

Introduction to Cities and Citizenship

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This volume originated at the “Summer Seminar on the City: American Government as Urban Government,” a conference held at Drexel University in 2011. Focusing on politics, the authors consider whether, or when, cities are better, and when they are worse laboratories of citizenship and democracy. Answering that question raises several others long asked about city governments: How can residents secure city governments responsive to public preferences? What can be accomplished by a group empowered in city politics? How limited is city government? When do urban citizens secure the attention of state and federal politicians? When can city government be autonomous of state and federal governments? Beyond the city’s limits, the authors explore the potential meaning and consequences of urban citizenship for US politics. In this chapter, I review what scholars of urban politics know about democracy in city politics, the autonomy of cities, their place in US politics, the limits on city government, and a presentation of an active and creative role for cities in the process of globalization. The authors of the chapters here move our understanding of these most basic issues forward, some with cheering information and analysis, and others with sobering evidence and insight.

For those of us who live in a city or grew up in a city, urban citizenship is part of our identity. We commonly recognize urban identities in the character of people we meet, marking them as Angelenos, Chicagoans, Phoenicians, or New Yorkers (or, among New Yorkers, as from the Bronx, Manhattan, Queens, Staten Island, or Brooklyn). There are many ways to

identify with, or be proud of, the city in which we live. There might be good weather, great museums, historic sites, strong neighborhood communities, architectural greatness, or equitable public policy. And of course there is politics—an honest and efficient government, an excellent school system, or a tradition of civil service. Some cities are more political than others, and popular culture exhibits this. A simple, unscientific way to discover local political culture is to ask a taxi driver, or a teacher, or a table attendant about an upcoming election. In Chicago or Washington, the answer is likely to be a disquisition on candidates, platforms, misdeeds, and likely popular support. In San Diego, the response is more likely to be “I don’t pay much attention to politics.” City government, urban politicians, and local political institutions have much to do with how political residents are.

This follows from the ways cities share many of the properties we attribute to nation-states. Writing about nations, Theda Skocpol recognized that national governments have their own sets of electoral, administrative, and service institutions, and they “(and the politics they generate) can operate according to their own logic.” The same is true of cities. Like national states, cities impose taxes and fees, distribute jobs, goods, and services, and “matter because their organizational configurations . . . affect political culture, and encourage some kinds of group formation and collective action . . . make possible the raising of [some] political issues” and discourage the appearance of other issues.¹ In addition, city governments have their own political leaders, who lend meaning to particular programs, create policies rewarding some and excluding others, and mobilize voters into coalitions they hope to maintain. Urban leaders can design political rules to make themselves independent of some groups, as they rest comfortably on others.² City governments influence the creation of interest groups and offer political lessons citizens may bring to other decisions, as when successful black mayors lower Anglo anxieties about voting for African American candidates. Although it is true that cities are legally creatures of their states, cities also have considerable authority and prerogatives: they raise their own revenues; have monopolies of certain functions for which they preside over employees, policies, and administration; and can be effective on their own behalf.

The authority and scope of city government have made it possible for skillful politicians to improve the well-being of urban residents. The constructive possibilities of city government can be seen in the administrations of the early twentieth-century social reform mayors Hazen Pingree (Detroit), Tom Johnson (Cleveland), and Sam “Golden Rule”

Jones (Toledo).³ Pingree fought for the three-cent fare and free transfers on public trolleys, campaigns that were closely watched by residents in their cities and brought nationwide attention in the press. Pingree was a very successful businessman, a Republican, pressed by colleagues in his party to run for mayor of Detroit and clean up its corrupt government. In office, Pingree grew to be a strong ally of the city's immigrant working population. It was for their benefit that he championed the three-cent fare and free transfers. It was for their benefit too that he pressed Detroit's utility corporations to lower their fees and became an advocate of municipal ownership of utilities. In the depression of 1893, Pingree initiated the potato patch plan, in which small plots of vacant land were given to indigent families who applied for them. In a few years, nearly 20,000 families farmed on these lands, the value of the crops harvested exceeded the city's poor relief budget, and the plan spread to many other cities. Pingree's efforts to pressure corporations to make them better serve Detroit's population alienated other Republican leaders in Michigan, including many who earlier had been his friends. The governor and state legislature also opposed him and so interfered with his efforts that Pingree ran for governor himself, serving two terms ending in 1901.⁴ We can think of comparable efforts and successes at both improving well-being and building community or popular solidarity, Fiorello La Guardia in New York (1934–1945) and Ivan Allen in Atlanta (1962–1970).⁵

More commonly, the authority and domain of city governments have enabled them to establish parks and school systems; supply drinking water and pick up the garbage; create mass transportation in trains, trolleys, and buses; support museums; and innovate in systems of criminal justice. So we know that, for all of our discussion of limits, control of city government conveys wide-ranging powers. Groups empowered by city government have these resources at hand, although, like Pingree and other social reformers, politicians leading their efforts will encounter resistance from several quarters.

