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"The Fireworks Next Time": The Intersections of Place-Making, Play, and Protest in NYC in Summer 2020

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We're basically celebrating the fact that we survived.

—New Yorkers¹

As far as the fireworks, I feel like it's beautiful [laughs]. To most people, they hate it. It's loud, but I—the message is what matters. And the message is that we're gonna celebrate our independence, real independence.

—young woman, *Vice Video*²

...and you hear Black people getting killed by police. So now we're enraged. You feel me? We tired of it. I'm tired of it...fireworks going off. People are all, like, going crazy right now; I think it's a form of expression. They letting the noise be heard, 'cause we got to be heard.

From our perspective at least, you hear?

—Otis Bruno, *Vice Video*³



*Fireworks ablaze, summer 2020
photo by Anuj Biyani*

Late spring and summer of 2020 were marked by such profound disruption that the dramatic changes in our sonic environment were treated as a symptom of these disruptions more than meaningful in and of themselves. In New York City—the city that never sleeps—the new quiet was deeply jarring for many. The silence as traffic slowed to a trickle and streets emptied of all other than essential workers was a powerful and constant reminder of all that had changed. The unfolding tragedy revealed the slower but more inexorable violence of life in the U.S.A. for the working poor, the un/der-insured, Black and Brown people. And, after George Floyd's murder in broad daylight, weeks of protest finally seemed to make Black critiques of police violence and structural racism audible to white people. The scale of the protests succeeded in altering the mainstream discourses on safety enough to at least make the call to defund the police a comprehensible position, even if it was then delegitimized. But the protests also succeeded through disruption, by being the metaphorical noise that interrupted the signal. In this case, the disruption was the communication.

“Fireworks Next Time” (cont.)

Reflecting on the changed soundscape of the pandemic, Kate Wagner wrote in *The Atlantic*:

The protests continued for weeks, accompanied by an endless wail of sirens and the constant whirring of low-flying helicopters. What was once a soundscape of startling, if enjoyable, quiet had become a cacophony of raucous, but righteous, noise. These two soundscapes encapsulate an age-old battle between noise and silence, which is really a struggle for control over city life. A simultaneous pandemic and political uprising offer an opportunity to reinterpret that struggle.⁴

It is in this context of a national reckoning with the ongoing refusal to listen—the challenges to the deep, persistent, and powerful apparatus for converting speech into noise, protest into disruption—that we have to understand the responses to the fireworks that erupted night after night in numerous cities throughout June and July. Theories of all kinds burst into temporary prominence on social media as people tried to identify the sources and reasons for these unusually early, sustained, informal fireworks displays. In Brooklyn, the fireworks were concentrated in the Flatbush and Crown Heights neighborhoods. The chatter about them became heated, fueled as it was by the ever-simmering tensions of gentrification. The moment forced white residents to recognize how their default option—calling the police to complain—was complicit in maintaining the racist structures they were often protesting by showing their support for Black Lives Matter, in person or on social media, or in one of those homemade window signs.

In this essay, I examine how some Brooklyn residents drew upon newly-circulating discourses regarding systemic racism in order to reframe their own responses to the disruption caused by the nightly fireworks. In particular, I am interested in how the changed consciousness of people vis-à-vis policing carried over to their existing opinions on gentrification. Did their receptiveness to the protests lead to a self-reflexive reexamination of their roles in the classed and racialized processes of gentrification in Brooklyn? The fireworks not only illuminated how the character of a neighborhood is aural as much as visual—what R. Murray Schafer called “soundmarks” establish place as much as landmarks do—but also how the struggle over gentrification often takes place in the terrain of the aural and thus can remain invisible to those just visiting these neighborhoods.⁵ This case study also aims to contribute to an understanding of the shifting soundscape of Brooklyn—not just during the pandemic, but also as a result of the longer term processes of displacement and contestation that has so altered the character of many neighborhoods, including my own, Ditmas Park.

I start by identifying a few dynamics in the protests during the summer of 2020 that became the immediate context for how different people heard the fireworks and then briefly describe how the NYC / Brooklyn soundscape changed during the pandemic and the sound of the fireworks. The final section connects these two aspects in relation to ongoing tensions around gentrification to bring out the importance of sound’s relationship to comfort, safety, and a feeling of belonging to or ownership of one’s neighborhood.

