my life narrowed down. I will not bow down to somebody else’s whim or to someone else’s ignorance.

—bell hooks
A BRIEF CRITICAL HISTORY OF LONG ISLAND
BY M.K.

The term gentrification was coined in 1964 by the sociologist Ruth Glass to refer to the displacement of working class Londoners from their neighborhoods by incoming upper- and middle-class residents. In the American context gentrification is often seen as the other side of a process called white flight, which describes the large-scale pattern of white migration from established urban centers like New York City, Detroit, Washington D.C. and Atlanta to adjacent suburban developments during the mid 20th century. Gentrification reverses this process through an influx of younger, economically mobile residents back into the same inner cities from which their parents and grandparents may have fled. The incentive for doing so is the lower rent and property values available in areas predominantly occupied by people of color, which were previously seen as undesirable ‘slums’ or ‘ghettos’. African-American, Puerto Rican and immigrant families who flooded into America’s urban centers seeking opportunity only to find limited prospects in a racially segregated, de-industrialized and decaying inner city are now being pressured to leave their suddenly sought-after homes and properties. One of the most dramatic examples of this dynamic is right on the western doorstep of Long Island in the New York City borough of Brooklyn.

Although gentrification in New York City has received a lot of attention recently—indeed it is, for instance, the impetus behind Mayor Bill de Blasio’s ambitious but controversial housing re-zoning plan—the role of suburban Long Island in this phenomenon is often left unexamined. One recent illustration of the issue can be gleaned from the 2015 Oscar-nominated film Brooklyn, based on Irish author Colm Tóibín’s 2009 novel of the same name. Whatever the merits of the novel, the movie comes across as curiously one-dimensional. It tells the story of a bright young Irish woman who immigrates to Brooklyn in the early 1950s and falls in love with an Italian-American plumber. With actors of color exclusively relegated to the background as silent, moving set pieces, the film comes off as an out of touch, Make-America-Great-Again paean to the heroic hard work and struggle of the now disappearing white working class. In one scene, the couple comes out to an empty plot of land that they have purchased on Long Island and imagines their future with a family in a beautiful suburban home. It is, in the words of F. Scott Fitzgerald, a vision of their own private slice of the “fresh, green breast of the New World.”

The scene, familiar as it is to the sentiments of American moviegoers, conceals the actual history of Long Island that precipitated its explosion of suburban residential development during the latter half of the 20th century. Discovered in 1609 by an expedition of the Dutch East India Company led by Henry Hudson, Long Island was of course not empty before the arrival of Europeans but rather, in the words of one 17th century observer, “inhabited from one end to the other” by at least thirteen distinct Native American tribes. Dutch colonization began in 1620, but Long Island and Manhattan came under complete British control in 1664. We are told to appreciate the operation of the “Divine Hand” of God that has always made space for the British in North America by “removing or cutting off the Indians; either by wars, one with another, or by some raging mortal disease”. If, according to Thompson himself, it is not exactly God that ceded the Province of New York to the British, we can rest assured that its lands were legitimately purchased by the Europeans from its indigenous inhabitants. The price to be paid was always agreed upon by the parties, and good faith, it is believed, was in most cases observed on the part of the white people. A letter from a Dutch settler in 1626 pegs the price paid for the island of Manhattan at a value of 60 guilders, or $24.

Dialogue (continued).

G: So just confirming that is about displacement for anyone curious Gentrification ideology alive a well...

R: A little bit further along, the article states that an “ancillary goal of project” is to remedy LI status as underserved with rental housing generally—in other words, all of Long Island needs more rental housing, not just Wyandanch, which is why they are not restricting the new housing to Wyandanch or Town of Babylon Residents, all LI needs “affordable” housing—so pretty much they are saying “All Long Island Matters…”

G: oh g’d...

R: There’s a bit from a local historian that points towards how Wyandanch first branded itself as having wide streets aimed to cater to car owners who commute by car. This new re-branding of Wyandanch is focusing on “health,” encouraging people to walk to the train station and anywhere else (at the cost of adding any increased bus service).

