

# SPARRING WITH PUBLIC MEMORY: THE RHETORICAL EMBODIMENT OF RACE, POWER, AND CONFLICT IN *THE MONUMENT TO JOE LOUIS*

Victoria J. Gallagher and Margaret LaWare

## Introduction

In the city of Detroit, located at the terminus of Woodward Avenue as it intersects with Jefferson Avenue, resides a sculpture of a “black” forearm and fist, hung by what appear to be chains or cables from a triangular frame. This sculpture, representative yet also abstract in its disembodied form, and referred to in the vernacular of the city simply as *The Fist*, is more formally known as the *Monument to Joe Louis*. It is sited directly across from a classical, allegorical statue known as The Spirit of Detroit, thrusting toward the futuristic pylon of Hart Plaza. What is the meaning, the significance, the potential, and the reality, of a huge bronze fist in the middle of a downtown intersection, in the heart of a city radically reconfigured by the affects of racial strife? It has been likened to the Black Power salute, but it is horizontal rather than vertical, a prizewinning punch forever suspended in time, its target only imagined (*Figure 1*). As Donna Graves points out, there are only “a handful of monuments that honor African Americans in the urban public realm” and certainly, no single monument can fill-in the gaps of the memory and history of African-Americans and racial relations in the United States.<sup>1</sup> However, while most Detroit residents agreed that Joe Louis, the nationally recognized heavy weight champion who inspired both black and white Americans, was a fitting figure to commemorate, the sculpture has become a source of controversy and a locus of divergent interpretations and reflections on both the past and the present. At a time when a growing amount of scholarly attention is paid to memorials and monuments of all types,<sup>2</sup> the

*Monument to Joe Louis* is thus particularly fascinating to consider. It is heroic in scale, yet anti-heroic; it honors, yet cautions; it evokes memory and provokes debate; it is both glorious and grim. The goal of our work is to examine the rhetorical aspects of this memorial to determine how, as suggested in the introduction to this volume, the memories evoked and referenced by it achieve durability over time *and* a compelling force in a particular context. Specifically, we examine the extent to which the *Monument to Joe Louis* functions as a resource for 1) public memory, in its reflection and evocation of fundamental issues regarding the city in both its social and material manifestations 2) cultural projection, providing the rhetorical means, the materiality, through which social groups seek to further their own interests and assert some control over public space.<sup>3</sup>



**Figure 1**

In focusing on the rhetorical elements of the monument, its evocation of public memory and its functioning as a resource for cultural projection within the context of downtown

Detroit, we concur with Rosalind Deutsche's view of the city as a "product of social practice," a concept she borrows from Raymond Ledrut. As Deutsche explains, "Describing the city as a social form rather than as a collection and organization of neutral physical objects implicitly affirms the right of currently excluded groups to have access to the city – to make decisions about the spaces they use, to be attached to the places where they live, to refuse marginalization"<sup>4</sup>

There are two other scholarly treatments of *The Fist*, one which provides a close reading of the sculpture as a public art text and the other which considers it as a rhetorical figure and uses it as the basis for elaborating a material theory of rhetoric.<sup>5</sup> Little attention is paid in either of these articles to the relationship between public memory and public art, the *rhetorical* character of public art, or the role of material artifacts in creating, evoking, or simulating public memory by referencing significant individuals, events and experiences in a community's history. Through our analysis, then, we seek to demonstrate how the monument's symbolic, material and contextual/geographical resources reference and make present the cultural experiences and memories of African Americans in America and in Detroit. In this way, our work responds to Deutsche's call to "erode the borders between the fields" of critical urban studies and aesthetics to critically comprehend how public art can function to both participate in, as well as provide a means for resisting, efforts at urban redevelopment and domination by elite groups seeking to control and homogenize public spaces and as a consequence, public memory. Rhetoric operates at the nexus between critical urban studies and aesthetics, providing an additional resource for understanding the discourses and audiences engaged as the "public" within the framework of public art and public space. Specifically, we

argue that *Monument to Joe Louis* operates as a resource for public memory and cultural projection in three significant ways. First, it highlights certain values and experiences, making those values concrete and visible to a wide audience. As a consequence, it evokes and intensifies emotions. Indeed, as we shall demonstrate, *Monument to Joe Louis* is both the result and the focus of deeply felt reactions and responses, particularly because it evolved from and evokes a painful history of racism, discrimination, and racial division. Second, the values and meanings of the work are not universal, but are contingent on location and audience, the product of a complex physical – as well as historical, political, and social – context, which adds to its rhetorical power and potential as a means for public memory and cultural projection.<sup>6</sup> Finally, it invites judgment, not only by art world elites, but by the public at large because of its location outside of a museum or gallery and by the implication that it is meant to benefit or edify a local populace. As Deutsche points out, “space is . . . political, inseparable from the conflictual and uneven social relations that structure specific societies at specific historical moments.”(xiv). Soon after its installation, *Monument to Joe Louis* became the subject of editorials and comments by the Detroit community and provoked a countermovement, which resulted in the siting of a representational memorial statue of Louis in nearby Cobo Hall, Detroit’s convention center.

While other civil rights and African American-related museums and memorials (not to mention American history museums) may tend to emphasize progress and a kind of resulting amnesia at the expense of contestation and debate, the arresting material and symbolic qualities of *The Fist* are hard to ignore.<sup>7</sup> Examining the materiality of the monument itself, along with its context, reveals the extent to which the *Monument to Joe*

*Louis* began as an attempt to inscribe a particular aesthetic and vision on to a city and its citizens but became, in addition, a rhetorical resource for both public memory and continued engagement.