Under the Rocket’s Red Glare: Fireworks and the Implosion of Meaning, Social Justice, and Sound

The protests this past summer—and the Black Lives Matter movement in general—were about being heard and taken seriously such that American common sense assumptions about safety, the value of life, and knowledge of history could be rewritten. The protests were also about how literal Black voices reasoning or pleading are reframed as lying, unintelligible, or irrelevant.⁶ The proximate cause of the protests was the brutal murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police in broad daylight on May 25 (Memorial Day), but as became powerfully evident, these protests were also and perhaps even more about the structural racism that has made such killings both possible and legal. Caught on video by Darnella Frazier, Floyd’s public murder by the police

“Fireworks Next Time” (cont.)

was not a momentary event. Minneapolis Officer Chauvin knelt on Floyd’s throat for almost nine minutes. During those eight minutes and forty-six seconds, while he could still form words, Floyd—like Eric Garner and countless others before him—tried to make his pain and fear known. The people around Floyd and the police officers tried to intervene, but as Frazier said in a Facebook post, “The police killed him, bro, right in front of everybody... He was crying, telling them like, ‘I can’t breathe,’ and everything. They killed this man.”

What followed were the largest, most sustained, and most diverse protests in recent U.S. history, with hundreds of thousands of people across the country—and in many other parts of the world—coming out night after night to make their voices heard.⁷ These protests against normalized police violence were met with heavy police presence leading to further instances of police violence. In the first few days, some protestors burned police cars, broke shop windows, and generally refused to show the respect for authority and property that passes for order and safety in U.S. society.⁸ Although cable news channels savored the highly dramatic video of these incidents and played them on repeat, commentators on MSNBC and CNN did not unequivocally denounce the damage to property. Instead, they showed surprising support for the protestors, for example, by repeating Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.’s words that “a riot is the language of the unheard.”⁹



*BLM Protest in Times Square, NYC; June 2020
photo by Anthony Quintano*

On the same day that Floyd was murdered, Christian Cooper—a Black man birding in New York’s Central Park—used the camera on his phone to record a white woman, Amy Cooper, responding to his request that she obey regulations with indignation, accusations of her own, and then a call to the police where she lied about being scared of what this Black man could do to her. This video, posted by Christian Cooper’s sister, went viral as people saw and heard in this exchange the shadows and echoes of all the other such incidents that go unrecorded and those that end very differently. Here, Christian Cooper, unlike Darnella Frazier, and unlike Ramsey Orta (who recorded Eric Garner’s murder), was able to disrupt the narrative. And it was his sister’s framing along with his own perspective and voice that, in turn, framed the broader (whiter) public’s interpretation of this disturbing incident.

In their speeches, their chants, and with their many posters and slogans, the protestors this summer articulated an alternative vision of public safety that rested on listening and attending to the needs of Black and Brown people. This vision came to rest on the acknowledgment of white supremacy as the specific form

“Fireworks Next Time” (cont.)

of systemic racism that had to end. Calls to defund the police and to fund needed community services were heard on the local, state, and the national stage. Even if this demand was transformed and partially defanged as it made its way from political demand to municipal policy, it was heard as a challenge, not as pure nonsense or noise. In the next section, I describe how the protests and the response to them altered the soundscape of New York City and how the same concerns reverberated into local debates about the more literal fireworks that were also erupting across the nation in the summer of 2020, connected to the ever-simmering tensions over gentrification.

