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Black San Francisco: The Politics of Race and Space in the City

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Sociology

by

Christina Renee Jackson

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September 2014

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June 2014

Black San Francisco: The Politics of Race and Space in the City

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by

Christina Renee Jackson

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ABSTRACT

Black San Francisco: The Politics of Race and Space in the City

by

Christina Jackson

This dissertation examines how Black residents in San Francisco navigate the politics of race, space and power during a time of massive change in the city. Based on field research conducted over a two-year period, this study provides an ethnographic account of the concerns that both middle-to-upper and low-income Black residents share about redevelopment and gentrification in the Fillmore and Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhoods of San Francisco. This dissertation illuminates a mismatch of ideas and values regarding the renewal of historically Black neighborhoods. The meaning of the word “Black” in San Francisco was intimately tied to the concept of “urban renewal,” and the concept was integral to the context and the subtext of many conversations concerning current redevelopment projects in the neighborhood. The words “Black” and “urban renewal” are connected to a shared history of dispossession, instability and the persistence of a racial hierarchy in San Francisco. My analysis finds that Black residents frame their experience living in the city as similar to living in a “chess game” played within a larger “battle” for power. Conversations about redevelopment and gentrification most often operate within a context that makes clear the politics of who is “in” and who is “out.” Middle-to-upper class Blacks who have “made it” are in, but as this study seeks to explore, what about low-income Blacks? Where do they

fit? Today's economy, built so much more heavily than in the past upon reliance on secondary education and specialized knowledge, tends to transform and redevelop the city's oldest neighborhoods in ways that often leave out poor, uneducated Blacks who lack the means to flee the city and , as a result, are the most vulnerable to institutional control. This study questions the stability and presence of a Black community in San Francisco, which has declined in population since the 1970s. This study of Black San Francisco contributes to sociological knowledge by exploring the different values, meanings and perspectives found among Black residents living in the city, as well as those who compete with them to renew their spaces.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Overview

For most of my life, I lived in West Mt. Airy, a quaint middle-to-upper class neighborhood in the city of Philadelphia with a suburban feel known for its diversity of Jewish, Black, and LGBT families. My family was not middle-to-upper class. With upward mobility in mind, and seeking to avoid the ghettos they believed they would have to live in if they failed, my parents did their best hold on to their place in the neighborhood. A primary concern and motivation for their struggles was to remain, at whatever cost, in an area where their children could have access to safer schools, parks, and other amenities generally not offered in low-income areas. My parents understood that the residential location I grew up in dictated the quality of life I would have.¹ Other privileges of growing up in a middle-to-upper class area included easy access to local grocery stores with fresh and healthful foods, nearby libraries, numerous large parks and playgrounds, schools with an array of college and career preparation programs, and even international trips sponsored by neighborhood organizations.

Although the outside of our duplex was nice enough not to merit any unwanted scrutiny or scorn from neighbors, the inside needed a lot of work that my family could not afford. We often called upon the financial help of our extended family. Family members still carry memories of teetering on the verge of bankruptcy. When my parents split and my mom became a single mother, she went deeply into debt to go back to school to finish her BA (and

¹ In *Stuck in Place: Urban Neighborhoods and the End of Progress Towards Racial Equality* (2013), Patrick Sharkey discusses how a person's access to opportunities is based off the quality of neighborhood they grew up in. (Sharkey, Patrick. 2013. *Stuck In Place: Urban Neighborhoods and the End of Progress toward Racial Equality*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.)

later her MA) to obtain a higher pay-grade at her job and help her family maintain a comfortable, seemingly middle-class life in their childhood home. During that time, my brothers and I regularly helped take care of the house in her absence, as our mother worked on her degree and gave up most of her limited spare time to do so. My mother raised us to follow in her footsteps, to finish college and to do well so that we could take advantage of the benefits of higher education.

Before attending high school, my brothers and I ventured outside of our neighborhood only rarely. As part of our seemingly middle-class survival strategy, we were taught to avoid ghetto areas.² This was clear even on our family trips to downtown Philadelphia; when choosing our routes, we would specifically avoid ghetto neighborhoods. My parents made it clear to us that they worked hard to be able to live in Mt. Airy. Although certain other family members never directly stated that people in the ghetto should just “work harder and move out of the ‘hood,’ ” this message was nevertheless implied. My father, who owned a plumbing business, would occasionally take me to poorer areas of North or West Philadelphia when he did plumbing work for residents of those locations. These places were similar to his childhood neighborhood, and he knew firsthand the many pitfalls of life in the ghetto that he struggled to help his children avoid at all costs. Years later, I found myself spending a good deal of time in these same areas when I attended Temple University, located in an increasingly gentrified North Philadelphia, a place that Anderson describes as a

² In *Between Good and Ghetto: African American Girls and Inner City Violence*, Nikki Jones documents the situated survival strategies that some mothers and grandmothers who live in distressed inner city neighborhoods pass on to their daughters. One strategy is to avoid distressed and troubled spaces as a way to avoid threats of violence. (Jones, Nikki. 2009. *Between Good and Ghetto: African American Girls and Inner City Violence*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.)

hyperghetto because of its' concentrated poverty and extreme isolation from mainstream society (1999).³

When I was a student at Temple, I took a community arts class where we teamed up with 7th and 8th graders as part of a North Philadelphia neighborhood organization known as Art Sanctuary. The goal of this program was to create a choreographed show that challenged stereotypes associated with inner-city Black children. We conducted a series of activities with the students that highlighted the similarities and differences of our experiences growing up Black in the city. I quickly learned that among my peer group, which included mostly white students with the exception of one Black student, I was one of the most comfortable talking to the younger students. Activities with the inner-city youth proved to us both that some important aspects of our experiences were very similar or could at least be relatable to one another. Many of us came from homes headed by single mothers who were struggling financially, as mine did after my father's departure. The main difference was for me, growing up in a middle-to-upper class neighborhood exposed me to a very different set of opportunities than these young people, many of whom grew up in distressed urban ghettos rather than quaint, tree-lined, almost-suburban enclaves on the outskirts of the city.

My experience with the students also revealed how, like many others from disparate racial and class backgrounds (including some residents of the ghetto), I possessed a bias that people in the ghetto with problems *are* the problem, rather than the consequence of historical and institutional racism and discrimination. The ideas that echoed in my head resembled the

³ In the introduction of Elijah Anderson's *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City*, he introduces both areas of the city I describe, Mt. Airy and North Philadelphia, as they are connected by the main thoroughfare Germantown Avenue. (Anderson, Elijah. 2000. *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence, and the Moral Life of the Inner City*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company.)

following: “My family survived in a higher-income area because they worked hard to stay in a neighborhood we couldn’t really afford; therefore, people in the ghetto simply do not try hard enough to reach a better place. They are not strategic enough or serious enough about fleeing the ghetto.” During my time in San Francisco, when I was developing as a scholar and conducting research on Black intra-racial tensions, I learned that the issues of race, class, and neighborhood mobility were more complex than I had previously imagined. I also discovered that in unraveling some of this complexity, I was able to relate my struggles as a member of a family striving desperately to maintain their upward mobility to the struggles of other families scrambling to maintain their standard of living in poor neighborhoods, families for whom upward mobility would most often remain an elusive dream. This experience of being reared by parents only once or twice removed from life in the ghetto, who spent so much time barely clinging to the edges of middle-class comfort and security, placed me at an advantage when my line of study began peeling back the various layers of racial and economic diversity making up the fabric of San Francisco’s Black community.

Studying the Black community in San Francisco, which lacks a substantial middle-class, revealed how class shapes Black residents’ understanding of their position in a city that is undergoing a radical makeover because of migration, new technology companies and jobs disappearing (Walker 2014). As I will explain in Chapter Two, both low-income and middle-to-upper class Black residents of San Francisco know that place matters. The place in which one grows up determines the opportunities that one will have (Sharkey 2013). Although these feelings manifest themselves differently across class lines, the Black experience in San Francisco is marked by instability and temporariness. Both low-income and middle-to-upper class Black residents share a similar uncertainty of not knowing if they will still be in the city

in the future. If you ask a lower-income Black resident over the age of 40 about what it is like to live in San Francisco, he or she will likely respond that Black residents are in the process of being kicked out of the city by urban renewal and gentrification. If you ask a middle-to-upper class Black resident over 40, you will probably witness recollections of dislocations during the age of large-scale urban renewal in Black neighborhoods after World War II and hear complaints that the Black community is not treated as part of the permanent fabric of the city today as other ethnic groups are. Despite different economic positions, the public narratives of Black communities possess a common desire to “make a difference” and improve their quality of life for the two of the remaining neighborhoods with a significant presence of Black residents: Fillmore and Bayview-Hunters Point (Patillo 2007: 97).

Residents report a history of being displaced by urban renewal in the Fillmore district and moving to Bayview-Hunters Point, therefore possessing a relationship to their surroundings grounded in relocation, trauma and endurance. Regardless of class status, many Black residents understand the history of the struggle that has impoverished and continues to impoverish Black families and individuals.

Even middle-to-upper class residents, who often lack firsthand experience with life in the ghetto, may have had a parent or a sibling who was born and raised in that environment. In *Black on the Block: The Politics of Race and Class in the City* (2007), Mary Patillo describes the politics of Chicago’s African American North Kentwood Oakland neighborhood and complicates the ideas of the connectedness of Black residents with different levels of class status. In her discussion of the connections between poor and non-poor Blacks, she writes that her “own research with colleague Colleen Heflin shows that just over 40% of middle-class Blacks have a poor sibling (compared to 16% of similar whites),

and a third of middle-class Blacks grew up poor themselves” (Patillo 2007:96). Even if a Black middle-class resident is financially stable today, he or she could have been raised poor or might have a close family member who remains poor. Also, through the telling of what one might call family “ghetto horror-stories,” the after-effects of life in these neighborhoods is never that far away.

The Destabilization of the Black Community

Urban renewal has affected Black communities in San Francisco regardless of class status, as it has in other cities across the nation. In *Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, and What We Can Do About It* (2005), Mindy Thompson Fullilove analyzes the effects urban renewal has had on community identity and the root shock that residents are forced to endure. She defines root shock as the destruction of an area’s emotional ecosystem through the serial displacements of urban renewal (2005). Urban renewal in San Francisco has produced profound root shock and instability, but it is not the only factor that has caused the Black community to become destabilized. Discriminatory policies like red lining and racial covenants that I describe in Chapter One produced systematic residential segregation throughout the Bay Area and the nation. Residents often turned these segregated neighborhoods into hubs of culture and congregation, but land clearance and urban renewal eroded the stability they tried to create and intensified class divisions as those with means fled while others without means were forced to stay in dispersed yet confined sections of the city.

Economic restructuring, unemployment, gentrification, and greed are also other factors that have contributed to the destabilization of the Black community (Bluestone

1982⁴). African Americans are not the only group affected by urban renewal and deindustrialization, but their communities have been more profoundly disrupted due to the concentrated poverty created by residential segregation, disinvestment, and the cumulative vulnerabilities confronted in the specific ghettos they inhabited.⁵

The more general question that informs much urban struggle today after nation-wide urban renewal, deindustrialization, and disinvestment is how to reinvigorate these Black communities after such a social disaster. How can a community bring back a sense of unity and congregation? How can relationships, bonds, and networks be rebuilt? How can Black residents leverage their existing skills and convert them into gainful employment in our current economy? What strategies can increase their quality of life? For institutions and elite stakeholders in San Francisco, the answer lies in the restoration of the neighborhood, rather than healing bonds and networks in Black communities. Low-income and middle-class Black residents understand their position by seeing their lives in the city as a type of chess game

⁴ In *Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment, and the Dismantling of Basic Industry*, Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison describe that plant closings due to deindustrialization hurt Blacks most because they were concentrated in areas that routinely had the most closings (1982, 54). Also, Blacks and other residents of color did not reap the same benefits as whites from suburban housing and increases in business opportunities over this time period. Before 1964, Black workers were also denied seniority when layoffs started because of employment discrimination. (Bluestone, Barry and Bennett Harrison. 1982. *Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment and the Dismantling of Basic Industry*. New York, NY: Basic Books.)

⁵ In *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, Massey and Denton explain how urban renewal contributed to Black instability and decline because poor Black residents were permanently displaced to other concentrated ghettos in a process called ‘negro removal.’ Instead of addressing blight and crime, Massey and Denton claim that this relocation only shifted the problems deeper into a nearby Black ghetto (1993:56). (Massey, Douglass and Nancy Denton. 1993. *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.)

where they need to be strategic in order to avoid getting moved around the board and pushed out of their neighborhoods. Strategies seeking community control express Black San Franciscans' desire to address and fight the fatal couplings of race and place in disinvested inner city Black neighborhoods. Although their strategies for achieving stability vary by class position, the shared remembrance of their community's ability to turn segregation into congregation during the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s still acts as a cohesive and nostalgic memory among Blacks that drives their current fight. Contemporary tensions regarding access to power and status shape understandings of the best route to increase the quality of life and permanence of Blacks in the city. In Chapter One, I will report on and analyze my conversations with Black San Franciscans, as they remember how their communities became destabilized in very specific ways. As we talked, certain memories receded into the background while others emerged at the forefront. Residents use the memory of their experiences in the past as a frame through which they view current redevelopment projects for their neighborhoods today.

The Problem

My exploration of memory and community destabilization began in 2008, when I came to San Francisco to study a project initiated by the mayor's office called the African American Outmigration Task Force. According to the *San Francisco Chronicle* newspaper, there has been a "quiet exodus" of Black residents from the city since the 1970s.⁶ In the 2000s, Black flight attracted attention from community groups, elected officials, and the media. Middle-to-upper class Blacks began urging the mayor to address this issue officially.

⁶ See the *San Francisco Chronicle's* coverage of Black flight here: <http://www.sfgate.com/opinion/diaz/article/The-quiet-exodus-of-African-Americans-from-S-F-2345107.php>.

In 2007, Mayor Gavin Newsom convened the Task Force comprised of 18 core members, several advisory board members, and one main facilitator. The goal of this Task Force was to convene Black leaders in the city to review the demographic shifts in the Black population, explore models that had been tried to reverse Black flight in other cities, and develop a list of recommendations for the city to enact. After spending time in the Fillmore, I later learned that many residents of Bayview-Hunters Point (BVHP) were not asked to sit on the Task Force. Members tended to be from the Fillmore neighborhood, which is closer to downtown San Francisco and tends to be an area that is more politically connected to the city's ruling elite. In contrast, BVHP is located in San Francisco's southeastern most region, adjacent to the Hunters Point shipyard. According to one resident, this neighborhood is known for housing much of the working-class sectors of the city and remains the place where the largest concentration of the city's remaining Black population dwells (US Census Bureau, American Fact Finder 2008–2012 ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates).

By spending time in Bayview-Hunters Point with community leaders who had not been asked to be on the Task Force, I learned of a somewhat similar yet slightly different struggle in the city's most diverse yet low-income neighborhood. Community meetings in Bayview-Hunters Point were mostly conducted by the social movement group, Taking Control of the Shipyard Coalition (TCSC). This multi-racial but predominately Black group was created to save its neighborhood from impending large-scale redevelopment and to demand proper clean-up of the mostly vacant but still highly toxic Hunters Point shipyard that had closed down in 1974. In these meetings, I learned that lower-class Black residents felt threatened by the city. They perceived redevelopment efforts as a way to push them out.

In response, they sought to band together to claim their stake in future plans for the neighborhood.

Both the Fillmore and BVHP are experiencing high levels of change and are becoming richer and whiter by the day. There is a high level of control in these neighborhoods by the redevelopment agency and housing authority because such areas are viewed by non-residents as dilapidated ghettos in need of redevelopment.⁷ Many times, the poor conditions in these neighborhoods are blamed on the residents rather than on disinvestment, exploitation, and opportunity hoarding. Urban redevelopment is presented as a cure for blight, a way to remake certain distressed neighborhoods. Black residents rebuke this approach, however, recalling a time when Black San Franciscans felt more rooted and permanent in unglamorous but fully functioning pre-urban renewal communities. These memories of unity and stability are punctuated by retellings of the string of insults, displacements, and disruptions that have cemented their place in the racial caste system of San Francisco⁸.

Both race and class play roles in strategizing over neighborhood life in the city. Race and ethnicity as a common trait is a powerful tool for “organizing and sensing security”

⁷ Urban renewal, as controlled by the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, officially ended in the Fillmore on January 1, 2009. Additionally, as of February 1, 2012, all California Redevelopment Agencies were dissolved by a Supreme Court decision. In San Francisco, the agency’s prior projects are now maintained by the Office of Community Investment and Infrastructure. BVHP is still considered a current project area. See more information here: <http://www.sfocii.org/index.aspx?page=53>.

⁸ In Anderson, Austin, Hallaway, and Kulkarni’s “The Legacy of Racial Caste: An Exploratory Ethnography,” they argue against the idea of a post-racial society and claim that despite the end of Jim Crow “the legacy of a racial caste system remains visible and consequential in the everyday interactions of Black and whites in the United States” and is reflected in “education, employment, residence and law enforcement disparities” (2012:26).

because it is a logical way for people to organize around an issue that affects all racially oppressed groups (Logan and Molotch 1987:109). Race also acts as a unifying factor across class lines because the residents remember how the community used to be and have a clear desire to bring back a sense of security that once existed. Yet, lower- and middle-class Black residents are affected differently by drastic community changes. To middle- and upper-class Blacks, low-income Black residents may appear to stand in the way of urban restoration and development that could improve quality of life in the neighborhood. In a sense, they are seen as physically standing in the way of developers who want to build on land they can acquire cheaply in places where low-income Black residents live and from which middle-to-upper-income Blacks have already fled. Low-income Black residents can also seem to be in the way both politically and economically; as one middle-income resident named Jen explained to me, low-income Black residents lack the skills, networks, and status that would make their neighborhoods attractive to white professional-class newcomers. Therefore, middle-to-upper-income Blacks often support policies that displace low-income Black residents. Middle-to-upper-income Black residents perceive that they would be welcome in the new mixed-race and mixed-income developments.

Strategy and the Quest for Roots in Current Redevelopment Efforts

In *Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America and What We Can Do About It*, Mindy Thompson Fullilove says “people need roots, like trees” (2005:191). The destruction of San Francisco’s Black neighborhoods has disconnected residents from the roots they needed to do well in the neighborhood. In the city, as in other neighborhoods across the nation, many individuals and groups have invested in neighborhoods with large

Black populations that seek to redevelop them. Residents want these investors to know the history of their spaces as they make plans to remediate their problems and renew the areas. Many of the investors that have working relationships with these neighborhoods do not reside in them, nor do redevelopment officials, business owners, or Navy shipyard remediation team representatives. Investors, officials, representatives and owners all value the Fillmore and BVHP regions in very different ways. In BVHP, developers, Navy representatives, and redevelopment officials are required by their 9-5 jobs to fix up, clean, and build in BVHP, but they collide with older low-income Black residents who rightly feel pushed out and wish to create firm roots once more in the city. After the workday has ended, these officials can go back home and forget about the neighborhood, while the residents cannot. Officials do not appear to be deeply concerned with the profound root shock that Black San Franciscans have experienced. Yet among residents, this past trauma shapes a fight for the very life of the neighborhood.

Study Contributions and Specific Questions

Large-scale urban renewal projects of the 1950s and 1960s did more to hurt urban Black residents than they did to improve conditions for them. Black residents were vulnerable to urban renewal and deindustrialization, and they suffered from a domino effect that was combined with other social ills in urban Black communities. These effects increased the isolation of Black residents. Black middle-to-upper-class residents fled with the hope that their children would be better protected from the cycle of poverty. According to Sharkey's *Stuck in Place: Urban Neighborhoods and the End of Progress Toward Racial Equality* (2013), neighborhood disadvantage has remained stable and therefore was inherited by Black families. As class and race dictate the choice in environments in which Black children live,

Sharkey's study revealed that Black families from poor distressed environments are more likely to live in similarly poor distressed environments after fleeing the neighborhood (2013). Despite this grim reality, I question what about the low-income residents who still occupy areas desirable to developers that were not afforded the opportunity to leave? Since the initial problems of race, discrimination, and social decay were never addressed but instead were shifted deeper into adjoining ghettos, the effects of historic insults, displacements, and disruptions still remain today. These are the types of concerns that lower-class Blacks voice in meetings over the future of their neighborhoods, but the moderators often label these concerns as "off topic." This study provides an ethnographic account of concerns that low-income Black residents raise in redeveloped and gentrified neighborhoods across the nation. Critical attention is paid in this study, as it should be in future studies, to the concerns, narratives, and general distrust among those left in ghetto without the means to leave. As I describe in Chapter Three, this study concludes by examining residents' "inappropriate behaviors," as described by institutional stakeholders during public meetings, and situating our evaluation of them in a long struggle over race, class, power, and justice.

This dissertation illuminates a mismatch of ideas and values regarding the renewal of historically Black neighborhoods. It is important to study the redevelopment of Black San Francisco because this tension is likely to occur when redeveloping or gentrifying any older Black neighborhood next to a Central Business District. This study of Black San Francisco contributes to sociological knowledge by exploring the differences in values and perspectives of Black residents living in the city and those competing with them to develop the same land and space. Black residents in the city live in a mental space shaped by several forces: a belief that they will be pushed out of their communities in the next 10 to 15 years; a commitment to

reaffirming their present-day rootedness in the city; and a desire to use the community's racialized history to exemplify the continued existence of a racial hierarchy in San Francisco.

To understand how Blacks live this struggle everyday, I first identified how residents retell the history of their neighborhoods, how memory influences their stance on neighborhood change given their social position, and also what strategies they adopt to prevent this history from repeating itself. To do so, I was especially concerned with the following questions:

- How do residents account for the economic, social, political, and racial factors that have shaped Black neighborhoods in the city?
- What strategies do Black San Franciscans, especially low-income Black residents, use to fight institutional control, gentrification, and redevelopment?

By answering these questions, we are able to use Black San Francisco as a case study of how low-income Black residents use history to understand their current position and to devise strategies for remaining in the city.

This story of displacement, congregation, and struggle that I describe in Chapter One is vital because it illustrates why Black residents view racialized urban redevelopment and gentrification of their space as evidence of “Negro removal” or “white-washing.” It also sheds light on the importance of agreements and understandings between corporate newcomers and lower-class Black residents who share the same space. Residents can only separate the past Negro removal from contemporary efforts at renewal if the rules of this game are different from those of the past; they can make this distinction by ensuring an inclusive process and by being tangibly beneficial to the residents of Black neighborhoods. These factors complicate urban policies around renewal and spark conflict with current

residents who naturally oppose policies that promote the neighborhoods' transition to becoming whiter and richer.

In San Francisco, there are two avenues taken by middle-to-upper-class and lower-class Blacks today. First, they remember and retell the history of Black neighborhoods in a very particular way that highlights the progression of racial and class oppression in Black San Franciscan history. Secondly, Black residents offer solutions that promote communal inclusion and engagement with redevelopment and gentrification through the efforts of a city-initiated African-American Out-Migration Task Force and the community-run Taking Control of the Shipyard Coalition.

Literature Review

My analysis of the problem of Black San Francisco is grounded in interdisciplinary literature on the experience of Black residents in the city after World War II. Understanding the problem involves a look at the trajectory of Black communities in the city during the processes of ghetto formations and continuing through to their more current issues of urban renewal and the impact of institutional control over their neighborhoods. Much of this literature is described at length in Chapter One, as I retell the history of Black San Francisco from the perspective of Black residents. This history highlights the power plays that communities of color have been engaged in with city governments and other institutions over time. In the following section, I provide a brief review of the urban sociological literature that is relevant to this study.

Black Community Studies

The complexity of Black urban experiences was first revealed in *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* in 1899 by W. E. B. Du Bois. Du Bois' ideas on Blackness and

American identity within a post-slavery context are foundational to understanding the past, present, and future of Black San Francisco. The Black struggle to win the “chess game” represents a continuance of a longer trajectory of what Blackness means and the common struggles attendant to it.

This study was significant because it was the first sociological study on a Black urban population in the United States (US). Du Bois was asked by the University of Pennsylvania to conduct a yearlong study to understand the problems of Blacks living in the Seventh Ward in Philadelphia. In *The Philadelphia Negro*, Du Bois documented the social inequalities that plagued the densely populated Seventh Ward, where approximately 25% of the city’s Black population lived, including poor housing and sanitation conditions, dilapidated buildings, poverty, unemployment, and crime (Hunter 2013:10). With its concentration of Black-owned businesses and location as a “port of entry” for southern Blacks, the Seventh Ward was a hub of Black life in Philadelphia (Hunter 2013:10). Du Bois explored and statistically documented the different classes of Black residents, dividing them up into four grades, and discussed the tensions regarding how different classes identified. Du Bois had several important conclusions that shaped the way we think about contemporary Black communities. First, Black residents of the Seventh Ward confronted plenty of problems, but they themselves were not *the* problem. Their problems were the result of years of discrimination and enslavement, rather than from deficiencies of character that were perceived to be innate to Black Americans (Hunter 2013). Second, Du Bois charged both Blacks and whites with the duty of fixing the problems of the Black Seventh Ward. He outlined several ways that whites could combat racism and discrimination and therefore provide occasions for Blacks to

access a wider range of opportunities, and he also charged Blacks with the responsibility of rising to the challenge of better integrating themselves into the dominant society.

Although challenged by many contemporary scholars of Black politics, Du Bois' conclusions are still useful and can be applied to Black San Francisco. Much of mainstream America blames Black residents who live in run-down neighborhoods for their own social decay. Understanding that Black residents experience problems just like anyone else but are not *the* problem shifts our ideas about ghettos and allows the attention to be focused on the historic policies, like red-lining, or economic transitions, such as deindustrialization, that have shaped the history of the Fillmore and BVHP neighborhoods. Secondly, Du Bois ends *The Philadelphia Negro* with an inclusive charge of how to improve the conditions of the Seventh Ward that balances considerations of structure with an appreciation for the agency of Black residents of the Seventh Ward. For example, Du Bois gives whites the duty of eradicating discrimination and barriers for Black advancement, and implores Blacks to develop themselves in the areas of education, political status, and crime reduction, among other things (Du Bois 1899: 391–397).

Du Bois' insight is important in helping to understand solutions for Black neighborhoods in San Francisco, as it is not just one entity's problem but also a problem for all of the city, residents and developers included. Low-income and middle-income Black residents request to be represented at city forums and to be invited to the decision-making table at public community meetings in the neighborhood. This request reflects the desire for a more inclusive process in the creation of redevelopment plans for the neighborhood.

Other literature addresses various topics relating to the formation of Black communities after World War II, including their transformation into ghettos, and

contemporary studies on race and the city, which help to illustrate the struggles that Black urban neighborhoods face in the twenty-first century. These studies include work that examines the challenges of creating Black communities in major metropolitan areas and specifically within San Francisco (Hippler 1974, Broussard 1993). Drake and Cayton's *Black Metropolis* (1945) offers systematic ways of studying the emergence of Black urban centers, class systems, and other social conditions that shape the lives of Black communities in major cities. Like Du Bois' *The Philadelphia Negro*, *Black Metropolis* documents the social conditions, such as employment, education, living conditions, health, and family life, that shaped the experience of African Americans who lived in Chicago after migrating from the American south.

