The opening of the twenty-first century provided many exciting opportunities and menacing threats to Toledoans, Americans, and citizens of the world. Two of the more powerful emerging forces that reshaped social institutions and conventions everywhere were the Internet and globalization. The economy, the family, personal aspirations, modalities of romance-seeking and fellowship, and the ability to harm others en masse have been transformed by this technology and the process of global social integration. Globalization is a dialectical process of local events being shaped by and shaping events far away, which contributes to a global consciousness. Many also see globalization as primarily the latest neoliberal stage of global capitalism. Larry Bartels in Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age chronicles the collusion between plutocrats and politicians to rig the global political and economic systems to their advantage against global society’s general welfare. Articles presented in this final stage illustrate how Black Toledoans were caught up in these cross currents that impacted everyone. However, a brief historical account of major twenty-first-century developments provides a context in relation to the selected articles.

Mark Mizruchi in The Fracturing of the American Corporate Elite argues that “the American corporate elite once played an important role in addressing ... the needs of the larger society. Since the 1970s, the members of this group have largely abandoned their concern with issues in the United States beyond those of their individual firms.” Thus:

as George H.W. Bush’s Treasury Secretary, Nicholas Brady, put it, ‘Wall Street ... financed the building of this country’s industrial capacity and infrastructure’ (quoted in Johnson, 2010, p. 62). National development coincided in a mutually beneficial fashion with wealth accumulation for leading capitalists in Western countries.
The Toledo industrial landscape is littered with abandoned buildings that are testament to the abandoned commitment to America by financiers and industrialists.

Businesses in municipalities that once thrived on providing services to the industrial and technology employees and subcontracting the workforce for the Fords and IBMs of the economy also collapsed, thereby rippling and amplifying unemployment in the broader community. Between 2001 and the banking crisis of 2008, the United States lost 42,400 factories, including 36% of factories that employed more than 1,000 employees. Since manufacturing wages are as much as 20% higher than wages in other sectors for workers of similar skills and credentials, the loss of these jobs contributes to growing inequality and poverty. During the middle of the twentieth century, the largest U.S. employers included General Motors, Ford, and United States Steel, which all paid high wages, whereas by the beginning of the twenty-first century the largest employers included Wal-Mart, McDonald’s, and Kroger, all of which pay low wages.

With the success of the Internet and other burgeoning markets, the twenty-first century welcomed further globalization, but it came with a hefty price. Repercussions from the past, such as former President Reagan’s “War on Drugs” along with former President Clinton’s “Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994,” as well as his “Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, aka the Welfare Reform Act, manifested in nefarious ways. The War on Drugs” led to mass incarceration and the gross disfiguring of the black community. Welfare reform wrought consequences far more ominous and debilitating than was originally understood by the black community or by analysts of welfare policy, considering the fact that the 1996 Welfare Reform Act shifted resources from the unemployed to lower-income employed citizens. Those who were unemployed were largely left to fend for themselves. The bombing of the Twin Towers and the countless lives lost on American soil, 9/11, ignited the War on Terror under former President Bush. As a result, Islamophobia and xenophobia permeated the mediascape, both in America and abroad.

The globalization and automation of production contributed to the deindustrialization of America and the attendant growth in inequality, poverty, family dissolution, and the devastation of inner cities across America. In his classic book *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*, William Julius Wilson describes the unfolding impact of this process in considerable

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