

3 Sacrifice, Race, and Indifference

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In this chapter we explain what a world subjected to the neoliberal ethos looks like. Normally neoliberalism is presented exclusively in terms of its benefits: lifting people out of extreme poverty, bringing comfort to a large swath of people, and spreading democracy and freedom worldwide. But the truth of neoliberalism emerges more clearly if we scrutinize it in terms of the crises it precipitates and exacerbates.

As we discussed in chapter 1, Francis argues that an “economy of exclusion” now dominates our world and has generated a broader ethos of marginalization that supports a “culture of exclusion.” For him, “it’s no longer simply about exploitation and oppression . . . those excluded are no longer society’s underside or its fringes or its disenfranchised—they are no longer even a part of it. The excluded are not the ‘exploited’ but the outcast, the ‘leftovers’” (EG, 53). Francis maintains that exclusion is the dominant form of structural sin in our world, manifest in the practices of nation-states, religions, and racial and ethnic groups. However diverse the manifestations of this culture of exclusion, the underlying cause is inequality: “The need to resolve the structural causes of poverty cannot be delayed . . . as long as the problems of the poor are not radically resolved by rejecting the absolute autonomy of markets and financial speculation and by attacking the structural causes of inequality, no solution will be found for the world’s problems, or, for that matter, to any problems. Inequality is the root of all social evils” (EG, 202). The tyranny of a faceless economy, contoured by extreme inequality, generates not only poverty, but also terrorism, the migrant crisis, and the intensification of xenophobic forms of political populism.¹

In *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy*, Saskia Sassen offers a similar diagnosis concerning the violent consequences of the dominant economic order.² But where Francis describes our societal disorder as the dominance of a faceless economy that supports a culture of exclu-

sion, Sassen uses the term *expulsion* to describe the pathologies generated by a neoliberal order. People are routinely, forcibly, and often violently barred from participating in the central economic, political, and cultural orders of society. Expulsion varies enormously across different geographical locales and distinctive cultural contexts, but in each situation entire groups of people are deemed surplus and expelled from society’s core and past its outskirts. These are the “countless displaced people warehoused in formal and informal refugee camps, the minoritized groups in rich countries who are warehoused in prisons, and the able-bodied unemployed men and women warehoused in ghettos and slums.”³ Further, this expulsion is not limited to surplus human populations, but extends to the biosphere itself. According to Sassen, today we are witnessing the widespread expulsion of life from the biosphere, a human generated destruction of land and water that has already brought about massive species extinction.⁴

Francis and Sassen contend that the transformation of the global economy has in some cases exacerbated existing forms of oppression and, in other cases, created new forms of exclusion and expulsion. These practices implement a logic of sacrifice, specified as elimination of the abjectly poor through starvation or slum warehousing, violent extinction of millions of species, and punitive racism that stigmatizes and controls populations judged expendable and exploitable. In what follows we analyze this neoliberal sacrificial logic as it relates to, sustains, and intensifies neocolonial and racist forms of exclusion. Environmental destruction, the proliferation of slums, mass incarceration, and mass deportation represent distinct yet fundamentally interconnected manifestations of this logic. We analyze these four crises together precisely because, together, they depict neoliberalism’s multilayered global assault on vulnerable populations, creation, and life itself.

Recognizing these crises as interlinked exposes the true gravity of our current situation—and reveals possibilities for alternatives. As Pope Francis avers repeatedly in *Laudato Si*, everything is connected (LS, 16, 42, 70, 91, 117, 138, 240). This is true of both the crises we face and the alternatives that we sketch in chapter 5. A new social order will not emerge without seeing neoliberalism as the connective tissue between varied crises that threaten life here and now.

Environmental destruction, the proliferation of slums, mass incarceration, and mass deportation exemplify the sacrificial ethos of neoliberalism

in particularly painful ways. Easily one could object that environmental problems, slums, prisons, and migration predated neoliberalism and therefore could hardly function as illustrations of distinctively neoliberal threats to humanity and the wider creation. But we argue that neoliberalism finds “creative” ways to redesign social problems, thus rendering them peculiarly neoliberal. In short, it subjects them to thoroughly economized logic and often aims to profit from them. We use the analytic categories of *sacrifice zones*, which elucidates environmental destruction and slum proliferation, and *racial neoliberalism*, which illuminates mass incarceration and mass deportation. Having done this analytic work, we reexamine the governing ethos of neoliberalism, this time under Pope Francis’s rubric of the *culture of indifference*, in order to account for why, in the face of massive crises, most people do not care or feel unequipped to address them.

Sacrifice Zones, Earth, and Slums

Here we commence our consideration of neoliberal crises by introducing the analytic category of sacrifice zones, which we then use as a heuristic for understanding how the neoliberal ethos of sacrifice is performed with respect to the planet and slum populations.

Sacrifice Zones

David Harvey defines neoliberalism as “a theory of political economic practices proposing that human well-being can best be advanced by the maximization of entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterized by private property rights, individual liberty, unencumbered markets, and free trade.”⁵ This definition appears in a paper titled “Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction.” Harvey evokes the famous phrase of Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter, who coined “creative destruction” in 1942.⁶ Originally, this term, which linked entrepreneurial creativity to economic instability, was intended critically, but by the year 2000 it was adopted by neoliberal economists such as Alan Greenspan and Lawrence Summers as expressing the condition for capitalism’s flourishing.⁷ We may viably call neoliberalism a utopian deployment of creative destruction. Creativity, which today we unreflectively call “innova-

tion,” comes virtually always with mass destruction, environmental and human. For this reason, Naomi Klein has recently drawn a connection between neoliberal ideology and practice and the notion of “sacrifice zones.”⁸ This idea was first developed in the 1950s by the United States government to denote areas used for uranium mining. Steve Lerner reports, “The label *sacrifice zones* comes from ‘National Sacrifice Zones,’ an Orwellian term coined by government officials to designate areas dangerously contaminated as a result of the mining and processing of uranium into nuclear weapons.”⁹ Today it sums up the neoliberal attitude toward the environmental and human costs of doing business. And it refers to zones polluted and poisoned by economic projects of extraction as well as those abandoned through economic and governmental disinvestment.

Klein’s commentary on sacrifice zones complements her consideration of what she calls “extractivism.”¹⁰ A major critic of extractivism, Ecuadoran economist and former minister of energy and mines, Alberto Acosta, defines extractivism against the background of the five-hundred-year history of conquest and colonization of the Americas, Africa, and Asia which served and, even after the end of what is usually recognized as colonialism, serves as a primary mode of capital accumulation.¹¹ The term itself signifies “activities that remove large quantities of natural resources that are not processed (or processed only to a limited degree), especially for export,” including mining of minerals, drilling for oil, farming, forestry, fishing, and other such activities.¹² This definition, with its emphasis on export-driven economics, highlights the colonial character of extractivism, which consists not simply in resource extraction but in what Acosta calls “a mechanism of colonial and neocolonial plunder and appropriation” that has driven the “industrial development and prosperity of the global North.”¹³ For her part, Klein defines extractivism as a “nonreciprocal, dominance-based relationship with the earth, one purely of taking. It is the opposite of stewardship, which involves taking but also taking care that regeneration and future life continue.”¹⁴ The same type of relationship that characterizes conquest and colonization on a social plane also applies in capitalism’s methods of wealth accumulation—the bare conditions of life, let alone the possibility for dignified life, are ignored in pursuit of the sorts of development and progress that neoliberals laud. For this reason, Klein links extractivism, especially in its neoliberal forms, with sacrifice zones, “places that, to their extractors, somehow don’t count and

therefore can be poisoned, drained, or otherwise destroyed, for the supposed greater good of economic progress.”¹⁵ To the god of the market, through the religion of economic growth (*la religión del crecimiento económico*),¹⁶ anywhere or anyone can be sacrificed—starting with (formerly) colonized and “raced” people—so long as the market is encased against demands for equality and distributive justice.

Here we explicate two prominent contemporary examples of sacrifice zones, or the destructiveness that attends neoliberal, market “creativity”: environmental destruction and slums. Obviously, environmental degradation and poor housing, food, water, and sanitation predated the onset of the neoliberal revolution. We do not accuse neoliberal economics or business practices of being solely responsible for all destroyed biospheres and squalid living quarters in today’s world. That said, we outline in the following sections how neoliberalism bears large responsibility for the global environmental and slum proliferation crises we now face, for exacerbating these crises, and for exploiting these crises for epistemic, political, and economic gain. There are identifiable aspects of today’s environmental destruction and slum proliferation around the world that prove distinctively neoliberal, that bear the *vestigia* of its peculiar mercilessness.

