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Between the Rural and Suburban: The Social, Political, and Economic Dynamics of Policing Forsyth County, GA

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**BETWEEN THE RURAL AND SUBURBAN: THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND
ECONOMIC DYNAMICS OF POLICING FORSYTH COUNTY, GEORGIA**

A Thesis

Presented to

The Academic Faculty

By

Alexandra Vuich

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in American Studies

Kennesaw State University

May 2017

For Abbie

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Preface

This thesis explains the social, political, and economic dynamics of Forsyth County. As a researcher, it is important to speak to my relationship with the county and my personal beliefs and motivations for focusing my research on this place. I moved with my family to the north end of Forsyth County from the southwest suburbs of Chicago, Illinois in 2007 for work when I was 21 years old. I am what the locals in Georgia would call a “Northern Transplant”, a new wave of primarily white flight from Northern suburbs to Georgia’s newer suburbs and exurbs. Part of my want to focus my research on my new home stems from the realization that I did not know much about Forsyth’s history. Throughout my undergraduate and graduate studies, I became familiar with the history of the South, but felt that there was something particular or special to be known about Forsyth. This feeling grew over time as my family settled into our new home and began to take deep root through everyday life. Many of my family’s experiences, relationships, and memories from the last decade cannot be spoken about without referencing “FoCo”, a term us residents lovingly use as shorthand for the county.

In scholarship, we are told to avoid generalizing statements, but I believe that any place, especially ones we call home, has a history that shapes us and that we shape in return. We can take pride in and show love for the people and experiences in a place no matter how that place’s history can be labeled either “good” or “bad”. For the history of any place, I believe that what matters most is what we learn from it and what we do with it going forward. Because of my experiences, memories, and everyday living here, I have a sense of pride and love of Forsyth

County. It is with this pride and love of that I approach this work and what also compels me to look critically at the dynamics of Forsyth County.

The history of any place is complex, it can evoke feelings of pride and belonging, be a foundation in which we find solidarity, but it can also include things we might like to forget. I recognize that the history of Forsyth County is no different. As this thesis reveals, the tense issues of race and racism run through the history of the county and into the present day. My intention in exploring the topic of race in Forsyth County's past and present is to offer one analysis of why the county maintains a level of racial segregation that spawned from specific historical events in 1912 as well as other social, political, and economic shifts from the rest of the 20th Century and early 21st Century, and how that history ties into the policing of the county. My analyses and interpretations of these events are not fixed, but are a contribution to the larger conversation about Forsyth. This larger conversation about the county includes ongoing debates about how we want to remember our past, but also discussions of how we let it influence our future, especially as the county flourishes into a major suburb of Atlanta. Scholar and former Forsyth resident, Patrick Phillips, published a book about Forsyth's racial past, *Blood at the Root: A Racial Cleansing in America*, while I was writing this thesis and was met with mixed reviews by locals. On one community forum, I recall many residents calling the book "dramatized", "garbage", "disturbing" and questioning its validity, with some deciding to not finish the book.¹ Many of the posts in the community forum about the book have since been deleted in an effort to stifle discussion about it. I understand that there are some in the community that would rather not acknowledge this part of Forsyth's history. However, I want to make clear that my intention in discussing the topics of race and racism is to illuminate our

¹ Facebook Posts: August 28, 2016; November 14, 2016; December 13, 2016.

opportunity to be intentional in creating an inclusive future for Forsyth, not to place blame on individuals or leave my fellow neighbors with a sense of “white guilt”.

Furthermore, I find it necessary to speak to the theoretical and analytical lens provided by Police and Prison Studies I employ and how it relates to my research on Forsyth County. In this thesis, I foreground the ways in which social, political, and economic shifts through time have culminated in the increased policing of the county by both law enforcement and its own residents, *despite decreasing crime rates*. To show the intensification of policing in the county, I focus on community discourse surrounding a drug awareness seminar in early 2017 and the election campaign for sheriff in 2016. My intention in analyzing discourse surrounding the drug awareness seminar is to broaden our conversations about community responsibility and improve upon our responses to drug use in ways that rely less on policing and incarceration. This is not meant to cruelly undermine the efforts made by my well-intentioned neighbors. I admire and appreciate my neighbors who are active in our community and hope that my research inspires more people in Forsyth County to participate, as well as others to get involved in their own communities.

Regarding the sheriff election and its results, I approach this topic with sensitivity towards the individuals involved. My aim is to analyze and critique the politics and platforms presented during and after the campaign, not to maliciously single persons out. My intent is not to reduce an individual solely to their campaign or public official projection. Regrettably as a function of time and attention constraints, this thesis cannot provide full insight into the people presented within. In addition to their roles as elected officials, those mentioned here serve the community in other capacities, through local churches and public schools, and this thesis does not wish to take away from their service. Again, as life and places are complex, so are people.

As with any political platform or elected official, there are facets in which we can agree as well as those we will disagree. I believe that it is in the disagreements that we find the opportunity to have larger discussions about our communities, politics, and collective future, if we so choose to engage them. Having an elected official overseeing the local policing agency in theory means that the agency is more in communication with and accountable to the public than one lead by an appointed official. However, as the public, we cannot let accountability happen only once every four years. We should treat communication and accountability as an ongoing process. Again, the opportunity to have larger discussions about our communities, politics, and collective future only happen when we engage them.

Lastly, I take this opportunity to address my theoretical and analytical lens drawn from Critical Police and Prison Studies to make clear my own political views surrounding incarceration and the institution of policing. I believe that society must rethink policing and come to rely less on incarceration to solve social, political, and economic conditions that over time have come to be heavily policed and literally remove people from society through the use of prisons. It is my hope that the institution of policing will at least be reconfigured and that we may achieve the abolition of the prison system. I personally do not know everything about how we will do this, nor entirely what our society would look like when it is achieved. What I do know, however, is that it must be a collaborative project, and as such, this thesis is my contribution. To engage in this project, we must all realize our position vis-à-vis policing and prisons, which includes taking an honest look at how we have been complicit in these institutions.

Recall that life, places, and people are all complex, and with that, we must recognize that change is no easy task. Reconfiguring the institution of policing and relying less on prisons

compels us to dialogue across differences such a race, gender, class, and place, to interrogate our own complicity, and to collectively imagine a future that treats social, political, and economic conditions more justly. If my view of this project seems too ambitious, remember that the abolition of slavery, ending Jim Crow, women's right to vote, worker's rights, and disability rights also seemed too ambitious before their time. Recall that life, places, and people are all complex, and with that, we can continue to shape our collective future towards new ways of justice so long as we engage in dialogue and take the actions to do so.

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Introduction

We know relatively little about policing and incarceration in suburban and rural areas, especially in the Southeastern United States. Research that addresses this gap illuminates not only how policing and incarceration shape and are shaped by social, political, and economic dynamics in suburban and rural areas, but also how these settings are situated within the larger social, political, and economic context of the U.S. The purpose of this thesis is to explore the social, political, and economic dynamics that inform how people perceive crime and how that translates into policing in Forsyth County, Georgia, a suburbanizing county roughly 40 miles North of Atlanta. In doing so, this thesis makes visible the ways in which Forsyth County is situated within the larger social, political, and economic context of the U.S.

The significance of this work to American Studies scholarship is that it adds to our understanding of how rural and suburban policing are intrinsically tied to the larger social, political, and economic context of the U.S. as these areas are often overlooked within police and prison studies. Rural and suburban areas present their own challenges regarding population size and density, race, class, among other factors. In addition, this research is significant because it enhances our understanding of these topics as they occur in the understudied Southeastern U.S. Furthermore, this thesis offers insight into how people understand their relationships to police, to crime and safety, to each other, and to collective action.

This thesis employs historical and ethnographic methods to make sense of policing and incarceration in Forsyth County and to situate it within the broader context of the U.S. The purpose of using historical analysis is to uncover how the political economy of the area shapes

and is shaped by perceptions of crime and how the county is policed. More specifically, this method explores the area's shifts in political economy through time, in conjunction with the evolution of its social climate, an endeavor that reveals how race is tied to both the political economy and social climate.

Ethnography is also used to reveal how people in the area shape and are shaped by perceptions of crime. This method illuminates public perceptions of crime that influence and are influenced by policing, drug use, race, law and order rhetoric, and economic and population growth. I analyze discourse from community forums on social media and observations made from participant-observation of the county's board of commissioners' meetings to uncover the social, political, and economic dynamics of the county. I draw from social media posts and comments that received attention from residents in the form of "likes", comments, and "shares". In addition, many posts and comments I use initiated or were made through longer threads of dialogue.

The area under study in this thesis, Forsyth County, was once a completely rural area, but is now quickly suburbanizing, experiencing growth in population and changes in economy and infrastructure. In 2016, the population of Forsyth County was 221,009. Forsyth County is one of the wealthiest places in Georgia, with a median income of \$88,816, compared to the national median of \$53, 889. In addition, the poverty level is less than half of the national average with 6.3% poverty compared to 13.5%. The median home value is also higher than the national, at \$267,300 compared to \$178,600. Throughout its growth, Forsyth County has remained majority white (84%), with a recent influx of Asian Americans (10.3%). The African American population in the county is relatively low, at 3.7%.²

² "United States v. Forsyth County Georgia Census Statistics," *United States Census Bureau*, accessed April 11, 2017, //www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/INC110215/13117.

Forsyth County was established in December 1832, when the state of Georgia created nine counties on what were Cherokee Nation lands.³ The promise of wealth from recently discovered goldmines in the area attracted many settlers, and between 1805 and 1832, tracts of land were divided and raffled to white settlers.⁴ The excitement over potential gold quickly faded, and many settlers turned to farming tobacco and cotton, well into the 20th century and up until the end of World War II, when the county's economy would shift its focus to the poultry industry.⁵ After World War II, the area experienced growth due to infrastructure changes such as the building of a man-made lake and dam, as well as the construction of a major highway that linked the rural area to Atlanta. In the latter part of the 20th Century, the county's racial history was brought to light as may in Atlanta and around the nation questioned the county's "sundown town" nature, the result of a "racial cleansing" after three black men were accused of raping and murdering a white woman in 1912.⁶

The events of 1912 in Forsyth County put the county on a trajectory to remain racially segregated and majority white well into the present, which has important implications for how current residents perceive crime, especially in terms of race. However, what happened in 1912 does not fully explain how perceptions of crime have evolved over time. I argue that in addition to the events of 1912, the economic shift away from an agriculture and poultry-based industry, the construction of Lake Lanier and Buford Dam, the staggered expansion of Georgia State

³ Annette Bramblett, *Forsyth County: History Stories* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia, 2002), 26; Garland C. Bagley, *History of Forsyth County, Georgia: 1832-1932 Volume 1* (Milledgeville, Georgia: Boyd Publishing Company, 1985), 18-25, 230; David Williams, *The Georgia Gold Rush: Twenty-Niners, Cherokees, and Gold Fever* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 47-48.

⁴ Williams, *The Georgia Gold Rush*, 47-48.

⁵ M.H. Cauley, "NEIGHBORHOOD OF THE WEEK: Southeast Forsyth County Subdivisions Sprouting Quickly in Area with Pastoral Allure," *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, March 24, 1996.

⁶ Patrick Phillips, *Blood at the Root: A Racial Cleansing in America* (New York; London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2016), xi-xiii.

Route 400, and white flight all positioned Forsyth County to maintain its racial segregation, subsequently factoring into how residents of the county perceive crime in terms of race and place. This thesis reveals how these perceptions produce real outcomes in how the county is policed by the local sheriff's office and how the residents come to police themselves and each other.

This thesis opens with a review of current scholarship in police and prison studies. The literature reveals the interplay of political economy and social discourse in the ways in which we perceive, shape, and are shaped by policing and incarceration, as well as how these factors contribute to the rise of the Prison Industrial Complex. In addition, current scholarship illuminates the opportunity for research on rural and suburban areas as the literature shows a strong preference towards urban landscapes. The literature review closes by examining the structural and cultural factors that inform policing in practice, as well as an overview of how community influences policing. Following the literature review, Chapter 1 chronicles the racial history of Forsyth County, detailing the events of 1912 that led to its "sundown" nature and subsequent racial segregation that is fairly well-maintained today. In addition, the chapter explores the early political economy of the county, linking the shift from agriculture and poultry farming to recreation and high-cost housing to the ways in which Forsyth maintained racial segregation. Furthermore, the chapter gives an account of the late 1980s, as Forsyth County's racial past and segregation were thrust into the nation spotlight through civil rights marches and the *Oprah Winfrey Show*. Lastly, the chapter shifts to the political economy of the late 1980s to the 2010s, showing how changes in infrastructure allowed the county to remain racially segregated through today. Chapter 2 relates the previous chapters to current public perceptions of crime in Forsyth and shows how these perceptions translate into real policing outcomes.

Literature Review

The Prison Industrial Complex, Political Economy, and Social Discourse

To situate the policing of rural and suburban areas, we must first be able to understand the broader social, political, and economic context of the United States. A survey of current police and prison studies scholarship points to the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC), the political economy in which it came to be, and the social discourses in which it thrives today as the foundation in which to understand policing and incarceration in the United States. By understanding the PIC, political economy, and social discourses in a broad sense, we can then begin to make sense of the ways in which rural and suburban areas are specifically situated within it.

The term Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) is commonly used to describe relationships between corporations and prisons. The relationships are often oversimplified. The popular belief behind the PIC holds that corporations drive prisons to incarcerate more people so that they can make a profit. In this view, the private management of prisons plays a key role in generating profit from the incarceration of large numbers of people. However, scholars are critical of this narrow interpretation of the PIC for at least two reasons. First, while they have grown in number with mass incarceration, private prisons make up less than 10% of prisons in the U.S. and their population pales in comparison to that of public prisons and the total number of people imprisoned in the United States. Second, private prisons remain under the control of

governmental agencies, the entities who have the power to incarcerate. If we removed the element of privatization, we would still have mass incarceration because the power to incarcerate lies with these entities.⁷ Corporate profits and privatization are important elements of the PIC, but they do not encapsulate the totality and complexity of the system.

Scholars propose that we think of the PIC as a trajectory in which many elements and entities are interdependently related. In addition to drives to privatize and generate profit, these entities include: the state and an array of corporate interests at multiple scales (e.g., from the global to the local), educational institutions (i.e., the ‘school to prison pipeline’), rural prison sitings, and urban neighborhoods. Each of these elements of the PIC shape and are shaped by concerns over what to do about social, political, and economic problems. These problems become the target in which these elements, entities, corporations, people, and places turn their attention. Their focus, thinking, and actions come to work in concert to eradicate the often elusive, and ever growing targets of social, political, and economic conditions such as homelessness, mental health, poverty, and so on.⁸ The complexity of the PIC is that it penetrates all of society. For example, schools are implicated in the system as many of those who cannot successfully navigate the educational system end up incarcerated. The education system is implicated in defining and identifying social problems as well as eradicating them. The education system then, functions as one extension of the PIC, defining and identifying those who are deemed fit for society and those who are prime for funneling into the prison system.⁹ To better understand the workings of the PIC, it is important to explore its origins.

⁷ Jenna M. Loyd, “Race, Capitalist Crisis, and Abolitionist Organizing: An Interview with Ruth Wilson Gilmore, February 2010,” in *Beyond Walls and Cages: Prisons, Borders, and Global Crisis*, eds. Jenna M. Loyd, Matt Mitchelson, and Andrew Burridge (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 43-45.

⁸ Ibid., 44-45.

⁹ Ibid., 44-46.