### ***The Fist as Resource for Cultural Projection and Public Memory***

#### *Making Values Concrete and Visible*

What are the values made visible in and through *The Fist*? The *Monument to Joe Louis* is connected to a larger social discourse involving the struggle over defining and representing public memory in the form of local and national histories, particularly ones that evoke painful memories of racism, marginalization and injustice. Further, it is connected to struggles by those communities marginalized by and made invisible by urban redevelopment policies to regain some control over and access to public space. The latter is particularly significant given that in the contemporary era, public space that is not controlled by private and/or corporate interests is increasingly limited. The *Monument to Joe Louis*, commissioned by *Sports Illustrated*, was created during the late 1980s when corporations became heavily involved in the arts and in financing public art commissions as a form of public relations and investment. As a consequence, corporate sponsorship influenced the shape and development of art in the public sphere, and in certain ways reflected efforts to control and influence the development of public culture. Corporations looked to art experts for advice, which, as Erika Doss points out, makes the process more bureaucratic and less likely to incorporate or account for the interests and concerns of the local public who are on the receiving end of the commission.<sup>8</sup>

In many ways, these material circumstances, the need to use public space as a form of urban investment and “revitalization” for the prime benefit of certain corporate

and government elites was reflected in the Joe Louis commission. While the monument was described from the outset as a public art sculpture, there were no aspects of the artist selection process, the design selection process, or the site selection process that involved the public. Instead, *Sports Illustrated* representatives chose Robert Graham, the sculptor of *The Fist*, from a short list provided by the Detroit Institute of Art (DIA) museum staff, and the design was approved by the DIA and the mayor's office without any input from citizens or other representatives of the public. Graham worked secretly, refusing to talk about his concept and the form the sculpture would take.<sup>9</sup> Graves' describes the three main parties whose values dominated the decision processes related to *The Fist*: Time Incorporated (*Sports Illustrated*'s parent company), whose representatives claimed altruism as the motivation for the gift but whose interests would also be served by maintaining a positive profile with the magazine ad-buying auto industry in Detroit; staff and board members of The Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA) who wanted to improve their relationship to the city's black population and power structure in the face of a municipal investigation for mismanagement; and Coleman Young, who wanted the city and his administration to have greater control over the DIA's large state appropriations.<sup>10</sup> The decision process thus reflected the aesthetic and corporate/institutional values of economic and political elites whose perspective of having the will and the power (and perhaps even the duty, in the wake of the racial strife of the 1960s) to impose an aesthetic vision on the city became the "common sense" that underlay decision making in relation to the project.

Additionally, as Harriet Senie and Sally Webster point out, public art projects in the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are also characterized by modernist aesthetic values:

To a great extent the emergence of large-scale sculpture in conjunction with modern architecture in the 1960s may be seen as an attempt to ornament after the fact. What made this development even more problematic in terms of public art was the abstract style practiced by the most important artists of the day, an artistic vocabulary difficult for many museum audiences, and completely foreign for large segments of the public who now had to contend with it in the spaces they used daily. In a museum it could be ignored; in a public space it clearly could not.<sup>11</sup>

This type of aesthetic came to dominate the “public” art scene in Detroit during the 1970s. In the aftermath of the rebellions or riots of 1967,<sup>12</sup> civic and corporate leaders attempted to rejuvenate the city of Detroit by instituting a reinvigorated public art program.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, urban public art programs were somewhat common during this time period as a part of urban renewal programs. And, according to Senie and Webster, public art programs had been used to similar ends in centuries past, “functioning as an emblem of culture and a manifestation of economic wealth, a sign of the power of its patron.”<sup>14</sup> In Detroit, various works of art were sited in downtown public spaces, including geometric wall paintings and murals by various local and not-so-local artists, a twisted steel pylon and a steel fountain (shaped like a donut held up by two steel straws) designed by Isamu Noguchi, and various other abstract steel sculptures including ones by Alexander Calder and John Piet. To the extent that the concept of public art presupposes a fairly homogenous public and a language of art that speaks to all, the motive for, and the aesthetic style and timing of, Detroit’s public art campaign during the 1970s, were at least somewhat ironic. The campaign demonstrates the extent to which a few (in this

case, political and economic elites) attempted to control the look and spaces of the city, and thereby impose their values on the city. Despite or perhaps even because of the rebellions/riots, they neglected the views and values of their fellow citizens, whose perceptions of the art being installed around the city were likely to be quite different from those of the elites, as Senie and Webster point out:

Seen from the vantage point of economic underclasses, public art is affirmation of their exclusion from power and privilege. Art in the public domain, a sign of the power of its patrons, frequently becomes the focus for discontents that often have nothing to do with art. Small wonder that public art and controversy seem to have been joined at birth.<sup>15</sup>

While clearly the creation of a small group of elites in the corporate, government and art world who sought to control and revitalize the image of Detroit and its public spaces, *The Mounument to Joe Louis*, at the same time, through its material and symbolic presence in a central public space, invited response from diverse publics, and thereby opened a rhetorical space for also challenging the discourses of control, redevelopment and homogenization of public space. To understand therefore its rhetorical function, it is first important to better understand its material and aesthetic form.

The sculpture itself is a 24-foot bronze arm and fist suspended by cables from pyramidal support beams that stand 24 feet tall. While anatomically precise, it is disembodied, abstracted, and decontextualized, an arresting combination that is symbolically and interpretably open. It is perhaps not surprising that upon seeing the sculpture for the first time, Joe Louis's widow murmured, "It could be anybody's arm."<sup>16</sup>

Robert Graham's comments about his work affirm this description of *The Fist*: "People bring their own experiences to the sculpture. I wanted to leave the image open, allowing it to become a symbol rather than make it specific." According to Graham, "Making a statue of a fighter would have been a limited image of Joe Louis."<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the disembodied forearm and fist function as a metonym for Louis, a kind of shorthand sign of a larger meaning, functioning efficiently to stand for the whole. Unlike metaphor, which draws our attention to similarities in dissimilar things through direct comparison (e.g., that man is a lion), metonymy relies upon the use of a single characteristic to identify a more complex whole, or the use of a single attribute to create identification with a larger whole. In the case of *The Fist*, Louis' muscle and brawn used to defeat opponents in the boxing ring serve as short hand for the larger struggles of African Americans to attain greater equality in society, struggles in which Louis himself played a significant part. As Thomas R. Hietala argues, Louis' knockout punch resonated throughout the African American community in the 1930s, because African Americans "relished those rare moments when one of their own shattered white pretensions to superiority."<sup>18</sup> However, from another standpoint, as Graves argues, "the arm is severed from the brain that lends intelligence and intention to its driving force."<sup>19</sup> There is thus a disturbing side to a metonymy that, by elevating one attribute, contributes to the separation of physical attributes from those attributes that are considered essential to one's humanity. Given that the body part is attributed to a black man and given the history of lynching and other forms of violence enacted against blacks during Joe Louis' lifetime and career, *The Fist's* formal dimensions are also inextricably tied to "a set of cultural and visual stereotypes borne of denigrating racial ideologies."<sup>20</sup> Using one body

part to symbolize the complex whole of a person objectifies and dismembers that person, both figuratively and literally. As such, the sculpture is both a grotesque caricature of the man and a glorification of his limb. It is a piece of a (subhu)man, whose life can be reduced to one limb, to be held up for the gaze of the “public,” a curiosity, a carnival sideshow, a burlesque oddity. The fact that *The Fist* is hung from a tripod, shackled by cables, simply underscores such a reading (*Figure 2*). Louis’ brawn is both mighty and constrained, daunting and caged, an emblem of the black body writ large and the families torn apart and dis-membered by slavery, violence, and poverty. Indeed, Richard Marback pushes the metonymic possibilities of *The Fist* even further, arguing that:

The body of Joe Louis, or at least the part of his body monumentalized on the corner of Woodward and Jefferson, has become ‘urbanized,’ a metropolitan body, or more specifically, the body of Detroit, a fist inscribed with racial violence, agonized memories of racial injustice, and hopes for democratic citizenship. At the same time, the city itself has become a spatialized simulacrum of an African-American body fighting against, while living within, embodiments of racial injustice and the geographic limitations of democracy.<sup>21</sup>



*Figure 2*

As the discussion above indicates, *The Fist* makes visible the hegemonic processes and values of political, corporate, and cultural elites (the material circumstances), the modernist aesthetic values of much urban public art (its specific aesthetic properties), and the metonymies of racial and racist images and ideologies (rhetorical figures/resources).<sup>22</sup> In so doing, it functions rhetorically to evoke and intensify emotions and responses. For example, in February 2004, two men from suburban Detroit, one a suburban parks commissioner, used mops to whitewash the statue and left photocopied pictures of two slain Detroit police officers (both white), whose “alleged killer” was black. They also left a note with the inscription, “Courtesy of Fighting Whities.”<sup>23</sup> This act of vandalism provided a visible rhetorical manifestation of, in Marback’s terms, the pain of the urban body and an effort to both call attention to and alleviate the pain through a public statement. In an effort to defend and explain their

motivation, the two men, who both lost their jobs as a result of the vandalism, argued that the act was not racially motivated, but rather a plea “to stop the violence.”<sup>24</sup> They saw the violence in Detroit echoing the violence in Iraq and they sought to express their feelings of pain, frustration, and outrage. Thus vandalism of *The Fist* became their rhetorical response to the situation. *The Fist* was cleaned and the two vandals were charged with “malicious destruction of property.”

The men’s account of their actions suggests that *The Fist*, to the extent that it symbolizes, in its abstracted form, violence without a context or framework (i.e., random violence), evokes an intensified experience of the emotion that accompanies awareness of such violence, namely fear: fear of racialized violence, fear of otherness within urban spaces. The public sculpture provided a space to articulate those fears visually. In a sense, whitewashing the sculpture also rhetorically referenced efforts to whitewash, through redevelopment efforts, underlying struggles within the urban context and the realities of communities separated by racial and economic boundaries. Without an understanding of who *The Fist* belongs to (there is nothing to connect the sculpture to Joe Louis, as indicated above, if one does not know the title of the work), it can also be seen as a sign of warning or danger as it hangs firmly resolute and faceless, suspended over those who pass by and below its imposing form. It is contained within the pyramidal structure from which it is hung by steel cables, but it also projects outward from the pyramidal form. It thus seems on the verge of breaking through invisible barriers, suggesting the illusion that it could actually move, swinging out like a missile without warning (see *Figures 2&3*). Such a reading of danger is underscored by the public awareness of another monumental sculpture featuring disembodied arms, namely Baghdad’s triumphal arch, titled *Hands of*

*Victory*, constructed by Saddam Hussein, which features Hussein's forearms holding swords over the roadway.<sup>25</sup> The first and second Iraq wars made this sculpture a potential reference point in the public imagination, underscoring both the hegemonic force of *The Fist* and the fear and discomfort it might invoke in viewers. However, the fist featured in the *Monument to Joe Louis* holds no weapons and, as Marback argues, presents an alternative rhetorical figure that may better illuminate the state of contemporary civic life than the Ciceronian open-handed gesture. Marback writes: "as an icon of protest and cultural turmoil and racial tensions of the last three decades, the fist figures forth spatial interactions embodied in claims to contested cultural and physical terrains on which memories of racial injustice and hopes for democratic citizenship are written."<sup>26</sup>

As this discussion indicates, the sculpture highlights the tensions of the urban experience of Detroit, an urban history, as we shall demonstrate below, involving economic downswings, rioting/rebellion, white flight to the suburbs, and social and urban planning policies that left African Americans with few choices, locking them into increasingly depressed and deteriorating communities. The symbolic and material aspects of *The Fist* suggest both efforts to literally break out of such a downward spiral and the fears of those outside the city that African American individuals and communities will indeed break out and enter their own predominantly white, middle class havens. It therefore evokes, among other things, anger, frustration, pain, determination, and hope on the part of African Americans as well as fear and efforts at containment on the part of whites and their political representatives. In terms of representing "hope" for African Americans, one supporter of the monument saw the monument as symbolizing the black

community “fighting against all odds, rising out of obscurity, refusing to be a passive victim of an unjust system.”<sup>27</sup>

*Contingent and contextual: location and meaning*

As our discussion so far makes clear, race is an important aspect of the signification of the monument. Given the man being memorialized and the location of the memorial, this is hardly surprising; however the rhetorical import of these factors is worth careful consideration. In his detailed historical and cultural analysis of the social impact of three famous African American boxers in the twentieth century, Frederic Cople Jaher describes the pivotal role Joe Louis played in the developing racial consciousness of the nation. Unlike the earlier black heavyweight champion, Jack “Little Arthur” Johnson, who Jaher claims was seen as a provocateur because his behavior “presented demands for the elimination of the color line in everything from boxing to the bedroom,” Louis was one of the country’s first black heroes. Indeed, Jaher argues that:

Although he accommodated to the racial stereotype of the submissive Negro, Louis (partly as a result of this accommodation) became the first black national hero. This achievement represented a new role for blacks and a major concession by the dominant race. Most white Americans now altered their vision of their national identity to include Afro-Americans. Louis convinced whites that blacks could be virtuous as well as virtuoso athletes and, by extension, worthy citizens. By alleviating Caucasian anxieties regarding changes in race relations and black patriotism, Louis’ example regularized black contention for the heavyweight crown.<sup>28</sup>

Through both his fist and his persona, then, Louis made a claim for equality that resonated with the white community. And in his triumph over German opponent, Max Schmelling, he served as a symbol of America overcoming the destructive forces of Nazism in Europe. If we accept Jaher's account then Joe Louis's public image, as crafted by himself and his handlers, might be read as an example of a shared or conciliatory cultural projection, wherein dominants and subordinates exchanged and accepted the images and perspectives of the other.<sup>29</sup> However, despite Louis's hero status and the acceptance of black contenders for the heavyweight-boxing crown, his life and that of other African Americans, particularly in the city of Detroit, continued to be characterized by political, economic, and cultural struggles, not least having to do with access (or lack thereof) to spaces and places. This history is inscribed into the physical landscape of the city and, in turn, plays an important role in understanding the rhetorical significance of the *Monument to Joe Louis*, of the memories and emotions it evokes on the part of different publics as result of its material location in the heart of the redeveloped downtown and its aesthetic realism and abstraction.