The NYC Soundscape: Now and in the Before Times

According to R. Murray Schafer, who is credited with coining the term, a “[soundscape](#)” has three main elements: keynotes, signals, and soundmarks.¹⁰ The strangeness of our city during the time of the pandemic was heightened by the [absence](#) of so many of these keynotes, the sounds that establish the identity of a place. Because many of the sound elements that make up NYC’s regular soundscape have been missing, signals—alert sounds like ambulance sirens—rose to greater prominence. Attention-grabbing sounds increased in frequency, but residents were also sensitized to be [more aware of them](#). Even in the before times, it was difficult to entirely forget that each siren was an index of someone’s fear, stress, and pain. During the pandemic, of course, everything around us emphasized this awareness. Non-stop news coverage, characteristically relying on war analogies, focused on the lack of materials—ICU beds, PPE, ventilators—and began to include a permanent sidebar showing statistics such as infection rates and numbers of hospitalizations and deaths. While these numbers were perhaps an attempt to assert some kind of control over the pandemic, media narratives focused on how unprepared the U.S. was and, in a familiar pattern, identified the “essential workers,” especially doctors and nurses, but also service workers as heroes who were fighting to keep us safe. And thus began another pandemic sonic ritual: the 7:00 PM banging of pots, clapping and cheering to show public support. From late March through the summer, this ritual was observed with impressive regularity in many NYC neighborhoods.

By May then, talk of a “new normal” had begun. Staying indoors, social distancing, wearing masks, endless video conferencing (note how these markers are classed), new silences and new sounds. As we adjusted to the sirens and nightly cheering, we perhaps stopped noticing the absence of traffic sounds. And then came the fireworks. There are always fireworks in the summer in Brooklyn. They reach a peak around the 4th of July, but are not limited to that weekend. The summer of 2020, though, was different. The fireworks began in April and—at least in my neighborhood of Ditmas Park/Flatbush—became a nightly event. Unlike the 7:00 PM cheers for frontline workers, the fireworks were not a brief event. They went on for hours at times and until late at night, sometimes overlaid by the sound of police helicopters hovering low and loud over protestors in another part of the neighborhood. For examples of this soundscape, listen to [Video 1](#) or [Video 2](#).

Some of the more impressive fireworks come in “cakes:” bundles of fireworks that, once the fuse is lit, go off in timed sequence. They can be rockets with the signature whining sound, or aerial repeaters that explode with a series of moderately loud bangs and pops to create blooms of light, often accompanied by a sizzling sound. Firecrackers like M-80s or Black Cats produce a series of loud bangs or a rapid staccato of sharp pops. Unlike official fireworks shows, these informal displays follow no clear timetable. In many responses, the unpredictability and suddenness was a key part in the felt experience of shock and disruption. And for people living in close proximity, the loudness of the sound compounded this effect dramatically. For example, one Twitter user contacted by *Gothamist* described the experience as such:

“Fireworks Next Time” (cont.)

“That night, my girlfriend and I were just watching TV. We suddenly heard loud sounds, like shots being fired,” Ahmadi told Gothamist. “And our blinds were open, so with each [heard] sound; flashes of light filled our room too. We assumed it was some crazy shooting outside. But then I approached our window and saw fireworks from the building some short distance away. They set off two sets of fireworks.”¹¹

The fireworks associated with the 4th of July and New Year’s Eve are, for most people, a visual event that they participate in as distant observers, often through a screen. The appeal of the event is visual, as the sounds of the fireworks themselves might be supplanted by a recorded soundtrack or live pops orchestra. The visceral experience of fireworks when one sets them off personally—the smell, the tactile sensations, the adrenaline and thrill of danger, and of course, the sound—is entirely different.

Beginning as early as late April, some New Yorkers began setting off fireworks, and even more became unwitting spectators and auditors. Public response was cautiously censorious, raising concerns about safety and the disruption to the lives of residents first and mentioning the illegality of the firework displays as a secondary point. Starting on social media and then gaining the attention of mainstream news outlets, these stories attempted to learn more about the who, how, and why of the fireworks.

Whose Streets? Claiming Space Through Sound in the Borderlands

Struggles over space, belonging, and security are linked to contestations over sounds and noise. This link is articulated through foundational logics of intelligibility and rationality as prerequisites for citizenship. But they are also part of the everyday friction that accretes into the changing character of a neighborhood. Noise and disturbance “quality of life” complaints to 311, [signs in apartment buildings](#) about how the space can be used, and discussion threads on neighborhood social media groups link surveillance to action by collectively articulating new narratives about the neighborhood and displacing older ones. The silencing of a community’s soundmarks—Schafer uses this as a parallel for landmark, as in the sounds that “make the acoustic life of a community unique”—is as much a part of gentrification as is the changing beer selection in the local bodega.¹²

Spaces are not purely physical in nature; social, physical, and cognitive spaces are mutually constitutive.¹³ Sound—music, noises, voices—all establish the specific character of a space, and changes in the soundscape can mark the boundaries between different neighborhoods. For example, moving from the noise and tourist clamor of Times Square to the relative quiet of residential blocks in Midtown East, a clear boundary can be heard.