Race and Class

At the heart of this study of Black San Francisco are the class tensions highlighted in previous studies of Black communities. Today, these tensions manifest themselves in clear divisions among residents with varying social backgrounds and tend to create similar divisions along these lines regarding the merits and pitfalls of redevelopment. I have learned that these divisions are much deeper than a simple tally of who is for or against redevelopment, with origins that run prior to the arrival of Black migrants in San Francisco. In 1957, E. Franklin Frazier published a sociological study entitled *Black Bourgeoisie* that examined the behaviors, values, and attitudes of the rising Black middle-class. Frazier's study is foundational to the way we perceive urban Black communities, and it further ruptures the idea of a monolithic Black community. He claims that the rise of the Black bourgeoisie is intricately tied to the economic and social changes within the American community of the time. Frazier begins his study by pointing to the origins of Black class

relations deriving from slavery, as these divisions were created out of racial segregation and discrimination. As we know, racial stratification first began with formal and informal hierarchies based on skin tone and prohibitions against racial mixing, as well as those based on who was a freed slave and who was not. Frazier points to the early systems of stratification within the slave community and how those same divisions have transformed into stratification in a modern economy (1957).

Most importantly, Frazier outlines the complicated issues around identity for the Black bourgeoisie as they strive to exist simultaneously in both Black and white worlds. In their earnest desires to be fully accepted, the Black bourgeoisie takes on the values of the white elite, the refined behaviors and politics of racialized respectability. Frazier claims that identifying with the elite increases the self worth of the Black bourgeoisie and therefore raises confidence in the world of make-believe, as he puts it, to further the illusion that they are fully accepted (1957). As he touches on in the conclusion, this world of make-believe is considered hypocritical by Black lower-class individuals, as they claim that the Black bourgeoisie pretends to have the best manners and morals in their obsession with status and further distancing themselves from Black lower-class individuals. Frazier's study of the Black bourgeoisie aptly describes the origins of much of the class conflict in San Francisco's Black community. Although the kind of economy that Frazier speaks of no longer exists, his study forces us to consider how the continuance of Black class tensions within our knowledge-based economy has caused increasingly more divisions.

There are two examples in Black San Francisco of the economic and social changes that have led to the continuance of Black class tensions. The first is the tension between Black natives who arrived before World War II and Black migrants who came after that time.

Douglas Daniels's *Pioneer Urbanites* (1980) and Albert Broussard's *Black San Francisco* (1993) describe the tensions between native Blacks and migrant Blacks from the South who were recruited to work in the Kaiser shipyards. The apparent differences in values and behaviors are points of contention that the two groups use to justify further ideological and physical distance from one another. Native Blacks described migrant Blacks as unsophisticated, loud, and rowdy in San Francisco in the 1940s (Broussard 1993). In 2010, Black residents descended from migrant families of the 1940s regard those middle-to-upper class Blacks who are "friends" of the government as being "sell-outs" and "Uncle Toms."

Secondly, in *Hunters Point: A Black Ghetto*, published in 1974, Arthur Hippler discusses a similar tension in the treatment of the 1966 Hunters Point community riot in which 16-year-old Matthew Johnson was shot by a white police officer. In Chapter One, I describe how Black leaders from the Human Rights Commission and Board of Supervisors were called to the scene in an attempt to calm down the angry young Black protesters. Hippler quotes comments about this type of Black leader from one of the young Black Hunters Point community members, who went on record with the following statement: "That cocksucker forgot he's Black, but when we put them fuckers on the run, they sure let him know at City Hall right away. Shit man, who the fuck he think he's foolin'?" (Hippler 1974). Residents like this young man felt that Black leaders were "trying to be white" and that they were fooled into thinking that the white establishment accepted Black leaders as equals, or as Frazier would say, equals in the world of make-believe (Hippler 1974: 206, Frazier 1957). Understanding these past tensions is critical to clarifying the deep divisions in regards to the best strategies for increasing the quality of life for all Black residents.

Black Settlement into the Bay Area

Black residents were initially attracted to the Bay Area because of the promise of new opportunities in the west. The region later transformed into being a hotbed of progressivism and neighborhood control movements in the 1960s and 1970s (Crowe 2000). Prior to the 1940s, the Bay Area attracted sailors and railroad workers that looked to the then-booming industries in the area to provide them with stable, well-paying jobs. In other areas of Black settlement, like Richmond and Berkeley, San Francisco and Oakland were considered the hubs of Black life in the region. In 1910, Oakland's Black population was 3,055, while San Francisco's was 1,642 (Broussard 1993, p. 24). Working at the shipyards was a source of pride for Black migrants who secured employment there because these were considered better jobs (Moore 2000). Within this period, Black migrants were able to possess such good stable jobs while being unskilled or semiskilled and often wholly uneducated. Blacks were able to buy their own homes and feel rooted in such conditions despite a lack of formal education.

Daniels' *Pioneer Urbanites* (1980) and Albert Broussard's *Black San Francisco* (1993) also reveal the processes through which the Black San Franciscan community established itself in the city despite the widespread prominence of racism and discriminatory actions. In particular, they detail adaptations to conditions specific to the Fillmore and BVHP neighborhoods. For example, their work reveals the importance of these two neighborhoods for migrant Blacks; specifically, how these areas' transformations into cultural hubs helped to ease their transition into life in the city of San Francisco (Mah 1999, Jackson 2010). Not only were Black migrants not welcome by Black natives, but they were more often subject to violence on account of the fears of white homeowners and the white

elite in the city, who saw increased Black migration to the area as a direct threat to their livelihood and peace of mind. Violence, riots, and bombings were used to reaffirm that Blacks were not welcome in both northern and western cities (Fusfeld and Bates 1984, Massey and Denton 1993, Fullilove 2005). Institutional policies were developed to systematically keep Blacks out of neighborhoods.

The Ghetto

It is difficult to avoid the topic of the ghetto when discussing the Black experience in the US. Many times, this difficulty stems from the conflation of the problems and issues of urban Black communities with the concept of the “inner city” in policy discussions, mass media, and academic research (Gregory 1998). While the formation of the ghetto is very important to this history of urban Black communities, it is also vital to problematize how we talk about inner city life and its residents. Although in mainstream media the ghetto is treated as a monolithic space, there is a diversity of experiences that occur within these spaces. For the purposes of this study, I describe the history of the formation of the Fillmore and Bayview-Hunters Point as ghettos, but I also illustrate the contrast between residents’ views of their spaces and the negative, simplistic imagery undergirding common stereotypes associated with such spaces.

From the 1960s through the 1980s, numerous academic studies have been conducted that describe and define the transformation of Blacks’ spaces into institutionally defined ghettos. As housing segregation and white flight increased, more migrants concentrated in these neighborhoods after World War II. Institutional racism through practices such as red-lining, racial covenants, and subsidies for the flight of white homeowners from urban inner cities caused some of the remaining urban spaces to be what urban historians and

geographers like Arnold Hirsch describe as the “Second Ghetto” (Gilfoyle, Bayor, Mohl, and Hirsch 2003). These processes maintained segregation and limited the choice of housing, forcing Black urban dwellers to remain in designated areas inside the city limits. The creation of inner city ghettos reflected a systematic pattern of discrimination imposed upon Blacks by the larger society (Fusfeld and Bates 1984, Massey and Denton 1993). Left with little to no choices, residents participated in informal economies that increased ghettoization (Wilson 1996, Anderson 2000, Fullilove 2005.)

When examining ghettos, Herbert Gans encourages us to look at the processes by which these spaces have been created: involuntary segregation and ghettoization. “The ghetto is merely the place in which the involuntary segregated are housed; it is the spatial representation of a socio-political process of involuntary segregation” (Gans 2008, p. 355). Ideas similar to this one have given rise to literature that provides alternative accounts of ghetto creation and how its invisible walls shape the experience of Black residents (Patillo 2003, Massey and Denton 1993, Haynes and Hutchinson 2008, Gans 2008, Anderson 2000, Anderson 2012, Jones and Jackson 2012)

In “The Iconic Ghetto,” Elijah Anderson points out that Black residents have a complicated history and relationship with ghetto spaces (2012). On the one hand, whites confined and contained Blacks to ghetto spaces, creating a lack of choice of housing for them. On the other hand, Blacks responded to this containment by turning segregation into congregation, creating spaces of culture and comfort within their assigned areas (Castells 1983, Haynes and Hutchinson 2008, Lewis 1991, Fullilove 2005). They created a kind of security in these neighborhoods that is valuable and hard to give up, even if the physical conditions need improvement. Despite the fact that they were created and designed for Black

residents who were seen as second-class citizens undeserving of first-class standards of living, these spaces still have a special relationship with residents (Anderson 2012). They are places with deep histories of trauma, pain, and destabilization, but they are also places where many Black residents feel comfortable, especially in light of the notable lack of spaces where Black residents feel they can convene or live in safely without fear of harassment. This complicated history and position informs the chess game, as it is described later in this dissertation. Similar literature also seeks to highlight more of the intersections between race, space, and power by looking at the racialized effects of segregation as well as the benefits of redeveloping these spaces for investors, such as increasing city revenues, which rarely tend to “trickle down” to long-time community residents (Lipsitz 2011, Gregory 1998, Jones and Jackson 2012). Much of what I have found at the intersections of race, space, and power presents a different perspective on how to value neighborhood space. Since Fillmore and Bayview-Hunters Point are prime areas for redevelopment, many stakeholders make plans according to how they see the space as a source of great profit. Aware they will not likely see any of that profit, residents are still skeptical about the potential benefits of such plans.

The Battle: Space, Power, and Policy

Various stakeholders provide perspectives on urban spaces like the Fillmore, which is in proximity to the Central Business District (CBDs). These various perspectives on how stakeholders frame the problems of neighborhoods are particularly useful in this dissertation’s third chapter, “The Battle.” In this chapter, I describe how neighborhood residents were defined, labeled, and controlled by both the Redevelopment Agency and city elites in their attempts to claim land for the betterment of the city as an economic growth machine (Logan and Molotch 1987, Molotch 1976, Mollenkopf 1983). In the

1950s and 1960s, the city elites transformed urban renewal laws to define and implement slum clearance to improve the perceived quality of Central Business Districts (Massey and Denton 1998). The fight for control of urban land among cities, communities, corporations, and businesses is represented in works on urban public policy, structural forces, and the social organization of communities (Logan and Molotch 1987, Martin 2004). When Black residents envision their neighborhoods, they are not necessarily viewing them through a lens calibrated according to how much money there is to be made. History has taught them that the city's institutional stakeholders want to take control of neighborhood land for the benefit of their own profit rather than that of the community. The profit motive is implied, not directly or openly stated, which is why residents see their lives as a kind of chess game where there are hidden motives and elements. Many times, residents attribute hidden motives as coming from "the city." I came to understand that "the city" often refers to a group of institutional stakeholders that have plans for their neighborhood's land.

The "city" or institutional perspective, as held by City Hall, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency, and the Navy, is influenced and shaped by global economic transitions, public and private financial gain, and the perceived economic value of the "public face" of San Francisco (Wirt 1974, Mollenkopf 1983, DeLeon 1992, Davis et al. 1990). The city's institutional perspective on neighborhood spaces can be understood through the exchange value of the neighborhood and how much revenue will be generated once the redevelopment is complete (Logan and Molotch 1987).

This tension over urban space, land, and property has manifested itself in community opposition to development and urban renewal, and it is illustrated in the cases

of redevelopment projects for the South of Market Area (SOMA), the Western Addition, the Moscone Center, and the I-Hotel (Geron et al. 2001; Hartman 1974, 1976, 2002; Lai 2006, Solnit 2000, Castells 1983). All of these past redevelopment projects involved much tension around fighting for what residents believed belonged to the communities. San Francisco is known for slow growth and community control movements that occurred during the 1960s and 1970s. In order to be financially beneficial to San Francisco, urban inner city spaces must be transformed from isolated ghettos into cultural hotspots that are attractive to middle- and upper-class tourists and investors. Urban policy has been challenged for its claims about alleviating poverty, decreasing joblessness, and lessening the isolated quality of ghettos, as it also has to balance addressing global economic restructuring and combating structural forces that maintain racial discrimination in these neighborhoods.

The community and the city differ in how they choose to define a slum, and their inhabitants attempt to use this difference of perspective to defend their neighborhood from redevelopment and gentrification (Hartman 2002). Residents rebuke the condemnation based on current conditions in their neighborhoods and keep a clearer picture of the past community's unity and racial pride in mind. Du Bois came to the same conclusions in his Philadelphia study of long-time Black residents and their varying views of their neighborhood. They understand that as Black residents they have several problems to deal with, but they themselves are not solely to blame for the community's degradation. To others, the community and its residents are defined by the urban renewal criteria associated with potential redevelopment areas: social pathologies, drugs, crimes, inner city underground economies, and illegitimate job opportunities.

Skepticism about Redevelopment

This study sheds light on the common concerns and skepticisms that older Black residents from both the low-income and middle-classes have about urban renewal. Psychiatrist Mindy Thompson Fullilove's research on the effect of urban renewal on communities details the processes by which it tore apart social networks and eroded feelings of security. This sense of security and stability has been difficult to recapture. In *Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, and What We Can Do About It*, Fullilove describes how urban renewal has caused a profound root shock. Fullilove explains that root shock "destroys the working model of the world" for residents, creating a strong distrust and chronic "crankiness" that stems from a sense that their community's world has been shattered (2005). Root shock also increases anxiety about the relationships that are created within the neighborhood because the various social networks formed by residents were broken apart as friends or relatives were dispersed or otherwise relocated to other parts of the city and region. Later, when members of a former community try to reunite and reconvene, they are not sure what to do (2005:14). Root shock disrupts ways of looking at the future of communities and causes residents to be both suspicious of and pessimistic about new plans for renewing and rebranding their neighborhoods (2005). For the Black community, it is difficult to pick up the pieces and create a collective unit after their spaces have been torn apart, safety nets have been broken, and middle-to-upper-class residents have fled.

The knowledge of the effect of root shock on existing Black communities is important for city stakeholders to keep in mind because it informs the perspectives and the expectations that residents will have concerning future redevelopment. Because of this

history, residents immediately want to know how the community will benefit from the proposed plans. Stakeholders must also understand that since the initial racism and discrimination associated with urban renewal was never addressed, current residents will be highly sensitive to whether or not current projects are contributing to further proliferation of racism and discrimination today.

In the book *Urban Alchemy: Restoring Joy in America's Sorted Out Cities* (2013), Fullilove further explains Black residents' skepticism with current redevelopment projects. After spending time with African American leaders in the Hill District in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1997, Fullilove learned that the community had been ravaged by past urban renewal projects. Families and other strong social networks among local residents were torn apart. She also learned that the city of Pittsburgh had recently adopted the federally funded HOPE VI program that seeks to alleviate the problems and isolation of inner cities by demolishing housing projects and replacing them with mixed-use housing. The Hill District residents viewed this program with much suspicion, as Fullilove explains:

But the leaders of the Hill District had lived through urban renewal—the 1950s federal program that had promised to clear blighted slums and create beautiful new urban terrain. The truth was that people lost their homes, businesses, churches, friends, and neighbors as a result. The neighborhood was devastated and had been on a downward course since then. *The Hill leaders recognized in HOPE VI an eerily familiar program of displacement and feared the worst* (2013: 42, emphasis mine).

In Pittsburgh, Hill District residents viewed the current urban restoration plan, HOPE VI, through a lens of suspicion because of the lingering effects of past urban renewal projects and their continuing influence on the community. Residents witnessed their neighborhood change drastically, not unlike other predominately Black areas across the nation. The suspicion that Black Hill District residents have harbored after bearing witness to this change

is now a part of the baggage that they bring to the table; however, this weight can help to illustrate and inform methods of restoring hope and a faith that residents can use the lessons learned in the past to negotiate the obstacles of the future for their own betterment.

Studying Black San Francisco

In this dissertation, I describe the connections among race, class, space, and place in the lives of Black San Franciscans. The findings presented in this dissertation are based on qualitative data collected in the Fillmore and Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhoods over a two-year period including 27 weeks of continuous residence over two summers from June to August of 2008 and April to August of 2010. In 2008, I spent most of my time in the Fillmore and downtown San Francisco areas interviewing members of the Task Force and attending relevant city and community meetings. During my initial round of interviews with Task Force members, I felt as if I had heard enough about the experiences of upper-middle-class Blacks in the city and wanted to hear more about the struggle among lower-class residents. In 2010, I spent my time in BVHP conducting participation observations and interviews with residents. I had conversations with residents, volunteered with an environmental justice organization, and attended townhall meetings. My work at the environmental justice agency included writing articles for the organization's newsletter, protesting, and organizing a "toxic triangle event," which brought the BVHP, Richmond, and East Oakland communities together to meet with environmental regulators. Additionally, I helped facilitate learn-ins, alerting the press to important issues and writing articles for the neighborhood newspaper. I also collected archival documents about 1) Black migration to the neighborhoods, 2) redevelopment agency reports on both neighborhoods, and 3) professional studies conducted by local universities on both neighborhoods. Participant observation

helped me to better understand the challenges and strategies used by low-income Black residents to reunite and reclaim their communities.

During the course of my fieldwork, I formed relationships with neighborhood residents and their allies. In addition to volunteering my time at an environmental justice organization, I regularly attended official meetings and more private community meetings in an effort to learn more about the struggles facing Black San Franciscans. Over this time, I conducted 23 formal and informal interviews with mostly lower-to-upper-middle-class Black residents and a few non-Black residents and allies in both neighborhoods. Six of my interviewees were between the ages of 30 and 40. Nine were between 41 and 50 years old, and one was between the ages of 51 and 60. Six interviewees were between the ages of 61 and 70, and one was between the ages of 70 and 77 (Figure 1). I also prepared field notes from my attendance at 22 city/community meetings (Figure 2). For this project, meeting field notes were an important part of my data because of the collective nature of problem solving in Black San Francisco. City and Redevelopment meetings were standard citywide meetings that I attended primarily because I was alerted that some issues about Black San Francisco would be brought up. For the BVHP community, a strong presence at these meetings was very important. For the June 3, 2010 Planning Commission and Redevelopment meeting on the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) of the Hunters Point shipyard, I was heavily encouraged by my respondent, Shirley, a middle-class activist, and other residents to speak briefly during the public comment period about my project. My educational affiliation helped to further establish the credibility of TCSC's testimony in a small but useful way. At these meetings, I saw some of the middle-to-upper-class Black residents I met while researching the African American Out Migration Task Force. I learned that I had to be careful about my

outward affiliations with them because of the class tensions in San Francisco's Black community. I also attended several public Navy "community" meetings that were held in Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhood centers. The formality of these meetings caused residents to perceive them as "city" meetings, rather than community meetings.

I also attended several community town hall meetings and gatherings, most of which were held on Thursday nights. Town hall meetings were facilitated by Taking Control of the Shipyard Coalition (TCSC) and were mostly comprised of lower-income Black, Latino, and Samoan residents that were Christian or Muslim. Other events in this category were attended mostly by BVHP community residents, with the exception of the State of Black San Francisco meeting, which was an attempt to bring *all factions* of the Black community together. Last, I attended citywide events and meetings that pertained to Black San Franciscans and other oppressed groups. Most of these other meetings and events involved the environmental justice agency that I volunteered with from April to July of 2010. These meetings and events centered around BVHP as part of a larger network of oppressed groups in the Bay Area, such as the residents of Oakland and Richmond who struggled with environmental racism as well. My presence at these meetings and events allowed me to reach out to residents and make arrangements to interview them. This study primarily used a snowball sample, as interviewees would suggest that I speak with certain community residents to get the "correct" story of Black San Francisco.

This approach to data collection helped me to document the past and contemporary struggles for space and power in the city. The problems facing Black residents are neighborhood- and group-based, and solutions are sought at both an institutional and local level.

Figure 1: List of Respondents

Name	Age	Race	Gender	Neighborhood/City
Fernando	65	*	M	BVHP
Wayne	50	White	M	BVHP/Fillmore
Shirley	62	Black	F	BVHP/Fillmore
Ben	41	Black	M	Fillmore
Carol	49	Black	F	BVHP
Troy	37	Black	M	BVHP/Treasure Island
Frank	49	Black	M	BVHP
Jason	44	Black	M	BVHP
Maurice	77	Black	M	BVHP
Mirtelina	49	Latino	F	Mission/BVHP
Sarah	30	Black	F	BVHP/Vis Valley
John	48	Black	M	Oakland
Bryan	61	Black	M	Fillmore/Vis Valley
Karen	63*	Black	F	Sunnydale
Rhonda	30	Black	F	BVHP/Lakeview
Jen	33	Black	F	Fillmore
Ray	40	Black	M	Noe Valley/Mission
Rev. Johnson	65	Black	M	Fillmore
Beth	47	Black	F	Presidio Heights
Donna	47	Black	F	Richmond
Rev. White	67	Black	M	Lakeview
Suzanne	52	Black	F	Oakland
Dan	38	Black	M	Oakland

*=Estimate/not sure

Figure 2: Meetings and Events 2008–2010

City, Navy, and Redevelopment Meetings	Community Gatherings and Townhalls	Other Citywide Related Events
Monthly Redevelopment Meeting (8/5/08)	The State of Black San Francisco (6/28/08)	Fillmore Jazz Festival (7/6/08)
Daly’s Black Flight Meeting (8/7/08)	Townhall Meeting (7/24/08)	Toxic Triangle Planning Meeting (4/21/10)
Housing Reparations (8/11/08)	Appreciation Dinner (4/8/10)	Greenaction Protest at PG&E (4/22/10)
Navy Environmental Forum (4/29/09)	Townhall (4/15/10)	Toxic Triangle (6/12/10)
BVHP Project Area Committee Meeting (8/5/09)	Townhall (4/22/10)	Greenaction and BAAQMD Learn In (7/10/10)
Community Involvement Plan Meeting (2/2/10)	Townhall (5/20/10)	
Planning Commission (5/6/10)	Caravan for Justice (6/24/10)	
Navy Radioactive Materials meeting (5/28/10)		
Planning Commission and Redevelopment Meeting (6/3/10)		
HP Navy Business Mtg (6/3/10)		

Black San Francisco Today: A Demographic Portrait

Today, the Fillmore and BVHP are very different than they were when Black residents arrived in the city during and after World War II. At the height of their population in the 1970s, there were as many as 96,000 Black residents, accounting for 13.4% of the

city's population⁹. Today there are only 55,944, which accounts for just 6.8% of the population (Figure 3).

Figure 3: 2012 Racial Demographics of San Francisco

<u>Subject</u>	<u>San Francisco</u> <u>City, California</u> <u>estimate</u>	<u>San Francisco</u> <u>City, California</u> <u>percent</u>
Total Population	825,863	825,863
RACE		
White	441,744	53.5%
Black or African-American	55,994	6.8%
American Indian and Alaska Native	8,763	1.1%
Asian	298,928	36.2%
Native Hawaii, Pacific Islander and some other race	62,451	7.6%

2012 American Community Survey 1 Year Survey (US Census Bureau)

⁹ San Francisco Gate. 2007. "S.F. moves to stem African American exodus / Critics say effort to reverse longtime trend may be too late." Retrieved August 25, 2014. (<http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/S-F-moves-to-stem-African-American-exodus-2604038.php#photo-2092000>)

The rate at which Blacks are leaving the city makes the city look less racially and culturally diverse, an aspect of its identity for which San Francisco is quite proud. For the purposes of this study, I chose to concentrate on the Fillmore and BVHP areas because of their proximity to downtown San Francisco and also their prevalence in public stories about the Black experience and Black flight. Fillmore has much symbolic and historical significance as being a past hub of Black culture. As a neighborhood, it signifies the Black elite and those in a relationship with the city's elite power structure. BVHP is farther away from downtown and is historically significant for housing the Hunters Point shipyard, which holds much meaning for residents as it once employed many of their family members. Outside of stories about the shipyard, it is not brought up as much in public stories of the Black experience.

The Fillmore

The Fillmore neighborhood is located in the larger geographic area of the Western Addition (number 2 in Figure 4), making it very close to downtown San Francisco. BVHP (number 3 in Figure 4) is located in the southeast most section of the city near the Hunters Point shipyard (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Map of San Francisco



The Fillmore and BVHP regions have developed different social and economic histories. In the 1950s, Fillmore businesses became accustomed to having white patrons as part of its Harlem of the West image¹⁰. According to residents, it was also the first and most large-scale of the Black neighborhoods targeted for urban renewal, in part because of its proximity to the Central Business District.

While in the Fillmore, I spent most of my time in the Lower Fillmore neighborhood, which is located within the 94115 zip code. Other zip codes, such as 94102, 94109, and 94117, also make up the larger neighborhood. The lower Fillmore neighborhood, where I spent most of my time while interviewing the Task Force members, started to experience gentrification in 1985, but the heaviest in-migration of new residents has occurred over the past 14 years with the arrival of expensive condominiums and restaurants. In 2012,

¹⁰ For more info on the Harlem of the West, see (Oaks 2005; Jackson 2010)

approximately 13% of residents in the 94115 zip code identified as Black, many of whom lived in government subsidized housing in the neighborhood¹¹. In 2000, ten years earlier, Blacks accounted for 18% of the population in the neighborhood. Many of the remaining Black families feel as though they are being specifically targeted (the 94115 zip code is also home to a civil gang injunction targeting over 40 African American male residents (Jones and Jackson 2011))¹². As of 2012, the 94115 area code is 61% white, 20% Asian, 13% Black, and 9% Latino (Figure 5). About a quarter of the population is between 25 and 35 years old, which is mainly due to the gentrification of the neighborhood by a younger crowd of newcomers (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Gender, Race, and Age Demographics of the Fillmore neighborhood in 2012 (94115)

Subject	ZCTA5 94115	ZCTA5 94115
	Estimate	Percent
SEX AND AGE		
Total population	32,882	32,882
Male	15,834	48.2%
Female	17,048	51.8%
AGE		
25 to 34 years	8,472	25.8%
35 to 44 years	5,539	16.8%
45 to 54 years	3,696	11.2%
55 to 59 years	1,803	5.5%
60 to 64 years	1,794	5.5%
RACE		
One race	31,688	96.4%
White	19,984	60.8%
Black or African American	4,160	12.7%
Asian	6,585	20.0%
Chinese	1,957	6.0%
HISPANIC OR LATINO AND RACE		
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	2,932	8.9%
Mexican	1,456	4.4%

Source: US Census Bureau, American Fact Finder 2008-2012 ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates

¹¹ US Census Bureau, ACS Demographic and Housing estimates, 2008-2012

¹² For more information, see <http://www.counterpunch.org/2007/09/29/ethnic-cleansing-in-san-francisco/>

Bayview-Hunters Point

BVHP is located within the 94124 zip code entirely and is home to several industrial facilities, including the sewage treatment plant, the former Pacific Gas & Electric plant, Candlestick Park stadium, and the Hunters Point shipyard. From 2000–2012, the Black population in 94124 shrank from 48% to 36%, whereas the white population increased from 10% to 20% (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Population Change in 94115 and 94124 from 2000–2012

<u>Racial and Ethnic Background</u>	<u>Fillmore (94115)</u>		<u>Bayview-Hunters Point (94124)</u>	
	2000	2012	2000	2012
Black	17.8%	12.7%	48%	36%
White	59.8%	60.8%	9.6%	20.4%
Asian	16%	20%	24.4%	27.6
Latino	5.5%	8.9%	16.7%	25.1%

Source: US Census Bureau, American Fact Finder 2000 and 2008–2012 ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates

The white population has increased over the last 10 years as the city has invested in transforming Bayview-Hunters Point (BVHP). BVHP has always been more racially heterogeneous than other neighborhoods in the city. This is not just a matter of Black and white. Other racial and ethnic groups make up a large percentage of the population as well, which is why TCSC is so racially diverse. In 2012, the neighborhood was approximately

28% Asian and 25% Latino (Figure 7). Still, this neighborhood houses the largest Black population in the city.