Ruth Wilson Gilmore contends that the sociopolitical and economic climate of 1967-68 created the context in which the PIC would come into being. During these years, two significant shifts in the social, political, and economic state of the United States help to make sense of the rise of the PIC. First, social, political, and economic revolutions were taking place. It was simply not that these revolutions were occurring, but that singular movements were beginning to connect and coalesce into larger, global factions of dissent towards authoritarianism. For example, the anti-Vietnam War movement made connections to struggles against anticolonialism and antiapartheid and antiracism movements found alliance in anticapitalism and international solidarity efforts. As direct threats to capitalism and the power of the state, these instances of revolution were often criminalized at the scale of individuals.¹⁰ Second, the economic boom attributed to governmental restructuring around World War II known as “The Golden Age of Capitalism” came to an end. This era created wealth and bolstered the economy, drew in the South and West through infrastructure, development, and population, and brought into fruition government welfare programs created out of the Great Depression, but as the 1960s ended, the economy stagnated and the social welfare safety net began to disappear.¹¹ The ramifications of the end of this era for the ordinary U.S. citizen, especially for those in the working class, laid the groundwork for the PIC. The Golden Age ushered in gains for the working class in areas such as workplace safety and wages and the state managed to quell worker hostility. However, at the end of the 1960s, a socioeconomic and political hierarchy became more pronounced, meaning that a higher standard of living, wealth, and capital became more stratified. Mostly whites, men, and industrial workers in urban areas benefited from this structuring while many people of color,

¹⁰ Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 24.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

women, and domestic, rural, and agricultural workers were left disenfranchised.¹² In sum, the real possibility of revolution against the state, the stagnation and immobility of wealth and capital, and social stratification constituted a social, political, and economic crisis.¹³

The end of the economic boom and wealth generated by World War II, coupled with the disintegration of social safety nets, the possibility of revolution, and growing socioeconomic stratification of the population, constituted a crisis in which “people, land, capital, and state capacity” became “surplus”.¹⁴ In other words, people went out of work or found themselves left out of the market economy, land used for producing goods went out of commission, capital became immobilized, and the state was tasked with the delicate balancing act of reenergizing the economy while also maintaining public support despite the growing inequalities brought on by this new age of capitalism. Within the context of capitalism, “ups and downs” are to be expected, but when the “down” is too great, it culminates in crisis, just as in this instance. The interesting thing about crisis, however, is that it creates the opportunity for new ways of offsetting the social, political, and economic problems it entails. In the context of the late 1960s, crisis created the opportunity for the prison to flourish and criminalization and incarceration to meet the challenges exacerbated by it.¹⁵ It is important to note that this specific crisis did not automatically dictate that prison expansion and mass incarceration would be its “fix”. When we speculate about all the possible trajectories this crisis could have initiated, including less reliance on prisons, the rise of the PIC is truly a phenomenon especially considering crime rates began to fall during this time.¹⁶

¹² Ibid., 25-26.

¹³ Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*, 26.

¹⁴ Ibid., 26-27.

¹⁵ Ibid., 54-57.

¹⁶ Ibid., 86.

Prison expansion and incarceration rates have grown in the wake of a decades long trend of decreasing crime rates. The way in which the PIC thrives and permeates all of society in the face of falling crime rates is “unparalleled in world history”.¹⁷ Scholarship illuminates the ways in which discourses on perceived crime contribute to the growth and sustainability of the PIC. During the 1970s, the public fear of crime rose as crime rates began to fall, aiding in the rise of and public complicity in prison expansion and mass incarceration. This public fear of crime has carried through to the present, although crime rates have continued to fall. The ever-intensifying public fear of crime drives policy concerning punishment, as policy is laden with emotions like anger, anxiety, and a sense of revenge instead of justice and democracy.¹⁸ Regarding the fear of crime, David Garland argues that during the 1970s, we started to think of crime differently. Crime became broadly a “major social problem” that was to be feared because it threatened all of society. The fear generated by this shift in thinking about crime compelled law and policy to address this fear and not actual crime.¹⁹ Garland goes on to say that the fear of crime has created an image of who deserves punishment in public opinion. Prior to this shift in thinking, those who committed crimes were thought of as destitute or in need of help. However, during the 1970s, as the fear of crime rose and policy began to pander to that fear, perpetrators of crime took on stereotypical characteristics. Those who committed crimes were now seen as incurable, threats to society in need of eradication.²⁰

¹⁷ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press, 2012), 8.

¹⁸ David Garland, *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 10-11.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Katherine Beckett ties the reconfiguration of crime in the public imagination to social and political shifts in the 1960s.²¹ Beckett argues that the fear of crime produces a delineation of its targets; it names certain groups over others as the incurable threats to society. In identifying one way in which the fear of crime targets certain groups over others, Beckett writes that adherence to strong beliefs in “law and order” tend to coincide with “racially and socially conservative views”.²² Of interest in her research, is how Southern discourses concerning fear of crime and a longing for law and order contributed to the modern racially disproportionate penal apparatus of today. In the wake of the Civil Rights Movement, the Republican party leveraged racial anxieties of Southern whites to gain support for policies that would eventually lead to the PIC. In fact, political strategists admitted that purposefully playing on racial anxieties was a part of the Republican Party’s plan to gain a large majority of support from the South in what is known as the “Southern Strategy”.²³ This boost in political support for conservatives propped by racism became a driving force of the New Right at the time, which worked against legislation and state support and sanctioned programs that were intended to alleviate racism, class disparities, and gender inequality. In their place, they pushed a rhetoric of law and order to crack down on perceived incurable threats to society. The reconfiguration of crime as something to be feared, the political discourse of law and order, and deep-seeded racial anxieties, along with class and gender biases laid the foundation for the justification of the punishment, incarceration, and incapacitation of some groups over others.²⁴

²¹ Katherine Beckett, *Making Crime Pay: Law and Order in Contemporary American Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 5.

²² Beckett, *Making Crime Pay*, 5.

²³ *Ibid.*, 41.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

Punishment, incarceration, and incapacitation have become effective answers to social, political, and economic issues that are interpreted along the lines of race, class, gender, and immigration, among others.²⁵ The efficacy of the penal apparatus lies in the expansion of what gets defined as criminal. Social, political, and economic conditions are understood as threats to society are often and increasingly labeled as criminal. Conditions such as drug addiction or undocumented immigration get pushed under the ever-growing umbrella of criminalization. As more conditions become criminalized and thus punishable, the more people, whose actions are a result of social, political, and economic realities, are drawn into the penal apparatus.²⁶

Urban Scholarship: Focus, Issues, and Solutions in Police and Prison Studies

Currently, scholars of prison and police disproportionately focus on policing and incarceration in urban settings. These scholars tackle subjects such as police violence and mass incarceration, to which they propose solutions. Although my study is about rural settings, this scholarship is relevant because it helps to situate rural and suburban areas within the larger context.

Major urban epicenters, such as New York City and Los Angeles, are highly visible in the field of police and prison studies. The increased attention to police violence in the 2010s brings cities, such as Baltimore on the Northeast coast, to the foreground of scholarship. With the increased visibility of police violence in the 2010s, much attention has been paid to cities on the Northeast coast such as Baltimore and New York City, and occasionally in the Midwest such as Ferguson, Missouri.²⁷ The West coast, especially the state of California, is a popular setting for research on incarceration due to its ongoing prison expansion and growing prison population that

²⁵ Loyd, "Race, Capitalist Crisis, and Abolitionist Organizing," 42-43.

²⁶ Loyd, "Race, Capitalist Crisis, and Abolitionist Organizing," 43.

²⁷ Jordan T. Camp and Christina Heatherton, eds., *Policing the Planet: Why the Policing Crisis Led to Black Lives Matter* (London; New York: Verso, 2016), 7.

dates back to the early 1980s.²⁸ With such a heavy focus on urban areas in the Northeast and on the West Coast, research in police and prison studies lacks not only attention to suburban and rural areas, but to the Southern region of the U.S. as well.

Police and prison studies have focused on theories of policing used in urban settings that speak to the crisis in which certain groups are more frequently and violently policed than others.²⁹ For example, scholarship has recently focused on Broken Windows Policing, a practice of policing that works on the assumption that serious violent crimes like rape and homicide are preventable if small crimes, ranging from jaywalking to selling loose cigarettes, are aggressively policed.³⁰ However, this theory of policing disproportionately targets people of color, immigrants, and the homeless for police violence and hyper-surveillance.³¹ The largest number of studies on this subject concern urban settings such as Baltimore and Chicago, with a special emphasis on New York City. While this work strengthens conversations of racism, police and state violence, and resistance, police and prison studies must also mind settings other than the urban.³² As Andrea Boyles argues in her important work on suburban policing argues, including rural areas and suburbs in scholarship will broaden our understanding of how the relationship between policing and race play out across the U.S.³³ The disproportionate focus on urban areas promotes assumptions about policing and notions like race that may not hold true in other places. For example, a heavy urban focus might imply that race is unimportant in other areas and in turn masks issues of police violence that occur elsewhere. In addition, it reinforces the idea that urban

²⁸ Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*, 7.

²⁹ Camp and Heatherton, *Policing the Planet*, 7.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

³² *Ibid.*, 7.

³³ Andrea S. Boyles, *Race, Place, and Suburban Policing: Too Close for Comfort* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2015), 10.

areas are the only places worth studying and that the consequences of enacting practices such as Broken Windows Policing are only specific to urban areas.³⁴

While research on mass incarceration in police and prison studies does address settings beyond urban space, scholars tend to approach rural settings as sites of prison expansion and overlook how policing and incarceration happen in these locales. For example, scholars such as Ruth Wilson Gilmore explore the ease in which the state can take advantage of rural land surpluses and rural citizens' desire for jobs, infrastructure, and economic growth by siting prisons in these areas.³⁵ With an emphasis on the policing and incarceration of urbanites as a reason for prison expansion into rural areas, this angle overlooks the ways in which policing and incarceration play out in rural settings.³⁶ However, it is important to see that scholarship like Gilmore's illuminates social, political, and economic connections between urban and rural areas that must be better understood so that we do not run the risk of collapsing the urban and the rural.

Scholars of police and prison studies also propose solutions to police violence and mass incarceration. However, since most scholars focus their attention on urban settings, solutions to and organizing around these issues may need to be more inclusive of suburban and rural dynamics. One solution to police violence often cited by scholars is more accountability to the public by police. This solution involves instituting Civilian Review Boards in which citizens monitor the actions of the police in their own community.³⁷ In theory, Civilian Review Boards disrupt the power imbalance between the public and police and offer alleviation from police violence, misconduct, and abuse of power. However, to be effective, Civilian Review Boards

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*, 104.

³⁶ Boyles, *Race, Place, and Suburban Policing*, 75.

³⁷ Steven Kelly Herbert, *Citizens, Cops, and Power: Recognizing the Limits of Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 139.

must rise to the challenge of being representative of the community being policed. Such boards run the risk of reproducing police violence if they simply reflect the social, political, and economic inequality of the community that dictates who is policed more harshly than others³⁸. The way in which Civil Review Boards and other forms of public accountability can be inclusive and representative of the community might be to challenge state policies that value certain citizens' input over others.³⁹ While the idea of police accountability sounds promising, these solutions are largely born out of urban contexts and do not take into consideration how they could be instituted in suburban and rural contexts.

Another solution scholars pose is police and prison abolition. Police and prison abolition is not simply doing away with police and prisons, but entails a complete restructuring of society and reconceptualization of the popular notion that punishment means justice is served.⁴⁰ This restructuring of society calls for building new institutions of public education, healthcare, and justice that are inclusive, accessible to everyone, and “based on reparation and reconciliation rather than retribution and vengeance”.⁴¹ Angela Y. Davis proposes that one way in which to begin the process of police and prison abolition is to create new ways of treating drug use. Davis argues that as it stands, the criminalization of drugs disproportionately targets people of color and that decriminalization of drug use in conjunction with new, accessible, and local health care programs is one way to rely less on police and the prison system.⁴² However, with all the U.S. implied in the making of this new society it seems logical that expanding our knowledge of how specifically suburban and rural settings can contribute to this new society would be beneficial. It

³⁸ Don Mitchell, Kafui Attoh, and Lynn A. Staeheli, “‘Broken Windows Is Not the Panacea’: Common Sense, Good Sense, and Police Accountability in American Cities,” in *Policing the Planet: Why the Policing Crisis Led to Black Lives Matter*, eds. Jordan T. Camp and Christina Heatherton, (London; New York: Verso, 2016), 256-257.

³⁹ Herbert, *Citizens, Cops, and Power*, 143.

⁴⁰ Angela Y. Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), 107.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, 109.

is also equally important to know about the special challenges rural and suburban areas face to be able to implement new education, healthcare, and justice programs in specific locations that address the needs of those communities.

Suburban and Rural Scholarship: Opportunities for Police and Prison Studies

With a heavy focus on urban areas, police and prison studies scholarship has been slow to pose questions about how policing and incarceration happen in suburban and rural settings. A considerable gap in the research on suburban and rural settings is the product of neglecting to realize the complexity of these places and their connections to urban space. Suburban and rural settings are often overlooked because of the assumption that urban culture has spread throughout the U.S. as an all-encompassing force that has engulfed the totality of the population regardless of where one lives or how densely or sparsely populated a setting may be. As Weisheit, Falcone and Wells argue, this assumption collapses any distinction between these settings and renders the suburban and rural less worthy of research because, as this line of thinking goes, whatever happens in urban settings also occurs in suburban and rural settings as well, just on a much smaller scale.⁴³ In addition, the weight given to the association between high crime rates and urban settings by police and prison studies strips suburban and rural areas of their significance and downplays their complexity.⁴⁴

Donnermeyer, who also studies rural criminology, argues that the fact that suburban and rural areas contain smaller numbers of people and are much less densely populated than their urban counterparts does not mean they are any less significant.⁴⁵ More people live in suburbs

⁴³ Ralph A. Weisheit, David N. Falcone, and L. Edward Wells, *Crime and Policing in Rural and Small-Town America*, (Long Grove, Ill: Waveland Press, 2006), 2.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Joseph F. Donnermeyer, "Rural Crime and Critical Criminology," in *The Routledge International Handbook of Rural Criminology*, eds. Walter S. DeKeseredy and Molly Dragiewicz (London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 292.

than anywhere else in the U.S. Moving from the city to the suburbs has been an ongoing trend since 1950.⁴⁶ The population and area of the rural United States, in aggregate, is remarkable. Three fourths of the area of the U.S. is rural land and over 50 million people dwell in these areas.⁴⁷ Considering the number of people who call rural areas or suburbs home, it is staggering to consider the gap existing in police and prison scholarship. In the context of population size, it is also worth noting that rural areas tend to adhere to different styles of social organization, norms, and ways of controlling behavior than are seen elsewhere.⁴⁸ These dynamics, which are important to police and prison scholarship, run the risk of going unnoticed when urban areas become the sole focus. Furthermore, the appeal and high population of suburbs warrant inquiry into how these areas connect to both urban and rural areas as well as the larger social, political, and economic context of the U.S.⁴⁹

Demographics such as race and socioeconomic class are often the focus of urban policing and prison studies, but largely go ignored outside of these settings. In the few empirical studies of suburban and rural police and prison studies, scholars propose that demographics such as race and socioeconomic class shape and are shaped by policing and incarceration in the suburbs and rural areas differently than in urban areas. For instance, in a study done in St. Louis, Missouri, Andrea S. Boyles contends that by only focusing on urban areas and assuming suburban areas are overwhelming white and lack racial diversity, scholars miss an entire realm of black experiences with policing in the U.S.⁵⁰ Boyles argues that assuming people of color and police

⁴⁶ Kevin Michael Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue, eds., *The New Suburban History: Historical Studies of Urban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 1.

⁴⁷ Kenneth M. Johnson, "Demographic Trends in Nonmetropolitan America: 2000 to 2010," in *Rural America in a Globalizing World: Problems and Prospects for the 2010s*, eds. Conner Bailey, Leif Jensen, and Elizabeth Ransom (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2014), 311.

⁴⁸ Donnermeyer, "Rural Crime," 292.

⁴⁹ Kruse and Sugrue, *The New Suburban History*, 1-2.

⁵⁰ Boyles, *Race, Place, and Suburban Policing*, 27.

have the same types of relationships in suburban areas as they do in urban areas ignores the significance and complexity of those relationships in the suburbs. Failing to pay attention to the specific dynamics of suburban areas potentially masks the experiences of people of color have with the police. Boyles's work has gained increasing relevance given the centrality of the St. Louis, MO suburb Ferguson to the national conversation on policing in the wake of Michael Brown's death. Neglecting suburban areas may do more to further assumptions such as that people of color only have negative experiences with the police in urban cities when in fact, that is most likely not the case.⁵¹ Kevin Michael Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue build upon the importance of recognizing race in the suburbs and argue that the interplay of socioeconomic status and race in the suburbs have social, economic, and political ramifications that factor into the larger context of the United States. Geographically, socioeconomic status and race in suburban areas are implicated in where and how people are bound together or separated, where the government distributes resources, and where wealth and capital become concentrated.⁵²

The dynamics of race and socioeconomic status in rural settings also warrant the need for more scholarship in this area. Many rural settings are poor and predominantly white, a racial and socioeconomic dynamic that signals a new facet of study in police and prison studies. Rural places are often immersed in a single industry, such as poultry processing, that underpins the area's economy.⁵³ In addition, rural areas vary greatly from each other in regard to how they experience economic growth and decline. Just because one rural area is experiencing economic growth or decline does not mean every rural area in the U.S. is having that same experience. Each rural area in the US offers a unique opportunity to understand how complex local, social,

⁵¹ Boyles, *Race, Place, and Suburban Policing*, 10.

⁵² Kruse and Sugrue, *The New Suburban History*, 2.

