



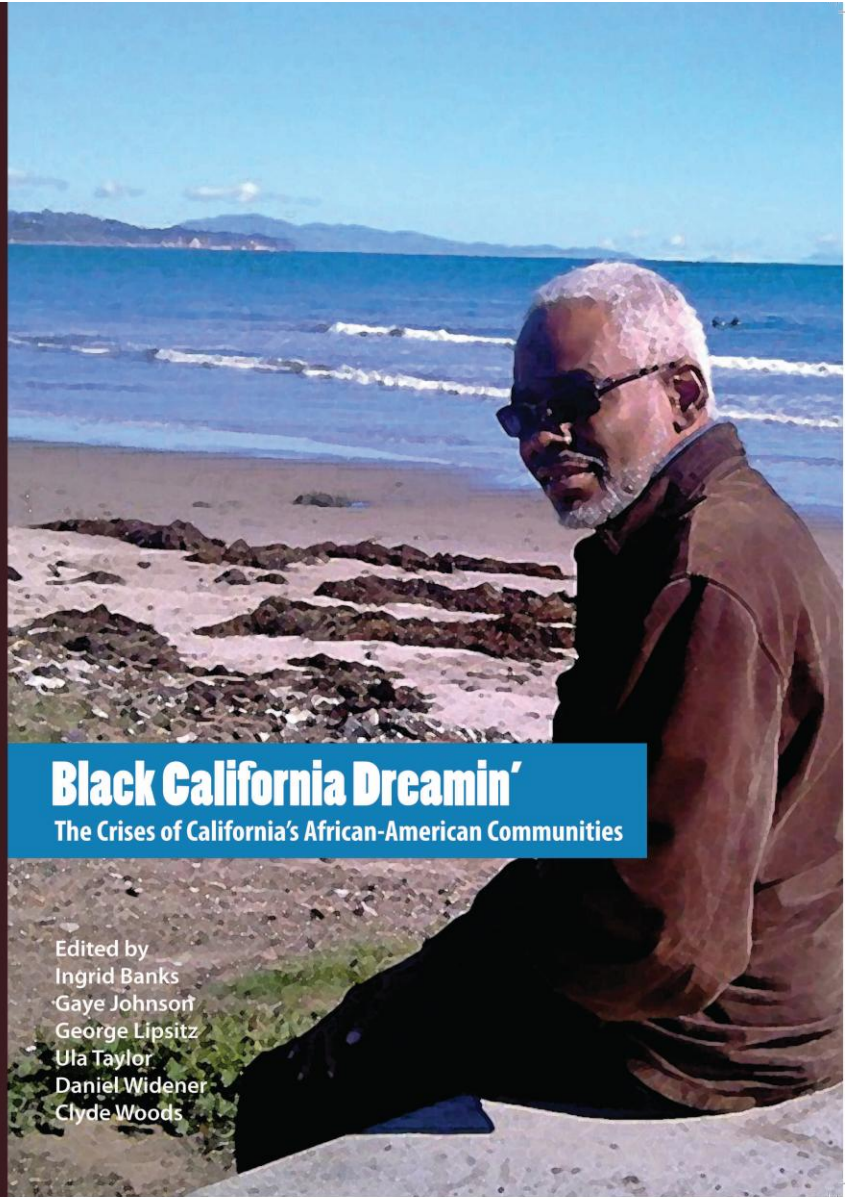
"The privileging of indigenous knowledge, of blues epistemology, and of millions of organic intellectuals denies power to another elite-led regime of stagnation. What is left? A society where every member is both a teacher and a student."

—Clyde Woods, *Development Arrested*



Center for
Black
Studies
Research

Black California Dreamin' The Crises of California's African-American Communities



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Edited by
Ingrid Banks
Gaye Johnson
George Lipsitz
Ula Taylor
Daniel Widener
Clyde Woods



Black California Dreamin'

The Crises of California's African-American Communities

Editors

Ingrid Banks, Gaye Johnson, George Lipsitz, Ula Taylor, Daniel Widener
& Clyde Woods

C B S R

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Southern California Library - The People's Library

6120 S. Vermont Avenue

Los Angeles, CA 90044

The photo depicts the Library still standing while other buildings around it were burned down in the aftermath of the Los Angeles Rebellion in 1992. One of those buildings was a liquor store across the street from the library.



Clyde A. Woods
January 17, 1957 - July 6, 2011

Photograph by Lluvia Higuera,
commissioned by the
Department of Black Studies,
University of California, Santa Barbara

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Black California Dreamin': The Crises of California's African-American Communities owes a great debt to Clyde Woods. His vision of Black California Studies will leave an indelible mark on how we think about the African-American presence throughout California and we thank him for helping all of us to think more innovatively about how we engage work that merges different genres and speaks to a diverse audience. The co-editors are also indebted to the authors of *Black California Dreamin'* for permitting us to publish their work in the pages that follow.

Alison Jefferson worked with Clyde in writing grants for the Black California Dreamin' project and organizing the conference, held in May 2011. Alison was Clyde's right-hand in dealing with all aspects of the conference. Her incredible efforts laid the foundation for the publication of this volume and we thank her immensely. We also thank Emily Tumpson Molina for her work in assisting Clyde with the Black California Dreamin' project. We are especially thankful to Alva Stevenson for graciously agreeing to serve as Honorary Co-editor of the volume.

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Clyde would approve of our appropriating his image in our visual take on the Black California Dreamin' theme. Along with Donna, we thank Clyde's son Malik Woods and cousin Deborah Bassard for their unwavering support.

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Clyde Woods

INTRODUCTION

*Ingrid Banks, Gaye Johnson, George Lipsitz, Ula Taylor
& Daniel Widener*

“California Dreamin’,” the 1965 single by The Mamas and the Papas, captured a shared nostalgia for California, one that emphasized environmental and social warmth as sources of universal longing. The iconic Golden State described by the group has indeed figured largely in the collective imagination of African-Americans. Yet there is much more beyond the dream of sun, sand, and surf in black memories and experiences of California. A black “California Dreamin’” has been a critical mixture of promise and adversity, warmth and struggle. Perhaps a more fitting depiction of black collective experience of the state can be found in Bobby Womack’s 1968 rendition of “California Dreamin’,” which we read as a more accurate portrayal of the black relationship to the “California Dream.” Womack’s version of the song adds gritty rhythm and blues arrangements and conveys black histories and expressions of resolve and resistance in the face of strife. The combination of sensibilities captured by Womack is a fitting analogy for Professor Clyde Woods’s own dream of assembling a diverse group of academics and journalists to consider the meaning of what he opined, “Black California Dreamin’: The Crises of California’s African-American Communities.”

After receiving grants from the University of California’s Center for New Racial Studies and UC Santa Barbara’s Interdisciplinary Humanities Center to fund the “Black California Dreamin’” project, Woods began laying the seeds for what he envisioned as a University of California-wide initiative on California Studies. To that end, in July 2010, Woods sent out a call for papers requesting writings on the presence of blacks in California and on May, 13, 2011, in the midst of battling cancer, he hosted the “Black California Dreamin’ Conference” at UC Santa Barbara. Tragically, as Woods began to collect papers for the volume, he passed away on July 6, 2011. At the time, he was also engaged in working on an essay for the volume that he unfortunately was unable to complete. However, that essay, published here as a “work in progress,” concludes his dream of “Black California Dreamin’.”

Black California Dreamin’: The Crises of California’s African-American Communities critically examines the multiple challenges facing black communities in California. It examines poverty, housing, urban renewal, gentrification, incarceration, violence, education, homelessness, and the economic devastation of home foreclosures. Prior

to the past three decades, African-Americans already led the state with the largest high school dropouts, homelessness, incarceration, and mortality. Since the economic crisis, blacks have also experienced extreme rates of unemployment and housing foreclosure, the elimination of life sustaining social and educational programs, and the closure of major organizations, institutions, and cultural programs.

In addition to the problems facing black communities in California, the editors of this anthology are also aware of the inequalities that exist within academia. Traditional academia pivots on the meta-narrative of a “scholarly canon,” thereby rendering forms of knowledge and scholarship that exist outside of said canon as non-normative. We understand the importance of beginning a conversation whereby new archives and databases can be developed that privilege marginalized narratives. *Black California Dreamin’* is an important part of this conversation.

From the beginning of the project, Woods envisioned a volume that would bring together diverse voices to explain *Black California Dreamin’*. He imagined social scientific, humanistic, artistic, and journalistic discussions existing within the same space. Woods was centrally concerned with chronicling both the past and present conditions facing California’s African-American communities. To that end, the following papers cross disciplines, genres, eras, and locales.

Malik Woods’s eulogy for his father serves as the foreword to *Black California Dreamin’*. “In Memoriam” illustrates both the love and esteem that Malik held for his dad, as well as the brilliance of a son and student mentored by an exceptional father, thinker, activist and teacher. In his opening remarks, Malik reminds us that everyone possesses knowledge and it is imperative that we are open to listening to and learning from each other. Malik Woods’s “In Memoriam” stands as an example of the kinds of conversations and stories that we embrace in *Black California Dreamin’* and hope to nurture beyond these pages.

In “The Search for Significance in Interstitial Space: San Jose and its Great Black Migration 1941-48,” Herbert G. Ruffin II illustrates how community building during the Second Great Migration (1941-1970) was linked to the black residents of San Jose working together in spite of racial discrimination during the postwar period. By focusing on San Jose, Griffin challenges the primacy of large cities in discussions about black community building in California. Smaller municipalities were equally important and given that black residents were the smallest racial and ethnic minority group in locations such as San Jose, Griffin shows how they were invested in creating and maintaining a distinctive black community. The importance of maintaining community also emerges in the opening essay on gentrification in San Francisco.

Christina Jackson and Nikki Jones argue that the devastating impact of past urban renewal projects shapes how current development projects are viewed by black residents in the predominantly black neighborhood Bayview-Hunter’s Point in San Francisco. In “Remember the Fillmore: The Lingering History of Urban Renewal in Black San Francisco,” the authors present ethnographic data illustrating how

black residents use memories of the Fillmore as a cautionary tale in pushing back against redevelopment projects in their community. The crisis of urban renewal and gentrification in the Fillmore and Bayview-Hunter's Point neighborhoods in San Francisco is indeed a crisis of California's black communities. The perils of gentrification continue in relationship to black entrepreneurship in the volume's next essay.

In "From Fillmore to No More': Black-Owned Business in a Transforming San Francisco," Jasmine Johnson and Shaun Ossei-Owusu present a study of black independently-owned Marcus Bookstore in San Francisco as a means to show how black-owned businesses and black residents have fared under gentrification. In grappling with what happens to black businesses when their clientele are pushed out of the city, Johnson and Ossei-Owusu provide important insight into how black residents attempt to challenge the displacement that comes with gentrification. The essay tells a little-known history of one important black business that has important ramifications on our understanding of the racialized impact and effects of urban renewal and its attendant demographic alterations of the city of San Francisco. Along with gentrification and the survival of black businesses, the political nature of education is also an issue facing black California in San Francisco as discussed in the next essay.

Savannah Shange explains how a climate of politically progressive schooling does not shield an educational institution from the trappings of neoliberal and state-controlled influence. In "This is Not a Protest': Managing Dissent in Racialized San Francisco," Shange presents an interesting contextualization and analysis of the June Jordan School for Equity (JJSE) in San Francisco as an example of how progressive educational sites work against as well as within powerful state practices. This tension should not be read as a "contradiction," but as representative of the very real negotiations that progressive educational institutions must enter. Students, staff, and teachers nevertheless work to push back against oppressive state policies through protest, even when their efforts are constructed as "not a protest, but a peace rally" by one of their own. As a result, particular educational outcomes in inner-city schools serving kids of color are ironically in line with the failings of the public school system that a school like JJSE attempts to resist. A discussion of the political ramifications of education are also presented in a Southern California context, as the following essay takes an historical view in relationship to the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD).

In "Criminals, Planters, and Corporate Capitalists: The Case of Public Education in Los Angeles," Damien Schnyder makes a critical connection between corporate-backed contemporary punitive policies in the LAUSD and the history of plantation-economy education that dominated the post-Reconstruction South. In making this connection, Schnyder argues that over the past three decades, California has passed legislation to limit the educational access of black (and brown) youth and therefore shares a troubling history with state and federal policy that aimed to prevent and

limit the education of blacks during the enslavement and post-enslavement periods. Not unlike the historical education-gap that African-Americans have endured in California, the wealth-gap has been equally devastating, particularly within the context of home-ownership as illustrated in the succeeding essay.

Emily Tumpson Molina argues convincingly that the loss of home-ownership among blacks devastates financial security and has consequences that extend to the community as a whole, even as the effects are varied among different black neighborhoods. In “Reversed Gains?: African-Americans in Foreclosures in the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area, 2008-2009,” Molina documents the prevalence of foreclosures in exurban areas in diagnosing which black communities have been harmed and how the devastation occurred. Traditional housing discrimination coupled with disinvestment in urban areas led black mortgage applicants disproportionately into exurban areas, making home ownership and suburbanization qualitatively different for African-Americans than for previous generations of whites leaving urban areas. The essay generates important new questions about the wealth-gap in California as it pertains to blacks, particularly in the Inland Empire of Los Angeles, where Molina notes that diversity is an important factor to consider in any study of the foreclosure crisis. A journalistic discussion of home-ownership along with changing neighborhood demographics within Black Los Angeles is presented in the following essay.

Erin Aubry Kaplan’s essay “Season of Change” serves as a bridge to politicized artistic renderings of “Black California Dreamin’.” Kaplan’s personal and honest reflection on the changing demographics in previously predominantly-black neighborhoods in Los Angeles is part of a broader discussion of how black and brown people negotiate the political and economic landscape that is shaping in-migration and out-migration in LA County. In reflecting on the dilemmas of residence, home ownership, and the changing demographics of LA, Kaplan shows how broad social changes register themselves meaningfully in everyday life in many ways, as does the next essay through a reading of artist Betye Saar’s work.

In “*Serving Time: Betye Saar’s Cage, the Criminalization of Poverty, and the Healing Power of Art in Black California*,” George Lipsitz presents artist Betye Saar’s exhibition *Cage* as a foundation to foreground various forms of imprisonment (i.e., within and outside of formal incarceration) and explains how Saar’s use of discarded objects articulate unique and powerful statements about power, race, and humanity in black life. Lipsitz demonstrates how art can be one source of meaningful resistance to the shame and immobilization caused by institutionalized racism. The essay provides a telling picture of how art functions within a social-cultural-political context, as does the performance piece that follows.

Stephanie Batiste’s *Stacks of Obits: A Performance Piece* serves as an example of George Lipsitz’s statement regarding the emotive and political power of art/performance and the kind of interdisciplinary conversation that Clyde Woods believed was to be so essential to the Black California Dreamin’ project. In the play,

Batiste “processes” a young woman’s scrapbook to chronicle the obituaries of young black people killed with guns in Los Angeles. The obituaries amassed illustrate how individuals attempt to maintain a connection to slain loved ones through funeral programs, newspaper articles, and photographs. The mourners engage in collecting these documents to create a community of memory and sorrow for those whose adolescent experience in America includes profound human loss.

In the afterword of the volume, Clyde Woods’s essay “‘A Cell is Not a Home’: Asset Stripping and Trap Economics in Central City East/Skid Row, Part 2,” highlights a number of crises that many black Californians presently face. In making regional connections, “Part 1” of Woods’s discussion on asset stripping and trap economics examined the disaster of African-American life in pre- and post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans. In “Les Misérables of New Orleans: Trap Economics and the Asset Stripping Blues, Part 1,” Woods examines how these economics and stripping are part of a complex system that produce and reproduce public and private traps. Here, in what we position as “Part 2” of Woods’s discussion on asset stripping and trap economics, he maps his earlier treatment onto Black Los Angeles. It is a rare pleasure to see, in this unfinished draft, Woods’s mind at work. As we read it, we could almost hear him thinking out loud. This was one of the final pieces of writing that Woods engaged in before passing away. It captures his brilliance, poise, and passion on both the disparities that are yet to be resolved and the justice and freedom that we hope to achieve.

FORWARD: IN MEMORIAM

Malik Woods

I really loved my dad, both as a father and as a friend, but more so as a teacher. He was a passionate teacher and he taught me my whole life. He taught me how to think both critically and broadly. And what made him such a great teacher was that he had an equally great passion for learning. He was a perpetual student and one of the best things that he ever said to me was that “the things you don’t know far outweigh the things you do.” This has been a kind of mantra that I’ve adopted to remind myself to keep exploring and to keep learning and to respect the knowledge that every person possesses, because, at the end of the day, there’s something to be learned from everyone and everything.

My dad and I used to have these long, seemingly unending conversations about politics, history, music, and religion, even when I was a child. He would go into great detail about subjects I had only a passing familiarity with, but he would guide me through them in such a way that I felt immediately engrossed by whatever it was we were talking about. He always challenged me to work harder and think deeper and because of that I have been able to achieve everything I have accomplished to date. Clyde Woods was the consummate professor at all times and in all ways. Even in his private life.

A few key principals always guided our conversations: respect the subject, seek the truth, and be mindful of the implications and ramifications of your conclusions. This philosophy was at the core of his success, both as a writer and a professor, because he knew that by constantly digging deeper and deeper into an idea or a subject you could discover some new facet that had previously gone unexplored. That you could perhaps find some new, more powerful truth that warranted the attention of others. By passing this philosophy to his countless students, my father was able to inspire a generation of critical thinkers all of whom are now deeply capable of discovering new truths and articulating them to the rest of the world. He inspired them not only to learn, but also to teach.

His success as a professor will be measured not in the number of students who passed through his classroom but in the number that went on to become teachers and professors themselves. Others have become beacons of intellectualism in their communities, many of whom are currently affecting great change in a broad set of

arenas: business, music, the arts, and especially in community organizing. All of his students benefitted from my father's tutelage and sincere passion for learning.

His students, of which I count myself as one, will stand as his greatest legacy.

And the reason that he was able to bring so much out of his students is that he believed that they had as much to teach him as he had to teach them. Clyde believed strongly that everyone has a story worth hearing and every once in a while those stories are truly inspiring. That was ultimately his greatest gift—his belief that important knowledge can be gained just as readily from new experiences with real people as it is from academic tomes. The same sort of people that historians and political theorists attempt to describe but rarely find themselves interacting with were the types of people my father was most interested in meeting. He was less concerned about pontificating about a community than he was about being a part of that community. He wanted to know how a community really processed an experience, and he wanted to hear that in their own voice.

We often hear people talk about those below the poverty line or those who are in marginalized communities. But how many of those people have actually had someone in that situation over for dinner, or sat in their house, and ate their food? Met their children and looked at the art on their walls? Heard their voice and their story? And then, how many of them discover that they're in fact far richer in ways that others fail to appreciate?

He believed that with every person he met there was an opportunity for learning. That there was some insight to be gained by talking, really talking, to the barber at the barbershop. By asking the homeless musician in the French Quarter his thoughts on income disparities and gentrification. By engaging with the community leader in South Central to see what they need and how he can help. By hearing the perspective of a young Haitian child not three months after her world was literally turned on its end. By listening to a voice that had thus far gone unheard.

For once you looked a little deeper there was a story worth hearing and one worth retelling. A compelling narrative of a life that was intrinsically important. The original voice carried an inherent honesty that so intrigued my father that he travelled the country and the world to hear and record the many voices that formed the chorus of a people.

He loved a good story...

Maybe it comes from his days as a self-published journalist or his time spent in the Mississippi Delta exploring the black American storytelling tradition. Or maybe it was just something that he was destined to do. The story of his life was so varied and so complex that it would've filled a book. He knew that this story was something worth retelling and often used his own experiences to develop common ground with his students and with the many people he met. He was happy to draw on his own experiences whether good or bad to create a bond with someone.

Even though he had experiences that would make most people distrustful of

others, he was a friend to so many. And those he didn't let in may have only saw him as a serious man.

But for him, his life and his profession were serious. He was a serious man, because he took what he did very seriously. It was more than a job; it was a calling. It was an opportunity to shape and form young minds, to give them the tools needed to have a profound impact on the future. And it was a chance to uplift communities that had been aspersed by our society by giving them a voice in the ivory tower, to speak of their own experiences, and to have those experiences sincerely appreciated and heard. He brought together people at all levels in our society and blurred the lines between the subject and the observer, with disregard for historical notions of pedagogy, hegemony, and community.

His goals weren't simple ones so it is no surprise his achievements, even at his relatively young age, were so profound. He really wanted to shake up the world. To make us see it differently. To see it for what it really is. He wanted us to smell it; hear it; listen to it; and, to be a part of it, all at once. And then, after all of that, to sit and reflect on it. To learn from it. To take it all in and then pass it along to someone else, so that they might learn from it and then be driven to start the cycle all over again. His goal was to draw our attention to all these voices that go unheard, voices like those he grew up with in West Baltimore, many of which were silenced far too young. Voices from his childhood and his community that were swept away in the tide of what some call "progress," but what my father saw for what it was: injustice. He wanted to speak for those people, but he also wanted them to have a podium to speak for themselves. Because he felt part of that community, of so many communities, simultaneously. And as a result he had an appreciation for everyone's background and everyone's perspective.

I think to some extent he accomplished that. He linked the academic and the non-academic and he did so in ways that will be difficult to undo. He opened the door to interpreting music as a record of a culture and an historical text, an idea that once out of the box is impossible to put back in. Additionally, his work in contemporary cultural studies showed that there's as much to be learned by the present conditions of a people as there is to be learned by their history and that the two are actually bonded; that a person cannot be separated from her history and you cannot study her history and not consider her present circumstances.

Clyde Woods accomplished a great deal in a short amount of time, because he believed in what he did and was passionate about it. We can all learn something from that. That if you find something you love, something you're willing to die for, and focus on that thing, then your potential is limitless. And what you accomplish will then be remembered for generations.

I'm thankful for my family, my friends, my father, his friends, and his colleagues. They are a collection of great minds and even greater people. They all shaped my life in ways I will never forget and for that I am eternally grateful.

**THE SEARCH FOR SIGNIFICANCE IN INTERSTITIAL SPACE:
SAN JOSE AND ITS GREAT BLACK MIGRATION, 1941-1968**

Herbert G. Ruffin II

During World War II, Santa Clara County and its county seat, San Jose, were dominated by agricultural pursuits. In that geographical region there were not many defense industrial employers hiring workers for the war effort; those jobs were in Oakland, Richmond, and Sausalito. The few defense industries that could have democratized Santa Clara County's workforce such as Hendy Iron Works, in nearby Sunnyvale, did not reach out to black workers as the Kaiser Shipyards did in Richmond, over fifty miles away. Instead, African-Americans were drawn to the Bay Area to work in the shipyards surrounding San Francisco Bay in unprecedented numbers. This part of the Great Migration narrative has been thoroughly examined since the early-1990s by historians such as Albert S. Broussard, Marilyn S. Johnson, Shirley Anne Wilson Moore, Donna Jean Murch, Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, and Quintard Taylor.¹ What has been ignored in earlier accounts of the Great Migration and US West historiographies is the study of small black communities in cities that have grown into major metropolises after 1950 like San Jose, which since 2005 has ranked as the tenth most populated US city, surpassing Detroit.²

This essay examines community building in San Jose in the context of African-American migration during the Second Great Migration. It argues that black San Jose's community development can be best understood as residents "working together to survive and thrive" amidst institutional and customary racial discriminatory barriers in housing, employment, and education. While this form of development reflects a national trend of black community development during the postwar period, in San Jose, its African-American community formation was unique in several ways. First, African-American migration into San Jose occurred after World War II, as a part of an intraregional migration from the industrial city to a semi-rural area. By 1970, rural parts of the Santa Clara Valley had become suburbs. Second, the largest waves of black migrants came to the South Bay for family, familiarity, and social justice. Finally, South Bay blacks attempted to cultivate an African-American community in a social geography where Mexican-Americans and Asian-Americans always had been the largest populations of color. This led to a different pattern of race relations in the greater San Jose region. None of these elements follow the traditional patterns already charted by urban scholars like Joe William

Trotter, James Grossman, and the aforementioned US West historians.³ In their studies, black migration is sparked by employment opportunities in manufacturing industries located either in Chicago or in other cities that developed rapidly after they industrialized for the war effort in the 1940s. In contrast, San Jose did not begin to develop into a metropolis until after 1950. Its suburbs were different in that they developed manufacturing industries and high-tech industries whose hiring practices never encouraged black applicants and thus have never sparked a mass migration of African-Americans similar to what occurred in cities with defense industries. Finally, unlike nearby San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Seattle, where African-Americans were the largest population of color from 1942 to 1980, San Jose blacks were always the smallest minority population, which had important ramifications for them in establishing and maintaining an identifiable black community in the postwar period.

Places that arguably fall into San Jose's model of urban growth include Anaheim, California; Arlington, Texas; Las Vegas, Nevada; Phoenix, Arizona; and San Diego, California, to name a few.⁴ To outside observers, the African-American communities in each of these cities are difficult to identify. And like San Jose, "boomburbs," as demographers Robert E. Lang, Patrick A. Simmons, and Jennifer Lefurgy call them, surrounded these cities.

Boomburbs represent a new type of urban growth rooted in the recent and rapid suburbanization of Sunbelt metropolises that exist mainly in the Southwest.⁵ Today, what cities like Mesa, Arizona and Riverside, California have in common are populations from 100,000 to 400,000 people, and an essentially suburban and multiracial character.⁶ They also have small downtown cores and vague borders. In addition, most of the fifty-three boomburbs cited by Lang and Simmons incorporated in the 1950s and 1960s and did not begin to rapidly grow until the 1970s. Although the South Bay region has only two boomburbs near San Jose in Santa Clara and Fremont (in Alameda County), the region as a whole has taken on the characteristics of a boomburb, or a string of edge cities that have grown from 290,547 in 1950 to 1,497,577 in 1990, and is well on its way to being one of the fastest growing and most unaffordable places to live in the US.⁷ Within this chronology, black Silicon Valley growth and community development coincided with the dynamic urban and industrial formation of the South Bay region growing from 730 people in 1940 to 56,211 persons in 1990.⁸

THE NORTHSIDE AND ITS BLACK PIONEERS

Prior to the 1940s, most African-American communities did not constitute population majorities in any community in the West. Instead, they were clustered in what often became racially segregated and isolated areas in the postwar era.⁹ Like other clustered communities, black Santa Clara Valley, centered in San Jose, was a close-knit community formed from necessity to resist their total exclusion from the region and to combat *de facto* racial discrimination. These actions directly

contradict the common claim by traditional western scholars like Walter Prescott Webb who argued in 1957 that black westerners were passive actors in their own community development.¹⁰ From the late-1870s to the 1950s, most South Bay blacks lived in single-family homes on the northern outskirts of Downtown San Jose in a semi-rural area called the Northside, a diverse enclave that neighbored Japantown and Chinatown.¹¹

Prior to *Shelley v. Kraemer* (1948), most African-Americans, with the exception of servants, were limited to living in the Northside because of restrictive covenants, real estate practices, and homeowners refusing to sell property to people of color out of fear of miscegenation, declining property values, and crime.¹² In spite of a local myth which denies that restrictive covenants and redlining existed in San Jose, deeds within the Santa Clara County Archives show that restrictive covenants were widespread and common throughout the county in the early 20th century. The most common racially restrictive deed stated, “No person of any race or nationality other than of the Caucasian race shall be allowed to own, lease or occupy any of said real property or any part thereof, except servants who may be permitted to live upon the premises occupied by the owner or tenants thereof.”¹³

Moreover, San Jose redlined persons of color and the working poor to encourage home ownership on open land that became suburbs.¹⁴ Redlining was the practice of systematically denying home loans to residential areas considered to be high economic risks because they were populated by persons of color, working poor people, and had mixed land uses (i.e., housing near businesses).¹⁵ Central to this suburban policy bias was the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) mortgage program. Their participation in the postwar housing market profoundly restructured race relations by divesting and restricting people of color to central cities, and investing and allowing whites-only access into newly developed suburbs. In San Jose, African-Americans were redlined in the Northside and in East San Jose, Mexican-Americans were redlined in East San Jose, and Japanese-Americans were restricted to North San Jose until their internment in 1942.¹⁶ For black migrants, non-penetrable boundaries included any place west of the Guadalupe River (i.e., West San Jose) and San Jose’s Southside during sundown. Boundaries marking San Jose’s Southside, within the white controlled central business district, included south of Santa Clara Street, Naglee Park, and the campus community (San Jose Normal School/San Jose State College). According to early African-American migrant Joyce Ellington, the Southside was “considered the fancy side of town.” She elaborated that “lots of doctors settled there and they didn’t want houses sold to blacks.”¹⁷ Charles Alexander, San Jose’s first African-American probation officer in the 1960s, expanded upon Ellington’s comment stating that blacks could walk through the Southside during the day, as long as they had a reason to be there and were not involved in activities that broke the color line.¹⁸ In spite of this resistance to African-American occupancy, by 1940 South Bay blacks’ pioneering spirit led them to form several enclaves in the northern and eastern half of the Santa Clara Valley in communities like Alum

Rock in San Jose, Lakewood in Santa Clara, Mountain View Park, and downtown Palo Alto.¹⁹

Demographically, South Bay black pioneers had to work together because their population was very small, especially in comparison to other African-American populations in urban California, such as Los Angeles, and nearby Oakland and San Francisco. What is intriguing about San Jose's early black population is that, in 1890, it was the third largest African-American population in California with 989 persons—behind San Francisco and Los Angeles which had 1,847 and 1,817 blacks, respectively.²⁰ However, by 1900, the South Bay black population was reduced to 251 people, primarily due to urban stagnation and young African-Americans finding better residential and work opportunities in the rapidly urbanizing and industrializing Alameda and Los Angeles counties.²¹ By 1940, the South Bay black population had risen to 730 people.²² This early population encountered a Santa Clara Valley that was predominantly a large farming community that fed the nearby metropolitan and industrial centers of San Francisco and Oakland—centers that in the 1940s experienced huge black population increases of 798 percent and 462 percent, respectively.²³ At the turn of the 20th century, boosters aptly termed Santa Clara County, “The Valley of Heart’s Delight,” a direct reference to the South Bay’s warm weather, placid valleys, and fruit trees.²⁴

Some of the early black families living in San Jose were the Berrys, Boyers, Casseys, Coopers, Ellingtons, Hortons, Jordans, McCalls, Mosses, Overtons, Ratliffs, Ribbses, and Turners.²⁵ Similar to the African-American migrants of the 1940s, many of the early San Jose blacks came from large farming families and resettled in the South Bay because it resembled their communities of origin in the South. One such re-settler was Henry Ribbs who came to San Jose from Shreveport, Louisiana, in 1920. San Jose reminded Henry of northwest Louisiana in that it was slower-paced and less sprawling than nearby San Francisco and Oakland. Moreover, San Jose offered a gentle country-like social atmosphere. In this environment, Henry immediately found the Antioch Baptist Church, one of several black churches in Northside and East San Jose that provided African-Americans with a sense of empowerment and socioeconomic support.²⁶ Through this network Henry found immediate employment as a rancher, and a plumbing apprenticeship under black plumber Thomas Moss, which in 1927, evolved into his becoming an independent plumbing and heating contractor.²⁷ Henry was fortunate in that he, like many early African-Americans, came to San Jose with some trade skills and education. However, most of the South Bay’s black pioneers were restricted to earning a living by doing jobs similar to those done by their predecessors in the 19th century who were “farmers, laborers, gardeners, porters, waiters, barbers and cooks.”²⁸ A small percentage of San Jose blacks worked as entrepreneurs and professionals beyond their parallel communities, which was a national phenomenon. Such was the case with Northside’s Mattie Berry, who ran the only concession stand owned by an African-American, selling newspapers, cards, and stamps in downtown San Jose’s St.

James Hotel lobby. Berry also had the distinction of being one of the few blacks to work at the Hale Brothers department store before the 1960s.²⁹ As for Clyde Ribbs, Henry's older brother, he was the only African-American to own and operate an express company—the Jones Transfer Company.³⁰ Finally, there were a handful of black professionals that included physician Milton Combs, caterers Sarah and Jacob Overton, Doctor D. W. Boyer, and the clergymen at AME Zion and Antioch Baptist churches.³¹

What partially binds the migration of the pre- and post-1940s is that all black migrants were confronted with *de facto* racial discrimination in housing, employment, education, and law enforcement. While this was not legal segregation, it was long-lasting and institutionalized. A crucial factor in making African-American pioneers feel like second-class citizens was their being constrained to particular communities like the Northside and working in positions for which they were overqualified. According to Maurice Hardeman, the first African-American Municipal Court Judge in Santa Clara County, and Reverend C. W. Washington of the Antioch Baptist Church, prior to the 1970s, blacks generally did not work in department stores, major grocery stores, banks, hospitals, municipal government, or for the telephone and gas companies.³² They were employed either as common laborers or domestics, or created alternative paths that fostered economic self-sufficiency.

“WORKING TOGETHER TO SURVIVE AND THRIVE,” 1941-1960

African-Americans nationwide overcame residential and economic racial discrimination through “working together to survive and thrive.” For Kenneth Blackwell, a San Jose native, “working together to survive and thrive” was an expression rooted in black Southern traditions of self-sufficiency that formed the theoretical framework for black San Jose self-reliance after the 1940s, during a period of overt racial restrictions.³³ Prior to the 1940s, South Bay blacks were racially tolerated because their population made minimal demands on white people and Santa Clara County's system of governance.³⁴ After the 1940s, this treatment noticeably changed with the unprecedented growth of the African-American community and rapid urbanization. In this period, Santa Clara County's first significant wave of black migrants settled into the region. According to thirty interviews conducted by the author, most of these African-Americans who lived in and around San Jose migrated from Oklahoma to reconnect with family members who had been migrating into the region since the late-1920s and, after World War II, to resettle in a reputedly racially tolerant region that reminded them of home.³⁵ Within the scope of pre-1940 black San Jose, the black Oklahoman contingent did not stand out because they were part of a larger movement of African-Americans who came from towns and farms throughout the South and Southwest in the 1910s and 1920s. They began to stand out in the 1940s, when the South Bay black population more than doubled, growing from 730 people to 1,718. By 1960, it had grown to 4,187.³⁶ Consequentially, this meant that during the 1940s, most African-Americans who came into the South Bay were instantly plugged into where they could live, work,

and go to school because they were already part of a community network. For Helen Gaffin, an early African-American migrant, this migration felt like “[black] Oklahoma took California without firing a shot” because many of its emigrants grew up together in Central and East Oklahoma. These migrants had similar experiences of racism and poverty, and were determined not to let San Jose become like the Jim Crow Southwest where race discrimination was prescribed by law and custom.³⁷

Black Oklahomans like the Andersons, Dollarhydies, and Blackwells came to dominate the black migration to San Jose by telling their relatives back home about the Valley’s economic opportunities, social environment, and mild weather. This was a stark contrast to Oklahoma still feeling the effects of the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression. According to Earlsboro, Oklahoma native Orvella Stubbs, a Dollarhyde, the Great Depression was more devastating to her family than the Dust Bowl. The Dollarhyde’s Oklahoman roots began in the 1890s when Tom Dollarhyde, a former slave, escaped plantation life in Arkansas and resettled in Earlsboro, Oklahoma. Of his twelve children, eight resettled in San Jose in the 1930s and 1940s. In the 1890s, Oklahoma was still Indian Territory. The African-Americans who migrated there were fed up with the sharecropping and Black Codes in places like Arkansas and the Carolinas, and looked to Oklahoma as a “Promised Land” where they could become yeoman farmers free of white intrusion.³⁸ This resulted in black migrants, like Tom Dollarhyde, purchasing 600 acres of land in Earlsboro. By the time of the Great Depression, this land had been passed down to Orvella Stubbs’s father. During that difficult time, the Dollarhyde farm saved the family from starving because they grew their own food, and they were not dependent on wages to pay bills, nor on markets for food. Essentially, this group of black Oklahomans followed a pattern set by Lenora Sypert-Anderson, and Edna and Gertrude Dollarhyde during the Great Depression and Dust Bowl in the late 1920s and early 1930s; people brought their families to the South Bay and conveyed the region’s prospects through letters, telephone conversations, and at family reunions in Oklahoma.³⁹

According to Pat Perkins, who is an Anderson, the Anderson movement to San Jose began with Lenora Sypert in the late 1920s. Lenora was an Anderson through marriage to Pat’s grandfather, John, son to Forest Anderson, the black millionaire who, according to *Ebony* magazine in 1949, was one of the top 10 richest African-Americans in the United States.⁴⁰ He made most of his money from farming, real estate, banking, and from two oil wells from which he sold crude oil to petroleum companies. After John’s death, Lenora married “Ernest Sam Cross who worked for the railroad, and they and the youngest children [Pat’s] father—Felton and his sister Gladys—all came.”⁴¹ In 1942, Lenora’s other two children moved to San Jose. Lenora’s brother, Frank and his family, Frank’s sister, Grace Echols and her family soon followed. Both the Andersons and Dollarhydies migrated to San Jose prior to the war’s end in 1945. According to Vern Wilson, a Dollarhyde, when many of these black Oklahomans came to the Northside, there were very few homes for



FIGURE 1. The Anderson Family, 1919. Photograph courtesy of Patricia Anderson

them to purchase. Initially, they resolved this by purchasing single family homes in adjacent Japantown, vacated during the Japanese-American internment. According to historian Quintard Taylor, this phenomenon occurred in almost every city on the West Coast.⁴²

In employment, the “working together to survive and thrive” ethos was crucial for at least fifteen San Jose blacks getting hired in the Kaiser Shipyards during the war years. This ethos was crucial in helping them make the daily hour and a half commute to Richmond, fifty-three miles away. To put this into perspective, when Great Migration historians examine African-American shipyard workers, they primarily focus on workers living in communities close to shipyard factories like North Richmond and West Oakland.⁴³ To my knowledge, in none of the black urban histories have scholars addressed African-American shipyard workers coming from far-away suburban metropolises like San Jose. With that said, some of the South Bay blacks who worked at the Kaiser Shipyards went by first names that included Buster, Dale, Gertrude, and Helen. Helen was a welder during swing shift on Liberty Ships. During the war years, working, commuting, and sleeping consumed most of her time and the time of her family. Their daily trip to Kaiser Shipyard #2 was made often in two or three Buicks and Fords. Sometimes Clarence “Buster” Johnson, a cousin, drove them in the bus he had brought from Shawnee, Oklahoma. With the long commute, they did not have time for union activities. They paid their union dues for access to the shop floor, worked, went home, and slept. According to Helen Gaffin, none of her cohorts were aware of the labor discrimination restricting blacks

from the full benefits of union membership in auxiliary units.⁴⁴ They were also unaware of the California Supreme Court decision *James v. Marinship* (1944) that dismantled the auxiliary structure in California.⁴⁵ Black Oklahomans who came to California to reunite with family were pleasantly surprised that shipyards were hiring African-Americans for well-paid employment. They were also handsomely compensated with gas stamps for their long commute up Oakland Road. This was almost two decades before the 880 Freeway was completed in 1958, which significantly shortened this trip by half an hour.⁴⁶ Since there were only two ways to get back and forth from the Santa Clara Valley to Richmond, many South Bay residents made this commute to the shipyards. Helen and her family never relocated to Richmond because they considered San Jose their home.⁴⁷

Most Santa Clara Valley blacks like the Andersons never seriously considered working in South Bay factories during the war because most did not have access to shop floors. According to Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, "Between 1941 and 1945 the federal government invested over \$70 billion in California aircraft, shipbuilding, food processing, clothing manufacturing, and other war-related industries."⁴⁸ In the South Bay, those industries included food processing, iron works, and aerospace. African-Americans had employment opportunities in food processing, token access into the Food Machinery Company (FMC) and the Hendy Iron Works as janitors, and very minimal, if any, undocumented access into aerospace at Moffett Federal Air Field and Lockheed Aircraft. The exception to this rule was that a few blacks, such as Bill Moody and Lucille Bunch, were hired by FMC as welders after passing a very difficult welding test. According to Helen Gaffin, Moody and Bunch were exceptionally good, and were part of an elite group of welders.⁴⁹

Employment opportunities were quite different for African-Americans in the North and East Bay Area where shipbuilding employment predominated. Four major shipbuilders were located in the region: Bethlehem-Alameda in Oakland, Kaiser Company in Richmond, Marinship in Sausalito, and Moore Drydock in Oakland. Arguably, the most inclusive of these employers was the Kaiser Shipyards that had four shipbuilding facilities.⁵⁰ This unprecedented demand for a diverse labor force to fill vacant positions predetermined in wartime defense contracts also included women and other people of color. A major barrier blocking access of African-Americans and other people of color to industries with war contracts were lily-white trade unions like the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers (IBB) or the exclusionist American Federation of Labor (AFL). In the Bay Area, the IBB dominated the shop floor through an unprecedented closed shop agreement with shipbuilders that gave them jurisdiction over 65 percent of the dockworkers on the West Coast, excluding Seattle-Tacoma. Within this arrangement, African-Americans were restricted to auxiliary unions designed to have them pay full union dues to work on the shop floor in temporary low- to semi-skilled jobs for only moderate pay and without full union benefits and protections.⁵¹ Racial discrimination at industries with defense contracts was tempered by federal oversight agencies coming such as

the War Manpower Commission (WMC) which recruited and placed workers, and the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) which reminded employers that they risked losing their lucrative contracts if caught discriminating against people of color.⁵² This legislation in turn politicized black dock and factory workers who used the FEPC to investigate discrimination in the defense industry and to build cases, such as *James v. Marinship*, that were solid enough to carry over to state and federal courts.⁵³

Contrary to the traditional Great Migration narrative, in South Bay manufacturing industries, the FEPC and the trade unions failed to function as galvanizing forces for blacks. Some African-Americans like Julia and Daisy Dollarhyde of San Jose, for example, attempted to make industrial labor more central to the black community. They appealed in writing to President Franklin D. Roosevelt through the FEPC, suggesting that African-Americans could help the war effort if they were given secure industrial work.⁵⁴ In the food production industry, the FEPC had a minimal presence because, during the war, African-Americans were hired on a regular basis to fill labor shortages in stereotypical “person of color” employment—as field workers, cannery workers, and dry packers—day labor jobs, which during peacetime preferred Mexican labor over black workers.⁵⁵ Furthermore, union representation in the food production industry was not an issue after the fall of San Jose’s United Cannery, Agricultural, Packinghouse, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA) because agricultural workers were minimally organized.⁵⁶ The FEPC had no jurisdiction over the work force in the Armed Forces so, unless African-American civilians worked at Moffett Field during the war, the FEPC had no reason to be involved there. In contrast, only a handful of janitorial positions became available to blacks at Lockheed Aircraft, perhaps because of pressures applied by the FEPC. Blacks did not work as skilled laborers at Lockheed because the aircraft producer preferred to hire white Bay Area residents and white migrants who fled the Dust Bowl.