What of democracy in cities? In the eighteenth century, it was the great discovery of citizens in the thirteen colonies that elections were an effective way to tie politicians to public sentiment. They came to this by comparing the behavior of colonial governors, who were appointed by the Crown, and members of colonial legislatures, who were elected. In the nineteenth century, residents were keenly aware that they were citizens or residents of a democratic republic, contrasted often by political leaders and the press with the "subjects" who endured monarchs and despots elsewhere. It was the republican government of the United States

that informed how residents thought about their prospects in cities. So, amid demonstrations for “work or bread” during the depression of the mid-1850s, Edward Mallon, a tailor, reminded workers that “there was one weapon the [American] workingmen had [that] . . . was more powerful than the gun or the chain behind the barricades of Paris. It was the ballot.”⁶

Elections remain the central institutional arrangement for citizens to tie city government to popular preferences. Yet all elections are not equal; rules and institutions matter. Cities make choices in arranging elections and public institutions. They may have mayor-council, city manager, or commission government. Elections may or may not be held concurrently with elections for state or federal offices. Polling places may be open only one day or on several days; they may be open for many hours, accommodating people in the labor force as well as those with more time. Candidates may have party designations, or elections may be nonpartisan. City governments set residence and registration requirements for voters. Each of these choices will influence who votes, how much their votes count, and who is likely to hold public office. Finally, politicians, their supporters, and political party or Nonpartisan Slating Groups activists may walk precincts, knock on doors, and remind people to vote.

The list is elementary, but it is important nevertheless, not least because every choice on that list affects turnout. In cities, turnout matters. Zoltan Hajnal and Jessica Trounstein have shown that the institutional arrangements in cities affect turnout, and turnout affects who is elected. The authors are concerned with racial and ethnic representation. People of color are twice the proportion of urban populations than they are of the nation as a whole. In 61 percent of US cities with populations greater than 100,000, non-Hispanic whites were less than half of the population. Propensity to vote is similar among Anglo Americans and African Americans; Latinos and Asian Americans are less likely to vote. Higher aggregate turnout in local elections results in more Latino and Asian Americans on city councils. Specific institutional changes to increase turnout—changing from at-large elections to district elections and changing from nonconcurrent to concurrent elections—increases the proportion of blacks on city councils by about 6 percent. More surprising, racial and ethnic differences in who turns out to vote in mayoral elections affect who wins. Hajnal and Trounstein simulated mayoral elections in the ten largest US cities to show who would have won if the same proportion of registered voters in each group had voted. In three of those elections (Houston, New York, and San Diego), equal turnout would have resulted

in a different winner. The key voters in each of the three cities were Latinos. In each city, Latinos in the actual election supported the loser; if the proportion of Latinos voting had matched the turnout of other groups, the candidate they supported would have won.⁷

My own research suggested that cities with district elections and descriptive representation, parties, and high turnout distributed benefits more equitably than cities without those traits. In *Morning Glories*, I compared seven reform cities (San Diego, San Jose, Phoenix, Albuquerque, Austin, San Antonio, and Dallas) with three I called “machine descendants” (New Haven, Chicago, and New York), in 1960. The reformed cities had citywide, nonconcurrent, and nonpartisan elections. The machine descendants had strong parties, concurrent elections, and representation by districts. The machine descendants distributed libraries and parks more equitably than the cities with reform government. Cities with district elections and descriptive representation had higher turnout and greater citizen satisfaction than residents in cities without them.⁸ Of course it would have been infinitely better if I had compared dozens of cities, with measures of more outcomes—educational attainment by race and family income, for example, or descriptive representation among municipal employees, or the incidence of police brutality. That research design would have produced much more information about the substantive and policy outcomes of institutions in city politics. And even more broadly, to know where residents of cities are empowered, we ought to investigate where policy outcomes, especially those most important to residents, match the preferences of the populace, try to identify the institutional arrangements that enable that outcome.

Understanding who gets what and how in cities requires looking beyond formal institutions and party leaders. In 1976, San Antonio residents petitioned the Department of Justice, arguing that the city’s annexations, in combination with its voting arrangements, diluted the votes of Latinos, who were about to become a majority of the city’s population. In response, the Department found that citywide elections—because they consistently deprived some citizens of ever securing their preferred candidates for political office, “diluting” the votes of Spanish-speaking residents—were discriminatory, violating their civil rights. The demise of citywide elections followed across the Southwest.⁹ The crucial actor in events in San Antonio, in both protesting existing political arrangements and mobilizing Latinos once new institutions were in place, was Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS). COPS was brought into being with the assistance of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF),

founded by Saul Alinsky in 1940.¹⁰ Since that time, IAF has been instrumental in the organization of dozens of community organizations. In the last twenty years, service workers' unions have similarly increased the public visibility of low-wage communities and workers and also raised their wages. Like many community organizations, these unions are politically active, and in many US cities they are a force to be reckoned with.¹¹ The lesson here is that citizen activism and community and other popular organizations empower citizens to tie elected officials to their will.