Recent scholarship on architecture and race suggests some of the difficulties in representing black social memory spatially and materially. Nathaniel Belcher describes the often-devastating impact of federal interstate transportation system initiatives during the 1960s and 1970s on African American urban neighborhoods around the country:

The most active years of highway construction coincided with a general relocation of population along racial and economic lines. This quasi-desegregation of shopping, residential, educational, and cultural facilities through both legal and spontaneous actions came on the heels of many

Interstate constructions through formerly segregated districts...In many of these areas the traditional African-American community was unprepared for these simultaneous occurrences and simply could not withstand such an onslaught; neighborhoods quickly fell into disrepair as uprooted residents moved to more accommodating suburbs.<sup>30</sup>

And Kenrick Ian Grandison argues, in his work on black colleges campuses as cultural records, that historical meaning “resides not so much in autonomous objects or ‘things’ but rather in how spatial relationships change over time.”<sup>31</sup>

The connection these scholars draw between spatial relationships and historical events and meanings are particularly relevant to Detroit, where, according to June Manning Thomas, inner city redevelopment projects that further reduced the already inadequate housing supply open to blacks as well as the rebellions/riots of the late 1960s effectively destroyed black communities, tearing apart the social fabric of African American neighborhoods in Detroit. The riots resulted in increased “white flight” and the necessity of black communities to attempt to rebuild neighborhoods with few resources and poor existing facilities. As Thomas points out, “Commercial owners hesitated to reinvest in areas where the residents were likely to burn down their buildings.”<sup>32</sup> White flight from the city multiplied in the years following the riots, jumping from an average of 22,000 Whites leaving the city each year in the early 60s to a high of 80,000 leaving in 1968.

Indeed, by 1990, four years after the unveiling of *The Fist*, only 1,027,000 people lived in the city, a loss of 800,000 people in 40 years. As [then-mayor Coleman] Young noted, “If you keep the same city limits as we have, if half the population is gone, then

half of your buildings are going to be deserted.”<sup>33</sup> The loss of formerly thriving urban neighborhoods, let alone poverty stricken neighborhoods or middle-class black communities, in the after-math of the rebellions/riots has had a profound effect on the city. According to Mindy Fullilove, a direct result of this loss is a deep and wounding psychological state she refers to as “root shock”: “the traumatic reaction to the destruction of all or part of one’s emotional ecosystem...Shock is the fight for survival after a life-threatening blow to the body’s internal balance,<sup>34</sup> Fullilove argues that the effects of root shock will last for a lifetime and can affect “generations and generations of people.”

The devastating and long lasting transformations in Detroit’s scenic components (which speak to both the material aspects and the rhetorical context of the monument) and the disparate impact on blacks and whites who were forced to move (but generally in different directions), leads to a rhetorical reading of *The Fist* from within a psychological framework of place, or more accurately, of loss of place. *The Fist* is what remains when the body is torn asunder. It strikes out, but with no clear opponent; it struggles, but never achieves resolution; instead, it remains suspended in air. The cables holding the bronze fist are significant here because they set boundaries in a manner metaphorically related to the boundaries set by housing policies, urban development policies, and economic policies, as well as to the boundaries of the physical scene.

In *The Monument to Joe Louis*, then, the past and present are brought together in a visualization of the relationship between power and force as they have played out in Detroit. The monument displays black embodied power that is visible and tangible: it is, of course, no accident that the forearm and fist are cast in bronze, a material that

resembles dark skin with varying degrees of darkness and ashiness, particularly as it ages. Nor is it an accident that the fist is pointed horizontally rather than vertically, providing a somewhat different sense of black power than the raised fist that became associated (particularly for whites) with militant elements of the civil rights movement during the 1960s.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, attitudes towards the monument reflect divergent perspectives on the notion of “black power” which, as the political scientist Michael C. Dawson explains, for most African Americans suggests “fairness or black unity” and for whites represents “blacks’ demands that white supremacy be replaced by black supremacy.”<sup>36</sup> At the same time, the monument calls attention to the constraints of the existing social system, and the unique historical realities of Detroit, that have, at different points in time, contained and undermined that power. The monument references the positioning of African Americans as “other” yet also symbolizes the “fight” to move beyond imposed limits that have become concretized in the form of urban planning that constrained the movement of African Americans both within and outside the city limits and that aided and encouraged the movement of whites to suburban areas.<sup>37</sup>

The surrounding physical /material context is rhetorically significant in several other ways. In addition to the public art projects described earlier, members of the economic and political elite also undertook urban redevelopment projects as a means to re-exert themselves upon the city. The ultimate symbol of this “renaissance” was the aptly named Renaissance Center, a privately financed project proposed and pushed through by Henry Ford II on the riverfront in downtown Detroit. The resulting complex, designed by John Portman (who also designed the Peachtree Center in Atlanta) was made up of a central, 73-story cylindrical tower, surrounded by four additional 39 story towers

and base floors laid out in a maze-like pattern meant to accommodate conference rooms, restaurants, retail shops, theaters, and other commercial facilities. Resembling a fortress of steel and glass and completely protected from the surrounding environment, the Renaissance Center (known as RenCen to Detroiters) provides a visual and physical backdrop for *The Fist* (Figure 3). It's gigantic scale and "cold", difficult-to-navigate interior, plus its inaccessibility from the street (the complex was surrounded by huge, plant covered berms with no visible street entrance), made it virtually inaccessible and/or unattractive to potential patrons.<sup>38</sup> As a result, it has changed owners multiple times, each one struggling to attract and keep tenants and patrons.<sup>39</sup>



*Figure 3*

Not to be out done by the city's economic elites, Coleman Young, Detroit's first African American mayor, took a similar tack in his efforts to revitalize the riverfront and, also, by extension he hoped, the city. One of Young's first downtown development projects was, interestingly, Joe Louis Arena. As Thomas recounts,

