Right to the Metropolis? Black and Latinx Struggles for Spatial Justice in Los Angeles, 1985-1993

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is their own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

This thesis explores a diverse range of grassroots social movements and organising amongst African American and Latinx residents of Los Angeles during the 1980s and 1990s. Through an understanding of how activists worked to tackle myriad problems within their communities, this thesis makes an important intervention into our understanding of the 1992 Rodney King riot/rebellion, the most costly and destructive instance of civil unrest in modern American history. Moving beyond reductive and homogenising interpretations which view the Black and Latinx population of L.A. as economically and politically powerless during this 'urban crisis', this thesis illustrates a more complex interpretation of communities which emphasises the prevalence of active efforts to contest injustice. A focus on space, place, and 'spatial justice' helps us to better understand this activism. By considering a wide range of issues which these residents organised around – police and the criminal justice system, environmental racism, the janitorial industry, the proliferation of liquor stores, and urban tourism – this thesis demonstrates the broad scope of issues these communities wished to tackle were connected through a shared desire to claim and control urban space, both real and imagined. These activists argued that in addition to their race, class, or gender, where residents lived in the city was often a source of inequality and discrimination. They therefore fought to gain control over the cultural productions of place and physical spatial forms in the city, a right to self-determination that was already taken for granted in more privileged neighbourhoods. Understanding the connections between this diverse and vibrant activism as a struggle for spatial autonomy helps us better understand the dialectical relationship between racial identities and the social production of space, and why this is of such importance in movements for social justice both historically and today.

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List of Abbreviations:

ABC	Alcoholic Beverage Control Department
ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
ACORN	Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now
ANC	Aid to Needy Children
APPCON	Asian Pacific Planning Council
BPP	Black Panther Party
CAPA/C.A.P.A	Coalition Against Police Abuse
CCOSC/CCSCLA	Concerned Citizens of South Central Los Angeles
CPR	Community Project for Restoration
CRA	Community Redevelopment Agency (Los Angeles)
CSAC	Chicana Services Action Center
CTTS	California Thermal Treatment Services
CSO	Community Service Organization
CYGS	Community Youth Gang Services
DHS	Department of Health Services (California State)
DOC	Department of Corrections (California State)
EIR	Environmental Impact Report
ELA	East Los Angeles
ERC	Equal Rights Congress
FAME	First African Methodist Episcopal Church
HERE	Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union
JfJ/J4J	Justice for Janitors
L.A.	Los Angeles
LAANE	Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy
LANCER	Los Angeles City Energy Recovery Project
LAPD	Los Angeles Police Department
LCSC	Labor/Community Strategy Center
MELA	Mothers of East Los Angeles
MROC/Mothers ROC	Mothers Reclaiming Our Children
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NAPP	Neighbourhood Adult Participation Project
NLRB	National Labor Relations Board
NWRO	National Welfare Rights Organization
PODER	Pro-Active Organization Dedicated to the Empowerment of Raza
RLA/R.L.A.	Rebuild LA/Rebuild Los Angeles

SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SCOC	South Central Organizing Committee
SEIU	Service Employees International Union
TELACU	The East Los Angeles Community Union
TIDC	Tourism Industry Development Council
TOCB	Taking Our Communities Back
UABG	United Against Black Genocide
UCLA	University of California, Los Angeles
UNIA	United Negro Improvement Association
UNO	United Neighborhoods Organization
USC	University of Southern California
WLCAC	Watts Labour Community Action Committee
WOP	War On Poverty

Introduction: The Battle of L.A.

On May 15 1992, approximately 100 people attended a community meeting at the Vermont Square United Methodist church in South Central Los Angeles. Two weeks earlier this neighbourhood had been the epicentre of the most catastrophic instance of civil unrest in twentieth century America. Across five days, 53 people were killed and approximately 1,100 buildings were destroyed following the April 29 acquittal of four police officers accused of beating Black motorist Rodney King. The meeting was organised by Michael Zinzun, a former member of the Black Panther party, and since 1974 the leader of one of L.A.'s most noted multicultural grassroots organisations: the Coalition Against Police Abuse. According to Zinzun, the meeting was attended by neighbourhood residents, activists involved in education, welfare, and housing issues, representatives from local churches and block clubs, and gang (or 'street organisation') members.[1] They met to deliberate the many possible ways the city could be rebuilt and remade in the wake of the catastrophe, and their collective demands were distributed under the title 'NOW THAT THE SMOKE HAS CLEARED…WHAT NEXT?'[2] This document compiled fifteen demands which reflected debates surrounding urban social policy that had continued throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. Given that police brutality was an immediate trigger for the unrest, demands surrounding the criminal justice system played a prominent role. In addition, demands for improvements in education, the provision of jobs, and better treatment for undocumented migrants were also contained within the manifesto.

Yet the most striking feature of these proposals was the number of demands which addressed the quotidian urban spaces which were inhabited by the meeting's attendees. By far the largest section of the document was that which expanded on their tenth demand, 'recreational facilities that serve the needs of our communities'.[3] It suggested the building of more parks, community centres, theatres, and swimming pools, all of which would be staffed by local residents.[4] Demand number five argued for a 'moratorium on the rebuilding or new construction of liquor stores'.[5] They highlighted that their community 'has more liquor stores than any other community in this country' and questioned 'is this racism or exploitation or both?' before suggesting providing incentives for owners to convert these stores into more

[1] Coalition Against Police Abuse, 'Now That the Smoke has Cleared…WHAT NEXT?', n.d., p.1, Mothers Reclaiming Our Children Collection, Southern California Library Box 1, Folder 1.
[2] *Ibid.,* p.9.
[3] *Ibid*., pp.6-7.
[4] *Ibid*., p.6.
[5] *Ibid.*, p.3.

'acceptable businesses'.[6] This reflected one of the plan's opening statements, which insisted that 'we will no longer tolerate our community being used as a dumping ground for those destructive businesses' such as experimental waste incinerators, or polluting industries.[7] Instead, they organised around an idea that the city should 'build for people – not for profit'.[8] These proposals offer a fascinating example of how activists in the African American and Latinx communities of Los Angeles understood the physical space and built environment around them as both unequal and unjust. Their demands were made against the backdrop of a rapidly changing city, and within the context of decades of racial discrimination that spatially reproduced the social inequalities of urban politics. As this example suggests, struggles over the ownership and use of urban space were therefore inextricably tied to, and embedded within, efforts to imagine and secure social justice.

This thesis explores the stories of such activism; the ways grassroots campaigns within Black and Latinx communities in the 1980s and 1990s organised around issues of local urban space, and deployed their understanding of how inequality and discrimination produced material geographical consequences in shaping their approaches to protest.[9] It therefore makes several contributions to existing studies of Los Angeles, as well as American urban history and histories of the 'long' Civil Rights Movement. At the most direct level, this thesis complicates the story of the Rodney King Crisis, moving beyond structural explanations that restrict the agency of Angelenos of colour and marginalise the role of Black and Latinx activism within the city's political culture.[10] Despite assumptions that activism and

[6] *Ibid*., p.3.
[7] *Ibid*., p.1.
[8] *Ibid*., p.2.
[9] On nomenclature: I have used two main terms throughout this thesis to describe people of Mexican and Central American descent. 'Mexican-American', to describe those who were born in the United States but see their identity as linked to Mexican heritage, or were born in Mexico but see their identities as partially American, and 'Latinx', more of an umbrella term to indicate those whose nationality may be from the United States, Mexico or other Central American countries. I have avoided using the term 'Chicano/a', a more self-referential and politicised label that became less popular after the 1970s, unless discussing this movement or it has been indicated clearly. As George Sanchez explains, 'any notion that individuals have occupied one undifferentiated cultural positions – such as 'Mexican', 'American' or 'Chicano' has been abandoned in favour of the possibility of multiple identities and contradictory positions.' I have tried, where possible, to avoid using these terms interchangeably, and accept that these terms are far from a satisfactory solution to a complicated terminology. See George Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p.8.
[10] The terminology of the civil unrest has also been controversial, and has often been referred to interchangeably as 'riot', 'rebellion', 'uprising' and 'disturbance'. Terms like 'riot' deny the political agency of participants. Yet terms which directly acknowledge this, such as 'rebellion' or 'uprising', have been seen to validate the racial targeting of Korean immigrants. I have therefore followed Lynn Mae Itagaki's example in using the term 'Crisis' throughout, to connote political communication on the part of participants while also recognising claims of racial violence. See: Lynn Mie Itagaki, *Civil Racism: The 1992 Los Angeles Rebellion and the Crisis of Racial Burnout* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), pp.4-5, Nancy Abelman and

grassroots leadership in South Central and East Los Angeles communities had evaporated since the pinnacle of 1960s and 1970s Black Power, Chicana/o, and War on Poverty movements, the stories surveyed throughout this thesis demonstrate that local Black and Latinx communities offered substantial and committed support to a diverse range of causes.

Some of these issues had roots in L.A.'s long history of Black and Latinx organising, such as movements against police brutality and abuse and for better jobs, education and welfare services. Many others responded specifically to developments that occurred both nationally and in Los Angeles during the 1980s. As deindustrialisation and Reagan-era welfare cuts forced a restructuring of urban economies, Los Angeles underwent a period of rapid redevelopment, which benefitted some residents (largely white or wealthy), while disadvantaging others (primarily poor communities of colour). The specific issues communities organised around varied greatly: the siting of public health hazards such as prisons and incinerators, mass incarceration, the service industry, the oversaturation of liquor stores, and the scarcity of urban tourism, amongst many others. This thesis argues that despite this patchwork array of issues, activists shared an awareness of racial geographies and their material consequences, and sought to reconstruct both the real and imagined spaces of the city. Their efforts to alter these processes therefore indicated a purpose and a consciousness that I describe here as struggles for 'spatial justice'.[11] While activists varied greatly in their ambitions and their tactics, the increased emphasis activists placed on the spatial autonomy of their communities recognised that discrimination and inequality produced a consequential geography, and that the contestation and reclamation of urban space provided a critical component in the struggle for all forms of social justice.

This approach therefore centres the role of space and place in the histories of Black and Mexican-American communities in the United States to sharpen our understanding of the importance of physical and discursive geographies to social identities and urban protest. Through their work to tackle the social consequences of Reagan-era neoliberalism, activists were clearly demonstrating a resistance to the political and economic changes occurring within late-twentieth century urban life. Yet this thesis also stresses the continuities that existed, both in the spatialisation of injustice and the ways activists used space as a basis for organising. The Rodney King Crisis was evidently a cataclysmic, destructive event. It is impossible to reduce civil unrest on this scale to one singular meaning or cause. Not only was the Crisis a multiracial event that cut across class and gender distinctions, it produced

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John Lie, *Blue Dreams: The Los Angeles Riots of 1992 and Korean Americans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp.8-9. 'Angelenos' is the recognised term for those who reside in Los Angeles.

[11] Edward Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

multiple forms of resistance and protest that blurred racially-targeted assault and looting with non-violent protest that made claims on the state for the protection of Black and Latinx bodies. As many scholars have emphasised, underlying causes for the unrest stretched back decades.[12] This thesis explores hitherto understudied activist groups who looked to highlight and resolve these issues, and provides a more nuanced picture of the anger and grievances felt by Black and Latinx communities in April 1992. It argues that despite the enormity of the event, the Rodney King Crisis was only one part of a much longer effort on the part of Black and Latinx residents of L.A. to renegotiate, remake, and reclaim control of urban space within their communities. Whenever 'rioting' occurs, right-wing politicians, the media, and in some instances Black and Latinx leaders question why participants would destroy 'their' community, or put simply, 'burn down their own house'. In response, many emphasize that the disenfranchisement and marginalisation of people of colour suggests that communities have little sense of control or ownership over 'their house'. This thesis therefore looks to contextualise and historicise such debates. Through an exploration of spatial justice, it highlights how Black and Latinx activists worked to resolve inequality and discrimination in L.A. through attaining ownership and control of urban development within local community space.

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By shifting our analysis and considering the role of space and place in grassroots social movements, scholars can gain a number of insights into Black and Latinx histories. The first is the ways that the social and cultural constructions of space have been intricately tied to the establishment and maintenance of discrimination and inequality. The basis for the academic 'spatial turn' has been that space is not simply a neutral container within which events unfold, but is instead produced through relations of power to actively shape histories. Spaces can reproduce social relations in physical form, be used to wield power over others, or can be harnessed to disrupt, resist and transform these relations.[13] As Edward Soja

[12] See: Paul Ong and Evelyn Blumenberg, 'Income and Racial Inequality in Los Angeles', in *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the End of the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Edward Soja and Allen Scott (Berkley: University of California Press, 1998), pp.311-335, Susan Anderson, 'A City Called Heaven: Black Enchantment and Despair in Los Angeles' in *The City*, ed. by Soja and Scott, pp.336-364, Edward Soja, 'Los Angeles 1965-1992: From Crisis-Generated Restructuring to Restructuring-Generated Crisis' in *The City*, ed. by Soja and Scott, pp.426-462, Rhonda M. Williams, 'Accumulation as Evisceration: Urban Rebellion and the New Growth Dynamics' in *Reading Rodney King/Reading Urban Uprising*, ed. by Robert Gooding-Williams (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp.82-96, Gerald Horne, 'Black Fire: Riot and Revolt in Los Angeles, 1965 and 1992' in *Seeking El Dorado: African Americans in California*, ed. by Lawrence B. De Graaf (Los Angeles: Autry Museum of Western Heritage, 2001), pp.377-404, Itagaki, *Civil Racism*.