Leaders may move some distance from the citizenry, and city governments may formulate and pursue goals that are not reflective of the demands, interests, or ideologies of social groups, classes, or public sentiment more generally. Jessica Trounstone has argued that parties and politicians follow a trajectory in which the most successful can afford to neglect some constituents. In their initial efforts to secure office, politicians seek support from many communities and groups, creating broad coalitions. Once secure in office and confident of victory in future elections, they direct resources to core constituents and curtail benefits to marginal—and so, in their view, possibly superfluous—supporters. The resulting disaffection eventually results in their loss of power.¹²

One reason politicians and other officials may stray from the desires of their constituents is that in the ordinary pursuit of their responsibilities, politicians and municipal employees may operate well under the radar of residents and the press. In this way, low turnout may bear bitter fruit. Widespread withdrawal from politics facilitated the astonishing greed and corruption of public officials in Bell, California, and abuses of authority by an empowered white minority in Ferguson, Missouri. Both cities are small; in 1910 Ferguson's population numbered about 21,000, and Bell counted about 35,000 residents. Residents were also of moderate income. Median household income from 2009 to 2013 was \$35,945 in Bell and \$38,685 in Ferguson. Bell has a predominantly Latino immigrant population; 67% of Ferguson residents are African American. Small cities are not much studied; Bell and Ferguson offer morality tales of city government gone wrong.¹³

In both cities, police were key partners of elected officials. Like the support armed forces have provided to authoritarian national regimes, police in Bell and Ferguson engaged in repressive and punitive activities. Police also generated funds for government salaries and services by the aggressive use of traffic violations, impounding of cars, and arrests for minor offenses, all targeting the low-income populations. Ferguson officials made both the goals of these activities and their targets clear

to the police. The Department of Justice investigation of the Ferguson Police Department reported that “[c]ity and police leadership; pressure officers to write citations, independent of any public safety need, and rely on citation productivity to fund the city budget.” Similarly, in Ferguson’s municipal court, “staff are keenly aware that the City considers revenue generation to be the municipal court’s primary purpose.” In Bell, the police chief planned to boost revenue “by aggressively towing the cars of illegal immigrants.”¹⁴ In both Bell and Ferguson, elected officials were freed from public scrutiny by low turnout in municipal elections. Officials in Bell were granted more fiscal freedom by an election that turned it into a charter city. In both cities, turnout was kept low by devices known to practitioners and scholars to suppress participation: off-cycle years for elections, elections in the spring rather than the fall, and the depoliticization of government by adoption of the city-manager form.

Corruption in Bell was revealed by the *Los Angeles Times* in 2010. The reaction of the community was immediate. The *Times* revealed that the city manager earned \$1.5 million annually; city council members were paid \$100,000 per year for their part-time jobs. A new community organization, Basta!, organized in a campaign to recall the city manager, his assistant, and a majority of the city council; the measure was endorsed with 95 percent of votes cast. The same people were convicted of corruption and jailed or fined. Voter registration increased by 10 percent; in 2011 a new city council took office on April 8. Ferguson became the focus of national attention after Michael Brown, an eighteen-year-old black man, was killed by a city police officer. The officer was found innocent of criminal intent. The immediate response was a sustained series of demonstrations. In Ferguson, too, popular response included mobilization to replace city officials with others committed to the community. Local activists were assisted by national nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), including MoveOn.org, the Service Employees International Union’s Missouri state council, and the Working Families Party. The election increased black representation on the city council from one to three and, more importantly, brought turnout to 30 percent, almost triple the turnout in the prior election. Here, as in Bell, there was optimism about the city and its government, as well as recognition that “This is the beginning of a long Process.”¹⁵ How much change takes place in Bell and Ferguson will depend on how well residents can sustain the organization and energy that brought new officials in these elections.

When have cities and their residents been effective at winning the attention of higher governments and securing policies and funding for

them? Scott James has argued very persuasively that the electoral pressures of presidential elections are not confined to the quadrennial event, but continue without end.¹⁶ In the middle of the twentieth century, the presence of African Americans in critical swing states—Illinois and New York most prominently—provoked the Community Action Program and other initiatives of the Great Society intended to cement loyalty and encourage turnout for the Democrats among African Americans.¹⁷ The same dynamics increased the influence of New York and Chicago mayors, whose support was key to Democratic victory in their closely competitive states. Democratic majorities were not African Americans alone, but African Americans and Latinos were central components of a coalition of people of color and Anglos in the nation's cities. The greater inference here is that rules designed for a particular purpose may well serve quite different ends. In this instance, the electoral college, meant to ensure the representation of small population states, and hence their loyalty to the union in 1787, in 2012 reinforced the victory of a popular majority. The meaning was not lost on Republicans, some of whom are now working to change the way electoral votes are counted. What of larger forces—the changing shape of the US economy, and with it the changing roles of cities, and what threats or opportunities might be posed by the international economy? These are indeed towering challenges. Jerome Hodos observed that academic attention to globalization has focused on the “world cities” tasked with managing international enterprises (New York, Tokyo, London). In *Second Cities*, Hodos focused on more common, lesser cities in the world economy and their leaders' efforts to find an economic niche that would support their communities. Looking at Philadelphia and Manchester (England), Hodos shows how nineteenth-century leaders in each city secured a key role in their region, Philadelphia by construction of canals and later railroads tying it to the West, and Manchester by construction of a port that brought it transatlantic commerce in cotton. In this way, Hodos reminds us that regional and world trade were hardly new to the twentieth century. More recently, Philadelphia has rested its hopes in part on the port (landing the enormous coup of winning a large shipbuilding contract, which endowed Philadelphia with a state-of-the-art shipbuilding facility) and, more importantly, its airport's function as a hub for major airlines. Manchester has for the most part abandoned the port and shifted its focus to airlines. Hodos suggests we think of these efforts as urban mercantilism, or municipal foreign policy, emphasizing benefits to the city as a whole on the one hand and the

need for connections beyond its immediate region on the other. And he is insistent on the centrality of city governments in this effort. “The local state,” Hodos wrote,

took the leading role in planning, funding, and managing immense transportation infrastructure projects that enhanced the city’s position [in the transportation network], reinforced its dominance over its hinterland . . . and spread the city’s economy into new leading sectors.¹⁸