We begin with environmental destruction, as this constitutes the most massive illustration of neoliberal sacrifice: its willingness to destroy the entire planet at the behest of market rationality, by sickening it and bringing widespread death (e.g., mass extinction of species), all the while profiting from this and proposing “market solutions” to the crisis. We then relate the global environmental crisis to a global crisis bearing upon the basic conditions for human life and flourishing: the worldwide proliferation of urban slums. While neoliberal ideology holds that slums are temporary waystations toward urban prosperity, we diagnose them as, increasingly, areas of permanent social exclusion or expulsion. Slumdweller are the “waste” of the neoliberal economy, revealing the obverse of the neoliberal ideology of freedom: they are “free” to be judged by market logic, and entirely “free” from the protection of the state or any other social safety net.

The Earth as a Neoliberal Sacrifice Zone

In 2000 Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer published a landmark essay arguing that a new age characterized by human-caused climate catastrophe

should be added to the geological timescale: the Anthropocene. The effects of this catastrophe range from climate change and widespread species extinction to environmental displacement and extreme weather events that disproportionately harm the global poor.¹⁷ The contribution of Crutzen and Stoermer is significant because it highlights the fact that humans have dramatically altered geological time and the biosphere. But where “Anthropocene” improves upon the relatively neutral language of “climate change,” as well as the potentially misleading language of “global warming,” it ultimately fails to describe adequately the specific cause of the multifaceted crisis to which it points. The truth of the matter is that a relatively small percentage of the global population has caused this crisis: not humanity in general—those who inhabited the earth roughly six million years ago to the seventeenth century are excluded from any culpability—but the most affluent people during the capitalist period. This comparatively tiny population has generated widespread biospheric destruction. Since the industrial revolution approximately 25 percent of the global population is responsible for 75 percent of cumulative CO₂ emissions. The term *Anthropocene* does not highlight that the capitalist growth imperatives that represent the primary mechanism of environmental destruction. Accordingly, it is more accurate and useful to characterize our situation as *capitalocene* and to name the cause of environmental destruction as capitalogenic rather than anthropogenic.¹⁸

Furthermore, it is not simply the growth imperatives of capitalism but also specifically *neoliberal* strategies for managing crises that has delayed any substantive response to capitalogenic environmental destruction. Philip Mirowski provides a broad overview of these strategies in *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste*. According to neoliberals, climate change poses a threat inasmuch as it may cause the greater public to demand socialism, a planned economy, which could, the hope would be, avert climate catastrophe by limiting carbon emissions through restraint of the market. Such a response to climate change is, in principle, unacceptable to neoliberals. They will, in fact, “concede that it may appear that the existing market system sometimes fails; but the answer to these hiccups is to impose more markets.”¹⁹ Their justification comes down to the neoliberal “negative theology” discussed in chapter 2. For neoliberals, the market is the ultimate information processor; to every quandary or crisis, the market has answers, and no human mind can grasp them. The answer to climate

change, then, is not to cave in to the demands of a fearful *demos*, but to buy time for the market to figure out the best of all possible responses. The sacrificial system can and should continue, or better continue to evolve, in the face of climate change, lest demands for climate justice make matters even worse.

Mirowski suggests that the neoliberal state serves a threefold function in relation to crises of this sort: (1) to calm the public and dissuade them from implementing regulatory controls on the market; (2) to provide positive arguments that convince the public that the most effective response to any societal problem is more markets; (3) and to support and facilitate the discovery of market solutions to crises.²⁰ Mirowski contends that this approach is the primary reason for the enormous success of the neoliberal paradigm—it has refused the simplicity of a single “fix” and instead offered a complex, layered approach that can appeal to different constituencies and push them toward the capitulation of nature and society to the market. The neoliberal response to climate change evidences how neoliberals can integrate even seemingly contradictory political strategies over different periods of time to achieve a desired result.

The short-term strategy adopted by neoliberalism with regard to climate change is denialism, denying to whoever will listen that climate change is not occurring. This short-term strategy is easy to implement and distracts people from what really needs to be done to address climate change. We should be clear that neoliberals in general do not actually believe that anthropogenic (or even capitalogenic) climate change does not exist. Instead, given their belief in the market as an information processor beyond human knowledge, neoliberals believe that the truth or reality of climate change is beside the point. Mirowski explains, “The neoliberal think tanks behind the denial of climate change don’t seriously believe they are going to win the war of ideas within academic science in the long run.”²¹ Instead, they hold that the “first response to a political challenge should always be epistemological, in the sense that the marketplace of ideas has to be seeded with doubt and confusion.”²² With this accomplished, the market can sort out what is functionally true (that is, “true” enough to keep the world economy going) and functionally false (that is, which threatens to interrupt economic growth or answer to the needs and concerns of the *demos*). In the United States neoliberal climate-change denialism has been given a broad base of support through its alliance with Evangelical Christians—

and even some Catholics—who already distrust scientists because of their rejection of creationism. This combustible mix of market epistemology and religious suspicion has already bought over a decade for more time-intensive market-based approaches to climate change to be conceived, incubated, and tried.

Neoliberals also developed a mid-term strategy. Neoliberal think tanks and affiliated political actors concocted a market-based strategy for addressing climate change. The common name for this strategy is “cap and trade.” In brief, it consists in a “pragmatic” response to climate change that involves, supposedly, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by creating a market for tradable pollution permits. According to Mirowski, where denialism appeals to Christian fundamentalists and politicians with attenuated relationships with truth, cap and trade is targeted at government officials, NGOs, and educated segments in society, who may accept the judgments of scientists but also hold faith that markets can autocorrect.²³ Mirowski expresses serious doubts that cap and trade actually does anything to mitigate carbon levels in the atmosphere. He interprets it instead as a diversion that throws those who wish to use state power to limit carbon emissions into “endless technicalities of the institution and maintenance of novel markets for carbon permits.”²⁴ Effectively, no substantive or meaningful restrictions are placed on corporations, and the neoliberal economy continues to emit vast amounts of carbon into the atmosphere, without regard to future effects, in the pursuit of profitability now. The real achievement of cap and trade has been to provide neoliberals with legitimation. They can defensibly claim that they are working to provide solutions to the climate crisis.

If cap and trade is a diversionary tactic designed to distract in the middle term (over the course of several years), neoliberals have an even grander design for the longer term (a matter of decades). Mirowski identifies “geo-engineering” as the neoliberal long-term strategy to addressing climate change with markets. Geoengineering comes in many forms, but the most prominent examples of it are carbon sequestration and direct weather modification. With the former, carbon would be removed from the environment using various technologies. With the latter, the attempt would be made to modify weather patterns by “cloud seeding,” or spraying chemicals like sulphur dioxide into clouds to reflect the sun’s rays away from the Earth. Mirowski describes the overall program of geoengineering as

a utopian scheme of “sheer lunacy.” It assumes the possibility of climate manipulation without unintended consequences by, as Klein puts it, answering pollution with more pollution.²⁵ Furthermore, geoengineering pretends to offer “solutions” to a global problem simply by treating symptoms without actually confronting the deeper structural causes. Despite these limitations it has played and will continue to play a central role in the neoliberal response to the climate crisis, precisely because it offers its proponents the prospect of market success. Just one successful sun-reflecting technique could bring a market windfall.²⁶ Along with cap and trade, geoengineering serves further to entrench the view that market solutions represent the only plausible remedies to large-scale social problems.²⁷

Mirowski's concern is to describe the complex, multilayered strategy that neoliberalism has deployed to delay immediate (socialist) responses to a crisis, to argue for market-based responses, and to limit the field of vision to market-based responses alone.²⁸ In *Birth of a New Earth* (2017) and *Natural Catastrophe: Climate Change and Neoliberal Governance* (2016), Adrian Parr and Brian Elliott add to Mirowski's analysis by exploring neoliberal approaches to “neoliberal environmentalism” and “green governmentality,” which are adopted by seemingly “leftist” politicians and their supporters.²⁹ By “neoliberal environmentalism,” Parr and Elliott mean a political response to climate catastrophe characterized by a turn to sustainable and green economic growth. Where denialism has captured the conservative electorate in the United States, sustainable and green growth have become the privileged models touted by the Center and the Center-Left. If denialism serves as an accurate representation of the Trump administration's approach to the environment, the Obama administration's approach was characterized by a commitment to a green growth platform.³⁰ In this regard, Trump and Obama, who, respectively, represent the political Right and Left in the United States, serve as two sides of the neoliberal coin with respect to the environmental crisis. Parr and Elliott view the right-leaning neoliberal strategy of denialism as odious, as does Mirowski, but view the neoliberal strategy on the Left as deeply compromised as well. Even though a “green” strategy appears to take seriously the threat of environmental catastrophe, it ends in the same place, because it fails to face the scope of the crises and to engage in the dramatic action necessary to avert disaster.