[13] See Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), David Harvey, *Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001),

described, spatiality is both 'a social product (or outcome) and a shaping force (or medium) in social life,' and can therefore be seen as a critical - if sometimes neglected – aspect of social history.[14] Although often used interchangeably with space, the term 'place' has a contested meaning amongst geographers. What constitutes a 'place' across multiple scales, such as a home, a school, a city such as London or New York, or a continent such as Europe or Africa, often appears to have an intrinsic meaning that negates any further exploration. Places, however, are also subject to the same processes of production as space, constructed through the historical and cultural meaning that has been attached to the spaces and inhabitants within them.[15] With this social construction occurring through discourse within the public sphere, productions of place have been defined by processes and structures such as the media and politics which are highly racialised, gendered, and class-based. Moreover, definitions of place are fundamentally relational. In the same ways that socially constructed identities were often dependent on the creation of binary oppositions, such as 'Black' and 'white' or 'man' and 'woman', places also only have meaning in relation to one another.[16]

Much like the rest of the United States, historical processes of segregation and disenfranchisement had constructed great racial and economic disparities in residential patterns within Los Angeles.[17] These determined the relational meanings of place within the city. Neighbourhoods which had a high proportion of low-income people of colour were

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Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity, 1994), Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*: *The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989).

[14] Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, p.7.

[15] See Tim Cresswell, *Place: An Introduction* (Chichester: Wiley, 2015), John Agnew, *Place and Politics: The Geographical Mediation of State and Society* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), Jon Anderson, *Understanding Cultural Geography: Places and Traces* (London: Routledge, 2015).

[16] For relational identities see: R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995), pp.67-68, Catherine Kudlick, 'Disability History: Why We Need Another "Other"', *American Historical Review*, 108.3 (2003), 763-793, Noel Ignatiev, *How The Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995). For a relevant study of how relational identities functioned in the multiracial context of Los Angeles, see: Scott Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

For relational concepts of place and space, see: Massey, 'Geographies of Responsibility', *Geografiska Annaler B*, 86.1 (2004), 5-18, Jeffrey Boggs and Norma Rantisi, '"The 'Relational Turn' in Economic Geography', *Journal of Economic Geography,* 3.1 (2003), 109-116, Ash Amin, 'Regions Unbound: Towards a New Politics of Place', *Geografiska Annaler B*, 86.1 (2004), 33-44 Laura R. Barraclough, 'South Central Farmers and Shadow Hills Homeowners: Land Use Policy and Relational Racialization in Los Angeles', *The Professional Geographer*, 61.2 (2009), 164-186, Jon Murdoch, *Post-Structuralist Geography: A Guide to Relational Space* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2006).

[17] For residential segregation in postwar America, see Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), Josh Sides, *L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles From the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2003).

inscribed as dangerous, politically apathetic, and incapable of progress. In comparison, neighbourhoods with whiter and wealthier populations were seen as safe, responsible, and attractive for residents, investors, and visitors alike. The meanings attached to these areas were not just symbolic. They were central to the production of knowledge which represented the city to politicians, planners, and developers. When determining the spatial layout of the city, development often relied on these imagined geographies to inform decisions. The result was that cultural constructions of place reproduced the inequalities of the city and perpetuated the negative stereotypes attached to particular areas through the spaces they engendered.[18] While wealthier white neighbourhoods and suburbs received plentiful recreational space, economic investment, and luxury housing developments, the supposed ghettos and barrios of L.A. were subject to political negligence, saturation policing, and a distinct absence of essential services such as banks and supermarkets.[19]

These developments made the boundaries between neighbourhoods as socially constructed places increasingly impermeable, isolating communities such as South and East Los Angeles, and verifying binary positions between 'us' and 'them' in physical spatialised terms. Place therefore played a critical role in the process of racial formation.[20] The activists explored in this thesis recognised that where they lived was a fundamental reason for their oppression, in addition to their race, class, and gender. They felt that those who resided in poorer and minority neighbourhoods lacked control over both the physical spaces of their community, as well as the ways these neighbourhoods were defined as 'places' through popular culture and public discourse. This was ultimately relational. As this thesis explores, those participating in social movements compared their own neighbourhoods to more privileged communities, who they argued had a right to control development and construct their own meanings of place that was absent from their own communities. Therefore seeing 'place' as a constitutive part of the construction of social identities which merged race, class, and gender together provides a fresh insight into the persistence of discrimination and oppression. In the post-Civil Rights era in the United States, lawmakers and political commentators across the ideological spectrum employed an increasingly race and gender-neutral language to signify the absence of racism and sexism, and to pathologise women

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[18] David Delaney, 'The Space That Race Makes', *The Professional Geographer*, 54.1 (2002), 6-14, Richard T. Ford, 'Urban space and the Color Line: The Consequences of Demarcation and Disorientation in the Postmodern Metropolis', *Harvard Blackletter Journal,* 9 (1992), 117–47, D.T. Goldberg, 'The World is a Ghetto: Racial Marginality and the Laws of Violence', *Studies in Law, Politics, and Society* 14 (1994), 141–68, Patricia Price, 'At The Crossroads: Critical Race Theory and Critical Geographies of Race', *Progress in Human Geography*, 34.2 (2010), 147-174.

[19] For more on this process see: Soja, 'Los Angeles 1965-1992', Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London: Verso, 1990).

[20] Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge, 1989).

and men of colour for their personal irresponsibility by remaining in poverty.[21] This thesis therefore sees the construction of place as highly significant in validating the continuation of discrimination through the persistence of spatial inequalities.

It is not enough to simply recognise the ways that space and place organise social hierarchies, however. Theories of space have been extremely valuable in detailing the ways that space can be a manifestation of power, used to regulate and control. A less voluminous, but significant, body of literature has theorised and demonstrated how cultural and social geographies have offered opportunities for those oppressed to challenge the production of place, and to imagine and organise around issues of urban space.[22] It is these ideas which this thesis is primarily concerned with exploring and expanding, to show how struggles for urban space both real and imagined played out in multiple ways across a complex metropolis, and transformed urban politics. As Beat Kumin has argued, the analytical category of 'space' did not require 'inventing' by theorists in the late-twentieth century.[23] The importance of space and its social production had been understood by communities, workers, and radicals for centuries.[24] While radical geographers such as Ruth Wilson Gilmore have argued that 'a geographical imperative lies at the heart of every struggle for social justice', historians have often understood the role of space as implicit within liberation movements amongst marginalised communities.[25] Contrary to assumptions regarding 1980s Los Angeles within the media, popular culture, and occasionally scholarship, the actors explored in this thesis not only recognised the importance of space and place in the production of inequality, but actively fought to contest this disenfranchisement. Thus this thesis argues that a second key theme flowing through these diverse movements was the

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[21] Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, 'The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,' *Journal of American History*, 91.4 (2005), 1233-63 [1235-1239], Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), pp.126-137, Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (Chicago: Haymarket, 2016), pp.51-75. For examples of conservative race-neutrality and colour-blindness, see Dowd-Hall, 'The Long Civil Rights Movement', p.1138 [n.11].

[22] See, for instance: Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, Manuel Castells, *The City and The Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements* (London: Edward Arnold, 1983), Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds: Black Women and Cartographies of Struggle* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), George Lipsitz, *How Racism Takes Place* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011).

[23] Beat Kumin and Cornelie Usborne, "At Home and in the Workplace: A Historical Introduction to the "Spatial Turn", *History and Theory*, 52.3 (2013), 305-318.

[24] Kumin (ed.), *Political Space in Pre-Industrial Europe*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[25] Ruth Wilson Gilmore, 'Fatal Couplings of Power and Difference: Notes on Racism and Geography', *The Professional Geographer* , 54. 1 (2002), 15-24 [16]. For example in historical work, see: George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), Robin D.G Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York: Free Press, 1996), Evelyn Brooks Higgenbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), A.K Sandoval-Strausz, 'Latino Landscapes: Postwar Cities and the Transnational Origins of a New Urban America', *Journal of American History*101.3 (2014), 804-831.

desire to claim ownership of their communities and gain control over the uses and meanings of urban space. Self-determination, the long-held but often elusive goal of so many Black and Chicano/a movements in America, was interpreted in a very localised way by these activists. Campaigns were fought for the right to determine how development unfolded in their communities; a right that more privileged communities took for granted. Leaders of social movements looked to project their own constructions of place to counteract those which dominated public discourse, in order to illustrate the complex and diverse social reality in their communities in the hope of dismantling the consequential geographies fostered through place-based discrimination. These were movements that were fundamentally about establishing what Henri Lefebvre would describe as 'spatial *autogestion*'; the formation of a collective and autonomous self-management decentralised from outside control.[26]

Activists fought for self-determination within local urban space not because it acted as a purely symbolic representation of their disempowerment, or because this provided a 'first step' or point of departure towards a wider goal. This activism also suggests campaigners saw a wider meaning to their efforts than has been suggested by some historians who argued that social movements were becoming more parochial in the 1970s and 1980.[27] Rather, these social movements were centred around spaces both real and imagined because it was within these areas that the devastating consequences of inequality and discrimination were felt by people of colour at an everyday level. The absence of spatialised control had material effects on residents within communities of colour that hindered their quality of life. Conceptions of place determined policies that led to saturation policing within South and East Los Angeles, which had brutal and deadly consequences for residents. Environmental hazards such as prisons, incinerators and liquor stores, which would have never been approved by more privileged communities, were routinely placed in poor communities of colour, exacerbating racial disparities in health and wealth. Politicians accepted the displacement of residents in favour of private-sector redevelopment in the hope that subsistence-wage jobs would alleviate urban social problems, regardless of residents' fervent opposition. The places and spaces that activists organised around were therefore the nucleus of relations between Black and Latinx Angelenos and the state, and the establishment of spatial *autogestion* offered the clearest means to achieve power and equality for those who were suffering.

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[26] Lefebvre, *State, Space, World*: *Selected Essays*, ed. by Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), p.16.

[27] Michael S. Foley, *Front Porch Politics: The Forgotten Heyday of American Activism in the 1970s and 1980s,* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2013), Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 2000).

In 2005, Robert Self's seminal study of Black politics in postwar Oakland declared that 'Black Americans, too, imagined the city and its possibilities'.[28] An impressive and expanding literature has elaborated on these ideas, demonstrating how the geographical underpinnings of the racial order was not exclusively a tool for oppression, but forged a 'Black spatial imaginary' which empowered African Americans to claim and remake urban space.[29] This thesis broadens the scope of this perspective, to include Latinx activists, a greater diversity of women, and an expansion of this concept into 1980s and 1990s L.A. to show the variety of ways communities understood and organised around issues of space and place. In addition, while space clearly plays an important role in constructing an imagined future, I argue that space also remained critical in establishing the past and present injustices that motivated social movements. I have employed Edward Soja's term 'spatial justice' to describe the inherent spatiality of these movements.[30] The concept of spatial justice shares many similarities with ideas such as equitable growth, planning justice, and in particular Lefebvre's 'right to the city'.[31] Yet the term spatial justice encapsulates the ways that consequential geographies produced by power relations are inseparable from other forms of injustice and inequality. It recognises that activists in L.A. rarely fought ostensibly or explicitly over control of urban space. Rather, it demonstrates that while organising around a diverse range of causes from policing and prisons to janitorial unions, liquor stores, and tourism, a renegotiation of spatial control and production was required to achieve their goals. Reinserting space into social justice activism therefore challenges scholars to rethink the meaning of Black and Latinx freedom struggles throughout history. Productions of place and space were not restricted to urban environments, and thus we need to think more carefully about how these processes shaped the construction of social identities in America and across the globe. In addition, it forces scholars to take seriously the role that claiming and owning space played in demands for power amongst marginalised communities, and how

[28] Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the struggle for Postwar Oakland* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), p.13.

[29] For the 'Black spatial imaginary', see: Lipsitz, *How Racism Takes Place*, pp.51-70. James Tyner, "Defend the Ghetto": Space and the Urban Politics of the Black Panther Party," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 96.1 (2006), 105-118, Tyner, *The Geography of Malcolm X: Black Radicalism and the Remaking of American Space* (New York: Routledge, 2006), Stephen Robertson, Shane White and Stephen Garton, 'Harlem in Black and White: Mapping Race and Place in the 1920s', *Journal of Urban History*, 39.5 (2013), 864-880, Shannon King, *Whose Harlem Is This, Anyway?: Community Politics and Grassroots Activism During the New Negro Era* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), Brian D. Goldstein, "The Search for New Forms': Black Power and the Making of the Postmodern City', *Journal of American History*, 103..2 (2016), 375-99, Russell Rickford, '"We Can't Grow Food on All This Concrete": The Land Question, Agrarianism, and Black Nationalist Thought in the Late 1960s', *Journal of American History*, 103.4 (2017), 956-980, Daniel Matlin, '"A New Reality of Harlem": Imagining the African American Urban Future during the 1960s', *Journal of American Studies*, 52..4 (2018), 991-1024.

[30] Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*.

[31] Lefebvre, 'The Right to the City' in *Writing on Cities*, ed. by Eleanor Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996) trans. by Kofman and Lebas, pp.64-184.

the success or failure of this effort transformed social relations.

The third and final theme explored in this thesis considers the ways activists utilised space as a tool for protest. While place and space never played a purely symbolic role for activists, the inversion of spatial productions and challenges made to the social conventions dictated by space provided an important way for social movements to convey their message and build support. The language of space and appeals to the rights of spatial self-determination became powerful mobilising tools which situated injustice within universal notions of community and local quality of life. Activists invoked Black and Latinx residents' lack of control over urban development, and contrasted this with the power wielded by more privileged communities. This approach deconstructed the racialised rationale which underpinned spatial discrimination and inequality. Through their continual focus on inequalities within how local community spaces were imagined and developed, organisers could build successful movements and campaigns which appealed beyond traditional social divisions. By emphasising that where people lived actively shaped their quality of life, some organisations were able to create multicultural alliances that circumvented conventional inter-racial hostilities, or galvanised women of colour who were often isolated from civic participation.