This means that cities were not simply the benefactors of good fortune bestowed by the world system. Rather, “[u]rban agency . . . also constitutes the very process of globalization—it is the stuff of which globalization is made.”¹⁹ Urban mercantilism creates the map of trade routes; urban mercantilism charts the flow of commerce; urban mercantilism crafts the ties of globalization.

Any of these claims about the potential for city governments rests on their autonomy. Harold Wolman and Michael Goldsmith define urban autonomy as “the ability of local governments to have an independent impact on the well-being of their citizens.”²⁰ What city government, and hence those empowered by it, can accomplish requires autonomy. *Cities enjoy autonomy when they have adequate resources they control*. New York Democrats learned this in the 1850s. From the founding of the republic, mayors sent envoys to Washington after each presidential election, seeking patronage and resources from the Oval Office. In 1856, politicians realized that city government’s own patronage positions outnumbered those available from the federal government in the Customs House, a federal institution central to balancing the federal budget and employer of many citizens. One Tammany politician declared their liberation: “No man should have power in this state if that power is to be swayed by authorities in Washington.”²¹ Those resources and the fealty of a majority of the city’s voters empowered New York’s Democrats for decades.²²

What of the limits on city governments—the restraints imposed by the threat of exit by residents and employers; the legal confines of their status, which subordinates them to their states; and the costs and compromises imposed by the federal government? These are frequently complained of in academic writing, including authors in this book, and the press. Yet before we let our politicians and ourselves off the hook,

it is worth listing a few possibilities within reach of local governments, political leaders, and citizens willing to work for them. Housing provides an example. Some cities require that all multifamily housing set aside a portion of units for low-income families, as happened in Oceanside, California, and the more affluent Montgomery County, Maryland. Cities might work harder at enforcing building codes. Equally pressing, we continue to have towering problems of inequity in education, from absence of Head Start and pre-kindergarten to the school-to-prison pipeline. Although it is certainly true that more plentiful resources enable greater efforts, I do not think the fundamental problems here are financial. Alas, teachers are sometimes part of the problem; even lifelong supporters of unions, especially public-sector unions, have been disappointed, disheartened, and angry about the prerogatives claimed by public schoolteachers. And parents can be disappointed, disheartened, and angry about the abandonment of public schools by politicians and by their more affluent neighbors, abandonment both in policy and by where they choose to send their own children to school. In the criminal justice system, we also have problems that are not fundamentally financial. There are the continuing problems of harassment and worse of people of color, especially young men, by police, and their differential treatment by the courts. However high up these systems may be faulty, discriminatory, or white supremacist; for the hapless resident they happen in school, on the sidewalk, and in the streets.

The chapters in this collection provide arguments and evidence that help us understand cities, citizenship, and democracy. Students of cities have long recognized their subordinate legal status, of which the most extreme case is Washington, DC. Nevertheless, cities have at times been home to more, and at other times to less, effective citizenship and democratic government. Sometimes cities have made progress toward these goals when left to their own devices; at other times their path was encouraged by state or federal government. The stakes of city politics are hardly trivial to their citizens. Those high stakes made cities the province of a street-fighting pluralist politics for many years and in some cities still does.

Michael Javen Fortner offers answers to questions about effective citizenship and democracy. Fortner counterposes a centuries-old understanding of cities—more precisely, city-states—as the ideal type of democracy, with the evisceration of urban possibilities by Paul Peterson's declaration that, because cities have for generations not been city-states, but simply cities scattered across the vast expanse of the United States,

their governments are very limited in what they can accomplish. The enforcers of those limits are those residents and employers who, should they find the balance of costs and benefits of being in a particular city negative, will not hesitate to exit.²³ It follows from that insight that city governments will be punished if they pursue—and so will be reluctant to engage in—redistributive policies, which the public and employers are likely to reject. As a result, Peterson argued, politicians are likely to pursue policies that benefit the city's economy as a whole. Fortner's response is, in brief, that Peterson's insight was time limited. It is only a quite recent possibility that firms or families will move outside their home city to lower costs; exit only became a possibility practiced by business in the 1950s.²⁴

Fortner's larger concern is citizenship. Here he raises the bar, seeing effective citizenship as "individual engagement with city politics" on the one hand and "the capacity of residents to determine the fate of their communities," more particularly to "use the urban state to achieve outcomes they value," on the other. Even if city residents could live up to the standard Fortner sets for them, under what conditions might their city governments be able to deliver? Here Fortner's strongest case for cities to overcome the limitations of law and local resources is for their leaders to leverage, though political parties, their political support of national politicians. Like many other things, that leverage is a product of "big structures and large processes" not under the control of cities. Following Scott James, if we recognize that winning presidential elections is ever the driving force of national politics, then cities will have leverage when their votes are considered critical to success in presidential elections. Sure enough, the most compelling examples of urban leverage within the party system come at those moments when presidents and their parties recognized city votes as critical to election outcomes. For twentieth-century Democrats, that meant the 1960s (as described above), 2012, and 2016.