G: Of course what lies behind that, right, is this tacit assumption that encouraging walking and burning calories (aka weight) is somehow encouraging being “healthy.” It’s all over this “complete street” plan. For me that’s activating all kinds of nonsense. First off, what the heck is health and being healthy?—A completely narrow cis-white, able-bodied, non-fat, desirable bougie understanding of bodies should look and move like. In this frame, one’s body is assumed to walk, and walk distances without care. Never mind to those of us who walking can be a chore and consume all energy for any physical activity the following day; or those of us who have to worry about being in the wrong place at the wrong time when an officer of the law decides you’re threatening. It not only becomes a regulatory function, controlling habit and behavior, but aesthetic. What adds to the communities “unhealthiness” but the dirty, trash filled vacant lots, the KFC and McDonalds (read obesity and diabetes inducing) restaurants (that can’t even stay open), the neon signs that illuminate the rot and trash, etc. Activities well ingrained discourse of blackness and poverty as pathology; as both immediately signifying unhealthy—something to be fixed or cured.

G: This all goes without mentioning the issue of environmental justice surrounding this whole conversation, as exposed in the Wyandanch Rising report: there is a ton of environmental pollution in this rather small hamlet. There are no less than 8 superfund sites alone (5 current, 3 delisted). At large there at 16 sites of known contamination, and 29 potential sites. I’m not a medical professional nor a public health official, but you can’t tell me that can’t have a negative impact on a long-term resident’s health and wellbeing. I also want to mention that as the words to the left point out—developers speak these contaminated sites are known as brownfields. Seriously, peeps— you mean to tell me know one catches the overtones there...
The modern colonization of Long Island, however, was almost the single-handed achievement of one man, Robert Moses (1888-1981). In the early 1920s, as a key advisor to Governor Alfred E. Smith, Moses became obsessed with transforming Long Island after his first visits there. At that time, its residents consisted mostly of insular fishing and farming communities as well as a handful of the so-called Robber Barons of the late 19th century industrial boom. Massive palatial estates dotted the shores of the island owned by the descendants of great American financial and retail dynasties with names like the Morgan, Vanderbilt, Frick, Tiffany and Woolworth. This is the Long Island of The Great Gatsby, with its Golden Coast of the Gilded Age homes located on the South Shore. According to Caro, neither the ultra wealthy nor the parochial villagers of Long Island welcomed outsiders. The Robber Barons would often station armed guards along the rickety roads that led eastward from New York in order to prevent city folk from enjoying the limited public park and beach space on the island. The presence of the Ku Klux Klan was greater in Suffolk County in the 1920s than anywhere else in the state. In the period of New York City’s development of public parks, it has been argued, only one of which was in the historically African-American and Puerto Rican neighborhood of Harlem. He tried to prevent black and brown New Yorkers from using certain of his public pools by lowering the water temperature, based on his belief that whites could tolerate colder water. He discouraged people of color from using any of his public projects on Long Island by making the bridges on his highways too low for buses to pass, requiring those buses that did manage to make the trip by alternative routes to have special permits to enter state parks, and staffing primarily white lifeguards at the best beaches and black and brown lifeguards at the less popular ones. As one former aide to Moses told Caro, “Well, you know how RM felt about colored people.”

Outside of public spaces, Moses worked hard to make Long Island a largely white, affluent and sprawling suburban appendage to New York City dominated by the automobile. He severely limited commercial zoning on the island, which meant that city streets could not be extended in order to find work. As a vehement opponent of mass transit, he expanded highways while the Long Island Rail Road deteriorated and became a permanent punchline. The net effect of Moses’s policies was to ensure that Long Island was a place strictly for middle-class commuting car and home owners. Factors beyond even Moses guaranteed that this demographic was mostly white. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA), established by President Roosevelt in 1934 to help finance mortgages in the midst of the Great Depression, has a longer, tawdry history of racial discrimination. This legislation was used to uphold what is known as redlining, the practice of denying certain groups services and privileges available to others, in this case, affordable housing in "good neighborhoods". Together with broader redlining tactics, then, Moses’s policies helped to make Long Island one of the most racially segregated suburbs in the country.

It is important for those of us who live, work and study on Long Island to be aware of its often obscured history. Long Island did not become the blank canvas for the white middle-class imagination depicted in the movie Brooklyn by accident. It is the result of an historical process that oppressed and prejudiced some to the benefit of others, a process that continues to affect our lives unequally to this day.

