

# YOUNG ACADEMICS

American Studies

1

Leo Kempe

## **Fighting against AtroCITIES**

The Relational Triangle of Black Lives,  
Geography, and Democracy in the U.S.

# YOUNG ACADEMICS

American Studies | 1



Leo Kempe

# **Fighting against AtroCITIES**

**The Relational Triangle of Black Lives,  
Geography, and Democracy in the U.S.**

With a Foreword by Prof. Dr. Ulrike Gerhard

**Tectum Verlag**

**The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek** lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>

ISBN 978-3-8288-4845-0 (Print)  
978-3-8288-7964-5 (ePDF)

#### **British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-3-8288-4845-0 (Print)  
978-3-8288-7964-5 (ePDF)

#### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Leo Kempe

Fighting against AtroCITIES

The Relational Triangle of Black Lives, Geography, and Democracy in the U.S.

Young Academics: American Studies; Vol. 1

ISSN 2940-0465

120 pp.

Includes bibliographic references.

ISBN 978-3-8288-4845-0 (Print)  
978-3-8288-7964-5 (ePDF)

1st Edition 2022

© The Author

Published by

Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG

Waldseestr. 3–5 | 76530 Baden-Baden

[www.nomos.de](http://www.nomos.de) | [www.tectum-verlag.de](http://www.tectum-verlag.de)

Production of the printed version:

Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH & Co. KG

Waldseestr. 3–5 | 76530 Baden-Baden

ISBN 978-3-8288-4845-0 (Print)  
978-3-8288-7964-5 (ePDF)

DOI <https://doi.org/10.5771/9783828879645>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution  
– Non Commercial – No Derivations 4.0 International License.



Onlineversion  
Tectum eLibrary

## Foreword

Leo Kempe has developed a very strong argument in his thesis why black lives matter on a socio-spatial scale. By using the case studies of Washington, D.C., and Minneapolis he analyzes three different spaces of injustice in cities (racism, police violence and injustice, accessibility) to reflect upon the importance of the Black Lives Matter Movement as an urban social movement. With this he hypothesizes that racism is strongly related to urban space and urban development, while cities also open up new frameworks or pathways to overcome such discriminations in order to contribute to American democracy, best described in the theoretical concept of the Right to the City. With this strong argument, Leo Kempe has developed a very ambitious and sophisticated Bachelor thesis topic that lies at the crossroad of Urban Geography and American Studies.

*Prof. Dr. Ulrike Gerhard  
Supervisor and First Reader*



## Abstract

Black lives are connected to geography and politics, particularly in the United States, its cities and neighborhoods. Often initiated by Whites, detrimental practices of racialization, alienation and opportunity deprivation can be observed on various scales. Importantly, these realities are connected to human rights and thus a fundament for democracy. This thesis uses a triangulation of the three variables Black lives, geography and democracy to answer the question of how the first two influence democratic stability in the United States. In the context of the Black Lives Matter Movement, it focuses on racism, police violence and accessibility problems for Black people, taking the cities of Minneapolis, Minnesota and Washington, D.C. as illustrations. These proved to be relevant because of the murder of George Floyd and the anti-discrimination White House protests, respectively. Theoretical orientations from Black Geographies and social justice activism facilitated assessing the two cities' contribution to democracy, and it is concluded that through relational analysis we can better understand the significance of the three interdependent variables for the country.





## Table of Contents

Foreword	V
Abstract	VII
Table of Contents	IX
List of Abbreviations	XI
1 Introduction: Topic and Methodology	1
2 #BLM: A Movement Conquers the Web and the Country	7
3 Spaces of Injustice, Discrimination, Disparity: Marginalization of Blacks in the United States	15
3.1 Racism: A Haunting Social, Political, Geographic Reality	15
3.2 Police Violence in the US: Law Enforcement Immoralities	27
3.3 Accessibility Problems: Health, Food, Housing	33
4 Washington and Minneapolis: Spatial Catalysts for Active Resistance	39
4.1 The Case of George Floyd	39
4.2 Effects on Black Social Activism in the City	41
4.3 Black Exigencies: The Relation to Minneapolis Law Enforcement	42
4.4 Washington, D.C. White House Protests and the ‘Trump Effect’	45
5 Why Are the Two Cities Important to Consider in This Context?	51
5.1 Washington, D.C. – Black Lives, Police, and H Street Corner	51
5.2 The Capital’s Bloomingdale Neighborhood	64
5.3 Minneapolis – Yet Another Example of Multifaceted Racial Tensions	67

## Table of Contents

---

5.4	Minneapolis 2040 Plan and Other Policy Guidelines	69
5.5	Chapter Summary	72
6	Socio-Spatial Chances for Democracy: BLM's Contribution to Saving It	75
7	Conclusion: Relational Analysis, Democracy Promotion as Crucial Points	83
	Bibliography	87
	Appendix	101

## List of Abbreviations

(Information: Only those used more than once are included).

ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
AJPH	American Journal of Public Health
AP	Associated Press
BLM	Black Lives Matter
BOP	Body/Bodies Out of Place
BWC	Body-Worn Camera
CRM	Civil Rights Movement
DC	District of Columbia
DLA	Defense Logistics Agency
EIS	Early Intervention System
HBC	Historically Black Church
HCME	Hennepin County Medical Examiner
HCSP	Healthy Corner Store Program
LEO	Law Enforcement Officer/Official
MHD	Minneapolis Health Department
MPD	Minneapolis Police Department
MSP	Minnesota State Patrol
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NHS	School of Nursing and Health Studies (Georgetown University)
NYU	New York University
PPP	Public-Private-Partnership
SSRC	Social Science Research Council
UMN	University of Minnesota
US	United States
WMPD	Washington Metropolitan Police Department