Figure 7: 2012 Demographics of the Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhood (94124)

Subject	ZCTA5 94124	
	Estimate	Percent
SEX AND AGE		
Total population	34,296	34,296
25 to 34 years	5,005	14.6%
35 to 44 years	4,569	13.3%
45 to 54 years	4,878	14.2%
55 to 59 years	2,052	6.0%
RACE		
One race	33,020	96.3%
White	6,997	20.4%
Black or African American	12,349	36.0%
Asian	9,456	27.6%
Chinese	6,880	20.1%
Filipino	913	2.7%
Vietnamese	1,009	2.9%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	582	1.7%
Samoan	395	1.2%
HISPANIC OR LATINO AND RACE		
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	8,620	25.1%

Source: US Census Bureau, American Fact Finder 2008–2012 ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates

Bayview-Hunters Point has historically housed the city’s poor Black workers because of its proximity to the shipyard and the many other industrial facilities in the neighborhood. Third Street, the neighborhood’s main thoroughfare, was home to several Black-owned businesses in the 1940s. When housing discrimination increased in the Fillmore, residents would move to BVHP. Both neighborhoods experienced from 2000–2012 an increase in the white, Latino and Asian population, and a decrease in the Black populations (Figure 4). The neighborhoods maintain an intimate connection with one another and a sense of a shared fate in the city. Conducting fieldwork and spending time in these neighborhoods allowed me to document this shared fate and the Black struggle for justice.

Journey of Roles

During my research on the Task Force, I interviewed and interacted with middle-to-upper-class Black residents who had “made it.” These respondents typically had secure connections with the city’s institutional structure, which is likely why they were chosen to be on the Task Force in the first place. None of them were from Bayview-Hunters Point. Instead, they were from the Fillmore and other non-predominately Black neighborhoods in San Francisco. Like Jones, in her study *Between Good and Ghetto: African American Girls and Inner City Violence* (2009), as a light-skinned Black woman in my twenties working on my graduate degree, I found that my position as a researcher in the Black community was strange. Unlike Jones’ position as a researcher, the class and neighborhood affiliation of my respondents dictated how accepted my strange position was, given the fact that I studied both low-income and middle-to-upper income Black residents¹³. Middle-to-upper-class residents of the Fillmore reacted to my presence in a different way than lower-class residents of Bayview-Hunters Point¹⁴. I was accepted immediately by Fillmore Task Force respondents, but those in BVHP regarded me on a conditional basis until I started working for one of the leaders of the TCSC movement.

Middle-to-upper-class members of the Task Force took me under their wings, in a patriarchal sense, as they were proud of my success and enthusiastic about the topic of my

¹³ In the appendix of Jones’ *Between Good and Ghetto: African American Girls and Inner City Violence*, she reflects on her experience as a light-skinned Ivy League educated Black female researcher and the strange position she occupied. On the one hand, she is understood as being an educated Ivy League woman who uses “big words,” according to one of her respondents, and on the other hand, she is Black, which may of led her respondents to believe she possessed a kind of street knowledge as well.

research. To most, it seemed as if I reminded them of their daughters or granddaughters. It felt as though they treated me as an insider. I found the manner in which older middle-to-upper-class Blacks interacted with me to be very familiar given the neighborhood I was raised in. When I asked Reverend Johnson, a 65-year old reverend, to discuss some of the divisions in the Black community, he addressed how he disagreed with other residents who call more established Blacks sellouts simply because they have a difference of opinion. He remarked:

Now you telling me I'm selling out Black folk because you have a belief that is unproven and untested, just like mines is... even 'cause you wear dreadlocks, I'm not gonna tell folks you a sell out, even though I might prefer it if you went to the beauty shop and had it pressed and set and curled, you know...

We then went on to talk about his daughter's hair and what he preferred, and I shared my family's thoughts on my hairstyle. Conversations like these came up in a very patriarchal yet familiar way as Reverend Johnson was comfortable commenting on my stylistic choices and having more personal conversations outside of the direct focus of the interview. Other times, he would offer to take me out to dinner and introduce to me to other folks in the neighborhood. Relationships like these worked to my benefit during my initial round of interviews by helping me to establish credibility early on in the process.

By the end of my research on the Task Force, I naively thought I had been exposed to the opinion of the Black community as a whole. However, after I began attending meetings about environmental racism in BVHP, I came to understand that members of the Task Force were seen by other Black residents as sellouts, as Reverend Johnson had said, because of their connection to the city's power structure. Residents of BVHP often yelled out slavery references in townhalls, referring to individuals that I had interviewed previously as "house

negroes” or “Uncle Toms.” This BVHP community was one you did not hear much about, except in the newspaper as an angry and controversial population claiming that the shipyard clean-up was an example of environmental racism. BVHP was not only diverse racially but also in terms of religious affiliations. Most residents at the meetings were lower-class and either Christian or Muslim. Most of my interviewees were African American, but there were Latino and white interviewees as well.

With this segment of the Black community, I found it harder to be an insider than it had been in my previous research. My main identity here was that of a student. My race, age, and gender still granted me insider status. I came off as less of a threat than if I were white. Because of the patriarchal nature of their Muslim and Christian town halls, being a woman made me less of a threat as well, as men would line the perimeter of the town hall and check individuals for weapons. Ironically, my outsider status still appeared to trump my insider status because of my non-Muslim affiliation and my institutional affiliation. I often chose not to reveal that I was working on my dissertation but instead framed my work as a school project, as I thought my graduate student status might be a threat to this group of both men and women.

However, I did gain a semi-insider status when Shirley, a middle-class activist, allowed me to volunteer at an environmental justice agency downtown that centered on issues in BVHP and other environmentally toxic neighborhoods. When I attended town halls, she would introduce me as one of *her* students. At that point, community residents became more willing to allow me to interview them. On the whole though, I had to work harder to gain the respect of those in the BVHP community than I had with the Task Force. In order to respect their privacy and not come off as more of a threat, I did not take pictures or notes at

meetings.

Chapter Summary

In the following chapters, I discuss in depth the state of Black San Francisco. In Chapter One, I retell a social history of the two neighborhoods from the perspective of Black San Franciscans. As they recall the history of their neighborhoods, certain things are left out, while others are distinctly remembered, similar to Hill District residents in Pittsburgh. The retelling of this history is also important because it provides a frame through which Black San Franciscans understand their present day struggle. They use their history to rebuke the present conditions of the neighborhood in order to remember a time when they were in control of their neighborhoods. Rebuking the present by constantly retelling the past is also important for problematizing the way we talk about ghetto Black communities. In Chapter One, I lay out an abbreviated history of settlement, displacement, and resistance from the perspective of residents.

In Chapter Two, I focus on answering the question, “How do Black people in San Francisco make sense of their social standing in the city?” I spend a good deal of time discussing how institutional processes like urban renewal and discrimination have caused Black residents to undergo a profound root shock, therefore creating feelings of anxiety, distrust, and temporariness living in the city (2005). I describe what one resident defines as “the chess game” that Black residents find themselves playing—this game is to preserve their lives and survival chances in the city. As in Frazier’s *Black Bourgeoisie* (1957), I focus on the importance of class tensions in understanding the differences in how lower-class and middle-to-upper-class residents play the chess game and survive in the city with dignity. Gender and the relationship to the city also define the way the chess game is played among

urban Black residents. The ultimate goal in this game is respect, an acknowledgement of the politics of race in spaces and a say in the future of their neighborhoods. I end the chapter discussing how both lower-class and middle-to-upper class Blacks play the chess game.

In Chapter Three, I extend this idea of urban Black residential life as a chess game to imagining San Francisco as a field of power relations that resembles a battlefield. On this battlefield, race and class shape the fight over power and space. I draw from Logan and Molotch's *Urban Fortunes* (1987) to understand how institutional stakeholders frame the neighborhood as a commodity; they want control over the area because it can be bought and sold. They have a stake in containing the activist efforts of low-income Black residents to benefit the city, not existing residents. In this chapter, I argue that so-called "inappropriate" behaviors in institutional meetings constitute counter-containment strategies that challenge macro level decision-making processes in San Francisco. The low-income community's resistance in public neighborhood meetings redirects the discourse toward a focus on community issues and their history. I argue that since residents frame their experience in the city as a battle, their "inappropriate" behavior at meetings regarding their future is used as a strategy.

In the conclusion, I summarize the history of Black San Francisco as told by residents and the two frames (the chess game and the battle) they use to understand their position. I use these main findings to revisit my initial research questions about what shapes Black neighborhoods and the strategies of resistance used by residents. In the last part of the chapter, I discuss the contributions and implications of Black San Francisco as a case study on the agreements and understandings between Black residents and corporate actors seeking to redevelop inner city neighborhoods.

II. “ I REMEMBER WHAT THE FILLMORE WAS LIKE”: A BRIEF SOCIAL HISTORY OF BLACKS IN SAN FRANCISCO

Introduction

The current social situation of Black San Franciscans who live in the Fillmore and Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhoods is intimately tied to the social history of these neighborhoods. The stories shared with me by many of the residents that I spoke with, most of whom were 30 years of age or older, were characterized by what I describe as a *then and now* frame. These stories give a sense that residents are living simultaneously in the past, the present, and the future. In *Ghostly Matters*, Avery Gordon claims that life is more complicated than sociologists and sociological theories often represent. She theorizes that individuals possess a *complex personhood*. Gordon’s *complex personhood* contextualizes the *then and now* frame: both are ways of understanding how the stories “people tell about themselves, about their troubles, about their social worlds, and about their society’s problems are entangled and weave between what is immediately available as a story and what their imaginations are reaching toward” (Gordon 2008: 4). In short, the stories of individuals are deeply entangled between the past, the present and what they imagine as the future.

This shared understanding of their social position vis-à-vis the rest of the city cut across class differences: as a community, Black San Franciscans have a Black spatial imaginary of what their neighborhoods “used to be like” as well as a shared understanding of how it is now and what it will likely become in the near future. (Lipsitz 2011). In this chapter, I focus on the historical social memories that encompass the *then and now* frame. This frame emerged time and time again in my interviews. Memories of what these neighborhoods used to be like were and are often interjected into the regular business of city

government meetings, redevelopment meetings, and most controversially, in meetings sponsored by the Navy regarding the clean up of the Hunters Point shipyard. In these settings, which are dominated by the bureaucratic machinations of the government, residents feel that it is important to tell their version of the story. It is a story that typically references the shared history - and shared fate - of these two neighborhoods. It is also a story that highlights the more positive aspects of these now somewhat notorious settings.

When outsiders think of San Francisco's Black neighborhoods today, they may look at it as both a revived "Harlem of the West" rich with a history of Black culture or a working class, diverse, industrial neighborhood. In the Fillmore neighborhood, one of the last efforts of the redevelopment agency was a high-rise, mixed-use condominium complex for newcomers to the city, so they may dine at 1300, a Black owned restaurant that features sophisticated southern food. The Fillmore is looked at as a neighborhood in transition with the development of more condominiums and some are hopeful that a recent gang injunction in the neighborhood will lead to a decline in crime. Certain corners and blocks are looked at as mired in ghetto conditions, especially those areas where Black residents congregate on corners. Newcomers to the neighborhood often warn others to avoid these areas (Jones & Jackson 2011). Bayview-Hunters Point, on the other hand, is a neighborhood that is perceived as a ghetto wrought with much crime, drugs and gang activity. It is a neighborhood that has breathtaking views and homes that are affordable when compared to the rest of the city. The area is slated for redevelopment including the controversial redevelopment of the former Hunters Point shipyard. Up on the hill stands the old military barracks converted to project housing. Once it housed Black shipyard workers; now it is public housing home to many African American residents. The police frequently drive up the hill. The area is

identified as home to one of the gangs there. Up the hill, there are claims of environmental racism including higher than usual cancer and asthma rates. It is also the location of the Islamic school that hosted several of the townhall meetings that I attended. The Black residents of Bayview-Hunters Point and Fillmore remain in a precarious position living in San Francisco today because they realize that these neighborhoods have not always been the way they are today.

Despite the challenges facing these neighborhoods, residents make sure to tell stories of unity and consciousness alongside stories of struggle and exclusion. “It hasn’t always been like this” is a way to urge others to separate what they currently see today in the community - the crime, the gang wars, the lack of unity- from what their neighborhoods once were.

Shirley’s comments on the neighborhood illustrate the *then and now* frame well:

So, *our community today is nothing near what our community used to be*. There was a time when I knew everybody, and I've lived in different locations in Bayview. I've lived on Thomas Street, I've lived on Griffin Street for numbers of years, I mean, numbers of years. I had family that lived on Underwood so I was always on Underwood. But *those were times* when I knew everybody on my block, on both sides of the street: the children, the children’s children, the parents, the grandparents. I woke up one morning and was talking to a neighbor and realized, wait a minute—we’re the last two standing that I could actually say I had a history with. That’s scary. Because you have to wonder, what happened to everybody? (fieldnote entry- June 29, 2010; emphasis mine)

Later in my conversation, Shirley would answer her own question of what happened to all the Black residents on her block. Many of these residents left the city when the cost of living became unaffordable. Others were displaced due to urban renewal or discriminatory housing practices. City residents without the sort of historical ties shared by someone like Shirley don’t always understand the value Fillmore and Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhoods once held as cultural hubs in the city. They do not remember fondly the unity

on the block. Remembering how the neighborhood “used to be” is important because remembering provides a more nuanced understanding of the neighborhood than what is conveyed simply through facts and statistics. Memories are what make a neighborhood. Memories of how the neighborhood used to be - a cohesive block where everyone watched out for one another - give a person like Shirley a reason to fight for the neighborhood today. In contrast to Shirley, outsiders are somewhat disconnected from this history. This disconnection is caused by a variety of factors including the vulnerability of the Black community to institutional control and the onset of poverty, drugs, and unemployment. Many of these forces are national in scope and affect many cities, but there are also factors of race and institutional exclusion that are unique to the history of Black San Franciscans. This story, residents like Shirley urge, must be told too.

There are several types of individuals that are connected to historically Black neighborhoods in San Francisco. There are “born and raised” residents, “new” residents, “community allies,” and “city allies.” An individual like Shirley is considered a “born and raised” resident because her family migrated here from the South. Shirley’s immediate family and her own children were raised here. The majority of individuals I spoke with were born and raised residents. “New” residents are those that were not raised in the neighborhood and possess no familial connection to it, but have chosen to move to the neighborhood in the past 10-15 years. The last types of individuals, “community allies” and “city allies” do not reside in either historically Black neighborhood. “Community allies” are those who identify strongly with the Black community’s struggle because they have been affected by the same processes that cause their community to look different. Community allies attend meetings, support residents and sponsor events with the community. “City

allies” are individuals who are part of the discussion of the future of Fillmore and BVHP through their work with the city’s institutions and may culturally identify with the neighborhoods to different degrees.

Born and raised residents do not easily separate out the past from the present and the future. They carry the weight and burden of this history with them. All the time periods become entangled in one story of what the city has done to their communities. Residents pass down stories of how racism and discrimination impacted their community as a way to help others understand the neighborhood’s precarious position today. They draw on their “then and now” memories as evidence of the positive possibilities for their future in the city. The “bad neighborhoods” that outsiders refer to weren’t always bad neighborhoods. The “then and now” stories are used to rebuke the current conditions of the neighborhood and push others to look beyond to imagine a future that includes the Black community instead of displacing them.

In this chapter, I will tell a story of Black San Francisco from the perspective of Black born and raised residents whose families have lived in the city since the 1940s. Their stories include references to the more positive aspects of Black city life that are frequently documented by archivists and other institutional entities, like the often referenced Harlem of the West period, as well as references to the less positive aspects of Black life in the city, like the forms of displacement and discrimination experienced by Black residents over the last sixty years. It is true that both Fillmore and Bayview-Hunters Point were, at one point, hubs of Black culture, but residents in these communities have also been vulnerable to institutional control, exclusion, and the displacement caused by renewal efforts. These stories are important to residents, but they are usually left out of contemporary efforts to “re-brand”

Black neighborhoods like the Fillmore.

I begin this chapter by providing a brief history of Black migration to the city. I then discuss the progress Black residents made in the 1940s and 1950s, as well as the ongoing extra- and intra-racial struggles that occurred within the job and housing sectors. I go on to discuss the sense of rootedness and consciousness that arose during the Fillmore's Harlem of the West period. I explain how urban renewal projects influenced the Black community in the decades after the war and how structural changes in the 1970s set the stage for disastrous impact of drugs and unemployment on the community in the 90s. I also describe how some stable institutions, like the Nation of Islam, helped to support and shape the neighborhood during this time. I end the chapter with a discussion of the condition of the neighborhoods today. The social history described in this chapter helps us to better understand how residents come to understand and describe their ongoing struggle to survive in the city.

Black Migration to San Francisco

The Great Migration represents a large part of Black history that encompasses the migration of Blacks from the Deep South to industrial cities across the United States. As we know, there were two waves of migration from the Deep South. The first wave, from 1915-1940 was well documented in books like *Black Metropolis* and consisted of Blacks who migrated to cities in the Midwest and Northeast like Chicago, New York and Philadelphia. The second wave of migration from 1940-1970 brought more Black southerners to places in the west like California. Much of this history is documented well in books like *Black San Francisco*, *Pioneer Urbanites*, and *Black California Dreamin': The Crises of California's African American Communities* (Broussard 1993, Daniels 1980, Banks, Johnson et.al 2012).

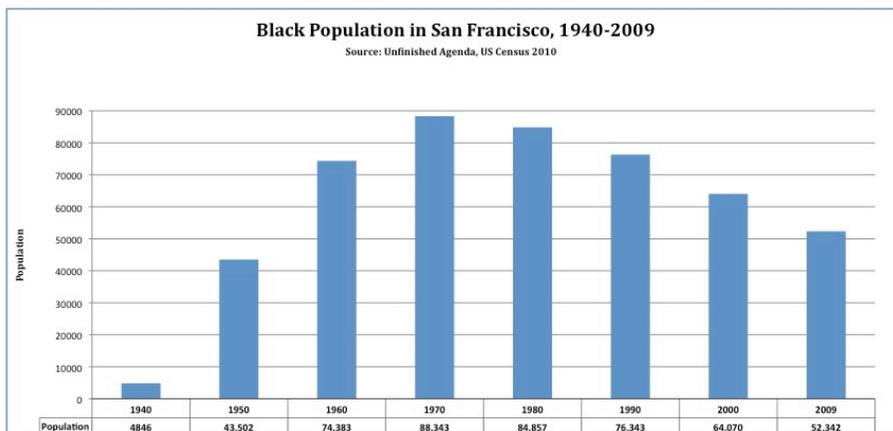
Prior to WW2, a small Black community of “pioneer urbanites” lived in the Fillmore neighborhood and even smaller ones could be found in other sections of the city (Daniels 1991). In 1940, there were only 4,846 Blacks living in San Francisco. These Blacks encountered some violence, but were not considered a threat as long as they remained “spatially and socially subordinated” because only in that manner were they not a threat to white property and wealth (Pulido 2006: 43). In fact, Blacks were not restricted to living in certain parts of the city de jure since San Francisco’s segregation laws were eradicated in 1900. They were able to use the public transportation systems and schools just as their white counterparts (Broussard 1993:2). San Francisco’s racial tension did not escalate to what we are familiar with in other metropolitan cities until after 1960. In this vein, San Francisco’s liberal image was strong in shaping the dynamics of social space in the city. As we will see, some find this liberal image of San Francisco to be troubling and even a farce, since racism existed prior to WW2, but many refer to it as a “polite racism.”

Despite the small number of Blacks in the city, race still shaped their life in San Francisco. In *Black San Francisco*, Broussard describes the important role of race and the presence of a racial caste system in shaping the city even without outward displays of racism each day: “most whites were civil in their contacts with Blacks, irrespective of their personal prejudices, and displayed what one historian called ‘polite racism.’ Yet civility only masked the antipathy, disdain and hostility that many whites felt toward Black San Franciscans” (Broussard 1993:7). This sentiment is what allowed San Francisco’s liberal image to stay intact until after the 1940s, but as residents often mention, a system of racial caste was still very much in place in the city.

This image of racial civility within the city can be compared to Elijah Anderson’s

contemporary example of the presence of a racial caste system in modern day Philadelphia. He refers to particular spaces in the city as cosmopolitan canopies—or spaces where residents can have temporary relief from social and racial tensions in the city because of the prevalence of a set of norms that would look down upon such racist actions. In this sense, San Francisco tries to keep its image as a cosmopolitan canopy strong, but it begins to shed that quality with the onset of a large influx of Black residents. As Anderson explains, race is still very prominent in these settings when particular fault lines are crossed and tensions arise (Anderson 2012, Anderson 2011). In San Francisco, race played a particularly powerful role in reinforcing inferiority when it came to housing and jobs after the 1940s.

Figure 8:



After 1943, the Fillmore and Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhoods housed the city’s largest in- migration of Black workers which was seen as a “severe aggravation to white sensibilities” (Fullilove 2005). During this time, the Black population grew to over 43,000 by the 1950s [see Figure 8].

The primary growth of San Francisco’s Black community drew from migrants of the second wave who were recruited to work in the Bay Area’s shipyards during World War 2

(Dawson 1994, Mah 1999). Representatives from the war industries would visit the South and promise better paying jobs and a freer life in the Bay Area. Southerners also were attracted to the jobs and freedom described by those Blacks who did revisit the South. There was much talk about the better opportunities in industrial cities as opposed to those experienced within the sharecropper system and other forms of southern labor. There was also discussion of more tolerance for Blacks outside of the South, where there was less subservience to white residents in their everyday experiences (Lemann 1991).

Black migration was also spurred by pressure from activists like Bayard Rustin and A. Phillip Randolph who in June 1941 led President Roosevelt to issue Executive Order 8802, an anti-discrimination policy for World War II. The Fair Employment Practices Commission declared, "there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or government because of race, creed, color, or national origin" (Collins 2001:273). This executive order opened up skilled and semi-skilled opportunities for Black migrants in the Bay Area to participate in defense industry trainings, therefore securing their job status (Fusfeld & Bates 1984). The establishment of San Francisco's Black community in the Bay Area was a response to a national need, but it presented a social and civic problem for established residents and navy representatives to have to get used to such a large Black population. This problem could no longer be handled as civilly as it was before. More important, the growth of the Hunters Point Black community after the end of WW2 was also considered a civic problem as it confounded expectations that Black migrants would return to the South once the war ended. (Hippler 1974).

The Navy viewed Order 8802 as a dilemma: it provided much needed labor, but it also forced naval integration. There were several published conference proceedings, memos

and booklets on how to deal with “the Negro problem.” In the conference transcripts, one Admiral said, “...we are faced with a problem—a very serious problem- in connection with our naval enlisted personnel and that is the introduction into the District of the large numbers of Negro personnel.... The order has come now and it isn’t a question of whether anybody likes it or not.” (1943 “Conference with regard to Negro personnel”). Black migration and integration were accepted grudgingly since they disrupted the social order of the Navy’s shipyard.

However, two years after Order 8802 in 1943, 112,000 Blacks completed the war training in shipbuilding and repairing aircraft and machinery despite the Navy’s disdain for integrating Black workers (Fusfield & Bates 1984). New avenues into previously restricted fields allowed migrants to increase their social and economic wellbeing being during the war. Black residents took pride in their jobs at the shipyard and the Black community benefited from its connection to the war industry. Moving to areas housing other ethnic migrants eased the transition from the agrarian south for migrants, but in the 1940s even existing ethnic residents were not prepared for the large in-migration.

Not only were non- Black residents uncomfortable with the large in migration but the Black pioneer urbanites were critical of migrant Blacks as well. Many established Blacks in San Francisco, ones who had lived in the city prior to 1943, regarded the newcomers’ behavior as loud or uncivilized since they came from the South. In both Chicago and San Francisco these newcomers were looked at as lacking the sophistication of the established Blacks in the city (Drake and Cayton 1945, Broussard 1993). We see this tension between established Blacks and migrant Blacks grow to another level as time passes between the old elite leaders and new elite leaders. These divisions in San Francisco’s Black community are

still very much alive in 2010 as I clearly saw in my fieldwork.

Most of my respondents were members or descendants of migrant families that moved to San Francisco because their families had opportunities to work in the shipyard or related industries. I sat down with Jason, a 44-year-old housing counselor and long time resident of Bayview-Hunters Point, at his office to discuss when and why his family moved to Hunters Point.

J: It was for the opportunities at the Hunters Point shipyard. My family was part of that migration [of] folks who moved here from the South to work. My maternal grandmother came out here in 1944, the same year my mom was born so my mom was about 3 or 4 months old. My paternal grandmother came out here around the same time. She was from Louisiana. My mom was from a small town called Sherman, Texas. My paternal grandparents were from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, so around the early 40's.

C: So primarily for working at the shipyard?

J: Yeah, so both my maternal and paternal grandfathers worked at the shipyard. (Fieldnote entry- 7/21/10)

Jason goes on to describe his family's history in greater depth, but emphasizes that both his paternal and maternal grandparents were from the South. This story is prevalent in the community because of the great migration, a common historical trajectory for Black San Franciscans.

After 1943, Black families lived in Bayview-Hunters Point, a neighborhood adjacent to the shipyard and also in the Fillmore section, a neighborhood closer to downtown San Francisco. Fillmore and Bayview-Hunters Point were different from each other even though they both housed the city's main Black population. The Sunnyvale neighborhood, south of Bayview-Hunters Point, Fillmore and San Francisco's downtown area, was also a site where some African Americans lived after 1943. Sarah, a 30 year old social worker and long time Bayview-Hunters Point resident, described the emerging social and economic difference

between the neighborhoods at the time:

So over here [in Fillmore], you have your boughie... you know, the musicians. This is the Black hub right here in the Fillmore. Then out here [in Bayview-Hunters Point] you got the riff-raff, or however you want to say it. You've got the po', the work-hard, the sharecroppers, the maids, whatever, all right here.
(Fieldnote entry- 7/21/10)

Fillmore and Bayview-Hunters Point developed different social and economic histories as time went on. Fillmore has always been associated with Black intellectual and cultural life. According to residents, it was also the first of the Black neighborhoods targeted for urban renewal, in part, because of its proximity to the central business district. Later in the 1950s, businesses in the Fillmore became accustomed to having white patrons as part of its Harlem of the West image¹⁵. As Sarah mentions, Bayview-Hunters Point housed the poorer Black “workers” of the city because of its proximity to the shipyard and the many other industries in the neighborhood. Third Street, the neighborhood’s main thoroughfare, was home to several Black-owned businesses. However, long-time city residents say that the place to party or hang out, was always on Fillmore Street.

In contrast to the Fillmore, which sits adjacent to the city’s downtown area, the southeast sector of San Francisco that includes Bayview-Hunters Point also houses the city’s industrial facilities including the Navy’s shipyard. It also housed most of those who were displaced when urban renewal came to the Fillmore. When housing discrimination increased in the Fillmore, residents would move to Bayview-Hunters Point. The neighborhoods maintain an intimate connection with one another and a sense of a shared fate in the city.