These movements also carefully selected the sites and spaces through which they would protest - at times creating counter-spaces - to communicate and physically realise their arguments. In particular, the mobilities of activists – the practical acts of moving in and out of, or inhabiting spaces - were essential to the geography of protest. As theorists of the 'new mobilities paradigm' have suggested, mobility – the movement of people, objects, and ideas, the meanings attached to these movements, and actors' experience of them – provides the basis upon which social and power relations are constructed.[32] Much like place and space, mobilities 'are both productive of social relations and produced by them'.[33] Mobility, or lack of mobility, is therefore essential to understand the construction of racial identities and disparities of power within the United States. Using examples of slavery, Jim Crow segregation, and mass urban migrations, Euan Hague has suggested that 'mobility is arguably the defining feature of African American geographies.'[34] Yet as these examples suggest, the mobility of people of colour has often been defined by white efforts to restrict

[32] Tim Creswell, 'Towards a Politics of Mobility', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 28 (2010), 17-31 [19-20]. See also: Kevin Hannam, Mimi Sheller, and John Urry, 'Editorial: Mobilities, Immobilities and Moorings', *Mobilities*, 1.1 (2006), 1-22, Mimi Sheller and John Urry, 'The New Mobilities Paradigm', *Environment and Planning A*, 38 (2006), 207-226.
[33] Cresswell, 'Towards a Politics of Mobility', 21.
[34] Euan Hague, '"The Right to Enter Every Other State": The Supreme Court and African American Mobility in the United States', *Mobilities* 5, 331–347 [333].

and control the movement of marginalised groups. Freedom of unrestricted movement can subsequently be seen as a right that was often exclusive to middle-class white men, and was thus a constitutive element in the construction of relational identities of race, class, and gender.[35]

Activists in Los Angeles therefore utilised the mobility of protesters to contest the literal restrictions on where and how Angelenos of colour could move, or the spaces they could inhabit. This approach included demands that Black and Latinx youth or low-income workers had rights to occupy the public spaces of the city without encountering suspicion, arrest, or violence. Mobility also influenced understandings of the spatialisation of justice by reducing the isolation and segregation of communities of colour. The production of urban space and place had disaggregated these neighbourhoods from the idealised imagining of 'Los Angeles', separating Black and Latinx residents from urban power and full citizenship. Some activists brought poor people of colour to sites of wealth and power, to ensure the visibility of their protests, and drew attention by contravening the expected behaviours and mobility within public space that were segmented along lines of race, class, and gender. Other movements invited those from outside into their neighbourhoods, to experience the reality of these places and spaces for themselves, challenging the dominant stereotypes regarding their communities which had proliferated. In both instances, these actions forced those with power and control over spatial development to confront those who were most affected by these productions. For these residents to move into the white and wealthy spaces of the city, or to encourage more privileged Angelenos to visit their neighbourhoods, therefore constituted a demand to be recognised as urban residents and for inclusion into the processes of place-making in L.A. The ways in which activists were mobile as part of their protests, therefore, was at times a literal challenge to restrictions upon their freedom of movement. Yet it also provided a means of disrupting power relations in the city and remaking urban identities. Understanding the ways activists made their appeals through both the discourse of spatial inequalities, and innovative use of space and mobility in protest provides insight beyond L.A. It suggests that given the intrinsic role of spatial justice within social movements more generally, that protests benefit from spatially-conscious organising. Campaigns garner substantial and broad support by rethinking the spatiality of protest and by appealing to a universally relatable goal of spatial self-determination and *autogestion*.

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Writing the history of Los Angeles has often been complicated due to its atypical urban development and the diverse experiences of the city's multicultural composition. For these

[35] *Ibid*.

reasons, the city has provided fruitful ground for scholars to develop and apply theories of space. The 'L.A. School' of urban studies has seen Los Angeles as the archetypal 'postmodern' city for its continued economic restructuring, geographic sprawl and the decentralised segmentation of land use.[36] Yet Los Angeles no longer sits as an anomaly of American urban development, but as a progenitor for twenty-first century city planning. A decentralised planning process resulted in a fragmented geography that preceded the suburbanisation of other regions and created a complex relationship between the urban core and various peripheries, establishing a myriad of smaller municipalities attached to the Los Angeles County nucleus.[37] By the 1980s, the city of L.A. was surrounded by over 80 individual cities that comprised the wider Los Angeles County. Los Angeles' rapid development in the early twentieth century relied heavily on the boosterism of civic elites to cultivate its reputation for an enjoyable climate, agricultural potential, and a 'hospitable society'.[38] It gained a reputation as one of the twentieth-century's defining city, as population and development expanded rapidly through the first half of the century. This economic success depended upon ensuring an open-shop industrial culture, which violently suppressed and vilified unionism, creating bitter relations between workers and civic elites until World War Two.[39] Post-war, the city built upon its reputation as an entertainment, leisure and recreation hotspot, seeking to reshape urban meaning to be viewed as 'the nation's white spot' through an imagined geography which excluded the city's growing communities of colour.[40] The municipal government, alongside support from business interests, embraced urban renewal through the construction of the new Dodgers' Stadium and the redevelopment of Bunker Hill, in preference to demands for public housing and services.[41] Despite this, white Angelenos followed the national pattern of leaving the inner-city in increasing numbers to L.A.'s established suburbs, which reduced urban tax bases and

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[36] The most noted work in this field is Soja, *Postmodern Geographies.* See also: Michael Dear, 'The Los Angeles School of Urbanism: An Intellectual History', *Urban Geography*, 24.6 (2003), 493-509, Dear and Steven Flusty, 'The Iron Lotus: Los Angeles and Postmodern Urbanism', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 551.1 (1997), 151-163, Greg Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles: Planning the Twentieth Century Metropolis* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1997).

[37] Robert Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967).

[38] Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis*, p.63, William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of Its Mexican Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), Stephanie Frank, 'Claiming Hollywood: Boosters, the Film Industry, and Metropolitan Los Angeles', *Journal of Urban History*, 38.1 (2012), 71-88 [72].

[39] John Laslett, *Sunshine was Never Enough: Los Angeles Workers, 1880-2010* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2012).

[40] Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2004).

[41] See: Avila, *Popular Culture,* Don Parson, 'The Development of Redevelopment: Public Housing and Urban Renewal in Los Angeles', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 6.3 (1982), 393-413.

accelerated *de facto* segregation.[42]

When the city elected its first Black Mayor, Tom Bradley, in 1973, his story followed that of many other Black elected officials in this period.[43] Faced with satisfying a delicate multicultural electoral alliance and tackling the apparent 'urban crisis', Bradley's most significant contribution during his five terms was the continued redevelopment and renewal of L.A.'s urban core through the late 1970s and 1980s.[44] Downtown Los Angeles was transformed as the city looked to become a global financial capital, while the city's hosting of the 1984 Olympics brought international attention and focus on the apparent success of the multicultural metropolis. This process has been described as the crafting of 'World City Liberalism'; an effort to remake L.A. as a city safe for capital and investment whilst promoting a multicultural diversity to compete in a globalised economic environment.[45] Critics have argued this process created an uneven redevelopment that courted corporations and improved security and recreation for wealthier enclaves, but continued to ignore spiralling socioeconomic problems within communities of colour.[46] From the late nineteenth century, when Los Angeles grew to become the West's largest city, it has remained the nation's most diverse urban area. In addition to Black and white residents; migrants from China, Japan, Korea, Philippines, Mexico and other Central American nations arrived in large numbers during L.A.'s development to create a patchwork spatial and cultural chorography. This has meant the city's racial histories can never be understood in simple binary terms between 'white' and 'Black' residents.[47] While the histories of L.A.'s multiracial communities cannot be easily summarised, the following attempts to briefly explore how African American and Latinx residents experienced, struggled, and survived through these developments to provide a contextual basis for their activism in the 1980s.

The 1850 census of Los Angeles listed twelve African Americans residing in the city. This quickly expanded in response to cultural perceptions of Black life in L.A. that amounted to a unique kind of boosterism. Los Angeles was seen as an oasis, far away from the brutality of

[42] For 'white flight', see Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto,* Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis,* Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven,* Kevin Kruse and Sugrue (eds.), *The New Suburban* History (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

[43] Cedric Johnson, *Revolutionaries to Race Leaders: Black Power and the Making of African American Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

[44] For a comprehensive analysis of Tom Bradley's mayoralty, see: Raphael Sonenshein, *Politics in Black and White: Race and power in Los Angeles*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993).

[45] See Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles,* pp.9-10.

[46] See Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, Davis, *Quartz*, pp.151-264, Sonnenshein, *Politics in Black and White*, pp.192-209.

[47] Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race.*

southern Jim Crow and the harsh living conditions of Northern and Eastern cities.[48] The reality was more complex: African Americans did have greater access to employment and opportunities for home-ownership, leading W.E.B Du Bois to describe Black Angelenos as 'the most beautifully housed group of colored people in the United States' in 1913.[49] Still, these ideas of freedom and opportunity were often only true in relation to other regions of the U.S. Black Angelenos continually confronted an increasingly rigid colour line that limited where they could live, work and socialise. They responded, like many Black communities in the 'New Negro' era, by engaging with Black social and political organisations such as local chapters of the NAACP, UNIA, and women's clubs.[50] Whilst L.A.'s Black population were becoming increasingly segregated residentially, the Second Great Migration dramatically altered living patterns in the city. Fewer than 75,000 African Americans lived in L.A. at the outbreak of World War Two. By 1950 this number had trebled as the city became an industrial behemoth, the site of crucial war production and Fordist manufacturing.[51] Racially restrictive covenants emerged throughout housing tracts in the city, strengthening the colour line and forcing an influx of African Americans to reside in the increasingly overcrowded areas of South Central, Avalon, Watts and Little Tokyo. While conditions were often deplorable, many African Americans found greater financial independence in L.A., and were emboldened to challenge discrimination throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Charlotta Bass, editor of *The California Eagle*, a Black newspaper that had previously been an advocate for Black migration, became the most prominent agitator for racial equality in the city, leading battles to desegregate housing, beaches and labour unions.[52] Although residential segregation continued apace, Central Avenue (the symbolic centre of the South Central area) became the forefront of L.A.'s cultural production for Black residents. Jazz clubs such as the Dunbar Hotel saw America's leading Black musicians frequent the area, creating a nightlife that rivalled the nation's most celebrated urban areas and instilling significant local pride within the Black community.[53]

These developments produced material gains for many African Americans, and many

[48] See Anderson, "A City Called Heaven", pp.336-342.
[49] Douglas Flamming, *Bound for Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2005), p.56.
[50] See Flamming, *Bound For Freedom,* pp.126-158, Emory Tolbert, *The UNIA and Black Los Angeles: Ideology and Community in the American Garvey Movement* (Los Angeles: Centre for Afro-American Studies, 1980).
[51] U.S. Census Bureau, *A Report of the Seventeenth Decennial of the United States Census of Population, Volume 2, Part 5: California* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1952), p.72.
[52] Regina Freer, 'L.A. Race Woman: Charlotta Bass and the Complexities of Black Political Development in Los Angeles', *American Quarterly*, 56.3 (2004), 607-632.
[53] Daniel Widener, *Black Arts West: Culture and Struggle in Postwar Los Angeles* (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 2010), Gaye Theresa Johnson, *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity: Music, Race, and Spatial Entitlement in Los Angeles* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2013) pp.48-84, Bette Yarbrough Cox, *Central Avenue: Its Rise and Fall, 1890–1955* (Los Angeles: BEEM, 1996).

Southern migrants still considered the city to be a haven. Furthering this optimistic vision of the city, the National Urban League named L.A. the most desirable city to live for African Americans in 1964.[54] This perception was shattered in August 1965, when the city of Watts (which contained 70% of L.A.'s Black population, located in the southern part of South Central) exploded in violence following the controversial arrest of motorist Marquette Frye. Seen as a symbolic end to the supposed 'peaceful' or moderate phase of the Civil Rights Movement, the Watts Rebellion was understood by white America to be a dramatic break with the recent past.[55] Scholars have often seen the disorder as a manifestation of intergenerational differences over the ambiguous place of African Americans in Los Angeles, pitting the perceived progress and relative security understood by the Great Migration generation against the sense of continued injustice, institutional discrimination and increasing police brutality felt by many young Angelenos.[56] In contrast, Jeanne Theoharis has argued that Watts did not act as a paradigmatic shift between 'Civil Rights' and 'Black Power', but that the long history of activism in the city demonstrated continuity.[57] Historians have explored the many examples of Black protest in L.A. during the 1950s and early 1960s, a city that led the nation in attempts to eradicate restrictive covenants, and organised around issues of police brutality and harassment of Black women, to support Theoharis' conception of a 'long' Black Freedom Movement.[58] Watts cannot be seen as the failure of activists to engage with working-class Black residents, but rather their success in galvanising communities, and the proliferation of radical organising that followed Watts drew connections with these earlier movements. This thesis will also draw similar connections between activism prior to, and following, the 1992 Rodney King Crisis. Understanding activism in the 1980s and 1990s not only extends the timeframe of the 'long' Civil Rights Movement, but demonstrates that despite significant changes within the social and spatial makeup of communities of colour, these campaigns shared many continuities with the more celebrated

[54] Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, p.4.
[55] Scott Saul, 'Gridlock of Rage: The Watts and Rodney King Riots' in *A Companion to Los Angeles*, ed. by William Deverell and Greg Hise (Chichester: Willey Blackwell, 2010), pp.147-167 [pp.147-152].
[56] Sides, *L.A City Limits*, pp.169-176. See also: Gerald Horne, *The Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1997)
[57] Jeanne Theoharis, '"Alabama on Avalon": Rethinking the Watts Uprising and the Character of Black Protest in Los Angeles', in *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil-Rights-Black Power Era*, ed. by Peniel E. Joseph (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2006), pp.39-66. See also: Christopher Strain, *Pure Fire*: *Self-Defense as Activism in the Civil Rights Era* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2005), pp.127-144.
[58] For the Long Civil Rights Movement, see: Dowd Hall, 'The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past', Theoharis, 'Black Freedom Studies: Re-imagining and Redefining the Fundamentals', *History Compass*, 4.2 (2006), 348-367.