⁵³ Weisheit, Falcone, and Wells, *Crime and Policing*, " 31; William Campbell Garriott, *Policing Methamphetamine: Narcopolitics in Rural America* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 12-13.

political, and economic dynamics shape and are shaped by policing and incarceration, and how these rural and suburban locales are situated within the larger social, political, and economic context of the US.⁵⁴

There are also realities specific to suburban and rural settings that go unnoticed in current scholarship, such as how illicit drugs shape the politics surrounding policing and incarceration in those areas. William Garriot's work on policing methamphetamine in West Virginia indicates that all too often illicit drug use and the politics surrounding it in rural places are neglected in scholarship because it is assumed that issues such as addiction and crime are specific to urban settings.⁵⁵ It is important to study these issues in relation to setting because when they are left out, we ignore how the politics surrounding drug use and addiction in suburban and rural areas are actually a part of the larger project of state organization around social control, policing, and criminalization.⁵⁶ The gap in literature on suburban and rural settings in police and prison studies needs to be filled with research that takes social, political, and economic dynamics into account, so as not to run the risk of perpetuating the application of urban scholarship to these settings.

Structural and Cultural Factors that Inform Policing in Practice

Within police and prison studies, scholarship also hones in on policing agencies and police officers to explore how political and social structures may inform policing in practice. It is useful to understand the ways in which police agencies and police officers are influenced by political and social forces because these forces may be contextual to place. The political structure within a police agency and general police culture influence the way police agencies and police officers carry out their functions and police their locales.

⁵⁴ Weisheit, Falcone, and Wells, *Crime and Policing*, " 31.

⁵⁵ Garriott, *Policing Methamphetamine*, 7.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

The political structure within police agencies generally takes on one of two forms: the municipal police department or that of a county sheriff's office. There are significant distinctions between these two political structures that affect policing. First, municipal police departments are usually the realm of urban and suburban areas. Sheriff's offices may also overlap into these areas, but in rural settings, it is sheriff's offices that provide the same services as municipal police would in addition to their duties of serving warrants and other court issuances.⁵⁷ Another major difference between municipal police departments and sheriff's offices is that most police departments are led by an appointed chief, whereas sheriffs are elected officials. It is thought that as elected officials, sheriffs are more scrutinized by the public, and that the threat of being voted out of office should in theory keep them more accountable to their constituents.⁵⁸ The role of sheriff's offices in rural areas is also significant because of the potential reach of their power. Sheriff's offices often have more resources than rural municipalities and oversee, support, and intervene in smaller agencies when needed.⁵⁹ It is worth noting that the rural should be a focus in police and prison studies because often, the power and reach of the sheriff elevates them to one of the highest ranking and powerful law enforcement positions in the state.⁶⁰

An agency's internal police culture also plays a role in how policing manifests in a place. Scholars often foreground gender as one of the most prominent facets of police culture. Susan L. Miller and Emily Bonistall argue that "law enforcement remains one of the most male-dominated and masculine occupations".⁶¹ Masculine gender role expectations affect both police officers and

⁵⁷ Weisheit, Falcone, and Wells, "*Crime and Policing*," 118-119.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁶¹ Susan L. Miller and Emily Bonistall, "Gender and Policing: Critical Issues and Analyses," in *Routledge Handbook of Critical Criminology*, eds. Walter S. DeKeseredy and Molly Dragiewicz (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2012), 316.

how the public react to them.⁶² In this way, a masculinized culture plays into “the coercive authority of the police”.⁶³ The normalization and even promotion of hyper-masculinity in police officers works to divide them from the communities in which they work. They argue that this means that community policing, a strategy in which police work closely with the community to stave off crime includes functions that are dismissed as women’s work and “not matters for the strong, masculinist, adventuresome officer”.⁶⁴ This type of emphasis on masculinity can drive police officers to seek confrontations with people they perceive as dangerous threats to reinforce and display this form of hyper-masculine power.⁶⁵ This mode of thinking and behaving is dangerous because it targets mostly people who are not actually threatening and thus contributes to a breakdown in trust between people and police.⁶⁶ The interaction between people and police, which includes trust, who is policed and who is not, and in what ways, as well as the ability to hold police accountable or cultivate collective action against policing hinges on the understanding of the notion of community.

Community

The notion of community is important when studying how policing and incarceration happen in a specific place. How scholars define community provides a foundation upon which we can start to think about the interaction between various communities and the police and the criminal justice system. In scholarly discussions, the importance of how we think about the notion of community, and the lengths and limits of this notion, take a prominent role in

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Herbert, *Citizens, Cops, and Power*, 97.

⁶⁴ Herbert, *Citizens, Cops, and Power*, 97.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 98.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 99.

untangling the forces at play in how people and places are policed and to what extent policing can be changed or even abolished.

In a general sense, community can be defined as an entity that is bounded by space or the multiple spaces in which we traverse and interact with others.⁶⁷ Steve Herbert argues that “community” is often thought of with as much esteem as we give the “God word in American discourse”.⁶⁸ In other words, public imagination regards the notion of community so highly that it has come to signify the epitome of unity and social order.⁶⁹ The ideal notion of community in the public mind conflates perceived unity and social order with high levels of morality. In this vein, immorality begets disunity and social disorder, and can only be redeemed by a return to a time in which community was highly valued. However, this time never existed. This imagined moral, unified, and orderly community becomes the standard in which society measures and reinforces its values.⁷⁰

Herbert argues that subscribing to idealized forms of community is dangerous, because real community dynamics complicate the idea that communities can unify over issues that directly affect them. Most people are only interested in forming superficial ties with those around them. People often yearn for the unity an ideal community could give them, but only care enough to forge as minimal bonds as possible with those around them just to ensure their own safety and security.⁷¹ Within communities there exist high levels of individualism, difference, fear that promotes separation over cohesion, and impermanence. This understanding of community explains why collective action is challenging and close to impossible.⁷²

⁶⁷ Ibid., 12-13.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁶⁹ Herbert, *Citizens, Cops, and Power*, 3, 23-24.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 24.

⁷¹ Ibid., 37.

⁷² Ibid., 40-41.

One reason why collective action is challenging is because individualism and the “valorization” of such makes it so that people do not get involved with their communities.⁷³ In addition, linguistic and cultural differences within a community are hard to overcome and can be “sources of ongoing tension”.⁷⁴ Second, fear of personal danger out of retribution for calling out crime in one’s community hinders cohesion and participation in collective action.⁷⁵ Herbert’s explanation of transience, or impermanence, illuminates a relationship between property ownership and membership in a community.

In Herbert’s assessment, transience is the opposite of the permanence afforded by property ownership. Those who are transient are usually people in a community that rent property and are viewed as the opposite of homeowners who are endowed with community values of “permanence, pride, and care”.⁷⁶ When it comes to concerns for safety and security, renters are seen in terms of their impermanence, and therefore subsequent lack of care and pride, and become of no importance to discussions of safety and security.⁷⁷ In his study on community-police relations in Seattle, Herbert found that the ways in which renters were seen as transient persons with no sense of care or pride excluded them from programs in which police worked with or were held accountable to the public.⁷⁸ In addition, renters often internalized these notions and accept their exclusion.⁷⁹

Herbert concludes that community, specifically urban Seattle, is “unbearably light”.⁸⁰ By this he means that incongruence between idealized notions of community and how community

⁷³ Ibid., 41-45.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 45-49.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 52-55.

⁷⁶ Herbert, *Citizens, Cops, and Power*, 49.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 50.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 50-51.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 148.

works in reality is too great and thus communities are not capable of the type of collective action they idealize.⁸¹ In the public's mind, the word "community" stands for the possibility of "communal togetherness" in which everyone in the community participates in communal wellbeing, however, what happens in reality is that people only care enough to know that they are safe and that their neighbors are predictable and can superficially be relied on.⁸² What this means for community involvement in issues of policing and incarceration is that community "cannot bear the political weight of projects like community policing, its voice is not loudly heard by state agencies like the police".⁸³ Although Herbert argues that there are limits to community political action, he does say that the notion of community should not be disregarded in the future. On the contrary, Herbert suggests that political action that invokes the notion of community must recognize the challenges urban areas face in terms of the social, political and economic issues that do more to divide people than bring them together.⁸⁴ This can also be said of suburban and rural areas. However, more scholarship is needed on these settings to understand how the notion of community and its challenges work for or against cohesion and collective action.

As we will see in the case of Forsyth County, Georgia, residents sporadically and superficially come together to combat what they perceive as rising crime in their community. In addition, whatever actions they do take result in an increase of surveillance and policing in Forsyth. How residents have come to believe crime is on the rise, as well how race and place accompany those perceptions, drives the ways in which the county is policed in specific ways.

⁸¹ Ibid., 135.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Herbert, *Citizens, Cops, and Power*, 136.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 147.

An analysis of Forsyth's history reveals how residents have come to perceive of crime and how those perceptions translate into policing outcomes today.

Chapter 1: The History of Forsyth County

Becoming a Sundown Town in 1912

A complete history of Forsyth County compels us to reveal the county's racial past. 1912 marks a pivotal year in the county's history as all 1,098 African Americans were purposely driven out. For 75 years, no black people would live in Forsyth County.⁸⁵ The events surrounding 1912 set the county on a social, economic, and political trajectory that resulted in the county racially segregating itself for many years.

On September 7, 1912, two black men were accused of breaking into a home and assaulting a young white woman in her bedroom. Tensions between the black and white communities in the county grew as a black pastor spoke out against the charges imposed on the black men. The pastor was “‘horsewhipped’ almost to death by an angry crowd...and placed in the courthouse vault for his own safety,” as the local historical society claims.⁸⁶ Two days later, on September 9th, a white woman was beaten and raped and later died from the attack.⁸⁷ White mobs raided the county looking for suspects. Many black families hid inside their homes or moved out of the county.⁸⁸ Reports vary, but up to 10 black men and one black woman were held as suspects for the rape and murder. Many of the suspects were placed in jails in neighboring Cobb County and Atlanta to keep them safe from the mobs.⁸⁹ One day after the rape occurred, a

⁸⁵ Phillips, *Blood at the Root*, xii-xiii.

⁸⁶ Bramblett, *Forsyth County: History Stories*, 143.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Mike Christensen, “In Fall of 1912, All the Blacks Were Driven out of Forsyth,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, January 20, 1987.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

white mob stormed the county jail, beat and took one of the suspects, and hung him from a telegraph pole in the square.⁹⁰ A few weeks after, two men were tried and convicted of the rape and murder. The trial was of such interest in the community, that the military was called in to encircle the courthouse. The men were sentenced to hang on October 24, 1912. The hangings were to take place on a local resident's land and out of view from the public. A barricade was put up to block the view of the gallows to conceal the hangings. The night before the scheduled executions, a white mob burned down the barricade, and the two men were hung in front of 10,000 spectators.⁹¹

During this time, white mobs began to violently force the black residents of the county to leave.⁹² Black people who had not left during the initial raids, were met with “written notices...placed in mailboxes, on trees, and thrown on doorsteps” telling them they must leave the county.⁹³ The county's historical society claims that “decades-old rumors to the contrary, each and every parcel of land was sold, with the proceeds going to the African-American owners. All of these individuals may not have received ‘fair market value’ for their property, but deed records in the Forsyth County courthouse indicate that the land was sold and deeds recorded in a legal manner”.⁹⁴ However, there are instances that directly contradict this argument. The son of a black tenant farmer, who was forced to leave with his family in 1912, remembers, “They come around and gave us all notice we had to be out by a certain time or they was gonna burn us out”.⁹⁵ The man's father was one payment short of fully owning his 40-acre farm when they were forced to leave in the middle of the night. The family left behind farm

⁹⁰ Mike Christensen, “In Fall of 1912”.

⁹¹ Bramblett, *Forsyth County: History Stories*, 145; Christensen, “In Fall of 1912”.

⁹² Phillips, *Blood at the Root*, xii.

⁹³ Bramblett, *Forsyth County: History Stories*, 146.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Christensen, “In Fall of 1912”.

animals and crops of corn and cotton. The family was never compensated for the farm, home, and animals they left behind.⁹⁶

In 1987, the county would come to be known as all-white and unwelcoming to African Americans through the national media. Interestingly, African American expulsion during the early part of the 20th century was not exclusive to Forsyth County. In fact, five “adjacent counties in north Georgia expelled their African Americans about when Forsyth did” and the area become home to many sundown towns.⁹⁷ As James W. Loewen explains, “a sundown town is any organized jurisdiction that for decades kept African Americans or other groups from living in it and was thus ‘all-white’ on purpose”.⁹⁸ After the expulsion of the entire African American population in 1912, Forsyth County experienced shifts in its political economy that would lay the foundation for it to grow in terms of wealth, population, and infrastructure, all while hardening the line of racial segregation.

1832-1850s and The Poultry Industry

In December 1832, the state of Georgia established nine counties in north Georgia, including Forsyth County.⁹⁹ To create these nine counties, the state government did not simply divide up tracts of untouched land. On the contrary, the demarcation of these nine counties overlaid Cherokee Nation lands.¹⁰⁰ The promise of wealth from recently discovered goldmines attracted many settlers to the area. Between 1805 and 1832, “stolen Indian lands were surveyed into land lots. Citizens of the state, but not the native Indians, could then register for a lottery in which these lands would be raffled off”.¹⁰¹ It was the hope of many white settlers to find gold on

⁹⁶ Mike Christensen, “In Fall of 1912”.

⁹⁷ James W. Loewen, *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 178.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁹⁹ Bramblett, *Forsyth County: History Stories*, 230.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 18-25.

¹⁰¹ Williams, *The Georgia Gold Rush*, 47-48.

the land they won from the lotteries.¹⁰² All the while, the state and federal government worked on pushing the Native Americans further west, in their search to take over their lands. In 1835, the Georgia state legislature and the Cherokee Nations signed the Treaty of New Echota, legally removing Native Americans from north Georgia and relocating them west. Backed at the federal level by President Andrew Jackson, the state took over all Native American lands in Georgia on May 24, 1838. Some Native Americans in Forsyth County were violently removed, “A few had already migrated. Some who possessed skills of particular value to their communities were allowed to stay, as well as others whose intermarriage among the whites had produced citizens socially acceptable in the newly-converted white man’s territory”.¹⁰³ Gold in the area spurred the immigration of many European settlers that had mined other places in Europe and South America. Among those who came to the area hailed from “Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, Spain, England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales”.¹⁰⁴ However, Forsyth County did not prove to be a lucrative spot for goldmining compared to surrounding counties.¹⁰⁵ After the excitement over potential gold faded, many turned to farming tobacco and later cotton, well into the 20th century and up until the end of World War II, when the county’s economy would shift its focus to the poultry industry.¹⁰⁶

By 1944, the county had its first chicken processing plant, capable of processing 15,000 chickens a day. The plant provided locals in the county with jobs and farmers a means to sell their chickens locally.¹⁰⁷ As one state representative remarked in 1947, over half of all the

¹⁰² Williams, *The Georgia Gold Rush*, 48.

¹⁰³ Bramblett, *Forsyth County: History Stories*, 22-25.

¹⁰⁴ Williams, *The Georgia Gold Rush*, 88.

¹⁰⁵ Bagley, *History of Forsyth County, Georgia*, 279-290.

¹⁰⁶ Cauley, “NEIGHBORHOOD OF THE WEEK”.

¹⁰⁷ Annette Bramblett and George P. Ingram, *The First Era of Change and Development: Forsyth County, Georgia, 1935-1975* (Virginia Beach, Virginia: Donning Co. Publishers, 2007), 56-58.

farmers in the county were in some way a part of the poultry industry.¹⁰⁸ The poultry industry boomed in the latter part of the 1950s and into the late 1960s due in part from the entrepreneurship of George L. Cagle. Cagle built 20 chicken houses in the county on the land of local families. The families worked the chicken houses and would evenly split the profits with Barkley when they sold the mature chickens to the processing plant. The venture proved lucrative for Cagle and the locals, as 225,000 chickens were lodged between the 20 houses at any given time with chickens reaching maturity within 15 weeks.¹⁰⁹ The poultry industry also included hatcheries and feed milling on a small scale, until “major milling companies” came in and forced the local feed mills to close.¹¹⁰ As early as 1947, the historical society reports that chicken farmers began to incorporate their businesses, sometimes forming partnerships with other local farmers. A few of these established businesses tended to all aspects of the poultry industry, not only processing. For instance, some entities sold hatchlings, feed, and chicken house equipment.¹¹¹ The introduction of widespread electricity into the county bolstered the poultry industry. By 1949, farmers began using electricity to heat their chicken houses. Electric heating meant that farmers could rely on a consistent and constant heat source, ensuring the survival of their chickens especially through the night, whereas other heat sources would burn out and need to be refueled.¹¹² The livelihood of many people in the county depended on the poultry industry. In fact, people would use every space available to them to raise chickens, often placing them on their front porches and bringing them inside their homes to keep warm.¹¹³ By 1980, the plant would process 100,000 chickens a day and employ more than 400 people.¹¹⁴ As

¹⁰⁸ Bramblett and Ingram, *The First Era of Change*, 62-63.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 59.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 63-64.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 64-65.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 58.

the poultry industry gained momentum, the economy would undergo another significant shift to include recreation and real estate as the 1950s saw the construction of a local dam and man-made lake.