At Hendy Iron Works, a great opportunity to democratize an inclusive South Bay industrial workforce beyond food processing was lost. Hendy and food producer Libby, McNeil & Libby dominated the economy in Sunnyvale until Westinghouse took over Hendy in 1947. Hendy’s presence in Sunnyvale dated back to 1906, when it had relocated from San Francisco following the earthquake and fire. This fledgling iron works business was saved from bankruptcy by World War I which also assured its solvency during the intervening period of peace and then enabled it to become one of the main employers in the Valley during World War II. As a defense contractor, Hendy manufactured ship engines as well as iron and steel armaments for the Navy.⁵⁷ There is no mention of the employment of African-Americans at Hendy during WWI; however, someone who had worked at Hendy during WWII later remarked that it was not uncommon to see white working class men and business professionals working beside housewives and blacks.⁵⁸ In most instances only a few African-Americans and women worked on Hendy’s assembly lines, while most were

relegated to social segregation and inequitable labor assignments based on racial prejudice and old stereotypes in jobs such as cleaning engines and janitorial duties.⁵⁹

To escape the indignities of working in spaces like Hendy, many South Bay blacks survived and thrived as common laborers working for relatives and extended kin in small black companies founded during the immediate postwar era. Some of these businesses included Mr. Ferguson's cement and construction business, Emmitt Dollarhyde's steam cleaning business called Dollarhyde House, and Mr. Graham's Shell gas station. According to Kenneth Blackwell, prior to the 1960s "any black person could find a job if they were willing to work."⁶⁰ In 1946, Blackwell's father, Deelvin, founded the janitorial service, Blackwell and Sons, which is still running strong. Of the businesses mentioned, the largest employers were Mr. Ferguson's cement and construction business and Blackwell and Sons. According to Kenneth, Pat Perkins, and her mother Gloria Anderson, everyone who needed a job worked for Deelvin Blackwell.⁶¹

Prior to Blackwell and Sons' founding, very few African-Americans worked as janitors in Santa Clara County. Blackwell and Sons' founder, Deelvin, lived in several places in Oklahoma—Brooksville, Shawnee, Earlsboro, and Boley—before traveling to the West Coast to resettle. Similar to many men who made this trek, Deelvin worked his way to California, temporarily resettling in Arizona before migrating to San Jose for economic opportunities. Once he was rooted, his family drove twenty hours non-stop to San Jose to relocate. The path they took was Route 66 and the former route of US 40, which was common for most Oklahomans. In San Jose, Deelvin, first worked in agriculture, then he found his niche as a janitor under a white man named Johnson. Deelvin did his job so well that Johnson let him work unsupervised, and increased his responsibilities. The places where Johnson was contracted also recognized Deelvin's talents and encouraged him to start a janitorial business, which became Blackwell and Sons. Other notable African-American businesses in this early period include: Henry Ribbs's plumbing company; Thomas Moss's plumbing company; beauty shops operating out of private homes; Fisher's barbecue restaurant and several other restaurants; Walter the shoe shine man; and juke joints such as Cherry Inn and Hollywood Inn, where a diverse range of people danced, drank, and partied into the wee hours of the morning, listening to music played by entertainers like Duke Ellington. Helen Gaffin's mother owned the latter club. Together, these businesses were centered on the Northside and in East San Jose, providing service to anyone that respected their businesses. More importantly, the black businesses listed fostered a sense of black community, independence and pride. In sum, Pat Perkins described this world of working together best, when she said that everyone knew one another, and "supported one another until somebody did them wrong."⁶²

“SUITCASE NEGROES”

Similar to blacks nationwide, in the immediate postwar period African-Americans in San Jose worked together to become first class citizens. In employment, this began with new African-American migrants who had a larger population than the established one. The newer migrants were also more unapologetically Southern, younger, relatively more educated, and were not content with racial injustice and settling for menial jobs.⁶³ During World War II, most of these blacks migrated to California for shipyard employment and lived in central cities. After the war, they were the first factory employees to be laid-off along with women. Most of these African-Americans remained in the cities of their former shipyard factory employers; others migrated intra-regionally from cities like Oakland to cities like nearby San Jose, which offered the most favorable path toward socioeconomic justice. Many established black residents, including Mattie Berry, blamed this new group for the South Bay’s abrupt shift toward a more racially hostile social climate. They derided this new wave of African-American migrants by calling them “suitcase Negroes.”⁶⁴

Among these newcomers were the first African-Americans—black Oklahomans—to politically agitate for equal opportunities and their civil rights. Local civil rights icon, Inez Jackson, came to California as an experienced teacher with a credential from Langston University in Oklahoma, and planned on reuniting with her husband who worked in the Oakland shipyards in 1944. In 1945, the Jacksons moved to the South Bay. Jackson wanted to live in California during the war years because she had heard that discrimination did not exist there and that she could teach in an integrated setting. She was disheartened when she found out that California was in many ways no better than Oklahoma—a place in which she not only experienced poverty during the Dust Bowl, but also where her family was victimized during a race riot in the mid-1930s.⁶⁵ She was told by San Jose’s school board that “black teachers were not hired” and was instead offered a job scrubbing floors.⁶⁶ Insulted, she never pursued teaching again. Moreover, Jackson had a hard time finding decent housing and employment compatible with her education. In San Jose, she was forced to pick prunes and work in canneries for several years before she was hired as a clerk for the US Postal Service in 1949. Her experiences looking for employment prompted Jackson to critique postwar South Bay in a manner that would be echoed by other politically conscious African-Americans when she said, “people had always talked about segregation in the South but this was worse.”⁶⁷

For Jackson, what was worse about the racism that she and her family were experiencing in the Santa Clara Valley was that it was *de facto* racial discrimination rather than the more familiar Jim Crow segregation. Far subtler than Jim Crow, *de facto* racial discrimination is far more difficult to detect because it consists of people’s prejudicial customs. To make the region live up to their expectations, Southern black migrants like Jackson worked with settled African-Americans in established institutions within Northside, like the Garden City Women’s Club, Antioch Baptist Church, Prayer Garden Church of God, and the Afro-American Center. New

African-American migrants were also the driving force behind making political inroads through the founding of the Santa Clara County National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

The Santa Clara County NAACP was founded in February 8, 1942 at Anna B. McCall's home.⁶⁸ Its first president was Antioch minister, J. W. Byers. The Santa Clara County NAACP was an organization made up of working people, women, and a few professionals. It included maids, domestics, butlers, a few teachers and clergymen, and an expressman, chauffeur, machinist, printer, carpenter, and lawyer. Needless to say, most members worked as domestics and manual laborers. There was no gender and class discrimination except perhaps in leadership during the 1940s. Representative of this group was Emmitt Dollarhyde, who migrated to the South Bay from Earlsboro, Oklahoma, during the Dust Bowl in either 1933 or in 1940.⁶⁹ Emmitt came to the South Bay in search of farm work. According to Helen Gaffin and Orvella Stubbs, both Dollarhydies, Emmitt was a calm and forthright person who differed from his male siblings, who were said to be "hell-raisers."⁷⁰ Upon arriving in the Valley, Emmitt succeeded quickly. He went from picking prunes to becoming the owner of Dollarhyde House.⁷¹ In Emmitt's spare time he was a political activist and was nominated as Reverend Byers's successor as Santa Clara County NAACP president.

Under Dollarhyde's tenure, the Santa Clara County NAACP became very active. For example in 1947, Dollarhyde, representing the branch, and Antioch Reverend C. W. Washington negotiated with San Jose Mayor Clark L. Bradley to institutionalize San Jose's Negro History Week during the first week of February.⁷² In this same year the Santa Clara County NAACP also created an interracial forum to discuss and improve race relations in the South Bay. Successes such as these correlated with a rise in NAACP membership.⁷³

The Santa Clara County NAACP branch began 1951 overconfident and ended the year in a tailspin. The organization made a tactical mistake when it attempted to sue the lily-white Elks Club and ban all Elks-sponsored minstrel shows at the San Jose Civic Auditorium.⁷⁴ The crux of the issue was that race-based citizenship had existed in the South Bay from 1880 to 1965, and no one had ever protested its existence prior to the Santa Clara County NAACP.⁷⁵ Historian Stephen Pitti explains the centrality of this presence:

While apparent for a time in the late nineteenth century, anti-Italian and anti-Portuguese nativism did not dominate political concerns for long in Santa Clara County, and the widespread acceptance of European immigrants and their US-born children as "white Americans" emerged hand in hand with more salient hostilities towards those considered to be nonwhite. Along with other images of black primitivism, minstrel shows shaped a sense of whiteness among local European immigrants and their children by the 1920s.⁷⁶

The Santa Clara County NAACP in this instance wanted minstrel shows banned because they contributed to the forging of a local white supremacist identity by characterizing African-Americans as “other” and defining them as “lazy, ignorant, unfaithful to marriage vows, afraid of ghosts, given to unintelligible jabbering, given to razor wielding and chicken stealing, and endowed with other negative traits.”⁷⁷ Defendants of the Elks included Mayor Clark Bradley, City Manager Anthony P. Hamann, Auditorium Manager Jay McCabe, and all members of the City Council.⁷⁸ Some of them, including Mayor Bradley, went on record as being “friends of the Negro” when it came to resolving insignificant social issues. However, the NAACP’s attack on such a deeply ingrained institution like minstrelsy, turned “friendship” and supposed white tolerance of the local black population into white backlash. This resulted in the immediate economic devastation of branch president Dollarhyde, who immediately lost most of his auto-cleaning customers and was forced to close Dollarhyde House temporarily.

Following the minstrelsy protest, the Santa Clara County NAACP split into San Jose and Palo Alto-Stanford branches. They split over political tactics, but both branches were overconfident that their memberships would continue to increase. Immediately after this arrangement, both branches went into noticeable decline as most South Bay blacks lost interest in social movement politics, because, until 1960, both chapters were ill-prepared to take on larger tasks such as fighting for fair employment and fair housing.⁷⁹

Similar to most civil rights movements in the urban North and urban West, the Santa Clara County Civil Rights Movement (SCCCRM) was sparked by the Greensboro sit-in at Woolworth’s lunch counter on February 1, 1960.⁸⁰ What ensued were sympathy boycotts and demonstrations in downtown San Jose and downtown Palo Alto to apply economic pressure on the local chain stores to effect a change in policy at national headquarters regarding the stores hiring policies and legal segregation at lunch counters in the South. The original logic behind this tactic was that segregation in public accommodations in San Jose was most pronounced in high-end establishments—not in department stores, where discrimination was subtle and regulated by social custom and individual bias.⁸¹ The initial result of this thinking was the widespread belief that racism did not exist in the most common spaces in the South Bay, until civil rights activists started focusing on the hiring practices of local stores like Woolworth and S. H. Kress.

The San Jose NAACP demonstrations started on April 14, 1960, in downtown San Jose and continued until 1964. With each succeeding demonstration, civil rights participants became more critical of racial inequities in Santa Clara County. On September 19, 1960, a local chapter of Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was established in San Jose to channel the local youths’ exuberance and successfully pressured San Jose State College into admitting St. John Dixon, who was expelled from Alabama State Teachers College for taking part in a lunch counter demonstration.⁸² In the following year, SCCCRCM activists in San Jose deepened

their commitment to the freedom struggle in the South and South Bay following public lectures and workshops given by Southern civil rights activists Anne Braden and the Freedom Riders in 1961.⁸³ The first Freedom Rider to arrive was James Farmer, national Director of CORE, who officially recognized the SCCCRM as an important cog in the national fight for civil rights during a talk and workshop at San Jose's Unitarian church in late May 1961.⁸⁴

In the following year, the SCCCRM battle expanded towards enacting a fair housing law in the private market in which San Jose was almost pressured into legislating its own fair housing ordinance.⁸⁵ That effort was superseded by the California Fair Housing Act in 1963, which in-turn was succeeded by California's Proposition 14 in 1965. Proposition 14 legalized racial apartheid housing in California's private market from 1965 to 1967. The law also contributed to the massive loss of momentum in the California Civil Rights Movement. Proposition 14 passed almost two-to-one, by an official count of 4,526,460 to 2,395,747, with suburbanites—mostly in Southern California—voting almost three-to-one in support of the residential segregation and property rights.⁸⁶ Within Santa Clara County, the Proposition passed 162,029 to 143,689.⁸⁷

Prior to Proposition 14, protests such as San Jose's St. James Park March demonstrated that San Jose's African-American community was a major player in the local Civil Rights Movement. For example, in July 1963, San Jose's NAACP and CORE organized with their coalition partners—a ten thousand person march in San Jose—to maintain the California Fair Housing Act.⁸⁸ The coalition partners that worked with African-Americans throughout 1963 included Assemblyman Al Alquist (D - San Jose); the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC—Quakers); the American Jewish Congress; the Anti-Defamation League; the Antioch Baptist Church; the Bar Associations in Santa Clara County; the Catholic Interracial Council; the Citizens Committee Against CREA; the Community Service Organization; the Council for Civic Unity; the County Democratic Council; the First Methodist Church of Los Gatos; the Garden City Women's Club; the Japanese-American Citizens League; the Palo Alto, the San Jose, and Sunnyvale United Auto Workers Local 560; the San Jose Human Relations Commission; the San Jose Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; the Santa Clara County Council of Churches; the Santa Clara Valley Friends of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (Friends of SNCC); the South San Mateo County and the Palo Alto NAACPs; the Sunnyvale-Cupertino Branch of the American Association of University Women; and the 25th Assembly District Council of Democratic Clubs.⁸⁹

One of the coalition's most successful demonstrations was a thousand person silent march through downtown San Jose in support of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom that occurred on August 27, 1963. Following the sympathy demonstration, three hundred people stayed around for a rally at St. James Park that started at 2 p.m. Civil rights demonstrators unprecedentedly listened to several local leaders in the African-American and Mexican-American communities, and

civil rights supporters signed a petition with numerous proposals on how to improve race relations in the Santa Clara Valley. These proposals included implementing policy promoting an end to segregation and racial exclusion in employment, job training programs, housing, and education. According to Maurice Hardeman, the SCCCRM was responsible for “the biggest area of racial change in the [South Bay from 1960-1980, which] has been in [unskilled and entry-level] employment opportunities for [people of color].”⁹⁰

Moreover, in education, marchers demanded an end to “cronyism” in the San Jose Unified School District and the hiring of qualified teachers regardless of their race. Once signed, the petition was read to San Jose Mayor Robert Welch at the rally by outgoing president of San Jose’s NAACP James E. Blackwell and vice president of the Mexican-American Political Association of San Jose (MAPA), Isaias Aguilera. The mayor in turn promised to immediately present the proposals to the City Council. He then attempted to mollify the crowd by describing the steps that City Hall had taken in eradicating racial discrimination over the past year. The majority of the marchers discarded Welch’s statements as double talk, with signs reading “Double talk is all at City Hall,” “Mexican-Americans are many—at City Hall few if any,” and “Don’t teach our kids to hate—let them integrate.”⁹¹

As momentous as the SCCCRM was, the relative lack of black and brown collaboration on civil rights projects hurt the movement. According to Charles Alexander, of all the groups of color, blacks were “probably closer to Mexicans.” He added, “We were all they [had] seen. [Politically] they were following [the Black Freedom Movement and developing their own struggle]. They were basically work, big families, like we were in the South. Like our folk, their goal for their youth was to move up [American society] through education.”⁹² However, prior to March 1968, when Caesar Chavez fasted for twenty-five days to rededicate the United Farm Workers (UFW) and its grape boycott to the principles of nonviolence, African-Americans and Mexican-Americans approached coalition politics in relation to one another more as competitors than as allies. Historian Albert Camarillo explains that this was common in California during the 1960s and 1970s.⁹³ The common explanation for this was that groups like the United Latin American Counsel of Santa Clara County officially declined to get involved in the early civil rights struggle because most members either did not understand the Civil Rights Movement or saw it as a movement centered on the concerns of African-Americans and only marginally considered the concerns of other people of color, who were a much larger demographic.⁹⁴ Such was the case in the battle for fair housing in San Jose, which is what every black, brown, and working poor person wanted; however, for having such a small population, South Bay blacks in every civil rights battle prior to the UFW movement stood out and emerged as leaders of the various struggles for social justice. Moreover, language and cultural barriers were a huge factor in both populations having very few meaningful relationships prior to the UFW and Chicano movements of the 1960s and 1970s.⁹⁵

SANTA CLARA COUNTY YOUTH AND THE POSTWAR COLOR LINE

Most blacks who participated in the UFW and Chicano movements were children in the 1940s and 1950s. In this period, African-Americans forged the most meaningful relationships with other youth of color. These black activists were either born elsewhere and came to the Santa Clara Valley with their parents, or were born in the South Bay, or were part of a small group of blacks recruited into the region for educational and employment opportunities after 1955. Essential to this narrative was an emerging consciousness for social justice among black and brown people who lived within close proximity of one another in the mid-1950s. An individual sometimes broke the Santa Clara County color line on moral grounds. Such was the case of Mattie Briggs.

Briggs's Great Migration story begins in 1943 with her father resettling her family in San Bernardino, California, to work at the Kaiser Shipyards and to leave behind Jim Crow segregation, cotton picking, and East Texas. After the war, her family moved to Oakland, Indio, and Fresno, California for farm work, before settling in Alum Rock in 1948, which was just beginning to open up to black homeowners. Briggs attended James Lick High School and not San Jose High near downtown San Jose where most African-American students went to high school. In 1954, Briggs's graduating class at James Lick had four black students out of five hundred students. At school, she was friends with blacks, whites, and Mexicans. Outside of school, she associated only with African-Americans. This was typical for race relations among young people in East San Jose before the mid-1960s, a pattern that was mainly driven by the parents.⁹⁶ The exception to this occurred during Briggs's senior year, when class leaders wanted to throw a blackface show featuring an Al Jolson impersonator. Briggs was unaware of the event and did not know what "blackface" meant until a white student informed her. She said, "Really? What do you mean, a blackface show?" He responded, "They said, they are going to have a show featuring a person who imitates black people by making fun of them." After speaking of this with her African-American friends, Briggs found herself the only person interested in agitating to stop the show from happening. In the end, the show was cancelled because Briggs simply told the dean of Boys, "I don't want it to happen... I don't think it's right." The dean responded, "Mattie, if you do not want this to go on, it will not go on."⁹⁷

Prior to 1963, race relations among young people in downtown San Jose differed only slightly from what Briggs experienced in East San Jose, where most youth interacted with one another in most public places except in the presence of their parents. This was also the period in which interracial dating among black and brown young people became more noticeable.⁹⁸ According to elders like Mattie Berry, the Northside prior to the 1950s was a racially mixed neighborhood composed of "Italians, Chinese, some Negroes and Mexicans—and *we had no racial problems.*"⁹⁹ Helen Gaffin echoed much of this sentiment without the romanticism because the supposed absence of racial problems Berry spoke of coincided with little meaningful

relationships among the racial groups mentioned. In most instances, people kept to their own and broke color lines as customers in local shops, stores, and nightclubs. However, after the 1950s, the strain of a rapidly growing population within both the newly incorporated white suburbs like Cupertino and the diverse East San Jose, led to the hardening of Santa Clara County's color line, most readily seen in housing, education, racial profiling, and hiring practices by local businesses.

For instance, in 1955 Orvella Stubbs's family migrated from Earlsboro, Oklahoma to San Jose to live in a familiar setting reunited with the Dollarhydies. At that time she was nine years old, and her parents were temporarily separated. Her mother, a woman who could pass for white, initially had a hard time finding an affordable home to rent in overcrowded downtown San Jose. She eventually found a home to rent in San Jose's Southside at 9th and Margaret Streets, which was off-limits to African-American residents. Everything in the negotiations went fine until she brought her brown-complexioned children. Then white adults attempted to intimidate the Stubbses to prevent them from moving in, calling them "niggers" and other racially charged epithets. The Stubbses' white neighbors also went so far as to interrogate the white woman who owned the home, as to whether or not she knew that the Stubbses were black. This was followed by demands that the owner make the Stubbses move. The homeowner refused because she was sympathetic to Orvella's mother. Consequently, the Stubbses lived in that residence until 1961, when the family reunited with Orvella's father in Detroit. In the meantime, the Stubbses had to endure constant hate from their white neighbors who wanted them to leave as soon as possible.¹⁰⁰

In the Southside, Orvella attended Lowell Elementary School and Roosevelt Junior High School, which had far better reputations and far more resources than the Northside schools. Both schools were segregated by custom, and Stubbs was one of the few children of color to penetrate what essentially was an integrated school in a racially segregated community. Similar to the Northside, kids of all cultural backgrounds in the downtown area were friends in most public places and walked to school together until they "hit the corner [of one's own block, then] everybody had to go their separate ways."¹⁰¹ The pretense of these children not interacting with one another in the same geographical location, under the gaze of their parents, took on the most dramatic form on the live televised dance party, *Record Hop* (1959-64). This show aired on KNTV Channel 11 every weekend, from its San Jose studio at 645 Park Avenue. It was patterned on Dick Clark's *American Bandstand*, where teenagers danced to Rock and Roll and Soul music to win pizzas and drive-in movie tickets.¹⁰² Television projected the spectacle of an integrated Santa Clara Valley, while in actuality it mirrored South Bay society, as blacks, whites, Portuguese, and Mexican youth danced on a segregated dance floor. After the show, everybody left in separate cars.¹⁰³

Living in a community of customary discrimination was an odd experience for Orvella because in Oklahoma she was raised in a "separate and unequal"

community that was undergoing the process of legal desegregation. In this world, she and her African-American friends played with white children at school, and then as they were bused to the black side of town, the white children would yell out, “niggers, niggers.” The next day, this cycle would start all over again. California was different from other states because most communities had theoretically undergone legal desegregation in the 1890s, when most racially discriminatory codes were written out of the California Constitution.¹⁰⁴ However, prior to the Second Great Migration, California’s movement towards integration was never fully tested in communities with relatively small African-American populations like San Jose, until after 1945. In Stubbs’s world, which was different from Berry’s and Gaffin’s, the local color line of the 1950s was hardening because it was visibly exposed. Established residents, both white and black, saw the new African-American migrants as “suitcase Negroes.” These unapologetic Southern blacks who migrated to the South Bay were blamed for the region’s abrupt shift towards a more racially hostile social climate.¹⁰⁵ Although Orvella was surrounded by white neighbors, and interacted with the young people away from their block, she never went into their homes except as a house cleaner, thus reinforcing the notion that if African-American migrants wanted to get ahead they were going to have to do it by “working together to survive and thrive.”¹⁰⁶

BEYOND FAMILY, FAMILIARITY, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: OPPORTUNITY

After the mid-1950s, small groups of African-Americans began migrating to the South Bay for educational and employment opportunities. In most instances, these black migrants were similar to earlier African-American migrants, except that they came for unprecedented educational and employment opportunities. In this movement, students and workers worked together out of the necessity to combat the *de facto* racial discriminatory constraints of their times. In education, “The Good Brothers” were the first African-Americans recruited into the South Bay for opportunities that may have improved their life choices and standard of living. The Good Brothers were African-American student-athletes who attended San Jose State College (SJS) in the 1950s. Some of the Good Brothers included Charles Alexander, Willie Bronson, Melvin Newton, “Rapid Ray” Norton, and “Bullet Bob” Pointer. According to Alexander, who came from a small town in East Texas, most of the Good Brothers came from small towns in Central California and were standouts in football and track and field. All together, about thirty-five black student-athletes were recruited into the region via SJS during the 1950s.¹⁰⁷ Collectively, they used sports to get a college education. They also saw San Jose as a place of economic opportunity that rapidly transitioned from an agricultural area to make way for residential, industrial park, and shopping center construction that went on from 1950 to 1970.¹⁰⁸ To this end, Alexander said that they “all ended up graduating and being doctors, judges, lawyers, dentists, [and] coaches.”¹⁰⁹

Alexander’s premise for the Good Brothers’ success was quite simple: they were trying to get out of their small towns and penetrate the established educational and economic systems. Their foundation for succeeding was working together, family,

education, and church. Their models on how to achieve their goals were Joe Louis, Jackie Robinson, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. As for Alexander, he was given the necessary space at SJS to discover that he did not want to be a medical doctor; instead he earned an Administration of Justice degree. Immediately after graduating, he worked for San Jose's Probation Department, and opened doors for additional African-American hires such as Blackwell and Son's Kenneth Blackwell in the late-1960s and early-1970s. By 1960, many of the avenues opened to the Good Brothers closed on the "Speed City" generation until the 1970s because of the hardening of the local color line.¹¹⁰ The Speed City generation of the 1960s included 1968 Summer Olympic boycott organizers and participants such as Tommie Smith, John Carlos, and Professors Harry Edwards and Kenneth Noel.¹¹¹

Before 1969, one discriminatory issue that was a constant for black student-athletes at SJS was unfair housing. None of the Good Brothers could get dormitory housing or find homes to rent around the college. So they collectively pressured their coach into finding them a home, which became known as the "Good Brothers' Pad" on 5th Street and St. John, located in a middle-class white community near San Jose State. They paid the rent during the off-season by working odd jobs and then pooling their income. In one instance, the Good Brothers earned their rent loading 10,000 chickens at night for a friend of the landlord. For Alexander, having a strong work ethic made the difference:

You see, I said [to his peers], "We can't write home to Momma." If your scholarship runs out, which mine did, you still gotta make it. You'll make it if there's a job that nobody else wants... Nobody wants to wade in chicken shit. But them greenbacks still spend the same.¹¹²

Despite being restricted to socializing in the Good Brothers' Pad, the home was one of the few places where people of different racial backgrounds freely intermingled in San Jose before the civil rights struggle of the 1960s. These restrictions went as far as SJS boarding 1960 Olympian "Rapid Ray" Norton in an equipment shed on its football field in 1956, during his first six weeks at SJS.¹¹³ According to Alexander, the Good Brothers' Pad was the unwritten Mecca of SJS's social scene in the 1950s. Its presence frightened many white men around the campus, who thought that these talented black student-athletes were going to sexually intermingle with "their" white women. In actuality, the Good Brothers had to work together to make up their own institutions and after-hour entertainment because they were not accepted into school fraternities and SJS's after-hour social scene—a reality that officially ended after November 1, 1967, with the Speed City generation successfully pressuring SJS into radically reforming its fraternity and sorority systems.¹¹⁴

Just as the presence of student-athletes at SJS increased, the Ford Motor Company resettled between 196-to-350 black United Auto Workers (UAW) from Richmond's declining Ford assembly center to nearby Milpitas.¹¹⁵ Black UAW migration was "African-Americans first full inclusion into industrial labor within

Santa Clara County [which] occurred from 1955 to 1957.”¹¹⁶ The black laborers worked at the San Jose Ford assembly plant because they negotiated that UAW Local 560 maintain solidarity along racial lines, which included the creation of an interracial cooperative housing complex near the newly built plant in Milpitas called the Sunnyhills Cooperative—probably the first planned interracial community in the United States.¹¹⁷ In the 1960s, Sunnyhills maintained an African-American occupancy of around 15 percent prior to the Fair Housing Act of 1968. At the time this percentage was large for black single-family occupancy in most US suburbs, and was huge for the South Bay, because from 1950 to 1970, its African-American population ranged from 0.6 percent to 1.7 percent of the overall population.¹¹⁸ Essentially, the UAW and Sunnyhills experience politicized most black migrants to work together and to work in interracial coalitions. For instance, Benjamin Franklin Gross, a Local 560 worker, successfully merged black liberation politics with labor movement politics in the Santa Clara Valley. In the early 1950s, as Local 560’s housing committee chairman, Gross was responsible for making sure that the local’s workers had comfortable and affordable housing near the newly built Ford plant in nearly all-white Milpitas. As mentioned, the end result was the development of Sunnyhills.

After the 1960s, Gross’s political profile grew when he became a city councilman, and then served two terms as mayor of Milpitas in the late 1960s.¹¹⁹ Similar to Charles Alexander, in San Jose’s Probation Department, Gross opened doors for African-Americans needing a job at San Jose Ford in the 1960s and 1970s—a period in which whites, and to a lesser degree, Mexican-Americans, were the preferred hires. In the example of Blackwell and Son’s Kenneth Blackwell, before he became a longtime hire in San Jose’s Probation Department, Blackwell actually worked at Ford for six months. In an era when you usually needed to know somebody to get hired at the Ford assembly plant, the person who gave Blackwell his first living wage job was Mayor Gross. While at Ford, Blackwell never hung out with the African-Americans in nearby Milpitas, even though he worked with them and was involved with black student politics at San Jose City College.¹²⁰ Several years earlier, a black Local 560 member not hanging out with colleagues in Sunnyhills was almost unknown. However, by the late-1960s, African-American autoworkers who had resettled from Richmond were retiring, and the South Bay black community was rapidly growing and fragmenting into distinctive enclaves as increasingly more African-Americans migrated for individual opportunity to the Northside, East San Jose, North Milpitas, Palo Alto’s Barron Park neighborhood, East Palo Alto, and in nearly all-white suburban communities.¹²¹ How did this post-1970 Great Migration that exploded to 56,211 residents in 1990 immediately impact the black Silicon Valley?¹²² From 1970 to 1990, most South Bay blacks were arguably better integrated spatially and were more prosperous and educated than African-Americans in most parts of the US.¹²³ However, even though many Silicon Valley blacks on the surface lived the “American Dream” in home ownership, income, and education, most from

the late-Second Great Migration era did not *reach* that dream because they lived socio-culturally isolated lives while grappling with *de facto* racial discrimination with considerably less of a firm sense of community to work with in order to survive and thrive.

THE END OF AN ERA

African-Americans fragmenting and scattering throughout the Santa Clara Valley became noticeable after the passage of Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, better known as the Fair Housing Act of 1968.¹²⁴ The immediate result of this civil rights law saw the South Bay black population spike in 1968-1969, leading it to quadruple from 4,187 in 1960 to 18,090 in 1970.¹²⁵ Shortly before this, most black professionals, who became the South Bay's first beneficiaries of affirmative action, were recruited into the region to work at high-tech firms like Lockheed and IBM.¹²⁶ Most of these professionals initially failed to find housing in West County where white recruits lived, such as in Campbell, Santa Clara, and San Jose's Willow Glenn neighborhood. Ocie Tinsley was one of these early African-American professionals. He is married to Mattie Briggs, who in 1954 persuaded her dean to cancel a minstrel show at James Lick High School. Tinsley, a Kansas City, Missouri native, was one of approximately fifty African-American engineers recruited to work in the high-tech industry in the mid-1960s. In 1966, he had forgone moving to Florida, Arizona, and St. Louis to resettle and work in the Santa Clara Valley at Lockheed in Research and Development. He was drawn to this opportunity because the booming National Aeronautics and Space Administration fascinated him. At the time, Lockheed was building Polaris missiles for the US Navy.

Like many of this new generation of black emigrants, Tinsley initially failed to understand the South Bay's color line, which was far subtler, and arguably more complex than Jim Crow discrimination in Kansas City. When he first came to the Santa Clara Valley, he moved to Sunnyvale, like white recruits within his cohort. Unlike the white members of his cohort, who immediately found single family housing, Tinsley was forced to live in hotels for two months until he figured out that most African-Americans lived in the Northside, East San Jose, North Milpitas, and unincorporated East Palo Alto. This early experience of social isolation and difficulty adjusting almost convinced Tinsley to leave the Bay Area. He felt estranged not only because he was excluded from most of the South Bay's housing market but also because of the region's diversity. Tinsley noted that Mexican-Americans and Asian-Americans "were not the... people that I... normally [hung] out with."¹²⁷ These feelings of social isolation subsided only when he came into contact with the African-American community in the Northside, and in East San Jose, which is where he bought a home and thrived as a software engineer at Kaiser Electronics. This relates to African-Americans migrating into the South Bay for economic and educational opportunities because when Tinsley first arrived into the South Bay the Great Migration for family, familiarity and social justice had ceased to be the dominant reasons why African-Americans migrated to the region. Since integration

in the 1970s, South Bay's black community has consisted of fragmentation, social isolation, and individualism without a stable sense of community even though the African-American community and black institutions were continually developing.¹²⁸ After 1980, a declining sense of black community and self were compounded with the decline of blue-collar employment that has coincided with the rise of the Silicon Valley.

In contrast, since 1970, the Mexican-American and Asian-American population growth within Santa Clara County has been much larger than that of the region's African-American population. By the 1990s, most population growth came from Indian or Chinese immigrants who came for high-tech jobs, while black and white populations moderately declined and resettled into affordable areas such as Stockton, and the boomburbs of Phoenix and Las Vegas. The ramifications of this growth pattern have, on the one hand, resulted in Silicon Valley becoming more international and sophisticated. Demographic changes altered the character of the Valley, even as anti-immigrant sentiment lurks below the surface of natural-born US citizens who were increasingly living paycheck-to-paycheck.¹²⁹ On the other hand, this growth pattern sparked a demand by Mexican-Americans and Asian-Americans for more press coverage and more participation in the political and economic processes as their populations increased.¹³⁰ The presence of Latino- and Asian-Americans permeates East Santa Clara County in residential communities, and the extensive formation of ESL programs, daycare services, after-school programs, senior housing and emergency services, and commercial enterprises such as ethnic-themed shopping centers like McCarthy Ranch in Milpitas.¹³¹ Within this development there is the legacy of the Great Migration and the South Bay black community just below the surface. Outsiders just have to know where to look, which is in those spaces where African-Americans are still working together to survive and thrive in the Northside and in East San Jose. For Ocie Tinsley and Mattie Briggs, this legacy lives on through *Sankofa*, or them learning from their black past and publicly disseminating that past through their recent founding of the African-American Heritage House at History Park in San Jose.¹³²

Notes

- ¹ See Broussard, *Black San Francisco*; Crouchett, Bunch, and Winnacker, *Visions Toward Tomorrow*; Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*; McBroom, *Parallel Communities*; Moore, *To Place Our Deeds*; Murch, *Living For the City*; Lemke-Santangelo, *Abiding Courage*; and Self, *America Babylon*.
- ² Konrad "Do You Know the Way to America's 10th Largest City?"; Murphy, "Silicon Valley Hub Knocks off Detroit as 10th largest city"; and Peters, "To the Chagrin of Detroit, Top 10 No Longer."
- ³ See Goings and Mohl, *The New African American Urban History*; Trotter, *Black Milwaukee*; *ibid.*, *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective*; Grossman, *Land of Hope*; and Trotter, Lewis, and Hunter, *The African American Urban Experience*.

- ⁴ See Table 1 for more on boomburbs. For more on modern urban and postsuburban development in the West see Broussard, “Percy H. Steele, Jr., and the Urban League”; De Graaf, “African American Suburbanization in California, 1960 through 1990”; Florido, “Feeling a Different Pulse in the Heart of Black San Diego”; Rothman, *Devil’s Bargain*; Saxe, *Politics of Arlington, Texas*; and Whitaker, *Race Work*.
- ⁵ See Lang and Simmons, “Boomburbs”; Fannie Mae Foundation Census Note 06, 1. For additional information of the acceleration of suburbanization see Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck, *Suburban Nation*; Garreau, *Edge City*; Lang and Lefurgy, *Boomburbs*; and Weise, *Places of Their Own*, 255-292.
- ⁶ The racial character of a suburb is addressed in Frey, “Melting Pot Suburbs.” For an alternative discourse on suburban diversity in the blackbelt South see Lacy, *Blue-Chip Black*.
- ⁷ Lang, “Boomburbs,” 1-3; See also Garreau, *Edge City*; Performance Urban Planning Report, “8th Annual Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey: 2012”; Puente, “Ethnic Diversity Increases on Peninsula, Census Shows”; Social Explorer Professional, “Census 1950”; *ibid.*, “Census 1990”; US Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Housing*, 7-10, 14-15, 453; and *ibid.*, 1990 Census of Population and Housing, 1288-1289.
- ⁸ US Bureau of the Census, *1950 Census of Population*, 5-21; *ibid.*, *1970 Census of Housing*, 7-10, 14-15, 453; *ibid.*, *US Census of Population and Housing*; *ibid.*, *1980 Census Tracts*, 215; *ibid.*, *1990 Census of Population*, 1920; and University of Virginia Library, *Historical Census Browser: County-Level Results for 1850-1960*.
- ⁹ The exception to this claim was Los Angeles, which was already showing signs of becoming racially segregated and isolated in the 1930s. See Broussard, “Black San Francisco as a Model for Examining the Urban West”; Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 350-353; and Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 11-35.
- ¹⁰ Webb, “The American West: Perpetual Mirage,” 25-31.
- ¹¹ Gagliardi, “Roots,” 16.
- ¹² *Shelley v. Kraemer*, 334 US 1 (1948); Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*; Gagliardi, “Roots,” 16; Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, 1-23; Ruffin, *Uninvited Neighbors*, 247-297; and Testbed for the Redlining Archives of California’s Exclusionary Spaces (T-RACES), “San Jose, Santa Clara, and Vicinity Redlining Map.”
- ¹³ Santa Clara County Office of the Clerk Recorder, Archives, “Declaration of Restrictions, Conditions, Covenants, Charges and Agreements affecting the Real Property.” I examined deeds from 1915-47.
- ¹⁴ T-RACES, “San Jose, Santa Clara, and Vicinity Redlining Map”; California Newsreel, and Independent Television Service, “The House We Live In”; Beauregard, *When America Became Suburban*, 83.
- ¹⁵ California Newsreel, “The House We Live In”; Beauregard, *When America Became Suburban*, 83; Freund, *Colored Property*, 99-139; Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 195-230; Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, 1-23; and Ruffin, *Uninvited Neighbors*, 160-168.
- ¹⁶ For more on Japanese internment see Asian Women United of California, *Making Waves*, 116; Cope, “The Effect World War II had on the Japanese Living in Santa Clara County,” 7, 16, 22; Daniels, *Prisoners Without Trial*; Loomis, *Milpitas*; Pearce, *From Asahi to Zebras*; Rawls and Bean, *California*, 361-367; Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore*, 209-212; and Yoo, *Growing Up Nisei*, 1-16.

- ¹⁷ The Garden City Women's Club, *History of Black Americans in Santa Clara Valley*, 16-17.
- ¹⁸ Charles Alexander, interviewed by the author, August 2010.
- ¹⁹ Social Explorer Professional, "1940 Census Tract." Social mapping corresponds with testimony of people interviewed by the author at San Jose, Los Altos, Mountain View, and Palo Alto in August 2010 and October 2011: Helen Anderson Gaffin; Orvella Stubbs; Patricia Perkins; Kenneth Blackwell; Gloria Anderson; Charles Alexander; Mattie Briggs; Cazetta Gray; Jean Libby; Staff at Mountain View Historical Society; and Steve Staiger at Palo Alto Historical Society. Also see The Garden City Women's Club, *History of Black Americans in Santa Clara Valley*.
- ²⁰ University of Virginia Library, *Historical Census Browser*, 1890.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 1900, 11.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 1940.
- ²³ See Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 254.
- ²⁴ The Regents of the University of California, and San Jose Public Library, California Room, "The Valley of Heart's Delight."
- ²⁵ City Hall Exhibits Committee, "Hidden Heritages: Six African American Families, San Jose 1860-1920"; The Garden City Women's Club, *History of Black Americans in Santa Clara Valley*.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*; and Arnold, *Antioch*.
- ²⁷ See The Garden City Women's Club, *History of Black Americans in Santa Clara Valley*, 125-136.
- ²⁸ Gagliardi, "Roots," 17.
- ²⁹ Ancestry.com, "United States Federal Census Collection, 1870-1930, San Jose"; The Garden City Women's Club, *History of Black Americans in Santa Clara Valley*, 123; and Santa Clara County Library, "*San Jose Mercury News Archive* (1886-1922) Online," Search: "Jacob Overton" and "Sarah Overton."
- ³⁰ See The Garden City Women's Club, *History of Black Americans in Santa Clara Valley*, 125.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 66.
- ³² "Blacks Make Solid Leap"; and Cronk, "NAACP Chieftain Sees Pendulum Swing Towards New Racism."
- ³³ Kenneth Blackwell, interviewed by the author, San Jose, August 2010.
- ³⁴ Ruffin, *Uninvited Neighbors*, 69-142.
- ³⁵ People interviewed by the author, August 2010: Helen Anderson Gaffin; Orvella Stubbs; Patricia Perkins; Kenneth Blackwell; Gloria Anderson; and Charles Alexander. People interviewed by the author and Patricia Perkins, 2005: Gladys Anderson; Gloria I. Ellington; Bertha Stafford; Frank Sybert Jr.; Grace Sybert; and Lenora Sybert. Also see The Garden City Women's Club, *History of Black Americans in Santa Clara Valley*.
- ³⁶ University of Virginia Library, *Historical Census Browser*, 1940-1960; and US Bureau of the Census, *1950 Census of Population: Volume 11*, 5-21.
- ³⁷ Helen Anderson Gaffin, interviewed by the author, August 2010.
- ³⁸ For more on the black migration to Oklahoma see Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 143-151.
- ³⁹ Based on people interviewed by author at San Jose in August 2010: Helen Anderson

Gaffin; Orvella Stubbs; Patricia Perkins; Kenneth Blackwell; Gloria Anderson; and Charles Alexander.

⁴⁰ Lee, “Forest Anderson”; and “The Ten Richest Negroes in America.”

⁴¹ Pat Perkins, interviewed by the author, February 2011.

⁴² Helen Anderson Gaffin, interviewed by the author; and Orvella Stubbs interviewed by the author; Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 272-273; and Gorham, “Negroes and Japanese Evacuees,” 314-316, 330-331.

⁴³ See Broussard, *Black San Francisco*; *ibid.*, “In Search of a Promised Land,” 181-209; Dembo, “The West Coast Teamsters’ and Longshoremen’s Unions in the Twentieth Century,” 27-35; McBroome, *Parallel Communities*; Moore, *To Place Our Deeds*; Nelson, “The Big Strike”; Lemke-Santangelo, *Abiding Courage*; Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 251-277; *ibid.*, “Urban Black Labor in the West, 1849-1949,” 99-120; and Winslow, *Waterfront Workers*.

⁴⁴ Based on people interviewed by the author: Helen Anderson Gaffin, Gloria Anderson, and Orvella Stubbs.

⁴⁵ See *James et al. v. Marinship Corporation*, 25, 2d California Reports, 721 (1944); and Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 258-260.

⁴⁶ Helen Anderson Gaffin interviewed by the author; Gloria Anderson interviewed by the author.

⁴⁷ Helen Anderson Gaffin interviewed by the author.

⁴⁸ Lemke-Santangelo, *Abiding Courage*, 50.

⁴⁹ Helen Anderson Gaffin interviewed by the author.

⁵⁰ Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 255.

⁵¹ See Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, 158-165; McBroome, *Parallel Communities*, 106-112; and Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 257-60.

⁵² Cited in Taylor, *African American History*.

⁵³ See *James et al. v. Marinship Corporation*, 25, 2d California Reports, 721 (1944); and Taylor, *In Search of the Racial Frontier*, 258-260.

⁵⁴ Ruffin, *Uninvited Neighbors*, 150-151.

⁵⁵ Based on Mattie Tinsley, interviewed by the author, August 2010; Helen Anderson Gaffin, interviewed by the author; and Steve Milner, interviewed by the author, October 2011.

⁵⁶ See Pitti, *The Devil in Silicon Valley*, 136-138.

⁵⁷ California History Center, *Sunnyvale*, 63, 85. During WWII, Hedy manufactured engines for Liberty ships “and built ship propulsion steam turbines and gears under license from Westinghouse.”

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁵⁹ Taylor, “Urban Black Labor in the West, 1849-1949,” 110.

⁶⁰ Kenneth Blackwell, interviewed by the author.

⁶¹ Based on interviews by the author: Patricia Perkins; Kenneth Blackwell; and Gloria Anderson.

⁶² Patricia Perkins, interviewed by the author.

⁶³ For a rich discussion on Black migration to California from 1941-70 see Broussard, *Black*

San Francisco, 133-142, 171; McBroome, *Parallel Communities*, 129-147; Moore, *To Place Our Deeds*, 127-146; and Lemke-Santangelo, *Abiding Courage*, 133-152.

- ⁶⁴ Interviews are from the Garden City Women's Club, *History of Black Americans in Santa Clara Valley*, 68, 116.
- ⁶⁵ Based on the interviews by the author: Patricia Perkins; Gloria Anderson; and Kenneth Blackwell.
- ⁶⁶ Don Gagliardi, "Roots," 17.
- ⁶⁷ "San Jose Civil Rights Fighter Inez Jackson Dies at Age 86." Also, see Edwards, *The Struggle that Must Be*, 112; "Black Apartment Hunter Encounters Waiting List."
- ⁶⁸ The home was at 386 North 12th Street.
- ⁶⁹ See The Garden City Women's Club, *History of Black Americans in Santa Clara Valley*, 148; Helen Anderson Gaffin, interviewed by the author; and Orvella Stubbs, interviewed by the author. According to the *History of Black Americans in Santa Clara Valley*, Dollarhyde came to San Jose in 1933; whereas, the interviews suggest 1940.
- ⁷⁰ Helen Gaffin, interviewed by the author; and Orvella Stubbs, interviewed by the author.
- ⁷¹ The Garden City Women's Club, *History of Black Americans in Santa Clara Valley*, 148.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*, 94.
- ⁷³ See NAACP West Coast Region Files, "NAACP Membership Report, San Jose Branch, 1948-1976."
- ⁷⁴ The Garden City Women's Club, *History of Black Americans in Santa Clara Valley*, 94.
- ⁷⁵ Loomis, *Milpitas*, 51; Pitti, *The Devil in Silicon Valley*, 224; Ruffin, *Uninvited Neighbors*, 178.
- ⁷⁶ Cited in Pitti, *The Devil in Silicon Valley*, 84.
- ⁷⁷ Cited in The Garden City Women's Club, *History of Black Americans in Santa Clara Valley*, 94, 148.
- ⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 94.
- ⁷⁹ Ruffin, *Uninvited Neighbors*, 177-180, 248-299, 300-347, 359-393. Cazz Jackson, interview by author; Harry Edwards, interviewed by the author, June 2012.
- ⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 353.
- ⁸¹ Harry Edwards, interviewed by author, October 2011; Jean Libby, interview by author, October 2011.
- ⁸² The official court decision on Dixon being expelled can be seen at *St. John Dixon v. Alabama State Board of Education*, No. 18641, United States Court of Appeals Fifth Circuit (August 4, 1961).
- ⁸³ "Anti-Segregationist Talk Okayed by SJS President"; Hanson, "Protests Fizzle; SJS Students Hear Braden Integration Plea"; and Fosl, *Subversive Southerner*, 267-268.
- ⁸⁴ Meier and Rudwick, *CORE*, 135-158.
- ⁸⁵ Ruffin, *Uninvited Neighbors*, 292-298.
- ⁸⁶ De Graaf et al., *Seeking El Dorado*, 415.
- ⁸⁷ Ruffin, *Uninvited Neighbors*, 327-328.
- ⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 377-383.
- ⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 372-387.

- ⁹⁰ Cronk, “NAACP Chieftain Sees Pendulum Swing Towards New Racism.”
- ⁹¹ Ruffin, *Uninvited Neighbors*, 378-381.
- ⁹² Charles Alexander, interviewed by the author.
- ⁹³ Albert Camarillo, interviewed by the author, October 2011.
- ⁹⁴ Ruffin, *Uninvited Neighbors*, 378-381.
- ⁹⁵ Based on people interviewed by the author: Helen Anderson Gaffin; Orvella Stubbs; Patricia Perkins; Kenneth Blackwell; Gloria Anderson; Charles Alexander; and Monica Ramos of Mexican Heritage Corporation, San Jose, October 2011. Also see The Garden City Women’s Club, *History of Black Americans in Santa Clara Valley*; Pitti, *The Devil in Silicon Valley*, 178-197.
- ⁹⁶ Mattie Tinsley, interviewed by the author; Orvella Stubbs, interviewed by the author.
- ⁹⁷ Mattie Tinsley, interviewed by the author.
- ⁹⁸ Kenneth Blackwell, interviewed by the author.
- ⁹⁹ See Gagliardi, “Roots,” 17.
- ¹⁰⁰ Orvella Stubbs, interviewed by the author.
- ¹⁰¹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰² For an idea how Record Hop functioned see “KNTV Record Hop.”
- ¹⁰³ Orvella Stubbs, interviewed by the author.
- ¹⁰⁴ De Graaf, *Seeking El Dorado*, 20-53.
- ¹⁰⁵ Garden City Women’s Club, *History of Black Americans in Santa Clara Valley*, 68, 116.
- ¹⁰⁶ Orvella Stubbs, interviewed by the author.
- ¹⁰⁷ Charles Alexander, interviewed by the author.
- ¹⁰⁸ See Arbuckle, *Clyde Arbuckle’s History of San Jose*, 163. The disappearance of fruit acreage began with fruits and grapes; walnuts lasted past the 1970s before vanishing.
- ¹⁰⁹ Charles Alexander, interviewed by the author.
- ¹¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹¹ For more on Speed City see Edwards, *The Revolt of the Black Athlete*; *ibid.*, *The Struggle that Must Be*; Smith and Steele, *Silent Gesture*; Zirin and Carlos, *The John Carlos Story*; and Ruffin, *Uninvited Neighbors*, 300-344.
- ¹¹² Charles Alexander, interviewed by the author.
- ¹¹³ Ray Norton, interviewed by the author, San Jose, October 2011; and Urla Hill, interviewed by the author, San Jose, October 2011.
- ¹¹⁴ Ruffin, *Uninvited Neighbors*, 396-423.
- ¹¹⁵ See Ruffin, “Sunnyhills”, 114. Also see Devincenzi, Gilsenan, and Levine, *Milpitas*, 3; and Sunnyhills United Methodist Church, *Sunnyhills United Methodist Church*.
- ¹¹⁶ Ruffin, “Sunnyhills,” 113.
- ¹¹⁷ Ben Gross, interviewed by the author, December 2008. Also see Ruffin, “Sunnyhills.”
- ¹¹⁸ Ben Gross, interviewed by the author; De Graaf, et al., *Seeking El Dorado*, 411; University of Virginia Library, *Historical Census Browser*, 1950-1960; US Bureau of the Census, *1950 Census of Population*, 5-21; *ibid.*, *1970 Census of Housing*, 7-10, 14-15, 453.