To understand this process of change, I draw on the “borderland analytic” developed by Margaret Ramírez to understand policing and gentrification in Oakland. Building on Gloria Anzaldúa’s foundational work, Ramírez argues for the utility of this concept to rethink city planning as “bordering practices that create structural and cultural exclusion in city space.”¹⁴ Thinking of the city as a borderland also “encourages a multi-scalar understanding of how gentrification is not only intertwined with broader processes of racial capitalism, colonialism, and the carceral state, but how it is lived, embodied, and resisted daily by those experiencing displacement.”¹⁵ In other words, this analytic allows us to foreground the everyday experiences of those living in these conditions.

In Brooklyn, these bordering practices are evident in how annual celebrations like the Caribbean Day parade on Labor Day are regulated and policed; in complaints about loud music and noise from bars; and in how

“Fireworks Next Time” (cont.)

the bodies of young people of color are rendered unruly and out of place by anti-loitering signs. Even a NYC institution like Mr. Softee was not safe from the demands for neighborly civility. A 2017 story in *Gothamist* about a new white resident in Harlem who had had enough of the incessant jingle nicely captures the unequal resources available to different subjects:

To make matters worse, according to Mackenzie [the new resident], “No one seems to be willing to do anything.” The first time this happened, she recalls, “I went down and said to him, ‘Would you mind turning off the music?’ He looked at me and he was like, ‘What are you talking about?’” She continued, “I said, ‘It’s illegal for you to have your music on anyway, so could you please turn it off?’ His response: ‘Fuck off.’” At this, Mackenzie retreated. The next time it happened, “I went down, and he just rolled his eyes.” Since then, Mackenzie has branched out, calling 311 and her local precinct repeatedly, and emailing the Mayor’s Office, ice cream truck owners, and the office of Rep. Adriano Espaillat.¹⁶

As this exchange shows, imported norms of civility, respect, and neighborliness are used to cast existing practices and inhabitants as disruptive, which then legitimizes the next step of calling on authorities to manage the body now described as unruly.¹⁷ In this instance, the only (and only needed) weapon in the ice cream truck owner’s arsenal was a refusal to conform to the expectation. Everyone complains about the jingle, but it is also as much a part of the soundscape of NYC in the summer as the sounds of people having a sidewalk barbecue. This summer, the same jingle was written up in a local Brooklyn paper as a welcome reminder of more normal times and as a “startling juxtaposition to the piercing wails of ambulances on Brooklyn’s otherwise quiet streets.”¹⁸ Official policies, codes, and laws such as those governing the proper use of public space illustrate how certain forms of listening and certain sounds institutionally reinforce what Stoever-Ackerman would call a white “listening ear.”¹⁹ As the Mr. Softee example above illustrates, recoding the soundscape of a neighborhood for that white ear—that is, altering the social and cognitive mapping of the same physical space—is an essential aspect of gentrification.

Ramírez cites Alexander Weheliye’s work on sonic Afro-modernities to discuss how the boundary between “music” and “noise” is subjective and reveals much about the social construction and positioning of the listening subject.²⁰ Weheliye is talking about music, not sound in general, but his point that sonic technologies are consumed by subjects and that subjects are consumed, in turn, by those technologies, is useful here: “[t]he tense articulation of both the intimacy and the sociality in sound is key, for it highlights the particular manner in which subjects related to sound in space.”²¹ Unlike visual elements which can—to a greater extent—be ignored, sound is difficult to screen out, and “the listener is forced to hear the sound of others, which in turn dissolves physical and mental boundaries.”²² This dissolution of boundaries is essential to the ecstatic potential of sound as music, of feeling yourself merge or become something other than what you were. However, it can also be experienced as a threat or attack. The racialized construction of rap and hip-hop as violent noise and a threat to Whiteness and respectability is familiar, and in 2012 it provided the flimsy pretext for Michael Dunn’s murder of Jordan Davis, a seventeen-year-old Black child. Dunn was found guilty and is currently serving a life sentence for murder.