Dam and Lake Construction: 1950s

The construction of Buford Dam and Lake Lanier in Forsyth County marks a shift from a mainly agricultural economy to one based on recreation and real estate. The planning for the dam and lake began in 1947, and the project was solidified by the Federal River and Harbor and Flood Control Appropriations Bill of 1949, which allotted federal funds to begin construction.¹¹⁵ Construction began in 1950 and was completed in 1957.¹¹⁶ The purpose of the dam and lake was to “develop [surrounding] rivers for flood control, navigation, hydro power, water regulation and supply, and recreation”.¹¹⁷ The lake spans over “38,000 acres of surface water” and boasts as “one of the most heavily visited lakes built and operated by the United States Army Corps of Engineers” with over 20 million visitors a year.¹¹⁸ Since its construction, Lake Lanier has created a space in which businesses dealing in boating and fishing have flourished.¹¹⁹ In 1960, the project had cost approximately \$44.8 million.¹²⁰ The construction of the dam and lake changed economic and social dynamics in the county.

The project required the government to purchase about 56,000 acres of private land.¹²¹ The government bought land piece by piece as construction expanded. The process of buying land was long, as the official start date of the project was March 1950 and the first piece of land

¹¹⁵ Bramblett and Ingram, *The First Era of Change*, 148; Robert David Coughlin, *Lake Sidney Lanier: A Storybook Site: The Early History and Construction of Buford Dam* (Atlanta, Ga: RDC Productions, 1998), 48.

¹¹⁶ Bramblett and Ingram, *The First Era of Change*, 148-151.

¹¹⁷ Coughlin, *Lake Sidney Lanier*, 2.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 58.

was not bought until Spring of 1954.¹²² The first person to sell his property was an 81-year-old man who sold 100 acres for \$4,100.¹²³ Many people did not like the idea of selling their land to the government for the project. People had many personal reasons for not wanting to do so, including feeling that “the government did not have the right to ask them to pull up stakes and start all over again” as well as “many felt it was impossible to put a price tag on years of work, memories, and everyday living and dying that had taken place on their land”.¹²⁴ Further illuminating the complex ties people had to their land was that families were not as nuclear as they are today; many families in the county consisted of multiple generations and extended relatives occupying single properties.¹²⁵ In all, 700 families would need to give up their land for the project.¹²⁶

The government appraised and paid people for their land, but it proved to be a difficult endeavor. Early on during construction, the government exercised “Eminent Domain”, the process by which the government “acquire[s] private land for public use”.¹²⁷ For the dam and lake project, the government declared Eminent Domain over 444 acres of private land, prompting a series of court cases to determine how much those affected could be compensated.¹²⁸ The rest of the land acquisitions went through a series of individual sales, some of which were litigated in court when owners believed they were not being compensated enough. In addition, the government used residents to appraise the land, assuming people would be more likely to settle for their offers if their land had been appraised by someone they knew.¹²⁹ In a

¹²² Coughlin, *Lake Sidney Lanier*, 58.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 58-59.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 58-59.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 62-63.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 62-63.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 64-67.

locally published book about Lake Lanier, Robert David Coughlin describes the local appraisers as “human and the manner in which they approached the property owner often times determined how smooth the appraisal process went”.¹³⁰ This raises the question of people being fairly compensated for their land. In one instance, a woman was paid \$39.58 an acre for her land, which consisted of a small farm and wooded area on 63.8 acres and a nearby man who was compensated \$159.30 an acre for his 73.74 acres of land that was mostly uneven and woods without a farm.¹³¹ The question also arises to fair appraisal and compensation, as many of the court litigations over land involved discrepancies of tens of thousands of dollars. People might have been less likely to question the appraisals if they did not know how or have the money to appeal. In some instances, the courts awarded many thousands of dollars more than the initial appraisals. In one case, an appraisal of \$31,000 was increased to \$42,397, while another that was initially appraised at \$14,000 was awarded \$22,410.¹³²

As the 1950s ended and the construction of Buford Dam and Lake Lanier completed, thousands of acres of agricultural land had gone out of commission and real estate began to become a part of the county’s economy. Real estate developers began to build private homes around the lake while it was under construction. By the end of 1956, most of the land surrounding the lake was private residential and not owned by the Army Corps of Engineers.¹³³ The local newspaper began to advertise lake homes.¹³⁴

With the recreation and lakefront property afforded by Lake Lanier, the county became the place to go to for many whites wishing to escape urbanization. Up until the 1980s, Forsyth

¹³⁰ Coughlin, *Lake Sidney Lanier*, 64-67.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 290.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 64-67.

¹³³ Bramblett and Ingram, *The First Era of Change*, 163, 166-167.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 164.

County quietly maintained its racial segregation from the outside world until it was suddenly thrust into the national spotlight when two civil rights marches took place in the county in January of 1987.¹³⁵

Racial Segregation Exposed: The Brotherhood Marches of 1987

In January 1987, two civil rights demonstrations, known as the Brotherhood Marches, took place in Forsyth County. The first march was planned by a local resident and small business owner who had moved from California five years prior. The goal of the march was to “show times and minds had changed” and to dispel the area’s reputation as “anti-black”.¹³⁶ However, the resident received death threats and decided to call off the march. By 1987, Forsyth County had undergone many changes. The decade of the 1970s brought with it a population increase of 65%. The population was about 38,000 people in 1987, an increase of a little over 10,000 since 1980. Locals seemed surprised that the issue of race was becoming a topic of interest. As a local bank president said, “I think the [area is] getting the blame for what a few people did. Don’t blame [us] for that few.” He went on to say that, “I don’t see how we could avoid it if we wanted to. Growth is going to come. With change, the mix of minorities will come eventually”.¹³⁷ After the march was cancelled, another local small business owner decided to go ahead with the march, and this time to include the theme of “anti-intimidation” in response to the death threats to the original planner.¹³⁸ As planning went underway, the Klu Klux Klan made their own plans to “keep an eye on the marchers” and flier [the area] with Klan materials.¹³⁹ The county sheriff told *Atlanta Journal Constitution* reporters he was uncertain about what to expect during the

¹³⁵ Bramblett, *Forsyth County: History Stories*, 148.

¹³⁶ Joe Earle, “Forsyth ‘Walk’ Not an Idea Whose Time Has Come,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, January 14, 1987.

¹³⁷ Earle, “Forsyth ‘Walk’ Not an Idea Whose Time Has Come”; Charles Walston, “Klan Plans King Holiday Protest in Forsyth: But Appearance Won’t Stop ‘Anti-Intimidation’ March,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, January 15, 1987.

¹³⁸ Walston, “Klan Plans King Holiday Protest”.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

march. The sheriff said that he expected “most of the marchers probably would be [outsiders] and that the local sheriff’s office, State Police, and Georgia Bureau of Investigation would be there to “assist”.¹⁴⁰ It seemed that the Klan was indeed rallying people from outside North Georgia, as a local Klan official began organizing all over the Southeast. The organizer for the march was also organizing outside the area, inviting those who wished to gather offsite a few towns over from where the march would take place the day of.¹⁴¹

On January 16, 1987, a day before the first march was scheduled, Bill Ship, an editor of the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* wrote his opinions about the area and the planned march. Shipp speaks to the economic changes and sustainment of racial segregation. The editor says that “the place has been invaded by the Upwardly Mobiles” who “don’t get het up much about the Klu Klux Klan, except they wish the chaps in the sheets or camouflage fatigues or whatever costume they wear nowadays would just go away. All they do is hold down real-estate values and scare the kids”.¹⁴² On this day, local business and elected officials “held a news conference on the steps of the Forsyth County courthouse...to dispel what they feel is an unfair perception of Forsyth County as a haven for racism”.¹⁴³ The incoming president of the Forsyth Chamber of Commerce stated, “There exist small radical elements who would portray [us] as a lawless, racist anachronism. This simply is not so”.¹⁴⁴ The incoming president also feared any progress that had been made “could be set back a little”.¹⁴⁵ The *Atlanta Journal Constitution* also cited a local pastor as thinking the “racist image was underserved” as he stated, “I hear all of this stuff that

¹⁴⁰ Walston, “Klan Plans King Holiday Protest”.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Bill Shipp, “BMW Replaces KKK as Status Initials in Forsyth County,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, January 16, 1987.

¹⁴³ John Brady, “Forsyth Doesn’t Deserve ‘Lawless, Racist’ Image, County Officials Say,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, January 16, 1987.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

it's all-white and racist, but I haven't seen any of this".¹⁴⁶ To the claims of the Chamber of Commerce official and the pastor, the organizer of the march accused locals of being in denial and urged them "to face it [racism] straight on".¹⁴⁷ By this time, civil rights leaders from Atlanta began to take interest in the march. Joseph Lowery, the President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and Atlanta City Councilman Hosea Williams pledged their support of the march. Lowery is quoted as saying, "We'd be glad to join in on the march, [it] should prick the conscience of [the local] people".¹⁴⁸ Williams added, "[I] will see to it that there's a march in Forsyth County if I have to go up there myself".¹⁴⁹ Williams, who had worked with Martin Luther King, Jr. during the Civil Rights Movement, chartered a bus to bring marchers from Atlanta.¹⁵⁰

About 90 Brotherhood marchers attended the march on January 17th. They were met by 400 counterdemonstrators, some of which were members of the KKK. The counterdemonstrators "lined the parade route, shouting racial slurs".¹⁵¹ Violence erupted, and many of the marchers received cuts and bruises from bottles being thrown. Counterdemonstrators and KKK members held signs that read, "Go home, nigger!" and "Sickle Cell Anemia—The Great White Hope".¹⁵² 75 law enforcement officers from the GBI, State Police, and a local Sheriff's Office could not hold back the counterdemonstrators and KKK members. After marching about 3/4ths of a mile, the sheriff proposed that the marchers get back on their bus and drive about a mile farther down the road and pick up the march again. The marchers agreed, but about 50 counterdemonstrators

¹⁴⁶ Brady, "Forsyth Doesn't Deserve 'Lawless, Racist' Image".

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ John Brady, "Security Beefed up for March, Klan Demonstration in Forsyth," *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, January 17, 1987.

¹⁵¹ John Brady and Joe Earle, "Violent Protesters Disrupt Forsyth March: Klansmen Throw Bottles and Rocks at Demonstrators," *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, January 18, 1987.

¹⁵² Ibid.

and KKK members met up with them. The sheriff and GBI agents encircled the marchers as they began to march again. The sheriff was overheard by a reporter as saying, “Give me a helmet, we’re going to finish this damn march. There are about 50 demonstrators ahead and we’re going to let them finish their march if it costs us a head knocking”, a sentiment which would have been unlikely coming from a law enforcement official had it been some 20 years earlier.¹⁵³

After the march, the KKK led a rally at the Forsyth County courthouse. In attendance was an estimated 1,000 KKK members, sympathizers, and counterdemonstrators. The rally was addressed by notorious KKK leaders J.B. Stoner and Dave Holland. Stoner addressed the gatherers, who were giving Nazi salutes and chanting “White Power”, saying, “We won a great victory today”.¹⁵⁴ The *Atlanta Journal Constitution* observed “members of the group making racial jokes as curious local people looked on”.¹⁵⁵ Eight people were arrested during the march and rally, all of them counterdemonstrators. They were charged with varying crimes, including disorderly conduct, trespassing, and carrying concealed weapons.¹⁵⁶ Hosea Williams “vowed to return” to the county, saying, “This is not the end of marching [here]”.¹⁵⁷

Two days after the march, the demonstration’s local organizer told the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* that he would like to plan another march. He told the newspaper, “I’m going back. I still haven’t made my statement. There’s a lot of good people [here] who are being hampered by this (*sic*) kind of threats and intimidation”.¹⁵⁸ In this particular account by the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* dated January 19, 1987, elected officials and locals voiced their opinions of the march. Their remarks show their disdain for both marchers and KKK members as well as their

¹⁵³ Brady and Earle, “Violent Protestors Disrupt Forsyth March”.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Mike Christensen and John Brady, “King Followers Promise Another March in Forsyth,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, January 19, 1987.

attempts to distance themselves from the event. The newspaper reports that “officials and residents said they were ashamed of what happened but blamed the incident on outsiders”.¹⁵⁹ One local expressed feeling “irritated...that people from outside” the area were there.¹⁶⁰ A local pastor commented that, “the violence was not typical of the attitude of [locals]” and that the events were “brought on by outsiders who were doing their fighting in our back yard and we’re getting the blame for it”.¹⁶¹ A sheriff denied the KKK’s claim that most counterdemonstrators were locals, saying that he felt only 10% were residents of the area. The sheriff placed blame for the violence at the march on KKK leaders J.B. Stoner and Ed Stevens, the grand dragon of the Invisible Empire of the Klu Klux Klan. He also added that he “feared that the televised scenes of the chanting, cursing crowd had severely damaged [our] image”. The sheriff continued, “When people see this they’ll think that everybody [here] looks like that, acts like that and talks like that”. He concluded by ensuring black people were welcome and calling for the race issue “to be resolved right now”.¹⁶²

In another article dated the same day, another local pastor conveyed his congregation’s feelings towards what had happened: “We asked forgiveness for those who showed such deep hatred. We’re kind of caught in the middle. In the church, we’re going to get crucified either way we go. If we said, ‘Let’s get a march going,’ here comes the Klan. If we said, ‘no march,’ here would come the other side”.¹⁶³ Another pastor added, “We don’t want to react in a way that would tend to aggravate the problem, rather than solve it”.¹⁶⁴ Meanwhile, SCLC President Joseph Lowery wanted local government and church leaders to stage their own march “to make

¹⁵⁹ Christensen and Brady, “King Followers Promise Another March”.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Christensen, Mike. “Lowery Says the next Move Is Forsyth’s.” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*. January 19, 1987.

¹⁶⁴ Christensen and John Brady, “King Followers Promise Another March”.

clear that the official policy is to welcome all of God’s children”.¹⁶⁵ The article goes on to say that the SCLC “must have definite goals beyond the simple fact of a march”, citing the goal of 1960s protests in Chicago for the explicit aim of desegregating housing.¹⁶⁶ However, the article also points to why mobilizing the local residents was challenging. The article describes the area as “a unique situation, a [place] with no official discrimination but no blacks”. The article also mentions that Lowery thought that “civil rights activity passed the region by...because whites there never instigated it”.¹⁶⁷ It might be probable that the locals did not think integration of minorities into the area necessitated struggles to the degree of those that occurred during the Civil Rights Era. In addition, residents might have been confused by the demands from civil rights leaders to respond to the KKK. The civil rights leaders demanded the locals welcome everyone, but might not have come across as clear: What areas exactly did the civil rights leaders feel the residents were being unwelcoming in? As evidenced by their statements of acceptance of black people, denouncing the KKK and violence during the march, and calling for some solution, the residents may have felt they were not racist. However, confusion persisted as one local mayor expressed his concern: “We really don’t know what the next step is. Certainly some of the community leaders and elected officials will be discussing things in the next few days”.¹⁶⁸

The KKK also confounded the residents in responding to either side. As Charles Wittenstein, a representative for the Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith stated to the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, “The Klan mentality has always been more widespread than actual membership and that mentality is alive and well in [this area], and some other places in the South. This wouldn’t have happened just anywhere in Georgia. But there are pockets largely left

¹⁶⁵ Christensen and John Brady, “King Followers Promise Another March”.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Joe Earle, “Rapidly Growing Forsyth ‘Embarrassed’ by Violence,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, January 19, 1987.

untouched by the social changes of the '60s and '70s".¹⁶⁹ This is not to say that because the area was overlooked by the Civil Rights Movement that people harbored violent racist animosity, waiting for an opportunity to show it. However, going unaffected by civil rights and the absence of racially different people created the opportunity for KKK ideas to infiltrate these kinds of areas. Wittenstein goes on to describe the Klan mentality as "more widespread" and not indicative of the number of people that are members of KKK groups. The GBI at the time "estimate that hard-core members of white supremacist groups in Georgia number fewer than 200, to which Wittenstein said "active membership in such organizations at no more than 6,500 nationwide".¹⁷⁰ It would seem then, that it was not that locals were committed Klan members or would automatically side with the Klan ideology, but that because of the covert nature of racism, whites could easily be swayed into such ideological alignment.¹⁷¹

This possibility proved itself during the march, as a local 42-year-old man was arrested during the violence. Charged with criminal trespass, the man described himself as "motivated solely by curiosity" and said that he had "got 'caught up' in the fervor of those who do not want blacks living here".¹⁷² He told newspaper reporters that "he was confused and angered at the sight of blacks marching in a [place] he says is all-white and should remain that way".¹⁷³ The man "said he is not a Klu Klux Klan member and never has attended any meetings".¹⁷⁴ The KKK then, might have been playing on anxieties about change, specifically population growth and impending diversification, and coding them as a racial issue. By conflating blackness with

¹⁶⁹ Bill Montgomery, "Authorities Failed to Anticipate Size of Forsyth Mob," *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, January 19, 1987.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ian Haney López, *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), xii.