¹⁵ For more info on the Harlem of the West—see (Pepin 2006; Oaks 2005; Jackson 2010)

Progress But Still Struggle

Housing

Even though the war industry opened up opportunities for Black migrants, Blacks still faced patterns of racism and exclusion in other areas, such as housing. Glimpses of a “civilized” racial caste system started to become more readily visible. The city’s residents were not prepared for the large in-migration of Black migrants during the war period (Broussard 1993). During this time, exclusionary housing practices intensified and, especially after the war’s end, white flight increased. The threat of a “Black invasion” stoked the fears of white homeowners and helped to transform inner city neighborhoods such as the Fillmore into what urban historians and geographers such as Arnold Hirsch describe as the “Second Ghetto” (Mah 1999, Gilfoyle 2003; Hirsch 2003; Mohl 2003). In such areas, “government policy and decision making, especially public housing location and urban renewal, [trigger] racial transitions of formerly white neighborhoods and, subsequently, in concentrating and containing African Americans in these newer, ‘second’ ghettos” (Mohl 2003: 243). Because of this, there were concerted efforts to house Black migrants in particular neighborhoods. One resident, Shirley, whom I came to know well, explains the process of obtaining a house in the Fillmore through a lottery system sponsored by the city. She also explains how difficult it was for Black residents to obtain loans to fix up their homes:

I remember when my mother and father worked very very hard in their life. They wanted to buy a home in Fillmore. And what they wanted was one of these old Victorians. You could buy the house itself for a dollar. And you put your bid in through the auction and if your name was called, you get to buy the house for, the lottery should I say, and you get to buy the house for a dollar, and redevelopment would make sure the bank loaned you the money to sit it on the foundation, and to revamp it. Most of the people who have those old Victorian homes in the Fillmore got them through the lottery. My father worked

construction which is very good money, but the bank wouldn't loan us the money to buy the house. Years later, I found out that a friend of mine I worked with when I worked at Nordstrom's, her and her sister bought one of these houses. You know how they got the house? By the way I got to say this: her sister worked for Nordstrom's. She worked for MUNI [the city transportation system]. Another really good paying job, right? Her sister had a friend who worked for MUNI, a white friend, take her bid number, purchase the house for a dollar, get the loan from the bank, had the foundation set underneath it where they wanted it, and use that money to vamp the house up, and then sold it back to them. Because they couldn't get the loan, their bank would not, even though they had the certificate number, the bank would not loan them the money to buy this house. Redevelopment deliberately set out to remove as many Black folks from that community as they possibly could.
(Fieldnote entry-6/29/10)

Even though Black migrants had work at the shipyard and other related sectors, many were still limited by the persistence of discrimination and institutional practices to limit Black homeownership. Shirley recalls the experience of a Black friend of hers who used a white ally to buy a house and obtain a loan for their family in order to obtain a house in the neighborhood in hopes of avoiding redlining and restrictive covenants. More important, her memory of this incident shapes her account of discrimination in the neighborhood today. These incidents of racial discrimination and segregation were also exacerbated by violence, riots, bombings, and police brutality in the city that became more common in the 1960s (Fusfield and Bates 1984; Massey and Denton 1993; Bonacich 1976:44, Broussard 169).

Efforts intensified to restrict Black migration into white neighborhoods. Restrictive covenants, which had been existence in the city since the 1920's, forbade white homeowners from transferring their deeds to potential Black owners. Redlining, the practice of restricting lending to areas where Blacks resided was also used in the city (Mah, 1999, Fusfield and Bates 1984). Together, segregation, restrictive covenants, redlining, violence, and lack of choice created what we now know of, as Black inner city space or ghettos (Judd and

Swanstrom 1994, Massey and Denton 1993). Further, there was not enough of a Black political base to address these issues of racial discrimination effectively (Broussard 1993).

Housing in Bayview Hunters Point, the neighborhood adjacent to the shipyard, was obtained in a different manner. Before the surge of Black migration into San Francisco in 1942, the federal government created 5,500 temporary military barracks around the shipyard on Hunters Point hill as a way to address the increasing housing shortage. Naval workers and their families lived there and at the time it was a relatively integrated community. By 1945, the community's population was at 20,000 and about 1/3 of the workers were Black (Broussard 1993). Bayview-Hunters Point was an area Black families could successfully live in with little or no difficulty in obtaining housing. The neighborhood essentially became a place for Blacks. This temporary housing was later turned into public housing, where many of the residents' families still live to this day (Hippler 1974).

When residents recall the instances of redlining, racism, and labor market antagonisms, their memories and disbursement of these stories help others make sense of contemporary battles over Black space in the city. These practices helped to turn neighborhoods such as the Fillmore into ghettos: a “place in which the involuntary segregated are housed ... the spatial representation of a socio-political process of involuntary segregation” (Gans 2008:355). Discriminatory housing practices are sometimes overlooked in the archive of the Black experience during city meetings and residents feel the need to remind everyone of them today to understand why their neighborhoods are in the condition that they are.

Jobs

Executive Order 8802 opened up several semiskilled, skilled, and white-collar occupations to the Black community in San Francisco. In particular, the Bay Area defense industry provided large numbers of industrial jobs for Black residents that were well paid (Broussard 1993). Defense contracts forced shipyards to hire as many workers as they could, regardless of race, to meet the new demands. In *Black San Francisco*, Broussard quotes a figure from a Bay Area civil rights organization, stating that about 15 to 16 thousand Black migrants worked in the shipyard by 1943. That number exceeds the number of Black residents who lived in both San Francisco and Oakland combined prior to 1940 (145). The influx of migrant Blacks into the city truly changed the landscape of racial relations after the 1940s and was now viewed as a threat to the existing social order and its civility.

The Navy was primarily responsible for hiring Black workers, as private businesses and other sectors in San Francisco were not required to open their doors. These other sectors were not mandated by an executive order to force integration in their businesses. In San Francisco, “ninety percent of Black workers were employed by 10 percent of all industries” (Broussard 1993:150). Black women had the hardest time finding work in San Francisco’s private sectors and did much worse than their Black male counterparts. I asked a resident named Brother Ben, a 41 year old small business owner and resident of the Fillmore, about the type of work his family did upon their arrival into the city and he describes the limited opportunities for both men and women:

The opportunity for us was either you was working on the shipyard, prior to the war, the war in the 1940's, or for mostly women, housewives they call them, they would be babysitters, they would be housekeepers, maids. That was pretty much it. That was pretty much it for Black women in the late 40's. Or nurses, there was a lot of positions for in-house nurses and stuff like that, but other than that there was not a lot of opportunities for Black women.

(Fieldnote entry-7/6/10)

Working at the shipyard, for men, and being a housewife, nurse, or doing personal service jobs for women, were the options for Black migrants to the city (Broussard 1993). Since the strain on jobs was so great, economic competition and antagonisms between Black and white working classes seeking employment in a split labor market exacerbated racism and white fear. Since Blacks were more exploitable, sometimes they were recruited for jobs as strikebreakers, thus fueling white antagonism in neighborhoods (Mah 1999, Fusfield and Bates 1984, Bonacich 1976).

Even though the wartime marked a definite increase in progress for Black San Franciscans in the areas of housing and jobs, many families still struggled with issues of race. In *Black San Francisco*, Broussard sums up the situation:

Despite San Francisco's attempt to promote civility and live up to its egalitarian image, its housing patterns by the mid 1960s resembled a northern city like Chicago, which has a well defined Black ghetto. San Francisco's reputed liberalism in matters of race was belied by its inability to deal satisfactorily with this problem (241).

Because of these stark housing patterns and the inability to deal with its problems of race, the experience of Black San Franciscans has been marked by struggle. The inability to deal with race also led to the beginning of a series of attempts to control migration and residency, setting the stage for urban renewal being understood as "negro removal." Even up through the late 60s, when Arthur Hippler conducted his ethnography of Hunters Point, he still observed job discrimination with Black males: " 'last hired, first fired' is still an accurate way of describing Black male employment opportunities in San Francisco" (Hippler 1974:22). This struggle and experience in the Black community was also evidence of a very much intact racial caste system in the city that residents often refer to in city meetings today.

Harlem of the West: The 1950s and 1960s

In the 1950s and 1960s, Black communities nationally transformed into bases of cultural and political mobilization with the onset of the Civil Rights movement. Particularly in San Francisco, after Black neighborhoods were created, often as a consequence of racially discriminatory practices, the concentration of residents in the Black ghetto caused it to become a site for “imaginative recreation,” an opportunity for residents to re-create an autonomous Black space with deeper roots just as they have recreated the story of the neighborhood today. In a setting originally shaped by institutionalized racism, Black ghetto residents remade segregated spaces of exclusion into spaces of freedom and culture (Castells 1983, Haynes & Hutchinson 2008, Lewis 1991, Fullilove 2005, Lipsitz 2011).

By the early 1950s, the Black political base began to grow and Black leaders forced white politicians to take a stance on particular issues of race in order to gain their support as a community (Broussard 1993:237). After several years, the community was able to elect a Black attorney to the Municipal Court and later secure the appointment of a Black man to the Board of Education. 1964 saw another victory when a Black resident, Terry Francois, was appointed to the Board of Supervisors by the mayor (Broussard 1993). These victories illustrated that the Black community’s political base was becoming stronger as a decision-making body, helping to recreate these neighborhoods into spaces of power. These victories marked the post-war period as significant for the socio-economic progress of Blacks. Race riots over working conditions and overall discrimination also engendered a sense of racial unity (Jackson 2010). In the 1950s and 1960s, the formation of Black and integrated organizations, and the famous “Harlem of the West” Black jazz scene helped balance out the

economic inequalities in the Fillmore and Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhoods (Jackson 2010). This unity encouraged social development and enabled Black roots to grow deeper and firmer in the San Franciscan community.

Longtime Black city residents remember the Harlem of the West period when the Fillmore neighborhood was a cultural hub for the Black community, but also acknowledge the changes that have occurred over the last several decades. For example, Reverend Johnson, a 65-year-old Black man and active participant in community politics, describes the Fillmore in its “heyday” and the Fillmore today this way:

I remember what Fillmore was like in its heyday.... That’s where my kids was raised, that’s where I met my wife, you know where my church is, all of that, that’s where I used to club, I remember how hip it was, party, party, party, and so I’m willing to hang in there and wait, but now you my daughter... you don’t remember anything, because when you came along, that was gone. You don’t have that tie [to the neighborhood], you don’t have that memory, and so all Fillmore is to you is where you live not very well, and you can’t buy no home...and guess what, now you want to start your family and you want your first home. You got your degree, you got a job, you work hard, you save money, you deserve it, [but] you can’t buy it here and there’s no memory to make you struggle and save to stay here when you can have more product for one half the cost. Instead of \$600,000, you can go somewhere, out there in Fairfield, Sacramento and get the same house or bigger for three, four hundred, c’mon! (Fieldnote entry- 7/22/08)

Reverend Johnson refers to a time in the Fillmore that doesn’t exist anymore. He remembers when the Fillmore was a neighborhood that included all of the essential components of social life: his family, his place of worship and places of leisure and recreation. Shirley remembers the sense of community that existed in the Fillmore when it was a hub of Black culture. “When we lived in the Fillmore, it was a community of Black folks, I mean, we had nightclubs and movie theaters, restaurants, and so- what we call real food, they call it soul food here, we call it real food, okay?” (Fieldnote entry- 6/29/10) Shirley’s description of the Fillmore, like the description of Reverend Johnson harkens back

to a Fillmore that was, but is no longer. She describes a time when the neighborhood was home to clubs and restaurants and other businesses that Black people could afford and where Black people were welcomed. This sense of community and belonging was part of what was lost after the Fillmore was destroyed by urban renewal. Shirley explains further:

In the Fillmore, right there on Fillmore Street, there was a [dry-]cleaners there. My family would drop their coats and whatever was dry-clean-able there, and I could go back in a couple days and pick it up and say [to the owner], “Mom says she’ll take care of you whenever.” The owner would say, “Sure, just go, your mom said she wanted this right back.” You know what we do...we were a community...everybody. He didn’t worry about getting paid, because he knew it was gonna get paid. And mom would be here Friday or Dad would be here Friday and pay you, whatever. We lost all that.

(Fieldnote entry-6/29/10)

Shirley is one of a number of other residents I interviewed who described the Fillmore of their youth as a tightly knit African American neighborhood characterized by a “sense of community.” The 60s period in Fillmore and Bayview-Hunters Point was important for building up Black autonomy, stability and a sense of community. It also was a period of intense racial struggle and physical battles over Black space in the city.

Towards the tail end of the 1960s, racial relations still evoked much police brutality and racial tension that caused the onset of riots in the city such as the one at San Francisco State University and also in Hunters Point. As I explained in the introduction, the fatal shooting of 16 year old Black youth named Matthew Johnson by a police officer sparked a riot that went on for 128 hours. It comes as no surprise that the city’s Black leaders were met with much hostility from the Hunters Point community, more specifically, the younger Black men. This tension between the city’s Black officials and Hunters Point Black community residents is an important one to note because the same type of divisions that existed between

native and migrant Blacks continues to exist now between lower-class residents and middle-to-upper class Blacks.

The help of the highway patrol and the National Guard was later enlisted to keep order in the neighborhood and end the riot. The rage of the Bayview Hunters Point community threatened the city and contributed to why the city wants to control and push out its residents. Restrictive covenants, race riots, job discrimination, housing discrimination were all instances that informed why residents felt and continue to feel pushed out of the city after they had built a sense of rootedness with the Harlem of the West scene in the neighborhood. With the onset of urban renewal, Black community residents felt that the more correct label would be ‘negro removal’ because they were the ones whose lives were displaced from their neighborhoods strategically.

“Negro Removal” in San Francisco

Urban renewal funding initially derived from 1930s New Deal Era programming led by the federal government to promote economic recovery from the Great Depression and to federally assist distressed urban cores (Mollenkopf 1983). After World War II, the 1949 Federal Housing Act that created the financial resources to rebuild the urban infrastructure went towards the creation of redevelopment agencies and urban renewal programming. “In 1950s America, urban renewal was a synonym for ‘progress’” (Fullilove 2005, 57). Progress was looked at as bringing new jobs, new technologies and new ways to use existing rotting land. Those who lived on this land now slated for progress stood in the way of a new San Francisco.

The 1949 Federal Housing Act also created the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency that operated as a superagency with powers that rose above city legislation¹⁶ (Hartman 2002). This power allowed agencies to use eminent domain to obtain private lands identified as blighted areas or slums (Fainstein & Fainstein 1983, Judd & Swanstrom 1994). To city officials, in order for cities like San Francisco to remain financially competitive in an industrial economy, they had to focus their efforts on the physical redevelopment of center cities and adjacent neighborhoods (McGovern 1998, Mollenkopf 1983).

The Fillmore neighborhood was classified as an “inner city slum” by physical and social characteristics like overcrowding, dilapidated housing, and high rates of unemployment. Attacking blight and stimulating downtown investment became of increasing interest for the mayors, business associations, and planners, which the New Deal had brought together around slum clearance projects (Mollenkopf 1983, Massey & Denton 1993, Godfrey 1997). Redevelopment ideology placed new exchange values on slated neighborhoods by calculating the worth of neighborhoods based on how much capital could be made from these spaces (Mah 1999, Logan & Molotch 1987).

During a visit to San Francisco’s Fillmore neighborhood in 1963, the writer James Baldwin described the city’s efforts at urban renewal as “Negro removal” (Standley and Pratt 1989). By the time of Baldwin’s visit, the Fillmore area had been declared a slum and was targeted for urban renewal. Two urban redevelopment plans were implemented, the “Western

¹⁶ On July 28, 2011, Governor Jerry Brown approved the AB 26 bill, which dissolved all redevelopment agencies in the state of California. Effective February 1, 2012, the San Francisco Redevelopment agency under the California Redevelopment Law was abolished and transferred over to the City and Country of San Francisco, so its’ power no longer rises above city legislation.

Addition A-1” in 1953 and “Western Addition A-2” in 1963 (Mah 1999)¹⁷. These efforts were implemented under the leadership of Justin Herman, who became head of San Francisco’s Redevelopment agency. The agency used eminent domain to take control of land in the Fillmore, which led to the displacement of thousands of families. I interviewed one of the city’s well-known African American leaders, Reverend White, who is now 67 years old and the head of one of the oldest churches in the Fillmore. As we sat in his office, he told me the history of his church and explained the church’s historic position as an advocate for the Black community in the city. Like Baldwin, Reverend White uses the term “Black removal” when describing the impact that urban renewal has had on the neighborhood. Reverend White’s comments also highlight the racial politics that characterize the history of gentrification and redevelopment in the city:

The Redevelopment Agency, 40 years ago, said to the African American community: “We’re gonna tear down these old houses, these old Victorians, y’all can rebuild the community. [...] Those of you who have businesses and have homes, we’re going to give you a certificate, once things that need to be rebuilt are rebuilt, [then] you can come back.” That’s what that whole Fillmore area is supposed to have been, but the Redevelopment Agency did not keep faith—it did not deliver on its promises to Black folk. It was not urban renewal, it was Black removal! And even the study that the Redevelopment Agency did indicates that if they were to do it again, they would not do it the way they did it because it was a disservice to Black people....After 40 years, lives have been destroyed, families torn apart and broken apart, people end up giving away everything they had when they declared eminent domain.... took homes from people and through redlining, others were forced to seek out Victorian homes that would be worth millions today. You know who are the ones that you didn’t tear down, who gets the millions of dollars out of those now by and large? White folk.

(Fieldnote entry-7/29/08)

Reverend White explains the economic consequences of these broken promises for

¹⁷ Western Addition is the name of the larger geographical area that includes the Fillmore.

Blacks in the city. His is a very popular opinion among Black residents about urban renewal. Residents like Reverend White believe that urban renewal tore apart the community's unity and stunted opportunities to build wealth. Black residents were displaced to neighborhoods like Bayview-Hunters Point and other cities in the Bay Area. After urban renewal the Fillmore was no longer an affordable place for families to live.

From Reverend White's perspective, it is white people who have profited most from redevelopment and the displacement of Blacks in the Fillmore. Reverend White's assertion is backed up, in some ways, by statistics. After urban redevelopment plans were implemented, only four percent of Black-owned businesses returned to the neighborhood as of 1999 (Public Broadcasting Service). According to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, out of over 5,000 residents, only approximately 22% returned to the Fillmore neighborhood (Fullbright 2008). Thousands of Black families, including those who owned homes and businesses, were displaced. This displacement interrupted the accumulation of intergenerational wealth that could have been gained from these investments. Most importantly, a sense of trust and community, along with a sense of "rootedness," was lost due to urban renewal (Fullilove 2005).

Frank, a 49-year-old community organizer and resident of Bayview-Hunters Point, describes urban renewal in the Fillmore this way during our conversation: "they made a way to get you out, and once they got you out, they don't have to worry about you too much." Frank's comment echoes similar sentiments shared by residents who believe that past and present redevelopment projects are thinly veiled efforts to move Blacks out of their neighborhood in order to make room for more desirable populations. Residents highlight the lessons they have learned from San Francisco either from discriminatory practices or urban

renewal. Many residents attribute the same racial caste system that caused Black struggle in the areas of housing and jobs to the process of urban renewal as well. To them, urban renewal was another example of an institutional process that attempted to displace Black residents.

Deindustrialization and Closing of the Hunters Point shipyard

In 1974, at the height of urban renewal, the Navy's Hunters Point shipyard, which many regarded as the economic lifeline of the community, officially closed down. During the 1970s and continuing on in the 1980s, the deindustrialization of San Francisco was quickened by the city's transformation into a corporate global city. Factories closed and middle-class Blacks with means moved out of inner cities, while poorer Blacks remained (Wilson 1996). In the post-industrial era, corporations separated the administrative sector from their core production centers; the former remained in city centers, and the latter moved to areas outside of the city (Bluestone 1982). Production jobs were more available to inner city residents because these positions did not require high-level skills or formal education. Relocating production jobs outside major cities disconnected workers from the places of work and drove poverty rates in inner cities to an unprecedented height (Wilson 1996). Deindustrialization shifted city jobs from manufacturing services toward skilled corporate and semi-skilled public services (Mollenkopf & Castells 1991, Castells 1983, Kim 2000, Bluestone 1982, Wilson 1978)¹⁸. In San Francisco, the city lost 22,000 jobs in the

¹⁸ Simultaneously, deindustrialized inner cities became new corporate headquarters for global banking, finance and electronics industries. (Bluestone 1982: 115). In the 70s, San Francisco and the Bay Area particularly became central in the advancement of capitalism in the United States, by becoming the headquarters for corporate giants of major banks and oil companies (Davis, Hiatt et al 1990, Mollenkopf 1984; Fusfield & Bates 1984, Feinstein, Hill et al 1983, Hartman 2002, Bluestone 1982, 162).

construction, manufacturing, and wholesale sectors, while gaining 65,000 jobs in retail, trade, and finance. Nationally 450,000 to 650,000 jobs in both manufacturing and non-manufacturing sectors were lost due to the relocations of these industries (Castells 1983: 99, Bluestone 1982, 25).

Uneducated Black inner city residents who migrated to affordable sections of town now found themselves in an hourglass economy composed of high wage professional and low wage service jobs (Dawson 1994)¹⁹. Bluestone explains how the Black community was especially vulnerable to deindustrialization, because they, more often than not, were concentrated in places where plant closings and economic dislocations were more prevalent (1982). The degree to which Blacks were dislocated was also dependent on education and class, because middle-class Blacks associated with the city's government remained largely unaffected by these economic transitions. The effect of diversity efforts on behalf of the government after the Civil Rights Movement caused an increase in opportunities for middle-class Blacks (Dawson 1994). This division exacerbated intra-racial class tension between those that "made it" and those who didn't. Wilson argues that the transition from industrial to modern corporate economy developed a Black class structure, providing some inner city Blacks with new white collar jobs, while others struggled to be employed (Wilson 1978). As I will discuss in my next chapter, class divisions increased over time to the point where in some of my cases racial loyalties declined, while class loyalties became more evident (Dawson 1994).

¹⁹ In "Urban restructuring in New York and Los Angeles," Edward Soja discusses how Blacks have suffered the most from economic restructuring and new urbanism because of the rates of unemployment, poverty, punitive discipline and attractiveness of their neighborhoods to potential developers (1991:369).

The transformation of metropolitan inner cities changed employment opportunities for low-income residents and increased the pace of ghettoization. White flight and extreme poverty were accompanied by the exit of public services like community facilities and public offices. In the 1970s, the conditions of Black neighborhoods worsened and Black isolation deepened (Massey and Denton 1993, Wilson 1987). Even though, the isolation of Black neighborhoods in the Bay Area was dire, it was still better off than others in the US. In the 1970s and 1980s, San Francisco and Oakland's Black neighborhoods listed below the national average for the level of Black-white segregation and index of Black isolation (Massey and Denton 1993). This new market accompanied by economic restructuring was more open to Black women than Black men: employed women worked in childcare and secretarial jobs downtown, while men tried to use inadequate transportation to commute to industrial jobs outside of the city. High rises, businesses, and condominiums replaced rail yards and factory districts to accommodate the new system rooted in service jobs (Mollenkopf 1984).

By the end of the 1970s, the discourse around race, poverty, the exit of public services and new service jobs gave rise to a new concept, the urban underclass. With this urban underclass, came an image of a poor family of color lost in the cycle of unemployment, illiteracy, out of wedlock childbirth (Wilson 1987, 1978, Massey and Denton 1993). What was not included in this image is the prevalence of structural inequality that limited the choice of housing for Blacks and increased the poverty of these neighborhoods which housed the new urban underclass (Mollenkopf & Castells 8, Wilson 1987, 1978, Massey and Denton 1993). The lack of nearby jobs, transportation to sites of opportunity and the skills needed to be competitive in the corporate world forced residents to seek out illegitimate means to work

within the informal or underground economy (Anderson 2000). In *The Political Economy of the Urban Ghetto*, Fusfeld and Bates describe how economic and historical transitions aid in creating racialized ghettos:

The creation and persistence of Black urban ghettos are not random outcomes of nearly a century of Black migration from rural southern to urban areas. Rather, they are the products of specific economic and historical circumstances... The shape and form of the ghetto reflect, instead, a systematic pattern of discrimination imposed upon urban Blacks by the dominant white society. Blacks are indeed loosely bound together by a common cultural heritage; they are tightly bound together by a common set of grievances” (1984:12).

Historically, ghettos are not places people choose to live in by choice. Discriminatory practices have shaped these spaces, in addition to the more structural economic changes that caused work to disappear from inner cities (Wilson 1996, Massey and Denton 1993). Restrictive covenants, redlining, and violence are ways that the white society reinforced the boundaries of the ghetto. Practices that maintained segregation relied on individuals and general racist attitudes with a stake in keeping the effects of systematic racism intact. Racism caused Blacks to be forced to live in areas where plant closings and economic dislocations were more prevalent. This forced Blacks to live in areas with concentrated poverty. As economic restructuring provided new opportunities for those of higher class and education, it worsened existing racial and ethnic divisions within neighborhoods. Therefore, economic restructuring drove up poverty in many of these Black neighborhoods, causing them to be extremely vulnerable to fluctuations in the economy in the 1970s and 1980s (Massey and Denton 1993).

The Aftermath: Struggle and Reinvestment in the 1980s and 1990s

Residents state that once their neighborhood was slated for urban renewal and the “economic bloodline,” as Maurice says, for work was cut off, they were left with no options,

and crime increased because of it. Some young adults turned to selling drugs (and some shared the common belief that drugs were strategically brought into Black communities by the government). One 70 year old resident, Maurice remarks, “If you take away the jobs, what are people supposed to do?” In Bayview-Hunters Point, there were several hotspots for the drug trade in the 1980’s. Residents remember some of their friends being “caught up” in this lifestyle. Another resident asserts that most families in Bayview-Hunters Point are in the same position: one family member is locked up, one is dead, while the other family member roams 3rd Street jobless. To residents, this is the current reality for Black families in a neighborhood affected by unemployment, drugs and crime. The social safety net for both the Fillmore and Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhoods has eroded.

Brother Ben, who grew up in the Fillmore, describes that much of his personal experience in the neighborhood deals with financial struggle, school delinquency, and drug selling. When he was released from prison in 1991, he noticed that a lot of older Black men were trying to mentor younger Black men. He describes the Nation of Islam as being one of the institutions that caused his life to transform and also help stabilize the mindset of the community:

When I went [to prison] in the 80's, there was nobody talking to you, cause everybody was high, everybody was affected by drugs. But in the nineties you started seeing a little more concern, and of course one of the biggest groups in our area at that time, which nobody had witnessed for almost 20-some years was the Nation of Islam, [it] was back on the scene... and the effect that the Nation had on the area which a lot of people would never give the credit, but just the presence of another voice that was not waiting for someone else, or depending on someone else. It was more so a voice of, look, all your problems can be solved by you. They had to face up to it... that most of the things we go through as a people is because we want to address it as a people... After that, my eyes started coming open to everything. I started seeing the real true reason of why we [are] in our condition and how politics, money and greed is really the reason why we [are] in the condition we [are] in and the redevelopment agency and all these different things is nothing but an arm of the government, which they determine that "by any means necessary" will forever control

a certain group of people, and that certain group of people happen to be Black people. So all these different things started coming back to me, and I asked, what is really the war? The war is, that from slavery in this country on up to now, this country do[es] things because they're trying to buy time. It has nothing to do with morals. [When] Abe Lincoln, [abolished slavery] it was politics, it was saving the union. It wasn't about, I love Black people, we gonna free the slaves, it was more a financial move. So, I started realizing that I got a bigger mission, there's a reason why I went through what I went through, and this is all about money. Its all about greed and power and control. And, that's what leads us now to having a situation we locked into in Bayview Hunters Point where there's environment, gang injunctions, same thing, same mindset, label young people, so you can take the land. Whether it's housing, whether it's criminalization of young people, three strikes and you out.

(Fieldnote entry- 7/6/10)

Brother Ben attributes the transformation of his mindset, and that of the Black community, to the activities of the Nation of Islam in the 90s. For him, the Nation of Islam did several things. First, it promoted a mindset of collective problem solving, stepping up and taking care of your own personal issues and that of the community's instead of waiting on someone else to do it for you. Secondly, in his mind, it caused him to connect the dots—or the events that have happened in the Black community since slavery. It causes him to link together the connections between racism, discrimination, money, and power as being the core forces that have shaped the Black experience in the United States. He applies his Nation of Islam teaching to the San Francisco Black experience and history with displacement, criminalization, and discrimination. Ideas like Brother Ben's form the foundation of many contemporary social movement organizations in the city today, including the one I spent time with, Take Control of the Shipyard Coalition (TCSC). This movement was primarily influenced by the Nation of Islam but also worked in tandem with a local Christian church. This coalition holds community townhall meetings, educates residents and makes their presence known at city meetings regarding their future. Today, members of the group often frame their struggle over resources in the city as a chess game.