Parr and Elliott's concerns dovetail with those of Pope Francis (and, notably, many economists),³¹ in that they question whether more

consumption and more growth—even if it is green—is the most effective way forward, with regard to the environment but also with regard to people's lives. Francis lays out the problem in *Laudato Si'*, when he points out that we tend to “accept the idea of infinite or unlimited growth, which proves so attractive to economists, financiers and experts in technology,” but we fail to see that this idea “is based on the lie that there is an infinite supply of the earth's goods, and this leads to the planet being squeezed dry beyond every limit” (LS, 106).³² Francis calls for a renewed commitment to voluntary asceticism that limits consumption and for the enforcement of regulations that curtail growth, all the while redistributing the benefits of economic growth more equitably. Naomi Klein comes to the same conclusion as Pope Francis, namely, that it is impossible to leave the primary driver of environmental destruction untouched when reflecting on how best to respond to the crisis to mitigate its most grave consequences. Klein observes: “The bottom line is that an ecological crisis that has its roots in the overconsumption of natural resources must be addressed not just by improving the efficiency of our economies but by reducing the amount of material stuff we produce and consume.”³³

Together, Mirowski, Parr, Elliott, Klein, and Francis help us reach the conclusion that a response more radical than “more markets” is needed to confront the sacrifice of creation sanctioned by the neoliberal order. With the word *radical*, we have in mind the term's etymological sense; we need to return to the “roots” (*radices*). Neoliberalism must be rooted out—solutions aimed merely at symptoms will fail. Thus we must specify the roots of our current crisis as capitalogenic, not simply anthropogenic. Only by doing this can we propose proper alternatives. The neoliberal strategy of proposing market solutions (even if they are “green”) to a market-generated problem should be resisted, because, in reality, neoliberal responses serve only to obfuscate the problem and to prevent serious action that responds structurally and substantively to a crisis that is so deeply entangled with other crises of pressing concern—global poverty, racism, indigenous rights, and gender equality to name just a few.

Slums as Neoliberal Sacrifice Zones

Today, one-third of the world's urban population inhabits slums.³⁴ There exist more than 200,000 slums on earth and around 1.3 billion people

(14 percent of the global population) worldwide currently live in slums, a figure that could double by 2050 (30 percent of the global population). These numbers set alongside inequality statistics—26 human beings possess as much total wealth as the bottom 50 percent of the global population (3.8 billion people)—serve as shocking reminders of the extreme inequality that defines our neoliberal world.

Mike Davis created a sensation with his 2006 *Planet of Slums*, which argued that the price of mass urbanization, a much-vaunted effect of globalized capitalism, has been proliferation of slums.³⁵ Davis's sixth chapter, "Slum Ecology," avers that slums are "poverty's niche in the ecology of the city, and very poor people have little choice but to live with disaster."³⁶ As Javier Auyero puts it when reflecting upon the populations of the *villas miseria* in Buenos Aires, "poor people's lives do not unfold on the head of a pin; theirs is an often polluted environment that has dire consequences for their present health and their future capabilities."³⁷ The ecology of the slum emblemizes the type of environmental destruction that proceeds apace worldwide: just as "the market" seems more than willing to sacrifice ecosystems, the atmosphere, and so forth to the Moloch of economic growth, so, too, will people end up on the same altar. The United Nations definition for a slum makes this plain, as it includes among its criteria inadequate access to safe water, to sanitation and infrastructure (including lack of toilets or even of latrines), to proper living space (overcrowding characterizes slums), and to secure residential status.³⁸ Slum life involves deprivation of many sorts of the bare conditions for life and flourishing.

Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore argue in a now widely influential 2002 geographical study that cities have proven to be "strategically crucial arenas in which neoliberal forms of creative destruction" unfolded.³⁹ Brenner and Theodore schematize the neoliberal restructuring of urban life, which has, in turn, reconstituted all of life globally. Their schema has three phases, extending from the 1970s up through the early 2000s: "proto-neoliberalism" (1970s), "roll-back neoliberalism" (1980s), and "roll-out neoliberalism" (1990s, early 2000s).⁴⁰ Proto-neoliberalism was characterized by a struggle between preservationist (largely Keynesian) and modernizing (incipiently neoliberal) policies that saw the gradual erosion of social safety net provision. Roll-back neoliberalism ramped up the modernizing tendencies of proto-neoliberalism, achieving drastic cutbacks in

municipal spending (austerity) and championing cost-cutting entrepreneurialism (privatization), thereby clearing a space for the creation of a neoliberal, market-driven state. Roll-out neoliberalism focused on creative destruction of the urban environment, mobilizing the city as "purified arena for capitalist growth."⁴¹ Brenner and Theodore recognize that these overall projects were realized heterogeneously in distinctive urban environments across the globe; nevertheless, they see the progression of proto- to roll-back to roll-out neoliberalism playing out across the globe over the past several decades.

Important for our specific topic of slums are the ramifications of these larger projects for the urban poor. Jan Nijman contends that neoliberalism relates to slums in three discernable ways: (1) "the shift from reliance on government intervention to reliance on the free market," (2) "the shift of responsibility from government to civil society," and (3) "the rescaling of government from central to local levels."⁴² The "creative" aspects of neoliberal creative destruction that Brenner and Theodore identify as occurring in the roll-out phase of neoliberalism relate to all three. "Creative" proliferations of low-wage and contingent labor markets and a strengthening impulse to expand informal economies (thus shrinking tax bases) ensure the permanence of poverty and the difficulty of moving out of slum housing, all the while neoliberal reformers insist that these labor market innovations will empower the poor.⁴³ Since roll-back neoliberalism tended to bring the destruction of public housing projects, emergency shelters have come to serve as "warehouses" for the homeless, and low-income people are offered rent vouchers instead of housing; this marketization has driven up housing costs even in slums. The retreat of the state has birthed proliferation of nongovernmental organizations that, despite their stated missions to do good and their obvious successes in many arenas, have led to further regression of state provision of basic services and have greased the wheels for the thorough marketization of civil society as regards slum life and attempted rehabilitation of slum conditions.⁴⁴ This marketization often benefits economic elites rather than slum dwellers. At the nexus of civil society and local government, really existing neoliberalism in the roll-out phase establishes "new institutional relays through which elite business interests can directly influence major local development decisions," so resources tend to funnel more toward skyscrapers than slums, gated communities for the wealthy rather than low-income areas.⁴⁵ In an era of

rapid urbanization this means asking ever more from municipalities—to sustain countries' global aspirations, represented by cutting-edge economic zones—with ever fewer available resources, thus leaving less and less possible help for slumdwellers.⁴⁶

Given all this, we must ask pointedly how slums function in today's global economy. Two trajectories in social-scientific literature have emerged on this question. The first, represented by Edward Glaeser and Hernando de Soto, presents a "modernization theory" of slums.⁴⁷ It contends that poor people are pulled by the wealth of cities and stay in slums transitionally until they begin to participate creatively in urban prosperity and move into formal housing. This perspective presumes that all people can, in principle, be integrated into the economy and thrive as a consequence.⁴⁸ The second trajectory regards slums less rosily. Davis's *Planet of Slums* sums up this trajectory. Recent analysis out of MIT has shown that slums are hardly a purgative way into urban wealth; instead, they are poverty traps.⁴⁹ Saskia Sassen (along with Pope Francis) falls under this rubric, as she regards slums as sites of expulsion, destinations for outcasts from a shrinking global economy.⁵⁰ This trajectory of thought emphasizes push factors, that is, adverse conditions in rural areas that force people to find economic opportunity in cities, whether or not in reality such opportunities are there.⁵¹ Slum proliferation relates inexorably to the neocolonial phenomenon called "land-grabbing," in which Western countries are buying up vast areas of the Global South for industrial-level agricultural production, thereby displacing smallholder farmers who have little choice but to move from their rural homes to urban slums.⁵² Any consideration of slums these days must, it seems, decide whether slums are transitional vehicles toward prosperity or poverty traps. In our estimation, one must opt for the latter position.

Vijayanthi Rao and Ananya Roy have, each in her own way, pointed out that slums are often used as metonyms for twenty-first century (mega) urbanization in the Global South, and consequently that scholarly treatments of slums must tread carefully in how they theorize slums.⁵³ Alan Gilbert has raised analogous cautions against adopting fully either the positive, de Soto-style narrative of slum opportunity or the negative, Davis-style narrative of slum apocalypse.⁵⁴ We are interested in this aspect of slums with regard to neoliberalism, because as with the environmental crisis, even if neoliberals recognize that rapid worldwide urbanization has

led to a sharp increase in global slum populations and a consequent rise in human misery, market-friendly theory can dissuade governments from providing services for slumdwellers, can enable companies that rely on slumdwellers' labor from providing them with living wages and health-care, can stifle outcry over rising rents in slums or the bulldozing of slums for real estate development, and can in general contribute to a culture desensitized to the fact that a billion or more people live in unacceptable conditions. Neoliberal theory can produce such desensitization by explaining away crushing poverty and indignity on the same model as climate change denialism. While avoiding an overly dire tone with regard to slums, we do deem it necessary to point out how a positive theorization of slums has been offered by neoliberals.