The city had already lost one of its major sports teams, the Detroit Lions football club, when the Pistons basketball team and Red Wings hockey team also threatened to leave. Young resolved to build a new arena for

them. Finding no buyers for municipal bonds, he convinced the Carter administration to lend the city \$38 million. This was, up to that time, the largest loan of its kind and the only one given for a sports facility. Most of the money for repaying the loan came from the city's parking revenues.<sup>40</sup>

This type of deal characterized Coleman Young's leadership style as mayor: he used highly visible redevelopment projects – such as the Joe Louis Arena, the Detroit People Mover, and developer Max Fisher's Riverfront Apartment complex – to cover up deep-seated social and economic decline.<sup>41</sup> One observer summed up Detroit's redevelopment projects of the 1970s and 1980s as follows: “Riverfront and RenCen were to be Max and Henry's bookends. It went all the way back to the riots and their vision of a new Detroit. You could look at Detroit from [Canada] and see Henry's RenCen and Coleman's Joe Louis Arena and Max and Al's [Taubman] two apartment towers and understand Detroit pretty much at a glance.”<sup>42</sup> The physical context of *The Fist* is thus marked by “new” buildings in a shrinking downtown center, buildings which, despite their grand scale and design, do not hide the city's many persistent problems and aborted initiatives.

What is striking about the physical location of *The Fist*, then, is the extent to which it reflects both the car culture and the racial culture of Detroit. The mix of shiny, modern buildings surrounding the monument were made possible by the car industry both figuratively and literally: Detroit is, after all, the “Motor City,” a city whose fortunes have depended upon those of the American car industry's, and Henry Ford II (RenCen) and Max Fisher (Riverfront Towers), were the heirs to the car companies and/or fortunes of their fathers and grandfathers. And, as mentioned previously, Coleman Young was the

first black mayor of the city, elected within six years of the 1967 rebellion/riot, a period during which Detroit went from having a majority of white residents and a largely white administration to a black majority and a black administration. Thomas provides a useful discussion of the extent to which these two cultural components have impacted the lived experience of Detroiters:

....in Detroit, events conspired to leave the city uniquely impoverished, abandoned, and militant. The bottom fell out of the auto industry, causing mass unemployment. The abundance of land beyond the municipal boundaries [and the inability of the city to annex it] enabled suburbanites to create an alternative downtown in the suburb of Southfield. And the new mayor, Coleman Young, elected in 1973, did not come from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. He was a militant former union man who consolidated power by adopting a confrontational policy toward the city's suburban neighbors.<sup>43</sup>

Given the influence of the automobile on Detroit, both in terms of its economic impact on the city and the enabling force it served in the creation of the surrounding suburbs and metropolitan areas and the increasing isolation of the central city, it is perhaps not surprising that the sculpture itself is sited on a cement island in the middle of a turn around on Jefferson Avenue, which, as the major thoroughfare along the riverfront, is ten lanes wide (*Figure 4*). As a result, most people experience *The Fist* by car, many on their way to work at one of the surrounding office or government buildings, having driven in from the suburbs. At the speed of driving on Jefferson Avenue, the monument appears, looms, and recedes in the rear view mirror within the duration of a minute or

less. Despite this hurried pace, it is arresting enough to register, to disrupt, even to antagonize, and in so doing, reveals the potential rhetorical power of public art to problematize urban living. The symbolic and material aspects of *The Fist* take a mundane, ordinary experience of driving and unlock the rhetorical potential of our day-to-day mental and physical meanderings. It thus demonstrates the potential for memorials to re-activate rather than cover the debates and contests of history, keeping them fresh in our memories (and providing one possible answer to the question: what sticks and why?). Because it is located right in the center of a major thoroughfare in the center of a city, the tension of power and power constrained, the tension between the part and the whole, is inescapable.

For employees in the surrounding buildings, *The Fist* stays potentially within their gaze for longer periods. Indeed, Coleman Young depicted *The Fist* as his own personal co-optation of the efforts of the dominant elites. As both an elite, by virtue of his role as mayor, and a self-proclaimed representative of the black community, he encouraged siting *The Fist* where he could see it from his office at City Hall. *The Fist* was an “in your face” reminder of his connection to the black constituency. It also served as an emblem of the on-going challenge his administration posed, his assertive stance over and against the white establishment with whom he was in constant and direct opposition.



*Figure 4*

Within a cultural context marked by race, therefore, the physical location, particularly issues related to access and planning of place and space, are important factors in the signification of a commemorative site. Due to the complexity and divisiveness of race relations in the United States in general and Detroit in particular, characteristics that translate into how space is allocated, who lives where, and the “good” and “bad” parts of cities, artifacts that memorialize individuals and events that are “raced” are essentially complicated, unfinished texts that, as we have demonstrated here, “draw from outside the structures of the memorials themselves to form the character of the structure.”<sup>44</sup> Unlike the recognizable “memory places” described in the introductory essay (museums, preservation sites, battlefields, and so forth), the Monument to Joe Louis creates a place and occupies a space that is ambiguous yet recognizable and, ultimately, rhetorical.

### Inviting Judgment

Increasingly, public art sculptures and installations are some of the few symbolic markers, in the world beyond one's private and constrained spaces of home and work, where there is a larger sense of visibility as well as strangeness. Amidst the modernist, faceless buildings in the revitalized section of downtown Detroit, including the imposing dark glass and steel structure of the Renaissance Center, towards which the sculpture directs its closed fist, *The Fist* provides one of the few human reference points, a contained space of expressiveness and meaningfulness however abstract and symbolically open it may be. As Richard Sennett points out, writing about contemporary urban planning and architecture, modern public space "prompts people to think of the public domain as meaningless."<sup>45</sup> Further, instead of providing visual cues that could help individuals understand and embrace the social diversity of the city, urban planners often build physical barriers to "seal off conflicting or dissonant sides."<sup>46</sup> Works such as *The Fist* provide, then, an opportunity or a vehicle for public expression of various sorts, an opportunity for both connection and conflict as different historically and racially located social memories are invoked and brought to bear on judgment and response. These expressions as indicated earlier, include frustration, resistance, even outrage.