- ¹¹⁹ Ben Gross, interviewed by the author.
- ¹²⁰ Based on oral testimony of Kenneth Blackwell, Gloria Anderson, and Patricia Perkins.
- ¹²¹ Social Explorer Professional, “1970 Census Tract.” Also see people interviewed by the author at San Jose, Cupertino, East Palo Alto, Los Altos, Milpitas, Mountain View, and Palo Alto: Charles Alexander, Gloria Anderson, Kenneth Blackwell, Mattie Briggs, Albert Camarillo, Clayborne Carson, Helen Anderson Gaffin, Charles Gary, Cazetta Gray, Ben Gross, Kelly King, Jean Libby, Staff at Mountain View Historical Society, Steven Milner, Charles Murray, Alissa Owens, Patricia Perkins, Herbert G. Ruffin I, Sadie Mae Ruffin, Steve Staiger, Orvella Stubbs, Ocie Tinsley, and Robert Walker. Also see Pitti, *The Devil in Silicon Valley*, 189; and The Garden City Women’s Club, *History of Black Americans in Santa Clara Valley*.
- ¹²² US Bureau of the Census, *1990 Census of Population*, 1920.
- ¹²³ See 1990 US Census, “Demographic Reports”; Spatial Structures in the Social Sciences, Brown University, “Residential Segregation” (by “City” and “Metropolitan Area” from 1980-2000), in *US2010: Discover America in a New Century* (<http://www.s4.brown.edu/us2010/segregation2010/Default.aspx>); “Sortable List of Dissimilarity Scores” (http://www.s4.brown.edu/cen2000/WholePop/WPsort/sort_d1.html); “Silicon Valley Exodus: Thousands Leave Congested County as Others Move In”; Johnson, “Minorities Fare Better in County Than Nation”; and “San Jose Upstages Nations Other Melting Pot’s,” June 11, 1993.
- ¹²⁴ US Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Housing*, 7-10, 14-15, 453; and *ibid.*, *US Census of Population and Housing*, Table P-1; and “Civil Rights Act of 1968, Title VIII (Fair Housing Act of 1968).”
- ¹²⁵ US Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Housing*, 7-10, 14-15, 453; and University of Virginia Library, *Historical Census Browser*, 1960-1970.
- ¹²⁶ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, s.v. “Affirmative Action.”
- ¹²⁷ Ocie Tinsley, interviewed by the author, San Jose, August 2010.
- ¹²⁸ Corwin, “Blacks in San Jose Lack a Sense of Community, Workshop Told.”
- ¹²⁹ Palmer, “Whites Aren’t Majority in Region, Figures Show Asian, Latino Percentages Rise”; “‘Them’ Must Become ‘Us’ to Meet Valley’s Needs.”
- ¹³⁰ Lapin, “Asian-Americans Started Demanding Greater Political Role as their Population Increased.”
- ¹³¹ Talya Ruffin, interviewed by author, Milpitas, June 2009; and *Milpitas Post*, “Profile Paints Milpitas as a Booming City,” February 20, 1997.
- ¹³² See “African American Heritage House at History Park, San Jose.” The House was founded by Mattie’s sister, Lula Briggs Galloway.

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Appendix

TABLE 1. BOOMBURGS, 2000

Boomburg	State	Metro Area	Year Started	Starting Pop.	2000 Pop.	Change (Percent)
Chandler	AZ	Phoenix	1950	3,799	176,581	4,548
Gilbert	AZ	Phoenix	1980	5,717	109,697	1,819
Glendale	AZ	Phoenix	1950	8,179	218,812	2,575
Mesa	AZ	Phoenix	1950	16,790	396,375	2,261
Peoria	AZ	Phoenix	1960	2,593	108,364	4,079
Scottsdale	AZ	Phoenix	1960	10,026	202,705	1,922
Tempe	AZ	Phoenix	1950	7,684	158,625	1,964
Anaheim	CA	Los Angeles	1950	14,556	328,014	2,153
Corona City	CA	Los Angeles	1950	10,223	124,966	1,122
Costa Mesa	CA	Los Angeles	1960	37,550	108,724	190
Fontana	CA	Los Angeles	1960	14,659	128,929	780
Fullerton City	CA	Los Angeles	1950	13,958	126,003	803
Irvine	CA	Los Angeles	1980	62,134	143,072	130
Lancaster	CA	Los Angeles	1950	3,594	118,718	3,203
Moreno Valley	CA	Los Angeles	1990	118,779	142,381	20
Ontario	CA	Los Angeles	1950	22,872	158,007	591
Orange	CA	Los Angeles	1950	10,027	128,821	1,185
Oxnard	CA	Los Angeles	1950	21,567	170,358	690
Rancho Cucamonga	CA	Los Angeles	1980	55,250	127,743	131
Riverside	CA	Los Angeles	1950	46,764	255,166	446
San Bernardino	CA	Los Angeles	1950	63,058	185,401	194
Santa Ana	CA	Los Angeles	1950	45,533	337,977	642
Santa Clarita	CA	Los Angeles	1990	110,642	151,088	37
Simi Valley	CA	Los Angeles	1970	56,676	111,351	96
Thousand Oaks	CA	Los Angeles	1960	2,934	117,005	3,888
Chula Vista	CA	San Diego	1950	15,927	173,556	990
Escondido	CA	San Diego	1950	6,544.	133,559	1,941

TABLE 1. BOOMBURGS, 2000, CONTINUED

Boomburg	State	Metro Area	Year Started	Starting Pop.	2000 Pop.	Change (Percent)
Oceanside	CA	San Diego	1950	12,881	161,029	1,150
Daly City	CA	San Francisco	1950	15,191	103,621	582
Fremont	CA	San Francisco	1960	43,790	203,413	365
Santa Rosa	CA	San Francisco	1950	17,902	147,595	724
Sunnyvale	CA	San Francisco	1950	9,829	131,760	1,241
Aurora	CO	Denver	1950	11,421	276,393	2,320
Lakewood	CO	Denver	1960	19,338	144,126	645
Westminster	CO	Denver	1960	13,850	100,900	629
Coral Springs	FL	Miami	1980	37,349	117,549	215
Hialeah	FL	Miami	1950	19,676	226,419	1,051
Pembroke Pines	FL	Miami	1970	15,589	137,427	782
Clearwater	FL	Tampa	1950	15,581	108,787	598
Naperville	IL	Chicago	1950	7,013	128,358	1,730
Henderson	NV	Las Vegas	1950	3,643	175,381	4,714
North Las Vegas	NV	Las Vegas	1950	3,875	115,488	2,880
Salem	OR	Portland	1950	43,140	136,924	217
Arlington	TX	Dallas	1950	7,692	332,969	4,229
Carrollton	TX	Dallas	1960	4,242	109,576	2,483
Garland	TX	Dallas	1950	10,571	215,768	1,941
Grand Prairie	TX	Dallas	1950	14,594	127,427	773
Irving	TX	Dallas	1950	2,621	191,615	7,211
Mesquite	TX	Dallas	1960	27,526	124,523	352
Plano	TX	Dallas	1960	3,695	222,030	5,909
West Valley City	UT	Salt Lake City	1980	72,378	108,896	50
Chesapeake	VA	Norfolk	1970	89,580	199,184	122
Bellevue	WA	Seattle	1960	12,809	109,569	755

Source: Robert E. Lang and Patrick A Simmons, “‘Boomburbs’: Fast-Growing Suburban Cities,” in Bruce Katz and Robert E. Lang (eds.), *Redefining Urban and Suburban America: Evidence from Census 2000* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 106.

FIGURE 2. TRADITIONAL BLACK COMMUNITY IN SAN JOSE, 1860-1970

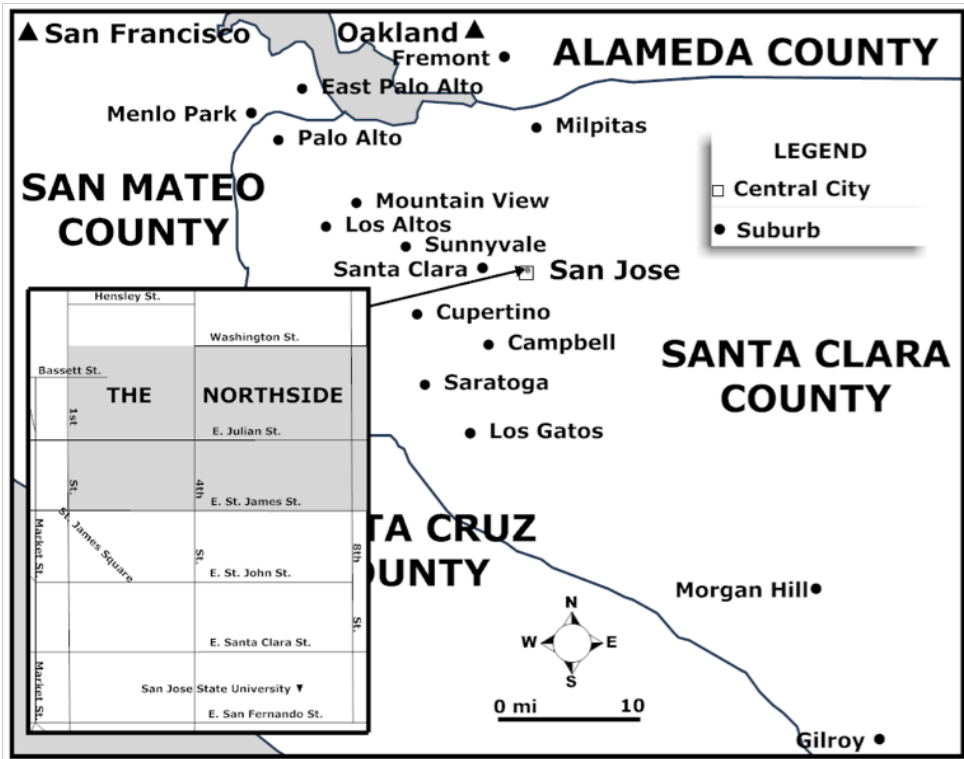


TABLE 2. BLACK POPULATION IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY, 1900-1940

	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940
Black Population	989	251	262	335	536	730
Total Population	48,005	60,216	83,539	100,676	145,118	174,949

Source: University of Virginia Library. *Historical Census Browser: County-Level Results for 1850-1960*. (University of Virginia Library: Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, 2011).

TABLE 3. BLACK POPULATION IN SANTA CLARA VALLEY, 1940-1980

	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980
Black Population	730	1,718	4,187	18,090	43,716
Total Population	174,949	290,547	642,315	1,064,714	1,295,071

Total county black population increase from 1940 to 1980: 98%

Total county population increase from 1940 to 1980: 86%

Sources: US Bureau of the Census, *1950 Census of Population: Volume 11, Characteristics of the Population, Part 5, California* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1952), 5-21; US Bureau of the Census, *1970 Census of Housing: Volume 1, Housing Characteristics for States, Counties, and Counties; Part 6#, California* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1972), 7-10, 14-15, 453; US Bureau of the Census, *US Census of Population and Housing: 1980 Census Tracts* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1983), 215; and University of Virginia Library, *Historical Census Browser: County-Level Results for 1850-1960* (University of Virginia Library: Geospatial and Statistical Data Center, 2005).

**REMEMBER THE FILLMORE: THE LINGERING HISTORY OF URBAN
RENEWAL IN BLACK SAN FRANCISCO**

Christina Jackson & Nikki Jones

In the summer of 2008, I moved to San Francisco, California.¹ I lived in the city for three months. As a researcher, my objective was to learn more about Mayor Gavin Newsome's African-American Out-Migration Task Force. The Task Force convened in 2007 and met eight times from August to December. In 2009, the Mayor's office released a final report on the Redevelopment Agency's website that summarized the history of blacks in the city and outlined several recommendations for reversing their flight.² The final report found that the political, economic, and social conditions of African-Americans are disproportionately more dire than any other group in San Francisco. During our conversations, some task force members suggested that this dire condition could be due to the lack of a black middle-class, which could act as a "connective tissue" between San Francisco's poor black community and the city's decision makers. The Task Force reported that although blacks had been in San Francisco for decades, many African-Americans, especially poor blacks, often felt disconnected from much of the city life. That finding resonated with what I heard during my interviews with the middle- to upper-middle class African-American members of the Task Force and with my observations of how residents and visitors shared public space in the Fillmore neighborhood, one of the city's historically black neighborhoods.

For example, in July 2008, I attended the Fillmore Jazz Festival, an event sponsored by the Fillmore District Community Benefit District to commemorate the 1940s and 1950s jazz scene in the neighborhood. The event was described in a local newspaper as a weekend that would feature "the best smooth jazz, soul, funk, and downright cool music guaranteed to get you on your feet." Visitors were invited to "enjoy gourmet foods, unique artwork, refreshing beverages, and all the charm of the Fillmore District."³ The event took place on Fillmore Street, a main thoroughfare in the neighborhood. The following reflection, which I recorded in my field notes an hour after my visit to the event, captures my initial impressions of how different groups of attendees participated in the event and how their participation appeared to be patterned by race and class:

Field note entry: July 6, 2008

When I turned onto Fillmore Street from Eddy Street, I first noticed

the crowd of people, one big stage and a string of white tents. A jazz band was on stage and a huge crowd of people was camped out on a tarp listening and bopping to the music while others listened from the sidewalk. The festival's four stages hosted different jazz artists all day. Away from the stages, vendors sold jewelry, energy drinks, foods, handbags, and art.

I expected that most of the people who attended the Fillmore Jazz Festival—along with the vendors—would be black, but as I walked around I noticed white, black, and Asian residents among the crowd. The scene reminded me of Philadelphia's West Oak Lane Jazz Festival, where the typical audience is predominately black with few other ethnic groups in attendance. Here, I was very surprised to see a more diverse crowd. Older white men and women danced to the jazz numbers. They seemed to take up more space than the black residents who were older and more middle-class, but also seemed to enjoy the music as they listened while softly bopping their heads. As a young black woman in her early 20s, I noticed that I didn't see many other young black women or men like me sitting down to enjoy the music.

The booth that most caught my attention was for the Fillmore Jazz Heritage Center. The Jazz Heritage Center is located at the corner of Fillmore and Eddy streets, inside the Fillmore Heritage Center, a retail and residential complex that opened in 2007. One older white woman, a younger black woman in her twenties, and a young white guy were working the booth. I asked them if they all worked for the Fillmore Jazz Heritage Center and they said yes. The center's slogan is "The Rebirth of the Cool." I noticed this slogan at the booth and on flyers around Fillmore Street. The vendors offered me several pamphlets about the Jazz Heritage Center. They also sold T-shirts that featured images of jazz musicians on their front. I was also offered an opportunity to enter a raffle to win a dinner for four at Yoshi's, a jazz club in the Center. The Heritage Center's pamphlet included a quotation from Mayor Gavin Newsom: "The Fillmore Heritage Center is a cornerstone of my commitment to restore the economic viability and population of San Francisco's African-American community." There were other quotations from the former mayor, Willie Brown—the city's first black mayor—about how the jazz scene "used to be."

As I take in the scene in front of me, I notice that none of these publications or pamphlets speak to the struggling lower-class black community that lives in the Fillmore. Issues that were brought up at community meetings I attended, like the recent "State of Black San Francisco" meeting held in the Lower Fillmore (the area below Geary Boulevard), are not part of the new effort to rebrand the neighborhood. The community forum sought to provide information to concerned residents on how to eliminate disparities faced by African-Americans. I realized that the community forum and this jazz festival represent two very different sides of the same neighborhood. On the one side, the Fillmore is packaged as a tourist attraction—a destination neighborhood—that uses jazz history as a way to attract artists and music lovers to the community with the hope that these visitors would buy property and revitalize the neighborhood. On the other side, local

activists and residents represent the Fillmore as a neighborhood in major conflict with the city over how to meet the needs of struggling blacks who don't see a hopeful future for themselves in the neighborhood.

This reflection illustrates my initial understanding of the two very different sides of the Fillmore. Over time, I learned that the Fillmore is represented differently depending on the situation and the audience. Different residents also offer different understandings of the Fillmore, depending on their stakes in the neighborhood and its renewal. For example, the Fillmore Jazz Festival is mostly about buying things. In many ways, it represents the commodification of "cool" in the city. The festival opens up a space for financially secure whites on Fillmore Street to enjoy black culture and especially jazz music. They can dance and enjoy the music. Some older black residents may attend the jazz festival as a way to connect to what the Fillmore used to be. The Fillmore District Community Benefit District (FDCBD) and the Fillmore Jazz Preservation District (FJPD) promote events and retail and residential projects that they believe will help to stimulate the neighborhood's economy south of Geary Boulevard, which is something of a dividing line between the more white and middle-class population "up the hill" and the poorer African-American population in the Lower Fillmore. Yet, many Fillmore residents feel at odds with city-funded efforts, and report that they gloss over the real struggles in the Fillmore and marginalize the voices of its low- and middle-income residents. A common belief among these residents is that city-funded efforts are not beneficial to the black residents who have lived in the neighborhood for decades. Instead, they argue, these efforts are oriented toward drawing the city's white community and newcomers to the neighborhood. These residents see the Fillmore Jazz festival and the African-American Out-Migration Task Force as examples of city-supported projects that fail to deliver on their promise to improve the social and economic situation of San Francisco's black community. This skepticism is not confined to projects that take place in the Fillmore. When similar projects are proposed in other parts of the city, like the proposed redevelopment projects in Bayview-Hunter's Point, activists and residents implore city officials and community members to "Remember the Fillmore!"

How do memories of past battles shape the experiences of African-Americans with redevelopment in San Francisco today? In this essay, we draw on field research conducted among members of San Francisco's black community to describe how the history of urban renewal in the Fillmore shapes responses to urban redevelopment projects in the city today, especially in historically black neighborhoods such as Bayview-Hunter's Point (BVHP). We draw on ethnographic fieldwork, including direct observation, participant observation, and in-depth interviews conducted by the first author from 2008 to 2010, to illustrate how residents of Bayview-Hunter's Point draw on memories of the Fillmore to challenge and change the city's plans for redevelopment in their neighborhood.⁴ We begin this article with a short history of African-American migration to San Francisco in the wake of World War II

and the experiences of African-Americans in the city since the end of the war. We then describe a common sentiment among a sub-set of African-Americans in the city—that urban renewal, like the renewal that changed the Fillmore neighborhood, leads to the displacement of blacks from the city—and how that sentiment shapes understandings of the city’s efforts to redevelop neighborhoods in the city today.



FIGURE 1. The Fillmore Jazz Festival, 2006. The crowd at the annual Fillmore Jazz Festival. Photograph courtesy of Nikki Jones

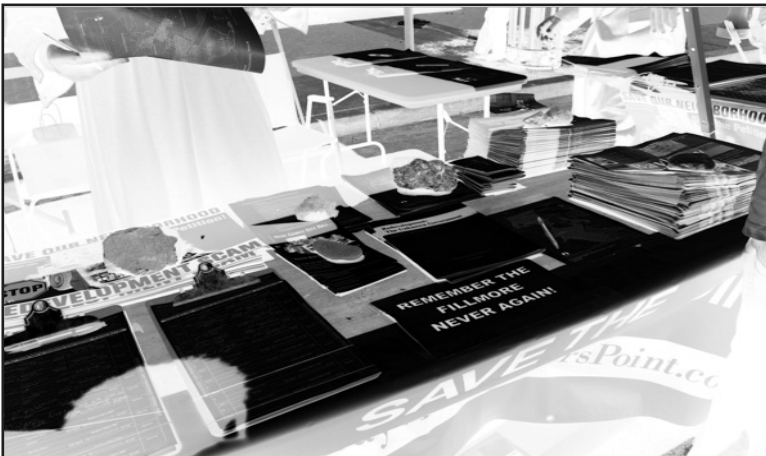


FIGURE 2. “Remember the Fillmore—Never Again!” 2006. The sign on this table at San Francisco’s 56th Annual Juneteenth Festival warns city residents to “remember the Fillmore.” Activists distribute information to passersby and encourage others to sign petitions to “save our neighborhood” and stop redevelopment in Bayview-Hunter’s Point. Photograph courtesy of Nikki Jones



FIGURE 3. Construction Site—Fillmore Heritage Center, 2005. Construction of the Fillmore Heritage Center begins as an African-American worker observes through a chain-link fence. Photograph courtesy of Nikki Jones

AFRICAN-AMERICAN MIGRATION INTO SAN FRANCISCO AFTER WORLD WAR II

For a brief period in the 1940s and 1950s, the Fillmore was home to a vibrant African-American community that was often referred to by locals as “the Harlem of the West.”⁵ Black migrants were recruited to work at the shipyard in Bayview-Hunter’s Point after the introduction of anti-discrimination policies during World War II opened up opportunities and training for skilled and semi-skilled black labor, including many from the South.⁶ The influx of migrants helped to create an African-American community around the shipyard and in the Fillmore neighborhood. For many city residents and Navy officials, however, the influx of black migrants represented a social and civic problem for the city. During a conference on Negro personnel, a Navy Admiral warned, “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.”⁷ Despite Navy officials’ initial reluctance toward integration, in 1943, after Executive Order 8802 was enacted, 112,000 blacks completed the war training in shipbuilding, aircraft repair, and machinery.⁸ The shipyard and related war industries allowed blacks to enter previously restricted fields, which helped migrants to increase their social and economic well-being during the war. The war industry also opened up job

opportunities for women. Black residents took pride in their jobs at the shipyard and the black community in the city benefited from its connection to the war industry.

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. The city's residents were not prepared for the large African-American immigration during the war period.⁹ 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.¹⁰ In such areas, "government policy and decision making, especially public housing location and urban renewal, [triggered] racial transitions of formerly white neighborhoods and, subsequently, [resulted] in concentrating and containing African-Americans in these newer, 'second' ghettos."¹¹ Racial tensions were also exacerbated by violence, riots, and bombings in the city during the 1960s.¹² These institutional and interpersonal practices and processes maintained racial segregation and limited the choice of housing for blacks. 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."¹³

Black residents of the Fillmore responded to patterns of institutional exclusion by transforming their neighborhoods into spaces of freedom and culture.¹⁴ This sort of response is what made the Fillmore the "Harlem of the West."¹⁵ In the years following the end of the war, however, the shipyard closed and government officials eventually declared portions of the Fillmore neighborhood a slum. Block by block, the neighborhood was razed and replaced by housing projects. Some lots remained vacant for decades.

URBAN RENEWAL AND NEGRO REMOVAL IN SAN FRANCISCO

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."¹⁶ By the time of Baldwin's visit, the Fillmore area had already been declared a slum and was targeted for urban renewal. Two urban redevelopment plans were implemented, the "Western Addition A-1" in 1953 and "Western Addition A-2" in 1963.¹⁷ These efforts were implemented under the leadership of Justin Herman. 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 sixty-seven years old and the head of one of the oldest churches in the Western Addition. As soon as we took a seat in his office, he proceeded to tell 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 used the term "black removal" when describing the impact that urban renewal has had on the neighborhood. Reverend

White's comments also highlighted the racial politics that characterize the history of gentrification and redevelopment in the city:

The Redevelopment Agency, forty 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!

Reverend White also explained the economic consequences of these broken promises for blacks in the city: "After forty years... [they] took homes from people and through redlining others [we] were forced to sell our Victorian homes. These homes would be worth millions today. And who gets the millions of dollars out of the ones that they didn't tear down now? By and large, white folk!" 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 partially supported by statistics. After urban redevelopment plans were implemented, only 4 percent of black-owned businesses returned to the neighborhood.¹⁸ 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.¹⁹

Frank, a forty-nine-year-old community organizer and resident of BVHP, described urban renewal in the Fillmore: "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.

In the wake of redevelopment, the Fillmore, like other inner-city neighborhoods across the country, experienced the various consequences of deindustrialization and the erosion of the social safety net, such as an increased concentration of poverty, increased crime, rapidly deteriorating schools, and an increase in drug trafficking and the violence associated with the drug trade. Brother Ben, who came of age when vacant lots dotted much of the neighborhood's landscape, recalls the struggle that characterized growing up in the neighborhood during this time period:

I remember struggle at a young age. To a degree that sometimes we didn't even have nothing to eat. And I can remember that; it stays. I mean, I didn't know why my mother would be going off to herself crying certain nights and crying herself to sleep. But as I got older I could

realize: it's that she couldn't provide for us. And the stress, the ultimate toll that took on her is what led her to start using alcohol, drinking... So that's what I can remember from an early age.

Ben's memory of struggle reflects an understanding of how structural forces like redevelopment affected his experience growing up in the Fillmore. The combined effects of redevelopment, racism, poverty, unemployment, and addiction shape how he thinks about urban renewal efforts today. Residents such as Ben are attuned to how plans for neighborhood change can impact people's lives. Some residents see a similar, although less dramatic, pattern in current efforts to profit off of the neighborhood's jazz history.

Today, much of the Fillmore's black community lives in public housing units near Fillmore Street. The area is gentrifying quickly. Young, middle-class, white urbanites give the neighborhood a different feel than what many longtime black residents remember. Many people who hear about urban redevelopment today do not share the history of struggle that Brother Ben describes above. For many who are familiar with the city, including the residents of the nearby Lower Pacific Heights, Alamo Square and Japantown neighborhoods, areas like the Fillmore or BVHP are largely defined as bad neighborhoods marked by poverty, crime, and violence. This remains true even as the Fillmore enters a new phase of renewal. In recent years, gentrification has extended the boundaries of neighboring Lower Pacific Heights deeper into the Lower Fillmore yet clear boundaries remain around what is commonly considered some of the most troubled parts of the neighborhood by outsiders, especially the federally subsidized housing projects along Eddy Street.

Longtime black city residents remember the time before renewal as a 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 sixty-five-year-old black man and active participant in community politics, contrasted the Fillmore in its "heyday" with 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 [and why] when you can have. You struggle and

save to stay here, [but why] when you can have more product for one half the cost? Instead of \$600,000, you can go somewhere, out there in Fairfield, [or] Sacramento and get the same house or bigger for three, four hundred, c'mon!

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. Older residents remember the Fillmore as a cultural hub. In contemporary meetings about redevelopment, they call on this history to fight for control over a process that destroyed the neighborhoods they grew up in. Longtime black residents often refer nostalgically to a sense of unity cultivated during their participation in protests, union-mobilization efforts, black social clubs, the famous black jazz scene and the vibrant cultural hub that was the Fillmore.²⁰ This sense of unity helped black people to grow roots in the San Franciscan community. Yet, these roots are showing their wear. Today, African-American San Franciscan residents under forty-five are three times more likely to leave the city than their older African-American counterparts. Those who have not lived in the city for twenty years or more are more likely to say they would move within three years.²¹ These findings indicate that younger individuals may not have the same relationship to the neighborhood and city as older residents who have lived there when the neighborhood was more unified. Many younger blacks are like Reverend Johnson's daughter. The "redeveloped" Fillmore is also too expensive for them.

The new development that has taken root in the neighborhood over the last few years was funded by the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (SFRA), which controlled much of the neighborhood for the past sixty years. On January 1, 2009, the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency ended its decades-long redevelopment project in the Fillmore. The attention of both the agency and the city turned to completing the redevelopment and "renewal" of Bayview-Hunter's Point (BVHP), which started in the 1960s.²² Generations of black families have lived in this part of San Francisco since the end of the war, many of them living in poverty. The shipyard still holds a great deal of meaning for longtime community members. Many are determined to gain control of this space and resist efforts to erase their social histories through redevelopment and gentrification. In BVHP, located across the city from the Fillmore but still connected through social history and social relationships, public battles over space and place play out—as they once did in the Fillmore—during regular community meetings. Neighborhood activists who are familiar with how redevelopment and false promises of renewal shaped the Fillmore's desperately warn city residents and community members to "remember the Fillmore." The phrase is invoked as a warning of the harm that urban renewal projects can do to a neighborhood's cohesion.



FIGURE 4. The Fillmore Center, 2006. The Fillmore Center apartment complex opened in the 1980s. It was built during the A-2 phase or redevelopment in the Fillmore, which began in 1963. Photograph courtesy of Nikki Jones



FIGURE 5. *Redevelopment and Renewal, 2006.* The new Fillmore Heritage Center is being built across the street from the Fillmore Center. Photograph courtesy of Nikki Jones



FIGURE 6. *The New Fillmore Heritage Center, 2007.* The Fillmore Heritage Center opened in 2007. Some of the city's African-American residents believe that the Heritage Center was built to attract more desirable populations to the Lower Fillmore, like those featured here. Photograph courtesy of Nikki Jones

THE PAST IS ALWAYS PRESENT: REMEMBERING THE FILLMORE TODAY

When we lived in the Fillmore, it was a community of black folks. I mean, we had nightclubs and movie theaters, restaurants, and what we call real food. They call it soul food here. We call it real food, okay?

- Angela, 63-year-old African-American community organizer

Angela's description of the Fillmore, like the descriptions of others noted in this essay, 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. Angela explains:

In the Fillmore, right there on Fillmore Street, there was a [dry-]cleaners there. My family would drop their coats and whatever was dry-cleanable 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.

Angela 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." This is what was lost after urban renewal, they say. Angela's remembrances mirror conversations I shared with other residents who now implored others to "remember the Fillmore," especially during community meetings held by the Redevelopment Agency or the Navy about the redevelopment of the shipyard.

In the aftermath of urban renewal in the Fillmore, BVHP residents now view the proposed redevelopment of their neighborhood with a degree of skepticism. In meetings about the redevelopment of the old Navy shipyard in BVHP, black residents use the phrase as a warning. They use the phrase to snap meeting attendees into recalling a shared history of how urban renewal impacted black neighborhoods in the past. In neighborhood town hall meetings attended primarily by community residents, the phrase is used nostalgically, as a reminder of a time when the city's black community was cohesive and united. It is also used in both settings as a reminder of, as Angela says, what was "lost." The different ways that people use the phrase reveal how residents of the city's black communities remember black space in the city. Perhaps the most important lesson underlying this warning is that black people have no real place—no roots—in the city. They remain a social problem that has been and can still be displaced. Eric, a forty-year-old black resident, illustrates this point well:

Well, definitely the urban renewal that happened in the Western Addition, I think that's the one phenomenon that everyone can point to and say that [it] had a tremendously negative effect. I wanted to say a word—even stronger word—than negative, but that had a tremendously negative effect on the black communities here in San Francisco because: (a) it showed that a city would use eminent domain to destroy, essentially destroy, a vibrant, what was a vibrant community, however poor, a vibrant community and (b) [it sent] a signal to black people, a long-lasting symbol because it's lasted about forty years now, a long-lasting symbol that black folk weren't really part of this fabric [of the city] and we'll uproot you and move you out and [offer you] great promises to move you back in if we have to.

Urban renewal did not remove all blacks from the city, but it did leave many who remained with a feeling that they were not part of the fabric of the city. A number of the black San Franciscans I spoke with shared a belief that they could be moved and shifted around at the whim of the city or the SFRA. Fillmore and BVHP community residents often view current redevelopment projects in their neighborhoods through a similar lens. In the wake of redevelopment, they are trying to rebuild a lost sense of community. Often, they do this in city meetings by asserting their voices and concerns during the public comment period. Their warnings to “remember the Fillmore” force people to critically consider the quality of life issues that accompany any redevelopment project. They use this rhetorical device to shift the focus of formal meetings from larger planning issues to the question of how redevelopment will benefit them. By doing so, poor and middle-class black residents stake a claim in their neighborhood with the hope that doing so will allow them to maintain their physical and symbolic presence in these spaces for years to come.

LESSONS FROM THE FILLMORE

On July 21, 2010, I met Jason, a forty-four-year-old housing counselor and resident of BVHP, at his office on Third Street, a main drag that houses many of the neighborhood's businesses. After talking about urban renewal in the Fillmore, I asked for his take on current proposals to redevelop Bayview Hunter's Point. Jason said he initially supported the redevelopment of the shipyard because the SFRA promised not to repeat the mistakes that were made during the “redevelopment” of the Fillmore:

What was interesting is when redevelopment came back around this time they promised they would come back with no eminent domain, a more piece type of plan, than a wholesale type of plan that took place in Fillmore because they just bull[doze]ed those like square blocks [in the Fillmore]. I supported [the plan to redevelop BVHP] reluctantly [because] it prevented other developers to come in buying up stuff.

These promises of a softer, gentler redevelopment, one that was different from the redevelopment of the Fillmore, somewhat swayed Jason to support plans to redevelop the shipyard in BVHP. Yet, he is also skeptical. His family was once displaced by an urban renewal project in the neighborhood during the 1960s. He remembers the difficulties his family endured from displacement. Like other residents, his personal experience also informs his level of support for redevelopment in the area. In San Francisco, the Fillmore and Bayview-Hunter's Point neighborhoods share a cultural connection. They also share a sense of struggle when it comes to battles in their neighborhood. Both neighborhoods became home to a large population of black workers after World War II. Yet, no matter where they lived, city residents by and large considered the influx of black migrants to be a social and civic problem. Racism, urban renewal, redlining, and other exclusionary practices shaped the trajectory of San Francisco's black community.

Today, the Fillmore is a neighborhood that is characterized by conflict and change. It has a reputation that is associated with a history of black struggle, but it is also a neighborhood that is struggling to establish a sense of unity among its residents. Some now think of the Fillmore as a "sterile" place that has lost its connection to black culture. Since 2002, the city has tried to repackage the Fillmore's "Harlem of the West" history in an effort to stimulate the economic viability of the neighborhood, but few longtime black residents can afford to eat at the new restaurants and clubs in the neighborhood. What once was a middle-class black area where residents owned their homes and businesses is today a highly gentrified space with high-end soul food restaurants and expensive condominiums. Some residents still wonder who is benefitting most from the redevelopment of their old neighborhood. Residents of both the Fillmore and BVHP can share stories of displacement that were associated with urban renewal projects of the past. Members of both communities were on the receiving end of broken promises. The memories of these past experiences linger and influence community decision-making today.

What lessons should city officials and urban planners learn from the history of urban renewal in the Fillmore? Two lessons jump out from my field research. First, it is important that residents have a place at the decision-making table at every phase of the process, not just in the latter stages when decisions have already been made. Second, promises of opportunities such as jobs, local hiring commitments, and low-cost housing must be kept. Residents must also be provided with relevant information in accessible ways so that they can make informed decisions about the plans for their neighborhood. Ultimately, the process should be honest, fair and inclusive. The process should heal, not make worse, the historical traumas of the past. Residents remember these experiences of exclusion and discrimination, and they draw on these memories when evaluating current attempts to renew their neighborhoods.

Notes

- ¹ The “I” here refers to the first author, Christina Jackson. The first author’s collection of field notes and interviews forms the foundation of this analysis. Data collection was supported by an award from the University of California’s Academic Senate (“Remember the Fillmore”: A Study of Place, Change, and Healing in San Francisco, PI: Nikki Jones). The second author also conducted field research in San Francisco over a five-year period, including 30 months of continuous residence in the Fillmore neighborhood of San Francisco. The insights shared in this article are collaborative in nature. All names are pseudonyms.
- ² Phelan, “Black Exodus.”
- ³ Repa and Reynolds, “Fillmore Jazz Festival 2008,” 10.
- ⁴ During this time, Jackson took up residence in the Bernal Heights neighborhood that lies between Bayview-Hunter’s Point and the Fillmore neighborhoods. This location was a twenty-minute bus ride from the Fillmore and a five-minute bus ride from Bayview-Hunter’s Point. She lived there for a total of seven months. She also made frequent visits to the city from 2008 to 2010. In addition to conducting formal in-depth interviews with twenty-three residents, she also attended town hall meetings, city government meetings, and other community meetings. From April to July of 2010, she conducted participant observation at an environmental justice organization. This allowed her to closely observe how residents understood neighborhood change. For the last year and a half of fieldwork, Christina spent most of her time in Bayview-Hunter’s Point.
- ⁵ Pepin and Watts, *Harlem of the West*, 13.
- ⁶ Fusfield and Bates, *The Political Economy of the Urban Ghetto*, 46.
- ⁷ See 5th Naval District Headquarters, “Conference with Regard to Negro Personnel.”
- ⁸ Fusfield and Bates, *The Political Economy of the Urban Ghetto*, 48; Collins, “Race, Roosevelt, and Wartime Production,” 273.
- ⁹ Broussard, *Black San Francisco*, 142.
- ¹⁰ Gilfoyle, “Introduction,” 233-234; Hirsch, “Second Thoughts on the Second Ghetto,” 299; Mohl, “The Second Ghetto Thesis and the Power of History,” 243-244.
- ¹¹ Mohl, 243
- ¹² Fusfield and Bates, *The Political Economy of the Urban Ghetto*, 28; Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*, 49; Bonacich, “Advanced Capitalism and Black/White Race Relations in the United States,” 44.
- ¹³ Gans, “Involuntary Segregation and the Ghetto,” 355.
- ¹⁴ Castells, “City and Culture,” 67; Haynes and Hutchinson, “The Ghetto,” 348; Lewis, *In Their Own Interests*, 90-91.
- ¹⁵ Pepin and Watts, *Harlem of the West*, 29-32; Jackson, “Black Flight from San Francisco,” 15, 64.
- ¹⁶ Standley and Pratt, *Conversations with James Baldwin*, 42.
- ¹⁷ Western Addition is the name of the larger geographical area that includes the Fillmore.
- ¹⁸ Public Broadcasting Service, “Fillmore Timeline 1860-2001.”
- ¹⁹ Fullilove, *Root Shock*, 17-19.
- ²⁰ Jackson, “Black Flight from San Francisco,” 15, 40, 50, 64.

- ²¹ Ginwright, Nakagawa, and Akom, “African American Out-Migration Task Force.”
- ²² 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.

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“FROM FILLMORE TO NO MORE”: BLACK-OWNED BUSINESS IN A TRANSFORMING SAN FRANCISCO

Jasmine Johnson & Shaun Ossei-Owusu

The churches began to lose populations. The black businesses, which were once wonderful and productive, were totally destroyed. The entertainment world for African-Americans virtually ceased to exist in San Francisco. It was a devastating blow to African-Americans in San Francisco, a blow from which we, frankly, have never really recovered. There is no true African-American community comparable to what it was in the Fillmore. This great life, that was comparable to the Harlem Renaissance, was destroyed by the redevelopment process in the Fillmore.

— *Willie L. Brown, Jr.*¹

San Francisco is often celebrated for its liberal cosmopolitanism. For the last fifty years, the city has been characterized as a hotbed of progressive consciousness, creative expression, rich diversity, and sexual freedom. San Francisco’s reputation undoubtedly stems from the city’s anti-Vietnam War demonstrations, LGBTQ activism, the 1966 Compton Cafeteria transgender riots (which predated the more renowned New York City Stonewall Riots), the 1967 Haight-Ashbury “Summer of Love,” and the attendant rise of the counterculture movement. Also lending the city progressive credentials is its close geographic proximity to Oakland, the birthplace of the Black Panther Party, and Berkeley, the home of the Free Speech Movement.² Despite its progressive image, San Francisco is a site of rapid gentrification and social stratification.³ This has particularly effected the city’s African-American population, which has dwindled faster than any other major metropolitan area in the United States.⁴ Dominant representations of the city tend to gloss over contemporary forms of injustice that manifest through intense stratification, color-blind rhetoric, and discrimination in various realms of social policy.⁵ Delving beneath the city’s progressive veneer, this essay sketches the redevelopment and gentrification of the city and the racial, cultural, and economic changes that these phenomena have encouraged. In doing so, we focus on one independent black business, Marcus Books, in order to complicate discussions of San Francisco and gentrification while illuminating black business owners’ response to the city’s shifting political, social, and economic climate.⁶

We look to Marcus Books—the oldest black-owned, black-themed bookstore in the country—in order to reveal the challenges that have, over the past fifty

years, stymied the success of black-owned businesses in San Francisco. We pay special attention to urban renewal, which, in seeking to transform San Francisco into a bustling economic center, restructured entire sections of the city during the 1960s and early-1970s. In order for the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency to capitalize on some of its city's most profitable properties, it had to first remove poor and working-class blacks and Latinos who were already occupying previously "undesirable" neighborhoods. Urban renewal, an ambitious economic strategy, deeply restructured the city by shuffling (and subsequently removing) many of its black and brown inhabitants. For Marcus Books in particular, urban renewal reduced the number of the store's largest and most consistent patrons—black folks—and spurred five relocations for the store and four for its owners. We argue that urban renewal and gentrification continue to be racialized and classed projects that deeply affect black businesses. We also argue that black-owned businesses like Marcus Books worked against those forces that undermined the vitality of San Francisco's black population.

SUCCESS PRINTING AND MARCUS BOOKS AS COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS

The life trajectory of Drs. Raye and Julian Richardson—the founders of Marcus Books—is representative of demographic changes in San Francisco. The Richardsons were part of a mass migration of African-Americans to the city. When they arrived in 1941, there were less than 4,000 African-Americans in San Francisco. However, by 1950, there were 50,000; by 1959, there were over 60,000.⁷ These demographic changes were largely the result of America's entry into World War II, the same year the Richardsons moved to the city. Wartime industries located in the Bay Area offered migrants reliable forms of employment and the internment of Japanese-Americans opened up housing space for blacks in the metropolitan area.⁸ Due to the availability of these new properties, and restrictive housing covenants in effect elsewhere in the city, African-Americans settled in Japantown, its neighboring Fillmore district, and other Western Addition enclaves. Despite these restrictions, Raye Richardson describes the Fillmore district in the 1940s and 1950s as exuberant and cohesive:

It was bustling. It was warm. It was friendly. There was a joy in the people, a love of life. And every store had a jukebox. You could start at Bush, walking down Fillmore toward Market, say, and there was a song that was so popular at that time, and it was called "Tippin In." So you could start at Post and you could walk Fillmore to, say, McAllister, and "Tippin In" would be playing, and you never missed a beat.⁹

Given their demographic growth and the cultural unity expressed by residents, African-Americans established a robust and vibrant community in the city's Western Addition throughout the 1940s and 1950s.

The growing African-American population in San Francisco also saw new

economic opportunities. When Julian returned from World War II in 1944, the Fillmore community he encountered was booming—a “Harlem of the West”—despite its being pronounced a slum by the San Francisco housing department.¹⁰ “A whole lot of black people did not want to see the war end,” Raye intoned. “They made more money than they ever dreamed of making.”¹¹ Meanwhile, businesses that had formally refused black patronage felt increasing pressure to either relocate or to open their doors to black customers. “The sit-ins and the shop-ins were very innovative and it was an exciting time and an exciting place to be,” Raye explains.¹² Black boycotts of segregated businesses occurred regularly. They were so effective that white businesses, already suffering because of the lack of regular white patrons due to the war, moved or closed. Eager to capitalize on the employment opportunities WWII created, early black migrants wanted employment first and foremost. As their savings began to accumulate, a desire to live more comfortably—to be property owners—grew.¹³ Black entrepreneurs soon capitalized on the newly vacated storefronts.¹⁴

Trained as a lithographer at the Tuskegee Institute, Julian Richardson took a job as a typesetter at the *San Francisco Chronicle* and, deciding to open a print shop, slowly accumulated the essential equipment.¹⁵ In 1947, Julian opened Success Printing while Raye worked at the local post office, saving some of her earnings to invest into their burgeoning family business.¹⁶ The print shop was anchored by the Richardsons’ belief in the power of black collectivity to encourage the prosperity, protection, and future security of black people in San Francisco. In a 1947 unpublished note “The Negro and His Economics,” Julian Richardson writes:

The Negro is not going to get something for nothing in the United States; money will speak loud in every state when the Negro has it to spend. There is no record in history to show that any race on the face of this earth has ever become great that did not develop itself economically. Education does not make a race great unless that race uses its education to make itself strong and independent by building an economic floor to stand upon.¹⁷

The belief in the necessity of coupling black entrepreneurship and black self-help was one held by a number of black individuals, leaders, and organizations. Richardson belongs to a tradition of activist-intellectuals who encouraged the wedding of entrepreneurship and self-help as a tactic toward black equality. This philosophy crossed ideological divides. Black nationalists like Marcus Garvey, black “separatists” like the Nation of Islam, and black conservatives like Booker T. Washington to name a salient few, all espoused, albeit differently, this position. Scholars like Juliet K. Walker and John Sibley Butler suggest that black self-help has been a powerful impetus for black business owning.¹⁸ A belief in literacy as a vehicle toward black self-making, organizing, and entrepreneurship also spurred Richardson’s interest in printing. He printed fliers for black political meetings,

protests, events, and celebrations, business cards, and other kinds of ephemera that were essential to the success of other black businesses and organizations.