Conclusion

Black neighborhoods in the city have gone through so many changes since the influx of their population in 1943. Learning how to survive has been the key way to remain in the community as their numbers have rapidly decreased since the 1970s. Shirley describes how hard it has been to survive in the city:

I've watched this community go through a hell of a lot of changes. And I say it and I truly do mean it. But I'm almost ashamed of it. Thank God I'm still standing. Do you know that I was no smarter, or no more gainfully employed than most of the folks in my community? I don't know how I ended up being the one who survived the longest thus far. There are still some. But we are stretched out so thin.

(Fieldnote entry- 6/29/10)

Black survival in the city is a struggle that is rooted in power. The struggle sometimes resembles a power play between residents and the city's decision-making powers. Residents fight to have a say in what goes on in their communities, instead of passively letting certain forces shape their neighborhood for them. As I discuss in later chapters, these battles often erupt during community meetings.

When residents tell me that the community is not what it used to be they are referring mainly to a particular time when Black residents felt deeply rooted in the city. Particularly, they refer to the "Harlem of the West" time period, notably known for its music, but also locally known for the number of Black-owned businesses and the feeling of closeness with other residents. They concentrate mostly on how the neighborhood used to have blocks where everyone knew every one else on it. They also concentrate on the discriminatory forces that caused the neighborhood to appear as a ghetto today. While the condition of San Francisco's Black neighborhoods has changed in some ways since the 1940s, 50s, and 60s,

there are some aspects that have remained the same. In *Black San Francisco*, Broussard made some conclusive remarks about the state of the city's Black population up until 1954:

Despite the progress and optimism, many problems remained unresolved in San Francisco's Black community. Residential segregation continued to plague Blacks and adequate housing was in short supply. Police brutality was on the increase, and the high number of Blacks arrested for vagrancy was indicative of economic deprivation and police harassment. Although the number of Blacks voters had increased almost ten fold since 1940, no Black candidate could be elected to citywide office. Blacks still enjoyed a greater measure of equality in 1954 than at any previous time in the city's history... Full equality in employment and housing was still beyond the grasp of many Black San Franciscans. (Broussard 238)

In 2010, several things had changed in San Francisco's Black community since the time of Broussard's writing. Black officials are now common in city the government and some middle-class residents do live in several other districts in the city, but housing, tensions between Black residents and the police and the lack of employment are still problems that plague the community today. All of these unresolved problems speak to their community's main issue with the quality of life living in the neighborhoods.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the current position that Black residents live in today. I will dig deeper into what it is like to not only be Black and poor in the city, but also Black and middle-class in the city. Regardless of their class status Black residents still live in a precarious position in the city and often feel as if they need to be strategic about how to survive, stay on their land and have status in their communities. One resident describes her life being Black and living in San Francisco as like living within a chess game. How, exactly, is life like a chess game for Black residents in the city? From their perspective, there are clear winners and losers. The Black community must be able to identify the game in order to gain an edge in dealing with the forces that have sought to change their communities. Being Black

and living in San Francisco also requires residents to develop strategies for successfully engaging with the city.

III. The Chess Game: The Precarious Position of Black San Francisco

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I described the history of Blacks in San Francisco including their migration to the city, their experiences with institutional exclusion, how this exclusion led to the creation of the “Harlem of the West,” and, lastly, the struggles over how to reinvest in the Fillmore and Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhoods today. Being Black in San Francisco means different things to different residents, but most residents share the feeling that their communities are treated as a social and civic problem by the city. In this chapter, I want to push my examination of the social situation of the Black community in the city a little further by answering the question: how do Black people in San Francisco make sense of their social standing in the city?

It is true that Black San Franciscans see their experiences as similar to residents living in many other Black communities in metropolitan cities in the US. Many of the institutional factors that helped to create Black ghettos in San Francisco did so in New York, Philadelphia, and Los Angeles too. Race has been significant in determining the quality of life for Black residents in cities since Blacks began migrating to cities. For many Blacks today, race still largely shapes their experience, though now it often wears the guise of redevelopment efforts.

In *Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, and What We Can Do About It*, Mindy Thompson Fullilove describes the catastrophes that followed the Civil Rights movement, how the loss of manufacturing jobs and urban renewal have severely affected the condition of Black America. She writes “The current situation of Black America

cannot be understood without a full and complete accounting of the social, economic, cultural, political and emotional losses that followed the bulldozing of 1,600 neighborhoods” (2005:20). Surely, the conditions of Black residents living in city neighborhoods are dire and complicated, but strategies used to improve their condition vary from city to city. My respondents’ accounts of their social standing suggest that their position in the city is precarious. They assert that Black residents in San Francisco must adopt strategies that will help to ensure their survival and permanence in their neighborhoods. Many feel as if they are caught in what one respondent described as “a chess game.” Further, they feel as if they are often the losers in the game the city plays with their neighborhoods and their lives.

There have been many efforts on part of the city and Black residents to increase residential security for Blacks in San Francisco neighborhoods like city initiated task forces, “Black flight” city hall meetings and also community coalitions with local organizations. Even though it has been taken up as a big policy question, Black residents are still fleeing from the city. Dependent, of course, on their class status, many Black residents feel they live in an uncertain, temporary condition in the city and contrast their precarious position with the perceived permanence of the rest of the city’s wealthier population. I have found that certain residents feel under attack, vulnerable to being easily uprooted, and low on the city’s priority list.

First, I will discuss how the social experience of being Black in San Francisco is similar to or different from the experiences of Black people in other cities. Specifically, I will describe how San Francisco’s liberal cosmopolitanism has shaped the Black experience in the city and how racial and spatial politics continue to inform how Black residents make sense of urban development and gentrification. Secondly, I describe how intersections of

race, class and space have placed Black residents in a precarious position in the city. I will describe the sense of uncertainty, temporariness, hostility, and sense of being under attack that certain residents feel on a daily basis. Thirdly, I explain the chess game that Black residents play on a daily basis to ensure their survival and permanence in the city.

Specifically, I discuss how class shapes the kind of games residents play. Lastly, I highlight my findings and introduce the racial and spatial landscape described as a battle in the city.

Being Black in San Francisco

In “From Fillmore to No More: Black Owned Business in a Transforming San Francisco” Johnson and Ossei-Owusu refer to the irony of San Francisco’s self professed liberal cosmopolitanism. Many acknowledge the city as being “a hot bed of progressive consciousness because of diversity, sexual freedom, LGBTQ activism and anti-Vietnam war protests” (2012). Yet, as the authors point out, sometimes this liberal history glosses over the deep inequality that exists in the city and the negative effects that redevelopment and gentrification have had on communities, especially the Black community.

All major urban spaces possess a kind of liberal cosmopolitanism—a space that celebrates diversity, inclusion, alternative cultures and racial tolerance. In particular, San Francisco works to keep its image as a “cosmopolitan canopy” strong (Becker 1971, Anderson 2011). My findings add to what Johnson, Ossei-Owusu, and Anderson describe as a kind of irony that exists in cosmopolitan spaces—vast inequality and racial intolerance that cannot be hidden by liberal pluralism. It is this forgotten or hidden history of racial intolerance in cities that shapes the Black experience in these spaces. Many times, Black residents’ retellings of their history place this racial intolerance and inequality at the forefront

of their story. The social position of Blacks in San Francisco is deeply shaped by this reality and has always been, as described in my first chapter.

Prior to 1940, the small number of Blacks in San Francisco did not represent a threat to whiteness or to whites' way of life in the city. Still, as I have illustrated, race was always a salient factor in determining life chances. As time passes, race continues to determine where residents live, what kind of jobs they have and what schools their children attend. *Race acts as a permanent lens through which Black residents understand their position* (Dawson 1994). In some cases, because of growing economic polarization in the Black community, racial loyalties decline and class loyalties become more obvious (Dawson 1994). My examination of how Blacks view the racial implications of redevelopment, gentrification, and the clean up of the Hunters Point shipyard reveal that San Francisco's liberal cosmopolitanism has given way to a focus primarily on racial inequality in the story of Black San Francisco. Black residents' past traumas of exclusion and discrimination have led to a deep skepticism among Blacks, especially when it comes to dealings with particular institutions in the city, such as the Redevelopment Agency. The trauma and baggage of Black urbanites can also be described as an *aura of unexpectancy*, where rapid neighborhood change, skepticism and instability become a normalized experience living in the neighborhood (Fullilove 2013). Race determined so much of their lives in the past, and it is hard for them to imagine that race is not a factor in institutional decisions, as these local government agencies purport.

Race has been a huge factor in determining the opportunities for Blacks in the city (Dawson 1994). As whites feared Black migration would ruin their neighborhoods, they proceeded to protect their borders to keep outsiders out. They did so through redlining, racial

covenants, violence, and bombings (Massey and Denton 1993). While San Francisco advertised its image of racial civility – as a place where racism did not exist - the city was not so different from other major cities that were influenced by the second wave of the Great Migration.

Race and place today

There are two immediate connections I see when I theorize about the connections between race and place in regards to Black residents in San Francisco. First, is that *place still matters*. Where you live in America matters because it determines the level of environmental toxicities you are exposed to and the kind of access you can get to certain resources and services (Dreier, Mollenkopf and Swanstron 2004, Lipsitz 2011). Second, *race and racism actually “take place” in very specific ways*. Lipsitz describes the act of “taking place” in both a figurative and literal way. On one hand, it can be used to describe things that happen in history, while it can also describe how “social relations take on their full force and meaning when they are enacted physically in actual places” (2011: 5). These two findings utilize and extend contemporary theories of race and place to provide the foundation for ideas of *racialized space*—or spaces in which we can see the connections between race and place. My study extends these ideas by providing ethnographic evidence of how the construction of racialized space leads Black urban residents to develop a specific lens of racial injury. Developing a neighborhood like Fillmore or Bayview-Hunters Point into a kind of cosmopolitan canopy can be difficult because of the space’s history and the memories held by the residents. When considering contemporary redevelopment efforts, many of my respondents recalled specific instances of racism or discrimination that have injured the Black community, which has, in turn, led to the development of a deep skepticism towards

the city (Nunnally 2012). Black people in San Francisco make sense of their social standing through the evaluation of specific instances of racial exclusion, urban redevelopment, gentrification, and ‘negro removal’ that have taken place in their neighborhoods. The question that lies ahead is how these instances that have harmed the community affect the social standing of Black residents and their understanding of their position in the future of the city.

Place matters

Even after the enactment of desegregation policies, the official end to discriminatory institutional practices, and its more contemporary counterpart, discursive redlining²⁰, place still matters. Growing up in neighborhoods like Bayview-Hunters Point and Fillmore has provided a certain experience for Black residents. This experience has been shaped by much of what I discuss in chapter 1 such as the effects of residential segregation, redlining, and other structural forces that created the ghetto in the first place. These forces cause these neighborhoods to be susceptible to health hazards and create a vulnerability to the criminal justice system for its residents (Lipsitz 1998). Many residents feel that the two neighborhoods are over-policed and under-protected, that constant surveillance and the presence of police cars and gang injunctions are aimed at securing white property rather than saving Black lives.

²⁰ Discursive redlining is “informal, talk-based declarations or warnings that discourage newcomers and outsiders from making interpersonal investments in certain parts of the city” (Jones and Jackson 2012). Discursive redlining is preceded by institutional redlining, which consisted of official practices that were created to warn those from making large economic investments in minority neighborhoods. For a more extended explanation of this (Jones and Jackson, 2012).

Place matters for both racial and economic reasons. Black residents more and more are coming to understand that the city is unaffordable for them. As a city, San Francisco is becoming unaffordable for many residents but perhaps especially Black residents. As economic segregation increases, the struggle to find affordable living arrangements within city limits becomes increasingly difficult. It's not just about income, as Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom point out in "Place Matters: Metropolitcs for the Twenty First Century," it's about quality of life as well. Intersections of health, age, education, gender, and class all affect the quality of a resident's life in particular neighborhoods (2004). In my conversations with residents, they reveal these cumulative factors that affect the life they live in the neighborhood. One middle-class 30 year old Black resident, Sarah, explains the interconnectedness of the forces she sees changing the neighborhood in this way:

Gentrification doesn't just come in development, you're talking about education, employment, foreclosures, finance, everything fuels into gentrification. People think it's development and that's it. No, because we have development every day in every area. Why is this development so superior? Like the shipyard is bringing in 10,000 more housing units. That's changing the whole makeup of an area. 10,000 units, if 3 people lived there [in each unit], that's 30,000 new residents. 30,000 residents anywhere will change the face of any community, any city. It's not just the building, or the shipyard. It's everything that goes with it. It's kind of like, you watch how people stack dominoes and how they hit. The building will get it going, but what keeps the dominoes moving is the educational system because people move out when they want better schools. People move out because they want more money for their housing. People move out because they're being outpriced by, let's say, childcare. You can't afford childcare, you can't afford rent, you can't afford the food.
(Fieldnote entry- June 21, 2010)

As Sarah points out, many factors affect the quality of life in Black spaces in San Francisco not only gentrification and redevelopment, but also the affordability of food, childcare, housing, and the quality of the educational system. Sarah's attempt to work though these factors can be compared to the matrix of contradictions within inner city spaces (Castells 1983). Place still matters because through the experience of living in particular

areas you are exposed to a certain quality of life filled with adequate services, resources, good schools and grocery stores. The fact that place matters undermines the promises of the civil rights movement and civil rights laws which envisioned an end to such place-based inequality.

Racism Takes Place

Growing up in neighborhoods with concentrated poverty makes a person more likely to be exposed to environmental toxicities, poor education and inadequate housing. The general history of racism and discrimination as I describe in Chapter 1 has actually taken place in neighborhoods like Fillmore and Bayview-Hunters Point in the past and it continues today. This officially started with segregation and white fear of neighborhood change once Blacks migrated to the city. Lipsitz points out that the effect of keeping neighborhoods segregated were advantageous for whites, but not Blacks. “ Segregated housing leads to segregated schools that give white people privileged treatment, better facilities and better trained teachers. School and neighborhood networks given them access to insider information which enables them to receive preferential treatment...” (2011:2). The connections between race and place are intertwined to create a specific lens for Black residents in San Francisco. This lens is one that sees much of the city’s intentions to redevelop Black neighborhoods as harmful for the Black community due to a history of tension between the city and its Black residents. This lens causes them to see their condition as part of a particular set of cumulative disadvantages that results from their being Black and living in the city (Lipsitz 2011).

Today, residents view every effort the city has made for revitalizing neighborhoods through this racial lens. With the onset of urban renewal in the 60s, as I’ve discussed in Chapter 2, Black community residents felt that the more correct label would be ‘negro

removal' because their displacement from their neighborhoods seemed strategic to these revitalization efforts. Negro removal is still a correct way of describing how most Blacks think about gentrification and redevelopment. Whether race is an overt factor in these practices is irrelevant for the moment. What is most important is that the history of racism towards Black urbanites has informed their skepticism about current projects claiming to "revitalize" neighborhood and contributes to the aura of unexpectancy they possess. Black residents typically see terms like "revitalization" or "redevelopment" as fancy words to describe a process of kicking them out. Urban redevelopment, renewal, and gentrification are seen as distinct racial injuries that have hurt the Black community in the past, regardless of how much they economically stimulated the neighborhood. Most Blacks view these forces of community change with skepticism but the degree to which they question it depends on class status, as I'll discuss towards the end of this chapter. For most Blacks in the city, their lives feel temporary, uncertain or unstable and as I will discuss, many Black residents use different avenues to survive and continue to live in the city.

A Precarious Position

My first interview was with Karen, who is a longtime Black activist, ex-city employee, and community organizer in a housing project in Sunnydale. She describes herself as a grassroots resident who advocates for change from the bottom up. She was a member of the mayor's African American Out Migration Task Force. This task force was the city's way of addressing Black flight from the city and combating the weak social position of Blacks in the city. My goal was to interview Karen, but she transformed the interview into a group discussion with her employees as well. I asked her why the mayor assembled this task force. She replied:

He was asked to do it because it was incumbent upon the African American community to raise the voice of accountability. Okay? So, let's understand the history of San Francisco. San Francisco has never been an LA, it's never been Harlem, the highest point of our population was 1970 and then from 70s on, we've been losing people ever since.
(Fieldnote entry-6/30/08)

Karen's response describes the position of Black San Franciscans and holds the city responsible for the poor quality of life for these residents. Throughout the interview she talks extensively about the history of Black migration, and made sure her employees did as well. She notes that Blacks pushed the mayor to make the city accountable to its Black residents after such a history of racial discrimination. Karen then reiterates that San Francisco is not an LA, and it's never been a Harlem—meaning that San Francisco has never been a place that has housed a huge, stable, consistent Black population that changed the layout of the city. It's different for Black San Franciscans to then demand accountability when they don't make up such a large percentage of the population such as in LA, Harlem, or Philadelphia. This complicated history leads to a sense of uncertainty and tension around being Black and living in the city.

All of the residents I have had the opportunity to speak with indicate a sense of uncertainty they and their families have with living in San Francisco. This uncertainty can be described as feeling that they could be here today and gone tomorrow. In the first chapter, I discuss the city's reaction to the large in-migration of Black residents. These residents were first viewed as a social and civic problem to more established city dwellers and city officials. One major event that caused Black residents to question their permanency in the city was urban renewal directed at the Fillmore neighborhood. Many residents cited "negro removal" as one event that caused Black residents to feel disconnected from the city.

In chapter 1, I gave an example of Ray, who worked at a non-profit and was on the African American Out Migration Task Force. He primarily discusses the effect renewal and redevelopment had on the Fillmore community. In his opinion, it is the one main event that all Blacks can point to that damaged the community in many ways. Many feel as if their social and emotional foundation was ripped out from them in addition to the physical house that they owned and could have passed on to their next generation. Secondly, as Ray points out, it showed Blacks that they were never really part of the permanent fabric of the city. This creates a very unstable position for residents as their income additionally makes them more vulnerable to being kicked out of the city. As this process of urban renewal came not long after official redlining and racial covenants, it is easy to see how Black residents would see these forces of community change as intentional.

Reverend Johnson, a 65 year old Black resident of San Francisco, raised his family in the Fillmore. I asked him about the social position of Blacks in the city and what policies caused their flight. He answered:

White folk have trouble admitting wrong, just like with slavery. You know, they say things to you like, I know it was wrong but it was a different time. Okay, do me a favor, tell me what time in history, slavery was okay? Tell me at what time in history was no one saying it was wrong. Ever since there's been slavery, someone has said it was wrong, so that's one. Two, they have a problem apologizing admittedly because if they apologize and admit it they have to accept their white supremacy. You see? If they say that Redevelopment was wrong, then that means they were able to steal the community from us, not because of our own failure but because of racism and they have what they have, not because they're that much talented than all these other funny looking people that come here. They would have to admit because it's the color of their skin, and they ain't yet been able to deal with that.... I think where we've gotten to now is we have a city that has nothing to offer Black people to attract them here. A city that politically when it comes to Black folk are, is pretty mean. I told Mayor Newsom, he was talking about how much trouble there having trying to attract Black police men from other cities and that in some cases they're paying better but people still don't want to come....Every time I go into Chestnut's bar, you know there's always some Black folk in there. It's usually just enough in there to let you know ain't no Black folk in there.

(Fieldnote entry-7/22/08)

Reverend Johnson describes a complicated position that Blacks have with the city government and other residents. He notes race as being a large factor in their history, but also describes the way discrimination and racism have worked in their lives so that they have gotten the short end of the stick. He addresses issues that are routinely swept under the rug like the racial determinants of urban redevelopment. He, like other Black residents, wants an honest direct conversation clear of bureaucratic lingo that admits that the redevelopment agency was wrong and that they cleared Fillmore because they intentionally wanted to remove Black people.

Reverend Johnson also illustrates this relationship between race and place. Black residents have grown up in neighborhoods that the city desires to refurbish as new places. Much of the deterioration of these areas was attributed to race and class, to how Blacks lived rather than structural causes such as dilapidated housing, overcrowding, environmental racism, redlining, zoning and inadequate city services (Mah 1999). He also brings up the political and social factors that influence the position of Blacks in the city. The political and social intertwine with one another. Socially, the city has little to offer Blacks in terms of a safe space that is predominately Black or businesses or restaurants that Blacks can enjoy. While it becomes complicated to justify the responsibility of the city to create a social scene for Blacks, it does intertwine with the lack of attraction for Blacks to accept job opportunities in San Francisco. Once again, the issue of the overall quality of life arises. It is not just one issue, but a matrix of contradictory issues that work together: employment, affordability, lack of a cultural hub, the history of racism, crime, and poor educational opportunities (Castells 1983). All these issues that have affected their neighborhoods have placed them at a

cumulative disadvantage when it comes to surviving in the city. As Ray and Reverend Johnson pointed out, from a social and political standpoint, Black residents do not see a permanent place for themselves in the San Francisco landscape, instead their experience is characterized by feelings of uncertainty, temporariness and unexpectancy. This precarious social position, which is characterized by feelings of uncertainty, has led Black residents to be strategic about how to ensure their survival in the city.

The Chess Game: Playing for Survival

The idea of being Black and living in San Francisco has been compared to playing a chess game. This chess game analogy came specifically out of a conversation I had with Shirley, my informant, with whom I grew close during the time that I volunteered at her organization. I asked her to explain what has caused the neighborhood to change so drastically. Shirley talked about drugs, unemployment, and urban redevelopment and described the effect of these vast changes on the community.

We were no longer a community of means anymore. That wasn't by our hand. I know Joe Thompson [a fellow resident] likes to say, "the third hand was always moving in the background, shifting." It's like a chess game that we were being outplayed on because we didn't realize what the game was. So when you don't know what the game is it's easy to be shifted around.
(Fieldnote entry-6/29/10)

Low-income members of Shirley's community were ill-prepared to advocate for themselves and play the chess game well. This causes survival to be difficult for most poor Black residents. The type and amount of difficulty endured by these residents depends on their class status and relation to the city's power structure. Middle-to-upper class Blacks are more prepared to play the game. Although, regardless of their class status, Black residents still live in a precarious position in the city where they need to be strategic about how to

survive, stay on their land, and have status in their communities. In many ways, class divisions become somewhat distorted because of the legacy of racism (Dawson 1994). When Black residents can identify the game—or the intersecting politics of race, place, and power—they are more likely to be guaranteed a place in the future of San Francisco. After identifying the power play at work in their community, they feel ahead of all the forces that have sought to change their communities. It is significant that Shirley compares the circumstances of Black residents to a chess game specifically. Winning requires, beyond basic knowledge of the rules, sophisticated strategy and an ability to take the long view.

During a chess game, being able to identify your position and strategy are most important, but there is also a certain level of mystery during the game. Real motives or moves are hidden from the opponent and a certain level of trust is put into question. This holds true for Black San Franciscans—there is a level of trust/distrust in the city that is called into question. This trust/distrust isn't specific to Black San Francisco, but the Black community in general with white Americans. In *Trust in Black America*, Shayla Nunnally notes:

The fact that race continues to cue Black Americans about the quality of their social and political experiences suggests that the vestiges of racial discrimination are ever present for them, not just because they face an uncertain probability of being racially discriminated against but also because their social and political realities involve interacting with people who potentially pose a threat of making their lives reminiscent of historical eras of race relations. Race and racial discrimination experiences, thus, normativize, distrust among Black Americans (234-235).

Nunnally reiterates that race has been and still is one of the largest factors that dictate the quality of life for Black Americans. It's not just the uncertainty around the probability of still be discriminated against, but also the difficulty in dealing with particular entities or

institutions that cause residents to reminisce about past histories of racism. Because of this, distrust is not an uncommon feeling among Black residents.

Playing the Chess Game in Meetings

I have cited urban redevelopment and gentrification as forces of community change that Black residents are somewhat skeptical of because of their history in the city. The main route used to increase urban redevelopment and gentrification has been through the remediation and redevelopment of the Hunters Point shipyard as I discuss in my introduction. The most controversial components of managing the shipyard are, first, the remediation or clean up of toxic chemicals as the facility has been abandoned for many years and, second, the redevelopment and new plan for the space. In the previous chapter, I explained how important the shipyard is to the Black community, causing its fate to be highly contested.

Black residents have used different avenues to join the decision making process around the development of both neighborhoods. Some use more formal methods such as joining task forces or programs funded by the city, while others use more of a social movement approach to demanding their concerns be heard through protest, activism and creating community based coalitions. I noticed these divides among the community at meetings across the city. One of the topics that raised the most tension was whether or not Black residents believed the “promises” made by the Redevelopment agency or other developers interested in the neighborhood. I wrote a memo about it while in the field:

This is a usual political split in the community, those who believe in the promises and those who do not. Specifically in San Francisco, this was the same divide that took place in the Civil Rights movement between the more traditional leaders and the more militant. City officials wanted to convince people to vote in favor of downtown expansion, and higher buildings, as it would provide new jobs for the community. Willie Brown supported the same thing for the stadium. The tried and true rhetoric is that these developments will bring jobs via the trickle down effect. More militant leaders that critically see the promises not made, stand up, and have a more skeptical

viewpoint. These groups understand that new development does not equal new jobs, and new affordable housing for poor community residents. This meeting helped me to understand more of the intraracial splits over this issue. You have people that I've followed, who have the slogan, "clean it up, right" who favor their life over jobs, as they say. This slogan doesn't mean they are anti-job or anti-development. You have those who wear tags that say "Yes, for jobs, parks and recreation." These residents believe they will get jobs out of this, and want the EIR to be approved. More educated ones of this pro group, like Reverend Johnson and Willie Brown, will say that this development will economically stimulate all of Bayview-Hunters Point, and the people need it to bring them out of their slump.

(Fieldnote entry- 6/6/10)

As this memo suggests, the strategies used by residents differ depending on their income and educational level. As I discuss in my first chapter, this Black divide becomes most apparent from San Francisco's transition into a more modern corporate economy and still exists today in meetings over current redevelopment (Wilson 1978).

Leaders that use more traditional means of surviving in San Francisco are more apt to work with the city for solutions, while more radical leaders tend to employ a more grassroots community centered approach. Both groups are divided over believing the "promises" made and possess different levels of skepticism of those promises. When discussing the redevelopment of the Hunters Point shipyard in Bayview-Hunters Point, they differ in their levels of support for it. I mention that middle-to-upper class traditional leaders believe that the redevelopment will economically stimulate the whole neighborhood and therefore, the Black community will benefit from the new jobs. More radical residents are skeptical of the promises and benefits of redevelopment, but prioritize the quality of the cleanup, claiming they are more concerned with their physical health living near the toxic shipyard than the jobs some claim it will generate. The Fillmore and Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhoods are illustrative for understanding how class polarization influences the politics of place and their future in the city (Jackson 2010, Dawson 1994).

“The Sell-Outs”

Black middle-to-upper class individuals tend to keep themselves connected with the city’s power structure through task forces and other respected institutions such as law firms, corporate and civic boards and universities. They are asked to sit on city-initiated commissions. These individuals consider themselves the old radical individuals who had been at the forefront of the community in the sixties and seventies. I came to know several of these now middle-to-upper class individuals. Some were older reverends who were considered radical in the past, but are now perceived by poorer residents as sellouts.

Middle-to-upper class Blacks are similar to poorer ones in that they do feel a degree of temporariness due to being Black and living in San Francisco. They attribute this sense of temporariness to urban renewal—which as Ray says sent a particular message to the Black community. To reverse the feelings of temporariness, many have decided to stay connected to the government so that they can be present at the decision making table. Being a representative of the Black community is most important. They may favor community redevelopment as long as it is labeled Black. One example is the 1300 restaurant located in the heart of the Fillmore and Fillmore and Eddy streets. 1300 is an expensive and posh Black owned restaurant that commemorates the Black jazz era. Lower-class residents complain that while it commemorates Black culture, the majority of Black San Franciscans can’t afford to eat there. Upper class Blacks regard it as a safe space.