¹⁷² Bill Montgomery, "Forsyth Man Arrested at March Got 'Caught up' in Fervor," *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, January 20, 1987.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

change, it then becomes clear as to how the KKK could gain support from white residents who felt their way of life was under attack.¹⁷⁵

Three days after the march on January 17th, another march was planned for the following Saturday. Hosea Williams announced the second march saying, “We are going back to set the record straight for once and for all” and likened the violence aimed at the first march to that of Apartheid in South Africa.¹⁷⁶ Williams would be accompanied to the second march by Coretta Scott King, Jesse Jackson, and Dick Gregory. Williams also planned two fundraisers to raise \$25,000 to lease 100 buses and four flatbed trucks to bring people and equipment to hold a rally.¹⁷⁷ David Holland, one of the leaders of the Southern White Knights of the Klu Klux Klan also vowed to be there to rally in the county.¹⁷⁸ In addition, the regional chapter of the Guardian Angels, a “citizens protection group...trained in self-defense” would march from Atlanta to the area and “camp out there for two days before” the second march.¹⁷⁹ Anticipating a larger clash with the KKK than at the first march, a Guardian Angel’s representative said, “If there are any problems we will have to deal with it. We are prepared”.¹⁸⁰ In addition, a local mayor said, “he wants to help the city move beyond the anti-black reputation” and “was prepared to join the marchers if they asked him to”.¹⁸¹ In an *Atlanta Journal Constitution* article published on January 21st, the writers proclaim, “Saturday’s march is shaping up to be the largest civil rights demonstration the South has seen in more than a decade”.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁵ López, *Dog Whistle Politics*, 1-5.

¹⁷⁶ Nathan McCall and Joe Earle, “Harris Invited to Join next Forsyth March: Williams, Lowery Blame Him for the Breakdown in Security,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, January 20, 2987.

¹⁷⁷ Mike Christensen and Priscilla Painton, “Rallies Set to Raise \$25,000 for March: Hosea Williams Says Funds Needed to Lease 100 Buses and 4 Trucks,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, January 21, 1987.

¹⁷⁸ McCall and Joe Earle, “Harris Invited to Join next Forsyth March”.

¹⁷⁹ Nathan McCall, “Angels Planning March to Forsyth,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, January 20, 1987.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ Christensen and Painton, “Rallies Set to Raise \$25,000”.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

One day before the second march, the Atlanta newspaper ran a story announcing that the governor would call out the National Guard to be at the march.¹⁸³ Due to the growing interest of civil rights activists across the nation and the implementation of the National Guard, KKK leaders Dave Holland and Ed Stephens “said they would not be at Saturday’s march and urged their members not to go” citing “the situation... would be a setup to continue what they called the federal government’s persecution of the Klan”.¹⁸⁴ However, David Duke, the leader of the National Association for the Advancement of White People promised to attend and hold a rally.¹⁸⁵ Duke, from New Orleans, Louisiana, was arrested for reckless conduct and blocking a state highway during the second march.¹⁸⁶

Violence did not erupt during the second march on January 24th. 20,000 people from all over the U.S., including a state representative from Washington State and religious leaders and groups from California and Ohio, participated in the march. The *Atlanta Journal Constitution* reports that “at their peak, more than 1,000 whites were assembled to protest the march”.¹⁸⁷ However, the protestors were kept at bay by over 1,700 National Guardsmen.¹⁸⁸ Civil rights leaders hailed the second march as successful and reflected on “how times have changed”.¹⁸⁹ Civil Rights leader and Congressman John Lewis commented that the relationship between activists and law enforcement had changed since the Civil Rights Movement Era. Lewis said, “In 1965 you had officially sanctioned violence. This time you had the state troopers and the sheriff

¹⁸³ Priscilla Painton, “National Guard Called out for March,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, January 23, 1987.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Connie Green, “THE MARCH IN FORSYTH COUNTY: Man Who Tried to Change Image of KKK Arrested in Clash with BGL,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, January 25, 1987.

¹⁸⁷ Bill Montgomery, “THE MARCH IN FORSYTH COUNTY: Huge Size of ‘Army’ Stuns Foes,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, January 25, 1987.

¹⁸⁸ Jim Auchmutey and Priscilla Painton, “THE MARCH IN FORSYTH COUNTY: Soldiers of Various Stripes Step Forward for Civil Rights,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, January 25, 1987.

¹⁸⁹ Nathan McCall, “THE MARCH IN FORSYTH COUNTY: Civil Rights Veterans Note How Times Have Changed,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, January 25, 1987.

trying to protect people from the Klan”.¹⁹⁰ Hosea Williams said, “We never had a demonstration in which you got more white folks standing up for justice than black folks”.¹⁹¹ Williams gives a sentiment that would have been rare during the Civil Rights Era. However, it is important to understand that the nature of racism had undergone changes since the 1960s. Outright, physically violent or blatant discrimination had faded from public view. It was commonplace now for many whites to denounce obvious racism while easily maintaining a clandestine new form of racism that sustained geographic racial segregation.¹⁹²

The Oprah Winfrey Show

On February 9, 1987, the *Oprah Winfrey Show*, a morning talk show based in the Midwest and hosted by Oprah Winfrey, an African American woman, filmed an episode about the racial tensions in Forsyth County. Only residents were invited to attend as the executive producer explained, “we hope to create a town meeting atmosphere”.¹⁹³ Winfrey had previously aired an episode exploring the racial tensions in Cicero, Illinois. A publicist for the show said they were attracted to the area because it “is kind of like a microcosm...suddenly thrown into a national spotlight. One day the residents woke up, and suddenly the world was labeling them racists”.¹⁹⁴ The show was not shy to admit that they capitalize on dramatic stories as the publicist revealed that the show “thrive[s] on controversy and emotional topics”.¹⁹⁵ A local lawyer told the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* that he was apprehensive of the show stating, “I think most

¹⁹⁰ McCall, “Civil Rights Veterans Note How Times Have Changed”.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² López, *Dog Whistle Politics*, xii-xiv.

¹⁹³ Phil Kloer, “ON TV: Oprah Winfrey Bringing Her Talk Show to Forsyth,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, February 4, 1987.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

everyone knows she's trying to have a sensational topic" and that he wished "the world can see we're not a community of bigots".¹⁹⁶

Controversy over the filming began days before it started. Hosea Williams declared he would protest the show because he wanted himself and others that were a part of the march to be present and have a say. Williams was adamant that "the true story" of the area "be projected to America". Williams believed in having a balanced discussion on the show and allowing members of the KKK to speak as well. Williams believed that the "Klu Klux Klan mentality" was more pervasive in the area than had been shown in the media and wanted the talk show to illuminate that "even the so-called good element have nurtured and tolerated" that mentality.¹⁹⁷ The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was also critical of the show, saying that "the program format would project 'a very narrow image' that ignores 'the true depth of racism' not only in [this place] but 'throughout the nation'".¹⁹⁸ Williams and the NAACP were met by criticism from 9th District Representative Ed Jenkins, who represented part of Forsyth, saying that Williams and other civil rights leaders were taking advantage of the racial tension to boost their fundraising. Jenkins said he had not spoken out about the situation earlier because he did not want to "[make] matters worse".¹⁹⁹ Jenkins was adamant that the media had skewed the area's image by focusing on the involvement of the KKK and their sympathizers during the marches.²⁰⁰ Williams was arrested during the filming for "unlawful assembly on a state highway".²⁰¹

¹⁹⁶ Kloer, "ON TV: Oprah Winfrey".

¹⁹⁷ Scott Shepard, "Hosea Williams Plans to Picket Oprah Winfrey's Forsyth County Show," *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*. February 9, 1987.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Scott Shepard, "Impressions of Forsyth County Distorted, Jenkins Says," *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, February 9, 1987.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ "Williams, 2 Others Arrested," *The Gainesville Times*, February 9, 1987.

The day of the filming, the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* and a local newspaper from a neighboring town highlighted the local response to the show. The *Atlanta Journal Constitution* interviewed two minority residents of the county. A 50-year-old immigrant from Colombia who owned a framing business and had previously lived in New York City before moving to North Georgia in 1973, told the newspaper that the county had in fact a growing Latino and Asian population and that “there may not be a great quantity of these people, but then we are a small” place.²⁰² The man went on to say that he had never experienced “discrimination and segregation” in Forsyth, but that he had in New York City.²⁰³ Another man, an immigrant from Egypt who had moved to the area in 1979 and was the pastor at a local Presbyterian church also said he only had positive experience since relocating.²⁰⁴ A local retiree told another newspaper, “I’m embarrassed by it [the attention the community was receiving]. There’s a very small percentage of people involved, and they may not even be from [here]”.²⁰⁵

County residents felt that the talk show had made a spectacle out of the racist people who spoke on behalf of the community during the show. Out of the 125 people invited to be on the show, about 30 people spoke. The *Atlanta Journal Constitution* criticized the show for lasting only an hour, arguing that no substantial or meaningful dialogue could take place in such a short amount of time. The newspaper also went on to say that the show created more controversy at a national level rather than properly portraying the situation or solving any issues.²⁰⁶

The attention from the live talk show and Brotherhood Marches would soon fade away as the county would undergo a major change in infrastructure. In the late 1980s, Forsyth County

²⁰² Nehl Horton, “Forsyth County Not Really All-White: Asians, Hispanics, Other Minorities Call Community ‘Superb,’” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, February 9, 1987.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ “Williams, 2 Others Arrested”.

²⁰⁶ Monte Plott, “Oprah’s ‘Live from Forsyth County’ Was Stroke of Programming Genius,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, February 10, 1987.

would be connected to Atlanta by way of Georgia State Route 400. The staggered expansion of Georgia 400 would help Forsyth maintain its racial isolation from the late 1980s to today.

Georgia State Route 400: Infrastructure Spurs Growth 1980s-2010s

The construction of Georgia State Route 400, which connects Forsyth County and its surroundings to Atlanta, spurred growth in the area by making it accessible to people who would have never thought about moving to the rural area before. Georgia 400, a project begun in the 1980s and arguably not yet completed today, stretches 54 miles from inside the Atlanta Perimeter, where it was a toll road until recently, to the town of Dahlonega, nestled in the North Georgia mountains.²⁰⁷ The construction of this highway changed the surrounding counties and towns, turning them into havens for recreation, retail, high priced housing, and high income “white-collar” jobs.²⁰⁸ Forsyth County, situated about 40 miles north of Atlanta by way of Georgia 400, became the destination of many people moving to get away from city life. The location of the county offered easy “access to Georgia 400, less crowding, access to [the lake] and lower taxes, a combination of amenities surrounding counties along the highway could not exactly replicate.”²⁰⁹

By 1996, a distinction between the south and north ends of the county began to emerge. In an article from *The Atlanta Journal Constitution* dated April 1996, the reporter describes the division as, “the booming south and the tranquil north.”²¹⁰ The 54-mile stretch of Georgia 400 was completed over a period of years, with people and businesses clustering around each new

²⁰⁷ Janet Frankston, “Major Artery Ga. 400 Pumps People, Jobs Northward,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, April 12, 2004.

²⁰⁸ Frankston, “Major Artery Ga. 400 Pumps People”; Cauley, “NEIGHBORHOOD OF THE WEEK”; Larry Hartstein and Dana Tofig, “Forsyth County Grapples with Growth,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, April 24, 2000.

²⁰⁹ Hartstein and Tofig, “Forsyth County Grapples with Growth”.

²¹⁰ Dennis McCafferty, “North Forsyth County Casts Wary Eye at Growth Two Worlds: The Transformation of Pastures into Suburban Sprawl Holds Little Allure for Residents of the Northern Part of the County,” *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, April 29, 1996.

addition of the highway, which explains the distinction between the suburbanizing south end of the county and the fairly rural nature of the north end.²¹¹ The county's low taxes and easy access to other areas via Georgia 400 shaped the south end, where country club style subdivisions and lake homes valued at over \$500,000 (\$770,000 in 2016 dollars) could be found.²¹² Residents in the north end of the county were apprehensive towards the change on the south end of the county, preferring to distance themselves from the growth and change and hold on to the rural feel of the north end. One resident told the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* that multiple developers had asked to purchase his 550 acres of pasture. When asked why he would not sell, the man replied, "I like my way of life more than I like money".²¹³

Between 1999 and 2000, the county experienced a 125% increase in population with 98,000 people now calling the county home.²¹⁴ By 2003, the county experienced an influx of 26,000 more people for an estimated population of 124,000.²¹⁵ The division between the ends of the county in terms of growth in businesses and people remained clear as the county entered the 21st century. More people and now international industries were moving to the south end of the county. In 2004, international engineering firm Siemens had overtaken the local chicken processing plant's title of "largest employer" in the county, with over 1,600 employees.²¹⁶ Most single-family homes in the county sold for over \$200,000 in 2004 (\$248,000 in 2016 dollars),

²¹¹ McCafferty, "North Forsyth County Casts Wary Eye".

²¹² McCafferty, "North Forsyth County Casts Wary Eye"; "Inflation Calculator. Value of \$500,000 in Today's Dollars, by Year," accessed March 11, 2017, <http://www.saving.org/inflation/inflation.php?amount=200,000>.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Lesa Rosato, "SPOTLIGHT ON...Forsyth County There Are Still Great Finds for Less than \$200,000," *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, January 16, 2005.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Marcia Langhenry, "2004 Guidebook: North Fulton/Forsyth: Ga. 400 Catalyst for Boom," *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, July 22, 2004.

which meant that those who could afford to move to the county were characterized by a certain high level of economic standing.²¹⁷

Although the county was experiencing rapid growth, racial demographics only changed slightly. More people of Asian descent came to live and work in the south part of the county, while the Latino population rose, with many finding work in chicken processing. By 2016, the African American population was relatively low, only comprising 3.7% of the population. Today, 84% of the population identifies as white.²¹⁸ Amid Forsyth's population growth, a particular perception and fear of crime began to manifest among locals. The ways in which residents speak about crime illuminates underlying and unresolved racial anxieties and gives insight into how the county is policed. Surprisingly, the relationship between attitudes about crime and the way the county is polices as a result, are not consistent with actual crime trends nationally or locally.

²¹⁷ Rosato, "SPOTLIGHT ON...Forsyth County".

²¹⁸ "People: Race and Hispanic Origin, Forsyth County, Georgia," U.S. Census Bureau, 2015, www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/SBO030212/13117.

Chapter 2: Perceptions of Crime in Forsyth County and Policing Outcomes

National, State, and Local Crime Trends

Nationally, crime rates have been falling steadily since the 1970s.²¹⁹ This trend is also true of the Southeastern United States and for the state of Georgia. Crime rates can be understood as the average number of a crime that occurs per 100,000 people in a population. For example, a crime rate of 100 for the category of larceny means that on average, there are 100 instances of larceny per 100,000 people in a place. They are relative measures. If the population of that same place is 200,000, we would know that the actual number of larcenies that took place is 200. Conversely, if the population is 50,000, we can see the actual number of larcenies is 50. Figuring crime rates per a population of 100,000 helps us compare crime rates across time and place. Violent crimes in Georgia, which include murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault, peaked in 1990 at 768.4 and have fallen ever since to a 35-year low of 355.3 in 2015.²²⁰ Property crimes have also declined since 1989. At their peak in 1989, property crimes, which include burglary, larceny, auto theft, and arson, occurred at a rate of 6,226.5. The most recent crime rate data indicates Georgia currently experiences its lowest property crime rate in 35 years at 2,930.8.²²¹ Overall, total crime in Georgia was at its lowest level in 35 years in 2015 at a rate of 3,286.1, compared to 5,377.5 in 1980 and the highest rate of 6,965.4 in 1989.²²²

²¹⁹ Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 8; Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*: 86.