Marcus Books also reflected the large-scale trends that Andrew Shane describes in his “sociology of entrepreneurship.” Shane writes, “The sociology of entrepreneurship moves the analysis from a complete emphasis on topics such as assimilation of prejudice to the development of ethnic enterprises which generates economic stability for ethnic groups.”¹⁹ In this theory, black entrepreneurs serve as “minority middlemen” whose “major purpose is to generate the flow of goods and services throughout the economy” as opposed to being “primary producers of goods and services.”²⁰ Although Marcus Books did produce goods through their print shop, Shane’s work informs an analysis of Marcus Books insofar as its entrepreneurial goal was from the outset tied to the presumed needs of the wider black society. As owners of a community institution, the Richardsons “recogniz[ed] that groups develop economic stability as a result of entrepreneurship.”²¹

Perhaps the most telling resource that evidences the spirit of black entrepreneurship in San Francisco is the 1959 publication, *The Success Directory*, sponsored by the Committee for Community Solidarity, Inc. and published by Julian Richardson’s commercial print business: Success Printing.²² The publication reveals how black populations in San Francisco on the eve of urban renewal were concerned with owning property, housing security, and economics. *The Success Directory* functioned as a Rolodex of black-owned businesses in the city.²³ Its goal was fourfold: 1) to improve the economic status of the black community through the study of economic principles and trends; 2) to render more effective the political power and aspirations of the community through the study of political principles and problems; 3) to strive for improvement in the morals and welfare of the community; and 4) to develop and foster moral leadership. The Committee—constituted by black male business owners—argued that, of all the facets of community life serviced by civic and social organizations, the plight of the black businessman and property-owner was the most neglected. The success or failure of black owners greatly influenced the broader communities to which these individuals belonged, and made a substantial impact on African-Americans’ future in the city of San Francisco, the committee argued. Richardson believed marketing was key to a thriving black business and worked to build strong networks between black business owners and service providers. “One of the reasons why most Negro businesses remain infinitesimal is their lack of advertising,” he wrote. “Most of those in the following pages were difficult to find. Our main purpose in presenting this journal is to make their services and locations known to all.”²⁴ Success Printing supported black San Franciscan businesses by advocating for self-sufficiency, allegiance, and investment into black services.

In addition to listings and general contact information organized by services offered, the directory included brief analyses on the special significance of particular industries as they related to the quality of black life; it even offered a tutorial on how to start and budget your own business.²⁵ A related publication, *The Success Newsletter*,

was printed monthly as the official journal of the Committee for Community Solidarity, Inc. It chronicled information of interest to the “Negro Consumer, businessman and homeowner.” Although sponsors were welcomed, there was no charge for the newsletter. The final column in the publication presents California’s black populations organized by city, a list of black business failures in 1958, and an outline of “businesses for Negroes to enter.” Apparel, bookstores, banking, distributorships, shoe stores, and waste materials constituted this list.

In 1960, Success Printing became Success Bookstore, expanding into a storefront while continuing its print shop services. Archives and interviews suggest that this transition was rooted in practicality. Both Raye and Julian expressed the frustration they experienced when friends compromised their personal book collection by borrowing and never returning their texts. In an interview Julian said, “I began ordering so many black books for Raye and myself and for friends, that I had to hire a clerk. Before I knew it, the front of the print shop had been transformed into the Success Bookstore.”²⁶

Success Bookstore provided San Francisco and Oakland with a supply of diverse texts by and about the black diaspora while functioning as a publishing house. Success Bookstore sold texts and promoted authors who were by and large marginalized in mainstream bookstores. Its rich collection of goods including children’s books, poetry, nonfiction, novels, calendars, cards, and posters all written by or concerned with black people continues to be rare. It should also be noted that, although the number of black businesses and services existing in 1960 were high in number (compared to 2012), very few were actually black-themed. Success reprinted books that concerned the culture, history, and politics of African diasporic people that the Richardsons found valuable, but which had gone out of print. Success Printing republished texts like J. M. Webb’s *Black Man: The Father of Civilization* (1910), Amy Jacques-Garvey’s *Marcus Garvey: Philosophy and Opinions* (1923), Carter Godwin Woodson’s *The Miseducation of the Negro* (1933), George G. M. James’s *Stolen Legacy: The Egyptian Origins of Western Civilization* (1954), J. A. Rogers’s *Five Black Presidents* (1965), and Martin de Porres Walsh’s *The Ancient Black Christians* (1969), in addition to some twenty poetry books by local authors.

It was Marcus Garvey and his philosophy of black capitalism, self-sufficiency, and cooperative business that inspired Julian Richardson to rename the bookshop “Marcus Books.” Functioning as both print shop and bookstore, Marcus Books continued to support black organizations and individuals by printing and selling “books by and about Negroes everywhere” and by defining itself as a space for critical discussions on black America and the African Diaspora. Continuing its early reputation of supporting and building networks among other black businesses, Marcus Books later served as a community institution for individuals and groups hungry for a space that would nurture critical conversation on issues facing black folks in San Francisco and elsewhere. Marcus Books became a space where organic and formal black intellectualism was honed, performed, and called into action

through its author signings, roundtable discussions, reading groups, children's literacy programs, and events. Author signings were especially meaningful events. Since its inaugural signing with Claude Brown, author of *Manchild in the Promise Land* (1965), Marcus Books has hosted countless talks, the overwhelming majority of which have been open to the public.²⁷ Marcus Books also served as a meeting place for the Black Panther Party, for the US Organization, and the Association for Black Psychologists.

As an institution of resistance, Marcus Books reflects historical scholarship on reading as well as more recent social science literature on bookstores and other counterpublic educational spaces. Along with a vibrant historiography on African-American education and literacy, the work of Elizabeth McHenry highlights how northern, antebellum black literary associations, reading societies, and book clubs emblemized African-American resistance, self-empowerment, self-improvement, and assertions of civic identities.²⁸ Similar themes are hardwired in the history and current operation of Marcus Books in addition to more contemporary social science literature on black-owned bookstores. For example, the ethnographic work of sociologist Colin Beckles on British and American bookstores (his study includes Marcus Books), emphasizes how black bookstores serve as sites of Pan-African resistance and as “active, political information centers wherein the archiving, production, and distribution of ‘Black counter-hegemonic’ information serves as the primary dynamic.”²⁹ Likening black bookstores to the “movement centers” that Aldon Morris describes in his classic text on the civil rights movement,³⁰ Beckles suggests that these bookstores serve multidimensional purposes “as gathering places, debate centers and as alternative education centers for the Black community.”³¹

The more recent work of education scholar Maisha Fisher explores similar themes. She too uses Marcus Books as a site for understanding the political importance of this bookstore to the Bay Area's African-American community. Fisher's research highlights how Marcus Books and bookstores like it serve as both “alternative and supplementary knowledge spaces for literacy learning” while helping cultivate intergenerational “participatory learning communities” where parents can expose their children to the undervalued African-American literary tradition, and where adult readers can obtain informal education training that helps individuals become more “informed and engaged” members of their communities.³² The research of Beckles and Fisher is buoyed by social science and historical work that emphasizes the importance of counterpublic spaces (e.g., bookstores, barbershops, salons, and churches) which teach political information, intellectual community building, and black consciousness.³³

The Marcus Saturday School that began in 1974 demonstrates the founders' commitment to black literacy—both the need for black folks to be a literate people generally, and the imperative of studying the black experience specifically. A Marcus Books customer and student of Raye's at San Francisco State University explained how he and his peers were complaining one day in the store about the Eurocentric

education their children were receiving in public school. “‘We’ll do something about it,’ Sista Richardson told us. Flat, just like that. ‘Do something. Start a school here,’” he recounted.³⁴ Many of the teachers at the Saturday School were Raye’s San Francisco State University students. The twelve children that attended over its two-year career were all the children of customers between the ages of five and ten. The curriculum was based on Pan-Africanist doctrine. In 1976, Marcus Saturday School turned into Malcolm X School, which institutionalized a Black Nationalist curriculum in a credentialed school setting. “We learned Swahili, different songs from the diaspora, we celebrated the first Kwanzaa there; we did math and science and learned about nutrition. Self-determination and affirmation was key,” explained San Francisco’s Marcus Books manager Tamiko Johnson who attended the school between the ages of eight and ten.³⁵ Blanche Richardson, owner of the Oakland store, explained further: “Our students had very high levels of achievement. When the school closed and our students transferred to public school, they were two to three years ahead of their age groups. Some of the families ended up putting their children in private schools to keep up the momentum of achievement.”³⁶

In addition to its school, Marcus Books has worked to suit the specific needs of San Francisco’s black population. During the Ethnic Studies strikes of the 1960s, for example, Marcus Books, with the recent name-change of the print shop to “Richardson Publishing,” printed the fliers and other pertinent information that helped spread information about the protests. San Francisco State University refused students access to its printing machines; Richardson offered his services for free. Furthermore, Raye and Julian put their Fillmore home up for bail when students were arrested because of their activism.

The Richardsons’ early experiences in the San Francisco Bay Area reflect trends in the history of the city’s black population, especially those of the Fillmore District. When situated within a broader context we come to understand how the Richardsons’ original relocation to the Bay Area, their inclinations toward entrepreneurship, and their multifaceted role in the development of the field of Black Studies as an intellectual project indexes the economic, political, and social currents of their time. Although the African-American community during wartime was hardly without its problems, there did exist an ethos of organization, ownership, and collaboration. This black San Franciscan community, within which the Richardsons became entrenched, would soon encounter a number of new threats posed by redevelopment and later, gentrification.

ALWAYS MOVING: BLACK INTRA AND OUTMIGRATION

Economic imperatives and putatively color-blind housing/development statutes impacted black San Franciscans and their businesses. Justin Herman, the official and corporate chief architect, spokesman, and operations commander for the transformation of entire sections of the city, aggressively promoted urban renewal.³⁷ Resisting the city’s efforts at urban renewal, neither black folks in San Francisco,

nor Marcus Books, moved willingly. Marcus Books and black people in the Western Addition and Hunter's Point neighborhoods fought the city's relocation policies and exercised a collective political agency. Urban renewal bled into the gentrification of the Fillmore district and presented a new set of challenges for the black populations existing in its wake.

On the one hand, San Francisco can be considered a peculiar city when discussing gentrification. Despite being the thirteenth most populated city in the United States with approximately 805,000 residents, it has the second highest population density of cities with more than 500,000 residents due to its relatively small geographic size. This population density, in addition to the decline in affordable housing, the increase of white-collar employment, the influx of global capital via the dot-com boom, and the government endorsed "renewal" has had deleterious effects on San Francisco's black population. The numbers are illustrative: the city's black population dwindled from approximately 96,700 people in 1970 to 86,000 in 1980, to 79,000 in 1990 to 60,500 in 2000 to 48,700 in 2010. Percentage-wise, this equates to a decrease from 13.4 percent in 1970 to a mere 6.1 percent in 2010. This ongoing forty-year hemorrhage represents one of the biggest decreases in a major city's black population, leading one journalist to sardonically state that San Francisco no longer has "enough black residents to fill the seats in Monster Park," the home stadium of the San Francisco 49ers.³⁸ Only two remaining neighborhoods have a semblance of a salient black community, the Fillmore and Bayview-Hunters Point, the former standing as the last majority African-American community in the city.

On the other hand, the exodus of black folk out of cities coincides with more national trends. In the last four decades of the 20th century, the number of African-Americans residing in the suburbs ballooned to 9 million, which is quite similar to the Great Migration of blacks in the early and middle parts of the 20th century.³⁹ Recent 2010 Census data shows that cities like Chicago, Oakland, Washington, D.C., and St. Louis also experienced losses in their black populations.⁴⁰ In fact, the five counties with the largest black populations—Cook (Chicago), Los Angeles, Wayne (Detroit), Kings (Brooklyn), and Philadelphia—all witnessed declining black populations.⁴¹ Thus, while San Francisco is unique in the intensity and the scale of its black outmigration, it is also emblematic of black flight trends that characterize many major cities.

As for contemporary black outmigration, available data suggests that cost of living determines the demographic configuration of San Francisco. One survey by Coldwell Banker showed that in the United States the average home listing price for a four-bedroom, two-bathroom property is \$353,032; in San Francisco, the average listing price was \$1.3 million dollars.⁴² Renting is equally demanding. In 2010, the average rent in San Francisco for buildings of fifteen units or more was \$1,782 and in buildings of fifty or more units rent was \$2,282.⁴³ But African-Americans are moving out by way of economic coercion and by their own volition, which furthers black San Franciscans inability to develop a substantial black population. One

commentator on African-American outmigration notes, “Typically, middle-class African-American families make the same kind of choices that white families have made for some time... as soon as kids are school-age, they move to the suburbs.”⁴⁴ Some people are priced out; others leave because different locales prove safer, offer their children better schools, and extend more viable home owning opportunities. The causes of the decline of the black population in San Francisco also explain African-Americans’ reluctance to move *into* the city, creating a catch-22. The prohibitive quality of life and the absence of black institutions and people make the city less attractive to African-Americans as a group.

The case of urban renewal in the Western Addition is a prototypical example of urban planning, business interests and local government’s unremitting encroachment into low-income minority communities.⁴⁵ Estimates report that urban renewal replaced approximately 900 businesses and 4,700 homes in the Western Addition.⁴⁶ The first City Planning study on urban renewal in 1963 stated that, “San Francisco is to the Bay Region what the Island of Manhattan is to the New York region.” As for the Western Addition, the report urged redevelopment because “it is close to the financial district... and contains slopes on which apartments with fine views can be erected.” It continued, “In view of the characteristically low incomes of colored and foreign-born families, only a relatively small proportion of them may be expected to be in a position to occupy quarters in the new development.”⁴⁷ This “Negro removal,” as many called it, contributed to the sharp decline of San Francisco’s black population. Reggie Pettus, owner of New Chicago Barbershop on Fillmore Street, describes this process well when he says:

When we first started down here, it was all vacant because redevelopment had come through and this whole area was blighted. They tore down all the buildings and it was just all empty. After almost fifteen to twenty years, they built the Fillmore Center, then Safeway came in. We had a big struggle down here for a long time but we survived due to the fact that we had good, faithful customers. A long time ago, it used to be years and years back, we used to call it the Fillmore. Now we call it the “No More.”⁴⁸

The San Francisco government has attempted to make some symbolic apologies by establishing the “Jazz District” in the neighborhood, which includes a “Walk of Fame” of famous celebrities who performed or lived in the neighborhood while offering little insight as to how or why the neighborhood changed. This leads to a sanitization of the complete history of the Fillmore while privileging certain historical features that are less problematic but more profitable, particularly for tourists and jazz consumers seeking an “authentic” black experience.⁴⁹

Marcus Books was touched by both urban renewal and later, gentrification. It was forced to hop around the city, even while it became an active site of opposition to forced black relocation. Julian, for example, worked to co-found the Fillmore

Community Development Association and Fillmore Residents, Inc. which were organized in the late 1960s to facilitate an organized black opposition to the urban renewal project as it concerned the Western Addition area. They proposed, and successfully fought for, the “Marcus Garvey Square Project” which continues to be a black co-operative meant “to provide on a nonprofit basis, housing for low and moderate income families and families displaced from urban renewal areas as a result of governmental action.”⁵⁰ Now called the Martin Luther King-Marcus Garvey Square Cooperative Apartments on Eddy Street, it provides 211 affordable units for low and moderate-income minority San Franciscans. All residents are shareholders.

The population decline of African-Americans in San Francisco has, unsurprisingly, made a significant impact on both the number of new black businesses and the vitality of those already established like Marcus Books. Despite their efforts to ameliorate the effects of urban renewal, Marcus Books found itself relocating in order to remain profitable and accessible to the African-American community. Raye remembers, “We moved downtown and went broke, but we kept adding to the bookstore. We were always moving ahead of the big ball that razed the district under the guise of urban renewal. The area where blacks lived was designated a slum. We were far from slum-dwellers.”⁵¹ Although the vast majority of San Francisco’s black population found it difficult to dodge the obstacles imposed by urban renewal, Marcus Books returned to the Fillmore district after a fourteen-year tenure, first on Leavenworth, and then on McAllister Street. The store’s ability to return to the Fillmore district in the early 1980s cannot be understood entirely as evidence of its financial viability. To be sure, Marcus Books’ yearly profits rarely eclipsed the sum of its running costs and employee wages. Julian often joked that they went from “Success Bookstore” to “Marcus Books” because “we didn’t have enough success to maintain that name.”⁵² Undoubtedly, the gentrification of the Fillmore district, ushered in by urban renewal, deeply affected Marcus Books and its sales.⁵³ While the shrinking of African-Americans in the city has effected the stores historical patronage, Marcus Books continues to provide what it has since its founding—a community of readers of black texts—while working to stretch its reach beyond the confines of its brick and mortar store.

CONCLUSION

More recently, the bookstore has undergone some changes. In 2000, Julian Richardson passed away and Raye retired, leaving the business to their two daughters, Blanche Richardson and Karen Johnson, who run the Oakland and San Francisco stores respectively. Their son, William, continues to run the print shop out of the Oakland store. Even today, the success of Marcus Books has proven to be interwoven in issues around property-owning and housing. High mortgage interest and low sales—coupled with the popularity of online book buying and mega bookstores—constitute obstacles for the store. Large corporations like Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and Apple and their technological inventions have

worked to unmoor the notion of reading from physical books. The ubiquity of these corporations dislocates the bookseller from the sale. Such changes make it difficult for brick and mortar stores to remain vibrant and jeopardize the role of bookstores as community institutions. These broad changes in the book-buying market, coupled with the specific gentrification of the Fillmore district have meant that Marcus Books' early community of patrons has since moved elsewhere. San Francisco's selective incorporation of the history of its black population (so that that history does not interfere with its self-described progressivism and diversity) works to dull the continued significance of Marcus Books. Yet, the store continues its legacy of social communion around the valuation of black literacy. It hosts local and renowned authors, book clubs, and community meetings in addition to the everyday geniality that has distinguished it. During the increasingly popular annual San Francisco Jazz Festival, Marcus Books hosts its own concert in front of the store, offering a platform for local black musicians and bands that are by and large excluded from the Festival. In these ways it lends itself to a changing Fillmore while it remains committed to black issues and themes. Much like its history, the future of Marcus Books may reveal much about the demographic, political, and economic changes taking place in the City by the Bay.

Interestingly, the decline of black bookstores stymied black participation in the literary industry at a time when black authors were beginning to gain attention. Professionally, black writers have gained more visibility in the past decade with the advent of self-publishing as well as the popularity of black “self-help” books and “street fiction” (or “ghetto pulp fiction”) but they are still underrepresented in the black literary world, with one study showing that blacks constituted a mere 2.4 percent of approximately a thousand editorial employees of six major publishers.⁵⁴ The predominance of big businesses like Barnes & Noble has the potential to flatten the diversity of African-American literature due to their privileging of certain kinds of texts seen as most profitable: street fiction and self-help books. “In the race for profits, mainstream booksellers usually skip over culturally significant literature and go for less than savory titles that sell,” one publisher notes. “The big chains are more interested in what’s flashy, what’s up-to-date, what sells the most.”⁵⁵ In bigger stores, books written by black authors are lumped together in the “African-American Literature” section with no specificity or care given to the variegation within this genre, leading to uneasy confluences of black self-help and commercial fiction and black canonical literature. This flattening leads to an obfuscation of black literary contributions and reinforces representations of black life as criminal (in the case of street lit) and romantically pathological (in the case of black self-help). Finally, there are political implications of the decline of black bookstores, as these spaces preserve the “annals of black culture” while operating as forums and counter-publics where consumers can congregate and discuss literature, history, and the politics of the day.⁵⁶ By revamping its website through which customers can access the entire range of its stock, Marcus Books is building an international community while

remaining committed locally.

An attention to Marcus Books and its founders, Raye and Julian Richardson, reveals how black folks in San Francisco organized and formed alliances around issues of land, black autonomy, and business owning through and around black print culture. The bookstore also offers insight into the precarious nature of being a black-owned and small business, and sheds light on the predicament of black-owned businesses in an increasingly changing San Francisco. The impact of gentrification on African-American business is difficult to broadly theorize since economic success depends on the type of business, the demographic characteristics of clientele and incoming populations, how businesses respond to neighborhood changes, and a host of other factors. What is unambiguous however, is gentrification's impact on businesses that are committed to serving black populations and consumers of all racial/ethnic backgrounds who are invested in supporting black-owned businesses. In places like San Francisco where blacks, Marcus Books' target audience and main clientele, are moving and being displaced, the consequences are detrimental on professional, economic, and political levels.

The case of Marcus Books is a microcosm of the Black San Franciscan experience. The store represents the economic determination of black California migrants in the post-war period, their geographic containment and displacement, the salience of "black power" in the resistance and agency of the 1960s and 1970s, and post-1980s in a city with a declining black population. As illustrated by Marcus Books, paying closer attention to the nexus of black-owned institutions and neighborhood changes explicates the nuances of local racial politics in the past, present and future.

Notes

- ¹ KQED, "Willie L. Brown, Jr."
- ² For some instructive takes on San Francisco politics see Deleon, *Left Coast City*; Hartman, *City for Sale*; and Sides, *Erotic City*.
- ³ For some contemporary takes on inequality in San Francisco see Bourgois and Schonberg, *Righteous Dopefiend* and Teresa and Gowan, *Hobos, Hustlers, and Backsliders*.
- ⁴ Phelan, "Black Exodus Emergency."
- ⁵ There are notable exceptions. See Daniels, *Pioneer Urbanites*; Broussard, *Black San Francisco*; Miller, *The Postwar Struggle for Civil Rights*; Moore, *To Place Our Deeds*; Rhomberg, *No There There*; and Self, *American Babylon*.
- ⁶ Currently Marcus Books has a branch in San Francisco (which opened in 1960) and an Oakland store that opened in the mid-1970s. A third branch existed briefly in Oakland's African-American Museum and Library in the mid-2000s. Space here prohibits an exhaustive history of Marcus Books, its founders, and its intimate relationships to black life in the Bay Area. For the purpose of this discussion, we analyze the store more broadly and cull specific moments in its career to buttress our readings on black San Francisco from the perspective of the black business owner. It must also be said that throughout this discussion, in evoking Marcus Books we most often refer to its San Francisco branch.

- ⁷ Daniels, *Pioneer Urbanites*, 18.
- ⁸ It is important to note that despite interethnic coalition building (and conflict) in San Francisco and throughout California, African-Americans, along with Mexicans, Filipinos and Koreans quickly seized the residential and commercial vacancies created by the Japanese internment, while remaining relatively mum on the issue of Japanese detention. In *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969), Maya Angelou describes the Japanese internment when she writes:
- The Japanese shops which sold products to Nisei customers were taken over by enterprising Negro businessmen and in less than a year became permanent homes away from home for the newly arriving Southern Blacks. Where the odors of tempura, raw fish and cha had dominated, the aroma of chitterlings, greens and ham hocks now prevailed... As the Japanese disappeared, soundlessly and without protest, the Negroes entered with their loud jukeboxes, their just-released animosities and the relief of escape from Southern bonds... No member of my family and none of the family friends ever mentioned the absent Japanese. It was as if they had never owned or lived in the houses we inhabited. (27)
- For a broader look at interethnic relationships in pre- and post-World War II San Francisco see Varzally, *Making a Non-White America*.
- ⁹ Raye Richardson, interview with Jasmine Johnson, October 4, 2005.
- ¹⁰ Hartman with Carnochan, *City for Sale*.
- ¹¹ Raye Richardson, interview with Johnson, July 19, 2010.
- ¹² Raye Richardson, interview with Johnson, March 10, 2010.
- ¹³ Raye Richardson, interview with Johnson, July 19, 2010.
- ¹⁴ Broussard, *Black San Francisco*.
- ¹⁵ Originally, Julian Richardson wanted to establish a black newspaper in Los Angeles or San Francisco, but soon discovered that both of these major cities already possessed a number of black periodicals. Walter G. Maddox had started *The Western Appeal* as early as 1909. In the 1930s, John Pittman published *The Spokesman*. Real estate broker H. T. Shepard established *The San Francisco Reporter* next. *The West Coast Star*, *The Tribune*, and *The Graphic* had short publishing life spans. The most enduring of black newspapers grew from a merging of two already existing ones—*The Sun* and *The Reporter* became *The Sun Reporter* in 1949 and “emerged as the first successful Negro newspaper in California outside of Los Angeles,” wrote the Committee for Community Solidarity in the Success Directory. “It is highly respected in the Bay Area and quoted all over the country.”
- ¹⁶ Since opening in 1947, the Richardsons’ print shop underwent multiple name changes. “Success Printing” became “Richardson Publishers” which in turn became “Marcus Books Printing.”
- ¹⁷ Julian Richardson, unpublished note, San Francisco, 1947.
- ¹⁸ Walker, *The History of Black Business in America*; and Butler, *Entrepreneurship and Self-Help Among Black Americans*.
- ¹⁹ Shane, *The Illusions of Entrepreneurship*, 1. For other accounts of black entrepreneurship see Hund, *Black Entrepreneurship*; Harris, *The Negro as Capitalist*; Irons, *Black Entrepreneurship*; Lee, *Civility in the City*; Tyson, *Black Entrepreneurship*; and Woodard, *Black Entrepreneurs in America*.
- ²⁰ Butler, *Entrepreneurship and Self-Help Among Black Americans*, 5.
- ²¹ Shane, *The Illusions of Entrepreneurship*, 4.

- ²² The committee for Community Solidarity was constituted by: George A. McQuillister (President), E. R. Hambrick, M.D. (Vice President), T. J. Wilson (Secretary), Edward Douglas (Treasurer), Alphonse Medlock (Chaplain), Ralph Bryant (Secretary), and Julian Richardson (Parliamentarian).
- ²³ The Success Directory was not unlike W. E. B. Du Bois's *The Negro in Business* (1899) that sought to investigate the life conditions and employment opportunities for the emancipated slave. Du Bois wrote, "It is hardly possible to place too great stress on the deep significance of business ventures among American Negroes. Physical emancipation came in 1863, but economic emancipation is still far off" (5). The publication organized black business according to type of service provided, by state, by investment and profit, and oral histories of black business owners.
- ²⁴ See *The Success Directory, 1959 Edition*.
- ²⁵ Among them are: accounting and bookkeeping, advertisers, barbecue sellers, barber shops, beauty salons, car dealers, churches, clergymen, clubs and societies, cocktail lounges, dentists, groceries, newspapers, medical men, real estate, and restaurants.
- ²⁶ See Stevenson, "Bookstores, Commercial," 87-90.
- ²⁷ An exhaustive list of Marcus Books' visitors is too long to list here in its entirety. We offer some notable guests: Muhammad Ali, Maya Angelou, James Baldwin, Amiri Baraka, Elaine Brown, Willie Brown, Claude Brown, Dave Chappelle, Eldridge Cleaver, Bill Cosby, Angela Davis, Ossie Davis, Ron Dellums, Ruby Dee, Earth Wind & Fire, Ernest Gaines, Nikki Giovanni, Danny Glover, Dorothy Height, Kareem Abdul Jabbar, Jesse Jackson, Chaka Khan, B. B. King, the Last Poets, Queen Latifah, Barbara Lee, Delroy Lindo, Taj Mahal, Hugh Masekela, George Moscone, Toni Morrison, Huey Newton, Sidney Poitier, Rosa Parks, Della Reese, Randall Robinson, Sonia Sanchez, Wesley Snipes, Ice T, Alice Walker, Cornel West, Barry White, August Wilson, Nancy Wilson, Oprah Winfrey, and Malcolm X.
- ²⁸ See McHenry, *Forgotten Readers*; for a broader take on African-Americans as it relates to education and literacy see Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*; Belt-Beyan, *The Emergence of African American Literacy Traditions*; Charron, *Freedom's Teacher*; and Fairclough, *A Class of Their Own*; Williams, *Self-Taught*.
- ²⁹ Beckles, "Black Bookstores, Black Power, and the FBI," 64; Beckles, "'We Shall Not Be Terrorized Out of Existence,'" 51-72.
- ³⁰ Morris states that a local movement center is a social organization within the community of a subordinate group, which mobilizes, organizes, and coordinates collective action aimed at attaining the common ends of that subordinate group. A movement center exists in a subordinate community when that community has developed an interrelated set of protest leaders, organizations and followers who collectively define the common ends of the group, devise necessary tactics and strategies along with the training for their implementation, and engage in actions designed to attain the goals of the group. See Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, 40.
- ³¹ Beckles, "Black Bookstores, Black Power, and the FBI," 64.
- ³² Fisher, "Earning 'Dual Degrees,'" 83-84.
- ³³ See Majors, "Shoptalk," 289-310; Harris-Lacewell, *Barbershops, Bibles, and BET*; Enke, *Finding the Movement*; Gill, *Beauty Shop Politics*; and Nunley, *Keepin' It Hushed*.
- ³⁴ Anonymous, interview with Jasmine Johnson, January 1, 2010.
- ³⁵ Tamiko Johnson, interview with Jasmine Johnson, May 26, 2012.

- ³⁶ See “Marcus Books Owner Talks about Impact of Family Business on Black Community.”
- ³⁷ Herman has even been referred to as the “last of the Robert Moses autocrats,” a nod to the controversial urban planner known for developing the architectural design of New York City and often touted as one of the key culprits in the demise of the South Bronx. See McGovern, *The Politics of Downtown Development*, 290.
- ³⁸ Yogis, “What Happened to Black San Francisco?”
- ³⁹ Wiese, *Places of Their Own*, 1.
- ⁴⁰ El Nasser, “Black Populations Fall in Major Cities.”
- ⁴¹ Tavernise and Gebeloff, “Many U.S. Blacks Moving to South, Reversing Trend.”
- ⁴² Pisillo, *On the Block*.
- ⁴³ Selna, “San Francisco Apartment Rents Expected to Rise.”
- ⁴⁴ El Nasser, “Black Populations Fall in Major Cities.”
- ⁴⁵ See Mollenkopf, *The Contested City*; and Hartman, *City for Sale*.
- ⁴⁶ Associated Press, “Troubled Urban Renewal Efforts in San Francisco.”
- ⁴⁷ Mollenkopf, *The Contested City*, 160.
- ⁴⁸ KQED, “Reggie Pettus.”
- ⁴⁹ Both of which are tactics that have been used in “ethnic enclaves.” On the sanitization of Chicago’s historic Bronzeville neighborhood see Boyd, *Jim Crow Nostalgia*. On the idea of “marketable ethnicity” and its uses in Spanish Harlem see Dávila, *Barrio Dreams*. For a related discussion on the “symbolic economy of authenticity” see Grazian, *Blue Chicago*.
- ⁵⁰ “Articles of Incorporation of Fillmore Residents Incorporated,” State of California, City and County of San Francisco. January 5, 1968. 1-5.
- ⁵¹ Raye Richardson, interview with Jasmine Johnson, March 11, 2011.
- ⁵² Lewis, “The Last Word in Bookstores.”
- ⁵³ White, “San Francisco Shifts Hurt African-American Businesses.”
- ⁵⁴ Dodson, “Black Americans in Publishing Call for Action.”
- ⁵⁵ Little, “Has the Chapter Closed on Black Bookstores?”
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

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“THIS IS NOT A PROTEST”: MANAGING DISSENT IN RACIALIZED SAN FRANCISCO

Savannah Shange

A slim, well-dressed mayoral aide stammered uneasily before the crowd of roughly 300 young people who blocked the steps of San Francisco’s City Hall. Many of these students wore hastily screen-printed white tee shirts emblazoned with “Invest in Prevention: More Police Doesn’t Equal Less Violence.”¹ The aide began stiffly reading Mayor Gavin Newsom’s condolences to the crowd at the “Rally for Peace” organized in response to a series of fatal shootings. “We are acutely aware of the violence and we have been working closely, not only with my staff and with the police department, but with the community and the schools, parents and businesses to help us,” she said. Punctuated by boos and hisses, the aide’s speech was winding down when a fiercely teary black woman sidestepped the official and grabbed the mic. In a voice pitched high with emotion, she demanded, “Why isn’t the *mayor* here!?” With that, the crowd roared in agreement, with whoops, whistles, and drumbeats from a youth-led Afro-Brazilian *bateria*.

The woman whose grief interrupted the script of bureaucracy in action was Kishara Bailey, the older sister of Joshua Cameron, a senior at the June Jordan School for Equity (JJSE) who was one of the two JJSE youth killed within the first week of the 2008 school year.² His death had come on the heels of the murder of Jorge “G-One” Hurtado, a JJSE graduate and founding student. The Rally for Peace was developed as a collective response to these losses, and as their voices echoed against City Hall’s marble façade in support of Kishara, Josh’s and G-One’s peers claimed control of the discursive space. Unlike the acrimony that had marked student mobilizations in other San Francisco high schools, this rally was co-organized and supported by the staff and families of the high school, resulting in almost the entire student body of the small school traveling across the city to the seat of municipal power to demand justice.³ In this instance, the grief and rage of students and staff were transformed into an organized protest insisting on concessions from the state in the form of municipally funded prevention programs instead of increased police repression.

While the Rally for Peace emerged from a student’s comment at an open strategy meeting after Josh’s death, it is only one of dozens of public protests and political

actions that JJSE has thrown its institutional weight behind. Since the 2005 March for Immigrant Rights, JJSE staff have regularly subverted their own positions as arbiters of state power by facilitating protests against state interests. At times, the administrators have even created “field trips” out of the rallies, complete with permission slips and school lunches delivered to the protest, while teachers designed and implemented a social justice based curriculum that integrated histories of resistance and political conscientization into daily lessons. At first glance, the overtly anti-racist and academically rigorous pedagogy at JJSE would seem the total inverse of the kinds of mind-deadening, punitive, white supremacist spaces that are all too common among urban California high schools.⁴ However, this subversion of the state is far from a stable organizational ethos as JJSE’s political practices are subject to constant and often painful negotiation. In seeming opposition to the chants heard at City Hall, the school building has at other times been the reluctant site of arrests and Child Protective Services seizures, student suspensions, and expulsions. Even the daily process of grading student work and thus ranking achievement (a battle long since lost by a few early radical staff members) is a practice of complicity with the surveillance and categorization methods of the state, an execution of disciplinary biopower. These tensions reveal a paradox of social justice education: JJSE is a school staffed largely by leftist and progressive teachers creating an explicitly politicized school environment that is antithetical to the NCLB-era neoliberal move towards standardized curriculum and high-stakes assessment tests, but then relying on the state-controlled education funds to operate, as well as jockeying for favor in a climate of impending school closures and reconstitutions.⁵ For some in the school community, the chameleonic practices of the school signal revolution retracted into reform, while others laud the tempered success of JJSE’s delicate balancing acts.

Furthermore, the California state budget functions as an over-determining factor in defining the constraints within which JJSE can act. While the global recession of 2008 dealt a huge blow to public funding of basic social services across the United States, California had been operating in a chronic budget crisis for almost a decade before the market crash. While most urban schools nationally are underfunded, California’s uniquely paltry school funding is primarily a result of Proposition 13, a 1979 ballot referendum that sharply limited the amount of property taxes that could be used for public school funding. California’s meager school funding is reflected in its lack of welfare services. Indeed, the state’s counties have not been fully funded for the cost of most of their social services since 2000-2001, resulting in fewer and fewer public contracts for community-based organizations, smaller welfare payments, and an overall lack of adequate services for working-class communities.⁶ Thus, while the 2008 recession happened before the peak of the Global Financial Crisis, it is also a result of a compounded retraction of resources allotted to human services in California. As a community response to the kinds of *structural vulnerability* created by chronic crisis, the Rally for Peace is a reflection of the *structural resiliency* that black San Franciscans can draw on in their struggle for a more just and livable city.

The “Rally for Peace” affords an opportunity to concretely examine both the institutional and individual negotiations of this tension. In particular, I would like to explore how the explicitly political actions of racialized youth articulate with the mechanisms of the neoliberal state and foreground the ways in which the spatial, political, and economic context of San Francisco converged to produce the Rally for Peace. Furthermore, although JJSE as a school is a prominent target of analysis, I am also guided by Philippe Bourgois’s imperative to expand educational ethnography beyond the arbitrary convention of curriculum and classroom. In the sections that follow, I will first sketch out the relationship between patterns of inequity in San Francisco and the practices of JJSE, and then return to the Rally for Peace before closing with a theoretical note on the politics of managed dissent. By taking an ethnographic approach to the articulation between school and city, I hope to demystify the processes at work in the interaction between a grieving sister and the personified apparatus of the state.

San Francisco is mythologized as a land of liberal tolerance, progressive politics, and picturesque cosmopolitanism. This image is fortified even by scholars of the region who, like Robert Self, reductively typecast the city as a “bourgeois utopia” in order to clarify its relation to the rest of the Bay Area.⁷ However, as is true of most utopias, San Francisco’s rosy image is attended by dystopic realities for those whose presence sullies paradise.⁸ Glossed over in these laudatory depictions is a brutal history of racialized displacement and gentrification that existed even before the internment camps of the 1940s. As a “quintessential post-Fordist city,” San Francisco has one of the highest per-capita income levels of the nation’s largest cities, a feat accomplished by prioritizing the finance and real estate sectors above the needs of the city’s poorer residents.⁹ This dynamic, combined with a dearth of manufacturing jobs and skyrocketing housing costs, has made San Francisco one of the most unaffordable places to raise a family in the nation. As a result, there is a steady stream of working-class and middle-class people emigrating from the city, including a drain of up to a thousand children per year from the school district.¹⁰ While San Francisco is one of the nation’s most rapid and extreme cases of racial and economic urban displacement, it is only the crest of a wave of population shifts occurring in cities across the United States.¹¹ If San Francisco is a harbinger of things to come as the urban renewal plans of the mid-20th century ripen in this season of neoliberal privatization and rollback of state provisions, then the struggle of its last poor residents against displacement and disempowerment is a key site for understanding the mechanisms by which individual and collective subjects resist, negotiate, and transform the macro-level processes that overdetermine life under late capital.

It is in this context of raciospatial shift that JJSE can be best understood. At a cursory glance, it may be difficult to tell June Jordan apart from the several hundred urban “small schools” that have sprung up in the last few decades, spurred by frustration with large, dysfunctional comprehensive high schools.¹² However,

June Jordan's formation diverges from many of its peers because it is a community-based institution that owes its genesis to faith-based neighborhood organizing in black, Latino, and Pacific Islander churches, rather than on the lobbying of a large educational management corporation. Its pedagogy weds the tools of progressive education with the tradition of ethnic studies and leftist-of-color organizing in the San Francisco Bay Area. An urban high school that is a third black may seem unremarkable, but in the context of a black population of 6.1 percent, the school's sizeable population of black students is an indicator of its relationship to the larger processes of demographic change in the city.¹³ The primacy of race and place in apprehending the school's work is made evident by JJSE's institutional profile; in the "Demographics" section of the website, a visitor is offered this commentary about where their students live:

[Southeast San Francisco is] working-class and low-income, with some of the highest concentrations of families with children in the city. At the same time, many of these communities are experiencing rapid gentrification, which is forcing long-time residents to leave the city and undermining community-based efforts to stem rising crime and violence. For example, San Francisco's black population, concentrated in Bayview/Hunters Point, declined from 96,000 in 1970 (13 percent of San Francisco residents) to 51,000 (only 7 percent) in 2006. And in 2007, 25 percent of San Francisco's homicides took place in the Bayview, which has about 5 percent of the city's population... JJSE serves the second highest percentage of African-American students of any non-continuation high school in the city, and a much higher share of Black and Latino students than other SFUSD high schools.¹⁴

In this excerpt, we see the ways that JJSE's institutional discourse draws on what we might call the racioscape of San Francisco to contextualize its work.¹⁵ By linking economic marginalization, displacement, and violence in a narrative of race and neighborhood, this statement from JJSE acts as a politicized counterpoint to the city's deraced official discourse.

According to the San Francisco tourist board, the most notable facts about the neighborhoods of the Southeast is that "this area, south of the I-280 freeway, is home to the former Hunters Point shipyard where the Point is billed as 'America's largest artist colony.'" ¹⁶ Gone are the "long-time residents" and "community efforts" that people JJSE's depiction of the Bayview, not to mention the unhoused addicts who live beneath that very freeway, or indeed, any mention of race at all.¹⁷ Instead the Travel Bureau presents a thinly veiled celebration of gentrification, in which a neighborhood of black working-class families battling street violence and disinvestment is recast as an "artist colony," but without a hint of irony about the literal colonial violence that founded the city in the first place. Indeed, in a city where around one in twenty residents are black, almost half of the residents of public housing projects are black.¹⁸ A significant portion of these public housing residents live in the very same "artist

colony” of Hunter’s Point, but figuratively disappear in the deraced portrait of the city painted for tourists and potential gentrifiers.

This erasure of neighborhood history is not exclusive to the Bay Area, but Solnit and Schwartzenberg make the argument that in San Francisco, increased material wealth and amnesia go hand in hand:

The new San Francisco is run for the dot-com workers, multimedia executives, and financiers of the new boom, and memory is one of the things that is being lost in the rapid turnover and all-out exile of tenants, organizations, non-chain businesses, and even communities.¹⁹

The “new boom” at the time was based in the knowledge economy of Silicon Valley, a few dozen miles south of San Francisco. Although in the decade since this was written the Great Recession has burst California’s speculative real estate bubble, the “rapid turnover” has by no means reversed. Instead, economic precarity has hastened the exodus of working-class residents from Southeast San Francisco; the bulk of those who remain can only stay because they live in government-subsidized housing. Alongside this hemorrhage of the dispossessed is a surge in San Francisco’s standing as an international city. In the two years after the 2007-08 global recession, the city’s ranking among “global cities” edged up three notches to twelfth place worldwide because it is a hub of international finance and cultural consumption.²⁰

A historical lens shows us that while racialized displacement is an urgent concern in contemporary San Francisco, it is by no means a new one. Since the 18th century, San Francisco has been marked as a site of racial difference, beginning with the enslavement of the indigenous Ohlone population, whose unpaid labor built the famous Mission Dolores church, and continuing through racist restrictive labor and housing covenants against Chinese communities.²¹ Indeed, while both black and Chinese laborers faced parallel barriers to economic and political participation, early San Francisco’s restrictive housing covenants only applied to Chinese residents, producing an overcrowded Chinatown in a city that was otherwise white with speckles of black residents all over.²² It was the forced displacement and incarceration of yet another racialized group, Japanese-Americans, along with US militarism that spurred the expansion of San Francisco’s landmark black neighborhoods. When tens of thousands of San Franciscans of Japanese descent were taken from their communities to internment camps in the Northwest, African-Americans, drawn to the city by the promise of jobs in the shipyards during WWII, moved in to the inexpensive housing of Japantown.²³ In its wake, the Fillmore, affectionately dubbed “the Moe,” was born. Across town, the company barracks built for workers at the Hunter’s Point shipyard were abandoned at the end of WWII, and eventually bought by the city for conversion to public housing. These barracks and the Bayview/Hunter’s Point neighborhood that has grown up around them now house many of JJSE’s students and their families, in a sunny peninsula that juts out into the polluted waters of the famed San Francisco bay.

II

Kishara's voice grew shrill as she strained to speak over the din of cheering youth, "Why isn't the *mayor* here? Can you answer that shit for me? I wanna know why the mayor isn't here and why he's *acutely aware* of the violence in his city, but he's not *here!*" With the last word, shrill became guttural and rage broke through its stalemate with pain. "That's what I would like to know," Kishara continued, gripping the microphone tighter as she landed her final blow. "And I know my *brother* would like to know too. Can you help me understand that!?" While Kishara's voice boomed through the PA system, the mayoral aide had shrunken steadily from the podium, and had to recompose herself as she delicately took the mic that Kishara thrust back at her.

The brown-skinned Filipina aide, Hydra Mendoza, began to respond, raising her voice over the jeers and dismissals of the crowd. "So the mayor—you guys—if the mayor could have been here, he would, he had prior commitments..." Mendoza faltered when an impromptu chant began to gather steam among the young people crowded onto the steps of City Hall. "Where da mayor at? Where da mayor at?" they demanded in the rhythm of a hyphy rap song, the distinctive hard "r" of Bay Area hood vernacular grating on the practiced formality of Mendoza's brand of English.²⁴ As she tried to continue, a call-and-response erupted with "He scurred! He scurred!"²⁵ In muted frustration, Mendoza pushed forward with, "He has been to June Jordan, he understands..." Faced with the defiant song of the students, she shook her head and put down the mic.

Before she could step away, a wholly different actor stepped up to the podium and put his arm around Mendoza, the cofounder and co-director of JJSE, Matt Alexander. In a voice attempting to appease, but not patronize, he gave his pitch, "I just wanna say, this isn't about any one politician. And I'll say to the June Jordan students, if you think this is about the mayor, then you're missing the point, right? Hydra here is a school board member; she also works for the mayor. If we're divided, if we make this a political issue, we aren't gonna get anything done. That doesn't mean we shouldn't hold our public officials accountable. Of course, we should. But we all have to be working together to make this happen."

Alexander's improvised diplomacy between impassioned students and an intimidated city official is metonymic of the broader practices of JJSE as it negotiates the tensions inherent in being a state funded social-justice organization. Indeed, this stance is reflected in both the media coverage of the rally and in staff e-mails circulated prior to the event. "This is a peace rally, not a protest," read one e-mail chiding staff that had sent out informal organizing messages to their personal and political networks. However, the chants of "No justice, no peace / we taking over the streets!!" and the classic "Ain't no power like the power of the youth because the power of the youth don't stop! / Say what!?" seem to belong quite squarely in a protest. Thus, one question is whether the intent of these ameliorating moves is to actually pull back on the radicalism of student and staff activism, or to simply spin

the perception of such actions so that a representative of the state does not perceive the school as a threat. Perhaps a more pertinent query is whether the latter can be achieved without the former. Does the discursive management of working-class dissent distort the content of political opposition? Does it matter to our analysis of black community mobilization in San Francisco if the co-director was actually ecstatic to see young people stand up to the state, while he simply played the role of “diplomatic dissuader” to placate those with positional power? More simply, *was this* a protest?