Middle-to-upper class residents aren’t as distrustful of the city’s intentions for redevelopment because they don’t have as much to lose since they are more financially stable. I interviewed a 30 year-old Black female government employee named Rhonda. I could see that her job with the city was stable and that she was very different from others I’ve

spoken with who were struggling financially. Below is an excerpt from my fieldnotes where I jotted down my impression of the conversation:

I could see that others might view her as having sold out to the mayor but she feels strongly that there needs to be Black representation in government practice. By the sheer presence of Black residents in the Mayor's office, they can change things and be that voice to shape policies that affect Black San Francisco residents. This is why she works here. She said many times that "*my sheer presence and contribution to the discussion as a Black woman raised in San Francisco public housing shapes policy.*" (In this sense, she believes that programs in the Mayor's office can change for the betterment of the Black community, while others have given up on the city and do not trust their ideas to revitalize the community any longer.)
(Fieldnote entry-7/8/2008)

Staying at the decision making table is important to feeling more permanent in the city. By being present when decisions are made, she can help enact change in the conditions of Black residents. Embedded in a perspective driven by her contribution, rests the belief that city hall *can* revitalize the community. There is a certain level of trust Rhoda has in the city government but a certain level of distrust as well, which is why she must be present at the table. Many feel that the city of San Francisco wouldn't do anything beneficial for the Black community unless they were pushed to do it, which is why residents must stay at the forefront of decisions made.

Middle-to-upper class Blacks also favor being well connected to the city's government so they can be in charge of how redevelopment will look in their communities. Reverend Johnson spoke about this a lot during our conversation. We talked about redevelopment but also how a racial lens is used to understand relations with white residents in the city. He said: "redevelopment works for people when people redevelop it themselves. We were the tail wagging the dog in the whole redevelopment process. They listened to us only cause they had to and then they didn't do what we asked them to do." Reverend Johnson

brings up a hierarchy of power relations in the city that is influenced by racial relations. In the past, Black residents were the ‘tail wagging the dog’ when it came to urban redevelopment, instead of being at the front and center of projects designed in Black neighborhoods. In other words, the reverend looks more favorably upon redevelopment when the community is leading it.

The work performed by middle-to-upper class Black residents to secure positions on city boards and task forces so they can 1) be at the decision making table, 2) be a representative, 3) guide bureaucratic change in their community and 4) stay close to the city’s money, is all part of the chess game that is surviving in San Francisco.

Lower-class Black residents

One of the main distinctions between middle-to-upper class and lower-class Blacks when it comes to navigating the chess game is who is invited to the decision making table and who isn’t. Certain middle-to-upper class educated Blacks are routinely recruited by the city to work with them on certain issues. I met several because I interviewed those on the African American Out-migration Task Force. Lower-class Blacks knew they would never be asked to sit on that Task Force. This understanding led me to become more interested in this segment of the Black population.

Poorer Black residents reside primarily in Bayview-Hunters Point, though some in Fillmore or in Sunnydale make up the other segment of the population that lives in a precarious position. These residents have taken a very different path than well off Blacks in the city. They view the Black struggle in San Francisco as mainly a spiritual fight in combination with other communities of color. They play the chess game more radically than

middle-to-upper class Blacks, as they want more radical changes within the city in regards to Black people. They see their struggle as a shared oppression along with Latino and Samoan groups. Lower-class Blacks use several methods to combat their social position. First, residents routinely bring race back into the conversation of renewal and the intentionality of Black out migration. Secondly, Take Control of the Shipyard Coalition (TCSC) acts as a force to protect racially oppressed poor groups across the city. TCSC seeks to stop developers from taking over Bayview-Hunters Point while holding them environmentally accountable for their development.

From 2008-2010, the main issue of concern of many lower-class Blacks in the city was the remediation and redevelopment of the shipyard. This was a secondary concern to middle-to-upper class Blacks. There are several issues that the lower-class Blacks have with the shipyard. First, the shipyard is not being cleaned to residential standards. The Environmental Protection Agency and the Navy's clean up team run meetings often with the community to describe the clean up process at each parcel. Many of these residents are skeptical about the claims that the shipyard is no longer radioactive or dangerous. All parties can agree that the shipyard was once toxic, since it was considered a Superfund site²¹, but in question now is if it is still too toxic for residents. Residents have requested that their own scientists come in and test the soil to make sure it is not toxic. This has caused a lot of controversy between the Navy and the community group.

Secondly, residents are concerned with the redevelopment of the shipyard and two aspects of this redevelopment in particular. One, they are concerned about building on toxic

²¹ Superfund is the name given by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for abandoned toxic wastes sites.

ground and two, they want to have a say in what the redeveloped shipyard will look like. The group has taken an environmental justice framework, arguing that considerations of race and class explain why their community is more vulnerable to toxic wastes sites. Many residents remark that the shipyard is being redeveloped out of greed, that the city is attempting to make BVHP less isolated and more accessible from downtown in order to make it a profitable site for gentrification.

“This is being done intentionally”

Brother Ben is a resident who clearly explained the skepticism that was often displayed by community residents at city meetings. I met him in 2008 at several city and community meetings in the Fillmore. He considers himself to be from the Fillmore, but very much connected to the struggle in Bayview-Hunters Point. As I attended more meetings in Bayview-Hunter’s Point, I began to see him often, as he was a part of TCSC. We met at a café in the Fillmore and discussed urban development in Bayview-Hunters Point and its effect on Black residents. He explained:

This [development] is about removing the people and bringing in a rich white middle-class group of people, a dog population...a playground for rich people...and just completely remove anyone who's not what they call a “desirable population.” This is what plays into the depopulation also of Black people in San Francisco, which we say is being done intentionally. And that’s what we gotta be clear on, a lot of people want to skirt and dance around that issue, *this is being done intentionally*. Emphasis mine (Fieldnote entry-6/6/2010)

Brother Ben shares his thoughts on the racialization of space in Bayview-Hunters Point and describes urban development as a strategic removal of Black residents from the city. Through the lens of race, as well as class, who is defined as a desirable population for the revised version of the neighborhood becomes clear to existing residents. From his perspective, not only are urban development projects in the neighborhood kicking Black

people out, but they are doing so *intentionally*. He describes current redevelopment as compared to what James Baldwin labeled as Negro removal in the Fillmore. Just as residents thought that urban renewal in the Fillmore was used as a tool to force them out the neighborhood, the same thing is happening today in both neighborhoods.

A social movement that educates

Taking Control of the Shipyard Coalition gathered at town halls, and residents would discuss strategies for staying in their communities and exercising influence over what their communities would look like in the future. Like Brother Ben, and many others I have mentioned, they regard redevelopment as Negro removal and feel they are being forcibly displaced from San Francisco. They are kicked out not just by gentrification and redevelopment but also through targeted policing practices.

Some weekly town halls were spent organizing for the removal of gang injunctions²² or getting justice for a Black youth who was shot in a case that made major headlines. The increasing number of incidences they regard as being unjust, makes residents feel they are being kicked out for intentional reasons dealing with race, as a consequence of an institutional hostility toward, and a desire to eliminate, Black residents. In addition to town halls, they attend both city redevelopment meetings and Navy meetings. They also organize around the scientific testing of the shipyard and facilitate “learn ins” where residents can learn about the cumulative environmental effects of the shipyard on the area and on their health. Many compare their struggle and feeling of being under attack with Black radical movements in the 60s. As middle-class Blacks have focused more on job creation, this

²² A gang injunction is a civil injunction that restricts the lawful and unlawful behavior (for example, walking down certain blocks, wearing certain colors and talking to particular people in public) of individuals named on the injunction within a defined geographic area.

group's biggest slogan has been "clean it up right," as they are more concerned with the health of the residents due to the toxic elements of the shipyard.

One of the main leaders of the TCSC movement, Brother Ben described the group to me. He replied:

What TCSC does is that we educate the people. And we educate the people not only to just Lennar and the environment, but educate the people that they must take back the city government and must become aware of what's happening not just on the hill, but politically aware of what's going on in the city. How do the gang injunctions connect with Lennar? How does the criminalization of Black youth connect with Lennar? How do the schools closing, the education in San Francisco at its lowest ever in terms of academics, more people are graduating here who can't read or write, than anywhere.

(Fieldnote entry- 6/6/10)

As Brother Ben explains, TCSC encourages residents to be aware of the political landscape of San Francisco and where their lives fit into the complex matrix of race, class, and power. Also, TCSC is very concerned with the quality of life for Black San Franciscans and does not just focus on one particular issue but on the interconnectedness of redevelopment, gang injunctions, criminalization, and poor education. As a group, they attempt to describe the cumulative experience of being of color and poor in the city.

Meetings

TCSC, as a group, attends a lot of meetings in the city as well as holding their own meetings. Meeting field notes and memos represent an important part of my observation data because from them it is easy to see the power dynamics between lower income Black residents and institutional officials over the importance of the shipyard. Below is a lengthy field note excerpt from a "Community Involvement Plan" meeting held by the Navy

February 2, 2010. I attended and sat in the back to observe the meeting since residents thought I should be present.

One major issue brought up by the community is the eradication of a group called the Restoration Advisory Board (RAB). RAB was a Navy and community decision-making body that sought to work with communities and residents they trusted to be sympathetic to their interests. Residents told me that this group was abruptly ended. This excerpt represents the typical tension I see at all of the meetings that the Navy or redevelopment agency holds with the lower income residents.

I entered and felt a bit intimidated by all the formality. Navy representatives were there to greet me as soon as I entered, got me to sign the sign in sheet and gave me agenda handouts. I recognize Keith Forman and Marsha Pendergrass from the meeting last April. Marsha, Black woman with locks, starts off the meeting in a friendly manner like she did last meeting. She explains that this was the first meeting in 9 months. Past meetings were supposedly more technical and this one was pertaining to the community. She explained the agenda, introductions, and the formalities around being recorded including stating your name first. At 6:15 Ms. Bea Carter arrives along with Brother John Mohammed 15 minutes late. She sits at the main table while Bro Leon sits in the periphery but still very visible.

After they take their seats, Marsha tells Keith to repeat his speech on community involvement and time constraints. Keith says lines like “talk one at a time,” “there is a 3 minute limit” and “please be respectful.” (I get a little flashback of preschool, because of the way Keith is talking to the crowd). They go on to explain to everyone what the Community Involvement Plan (CIP) is. He explains about how the Navy funded a new Community Involvement Plan, and Ms. Carter says, “Can you repeat that?” Some of the Black residents interrupt Keith and he asks to get through his speech first, *then* he’ll answer questions. Keith explained that the new plan has a questionnaire for residents. More Black residents trickle in. Questionnaires are aimed at taking the “temperature” of the community. Keith then explains that the community can help the Navy by commenting on the questionnaire by March via email or on a form.

Keith: Diversity is very important in this community, not just by race. We haven’t been successful at reaching certain parts of the community.

Ms. Carter: (raises her hand)

Keith: Hold on a second, Ms. Carter. Review this questionnaire! Form an opinion on this! During the break, residents can meet and talk with regulators who are present tonight.

Ms. Carter: I had my hand up.

Keith: (calls on her)

Ms. Carter: Who is selecting people who are doing like RAB was doing?
Keith: I think there was a focus group. (They are referring to the people who created the questionnaire and were making decisions about if names are on it or not.)
Another resident: What (or who?) initiated the meeting for this questionnaire?
Another resident: Why was it abandoned?
Keith: Some questions I can't answer.
Another resident: (interrupts Keith)
Keith: Excuse me, sir... You should have received a letter about why it was dissolved.
Another resident: It was abruptly abandoned in a legal way... What is the purpose for this? Will you disband this when the community speaks out? You should have taken a survey before you banned it!
Keith says: I understand that you disagree with why the Navy dissolved the RAB.
Another resident: I'm a little puzzled. The majority of the people here were on the RAB, other people here are not really from the community.
(Douglass Gilkey, Keith's boss speaks up to clarify. He begins to speak.)
Ms. Carter: Who are you, sir?
Douglass: I'm Douglass Gilkey.
(I see Navy reps whisper on the side while Gilkey is talking and trying to explain why RAB was dissolved. Other Navy representatives seemed to be trying to figure out what to do with this meeting).
Another resident: I'm not comfortable with that answer... Why did we disband the RAB? How does the community benefit?
Ms. Carter: The Navy needs to respect our opinion... our lives are in danger here! It hurts me to bypass community concerns... I want you to be upfront!
A local activist: RAB was a community body.
Lastly, Archbishop Peters of the African Orthodox Church and a member of TCSC, gets up to speak. I know him from prior meetings. He gets up and reads the reasons found online why the Navy dissolved the RAB. It describes that community members did not follow agenda, and acted inappropriately in meetings. Another brother from TCSC gets up and starts talking about the police presence outside the room. He said, "You feel threatened in our community. Police will deter low income folks from coming." He gets fed up and walks out claiming that the rest of the people in the meeting are wasting their time. The brother from TCSC gets up again and says, "*You have to correct the past before you move forward, can't put a band aid on it.*"
(Fieldnote entry- 2/2/10)

This excerpt represents a typical experience at meetings between the Navy and community residents. Navy representatives come with a preexisting agenda and format for how residents can get involved in the clean up of the shipyard. As illustrated here, residents feel very uncomfortable about the way in which the Navy is going about the remediation of

the shipyard. The Navy representatives also try to keep this meeting focused on clean up, but residents contextualize the shipyard within the larger issue of the declining quality of life for Black San Franciscans. This clean up process is more than just the shipyard and residents urge representatives to not just look at it within a bubble. The community uses several ways to redirect this meeting to their own benefit so they can have a sense of control. They routinely did not follow the agenda or meeting protocol by showing up late, asking for things not on the schedule, and speaking out of turn. This frustrated Navy representatives, as they tried to find a way to continue on with the meeting they planned prior.

The lower-class Black individuals at this meeting were viewed as the rule-breaking residents who bring “non-related” issues into the discussion of the clean up of the Hunters Point shipyard. This meeting was similar to several kinds of meetings I attended during my fieldwork. Lower-class Black residents use these meetings as kind of battle site where they fight to be heard and for a say in the future of their neighborhoods and health. Lower-class Blacks choose to navigate the chess game in San Francisco differently than middle-to-upper class Blacks because they are not invited to the decision making table. They lack the status, professionalism, and education to be asked to brainstorm with the city’s stakeholders over the future of their communities. They survive the chess game by creating a social movement that educates and protects poor oppressed groups of color, but remain vilified as being too radical and unprofessional. Because of this, they dominate public meetings as they are among the very few places for their voices to be heard.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed description of how Black San Franciscans make sense of their social standing in the city. Many Black residents see their experiences as overlapping with Blacks in many other large metropolitan cities. These residents do however see their living in San Francisco as a distinct experience, more specifically, one that is like living in a chess game. They often feel as if they are perceived as the losers in a larger chess game that plays with their lives and the future of their neighborhoods.

In the first half of this chapter, I discussed the social standing of Black residents in the city and also contextualized the race relations of the space. As the city attempts to turn Black neighborhoods into cosmopolitan canopies, deep inequality is glossed over. Because of this and their history, residents take on race as a permanent lens through which they come to understand their position. Findings from this chapter illustrate how place still matters and how racism has taken place in their neighborhoods in ways that make residents feel as if the city is intentionally kicking them out. Residents have come to understand that it is not just about these obvious changes of redevelopment or gentrification, but the overall quality of life for them including the failing education system, criminalization, lack of a cultural hub and expensive child care. I then turned to a discussion of how the complicated social standing of Black residents has led many residents to feel as if they occupy a precarious position in the city. This understanding of their position has emerged from a racialized history that has led to uncertainty around the true intentions of the city. Urban renewal was used to forcibly remove them out of cities, in return for great promises about how they would benefit when redevelopment was completed. Through this process, race and the legacy of racial exclusion have routinely been swept under the rug.

In the final section of the chapter, I describe the actual chess game Black residents' play. The hidden aspect of chess or what the city's institutions are not saying has led to a distrust of the government's intentions. It has caused a divide in the community as the middle-to-upper class segments and the lower-class segments navigate the chess game in different ways. They choose different avenues to combat their feelings of temporariness in the city. Middle-to-upper class Blacks combat their uncertainty by forcing themselves upon the city's decision making table so they can be a representative of the Black experience. They additionally work more closely with the city's stakeholders, finding it advantageous to use white money for access, so they can fulfill their Black agenda.

Most importantly, middle-to-upper class Blacks are *asked* to the table because they have relationships with the city's most powerful stakeholders. They are more willing to work within a preexisting agenda for reversing Black flight into the city. Lower-class Blacks are in a more complicated position because they have more to lose and more is at stake. They take a different avenue, because they are mainly vilified in their social movement and not asked to the main decision making table. They see Black struggle as a spiritual fight for justice locating their movement in a moral position rather than a strictly political one. They connect with others to identify their common oppression with being of color and having a low quality of life in the city. They play the chess game with their bodies at public community meetings. They additionally educate people about the racial injury lens, reminding residents that this is just another way San Francisco has made it hard for Blacks to remain in the city.

What guides this chess game is San Francisco's attempt to turn Fillmore and Bayview-Hunters Point into cosmopolitan canopies—pluralistic places where relations are civil, giving residents a break from the tension of urban life around race, class, and gender

(Anderson 2011). In other words, for these neighborhoods, redevelopment means de-racialization—where racism has *not* taken place, or where Blacks do *not* need to possess a racial lens in which they view their position. Ideally the city should be one where *place* will not appear to matter. Institutions ask Black residents to stop living in past, shed their skepticism and embrace the redevelopment of their neighborhoods because change is good for communities. They all regard change as good, but the amount and type of change differs with who you talk with. As one of the brothers from TCSC said at the Navy’s meeting, “*you have to correct the past before you move forward, you can’t just put a band aid on it.*” He clarifies the moral importance of correcting the wrongs from the past before you can move forward with something new. This battle for these two communities is complex and intertwines issues of race, class, power and time.

In Chapter 3, I will talk more about this battle to contextualize the Black chess game that must be played in order for residents to stay in their neighborhoods. I describe a contemporary struggle in San Francisco: the struggles that emerged over urban redevelopment, gentrification, and environmental justice. Who are the players and the antagonists in the Fillmore and BVHP? How do Black residents make sense of this struggle in the city? How do they define the situation and what’s at stake for the individuals involved?

IV: The Battle

Introduction

“Throughout the second half of the 1960s, the inner cities, of the largest American metropolises literally exploded. The massive riots in Black ghettos were the most spectacular and perhaps the most influential form of social protest at the time. Yet, numerous other grassroots mobilizations, ranging from rent strikes to welfare rights demands, fighting urban renewal or stopping highway construction, turned the American urban scene into a battlefield.... Beyond its internal diversity, this revolt came from a common matrix of contradictions underlying the fabric of the inner cities, defined as the spatial manifestation of ethnic segregation, urban poverty, economic discrimination, and political alienation” (Castells 1983:49).

In the *City and the Grassroots: A Cross Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements*, Manuel Castells talks about the landscape of power in cities, and in particular, the struggles in Black ghettos in the second half of the 1960s. Castells describes the urban landscape as a battlefield by residents reacting to a matrix of contradictions including segregation, poverty, discrimination and alienation. This matrix of contradictions that Black urban residents struggle with on a daily basis shapes the parameters of today’s chess game.

In the last chapter, I compared the lives of Black San Franciscans to living in a high-stakes chess game. In this chapter, I describe how residents define the battle by taking their personal neighborhood experiences, politicizing them, and using them as weapons when they come up against a larger political/economic system that frames their neighborhoods in ways that are economically beneficial to the larger city. Institutional representatives frame the neighborhood as a commodity: they talk about the neighborhood in terms of how much money it can make and the futures of the economically transformed neighborhoods. In contrast, Black residents frame their neighborhoods as spaces of struggle, that have endured histories of discrimination and racism, and as geographically vulnerable to inequality (Lipsitz 2011). For Black residents who do not control the exchange values of the neighborhood, race

solidarity across class lines can be used as a political tool to frame their struggle (Logan & Molotch 1987). These different views on neighborhood politics inform the urban Black identity in San Francisco and can be understood best through the different ways their neighborhoods are valued. In *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place*, Logan and Molotch describe the sharp contrast between use and exchange value, where the former focuses on neighborhood space as fulfilling the essential needs of residents' lives and the latter based on how much money can be generated by the neighborhood (1987:2).

In *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community*, Steven Gregory discusses the relationship between urban Black identities and politics claiming that ... “the identity of Black people in the United States has everything to do with politics” (13). He prefaces this idea by defining politics for the purposes of his book:

By the same token, politics is rarely considered as a social process implicated in the formation and reformation of urban Black identities. For my purposes, politics refers to a diverse range of social practices through which people negotiate power relations. The practice of politics involves both the production and exercise of social relationships and the cultural construction of social meanings that support or undermine those relationships (1998:13)

Gregory describes his use of politics as referring to practices through which individuals negotiate power. Black residents negotiate power over their community by forming several different kinds of relationships with the Navy, City departments, and development corporations. For Black residents in the city, this field of power relations resembles a battlefield. The fight over power and space is shaped by race and class. Institutional stakeholders who frame the neighborhood as a commodity want control over the area because it can be bought and sold. Stakeholders and community residents frame these spaces

differently and therefore attribute different social meanings to the contested neighborhood. These battles are seen clearly during various meetings.

Town hall community meetings are led by TCSC leaders at different locations around Bayview-Hunters Point, but mostly at the Islamic elementary school. Navy and city meetings were led either by Navy representatives or city officials. Navy meetings were held at local buildings like the community college BVHP campus or the YMCA. City meetings were always held at City Hall and were facilitated by either the redevelopment agency, the housing commission, or supervisors.

In this chapter, I will describe the battle that Black San Franciscans engage in with the city's power holders by considering the local scope of these meetings. I have found that town hall, navy, and city meetings are microcosms of the larger racialized battle for space, power and a say in the future of Black San Francisco. Meetings are formal spaces where individuals convene to discuss the fate of Black San Francisco, its conditions, neighborhoods, and the changes that will take place over the next ten years. During these meetings institutional representatives attempt to contain the conversation about the remediation and redevelopment of the contested shipyard using strategies such as creating agendas, putting time limits on public comment periods and redirecting community comments (Few 2001).

As a reaction to this kind of containment and as a way to force themselves into the conversation, residents use counter-containment strategies challenging the power dynamics of the meeting set up and agenda and reprioritizing their concerns (Few 2001). Often times, these meetings routinely end in a lot of tension between official representatives of particular entities and long time community residents. To representatives, community residents are seen

as rule breaking malefactors who exhibit inappropriate behaviors at every meeting. Community residents, on the other hand, feel that it is imperative to prioritize their concerns about the future of the neighborhood because no one else will. In this chapter, I argue that “inappropriate” behaviors in institutional spaces constitute counter containment strategies that challenge macro-level city decision making processes in San Francisco. The community’s resistance redirects the discourse toward a focus on community issues. I argue that since residents frame their experience in the city as a battle, their “inappropriate” behavior at meetings regarding their future is understandable given their history living in the city.

In this chapter, I first describe the political and economic landscape of San Francisco in the context of different frames that institutional representatives have versus those of community residents. Secondly, I use field note data from meetings to talk about the tools Black San Franciscans use in their battles with the city and other institutional stakeholders.

San Francisco’s political economic battlefield

In San Francisco, Black residents have learned that the wealthy are intricately linked to the decision-making powers of the city and therefore have a say in what neighborhood space will look like. There is a constant power play between institutional entities, corporations, and community residents over what Bayview-Hunters Point and the Fillmore will look like in the next few years. Residents are also concerned with having their basic needs met including jobs, healthy food and air quality. These Black residents feel as if they are in never-ending battle for justice for their basic needs. Residents who lack faith in the city to take care of their basic needs often attempt to take care of it themselves.

This is a battle about respect and spatial justice that is shaped by race as well as class, as the two are intertwined. Black San Francisco has a long history of racial exclusion and discrimination. In my second chapter, I reiterate that race was and still is a defining factor of the Black experience in the city. The condition of Black San Franciscans is almost always viewed through a racial lens. In San Francisco, I have found that Black life can be framed as a fight for procedural justice, a process of ensuring the fair allocation of opportunities, power and self-respect (Gau & Brunson 2010, Lucas-Darby 2012). Therefore, at meetings residents' attend, the treatment of their "unruly" behavior is being noted and signals a community concern around procedural justice.

Black San Franciscans demonstrate varying degrees of optimism and skepticism about their fate in the city and their ability to create a better quality of life for their families. They feel under attack and pushed out, or they feel low on the totem pole in terms of the city's priority. This has caused battle lines to be drawn within the neighborhood. Everyone is fighting for a say in the future of his or her spaces and residents and corporations frame the 'value' of these spaces very differently (Goffman 1975). Black neighborhoods in San Francisco don't stand alone, but instead exist within a constant power play for land and a say over what will go on this land. San Francisco is considered a city in which the social relations and interests of capital go beyond the city residents to a global scale. Money comes in and out of the city without touching the hands of its residents. San Francisco is also a huge tourist city and tourism operates as one of its most lucrative sectors.

In past chapters, I have talked about the history of the redevelopment agency and urban renewal in both neighborhoods. Past urban renewal has left a nasty taste in the mouths of everyday Black San Franciscans because many feel as if the process was unfair, unjust,

and was primarily used as a tool to kick Blacks out of the city. If this is true, it is not a new process. Redevelopment and urban renewal have become solutions for revamping cities for economic expansion. Contemporary redevelopment as framed by the city can be understood both as a local response to economic globalization in the Bay area (Godfrey 1997) and as something framed by residents as a process by which public and private interest groups make decisions for their own personal financial gain (Hartman 2002). There is a long history of city governments taking control of neighborhoods like the Fillmore and Bayview-Hunters Point in order to treat them as commodities that can be parceled out and sold to the highest bidder. Taking a political economic perspective on the politics of San Francisco reveals the city as a growth machine, a place where the use and exchange values of spaces are constantly contested.

The battle between use and exchange value is played out daily in town hall, Navy, and city meetings all the time causing much conflict (Jonas and Wilson 1999, Mah 1999). For Black residents, they know that increasing the exchange value will not benefit them, therefore undermining the neighborhood's use value. The battle boils down to a fight for the value of their neighborhood that benefits residents, against the interlocking departments and institutions that seek to see it grow the neighborhood for the benefit of capital accumulation. As Molotch and Logan also point out, this interlocking machine of departments and institutions that seek growth pervade all sectors of the city including its political system and economic development and cultural institutions (1987). In San Francisco, these interlocking systems take on different meanings and are often used in ways that protect private interests (Jackson 2010). So, for Black residents, the battle is not just for neighborhood space, but it is for the value of their own lives, families, employment, health, and status as well.

For Black San Franciscans, the continued fight is for their lives and livelihood, but also for status, seen best in the desire to have a “say” in what goes on in their neighborhoods in the next ten years. For the rest of the chapter, I will turn to the micro-level to illustrate how the value of neighborhoods is contested and how residents use tools other than money and financial interests to redirect public concerns back to their own interests.

Meetings

Town Halls

In this section, I will describe the three types of meetings starting with community town hall meetings. These town hall meetings are comprised mainly of lower-class residents. If middle-to-upper class residents attend, it is often because they identify with the Black struggle of Bayview-Hunters Point, so in this way, race helps to build across class lines. There are only a few Fillmore residents in attendance, but that is not unusual since the meetings are about the takeover of the Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhood.

Community town hall meetings are run by the coalitions that community residents have convened themselves. They make the space a very physically secure one monitoring everyone coming in and out of the meetings. Generally non-community residents are not in attendance. At community town hall meetings in particular, the battle is *framed and defined* by the group, not played out, as in other meetings. This is a place where leaders and residents define the battle they are in with the city and frame their discussions about what they are up against. The battles are typically enacted at city and navy meetings. Town hall meetings are strategic planning meetings where they discuss what has happened and what to do next. In these spaces, community residents are generally empowered to make plans for how to act on the injustices in their spaces among others who feel the same way.