The best example of this is the intersection between slum life and human capital anthropology. Slumdwellers are, by some accounts, ideal human capital—completely "free," assuming freedom means freedom from state interference in market projects. For example, an October 2016 report on slums by Thomas Reuters, a neoliberal corporate philanthropic organization, presents the Dharavi slum in Mumbai as a humming economy full of entrepreneurial human capital, entirely untethered from governmental control.⁵⁵ Author Rina Chandran illustrates: "Most homes double up as work spaces, the whirr of sewing machines, the clang of metal and the pungent odour of spices mingling with the call for prayer and the putrid smell of trash." She then speaks ecologically, "Slums are ecosystems buzzing with activity."⁵⁶ Such narratives about slums suffuse the financial press, wider media, and, especially, business schools,⁵⁷ which have begun studying economic activity in places such as Dharavi precisely to gain insight into no-holds-barred entrepreneurial creativity. As with much neoliberal theory and practice, there is some truth to the contention that slumdwellers retain human freedom and, in many cases, make the best of difficult situations. That said, idealization of slum entrepreneurialism strikes us as just as deceptive and potentially destructive as human capital anthropology as such. This proves especially true because slumdwellers are relegated to a second-class status that, except in rare cases of exception, bars them from competition in the "real" marketplaces of neoliberalism.

Earlier we gained from Mirowski the insight that human capital anthropology and everyday mercilessness go together. While "human capital"

designates the ideal neoliberal subject, the model for market success, everyday mercilessness expresses the contempt, ridicule, and exclusion directed toward market failures. Such mercilessness, which is “everyday” in the sense of subtle and subliminal, structures urban landscapes.⁵⁸ Close proximity of exorbitant luxury and lurid depravation carries a message: follow the market where it leads, or suffer being left utterly without support, access, anything, with your only promise being an early death.⁵⁹ Arundhati Roy gets it right when she chooses petrochemical magnate Mukesh Ambani’s billion-dollar home, Antilla, which rises out of the slums of Mumbai, as a symbol of the neoliberal “gush-up” model of economics whereby very few “successes” rise and market “losers” are left quite literally in the dust.⁶⁰ We can praise slums as places ideally suited for unleashing human capital’s creative potential, but it would be more accurate to see them as decreative ecosystems of annihilation, as disposal systems for the human waste produced by neoliberal economies. Slums are, for all the entrepreneurial cheering, altars of market sacrifice.

The Sacrifices of Neoliberalism

As noted in the introductory discussion of environmental destruction and slum proliferation, neoliberalism necessitates sacrifice and, whether invoked in a religious or secular idiom, sacrifice entails some form of violence. Theologically, sacrifice represents the act of offering something as an immolation to a god and serves as *both* an act of destruction and an attempt to *make things holy* or sacred (*sacri-ficium*). In religious sacrifice there exists a dialectic, the goal of which is to restore an order destroyed by sin. The sacrifices of neoliberalism, however, are nondialectical, unholy sacrifices, acts of destructive violence that punish the most vulnerable and marginalized in our world while offering comparatively few redemptive qualities.

We often fail to perceive the violence of neoliberalism because it is neither dramatic nor explosive. We have grown accustomed to associating violence with immediate and visible acts, as with a terrorist attack or an act of war. But, as Rob Nixon persuasively argues in *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, subtle forms of violence exist that accumulate slowly over time. For Nixon, climate change, environmental destruction, and the displacement of vulnerable populations all result from

the capitalogenic transformation of the natural world, which occurs through slow violence. The issue with slow violence is that it is hard to perceive and is easily rendered invisible because it transpires cumulatively over time and tends to adversely affect poor and powerless populations who have little or no political voice. One thinks here of forms of environmental racism that push toxic and polluting industries to the periphery of society where the negative health effects of these industries will slowly sicken and kill poor and minoritized populations. One could argue that climate change itself is a manifestation of global environmental racism, a form of neocolonialism through which the damaging effects of extractivist, fossil fuel-driven capitalism silently impose displacement, destruction, and death on the poorest populations around the world. Whether we look at Flint, Michigan as an instance of environmental racism coordinating with neoliberal austerity policies, or the slowly drowning Island of Nauru in the South Pacific, whose inhabitants are the victims of the slow violence of extractivist capitalism, we find that the earth and its most vulnerable populations have been treated as sacrifice zones.

Slums represent another instance of the same colonizing and sacrificial logic by which surplus and discarded populations are warehoused in substandard and inhumane living conditions at the margins of society. Slums are spaces of social abandonment and systemic neglect where the poor, the disabled, and the marginalized are left to fend for themselves without state protection or support. Slumdweller live in what Giorgio Agamben calls the “threshold of indistinction,” a gray zone between bare life and political citizenship, between legal and illegal status, where they expend all of their resources and energies on mere survival.⁶¹ The structurally generated suffering of slumdweller, condemned to material deprivation and social death, is the very antithesis of the politics of mercy we sketch in chapter 5.

For these reasons we paired environmental destruction and slum proliferation. When juxtaposed with Pope Francis’s plea in *Laudato Si’*, in its subtitle and throughout, for all people of good will to see the earth as a common home, the phenomena of environmental destruction and slum proliferation appear for what they are: evidence of neoliberalism’s commitment to a divided home, parceled out into habitable zones for market successes and sacrifice zones for market failures. Environmental destruction

and slum proliferation show the sinister side of neoliberal “creativity,” the emptiness of its utopianism, and the brazenness of its idolatry.

Racial Neoliberalism, Mass Incarceration, and Mass Deportation

We will now shift from our discussion of global neoliberal crises to domestic crises in the United States of America, a country that is, in many ways, the cradle of neoliberalism. Although Austrian and German economists may be credited with cultivating the seeds of neoliberal theory and ideology, the United States soon became the primary sower of these seeds and the greenhouse for their lasting growth. Therefore, we turn to discuss United States racial neoliberalism, that is, the way neoliberal political economy, political rationality, and culture are inflected by the distinctive racial history of the United States. By analyzing the phenomena of mass incarceration and mass deportation, we will see prime examples of the type of expulsive neoliberal structures outlined by Sassen and Francis.

Racial Neoliberalism

The term *racial capitalism* was developed in South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s to describe the racialization of political and economic structures under apartheid. It was subsequently popularized by Cedric Robinson’s *Marxism and the Black Radical Tradition* (1983), which argued that capitalism always operates through existing forms of racism.⁶² Against Marx, Robinson argued that capitalism did not dramatically break with feudalism, but rather strategically utilized its racialized categories of exploitation for capitalist purposes. For Robinson, Europe was racialized before the advent of capitalism, so that the proletariat were already racialized subjects (Jews, Roma, Slavs, etc.).⁶³ Capitalism appropriated existing racial categories as media for pursuing projects of accumulation through the expropriation of indigenous land (settler colonialism), the extraction of labor from those deemed to be nonpersons (slavery), and the racialized oppression of global immigrants. Although there is no stable relation between racism and capitalism, since these realities are interlaced in distinctive ways in every sociohistorical situation, one constant of capitalism is

that it deploys race in order to institute hierarchies and normalize the differential value attributed to groups of people.⁶⁴

Racial neoliberalism represents a distinctive form of racial capitalism that extends the basic logic of racial capitalism into new social spaces by deploying a unique set of ideological and practical strategies. This is done in three ways.

First, racism is remade under neoliberalism as colorblind and meritocratic. Neoliberals argue that we live in a postracial or colorblind culture in which individuals are freed from identity constraints and judged solely on the basis of merit.⁶⁵ The marketplace is defined as a neutral arbiter of merit. It follows that failure to succeed results from personal faults or limitations and not systemic or structural causes. David Theo Goldberg argues in *The Threat of Race: Reflections on Racial Neoliberalism* that a liberal-conservative consensus has emerged over the past forty years around what amounts to a postracial ideological framework.⁶⁶ He describes this as a neoliberal consensus that embraces discourses of “antiracism” while rejecting any substantive “antiracist” policies. Antiracism rejects the category of race altogether in favor of meritocratic competition. By way of contrast, antiracism attempts to remedy historical injustices by demanding structural reform (criminal justice reform, expansion of antipoverty programs, etc.). Of course, for those committed to antiracial or colorblind discourses of neoliberalism, these programs are irrelevant because the market is viewed as the primary mechanism for distributing goods to impoverished communities of color.

Second, racial neoliberalism coheres with widespread proliferation of procedures of securitization.⁶⁷ “Securitization” means increased state support for the expansion of military, police, and immigration enforcement. Generally, we find that a renewed focus on securitization emerges in concert with the process of neoliberalization. It is often the case under neoliberal austerity regimes, which drastically cut back social spending, expenditures on security, policing, incarceration, and immigration enforcement actually expand.⁶⁸ Securitization proceeds in lockstep with neoliberalism by imposing discipline and order on a society that has been destabilized and restructured by market reforms. Historically this increased focus on security has not responded to a dramatic increase in crime, but rather a response to the insecurity generated by wealth inequality, unemployment, and trimming of social programs. It is not a

coincidence, therefore, that the expansion of the state security apparatus in the United States coincides with the massive reduction of social spending on welfare in the 1980s.