Tom Hulme shows that long before Mr. Rogers appeared on television, adult immigrants to the United States, and schoolchildren, were taught that cities created beautiful days in their neighborhoods. From World War I through the 1930s, civics textbooks taught that citizens' well-being was the product of the work of municipal employees, who cleaned the streets, ensured that the milk left on the front step was pure and unadulterated, provided clean and safe running water, collected the garbage, and taught in city schools. Civics textbooks presented urban life as peaceful, clean, and orderly—a veritable utopia—and the product of municipal employees. For Hulme, the key insight is that in the interwar period it was urban rather than national citizenship that formed

the basis of belonging in the United States. Although Hulme concedes that city dwellers “may not have necessarily seen themselves primarily as Bostonians, Philadelphians, or Chicagoans rather than Americans,” residents first learned about, and began the practice of, democracy and government in their cities.²⁵

Marion Orr and colleagues turn their attention to contemporary public schools, showing how public schools have functioned to build political participation by Latino parents. The importance of Latino political participation is enhanced by the rapidly increasing size of the Spanish surnamed electorate in the United States, particularly in swing states. Orr and colleagues carefully trace the relations between parent involvement in schools and their political activity. The authors found a significant relationship between participation in school activities and an interest in politics and public affairs. Participation in school activities increased the likelihood that Latino parents contacted a public official and, even more compelling, that participation in school activities was strongly associated with political and civic engagement, joining with others to solve problems.

Schools are especially influential when they offer welcoming, multi-lingual environments. The process can be seen today in even earlier grades than the ones Orr and colleagues discuss. Immigrant families may have children in Head Start (three-year-olds) or pre-kindergarten (four-year-olds) in public schools. For the parents, especially those not in the labor force, the school provides a US community different from, and likely more diverse than, their own neighborhood. In those ways, schools can provide entry into contemporary American life for parents as well as their children.

There are other readings of cities and city politics that focus on the ways opportunities for effective politics in cities have been diminished, or enhanced for some residents and diminished for others. Richard Harris presents a new urban regime now in place in Camden, New Jersey. Camden’s major employers—Campbell Soup, Esterbrook Pen, RCA Victor, and others, have abandoned the city, leaving high unemployment and impoverished government in their wake. Camden is 52 percent African American and 38 percent Hispanic; its unemployment rate is 20 percent, and half of all households in Camden have income no higher than \$25,000 per year. In addition, subsequent to the authors’ completion of their essay, Camden lost its police force—because it could not pay them—to county government.

In place of the business-government regime presented by Clarence Stone, Camden has seen the rise of a community development regime. In place of business leaders, Harris finds foundations, nonprofits, and

sometimes health sector institutions setting the course for urban communities and likely their governments as well. Whereas the old regime joined politicians and business, the new regime hardly consults with politicians or government. This is possible in part because Camden's government became so weak and incapacitated that the community development regime was able to step in to take its place. Camden is not alone. Benton Harbor, Michigan, is a similarly economically distressed city, now "subject to . . . state intervention that effectively prorogues its elected government." East St. Louis (Illinois) too has become a ward of its state. Although organizations in the community development regime "work with activists" in their cities, as happened in urban renewal in the 1950s and 1960s, the decisions of the new regime are presented to the public as *faits accomplis* rather than propositions for public debate. Harris concludes that, although not tainted by venal interest in the outcomes (as were some of their business predecessors), central actors in the new urban regime are confident that they know best about public policy for their cities. African Americans and Latinos are the majority in cities like Camden and Benton Harbor, communities stripped of gainful employment, good schools, and effective local government. If residents of those cities are beneficiaries of community development regimes, Harris argues, they are nevertheless not effective citizens in those cities, and so are only the beneficiaries of the regimes, not architects of their own future.

Despite the muting of resident voices in Camden and Harris's disparagement of citizenship under community development regimes, his chapter offers grounds for hope. A major redevelopment project to which the mayor and the city council acceded was derailed by popular opposition, supported from two important actors in the community development regime, the Ford and Annie E. Casey Foundations. It seems likely that, absent the foundations, opposition would have been managed one way or another and defeated. As it happened, however, the coalition of popular groups and their wealthy supporters was successful. This suggests that, if nothing else, popular civic participation in Camden may be down, but it is not out. Equally important, partners in the community development regime can be open to, and supportive of, popular input and activism in ways their predecessors were not.

It may also be that community development regimes are quite different in intent and motivation than the business regimes of the past. The Web site describes the Annie E. Casey Foundation as "devoted to developing a brighter future for millions of children at risk of poor educational, economic, social and health outcomes." The Ford Foundation's Web

site explains that its “goals for more than fifty years” are “to strengthen democratic values; reduce poverty and injustice, promote international cooperation, and advance human achievement.” The Ford Foundation has a long and storied history of promoting progressive liberal reform. The Casey Foundation has chosen two cities, Atlanta and Camden, for community-building assistance. If Harris sees Casey and Ford as directive big brothers, Casey’s own description of their efforts in Atlanta has an Alinsky-ish tone:

Community building, the practice of working with residents and community-based organizations to strengthen civic life and develop community-driven responses to common challenges, has been foundational to this work.