For Civil Rights organising in L.A before Watts., see: Andrea Gibbons, *City of Segregation: 100 Years of Struggle for Housing in Los Angeles* (New York: Verso, 2018), pp.41-64, Anne Gray Fischer, "Land of the White Hunter": Legal Liberalism and the Racial Politics of Morals Enforcement in Midcentury Los Angeles," *Journal of American History*, 105.4 (2019), 868-884, Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, pp.64-85, Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, pp.57-94.

social movements of the 1960s.

Given Los Angeles' territorial status before being incorporated into the United States, it is unsurprising that a large Mexican-American and Latinx presence has impacted the historical development of the city. An increasing number arrived in the early twentieth century, settling in Central and East Los Angeles - in less segregated residential patterns than African Americans faced - around areas such as Boyle Heights, Lincoln Heights and Belvedere. These were patterns which would continue through to the present day.[59] Most worked in agricultural and industrial labour during these years, forming social groups and bonds that blended elements of both Mexican and American cultures in uneven ways.[60] Yet it also strengthened beliefs that L.A. offered social networks and opportunities for immigrants, and by 1928 the city had the largest Mexican population in the United States.[61] The mass 'repatriation' of Mexican-Americans during the Great Depression - which saw one-third of L.A.'s Latinx population deported – simultaneously radicalised and depoliticised those remaining by underscoring their precarious status in America. They mirrored other Latinx communities throughout the country in turning to a burgeoning labour movement for support and the primary means of defence of their civil rights.[62] Throughout the 1930s, these immigrants, particularly women involved in the cannery and garment industries, helped lead efforts to deconstruct L.A.'s harsh anti-labour environment.[63] As Eduardo Pagan has suggested, the cultural displacement and discrimination meant Mexican-American youth often had to forge their own identity by developing new urban meaning through the public spaces of Los Angeles.[64] This growing assertiveness produced resentment in a city increasingly anxious to retain a hegemonic white culture. Tensions materialised through the wrongful arrest and imprisonment of twelve Mexican-American youths during the 1942 Sleepy Lagoon murder trial, and the Zoot Suit riot of 1943, when servicemen stationed in

[59] See Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, pp.19-42.
[60] See Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, Stephanie Lewthwaite, *Race, Place and Reform in Mexican Los Angeles: A Transnational Perspective, 1890-1940* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2009), Douglas Monroy, *Rebirth: Mexican Los Angeles from the Great Migration to the Great Depression* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).
[61] Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican-American*, p.13.
[62] Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005)
[63] Clementina Duron, 'Mexican Women and Labor Conflict in Los Angeles: the ILGWU Dressmakers' Strike of 1933', *Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 15.1 (1984), 145-161, Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987), Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.72-99
[64] Eduardo Obregon Pagan, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), pp.151-2

L.A. attacked and stripped male immigrants of their clothing.[65] While these events evidenced the discriminatory barriers faced by Mexican-Americans, they also helped to forge new forms of political activism in the city. Latina-led unions founded Sleepy Lagoon defence committees to cover legal fees, and eventually helped form the Community Service Organisation in 1947.[66] The CSO are most recognised for training future leaders of the Chicano/a movement such as Cesar Chavez and Delores Huerta, and for campaigning tirelessly for Edward Roybal, who in 1949 became L.A.'s first Mexican-American elected official. Their work extended far beyond the electoral arena, challenging discrimination in housing, providing legal support to Mexican-Americans, and demanding progress within local communities through improved street-lighting and sidewalks.[67] As the 1950 police rampage known as 'Bloody Christmas' suggests, Mexican-Americans and migrants still faced many challenges created by racial discrimination in L.A.[68] By the 1960s, however, communities had founded a range of social networks and activist organisations to confront such challenges.

In the aftermath of Watts, activism within both Black and Latinx communities focused on a greater range of issues, reflecting the increased attention and funding directed towards L.A. While the more 'radical' forms of protest are most popularly remembered, this organising took a variety of forms, and both African Americans and Mexican-Americans tackled social justice in similar, but often separate ways. The flourishing of the Black Power movement saw the emergence of myriad radical African American organisations, including a controversial chapter of the Black Panther Party and the one of the country's leading proponents of cultural nationalism, the US organisation, who promoted and publicised the establishment of Kwanza.[69] Los Angeles also became a national centre for the burgeoning movement to construct the Chicano/a identity and increased political engagement on the part of Mexican-Americans. The Chicano/a movement permeated throughout all of Los Angeles life: *La Raza Unida* looked to replicate Black efforts to secure greater political representation, while the Brown Berets mirrored the Black Panthers' paramilitary aesthetics and faith in anti-colonial

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[65] *Ibid*.
[66] Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, p.242.
[67] Margaret Rose, 'Gender and Civic Activism in Mexican American Barrios in California: The Community Service Organization, 1947–1962' in *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America 1945-1960*, ed. by Joanne Meyerowitz, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994) pp.177-200.
[68] Edward Escobar, 'Bloody Christmas and the Irony of Police Professionalism: The Los Angeles Police Department, Mexican Americans, and Police Reform in the 1950s', *Pacific Historical Review*, 72.2 (2003), 171-199.
[69] Judson Jeffries and Malcolm Foley, 'To Live and Die in L.A.' in *Comrades: A Local History of the Black Panther Party*, ed. by Judson Jeffries (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2007), pp.255-290, Scot Brown, *Fighting for US: Maulana Karenga, the US organization, and Black cultural Nationalism*(New York: New York University Press, 2003).

global revolution.[70] Chicano/a opposition to the Vietnam war grew, and marches of the 'Chicano Moratorium' coalition drew deadly confrontations with police.[71]The 'mural' movement, designed to illustrate and imprint the history and culture of Mexican-Americans onto the physical environment, became particularly popular in L.A.[72] While Chicanas participated in all of these movements, the lack of female leadership and focus on issues important to these women created an energetic array of organisations to represent a uniquely racialised perspective on feminism.[73] From this activism, a range of community organisations emerged, most notably the *Comision Femenil de Los Angeles*, which worked to train future Chicana leaders and established the Chicana Services Action Center.[74]

Both Black and Mexican-American activists also engaged with the state through War on Poverty programmes. Johnnie Tillmon, a Black single mother of six children, founded one of the country's first welfare rights organisation, Aid to Needy Children, in 1963, and would go on to become the chair and executive director of the National Welfare Rights Organisation.[75] Robert Bauman has extensively analysed a range of organisations that looked to secure federal and state funding for neighbourhood improvement. The Watts Labour Community Action Committee and the Neighbourhood Adult Participation Project, founded by African Americans, as well as The East Los Angeles Community Union and Chicana Services Action Centre, representing Chicano/a communities, sought to provide employment, training and economic development through their own particular understandings of nationalism and racial pride.[76] The obfuscation of white politicians hindered the disbursement of War on Poverty funds, and these limited programmes could do little to stem escalating disparities in wealth

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[70] Laura Pulido, *Black Brown, Yellow and Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2006), pp.89-122, Ernesto Chavez, *"¡Mi Raza Primero!" Nationalism, Identity, and Insurgency in the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles, 1966–1978* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp.42-60.

[71]Lorena Oropeza, *¡ Raza Sí!¡ Guerra No!: Chicano Protest and Patriotism during the Viet Nam War Era,* (California: University of California Press, 2005), Edward Escobar, 'The Dialectics of Repression: The Los Angeles Police Department and the Chicano movement, 1968-1971', *The Journal of American History,* 79.4 (1993), 1483-1514.

[72]Marc Rodriguez, *Rethinking the Chicano Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp.139-164, Avila, 'L.A.'s Invisible Freeway Revolt: The Cultural Politics of Fighting Freeways', *Journal of Urban History*, 40.5 (2014), 831-842.

[73] Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.135-165.

[74] Virginia Espino, '"Woman Sterilized as Gives Birth": Forced Sterilization and Chicana Resistance in the 1970s' in *Las Obreras: Chicana Politics of Work and Family,* ed. by Vicki L. Ruiz (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, 2000), pp.65-82

[75] Premilla Nadasen, *Welfare Warriors: The Welfare Rights Movement in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

[76]Robert Bauman, 'Gender, Civil Rights Activism and the War on Poverty in Los Angeles' in *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History*, ed. by Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirjian (Athena, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011), pp.209-229, Robert Bauman, *Race and the War on Poverty: From Watts to East L.A.* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014).

brought by creeping urban deindustrialisation.[77] War on Poverty organising also fostered interracial resentment and conflict, as groups who represented 'a clear, unmistakable geographical component' competed for funding to benefit neighbourhoods segmented along lines of race.[78] This highlights one of the key conceptual problems in understanding activism in L.A.; the important role of both multicultural and racially exclusive organising. A city with the racial and ethnic diversity of Los Angeles ensured that interactions between these different populations were frequent, and often affected how race was constructed by Angelenos.[79] This held much potential for interracial cooperation within protest and organising, as a number of historians have pointed to.[80] Simultaneously, it could also create conflict, through the perception of funding and social change as a zero-sum game, and understandings of discrimination and injustice that many felt were specific to their community.[81] Thus, this thesis analyses several movements that were multiracial in their composition and leadership, and argues that a focus on space and place provided fruitful ground for such organising. Yet it is important to recognise that the majority of the grassroots activists explored here focused on racially homogenous neighbourhoods, and at times racially-exclusive conceptions of place and the meaning of space. Therefore many organisations were mainly comprised of one racial group, and at times exhibited racist or nativist sentiments themselves. These myriad standpoints show the multiplicity of ideas concerning racial composition and positionality in L.A. Though, in the broadest sense, they were joined together by a commitment to developing social change that tackled discrimination through a deconstruction of its geographical implementation, and worked to demand their full inclusion into urban life.

Historians focusing on Black and Latinx activism across the U.S. have often curtailed this narrative before the 1980s.[82] When advocating for further study of Black activism in the

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[77] Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, pp.176-189.
[78] *Ibid*., p.5.
[79] Mark Wild, *Street Meeting: Multiethnic Neighborhoods in Early Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2005), Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race*, pp.4-7.
[80] Shana Bernstein, *Bridges of Reform: Interracial Civil Rights Activism in Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), Mark Brilliant, *The Color of America has Changed: How Racial Diversity Shaped Civil Rights Reform in California, 1941-1978*, (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2010), Kevin Allen Leonard, 'In the Interest of All Races: African Americans and Interracial Cooperation in Los Angeles During and After World War II' in *Seeking El Dorado*, ed. by De Graaf, pp.309-340.
[81] Alberto Camarillo 'Cities of color: The New Racial Frontier in California's Minority-Majority Cities', *Pacific Historical Review* ,76.1 (2007), 1-28 [20-23], Bauman, 'The Neighborhood Adult Participation Project: Black-Brown Strife in the War on Poverty in Los Angeles', in *The Struggle in Black and Brown: African American and Mexican American Relations During the Civil Rights Era* ed. by Brian Behnken (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), pp.104-124.
[82] Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt, 2006), Rhonda Y. Williams, *Concrete Demands: The Search For Black Power in the 20th Century*, (New York: Routledge, 2015), Matthew Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia*

1970s, Stephen Tuck suggested that we should avoid 'lumping the decade together with the 1980s as a post-civil rights era of reversal.'[83] The decade is therefore firmly entrenched as a period of defeat and despair for African Americans and Latinx people alike. This coincides with a traditional perspective on the impacts of the Reagan and Bush presidencies on these communities. In this understanding, the decline of welfare and federal social spending, and the re-emergence of the 'war on drugs' only accelerated crime, unemployment, and misery.[84] Moreover, as several scholars have argued, the rise of neoliberalism also brought the increasing privatisation of urban public space. An urban landscape that was once in theory open and democratic (although often restricted for many in practice) was being replaced by highly securitised shopping malls, car parks and gated residential communities, further reducing access and opportunities for free speech and protest.[85] A number of historians have begun to restore the role of activism in local and national politics during the 1980s.[86] This thesis continues these efforts by pivoting our focus towards poor communities of colour as central actors within these histories.

By unintentionally imposing an end to the Long Civil Rights Movement at the beginning of the 1980s, we are implicitly reinforcing the idea of an urban underclass. The theory of an 'underclass', initially proposed by Charles Murray in 1984 to discuss welfare dependency, has certainly not always been unsympathetic towards poor communities of colour. William Julius Wilson, for instance, understood the underclass as materialising in the wake of continued deindustrialisation and white flight from cities. Yet diagnoses of the symptoms and the demographics of an underclass are often uniform: as the urban crisis deepened throughout the postwar era, a culture of poverty and deprivation became ingrained in poor inner-city communities, resulting in widespread unemployment, welfare dependency, and high levels of crime and violence.[87] Areas of Los Angeles, such as East L.A. and South

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(Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), Theoharis, Countryman, and Komozi Woodard (eds.), *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), Rodriguez, *Rethinking the Chicano Movement*.

[83] Stephen Tuck, '"We Are Taking Up Where the Movement of the 1960s Left Off": The Proliferation and Power of African American Protest during the 1970s', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 43.4 (2008), 637-654 [654].

[84] Donna Murch, 'Crack in Los Angeles: Crisis, Militarization, and Black Response to the Late Twentieth-Century War on Drugs', *Journal of American History*, 102.1 (2015), 162-173.