Certainly public art has had a mixed history in the United States and the modernist design aesthetic, as described earlier, has caused controversy in other cities in regard to other installations because of the aesthetically difficult and literally imposing bulk of large, modern steel sculptures. As Doss explains, "controversies over public art style really unmask deeper concerns Americans have regarding their voice in the public sphere....If the mercurial complexity of contemporary life seems unfathomable, if real-life programs seem insurmountable and experts appear irresolutely unresponsive, the

simple presence, “the “thereness” of public art is a solid, knowable target.”<sup>47</sup> Similarly, art critic Amy Golden notes that “public art addresses its audience as participants in a public world. Sympathetic attention is not enough. We are encouraged to take sides.”<sup>48</sup> In the case of *The Fist*, audiences of various types expressed frustration, took sides, and used the monument to make judgments and to lay claim to a voice in the public sphere. Some of these judgments indicated a conciliatory reading of the monument, while others indicated a more clearly polarized reading.<sup>49</sup> For example, when asked by a local newspaper columnist to respond to the question, “What’s in *The Fist*?” readers from the Detroit Metropolitan area sent in a variety of responses, from cynical and divisive to conciliatory and hopeful: “M&Ms,” “A squashed palm reader,” “[it’s] spring loaded to release a certain digit every time Mayor Young attacks the suburbs,” “Hope,” “Tolerance,” and “What will it take to open *The Fist* and spread it [hope] around?”<sup>50</sup>

A more polarized set of judgments regarding the monument is also indicated by the fact that *The Fist* has been subjected to vandalism (in reality as well as in fictional scenarios) as a form of rebellion and protest by local, suburban white individuals who seek to express yearning for transformation in the character of Detroit city life. Paul Clemens, in his memoir about growing up as a white Catholic on Detroit’s Eastside, created a fictional incidence of vandalism with overtones similar to the February 2004 incident described previously:

...the three [white] kids, still armed to the teeth with dairy products after egging houses in wealthy Grosse Pointe, drive downtown and park near *The Fist*, intent upon egging the shit out of it. They fit nowhere – the suburbs, the city – and so are reduced to this impotent gesture. “We should

have bought yolkless eggs,” one of them remarks. Though it had made no difference in Grosse Pointe, the symbolism of the all-white egg would have been better downtown.

And so they begin, to the accompaniment of alphabetic swearing. “Asshole!” one of them hollers, letting the first egg fly. “Bitch!” And so on, until they get to the letter *n*, when the scene fades out.

They were picked up by the Detroit police, the narrator says in a postscript, on charges of drunk and disorderly and destruction of public property. But nothing had been destroyed – the eggs washed right off – and there’s nothing disorderly, the narrator asserts, about civil disobedience executed in alphabetical order.<sup>51</sup>

Both the fictional and the actual attempts at vandalism indicate a struggle by (formerly) politically and economically dominant whites, to render judgment, to reject or re-interpret the perceived symbolic aspects and values inscribed in the materiality of *The Fist*.

A potentially even more significant response, given the material outcome, came in the form of an anonymous donor who started a countermovement to site a representative sculpture honoring Joe Louis in Cobo Hall, Detroit’s downtown convention center. The donor’s gift was “matched by Detroit citizens, Louis’s family, public school students, teachers and staff.”<sup>52</sup> The stated purpose of the commission was to site a sculpture that “the community could identify with,” one that would serve as a corrective to *The Fist*. The result was a 12-foot bronze statue of Louis in a boxing stance created by Ed Hamilton, an African American sculptor who won the design competition.<sup>53</sup> Of course, as indicated in the introductory essay, this is not the only example of a countermovement

developing around a controversial public art sculpture: consider, for instance, the countermovement that resulted in the siting of the representational sculpture and flag pole adjacent to the Maya Lin-designed portion of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, or the countermovement that resulted in the removal of Richard Serra's sculpture, "Tilted Arc" from the plaza in New York City.

The case of the VVM indicates that counter memorials may serve at least three functions: as a corrective, as a supplement, and/or as a contradiction. Considered in this light, the statue of Joe Louis in Cobo Hall may be understood to function as a corrective to 1) Graham's (the artist's) claim that a statue of a fighter would be too limiting and 2) his use of an abstracted, interpretably open aesthetic. It does so by evoking, instead, the tradition of the "great man" in commemorative art (exemplified by representational sculptures that are larger than life, that concentrate on capturing a likeness so that the great man becomes the stand in, the embodiment of the community's best hopes and aspirations). Indeed, because the largely African American community chose this traditional, honorific style of commemoration, associated with dominant group memorializing of the past, and the political and economic elites accepted the community's right to participate in public representation of history, the representational statue of Joe Louis, despite its oppositional character, may be read as a conciliatory cultural projection.

In a manner similar to the representational elements of the VVM, the representational statue of Louis in Cobo Hall also may be understood to function as a supplement, providing another way by which people may participate in remembering a person and/or event(s). The addition of the Hamilton memorial has meant that Joe

Louis's memory is inscribed into the visual and material landscape of modern Detroit in three distinct ways, including (in addition to *The Fist* and the Hamilton statue in Cobo Hall) the *Joe Louis Arena*, the sports stadium (also referred to as "The Joe") where the Red Wings hockey team plays. Of these, *The Fist* remains the most publicly visible and provocative commemorative form. However, each form of memorializing represents different interests and needs, different communities tied to Detroit, and different moments in contemporary history fraught with tensions and with desires for transformation, renewal, and restoration of community and prosperity. Taken together, these commemorative projects evoke memories of Joe Louis as a man, a legend and a symbol, memories that continue to have an impact both locally and nationally. *The Fist* has, therefore, brought about (in the case of the Hamilton statue) and become part of (in the case of the arena) a more extensive field of memory and commemoration, reflecting and engaging the complexities of Detroit's history and of racial histories throughout the country. As Blair, Jeppeson and Pucci read the three parts of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial together as symbolizing conflict and the lack of resolution over the conduct of the Vietnam War, we can read the three Joe Louis commemorative projects together to see them symbolizing the complexity and partisan nature of public memory and the inevitability of conflict and contestation over how events and individuals are represented materially within the public realm.<sup>55</sup>

As this analysis has shown, the rhetorical impact of the artifact's specific physical location, the aesthetics and the history of the surrounding built environment, and the multiple modes by which people both experience and engage it are significant factors in developing an understanding of the monument's rhetorical and commemorative power.

Examining these factors, as we have done here, provides a clearer sense of how and to what extent *The Fist* functions rhetorically to provide a space of attention to which individuals respond, both emotionally and rationally, by articulating a position and by further identifying themselves as members of the public being addressed by the monument.