Loud, unpredictable sounds, unfamiliar and culturally distant music, painfully pitched tones: all are either used or have been studied as weapons of war and torture. Police sirens, bullhorns, and helicopters are very much part of the apparatus of surveillance and intimidation used to discipline and manage urban Black and Brown populations. In other instances, what Stoever calls the “sonic colour line, then not only created and regulated so-called ‘Black’ sound, but it also deemed certain sounds recognizably and publicly expressive of whiteness and

“Fireworks Next Time” (cont.)

its attendant power in U.S. political, social and economic life.”²³ Challenging “whiteness’s alleged inaudibility,” Stoeber analyzes what she calls “cop voice,” a “vocal cadence and tone structured by and vested with white masculine authority, a sound that exerts a forceful, unearned racial authority via the sonic colour line to terrorize people of colour.”²⁴ An article from mid-June in BuzzFeed summed up the fireworks in connection with these terms:

Monday’s response [by police who showed up in riot gear at the scene of fireworks] came as three dynamics in Brooklyn, some brewing for years, seemed to converge: the genuine increase in the amount of fireworks, possibly out of solidarity with Black Lives Matter demonstrations; police frequently rolling through the streets in riot gear after this month’s protests; and people on Facebook, primarily white gentrifiers, complaining about the level of noise and demanding that the city responds.²⁵

Signal to Noise: Ratio’ing Whiteness

Describing the summer of 2020 as a time of national reckoning with persistent structural racism has become commonplace. Similarly, understandings of the pandemic have oscillated between spectacular images of long food aid lines and bar charts of dramatic increases in infection rates, and the everyday tedious realities of parents trying to manage young children forced to sit still and Zoom. The spectacular nature of the unlicensed and illegal amateur fireworks displays highlighted the ongoing frictions, negotiations, and skirmishes over regulations that are part of the everyday experience of gentrification.

The term “getting ratioed” on social media, Twitter especially, is used to describe a tweet that provokes a much higher ratio of comments to likes than is usual. In these cases, the comments are usually critical and pick out the flaws, errors, biases in the tweet. This does not at all mean that the original tweet will lose its authority—[Trump’s tweets](#) were [ratioed more than once](#)—or that the tweeter will be fully discredited, just that their position is recognized as partial and contested. In this final section of the essay, I suggest that this is a useful way of thinking about how the varied public conversations about the fireworks challenged the “normalcy” of whiteness.

As discussion about the fireworks moved from Twitter and other social media platforms, news outlets started reporting on the story and attempted to figure out if the increase was an objective or subjective phenomenon. As this dramatic [graph of 311 calls shows](#)—even controlling for various [social factors](#)—there does seem to be an actual increase with [the highest concentration](#) in central Brooklyn and Washington Heights and then in East New York and parts of the Bronx. While local news outlets such as [Gothamist](#) and even the [New York Times](#) covered this story, it didn’t really break into mainstream awareness. Pieces in the [The New Yorker](#) and [Slate](#) both focused on debunking the conspiracy theories circulating on social media. They sensibly pointed out how people were bored, fireworks were being sold at a discount, a few enterprising brokers had created a supply by bringing them in from Pennsylvania, and the fireworks might be loud but they were not professional grade. [Rolling Stone](#) contextualized the willingness to believe in conspiracy theories within the long history of the U.S. government initiatives aimed at harming Black communities from Tuskegee to unsanctioned birth control. They concluded though—as did most other journalistic investigations—that while the NYPD may be involved in a small way:

The most plausible theory for why nationwide fireworks sales are booming this year is that they’re a form of entertainment that’s still available during the COVID-19 pandemic. As people

“Fireworks Next Time” (cont.)

come out from being cooped up in strict lockdown and fireworks stands reopen, offering discounts ahead of July 4th, pyrotechnics are enjoying a boost in popularity as an outdoor, accessible, socially distanced activity during a global pandemic that has shut down many other summer plans.²⁶