[85] See Davis, *Quartz*, Michael Sorkin (ed.), *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space* (New York: Macmillan, 1992), Bruce Schulman, 'The Privatisation of Everyday Life: Public Policy, Public Services, and Public Space in the 1980s' in *Living in the Eighties*, ed. by Gil Troy and Vincent J. Cannato (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.167-180.

[86] Bradford Martin, *The Other Eighties: A Secret History of America in the Age of Reagan*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 2011), Simon Hall, *American Patriotism, American Protest: Social Movements Since the Sixties,* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), Foley, *Front Porch Politics*.

[87] Charles Murray, *Losing Ground: American Social Policy, 1950-1980* (New York: Basic Books 1984), William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner-City, the Underclass and Public Policy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

Central, would certainly be seen to fit this definition during the 1980s and 1990s. With the removal of many racial housing covenants, more affluent Black and Latinx Angelenos chose to leave the inner-city. These shifts exacerbated the economic disparities within neighbourhoods of Los Angeles, and intensified the role that class and wealth played in the construction of place both within and outside communities of colour.[88] In addition, South and East Los Angeles also saw an influx of over 1.5 million Latinx immigrants, as Civil Wars disturbed Central America. Many were funnelled into low-paying service work and lived in highly concentrated housing projects that ensured they remained in poverty. Essentially, as the 1980s progressed, *low-income* communities of colour, as opposed to just 'Black' or 'Mexican' communities, were residing in increasingly segregated geographic patterns throughout Los Angeles. The stereotypes these changes engendered solidified the racial and economic constructions of place. Politicians and the media sensationalised social problems in South and East L.A., projecting images of communities destroyed by the 'crack' epidemic and spiralling violent crime rates.[89] These acts of racialised place-making manipulated public fears of urban chaos and drove support for law-and-order policies of saturation policing and mass incarceration.[90] They also repelled investment in these communities by firms who saw no benefit from building housing, offices, or businesses in dangerous neighbourhoods consumed by poverty. At the same time, it signalled to some developers that they could house dangerous or exploitative projects in these areas, and would be welcomed by residents for the jobs and investment provided. The urban 'underclass' was therefore a concept understood through productions of place influenced by race and class, that in turn intensified the spatial inequalities which affected the everyday urban experience of Black and Latinx residents.

Undoubtedly, the inner-city neighbourhoods of L.A. faced many challenges in the 1980s and 1990s. Yet the theory of an urban underclass has been debunked as conceptually reductive, providing a homogenising and pessimistic view of everyday life in neighbourhoods inhabited by people of colour.[91] Moreover, if we rely on the argument that urban social movements declined in the 1980s and an urban underclass replaced them, then the reasons for the 1992

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[88] See: David M. Grant, Melvin L. Oliver, and Angela D. James, 'African Americans: Social and Economic Bifurification' in *Ethnic Los Angeles*, ed. by Rodger Waldinger and Mehdi Bozorgmehr (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1996), pp.379-412, Ong and Blumenberg, ''Income and Racial Inequality in Los Angeles', Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, pp.186-209.

[89] See: Sides, 'Straight Into Compton: American Dreams, Urban Nightmares, and the Metamorphosis of a Black Suburb', *American Quarterly*, 56.3 (2004), 583-605.

[90] Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, pp.113-138.

[91] Michael B. Katz (ed.), *The Underclass Debate: Views from* History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), Robin D.G. Kelley, *Yo'Mama's Disfunktional!: Fighting the Culture Wars in Urban America* (New York: Beacon Press, 1997).

Rodney King Crisis are identified through an overly simplistic explanation. A range of sympathetic scholars have sought to understand the unrest through a mixture of economic destabilisation, punitive policing and criminalisation, and the repercussions of demographic change.[92] Others have been more forthright in their belief that the Crisis occurred in part due to the lack of activism and leadership in the city. Mike Davis, for instance, lamented the lack of young Black political participation compared to the 1960s, suggesting 'Teenagers, who today flock to hear Easy-E rap "It ain't about colour, it's about the colour of money, I love that green"' - then filled the Sports Arena to listen to Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown. Bobby Seale and James Forman.'[93] However the Crisis has been explained, it has often neglected to hear the voices of the Black and Latinx residents who worked to confront injustice in the years preceding the Rodney King verdict. Nevertheless, these voices were certainly not obscured in contemporary Los Angeles. As E.P. Thompson famously described, civil unrest was often motivated by a complex set of desires and frustrations on the part of participants, with a wider variety of long-term strategies developed before 'riots' occur.[94] Grassroots movements representing a range of causes regularly marched, occupied buildings, attended hearings and initiated lawsuits. Newspapers carried stories of these emerging campaigns and demonstrations on a daily basis. Academic studies from a range of disciplines have examined these groups on an individual basis, exploring their identities, their tactics, and the challenges they faced.[95] These studies have offered us an illustrative and important foundation for understanding how these grassroots movements formed and their impact on Los Angeles. This thesis, however, looks to build on this by drawing together this fragmented and variegated activism to complicate how we understand the identities and beliefs of these urban residents, and to show the common concerns that prompted them to take action, even as they acted separately. These concerns, this thesis argues, were centred around the urban forms of L.A.; claiming space, controlling how such space was developed and utilised, and producing a new urban meaning which included and celebrated the diversity of its

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[92] Gooding-Williams (ed.), *Reading Rodney King,* Mark Baldassare (ed.), *The L.A Riots: Lessons for the Urban Future*, (New York: Routledge, 1994), Ong and Blumenberg, 'Income and Racial Inequality in Los Angeles', Anderson, 'A City Called Heaven', Soja 'Los Angeles 1965-1992'.

[93] Davis, *Quartz*, p.298.See also: Horne, 'Black Fire', James A. Regaldo, 'Community Coalition Building' in *The L.A. Riots*, ed. by Baldassare, pp.205-235.

[94] E.P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present*, 50 (1971), 76-136.

[95] For the most relevant examples see: Mary Pardo, *Mexican American Women Activists: Identity and Resistance in Two Los Angeles Communities*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998),Cynthia Cranford, 'Labor, Gender and the Politics of Citizenship: Organizing Justice for Janitors in Los Angeles' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of South Carolina, 2001), Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), pp.181-240, Sonya Winton, 'Concerned Citizens: Environmental (In)Justice in Black Los Angeles' in *Black Los Angeles*, ed. by Hunt and Ramon, pp.343-359, Brenda Stevenson, *The Contested Murder of Latasha Harlins: Justice, Gender, and the Origins of the LA Riots* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*.

residents. As post-Rodney King Los Angeles saw a new resurgence of social activism in the 1990s and early 2000s, scholars rushed to hail their new focus on geographically-conscious activism as an innovative, postmodern development in organising.[96] These movements were undoubtedly encouraging and effective, yet this thesis suggests that the fight for spatial justice was always a prominent factor in organising in L.A. Considering the longer roots of such activism helps us to understanding the Rodney King Crisis as one part of a much longer history of spatialised injustice within urban communities, and points to the important role of space and place in both the formation of social identities and the lived experience of inequality.

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At the heart of this thesis lie the stories of how activists looked to improve the health, wealth, and quality of life for residents within communities of colour. Stressing the need to uncover the voices of low-income Black women, Rhonda Williams has argued that historians can gain new insight through reconceptualising methodological approaches to urban history. She highlights that 'low-income Black women are more than their suffering; more even than revelatory expositions of the matrixes of race, gender, economic, and spatial oppressions.'[97] Uncovering the means through which Black and Latinx communities were subject to spatialised injustice is certainly important, but we cannot see the productions of place and space as being unidirectional processes of oppression which victimise communities of colour. Through the inclusion of marginalised voices, we can witness such people as actors and as 'human beings experiencing and imagining…Surviving. Suffering. Challenging. Acting. Living.'[98] Exploring the role of place and space within communities of colour can make a significant contribution to this endeavour. As Dolores Hayden has suggested, cultural geographies and the 'vernacular' landscape are intimately linked to social history because they are the story of struggle; 'human patterns impressed upon the contours of the natural environment.'[99] The ways residents of these communities imagine and describe space indicates much about their ideas, their goals, and their dreams of a just society. Understanding their challenges for control of spaces elucidates how Black and Latinx communities experienced and conceptualised injustice. Thus by seeing the production of

[96] See Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice* pp.138-155, pp.181-201, Manuel Pastor, 'Common Ground at Ground Zero? The New Economy and the New Organizing in Los Angeles', *Antipode*, 33.3 (2001), 260-289.
[97] Rhonda Y. Williams, 'Places Created and Peopled: "Black Women: Where They Be . . . Suffering?"', *Journal of Urban History*, 46.3 (2020), 478-489 [481]
[98] *Ibid*., 482.
[99] Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997),

urban places and spaces as a process of continued remaking and renegotiation, 'systems of power and humanity speak to the complex, inextricably linked, lived realities and structural processes of urban change'.[100] Drawing on a broad range of sources – archival collections, newspapers, and oral histories – this thesis connects the voices of low-income people of colour to histories of urban inequality and the production of space. By considering a range of grassroots organisations hitherto neglected by historians, or studied in isolation, this thesis looks to reconstruct the reclamation of community space as a fundamental goal of the many activists working in Los Angeles during the 1980s and 1990s.

The sources used here directly challenge the assumptions that activism was absent from Black and Latinx life in L.A. Although prominent scholars such as Cornel West and Edward Soja have indicated that there was a 'paucity of courageous leadership' and 'remarkably little resistance to restructuring' in L.A., archival collections and newspaper stories contain widespread examples of activists' indelible impact on Los Angeles.[101] Inevitably, these sources pose challenges for historians attempting to understand such stories. Scholars across many disciplines have explored why archives, news media, and oral histories cannot be seen as objective or representative reconstructions of events.[102] Rather, it can be the subjective selection of what materials and memories are retained for posterity, or the politicised construction of reality through 'the first draft of history' that provides insight of its own. Many of the sources utilised in this thesis through which the voices of Black and Latinx activists can be heard - such as funding applications, newspaper stories, or groups' public communications - inevitably have an intended audience. Within short profiles, mission statements, or quotations for reporters, activists were required to encapsulate their reasons for protesting in ways that would evoke empathy, public support, or monetary donations. Within these parameters, what is most striking is the frequency with which activists discuss issues of space and place when constructing a discourse of protest. Despite evidencing an array of concerns, the movements here repeatedly construct imagined geographies of both their own communities and other areas of the city, and continually highlight spatial inequalities. The spatiality of protest – for instance sites that were selected for campaigns, or the ways activists utilised spaces – became a means to garner attention and allow organisers to elaborate on their arguments. Examining the role of space and place in

[100] Williams, 'Places Created and Peopled', 485.
[101] Cornel West, 'Learning to Talk of Race' in *Reading Rodney King*, ed. by Gooding-Williams, pp.255-260 [p.259], Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, p.219.
[102] For example, on archives see: Bonnie Smith, 'Gender and the Practices of Scientific History', *American Historical Review*, 100.4 (1995), 1150-1176, Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), Kate Dossett, 'Writing to Stay in History: Women, Politics and New Deal Archives', *Journal of American Studies*, 52.1 (2018), 1-25. On news production, see: Ciaran McCullagh and Jo Campling, *Media Power: A Sociological Introduction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), Sarah Niblock and David Machin (eds.), *News Production: Theory and Practice*, (London: Routledge, 2006).

activism therefore not only allows historians to uncover the shifting political and social identities of activists, but also underscores the ways in which spaces both physical and imagined were central to a wide range of struggles for urban communities.

This thesis suggests that the enormity of the Rodney King Crisis should not obscure the wider processes of urban transformation during the 1980s and 1990s. Nevertheless, the historical significance of the Crisis undoubtedly plays an important role in determining the organisation of this thesis. As discussed below, Los Angeles increasingly became seen as representative of the African American and Latinx experience in the U.S throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and the unrest viewed as a reflection of the failures and transformation brought to communities of colour during in post-Civil Rights America. In addition, the unrest did not spread to other urban areas (unlike similar cases in 1968 and 2020). But while Los Angeles certainly cannot be seen in isolation from the rest of the U.S., the city can provide crucial insight into how national and local structures transformed urban communities of colour, and importantly how these communities responded. The Crisis was a 'rainbow riot', with participants cutting across all cleavages of race, class, and gender. Yet while arrest statistics and media reports are problematic, 87% of those arrested were either Black or Latinx, and all scholarly evidence suggests that these two groups comprised the majority of participants.[103] Without denying the existence or significance of other grassroots protests, I have therefore focused predominantly on organisations that primarily represented Black and/or Latinx Angelenos, and where race played a significant role in the basis or meaning of their protests. This has resulted in a concentration on a select few areas within the city. Black and Latinx Angelenos - particularly those with greater incomes – resided throughout the city, but I have largely focused on areas which were predominately comprised of people of colour. This has therefore resulted in the majority of organisations studied being located in either South Central Los Angeles, East Los Angeles, or Pico-Union, all three of which were geographically imprecise areas defined primarily through their association as 'Black' or 'Mexican' neighbourhoods.