It is obvious, reading the foundation’s description of its work in Atlanta, that the initiative is built on years of sometimes painful experience (for example, one lesson of their experience is “the importance of [the foundation] staying out of implementation as a place-based funder”), and that the foundation and its employees are driven by their desire to help residents of Atlanta communities make their lives better. There is much emphasis on “transparent dialogue, participatory planning resident organizing, and organizational capacity building.” On the other hand, the document cautions that “more important than strategies . . . is not to get ahead of the community as the Foundation charts its way forward.”²⁶ So I do not doubt that Harris is onto something about the demeanor and intent of foundation representatives in Camden, and I am confident that Camden would be different if the Industrial Areas Foundation had been there instead of Casey and Ford. On the other hand, when push came to shove, Casey and Ford cast their lot with popular opposition to the proposed development, not with the developers, surely a different stance than their business predecessors would have taken, a stance that made all the difference.

Khalilah Brown-Dean investigates the insidious role of prisons in federal and state elections, creating their own peculiar malapportionment and thus draining resources away from poor communities, African Americans, and cities. This is indeed important. The communities in which prisons have been built are a world unto themselves, and their residents want to preserve that status. Although residents of communities that house prisons recognize their economic importance, one wonders how aware they are of the increased power of their own votes. County

and town leaders in places with prisons are perfectly clear about the advantages that accrue to their communities and themselves from prisons. Certainly politicians are alert to the dynamics of elections to state legislatures. Interest groups reliant on prisons, especially prison guards, are active on behalf of their own prison-related economic and political interests.

For the general public and in academia, recognition of these dynamics is sparse. On the one hand, there is considerable awareness of the disproportionate imprisonment of people of color, especially black men. Brown-Dean reminds us that African Americans are 12 percent of the US population but 60 percent of all Americans behind bars. Latinos, too, are overrepresented among those in prison. Many people are also aware that the disproportionate number of blacks among convicted felons has also resulted in their permanent disfranchisement, even in states where, according to law, their disfranchisement should end with their prison terms.²⁷ On the other hand, in addition to political losses to individuals are collective losses, and these are less recognized. Communities of color and cities suffer politically from the rules for counting prisoners in the census. Brown-Dean, retrieving a term that dates to the Middle Ages, denominates the decline in the power and influence of cities that follows from these rules “civil death.”

The census counts prisoners not in the places they lived before they were jailed, but as residents of the places where they are incarcerated. Were prisons close to their original residences, this would not be so consequential for their communities and for cities. Prisons are neither close to home nor urban. Rather, prisons are in rural areas, bringing the political weight of their populations with them. The result is that counties and towns take part in “fierce battles to win [prison] construction projects.” More remunerative for their locales than Wal-Mart, prisons are a surefire growth strategy. Because federal monies for many programs are allocated on the basis of population, the profits of prisons for their locales are from the public sector as well as the firms that supply food, uniforms, telephones, and many other amenities to prisons and their inmates.

The other side of this coin is the loss to cities of the same industries and federal monies that have moved to the countryside with former city residents. Prisoners have been moved not only from urban to rural areas, but also from one state to another. Sometimes representation in state legislatures is gained or lost by the location of prisoners. In this roundabout way, Brown-Dean argues, counting bodies and ballots results not only in the disfranchisement of individuals, but also in civil death for cities and

their residents. As a resident of the District of Columbia, which has jails but no prisons, I add to the pain inflicted by these rules the extreme and entirely unnecessary cruelty of housing prisoners hundreds and sometimes thousands of miles from their communities, their friends, and their families. The costs of counting bodies and ballots in the way we do, and placing prisoners where we do, marks the bottomless perversity of our system of criminal justice.

Lisa Miller argues that “the political arrangements of federalism” create “racially stratified access to power” in the United States. Federal government limits the power, prerogatives, and resources of cities and so limits the power and influence of African Americans, who are predominantly urban. There are examples of African American power and influence in large, prosperous cities: Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago, for example. Even in these cities, however, citizen efficacy is diminished by the inability of city governments to control the fate of their own communities. Miller’s case study of gun control efforts in Philadelphia provides persuasive evidence. There was tremendous public unhappiness about and mobilization against gun violence in Philadelphia. Active community groups hoped to diminish gun violence through policies that would restrict access to guns, especially for young people. Activists emphasized the victimization of individuals and communities and the goal of increasing security. Their efforts were stymied by gun rights advocates, who persuaded the legislature to pass a preemption law. The law precluded localities from taking actions to restrict gun ownership that were more severe than laws enacted by state government. Although gun rights activists lobby for more severe sentencing of criminals, they oppose restrictions on gun ownership.

The continued colonial status of the District of Columbia presents an even more striking example of limited city government. DC residents enjoy neither their chosen gun control policy nor the women’s reproductive policy passed by their city council. The Supreme Court found the District’s gun control policy unconstitutional. Congress overruled the freedom to choose once championed by the Supreme Court.²⁸ Congress even failed to enact legislation that would have relieved DC government from budget review and revision by Congress. And at committee hearings, DC Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton was not permitted to testify on behalf of DC’s policies. Taxation without representation creates many burdens.