Sources:
4. G. Edward White, Law in American History, Volume I (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 34-35. This is, for ideological reasons, of course a much contested claim. White notes that it was largely goods valued at 60 guilders by the Dutch that would have been "exchanged" for Manhattan. These European goods (probably mainly cloth and metal), rare in the indigenous peoples would therefore have had a different, higher valuation from their perspective. However, he claims that the idea of an irreversible transfer of complete private ownership over a portion of land would have been totally foreign to the Native Americans involved.
The Palestinian Struggle
Origins:
In the early 20th century, Palestine was part of the Ottoman Empire. The Palestinian people were in control of their land and during this time, Jews, Christians and Muslims coexisted peacefully. With the Ottoman Empire’s defeat in the first world war, the British Empire mandated Palestine. In 1917, the British Foreign Secretary, Arthur Balfour promised support to establish a Jewish homeland to Walter Rothschild who was the leader for the British Jewish community. This is known as the Balfour Declaration and is highly unjust because the indigenous people (Palestinians) had no say in the matter. With the British in control, the Balfour Declaration took effect and massive immigration of the Jewish people to Palestine took place. This is the birth and action of Zionism.

Zionism is fierce Jewish nationalism with the belief that the Jewish people’s homeland is in Palestine. With Zionism comes fierce militarism, ethnic cleansing, apartheid, extrajudicial killings, collective punishment, illegal settlement expansion, colonialism etc. In 1948, Jewish terrorist groups Irgun and Stern Gang, used violent tactics against the Palestinians and the waning British power to create Israel. The creation of Israel was only possible because of the Nakaba which means “the Catastrophe”. During the Nakaba over 500 Palestinian villages were destroyed, about 10,000 Palestinians went missing or dead and over 1 million Palestinians became refugees. In 1967, what remained of Palestine was the West Bank and the Gaza strip as the rest was taken by Israel. Stern Gang and Irgun eventually became the Israeli “Defense” Force.

For years to come the Palestinian people have been victims to an illegal occupation and unilateral warfare. To this day people in the West Bank have been forced to go through checkpoints within their own land. Within the West Bank, Israel builds illegal settlements for new Jewish immigrants and Settlers to come in on Palestinian land. This settlement building is an expansion technique to dissolve the West Bank and expand a greater Israel. IDF (Israeli “Defense” Force) is also present in the West Bank and commits acts of extrajudicial killings and administrative detention. Palestinians that go through

Dialogue:

G: This is probably the most money they’ve received in public funds...and for what? What’s the public good being served? What does the community actually need?
R: This can hardly be called a public project when 82% of the funding is private and a potential new source of revenue for the community (the parking lot) is actually privately owned.
G: Revitalization is just a way to say rebranding for displacement.
R: What’s lower-income? Who can afford that? What’s less than $1000-957? We can’t afford that.
G: I can’t I work full time at living wage (~$15/hr).
R: How can a single mother on $11 afford it?

G: Yeah, so let’s take a minute to talk about that. All over the Wyandanch Rising plan is mention of aesthetic—not just mention, but straight up dictation of what kinds of aesthetic actually support “revitalization” and “development.” As the Hughes article highlights, folks attached to this project went as far as changing building codes to control store and business owners choice of lighting schema, in the reports language:

“Proposed neon signage is required to go through the full review process, using neon tubes to outline the perimeter of show windows is discouraged. Flashing signs, moving signs, signs with moving lights or digital/electronic displays should be prohibited by the Town of Babylon Wyandanch Overlay District Code.”

Not to mention specific restrictions on exterior building facade materials:

“Natural materials are preferred, such as engraved and painted wood, Bas Relief carved wood, Engraved stone, porcelain enamel, individual cast metal letters, and stainless steel or other metals for building of architectural character which depend on these materials for their distinctive style, such as iconoclastic/theme signage.”

This further underscores R.’s point about who gets to feel “safe” and “welcome” in this new downtown (...built from scratch -lol-). These mandates on material and signs is an attempt to force a false nostalgic romanticization of an early historic moment (pristine colonial moment) of sophistication and elegance, i.e. white and bougie.

R: That concrete square? That’s not a real park...ice skating where is that? And where’s the summer concerts?
G: That little wooden thing in the center that looks like a bus stop---that’s the bandstand I guess
G: So just confirming that is about displacement for anyone curious...gentrification ideology alive a well...
Archive:

(NYTimes): 40 acre- $500 mill development via the Albanese Organization, Russell Albanese: "All these pieces will go hand in hand to help revitalize the place." **$93 Million in public funds for project.

"In a Long Island Hamlet, a Downtown Is Being Built from Scratch," NYT by C. J. Hughes Sept. 30, 2014: As a condition of receiving public money, 123 units are reserved for lower income levels; 1,000 applications for them were received this summer. The cheapest one-bedroom will cost less than $1,000 a month, Mr. Albanese said. The market-rate units, which will start at around $1,500 for a unit of the same size, will be leased this fall."