Of course, this process of securitization—mass incarceration, intensified policing and border security, and mass deportation—does little if anything to respond to underlying structural crises that marginalize both white working-class communities and communities of color. But even if securitization fails to mitigate the social suffering of marginalized populations, it serves two functions under neoliberalism.

It manages the insecurity of the general population. The neoliberal state dispenses with the work of providing economic protections for citizens, but it doubles its efforts to offer protection from racialized criminal threats. The shift to securitization undermines the view that social problems can be dealt with effectively through the maintenance and expansion of social programs. Instead, social problems are criminalized and then managed through enhanced police enforcement and increased focus on detention, incarceration, and deportation.

Similarly, the transformation of the state into a securitized instrument of punishment becomes a means of disciplining surplus populations made obsolete by processes of deindustrialization and globalization. Prior to the neoliberal era, welfare provisions were the primary method for managing surplus populations.⁶⁹ But as welfare programs were decimated through neoliberal reforms, the dominant method for dealing with issues such as poverty, mental health issues, and drug addiction became criminalization and punishment. The shift toward securitization justified the neoliberal state's disposal of persons no longer needed by the labor market. Incarceration and deportation have been deployed with increased frequency during the neoliberal era as a means of removing undesirable populations from market society.

Third, privatization, a central neoliberal commitment, has created novel ways of profiting from a politics of punishment and exclusion directed disproportionately toward communities of color. While the rise of private prisons and detention centers is a relatively new phenomenon that emerged in the 1980s alongside neoliberal reforms, it represents one of the clearest instances of the imbrication of neoliberal pursuit of profit with race. In 1984 the first for-profit prison business, Corrections Corporation of America (CCA), won a contract to run a prison facility in Tennessee.⁷⁰

Since then the growth of CCA (now called CoreCivic), as well as other private prison corporations, has exploded. In addition to expanding to immigration detention and deportation services, these corporations set up satellite factories for global corporations to contract low-wage labor from prisoners. Furthermore, even when not privatized, the prison and immigration-deportation complexes rely on vast networks of private firms to function and these firms often actively lobby for higher levels of incarceration, detention, and deportation. As we will see later in this chapter, persons of color bear the brunt of these “creative” market initiatives.

We turn now to mass incarceration and mass deportation as two distinct, and yet overlapping, regimes of control, punishment, and expulsion that intersect with and amplify neoliberalism's racialized mercilessness.

Mass Incarceration

In 1980 the prison population in the United States was approximately 300,000 people. By the 1990s that figure grew to almost 1 million. By the 2000s it had reached 2.4 million people. Presently, one in thirty-five adults in the United States are in prison, on parole, or on probation.⁷¹ The United States accounts for approximately 5 percent of the global population, but warehouses 25 percent of the global prison populations. These statistics are jarring and raise a number of disquieting questions about the rapid development of the United States' vast carceral apparatus. In general, there have been two primary interpretative positions that attempt to account for the explosion of mass incarceration over the past forty years: structural racism and capitalism.

The persistence of structural racism in American history is often pinpointed as the primary cause of the rise of mass incarceration in the United States. Michelle Alexander offers the most famous example of this approach in *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in an Age of Colorblindness* (2012). Her book describes how mass incarceration succeeded Jim Crow policies as a new means of social control of African American populations after the end of the formal Jim Crow system. She contends that after the Civil Rights Act in 1964 there emerged a political backlash by disaffected whites who feared that their jobs, educational access, and social standing were threatened by the social transformations associated with the civil rights movement. The Republican Party saw this disaffection as

an opportunity for electoral advantage and seized upon it.⁷² They successfully deployed the so-called Southern Strategy that utilized coded forms of racism to appeal to whites' racial resentments. After the civil rights movement it was no longer socially acceptable to use explicit forms of racism in public, so politicians employed "dog whistles" to signal to voters that their policies would serve white interests and punish communities of color.⁷³ Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and Bill Clinton all built a winning electoral strategy around policy proposals to cut welfare, enact a war on drugs, and get tough on crime. As politicians achieved electoral success with dog whistle strategies, they attempted to deliver on their campaign promises by passing legislation that launched the war on drugs and tough-on-crime policies that swept unprecedented numbers of African American men into the criminal justice system. Alexander surveys the results: "more African American adults are under correctional control today—in prison or jail, on probation or parole—than were enslaved in 1850, a decade before the Civil War began."⁷⁴

Alexander argues that the exploitation of racial resentment by politicians drove the rise of mass incarceration. Others have suggested alternative explanations that, without rejecting Alexander's thesis, supplement it by pointing to economic factors behind the expansion of the American carceral complex. Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Angela Davis, Cedric Johnson, and Loïc Wacquant suggest that the crisis of capitalism in the late 1970s and the neoliberal restructuring of society in the 1980s worked in concert with structural racism to create the prison-industrial complex. For these thinkers, the relation between racism and neoliberalism most adequately explains mass incarceration's genesis.⁷⁵ There are three notable features of this relation: (1) the management of surplus populations through criminal justice rather than welfare, (2) the management of neoliberal crises through the security state, and (3) the profit-seeking mechanisms of private and public prisons.

First, as a result of neoliberal reforms and the attendant processes of deindustrialization, globalization, and deregulation, sizeable portions of the population have been rendered unemployable and useless by market standards. During the era of industrial capitalism, increases in unemployment were dealt with by expanding the welfare state. Similarly, declines in unemployment meant restriction of welfare benefits in order to push recipients back into the labor market. In their classic work *Regulating the*

Poor (1971), Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward argue that this expansion-retraction cycle served to manage the poor and mitigate any social disorder that might result from unemployment.⁷⁶ The neoliberal restructuring of economy and the state undermined this approach from two sides by assaulting the Keynesian ideal of full employment and enacting severe cuts to welfare and antipoverty spending.⁷⁷ Under neoliberalism, the welfare state has been replaced with a punitive state.⁷⁸ It has been estimated that increased prison populations during the rise of mass incarceration shaved almost two percentage points off of US unemployment statistics. Angela Davis detects in mass incarceration something even more insidious: prisons serve to inoculate society from disturbing questions about structural racism and the inequalities generated by capitalism. Prisons "function ideologically as an abstract site into which undesirables are deposited, relieving us of thinking about real issues afflicting those communities from which prisoners are drawn in such disproportionate numbers . . . the prison has become a black hole into which the detritus of contemporary capitalism is deposited."⁷⁹ Both spatially and ideologically, prisons warehouse societal problems generated by the nexus between structural racism and neoliberal capitalism.

Second, mass incarceration relates to neoliberalism's tendency to create insecurity for white working-class communities and communities of color alike. A defining feature of neoliberalism is its proneness to constant crisis.⁸⁰ The felt sense of precarity produced by neoliberal reforms and their attendant crises, especially among working classes, could be dealt with by resisting neoliberalism and demanding a more extensive redistribution of wealth, greater economic protections, and the revitalization of unions. The alternative, neoliberal approach has been to translate economic insecurity into political insecurity and to reduce the state's function to criminal security provision. Wacquant details this approach: "by elevating criminal safety (*sécurité*, *Sicherheit*, *sicurezza*, etc.) to the front-line of government priorities, state officials have condensed the diffuse class anxiety and simmering ethnic resentment generated by the unraveling of the Fordist-Keynesian compact and channeled them toward the (dark-skinned) street criminal, designated as guilty of sowing social and moral disorder in the city, alongside the profligate welfare recipient."⁸¹ In this sense, securitization represents a political strategy of deflection and redirection that immunizes neoliberal policy from critique. Furthermore,

it serves as a potent political strategy that assembles white resentment against communities of color.

