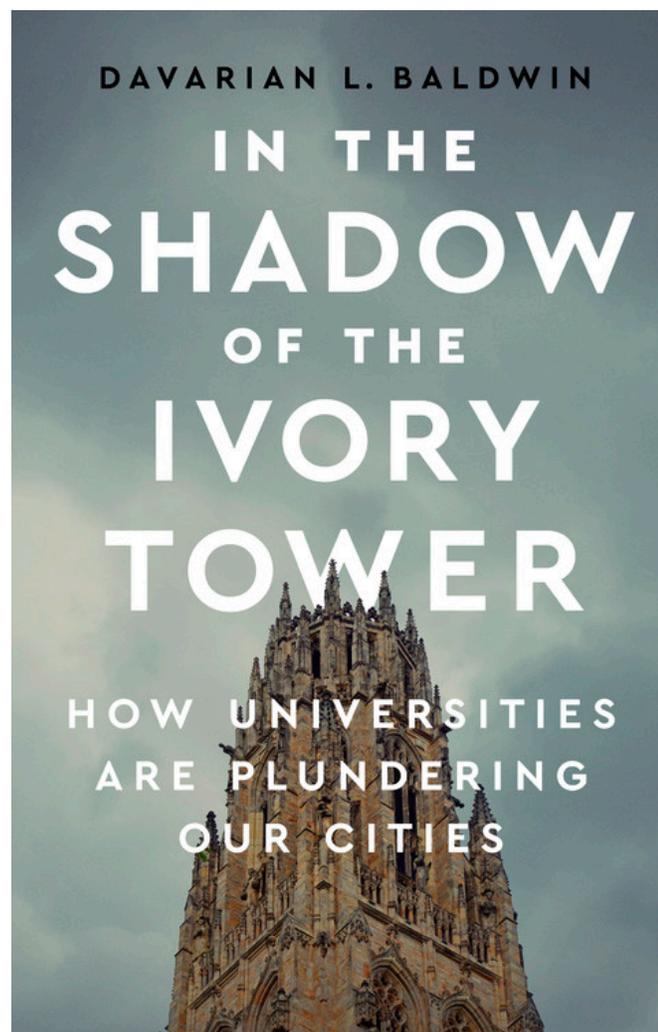


RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

In the Shadow of the Ivory Tower: How Universities are Plundering our Cities: by Davarian L. Baldwin

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Higher education has made way for a massive contingent of low-wage labor, increased racial profiling, and the elimination of affordable housing, retail, and health care in campus neighborhoods. But that's not the only story. Activists, residents, and students have fought hard against these changes and pulled progressive university administrators along to model alternative ways of relating to their cities.

- Baldwin, 2021, p. 16

Many readers who have themselves spent years matriculating on the campus of a major American higher education institution will likely relate to the description of a campus as a UniverCity, offering space and amenities not only for learning but also for housing, dining, cultural experiences, athletic opportunities, and retail needs. Many may also nod their heads in agreement that rental rates of properties surrounding universities are higher (often much higher) than in other areas of the community. Davarian Baldwin's *In the Shadow of the Ivory Tower* forces the reader to go beyond head nodding and consider the intentionality of these trends, such as the practice at some universities of offering housing subsidies to already highly paid employees with the consequence of driving rental rates even higher. Readers are forced to consider the implications of many university policies for neighbors trying to coexist in communities dominated by these institutions. The implications are often harsh.

It would be easy to assume that educational institutions have always dominated urban landscapes, but that isn't entirely true. "How did colleges and universities come to significantly dictate the terms of urban living, from a city's housing costs and wage ceilings to its health-care standards and even policing practices" is an excellent question (pp. 22-23). The answer connects back to higher education institutions and medical complexes, or "Eds and Meds," being classified as 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit entities with the Internal Revenue Service. On the surface this is great, as universities have enormous potential to serve as intellectual resources for their greater communities. Sometimes that potential is realized. Other times, universities have used this classification to enhance their coffers while simultaneously pushing back and down upon surrounding communities, drawing resources out of neighborhoods and onto campuses with the lure of tax-free rent and the power of eminent domain. Whether achieved by carrot or by stick, the effect – isolation of wealthy white students from less affluent neighbors of color – is the same.

In Chapter 1, "When Universities Swallow Cities," Baldwin describes several of the current and historic community-affecting initiatives driven by several powerful institutions, including Carnegie Mellon, Yale, University of Chicago, and the somewhat lesser known Trinity College.