The attempt to manage and control the contours of dissent in the context of JJSE underscores the necessity of viewing schools as *produced by and producers of* a larger community and municipal matrices of power, rather than artificially isolated sites of “learning” and “achievement.” This lens is sharpened in the realm of higher education, where college campuses have been sites of bitter contestation over the exercise of power in the US since the first waves of student activism in the 1960s. Indeed, one of the main battlegrounds of student-revolt was San Francisco State University, where students of color led a strike that culminated in the creation of the nation’s only College of Ethnic Studies, within which was one of the first departments of Black Studies.²⁶ The history of San Francisco State sets the stage for understanding the battles within the San Francisco Unified School District, where the Board recently recommended that Ethnic Studies be added to every high school’s curriculum after a major organizing push from black, Chicano, and Asian-American youth.²⁷ Importantly, since JJSE’s founding in 2003, Ethnic Studies has been more than a mere elective, as it is implemented across the academic curriculum. Rather than a place where students battled against the racist and exclusionary practices of their educational institutions, JJSE became a staging ground for a whole school community to protest the larger spheres of power that wield life and death in the 415. When we examine how both the founding of JJSE and the content of its curriculum are the fruit of black student labor a generation earlier, we realize the inadequacy of Manichean frames that position schools serving dispossessed urban youth as either repressive, dysfunctional institutions that shuttle youth on the school-to-prison pipeline on the one hand, or as magical sites of resistance and liberation on the other. Instead of choosing between a utopian or dystopic schema for understanding JJSE, it may be fruitful to focus on how the practices of the school’s staff, students, and families coalesce with the ever-more flexible forms of the neoliberal state.

In order to explain the relationship between an expansive US penal system and a withered, distorted social safety net, Loïc Wacquant has developed the conceptual frame of a *carceral-assistential state*. Wacquant layers gender onto governmentality to declare that the last wave of US policies that expand punishment “pronounce and promote the transition from the kindly ‘nanny state’ of the Ford-Keynesian era to the strict ‘daddy state’ of neoliberalism.”²⁸ In the former, the role of the state is to control resources in order to ensure the employment and well-being of the populace, while in the latter it is reversed: the role of the state is to control the

populace in order to ensure the well-being of capital. Certainly, for those of us in the black community for whom “nanny” is a job, rather than a metaphor, and for whom the state has *never* been kind, Wacquant’s terminology may fall short. Still, his articulation of a sea change in US government practices may help shed light on how JJSE fits into these macroprocesses. In this frame, we might apprehend JJSE as an opportunity to examine how the vestiges of the nanny state negotiate and adapt under neoliberalism.

While students, graduates, and pushouts from JJSE shouted down Mendoza as an anonymous representative of the city whose disinvestment cost Josh & G-One’s lives, Alexander instead foregrounded her role as a school board member and elected official in her own right. JJSE as an institution is out of compliance with the primary technologies of neoliberal education policy: it has lower test scores than the more affluent schools in the district, refuses to purchase corporate curriculum, and fought for autonomy within the public school district, rather than becoming a charter school and thus contributing to the privatization of education provision. Given its perpetual position in a state of exception to bureaucratic norms, the older technologies of political patronage and “having friends in high places” could be viewed as necessary lubricants for JJSE’s institutional survival.

At the same time, Wacquant’s frame centers on welfare’s articulation with hyperincarceration, setting aside other modes of neoliberal regulation. An alternative theoretical joining of the “nanny state” with the prison industrial complex (PIC) is found in the non-profit industrial complex (NPIC), or “a set of symbiotic relationships that link together political and financial technologies of state and owning-class proctorship and surveillance over public political intercourse, including and especially emergent progressive and leftist movements.”²⁹ For critics of the NPIC, it functions to manage the political impulses of the dispossessed in direct concert with the overt repression of the PIC. This parsing of management and repression is important in engaging JJSE, which has explicitly demilitarized the school campus, encouraging the police to park down the hill, rather than in the lot, when they have business in the building, and fighting for the ability to hire “student advisors” to support school culture rather than contract with the district-wide security force. However, this distance from the “overt repression” typified in a “locked down” school-as-prison model does not inure JJSE from the control of private interests inimical to any truly just San Francisco.

While the bulk of JJSE’s operating expenses come from California’s paltry per-pupil student funding, its original start up costs were covered by the Gates Foundation and its budget has been continuously supplemented by private donations.³⁰ Even the Small Schools by Design policy that established JJSE’s right to curricular and budget autonomy was forged in a public-private partnership between the district, the teachers’ union, and local philanthropic interests.³¹ By examining JJSE’s location at the juncture of putatively separate streams of funding and accountability, we can see the ways that the NPIC is not limited to formal 501(c)3 organizations, but also to

other institutional forms that serve to “manage and control dissent by incorporating it into the state apparatus.”³²

Rather than an imposed academic analysis, a related critique was issued organically by the protesters themselves even on the shirts that they wore: “Invest in Prevention: More Police Doesn’t Equal Less Violence.” Here, we see a community making a demand on the state for the services they need, rather than turning to regional giants like Google or Twitter for corporate funding. Given the scraps of funding for human services that remain in the California state budget, the centrality of untangling our political work from the whims of private capital and the repression of public policy becomes increasingly clear. However, all of these theoretical frames seem quite distant from the loss of G-One and Josh. Their death marks them among the lumpenized excess of San Francisco’s “bourgeois utopia.” Beyond the immediate catharsis of expressing grief and rage in a public space, how does the Rally for Peace and other events like it reduce the structural vulnerability of racialized, working-class urban youth? Furthermore, was JJSE’s institutional role just a pressure release valve to protect the ongoing legitimacy of the state, or one of political mobilization to challenge the practices of that very state?

By amassing at the seat of power and making demands on behalf of their fallen, the Rally for Peace could be seen as part of a global archipelago of disenfranchised residents of urban peripheries from favelas skirting São Paulo to the banlieue outside Paris rising up to claim their “right to the city.”³³ James Holston reminds us that for these communities, “their conflicts are clashes of citizenship and not merely idiosyncratic or instrumental protest and violence,” refiguring the JJSE youth as “insurgent citizens” who are working to redefine who deserves a say in the workings of municipal power.³⁴ Furthermore, their critique of the California police state signals their refusal to be lulled by the Gramscian common sense of the penal system as the only path to safety and justice. Given that “punitiveness is the flip side—the real cultural logic—of neoliberalism,” these young black and brown San Franciscans have spoken to the cracks in the consent that undergirds the neoliberal project that has tentacles extending into gentrification, defunding of education and welfare programs, and the explosive expanse of prison construction.³⁵ By uttering dissent to the caging of their bodies and their futures, the JJSE youth conjure “the possibilities of nonreformist reform—of changes that at the end of the day, unravel rather than widen the net of social control through criminalization.”³⁶ However, while the Rally for Peace owes a debt to the historic San Francisco State Strike, and has strands of truly transformative analysis, unlike the 1968-69 campus strike, it did not result in immediate concessions from the city. Indeed, at the close of the rally, youth and teachers filed, orderly and satisfied, onto the school buses that shuttled them safely back to the southeast corner of the city, everyone beaming and proud of themselves for standing up for Josh and G-One. It is this satiation that blurs the line between protest and pacification as the concrete structural demands of youth are potentially displaced by the cathartic exhilaration of symbolic collective action.

Close attention to the mechanisms by which power manages dissent is important, but it is also essential to remember that however totalizing, no power is total. Even if it does function as a pressure release valve, JJSE's concessions to the neoliberal state can never depressurize black San Francisco. To the contrary, Daniel Crowe argues that human service agencies have historically been an organizational training ground for Bay Area radicals of color to learn the basics of community work and program management, including the founding leadership of the Black Panther Party.³⁷ More than forty years before the rally for Josh and G-One, the same steps of San Francisco's City Hall were filled with black activists from the Hunter's Point Community Action Program, a federally funded War on Poverty program. The 1966 event was a Rally for Justice, protesting the unjust convictions of community activists, and was an antecedent to the group's collaboration with the Black Panthers, flipping what was intended as a liberal appeasement measure into a launching pad for a liberation movement. Given this historical lens, perhaps our understanding of JJSE's potential role in mobilizing for justice should be unhinged from the political messaging of one person in administrative leadership, and instead refocused on the critical expression of the three hundred young San Franciscans. Whether or not their collective action is remembered as a "protest," the demand "where da mayor at?" cannot be unshouted, and this group of brilliant young people, their critique sharpened by their grief and rage, witnessed a symbol of the state tremble before their organized power. Without permission from a teacher, a foundation, or a government policy, they called out the mayor and the dysfunctional state he represents by his absence from the rally and from their movement, proclaiming that "He scurred, he scurred!" He better be.

Notes

- ¹ The depiction of the Rally for Peace in this essay is based on hundreds of photos taken by staff, students, and myself; press coverage of the rally; document review of staff e-mails sent in the weeks before and after the event, and on my own reconstructed memory as a staff member at JJSE and participant in the event. All direct quotes are taken from video recordings of the protest made by Shadi Rahimi (2008) for Current TV, rather than based on recollection.
- ² Because San Francisco is historically and politically central to our understanding of black California, no effort has been made to change the name of the city or generalize the region. Furthermore, following the trend of literature on other nationally significant small schools by design like the Central Park East Secondary School, the institutional name of JJSE will be used in this study, as well as the names of its founders, key community leaders and school district officials. However, the names of staff members, students, and their families will be pseudonymized to protect their confidentiality. The exception to this is the names of the deceased students, Joshua Cameron and Jorge "G-One" Hurtado, whose names are a part of the public record and whose spirits deserve to be named in defiance of death. This compromise between confidentiality and specificity is an attempt to contribute to the sparse history on social justice schools as loci of youth political mobilization, while still protecting research participants from any undue harm.

- ³ In one instance a few years earlier, the principal of a nearby high school was trampled attempting to stop several hundred students from walking out in support of immigrant rights.
- ⁴ See Schnyder, “Enclosures Abound,” 350, and “Masculinity Lockdown,” 11. See also Seyer, “Smart on the Under, Wise to the Streets.”
- ⁵ NCLB is the commonly used acronym for No Child Left Behind (Elementary and Secondary Education Act), a regressive set of educational reforms enacted by the Bush administration in 2001 and extended by the Obama administration. Its key characteristics include increased bureaucratic control of educational practice, frequent high-stakes testing and tying school funding to performance on standardized measures of success. One way in which California policy reflects the priorities of NCLB is the CAHSEE (California High School Exit Exam), which was one of the nation’s first standardized tests that had to be passed in order to receive a high school diploma.
- ⁶ California Budget Project, *Stretched Thin 2008*.
- ⁷ Self, “California’s Industrial Garden,” 159.
- ⁸ Most glaring in terms of social and material exclusion from the city is San Francisco’s large and diverse homeless population. For ethnographic research on the survival strategies and structural constraints of unhoused people in San Francisco, see Gowan, *Hobos, Hustlers and Backsliders* and Bourgois and Schonberg, *Righteous Dopefiend*.
- ⁹ Browne et al., *Towards Land, Work and Power*, 108.
- ¹⁰ See Knight, “Students Demand Action on Slayings.”
- ¹¹ Solnit and Schwartzberg, *Hollow City*, 35; Browne, *Towards Land, Work and Power*, 99.
- ¹² Benitez, Davidson, and Flaxman, *Small Schools, Big Ideas*, 8; Meier, *In Schools We Trust*, 2.
- ¹³ See US Census Bureau 2011.
- ¹⁴ See June Jordan School for Equity, “Demographics.”
- ¹⁵ Developed specifically as a way to describe the uneven processes of gentrification in New York City, Jackson’s “notion of racioscapes speaks to the inescapably non-*flow* like constancy of racial inequality as an effective analytical template for understanding globality, diasporic relations, and transnational interconnections in the past, present, and unforeseeable future” (56).
- ¹⁶ See SF Travel Bureau.
- ¹⁷ See Bourgois & Schonberg, *Righteous Dopefiend*.
- ¹⁸ See SF Housing Authority, 2011.
- ¹⁹ Solnit and Schwartzberg, *Hollow City*, 22.
- ²⁰ Hales, King, and Pena, *The Urban Elite*, 4.
- ²¹ See Shah, *Contagious Divides*.
- ²² See Broussard, *Black San Francisco*.
- ²³ Brook et al., *Reclaiming San Francisco*, 4; Browne, et al., *Towards Land, Work and Power*, 90; See also Seyer, “Smart on the Under, Wise to the Streets.”
- ²⁴ Hyphy is a genre of hip hop music and dance indigenous to the Bay Area, typified by an infectious mid-tempo bass line and full-body, athletic dancing. As a cultural movement interweaving both consumer and creative modes, hyphy is “characterized by exaggeration, overness, and overall extraneousness,” and perhaps most relevantly, “the need to be seen and

heard” (Bailey, 143).

- ²⁵ Without belaboring the ways in which the young people’s dialect was linguistically different from Mendoza’s, “he scurred” is a regionally and racially marked rendition of “he’s scared.”
- ²⁶ See Orrick, *Shut It Down! A College in Crisis*. See also Boyle, *The Long Walk at San Francisco State and Other Essays*.
- ²⁷ See SF Board of Education.
- ²⁸ Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor*, 90.
- ²⁹ Rodriguez, “The Political Logic of the Non-Profit Industrial Complex,” 22.
- ³⁰ A neoliberal paragon in its own right, the state of California has been repeatedly critiqued for spending more money on building prisons than universities. For instance, even though California has by far the largest population of K-12 students in the United States, because of its regressive tax code and disinvestment in the “nanny state,” it was ranked 46th in per pupil spending in 2010. See California Budget Project.
- ³¹ Tucker, “Board of Education May Enlarge Small-School Program in District”; See also SF Board of Education 2007, 4.
- ³² Smith, Introduction to *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded*, 8. This dynamic in which the state incorporates the interests of marginalized groups is central to Michael Omi and Howard Winant’s conception of the contemporary racial rule, which becomes hegemonic only through the consent garnered by state concessions to various racialized subordinate groups.
- ³³ See Lefebvre, “The Right to the City” and Harvey, “The Right to the City.” See also Lipman, *The New Political Economy of Urban Education*.
- ³⁴ Holston, “Insurgent Citizenship in an Era of Global Urban Peripheries,” 246.
- ³⁵ Lancaster, Preface to *New Landscapes of Inequality*, xiii.
- ³⁶ Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*, 242.
- ³⁷ It is important to note that Crowe is generally critical of the leftist thrust of the black liberation movement, concluding that “the ultimate result of the radicalism of groups like the Black Panther Party was to undermine support for the liberal government of Lyndon Johnson, derail social reform programs like the War on Poverty, and usher in the age of conservative dominance in the White House that began with Richard Nixon in 1968” (257). Still, I find his archival research invaluable, and in this instance I read Crowe against the grain to highlight JJSE’s positive potential as a space for contemporary black radicalism to flourish.

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**CRIMINALS, PLANTERS, AND CORPORATE CAPITALISTS:
THE CASE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN LOS ANGELES**

Damien M. Schnyder

Roughly fifteen years ago, my mother and I had a long conversation pertaining to education in California. Having taught primarily black students in Los Angeles and Los Angeles County, she told me that she had never seen her profession under such attack. After describing in detail the strains of “teaching to the test” and the loss of financial resources, she informed me that if the state continued along the same path, public education would cease to exist. She explained that it was not by chance, rather she was convinced that it was an intentional attempt to undo a system that had the potential to counter a nation built upon social, political, and economic inequality. Rather than a conspiratorial notion fueled by black paranoia, her insight proved to be much more valuable than the litany of academic research that focuses on the achievement gap, intellectual ineptitude, and lack of motivation. Specifically, her analysis pointed to an active movement that utilized both plantation-based and corporate models as the means to undermine and attempt to destroy public education.

In *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880*, W. E. B. Du Bois gives a vast and encompassing history of the dialectical relationship between Northern industrialists and the Southern plantation bloc. While many histories hold that the US Civil War was fought over slavery, Du Bois successfully argues that the true conflict was the result of differences between Northern corporate elites, who were dedicated to efficiency, and Southern aristocrats, who focused intensely on consumption. Due to an economic model that was based on the desire to maintain a lavish lifestyle at the expense of black humanity and which had no interest in the science of productivity, Southern elites were blindly subsumed in an industrial economy (i.e., pricing of raw materials such as cotton, rice, tobacco, which were previously set by plantation owners, were now controlled by Northern industrialists).¹

Du Bois notes that it was largely out of this tension that the Civil War was fought. Key to his analysis was the role of black labor within both of these models of economic, political and social development. In a very general sense, Northern industrialists did not want to disrupt the violent racial hierarchies that had long dominated the foundation of the United States, rather there was a desire to incorporate the racial order within the purview of a free labor market system. This entailed the training

of black people for menial labor positions and the distribution of wages according to a pay scale that privileged wealthy white men at the expense of black labor. In the eyes of many white abolitionists, such a system looked seductively enticing in comparison to a Southern plantation model, which in general, forbade the education of blacks and was marked by the intense policing and surveillance of black bodies.

The particular histories of the plantation and industrial/corporate models with respect to black education are of particular importance as they provide context within the current moment. Specifically, while the plantation model has historically been conceptualized as physically violent and draconian, the corporate agenda has been cast as the logical reformist alternative to a system of fledgling black education. The current reality for black youth however is that both systems work in tandem, to limit black mobility and attempt to deradicalize the dissemination of black forms of knowledge production. In the next two sections, I will detail the daily implementation of these two models of education in California and how both are guided by the desire to remove public education from the realm of social possibility.

HOOD RULES: PLANTATION MEETS THE CITY

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, California passed a myriad of rules, propositions and policy initiatives that ushered in new forms of surveillance, economic restrictions, and massive cutbacks in response to black radical organizing and mobilization.² Culling through these records, the Abolish Chronic Truancy program (ACT) is perhaps the most strident form of legislation that was and continues to be part of a structural push to restore a plantation model of public education. Initially piloted in schools within a then predominantly black Compton in 1991 by Deputy District Attorney Thomas Higgins, ACT brought to the fore an aggressive form of criminalization of black youth under the guise of education reform. More than any other policy, ACT represented the coalescence of various state agencies (i.e., school districts, district attorney, police) working in conjunction to limit the mobility of black youth and their families.

The main thrust of ACT was to place the District Attorney's office directly within the schools. Under the terms of the law, the Los Angeles County District Attorney can bring misdemeanor charges upon both parents and youth who are truant from school.³ In order to fulfill this mandate, Los Angeles Police Department, Los Angeles Unified School Police, and Los Angeles County Sheriff officers were placed in locations in close proximity to schools in order to issue truancy tickets. As a result, students issued these tickets would have to go to court along with their family members to face charges of truancy from school. The "success" of the ACT program in Compton led to its expansion in 1995 throughout Los Angeles County under then Los Angeles County District Attorney Gill Garcetti. By the year 2000, the program was implemented within 36 school districts, had a program budget of over \$1 million and enlisted the services of twelve staff lawyers dedicated to the

prosecution of youth.⁴

In a brazen attempt to legitimate the policy, the RAND Corporation was commissioned to conduct a study of ACT.⁵ According to its findings, the program “empowered families to reestablish parental authority.”⁶ However, the reality of ACT has been quite the contrary. Upon a first offense a ticket in the amount of \$250 is issued to the student. Subsequent tickets lead to increased fines and punitive damages in excess of \$900 that if not paid, follow youth via the Department of Motor Vehicles database.⁷ The Labor Community Strategy Center (LCSC) located in Los Angeles has been at the forefront of fighting the continued implementation of truancy tickets throughout Los Angeles County. As part of their strategy to counter the policy, they have collected narratives of youth who have had to face the financial and social consequences of ACT. Lisa Adler, writing with the Community Rights Campaign, interviewed one student who faced these consequences:

One young man I spoke to told me that he had gotten several tickets when he was fourteen. He was going through a rough time in his life and he didn't make it to court and he didn't pay the fines. What he didn't know was that his unpaid tickets were forwarded to the DMV. Five years later, he got himself back on his feet and was going to a continuation school, working to get his high school diploma. When his class took a day trip to the DMV to help the students get licenses (something you need for many jobs), he was painfully rejected and told he owed hundreds of dollars because of unpaid truancy tickets! So here he is, a young man trying to get his diploma and go to community college (with rising tuitions remember), and before he gets in the door he already owes hundreds of dollars for tickets he got when he was fourteen-years-old.⁸

Given the progressive nature of the fine system associated with ACT, many youth find themselves in the unenviable position of trying to figure out how to resolve an increasing amount of financial debt. LCSC found that if youth are unable to pay the ticket(s), the only option available is to have fines and charges transferred over to a guardian. LCSC reported the case of a young woman named Lanicia who was caught in this very dilemma:

Lanicia... has three tickets. Two for being caught ditching and one for being late. She has not gone to court because her mom can't miss work and her aunty and grandma (who could go) do not count as her legal guardian. What should [Lanicia] do? According to a referee I spoke to (they are the acting judges at the Juvenile Traffic Court), she can go to a Pupil Services Counselor who can get the LASPD to “make” her mom go to court. So basically, her option is to arrest or fine her own mother for not being able to miss her job, or pay the tickets with money she does not have.⁹

Rather than random acts of policing, the break down of the tickets issued has

made it abundantly clear that the policy has a distinct demographic in mind. In an assessment of tickets issued between 2004-2009, it was found that of the more than 47,000 truancy tickets issued, 88 percent were handed out to black and Latino students within the city of Los Angeles alone.¹⁰

In light of these factors, I want to pose the following question: what is the point of policies such as ACT? Much of the early arguments made in favor of ACT pointed to the correlation between truancy from school and likelihood of being incarcerated. The irony is that not much attention was paid to education. The debate circulated around issues of gangs, drugs, and violence, but rarely was education brought up as a central concern. Perhaps, this is due to the fact that since ACT has been in place, the education levels of black youth have diminished dramatically. The dropout/pushout rate of black students from high school within Los Angeles County between 2000-2009 has never been below 20 percent and is currently at its highest level of 30 percent, which is also the highest level of any racial group in the county.¹¹ Most startling, rates of literacy among black high school age youth in Los Angeles County during this same period have remained abhorrent.¹² Yet, even more concerning than the aforementioned statistics was the response to the crises within the black community: a corporate model of governance that attempted to reshape black education.

TOP DOWN EDUCATION: CORPORATE TAKEOVER OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

In a 2009 interview with the *New Yorker*, Steve Barr who at the time was CEO of Green Dot Public Schools, a charter school management company based in Los Angeles, described his relationship with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) as such:

You ever see that movie *Man on Fire*, with Denzel Washington? There's a scene in the movie where the police chief of Mexico City gets kidnapped by Denzel Washington. He wakes up, he's on the hood of his car under the underpass, in his boxers, his hands tied. Denzel Washington starts asking him questions, he's not getting the answers he wants, so he walks away from him, and leaves a bomb stuck up his ass. I don't want to blow up LAUSD's ass. But what will it take to get this system to serve who they need to serve? It's going to take that kind of aggressiveness.¹³

Casting aside the problematic depiction of the racial savagery and violent masculine performance that is propagated in *Man on Fire*, Steve Barr made these comments following the hostile take over of Alain Locke High School in the Watts section of Los Angeles by Green Dot Public Schools from LAUSD.¹⁴ A school population of overwhelmingly black and Latino youth, Alain Locke High School was founded upon demands made to LAUSD for better schools by black Angelino's following the 1965 Watts Uprising. Just forty-five years later, under the terms and conditions of President George W. Bush's educational policy, No Child Left Behind (NCLB),

Locke was deemed a failing high school. Pushing forward the Bush policy of test mandates and corporatized notions of accountability, Barack Obama's Secretary of Education Arne Duncan championed Steve Barr and Green Dot Public Schools for completing the task encouraged by Bush: a corporate style takeover of Alain Locke High School.¹⁵

On the surface, Green Dot Public Schools appear to be an all-encompassing solution to the problem of education within black communities in Los Angeles. Yet, with just a little inquiry, the intent behind Green Dot Public Schools begins to surface. Green Dot receives its funding from two primary sources: private corporations and the federal government. Although the bulk of the funding comes from the federal government, Green Dot Public Schools is paradigmatic of corporate-style public education. This is in large part due to the "corporate leveraging" that corporations, under the guise of philanthropic organizations, have with respect to public education. In "The Rise of Venture Philanthropy and the Ongoing Neoliberal Assault on Public Education," Kenneth Saltman describes this process:

The key players of venture philanthropy in education—including but not limited to such leaders as Gates, Walton, Fisher, and Broad—are able to exercise influence disproportionate to their size and spending power through strategic arrangements with charter—and voucher—promoting organizations, think tanks, universities, school districts, and schools. The seed money desperately sought by underfunded schools allows the venture philanthropists to "leverage" influence over educational policy and planning, curriculum and instructional practices, and the very idea of what it means to be an educated person.¹⁶

In the case of Los Angeles, the Eli and Edythe Broad Foundation along with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation have been two of the biggest philanthropic players in the realm of public education of black people in Los Angeles. Eli Broad, a real estate mogul who has made billions from investments within California has been a key cog in the dismantling of public education and the implementation of a corporate model that is devoid of community influence within education; instead, education is conceived of as standardized forms of knowledge that disavow critical thinking and can be replicated within any setting across the nation.¹⁷ In addition, Broad and Gates have been major supporters of the School Information Partnership and Data Partnership. Broad alone has contributed over \$25 million to the development of the project which at its core is a database that provides parents and schools with test score information on students and teachers alike.¹⁸ The inherent purpose of this database is to create a marketplace where teachers are judged (and consequently can be terminated) on the performance of their students test scores and parents/guardians can pick and choose schools based upon test performance. The eventual goal is to create a model whereby teachers' and administrators' compensation, job security as well as curriculum and pedagogy are determined by business models

entrenched within particular notions of accountability.¹⁹

Analyzing Green Dot Public Schools' funding sources, both the Broad and Gates Foundations have been heavy contributors to the maintenance of the organization. Between 2005-2009, the Broad Foundation gave nearly \$4.5 million to Green Dot Public Schools.²⁰ In addition, in 2009, Green Dot Public Schools was one of five charter management organizations in Los Angeles that split a \$60 million contribution from the Gates Foundation to further the endeavors of the organization.²¹ Further, the Broad Foundation funded the establishment of the Los Angeles Parents Union, which attempted to counter Los Angeles chapters of the Parent Teacher Association, organizations that rejected both the establishment of charter schools and the take over of public schools by charter management groups such as Green Dot Public Schools.²²

With the political influence and backing of the corporate sector and the Department of Education, Green Dot Public Schools has been able to open or take over eighteen schools within Los Angeles and Los Angeles County. While media outlets such as the *Los Angeles Times* have been flag-bearers of the charter school movement, recent studies indicate that the schools have not lived up to the hype of closing the "achievement gap."²³ In 2009, the Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) based at Stanford University released a sixteen state study, including California, that found that "charter students are not faring as well as their [traditional public school] counterparts."²⁴ In the wake of the backlash of the CREDO study, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation funded their own study implemented by the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (NCRESST) housed at the University of California, Los Angeles.²⁵ While this study attempts to place a positive spin on charter schools, the data indicates a difference of a few percentage points in graduation rates between Locke High School and other high schools in the area. More troubling however is that the dropout/pushout rates for students at Locke between the ninth and tenth grade was at 30 percent which adds to the growing concern that charter schools can pick and choose their students.²⁶ This is of particular significance given that test scores determine a school's ranking. Because charter schools have the power to admit, or push out students on the basis of test scores, it is easier for them to be "high achieving."²⁷

Since the passage of NCLB in 2001, the very tests that indicate that black schools such as Locke are failing are also utilized to strip the black community of control of their schools. A year prior to the implementation of NCLB, Linda McNeil from Rice University issued a study of the Texas education policy, which NCLB was modeled after, and proved that such methods of testing had no bearing upon core educational areas (i.e., reading, writing, math, history, social sciences).²⁸ NCLB mandates that "failing" schools first lose federal funding, which is then followed by the implementation of private control of the school and subsequent transformation into a charter.²⁹ As a result, teachers are fired at will, processes of

collective bargaining cease to exist and importantly, communities no longer have input.³⁰ Just as insidious however, is that rather than privatization in the traditional sense, private corporations have immense control of public social and economic resources without having to front nor bear the risk of their own capital.³¹

Corporate privatization has dramatically effected predominantly African-American schools such as Locke, which have been central to black political and cultural mobilizations, ranging from the recruitment sites for the Black Panther Party to the production of musicians such as Barry White and Patrice Rushen. Cited for having low test scores, John C. Fremont, Manual Arts, and David Starr Jordan High School all suffered massive funding cuts during the 2011-2012 school year. The *Los Angeles Times* reported the staggering figures:

Fremont High, the largest of the schools, will lose an estimated \$4 million a year. That school, located south of downtown, reopened in July after a “restructuring” that resulted in the displacement of more than half the faculty. Jordan High in Watts is supposed to reopen next year, with part of the campus run by a nonprofit under the control of Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. Another portion of the campus would be under the management of one or more independent charter schools. Manual Arts, just south of downtown, has struggled with administrative turnover as well as sluggish improvement.³²

All three schools have been prime targets by Green Dot Public Schools for takeover.

While articulated as a reformation effort to improve public education, the assault upon black education has foregrounded the recent attacks upon publically-run institutions during the current financial crises. Within Los Angeles, NCLB has paved the way for a massive expropriation of financial and cultural resources out of the hands of black people. Under the guidelines of NCLB, tax revenue is removed from the control of the very constituents that pay into the system and placed under the stewardship of a private entity that has very little public oversight with respect to the development and maintenance of schools.

The plantation and corporate education models that I have described here, must be located within the historical struggle between the liberatory practices of black folks on the one hand and the aim of elites to reinstate rigid hierarchies of racial, political, social, and economic relations on the other. Rather than isolated phenomena, ACT and NCLB have historic antecedents that have provided a foundation for assaults upon black communities. Connecting the present to the past, the following section will look at the foundations of both the plantation and corporate models of education in order to grasp the breadth of the struggle with regard to the importance of public education to projects of black liberation.

STONO AND NAT TURNER: THE FUEL OF THE PLANTATION MODEL

The education of black folks has a tenuous history marked by distinct moments that have shaped the overall movement of public education in the United States. Within these processes, black subordination and organized education have had a long antagonistic history. Perhaps two of the earliest moments of this pattern were the aftermath of the 1739 Stono Rebellion in South Carolina and the 1831 Nat Turner Rebellion in Virginia. Though separated by nearly a century, both of these incidents exemplify the strident chords of fear within the Southern planter bloc toward an educated black public. In the wake of the Stono Rebellion, both South Carolina and Georgia passed laws that targeted the education of black people. While the South Carolina legislation, passed in 1740, sought to prevent the assemblage and education of black people in any fashion, in 1770 Georgia was less severe in terms of penalties, but nevertheless specifically addressed the teaching of black people as a major problem regarding the development of a sustainable plantation economy.³³ The policies aimed to stamp out literacy among Southern blacks in order to curb resistance to a political, economic, and social structure that attempted to subjugate black freedom. Vitally important to this process was the recognition on the part of the planter class that the education of black people was in direct opposition to their desire to maintain economic profits at the expense of black labor. Carter G. Woodson, writing about the reactionary tactics on part of both South Carolina and later Georgia stated:

The majority of the people of the South had by this time [1740] come to the conclusion that, as intellectual elevation unfits men for servitude and renders it impossible to retain them in this condition, it should be redirected. In other words, the more you cultivate the minds of slaves, the more unserviceable you make them; you give them a higher relish for those privileges which they cannot attain and turn what you intend for a blessing into a curse. If they are to remain in slavery they should be kept in the lowest state of ignorance and degradation, and the nearer you bring them to the condition of brutes the better chance they have to retain their apathy. It had thus been brought to pass that the measures enacted to prevent the education of Negroes had not only forbidden association with their fellows for mutual help and closed up most colored schools in the South, but had in several States made it a crime for a Negro to teach his own children.³⁴

The laws that governed the “legal” education of black people were strictly enforced with the exception of religious education and indoctrination of black people to Christianity. Throughout the colonies, various Christian denominational missions sought to teach black people the Christian doctrine. While the intent varied from patronizing benevolence to a passive, social project, Christian missionaries worked with great zeal to convert black souls.³⁵ Not always in agreement with the planter

class, missionaries were able to establish churches and religious schools with the intent of proselytizing to black people the goodness of Christianity. Yet, against the best intentions of the majority of Christian leaders, black people by and large had a vastly different interpretation of the Bible than did white overseers and ministers. Such was the case with a young Nathaniel Turner of Southampton County, Virginia.

Turner, learning to read during Sunday school classes, became a charismatic leader and minister within his community.³⁶ Charged with the responsibility to lead black people out of the confines of slavery, Turner led a revolt that shook the plantation South to the core. Perhaps even more astounding in the eyes of the planter class was the connection between Turner's radical Christian philosophical tenants and the execution of the revolt. Placed on trial and questioned about the rationale for the revolt, Turner stated:

I heard a loud noise in the heavens, and the Spirit instantly appeared to me and said the Serpent was loosened, and Christ had laid down the yoke he had borne for the sins of men, and that I should take it on and fight against the Serpent, for the time was fast approaching when the first should be last and the last should be first... And by signs in the heavens that it would make known to me when I should commence the great work, and until the first sign appeared I should conceal it from the knowledge of men; and on the appearance of the sign... I should arise and prepare myself and slay my enemies with their own weapons.³⁷

Turner's interpretation of the Bible brought swift changes to the position of Christianity within the plantation South. The Governor of Virginia was insistent that new legislation be drawn up to prevent the assembly of black people throughout the state and sought to ban the teaching of Christianity through written texts. In regards to the action of the governor, Woodson stated:

He [the Governor of Virginia] believed that these ministers were in direct contact with the agents of abolition, who were using colored leaders as a means to destroy the institutions of the South... To prevent the "enemies" in other States from communicating with the slaves of that section he requested that the laws regulating the assembly of Negroes be more rigidly enforced and that colored preachers be silenced.³⁸

Not confined to Virginia, states both in the North and South, enacted legislation to curb the possibility of black revolt via education. Colonial depots and then state legislatures from Mississippi to Delaware to Florida all put in place measures that severely limited the ability of black people to attain information. While Mississippi went as far as to expel all free blacks from the state, Alabama enacted a law in 1832 that prevented the education of black people in any fashion and imposed fines ranging from \$250 to \$500 on anybody who sought to teach black people to read.³⁹

North Carolina, which at the time was a leader in the development of a public education system, prevented the attendance of black people within the system and banned all forms of public education of black people.⁴⁰

While the legislation passed by specific state assemblies carried harsh penalties, the extralegal justice applied by the plantation bloc was vicious. Following Turner's revolt, plantation owners were hell-bent on preventing black Southerners from learning how to read. Black oral histories collected by the Work Progress Administration recount the intense desire of plantation owners to keep black people from learning how to read and write. Henry Nix told the story of his uncle, who appropriated a book in order to teach himself. Upon finding out about this action, the plantation owner had the plantation doctor cut off Nix's uncle's finger in order to send a message to the rest of the blacks on the plantation. Lizzie Williams told the story of a black woman named Nancy whose fate for knowing how to read and write was to be brutally whipped and branded with hot irons all over her body. Perhaps the story that best illustrates the savage culture of the plantation system is that of Joseph Booker's father Albert. Albert, who knew how to read and write, became an informal teacher on the plantation grounds. Upon this information coming to the property owner's attention, Albert was whipped to death when Joseph was three years old.⁴¹

Yet in the face of blatant hostility and violence, black Southerners were not fazed by the reactionary violence on the part of the plantation bloc. Undeterred in their passion to attain freedom, there are countless stories of black people teaching themselves and each other how to master literacy skills. Anderson Whitted told the story of his father, who lived fourteen miles away, but taught him to read during bi-weekly visits to the plantation.⁴² W. E. Northcross told the incredible story of learning how to read and write although he was forewarned that if caught he would be lynched. Northcross stated, "I would shut the doors, put one end of a board into the fire, and proceed to study; but whenever I heard the dogs barking I would throw my book under the bed and peep and listen to see what was up. If no one was near I would crawl under the bed, get my book, come out, lie flat on my stomach, and proceed to study until the dogs would again disturb me."⁴³

It was in the ethos of the sheer desire to learn how to read and write that the black population during Reconstruction lobbied for the construction of a nation wide public education system. However, probing deeper, a key stratagem within the call for public education was to fundamentally alter the social, political, economic, and racial relationships throughout the country, and in particular in the South. Writing about the origins of a comprehensive public education system, Du Bois stated:

The first great mass movement for public education at the expense of the South, came from Negroes. Many leaders before the war had advocated general education, but few had been listened to. Schools for indigents and paupers were supported, here and there, and more or less spasmodically. Some states had elaborate plans, but they were not

carried out. Public education for all at the public expense was, in the South, a Negro idea.⁴⁴

In a call for a massive redistribution of wealth away from the Southern plantation bloc, black representatives of both state and federal governments alike, called for the implementation of systems of public education to be financed via systems of taxation. A key aspect of the black proposal was to develop a structure that simultaneously attacked issues of race and class within the United States. In an astute manner, there was recognition of two important facets with respect to the establishment of a new system of education. The first was that poor whites had to realign their interests to those of black people in order to break free from their own class oppression via their “possessive investment in whiteness.”⁴⁵ Second, the development of a public education system through a comprehensive and progressive taxation system, would both strip away the economic base of the plantation bloc and foster the development of alternative forms of knowledge production that countered the oppressive aspects of forced labor inherently tied to the plantation economy. The result would radically alter the economic, political, and racial composition of the South, and reallocate extracted financial and social resources into the hands of the masses, drastically tipping the balance of power away from the planter bloc into the hands of black and impoverished white laborers.

The Reconstruction period saw fits and starts of systems of public education moving throughout the South. Yet many problems were still clearly present. Issues of public financing, segregation, misappropriation of funds and general hostility on the part of the white working and planter classes were major obstacles that prevented the full development of the system.⁴⁶ Reporting during the time period of 1866-1870, the American Freedman’s Commission stated that Negroes’ “attempts at education provoked the most intense and bitter hostilities as evincing a desire to render themselves equal to whites. Their churches and schoolhouses in many places were destroyed by mobs.”⁴⁷ Central to this violence was an understanding by the planter class that an educated black population would fundamentally alter the appropriation and importantly, consumption afforded from a skewed economic system.⁴⁸ The violence initiated upon black Southerners opened the door for the Northern corporate class to provide a reformist solution to a volatile situation. Rather than take into account the demands of blacks for an educative system that would challenge power, they offered a system based upon a labor model that would further solidify the racial order.

THE TAKEOVER: INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION

While the planter bloc took out their anger upon the masses of blacks, they could not counter the ability of Northern tycoons to entrench industrial education throughout the Southern landscape. Emboldened by their enormous economic and political clout, Northern industrialists such as Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Peabody ushered in an education system throughout the South that ran counter to

the intentions of black Southerners who lobbied congress during Reconstruction. Rather, industrial philanthropists established manual labor programs that focused on black schools in order to create a new system whereby “Blacks... [were] to learn their ‘place’ in the new industrial order.”⁴⁹ Furthermore, “Politics was the noteworthy feature of educating Blacks [sic] after the Civil War... The new corporate hegemonists needed to work toward their political and policy objectives. Among those objectives was a stable and orderly South where subservient wage labor and debt farming or sharecropping would provide the livelihood for black Americans.”⁵⁰

Compounded by the issue of Northern capital now achieving a dominant role in the Southern economy, the collapse of Reconstruction brought forth new models of dismantling public education on the part of the Southern plantation bloc. In many states, the first act of the post-Reconstruction legislatures was to fire the teaching faculty and replace them with a new instructional body that served to undermine the objectives of the Reconstruction public education system. Du Bois noted in Louisiana, for example, that following Reconstruction “when the Confederates returned to domination, the public schools, which had attained a degree of efficiency never before reached in the South, were greatly curtailed.” As a result, “one hundred and ten of the teachers, many of them native-born, were dismissed at once, and their places filled with intolerant Confederates.”⁵¹

Through the combination of a Northern capital influenced economic system and the return of an antebellum Southern social structure, public education remained a hotly contested issue within the United States. By 1896, a legally segregated social system buttressed by the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision paved the road for a grossly disproportioned imbalance of financial resources given to all white publically-funded schools. Additionally, the vast majority of black schools were designed to enforce a menial labor-based curriculum, most notably absent was a liberal arts pedagogy that would have placed a heavy emphasis on literacy.⁵² However, even this second-class system was altered once Southern governments realized that white working-class labor was losing ground to blacks who were being trained to compete within an industrial labor economy. Yet rather than attack the system by forming alliances with black people of the same class standing, state leaders “representing” poor whites galvanized the white base behind the veil of white privilege. The Southern strategy was once again invoked and black students quickly became further marginalized within an already unimpressive system of public education.⁵³

In closing, harking back to the insight of Du Bois, it is key to remember that similar to the ethos of the planter bloc and the corporate class, the current regime is not at all interested in the development of an educated black population, but rather control over the ideological and material resources that are provided within education. Key to their quest is the attempted destruction of public education. Perhaps there is no better way to understand this fact than reiterating Du Bois’s commentary upon the relationship between black people and the planter bloc, which extends to the corporate class as well: “The very fact that so many of them had

seen the wealthy slaveholders at close range, and knew the extent of ignorance... among them, led to that extraordinary mass demand on the part of the black laboring class for education. And it was this demand that was the effective force for the establishment of the public school in the South on a permanent basis, for all people and all classes."⁵⁴

Invoking Du Bois's analysis within the current moment, it has to be understood that much more than the structure of public education is in peril; rather, it is the philosophical ethos of freedom that has undergirded black resistance that is the true threat to corporate and plantation forms of governance. Similarly, it is not by chance that black Los Angeles has been a primary target of both policy makers and business leaders under the guise educational reform; for as previously stated, black Angelino's since the late 20th century have been at the fore of incorporating education to develop models of resistance to a variety of means of attempted subjugation. It is within this context that it is imperative to further study the case of education within black Los Angeles to understand not only current and future policy initiatives, but importantly, to understand strategies that have been successful to the *longue durée* of black survival and renewal.

Notes

¹ Du Bois notes:

From an economic point of view, this planter class had interest in consumption rather than production. They exploited labor in order that they themselves should live more grandly and not mainly for the increasingly production. Their taste went to elaborate households, well furnished and hospitable; they had much to eat and drink; they consumed large quantities of liquor; they gambled and caroused and kept up the habit of dueling well down into the nineteenth century. Sexually they were lawless, protecting elaborately and flattering the virginity of a small class of women of their social class, and keeping at command millions of poor women of the two laboring groups of the South. (35)

² See Kelley, *Race Rebels*. See also Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*.

³ See Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office, "Abolish Chronic Truancy."

⁴ See Landsberg, "D.A. Defends Crime Prevention Efforts."

⁵ Turner et al., *Los Angeles County Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act*. According to their homepage, The RAND Corporation is a "non-profit institution that helps improve policy and decision making through research and analysis." Housed in Santa Monica, California, RAND has had a sordid history in the complicity of government surveillance both within and outside of the United States. Daniel Ellsberg revealed this fact when he released more than 7,000 classified documents that RAND housed and analyzed. These papers became known as the Pentagon Papers (see *The Most Dangerous Man in America*). In addition to pointing out the role of the United States government in the murders of thousands of Cambodian and Vietnamese civilians during the Vietnam War, the Pentagon Papers also pointed to the dubious role non-official state agencies (i.e., non-

profits) such as RAND have in covering-up and assisting in state violence propagated by the United States.

⁶ RAND's report entitled, "Los Angeles County Juvenile Justice Crime Prevention Act, Fiscal Year 2004-2005 Report" commented on the praise that ACT was given by state agencies. The report states, "Juvenile Accountability Block Grants Program Best Practices Series Bulletin cited the ACT Program and presented it as one model of an approach and program that holds juvenile offenders accountable for their behavior." The article further states, "The program has experienced a 99 percent success rate in returning chronically absent minors to school and has generated enthusiasm within the community and the belief that the problem of truancy is not hopeless. Most important, ACT has empowered families to reestablish parental authority and improve family life." Yet, in making such a bold claim, the Best Practices Bulletin, which RAND cites, makes no mention, nor reference regarding the evidence to back up the 99 percent success claim. Rather, it is stated as an "objective" fact.

⁷ Upon conducting interviews with youth and court officials, the Labor Community Strategy Center commented, "According to Los Angeles municipal code 45.04, citations are 'not to exceed \$250.' However, we have been made aware by a Referee (the acting judges who preside over the truancy cases) that the fines have increased recently to be \$301 for the second ticket and \$985 for the third. This is likely due to increased court fees as the municipal code remains at \$250" (Adler, par. 22).

⁸ Adler, "Ticketing Towards Prisons," par. 14.

⁹ Ibid., par. 16.

¹⁰ See Hing, "Why Los Angeles Can't Ticket Students on Their Way to School."

¹¹ See California Department of Education, "Homepage."

¹² Data taken from the California Department of Education from 2002-2010 demonstrates that black students rates of literacy as indicated by annual testing have never been more than 40 percent proficient throughout the county. See California Department of Education, "Homepage."

¹³ McGray, "The Instigator," 66-67.

¹⁴ See Smith, "Can a Hostile Takeover Help a Desperate Inner City High School?."