Third, neoliberalism harnesses the power of capital to profit from incarceration.⁸² Prisons have been privatized at an alarming rate during the period of mass incarceration. From 1999 to 2010 the expansion in federal prisoners housed in private prisons grew by 784 percent.⁸³ At the core of private prison expansion is the claim that private prisons are inherently more efficient and therefore more desirable than public prisons. Contracts are granted on the basis of a bidding process and because these contracts can be terminated, it is argued that privatization offers the most effective means of saving taxpayers' money. But there is a disconnect between the profit-seeking aims and goals of private prisons and the vision that prisons should serve the public good as sites of rehabilitation. The business model of private prisons necessitates ensuring a steady flow of prisoners to fill prison cells. Filled beds mean more profits. Consequently, corporations operating private prisons advocate for policies geared toward higher levels of incarceration. In a 2005 annual report from the Corrections Corporation of America, the authors note that any political or legal attempt to reduce incarceration levels represents a serious threat to their business model:

The demand for our facilities and services could be adversely affected by the relaxation of enforcement efforts, leniency in conviction and sentencing practices or through the decriminalization of certain activities that are currently proscribed by our criminal laws. For instance, any changes with respect to drugs and controlled substances or illegal immigration could affect the number of persons arrested, convicted, and sentenced, thereby potentially reducing demand for correctional facilities to house them.⁸⁴

Furthermore, private prisons generate profits by spending as little as possible on each individual prisoner. Cost-reduction trumps rehabilitation. Critics argue that private prisons have a vested interest in generating recidivism. This makes sense. The private prison industry needs bodies in beds, and rehabilitation is costly. It follows that privatized prisons are doubly motivated not to rehabilitate prisoners.⁸⁵

The problems lie deeper than individual prison-operating corporations seeking profits. More serious is the existence of a broader network of

private entities that profit from public prisons.⁸⁶ This nebulous network of government-backed private sector actors is often referred to as the "prison industrial complex." Diverse firms provide food, clothing, medical supplies, and other materials to prisoners in private and public prisons alike. In addition to this vast network, there has been a noticeable shift among other corporations toward using prisoners as cheap labor. This contemporary turn toward "convict leasing" can be traced back to legislation passed in 1979 under the Federal Prison Industries Enhancement Act, which permitted private business to enter into contracts with state prisons.⁸⁷ This practice has since expanded to federal and state prisons and is used by Whole Foods, Walmart, AT&T, BP, and many other companies. This practice is often called "insourcing" and is billed as an alternative to outsourcing labor to China, Bangladesh, or other areas in the Global South. Corporations employ prisoners at a rate far below minimum wage (the average rate per hour is between 86 cents and 3.45 dollars).⁸⁸ Furthermore, companies paying these rock-bottom wages bear no responsibility for health insurance or other benefits such as sick days, vacation, or retirement. Nor must they deal with unions. We have seen that prisons function as warehouses for market undesirables, which largely is true. But now we must add that, if the price of their labor sinks low enough, prisoners become desirable once more.⁸⁹

None of these issues on their own—structural racism, surplus populations, securitization, for-profit prisons—fully accounts for the phenomenon of mass incarceration. But by analyzing them together we start to see how the perverse convergence of deep-seated racial resentments, dog-whistle politics, disemboweling of social programs, and attempts to manage macroeconomic shifts through expulsion has contributed to a crisis that exposes the lie of contemporary America's so-called colorblindness.

Mass Deportation

The United States is currently in the midst of an immigration-deportation crisis. During the 2016 election this issue served as a flashpoint. Donald Trump inveighed against "illegal immigrants," called for a "Muslim ban," and proclaimed that the construction of a wall at the US-Mexico border would be a central focus of his presidency. Furthermore, Trump announced that it would be necessary to build a "deportation force" in order to forcibly

remove 11 million undocumented immigrants from the United States.⁹⁰ Although Trump's rhetoric has been more inflammatory than previous presidents, his record is broadly consistent with his predecessors. Trump is on track to deport a similar number of undocumented immigrants to Bush (2 million) and Obama (2.5 million), if current trends continue and he serves eight years in office. The deportation crisis has been building since the late 1990s after the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (1994) and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act (1996).⁹¹ It has been estimated that more people have been forcibly removed from the United States in the first eighteen years of the 2000s than the entire prior history of the United States.⁹²

In what follows we will narrate the emergence of the immigration-mass deportation crisis in the 2000s as the result of the complex interaction between a history of racialized immigration laws with economic-political convulsions associated with neoliberal policy.

The history of immigration policy in the United States is part and parcel of the history of structural racism. The United States first enacted a naturalization law in 1790 that restricted citizenship to "free white persons." Citizenship was refused to Native Americans and African slaves. This restriction remained in place until 1870. In the aftermath of the Civil War the category of citizenship was applied to "white(s)" and those of "African nativity or African descent." This same right of citizenship would not be granted to Native Americans and Asians until the 1940s.⁹³ And it was not until the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act (1965) that explicit race-based justification for exclusion was eliminated from American immigration law. The United States replaced race-based exclusions with a quota system that permitted 120,000 persons annually from the Western hemisphere and 170,000 persons from the Eastern hemisphere to immigrate to the United States irrespective of their race and ethnicity.⁹⁴ The 1965 legislation limited immigration to 20,000 persons from any individual country in the Eastern hemisphere. And in 1976 this 20,000-person limit was applied to the Western hemisphere as well. Finally, the Immigration Act of 1978 eliminated the quotas based on hemisphere with a global quota of 290,000 per year and a limit of 20,000 from any one country.

While race-based exclusions were officially eliminated with the 1965 reform, it created a new set of problems. Mexican migrant workers had

long served as seasonal farm laborers in the West and Southwest regions of the United States. The Bracero Program formalized seasonal migration of Mexican laborers to the United States from 1942 to 1964, bringing almost 500,000 laborers to the United States every year. Following the reforms of 1965, 1976, and 1978 the need for inexpensive, seasonal labor remained, but the mechanism for delivering this labor had been eliminated. The restriction of immigrants to 20,000 per year from countries in the Western hemisphere was particularly problematic for Mexico, since it had provided the United States almost half a million migrant workers each year during harvest season. Thus, Mexican laborers were forced to return to the informal system that existed before the Bracero Program. Now that informal system has been outlawed. Those who returned for work were labeled "illegals" and excluded from legal protections.

This complex history of racist and exclusionary immigration law interrelates with neoliberalism in three ways, which should sound familiar given our discussion of similar phenomena in conjunction with mass incarceration: (1) the creation of exploitable labor, (2) processes of securitization, and (3) the expansion of for-profit immigration, detention, and deportation services.

One of the structural causes for accelerating migration of Mexicans to the United States after the reforms of 1965, 1976, and 1978 was the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). This policy had a devastating effect on rural Mexican farmers by permitting heavily subsidized American corn to flood the Mexican market. In the two years after the implementation of NAFTA the poverty rate in Mexico jumped from 52 percent to 69 percent. The introduction of cheap American agriculture into Mexico displaced approximately 15 million Mexican farmers from their land. This displacement led to massive waves of migration into Mexican urban centers and into the United States. The end result was that the undocumented population in the United States swelled from 2.2 million before NAFTA to over 11 million by 2005, where it has remained ever since.⁹⁵

The social dislocation created by NAFTA, qua neoliberal reform, benefited US corporations by providing agricultural and other industries with a steady pool of exploitable labor. In this sense, the situation is markedly different than that of mass incarceration. With mass incarceration the processes of deindustrialization and globalization created a surplus labor

population that was managed by the criminal justice system. After the reform of 1965 and subsequent immigration reforms, it is not a surplus of labor but rather a lack of exploitable labor in certain sectors that was the problem.⁹⁶ American industries continued to need laborers willing to work in undesirable jobs for pay below minimum wage, but these workers could not be found among US citizens. This situation was remedied by exploiting a reserve of laborers rendered exploitable precisely because of their status as “illegal.”⁹⁷

The construction of illegality and the threat of deportation reinforce the vulnerability and exploitability of this population. The threat of deportation generates docile laborers with few legal protections and little or no access to social entitlements. Nicholas de Genova contends that deportation serves an economic purpose, even if it is unrealizable as a political project: “it is deportability, and not deportation per se, that has historically rendered undocumented migrant labor a distinctly disposable commodity. There has never been sufficient funding for the INS to evacuate the United States of undocumented migrants by means of deportations, nor even for the Border Patrol to ‘hold the line.’”⁹⁸ Although deportations have increased since de Genova wrote this in 2002, the analysis remains valid insofar as the primary function of deportation is not literally to expel undocumented migrants from the country. Rather, it serves as a means of ensuring the continued marginalization and exploitability of those who remain in the United States. That said, in times of recession, as the one brought about by the 2008 financial crisis, deportation is employed to expel surplus labor. Tanya Golash-Boza observes: “The mass deportation of men of color is part of a U.S. policy response designed to relocate surplus labor to the periphery and to keep labor in the United States compliant.”⁹⁹ Beyond these economic functions, deportability serves at a political level to rally certain constituencies around the perceived need for intensified (racialized) security enforcement.¹⁰⁰

Perhaps neoliberalism’s central paradox is its demand for expanded state security regimes set alongside calls to eliminate most government programs. While this paradox may remain unresolvable, it makes more sense once one realizes that deregulation and globalization undermine economic sovereignty, thus stoking nostalgia for national (and racial) sovereignty. Such nostalgia emerged with particular clarity in the 2016 election with Trump’s incessant talk about a prospective wall along the

US-Mexico border. But this case is by no means unique. It fits with broader, transnational agitation for intensified securitization at borders including in Europe and the Middle East. Current demands for walls differ from those of previous epochs, when walls were erected to claim territorial sovereignty and prevent foreign countries from invasion. Currently the demand for walls responds largely to nonstate actors: migrants and terrorists. Incongruously, these walls rarely constitute an effective means of interdicting, monitoring, or controlling the flow of goods and peoples across borders.¹⁰¹ But walls—even when just imagined and promised—supply the state with tangible evidence that it cares for its citizens’ security. And even in the absence of real security, walls potentially symbolize national sovereignty in an age of its widespread dissolution.