A twelve-minute video by *Vice* on the “illegal fireworks scene in Brooklyn” focused on the perspective of those setting off the fireworks with a local man, Otis Bruno, serving as *Vice*’s inside guide. As a review in the *Columbia Journalism Review* said, “*Vice* has mastered the mass production of authenticity for profit.”²⁷ In its trademark way, the segment relies on an equivalence between coolness and authenticity, choosing people who embody the kind of Brooklyn style that is admired and imitated. The interviewees, with a few exceptions, are young Black and Latinx men gathering in driveways and in streets to set off and watch fireworks. In response to what feels like heavy-handed prompting from the interviewer, they obligingly and knowingly offer up the desired sound bites on protest, pleasure, self-expression and (with a very clear nod and a wink) the idea that the cops are behind the fireworks.

While *Vice* gave viewers an “inside” perspective, this piece was distant from those on Twitter who were more exasperated than anything. After seeing these comments and living on the outskirts of the acoustic reach of the fireworks and knowing Nextdoor’s reputation as a largely white space that has the same mutable community/surveillance possibilities as other such platforms, I became curious about how the fireworks were being discussed there.

The Nextdoor group for Ditmas Park/Midwood is an online discussion forum with a few dozen participants and several hundred comments. The initial posts were about the disruption caused by the fireworks. The responses clustered around the following points:

- A right to rest: parents, people with PTSD, pet owners, essential workers.
- Proper forms of intervention: none, talking with the people setting off the fireworks, 311, police, elected officials, community leaders.
- Competing claims to authority: long-time residents and recent arrivals, people of color and white people.
- Articulations to broader discourses: awareness of police violence against Black and Brown people and seeing this as a chance to practice the values they support; “yes, but” comments arguing for local exceptions; discourses about limits of tolerance very similar to those in the news.
- Concerns about physical safety as well as the emotional/mental effects.
- Speculation on reasons for the fireworks and about who was buying them.

Drawing on Ramírez’s framework, we can see these discussions as bordering practices that attempted to reconcile broader concerns about safety, justice, and claims to public space with local and individual needs. The group’s speculations on reasons for the fireworks were the most explicit in making these connections: seeing the fireworks as a form of resistance by Black residents or, conversely, as warfare by police. The willingness of white people to change (i.e. to not call 911 upon initial impulse) marks the relative success of the protests in raising awareness. On the other hand, the discussants showed a remarkable lack of self-reflexivity about who was participating in the discussion or about how Nextdoor itself has been part of the apparatus of surveillance that now accompanies gentrification.

“Fireworks Next Time” (cont.)

Conclusion

This article offers a context for understanding what the fireworks in Brooklyn in the summer of 2020 *meant*. The brief look above at the chatter on one neighborhood discussion group reveals how people are working out what social justice discourses mean in practical terms by changing their everyday practices as residents of gentrifying multicultural neighborhoods. In particular, I see people figuring out in discussion with others how to negotiate competing ideas of safety and comfort and neighborliness; rubbing up against the limits of their ability to speak on behalf of a community; and above all, as Ramírez says, demonstrating “how the city is imagined and fought for.”²⁸ In the process, we also gain insight into larger questions, such as: What does it take for some sounds or speech to become intelligible as something other than disruption or noise? To what extent does a new awareness of how space, sounds, and safety are racialized apply to analogous situations of policing? And, what does attention to the soundscape of a neighborhood tell us about how belonging and normalcy feel? The Black Lives Matter protests demanded that people of color, especially young Black people, be seen as vulnerable and not as a threat; that we realize how safety, public space, and freedom of movement are racialized. And that we—academics, gentrifiers, firework igniters—recognize how the right to speak and be heard is constrained by norms and civility. In the end, individuals as community members will have to decide what is a noisy disruption, and what is the soundscape of the city we love.