¹⁵ Writing about the relationship between Duncan and Barr, McGray notes:

Barr got a call from the new Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan. He flew to Washington, D.C. at the end of March, for what he expected to be a social visit. At the meeting, Duncan revealed that he was interested in committing several billion dollars of the education stimulus package to a Locke-style takeover and transformation of the lowest-performing one per cent of schools across the country, at least four thousand of them, in the next several years. The Department of Education would favor districts that agreed to partner with an outside group, like Green Dot. "You seem to have cracked the code," Duncan told Barr. Duncan was interested in the fact that Barr was targeting high schools, not elementary or middle schools. "The toughest work in urban education today is what you do with large failing high schools," Duncan told me. These schools get less study and less attention from charter groups and education reformers, most of whom feel that ninth grade is too late to begin saving kids. "Teach for America, NewSchools Venture Fund, the Broad Foundation—all these folks are doing extraordinary work in public education," Duncan said. "Nobody national is turning around large failing high schools." (68)

- ¹⁶ Saltman, “The Rise of Venture Philanthropy and the Ongoing Neoliberal Assault on Public Education,” 57.
- ¹⁷ Saltman writes:
- For Broad, public schools, teacher education programs, and educational leadership programs are all described as businesses. The description hangs on a metaphor of efficient delivery of a standardized product (knowledge) all along the product supply chain: The product is alleged to be high quality, neutral, universally valuable education. The deliverable, knowledge, is positioned like product. In the case of K-12, knowledge, which is presumed to be universal and objective, is to be standardized, measured, and tested. Test scores in this view are the ultimate arbiter of educational quality and, like units of commodity or money, can allow for the quantification of growth and progress. For Broad this is called, “achievement.”(66-67)
- ¹⁸ Saltman, “The Rise of Venture Philanthropy and the Ongoing Neoliberal Assault on Public Education,” 73-74.
- ¹⁹ Commenting on the end goal of the Broad model, Saltman notes:
- A crucial part of venture philanthropy’s aim to radically transform public schooling on the model of the market involves remaking administrator preparation on the corporate model. The Eli and Edythe Broad Education Foundation is the most active and aggressive Venture Philanthropy with this focus. Broad is funding educational leadership training projects to recruit corporate, military, and non-profit leaders to public education. The Broad Foundation is also seeking to deregulate teacher and administrator preparation programs that will take such programs away from the purview of universities and put them under the control of private non-profit companies that largely embrace corporate ideology. (58)
- ²⁰ See the Broad Report, “Connections between Eli Broad, the Parent Union (aka Parent Revolution, the creators of the ‘Parent Trigger’), and Green Dot.”
- ²¹ See Anderson, “Gates Foundation Gives \$335 Million for Teacher Effectiveness.”
- ²² McGray reports, “He [Barr] started a citywide group called the Los Angeles Parents Union, an activist alternative to the Parent-Teacher Association, in the hope of mobilizing foot soldiers for Green Dot’s escalating war against the district” (70). See also Anderson, “Gates Foundation Gives \$335 Million for Teacher Effectiveness.”
- ²³ Since the 2008 takeover of Alain Locke High School by Green Dot Public Schools, the *Los Angeles Times* has consistently lambasted the efforts of the LAUSD while promoting the promises offered by Green Dot Public Schools to educate a school populated by “students who return to school at various times from juvenile detention facilities” (Blume, “Green Dot’s Biggest Test Yet,” par. 22). From the *Los Angeles Times*’ September 18, 2008 article, “Transformation of L.A. Unified’s Locke High into a Charter School is Green Dot’s Biggest Test Yet,” to the May 14, 2012, article “Students at Charter-run Locke Do Better than Nearby Peers,” the *Times* has attempted to denigrate public education in favor of a corporate model through a series of articles over the four-year period.
- ²⁴ The Center for Research on Education Outcomes, *Multiple Choice*, 6.
- ²⁵ The study can be found in the bibliography under Herman et al.
- ²⁶ See Blume, “Locke High School’s Slow and Steady Turnaround.”
- ²⁷ While NCLB initially was focused on highlighting the “achievement gap” between non-white groups and whites, data has proven that almost every school in the nation is failing according to NCLB standards. Arne Duncan, head of the Department of Education

for President Barack Obama reported in 2009 that an estimated 82 percent of schools in the US could fail to meet the education goals set by NCLB.

²⁸ McNeil, *Contradictions of School Reform*, 237.

²⁹ See United States Department of Education, “Duncan Says 82 Percent of America’s Schools Could ‘Fail’ Under the NCLB This Year.”

³⁰ For more information on NCLB, see McNeil, *Contradictions Of School Reform*; Ravitch, *The Death and Life of the Great American School System*; Valenzuela et al., “Introduction To The Special Issue”; and Watkins, *The Assault on Public Education*.

³¹ Steve Barr illustrates the power of corporate capital in controlling the economic interests of public education. Explaining the opening of his first school, he stated, “I told the parents, ‘When you come to this school, seven thousand dollars follows you... the rough sum that California paid a charter school to educate a child... That’s your money. I will treat that like tuition.’” According to McGray, “He promised them a school that was safe, local, and accountable. He said he’d need their help. And he gave everyone his home phone number and said that they could call him anytime. By the end of the night, he had a hundred and forty kids committed to his ninth-grade class. Suddenly, he said, ‘I started shaking. I’m standing in front of these parents, who have no money—all they have is their kids,’ he recalled” (68).

³² See Blume, “LAUSD Charter Schools.”

³³ Passed in 1740, South Carolina’s policy stated:

And whereas the having of Slaves taught to write or suffering them to be employed in writing may be attended with great Inconveniencies; Be it therefore Enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That all and every Person and Persons whatsoever, who shall hereafter teach or cause any Slave or Slaves to be taught to write, or shall use or employ any slave as a Scribe in any Manner of Writing whatsoever, hereafter taught to write, every such Person and Persons shall, for every such offense forfeit the Sum of One Hundred Pounds current Money. (Palmer, 526)

The Georgia colony, founded in 1735, was established by a charter that forbade slavery in the colony. The ban on slavery was revoked in 1753. The Georgia legislation in a similar fashion targeted literacy as a key component to preventing Black rebellions. The 1770 law stated:

And Whereas the having of Slaves taught to write or suffering them to be employed in writing may be attended with great Inconveniencys, Be it therefore Enacted by the authority aforesaid that all and every person and persons whatsoever who shall here-after teach or Cause any Slave or Slaves to be taught to write or shall use or employ any Slave as a Scribe in any manner of writing whatsoever hereafter taught to write every such person or persons shall for every such Offense forfeit the Sum of Fifteen pounds Sterling... that all and every person and... persons whatsoever, who shall here-after teach, or cause any slave or slaves to be taught to write, or shall use or employ any slave as a scribe, in any manner of writing whatsoever, hereafter taught to write, every such person or persons shall for every such Offense forfeit the sum of twenty pounds Sterling. (Palmer, 525-526)

³⁴ Woodson, *The Education Of The Negro Prior to 1861*, 5.

³⁵ The reasons for the conversion of Africans during the 17th and 18th centuries varied. While some felt that it was a part of the civilization process that provided opportunity to rid slaves of African spiritual practices, designated as heathen, others felt it was necessary to pacify blacks against potential revolt and rebellion.

³⁶ Woodson writes that Turner was “precocious as a youth he had learned to read so easily that he did not remember when he first had that attainment.” Woodson adds:

Given unusual social and intellectual advantages, he developed into a man of considerable “mental ability and wide information.” His education was chiefly acquired in the Sunday schools in which “the textbooks for the small children were the ordinary speller and reader, and that for the older Negroes the Bible.” He had received instruction also from his parents and his indulgent young master, J. C. Turner. (64)

³⁷ Rose, *A Documentary History of Slavery in North America*, 126.

³⁸ Woodson, *The Education Of The Negro Prior to 1861*, 64.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁴¹ Cornelius, “We Slipped and Learned to Read,” 174.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 177.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 180-1.

⁴⁴ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 688.

⁴⁵ The phrase has its origins in the works of W. E. B. Du Bois. Du Bois commented on the difficulty of the white working class to align their interests with that of black workers. Rather than attack the issue of capitalism head on, Du Bois stated:

But the poor whites and their leaders could not for a moment contemplate a fight of united white and black labor against the exploiters. Indeed, the natural leaders of the poor whites, the small farmer, the merchant, the professional man, the white mechanic and slave overseer, were bound to the planters and repelled from the slaves and even from the mass of the white laborers in two ways: first, they constituted the police patrol who could ride with planters and then exercise unlimited force upon recalcitrant or runaway slaves; and then, too, there was always a chance that they themselves could also become planters by saving money, by investment, by power of good luck; and the only heaven that attracted them was the life of the great Southern planter. (27)

Beginning where Du Bois leaves off, George Lipsitz argues that “public policy and private prejudice work together to create a ‘possessive investment in whiteness’ that is responsible for the racialized hierarchies of our society.” Explaining the seductive lure of whiteness he states, “I argue that white Americans are encouraged to invest in whiteness, to remain true to an identity that provides them with resources, power, and opportunity. This whiteness is, of course, a delusion, a scientific and cultural fiction that like all racial identities has no valid foundation in biology or anthropology. Whiteness is, however, a social fact, an identity created and continued with all-too-real consequences for the distribution of wealth, prestige, and opportunity” (vii).

⁴⁶ Writing on these issues, Du Bois documented extensive instances of fraud and reactionary opposition. He wrote:

It will be noted that in nearly all the Southern states there were continual and well-proven charges of speculation and misuse of public school funds. This was not a part of the general charge of stealing and graft, but was the fault of local county officials. In most cases, the leading white landholders, who took no part in the administration of the state, nevertheless kept their hands upon local taxation and assessments, and were determined that the impoverished property-holder should

not be taxed for Negro education... During and after Reconstruction, diversion of school funds was common. In North Carolina, \$136,076 was collected for education in 1870, but the Department of Education received only \$38,931. In Louisiana, \$1,000,000 worth of bonds for the school fund were used to pay the expenses of the legislature in 1872. (662)

⁴⁷ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 645.

⁴⁸ Writing about the planter bloc's understanding of the effect of a public education system, Du Bois notes:

The fact of the matter was that in the pre-war South, there were two inseparable obstacles to a free public school system. The first was the attitude of the owners of property. They did not propose under any circumstances to be taxed for the public education of the laboring class. They believed that laborers did not need education; that it made their exploitation more difficult; and that if any of them were really worth educating, they would somehow escape their condition by their own efforts. (641)

⁴⁹ Watkins, *The White Architects of Black Education*, 23.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 644.

⁵² See Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*.

⁵³ The famed industrial school leader Booker T. Washington, noted in 1907, "It is a fact that since the idea of industrial or technical education for white people took root within the last few years, much more money is spent annually for such education for the whites than for the colored people" (cited in Marable and Mullings, 191).

⁵⁴ Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America*, 641.

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REVERSED GAINS?: AFRICAN-AMERICANS AND FORECLOSURES IN THE LOS ANGELES METROPOLITAN AREA, 2008-2009

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By 2010, California had one of the highest rates of foreclosure in the country. Twelve percent of the state's housing stock was in foreclosure.¹ The foreclosure crisis has seen people thrown out of their homes, their credit ruined, and of course, people in much emotional pain. However, the effects of the foreclosure crisis have disproportionately affected some communities more than others. The areas hit the hardest in California were its Central Valley—especially the cities of Modesto, Merced, Stockton, and Bakersfield—and the Inland Empire area just east of Los Angeles, areas where many blacks and Latinos have settled. Indeed, while the median foreclosure rate² for neighborhoods in Los Angeles and the Inland Empire³ during the 2008-2009 period stood at 1.3 percent,⁴ black neighborhoods experienced a foreclosure rate of nearly 2 percent.⁵

While research has documented clear racial disparities in foreclosure rates due largely to uneven patterns of subprime lending, it remains unclear whether all neighborhoods with sizable black populations have been affected similarly. Have urban neighborhoods and suburban neighborhoods experienced comparable volumes of foreclosures? Past research suggests that predominantly black urban neighborhoods were particularly targeted in early subprime mortgage marketing.⁶ Given the high levels of black suburbanization in the Los Angeles area, how have these new and diverse communities on the urban fringe been affected? How do foreclosure rates in urban Watts, for example, differ from those in exurban Moreno Valley, both of which have large black populations? Given that suburban and exurban communities have generally experienced higher foreclosure rates, are higher foreclosure rates in Moreno Valley due primarily to its exurban location or to its racial composition?⁷ And why do uneven concentrations of foreclosures matter, particularly for suburban communities?

In this essay, I offer a detailed description of patterns of foreclosures at the census tract level in metropolitan Los Angeles, paying special attention to the exurban Inland Empire of San Bernardino and Riverside counties, where large numbers of blacks and Latinos have settled in the last twenty years and where the bulk of foreclosures in the region have taken place. I find that rates of foreclosure are consistently higher in black neighborhoods regardless if these neighborhoods are

urban, suburban, or exurban in character. However, the highest levels of foreclosure are in black exurban communities, like those found in the Inland Empire. These foreclosure patterns continue the long history of housing inequality in California and elsewhere and represent a reversal of many of the gains in social mobility made by African-Americans since the Civil Rights Era.

RACE, HOUSING, AND LENDING

Historically, housing has been a “centerpiece of opportunity” in America.⁸ Home ownership has served as a major vehicle of upward mobility in the United States, especially in the post-World War II period.⁹ Persistent residential segregation and lending discrimination, however, have prevented African-Americans and Latinos from purchasing homes and building home equity at the same rates as whites.¹⁰ Home ownership also has racialized disadvantages: black and Latino homeowners often live in lower-income, more dangerous neighborhoods with worse schools and lower property values than their white counterparts, regardless of income and education.¹¹ These findings are particularly significant given that blacks and Latinos tend to have more household wealth tied to home ownership than whites.¹²

These findings are also significant given the disturbing recent trends in mortgage lending, namely, the growth of the “subprime”—or high-risk—lending industry. While blacks and Latinos suffered from redlining in the 1980s, during the last two decades, black households have been more likely to receive credit, but at higher costs and rates than their white counterparts.¹³ As a result, black households and neighborhoods with more black residents are disproportionately affected by foreclosures.¹⁴ Thus, the effects of the collapse of the housing market on black wealth have been especially severe.¹⁵

What remains unclear is whether all black neighborhoods were impacted similarly during the height of the foreclosure crisis in 2008 and 2009. Are there predominantly black communities that were more highly impacted than others and if so, where? There is reason to suspect that older urban and inner-ring suburban tracts experienced a foreclosure crisis in the mid-2000s before the national crisis occurred beginning in 2007 due to subprime marketing efforts in the 1990s.¹⁶ In addition, subprime mortgage companies concentrated much of their business in the newer neighborhoods on the urban fringe in the exurban communities of Riverside and San Bernardino counties, putting neighborhoods there at particular risk for high rates of foreclosure. Thus, it may be that suburban and exurban tracts with large black populations experienced significantly more foreclosures than their urban counterparts in 2008 and 2009. Did urban neighborhoods experience more of a negative impact from the foreclosure crisis than suburban or newer exurban communities due to early patterns of subprime lending? Or have exurban communities experienced a higher volume of foreclosures? And why might the uneven concentration of foreclosures matter for black neighborhoods in the Los Angeles-Inland Empire region?

LOS ANGELES AND THE INLAND EMPIRE

A detailed examination of the impact of the foreclosure crisis in the Los Angeles metropolitan area—including the Inland Empire—is lacking, and it is particularly important for two major reasons. First, since 2007, California has consistently ranked within the top four states with the highest foreclosure rates, along with Nevada, Arizona, and Florida. Within California, foreclosures tend to be concentrated in the Central Valley and Inland Empire just east of Los Angeles, consisting of fast-growing exurban San Bernardino and Riverside counties. Thus, a careful analysis of how the foreclosure crisis has impacted neighborhoods within the metropolitan region is crucial to a comprehensive understanding of the impact of the crisis on neighborhoods within California and across the Sunbelt.

Second, the Los Angeles-Inland Empire region is tremendously diverse. Owing to the migration of many households of color out of expensive and at times crime-ridden parts of Los Angeles County, the exurban Inland Empire is among the most diverse regions in the nation, including significant numbers of African-Americans, Asians, Latinos, and non-Hispanic whites. In 2000, the region was 40 percent Latino, 39 percent non-Hispanic white, 10 percent Asian, and 8 percent African-American. At the same time, there were 1,644 neighborhoods with higher than average proportions of whites, 1,391 neighborhoods with higher than average proportions of Latinos, 713 neighborhoods with higher than average proportions of African-Americans, and 954 neighborhoods with higher than average proportions of Asians. Older, inner-ring suburban bedroom communities in the region are also highly diverse, with African-Americans and Latinos in the majority in many older suburban neighborhoods. The diversity of the region's suburban and exurban neighborhoods provide an unparalleled opportunity to identify the varying relationships between neighborhood characteristics and foreclosures.

DATA AND METHODS

In order to examine potentially disparate rates of foreclosure, I use a unique dataset that combines all foreclosures in Los Angeles, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties between 2008 and 2009 from DataQuick, Inc. with neighborhood demographic data from the 2000 US census. I used two analytic strategies to determine the relationship between neighborhood characteristics and foreclosures. First, I performed a spatial analysis by mapping foreclosure counts and rates and demographic characteristics in the region. Second, I regressed total foreclosures on a host of neighborhood characteristics to tease out the overall relationship between the proportion of black residents, neighborhood location, and foreclosures in the Los Angeles area.

VARIABLES

The dependent variable of interest was the foreclosure rate, which was logged to reduce skew. Based on the existing literature, I examined a total of eight neighborhood-level variables and their relationships to neighborhood foreclosure rates: neighborhood location (urban, suburban, or exurban), neighborhood racial composition, median income, owner-occupancy rate, median property value, and the change in median property value between 2005 and 2007.¹⁷ Because this study focuses on the major dimensions of spatial inequality in the Los Angeles area, three sets of focal independent variables were of particular interest: neighborhood location, neighborhood racial composition, and neighborhood class.

FINDINGS

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

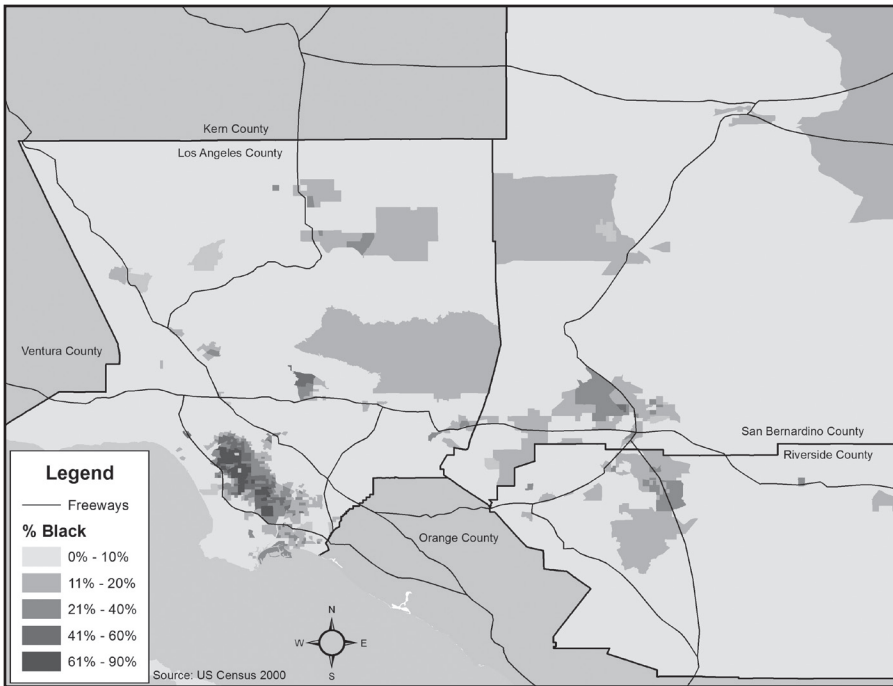
Over the period 2008-2009, neighborhoods in Los Angeles and the Inland Empire experienced an average of 54 foreclosures, a foreclosure rate of almost 3 percent. The median foreclosure rate was about 1 percent less, indicating that some tracts in the sample experienced very large numbers of foreclosures. Indeed, one tract saw 2,529 foreclosures, a foreclosure rate of 91.2 percent over the two-year period. The mean and median foreclosure rates differ strongly by whether the neighborhood location was urban, suburban, or exurban. The average foreclosure rates for urban and suburban neighborhoods were 1.2 percent and 1.9 percent respectively, while the average foreclosure rate for exurban tracts was 5.1 percent. Of tracts with foreclosure rates higher than the region's average, the majority was indeed exurban. Forty-two percent are located in Los Angeles County while 58 percent are located in the Inland Empire, an extreme overrepresentation. The whole of tracts with very high foreclosure rates (>25 percent) are exurban. In addition, of tracts with higher than average rates of foreclosure, 35 percent have higher than average proportions of black residents, while these neighborhoods make up only 25 percent of the region's neighborhoods on the whole.

Maps 1 and 2 provide a better look at the distribution of foreclosures in the region. Map 1 identifies neighborhoods with larger black populations, which tend to be clustered along the 110 and 105 freeways in Los Angeles County, in parts of Pasadena, and in the exurban communities of Lancaster and Palmdale. In Riverside and San Bernardino, blacks are concentrated in exurban Fontana, Rialto, Riverside, and Moreno Valley. Map 2 layers the distribution of foreclosures over the proportion of blacks in neighborhoods throughout the region. Foreclosures tend to be clustered around the areas with large black populations in all three counties. However, foreclosures are also clustered in Los Angeles County's San Fernando Valley, Norwalk, and West Covina, San Bernardino County's Victorville, Apple Valley, and Rancho Cucamonga and in Riverside County's Hemet and Murrieta, all of which have relatively small black populations. In San Bernardino and Riverside

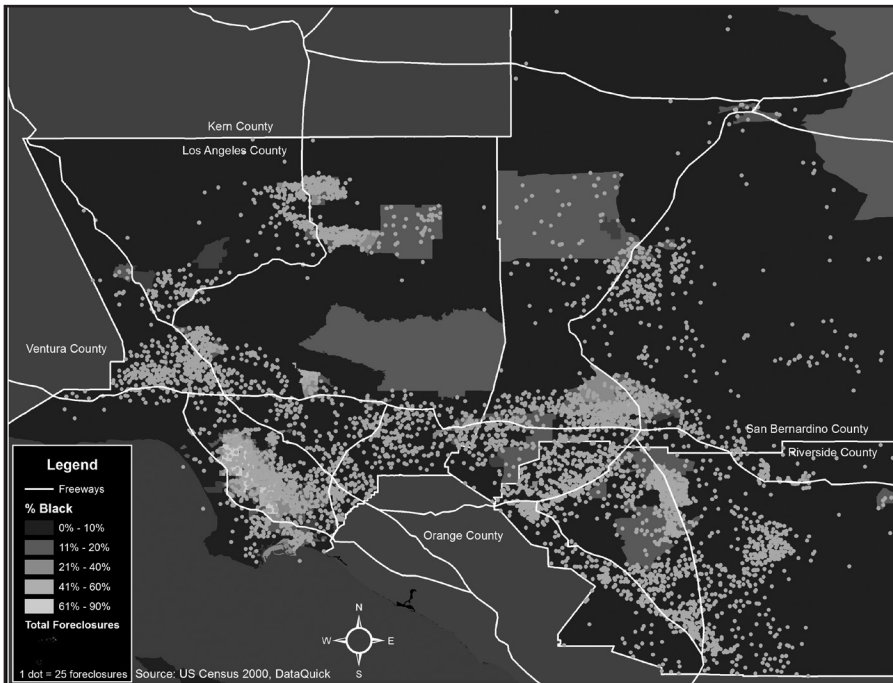
TABLE 1. SUMMARY OF FORECLOSURES AND NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTERISTICS, LOS ANGELES-INLAND EMPIRE REGION

Neighborhood characteristics	N	Mean	SD	25%	Median	75%	Min	Max
Foreclosure Rate	2608	0.03	0.05	0	0.01	0.03	0	0.91
Total Foreclosures	2608	54	123	6	50	50	0	2529
<i>County</i>	2463							
Los Angeles		76.5						
Riverside		13.8						
San Bernardino		9.6						
<i>Place</i>	2608							
Urban		12.7						
Suburban		54.5						
Exurban		32.8						
% White, 2000	2608	36.1	28.4	7.9	32.2	61.8	0	94.9
% Black, 2000	2608	8.7	14.1	1.5	3.4	8.9	0	91.1
% Latino, 2000	2608	42.1	28	17	36.9	64.2	2.3	98.4
% Asian, 2000	2608	10	12.9	1.9	5.4	11.6	0	81.8
Median Household Income, 2000	2608	\$45,991	\$22,941	\$30,100	\$41,401	\$55,441	\$6,310	\$200K
% Owner-occupied, 2000	2680	50.3	25.5	29.3	50.7	72.3	0	100
Median Property Value, 2007	2563	\$541,796	\$308,434	\$395K	\$476K	\$590K	\$50K	\$45M
% Change in median property value, 2005-2007	2547	0.1	0.2	0	0.07	2.1	-0.74	3.9

MAP 1. BLACK POPULATION BY CENSUS TRACT, 2000



MAP 2. FORECLOSURE DENSITIES IN THE LOS ANGELES-INLAND EMPIRE REGION, 2008-2009



counties, older neighborhoods in and around the anchoring cities of San Bernardino and Riverside have also experienced high densities of foreclosures.

It appears as though foreclosures tend to be concentrated in black communities, but many of these communities are also suburban or exurban and have larger Latino populations, higher poverty rates, and other varying neighborhood characteristics. It may be that foreclosures are concentrated in black communities as a result of these neighborhood characteristics rather than racial composition *per se*. Thus, a more detailed multivariate model is needed to tease out the most salient relationships between neighborhood characteristics and foreclosure rates.

MULTIVARIATE RESULTS

Table 2 presents four Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) models of foreclosure rates in the Los Angeles region. I began by estimating the overall effects of the control variables—median home sales price in 2007 and the percent change in tract housing values between 2005 and 2007—on foreclosure rates in the region. Model 1 estimates these effects. Interestingly, only median property values were significantly associated with foreclosure rates, with higher median sales prices associated with lower foreclosure rates. However, the changes in median property values between 2005 and 2007 were not significantly related to foreclosure rates during the 2008-2009 period, as some research using shorter time periods suggests.¹⁸

Taking into account these effects, Model 2 estimates the effects of neighborhood location, with urban as the omitted category. Surprisingly, suburban location was not significant, despite the concentrations of foreclosures in older inner-ring suburban communities, especially in Los Angeles County. Exurban location, however, was highly significant. Including property value and neighborhood location variables accounted for about 24 percent of the variation in tract foreclosure rates in the region.

Model 3 estimates the effects of neighborhood racial composition, controlling for the effects of location and property values. While the percentage of Latinos was not significantly related to foreclosure rates, the percentage of African-Americans and Asians were. The insignificant relationship between the percentage of Latinos and foreclosure rates is likely due to the omission of neighborhood class variables that are included in the following model. After controlling for neighborhood race variables, both suburban and exurban effects were highly significant, and the model accounted for about 30 percent of the variation in foreclosure rates.

Finally, Model 4 estimates the effects of neighborhood class while controlling for property values, location, and neighborhood racial composition. Foreclosure rates were significantly higher in neighborhoods with lower median incomes and higher owner-occupancy rates. After accounting for the effects of neighborhood socioeconomic characteristics, the effects of neighborhood racial composition increased and remained highly significant. Foreclosure rates were significantly higher in black and Latino neighborhoods and lower in Asian neighborhoods on

TABLE 2. OLS RESULTS PREDICTING TRACT FORECLOSURES RATE IN LOS ANGELES REGION, 2008-2009

Neighborhood Covarities	(1) Controls	(2) Location	(3) Race	(4) Class
Suburban	---	0.07	0.194**	0.114*
		(0.062)	(0.064)	(0.049)
Exurban	---	0.573***	0.745***	0.455***
		(0.077)	(0.083)	(0.067)
% Black, 2000 (increments of 10%)	---	---	0.067***	0.1***
			(0.017)	(0.014)
% Latino, 2000 (increments of 10%)	---	---	0.005	0.082***
			(0.012)	(0.010)
% Asian, 2000 (increments of 10%)	---	---	-0.269***	-0.243***
			(0.019)	(0.014)
Median Household Income, 2000	---	---	---	-0.863***
				(0.142)
% Owner-occupied, 2000	---	---	---	0.046***
				(0.002)
Median Property Value, 2007	-1.554***	-1.42***	-1.123***	-1.037***
	(0.076)	(0.0776)	(0.092)	(0.103)
% Change in median property value, 2005-2007	-0.0411	0.071	-0.231	0.073
	(0.160)	(0.158)	(0.160)	(0.118)
Constant	1.719***	0.961**	-0.111	6.094***
	(0.300)	(0.315)	(0.416)	(1.210)
Observations	2,444	2,444	2,444	2,444
R-squared	0.209	0.238	0.301	0.628

Robust standard errors in parentheses, *** p<0.001, **p<0.01, *p<0.05

average. They were also significantly higher in suburban and exurban communities. Absent measures of the extent of subprime lending, these results are largely reflective of patterns of high-cost lending that disproportionately affected blacks and Latinos. This full model accounts for about 63 percent of the variation in tract foreclosure rates in the Los Angeles-Inland Empire region.

There were significantly more foreclosures in black neighborhoods on the whole in the region, but were all black neighborhoods affected similarly? I estimated models for urban, suburban, and exurban neighborhoods separately, and the effect of the proportion of blacks was consistent across these distinct neighborhood types. That is, the effect of the proportion of blacks on foreclosures was similar in urban, suburban, and exurban neighborhoods. However, because foreclosure rates in the exurbs were so much higher than in urban and older suburban communities in the region, exurban neighborhoods with larger black populations generally experienced more foreclosures on average than urban neighborhoods with similar black populations.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis presented in this chapter identifies the kinds of neighborhoods that have been most impacted by foreclosures during 2008 and 2009 in the Los Angeles metropolitan area and explores whether some neighborhoods with larger black populations were more heavily impacted by foreclosures than others. Census tracts in the region experienced an average 54 foreclosures during 2008 and 2009, which resulted in an average tract foreclosure rate of nearly 3 percent. As in some other cities in the Sunbelt and elsewhere, foreclosures were concentrated in both older suburban and newer exurban communities, in predominantly black and Latino communities, and in poorer communities (both in income and in property values.)

While the relationship between the proportion of blacks and neighborhood foreclosures was similar across urban, suburban, and exurban neighborhoods, practically speaking, there were significantly more foreclosures in older suburban and newer exurban neighborhoods than in urban tracts. Specifically, communities in and around the older suburban bedroom communities of Inglewood and Compton in Los Angeles County, and the exurban communities of Lancaster, Palmdale, Fontana, Rialto, and Moreno Valley were heavily impacted by foreclosures during this period. These are largely suburban and exurban communities where more blacks and Latinos are concentrated in the region. Many of these exurban communities were destinations for black households migrating from Los Angeles County in the 1980s and 1990s seeking cheaper, newer housing, safer neighborhoods, and better schools. Once destinations for the black middle class, many of these communities are now at particular risk for decline.

Concentrated foreclosures within black neighborhoods in the LA region represent a reversal of many of the gains in social mobility made since the Civil Rights Era. As Jesus Hernandez argues, “The concentration of loans with high foreclosure rates brings a social and financial vulnerability to targeted neighborhoods, leaving

them highly unstable in times of economic crisis.”¹⁹ Foreclosures have not only affected the wealth and well-being of families who have experienced foreclosure directly, but they are also associated with property value declines for neighbors who have not experienced foreclosure, increased neighborhood crime rates, decreased neighborhood quality, and accelerated racial transition.²⁰ Such consequences are likely to be lasting in a climate of widespread public disinvestment, as neighborhoods and cities have fewer resources to draw upon to stave off the negative effects of foreclosure.

Indeed, California governments are especially reliant on revenue from the housing and construction sectors. As Swanstrom, Chapple, and Immergluck argue:

Limits on property tax increases via Proposition 13 create a distinctive fiscal structure in CA municipalities. Since reassessments only occur when properties change hands, a disproportionate share of property tax revenue comes from new homebuyers, and cities depend on a hot local market. Furthermore, they expect revenue from development impact fees to support much of their infrastructure costs and even general operating budgets.²¹

Foreclosures impact local revenue holdings, and the unsustainable reliance on the housing market to fuel local budgets in California leaves communities heavily impacted by foreclosures especially vulnerable in an economic downturn.

However, foreclosure rates measure only the initial impact of the foreclosure crisis. The eventual outcomes of foreclosed properties offer a better picture of how foreclosures may have a *lasting* impact on neighborhoods. While some researchers assume that the neighborhoods initially impacted with the highest concentrations of foreclosures experience the most lasting negative effects, this may not be the case, particularly in the “hot” housing market of Southern California. The long-term negative effects of concentrated foreclosures are primarily a result of vacancies from foreclosure rather than simply the foreclosures themselves.²²

Foreclosure rates are highest in suburban and exurban communities, in poorer communities, and in communities with more black and Latino residents. But there is evidence that foreclosed properties are selling quicker in exurban communities, potentially mitigating some of the negative effects of foreclosures, although it is still unclear who is buying these properties. Indeed, initial results suggest that foreclosed properties are much more likely to remain vacant in black neighborhoods, particularly in urban and older inner-ring suburban communities, bringing attendant problems with pests, garbage, vandalism, and other environmental hazards that come with unattended properties. That the foreclosure crisis has been “experienced primarily in racial terms” makes it almost certain that its consequences will fall along racial lines as well.²³ These consequences are likely to shape the life chances of future generations. Identifying the impact of the crisis is not only crucial to ameliorating its detrimental effects, but it is also necessary in the effort to uncover how racial

inequality has been maintained—indeed, potentially strengthened—through the current economic crisis.

Notes

- ¹ See Bocian et al., “Dreams Deferred.”
- ² The foreclosure rate is derived by dividing the total number of foreclosures in 2008-2009 by the estimated total number of housing units in 2007.
- ³ The Inland Empire refers to San Bernardino and Riverside counties.
- ⁴ Defined as census tracts with larger than the region’s average proportion of black residents.
- ⁵ See Bocian et al., “Dreams Deferred.”
- ⁶ See Immergluck, *Foreclosed*.
- ⁷ See Immergluck, “Neighborhoods in the Wake of the Debacle.”
- ⁸ See Carr and Kutty, *Segregation*.
- ⁹ See Oliver and Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth*.
- ¹⁰ See Alba and Logan, “Assimilation and Stratification in the Homeownership Patterns of Racial and Ethnic Groups”; Charles, *Won’t You Be My Neighbor*; Flippen, “Racial and Ethnic Inequality in Homeownership and Housing Equity”; Krivo and Kaufman, “Housing and Wealth Inequality.” See also Oliver and Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth*.
- ¹¹ Flippen, “Racial and Ethnic Inequality in Homeownership and Housing Equity”; Oliver and Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth*; Patillo-McCoy, *Black Picket Fences*.
- ¹² See also Alba and Logan, “Assimilation and Stratification in the Homeownership Patterns of Racial and Ethnic Groups”; Oliver and Shapiro, *Black Wealth/White Wealth*.
- ¹³ Calem, Gillen, and Wachter, “The Neighborhood Distribution of Subprime Mortgage Lending”; Calem, Hershaf, and Wachter. “Neighborhood Patterns of Subprime Lending”; and Immergluck, *Foreclosed*.
- ¹⁴ See Bocian et al., “Dreams Deferred”; Goldstein and Urevick-Ackelsberg, “Subprime Lending, Mortgage Foreclosures and Race”; Immergluck, *Foreclosed*; Kingsley, Smith, and Price, “The Impacts of Foreclosures on Families and Communities”; Rivera et al., “Foreclosed: State of the Dream 2008”; and Rugh and Massey, “Racial Segregation and the American Foreclosure Crisis.”
- ¹⁵ See Taylor et al., “Twenty-to-One.”
- ¹⁶ See Immergluck, *Foreclosed*.
- ¹⁷ A more detailed explanation of measures used can be found in the Appendix.
- ¹⁸ See Ong and Pfeiffer, “Spatial Variation in Foreclosures in Los Angeles.”
- ¹⁹ Hernandez, “Redlining Revisited,” 292.
- ²⁰ See Baxter and Lauria, “Residential Mortgage Foreclosure and Neighborhood Change”; Harding, Rosenblatt, and Yao, “The Contagion Effect of Foreclosed Properties”; Immergluck and Smith, “The External Costs of Foreclosure”; Immergluck and Smith, “The Impact of Single Family Mortgage Foreclosures on Crime”; Schuetz, Been, and Ellen, “Neighborhood Effects of Concentrated Mortgage Foreclosures.”

- ²¹ Swanstrom, Chapple, and Immergluck, "Regional Resilience in the Face of Foreclosures," 23.
- ²² See Immergluck and Smith, "The External Costs of Foreclosure."
- ²³ See Rugh and Massey, "Racial Segregation and the American Foreclosure Crisis."

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APPENDIX: DISCUSSION OF MEASURES

LOCATION

According to recent research by Immergluck and Hanlon on foreclosures and on suburban decline, foreclosures are likely to be concentrated in suburban and exurban neighborhoods. Following Holliday and Dwyer and others, I began by defining suburban neighborhoods as those with more than 50 percent of their housing built between 1940 and 1969. I defined exurban neighborhoods as those with more than 50 percent of their housing built from 1970 on. Urban tracts were those that were not suburban or exurban, but had more than 50 percent of their housing built before 1940.

Because housing is newer in the South and West compared to the North and Midwest—the median year homes were built in this sample was 1962—using this scheme resulted in very few tracts being coded urban (Map 2). As an alternative, urban, suburban, and exurban tracts were identified based on the natural breaking points of the housing age data for the region. Based on these natural breaking points, tracts with a median housing age between 1939 and 1951 were coded urban. Tracts with a median housing age between 1952 and 1978 were considered suburban. Tracts with a median housing age between 1979 and 1999 were exurban. This scheme roughly (but not entirely) corresponds to distance to the city center.

In addition to providing a region-specific definition of urban, suburban, and exurban, the additional advantage to this definition is that it serves as a proxy for housing development through 2000. As a result, some tracts that would be defined suburban based on their relative location to a city center are considered exurban. The definitions used here satisfy another goal: to differentiate aging suburbs from developing suburbs, regardless of their distance from downtown Los Angeles or other anchoring cities in the region.

RACE

Due largely to patterns of subprime lending and inequalities in property values, neighborhood race variables are likely to be significantly related to foreclosure rates. Neighborhood racial composition was measured as percent black, percent Latino, and percent Asian at the census tract level (percent white was omitted to avoid collinearity issues). Additional models also collapsed percent black and Latino, but foreclosure rates in black and Latino neighborhoods differed enough to warrant separate measures. Percent black, Latino, and Asian are not highly correlated in the Los Angeles-Inland Empire region (Table 1).

CLASS

Neighborhood “class” was measured by tract median income, poverty rate, percent owner-occupied, and percent college educated. Because percent college educated was highly correlated with tract income and poverty rates, it was dropped

for this analysis. Median income and poverty rates were also highly collinear, so median income was included to better assess the impact of concentrated foreclosures in middle-income and affluent tracts.

CONTROLS

Previous research has noted that property values, particularly the dramatic decline in property values in many communities in Southern California, are highly correlated with foreclosure rates. Properties in tracts with lower property values and/or a larger decline in values are much more likely to enter foreclosure. As property values rose dramatically over the 2000s and fell just as dramatically beginning in 2007 resulting in the “underwater mortgages,” fueling widespread foreclosures in tracts with lower or falling property values. Thus, I included the median sales price of properties in 2007 and the percent change in median sales prices between 2005 and 2007 at the tract level to account for these effects and to better isolate the effects of the neighborhood location, race, and class.

SEASON OF CHANGE

Erin Aubry Kaplan

One morning in 1999, I was sitting in the kitchen of my upstairs apartment in Mid-City LA, having coffee with my downstairs neighbor and longtime friend, Bernice. These were relatively good times, before Bush and 9/11, before our most recent wars in the Middle East and all the big, seemingly intractable troubles that swept in with the new millennium and made racial inequality seem small and almost quaint by comparison. That was all a little ways off. In the late 1990s in Los Angeles, we were still living in the long aftermath of the 1992 civil unrest, the biggest civil disturbance in America during the twentieth century. For all the destruction it had wrought, the unrest had thrust the whole issue of black people into public consciousness at a critical moment, just as political conservatism was shifting into high gear. The unrest had at least given people pause. That morning Bernice and I were talking about injustice, as we did almost every time we talked, with a mix of easy familiarity and agitation that characterize the talks black people routinely have about what still needs to be done and how far we have to go. It's a conversation I've heard all my life. For us, talking about the state of the race is like talking about the seasons: things change and stay the same in very predictable ways at roughly equal rates. But it's never a closed subject. Seasons happen every year, but never in the same way twice, and it's the subtle differences within a cycle of sameness on which black folks had come to pin their hopes for justice. We no longer expected a revolution or a revolt at the level of the events in 1992; in the modern age we had come to believe we could successfully compromise with reality, that despite the rising conservatism there was enough fairness left in the atmosphere to hammer out the small details that would make all the difference for us. It was just a matter of time. It was always a matter of time.

It was spring, and the sky was warm and clear of the gray overhang of fog typical of morning. The sun beamed in through my louvered windows that faced west to mid-Wilshire, and beyond that, to Beverly Hills. I was feeling more encouraged than usual, more confident that the particular inequality on the table today—Bernice was telling me about a black co-worker who'd been repeatedly passed over for promotions—would be soon addressed. Surveying the streets warmed by the mild weather and limned by sidewalks that looked as if they were waiting for someone or something to fill them—like a movie set—I felt genuinely hopeful. Black people should, and would, fill this space, I thought. Who else deserved it more?

Bernice said something about a Latino getting the job because her co-worker didn't speak Spanish. I nodded and waited for her to say something encouraging, to remind me that she herself spoke passable Spanish and that black folks, including her co-worker, would help themselves if they followed suit. Instead she sighed and stared out of the louvers, knitting her fingers together. Then she blurted out: "I'm tired of Latinos." She looked immediately troubled by her own words, like she'd just been forced into a confession. I was surprised. Bernice was older than me by a generation and she had an infallible, almost belligerent brand of optimism forged in the 1960s. She was social and loved parties, people, and cultures of all kinds. She was a big fan of motivational speakers and firmly believed in the power of positive thinking. So the remark about Latinos sounded different to my ears, colored with a wistful resignation and regret I'd never heard from her before. Later, I realized that what Bernice was telling me that morning was that there was change in the black world that we tried eternally to fix over coffee, but it was not the sort of change we were comfortable opposing and taking apart, like drugs or bad schools. We could not fix or get angry about or even discuss this new trouble. It was only something to accept; while not designed to hurt black folks, this change was going to take a toll on us nonetheless. By 1999, that toll was well under way, which Bernice recognized in a flash as she sat looking out the window contemplating the fate of her co-worker. *I'm tired of Latinos*. I nodded but didn't respond; there seemed no need to. After that morning we said nothing more about it.

In 2001, Bernice moved out of that Mid-City apartment building and back to Leimert Park, the predominantly black middle-class neighborhood where she had grown up. Her block on the eastern edge of Leimert that bordered South Central was not the same; it was less genteel than it had been forty years earlier, and had a lot more Latino families. I got married and bought a home with my husband in a virtually all-black gated community in Inglewood that had once been all-white; the only Latinos on the premises were those employed to keep up the lush, park-like greenery that had drawn us to the community in the first place. The complex was a bubble, a cozy bulwark against the black-to-Latino demographic shift in Inglewood that sat in the middle of Inglewood itself. A few years later we bought a house a mile away and prepared to move again. I wasn't very keen on the move—I had become pleasantly hypnotized by life in the bubble—but my husband was convinced that owning a real house with a real backyard was a necessary step up, official confirmation that he and I were living the American dream on schedule. It was also a step out into the world and the elements of demographic change and other urban-core realities that I really didn't have to think about living in the bubble, nor in the Mid-City apartment that, while certainly out in the elements, was closer in many ways to the affluent and aspirational Westside than to Inglewood.

Our new Inglewood house was fine, but it was right off the main drag, Crenshaw Boulevard. Crenshaw had the same issues that touched the whole city, but on my end of town it was also a bulwark. Blacks lived almost exclusively in houses east of

the boulevard, Latinos in smaller houses and apartment buildings west of it. Blacks lived on both sides of Crenshaw, but very few Latinos lived east of the boulevard. The scenario helped me maintain a certain distance in my mind not simply from Latinos, but from what their growing presence meant. I didn't want to think too hard about it. I preferred it that way. I liked the camaraderie on my block amongst the black families and retirees and wanted to enjoy it as long as possible; this was the world I had grown up in, in South Central many years ago, and though my new block wasn't methodically preserved like a gated community, it was idyllic in other ways.

We settled in. A couple of years later we got a dog, then another one. I began relaxing and enjoying the house, starting with the fact that I even had one at all. As my husband insisted, the house did *mean* something. The relaxing wasn't automatic; embracing this home was more like lowering myself slowly into a swimming pool filled with water that was clear but forbiddingly cold. But the embrace happened. On the best days I was as hopeful about my future here as I had been about the future of the race in my conversations with Bernice across town. Yet that kind of hope had been abstract, while this kind was concrete, built up day after day of living uneventfully, even happily, in the house east of Crenshaw. It was a self-perpetuating hope that was making that subtle but critical difference within the perennial sameness of black reality, shifting the compass just enough in the right direction to stake out and hold onto a bit of justice. I would take it.

II

It is 2006. I've made friends with my neighbor around the corner, Shelton. On my daily walks with the dogs I encounter him outside his house several times a week, watering the lawn, and I always pause to chat. Our conversations move from his front lawn to the upstairs kitchen in my old apartment, and after exchanging a few niceties—how are the dogs, how is your wife—we pick up the running conversation on race, which now includes a running conversation about Inglewood itself. Shelton has his criticisms of the city, but overall he feels like I feel: that Inglewood is solid territory worth defending, that it is ours. And then one morning Shelton tells me he is selling his house. He looks a little sheepish. I take the news hard, with a low, hot flame of panic and a feeling of loss that threatens to undo in a moment all the good feelings about the neighborhood that have been accumulating over the last several years. The sense of loss goes well beyond the prospect of losing a friend I've made on my morning rounds with the dogs, someone I had begun to consider inviting to dinner. The loss is not about our friendship or me. It is much bigger than that. Inglewood needs him.