The following chapters focus primarily on a range of case-studies, or multiple case-studies around a singular issue, that explore the role of space and place in organising. Inevitably, the complete stories of some of these groups have been difficult to uncover. Given the pressures on their time and resources, activists cannot be expected to prioritise detailed and complete paper trails for future historians. Other organisations existed fleetingly, and thus what is available is sometimes curtailed without a clear resolution. For these reasons, I have

[103] For arrest statistics see: Paul Lieberman, "51% of Riot Arrests were Latino, Study Says", *Los Angeles Times* (18 June 1992)

attempted to focus on those groups with the most complete recorded sources in the hope of constructing the most illustrative narrative. This has often led to an imbalanced (though not entire) focus on those groups with the largest support, those most likely to attract media attention, and those who found the most success in achieving their goals. Owing to limitations upon time and resources, this thesis does not contain sources which are available in Spanish only. A very small number of sources are only printed or available in Spanish. The bilingual nature of social life for many immigrant Angelenos encouraged grassroots organisers to produce materials in both English and Spanish, and in some cases have been translated before being placed into archives.[104] Beyond this, I have sought to include a diverse range of causes and concerns that galvanised protest in the city. By analysing issues as distinct as police brutality, the siting of environmental hazards, the janitorial industry, liquor stores, and urban tourism, this thesis demonstrates two key issues regarding protest in L.A. First, that we cannot see communities of colour as one homogenous group. We cannot generalise around labels such as 'Black', 'Latinx', 'men', and 'women', or reduce protest within these communities to singular issues. These were heterogeneous neighbourhoods, through which racial, class, and gendered identities manifested in varying ways. The second is to underscore the importance of place and space, and the spatial consciousness of activists, as a critical factor within multiple forms of discrimination, oppression, and resistance. Through exploring this diverse range of activism, we see that while struggles for 'spatial justice' took many forms, the demand for community control of urban development and the meaning of place remained central in efforts to achieve equality and justice within the city.

This thesis begins by examining several interconnected issues that were historically some of the most contentious topics amongst Black and Latinx Angelenos; those involving the criminal justice system. Although police brutality is seen as the root cause of the Rodney King Crisis, a number of different issues surrounding law and order drove Black and Latinx Angelenos to organise and protest throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Chapter one argues that through a combination of technological innovation and racialised productions of place, the city imposed a spatially uneven system of policing and justice which criminalised communities of colour. Residents recognised these processes and sought to gain greater control of criminal justice policies. Communities simultaneously fought to end police brutality, ensure that police protected and responded to Black and Latinx communities, and resisted

[104] Where interviews and oral histories have been used in this thesis which may have been conducted in Spanish, these have been translated into English by their original author, either in archives such as the Mary Santoli Pardo collection, or in printed scholarly work, for example Cynthia Cranford, 'Labor, Gender and the Politics of Citizenship'.

the racial disparities inherent in processes of mass incarceration. It therefore suggests that communities of colour not only recognised the role of place and space in determining uneven criminal justice policies, but utilised this knowledge and created counter-productions to challenge the unequal spatial delivery of justice.

A repercussion of rising incarceration was the need to expand California's prison system. Few communities, however, desire large-scale prisons constructed near to their homes, schools, and workplaces. In deciding to build their largest state prison in the predominately Mexican-American neighbourhood of Boyle Heights in East Los Angeles, the State of California demonstrated how processes of place-making resulted in the remapping of urban space in ways that could have serious consequences for those living in these areas. In chapter two we see how, faced with a prison, an incinerator, and other forms of urban blight, the Mothers of East Los Angeles (MELA), a loose coalition of Mexican-American residents of Boyle Heights, launched a seven-year campaign to successfully prevent such impositions. The Mothers constructed their own understandings of urban meaning through the prism of race and gender, a counter-space they used to rally community members to defend their neighbourhood. They invoked the historical racism embedded with the spatial development of their community, and the spatial inequalities inherent in the city, to deconstruct the logic underpinning the proposed prison and incinerator. Through a broad definition of motherhood that legitimised their right to defend the community, MELA demanded a greater role for residents in determining the construction of urban space. Through MELA, we see how race and gender were integral within productions of place and space, both from those outside the community and those who lived within it.

While the leaders of MELA had resided in Los Angeles for decades, many of the city's low-paid service workers were new arrivals during the 1980s, entering from Mexico, Nicaragua, Guatemala and El Salvador, where they often found work in the janitorial industry. Chapter three explores the efforts of the Service Employees International Union, who looked to these migrants to help build a union movement that would reverse the decline in wages and working conditions that had proliferated for janitors in the previous decade. L.A.'s chapter of 'Justice for Janitors' (JfJ) became one of the most notable success stories within labour organising during the 1980s and 1990s. Critical to their success was the way their activism highlighted the contested meanings of urban space. JfJ drew members through engaging the same social spaces that employers had used to construct and maintain a network of low-wage immigrant labour. The movement demanded access and visibility for janitors - and by extension immigrants - within the city's spaces of wealth and privilege. Their colourful protests and street theatre brought attention to their movement, but also stressed the

paradoxes contained within urban space. Justice for Janitors offers the clearest example of how the creative use of space and an engagement with the discourse of spatial justice, were fundamental aspects of successful organising. But they also looked to reclaim urban space and in particular the workplace for immigrant janitors. Where the janitorial industry had once been an occupation that was invisible in the public sphere, JfJ looked to restore immigrants' role in cleaning the city's offices and studios as a vital part of urban meaning.

Chapter four examines various approaches to the issue of liquor stores within South Central Los Angeles. While national attention turned towards the issue in March 1991 following the murder of a Black teenager in a liquor store, their presence had riled the Black community for decades. South Central contained more liquor stores per square-mile than any other community in the United States, the result of spatialised inequality borne from a lack of economic investment within the area. The proliferation of liquor stores was, for many residents, a symbolic representation of their community's dispossession and deprivation. Yet the high number of liquor stores and the paucity of full-service supermarkets also produced tangible economic and social consequences for residents: liquor stores sold lower-quality goods at higher prices than supermarkets and encouraged loitering and criminal activity. The three varying approaches to the 'liquor store problem' explored in this chapter demonstrate the multiple meanings of 'spatial justice' and potential solutions to spatial inequality. The rhetoric and social identities employed to frame the issue varied depending on who was protesting, and what their organising hoped to achieve. Nevertheless, all three groups looked to simultaneously tackle the social issues fostered by liquor stores while demanding that residents themselves had the right of self-determination over development within their communities.

The final chapter explores two related efforts that looked to encourage Black and Latinx communities to reconstruct the meaning of place in the wake of the Rodney King Crisis. Both Operation Hope (led by entrepreneur John Hope Bryant) and the Tourism Industry Development Council (a coalition comprised of notable local organisers) developed bus tours designed to counteract the negative images and stereotypes associated with South and East Los Angeles to promote economic investment in the area. I argue that both bus tours constituted an innovative form of activism and a creative means used to contest the structural conditions that defined economic relationships in the city. The tours challenged the dominant acts of place-making that facilitated urban neglect and disinvestment and encouraged residents to become involved in crafting representations of their own communities. The tours utilised the mobility offered by bus tours to allow attendees to interact with the spatial reality of urban communities of colour, yet this was a reality that had

been carefully constructed through the place-making of activists themselves. The bus tours encouraged community organisers to ask probing questions regarding who benefitted from urban development, and this had dramatic repercussions for social movements in the city during the late 1990s and early 2000s.

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The significance of understanding and recognising the work of these activists stretches far beyond the Black and Latinx communities of Los Angeles. Another theory of human geography, the 'politics of scale', is helpful in this regard. Politics is often segmented into simplified spatial classifications, commonly 'local', 'national', or 'global'. The movements described in this thesis would most likely be categorised as 'local' activism. Yet as Susan Ruddick suggests, spaces can be constituted on a number of different scales; the 'local' can also be national or international sites for the construction, mediation or regulation of social identities. Ruddick continues that 'a presumably local, small public square that is situated in a liminal space of a global city may play a more pivotal international role in the production and dissemination of social identities, in the production of mythologies, than entire regions or nations in other parts of the world.'[105] Increasingly throughout the postwar period, and especially during the 1980s, popular culture began to present African Americans and Mexican-Americans in Los Angeles as representative of the urban experience in the United States more generally. The emergence of West-coast hip-hop, and films such as *Colours*, *Do The Right Thing*, and *Boyz 'N' The Hood* made Los Angeles the home of popular culture's expression of racial identity. More recently, music by Kendrick Lamar and John Singleton's series *Snowfall* has made L.A. the backdrop for commentary on the Black American experience. Much of this work has of course adopted nuanced and sensitive portrayals of Angelenos of colour. Yet the subject focus has often remained on young African American males, and has reinforced ideas that everyday life in these communities was consumed by gangs, drugs, violence, and poverty. Discussing the 2004 video game *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*, set in a fictionalised South Central in the early 1990s (and ending with its own riot incited by police), one commentator described the game as a 'pixelated minstrel show' for its gratuitous fixation on violence.[106] Engaging Black and Latinx L.A. in these terms alone may foster or reinforce the imagined geographies and mapping of

[105] Susan Ruddick, 'Constructing Difference in Public Spaces: Race, Class, and Gender as Interlocking Systems', *Urban Geography*, 17.2 (1996), 132-151. For more on the politics of scale see: Kevin R. Cox, 'Spaces of Dependence, Spaces of Engagement and the Politics of Scale, or: Looking for Local Politics', *Political Geography*, 17.1 (1998), 1-23, Tyner, 'Defend the Ghetto'.

[106] Sides, 'Introduction: A Brief History of the American Ghetto' in *Post-Ghetto: Reimagining South Los Angeles*, ed. by Sides (Berkley: University of California Press, 2012), pp.1-10 [p.5].

an urban underclass. As Dionne Bennett has argued, media representations have 'constructed Black Los Angeles as a site of grotesque cultural pathology' which symbolised a nationwide Black experience.[107] In addition to these portrayals in popular culture, the Rodney King Crisis was seen as such a cataclysmic event not just because of its scale and destruction, but because it appeared to act as a plebiscite concerning the 'urban crisis'. It gave voice to marginalised criticisms of the state's social and economic policies towards people of colour not just in the Reagan/Bush era, but throughout the post-Civil Rights period. The violence and anger seen in Los Angeles in 1992 shattered illusions of a 'colour-blind' society that many claimed had been achieved through the neoliberal withdrawal of governmental intervention.[108]

If communities such as South Central and East Los Angeles are to act as a cultural shorthand for Black and Latinx America, it is critical to write the more complex, heterogeneous social identities and political positions into this story. Understanding the city's grassroots activism offers an insight into this everyday reality; to consider the wide array of issues that angered or inspired organisers, and galvanised residents to create change in their communities. Moreover, focusing on the role of place and space allows historians to see what concepts such as 'inequality' and 'justice' meant in concrete, tangible terms that altered the lived experience of racial, class, and gender politics. This approach suggests that the construction of urban space was not simply a reproduction or consequence of power relations, but a fluid and ongoing struggle to make and remake urban forms. While productions of place and space were a critical part in shaping discrimination and inequality for poor communities of colour, Black and Latinx residents continually fought for the right to determine urban development. This was because they recognised how spaces - real and imagined – were both unequal and adversely affected their quality of life. Understanding how Black and Latinx communities contested the meaning and reality of urban space therefore demonstrates how the consequential geographies of power were shaped by people of colour and employed to help tackle a wide array of social issues and struggles for justice in the city.

[107] Dionne Bennett, 'Looking for the 'Hood and Finding Community: South Central, Race, and Media', in *Black Los Angeles: American Dreams and Racial Realities*, ed. by Darnell Hunt and Ana-Christina Ramon (New York: New York University Press, 2010), pp.215-231 [pp.216-218].
[108] See Rodgers, *Age of Fracture*, pp.129-130.

Chapter One: Placing The Carceral State: Place, Space, and the Criminal Justice System in Los Angeles

Scholars have argued clearly why writing the history of the carceral state in America matters. Heather Ann Thompson has explored how the expansion of punitive policing, mass incarceration, and for-profit prisons transformed postwar U.S. history, bolstering conservative political power while disadvantaging urban communities.[1] Yet the populations most clearly affected by these changes - urban African American, Mexican-American, and immigrant communities - were never silent in this process. When protests over the deaths of Michael Brown, Freddie Gray, and George Floyd erupted in violence, many recalled events in Los Angeles in 1965 and 1992, rebellions sparked through the brutality of a police force acting with impunity. Writing the history of resistance and opposition to the prejudices of the carceral state therefore also matters. This chapter explores an array of protests directed towards the practices of the criminal justice system. These encompassed a wide range of issues, from police brutality and use of deadly force, the extension of police oversight into social services, racial inequalities in sentencing, as well as those who demanded greater police protection and the increased presence of law enforcement within communities of colour. That Black and Latinx Angelenos were frustrated and resentful towards the practices of the criminal justice system by 1992 appears obvious. However, by exploring grassroots efforts to affect change we can understand not only the grievances that exploded into urban unrest during the Rodney King Crisis, but the solutions proposed to ensure approaches to law and order corresponded to the demands and needs of the community. These stories suggest that despite activists' many differing (and sometimes competing) objectives, their work surrounding criminal justice was often motivated by shared foundational concerns. Primarily, activists recognised how the social and cultural constructions of 'place' had created geographically uneven systems of policing and justice to the detriment of communities of colour. Organisers worked to demonstrate why spatially determined and unequal criminal justice policies were discriminatory and problematic. In their place, these campaigns projected a vision of a fair and equal justice system which both policed and protected all areas of the city without discrimination. The basis of these struggles for spatial equality was the desire for Black and Latinx residents to gain control over how crime and policing decisions were determined within their communities.

An extensive scholarship on the development of the postwar carceral state has contextualised the increased emphasis on punitive policing and incarceration as simplified

[1] Heather Ann Thompson, 'Why Mass Incarceration Matters: Rethinking Crisis, Decline, and Transformation in Postwar America', *Journal of American History*, 97.3 (2010), 703-734.

solutions to urban social ills, both on a national scale and more locally in Los Angeles.[2] Work on L.A. has generally focused on the police force itself; how racially prejudiced attitudes were internalised by officers and manifested in daily policing practices, and on the political manoeuvrings of police leadership to gain greater autonomy and increase surveillance, repression and punishment within communities of colour. Although Donna Murch has suggested there has been a 'lack of research into how communities of color responded to this punishment regime across region and time,' and others have argued that grassroots opposition in L.A. was subdued, most have acknowledged the presence of small numbers of community groups protesting criminal justice practices.[3] These scholars have generally drawn sharp distinctions between those attempting to limit police autonomy, abuse, or mass incarceration, and those demanding a greater police presence and tougher sentencing for criminals, a division often separated across lines of class, age, and religious affiliation.[4] As the 1980s and 1990s brought increasingly punitive methods of law enforcement and criminal justice to communities within Los Angeles, these divisions appear to have been exacerbated. Working-class and radical groups such as the Coalition Against Police Abuse demanded greater community control and police accountability, while others, such as the South Central Organizing Committee and United Neighborhoods Organization (representing older Black and Latinx Catholics), argued for even more aggressive policing and harsh sentencing to keep communities safe.