### Conclusion

The *Monument to Joe Louis* has evoked strong emotional reactions and invited a variety of responses and judgments from different publics because of the historical, social and psychological experiences it references through its material presence in the heart of Detroit and through its resulting rhetorical force. Its aesthetic qualities and surrounding context (both physical and historical) provide the resources from which controversy, debate, and other forms of material rhetoric have emerged. The common reference to the sculpture as “*The Fist*” suggests the rhetorical meaningfulness of the sculpture: its combination of realist and abstract elements; the power, threat and anger it evokes; and the sense of brokenness and loss it displays through its metonymic qualities, referencing bodies and communities torn asunder. The memories evoked are much broader and more scattered than one might suppose from a sculpture titled for a specific person. Indeed, without it being designated as *Monument to Joe Louis*, its connection to the boxing champion – who helped to positively transform white perceptions of African Americans and helped African Americans imagine the possibilities of achieving parity with whites – is tenuous.

To the extent that most people experience the materiality of *The Fist* as a disembodied arm with multiple references, our analysis suggests this is *because* of its physical location, its connection to other works of public art and urban redevelopment commissioned around the same time, the dispersal of communities along the lines of race and class, and the shifting over of political power to the African American majority who remained within the city limits. Indeed, the hegemonic process by which the sculpture came into being, the conciliatory nature of the counter memorial in Cobo Hall, and the polarized cultural projections the sculpture evokes may be more apt, when taken together, to result in a counter hegemonic discourse regarding the redistribution of power than any number of representational sculptures celebrating civil rights and/or the African American experience.<sup>56</sup>

The sculpture, as material rhetoric, opened opportunities for discussion and reflection on the history of Detroit as well as the appropriate forms of commemoration for a significant figure whose prominence in the world of boxing became symbolic of the potential for greater feats and more successful struggles for power by African American communities around the U.S. The memorial delineated the tensions and the jockeying for control of Detroit's public spaces by corporate, cultural and political elites, bringing these groups head to head with each other and with the publics located both within and outside of the city limits. The counter memorial reflected a desire to take the memorializing process out of the hands of the cultural elites and corporate control, making the memory of Joe Louis into something more reflective of the community's perception of appropriate memorial sculpture. While more traditional in nature because of its representational form, this counter memorial served as both a corrective and a supplement, expanding the field

of memory and ensuring the enduring presence of Joe Louis in the history of Detroit for audiences in the present and in the future.

In revealing the rhetorical, contingent nature of the monument, this analysis provides a clearer understanding of how and to what extent *The Fist* serves as a resource for public memory by examining what “makes it stick,” how and with what effect. As we demonstrate, citizens of Detroit continue to be emotionally engaged by it, taking on the role first of critic, then of agent, and, ultimately, experiencing the *Monument to Joe Louis* as a resource for cultural projection and continued engagement.

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<sup>1</sup> See Donna Graves, “Representing the Race: Detroit’s ‘Monument to Joe Louis,’” in *Critical Issues in Public Art: Content, Context, and Controversy*, ed. Harriet Senie and Sally Webster, eds. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc, 2002), 221.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, among others, Barbara Biesecker, “Remembering World War II: The Rhetoric and Politics of National Commemoration at the Turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 88 (2002): 393-410; Carole Blair, “Contemporary U.S. Memorial Sites as Exemplars of Rhetoric’s Materiality,” in *Rhetorical Bodies*, Jack Selzer & Sharon Crowley, eds. (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1999); Carole Blair, Marsha S. Jeppeson, & Enrico Pucci, Jr., “Public Memorializing in Postmodernity: The Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial as Prototype,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 77 (1991): 263-87; Carole Blair and Neil Michel, “Reproducing Civil Rights Tactics: The Rhetorical Performances of the Civil Rights Memorial,” *Rhetoric Society of Quarterly*, 30 (2000): 31-55; Roseann Mandziuk, “Commemorating Sojourner Truth: Negotiating the Spaces of Public Memory,” *Western Journal of Communication*, 67 (2003):271-292; Kirk Savage, “The Past in the Present: The Life of Memorials,” *Harvard Design Magazine*, Fall (1999):14-19. Mabel Wilson, “Between rooms 307: Spaces of memory at the National Civil Rights Museum,” in Craig Barton, ed., *Sites of memory: Perspectives on architecture and race*. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001). James E. Young, “The Counter-Monument: Memory Against Itself in Germany Today.” *Critical Inquiry*. 18 (1992):267-296.

<sup>3</sup> “Cultural projection” is a term used by political scientist, Richard Merelman, in his book, *Representing Black Culture: Racial Conflict and Cultural Politics in the United States*, (New York: Routledge, 1995). Merelman defines cultural projection as: “the conscious or unconscious effort by a social group and its allies to place new images of itself before other social groups, and before the general public” (3).

<sup>4</sup> Deutsche, R. (1996). *Evictions: art and social politics*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 52-53.

<sup>5</sup> See Graves, “Representing the Race,” and Richard Marback, Richard, “Detroit and the Closed Fist: Toward a Theory of Material Rhetoric,” in *Rhetoric Review*, 17 (1998): 74-92.

<sup>6</sup> Grave’s concludes that the sculptor, Robert Graham, “ignored the monument’s audience and the fact that such a commission must be read against the complex reality of social, political, urban, and institutional history,” “Representing the Race,” 255. We counter her argument by showing how the monument highlights, and makes culturally and rhetorically present, significant aspects of that complex reality

<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, Victoria J. Gallagher, “Reconciliation and Amnesia in the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute,” in *Rhetoric and Public Affairs*, 2 (Summer 1999): 303-320 and Victoria J. Gallagher, “Memory as Social Action: Cultural Projection and Generic Form in Civil Rights Memorials,” in Steven R. Goldzwig and Patricia A. Sullivan, eds., *Communities, Creations, and Contradictions: New Approaches to Rhetoric for the Twenty-first Century*, (Sage Publications, Inc., 2004).

<sup>8</sup> Erika Doss, *Spirit Poles and Flying Pigs: Public Art and Cultural Democracy in American Communities*. (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995).

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<sup>9</sup> This quotation along with images and descriptions of some of Detroit's more famous sculptures and monuments may be seen at <http://info.detnews.com/history/story/index.cfm?id=165&category=locations>

<sup>10</sup> See Graves, "Representing the Race," 217-218.

<sup>11</sup> Senie, Harriet F. and Webster, Sally, eds. (1992). *Critical Issues in Public Art: Content, Context, and Controversy*. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc), xii-xiv.

<sup>12</sup> The use of these terms is loaded as June Manning Thomas observes in *Redevelopment and Race: Planning a Finer City in Postwar Detroit*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997): "Official investigations concluded that the riots were cries for help, protests against the cumulative effects of discrimination, and demands for greater assistance. But they were also statements of frustration with the existing social order, expressions of community pride and assertiveness. Hence, the insistence of many that these were urban rebellions or civil disorders rather than riots. Even their label is volatile," 127.