At community town halls, residents frame a moral, political, and physical battle with the city of San Francisco. Morally, residents are in a spiritual fight for justice with the city—out to fight for what they perceive is “good” and “true.” Politically, they understand the city’s politicians as part of the large San Francisco government to be “political gangsters.” They refer to politicians as gangsters because in their eyes, they are only out for their own benefit and will do whatever it takes to ensure it. Physically, residents feel they need to be protected because they are under surveillance and their community is under attack.

Sometimes these meetings are used to address other special community topics related to redevelopment or gentrification issues. One meeting I attended was located in Oakland since the TCSC wanted to convene with another coalition about the Oscar Grant case²³. This larger coalition of TCSC and other smaller groups that fight against oppression was called Troop of Justice (TOJ) TCSC and TOJ use racial solidarity as a political tool (Logan and Molotch 1987). I attended with a fellow volunteer from the environmental justice agency. Below is a description of the moral, spiritual, and political fight residents find themselves in at the TOJ town hall meeting starting with the main facilitator Minister C and several other speakers to follow. The meeting started with an introductory prayer by one of the ministers and then followed by a speech describing the purpose of TOJ.

After the prayer, he started to describe the Troop of Justice as “producing a coalition of people who are dissatisfied (with the state of poor communities of color) and have guidance from the almighty.” By doing this he clarified that this is a very spiritual movement as well as one that seeks justice. They need the help of God to guide them in their movement.

²³ Oscar Grant was a 22 year old Black youth that was shot at the Fruitvale BART transit station by a transit police officer on January 1, 2009.

He talked about how there are many different kinds of people that traveled here from Sacramento, Oakland, San Francisco, Vallejo and all over the Bay area. The main topic discussed was Oscar Grant, because a few days earlier, on the 22nd, Oscar Grant's friends shared their testimony about the shooting since they were witnesses. Jack Bryson Jr. told the jury, in the shooter Johannes Mehserle's trial, of how the BART cop treated and eventually shot Oscar Grant²⁴. The friend described the way that this community has attempted to urge the DA's office to handle his killing "right." He went over details of the case, and what kind of pressure they put on the city to address Oscar Grant's killing.

After this, Minister C took the stand again as usual. He is definitely perceived as a leader in the whole Bay Area, because he is very well respected by community folk. I saw people listening to him and nodding their heads as their bodies sat up intently. "Our meeting is here in order to mobilize and force justice." Minister C started to discuss the media coverage of the Oscar Grant killing and how 5 days after it no politicians, and few community members, had spoken about it. Additionally, he talked about how they forced politicians to speak on it, and take a stand. "We were tricked into believing politics would solve our problems!" This group had to take this killing into their own hands because the "politics" of it would not do Grant justice.

Minister C then began discussing how the leaders that one would think would stand up for justice don't because of their financial connections to the city. He went onto say "bums like Black, Latino, and progressive caucuses don't act in your interest when it goes against big business!" Because of this, you can't rely on those who you put in office to defend your interests and protect you. He said, "California has become a police state!" He goes on to read a written definition of a city that maintains repressive control over its people through law enforcement and how it affects the social, political, and economic decision of the space. He mentioned that two-thirds of the city budget goes to law enforcement as they shut down community services. He focused primarily on California, though these descriptions can be applied nationally. He quoted Frederick Douglass saying, "Power concedes nothing without a demand!"

Lastly, he said, "we got to put together an agenda to organize and mobilize to put pressure on our legislators starting with the ones who look like us. They need to choose!" I thought this was significant in describing their position on putting pressure on people of their own groups. Members of TOJ have learned that you can't trust a Black face, or a brown face, to protect your interests because they are often bought off. This is a theme that I've seen from both sides of the spectrum, those who work

²⁴ For more information see: <http://sfbayview.com/2010/jack-bryson-hits-the-stand/>.

with city hall and those who don't. More grassroots folks distrust many Black and brown faces on city task forces.
(Fieldnote entry- June 24, 2010)

TOJ defines themselves as a spiritual movement that fights for justice backed with the power of God. As a group, they fight for what is morally 'right' in the lives of poor communities of color. Attendees contend that their political interests are not important to the government nor protected in City Hall even when politicians of color are in office. This type of thinking reflects the plantation imagery that I hear evoked often in meetings. Certain individuals of color that work with institutions are labeled as sell-outs or "Uncle Toms." Meeting attendees regard these individuals as untrustworthy and not representative of their interests, especially when money is involved in the situation.

TOJ believes that 'politics' are not in their favor either. When they use the term 'politics,' they are referring to a bureaucratic system of laws and policies that do not act in favor of community residents. No one involved in 'politics' defends them. This idea also has a long history beginning with the Civil Rights movement. There was much recruitment of Black individuals into governmental positions as a result of the movement. Many recruited had advanced educations and the positions they obtained helped them to become financially secure, creating housing options beyond the ghetto or other places in the Bay Area. Many of those who left are perceived as leaving the community behind.

Lastly, the above excerpt clarifies TCSC's understanding of their struggle as a physical battle. Many residents regard the city of San Francisco as a police state with a mission to get Black residents, particularly Black men, out of the city limits. They feel their neighborhoods are under very repressive control and surveillance by the police force. This takes place especially in the Fillmore where residents are more concentrated. Certain blocks

on the main Fillmore Street are over-policed and patrolled. Black men are seen as a threat to the newly redeveloped area (Jones and Jackson 2011).

During my time attending town hall meetings, there was one main event among others that caused the community to feel threatened and under surveillance. I was not present at the particular meeting where the event took place, but I learned about the details of that night at subsequent meetings. I describe what I learned of the night of February 18th in a field note written after an April meeting:

At first, when I came up the hill, I was greeted by several men outside of the meeting appearing to be either just standing there or guarding the door. I greeted them and came in. One of the brothers mumbled, “one of the sisters will check you...” I did not understand this statement at all, but I just went in. After I signed in, one of the ladies asked me to come in a smaller room, so that she could check me. I tried not to be to upset and look confused, but I asked, politely “what this is for?” She replied that someone had brought a concealed weapon to their Feb 18th meeting, and I replied, “ Oh...” I thought it was personal. I came back in the bigger room, got some hot chocolate and sat down in the 4th row on the side.

So, then Minister C gets up to start discussing the main matter of discussion, which is the Feb 18th issue and how the *Chronicle* [city newspaper] is running the story to make the community look like the bad guys, however it was a white middle aged man who entered their town hall meeting on Feb 18th with a concealed weapon and a fake identity. Minister C started to legitimize how TCSC handled the situation professionally by tying him up to a light pole until the police came there. At first, I couldn’t understand why he was talking as defensively as he was and bringing up particular details, but then after I read the *Chronicle* article by Jon Cope, I understood. The article tried to make TCSC appear as if they were intimidating and going overboard.

Much of the meeting was spent telling the story of the man who entered the meeting with a gun and the address he put down on the police report. It was an address of a company in Miami, Florida called Sitrick and Company, a public relations firm that professes on their website (which I double checked) to work with major newspapers and media during crises or “make or break” situations. This was a shock to everyone, and they began to look at this guy as a spy. The paper reported that he was a security guard that works for Lennar Corporation.²⁵ The group led by Minister C definitely attempted to frame this incident as one in which Lennar “ knows who they are dealing with” and therefore sent a spy. The group, led by Minister C,

²⁵ The Lennar Corporation is an urban developer that seeks out land in a variety of different states to build homes and shopping centers on.

represented itself as the bump in Lennar's path preventing them from making their deadlines. Archbishop Peters broke in and noted that he tried to talk to the head of the NAACP about this matter, but he was shunned. Archbishop Peters said he was trying to warn him "Third Baptist is next!"
(Fieldnote entry- April 15, 2010)

There are several aspects of my experience that illustrate TCSC's desire to be protective. First, brothers at the meeting police who can enter and leave the building. This meeting was the second town hall I went to, but not the first community gathering I attended, so I knew that the security was something extra. I soon learned of the Feb 18th event as the reason why they were taking extra measures. After that, I notice that my efforts turn towards myself not looking like a spy with taking notes. At this point, I tried to blend in and I decided from then on that I would make mental notes, but write my fieldnotes exclusively at home. It made me look too suspect.

TCSC understands their position as inhibiting impending developments made on the shipyard by the Lennar Corporation. Familiar with COINTELPRO'S tactics in the past, this group feels that its motives are under surveillance. This complicated visitor who seems to have not been honest about his real identity appeared as a threat to residents, especially in a community context of distrust and over policing. A related experience happened to me when I sat in on a meeting that an environmental justice non-profit had with leaders of the TCSC. This meeting also reiterated how residents and non-profits frame their battle as a physical one with the city's institutional stakeholders. I started taking notes and my informant asked me to step outside. She then asked me to not take notes on this session because of a promise she made with the attendees about the privacy of the meeting. When I came back in and things settled, one of the progressive white leaders made a joke asking, "you're not a Chevron spy, are you?" Everyone chuckled and I responded "of course not." Even though this was a joke,

this moment represented a very stark reality for groups that are challenging major institutional entities in the city. The distrust that groups or organizations representing oppressed groups have for big institutional players in San Francisco is heavy and laden with long histories of covert tactics for obtaining information. Both of these meetings illustrated the constant moral, political and physical battle residents find themselves in.

Navy meetings

Meetings led by the Navy constitute another battle site for Black San Franciscans. At town hall meetings, the battle is anticipated and framed in advance, but at Navy and city meetings the battle actually takes place. The Navy as an institutional entity has a very specific history with Black San Francisco beginning primarily in the 1940s. The Navy's Hunters Point shipyard occupies up to 934 acres of the neighborhood. It was used primarily as a repair yard and radiological defense laboratory up until WW2. The shipyard was once a place of employment for Black southern migrants who took up residence in the barracks of the newly formed neighborhood establishing their presence as a group.

As I have discussed in previous chapters, the contested Hunters Point shipyard is a Superfund² site on the nation's priority list. In 2003, thirty years after the 1974 closing of the shipyard, the Navy and San Francisco Board of Supervisors took up their delayed responsibility of environmental investigation and clean-up. It parceled off land to the Redevelopment agency and development corporations. The Hunters Point residential community remains angered with the closed decision-making process about the clean up and development of the shipyard. In response, the Navy conducts "community involvement" meetings where they set the agendas geared at informing residents of the clean-up process.

Despite this, residents still believe their redevelopment ideas are isolated from the decision-making process in meetings concerning the shipyard. While attending these meetings I witnessed Black San Franciscans frustrated with the bureaucratic formality of the discussions. The expression of this frustration through talk, gestures and other body movements marked them as rule breakers who were seen by other non-Black residents and Navy officials as ‘always dissatisfied’.

The frustration on both sides of the battle can be understood within the containment and counter-containment strategies used at Navy meetings. Roger Few discusses a similar process of containing community input with conservation planning in Belize. He describes the importance of planners to sustain a “constructed image” of the planning process as being inclusive, despite their conscious efforts to engage local residents only as it fits within their timeline for completion of the project (2001:112-118). In order for planners to keep projects on time for completion they attempt to “contain” the public meeting. Few defines containment as “the strategic management of public involvement in planning so as to minimize disruptions to pre-conceived planning goals.... successful containment, therefore, ensures that a project ostensibly engaging local involvement progresses to completion on time and within pre-defined parameters” (Few 112). Some methods of containment that Few cites are avoidance, exclusion, and control over procedure and knowledge, which is done by conducting meetings, setting agendas and taking surveys (Few116-118). A successful public community meeting is therefore judged by the degree to which planners can contain the residents’ concerns.

Residents redirect the focus of their meeting back to their concerns by challenging their containment with counter containment strategies. Few argues that the existence of a

counter containment strategy is a consequence of the need for planners to contain public involvement. Counter containment strategies can be framed by a hidden transcript that residents possess to refocus the priorities of the meeting back to their concerns (Scott 1990). Few cites some counter containment strategies, such as delaying management plans, bringing up a different kind of claim to the land, and stalling progress on the project (Few 120). Few's idea on containment and counter-containment aid in surveying the landscape of power in San Francisco

There are several meetings that display the resistance of Black community residents to the Navy's strategies of containment. Meeting attendees were mostly middle-aged to older Black, Latino, Asian, and Pacific Islander working class community residents that were a part of or associated with the Taking Control of the Shipyard Coalition. TCSC claims their families have been poisoned and displaced for the last 35 years. Residents stake their claims in meetings through the use of personal narrative and resistance to meeting formality. Specifically at Navy meetings, I have seen the physical and a political battle mostly clearly.

Gender and the Physical Battle

In several meetings, white security guards and police officers were present and their numbers continued to increase as the year went on. Meetings that purport to be informal opportunities to obtain the community perspective end up having officers and guards 'man' these spaces. In these situations I see the enactment of hegemonic Black masculinity challenging the over-policing of these community meetings. Hegemonic Black masculinity has been adapted from hegemonic masculinity, which has been typically associated with white, heterosexual males who possess political and economic power. For Black men, who typically are locked out of the formal channels to political and economic power, hegemonic

masculinity has come to be defined through the use of their bodies, physical dominance and aggressiveness (Hill-Collins 2004, Jones 2008). Acting as the protectors of their community, Black leaders allowed their presence to be known and heard as they entered these meetings spaces. I described one meeting I attended:

I noticed in the beginning that the police officers were sitting down in the row behind me. When TCSC came in, male police officers got up and stood on the outskirts of the room. Some members of the incoming group sat, but by the end of the meeting all the men were all standing up against the wall in the back. They made a very dominant presence and stood shoulder to shoulder mostly in dark colors. Some community members with the group paced or walked around handing out an article for the BVHP (Bayview-Hunters Point) newspaper. They acted very much like a group as they wrote notes to each other, did some whispering but also had discussions in regular voices. It seemed as if the group was purposefully not conforming to the agenda and format of the meeting, as they felt two minutes was not enough for public comment about a shipyard that has been endangering their lives for over 40 years. (Fieldnote entry- 4/29/09)

At this particular meeting, brothers from TCSC established their presence through their late arrival, facial expressions, voice level, and other markers of groupness and where they chose to stand in the room. These counter containment strategies are used to place the meeting back in the control of residents despite the Navy's agenda created upon coming into this space. Residential actions are meant to change the course of the conversation to be led by those most affected by development and displacement, the residents.

Black male leaders also defended their community in paternalistic ways that combat the police apparatus at meetings. As I described, police officers became more watchful when Black male leaders came into the space. Nothing was exchanged in words, but brothers from TCSC mirrored the paternalism of the police by standing up in the back side-by-side representing a powerful securing force for their community. By standing in the back of these meetings, like police officers, brothers possessed an authoritarian eye over what happened in

these spaces. Weapons of resistance, such as standing in the back, identify the social constraints of these meetings and challenge them. Navy representatives leading these meetings also stand up when they want to reestablish order after several people have talked out of order. Male residents challenge representatives by standing up during presentations. By doing so, they put themselves on the same level of those who are in charge, and challenge hegemonic white masculinity.

Public Comment

The public comment period within these meetings is also a common site of battle with the shipyard's decision-making process. Residents are often non-compliant with formality and two minute limits placed for public comment periods where residents are allowed to talk in the meeting agenda. Residents resist the two minute limit because they look at it as a way to contain their community concerns. As community residents attempt to bring up other important issues connected to shipyard development, their commentary is seen as unfocused and narrative as too long. When residents' comments reach the 2-minute time limit, signs are put up in front of them to end their comment. The excerpt below describes one public comment scene.

A series of community members went up for public comment. Some of the comments asked critically about the scientific studies the Navy conducted on the shipyard, while others commented on the life of BVHP residents. People began to lengthen their comments, and a Black female Navy representative with locks began to mediate and shorten the commentary as she said that they specified this format for public comment earlier in the agenda. Prominent community leader, Bea Carter got up to the microphone and said, "I've been a resident here, and I can't believe you all are cutting people off! You are railroading this too fast for Bea Carter!" Guards began to walk around instead of standing put.
(Fieldnote entry- 4/29/09)

At each meeting, that they put a 2-minute time limit on each public comment. Residents

can feel the speeding up of their community historical narrative for the Navy's purposes and not their own. The formality of this system is used to dismiss residential concerns associated with the shipyard and contain public involvement with the shipyard. Residents challenge this by dominating public comment with their community-prioritized issues. The more residents challenge this order the more police officers seem to stand up and walk around to exhibit authority.

Even though these Navy meetings are supposed to be "community-centered" they still hire security guards to police the event. Residents use their bodies and voices to challenge this attempt to control their bodies as they fight for their community. Since quality of life issues are not prioritized in these meetings, residents must force them into the agenda. Calling out, talking out of turn, lengthening their public comments, and arriving late all represent strategies of counter containment used in the physical and political battle for inclusion. Residents use these battles to fight back so they can be at the decision-making table. This real conversation has still not been achieved as residents regard these meetings as cosmetic solutions seeking minimal "community input."

City meetings

City meetings are usually the most diverse meetings. They are always held at City Hall and are hosted by either the Redevelopment Agency, the Housing Commission, the Planning Commission, the Rules committee or individual supervisors on special issues. Many types of people attend depending on the topic being discussed. For example, at a Housing Commission meeting I attended, several groups presented their particular projects to the supervisors. One example of this could be a housing project funded by a developer in the

Mission that needs additional zoning clearances. Meeting attendees are usually residents from all across the city, representatives from corporations, and leaders in the city.

All of the meetings I attended pertained to some segment of the Black experience and it was usually a community member who suggested I attend. Within the walls of City Hall, there was rarely a physical battle like in Navy meetings, despite the presence of many security guards. Regardless of race, class, or gender, everyone mostly abides by rules of City Hall meeting protocol. During public comment periods, when individuals go over time, they are asked to stop and they do. . There is a certain level of respect shown from meeting goers to city hall Supervisors that I do not see at a Navy meeting. The presence of concerns around representation and class based tensions around which avenue to increasing their quality of life illustrate a political and social battle at play within these meetings. First, I see a political battle once again about inclusion and representation of the concerns of Black San Franciscans. Residents express concerns about the culture of redevelopment and the remediation of the shipyard. In the public forum I will soon discuss, it comes down to Black residents and other residents of Bayview-Hunters Point and the Fillmore being divided over concerns regarding employment versus health after the shipyard is officially developed. Many times, residents are skeptical because redevelopment officials will say jobs will go to residents, but lack an actual concrete community benefit agreements. There is much controversy on the particular avenue the city can take to prioritize the lives of Black San Franciscans, which brings me to the social battle I see.

At city meetings, the interracial tension within the Black community is most clear to me. Middle-class and lower-class Black residents across the city fight to win the attention of certain supervisors who will forward their agendas for Black success. It's a battle over who

will win the attention of which supervisor. One major meeting I attended was on Black flight sponsored by the Rules committee and in particular Supervisors Daly and Ammiano. It was suggested that I attend by Dan, one of the middle-to-upper class Blacks on the African American Out Migration Task Force as a way to see how the city officially addresses Black flight in a meeting. All of the most outspoken Black leaders attended this meeting. The crowd was mostly Black consisting of many Black families and several Black male leaders that convened together.

One of the goals for this meeting was to present the findings and solutions proposed by the African American Out-Migration Task Force. Asked to the task force were Blacks that were “friends” of the city and associated through various institutions. The task force was overwhelmingly middle-to-upper class Blacks that had “made it” and were financially stable. Dan, who was also the head of the redevelopment agency, was given the task of presenting the data from the task force. Dan is a very controversial man to most. On the one hand, he comes from a long line of individuals who have fought for Black rights, and on the other hand, he accepted the position as the head of the redevelopment agency that is seen as running Black people out of the city. It is a difficult position to be in, as he looks like a sell-out to some of the others. Below is an excerpt from my field notes taken during the meeting.

The meeting started off with a humble speech by Supervisor Daly. He admitted that Black flight in the city was a dirty little secret of San Francisco, and he wants to deal with it head-on, unlike the people before him. He was the Black sheep of the city, because he was for social justice and non-developmental issues. When Daly critiqued the city, Minister C would agree and yell out “yes!” often. The minister was definitely a loud audience member. Daly said things about white folks very liberally, evidence of his awkward effort to befriend an audience filled with nothing but the Black community. In reference to the future of mixed income communities, Daly said, “it’s hard to deal with disgruntled white folk!” The audience laughed, and individuals all said, “we’re used to it, we’ve been doing it for years!” Even Dan, who Daly was addressing, replied that he was used to it, too.

Dan spoke after Daly going through a complete PowerPoint presentation of statistics on the Black population and what areas the task force has found need improvement. Dan seemed well-spoken and used to making this presentation. His minor jokes and the speed of the presentation led me to believe that he was a bit nervous from all the opposition staring at him. When Dan spoke, sometimes Minister C would express disagreement via his facial expressions. In a very formal way, Dan said that Blacks feel like “outsiders looking inside” on the city of San Francisco and spoke to the irony of the liberal label. He urged that the city needed a Black middle-class present. Upon mention of the Hope SF²⁶ program, Daly and others were very critical of the program. Audience members mumbled under their breaths, yelled out and showed their dissatisfaction with their facial expressions. Dan mentioned that task force members were present. Rev. Mike White stood up promptly and said who he was and that he was the pastor of Trinity Baptist Church and the President of the San Francisco NAACP. There was an awkward moment, and everyone started laughing at him. White was not laughing.

Another member, Barbara Lewis spoke up about the task force and revealed the politics involved in who was chosen to be on the task force. She revealed that these politics has caused a division in the community and that none of the recommendations have been implemented in the year since the task force meetings. Admittedly, she notes that members had a suspicion they were being used by the city. The crowd agreed.

A weird moment occurred between Linda, the chair of task force, Barbara Lewis and Rev. White, another member. It was difficult to interpret what was seen visually. After Barbara’s speech, Rev. White went over to Linda whispering appearing like he wanted to craft Linda’s speech in a way. I’m not really sure what I saw. Minister C was like “aww.... c’mon they can’t do that!” It was obvious that Rev. White was trying to organize what was being said to Supervisor Daly in an upfront way, and Minister C and others were not happy.

Rev White speaks about how he’s on the “cutting edge” of the city. Everyone started to laugh loudly! The tension begins to increase. Supporters of the reverend kept a stone face as they looked around at others laughing. Rev. White urged for a meeting with brokers and “people with money” to forward his more middle-to-upper class Black agenda. He was tired of reports and meetings as well, as he referred to the Bible urging people to be “doers” of the word and have access to capital. White mentioned the NAACP and church as also being pillars of the community. After this, he walks out.

Minister C walks up to the podium pompously and first mentions the absence of his opposition since White and others left out. He urged Daly to take note about who leaves after they’ve spoken. Because he considers this an emergency situation, Minister C remarks about how appreciative he is for the opportunity to convene

²⁶ The Hope SF program is one that transforms several poor public housing sites into mixed income housing claiming not to displace current residents. The Hope SF program is modeled off of the federal Hope VI program and was created due to the federal budget cuts of the main program.

together. His grateful manner and calm speech illustrated to Supervisor Daly that Minister C is easier to work with on issues of Black flight. He continued to criticize the task force and developmental politics stating that the city uses a Black face to forward their agendas. The Black community therefore trusts this face, goes along with the scheme that inevitably hurts the community and breaks down the trust within. He advocated for changing the culture of redevelopment in the city, as he sees it as a process of ethnic cleansing.

The minister broadens the scale of this struggle for the Black community from local to the national levels of being kicked out of the metropolitan cities to live in the suburbs. He brought this struggle back to the city and more particularly to Bayview Hunters Point, mentioning the poisoning of that community by the Lennar Corporation with an Asbestos exceedance.

(Fieldnote entry- 8/7/08)

This excerpt illustrates a battle over the attention of the few supervisors willing to take on the problem Black San Franciscans find themselves in. The only two sympathetic supervisors to take on the issues of Black San Francisco also take on issues of homelessness and LGBT rights in the city. We see two different groups of Black residents in the city. One the one hand, Minister C who is head of the Taking Control of the Shipyard Coalition and his brothers present in the front row who by the end, are trying to come across as the “easier to work with” Black group. On the other hand you have Dan who was chosen to present the African American Out Migration task force data. In support of him are others on the task force, prominent reverends, and traditional leaders of pillars in the community like the NAACP or the Black church.

While Dan is speaking, TCSC and other residents still use their bodies in a City Hall setting to express dissent with what is being said. They sigh loudly, yell out, whisper and use facial expressions to express to the supervisors that they don’t agree with the method that most middle-to-upper class Blacks are using. Dan, on the other hand, is backed up by data and an official task force convened by the city. He has his PowerPoint notes and most importantly, he is *in* the agenda for the day. He receives a certain amount of respect from the

supervisors because he is employed as a leader in the city and used formal means to obtain statistics on Black San Francisco. Other colleagues of his, like Rev. White seize the moment that Dan has captured. Rev. White uses his affiliations and leadership position with the NAACP and Trinity Baptist church to proudly introduce his suggestion on addressing Black flight by meeting with those with money. He purports that being a doer of the word is having access to capital—and this capital will strengthen the Black community. Rev White is loudly laughed at by the audience for being pompous and supposedly not on the front line of the Black community. He's laughed at for representing institutions that many San Franciscan Blacks don't hold in the high esteem they did in the 60s. As I express in my field note, an interesting moment happens when Rev. White tries to whisper in a colleague's ear upfront and craft the message being said to the supervisor. Minister C and his crew yell out that it is unfair. This is what the state of Black politics in the city has come down to—a literal battle over whose avenue for Black success to use: ours or theirs.

I saw this same ours vs. theirs division at another big meeting about the approval of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Hunters Point shipyard. Specifically, this battle was broken down to choosing a job versus a life. This environmental impact report is a scientific environmental study claiming that the shipyard is now safe for continued redevelopment on the space. Of course, this is a major source of tension for city officials and residents. What is considered safe enough for Bayview-Hunters Point is constantly contested. Many don't trust the studies completed by the Navy and feel that the city is trying to fast track the redevelopment of the shipyard so it can parcel off land to developers. Individuals that are *for* the EIR are perceived as being *for* jobs because the potential developments are looked at as economically stimulating the neighborhood therefore providing new jobs.

Individuals that are seen as *against* the EIR are perceived as *anti-job*, when in reality, they are more concerned with their quality of life and future health declining because of a toxic shipyard. These concerns are illustrated best during the public comment section of the meeting partially excerpted below:

The next part was public comment, which I looked forward to. The first speaker up was Fernando Muroka, with whom I have an interview next Friday. He stated that this project is not paying attention to the “first people²⁷” here and the preservation of cultural resources. He complained that the EIR does not address cumulative impacts, quality of life issues and resources like childcare, schools, and hospitals. If Lennar (corporation) already has acreage, why does it need more? He questioned this to point to the greed of this corporation.

Shirley, my respondent, was the next speaker. She also opposed the EIR for not addressing cumulative impacts, as well as the standards of CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) or the standards of the community residents. She said “any time a community is divided this much, there is a problem with it. It’s not okay to be at arms with each other over a promise of a job versus a life.” This shipyard should be cleaned to residential standards, not capping.

(Fieldnote entry- 6/3/2010)

One major issue that community residents have with the Environmental Impact Report is that it doesn’t address the cumulative impacts of all the toxic facilities in the neighborhood. The shipyard is just one of many toxic plants and waste facilities that add to the poor health condition of residents in the neighborhood. In the statement above, my informant, Shirley attempts to bring to the supervisors’ attention the dire division that it has created in their community: a job vs. a life. A debate within the community about having a job versus having a healthy life represents a very dire situation where basic needs are not being met. It is choices like these that cause Black San Franciscans to continue to fight in the battle for inclusion and a place at the table. They do this so they don’t need to feel as if they have to choose between physically living in the neighborhood and prospering in the neighborhood.