Within this interpretation (which often focuses solely on these groups), CAPA has been viewed as inclusive and ambitious in their initial goals, but ultimately hampered by a lack of vocal support and opportunity to institute genuine change.[5] Scholars have been far more

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[2] Scholars taking a national focus include: Thompson, "Why Mass Incarceration Matters", Khalil Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), Naomi Murakawa, "The Origins of the Carceral Crisis: Racial Order as "Law and Order" in Postwar American Politics', in *Race and American Political Development*, ed. by Joseph Lowndes, Julie Novkov and Dorian Warren (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp.245-266, Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*, pp.107-134.

For Los Angeles, see: Steven Herbert, *Policing Space: Territoriality and the Los Angeles Police Department* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), Martin Schiesl, 'Behind the Shield: Social Discontent and the Los Angeles Police since 1950', in *City of Promise: Race and Historical Change in Los Angeles*, ed. by Martin Schiesl and Mark Dodge (Claremont: Regina Books 2007), pp.137-174, Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*, Donna Murch, 'Crack in Los Angeles', Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*.

[3] Murch, "Crack in Los Angeles," 168. For examples of work considering Black protest against police abuse in other cities, see Keisha N. Blain, '"We Will Overcome Whatever [it] is the System has Become Today": Black Women's Organizing against Police Violence in New York City in the 1980s', *Souls*, 20.1 (2018), 110-121, Leonard Moore, *Black Rage in New Orleans: Police Brutality and African American Activism from World War II to Hurricane Katrina* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010).

[4] See Murch, 'Crack in Los Angeles', Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, pp.64-85, Mike Davis, *City of Quartz:* pp.265-322.

[5] Max Felker-Kantor, 'The Coalition Against Police Abuse: CAPA's Resistance Struggle in 1970s Los Angeles', *Journal of Civil and Human Rights*, 2.1 (2016), 52-88.

critical of those 'supporting' an increased police presence in communities of colour. Mike Davis in particular has seen these groups as a bastion of Black respectability politics, where in return for conforming to the values of white America and marginalising those African Americans who did not adhere to such conceptions, they were to be protected by law enforcement against violence and crime.[6] Davis saw this community activism as a 'Black-Lash' against juvenile crime, where restrictions placed on the civil and human rights of youth of colour were welcomed. In short, this activism signified a 'war on the underclass'.[7] Murch has also suggested that Black and Latinx communities in L.A. were fractured across lines of faith, age and class, and that for many organisations, 'carceral solutions to problems of impoverished communities had much greater efficacy than redistributive liberalism.'[8] Max Felker-Kantor has offered a more sympathetic approach, suggesting that grassroots organisations had few options for recourse beyond calling for more police officers in their communities, but suggests their reliance on values of personal responsibility and private economic development indicate how far these ideologies had become ingrained within the national zeitgeist.[9]

The reality of this activism was more complex and nuanced than previous interpretations have suggested. This chapter will consider the historical construction of spatially uneven methods of policing and justice, and explores how communities contested these practices throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Ultimately, these groups all projected new visions of how law and order in the city could be reshaped to benefit all urban residents. This desire to improve the justice system could take many forms, and the following chapter examines an array of positions and community voices. Groups such as CAPA, the Equal Rights Congress, and United Against Black Genocide looked to tackle brutality and violence on the part of law enforcement, emphasising the need for community control of the police and the relationship between the justice system and structural prejudice and inequality. This chapter then considers three groups who made radical critiques of the LAPD's failure to adequately protect communities of colour. Many of these activists, who have been portrayed as conservative, were not hoping that youth of colour would be brutalised or subject to long prison sentences, but wished to ensure that police funded by residents' taxes were responsive to local suffering and did not neglect victims of crime in Black and Latinx communities. Following this, I consider debates regarding how the criminal justice system should change in the aftermath of the Rodney King Crisis, and how the merging of police

[6] Higgenbotham, *Righteous Discontent,* Cheryl Hicks, *Talk With You Like a Woman: African American Women, Justice, and Reform in New York, 1890-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).
[7] Mike Davis, *City of Quartz*, pp.272-274, p.291.
[8] Murch, 'Crack in Los Angeles', 170.
[9] Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, p.212

and social service funding concerned many residents. Finally, this chapter considers Mothers Reclaiming Our Children, an interracial organisation determined to alter racial disparities in how the state incarcerated the youth of Los Angeles.

Activists employed a wide range of social identities to contest criminal justice policy in Los Angeles, which altered how they understood the problems within the justice system, and their proposals to resolve them. Protesters constructed a discourse that encompassed ideas of radical Black feminism, revolutionary Black Nationalism, interracial motherhood, and religious conservatism. Yet this chapter argues that these myriad groups were connected through a recognition of the ways that productions of space and place resulted in geographical disparities in how criminal justice was conceptualised and delivered in L.A. These discriminatory practices were not just the result of singular or interwoven prejudices of race, class, or gender, but applied throughout low-income communities of colour. Protesters argued that entire neighbourhoods in South and East Los Angeles had been criminalised, which placed all residents under suspicion within public spaces of the city and justified policies which violently suppressed, regulated, and punished residents regardless of any crime they may or may not have committed. They frequently insisted that more privileged communities were not subject to this criminalisation, received greater protection from police, and that residents of these areas were treated more respectfully by police and the courts. Activists responded to these problems through a deconstruction of the acts of place-making, and rejected their communities' criminalisation. They demanded that criminal justice policies by applied equally and fairly across all the spaces of the city, and argued that their communities should have a greater voice in deciding such policies. By elucidating the concrete prejudices manifested through productions of place, these activists looked to tackle the ideas and injustices inherent within the carceral state and Los Angeles more broadly.

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As many scholars have already demonstrated, Los Angeles boasted a long history of police malpractice. Kelly Lyttle Hernandez has stressed that these attitudes and practices dated back to settler colonialism, and that the state has criminalised and specifically targeted California's residents based on their race and class; including indigenous peoples, Chinese labourers, and Mexican political exiles in the service of the 'white settler' mentality.[10] In the postwar era, policing in Los Angeles merged these attitudes with technologically sophisticated forms of tracking and arrest that criminalised the urban spaces inhabited by

[10] Kelly Lytle Hernández, *City of Inmates: Conquest, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging in Los Angeles, 1771–1965* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

people of colour. The combination of technology and racial attitudes within policing helped to develop spatially distinct methods of law enforcement. In the 1940s, the longstanding (and often inflammatory) LAPD Chief William Parker announced his intention for Los Angeles to retain its reputation as the nation's 'white spot'.[11] He replaced neighbourhood policing with officers in radio-controlled cars to improve efficiency in L.A.'s sprawling landscape. As the force became depersonalised, they relied on identifying criminals from afar instead of interacting with residents. This often ensured that officers resorted to conventional prejudices and assumptions based on criminalising the neighbourhoods in which Black and Latinx people resided.[12] With a predominately white, male police force who did not reside in the communities they policed, officers were more inclined to relate to the growing fear of urban crime that encouraged white flight and found many white suburban voters pushing for aggressive law enforcement during the 1950s and 1960s.[13] These principles had serious consequences for the safety of Black lives in L.A. For instance, between April 1962 (when the LAPD launched an unprovoked shootout outside a Nation of Islam temple) and the August 1965 Watts Rebellion, police killed more than sixty African-American residents.[14]

This brutality was not restricted to Black Angelenos. Police harassment and criminalisation of Mexican immigrants and Mexican-American citizens produced the injustices seen in the sensationalised 'Sleepy Lagoon' murder trial in 1942, and contributed to the 1943 Zoot-Suit riots.[15] In 1951, drunken officers mercilessly beat seven young Latinx men, puncturing kidneys and bladders, and slipping on victims' blood, while Chief Parker suppressed investigations.[16] The surveillance and regulation of urban populations stretched beyond lethal interactions and into everyday life for many residents. Attempting to manage new 'liberal' judicial guidelines that looked to curtail morality policing in the early 1960s, the LAPD declined to arrest or prosecute white women who engaged in sex work, or the 'caravans' of 'white hunters' who entered South Central nightly to seek African American workers. In contrast, they continued to stop, arrest, and charge Black women, often without any evidence that they were engaging in prostitution. This fostered great anger amongst the Black community, who saw a double-standard of policing emerging which excused white vice as either problematic or a personal matter, but ensured that African Americans engaging in the same behaviour were prosecuted. This also delegitimized the role of African Americans within public space, even within their own community, assuming their presence

[11] Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, p.19.
[12] *Ibid*., p.21, Schiesl, 'Behind the Shield,' p.138.
[13] Lawrence Friedman, *Crime and Punishment in American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), pp.450-452.
[14] Schiesl, 'Behind the Shield,' pp.141-143.
[15] Pagan, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon*.
[16] Escobar, 'Bloody Christmas and the Irony of Police Professionalism'

itself as inherently suspicious and potentially criminal. White men could enter neighbourhoods of South Central to solicit sex with impunity, yet Black women (and men) could not leave their homes, for whatever purpose, without being subject to punishment.[17] The disparities in how 'white hunters' and African American women were treated demonstrated how race, class, and gender all contributed to the cultural construction of place, but also how the mobilities of Black residents and access to the public spaces of the city were segmented through such classifications.

Given these conditions, it is not surprising that in the aftermath of the 1965 Watts Rebellion, many Black Angelenos believed that the LAPD should assume responsibility for the uprising. Yet Chief Parker and his successors - Thomas Reddin and Ed Davies - responded with an increased police presence in Black and Latinx communities, and improved technology to enhance surveillance and control of residents in ways that further codified the criminalisation of particular places. Parker racialised the threat faced by growing urban disorder, suggesting that by 1970, '45 percent of the metropolitan area of Los Angeles will be Negro…now how are you going to live with that without law enforcement?'[18] He therefore played on white fears of growing crime to legitimise the LAPD's position, while reinforcing the criminalisation of the entire inner-city neighbourhoods in which many African Americans resided. The LAPD became one of the first forces in the U.S. to utilise helicopters, as well as introducing electronic data processing, communications systems, and research and development projects to increase monitoring of urban spaces.[19] In response to the growing concerns of urban unrest in the late 1960s and early 1970s, police saw increased support for their policies. Not only white suburbanites, but politicians and residents from across the political and racial spectrum demanded tougher policing.[20]

When former LAPD officer Tom Bradley became L.A.'s first Black mayor in 1973, he and other councillors attempted to force police to conform to the rule of law and encouraged them to engage in community outreach programmes. However, politicians had little control over the LAPD, who were governed by a self-appointed Police Commission, and Bradley needed the LAPD's support to ensure the safety of the urban core to help him achieve his vision of L.A. as a 'world city'.[21] Community programmes, while well-intentioned, essentially expanded the LAPD's oversight into social services, further ensuring their presence as a vital component of the liberal state and cementing perceptions of South and East L.A. as

[17] See Fischer, 'Land of the White Hunters'.
[18] Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, p.46.
[19] *Ibid*., p.55.
[20] *Ibid*., pp.6-7.
[21] *Ibid.,* p.9.

'troubled' neighbourhoods .[22] As fears of a surge in juvenile crime spread during the 1970s, these policies allowed the LAPD to expand their two-tiered system of justice. White youths were now seen as delinquents and offered counselling or diversion programmes. Black and Latino youths living in South and East Los Angeles, however, saw the presence of officers within their schools, were tarnished as 'hardcore' criminals instead of petty delinquents, and were frequently incarcerated for their acts.[23] Following an increase in the number of Black and Latinx youths being stopped and photographed by officers in South Central, activists highlighted that police were less likely to treat white youths on Ventura Boulevard (in the wealthy Westwood enclave) in a similar manner. This therefore highlighted how the racialised undertones of policing were often explicitly tied to the geographical disparities in the experience of crime prevention.[24] Policing practices throughout the postwar period facilitated the explosion of surveillance, arrests, and incarceration that emerged in communities of colour during the 1980s. Racial prejudices and the autonomy of officers, combined with innovative technological methods, allowed for the highly-segregated neighbourhoods of Los Angeles to be criminalised and targeted for saturation policing and aggressive means of law enforcement. As progressive and liberal efforts attempted to limit the power and authority of police while public fears of crime grew, the LAPD enforced a geographically uneven system of policing which heightened the racial and class disparities inherent in the criminal justice system.