(Newsday) Apartments start at $957 per month, "low-income" are lottery, total 91 units in each building, 61 in one, 33 in the other for income-constricted units with 600 applications so far...1550 1/1 bed/bath, 2500 3bed/2bath...geiger lake memorial park revitalization. Max affordable is $52,000/year with 4 people.

All businesses who occupy the new development will receive a 15 year tax abatement. In preparation of the development's completion, building were rewritten, changed, and/or altered- ex: no neon band on signs....

(NYTimes) A part of the development plan, a "Public park..." would be constructed...including band stand for year round music nights, and space for an ice skating rink in the winter...

checkpoints need special papers and traveling becomes very difficult. A regular 20-minute commute can become 2 hours for Palestinians and the IDF can deny any Palestinian from entering in the checkpoint. With administrative detention, any Palestinian can be taken into custody without any stated charge.

There is also an Apartheid Wall built by Israel which is a separation barrier between the West Bank and the rest of Israel. It is also a land grab as the wall spans within Palestinian territory. Within Israel, the Palestinian people face over 50 discriminatory laws and are treated like 3rd class citizens. The Palestinians living in Gaza have to deal with the worst conditions. Since the democratically elected Hamas came to power, Israel has put a blockade on Gaza making it almost impossible for dire resources and aid to come in. Along with the blockade, Israel launches massive unilateral offensive strikes upon Gaza. The most recent offensive was in 2014 where Israel shot missiles and carpet bombed the region killing over 2000 innocent civilians. About 70 percent of the people that died during the offensive were civilians and Gaza was bombed back into the stone age. What is left of Gaza due to the blockade and multiple offensives is 70 percent unemployment, 50 percent of children with PTSD and 30 percent of adults with PTSD. The Palestinian people have only 15 percent of their land left. They face apartheid everyday and are in desperation to survive and liberate their land.

SBU: SJP Work:

Stony Brook SJP is an activist group on campus speaking out against the atrocities and war crimes the Palestinian people face. We believe in a one state solution with equal rights for the Palestinian people and equal protections. We also advocate for the right to return for over 6 million displaced Palestinian refugees. SBU: SJP acts as a voice for the Palestinian people and look to educate the campus on current events and history of the struggle. We take part in protests, educational events, demonstrations and BDS. BDS is the Boycott Divestment Sanctions movement which aims to boycott Israeli goods that fund the occupation and IDF and divests from any Israeli events because we do not recognize Israel as a legitimate state. We do not believe in any cooperation with any Zionist group. We will not stop working until Palestine is free from the river to the sea.
This sets the stage for Sustainable Long Island’s Wyandanch Rising project as it was coming of age. It was conceptualized as “community visioning process,” that fit its larger mission by pulling together youth, residents, clergy, business owners, and community leaders from Wyandanch to articulate a vision of the future. It captured by The Wyandanch Plan: Wyandanch Rising. Most of the plan translated from the vision shared by the community focused on “cleaning up” the business corridor center on Straight Path which included make it more pedestrian and bike friendly, installing new street lighting, changing building codes, and guidelines, and restarting a business association that could in turn help fund community programs (musical performances, art displays etc.) The plan also emphasizes the need to fix vital sewage infrastructure, address the area’s numerous “brownfields,” and encourage development directed by “Transit-oriented Development” or TOD by building up dense multi-use building near the LIRR station.

To scope out for a moment, a Brownfield is development speak that is shorthand to describe “... abandoned, idled, or under-used industrial and commercial facilities where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination,” as highlighted by the Wyandanch Rising report. In Wyandanch alone, there are five active and three delisted superfund sites, along with a number of potential or assumed contaminated sites at various levels of classifications (as depicted in the map watermarked behind the text on the previous two pages).

Enter the business end of this “revitalization” push:

The Albanese Organization, Inc. (for-profit) (Feature On Cover)
Conifer construction and management (for-profit)
FULL SERVICE APPROACH
WHAT WE DEVELOP, WE BUILD — WHAT WE BUILD, WE OWN — WHAT WE OWN, WE MANAGE
Allpro Parking (for-profit): The initial plan written for Wyandanch Rising suggested the following “Restrict certain amount of parking closest to Straight Path (particularly the spaces along the tracks) for short-term shopper use. Meters could be erected if the demand became great enough to warrant. Receipts from charges could go to support the Wyandanch community’s revitalization efforts. One possibility is to set up a Business Improvement District as repository of the parking receipts.” In place of this suggestion, Allpro parking provided the parking structure that Bellone called for in 2009—however at $70 for a monthly parking pass or $10 daily it is hardly accessible to residents. Residents of the town of Babylon can get a resident parking permit for free, but these “free spaces” are actually just two unpaved and unlit lots far behind the train station.
Wyandanch Quick Facts
from Census Data as of April 2010