²⁷ When Muroka mentions the “first people,” he is referring to Native Americans.

Conclusion

Black residents are in a battle in several ways. Residents don't easily separate out the various kinds of battles they have with individual institutional entities. If they frame their lives as being under constant surveillance, if they are cut off during their public comment period, if they feel forced to choose between employment and health by officials and developers who seem unconcerned about either, then of course they feel constantly at war with the city.

Meeting data has proven to be a good unit of analysis to see this battle play out. In town hall meetings, residents use these spaces as safe zones to define the battle they are in and identify the players: the Navy, the redevelopment agency, development corporations, the police etc. They also use these town halls to develop strategies for their community. Many times they plan who will attend what meetings and what will be the stance of their coalition. Much time is spent empowering residents and discussing the injustice that happens in their community. In these meetings, a moral battle is framed by community leaders since it is the job of this coalition to bring about truth and justice.

At Navy and city meetings, we see the physical and political battle that Black San Franciscans are in. These meetings are true microcosms of the larger battlefield of the city. In these meetings, there is first a political battle as still seen through a moral lens. Residents attend these meetings with the politicized intent of seeking inclusion and representation in the decision-making process. They want a fair say in shaping the transition of the neighborhood and ultimately a place at the table.

There is also a natural intra-racial political battle in these meetings between upper class and lower-class Black residents. The divide is mainly between Blacks that are well

connected to the city and have “made it” and Blacks that are not asked to the decision-making table and generally portrayed as villains in the mainstream city media. At these meetings, the divide is seen best within debates about the best means for keeping Blacks in San Francisco. A kind of political unity within the Black community may be expected but because of increasing economic polarization, the poor and middle-to-upper class have different prioritized interests (Dawson 1994).

In addition to a political battle, there is also a physical battle at Navy and City Hall meetings. Residents feel as if their bodies and voices are controlled when they try to speak out in defense of their community. Their voices are policed by the two-minute limits on public comments. Their bodies are also controlled by the excessive presence of police officers who line the perimeter of the room during meetings. In spite of this, they find ways to still have some control in these meetings. Residents who frame their community as under attack use counter containment strategies of resistance, like meeting disruptions, to challenge macro level city decision-making process that typically minimize community interests.

In the beginning of this chapter I ask two main questions. The first is under what conditions are what appear to be the disruptive behaviors of community residents understandable and second, why do Black residents feel they are constantly at war with San Francisco. In this chapter, I have described several behaviors residents exhibit that under normal circumstances would seem rude. During meetings, residents arrive late, call out, yell out of turn, act competitive, leverage their power with police, and ignore the rules of public comment. Outside the context of these meetings, their behaviors can be looked at as inappropriate, unnecessary, and excessive. However, residents display these behaviors for very particular reasons.

I have found that inappropriate behaviors in institutional spaces constitute the tools of resistance that challenge macro-level city decision-making processes in San Francisco. The community's resistance redirects the discourse toward a focus on community issues in battle sites. Because lower to middle-class Blacks are not asked to be on the agenda as upper class ones are, they feel they need to force their voices to be heard. They look at the Black experience as continuing the constant struggle for justice overall, but also on a micro level in these meetings. Residents are forceful because they know their ideas and comments are routinely contained and dismissed, so they "do politics" in a different way than others with more respected status.

Secondly, it is true that Black residents feel they are constantly at war with the city of San Francisco and that is because their history has been such. Their past battles over redlining, discrimination, and urban renewal are no different from present-day battles with urban redevelopment and gentrification. Living a life of constant struggle causes Black San Franciscans to be in a complicated and dire position as I discussed in chapter 2. As I discuss in my first chapter, Black San Franciscans were first looked at a problem as they forced integration in spaces that were ill prepared for such a change. Many residents believe they are still a problem and "in the way" of larger development plans the city has. In response, residents have always come up with solutions to defend themselves and stay in the battle. Some Black residents who are more financially stable choose to interact with a city government controlled by white elites only to gain power over their capital. Others question if money diminishes the racial pride and solidarity of upper class Black residents. Lower-class Black residents fight in a war where they are not respected as legitimate, but instead seen as perpetually dissatisfied rule breakers. This is because these residents are fighting for

the quality of their lives and rather than routinely attending a meeting because it is their job and they are paid to. There is a big difference here and residents know that.

Black residents feel they are constantly at war with the city of San Francisco because there is always an institutional entity that seeks to define them as a problem in need of a solution, much like the histories of ghettos. As Logan and Moloch pointed out, these interlocking systems of politics, the economy, and the police all work together for the interests of making the city more competitive and increasing returns to investors. Because of this, there is a serious battle happening between poor residents of color defending the only status they have left, which is that of living in their neighborhood. It is a long battle that has lasted for years and they intend on continuing to fight it for years to come.

V. Conclusion

Overview

Whenever the topics of Blackness or Black neighborhoods are discussed in Black San Francisco, the theme of urban renewal is deeply entangled in the story. During my time there I have learned that the community is in a crisis, caught between its past and its present situation in a way that often obscures the ideal path into the future. During my initial round of interviews, I was primarily concerned with the out migration of Black residents. I was looking into questions of why they may have fled, or how they may have felt pushed out in some way, and was looking to investigate the influence of different factors contributing to their leaving. Without any intentional probing or asking about urban renewal in my fieldwork, it became a common theme present across many interactions public and private: in meetings, in conversations with residents, and during the course of my volunteer work. I began to learn what “Black” meant in San Francisco, finding that it was intimately tied into the concept of “urban renewal,” and that the concept was integral to the context and the subtext of many conversations concerning current redevelopment in the neighborhood.

The words “Black” and “urban renewal” immediately became connected to a shared history of a larger story of dispossession, instability and the presence of a racial hierarchy in San Francisco. These processes explain not only why Black neighborhoods transformed into racialized ghettos but also how residents inverted this process by turning segregation into a means for creating congregation. Today, the words “Black” and “urban renewal” are also immediately connected to a story that leaves Black residents on an unequal playing field in contemporary politics. Because of disinvestment and destabilization their neighborhoods

suffer from a mix of social, political and economic inequalities as manifested through increased policing, environmental vulnerability, and institutional control by the city's departments.

I learned that conversations about gentrification and redevelopment have proven to be good forums for talking about the state of Black San Francisco. Such discussions highlight the connections between past dispossession and current redevelopment, and often cause residents to recall a nostalgic history of “how things used to be.” They remember a unity that is no longer felt within the larger Black community. This history is sometimes discussed fondly, in some ways memorializing a time that as a community they felt more in control and united over what happens in their neighborhoods. What is usually not shared in public stories but only privately among community members is the traumatic history of the root shock they endured and the effective destabilization of the community that this helped to further. This link between past renewal, the acknowledgement of the community's failure to “pick back up the pieces,” and contemporary redevelopment affects the way Black residents views current avenues for neighborhood mobility. The insistence by city officials on a “newer and softer” kind of development this time around is not enough to heal wounds that continue to fester despite the passage of time. These traumas have been routinely swept to the side and ignored along with other historical problems of the Black ghetto. In this way, the struggle of Black San Francisco to rebuild and heal from urban renewal is one tied in many ways to a larger national struggle that has been intensified by the heightened rate of gentrification. This struggle in the city has also been heightened because of the influx of wealth from the Silicon Valley. In San Francisco, this particular battle is mostly fought by low-income Blacks who are pushed out, displaced and do not see a place for themselves in this modern economy.

Conversations about redevelopment and gentrification most often operate within a context that makes clear the politics of who is “in” and who is “out”. Middle-to-upper class Blacks who have “made it” are in, but as this study seeks to explore, what about low-income Blacks? Where do they fit?

Conversations about redevelopment and gentrification also bring to light the vulnerability of particular neighborhoods given the fatal coupling of race and space. The degree to which the Black community has been destabilized in the past puts neighborhoods at a distinct disadvantage, particularly for low-income Blacks during periods of drastic neighborhood change. My study, like others, confirms the continued inequality of distressed urban ghettos that manifests its negative effects in a fairly large variety of ways. So while it is not just about redevelopment, this process is similar to other instances of change that caused similar loss of control and affected mobility in the neighborhood, while offering few if any benefits to its residents. In my conversations with residents, they reveal these cumulative factors that affect the life they live in the neighborhood. In the chess game chapter, I discuss how Sarah, a 30 year old middle-class resident described that community change and mobility is not just about gentrification or redevelopment. After asking her why, Sarah explained “it's everything that goes with it” (Fieldnote entry- June 21, 2010).

She gave an example of the domino effect to illustrate the interconnectedness, claiming that redevelopment may start it, but it is quickly followed by a failing education system, less affordable housing, the lack of quality childcare, and the unavailability of local fresh food. The collective nature of these issues offers confirmation that place matters greatly for all residents, but especially Black residents who were particularly hard hit in our transition into a more modern economy, chiefly because of employment discrimination and the locations of

their neighborhoods. From there, the inequality these neighborhoods have suffered led to their current vulnerability to environmental racism, redevelopment, and increased surveillance and policing.

In addition to the inability of most residents to keep up with the high cost of living in San Francisco, the inequality of the Fillmore and Bayview-Hunters Point neighborhoods drives the intra-racial Black class divisions even wider due to discrepancies between the ways that lower-class and middle-class Blacks play the chess game. Middle-to-upper class Black residents flee because they have the means to move into other neighborhoods. They do so to prevent their family from falling into the cycles of poverty in Black ghettos, because they know inequality in opportunity causes impoverished areas to suffer from poor schooling, crime, and a relative lack of community resources. So, they flee the neighborhood or leave the city altogether, but continue to work in the city. Lower-class Blacks lack the financial resources to be able to flee the ghetto, but also are pulled by the built up credibility and personal history in their neighborhoods. Additionally, lower-class Blacks are not pulled to places outside of San Francisco because of the lack of opportunities similar to San Francisco. Poor Black residents who don't have much in the way of material possessions value the physical space and form tighter social bonds in their neighborhoods, and will tend to see them in a different light than middle-to-upper class Blacks. Poor Blacks frequently force their way into public discussions, which are often the only platforms they are given to speak about their concerns and in particular, public comment. Middle- to- upper class Blacks are seemingly invited to the decision-making table with the goal of increasing the quality of life for Black residents. Although this invitation seems to evince concern for the quality of Black community life, often it is no more than the downtown power-brokers' concern to have

Black faces as tokens at the table. Being asked to the table instead of having to struggle to have one's voice heard at public forums corresponds with an increased chance of having city stakeholders listen as to seriously consider your concerns. In order for middle-to-upper-class Blacks to be invited, however, they have to choose their battles wisely and take into account any financial or political motivation underlying any decisions made by the white power structure.

Discrimination and the coupling of race and space cause vast inequality, and therefore effectively widen the divisions within the Black community. Conventional ideas of upward mobility held by many mainstream Americans, would view middle-to- upper-class Blacks as “smarter” for moving out of the ghetto, while lower-class Blacks as individuals that are shiftless, who have willingly given up their opportunity to better themselves. This logic of social mobility within neighborhoods is flawed because it tends to view mobility only through a lens framed by individual characteristics, choices and personality, rather than addressing the underlying structural history of neighborhood disinvestment, dispossession and opportunity hoarding.

Chapter Summary

In Chapter One, “I remember what the Fillmore was like: the social history of Black San Francisco,” I describe the history of asymmetrical power relations between Black neighborhoods and city institutions, and how it has a significant effect on contemporary relationships between Blacks and city power-brokers such as corporations, the redevelopment agency and the Navy. In Chapter One, I also discuss the social history of Blacks in the city from 1943 to 2010. From the aftermath of initially desegregating the Navy, to redlining, to Negro removal and the dramatic destabilization of the community due to

deindustrialization, and then on further to drugs and employment and housing discrimination, Black residents have survived a great deal of social trauma over the last half-century and more (Fullilove 2005). Like everyone else, Black San Franciscans possess a complex personhood that weaves the history of its neighborhoods in with the ways they envision the future. They want the future plans for the neighborhood to reflect their history as a past cultural hub, but also desire a general acknowledgement of the erosion of their safety net, which put them at a distinct disadvantage in terms of their position within the racial hierarchy. They perceive their experience to be disadvantaged compared to other ethnic groups, and see other groups who are able to benefit from city policies as recipients of unfair advantages.

Chapters Two and Three discuss the “chess game” and “the battle” as two frames that many Black residents use to make sense of their position in the city. Chapter Two discusses the chess game and illustrates the way lower-class Blacks often feel very much that they are losers in a game the city plays with their neighborhoods and lives. I talk more explicitly about the complicated position of Black San Francisco and the importance of place. In a city that prides itself on racial diversity, San Francisco ironically possesses a pronounced history of Black neighborhoods being transformed into marginalized spaces. I discuss the temporariness and unexpectancy that Black residents feel on a daily basis as a result of this racialized history and how that past informs their views on impending gentrification and redevelopment in the neighborhood. Finally in Chapter Two I discuss the different strategies used by both lower-class and middle-to-upper class Black residents to try to win this chess game. I also talk about the rules of the game, often played at public meetings where both classes are present.

In Chapter Three, I introduce and describe the larger political and economic landscape of the city of San Francisco, which can be referred to as “a battlefield” in order to contextualize the discussion of Black residents. I discuss the political and economic system that frames their neighborhoods in ways that are economically beneficial to the larger city, particularly to politicians and developers, and not to low-income Black residents. In the second part of the chapter, I illustrate this battlefield on a micro level, by using observations at meetings about different “battle sites” to describe the strategies that Black residents use to fight for inclusive conversations on the future of their neighborhoods. Institutional representatives attempt to use various strategies to “contain” the bodies of Black residents, and as a community, residents react by using “counter-containment” strategies to regain control of the conversation.

Study Contributions

“Black San Francisco: The Politics of Race and Space in the City” contributes in many ways to our understandings of the experience of Black residents in San Francisco and also across the nation. It challenges some of the flawed logics used to justify restoring urban, once-predominately-Black spaces, but it also provides insight and perspective on certain policies needed to address the successful restoration these neighborhoods to benefit all who are involved, especially Black residents. This dissertation also extends the conversation and challenges many of the conclusions of older studies of the Black community, and discusses the increasing role that class realities play in further dividing the community and further obscuring the ideal, most logical strategy for creating a permanent space for Black people in the city well into the future.

“The Problem” Vs. Structural Racism

As I discuss in my introduction, Du Bois’s *The Philadelphia Negro* set the stage for studying the struggles in urban Black communities. Like Du Bois, I have found that although our reality is far removed chronologically from life in 1896, even today in San Francisco Blacks are still looked at as being “the problem” and as the sole reason why their neighborhoods have been ghettoized. I would also extend this idea and add that in 2010 when I left the field, it was *poor* Blacks who were very much stigmatized, as opposed to the middle-to-upper class Blacks that have fled ghettoized areas. As I learned from residents and their conversations concerning neighborhood redevelopment, Bayview-Hunters Point and the Fillmore are not in the condition they are *because* of the deficiencies in character or motivation of Black residents, but instead as a result of the years of discrimination and disinvestment the residents have endured. Du Bois’s pathbreaking book is crucial in redirecting the conversation about the condition of neighborhoods back to structural racism and disinvestment. In the search for an answer to my first research question, about how residents account for the social, political, and racial factors that shaped Black neighborhoods today, my study confirms the importance of this history as part of their large collective story. As Du Bois argues, it is important for residents to redirect the conversation on the condition of Black neighborhoods back to structural racism, instead of blaming it on the personalities or choices of Blacks.

In this dissertation, I provide a history of Black San Francisco as seen from the perspective of Black residents. Telling the story from this perspective is important because grounding these perceptions within a historical context helps us better understand why Black residents continue to be portrayed as if their disparities caused by their group's racial

predispositions, make them “part of the problem,” adding them as dead weight to any existing obstacles in the progression of a radically transforming future for the city. Being seen as problem, of course, will tend to serve as a limiting factor for the desire to become more rooted into the city despite a history of exclusion, and the tension between these opposing forces will naturally produce a *complex personhood* for Blacks in San Francisco. They are torn among different desires and needs: to resist, to lay low, to benefit from their connections (if they can), or simply to leave (if that is an option).

Policy Conversations about Redevelopment and Gentrification

Contemporary conversations around redevelopment and gentrification between community members and stakeholders are more complicated than they seem. Most Black residents, but specifically lower-class ones, come to the table with feelings of vulnerability and distrust because of the manifestations of a racial caste system under which institutional stakeholders find themselves comfortably occupying the upper strata. Black residents emphasize the unequal field they encounter as players in the chess game during policy conversations about redevelopment, and often speak to a desire for concrete confirmation of tangible benefits from a given neighborhood transition.

Black residents perceive redevelopment from a moral perspective, and want an acknowledgment of the collective consequences suffered by those at or near the bottom of a racial hierarchy. They call attention to a specific vulnerability for San Francisco Black residents, which has placed them at a distinct disadvantage and forced them onto an unequal playing field. What I have seen happening is that in these conversations, Black residents and those financially invested in the neighborhood speak respectively from opposing viewpoints

that value the neighborhood differently. Black residents use their moral orientation of Christianity or Islam to highlight the greed and dishonesty of those both Black and white who mask a desire to increase the size of their personal bank accounts as a desire to “better” the neighborhood. Residents want what is “good” for Black neighborhoods and for themselves, and in this way, what is “good” is assumed to have a corrective effect when attempting to address the long history of racism and discrimination that has caused such inequality. These conversations become disjointed and will continue to be when redeveloping once predominately Black neighborhoods that have gone through periods of root shock and disinvestment.

Public policy must seek to heal these neighborhoods that are still wounded from the root shock of urban renewal and other forces of community destabilization. Although healing would be the most socially just and democratic outcome that could be imagined for these communities, it is unlikely to preoccupy policy-makers. It is unfortunately true that current Navy and redevelopment officials do not believe it is their job to do anything above cleaning up and developing the neighborhood, but they work for institutions that have deeply entrenched relationships with Black neighborhoods. These relationships are rooted in the opposing views of residents and stakeholders towards aspects of neighborhood value, which give rise to vastly different ideas for how best to go about the renewal of the space. These relationships are also rooted in Black residents getting the short end of the stick in urban redevelopment projects. One solution for policies has been the use of community benefit agreements (CBAs) that are contracts created between community institutions and land developers (Saito 2012). CBAs have proven to be effective means in most cases for leveraging low-income residents into coalition building with other institutions with similar

goals (Saito 2012). These agreements detail the tangible benefits to community residents of particular development projects in the city.

Current redevelopment can also benefit from collective and inclusive processes of renewal. In *Urban Alchemy: Restoring Joy in America's Sorted-Out Cities*, Fullilove recommends ways of restoring and renewing neighborhoods in a collective process by keeping the “whole city in mind.” She advocates for playing what she calls “the game of urban alchemy” which includes nine elements of urban restoration, including some that seek to find common ground in the loss of community ties while incorporating an inclusive vision of where the neighborhood is going (2013: 299). Her elements also advocate unslumming neighborhoods, clearing up the disconnect that residents and stakeholders have with spaces, and cultivating overall respect for what has been built (2013:299).²⁸ Elements such as these acknowledge the struggle and serve to clear the battlefield in cities like San Francisco, attempting fairly to administer disputes over land, power and control. Such an approach also encourages the collective, community-based thinking needed to recreate neighborhoods by bringing residents, developers and stakeholders to the decision-making table. Most importantly, it shifts focus away from individuals as the sole cause for neighborhood destabilization, and calls attention to the historical processes that have influenced the downward spirals of such communities. In that way, like DuBois’s study, it highlights the benefits of mutual self-interest, shared responsibility, and collectivity that may serve to better the conditions of today’s urban ghettos.

²⁸ For more on Fullilove’s elements of urban restoration see: Mindy Thompson Fullilove. 2013. *Urban Alchemy: Restoring Joy in America's Sorted-Out Cities*. New York, NY: New Village Press.

Black Intra-racial Class Tensions in a Modern Economy

In *Black Bourgeoisie*, Frazier makes the overall claim that the development of a Black elite class is tied to the economic and social changes within the American community. At times, when Blacks were formally considered second class citizens, different classes within the Black community still played the chess game. The game is nothing new, but it reflects a long tradition of Black residents having to negotiate power relations regarding their lives and neighborhoods. Frazier made the claim that middle-to-upper class Blacks try to exist in both the Black and white worlds. Within the larger landscape of the white-dominated world, such individuals exist simultaneously in a fantasy of inclusion, or in other words, a world of make-believe. From the perspective of lower-class residents, the Black bourgeoisie inhabits a world of illusions, in which they are the bottom of the racial hierarchy of San Francisco.

I have seen that modern middle- to- upper class Black residents know their place in the racial hierarchy, but choose to refine their strategies for playing the chess game in order to remain connected to the city's power structure for the benefit of the larger Black community, and primarily for themselves. As one 65 year-old, Black, middle- to upper-class pastor explained about his association with white politicians, "their money is just for access, that's what Willie Brown used to say, this is for access! Why would I talk to a rich white boy for free? They gotta bring money, they gotta donate to the cause...to the campaign or to some charity that I'm supporting, some community organization just to talk to me!" (fieldnote entry, May 2008). Middle- to upper-class Blacks play the cards at hand and advance themselves by seeking to profit personally, and to some degrees communally, from their interactions with powerful whites. In San Francisco, middle-to-upper class Blacks perceive

themselves as Black “middlemen” existing in both Black and white worlds (Patillo 2007)²⁹. I would argue that Black middlemen see themselves in a middle position, however low-income Blacks do not, believing that middle-to-upper class Blacks have already sold out and do not have the interests of the Black masses at heart. In this way, middle-to-upper class Blacks are taking their given position in the hierarchy and using it to beat elite whites at their own game. They perceive themselves as winning the chess game strategically, which to them, is why they are asked to be representatives of “the Black voice” on city-initiated boards. Ironically, while middle-to-upper class Blacks win an increased status and seemingly equal decision-making power, white elite power in San Francisco has still not lost, and the process is still not egalitarian.

Despite their involvement in city politics, middle-to-upper class Blacks are in practice most often skeptical of the good intentions of the city government concerning genuine increases in the quality of life for Black residents and neighborhood improvements, but less so than lower-class Blacks. Revisiting Frazier’s initial claim that Black class relations are rooted in the social and economic changes of the time, in this dissertation I have attempted to bring these ideas into the present day, dealing with the changing times and the differences in the diversity and structure of our economy. As I described in my introduction, when Blacks migrated to the Bay Area for work, their positions at the shipyard were “good jobs,” jobs that paid well and required little training, which allowed them to buy a house and enjoy some financial stability with little or no formal secondary (or in many cases even primary) education. With deindustrialization and the transition to a new knowledge-based, skills-

²⁹ In *Black in the Block: The Politics of Race and Space in the City*, Mary Pattillo provides a rich discussion of the application of Frazier’s *Black Bourgeoisie* to contemporary middlemen politics in North Kentwood Oakland in Chicago. (2007:81-86)

based, white-collar economy, many middle-to-upper class Blacks survived this transition while lower-income Blacks did not. With their education and connections, middle-class Blacks play the chess game in a way that increases their representation and status; while lower-class Blacks tend to distrust the system, and seek to utilize more community-led, grassroots methods separated from the city's elite in order to keep the process genuine and honest.

Today's economy, built so much more heavily than in the past upon reliance on secondary education and specialized knowledge, tends to transform and redevelop the city's oldest neighborhoods, leaving poor uneducated Blacks that lack the means to flee the most vulnerable to institutional control. This is how lower-class Black residents perceive their place in the battle over the Fillmore and Bayview-Hunters Point. This study questions the stability and presence of a Black lower-class in San Francisco in the future. Although at the height of Black residency in the 1970s there were as many as 96,000 Black inhabitants, accounting for 13.4% of the city's population, in 2012 Blacks only accounted for 6.8% of San Francisco's population. As I have discussed extensively, the city's solution for this was the creation of an African American Out- Migration Task Force in 2007. However, my findings reveal that both lower- and middle-to-upper class Black residents are skeptical about proposed recommendations being put into action and are not convinced that this will reverse Black flight. If changes are not made, the Black population will continue to dwindle in the city and be dispersed to other places in the region.

Study Implications

Re-establishing Roots

How could the current condition of San Francisco's Black neighborhoods be improved? My research suggests that the community would feel better, more rooted, safer, and more stable if they had a social hub for Black culture in the city. Reverend White, a 68 year-old leader of one of the oldest Black churches in the neighborhood summed it up this way:

Now tell me where there's an Africa town, where's there a Swahili town? Nowhere! Black folk are invisible in this city, when it comes to a real hub of economic development. [There are] businesses up and down Fillmore, about three businesses there and the only single free standing building that belongs to a Black person is that West Bay center, a third Baptist development in 1990, right there on the corner of Eddy and Fillmore. That's the only one. That area's supposed to [have] been an area redeveloped by Blacks; 6 acres, but it ended up going to whites, Asians, and you got Yoshi's there, [the] jazz club. Now I'm not being a racist in San Francisco, but tell me, where is there anything down there in Chinatown that Black folk are doing? Tell me if there's anything over there in Japantown that Black folks are doing? Tell me if there's anything down there in the financial district, if there's a building Black folk developed? (Fieldnote entry-July 2008).

Reverend White expresses his desire to recreate a Black social hub in the city where Black residents' own buildings and operate businesses. This space he speaks of as being marked for Black use used to be primarily in the Fillmore. Blacks felt safe and felt connected with the rest of their community there. The lack of a social hub and the absences of Black-owned businesses speaks to the presence of a racial caste system that is still alive in San Francisco. The jealousy that Blacks feel for the stability of San Francisco's Chinese community has been explained well through tools provided in Claire Jean Kim's book *Bitter Fruit: The Politics of Black-Korean conflict in New York City* (2000). Kim describes how Blacks are less equipped to capitalize on the potential of small business investment

opportunities because they are relegated to the bottom of our racial caste system (Kim 2000). White elite power structures the Asian community to operate a position higher than Blacks but lower than whites, signifying that they are better able to capitalize on the small business model, therefore allowing them to create a social hub for their cultural identity within the city. The Black community could derive many benefits from a stronger, more cohesive political and economic base, not divided by issues of class, so that they can equip themselves for better community control.

Future Research

This study suggests a need for 1) community-based decision-making bodies 2) coalition-building and 3) Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs). Black community residents want change, but their ideas of the type of change they want and how they will benefit is different from that of developers and the city's stakeholders. Future research should look more carefully at the use of Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) on a city-by-city basis, paying close attention to the ways that low income residents can leverage their needs by building coalitions with unions, organizations, and universities and obtaining set agreements. Since this study concludes that low-income residents, in contrast to middle-to-upper income Blacks, lack the networks to be taken seriously in conversations around redevelopment, building coalitions with other credible institutions with similar goals can positively influence this process.

In "How Low-Income residents can benefit from urban development: The LA Live Community Benefits Agreement," Leland Saito presents the Los Angeles LA Live CBA as a successful case in which the agreements have benefitted low-income residents of the city. The presence of a CBA enhanced the ability of low-income residents to connect with unions

and other community organizations. In San Francisco, this has not been the case yet with the redevelopment of the Hunters Point Shipyard. The Lennar Corporation, one of the biggest home building developers, owns the most parcels of the shipyard. A Community Benefit Agreement was created, but residents are still skeptical of the progress because many agreements have not been followed through as of yet (Jones and Yesko 2013). Bayview Hunters Point, for example, still awaits many of the affordable housing commitments made with the Lennar Corporation in the CBA. Saul Bloom, an activist with an environmental organization in Bayview Hunters Point said in reference to Lennar's promise, "We remain skeptical about their commitment to getting it done... What we'd like to see is some real action on the promises that were made to the public" (Jones and Yesko 2013). It is hoped that agreements will be made, but residents will still feel as if they are losing the chess game if particular benefits that are still looming are not made concrete.

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