Notes

1. The quote in my title is taken from a [quip](#) by NYC resident and author Hari Kunzru on Twitter and plays on the title of James Baldwin’s famous book of essays in the form of letters, *The Fire Next Time* (1963). For the first epigraph source, see Corey Kilgannon and Julianna Kim, “New Woe for a Jittery N.Y.C.: Illegal Fireworks Going Off All Night,” *New York Times*, 19 June 2020, updated 3 July 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/19/nyregion/fireworks-every-night-nyc.html>.
2. *Vice Video*, “Inside Brooklyn’s Illegal Fireworks Scene.” https://video.vice.com/en_us/video/inside-brooklyns-illegal-firework-scene/5f17228c120f46211c709141 (accessed 28 December 2020).
3. *Ibid.*
4. Kate Wagner, “The Struggle for the Urban Soundscape,” *The Atlantic*, 15 July 2020. <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2020/07/the-struggle-for-the-urban-soundscape/614044/>.
5. R. Murray Schafer, *The Tuning of the World* (Knopf, 1977), 101.
6. Jennifer Stoeber-Ackerman, “Splicing the Sonic Color-Line: Tony Schwartz Remixes Postwar Nueva York,” *Social Text* 28, no. 1 (2010): 65–7.
7. Michael Tesler, “Support for Black Lives Matter Surged during Protests, but is Waning Among White Americans,” *FiveThirtyEight*, 9 August 2020. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/support-for-black-lives-matter-surged-during-protests-but-is-waning-among-white-americans/>.
8. Rutgers Professor Brittney Cooper points out that the mostly white insurrectionists who stormed the U.S. Capitol on 6 January 2021 are being treated with much more leniency than Black protestors were during the summer of 2020, noting that America’s “empathy meter is set to seeing white violence as protest and Black protest as violence.” See her comments on 7 January 2021 [on MSNBC](#).

"Fireworks Next Time" (cont.)

9. *60 Minutes*, "September 27, 1966: MLK—A riot is the language of the unheard." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_K0BWXjJv5s.
10. Schafer, *Tuning of the World*.
11. David Cruz, "Booming Late Night Fireworks are Waking Up New Yorkers," *Gothamist*, 20 May 2020. <https://gothamist.com/news/booming-late-night-fireworks-are-waking-new-yorkers>.
12. Schafer (1977) cited in Wagner, "The Struggle for the Urban Soundscape."
13. For more on this concept, see Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (John Wiley and Sons, 2013) and Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (Verso, 1989).
14. Margaret M. Ramírez, "City as Borderland: Gentrification and the Policing of Black and Latinx Geographies in Oakland," *EPD: Society and Space* 38, no. 1 (2020): 148.
15. *Ibid.*
16. Nathan Tempey, "New Harlem Resident Declares War On Jingle-Happy Mister Softee Man," *Gothamist*, 21 July 21 2017. <https://gothamist.com/news/new-harlem-resident-declares-war-on-jingle-happy-mister-softee-man>.
17. Jennifer Lynn Stoever, "'Doing fifty-five in a fifty-four': Hip Hop, Cop Voice and the Cadence of White Supremacy in the United States," *Journal of Interdisciplinary Voice Studies* 3, no. 2 (2018): 115–31.
18. Jake Seiner, "Soft Serve Defiance: Ice Cream Trucks Ply Brooklyn Streets," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 17 April 2020. <https://brooklyneagle.com/articles/2020/04/17/soft-serve-defiance-ice-cream-trucks-ply-brooklyn-streets/>.
19. Stoever-Ackerman, "Splicing the Sonic Color Line," 164.
20. Ramírez, "City as Borderland," 159.
21. Alexander Weheliye, *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity* (Duke University Press, 2005), 111.
22. *Ibid.*
23. Stoever, "'Doing fifty-five in a fifty-four,'" 120.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Caroline Haskins, "People in Brooklyn Were Setting Off Fireworks. Then the Police Showed Up in Riot Gear," *Buzzfeed*, 17 June 2020. <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/carolinehaskins1/flatbush-brooklyn-fireworks-nypd-police-blm>.
26. Andrea Marks, "Why the Fireworks Conspiracy Theories Are So Damn Believable," *Rolling Stone*, 26 June 2020. <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/fireworks-government-cops-conspiracy-theory-1021236/>.
27. Chris Ip, "The Cult of Vice," *Columbia Journalism Review* 54, no. 2 (2015): 13.
28. Ramírez, "City as Borderland," 149.