I didn't know the city was in such need until this announcement and I suddenly saw his departure like a small hole in a dyke in which all the water will eventually run through, empty out. It's not the size of the hole but what it does, what it allows to be done. Shelton is young, in his 30s. And of course he is black, like most of the

rest of us living in this corner of a city—conceived as a suburb that borders both hard-luck South Central and the beachy, quintessentially California enclaves of South Bay. Shelton and his wife moved here less than two years ago. Their block is long and lovely, the one I never tire of walking. It's gently uphill from my own block in the east-of-Crenshaw enclave called Century Heights, which is one of those LA real-estate monikers that makes sense in this case. Century Heights has many things realtors eagerly describe as “charming”: sculpted lawns that occasionally burst into bonsai or tropical themes, homey 1950s architecture, and ample backyards. It's the essence of civility and middle-class pride of ownership that has prevailed in Inglewood for decades, ever since its inception in the early 1900s as a bedroom community strictly for whites; it retained that exclusiveness later when it became a residential outpost for the aerospace industry that boomed in the South Bay after World War II. When the racial covenants dissolved in the late 1940s, white flight steadily followed, but the blacks who moved in kept the spruced-up look of Inglewood, perhaps to prove that they had inherited something wonderful, something worth keeping rather than something tainted that had to be given up.

They were half successful. Century Heights has endured, but its endurance is frankly something of a paradox. Inglewood schools, once a main attraction, have deteriorated steadily since the white exodus. Commercial development is spotty and mostly uninspired; gang activity has grown. These elements, not Shelton devoutly watering his lawn every day, frame Inglewood to the rest of the world and have framed it for some time. Century Heights has suffered from the general downward drift of black America into a vexing stagnation that encroaches upon the middle class and the porous working class, breathing daily down our necks. The fact is, the prevailing black reality does not sit well in any kind of “heights,” and Shelton and his wife finally decided it was sitting too close for comfort. This was the theme of our regular race talk, this lack of comfort that was no longer abstract. It was concrete. On his block, along with the manicured lawns, he said he routinely saw young black men rolling up in trucks. Sometimes they sat idling in the middle of the street, playing music or hanging out. They did nothing wrong, he said. Nothing illegal. They were cooperative, even polite, parked their trucks properly on the curb when asked. Most of them seemed to have jobs.

But Shelton couldn't help but conclude, somewhat reluctantly, that these consistent congregations of black men meant nothing good or promising or stabilizing for our neighborhood, or for our people. He and his wife were worried about not what it meant, but what it *could* mean. Shelton knew better than most; he'd grown up in South Central, like me, in a much more precarious part of town than Century Heights. He confessed that these guys themselves didn't threaten him nearly as much as they collectively threatened an expectation of blessed predictability and a black social order finally free from the worry of gangs, bad schools, all of it. Driving home at night, he wanted to turn the corner onto his street and not tense up over what he might find, not rage against some blemish that, in the middle of Century

Heights' singular loveliness, looked uglier and more cancerous than it probably was. No, he couldn't take that chance. He was sick of his own paranoia and wanted to be rid of it. He wanted to consider himself and his fellow lawn-waterers and dog-walkers as the controlling force in the neighborhood, not fear. But he says he's not there yet—*we're* not there yet—and he can't wait to be. So he's moving. He says he'll move somewhere between here and the San Fernando Valley.

That's a lot of ground. I tell him that sounds awfully pricey; the always crazed LA housing market has reached a fever pitch lately, and houses are selling for well over half a million in Inglewood. What comparable place could he and his wife possibly get north of here? Shelton sighs, nods hard. He shrugs. Such is the price of non-progress. I'm distraught, but I understand. People in California are used to moving to different terrain, spreading out, moving on. Roots and conscience have little to do with it. You set your sights on a place distinctly Western with a covered-wagon privilege of mobility and a view of open land as a tabula rasa that, once you reach the destination, is yours to shape into whatever modest paradise you want. Black people especially are not going to give that up.

At the same time, black Angelinos are giving way. The Latino demographic revolution that has been going on for a generation in traditional black strongholds like Inglewood and South Central and Compton is nearly complete. Immigration is a high tide that is washing away the sands of community that black people were always a bit wary of calling home, especially as their own Southern immigrant ideals of shiny new opportunity ebbed further into the past; now that a new people have moved in and are fleshing out those ideals on their own, unrealized black dreams feel ever more displaced, uncertain. I felt the displacement acutely during the spring of 2006, when the immigration-rights movement swept the nation and LA in particular. I went to one of the massive downtown marches out of curiosity and a sense that history might be in the making; I wound up in the middle of the most impressive voluntary show of humanity that I had ever seen on LA streets. Here was a congregation that left no doubt as to who lives here, and what sentiments prevail in the places they live. I was inspired, but I felt entirely outside of the whole thing. I was unnecessary.

I spent most of the time pressed up against an enormous, slow-moving river of mostly Latino marchers, marveling as much at what wasn't there as what was. The marchers exuded a calm and almost wordless self-assurance that I had never seen at black demonstrations: though fueled by their indignation about immigration laws, this event was almost anger-free. People carried the American flag but no animus toward what it represented. In fact, they carried something opposite, a small piece of paradise carved out of imagination and experience, that covered wagon that was not yet at its destination but that was traveling miles every year. They were waving the American flag not as a perpetual grievance, as I was used to seeing it waved, but as a banner of their own truth and a clear marker of a journey that was too far under way to reverse course or stop now. It was done, settled. If the immigration

laws didn't change, it wouldn't matter; the journey would go on, and they would continue to claim their home, mile after mile.

Those marchers who wrapped themselves in Old Glory rather than carry it did so sincerely, not ironically. To be ironic would be to desecrate the can-do credo of American opportunity that the marchers held dear and that they have made their own, poor working conditions and low wages notwithstanding. Even the most xenophobic and isolationist citizen among us, even those in the black middle class who are watching the ground vanish under their feet whether they try and hold that ground or relinquish it to its fate as whites did before them, can't fault that idealism. We don't want to. What's more inarguably American than hard work? By that measure, Latinos have more than earned their membership to the club.

But that's the rub: "Earning" the right to be a US citizen, and more profoundly, an American. Paying your dues, logging your hours. It's a curious, wholly capitalistic approach to belonging that works splendidly for Latinos and other immigrants, but that has never worked for us. Sure, slave labor is what got this country built in its first 200 years or so; you can't get more industrious than that. But it was racism, not a reputation for industry, that followed black folk after slavery's end, and it's because of this racism that black employment has never been as noble or resonant a cause as that of the immigrant worker—in fact, it's become its permanent antithesis, a long-orphaned cause still looking for someone or something to take it up. Blacks who've more than earned their Americanness are still trying to make that point today, but I realized in the crush of that downtown march that there is literally no place for us to make that point in this movement. Not now. It will have to be made elsewhere, amongst ourselves, in last-chance neighborhoods like mine and Shelton's. Yet, it will not be Shelton's much longer.

I drove home from downtown along a South Central main drag that's quieter and emptier than I'd ever seen it. The protests still played out a few miles to the south, and the small Latino-owned businesses were shuttered as if on holiday. Their patrons had also gone missing, Mexican families who generated not only sales but also sidewalk life for the whole area. Blacks milled about in this sudden and profound vacuum with their eyes fixed on a middle distance, looking as if they were waking up and realizing something for the first time. They looked churlish, not pleased.

On an impulse, I turned off Broadway and headed east to Central Avenue. Central is the fabled thoroughfare of black Los Angeles's past, a one-time Mecca of commerce, civic activity, and entertainment that flourished in what can almost unironically be called the golden era of segregation. Every big city had a Mecca, and every big city started losing it in the 1950s. The loss of Central Avenue in the last big American city that was built on the triumphs of making the improbable happen, was particularly painful to African-Americans who'd come from the South and Midwest to stake their last claims of a good life here. At 42nd Street, I came upon the Dunbar, the hotel that housed a jazz club and that was once the boulevard's crown jewel. The sight of it startled me, partly because the Dunbar is refurbished

amidst so many buildings that aren't, but mostly because that day I saw with great clarity that it doesn't belong. It's a period piece, a museum. In the new Latino reality, and in this advanced age of multiculturalism, the Dunbar could be read as either a symbol of diversity or of defiance. Or both. On that day the glass looked decidedly half-empty.

I turned onto 40th Place and went a couple of short blocks to the Ralph Bunche House. This is the childhood home of one of Central Avenue's finest, the United Nations diplomat and Nobel Peace Prize laureate who was the first black man to win the prize in 1950. Bunche's house has also been preserved, museum-ized, a jaunty yellow California bungalow that actually looks like many other well-kept places on the block, iron window bars notwithstanding. The biggest difference is that inside it is empty, though brilliant. Sunlight streams uninterrupted through front bay windows, along scrubbed wood floors, floods an airy parlor that doubles as a den.

I came to the Bunche House earlier in the year to observe a group of students from the Ralph Bunche Youth Leadership Academy, which mostly draws on students at Jefferson High School, a short walk from the House. Jefferson is Ralph Bunche's alma mater and the former premier high school in the Central Avenue community; the foyer is still lined with photos of celebrity grads like Bunche and film queen Dorothy Dandridge. All the students gathered on the lawn at the Bunche House that day, ready and eager in their blue Bunche Academy t-shirts, were Latino. The black director of the program told me that African-Americans have been members of past classes, just not this one. He paused, then admitted that it's getting tougher to recruit black students; part of the problem is their shrinking numbers at Jefferson, part of it is declining commitment—they have other things to do, or they don't quite see the point, or they want it to be something that pays. Mostly they're not impelled by the same assumptions of self-improvement and upward mobility that Bunche and his generation had sixty years ago, even in the thick of segregation. It is this same faith that, to some degree, impelled the Latino students this day. I decided that I'm glad somebody is wearing the shirt; the globalist in Bunche would have approved, in theory if not in his heart. He would have had no choice.

My neighbor Shelton does. We all do. Choice is a direct and desired legacy of the post-segregation period, and living where you want is an inalienable right in California, and yet I wonder what Bunche would have to say about this impending move. Perhaps the greatest irony in all this is that Shelton agrees with me that he *should* stay. He knows Central Avenue is gone but, like many of us, he believes in keeping its spirit alive. He knows perfectly well that what Inglewood needs to thrive is what every place needs, a critical mass of concerned citizens who stand their ground geographically, metaphorically, who set agendas and can permanently tip neighborhoods from questionable to livable.

But this is hard to do when the tipping is strenuous work and when there are other, easier options. It's even harder if you're black and, like everyone else, conditioned to believe that a critical mass of blacks—certainly if they're young

and unoccupied, but even if they water lawns and walk dogs—will run down neighborhoods rather than raise them up. Shelton and his wife are gone. A single Latino man bought their place, with its cheery yellow paint and emerald lawn and wind chimes hanging on the front porch. I still walk the dogs daily, but I have glimpsed the man only once. His shoes sit on the welcome mat.

The lawn has not stayed as bright a green over the months, but I can see it's taken care of, watched over enough. By October, paper Halloween decorations appear on the door. I'm encouraged even though the house remains silent, disengaged, not Shelton, certainly not Bernice. But I invoke her now as I think to myself, cautiously trying on the optimism I admired but never thought of as my own: I am glad somebody is wearing the shirt.

***SERVING TIME: BETYE SAAR'S CAGE, THE CRIMINALIZATION OF
POVERTY, AND THE HEALING POWER OF ART IN BLACK CALIFORNIA***

George Lipsitz

Los Angeles artist Betye Saar's 2010 *Cage* series includes a mixed media assemblage with the title *Serving Time*. The piece presents three wooden dolls inside a birdcage decorated with keys, key rings, and locks. Inside the cage, dolls portray sambo-like black men with open mouths and wide eyes, wearing the tuxedos, ties, and caps of nineteenth century butlers and waiters. Artifacts of an earlier time, the dolls evoke the imagery of the minstrel show with their enormous white teeth framed by thick red lips and eyes characterized by black pupils and skin contrasting with the absolute white of the irises. As in many of Saar's pieces, the title of this one is a pun. The men work in service jobs. They spend their time serving others. Yet the cage, keys, and locks also remind us that the phrase "serving time" refers to prison sentences. The brilliance of the piece's provocation is that it creates a mash-up, fusing antiquated and now discredited racist images to the contemporary realities of mass incarceration in black communities. The descendants of yesterday's slaves and servants are not free; millions of them are serving time in jails and prisons while others are locked into low-wage jobs and locked out of upward mobility.¹

Assembling, arranging, and displaying the artifacts featured in *Serving Time* enables Saar to call attention to—and to counter—some of the immiseration that flows from present-day practices of mass incarceration. As Michelle Alexander's research reveals, there are more black men incarcerated in the United States today than at any other point in history.² Blacks and Latinos make up nearly three-fifths of the prison population and constitute 75 percent of those imprisoned on drug offenses, even though all racial groups use drugs with nearly the same frequency.³ If present trends continue, one out of every three black male children will wind up in jail. On any given day, one out of every fourteen black American children has a parent in prison.⁴ An estimated 13 percent of African-American men have become permanently disenfranchised because of a felony conviction. Yet the black crime rate has not increased, either absolutely or in relation to whites.⁵ The population incarcerated in prisons and jails in 1950 was 70 percent white and 30 percent non-white. Today the equation has been reversed with 70 percent of the incarcerated population nonwhite and 30 percent of prisoners and inmates white. Yet this is not because blacks are committing more crimes than whites. There has, in fact, been

no change in the rates of criminality between racial groups.⁶ But the past three decades have produced policing, prosecuting, and sentencing strategies aimed at criminalizing poor people of color.⁷

Saar's *Cage* series was exhibited from June 16 to August 7 in 2011 at the California African-American Museum in Exposition Park. This collection of six collages and twenty mixed media assemblages featured salvaged objects in antique bird cages dramatizing the many containments and confinements that characterize human existence, especially in a society like ours where so many people are locked up in jails and locked out of opportunities. True to her humanist vision and global concerns, Saar's installation shows us that race is not our only reality and that color is not the only cage. Kitchen scales symbolize the confinements of domesticity while a mirror reminds us that vanity can also be a cage. Yet these references to multiple confinements do not diminish the polemical force of Saar's argument. A birdcage consists of several thin wires, none of which by itself could deter flight. It is the accumulated compression of space that comes from their location in proximity to one another that enables separate wires to function as a cage. Similarly, in social life, any one instance of oppression or exclusion might not be devastating, but intersectional oppressions structured in dominance work together to confine us.⁸

The powerful and provocative *Cage* exhibition in 2011 constituted a kind of homecoming for Saar who was born in Los Angeles in 1926. She spent her earliest years just a few miles from Exposition Park. As a child she watched in fascination as Simon Rodia constructed seventeen towers in Watts out of the debris—pieces of broken glass and pottery, ceramic tiles, bed frames, steel pipes, mortar wire mesh, and rebar—that littered his working class neighborhood. Saar's mother, who worked a variety of jobs as a seamstress, house cleaner, and eventually nursery school teacher, put her artistic talents and creative imagination to work at home by knitting, making jewelry, upholstering furniture, and supplying her children with crayons, coloring books, drawing paper, and clay. Saar clipped paper doll cutouts of Tillie the Toiler from the Sunday newspaper, and made drawings of dresses of her own design. She joined forces with her brother and sister to make costumes for plays they staged for each other. When the family moved to Pasadena in the 1930s, publicly funded institutions encouraged, nurtured, and developed Saar's artistic abilities. She took craft classes, art classes, and participated in summer theater programs. The communities in which she was raised provided Saar with a firm foundation and a secure grounding. "I was born in Los Angeles," she explains, "a child of the depression in earthquake territory. I grew up 'old school' with strong feelings about love of home and family, respect for elders, and to honor my ancestors—known and unknown."⁹

Saar chooses an unusual way to honor these ancestors in the *Cage* series, as evidenced in one especially striking and important piece, *Serving Time*. The piece proceeds from the practice of turning refuse into art, a practice that Saar learned at an early age not only from Rodia's Watts Towers but also from the women in

her community who made quilts out of discarded fragments of cloth. This method enables Saar to dramatize the disposability of black people today by representing them through discarded objects from the past. The piece resonates with the qualities that have characterized Saar's art throughout her long and distinguished career. In 1972, she turned a plastic "mammy" figure positioned for "service" (in the form of a memo and pencil holder) into a mixed media assemblage, *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima*. In this piece, Saar transformed a mass produced representation of humiliated blackness into a symbol of survival, struggle, and resistance. Instead of holding pencils, the Aunt Jemima figure holds a broom in one hand and a gun in the other. This pairing warns America that there will be serious consequences if it does not make sweeping changes and clean up its act. A portrait of a black mammy holding a baby is superimposed on Aunt Jemima's body, which itself is partially obscured by a black fist clenched in the Black Power salute. Saar crafted this image not only to pay tribute to the black women who helped their community survive by working hard catering to the whims of their white employers, but also to explain how sustained subordination leads to rage and rebellion. Like the smiling "sambos" in *Serving Time*, the stereotypical "mammy" of *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima* transforms negative ascription into positive affirmation. A racism so powerful that its imagery has a pervasive presence in dolls, pencil holders, pancake mix boxes, and cartoons creates a long and seemingly endless chain of symbolic insults and injuries. Saar takes these images and confounds their meanings by placing them in new situations.

Pieces like *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima* and *Serving Time* enact a kind of guerilla warfare beyond enemy lines, reconfiguring instruments of oppression into micro-sites of resistance and counter-memory. It is no accident that Saar creates her assemblages out of the discarded objects that she finds at yard sales, flea markets, swap meets, and rummage sales. Discarded toys, pencil holders, and birdcages find new life and new meaning in her art. "Each item I collect," she observes, "has a certain energy from its previous function that carries over into its new use."¹⁰ Her passion for collecting small objects is so intense that her family members sometimes joke that only the existence of the world of "art" saves Saar from being the protagonist in a news story about a woman "swallowed up by piles of stuff in her house."¹¹ Yet Saar makes extraordinary use of these ordinary objects. She helps us see how things ordinarily dismissed as junk can contain beauty, power, and potential if we use them in the right way. In her work, discarded objects come to represent discarded people and forgotten histories. Saar's sambos and mummies remind us that black people have been discarded and devalued and that we can find beauty where others see only ugliness, if we train our senses appropriately. Her art references—and is informed by—a long history of Afro-diasporic artistry around the world and reflects its powerful local manifestations in black Los Angeles as well. African approaches to cosmology and epistemology guided the creation of asymmetric textiles in Senegambia. These visual syncopations of staggered patterns and colors enacted an Afro-diasporic belief that "evil travels in straight lines."¹² This affinity for indirection has permeated diverse

forms of popular dress, design, speech, and music in black communities around the world. Unusual color combinations in clothing disrupt continuous visual lines. Quilts feature uneven pieces in staggered patterns. Slang phrases invert the meanings of words and generate new phrases and metaphors constantly. Syncopated rhythms decorate musical pieces and also promote an attitude toward rhythm that influences the steps that dancers do and the ways that walkers walk and marchers march. Vernacular artists constantly reposition, rearrange, and recontextualize material objects. Yard artists decorate trees and porches with bottles. Figurative sculptures, fans, and medicinal herbs protect and guard dwellings. Mirrors and shiny metal objects on outside walls reflect back envy onto beholders and capture the “flash of the spirit” which relays communications from ancestors and cements enduring connections with them. Vernacular artists surround plants in their yards with tires and wheels. They scatter spinning pinwheels and figurative icons on their lawns. For these creators of art who lacked social recognition as artists, such wheels, tires, hubcaps, and pinwheels conveyed a desire for movement, a powerful appeal to people seemingly trapped in ghettos. These practices function to create alternative academies where artistic visions and skills are created, nurtured, sustained, honed, and refined. As Saar’s contemporary and fellow Los Angeles artist John Outterbridge observes in respect to how community creativity informs his art, “I know people in South Central Los Angeles that look at their front yards as works of art. They’ve got the oldest Cadillac in the world stacked up on blocks and they wouldn’t move it for anything. If I could take that front yard and transfer it to a gallery, it would be a most successful work of art. We [artists] can only mimic that attitude. The person who relishes that yard, he’s the artist. We’re just reacting.”¹³

Outterbridge and Saar express great respect for these people who make vernacular art even though arts institutions do not recognize them as artists. They know something about the credentialing process of the art world from experience. Like most black artists in Los Angeles in the mid-twentieth century, they encountered an arts community dominated by gatekeepers completely resistant to the idea that blacks could create meaningful work. Outterbridge labored as a bus driver and Saar as a social worker before their artistic talents were recognized by credentialing institutions. Saar started her career making crafts and jewelry from enamel, using the garage of her artistic and business partner Curtis Tann as their workshop and his living room as their display space for prospective buyers. Some of their first exhibits took place in private homes where they had to remove all the furniture to the back yard in order to create room to show the art.¹⁴ Because her creations came from a broad range of arts and crafts practices embedded in the everyday life decoration and display of black communities, Saar has a strong internal compass about what art is and what its moral obligations are.

Pieces like *Serving Time* fulfill those obligations. They draw on long traditions of community-based art making and art-based community making. They also show the influence of Afro-diasporic practices of conjuring and healing. Saar recognizes

that the things that can *kill* us can also *cure* us if we use them in the correct manner. Poison can become medicine. Toys can become tools of struggle. Humiliation can be turned into honor. The internal logic of turning hegemony on its head that permeates Afro-diaporic conjuring and healing has long informed African-American art. Quilt makers gather scraps of discarded fabric that others might deem useless and patch them together to create sources of warmth and sites of beauty. Juan Logan uses stereotypical statues of black jockeys often used as lawn decorations in his installations to inoculate viewers from the poison of white supremacy by exposing them to a controlled dose of it. This artistic imagination is also a political imagination. As Barbara Ransby observes in comparing Ella Baker's organizing strategies to quilting, Baker identifies "the value in people who were raggedy, worn, and a little bit tattered – people who were seen by some as the scraps, the remnants, the discarded ones." Ransby adds, "In each one, as in each strip of fabric, Ella Baker saw enormous beauty and potential."¹⁵

Discovering and recuperating the dignity of discarded and dispossessed people requires recognition of the realities of racist subordination and suppression. "Racism cannot be conquered," Saar explains, "until it is confronted."¹⁶ *Serving Time* confronts the uncritical acceptance of the mass incarceration of people of color that has taken place throughout the United States, but which has been especially pronounced in California. In a state where less than 7 percent of the total population is black, African-Americans comprise 29 percent of the prison population. One third of the inmates on death row in the state are black, while 38 percent of inmates incarcerated for life because of a Third Strike offense are African-American. Even though whites are as likely as blacks to use heroin and are more likely than blacks to use cocaine, blacks in Los Angeles are seventeen times more likely than whites to be incarcerated for drug use. Three counties in California number in the top five nationally for the number of blacks incarcerated for drug offenses.¹⁷ Mass incarceration entails enormous collateral consequences for black people in California. Every crime becomes a life sentence because arrest records lead to the loss of employment opportunities, homelessness, and the denial of social services. Ex-offenders generally lose the right to vote. They are vulnerable to deportation. They may be ineligible for military service, jury duty, educational grants, residency in public housing, and direct public assistance. They can be denied handgun licenses, professional licenses, and jobs in real estate, nursing, and physical therapy. In some states, ex-offenders are barred from public employment and cannot get licenses to be bartenders, barbers, cosmetologists, and plumbers. Formerly incarcerated people confront punitive parole systems that are more likely to return them to prison than ease their re-entry into community life. Because the standards of proof for parole violations are much lower than the standards needed for criminal convictions, technical parole violations account for a significant percentage of returns to prison by ex-offenders. In California, nearly 40 percent of prison returns stem from minor parole violations. Released to ghettos and barrios characterized by racial segregation

and concentrated poverty, ex-offenders are forced to dwell in areas where they are more likely to have casual associations with other ex-offenders and to be stopped and frisked by police officers.

Shame is an important collateral consequence of mass incarceration. The stigma of a criminal conviction in an era of racialized moral panic concerning crime makes it difficult for community and family members to contest the causes and consequences of incarceration.¹⁸ *Serving Time* makes its intervention precisely on this terrain. By associating contemporary incarceration with historical slavery and Jim Crow segregation, Saar renders the cage as evidence of the oppressor's cruelty rather than as a representation of the deserved fate of the oppressed. The senescent quality of yesterday's racism engraved on children's toys testifies to the casual yet monstrous instantiation of white supremacy in the practices of everyday life. The minstrel faces painted on the wood dolls constitute material testimony far stronger than any words, an exhibit to be entered as evidence in the case against white supremacy. In a way that photographs of individuals might not achieve, the caricatured faces on wooden dolls reveal the collective, cumulative, and continuing causes and consequences of racist subordination. They humanize the victims of mass incarceration by revealing the instruments of dehumanization crafted by the oppressors. They refuse defensive self-justification to insist that the system defend and explain itself. They deploy ridicule for the purpose that Mikhail Bakhtin describes as the laughter that uncrowns power. *Serving Time* echoes the tactic Saar deployed in *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima* and many other works of using a deft blend of seriousness and humor to allow viewers to have many different points of entry and exit, leaving them free to engage with the work at many different levels of attention. These pieces are always serious enough to command attention, yet always infused with a sufficient amount of life-affirming humor to create enjoyment. Facing hard facts and harsh realities can lead to despair, but Saar champions self-assertion and self-activity instead. "I try to have a promise of hope in my art," she explains, "even with a controversial theme."¹⁹

Saar's strategy of deploying racist images for anti-racist ends is replete with risk. In attempting to fool our oppressors we sometimes fool ourselves. The sambos and mammies Saar displays may reinforce rather than reduce racial hierarchies for some viewers. Mere exposure does not drain them of their capacity to injure, because the entire history of the republic has relied on the white supremacist racial project that brought them into existence in the first place. Like the ideas of "scientific racism," these images retain an aura of truth for many people no matter how thoroughly they are discredited and how many times they are disavowed. Yet ignoring them will not make them go away. If Saar turns again and again to degraded images of the black body, it is because black bodies have been so often offered as "proof" that racial stratification is natural, necessary, and inevitable. As Saidiyah Hartman demonstrates in *Scenes of Subjection*, the slave "coffle" compelled the parade of black bodies in public as a way of instantiating in social space and historical time the

abstract project of black enslavement and white supremacy.²⁰ The slave system did not require slave owners to shackle humans and march them from slave pens to auction blocks for the amusement of white spectators. But these coffles served important ideological ends. Degrading parades displaying black powerlessness and suffering offered “evidence” of black inferiority to whites. Humans who had been seen treated like animals, would not likely be seen again as fully human by their intended spectators.²¹ The widely circulated photographs and postcards celebrating lynchings in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries featured in James Allen’s *Without Sanctuary* and Dora Appel and Shawn Smith’s *Lynching Photographs* provided powerful pleasures to white spectators. In revealing a level of treatment that their white skin protected them from enduring, whites secured a kind of floor through which they could not fall from these images.²² To this day, these signs, symbols, images, and ideas continue to permeate popular perception and to promote moral panic about inner city crime, drug use, and sexual impropriety.²³

Recognizing the centrality of visual representation in the white imaginary, African-Americans like Saar have long struggled to fashion oppositional self-representations. They have created counter-spectacles on and off stage designed to challenge the visual regimes used to justify their social subordination.²⁴ Sojourner Truth and Frederick Douglass carefully cultivated their public images with photographs designed to prove black humanity and protect black dignity. Artistic expression loomed large for black Americans because, as Celeste-Marie Bernier explains, it enabled them to counter the “finite fixity of physical suffering with the infinite possibilities of textual symbolism.”²⁵

In the *Cage* exhibit at the African-American Museum in 2011, Betye Saar displayed some of what she has learned from the life journey that began in South Los Angeles in the 1920s. One of her first “pieces” appeared when she was a child sharing a bedroom with her sister and brother in a house in Pasadena. She had been ordered never to draw on the walls, but she did so anyway. In 1974 she returned to the house, and looked in the bedroom under the windowsill. She found a half-inch square drawing that she made some forty years earlier. “Perhaps I became an artist when I made that forbidden drawing,” Saar observes.²⁶ Exhibited around the world in prestigious art museums and galleries, Saar is no longer forbidden to draw on walls. But she knows that others like her are not so lucky. A young black girl placing a forbidden drawing on a wall today might receive a disciplinary suspension from her school, be charged with a crime by the police, or be prescribed psychotropic drugs to change her behavior. In *Serving Time*, as in so many of her other creations, Saar sends out a message of hope and solidarity to those who are locked out and locked up. She helps us remember that metal rusts, prison bars corrode, and that every cage has a door.

Notes

- ¹ Saar, *Cage*, 84-87.
- ² Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 175.
- ³ Mauer, "Two Tiered Justice: Race, Class, and Crime Policy," 170.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, 179.
- ⁵ Ball, "An Imperative Redefinition of 'Community,'" 1897.
- ⁶ Wacquant, "Deadly Symbiosis," 96.
- ⁷ Massey, *Categorically Unequal*, 100-101.
- ⁸ Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*, 92-3.
- ⁹ Saar, "My First Eighty Years," 5.
- ¹⁰ Cited in James Christen Steward, "'Lest We Forget,'" 15.
- ¹¹ Saar-Cavanaugh, "Collecting Things," 11.
- ¹² Brothers, *Louis Armstrong's New Orleans*, 50-51.
- ¹³ Smith, "Reverencing the Mortal," 45.
- ¹⁴ Jones, "To/From Los Angeles With Betye Saar," 31.
- ¹⁵ Ransby, *Ella Baker & the Black Freedom Movement*, 373-374.
- ¹⁶ Steward, "'Lest We Forget,'" 14.
- ¹⁷ Tucker et al., "Imprisoning the Family," 169-171.
- ¹⁸ See Braman, *Doing Time on the Outside* and Austin, "'The Shame of It All.'"
- ¹⁹ Van Baron, "Essay," 9.
- ²⁰ See Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*, 17-49.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² See Appel and Smith, *Lynching Photographs* and Allen, *Without Sanctuary*.
- ²³ See Lipsitz, *Time Passages*, 63-68; Reeves and Campbell, *Cracked Coverage*; Rogin, *Blackface, White Noise*; and Rose, *The Hip Hop Wars*.
- ²⁴ See Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent*.
- ²⁵ Celeste-Marie Bernier, manuscript in author's possession, 297. To be published in 2012 as *Black Heroism in the Transatlantic Imagination* by the University Press of Virginia.
- ²⁶ Saar, "Conversation with the Artist," 23.

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*STACKS OF OBITS: A PERFORMANCE PIECE*¹

Stephanie L. Batiste

Literary Dramaturgy by Brian Granger

DEDICATION

One of the last times I spoke with Clyde Woods before he entered the hospital was in late spring of 2011. When it was staged the previous year, Clyde expressed much regret that he would miss the performance of *Stacks of Obits*, my play about the urban landscape of Los Angeles serving as a space of death and home. He couldn't believe he would miss it since he'd been waiting to see it. He had read the show and given it to students, and commented to me when it was new to him that there were "curse words in it." I doubted that this was a reflection of his own unfamiliarity with certain vocabulary and chuckled internally at the circuitous naiveté he attributed to me. My communication with Clyde was always marked by jokes barely articulated, trades of critical intent unspoken but "word"-ed with a nod, head tilts, and chin drops of "exactly what do you mean"/"exactly what you do mean"—all suffused with honest, candid irony. I should not have been surprised when he arrived early at my informal reading of *Stacks of Obits* that was taking place in a colleague's classroom. I was happy to see him and thanked him for coming. He expressed interest in my unusual outfit, an honest inquiry—and no doubt ironic as Clyde could signify with a twitch of his eyes. I told him, "I always wear all white linen when I perform the show, and working shoes, to take the spirits to the other side." He dropped his chin... After the reading he told me he'd been nervous during the stories... for the children described in them, wondering what was going to happen... I nodded. I was silenced by the vulnerability he expressed in his feelings in response to performance. Performance always seemed to move him forward in understanding and he was able to freely express the change. These moments of intent and appreciation surrounding this particular play, interactions that took place in hallways and passageways, breathe with tragic irony.

I've lost others related to the play whose deaths will resonate in each rendering, whose passing through and over it will recount. Not directly mapped on to it, Clyde's passing and his deep consciousness of home, space, of Los Angeles, render his echo in its scope of our loss of black men that much more poignant.



CHARACTERS:

STELLA	Early 30s. Narrator and older sister of Tylene
TYLENE	Younger sister of Stella

USHER #1/MOM/FEMALE MOURNER/DEFENDANT'S MOTHER

USHER #2/DOCTOR

USHER #3/SISTER

USHER #4/VICTIM'S FRIEND

KRUMP DANCER #1/YOUNG MAN

KRUMP DANCER #2/LARRY/BRENT

KRUMP DANCER #3

PRODUCTION NOTES

NOTE ON CASTING:

This is a performance with multiple literal and metaphorical “voices.” Characters are noted in the text to distinguish voices and actions, but all character “voices” can be embodied/played by the actor playing STELLA. In the University of California, Santa Barbara production, STELLA and TYLENE were played by the same actor. In addition, 4 actors serving as USHERS and 3 KRUMP DANCERS also portrayed the additional voices.

NOTE ON LANGUAGE:

The pace is fast, with Stella tripping over syllables at rhythms ranging between storytelling and spoken word, sometimes slowing lyrically into song-like cadences of gospel. At times the language piles up—pushing ideas into one another—like the experiences described, like the violence that drives the piece.

NOTES ON STAGING:

The set consists of 4 main elements—a projection backdrop that covers the entire back wall or screen hanging in the rear of the performance area; various enlarged newspaper articles on victims of youth violence in Los Angeles; three distinct playing areas on the stage floor that are identified through the use of simple area lighting and props; and stacks of obituaries.

Projections: These slides include images of street signs and street corners where deaths have occurred, clear and blurred images of Los Angeles taken through the window of a moving car, portraits and family photographs from collected obituaries and funeral programs, institutional and commercial locations associated with lives or deaths of characters. Two images frequently recur: a picture of a street corner and one of moving traffic. The paths and crossings drawn by the vehicles and routes illustrate the shared wanderings of those that remain. They suggest that both the tightening connections between survivors, these vital human links, and the lives of loved ones are lost as well as the possibility of dispersal in the wake of despair and desensitization. Through the interspersion of slides of faces and of intersections, the landscape of vehicles in these spaces insists upon a hope that families and communities coalesce around them rather than fall apart.

Enlarged newspaper articles: These 4-6 images are taken from the *Los Angeles Times*. Some relate to specific acts of violence described in the piece. All images have been enlarged and mounted on foam core board. These images were hung with picture wire and duct tape (1 100-foot spool was used for 4 images) from the light rigging in the auditorium, 2 on each side, set on slight angles to keep their backings and tape out of audience sight lines. The images were hung high and to the side of the projection screen on stage left and right, to keep the images from

casting shadows or blocking the path of the image projection.

Playing areas: The stage is divided into 3 different areas—stage left, stage right, and stage center—all marked through the use of lighting and props. Stage left is a wall memorial in progress, which Stella works on continually throughout the piece. This wall is an off-white or sand-colored square of dry wall or construction board that has been supported to stand off on stage left at the edge of the proscenium. In front of this wall are some Spanish/Catholic candles, some flowers, a low stool, and various markers, scissors, tape, push-pins, and colored pieces of paper. This wall and its items should be vibrantly colored, representing the love and energy with which the departed are remembered, and contrasting with the stark black and white of the newspaper articles and images in the space. This stage left space tends to represent Stella's narrative in present time, though all spaces are subject to various shifts and transformations throughout the piece. Stage center is empty but is created through spotlighting at various moments in the piece. This space tends to represent Stella's reflection as she moves between past and present. Stage right is a simple black folding chair.

Stacks of Obits: Surrounding the stage right chair and music stand, the stage left wall memorial, and dotting the front edge of the auditorium stage are stacks of city newspapers, copied obituaries, funeral programs, newspaper articles, family snapshots, and funeral photographs, in neat piles all along the edge of the stage. Each stack of newspapers should be at least at knee height, though a few of the stacks near the proscenium wall edge should be at least waist high. Each stack of individual articles and obituaries is about 250 pages or 2.5 inches thick. Each page tells stories of victims of gun violence in Los Angeles. Some of the articles are on half a page, while others are 8½ x 11. Portions of script, particularly the poems projected, should be strewn amongst the other remains.

NOTE ON LIGHTING:

The entire production was done utilizing the preset light cues, which consisted of a few general washes and 3 spotlight areas (SL, SC, SR). The lighting was arranged in such a way that the slides were clearly visible at all times, regardless of the amount of light being given to the actual playing space.

ADDITIONAL STAGING NOTE:

The entrance to the auditorium was decorated with yellow police caution tape. Ideally this tape would serve as decoration around additional, full-color, enlarged images of citizens reacting to the impact of urban violence in their community.

SCENE:

(Four actors—dressed in semi-formal black attire, representing USHERS at a funeral—stand at the auditorium entrance and pass out programs. There are 4 different covers for these programs, and each is a copy from a real Los Angeles funeral service for a young African-American male victim of violence. As audience members enter the auditorium, these USHERS offer their condolences in the spirit of a true memorial service.)

(As audience members enter and take their seats, they also hear various “gangsta” rap songs over the house speakers, and see various slides being projected: street corners, traffic, newspaper articles, obituaries, and pages from various funeral programs. These images continue as the house lights fade to black, the USHERS take their seats at the back of the house/auditorium entrances, and the sound of the song “Gangsta Lean” by Dirty Rotten Scoundrels is heard.)

(SLIDE: A newspaper article image of mourners at a shooting)

(After a verse has played, STELLA enters, dressed casually in white or off-white sweats/jumpsuit suitable for the painting and craftwork she will engage in throughout the piece as she constructs her memorial wall. STELLA moves to the wall and assesses it. Sorting through some of the pictures and clippings at the base of the wall, STELLA picks up two different “family” pictures and holds both up for a judgment from the audience. Without speaking, but through gesture and eye contact, STELLA gathers feedback from the audience as to which photo is the better one, and proceeds to affix the picture to the wall.)

(STELLA sings along loudly off-key, with fervor and obvious, though indiscernible contempt. She gestures, as if holding a 40-oz bottle of beer, as she sings...)

STELLA

“This is for my Homies. This is for my Ho-O-MEE-EEES. Yeah-EH yeah. See you WHEN I get The—ERE...”

(The song begins to fade out)

This song is so ridiculous. Since when is “homies” a song lyric. Raise a Forty? and pour out some BEER!

(disbelieving)

That’s not respectful...²

MOM

You don’t know what you’re talking about. Those kids are dying.

Ask your sister.

(SOUND: Music out)

(SLIDE: Busy intersection)

STELLA

(Walking SC)

My mother, 42, corrected me. We were driving the maroon Toyota cargo conversion along that short stretch of Fairfax toward La Brea, by the field with all those oil pumps. And my grown-assed Mom made me hip to this ubiquitous death, something I tried to push back and away... This was in the early 1990s and I found my sister had friends, had tens and tens and tons of friends who been shot to death—with guns in the street. It started for her when she was, like, 14.

(Walking SR)

And I was away at Yale running between classes and jobs and auditions for parts that apparently wouldn't sustain a body like mine.

(She sits)

And living back East by myself in a 1-room world of my own drowning among more middle class and super rich white folks and black folks than I felt like I had really ever seen in one place in my life.

(She gestures or rolls her head with attitude)

Wondering who the fuck they were and why I was supposed to change. Trying to get "A's"—And this was part of HER reality. She, sharing space with our youngest sister, Lisa—in an overpriced little LA apartment on the Westside with my Mom and stepdad. Running from high school to high school cause she got too involved one time in defending this one kid some gang members wanted to jump.

(Throws up hand in a gesture of "OK, fine, I'll tell you this story," and stands...)

(SLIDE: Stocker Street sign)

The neighborhood was a little hot. An 18-year-old from our side of town had been gunned down in a drive-by and the culprits were playing it up, cruising and spray painting the neighborhood, messing with people. At the magnet school where'd she'd sung herself into a competitive spot at the music academy, a friend of 'T's', a young girl gang member, was getting beat up by kids who were supposed to be friends with the crew that did the shooting.

(STELLA gestures as if fighting and moves toward SC)

She and her girlfriend jumped in and started pulling dudes off of her—an aggressive defensive imprudent intervention... They weren't going to just let it happen like the security guards who just stood there and watched. Who said their job was to clean

up afterwards, not to prevent.

(Walks back to chair SR)

After this she came out to stay with me for a week pretending she had moved out to New Haven. You see these same dudes were cruising and calling the house. They knew she wasn't a gang member, but it didn't matter—she had put herself in where it wasn't her business. My mom was scared they'd kill her. This was maybe '92...

'T' became a survivor. Quickly. Her growing strength driven by loyalty and a refusal to fear. Between committing not to take shit off anybody, to defend her friends, and getting rescued from stampedes out of clubs where somebody decided to start shooting, by my mom and stepdad driving that same damn maroon van—there wasn't much of a choice.

(Moves to SC)

Got to the point where she used to get tossed out of spots 'cause she had a creative, and very smart, mouth. So, then, when people liked to invoke that "trigger" word, you know, "Bitch," in response to her speaking her mind, she would try to fight 'em; throwing punches of her own. Security guards would throw her out! This girl is 5' 7" and 110 pounds—WET! This was quite the reversal in our family 'cause when she was a kid I was the thug. I never had to do a thing to scare people who wanted to mess with her—just show up on her elementary school yard in my blue pinstriped private school uniform dress.

(Walking SL toward memorial side of stage)

Used to put that thing on off the floor when I woke up ten minutes before my carpool'd arrive and it was always wrinkled. I must'a looked like a reject prison guard. "Have you *SEEN* her sister!?" 'T' would have dismissed me, my mother would have rolled her eyes...

(Walks SC)

—But I was proud of her "Feminism."

(SLIDE: Stella and Tylene in "Sylvester" cartoon shirts)

Her friends called her "Toones." They could still call her 'T' for short. My Mom said it was 'cause she can sing, like "Tunes," but it was mainly because she was "Looney Toons"—*Loco*, a lil' bit. And she liked Sylvester.

(SLIDE: Busy intersection.)

(Walks SR to chair, walking around it over the next two lines...)

Her escape extended 7 days. She slept on an extra mattress on the floor of my 10 by 12 foot dorm room, its white cinder block walls interrupted by 2 big windows. Between arrival and graduation I had 3 family visits. She was the second. I took her to my sociology class on inequality taught by a black professor. But we were talking about stats that day and she wasn't feeling it, plus most of the interesting material was in the reading. She came to gospel choir rehearsal and refused to sing. Those

pious posers bored her with how seriously they took themselves and how intent they were to gather the most attention each onto themselves. She was still finding her voice then. We went to a movie, went dancing, walked, she saw the cold drive of college life. Wasn't real interested. Then she went back home. And it wasn't over. When she walked into her new school to register, a black kid was dropping off an attendance card—

YOUNG MAN

Where you coming from?

TYLENE

Hamilton.

YOUNG MAN

Oh, so you're the one...

(STELLA walks SC)

(SLIDE: Newspaper article describing crime involving "Three Young Men...")

STELLA

That was a long time ago now... maybe 20 deaths ago...

I thought myself lucky, you know, to have her alive. So lucky not to have had any of the men in my family murdered on the street. Thank God! Cause it seemed like because they were black and male this was an expectation—that they were in danger from so many different sources. My immediate family was blessed to have at least 6, 7 young black men still living. I am disgusted by the sigh of relief I breathe at their living. If this is my assumption about life, how far is this away from what sweet white self-righteous America thinks about everyday.

How deep is a divide defined by a basic difference of mind,
of emotional structure,
of love of family,
of ability to imagine a future?

(STELLA directly addresses the audience over the next 3 lines...)

Something like 45,000 gun-related youth and young adult deaths in 15 years, more

than 10% in LA alone—more victims than US lynching expunged in much less time. That’s one person per day everyday for 15 years.³

HOW to sustain such Loss?

And see so many others so unable to fathom
its depths.

She was in junior high school, that’s a normal experience, right? 13, 14, 15, 16, and on... and my living was next to hers. Parallel.

(STELLA claps hands together and looks straight ahead, directly at the audience imploringly and with bare despair for the first and only time in the piece.)

(SLIDE: Stocker Street sign)

STELLA

But there was nothing to do.

But lose and lose... A bus card baby fat virginity a boyfriend
belief in the safety of youth the solidity of home friends.

(LARRY enters House Left, and casually crosses the house over the next 3 lines, counting his money and walking along the front edge of the stage, stopping in front of STELLA who is standing SR...)

When she is 15, I’m 20, 21? Graduating from college, engaged to be married and moving to D.C. for a really shitty research job, while ‘T’ gets ready to finish high school. There is Larry who’d gone to Samo High with ‘T’ and strangely enough was an intern for a high school partnership in my mother’s office at UCLA. He acted like Mom was family.

LARRY

Heeee-yYY Mrs. D.

STELLA

Brought her a big smile and his new ideas all the time.

LARRY

“I’m gonna start a business, I’m gon be President.”

STELLA

Larry dressed to the nines and always had money.

(SOUND: Music cue. Heavy slowish base beat of Eazy E's "Ole School Shit" rising in background. "199-'Muthaphukkin' E! The 'muthaphukkin' year of the real 'muthaphukkin' Gs and we gonna do this shit like this—Nigger evidently you just don't know who youre fuckin with, So I suggest you get in your shit and keep truckin bitch. Before I get my gat, your pressure case. Blast Blast and leave my gang rag laying on your face. I tattooed Dre name on my chest, cross it out just another nigger that I Xed. And you wont see RIP, youll see PND, a 'punk nigga deceased...'")

(LARRY exits as music begins.)

He was trying to make it, go to college, and balance the grip of that block in Inglewood his grandma'd lived on with the whispers of a new self that didn't fit in his old space.

(SLIDE: poem 1 below)

A barrage of bullets at Slauson and Overland fixed him near
the beginning of a long line of kids in our lives atta-CK-ed
CUT-down DEVoured...

WA-kia, Al-FON-zO, CO-ry, PhiL-LY MAC,
TA-lly, ROB-ert, BlaCKKey, JO-van,
DOM-I-niCK, DarryLLLL, Mi-K -al Dece Williams,
Tim Graves, Maaar-CUS, D-avey, DE-von,
JOOOOOHHH-LEEeeee, PAHW
Ba-KO, Sha-K-a ...