<sup>13</sup> For a complete description of this campaign and the artworks that were sited during the period, see D. A. Nawrocki and T. J. Holleman, *Art in Detroit Public Places*. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press).

<sup>14</sup> Senie and Webster, *Critical Issues in Public Art*, p.xiv.

<sup>15</sup> Senie and Webster, *Critical Issues in Public Art*, p. 172.

<sup>16</sup> Shirley Carswell, "Neat Statue, Strange Fist, She Decides: Joe Louis' Widow Sees His Monument for 1<sup>st</sup> Time," *Detroit Free Press*, 11/10/87, 1A.

<sup>17</sup> This quotation along with images and descriptions of some of Detroit's more famous sculptures and monuments may be seen at <http://info.detnews.com/history/story/index.cfm?id=165&category=locations>.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas R. Hietala, *The Fight of the Century*, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharp, 2002), 10.

<sup>19</sup> Graves, "Representing the Race," p. 222.

<sup>20</sup> Graves, "Representing the Race," p. 225.

<sup>21</sup> Marback, "Detroit and the Closed Fist," pp.85-86.

<sup>22</sup> We are using the term "hegemonic" consistent with Merelman's definition: "dominant groups control the flow of cultural projection" enabling a "dominant group's cultural imagery to become the 'common sense' for all groups" thereby undercutting "the ability of subordinates to resist domination," Merelman, *Representing Black Culture*, 6.

<sup>23</sup> Ben Schmitt, "Man accused of defacing Joe Louis monument resigns township post," March 2, 2004, *Detroit Free Press*, downloaded 1/28/2005 from [http://www.freep.com/news/latestnews/pm18703\\_20040302.htm](http://www.freep.com/news/latestnews/pm18703_20040302.htm). 1-2.

<sup>24</sup> See J. Zaslow, Controversial Sculpture is Defaced with Paint; Vandals Deny Racism. *The Wall Street Journal*. March 4, 2004, Retrieved 6/16/2005 from <http://archives.econ.utah.edu/archives/marxism/2004w09/msg00187.htm>, 3.

<sup>25</sup> Images of the arch can be seen on <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/iraq/baghdad-monuments.htm>. See also, Makiya Kanin, *The Monument: Art Vulgarity and Responsibility in Iraq*, (Berkeley, CA:University of California Press, 1991)

<sup>26</sup> Marback, "Detroit and the Closed Fist," 18.

<sup>27</sup> Graves, 220.

<sup>28</sup> Frederic Cople Jaher, "White America Views Jack Johnson, Joe Louis, and Muhammad Ali. In D. Spivey, ed., *Sport in America: New Historical Perspectives*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985), 181.

<sup>29</sup> Merelman would refer to this as a form of syncretic cultural projection which he defined as a form of "mutual projection" that occurs when "dominants accept some of the subordinate cultural projection and subordinates accepts some of the dominant projection." Because it incorporates subordinate (as well as dominant) cultural imagery, syncretism may work to "weaken the cultural foundations of political domination in a society," *Representing Black Culture*, 5.

<sup>30</sup> Nathan Belcher, "Miami's Colored-over Segregation: Segregation, Interstate 95 and Miami's African-American Legends," in Craig E. Barton, ed., *Sites of Memory: Architecture and Race*, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001), 50.

<sup>31</sup> Kenrick Ian Grandison, "Negotiated Space: The Black College Campus as a Cultural Record of Postbellum America," in Craig E. Barton ed., *Sites of Memory: Perspectives on Architecture and Race*, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001), 58.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race*, 130.

<sup>33</sup> Coleman Young is quoted in Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race*, 174.

<sup>34</sup> Mindy Fullilove, *Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, and What We Can Do About It*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 2005), 11.

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<sup>35</sup> Interestingly, both Graves and Marback read *The Fist* as a black power fist. See, for instance, Graves, "Representing the Race," 222, who argues that it evokes the black power fist's emphasis on self-defense as "a crucial tenet of African American political theory from the Harlem Renaissance to through the Black Panthers."

<sup>36</sup> Michael C. Dawson, "Black Power in 1996 and the Demonization of African Americans," *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 29 (September 1996): 456-62, 456.

<sup>37</sup> For a discussion of how federal policies and money (or lack thereof) for highways, home loans, and public housing impacted the fate of Detroit and its suburbs, see Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race*.

<sup>38</sup> The information about the specific design aspects and the architect of the Detroit Renaissance Center summarized here is taken from Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race*, 156.

<sup>39</sup> However, during a recent renovation of the complex spurred by new ownership, the berms were removed in the hopes of making it more accessible from the street. The entrance is on Jefferson Avenue and features a curved driveway and portico reminiscent of fine hotels.

<sup>40</sup> Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race*, 157.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race*, 151-152.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race*, 158.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race*, 22-23.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas, *Redevelopment and Race*, 270.

<sup>45</sup> Richard Sennett, *The Fall of public Man*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1976), 12.

<sup>46</sup> Richard, Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1990), 201.

<sup>47</sup> Doss, "Spirit Poles and Flying Pigs," 21.

<sup>48</sup> Amy Golden, "The Aesthetic Ghetto: Some Thoughts About Public Art," in *Art in America*. (May-June, 1974): 31-35.

<sup>49</sup> Our use of the term "polarized" draws upon Richard Merelman's definition of polarization as a failed form of cultural projection that occurs when groups both "experience the pain of having their own projections rejected by others" and "struggle to fight off the projections of these same others," in *Representing Black Culture*, 6.

<sup>50</sup> Bob Talbert, "Here's a Giant Fistful of Reasons to Hope," *Detroit Free Press*, 10/29/86, 15B.

<sup>51</sup> Paul Clemons, *Made in Detroit: A South of Eight Mile Memoir*, (New York: Doubleday, 2005), 190-191.

<sup>52</sup> Graves, "Representing the Race," pp. 223-224.

<sup>53</sup> Graves, "Representing the Race," pp. 223-224.

<sup>55</sup> Blair, Jeppeson and Pucci. (1991). *Public memorializing in postmodernity: the Vietnam Veterans Memorial as prototype*. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* (77) 263-288.

<sup>56</sup> Our use of the term "counter hegemonic" is drawn from Richard Merelman's definition of counter-hegemonic cultural projection as a form of cultural projection that involves the conversion of "dominants to subordinate versions of the world" leading to dominants gradually becoming more accepting of subordinates and thus beginning to adopt a world view "which immediately and definitively questions their right to power and which demands they cede power to subordinates," *Representing Black Culture*, 6.