The migration crisis interweaves with the prison industrial complex, since neoliberalism has created a vast carceral and security apparatus that profits from immigration enforcement and deportation. This apparatus has been described as the “border-industrial complex” (Akers Chacón and Mike Davis) and the “immigration industrial complex” (Deepa Fernandes, Golash-Boza).¹⁰² As with the military-industrial complex and the prison-industrial complex, critics of the immigration-industrial complex analyze the collusion between state agencies and private corporations in the expansion of methods of securitization, enforcement, and punishment of vulnerable populations. For instance, in 2009 Congress passed appropriations laws that mandated a detention bed quota at thirty-four thousand beds per year. Every day that an individual is detained costs taxpayers 120 dollars. Over the course of a year, this detention bed quota costs taxpayers approximately 2 billion dollars—thus providing revenue in the same amount to companies operating detention centers.¹⁰³

The detention bed quota is just the tip of the iceberg of the profit-seeking motives that align state agencies with private corporations. Roxanne Doty and Elizabeth Wheatley describe four features that interlock to sustain the immigration-industrial complex. First, the legal apparatus, represented by laws that range from the Illegal Immigration Reform and Responsibility Act (1996) to Arizona’s S.B. 1070 (2010), augments measures to identify, punish, or expel undocumented migrants from the United States. Second, the expansion of prison corporations accommodates intensified focus on enforcement. The two largest prison corporations in the United States, CoreCivic and GEO Group, garner over 10 percent of their revenue from

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) by providing a broad array of detention services. Third, the ideologies of neoliberalism and securitization have supported the expansion of the immigration-industrial complex. The neoliberal commitment to privatization and to the market as a more efficient and cost-effective method for delivering social services has been the central ideological justification for growth in detention sectors. Doty and Wheatley point to criminalization as a critical ideological component that legitimates rising costs associated with the immigration-industrial complex. By stoking fear about criminality among immigrant populations—when, in point of fact, immigrants on average commit fewer crimes than native-born populations—politicians and media enable targeting of these populations for containment and expulsion (with their attendant costs) rather than reform and inclusion.¹⁰⁴ Fourth, private corporations that profit from detention and deportation commit significant resources to lobbying efforts that attempt to influence legislation and funding priorities and direct them toward the strategic priorities of their business model.¹⁰⁵

With this we see that, in ways similar to mass incarceration, the immigration industrial complex combines a variety of factors, threaded together by neoliberal economics and political common sense and braided with racial animus and racist structures, to yield a crisis that threatens millions of people in the United States—all that so a tiny fraction of the population can profit handily from their precarity.¹⁰⁶

The Politics of Racial Neoliberalism

Let us return briefly to Alexander's argument. She contends that mass incarceration amounts to a thoroughgoing redesigning of old Jim Crow-style legalized discrimination. Once Jim Crow was outlawed with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, imprisonment became the new method for reinstating legalized discrimination and disenfranchisement. The racial caste system was reconstituted in response to shifting labor needs within American society. After the eras dominated by slavery, sharecropping, and manufacture, the new era of mass unemployment for African Americans became the era of mass incarceration of African Americans and other expendable populations no longer needed by the labor market.

Aviva Chomsky maintains that a similar operation is at play with the current immigration-deportation crisis among Latinx persons in the United

States. The legal discriminations against immigrants outlawed with the Immigration and Nationality Act (1965) were redesigned through the invention of "illegality." Once migrants are labeled as "illegal," all manner of exploitation becomes permissible. Chomsky describes the experience of undocumented immigrants as one of "internal exile" and "civic death," since "illegal" status excludes them from voting rights and public benefits.¹⁰⁷

Neoliberalism's rise coincides with new "colorblind" forms of discrimination. Given neoliberalism's everyday mercilessness and its penchant for securitization, it becomes perfectly reasonable (per neoliberal political rationality) to aid and abet discrimination in the forms of criminalization, punishment, imprisonment, and deportation of market "losers." Marketized colorblindness has masked racial animus in politics, thus offering proponents of mass incarceration and mass deportation plausible deniability regarding their politics' driving urges.

Neoliberalism has intersected with, exacerbated, and sought to profit from crises generated by structural racism. Neoliberalism has redesigned structural racism to create systems predicated on the logic of exclusion and expulsion, barring vulnerable populations from access to work, housing, community life, healthcare, education, and various state benefits and protections.¹⁰⁸ Having considered racial neoliberalism, we can see the logic of neoliberal mercilessness in a new light, as attaching itself to ongoing histories of racialized exclusion while profiting from the social misery produced by these forms of exclusion.

From a Catholic perspective, racial neoliberalism is an ethos that follows from a stunting of people's capacity for seeing the truth of human dignity (through reducing people to racial categories and dog-whistle labels) and a perversion of people's capacity for compassion (through reducing our sensibilities to the need for security above all else, dulling our ability to feel disturbed at the suffering of others), resulting in a way of life predicated upon corrupt structures and institutions such as mass incarceration and mass deportation that, almost as evidence of their objective falsity, are largely kept hidden from the public.

Neoliberalism as Culture of Indifference

The question we are left with after examining the four crises of environmental destruction, slum proliferation, mass incarceration, and mass

deportation is this: How are these crises not causing widespread outcry, to the extent that neoliberalism would be discredited and alternatives eagerly embraced? How, more briefly, can people be indifferent to the crises of neoliberalism?

While Pope Francis does not pretend to be able to answer such questions completely, his cultural diagnoses demonstrate that he has asked and reflected upon them. We began this chapter with Francis's analysis of faceless economy and its relationship to a culture of exclusion in which persons are pushed to the margins and expelled from the social order. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, in the section "No to an Economy of Exclusion," Francis suggests that the dominant economic system generates both intolerable forms of "exclusion" and "inequality." The market enforces the rule that everything that is not of short-term financial value can be sacrificed, including the earth and its most vulnerable inhabitants. Francis declares: "In this system, which tends to devour everything which stands in the way of increased profits, whatever is fragile, like the environment, is defenseless before the interests of a deified market, which become the only rule" (EG, 56). Thus, a culture of exclusion, or a throwaway culture (LS, 16 22, 43), is born in which "everything has a price" and persons and things not deemed valuable by market standards can be discarded, expelled, or eliminated. Those without "value" are market "losers." Society, following the protocols of market logic, punishes these losers; "this way of thinking has room only for a select few, while it discards all those who are unproductive."¹⁰⁹ A culture of exclusion, then, represents an inevitable consequence of a faceless economy insofar as it forces individuals to focus on abstract and impersonal metrics rather than the preservation of dignified life and sustainability.

This culture's other profile is a culture of indifference (see LS, 25, 53, 92, 246). This side of the economy of exclusion affects even those who succeed according to its standards. As we discussed in chapter 1, Francis maintains that a new idol has emerged in the world, the idol of money. He argues that "we calmly accept its dominion over ourselves and our societies" (EG, 55). The acceptance of this idol's power over us is not a mere cognitive matter (though such ill thinking would be bad enough), but instead represents a reality that shapes us affectively, forms us as subjects, and trains us to engage in the world in very specific ways. In particular, Francis maintains that it forms us to be inordinately attached to the

imperatives of the market and indifferent to exclusion and social suffering. Francis observes:

To sustain a lifestyle which excludes others, or to sustain enthusiasm for that selfish ideal, a globalization of indifference has developed. Almost without being aware of it, we end up being incapable of feeling compassion at the outcry of the poor, weeping for other people's pain, and feeling a need to help them, as though all of this were someone else's responsibility and not our own. The culture of prosperity deadens us; we are thrilled if the market offers us something new to purchase. In the meantime, all those lives stunted for lack of opportunity seem a mere spectacle; they fail to move us. (EG, 54)

Our capacity to feel and be affected by the suffering of others has been dulled, even deadened, through our capitulation to market culture. Francis proposes that an alternative culture, a culture of encounter, is needed to contest this culture of indifference. We will say a bit more about this in chapter 4 in conjunction with Francis's interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan. But before we move to that chapter, we should deepen our understanding of the culture of indifference by examining Francis's comparatively little-known essay "Corruption and Sin."¹¹⁰

The essay was originally published in 1991, amid a scandal in Argentina centering on a politically impeded rape-and-murder investigation in the Catamarca province. It was republished in 2005; then-Cardinal Bergoglio intended it to be read as an Advent examination of conscience.¹¹¹ The essay does not concern neoliberalism directly. But it includes a set of theological reflections on personal and political corruption that can provide a theological framework for criticizing neoliberalism as an ethos. Furthermore, the language that Bergoglio uses to describe corruption resonates strongly with many critical phrases he directs against "the economy that kills."