Miller is certainly correct to argue that political rules shape political outcomes and that the limits on urban governments especially constrain

African Americans. Yet there is something to be said about a political arena in which communities of color have more influence—because they are a greater proportion of the population and the electorate—than they do in states or the national government, where their presence is diminished by their relatively smaller numbers. Cities have been settings in which African Americans and other people of color have implemented policies and fueled organizations that serve their interests, sometimes initiated by others and sometimes of their own devising, for example, community control of schools, Head Start and pre-kindergarten, charter schools, community development corporations, neighborhood health centers, police review boards, and the growth of service workers' unions.

Furthermore, political presence in cities enables influence beyond the city's boundaries. African America urban communities have long been a strategic element of presidential politics. As Woodrow Wilson ran for his second term in 1916, worried Illinois Democrats downstate in Jackson County wrote to Wilson's campaign manager that "trainloads" of African Americans were arriving from the South. These were described as simple "excursions" by the railroads, but the chairman of the County Democratic Central Committee wrote that "this is hardly probable . . . We fear that these negroes are being taken to some of the large cities where they will register their vote against our party,"²⁹ thereby causing Wilson to lose Illinois and with it, reelection.

Later, the presence of African Americans in critical swing states—Illinois and New York, for example—provoked the community action program and other parts of the War on Poverty (some of which, like Head Start, are still with us), and the Legal Services Administration—intended to ensure their turnout for the Democrats.³⁰ And in the most recent presidential contest, anyone with the stamina to watch hours of John King on CNN saw over and over again that the votes of swarms of red counties voting Republican were overwhelmed by the votes of tightly packed blue counties voting for the Democrats.³¹

The greatest victories for urban citizenship and democracy are not in national elections, but accomplished within their own borders. Successful cities create inclusive collective identities that project character and pride. Those were the accomplishments of Pingree in Detroit, La Guardia's administrations in New York, Atlanta under Allen, and San Antonio under Cisneros. None of those cities was without fault, or without exclusion, but they did not boast about them. They were not—before or after—without fights to change rules, institutions, and leaders, but the fights made for progress. My colleagues and friends will testify that I am

not much of a Pollyanna, but the more I study the history of cities, the more I see evidence that they remain the great hope of democracy.

Or we can simply look at Camden—or Bell or Ferguson—down but not out.

Notes

1. Theda Skocpol, “Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research,” in Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol, *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 21.

2. On this last point, see Jessica Trounstine, *Political Monopolies in American Cities: The Rise and Fall of Bosses and Reformers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008). Similarly, Janet Abu-Lughod has offered a sustained argument about the importance of attention to the particularities of urban communities. Janet Abu-Lughod, *New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, America’s Global Cities* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1999).

3. Jones was succeeded in office by Brand Whitlock. Whitlock, who served four terms as mayor of Toledo, championed a less harsh system of criminal justice. For this, he was attacked by Toledo’s Federation of Churches. Whitlock responded in a long public letter, *On the Enforcement of Law in Cities* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1910).

4. Melvin G. Holli, *Reform in Detroit: Hazen S. Pingree and Urban Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969). Holli also contributed the terms “social reform” and “structural reform” to urban studies. Social reform mayors were animated by a commitment to benefit low-income residents; structural reformers sought to reshape urban political institutions, often favoring nonpartisan elections, city managers, and commission government.

5. Ivan Allen Jr., *Notes on the Sixties* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971). Allen and Atlanta city government more generally were pilloried in Floyd Hunter, *Community Power Structure, A Study of Decision Makers* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953). The same years are chronicled in Clarence N. Stone, *Economic Growth and Neighborhood Discontent: System Bias in the Urban Renewal Program in Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1976), later theorized by Stone in *Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta, 1946–1988* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1979).

6. Quote is from Carl N. Degler, “Labor in the Economy and Politics of New York City, 1850–1860: A Study of the Impact of Early Industrialism” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1962, 276–277).

7. Zoltan Hajnal and Jessica Trounstine, “Where Turnout Matters: The Consequences of Uneven Turnout in City Politics” *Journal of Politics* 67, no. 2 (2005): 515–535; city councils, 535–536; mayoral elections, 521–522.

8. Amy Bridges, *Morning Glories, Municipal Reform in the Southwest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), chapters 7 and 8.

9. Charles L. Cottrell and R. Michael Stevens, "The 1975 Voting Rights Act and San Antonio, Texas: Toward a Federal Guarantee of a Republican Form of Government," *The Public Interest* 8, no. 1 (Winter 1978): 79–89. 86; Bridges, *Morning Glories*, chapter 8, The Politician and the Crowd.

10. Saul Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals* (New York: Vintage, 1969 [1946]).

11. Leo Fink and Brian Greenberg, *Upheaval in the Quiet Zone, A History of Hospital Workers' Union Local 1199* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); Karen Brodtkin, *Making Democracy Matter, Identity and Activism in Los Angeles* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007); Ruth Milkman, *LA Story: Immigrant Workers and the Future of the US Labor Market* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006).