²²⁰ "Statewide Crime Rates per 100,000 Population 1980-2015." *Georgia Bureau of Investigation*, https://gbi.georgia.gov/sites/gbi.georgia.gov/files/related_files/site_page/Statewide%20Crime%20Rates%20per%20100%2C000%20Population.pdf.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid.

At the local level, Forsyth County experienced a similar downward trend in crime rates. Burglary and vehicle thefts have steadily declined since 1980. In 1980, the rate of burglary was 1,162.3, but 149.7 in 2015. Vehicle thefts had a rate of 340.5 in 1985, but by 2015, had dropped to 39.07. Assault peaked in 1995 at 300.9, but by 2015 was 47.5. Larceny also was highest in 1995, at 3,017.1, but lowest in 2015 at 681.1. The same trend exists for robbery, peaking in 1995 at 19.5 and lowering to 3.8 in 2015. Rape and murder are the least frequent crimes in the county. Rape peaked in 1985 with 26.6, lowering to 8.5 in 2005 and rising to 16.0 in 2015. Murder only occurred in the years 2005 at 4.5 and 2010 at 2.2.²²³ Rape and murder are the least frequent crimes in the county. Interestingly, from the 1980s to the present, crime rates have fallen in the county, mirroring nation and state trends.

However, in the wake of declining crime in Georgia, an estimated 55,000 inmates were housed across 31 state prisons, 23 county prisons, 4 private prisons, and 146 county jails throughout the state in February of 2015.²²⁴ In fact, the state of Georgia has the “4th largest prison population in the nation”.²²⁵ County jails are usually the first stop for inmates before they are sentenced to county, state, or private prisons. County jails in Georgia typically hold “about two-thirds as many inmates as Georgia’s state facilities” at any given time.²²⁶ Interestingly, Georgia relies so heavily on the use of county jails that they are growing in capacity despite falling crime rates. From 2007 to 2017, county jails collectively increased their state-wide

²²³ “GBI Statistics - Crime Statistics | Georgia.gov,” *Georgia Bureau of Investigation*, <http://services.georgia.gov/gbi/crimestats/displayCrimeStatForm.do>; “Forsyth County vs. Georgia | Population Trends Report over 1969-2015,” *Georgia Regional Economic Analysis Project*, accessed April 4, 2017, <https://georgia.reaproject.org/analysis/comparative-trends-analysis/population/reports/130117/130000/>.

²²⁴ “Georgia Department of Corrections: Prisons Versus Jails,” *Georgia Department of Corrections*, accessed April 5, 2017. http://www.dcor.state.ga.us/sites/default/files/Info_Sheets_PrisonsVJails.pdf; “Georgia Department of Community Affairs Office of Research: County Jail Inmate Population Report as of Thursday March 2, 2017,” *Georgia Department of Community Affairs*, accessed March 15, 2017, http://www.dca.state.ga.us/development/research/programs/documents/JailReport_Mar17.pdf.

²²⁵ “Prisons Versus Jails,” *Georgia Department of Corrections*.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

potential for housing inmates by 8,162. Today, the state of Georgia can maintain a capacity of 47,909 inmates across 146 county jails.²²⁷

“Doesn’t Anybody Obey the Law Anymore?”: Public Perceptions of Crime

Concerns about rapid population growth influences perceptions of crime in Forsyth County. Residents feel that as the population grows, crime will increase. Interestingly, residents speak of crime mostly in the abstract, referring to it as simply “crime” without specifying whether they are referring to violent crime, property crime, or both. In a Facebook post, dated April 4, 2017, a local news outlet published an article detailing a drug deal of methamphetamine that was thwarted by Forsyth County Sheriff’s deputies. Multiple people responded to the post, many lamenting that crime in the county has grown or that they had underestimated the amount of crime in the county. One resident commented that “before 2012 this was a safe place”.²²⁸ Another resident wrote: “I just moved here I thought this was a safe place to raise my family but this is all I hear”.²²⁹

Social media response to another instance of crime in March 2017, where two people were arrested for trying to steal cars in the county also illuminates how residents perceive crime. The local newspaper posted an article on social media about the incident, to which residents voiced their concerns, explicitly connecting the growing population to a perceived rise in crime. One resident claims that as more people move into the county crimes like these “will be a daily occurrence”.²³⁰ Another resident attributed population growth to a specific rise in violent crime. The resident wrote: “With more people moving into the county it is bringing more violence in. I have lived in the county 40 years and I remember when people used to leave their doors

²²⁷ “County Jail Inmate Population Report as of Thursday March 2, 2017,” *Georgia Department of Community Affairs*.

²²⁸ Facebook Post, April 4, 2017.

²²⁹ Facebook Post, April 4, 2017.

²³⁰ Facebook Post, March 27, 2017.

unlocked and windows open at night. You absolutely can't do that anymore !!!".²³¹ An additional resident chimed in stating, "Omg [Oh My God] we are no longer safe remember the other theft the other time". Residents see crime as an escalating function of population growth, and news stories highlighting crime made easily accessible through social media, function as proof that crime is certainly on the rise.

The way in which residents responded to the construction of the new Forsyth County jail also evidences how people perceive crime in the county. When the new jail opened in September 2015, local news outlets published articles online and posted them to their Facebook page, to which many county residents responded. Residents feel that the jail itself gives incentive to people to commit crime, as they see the facility's physical upgrade attractive in terms of livability. In a post about the jail made by a local news outlet in March 2016, two residents commented, insinuating that the new jail's aesthetics detailed in the article promoted crime in the county. One resident writes: "We wonder why crime rates are so high [the jail is] better than motel 8".²³² In response to the increase in capacity from the old jail, one resident reacted to another news media post, "Doesn't anybody obey the law anymore?", assuming increased capacity means more people are indeed committing crimes than before.²³³ Another resident responded to a post about two people arrested for stealing cars in 2017 writing, "Going to jail is no longer a decent incentive to not be a criminal. Jail/prison time is a paid vacation to the criminals. Perhaps it is time to revisit the idea of Hard Time and chain gangs. Put these thugs to actual hard work so it makes having a paying job look easy.....which it is. Roadwork, improvements to the public spaces. Cleaning up graffiti. There are so many things that can be

²³¹ Facebook Post, March 27, 2017.

²³² Facebook Post, March 9, 2016.

²³³ Facebook Post, September 23, 2015.

done to improve the world besides watching tv in a cell with your best buddy cradling you”.²³⁴

Most residents believe that crime is on the rise in the county, going so far as to say the jail provides incentive to commit crime. When confronted with the facts to the contrary, as shown below, many residents are quick to dispute crime statistics and revert to their assumptions.

During the primary election season in Spring 2016, crime became a concern for many residents as the county sheriff was up for reelection and challenged by a former deputy of the county who had an FBI certification, a graduate degree in public administration, and experience leading the police department of a suburb near Atlanta.²³⁵ As the campaign was underway, residents began to discuss the election on social media. One resident posted crime statistics from the GBI website to show how the county and its closest neighbors compared. The resident did not endorse either candidate, but simply stated that “both [are] pretty good men who most counties would love to have as their sheriff” as his research showed the county was second only to a neighboring county with half the population in terms of lowest crime rates.²³⁶ One resident quickly responded, “I’ve been telling people the statistics that are being handed off to the GBI and FBI are highly suspect” and posted a link to a community social media group where citizens are prompted to self-report local crime.²³⁷ Another resident added that “It’s pretty common for local LE [Law Enforcement] agencies to under report crime statistics”, while others hinted towards a conspiracy to keep residents thinking crime was lower than they thought.²³⁸ No one who made these statements offered any substantial evidence as to how they knew for sure that crime statistics were wrong or how exactly they were being reported incorrectly.

²³⁴ Facebook Post, March 28, 2017.

²³⁵ “Ron Freeman,” VoteFreemanSheriff.com, accessed April 5, 2017, <http://votefreemansheriff.com/>.

²³⁶ Facebook Post, May 6, 2016.

²³⁷ Facebook Post, May 6, 2016.

²³⁸ Facebook Post, May 6, 2016.

“Maybe One of These Days You’ll Encounter Zantavious or Jarquez and Your Opinion of MARTA Will Change”: The Perceived Geography of Race and Crime

The theories of Imaginative Geography and Dog Whistle Politics illuminate ways in which residents think of crime as a threat imposed on them that comes from other places and makes visible the racism that belies these perceptions of crime and space in Forsyth County. The following analysis foregrounds the complex interplay between place and race in public rhetoric of crime.

In his work *Orientalism*, Edward Said lays the framework for understanding how identities for individuals, collectivities, and places are formed. Said argues that identity is formed by imagining oneself against what one is not. In other words, we define our identities “negatively”, by comparing ourselves to an “other” that represents the opposite of ourselves. In applying this to space, Said writes: “This universal practice of designating in one’s mind a familiar space which is ‘ours’ and an unfamiliar space beyond ‘ours’ which is ‘theirs’ ... Thus, imaginative geography...help[s] the mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatizing the distance and difference between what is close to it and what is far away”.²³⁹ An imagined geography conceives of an “over there”, a special difference that the “here” is not. Conceptualized in the negative then, the “over there” comes to signify a threat or “danger” to the “here”.²⁴⁰ Regarding the interplay of place and crime in a sundown town and its majority white population, crime comes to be perceived as a threat to the “here” and is understood as a danger originating not from within the sundown town, but from a distant “over there” inhabited by people racially different from them. Thus, residents perceive crime in the county as a phenomenon imposed on their space that originates elsewhere and is committed by nonwhites.

²³⁹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979, 1994), 54-55.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

The way in which residents perceive crime as an outside threat to their space is shown in responses to social media posts published by the sheriff's office and in local community groups. For example, the sheriff's office posted a notice that they had captured a man on peeping tom charges at a local clothing store. The man was from a neighboring town, easily accessible to the clothing store. In response to the post, one resident wrote, "Don't come to our county to commit your crimes".²⁴¹ A few days after this incident, the sheriff's office published another post about intervening in a car theft in progress. One resident commented on the post, "We need the thieves to know this isn't the place to carry out their crimes".²⁴² In a community forum post, a resident shared an online news article about a man arrested and deported on female genital mutilation charges in a county right outside Atlanta. The unusual crime was the first of its kind known in the U.S.²⁴³ Although this crime is extremely rare, one resident conflated the incident with the reputation of the place in which it occurred by stating, "I'm glad I don't live in [that county]".²⁴⁴

In early April 2017, the sheriff's office posted about a small drug seizure to which a resident responded, "people live in this county to avoid this crap" and another suggested, "By giving them prison time they will know that this is not acceptable in this county and they will move to where people who do not care about drug use and chaos. Tax payers do not want this".²⁴⁵ As this particular thread went on, people from other regions of the U.S. began to comment, questioning the illegality of recreational drug use. This sheriff's office had just received national attention for making a large discovery of marijuana earlier in the year and since then, the social media page has garnered a more widespread following. In response to those

²⁴¹ Facebook Post, March 22, 2017.

²⁴² Facebook Post, March 27, 2017.

²⁴³ Facebook Post, March 15, 2017.

²⁴⁴ Facebook Post, March 16, 2017.

²⁴⁵ Facebook Post, April 4, 2017.

advocating for the decriminalization of drugs, a resident questioned, “What has happened to the morals in this county?”²⁴⁶ This time, the sheriff joined the thread via his personal social media account, stating, “You will probably notice that the vast majority don’t live in our community and are pushing a drug legalization agenda”.²⁴⁷ The discussion prompted by the sheriff office’s post shows that residents perceive crime and even oppositional morals or values as problems originating and threatening them from other places. Furthermore, the residents also bring an element of race into how they explain crime coming from elsewhere. Crime is then perceived to come from other places as well as committed by people who are racially different from them, specifically nonwhite.

The way in which residents talk about race can be seen in coded language called dog whistle rhetoric. Ian Haney López defines dog whistle rhetoric as

“coded racial appeals that carefully manipulate hostility toward nonwhites. Examples of dog whistling include repeated blasts about criminals and welfare cheats, illegal aliens, and sharia law...Superficially, these provocations have nothing to do with race, yet they nevertheless powerfully communicate messages about threatening nonwhites”.²⁴⁸

López argues that dog whistle rhetoric is indicative of the adaptation of racism to our contemporary context of class anxieties concerning “declining economic opportunity”.²⁴⁹ In other words, racial “others” come to be seen as threats to destroy one’s already unstable economic standing.²⁵⁰ Racially segregated places further illuminate the work that dog whistle rhetoric does. In terms of white flight to suburbs and exurbs, “for many whites, the measure of

²⁴⁶ Facebook Post, April 4, 2017.

²⁴⁷ Facebook Post, April 4, 2017.

²⁴⁸ López, *Dog Whistle Politics*, ix.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, xii, ix.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 174-175.

whether they've made it [socially, politically, and economically] increasingly turns on being able to set the terms with which they associate with minorities".²⁵¹ Suburbs come to signify the 'better' place, with "'authentic' 1950s values and the [best] suburban amenities available today".²⁵² López continues, "In contrast, dystopia came to mean places peopled by nonwhites. To suffer downward class mobility meant having to rub shoulders with nonwhites at every turn".²⁵³ The interesting part of dog whistle rhetoric is that it covertly perpetuates racism. Such language bypasses the "strong moral consensus" that racism is wrong.²⁵⁴ Those who are adamantly opposed to blatant racism, such as the use of the "*n-word*" or outright acts of racial hatred, can be very much ensnared in dog whistle politics, as such rhetoric "often hide[s] racism even from those in whom it triggers strong reactions".²⁵⁵ In conjunction with viewing crime as an outside threat, dog whistle rhetoric illuminates the way in which county residents also view crime as something committed by racial "others". Language is important, as López claims, because it does political work.²⁵⁶ Dog whistle rhetoric does the work of maintaining racial anxieties as well as the physical boundaries of segregation.

Anxiety about the possibility of public transportation connecting the county to Atlanta spiked in 2013 and 2015. The ways in which residents connect how they imagine crime to come from outside the county and committed by people of color, is evidenced in the way they discuss the possibility of Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) moving farther north out of Atlanta. In a community forum from August 2013, a resident shared a thread from a local television news station claiming that MARTA would be expanded North to run parallel to

²⁵¹ López, *Dog Whistle Politics*, 172-173.

²⁵² Rich Benjamin in López, *Dog Whistle Politics*, 173.

²⁵³ López, *Dog Whistle Politics*, 173.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, xiv.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 3-5.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, ix.

Georgia 400. One resident commented, “That will be the kiss of death for our once beautiful county”.²⁵⁷ Another resident began to post full text from at least three national news outlets detailing crimes that have happened on MARTA, vowing “to fight it [MARTA] here...to my dying breath”.²⁵⁸ As the thread continued, one local suggested the need for increased police surveillance if public transportation came to the county, stating, “we can’t stop ‘progress’ but maybe we can be heard and help control ‘progress’ a little”. By putting “progress” in scare quotes, the resident means that connecting their location to Atlanta would in fact be a decline, and that they prefer to stay at least geographically separated, and probably racially segregated from the urban landscape. In response to the news articles posted by one local, another resident explicitly ties public transportation to crime. They wrote: “maybe we should concentrate on ‘beefing’ up our home and personal protections laws in [the county]. Let the criminals know that they don’t want to ‘mess’ with [us]”.²⁵⁹ Again, the use of scare quotes around “mess” can reveal another meaning, as in to “come”. In this vein, “criminals” mean people of color from Atlanta, that may come into the county via MARTA to disrupt the locals’ sense of law and order. Later in the thread, the explicit connection between race and imaginative geography becomes clearer. In response to one resident claiming they have “encountered only a few unsavory characters” while using MARTA, one local exclaimed, “Aren’t you lucky! Maybe one of these days you’ll encounter Zantavious or Jarquez and your opinion of MARTA will change.”²⁶⁰ By using made-up and suggestive racially/ethnically “other” sounding names, this resident clearly conveys that crime comes from a place outside the county and is committed by nonwhites.

²⁵⁷ Facebook Post, August 29, 2013.

²⁵⁸ Facebook Post, August 29, 2013.

²⁵⁹ Facebook Post, August 30, 2013.

²⁶⁰ Facebook Post, August 30, 2013.

