

Foreword

George Lipsitz is that rare intellectual who genuinely walks the talk *and* talks the walk. Actually, he doesn't walk. He runs, straight into the danger zone, alert—eyes, ears, and heart wide open. He navigates the danger zone with a surveyor's intentionality and a guerrilla's audacity but always in rhythm with the people. The danger zone is anywhere aggrieved people are struggling: for their lives, livelihood, safety, justice, freedom, and the power to determine their own future. The danger zone, as George continually shows us, is also a place of learning. He has spent the better part of half a century developing and practicing a philosophy of "situated" scholarship, an engaged intellectual practice involving the production and application of new knowledge to social movements. All of his writings exemplify situated scholarship at its best, whether he is interrogating the enduring impact of racism, the weapon of popular culture, the making of an organizer, the crisis in the academy, or the vagaries of neoliberalism. And he understands better than anyone that to be "situated" means to be committed to transforming the world while always remaining embedded in community and movement. This is the definition of "organic intellectual," and it is a perfect description of George Lipsitz. In fact, from the moment I first met George thirty-five years ago, I thought of him as the US version of Stuart Hall, the radical Black British intellectual who cofounded the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University as a response to social crises in England.

George walks the talk but is prone to erasing his own footprints. He refuses to toot his own horn, never seeks credit or appreciation for his contributions, and rarely mentions his movement history. The brief bit of personal history he discloses in this book doesn't scratch the surface. He has had a long relationship with the progressive wing of the labor movement (in Wisconsin, St. Louis, Minneapolis, San Diego, and elsewhere); worked tirelessly on behalf of migrant and excluded workers; played a leading role in antiracist struggles in California and across the country; worked in and with community-based alternative education spaces; and offered solidarity and service to frontline organizers in the danger zones here and abroad—from New Orleans to Okinawa, East LA to Greater St. Louis, and many points in between. And, as is reflected in this extraordinary book, he has dedicated his life to the struggle for fair, affordable, safe housing for all.

The Danger Zone Is Everywhere reveals the hidden relationship among housing, residential segregation, and health—a relationship created and structured by gendered racial capitalism. In the simplest terms, for most white folks homes mean more wealth; for Black, Brown, and Indigenous folks housing means poor health. De facto segregation not only determines property values but also creates food deserts and severely limits access to health care, transportation, libraries, green space, and clean air. Instead, residents get dilapidated housing, housing insecurity, vermin, lead paint, respiratory illnesses, gun violence, trauma, surveillance, trigger-happy police, poor schools, and prison. They are fleeced by landlords, insurance companies, grocers, liquor stores, check-cashing joints, utility and water companies, and the state—in the form of excessive fees, fines, and regressive sales taxes accompanied by little to no services. They are subject to landfills, toxic fumes, lead poisoning, “heat islands,” and the worst effects of the climate catastrophe. And high rates of unemployment, the diminution of the welfare state, overpolicing, and what sociologists call the “spatial mismatch” between decent jobs and low-income communities add to the endemic problem of housing insecurity.

George has been thinking and writing about these issues for most of his adult life. Growing directly from his activism, books such as *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness* and *How Racism Takes Place* laid the foundations for *Danger Zone*. In them, he exposed how so-called “color-blind” social policy not only delegitimizes race-based explanations for inequality but also camouflages its deleterious effects on aggrieved communities of color while perpetually rewarding white property owners with equity and a publicly funded criminal legal sys-

tem to protect its boundaries. But unlike his previous work, *Danger Zone* takes on the health care system directly. He proves that health care policy is as consequential as housing policy in determining the life chances of poor and working-class Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities. He reveals how inequities in access to health care have been deepened by neoliberalization, from welfare state-backed care in the form of Medicare and Medicaid programs to so-called “managed care,” or market-based corporate models that emphasize reducing costs, privatizing medicine, and limiting treatment for the underinsured and those who cannot pay.

So what is to be done? The answer, George insists, can be found in the danger zone, where people are already in motion, creating solutions and fighting the forces bent on turning suffering and precarity into profit. The danger zone is where we all must run, where George exhorts all self-proclaimed activist-scholars to be “propositional as well as oppositional.” He has always been propositional, always sought answers not only in his exhaustive research but from deliberative democratic practice, from past mistakes and lessons learned, from a critical analysis of crisis and the expectation of a just future. The movements featured at the end of the book all treat health care and housing as collective public resources and human rights rather than as commodities to be sold to the highest bidder. The lesson is clear: health and housing justice is indivisible, and the absence of justice is harming and killing too many of our people. Enter *Danger Zone*, read carefully, and prepare for the struggle ahead. This book can save lives.

Robin D. G. Kelley
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