Bergoglio draws a fundamental distinction in this text between sin and corruption. In the 2005 preface he deems it unfit to "accept the state of corruption as just another sin."¹¹² The distinction lies in this: sin is something that a person (eventually) recognizes about himself, both inwardly and outwardly; ultimately it is ordered toward a request for God's mercy.¹¹³ Corruption, however, is not ordered toward God's mercy, but rather consists in being "tired of asking for forgiveness," and in considering oneself

"sufficient for [one's] own salvation."¹¹⁴ Corruption is not mere hypocrisy, according to Bergoglio. Instead, he views it as an attack on truth itself that promises disaster for the corrupt person: "In setting themselves up as the measure of all things, there is an underlying danger: no one can twist reality so much without running the risk of that same reality turning against them."¹¹⁵ He continues: "Being is transcendently *verum*, true, and I can twist it and wring it like a towel, denying the truth; but being will continue to be true, even if, in the context of a particular situation, someone manages to present it otherwise."¹¹⁶ In this way Bergoglio construes corruption as a kind of sick, constructivist project. Corruption brings with it an air of triumph, of being the standard of judgment (above truth). Corrupt people divide others according to this standard. One is "either an accomplice or an enemy."¹¹⁷ Corruption becomes common sense—it is purveyed as the only realistic way. It is more than contagious, as sin and temptation are; it "actively proselytizes."¹¹⁸ It becomes socially acceptable, and its effects can be easily shrugged off, through "social cosmetics."¹¹⁹ This is all to say, if we switch briefly from Bergoglio's lexicon to Wendy Brown's, that corruption is sin qualitatively intensified into a political rationality: a constructive form of reason that ousts what would otherwise be recognized as truth, presenting itself as bedrock for judgment and as the common sense that all people should hold, and to which all people (in principle) are brought through dissemination and reeducation.

Bergoglio relates his description of corruption to a meditation from St. Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises* called the meditation on the Two Standards. In this meditation, Ignatius instructs the person making the Exercises to imagine life as a battlefield, where the armies of Christ and Lucifer vie for souls to add to the forces fighting under their respective battle flags, or "standards." Lucifer's soldiers, or demons, seduce people through a progressive set of temptations, starting with riches, proceeding through worldly honor, and on to pride.¹²⁰ The point of these temptations "is not to make them commit sins, but rather to ensnare men in the state of sin, in the state of corruption."¹²¹ The devil plans "to create a condition strong enough to resist the invitation to grace."¹²² Christ invites people into a share in God's life; the devil actively resists people accepting this share in God's life, precisely by locking themselves into their own high self-estimation and, consequently, their disregard for or mercilessness toward

others. This small section on Ignatius should be underscored: Bergoglio depicts corruption as demonic.

It should also be highlighted, in keeping with Bergoglio's criticism of "social cosmetics," that corruption is not only an individual phenomenon, but a collective one. Bergoglio declares: "Corruption is not an act but a state, a personal and collective state, to which people get accustomed and in which they live. The values (or non-values) of corruption are integrated into a real culture, with a capacity for its own systematic doctrine, its own language, and its own particular way of acting."¹²³ The state of corruption habituates people into being corrupt. This "state" becomes a culture, defined by corrupt values, bolstered by an ordered set of teachings on truth, a way of speaking, and a set of practices. In this way, corruption becomes global, comprehensive, a political rationality.

Lest it seem like we are extrapolating too far, pushing Bergoglio in Brown's direction, his further analyses of corruption can be marshalled along the same trajectory. Bergoglio identifies a dual dynamism at play in corruption that, as we see it, gives it the air of a (perverse) political rationality. The dual dynamism has to do with two classic philosophical dyads: appearance–reality and transcendence–immanence. Corruption distorts both, at least from the point of view of Catholicism. Corruption takes no interest in reality breaking out as truthful appearance. Instead, corruption constructs reality "in such a way that it can be imposed and accepted as widely as possible in society" (i.e., making it *appear* attractive, often through deception); it takes away reality and replaces it with appearance.¹²⁴ Hence Bergoglio's deployment of the potent phrase "social cosmetics." Corruption renders all transcendence immanent, reducing it to "at most, an armchair transcendence."¹²⁵ Being, which for Bergoglio is truth, is "ill-treated through a kind of socially acceptable shamelessness."¹²⁶ These may seem like very heady accusations, steeped perhaps in outdated Catholic metaphysics—unless one takes into account a new example (far more recent than Bergoglio's essay) that corroborates his concerns: the Trump administration's complete unconcern with truth, its purveying of "alternative facts," its promotion (in word) and often enforcement (in deed) of a nostalgic, "conservative" table of values that its figurehead (Donald Trump himself) clearly does not follow, all to give the sheen of a moral, Christianity-friendly government that is nothing of the sort. Corruption

consists in a political rationality without discernible reason, an ontology without recognizable being. If political rationality is, as we argue in chapter 2, a gatekeeper for reality, we could say that corruption as political rationality makes everything unreal; reality itself is merely a function of cosmetics, of manipulation, of the art of the deal.

Corruption breeds a culture of shamelessness. Catholic hope holds out that even great sinners can avoid becoming corrupt, so long as they remain open to forgiveness.¹²⁷ So long as sinners feel their hearts' weakness, they stand on the threshold of possible salvation. This is the difference between the sinful and the corrupt. The corrupt no longer feel their hearts' weakness. They no longer perceive their need to be forgiven. They close themselves to mercy.¹²⁸ The heart of the corrupt one becomes a "root of bitterness" (see Heb 12:15). Sinful people can remain open to transcendence; the corrupt become self-contained. Like Ananias and Sapphira, the couple who knowingly withheld for themselves money they had promised to the community for the benefit of all, the corrupt attempt to seal themselves off from God and others, thus "testing the Spirit of the Lord"—potentially with the same catastrophic results (Acts 5:1–11).¹²⁹

With Bergoglio's idea of "corruption," we gain an important diagnostic tool for examining neoliberalism theologically. When he calls corruption a "state," he means a condition of the depth dimension of individuals and a whole society. When he first penned this critique of corruption, he directed it against an Argentine culture that had degenerated into allowing police brutality and negligence, widespread violence and wrongdoing of various sorts, and betrayals of Argentina's ostensive Catholic heritage. We have already begun to point out how his critique of corruption has wider applicability for examining twisted political rationalities, which operate at the same level as does corruption, and with the example of the Trump administration, which we have designated as an example of neoliberalism's latest degeneracy, we opened the lines of communication still more.

Several insights emerge from this reading of Francis's "Corruption and Sin" as it may be applied to neoliberalism and its concomitant culture of indifference. First, neoliberalism is a system that constructs the market as above truth, just as corruption is a constructivism that wrings the life out of truth. Evidence for this abounds, even if we take into account only the crises this chapter has treated: climate change denialism as performing an agnosticism that disregards scientific fact; the obscuring of dire

conditions in slums through entrepreneurial rhetoric; and the distortion of human dignity through enhanced racism and a hidden carceral and deportation complex. Second, neoliberalism is triumphalist in the way that Francis says is endemic to corruption. Neoliberal slogans such as "there is no alternative" and "the end of history" (the neoliberal refrain after 1989) and the spirit of victory that carried neoliberalism through the global financial crash of 2008 (and more local ones, such as the collapse of the "Asian tiger" economies in 1997 or Argentina's depression from 1998 to 2002) serve as ample evidence. Third, as with corruption, neoliberalism sets itself up as common sense and assiduously sets to educating people in this common sense. Nothing forestalls action on crises like a system that autoimmunizes by teaching people to assume it as natural. Such naturalization may be a constitutive feature of capitalism in all its forms, or even beyond that systems of power generally, but neoliberalism has been distinctively effective at promoting itself as common sense. Fourth, for this work of theology, the specifically theological valence of Francis's category of corruption commands serious attention as well. Francis's allusions to the Ignatian meditation on the Two Standards levels a grave charge against corruption, namely that it is demonic or Luciferian, the result of human freedom being tempted by and capitulating to an ethos that twists truth, triumphalistically brandishes this twisted truth as a viable guide for living, and then presents such contorted living as a common standard, an ethos stamped by the devil, the deceiver.¹³⁰ Fifth, all of this may be tied together by one more theological valence, which relates to mercy, the chief theological topic of this entire book. A corrupt life is a life that regards itself as beyond mercy, that views mercy as no longer possible. Surely neoliberalism remains at best agnostic with regard to mercy and forgiveness. We suspect, though, that at least in its performance, exemplified by the four crises described in the current chapter, neoliberalism attempts definitively to leave mercy behind.

Given all this we can confirm Francis's diagnosis of the culture of indifference, and using one of his own texts, we can sharpen that charge. Neoliberalism breeds an extraordinarily pernicious kind of indifference. This indifference is apathy, for sure, but a creative-destructive apathy perfectly primed *not* to address neoliberalism's crises.