In a social media post from 2015, it becomes clear that MARTA has solidified its position as a dog whistle term, meaning nonwhites that come from elsewhere to commit crime in Forsyth County. In addition, housing associated with being lower income or in an urban area, such as apartments, gains the same dog whistle status as public transportation. In September 2015, a resident posted in a community forum about a homicide that had happened in a county that encompasses a part of Atlanta. The resident linked the perceived perils of “what used to be ‘Dynamic’ DeKalb County” to what they thought would be the fate of Forsyth County if growth in population, infrastructure, and housing could not be controlled.²⁶¹ The resident attributed the homicide to “when the neighborhoods [in DeKalb County] started turning upside down, due in large part to high density (lower cost) housing, Section 8 apartments, and let us not forget, MARTA” in “the late 1980’s”.²⁶² Again, we can see the perception that crime comes from elsewhere and is committed by nonwhites, particularly blacks, and those of lower income. Most recently, the trend is visible in a post by the local Sheriff’s Office detailing a prevented car theft in March of 2017. One resident commented on the thread, “Are the criminals from the group The Decatur Doo-rags?”²⁶³

The perception of crime as an attack on rural and suburban areas and perpetrated by urban nonwhites is counter to the reality of who commits crime and where they come from. Statewide in March 2017, the census of all Georgia prisons reflects that most of those incarcerated come from less populated and more rural areas in the state. Out of the 50,438 inmates held in March 2017, only 9.72% of those incarcerated came from Fulton County, which encompasses the city of Atlanta. Even when expanding the data to include all nine metropolitan

²⁶¹ Facebook Post, September 2, 2015.

²⁶² Facebook Post, September 2, 2015.

²⁶³ Facebook Post, March 27, 2017.

counties of Atlanta, Fulton, DeKalb, Gwinnett, Cobb, Clayton, Coweta, Douglas, Fayette, and Henry Counties, we find that only 29.44% of those incarcerated in Georgia prisons are from the Atlanta metropolitan area. In addition, if we expand the data to include higher populated hubs in the state which are Macon, Columbus, and Augusta, we find that 37.22% of those in the state's prisons come from urban metropolitan or hub-type areas. These findings show that 62.78% of those incarcerated in Georgia prisons come from more rural areas of the state. Forsyth County contributed 267 of its residents to Georgia prisons in March of 2017.²⁶⁴

Breaking this pattern of perceiving crime as coming from the outside as well as being perpetrated by nonwhites proves to be a daunting task in part because people fail to recognize the covert nature in which racism persists today and how they are implicated in its perpetuation. As Eduardo Bonilla-Silva explains, whites predominantly “assert they ‘don’t see color, just people’” and that “they aspire to live in a society where ‘people are judged by the content of their character, not by the color of their skin’” as espoused by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.²⁶⁵ Bonilla-Silva argues that this “ideology of color blindness...aids in the maintenance of white privilege without fanfare, without naming those who it subjects and those who it rewards”.²⁶⁶ I argue that this failure to recognize how racism works allows places to remain racially segregated and most whites to justify their misperceptions of crime as I have shown to be the case in Forsyth County. Furthermore, when opportunities arise that could potentially be openings to interrogate such forms of covert racism, people tend to cling to color blindness and place blame for racism on community outsiders as exemplified by recent events in the neighboring town of Dahlonaga.

²⁶⁴ “Georgia Department of Corrections: Inmate Statistical Profile,” *Georgia Department of Corrections*, accessed March 1, 2017, http://www.dcor.state.ga.us/sites/all/themes/gdc/pdf/Profile_all_inmates_2017_02.pdf.

²⁶⁵ Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 1.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

In February 2017, Dahlonega, GA, the county seat of Lumpkin County, garnered national attention as a sign was placed on a vacant building in the town square that read “Historic Ku Klux Klan Meeting Hall” with “a cartoonish drawing of a white-sheeted person raising a hand”.²⁶⁷ In response, many of the town’s white residents immediately exclaimed their disgust for the display. In fact, one “white 37-year-old mother of two...who called Dahlonega a ‘sweet, loving town’” who “had never protested anything in her life” felt so compelled that she “remembered the flip-chart paper in her trunk left over from a presentation the month before and made two signs---‘Not in my town,’ she wrote, and ‘Love Lives Here’—then...stood [in the square] in her sandals holding them”.²⁶⁸ A local church organized a protest and the “town issued an official statement saying that ‘Dahlonega is a welcoming community for people of diverse backgrounds’ and that ‘recent episodes are not indicative of a change in our character or philosophy’”.²⁶⁹

Residents seemed in disbelief that someone would put up such a sign in their community. People began to speculate that a range of hosts may have been guilty; “maybe...an outsider” did it, or as the county sheriff guessed, “possibly a renter”, or maybe it was a conspiracy involving “former congressional staffers working for the previous [Obama] administration” that are “part of an elaborate plot not only to create chaos in Dahlonega, but also to undermine the presidency of Donald Trump and ultimately, the nation” as one resident told a local talk radio station.²⁷⁰ It

²⁶⁷ Stephanie McCrummen, “In Georgia, Reaction to KKK Banner Is a Sign of the Times,” *Washington Post*, March 12, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/in-northern-georgia-a-kkk-banner-seemed-to-some-a-sign-of-the-times/2017/03/12/de5a3518-05bd-11e7-b9fa-ed727b644a0b_story.html.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ McCrummen, “In Georgia, Reaction to KKK Banner Is a Sign”; Matt Aiken, “Breaking News Update: KKK Sign Could Return to Downtown Building,” *The Dahlonega Nugget*, February 17, 2017, <http://www.thedahlonenugget.com/news-subscribers/breaking-news-update-kkk-sign-could-return-downtown-building>.

²⁷⁰ McCrummen, “In Georgia, Reaction to KKK Banner Is a Sign”; Aiken, “Breaking News Update: KKK Sign”; Kelly Whitmire, “KKK Sign Could Return to Dahlonega Building: Owner Applying for New Permit,” *Gainesville Times*, February 17, 2017, <http://www.gainesvilletimes.com/archives/121979/>.

later came out that the 84-year-old owner of the building and Dahlonega resident, Roberta Green-Garrett, put up the sign out of spite because local officials would not approve her petition for a building permit on the site.²⁷¹ Even after Green-Garrett was found out, the mayor attempted to distance the town from the racist act as the *Gainesville Times* reports him blaming Green-Garrett's employees for hanging the sign, "who he said are not from Dahlonega".²⁷² Clearly, most in Dahlonega would like to think racism does not originate from within their community.

Furthermore, a politician in Forsyth County spoke out against the sign and offered their support to Dahlonega. The *Washington Post* made it a point to highlight former Democratic State Senate candidate and Forsyth County resident Daniel Blackman's appearance at a town meeting about the sign. Blackman, the article touts, "was the first black person ever to run for office" in Forsyth County. The article presents Forsyth as having overcome its reputation of having "a long history of violence against blacks" and being "a 'whites only county'" "until the 1980s", with Blackman as living proof.²⁷³ If Forsyth County could overcome racism, surely Dahlonega, lacking such a history, could as well.

The residents' reaction to the sign was hailed as a victory by national news. In a *Washington Post* spotlight of the situation titled, "In Georgia, reaction to KKK banner is a sign of the times", reporter Stephanie McCrummen applauds locals for their anti-racist protest.²⁷⁴ For McCrummen, the adamant anti-racist comments and actions taken by the residents show that indeed the "times" have changed, racism is no longer an issue, and as the mayor says, Dahlonega is "not a racist community".²⁷⁵ On the contrary, the locals' reaction is a "sign" not that racism

²⁷¹ Aiken, "Breaking News Update: KKK Sign"

²⁷² Whitmire, "KKK Sign Could Return".

²⁷³ McCrummen, "In Georgia, Reaction to KKK Banner Is a Sign".

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

has been eradicated, but that it has changed forms. It is easy for the colorblind residents of Dahlonega to denounce the KKK sign, but what of the more clandestine forms of racism that most likely explain why Lumpkin County is 94.6% white with a black population that hovers at 2% today?²⁷⁶ Understanding the covert nature in which racism persists today gives way to recognizing the ways in which we are implicated in its perpetuation. In the case of Lumpkin County and the town of Dahlonega, it may explain issues such as the area's racial segregation. For Forsyth County, this realization begins to expose how the pattern of perceiving crime as coming from the outside as well as being perpetrated by nonwhites has implications for how county residents are not only policed, but how they come to police themselves and each other.

“It Will Help if Parents and Kids Report the People Who Bring These Drugs to School”: How Perceptions of Crime Have Real Implications for Policing and Politics

The concern with crime in the county, while imagined to be occurring at rates higher than what is really happening, has real implications for the ways in which the county is policed and how the locals come to police themselves and others. Residents internalize the fear of crime and in turn, express their desire for more police visibility and harsher punishments for offenders as well as the allocation of more funds to the sheriff's office. In addition, residents claim to want to protect police and other first responders and ‘pick up the slack’ when they feel the sheriff's office is not handling crime as well as they think the deputies should. In acting themselves, residents sporadically initiate and support programs designed to thwart crime or decrease offender recidivism. Public perceptions of crime and the desire for more law and order translated into the election of the new sheriff in 2016, who ran on a platform peppered with law and order rhetoric and the promise of decreasing perceived high rates of crime.

²⁷⁶ “Dahlonega, Georgia v. Lumpkin County, Georgia v. United States Census Statistics.” *United States Census Bureau*. Accessed April 27, 2017. //www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/HSG030210/00.

Residents of the county allude to the desire for harsher penalties for crime as a solution to lowering the perceived crime rate. As Alex S. Vitale argues in his work on policing homelessness in New York City, “Society at large usually is indifferent to the means that the police use to maintain order on the edges of society” and would rather ignore the social, political, and economic conditions that belie crime.²⁷⁷ In this vein, crime is seen “as a source rather than a symptom” of perceived “disorder” that people want taken out of view quickly and by any means necessary.²⁷⁸ We can also see this indifference to policing methods and punishments at work in Forsyth County. Punishments suggested by residents range from the denial of basic rights such as healthcare, to bodily dismemberment, and even death in lieu of trial or incarceration. In March of 2017, cars parked outside a local fire station were robbed, to which one person responded, “these crooks need a lot harsher penalties”, and another commented, “Just shoot some of these dang thugs and they will become more hesitant about stealing”.²⁷⁹ In response to a local newspaper’s social media post on the new jail’s medical facility, one person questioned the dental care given to inmates writing, “I wish I could afford to go to the dentist. Maybe I should get arrested next time I have a toothache”.²⁸⁰ In another post about the new jail, one resident questioned the new process of video-phone visitation as opposed to in-person visitation, arguing that the new method of visitation “degrade[s] the prisoner/family bond which is one of the few factors actually proven to reduce recidivism”. Another resident rebutted, saying, “They lost touch with their families a long time ago. If they loved & respected them, they would control themselves & behave better. The victims of their crimes had their rights taken away. Its

²⁷⁷ Alex S. Vitale, *City of Disorder How the Quality of Life Campaign Transformed New York Politics* (New York University Press, 2009), 1-4.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Facebook Post, March 16, 2007.

²⁸⁰ Facebook Post, March 9, 2016.

PUNISHMENT!!! Wish they would have to wear pink too, like in [another county]. Their crime rate dropped”.²⁸¹ Other instances of residents expressing their desire for harsher punishments include: A news article about car break-ins, to which a person responded, “Cut his hand off and he’ll think twice before doing it again.”; A reaction to a drug bust with a person saying, “I hope they get bread and water.”; And “Shoot till it clicks” in response to a car theft.²⁸²

In one such instance of the community acting with the sheriff’s office to control crime, one resident organized an information session with a deputy for educating parents about drug use. However, the information session was not geared towards understanding the relationship between addiction and incarceration. Instead, the educational meeting was geared more towards being able to identify drugs, methods people—especially pre-teens and teens—use to conceal drug use, and ways the community can help identify potential drug users. It was also promised that the deputy teaching the session would be “bringing drug samples so we know exactly what we’re looking at”.²⁸³ Many parents responded positively to the announcement of the event on social media, with one exclaiming, “It will help if parents and kids report the people who bring these drugs to school”. In the online thread for the session, parents even brainstormed ways they thought the sheriff’s office could better eradicate the “out of control” drug dealing and use in the local schools. One parent suggested using the sheriff’s K9 dogs more frequently for searches, as another proposed using the dogs for “checking the kids themselves” as opposed to only searching their lockers.²⁸⁴ All this, with no mind to what the K9 dogs do or how they are trained. In this case, the desire to identify those who sell or use drugs trumps the fact that the dogs used in the county are dual purpose, meaning they are trained to search out drugs, but also physically

²⁸¹ Facebook Post, September 23, 2015.

²⁸² Facebook Posts: November 22, 2016; April 4, 2017; December 15, 2016.

²⁸³ Facebook Post, January 27, 2017.

²⁸⁴ Facebook Post, January 27, 2017.

incapacitate individuals by biting onto them.²⁸⁵ The idea of using dual purpose K9s to search individual students might pose a physical danger to them. Nonetheless, vocal residents are adamant about intensifying the degree in which they, their children, and others are policed. The description of the event did not mention anything about resources to help those addicted to drugs or to decrease recidivism of those incarcerated for drugs. The election of a new sheriff later that year also illustrates the ways in which county residents perceive crime in addition to how it influences their voting for candidates that promise to address those perceptions.

There's a New Sheriff in Town

The election of a new sheriff in the county in 2016 illuminates the ways in which residents perceive crime, as well as the limits they are willing to go to address their fears of increasing crime regarding electing officials that reflect those same views. Throughout the campaign, candidate and future Sheriff, Ron Freeman appealed to residents' fear of crime and wanting of law and order. Freeman presented himself as both deeply tied to the community while almost over-qualified professionally to be sheriff. Living in the county for almost 40 years and working at the Sheriff's Office for most his adult life no doubt positioned him in the public mind as understanding the wants and needs of his fellow neighbors, as well as possessing knowledge of law enforcement and crime specific to the county. In a news article announcing his candidacy and on his campaign website, Freeman espouses his professional qualifications, which include graduating from both the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) National Academy and FBI Executive Development School, holding a Master's degree in Public Administration and pursuing a Doctorate degree in the same field, having served as President of the Police

²⁸⁵ "K-9 Unit," *Forsythsheriff.org*, accessed April 30, 2017, <http://www.forsythsheriff.org/divisions/enforcement-division/k-9/>.

Benevolent Association of Georgia, and most recently, helping to start the Brookhaven Police Department as their first Deputy Chief of Police, among others.²⁸⁶ Of all of his qualifications, Freeman stressed the importance of his two year experience with the Brookhaven Police Department as reported by Kayla Robins of the *Forsyth County News*: “‘It convinced me, after seeing what is there and the crime in DeKalb County, that I want to serve my home in Forsyth County,’ he said. ‘I know what’s headed our way, and I know what it takes to fight that level of crime.’”²⁸⁷ In this article announcing his candidacy, Freeman set the tone of his campaign that would leverage residents’ fears of crime and the threat of such coming from outside the county. In addition, Freeman’s platform included assigning a deputy to every public school in the county, increasing the number of narcotics detectives, defending residents’ 2nd Amendment right to bear arms, “reopening” the “closed” South precinct, “spend[in] tax dollars wisely”, and bringing back an independent accreditation certification for the Sheriff’s Office in his efforts to reduce crime.²⁸⁸

At the time, 14 deputies were assigned to public schools in the county, and spent their time between each of the five high schools in the county and took on secondary and as needed duties at the surrounding middle and elementary schools.²⁸⁹ To fulfill on his campaign promise of supplying every public school in the county with its own School Resource Officer (SRO), Freeman would have to designate at least an additional 22 deputies to cover every one of the 21 elementary, 10 middle, and five high schools. However, during the campaign, the Forsyth County Superintendent of schools pushed back against Freeman’s promise to increase the

²⁸⁶ “Ron Freeman,” VoteFreemanSheriff.com; Kayla Robins, “Former High-Ranking Officer Announces Candidacy for Forsyth County Sheriff,” *Forsyth County News*, November 12, 2015, <http://www.forsythnews.com/archives/28705/>.

²⁸⁷ Robins, “Former High-Ranking Officer Announces Candidacy”.

²⁸⁸ “Ron Freeman,” VoteFreemanSheriff.com.

²⁸⁹ Kayla Robins, “Forsyth County School Chief Refutes Sheriff Candidate’s Campaign Pledge on SROs,” *Forsyth County News*, April 22, 2016, <http://www.forsythnews.com/archives/29974/>.

number of deputies in the schools. Superintendent Jeff Bearden announced, as Kayla Robins of the *Forsyth County News* reports:

“At this point, I have not and would not make that recommendation [to add school resource officers]. I believe our current staffing of SROs is highly effective,” Bearden said. “I want to be clear to the public — while Mr. Freeman is campaigning on the pledge to place SROs in all of our schools, ultimately this [school] board has final say.”