12. This is the argument of Jessica Trounstine, *Political Monopolies in American Cities, the Rise and Fall of Bosses and Reformers* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

13. J. Eric Oliver has studied governments in small cities for many years. In *Democracy in Suburbia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2001) and *Local Elections and the Politics of Small-Scale Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), Oliver presents a measured appraisal of politics in small cities. Although Oliver has reservations about those governments, he mostly sees them as benign. Hogen-Esch, cited below, argues that small suburbs of Los Angeles are commonly governed by corrupt administrations. Tom Hogen-Esch provides a good account of politics in Bell in "Predator State: Corruption in a Council-Manager System—the Case of Bell, California," paper presented at the City of Bell Scandal Revisited Conference, Chapman University, February 19, 2015.

14. U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, "Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department," March 4, 2015, "fund the city budget," 10; "primary purpose," 14. Hogan-Esch claims that Los Angeles suburbs are commonly governed by corrupt administrations; "Southeast Los Angeles County: Corridor of Corruption," *op cit*, 7–9.

15. For Bell, *Los Angeles Times*, "Timeline Bell." For Ferguson, *New York Times*, "Election in Ferguson, Watched Nationwide, Carries Hope of 'New Tomorrow'" April 5, 2015, A14; "Ferguson Elects 2 Blacks but Snubs Protest Slate," April 8, 2015, A16; Council Vote in Ferguson Brings Promise and Pause," April 9, 2015, A18.

16. Scott James and Brian Lawson, "The Political Economy of Voting Rights Enforcement in America's Gilded Age: Swing States, Partisan Commitment, and the Federal Election Law," *American Political Science Review* 93, no. 1 (1999): 115–131.

17. Frances Fox Piven, "The War on Poverty as a Political Strategy," in *The Politics of Turmoil, Essays on Poverty, Race, and the Urban Crisis*, ed. Richard Cloward and Frances Fox Piven (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), 271–283.

18. Jerome I. Hodos, *Second Cities, Globalization and Local Politics in Manchester and Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 178.

19. Hodos, *Second Cities*, 185.

20. Harold Wolman and Michael Goldsmith, "Local Autonomy as a Meaningful Analytic Concept, Comparing Local Government in the United States and the United Kingdom," *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (1990): 3–27.

21. Amy Bridges, *City in the Republic, Antebellum New York and the Origins of Machine Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1984), 137.

22. Readers see, in the essay by Harris, how resources are key to urban autonomy or its absence. Weak economies have deprived Camden, New Jersey, and other cities of self-government and so, Harris argues, of opportunities for participatory democracy and effective citizenship. Brown-Dean and Miller have shown how political forces outside cities, as well as higher governments, have chipped away at the autonomy and power of city residents and their governments, limiting possibilities for urban residents and possibly eroding possibilities for effective urban representation in state and federal politics and government.

23. That observation was the insight of economist Charles Tiebout. Charles Tiebout, "The Pure Theory of Local Expenditures," *Journal of Political Economy* 64 (1956): 416–424.

24. In the 1940s, a few large production sites were constructed for war material in rural areas. Automobile manufacturers began moving production outside Detroit in 1950s. Thomas Sugrue, *Origin of the Urban Crisis, Race and Inequality in Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), chapters 5 and 7. In my view, Peterson does not provide persuasive evidence for his second claim, about politicians' choices. The history of urban renewal suggests that the pursuit of improvement of the economy of the city as a whole can be disastrous for politicians; see John Mollenkopf, "The Politics of Post-War Urban Development," *Politics & Society* 5, no. 9 (1975): 247–295.

25. Full disclosure requires me to state my father was a carpenter for New York City, and I worked at several campuses of the City University of New York before it was absorbed by the State University of New York.

26. "Community Building to Drive Change, Strategies for the Atlanta Civic Site," Annie E. Casey Foundation, April 4, 2014, 1, 6, 15, 16. On the foundation's Web site, www.aecf.org. The site does not have a comparable account of Camden.

27. The *New York Times* estimated that there would be 5.85 million disenfranchised convicted felons on the day of the midterm elections on November 5, 2014, nearly half of whom had completed their sentences. Editorial, Sunday, November 7, 2014, <http://takingnote.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/11/07/florida-leads-the-pack-in-felon-disenfranchisement>.

28. According to several media sources, Congressman Rand Paul was a key player in these losses (*DC Wire*, a *Washington Post* blog, June 26, 2012; *Huffington Post*, July 31, 2012; *Politico*, 7/31/12).

29. Letter from William Blair, Chair of the Jackson County Democratic Central Committee (Murphysboro, IL), to Thomas Walsh, manager of Wilson's

western campaign October 20, 1916. Thomas J. Walsh Papers, Library of Congress, Box 363.

30. Frances Fox Piven, "The Great Society as a Political Strategy," in Richard A. Cloward and Frances Fox Piven, *The Politics of Turmoil—Poverty, Race, and the Urban Crisis* (New York: Random House, 1975), 271–283.

31. And so Obama won, despite the overrepresentation of low population Western states in the electoral college. This has led to Republican efforts to reconfigure how electoral votes are counted. Albert R. Hunt, "Changing the Path to the Presidency," *New York Times* January 28, 2013, A1.