(SOUND: Music stops)

PAAHHWwww. PAHW PA-hw pow.

and we had no power—

(SLIDE: Image of Dorsey High School)

Joley went to Dorsey. Cheerleader. Everybody knew who she was since she would stand in front of them and jump and dance, clap and shake at every game at the beginning of every year. Beautiful, popular.

(Walks to chair on SR and sits)

She's 17, I'm 22 trying to plan a wedding, filling out grad school applications, and keep up with the labor speed-up and stretch-out at my shitty job. Kind of thing I thought was reserved for industry.

(SLIDE: Newspaper article featuring image of Joley)

Joley's English teacher calls her play-sister by her name for a week after Joley is found naked face up in an empty duplex near Haas and Century.

Howdidthishappentoher? DidsheKnowthosepeople? HadsheTrustedthem?

(SLIDE: Busy intersection)

Her family couldn't have known them. ***Mine didn't know my friends.***

Is she alone that day? ***I am alone all the time.***

Does she suspect what is going to happen? How afraid is she? ***I am afraid.***

She is raped. ***I am raped.*** Is it one person, does she want to die by the time they are done?

(STELLA drops slowly to her knees, center stage, hands clasped tightly together behind her back.)

Joley's hands are tied behind her back; she is shot, execution style through the forehead.

(SLIDE: poem 2 below)

GlitteringSmallSpanishWindowPane reflecting in
 its fragments her MO-tion-LLessSSSSSSS
 BO-DY
 on the floor of that empty room
 in a Sprawling Fetid City in the Richest Country
 on this starving planet
 SHATTERS
 with the exPLOdingPRESsure of the PAIN in
 her
 HEAD.

(SOUND: One single gunshot.)

(STELLA'S body jerks and crumples like she is shot dead; then her eyes open. Lying on her side STELLA stares blankly at audience like a corpse or disillusioned person extremely pissed off.)

(SLIDE: Newspaper article image of mourners crying in public)

(SOUND: Music. Ice Cube's "Dead Homiez" blares full volume into the dead silence. "Up early in the morning dressed in black, don't ask why, 'cause I'm down in a suit and tie. 'Ey killed a homie that I went to school wit, I tell you life aint shit to fool wit. Still hear the screams from his mother, while my nigger lay dead in the gutter... so I dedicate this to my dead homies..."²⁵ The song plays for close to a minute until music works its magic and the mood changes, calms under the influence of the beat. STELLA flops up to a seated position waiting. Music fades out.)

(SLIDE: Stocker Street sign)

STELLA

(Standing)

'T' calls and tells me and I'm speechless.

(Walking SC, STELLA gestures, letting her hand become the poem she "reads")

I write a poem for them, 'T' and Rashida J. Loquet, called "Jolie," in my grey padded cubicle and I drop it into the river on my way home from work.

(Using her hand, she evokes the falling and rolling of the paper...)

I watch it roll under the surface of the Potomac and float away.

(Walks to SL)

Dominick is my dad's baby brother Leland's son. My first cousin.

(The USHERS enter the aisles during the following line, spacing themselves throughout the auditorium.)

Dominick—such a cutie pie, like his Dad, but Uncle Leland was kind of retiring and demure—Dominick 'as determined and somewhat hot-tempered.

(The USHERS begin singing, to the audience, an a cappella version of the song "Angel of Mine" by the R&B singer Monica...)

USHERS

WHEN I FIRST SAW YOU, I ALREADY KNEW
THERE WAS SOMETHING INSIDE OF YOU
SOMETHING I THOUGHT THAT I'D NEVER FIND
AN-GEL OF MINE

HOW YOU CHANGED MY WORLD OH YOU'LL NEVER KNOW—
I'M DIFF'RENT NOW, YOU'VE HELPED ME GROW

YOU CAME INTO MY LIFE, SENT FROM ABOVE
WHEN I LOST ALL HOPE, YOU SHOWED ME LOVE
I'M CHECKING FOR YOU AND YOU'RE RIGHT ON TIME
AN-GEL OF MINE⁶

(The USHERS sing a harmonized rendition of the above first verse, bridge, and chorus of the song. They turn, slowly returning to their seats at the back of the house, still singing but dropping their volume. The USHERS begin again, singing the first verse, bridge, and chorus of the song but this time only on a hum, and at half voice. The humming continues until STELLA's line "Dominick is Dead"...)

STELLA

When Dominick and my youngest sister Lisa were about a year old. They were

sitting next to each other on the white-framed trundle bed in Granny’s beauty shop at the house. They kept leaning over and kissing each other! ...

(STELLA moves from left to right mimicking babies’ slobbery kisses—lean kiss, lean kiss, lean kiss).

over and over again. All on their own. OH!

So cute.

(To audience)

They aren’t related, so, you know, it was OK.

(SLIDE: poem 3)

We took pictures that have since gone to that Place old pictures hide.

In the closet? —Pushed

DO-WWwwnnnnnn

to the bottom of that wrinkled-old tan corduroy sac with the leather handle,

surrounded by older yellowed square snap-

shots

with those

Evennn

Wwhhh-iTe

borders

and multiple copies of everybody’s school portraits—

Vestiges of him

sta-CK-ed iN

piles

of

memory.

Dominick at 18 was our collective “luck” run out. It was my birthday when my Dad called.

(Walks SR)

(SLIDE: Busy intersection)

I was teaching, dissertating, and divorcing, still unpacking stacked up boxes from my recent separation. Remembering that my cousin Nicole’s birthday is the day before mine though 10 years after. I thought he’d remembered for once out of 28 birthdays and was so very impressed—and then when he sounded so broken I knew he was going to tell me that my half-blind, crotchety granddaddy had passed. I was not prepared for the sharp gasp for breath and tear-filled exhalation of “Dominick is Dead.”

(SOUND: Singing out)

‘T’ is 23 she has a 3 year-old daughter with pink lips and the smallest delicate pink hands. I call.

(SLIDE: Blurred steering wheel image)

(STELLA walks to downstage C spotlight. SHE lifts her hand to her face, her pinky finger and thumb spread out like a telephone into which she speaks. This occurs in nearly all of her ‘conversations’ with ‘T.’)

STELLA

Hi. Did Mom tell you about Dominick? Tylene—he was shot last night on his way back from a football game.

TYLENE

He was what?

STELLA

Shot.

TYLENE

Did he die?

STELLA

Yes.

TYLENE

Dominick is dead?

(SOUND: Singing stops.)

STELLA

Yes. yes.

(STELLA moves SR as KRUMPDANCER #1 enters and begins dancing in silence...)

Dominick and 2 friends were driving back from his coach's house. They'd watched a tape of that night's football game. He'd done great apparently, running that ball all the way down the field multiple times, first game of the season. They drove home along fairly empty streets at midnight in Carson listening to music. Getting sleepy from being so hyped. And some guys shot at the car.

(Pause)

Dominick was hit twice, one of the bullets ripping straight through his heart. The other boys, who weren't hit at all, drove immediately to Charles Drew.

They lay him down on the emergency room driveway,
got back in the car, and tried to drive off.

You see they didn't feel safe doing the right thing. They were sure they couldn't safely bring a gunshot victim, their teammate, Friend, to the hospital. They were right. A police car saw 'em and blocked the way of their car—

(KRUMP DANCER exits during this line)

they ended up sitting in a sheriff's station all night getting questioned and held while Dominick died at the hospital.

(SLIDE: Newspaper article image of mourners)

(SOUND: Music cue: Tylene singing "Memories" ("The Way We Were") a cappella... Music up, no fade.)

(Two main actions occur during this song: #1—the USHERS and KRUMP DANCERS, all in semi-formal black attire, enter and walk up on stage. Two people carry black folding chairs, one person carries a vase and a stack of articles and obituaries, while the remaining people carry Birds of Paradise flowers. The folding chairs are set up in 2 aisles facing the vase, which is downstage C. As the people come near they place their flowers in the vase and either sit in one of the 2 chairs or take a standing position somewhere behind the chairs. #2 – STELLA walks into the audience once the funeral mourners have cleared the aisle closest to her, and ceremoniously hands copies of articles from the LA Times, 2001 that describe Dominick's shooting to a few audience members. She walks further into the aisle, and takes in the entire space, looking at the enlarged, hanging newspaper articles, reading them while the song finishes. The entire song plays.)

VOICE-OVER (SONG)

(raspy and staticy—playing like ghosted vinyl)

*"Memories light the corners of my mind,
misty water colored memories
of the way we were, ...*

I loved You to death.
 You knew life was a test until you reached your final breath.
 The story of a prince in the making of a King.
 And until the fish stop swimming and the doves don't sing, but this morning the
 doves cry.
 The sky was your limit until you reached the gorgeous high.
 The meaning of Life, now I know why and what's in store, wishing
 that before was after and after was before. In time we all have to
 meet up with Satan's score. But until the end I'm truly convinced,
 A salute to Dominick Batiste, the young King that was once a prince.

STELLA

The last line read

BRENT

“Love Brent.”⁸

(The funeral disperses as people remove the chairs and exit the stage, leaving only the vase of flowers. A FEMALE MOURNER exits the stage but waits at the foot of the SL steps, grieving silently. The SISTER remains onstage as STELLA walks up the steps to join her...)

STELLA

He was so brave up there in front of all the family, all the strangers stuffed into the sanctuary. A bright perfect arrangement of about a hundred Birds of Paradise stood in front of the casket like orange and purple wings spread out in an embrace. I never appreciated those flowers enough 'til that moment. Now Dad has them growing all around his house.

(STELLA and her SISTER walk SL)

Along the long concrete steps in the front of the church there were 5, 6 beautiful young ladies in anguished tears being held up by trios of friends. My older sister nodded towards them, raised her perfect eyebrows and mumbled,

SISTER

“Ummmmm-Hm, Dominick ‘hit’ that. All of ‘em.”

(The SISTER exits down the stage steps, crossing to strike the vase of flowers as she exits to her original USHER position, while the FEMALE MOURNER exits after her.)

STELLA

I don't know how my uncle survived that day. Or Dominick's baby sister, Nicole—who'd traded her slumber party for a repast. I guess it was fair, right, we sacrifice one to streets that are supposed to be home.

(SLIDE: Stocker Street sign)

The corner of Crenshaw and Stocker is this crossroads where each direction you take shuttles you to a distinctly different part of the city. The hood, the hills (BALD-win Hills), the Westside, downtown... There's an old liquor store—The Liquor Bank—has been there for as long as I can remember. My mom used to go in there to cash checks when I was about 7, 'T,' 2, sat in the car seat next to me in the back of our big brown boat of a Cadillac. I was always nervous when she disappeared through the dark glass doors, sighed relief when she came out. I bought some Lemonheads and a Charms blue sucker in there one time with a quarter. There's a new shopping mall, well, renovated in the 80s, that is shared by the really bougie black folks who live in the hills to the west and the proudly ghetto folks who inhabit the flats to the east. Before that there was just this long line of shops, one was this old Kirby place where the white rep would offer my mom \$20 to buy our old vacuum cleaner every time she took it in for service. Said he'd put it in a museum.

(SLIDE: poem 4)

The pavement at that corner provides no evidence of so many histories in its insistent passing of traffic.

(Walks downstage C)

All the moments speak at once and—not at all, the concrete refusing to carry the onus of time, leaving that to memory. Only I can recount the landscape of corners, intersections signs that you can only stand to pass by holding absolutely still—because you know your tires traverse this space where life stopped. A cop car creeps by flashing lights no sound.

(Walks SR)

'T' says in the hood the helicopters are the bass beat—
thwoothwoothwoothwoo thwoothwoothwoothwoo—

(SOUND: A hip-hop music cue begins)

and the sirens are the melody...

(The beat drops in as 3 KRUMP DANCERS enter to stage center and begin dancing.)

STELLA, standing off to stage right, continues her monologue as the dancers do their thing.)

STELLA

‘T’ had a birthday party that was underway at about the time Ron G pulled up to that corner. It was Valentine’s Day, a Saturday afternoon. She turned 25. I’m 30 and living back in LA, babysitting nieces, finishing the dissertation and waiting for job offers or that torturous ‘you have been ranked second’ call/rejection. I devoted my usual Saturday afternoon break to help with the party. It was too windy to get the BBQ going. Sunny in February in LA but NOT warm—so the coal wouldn’t catch, the wings wouldn’t cook. We left early. ‘T’ got this phone call as soon as we got home. I was walking carefully up the stairs to her apartment carrying this HUGE double layer heart-shaped cake. The kind my mother, then I, would make for her every year since she was 4—real buttercream frosting that she loves—but nobody ever got around to eating.

(SLIDE: Image of asphalt)

She got a phone call and she took off. Left me with her kid and no hint of where she was going, why or when she’d be back.

Ron G, Ronni G—Byron Gregory, one of the homies who was doing the Hollywood thing, working on the set of this UPN show and pulling his acting career together—he was on the table at Cedars Sinai. ‘T’ and her friends went to the hospital and stayed together ‘til late that night. Something seemed to break. There was no stone-faced staring down the eyes of adversity but a bare desolation that overwhelmed them all. I watched my sister who had stoically passed through so many deaths just collapse and I was so relieved for her sake that Ron’s death didn’t just flutter into the void.

(STELLA moves her hand from above her head towards the ground mimicking the movement of the Joley poem.)

Unlike all the other cases where there is no suspect and little to no investigation, This one was tried. Though it almost went the traditional way, the way Dominick’s went. The police refused to take statements from people lined up at the scene waiting to talk. Sent ‘em home. The main reason the court case could be a go was because the young folks’ scattered street knowledge of events, their tenaciousness, led the D.A. to certain sources. And the trial is the only reason we have any information about the real sequence of things.

(One of the dancers “falls” and is carried off by the other two during the following line...)

So we actually know what happened, we know the when, why, how, and who.

(STELLA drags her folding chair to center stage and becomes “TYLENE” as she does this. The chair in the following monologue becomes the driver’s seat in the car TYLENE describes. She seats herself in the chair, envisioning Ron’s final moments...)

(SLIDE: Stocker Street sign)

TYLENE

There had been a funeral for this Blood earlier that day and his boys were driving up and down Crenshaw all day banging on-people, red-ragging everybody, and hitting people up. That’s wav-ing a rag at people in cars and just an-ta-gon-izing them. Ron was stopped at a red light at Stocker and Crenshaw. By himself in his car. In the left turn lane. These guys pulled up next to him going in the opposite direction. Three dudes got out while one stayed behind the wheel. They walked to their trunk and pulled out a ‘38 caliber revolver and some other kind of semiautomatic and walked towards Ron’s car. He saw them coming.

(SLIDE: poem 5 below)

He tried to go forward but he couldn’t ‘cause there was like a buncha cars. And he hit the car in front of him. He tried to go back and he hit the car behind him. This Mexican man said he just quit trying, —he threw up his hands. And then just fell over to the side.

STELLA

He was young. He was black. He was not someone they knew. He would suffice.

TYLENE

They unloaded 23 shells, got back in their car, and drove off. A nurse got out of her car and gave him CPR ‘til the ambulance got there.

He Bled into his car.

O n t o t h e p a v e m e n t.

O n t o h e r

Two of the bullets hit him, one in his elbow and one in his chest. They can’t figure out how the one in his chest killed him. His heart started beating again, but to everybody, you know, he died at that intersection...

(SLIDE: Stocker Street sign)

(SOUND: Music cue. Tylene's mournful voice singing a rendition of "His Eye is on the Sparrow" playing softly in the background...)

VOICE-OVER (SONG)

(Same voice and style as The Way We Were.)

*"Why should I feel discouraged?
Why should the shadows come?
Why should my heart feel lonely
and long for 'heavenly' home?"*

*When Jesus is my portion,
a constant friend is He,
His eye is on the sparrow
and I know he watches,
he watches me..."⁹*

(The next portion of the text is delivered in subtle call and response with the song until it stops...)

STELLA

'T' let me borrow her car to take these slides. As I took shots of the corner from the front seat of the car, from the curb, my breath grew short, my throat thick. The camera shook snapping stills of the continuous motion over that spot in the street. I thought of every person he knew passing through the site of trauma, stopping, waiting, praying wordless prayers—opening the soul in mourning at a stoplight. Watching oncoming traffic carefully nervous at the lack of distance between vehicles.

(Standing)

An off-duty sheriff's deputy parked at the liquor store watched this whole thing and drove away.

(SLIDE: Busy intersection)

(STELLA drags her chair from SC back to its original position SR over the next few lines)

He said he was afraid. The perps or their friends cruised the Gregorys' house for weeks. 'T' and the homies stood out front and just watched 'em pass. Facing the slow

menacing threat with resignation, patience. Hoping their presence would stand in for their anger, their solidarity create some kind of protection. These are the folks that had hung tough while people around them fell.

‘T’, always so belligerently cool cried, worried, mourned. This is her.

(Gesturing towards singing filling the theater)

In her life she is very frugal, stingy?, about using her voice and singing in public. It’s hard to get her to sing in church, she doesn’t do weddings—But she has come to respect death. It has gotten so that she only sings for people at funerals. And I don’t think she is singing for the mourners. It was humbling when I would drive her car to see Ron G’s photo on her dashboard next to her child’s picture that never gets moved. A lot of them did that. To remember not to forget since this one hit So close.

(SOUND: Music swells at “His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches, he watches me,” then fades out.)

STELLA

(Walking downstage C)

The massive response *had* to help get the case going. The shooting was covered in the paper and on the news. The funeral was incredi... have you ever seen a funeral procession that was more than 2 miles long that’s not for, like, a Kennedy, or fuckin’ Reagan? There were your Toyotas and Escorts, beat-up hoopdis, bright shining mustard Mercedes, silver jags, and SUVs coming out the ass from suzukis to suburbans, all with their lights on. Cars were still backed up at West Angeles Funeral Home when the front of the line was turning left down La Cienega to go to the Inglewood Cemetery. Johnny Gill sang at the memorial service. Eddie Murphy and one of them Wayans Brothers was there.

The homies started The Byron Gregory Foundation called “Our Brother’s Vision.” Sometimes OBV. To give scholarships to good kids, with OK grades, who play sports, like Ron, someone who wants to go to college, very talented, but not your, like, valedictorian. They had a T-shirt with Ron’s face and started a long series of fundraisers to provide scholarships in his name. I went to the 80s Roller Skating party just last July. They do these events together that are really exactly the thing that kept everyone in their circle alive all this time. A lot of people come. This kind of visibility meant so much for the case. It gave everyone something to do and also kept them connected to the issue, to each other.

(STELLA walks to her memorial wall SL)

(SLIDE: Newspaper article image of mourners)

Two of the shooters came up on charges. ‘T’ and her friends showed up at every court date, every hearing, even after a rather confused judge said they didn’t have to and implied that it wouldn’t make a difference. The status of things went back and forth with the effectiveness of the questioning and prosecution seemed to be asleep. One brave kid sat up on the stand and gave all kinds of details about the defendants’ actions on the day of the shooting. Those boys just stared at him with this wisened, chilling nod. Some witnesses forgot their testimonies, fudging the details of their depositions. If that sheriff’s deputy was afraid, I suppose the witnesses might be afraid of the promise of the kind of unrestrained violence they were being asked to recount. The homies saw one of the jurors talking to one of the defendants one afternoon long into the trial. Somebody found out she taught at his school. They reported it and got her dismissed. They were paying attention. Gathering and using pivotal information culled through an informal network of outraged peers. Knowledge came not from the sources of power, the voices of the system, but from vigilant minds behind the veil. ‘T’ got heated at the “I-wasn’t-there”, “It-wasn’t-me”s, the absolute lack of fear in the defendants. The bailiff emphasized staying coooool, right?, especially when the verdict came down... Bunch o’ young black people at an emotionally charged gang hearing. Me and my mom, everybody’s parents were scared for them. Seemed like the bailiff was too.

(SLIDE: Steering wheel image)

(STELLA moves upstage, close to the projection screen)

What if the jury came back with “Not Guilty?” ...after ALL of this...

What would happen once the patience and hope in the justice system wore off leaving only vengeance and retaliation?

(The USHERS walk down the aisles into the house, speaking the Letter to the Judge in unison. Once they have gathered together at the center front of the stage, they continue reciting the Letter, trading most sentences, phrases, and words, and speaking together on others, each speaking with their own individual personality, creating a poetic, musically rhythmic expression of this letter that simultaneously represents the unique and the collective grief response to this loss. One of the USHERS represents the voice of the DOCTOR...)

USHERS

July 30, 2003. Dear Judge, I remember like it was yesterday...

On February 14, 2002, I learned that bad news has no time limit. Here come the doctors...all of them. We swarmed around...shaking, waiting, praying, preparing,

listening. He began with

DOCTOR

“Do you want to know about the events of the day?”

USHERS

Yes. He tells us essentially, what the streets had already told us at this point. I found it hard to concentrate on his actual words. I was just waiting for the final report. Trina grabbed my arm tight. Then,

DOCTOR

“Despite everything we tried...”

USHERS

That was all I heard. NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!

(In pairs, the USHERS turn and walk up the auditorium stage steps, gathering in a semi-circle around an imaginary “body”.)

They let us in the back in pairs to see him after about 30 minutes. Lena was in there when I went in. I reached to give his lifeless body a kiss and was warned, “Don’t touch him!” How the hell am I supposed to know? He didn’t look bad enough to be dead. He just looked asleep with tubes hanging out of his nose. I was just waiting for him to sit up and smile, “What’s up ‘T’?”

(The USHERS turn and walk back down the steps to the house floor, spacing themselves out in front of the edge of the stage...)

The initial viewing of the body put actual flesh and blood on the situation. He was gone. Nothing we could do would bring him home. The anticipation was gone. Now we were pissed. Who the hell did this? This doesn’t make any sense. I had just talked to Ron a week ago and he was making fun of me.

(Over the next few lines, the USHERS move in toward the stage center, forming a tight formation by the end...)

Ron and I weren’t close. I had known him for over 10 years, but we weren’t “close.” Nevertheless, he was the homie, my friend, an integral part of the family, and the

last person we would expect... He has a good family, loving parents, life-long friends that he *never* had to worry might kill him one day. Why did they have to take one of ours?? They have no idea how much we all love each other, genuinely, whether we say it all the time or not; whether we see each other on a regular basis or not. We roll deep too, but not because the streets say we're supposed to. Rather, because by the grace of God, we have formed an undying love and loyalty to one another that cannot be shattered. We accept each other's faults. We make jokes about each other. Some of us even talk about each other, but we can't be touched. We are unique.

I have dreams about Byron often. He's alive in my dreams, laughing, drinking, hangin still. That's all I have to remember him by now...

STELLA

Still in Mourning,
Tyleno Davis

(The USHERS exit back to their places, but two of the USHERS remain at the edge of the stage—one on either side—in order to give the following exchange, and to return with the other USHERS when they finish...)

STELLA

Less than a year after the Valentine's Day murder, J-rock and Skit-zo got 2 consecutive sentences each of 25-to-life—and they laughed. Folks who got up to speak before the sentencing called the defendant's animals, inhuman—

VICTIM'S FRIEND

You are a monster. You will burn in hell.

DEFENDANT'S MOTHER

My son is not a monster. I hope he finds forgiveness.

(The USHERS exit)

STELLA

'T' sat in the back of the room frozen by the surreal drama of two laughing boys who were losing life by losing freedom. It all felt pointless, like hitting a concrete wall of air, invisible and porous but still slamming into it robs you of balance and sense and makes your head spin.

(SLIDE: Newspaper articles about “Bicyclist” and “3 Young Men”)

STELLA

(Walking downstage C)

Have we had enough? Can you live this?

Ah, but everybody knows somebody, right?

(With an encouraging sarcasm)

What’s your growing up story?

(SLIDE: Stocker Street sign)

(Walking back to wall on SL)

When I was working on this narrative I called home to get some details from ‘T’ and check on whether she’d mailed her collection of obituaries for me to look at. She hadn’t –

TYLENE

Because I was thinking I might wait to add one.

STELLA

She had gotten a phone call that day that “Shaka” a 29-year-old man she had gone to jr. high school with had been killed the night before in Las Vegas.

(“TYLENE” expels a dry laugh.)

STELLA

Why are you laughing?

TYLENE

’Cause not a year goes by without somebody getting shot.

STELLA

(Picking up a funeral program)

She added his obituary to the collection after his memorial service. She saw our cousins’ aunt there. An old family friend. Some women my mother worked with 15 years ago. The more funerals there are, the more people we seem to know. I was watching television once and his funeral program appeared on the screen in

someone else's hands.

(Gesturing to the auditorium space)

The web of sisters, mothers, fathers, and friends shrinks tighter and tighter until there is no space between us.

(STELLA walks SC)

TYLENE

“Shaka had, *has?*, three kids. We are feeling so sad for ourselves and then his son got up to talk. We all just remembered how awful it is for them. He was 8 and said his Dad was his hero. And he was there for his kids. Everybody was crying. He was shot 40 times. They emptied their guns, walked away and reloaded, came back and shot some more. They Shot him Up.”

(Pause)

“After they left, he got up and walked into the hotel lobby. When he got in there he said ‘I’m drowning in my own blood but I know I’ll be alright.’”

(SLIDE: Image from funeral program cover for Shaka)

(SOUND: Music cue. “Thugz Mansion” by Tupac Shakur rises. It plays out in its entirety, from beginning to end.)

(STELLA crosses back to memorial wall SL. As SHE crosses the lights dim except for the SL area, and the slide changes to a wedding scene. STELLA begins to work on the wall, adding things to it and assessing her work...)

(SLIDE: Image of wedding party)

STELLA

Some people, like “the critics,” think this is corny.

(LIGHTS: spotlight on STELLA at SL memorial wall)

Hhmp. I like it. This part especially...

(STELLA pauses to listen as the “Thug Mansion” chorus plays. “Ain’t no place I’d rather be, chillin with homies and family in a sky-high, iced out paradise in the skyyyy. Ain’t no place I’d rather be, Only place that’s right for me, chromed-out mansion in paradise in the skyyyy...”¹⁰)

(*STELLA holds up two pictures of the rapper Tupac for feedback from the audience then applies one to the wall. She turns away from the audience and surveys the wall pausing to take in the slide. She returns to putting the finishing touches on memorial wall, grooving and shaking her thang a bit as the song plays and the last spotlight on her gently fades.*)

(*LIGHTS: Black.*)

(*For the bow, the lights remain off long enough for applause to start. At applause, the house and stage lights rise. STELLA moves to SC to bow. The other performers enter from the SL wings, forming a line on either side and a few steps in back of STELLA. They bow once as a group, then step forward to STELLA'S alignment to do a collective bow. The "Thugz Mansion" song plays uninterrupted during this bow, and upon its finish "Stella" invites audience members to add notes and photos to the memorial wall. A question and answer is announced and begins without a curtain falling or "Stella" leaving the stage. As the crowd breaks the sound reverts to the pre-show soundtrack of hip-hop gangsta music until the Q&A is ready to commence.*)

Notes

- ¹ Anyone interested in performing this piece should first contact the author directly for permission at stacksofobits@gmail.com. This script represents the April 2012 performance of *Stacks of Obits* at the University of California, Santa Barbara Multicultural Center. I owe special thanks to Brian Granger for directing this staged version of *Stack of Obits* and for his vital role in formatting this production text.
- ² Dirty Rotten Scoundrels, "Gangsta Lean," *Gangsta Lean*, 1993 Capitol Records.
- ³ www.jointogether.org; www.tf.org/tf/violence/vp/facts/losangelesprofile.shtml; www.LAPDonline.org.
- ⁴ Eazy-E, "Ole School S***," *The N.W.A Legacy 2*, compilation 2002 Priority Records LLC., (c1996 Ruthless Records).
- ⁵ Ice Cube, "Dead Homiez," *The N.W.A Legacy Volume 1, 1988-1998*, Disc One, compilation Priority Records LLC 1999, (c1990 Priority Records).
- ⁶ Monica, "Angel of Mine," *Monica*, 1998 Arista Records.
- ⁷ "The Way We Were," composed by Marvin Hamlisch for the film *The Way We Were* (Columbia/Tristar Studios, 1973).
- ⁸ Brent Batiste, A Salute To The King That Was Once A Prince, unpublished poem, 2001.
- ⁹ Composed by Civila D. Martin, music by Charles Gabriel, 1905.
- ¹⁰ 2Pac, "Thugz Mansion," *Better Dayz*, 2002 Interscope Records.

AFTERWORD

**“A CELL IS NOT A HOME”: ASSET STRIPPING AND TRAP ECONOMICS IN
CENTRAL CITY EAST/SKID ROW, PART 2¹**

Clyde Woods

How can I feel guilty after all the things they did to me?

Sweated me, hunted me

Trapped in my own community.

-Tupac Shakur, “Trapped”²

The campaign to expel low-income residents from Los Angeles’s Central City East/Skid Row reflects a global coordinated effort by corporations and governmental bodies to reorder urban life. Throughout the nation, historic working-class neighborhoods are being transformed into privatized and militarized upper-middle-class zones of exclusion. New York, San Francisco, New Orleans, and many other cities share this experience and the numerous tragedies associated with it. These tendencies bring into relief a series of questions: What is unique about the expulsion of residents from Central City East/Skid Row? Is it the diminution of constitutional rights? Is it the reemergence of racial segregation? Is it the demonization of the most economically and physically vulnerable members of our community? Is this just another case of a social experiment being test run on these populations before being applied more widely? Or is it the resilience of this community and its determination to have its humanity? Can the many different stories of past and present residents, their blues, teach us about the challenges we all are facing and how to build new sustainable and socially just communities in the face of the naturalization of policies that are creating a new system of multigenerational dependency and immiseration?

Beginning in the 1970s, Skid Row became the most visible symbol of the failure of a regional urban policy that emphasized social abandonment, the upward redistribution of wealth, and the adoption of authoritarian solutions to address growing racial, class, and gender inequalities. The downtown redevelopment agenda was organized around asset stripping and asset hoarding. Affordable housing was demolished in favor of new corporate centers. Russ Rymer notes that the redevelopment plan adopted by the Los Angeles City Council in 1976 included the creation of a distinct “containment” zone for displaced residents. In addition to preserving the Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels in this enclosure, the city

concentrated social services, clinics, non-profit hotels, residential hotels, shelters, missions, transitional housing, and subsidized housing within the Central City East/Skid Row zone.

This ghettoization policy created a zone that thousands were forced into by the multiple crises of the 1980s: factory closures, recession, high rates of unemployment, lack of affordable housing, and continuous city, county, state, and federal cutbacks. Over 30,000 Los Angeles County residents were homeless by 1982. As the homeless population increased, its demographics shifted from transient white males to recently unemployed African-Americans and Latinos, particularly from resource-deprived South Central Los Angeles. A highly active political community emerged among the homeless to push for services, housing, and employment. Yet, within the Skid Row containment area/enclosure/trap, assets were being stripped. By the early 1980s, despite the housing crisis, “half of the hotels in Central City East had been torn down (many for parking lots) or had burned.”³

By the mid-1980s, Los Angeles was known as the “homeless capitol of America.”⁴ During the 1990s, social services subsidies obtained from companies that benefited from the first round of redevelopment were disappearing at the same time local and federal institutions were fostering the conditions that encouraged homelessness. The prison industrial complex resulted in the demographic collapse of many communities. The destruction of affordable housing throughout the city was compounded by the lack of investment in new construction and housing discrimination. The five-year lifetime time limits embedded in Clinton’s welfare reform policy increased the number of homeless families.

In *Malign Neglect: Homelessness in the American City* (1994), Jennifer Wolch and Michael Dear note that during the 1980s and 1990s, the welfare state in California was severely undermined by new public policies: Proposition 13 induced social program cuts; Republican governors George Deukmejian and Pete Wilson made deep cuts to social spending; and health services were privatized and eliminated. Similar cuts in Los Angeles County targeted the previously empowered members of the working class.

Political support for economic alternatives was undermined as white liberals and the black and Latino middle class became part of the city’s growth coalition. As the definition of economic growth shifted from job creation to gentrification, those in need of housing and employment were politically and economically abandoned. A new round of racial enclosure and displacement policies fueled the engine of African-American homelessness during the 2000s. The *2007 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count* found that there were 73,000 homeless persons in the county on any given day and 141,000 individuals who experienced homelessness at some point during the year.⁵ In a county where the African-American population is just 10 percent, the racial make-up of the homeless population reflected the devastation of African-American employment and housing options, and of their communities. The homeless population of Los Angeles was 50 percent African-American, 24

percent Latino, 19 percent white, 2 percent American-Indian or Alaskan Native, and 1 percent Asian or Pacific Islander.⁶ The *2005 State of Black Los Angeles* report found that African-Americans were behind all other racial and ethnic groups in every major social and economic category.⁷ Yet, it also found that blacks exhibited the highest rates of civic engagement.

By 2005, there were 13,000 residents in the district, 60 percent of whom were African-American. The average income was \$8,855 while the official unemployment rate stood at 25 percent while another 50 percent of adults were not searching for work and were thus not counted in the official unemployment numbers.⁸ Also, once the boundaries and functions of the new Central City East/Skid Row neighborhood were established by the city in the 1970s, the district became a place where many jurisdictions, institutions, and agencies from throughout Southern California would abandon, make invisible, or erase human beings who needed care by a practice known as “dumping.” More than a dozen hospitals, law enforcement agencies, and other institutions would abandon homeless persons from other cities, discharged hospital patients, the elderly, the disabled, the drug-addicted, the mentally ill, and the recently paroled on to the streets of Skid Row. Without resources, many were trapped by their reliance on social services. Yet, concerned community members did rescue many.⁹

Before 2005, public policy decisions resulted in several forms of assets being stripped from the residents of Central City East/Skid Row. High rates of hunger and malnutrition forced many residents to choose between paying rent and buying food. Additionally, food insecurity was prevalent due to the lack of cooking facilities, storage, grocery stores, transportation, nutritious food, and food stamp assistance capable of meeting basic needs, despite the distribution of free meals.¹⁰ The elimination of 1,000 residential hotel rooms between 2001 and 2006 contributed to the homelessness within the community.¹¹ Those who were able to find housing often had their health, safety, and shelter stripped from them by predatory landlords who tried to drive tenants out of buildings by refusing to make repairs, intimidation, or by illegally raising rents.¹² Other landlords relied on a perpetual asset stripping practice. Every twenty-eight days they would evict tenants and seize their possessions in order to ensure they did not reach the thirty days necessary to gain rights as legal tenants under California law. For instance, the Bristol Hotel’s landlord ordered tenants to vacate the building in one hour, ignoring the ninety-day eviction notice and relocation assistance laws.

While the city spent hundreds of millions of dollars subsidizing residential and commercial development, residents of Central City East/Skid Row were provided neither affordable housing nor job opportunities. In addition to employment discrimination, new traps were created by the increasing segregation of public spaces: racial profiling; massive law enforcement sweeps; private security forces; video surveillance; declaring streets and park benches off limits; and by creating separate and unequal entrances and elevators in mixed-income buildings.¹³

Other traps were created by constant law enforcement harassment. A 2000 lawsuit led to a restraining order preventing the LAPD from “stopping the homeless without reasonable suspicion while they are simply standing or walking on public streets and sidewalks.”¹⁴ In 2001, Alice Callaghan observed “instances when officers demanded identification from someone then cited him for littering when he threw his cigarette away to get his wallet.”¹⁵ Rymer noted that if “the homeless person did not make the trek to court, the misdemeanor led to a warrant, turning a luckless man into a wanted man.”¹⁶ A 2003 suit, *Fitzgerald v. City of Los Angeles* resulted in a 2008 ruling that the LAPD was engaged in unlawful stops and searches of those who were either sleeping on the street, jaywalking, or ticketed for minor offenses.¹⁷ Another trap emerged in 2004 as Central City East/Skid Row was targeted by recruiters for military contractors promising \$60,000 a year jobs in the Middle East.¹⁸

CRUEL AND UNUSUAL

They spread their poverty and misery

Creating the biggest catastrophe

Since Katrina hit N.O.

Our ground zero

Is found in Skid Row

-Gerardo Gomez, “Tent Cities”¹⁹

Much like we witnessed in the Hurricane Katrina debacle, there is NO plan in place that would ensure the well-being of current residents who “just happen” to be Black. Instead all of the rhetoric we are forced to swallow simply demonizes this Black community and paves the path for its permanent removal by force, trickery, or “unintended” consequences.

-Community Connection²⁰

At the height of the debate over the displacement of African-Americans from New Orleans, Los Angeles city officials and business leaders geared up to accelerate the final displacement of Skid Row’s homeless residents by creating a new panic. After thirty years of using Central City East/Skid Row as a human dumping ground, city officials “suddenly” discovered that other jurisdictions, institutions, and agencies throughout Southern California were doing the same thing. The Skid Row gentrification coalition led by the Central City East Association complained bitterly about how their project was being compromised by the practice.²¹ While social abandonment by the regions’ hospitals and other institutions became a major national scandal revealing official callousness, *Los Angeles Times* columnist Steve Lopez chose to contribute to the demonization of the residents in a 2005 series. In an article, Lopez recounts how newly elected Mayor Villagorossa accompanied him

on his “forays” before giving the Mayor orders to fix the problem:

“I mean, that almost looked like Bombay or something, except with more violence,” Villagorossa says of his two trips to skid row last week. “There is no place [in the city] where the chaos and the degradation are as pronounced. You see a complete breakdown of society.” Yes, and it’s utterly unacceptable. Now fix it.²²

By November, the Central City Association was pushing for an anti-camping ordinance allowing LAPD to arrest individuals sleeping, lying, or sitting on sidewalks.²³ In April 2006, the US 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the law and the practice was cruel and unusual punishment particularly given that 1,500 homeless persons on any given night were competing for 100 shelter and mission beds. Another setback for the city and downtown business leadership was the slow sale of condominiums and the reluctance of New York real estate firms to invest. Several blamed the presence of the homeless residents. This setback set off a panic. Soon afterwards, in April 2006, the city launched a new \$50 million program to build housing for homeless and low-income residents while the county dedicated \$100 million to establish five shelters with social services throughout the jurisdiction.²⁴

The other response to the panic of slow condominium sales was more authoritarian. Despite the April 2006 ruling, in September, the city attorney authorized LAPD to enforce a sidewalk-sleeping ban during daylight hours.²⁵ In the same month, the Safer Cities Initiative (SCI) was launched. In addition to dramatically increasing the number of police officers in the district, multiple sweeps and constant harassment followed. Several policies and practices associated with these initiatives combined asset-stripping with the creation of social behavioral traps. The police removed milk crates, shopping carts, pillows, and blankets from areas where the homeless congregated. At times, the police ticketed and even arrested homeless residents for the possession of milk crates.²⁶

Gary Blasi and Forrest Stuart found that during the first year of the program in the fifty-block area of Central City East, “LAPD made about 9,000 arrests and issued about 12,000 citations (primarily for crosswalk violations).”²⁷ According to several observers, some of the jaywalking violations were due to the intentional shortening of the time allotted to cross the street. The thousands unable to get their shopping cart across the street in time were fined twenty-five dollars. This fine exploded to \$159 once court costs were added. Blasi notes that “to someone subsisting on County General Relief, it is equal to nearly three weeks total income.” The failure to pay resulted in warrants being issued, arrest, incarceration, all of which leads to the further loss of possessions, and deeper impoverishment.²⁸ Blasi and Stuart also discovered another trap. While “people were being cited for littering (including such offenses as dropping a cigarette ash) in areas with no trash cans, the city’s ‘enhancement’ team struggled, but failed, to find the resources for eleven trash cans for the area.”²⁹

In addition to creating a pipeline to prison, the SCI expulsion campaign resulted in many individuals fleeing to Echo Park, Hollywood, Santa Monica, and South Central. According to Julie DeRose, director of homeless services for St. Joseph Center in Venice, “We’re putting down a solution in skid row that affects everyone else.”³⁰

“NO MORE JIM CROW ON SKID ROW”

-Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN) slogan

It is often forgotten that Central City East is a community. One of the costs of the multi-billion dollar campaign to redevelop downtown has been the humanity of the residents and the humanity of those who have accepted their demonization. Despite the multiple campaigns to expel this community, residents and their allies have launched numerous campaigns to preserve their community and their dignity: ending violence against women; preserving affordable hotels; making politicians accountable; increasing job opportunities; providing information on available services; ending police harassment; limiting hunger; prosecuting landlords; filing law suits; creating services for children; registering voters; forming coalitions; and holding community events such as talent shows, poetry readings, fashion shows, and picnics.

The policies of perpetual asset stripping and social traps have ensured that individuals would become homeless, remain homeless longer, and become even more dependent upon limited services. The new policy regime is dedicated to using these same policies to accelerate the expulsion of residents. The question remains as to whether or not this policy will continue during a recession defined by a decrease in the demand for upscale apartments and an increase in the demand for Central City East/Skid Row’s housing and social services. As the philosophy and policies of abandonment, destitution, food insecurity, racial and gender discrimination, child endangerment, and expulsion spread throughout Los Angeles, California and the nation, there is much to be learned from LA Can, allied activists, and their movement to create a new social compact.

Notes

- ¹ Clyde Woods was working on “A Cell is Not a Home” when he fell ill. Though he was unable to finish the essay, the piece nevertheless illustrates the promise of a thought-provoking discussion that proved evident in Clyde’s scholarship over the course of his career.
- ² 2Pac, “Trapped.”
- ³ Rymer, “The Rules of the Row,” par. 17.
- ⁴ Nagourney, “Los Angeles Confronts Homeless Reputation,” par. 7.
- ⁵ Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, *2007 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count*, 17.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.
- ⁷ United Way and Los Angeles Urban League, *2005 State of Black Los Angeles*, 2.
- ⁸ Rymer, “The Rules of the Row”; Los Angeles Community Action Network, *Taken for Granted*, 1.
- ⁹ “Film Features LAPD Dumping in Arts District,” Winton and Di Massa, “Police Allege 5 Patients were Dumped on Skid Row by Hospital,” A1; Blankstein and Winton, “Paraplegic Allegedly ‘Dumped’ on Skid Row,” B1; DiMassa and Winton, “Four Suburbs Said to Have ‘Dumped’ Homeless in LA,” B1; *Ibid.*, “Dumping of Homeless Suspected Downtown,” A1; In 2006, the state legislature was forced to pass a law prohibiting human abandonment across city boundaries.
- ¹⁰ Los Angeles Community Action Network, *Taken for Granted*, 7.
- ¹¹ See Fine, “Caught in Downtown’s Conversion Crossfire.”
- ¹² “Sue the Bastards,” 2.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*; See Nieves, “Skid Row Makeover.”
- ¹⁴ Rymer, “The Rules of the Row,” par. 45.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, par. 35.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷ Winton and DiMassa, “LAPD, ACLU Agree on Restrictions for Skid Row Searches.”
- ¹⁸ “Mission Impossible,” 11.
- ¹⁹ Gomez, “Tent Cities,” 10.
- ²⁰ “Nervousness Emerges From Central City Association?,” 5.
- ²¹ DiMassa and Winton, “Dumping of Homeless Suspected Downtown,” A1.
- ²² Lopez, “Street Conversations With the Broken-Down Brigade,” A1.
- ²³ ACLU of Southern California, “Criminalizing the Homeless.”
- ²⁴ DiMassa, “Pitching L.A. to N.Y. Pinstripes,” B1.
- ²⁵ Hoffman, “LA Cops Crackdown on Skid Row as Gentrification Looms,” *New Standard*.
- ²⁶ “Film Features LAPD Dumping in Arts District”; George, “Police Tactic Strips Homeless of Comfort.”
- ²⁷ Blasi and Stuart, “Research Report,” 2.
- ²⁸ See Blasi, “Policing Our Way Out of Homelessness?”.
- ²⁹ Blasi and Stuart, “Research Report,” 2.

- ³⁰ Khalil and DiMassa, "Rouosting of Skid Row Homeless Puts Strain on Surrounding Areas," A1.

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Clyde Woods began his appointment at the University of California, Santa Barbara in fall 2005, having previously taught at Pennsylvania State University and the University of Maryland. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 2009, the same year he became Acting Director of the Center for Black Studies Research. With a Ph.D. in Urban and Regional Planning from UCLA. His book, *Development Arrested: The Blues and Plantation Power in the Mississippi Delta*, is a model of interdisciplinary research that reframed the history of the Mississippi Delta by unearthing and interpreting the blues epistemology of its residents. At the time of his passing, Woods had recently published *In the Wake of Hurricane Katrina: New Paradigms and Social Visions* (2010), a Johns Hopkins University Press book version of his special edited *American Quarterly* issue on Katrina, and was working on three additional books—*Development Drowned and Reborn on Post-Katrina New Orleans* (under review at the University of California Press), a revised, updated version of *Development Arrested*, and this collection, *Black California Dreamin'*. An original thinker and prolific scholar, Woods believed the purpose of public social science was to explore and suture the links between knowledge embedded in communities of color and the knowledge disseminated by universities.

Malik Woods is the son of Clyde Woods. He currently lives in Santa Barbara, California where he works as a financial analyst.

PRAISE FOR CLYDE WOODS

After a 2010 visit to Haiti, Woods asserted that he saw Haiti and saw the future. What Woods observed in Haiti was that people, who did not control capital, resources, or canons, could continue to resist against imperialism and a culture of exclusion. Haiti proved to Woods something that he had already long understood from his work in Los Angeles and other urban environments: that scholarship must be geared toward the preservation of the earth's most precious cargo—its people—and it must work to restore wholeness where there has been loss and fragmentation. This collection is a tribute to Woods's teaching and his belief in human possibilities, principled alliances, and power of transformation through community engagement, ultimately recognizing Woods's immense legacy as a praise song for urban renewal, regeneration, and hope.

Claudine Michel

Assistant Vice-Chancellor, Academic Programs, Division of Student Affairs, UCSB & Interim Director, Center for Black Studies Research

Let us do more than remember Clyde Woods. Following his example and legacy, we must teach, research, and become engaged in our communities with Clyde's singular passion and commitment. We can do no less.

Alva Moore Stevenson

Program Coordinator, UCLA Library Special Collections