Bearden added “that our current relationship with our sheriff’s department is outstanding.”

“As I’ve stated earlier, I’ve never requested full-time SROs in our elementary schools,” he said.”²⁹⁰

In the same article by Robins, the incumbent sheriff, Duane Piper, also praised the work the sheriff’s office has done with the school board, saying “Thanks to this highly effective partnership, we are proud to have shown a continuous track record of keeping our students safe”.²⁹¹ Freeman likened the idea of not providing a resource officer in every school “to pick[ing] and choos[ing] which students get to be fully protected and which do not”. While the Board of Education retains power over the sheriff to position resource officers in public schools, Freeman continued to include this issue in his campaign’s platform and it remained on his campaign website.²⁹²

In appealing to residents’ fear of crime, Freeman promised to defend the 2nd Amendment, stating he believed in the right of “citizens to arm and defend themselves” because “if criminals have rights, so do law abiding citizens”.²⁹³ In a public debate held in late April 2016 before the primary election, Freeman elaborated more on the relevance between citizens’ right to bear arms and crime in Forsyth. Freeman began to talk about gun rights as “how you [citizens] can legally apply those [rights] on the street” in terms of “protect[ing] your family” and the community,

²⁹⁰ Robins, Kayla, “Forsyth County School Chief”.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² “Ron Freeman,” VoteFreemanSheriff.com.

²⁹³ Ibid.

while stressing the importance of gun safety. However, as he closes his statement on this issue, he adds, “I wish more criminals were scared of you [the citizens of Forsyth County]”.²⁹⁴ Incumbent Sheriff Duane Piper agreed with Freeman on preserving gun rights, but his brief response consisted only of vaguely urging citizens to arm themselves and to practice gun safety. Although Piper echoed Freeman’s response, Piper offered no link between the right to carry and decreasing crime, failing to speak to residents’ fears of rising crime.²⁹⁵ In addition, Freeman fundraised for his campaign by holding at least one event at a local gun range, where shooting lessons would be provided for a donation of \$100 per person.²⁹⁶ This was no doubt one way to put into action his beliefs that citizens should play an active role in ensuring the safety of the community and their families. Residents seemed pleased to be involved in the shooting lessons, as many expressed their interest in the fundraising event, commenting that they had signed up to go.²⁹⁷ On his campaign’s Facebook page, Freeman also included an image with a black background emblazoned in white lettering that read, “THE ONLY THING THAT CAN STOP A BAD MAN WITH A GUN IS A GOOD MAN WITH A GUN” in response to a mass shooting in San Bernardino, California in December of 2015.²⁹⁸ In the post, Freeman writes, “As a firm believer in our 2nd amendment, a lifelong police officer, and avid shooter, I remain in disbelief of those who believe that ‘bad’ people will be deterred from violence by making legal gun ownership more restrictive”.²⁹⁹ Although posted early in his campaign, Freeman supporters

²⁹⁴ *Ron Freeman vs. Duane Piper for Forsyth County GA Sheriff 04/27/16*, Forsyth County, Georgia, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Or4pZCb3KM>.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁶ Facebook Post, March 15, 2016.

²⁹⁷ Facebook Post, March 15, 2016.

²⁹⁸ Facebook Post, December 6, 2015.

²⁹⁹ Facebook Post, December 6, 2015.

signaled their agreement by “liking” the post 80 times, “sharing” it 19 times, and writing 14 comments in favor of his post.³⁰⁰

“Reopening” the Sheriff’s Office’s South Precinct was another of Freeman’s campaign platforms. On his campaign website, Freeman wrote, “South Forsyth has nearly 70% of the county’s population with 0% of the patrol deputies. As a result, our deputies are forced to travel from North Forsyth to respond to issues in the South. In the case of life-threatening emergencies, this travel time wastes precious minutes”.³⁰¹ Freeman’s description of the closed precinct gives the illusion that no deputies were ever present in the south end of the county, unless called to be there, leaving almost three-fourths of the county at a higher risk of crime than the north end. A few residents were quick to point out that “deputies don’t respond from the precincts”, only hold pre-shift briefings at the precincts, and are assigned zones all over the county called “beats”, which they patrol during their shifts.³⁰² Yet other residents were quick to believe and express their shock towards Freeman’s assertion that no deputies patrolled the south end, and in addition, mistook that fact that the South Precinct was used as the main facility for the Criminal Investigations Unit as proof that Freeman was correct in stating that patrol deputies were being hoarded in the north end.³⁰³ To the many residents who eventually elected him as sheriff by a large margin, Freeman was not only correct, but working in their best interest by promising more patrol deputies in the south end; a promise easily kept as deputies were already working their assigned beats in the south end well before he was elected.

The platform Freeman most evoked during his campaign was reaccrediting the Sheriff’s Office by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA), a

³⁰⁰ Facebook Post, December 6, 2015.

³⁰¹ “Ron Freeman,” VoteFreemanSheriff.com.

³⁰² Facebook Post, March 13, 2016.

³⁰³ Facebook Post, March 13, 2016.

national accreditation not required by Georgia State law. CALEA certification entails “compliance to a rigorous set of standards in all phases of department training, record keeping, and safety” set by CALEA itself.³⁰⁴ The Forsyth County Sheriff’s Office had been CALEA certified since 2003, but incumbent Sheriff Duane Piper canceled the agency’s recertification in August of 2015, stating that it was an expensive process costing up to \$4,000 a year. Piper preferred to maintain a state-level certification with the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police instead, which would cost less and give the Sheriff’s Office a discount on health insurance. In addition, Piper believed that CALEA policies contradicted state law in the use of lethal force. According to Piper, CALEA was less strict than Georgia law when it came to appropriate use of lethal force, which he argued to *11 Alive Atlanta* would “harm the public”.³⁰⁵ Freeman on the other hand, told the *Forsyth County News* that canceling CALEA certification was “really an embarrassment to the people of Forsyth County”.³⁰⁶ In the public debate before the election, Freeman again spoke in support of CALEA certification, calling it a “blue ribbon seal of approval” and explaining to those in attendance that the certification is “an independent award, coming in and proving your sheriff’s office is doing what it says it’s going to do. National accreditation is putting our walk with our talk”.³⁰⁷ Forsyth County residents supported CALEA certification as well by electing Freeman as their next sheriff. With the perception that crime was on the rise, CALEA certification ensured residents that their local sheriff’s office was not only prepared to control crime, but recognized nationally in their efforts to do so.

³⁰⁴ Kathleen Sturgeon, “Sheriff Piper Clears Air on CALEA Reaccreditation,” *Forsyth Herald*, September 14, 2015, <http://forsythherald.com/stories/Sheriff-Piper-clears-air-on-CALEA-reaccreditation,80285>.

³⁰⁵ Doug Richards, “Forsyth Sheriff Says Accreditation Report Should Stay Secret,” *11 Alive Atlanta WXIA*, April 29, 2016, <http://www.11alive.com/news/local/forsyth-sheriff-says-accreditation-report-should-stay-secret/160338443>.; Sturgeon, “Sheriff Piper Clears Air”.

³⁰⁶ Robins, “Former High-Ranking Officer Announces Candidacy”.

³⁰⁷ Kathleen Sturgeon, “Showdown over Sheriff Spot,” *Forsyth Herald*, May 2, 2016, <http://forsythherald.com/stories/Showdown-over-Sheriff-spot,91565>.

The appeal of the new sheriff to follow through on catering to the fear of crime perceived in the county trumped factors that might have been detrimental to his campaign. First, Freeman had filed suit against the county a few years prior, claiming wrongful termination as he had been relieved of his duties in the command staff in the sheriff's office after the 2012 election, in which Duane Piper was elected to his first term. Freeman and other members of the command staff, who also sued the county, lost their case.³⁰⁸ Citizens were clearly willing to overlook the fact that he might not have been working in residents' best interest regarding efficient use of tax dollars, a tenant of his campaign platform, when he filed suit against the county. Second, the incumbent sheriff released a mailer during the campaign accusing Freeman of failing to properly discipline a deputy accused of having sexual relations with an 18-year-old woman on duty while a member of the previous administration's command staff.³⁰⁹ Controversy surrounding the mailer was exposed by Atlanta news station *11 Alive*. The station's website provides a clip from the live broadcast with an accompanying article that details not only residents' reactions to the mailer, but Piper's reasoning for using the material and Freeman's response. The clip opens with women expressing their disgust at Piper choosing to include the woman's handwritten statement detailing what took place between her and the deputy. Freeman calmly explains to the reporter that he did in fact verbally recommend to the sheriff at the time that the deputy be terminated, but that the sheriff denied his recommendation, at which time he drafted a written recommendation for demotion that was then accepted. Piper tries to raise suspicion of Freeman's morals as he tells the reporter that he believes Freeman never recommended termination because it was not in writing. However, Freeman successfully turned suspicion against Piper, questioning his morals for releasing the mailer and stating about the woman involved, "This young lady

³⁰⁸ Robins, "Former High-Ranking Officer Announces Candidacy".

³⁰⁹ Duane Piper for Sheriff Campaign Mailer, Spring 2016.

when she filed that complaint didn't expect for this to be plastered all over the county five years later when she's trying to rebuild her life".³¹⁰ Although the mailer rightly invokes suspicion of Piper's judgement in releasing so much detail about the young woman, this scenario should have left residents in doubt over whether Freeman could effectively discipline his deputies if need be or that Freeman might cover up wrong doing within his administration. However, Freeman deflected that possibility. Election results show that residents could look past these discrepancies, as Freeman won the primary election against the incumbent with almost 65% of the vote. Freeman carried 19 of the 20 precincts in the county, losing only one precinct which had only a total of four voters.³¹¹

Running unopposed in the 2016 general election, Freeman surmounted 85,888 votes. To put the general election into perspective, as the only candidate on the ballot, Freeman would have won with just one vote. However, he was so backed by the county's residents that over 85,000 of them voted for him regardless. This is especially interesting as the majority Republican county carried Donald Trump for President with only 69,851 votes.³¹² Clearly, residents responded positively to his campaign platforms, and in the early months of his tenure as Sheriff, Freeman began to fulfill his campaign promises while maintaining high visibility of the Sheriff's Office throughout the community. After taking office on January 1, 2017, Freeman "reopened" the South Precinct, held an active shooter training at a local high school, and publicized criminal activity and drug busts via Facebook. In addition, he attended county commissioner meetings in uniform, with other Sheriff's Office personnel. No doubt, Freeman's

³¹⁰ Catie Beck and Shawn Holder, "Sheriff Unapologetic over Controversial Campaign Flyer," *11 Alive Atlanta*, May 18, 2016, <http://www.11alive.com/news/local/investigations/sheriff-unapologetic-over-campaign-flyer/199522871>.

³¹¹ "Forsyth - Election Results May 24, 2016 Primary Election," *Georgia Election Results*, accessed April 11, 2017, <http://results.enr.clarityelections.com/GA/Forsyth/60100/170547/en/summary.html>.

³¹² "Forsyth - Election Results November 8, 2016 General Election." Accessed April 11, 2017. <http://results.enr.clarityelections.com/GA/Forsyth/64050/183469/en/summary.html>.

appearances at the commissioner's meetings, in which the topic of future growth in Forsyth County was frequently the topic, reified the perceived link between population growth and high crime for those residents in attendance.³¹³

On February 21, 2017, the Sheriff's Office posted a video of Sheriff Freeman standing outside a local high school. In the video, Freeman announces that the Sheriff's Office had facilitated a "full-scale mock scenario" of a school shooting earlier that day for training purposes. He ends his message by stating, "I hope that [the active shooter training] gives you some comfort knowing that we are prepared".³¹⁴ About a week later, the Sheriff's Office posted another video of the active shooter training, this time with footage from inside the school as the training was going on. The video shows actors laying on the ground throughout various parts of the school as first responders attend to victims and deputies go after the shooter, all while dramatic music plays in the background. The video attracted over 37,000 views on Facebook, with more than 50 people commenting, commending and thanking the Sheriff's Office for conducting the training.³¹⁵ At first thought, the training seems justified; it only makes sense to be prepared for a school shooting. However, the training can also be seen as Freeman intentionally delivering on his campaign promises. In foregrounding the tactical strength of his deputies in the video through a very rare, yet one of the most violent scenarios a law enforcement officer may ever find themselves in, Freeman is also making clear that his agency is more than capable of controlling a multitude of crimes that might occur in Forsyth County.

Also in late February 2017, the Sheriff's Office posted another video to their Facebook page, this time, announcing the "reopening" of the South Precinct. The roughly one minute video

³¹³ Field Notes, February 16, 2017 and March 2, 2017.

³¹⁴ Facebook Post, February 21, 2017.

³¹⁵ Facebook Post, March 2, 2017.

shows deputies and other agency staff utilizing the building for briefings and administrative tasks. Text across the imagery reminds viewers that when the precinct was “closed”, “Deputies had to respond to south end calls from our North Precinct”.³¹⁶ Recall that “reopening” this precinct was a substantial part of Freeman’s campaign promises and that it leverages voters’ fears of being at risk to crime. Again, this “reopening” of the South Precinct was a fairly easy campaign promise to fulfill, as deputies had always been assigned to patrol beats throughout the county, including the south end.

Shortly after Freeman became Sheriff, the agency began posting criminal activity updates and information about recent drug busts on their Facebook page. In one such post, the Sheriff’s Office gave information about a drug bust in February of 2017 that resulted in two arrests and the seizure of methamphetamine, marijuana, and firearms. The post began with the words, “ILLEGAL DRUG TRADE ON NOTICE” followed by a brief statement from Freeman. Sheriff Freeman writes, “Keeping with our commitment to impact the drug trade in Forsyth County, I am pleased to announce one of several recent narcotics arrests that are making a difference in our community. We are actively targeting those selling drugs to our youth and most vulnerable. If you are thinking of selling drugs in Forsyth County, get ready to join the likes of those below [names of arrested]. I have no tolerance for drug dealers in our community”.³¹⁷ Previous updates provided by the Sheriff’s Office were well received by the citizens of Forsyth County, and this post was no different. One resident applauded the sheriff, writing, “Thanks Sheriff and the whole team. Maybe I won’t pull my son out of school and home school him if y’all keep this going”.³¹⁸ Another resident directly tied the success of the drug bust to Freeman himself, they write,

³¹⁶ Facebook Post, February 26, 2017.

³¹⁷ Facebook Post, February 9, 2017.

³¹⁸ Facebook Post, February 9, 2017.

“Definitely a new sheriff in town! Thank you Sheriff Freeman this is long over due!”³¹⁹ In this particular post, Freeman appeared to be fulfilling his campaign promises of controlling crime. In addition, residents felt that their perceptions of increased crime were finally being addressed. Although Sheriff Freeman is only months into his four-year term at the time of this writing, only time will reveal how Forsyth County continues to be policed by how residents continue to perceive crime and translate their anxieties of such into real outcomes.

³¹⁹ Facebook Post, February 9, 2017.

Conclusion

This research contributes to the field of police and prison studies by illuminating how social, political, and economic dynamics shape perceptions of crime and how these factors translate into how rural and suburban spaces are policed. The events of 1912, as well as subsequent shifts in infrastructure and economy, accompanied by white flight, provided the framework in which residents of Forsyth County came to perceive of crime as originating from outside the county and committed by nonwhites. Perceptions of crime in Forsyth County contradict actual trends nationally and locally, as crime has steadily fallen over the last three decades. Nonetheless, residents of Forsyth County think of crime as an outside threat imposed on them from people racially different from themselves. Contradictory perceptions of crime held by residents of the county influence the ways in which the county is policed and how the residents police themselves and each other. In this work, we can see that residents come to sporadically engage with local law enforcement to educate themselves on identifying illicit drugs and users, as well as support harsher punishments for crime. Furthermore, residents' perceptions of rising crime culminated in the election of a sheriff in 2016 that promised "law and order" and to decrease crime.

To begin to have larger conversations about the future of policing in both Forsyth County and the United States, we must address the social, political, and economic dynamics that perpetuate racial segregation and racism in all its forms, and work to understand not only how these dynamics shape our perceptions of crime, but also how we in turn shape the policing of our communities. Despite actual crime decreasing across the United States, we have come to rely

more heavily on harsher policing and incarceration as a way to eschew social, political, and economic conditions like socioeconomic class inequality and racial anxiety. In avoiding the reality of these conditions, we instead translate our fears into tangible outcomes, such as electing officials that will only perpetuate harsher policing and expand prison use. By revealing how we come to perceive crime and how these perceptions translate into policing outcomes, we can begin to rethink the ways in which we understand our relationship to policing, each other, and our communities.

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