Some were complex, multi-layered, and long lasting, such as the University of Chicago's manipulation of the Hyde Park neighborhood. Some were brief but openly egregious, such as Trinity College's "Student Movement for Americanization at Trinity," implemented in the 1920s. On the surface this resolution implemented an undergraduate residency requirement. The impact of the residency requirement was two-fold. First, it elevated the cost of attendance beyond the means of many local families, including many Jewish immigrants. Second, for those working-class and immigrant students still managing to enroll, it instituted a cultural barrier. Newcomers would be surrounded by a student body that was mostly wealthy, mostly white, and mostly non-Jewish, which was intended to help "Americanize the country's foreign-born population" (p. 27). If this were not direct enough, Trinity College also limited the number of students from the local Hartford area to 20% of the total student body. While short-lived and a century past, these initiatives were brutally effective in deliberately isolating privileged students from the wider community. Even today, while not directly linked to bald policy, enrollment at higher education institutions is disproportionately wealthy and disproportionately white (Le et al., 2020). Baldwin's research into these historical events is important work, especially as some educators are experiencing increasing pressure not to delve too deeply into matters of race and privilege lest they be accused of teaching Critical Race Theory and "indoctrinating" students (Sawchuk, 2021; Pettit, 2021).

Baldwin offers a deeper examination of current segregation of privileged students from working-class neighborhoods in Chapter 2, "Rural College in a Capital City." In presenting myriad ways Trinity College has more recently managed to isolate and insulate itself, he paints a picture of what several authors refer to as the "amenities arms race" among high-tuition institutions (Corsino, 2017; McClure, 2019). Included in his description of the extraordinary amenities elite colleges and universities make available to their students is a photo of Trinity's Crescent Street Townhouses, built after the forced eviction of neighborhood residents and offering "stainless steel appliances, central air, and lawn care" (p. 72).

Chapters 3 ("The Schools that Ate New York") and 5 ("A 'Phoenix Rising'?") highlight Baldwin's journalistic skills as he unearths and shares the multifaceted stories of political and economic giants such as Columbia University, New York University, and Arizona State University. Readers weave through complicated relationships between Columbia and surrounding community advocates, exploring issues of expansion and eminent domain in a community where local residents cannot even use the campus library. The ways in which both Columbia and NYU have disregarded their own community task forces and even (at NYU) their own faculty are discussed. Shifting his focus Southwest, Baldwin describes the unpopular suburban design of a downtown ASU campus, along with the insulting assertion of ASU officials that there was "nothing" downtown previously. In "A 'Phoenix Rising'?" we read how reduced State funding led ASU to seek funding elsewhere, finding it in complex commercial development agreements. These agreements, which pulled for-profit businesses onto

tax-free ASU land, have the effect of shifting local tax burdens to existing residents, creating a situation described as “reverse condemnation” (p. 187). Capitalism would have us believe that private business benefits communities, but when communities are left holding the tax burden while businesses reap profits from tax sheltered locations, the opposite is ironically true.

In between these largely economic discussions Baldwin situates Chapter 4, “The ‘800-Pound Gargoyle.’” Pulling together data largely from the University of Chicago and the University of Cincinnati, Baldwin describes the often contentious and sometimes tragic relationships between university police forces and the neighborhoods surrounding those universities. The data is clear that granting private, armed police forces the authority to arrest on public city blocks does little to strengthen campus-community relationships. Instead, racially disparate police stops and, in at least one instance, a senseless fatal shooting, contribute to strained campus-community ties. Chapter 4 feels slightly out of place in a text emphasizing political relationships and economic connections, and provokes enough questions to serve as the foundation of a book of its own. Are two layers of policing really necessary? Why or why not? What are the jurisdictions of these separate entities? What is the relationship, both historic and present, between citywide police departments and campus police? Where do campus communities fit in this dynamic?

Baldwin ends on a cautiously optimistic note, describing policies and infrastructure which have helped to create excellent campus-community relationships at the University of Winnipeg in Canada. Progressive infrastructure developments such as affordable, LEED-certified housing for students, families, and community members, as well as a Downtown Commons designed for the greater community – specifically including immigrants and refugees – as well as for university students are described. A similarly accessible RecPlex *truly* available to neighborhood residents, locally sourced and environmentally sustainable food service providing nutrition for campus residents and an influx of business dollars into the surrounding community, and a documented commitment to hiring previously marginalized neighbors as living wage employees are all discussed.

After sharing several best practices in action, Baldwin leaves the reader with six concrete recommendations involving the redesign of current university tax structures,

community benefits agreements (CBAs), planning and zoning, and athletic revenues. Recommendations also call for rethinking public safety measures and fair labor practices. While reading *In the Shadow of the Ivory Tower*, I found myself continually wondering how the policies and practices of the urban university nearest my neighborhood stacked up. Baldwin instilled in this reader both a curiosity and a roadmap for learning the ways in which my local university is or is not a beneficial neighbor, and to whom. Readers picking up that roadmap is how the conversation, and the work, continues.

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