Total Population: 11647

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<th>Demographics</th>
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<td>Black or African American alone</td>
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<td>American Indian and Alaska Native alone</td>
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<td>Asian alone</td>
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<td>Two or More Races</td>
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<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
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**What is Wyandanch? Who Lives (Lived) Here?**

The hamlet of Wyandanch is located within the Township of Babylon, situated between Deer Park and Farmingdale to the east and west respectively, and Wheatley Heights and West Babylon to the north and south. The hamlet was named after Chief Wyandanch of the Montaukett people who lived in the surrounding area up until the 17th century. The land was bought by Jacob Conklin who had an estate in what is now Wheatley Heights. Being some of the richest farmland on Long Island, the area had a large draw on immigrants—particularly German and Austrian American initially—who were looking outside NYC for land and space to make a better life than what the city could offer through industrial work in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The Wyandanch LIRR stop (initially called West Deer Park) was established in 1903. With the added easy transport to Manhattan (only an hour ride to Penn Station) the area continued to be appealing. During the 1920s, black folks from NYC began emigrating to Wyandanch trying to find land to build their own homes. Mortimer Cumberbach and Ignatius Davidson started a cement block business in 1928, and as late as the 1950s the C & D Cement Block was the only large business owned and operated by African-Americans in Suffolk County. From 1910-1940 Italian-Americans also settled in the area and during those years owned almost all of the businesses in Wyandanch. In the 1940s Latina folks settled in the area for easy commute to the numerous mental health hospitals in the area where there were many job opportunities.

A development called “Carver Park” established in 1951 was one of the first non-segregated housing developments in the area. Carver Park consisted of 72 ranch style homes located on what is now the northern section of Straight Path in Wyandanch. The construction of this and a few other “interracial housing” developments eligible for post-WWII veteran benefits and low federal loan opportunities is what lead to Wyandanch moving from a majority white working class community in 1950 to a majority black working class community by 1960. As redlining practices continued and intensified, Wyandanch was one of the only places black folks could buy a home on Long Island. Today Wyandanch remains the most impoverished hamlet on Long Island.

**what’s the deal?**

The present worry of folks thinking through the future development of Long Island is how to balance the now aging community of the majority of LI with encouraging new younger folks to start families and buy property to boost local economies. As many “young professionals” who grew up on LI are moving to NYC for more densely populated transit oriented living arrangements—there is a push to create these conditions, in particular strategically situated LI towns, to bring these young professionals back to LI.

There have been numerous recent developments to “revitalize downtowns,” particularly in towns with LIRR stops and near waterfronts, to draw in younger residents. The group spearheading this push is Sustainable Long Island, self-described as “a (non-profit) advanced econ development focused on sustainability/ecological preservation...started by a group of environmentalists, civil rights advocates, philanthropists, developers, business people and civic leaders.” Some places that have recently seen these kinds of developments are Patchogue, Greater Bellport, Bethpage, Copiague, Elmont, Farmingville, Freeport, Huntington, Town of Islip, Long Beach, Middle Country, New Cassel, North Amityville, Port Washington, Roosevelt, and Wyandanch.

Before Sustainable LI launch its Wyandanch Rising project, this was already well underway. Around 2009, Steve Bellone, the former supervisor of the Town of Babylon, in response to the growing concerns of residents from Wyandanch complaining of the inadequate sewage system, brownfields, poverty, and weak infrastructure said to a NYT reporter: “It’s not just about getting one ball rolling,” he said. “The reason why these projects usually don’t happen is because you have to keep 50 balls moving at once. We’ve put in colonial lighting; we have a new clock. We’ve put in decorative planters and receptacles and hanging flower baskets.”

But, he said, “we’ve also been doing the planning and design work and grant work necessary to lay the foundation for more structural change” – in Wyandanch’s case, this means financing for environmental studies of the sewers and a design for a parking plaza at the L.I.R.R. station.

As asked about details like flower baskets and planters, Mr. Bellone acknowledges that “people may say, ‘Well, those are just aesthetics – they’re small.’ But what they’ve done is to demonstrate that there is a commitment there, that things are happening.”

In addition to these dynamics at play, Wyandanch was a place particularly hit hard by the 2008 housing crisis: “In 2007, the median cost of a house in Wyandanch was $291,500. It dropped to $245,000 in 2008, and to $186,900 through the end of May 2009.”