These developments in policing, of course, were never accepted by Black and Mexican-American communities. Particularly following the Watts Rebellion - which began after an alleged assault on Black resident Marquette Frye by an officer - residents and grassroots organisations demanded greater accountability by the LAPD. The ACLU created complaint centres in South Central and East Los Angeles that received 734 cases in only two years, leading them to conclude that nearly one in ten officers were engaged in malpractice.[25] Activists representing the diverse range of constituents within these neighbourhoods placed police abuse as a high priority. In South Central, the Community Alert Patrol demonstrated how a Black Power ideology of local self-determination forged community practices that opposed the police. With the slogan 'to protect and observe', the group were formed to patrol and observe police actions. They created an alternative vision of policing, providing security for the famed Watts Summer Festival, and being relied on by residents to resolve unfolding

[22] *Ibid.,* pp.86-112.
[23] *Ibid.,* p.88.
[24] *Ibid,* p.106.
[25] *Ibid.,* p.67.

incidents of crime and violence.[26] Through these programmes, CAP underscored residents' desire for community control of law and order practices and the belief that urban spaces should be policed from 'within' instead of by what they conceived of as an 'occupying force'. Other organisations - such as the Black Panthers and Black Congress - made community control of policing a central pillar of broad strategies for African American empowerment and social justice.[27] In East Los Angeles, local mothers created the Barrio Defense Committee in response to police brutality during the famed East L.A. school walkouts. They organised the community through meetings attended by over 1000 residents to determine a strategy which would limit police power, and even conducted a mock funeral outside LAPD headquarters for two Latino brothers killed by officers.[28] Many organisations leading the emerging Chicano/a movement, including *Accion De Bronze Collectiva* and the Brown Berets, also placed police abuse as a high priority for the community. Unsurprisingly, the LAPD looked to vilify these activists and portrayed them as subversive or criminal, often using excessive force in attempts to disband them. In 1969, an attack on the Black Panthers' L.A. headquarters saw the use of dynamite, grenade launchers and 300 officers and SWAT members.[29] In 1970, as the Chicano Moratorium brought over 30,000 Mexican-Americans to protest the Vietnam War, police opened fire, killing four including journalist Ruben Salazar.[30] When protests against police abuse gained renewed momentum in the early 1980s, these struggles, and the LAPD's response to them, provided a basis for community organising. They demanded that the community, rather than the state, determine how their neighbourhoods would be policed and protected. As later activists recognised the spatialised nature of discriminatory policing and justice, the efforts of these earlier groups in attempting to place communities at the heart of justice policies would become an important means to confront inequalities.

By the 1980s, the LAPD had significantly adapted the application of law enforcement within communities of colour under a new, often antagonistic Police Chief, Daryl Gates. As Felker-Kantor has argued, the police played a large role in expanding their own authority, exacerbating fears of crime to demand unconstrained power and negligible oversight.[31] During this decade, Los Angeles faced intertwined increases in drug abuse and gang violence. As cheaper 'crack' cocaine became popular in low-income communities, 'Blood' and 'Crip' gang factions increasingly fought deadly battles over territory in which these narcotics were sold. In 1984, for instance, over 500 deaths were attributed to gang crime,

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[26] *Ibid*., pp.68-72.
[27] Scot Brown, 'The US Organization, Black Power Vanguard Politics, and the United Front Ideal: Los Angeles and Beyond', *The Black Scholar,* 31.3 (2001), 21-30.
[28] *Ibid*., pp.81-83, Escobar, 'The dialectics of repression' , 1497-1500.
[29] Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, p.77.
[30] Escobar, 'The Dialectics of Repression', Oropeza, *¡ Raza Sí!¡ Guerra No*.
[31] Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, p.43

and L.A. was regularly referred to as the 'nation's gang capital' by the media.[32] At both federal and state level, authorities responded with an increased determination to win the 'war on drugs' and the 'war on gangs'. Yet as Mike Davis has claimed, these were wars that the LAPD 'secretly loves losing.'[33] Despite a 90% rise in drug arrests between 1980 and 1986, claims that police were 'failing' to prevent an uncontrollable crime spree saw many concerned communities support budget increases and reduced scrutiny of police discipline.[34] The LAPD created a range of new initiatives that once again utilised technology to facilitate spatially uneven methods of criminalisation, surveillance, and control of Black and Latinx communities. For instance, in 1988, the Street Terrorism and Prevention (STEP) Act made membership of a 'criminal gang' an offence, and police developed a computerised database to track and monitor all gang members.[35] Attempting to define who constituted a 'gang member' involved highly racialised conceptions that placed all Black and Latinx youth under suspicion. Descriptions of 'gang members' provided by the LAPD included 'Black males 12 to 24 years of age', wearing red or blue clothing and jewellery, had 'closely cropped' hairstyles and used nicknames, rather than any reference to actual participation in criminal activity.[36] What officers were seemingly referring to was the presence of Black youth in the public spaces of their own communities, and thus deemed almost entire neighbourhoods to be under suspicion.

Despite the number of gang crimes remaining stable, the number of Black and Latinx youth placed on the LAPD's gang database soared from 15,000 in 1980 to 30,000 by 1988, estimated to be half of the entire Black male population of South Central under the age of 30.[37] The city also looked to regulate the presence of Black youth in public space, and control their mobility. In a civil suit struck down by courts, City Attorney James Hahn attempted to stop any identified gang members from congregating in groups of two or more, having people in their house for less than 10 minutes or remaining in public streets for any more than five minutes at a time.[38] Given the ways that gang members had been identified, these regulations would have dramatically altered daily life within communities of colour, but would have hardly been noticed (or indeed enforced) in whiter communities on the Westside of L.A. Despite this, the criminalisation of Black youth could be transplanted across urban spaces. In 1988 a policeman brought several African American youths onto the streets of the wealthy enclave of Westwood to demonstrate the suspicion they endured in all public

[32] Schiesl, "Behind the Shield", p.156, Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, p.195.
[33] Davis, *City of Quartz*, p.267.
[34] Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, p.194.
[35] Davis, *City of Quartz*, p.282.
[36] Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, p.205.
[37] *Ibid*., p.210.
[38] Davis, *City of Quartz*, pp.278-80.

spaces. Despite observing the law, they were stopped and detained by police. [39] Thus while criminal justice policies mainly impacted Black and Latinx neighbourhoods, the criminalisation of poor communities of colour altered how residents of these areas could inhabit public spaces across the entire city, and limited their access to areas that deemed them suspicious.

If communities of colour and the spaces within them were unquestionably sites of criminal activity, this allowed police to justify aggressive methods of law enforcement that often discarded basic civil and human rights in pursuit of criminals. The city approved, for instance, the implementation of Operation Hammer, 'gang sweeps' which amounted to mass arrests and house searches, as Chief Gates looked to bring 'Vietnam' to the streets of South Central.[40] At its peak in April 1988, police arrested over 1400 people in one weekend, using battering rams and tanks to gain entry into homes which were subsequently ransacked in an often fruitless search for drugs. The vast majority of arrestees were released without charge, yet many were still entered in the city's gang database for further surveillance and tracking.[41] Such policies also contained elements of class prejudice. While most Black and Latinx Angelenos resided in South Central and East Los Angeles neighbourhoods, wealthier middle-class African Americans could be insulated from this saturation policing by living in the more exclusive communities such as Baldwin Hills.[42] Law enforcement therefore focused on containing, or repressing, the city's poorest people of colour through the implementation of policies that criminalised particular places.

This extended to the right to physically remain within the United States, as the focus on suppressing drug and gang crime also allowed police to expand their discretion and collaborate with Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS).They policed 'criminal aliens' and assisted in deportation, even when those arrested had not committed any crime, reinforcing racialised associations between immigration and criminality.[43] Such policies evolved so that by 1989 and 1990, the LAPD were conducting 'Operation Cul-de-sac' in areas such as Pico-Union (occupied by a predominately immigrant population), and the Black-majority neighbourhood of South Central. Certain streets were designated 'narcotics enforcement zones' that saw increased police presence and barricades with checkpoints to prevent unsupervised entry or exit.[44] The LAPD manipulated the concerns of L.A. residents regarding the very real threat posed to their safety from increased drug and gang crime, to

[39] *Ibid*., p.284.
[40] *Ibid.*, pp.267-68
[41] For Operation Hammer, see *Ibid*., pp.267-316, Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles,* pp.196-217.
[42] Murch, 'Crack in Los Angeles', 173.
[43] *Ibid*., 162-190
[44] Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, p.202, Davis, *City of Quartz*, p.277.

exacerbate the unequal application of law enforcement across the city's diverse population. As Donna Murch has argued, and these stories support, their approach to policing involved geographical components in addition to racial, class and gendered prejudices. [45] Particular populations were targeted not just because they were young people of colour, but because of where they lived. Urban spaces inhabited by poor people of colour were subject to an imagined geography that deemed those within them inherently suspicious, which in turn criminalised those living and working within these areas and justified the escalation of aggressive criminal justice policies. It is little wonder, then, that throughout the postwar period, the LAPD were viewed as a predominately white, masculine department that not only did not represent their interests, but also signified an aggressive occupying force within low-income neighbourhoods of Los Angeles.[46]

A resurgence in activism to resist police brutality and abuse corresponded with the increasingly hostile methods of law enforcement in the 1980s. This organising constantly expanded the issue of brutality as a way to reject the criminalisation of local neighbourhoods and demonstrate the broader issues affecting their communities, while demanding greater community control of the social and economic institutions which dominated residents' lives. Perhaps the most noted of any grassroots organisation in the 1970s and 1980s was the Coalition Against Police Abuse (CAPA). [47] Founded in 1976 by former Black Panther Party member Michael Zinzun , the group developed several campaigns attempting to secure greater accountability on the part of the police towards the community. They created a complaint centre for victims of police brutality, documenting cases of abuse and mobilising residents to file official complaints against the LAPD.[48] CAPA also campaigned to establish a civilian police review board that was vehemently opposed by LAPD leadership.[49] A number of other groups also looked to tackle police brutality and abuse in South and East Los Angeles. United Against Black Genocide (UABG) hoped to 'organize the Afro-American community of Los Angeles County in a systematic and effective way' to tackle a range of violence perpetrated against them from the police, the U.S. government, and racist terrorist

[45] Murch, 'Crack in Los Angeles', 164.
[46] Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, p.121.
[47] See: João H. Costa-Vargas, *Catching Hell in the City of Angels: Life and Meanings of Blackness in South Central Los Angeles* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), pp.109-140,Felker-Kantor, 'The Coalition against Police Abuse'.
[48] Coalition Against Police Abuse, 'C.A.P.A Report for 1979', Rosalio Munoz Papers, Collection 93, UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, University of California, Los Angeles Box 40, Folder 6, [Hereafter: Munoz Papers].
[49] Coalition Against Police Abuse, 'Los Angeles City Launches a "Campaign for a Citizen's Police Review Board"', n.d, Munoz Papers, Box 40, Folder 6.

organisations.[50] The Equal Rights Congress (ERC) created a police abuse committee as part of their multifaceted social service and campaign work, where they would 'march, demonstrate, petition, picket and use any opportunity open to us to get public attention' following instances of brutality.[51] The Pro-Active Organization Dedicated to the Empowerment of *Raza* (PODER) was another group representing a wide range of concerns for Latinx residents, but found that since their inception, 'we have been consumed with community concern about the Sheriff's Department.'[52] These groups encountered many high-profile incidents which they could use to draw attention to their campaigns. In 1979, police shot 39 year-old Black single mother Eula Love in a dispute over her gas bill. The seemingly callous nature of her killing outraged many in the city, and demonstrated that police were not solely using violence against young, Black, or male 'hardcore' criminals, but all members of communities of colour.[53] It was therefore not coincidental that at the height of this controversy, CAPA created a petition to demand the civilian police review board.[54] Between 1975 and 1982, sixteen men, twelve of whom were Black, were killed by officer chokeholds, and the situation was inflamed by Chief Daryl Gates' rebuttal that this was because for African Americans, 'veins or arteries do not open up as fast as they do on normal people.'[55] United Against Black Genocide responded by creating a petition demanding the removal of Gates for his 'genocidal police practices'.[56] PODER's calls for greater oversight of law enforcement came following four shootings of Black and Latinx Angelenos in the space of one month at the hands of sheriff's officers, and they demanded the reopening of an inconclusive investigation into violence within the department.[57] As CAPA's organising manual noted, campaigns were always more effective when 'began in reaction to a specific episode of police abuse, rather than around an abstract idea.'[58] Police in L.A. provided many such instances of abuse for protestors to organise around, and connect these tragedies to highlight broader injustices within their community and demand police accountability.

A critical part of this organising involved efforts to instil greater community control of the

[50] United Against Black Genocide, 'Statement of Purpose' (n.d.), Liberty Hill Foundation Collection, 1976-2001 (MSS 022), Southern California Library, Box 19, Folder 14 [Hereafter: Liberty Hill Collection].
[51] Equal Rights Congress letter to members, 15 April 1987, Liberty Hill Collection, Box 29, Folder 6.
[52] Pro-Active Organization Dedicated to the Empowerment of Raza, 'Liberty Hill Foundation Application for Funding', 1 March 1993, Liberty Hill Collection Box 44, Folder 7.
[53] Davis, *City of Quartz*, pp.271-2, Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, p.154.
[54] Davis, *City of Quartz*, p.272.
[55] *Ibid*.
[56] Debra Url Greenwood, 'United Against Black Genocide', September 1982, United Against Black Genocide , 'Petition of Fire Los Angeles Police Chief Daryl Gates', n.d., Liberty Hill Collection, Box 19, Folder 14.
[57] PODER, 'Liberty Hill Application for Funding'.
[58] Costa Vargas, *Catching Hell*, Appendix: CAPA's Community Organizing Manual, p.243.

criminal justice system, and by extension the productions of place and space that rationalised police brutality. Groups such as CAPA and the ERC developed a diverse membership and support base in order to create a broad definition of 'community'. The ERC board included a mixture of African Americans, Mexican-Americans, and Latinx immigrants, with a diverse background including victims of police abuse, single parents, an environmental justice advocate, and a musician.[59] CAPA was comprised of a coalition of multiracial community groups, church organisations, students, and LGBT groups.[60] CAPA believed that 'our strength is in our unity', and therefore expanded their definition of 'their' community to demonstrate that police brutality and abuse was not an issue that only concerned young Black men in the area.[61] They hoped that by 'present[ing] ourselves as this one unified body', they could achieve 'community control of our neighborhoods.'[62] These statements suggest that CAPA saw organising around issues of police abuse as one means to achieve their wider goal; the reclamation of community space and self-determination by a diverse range of residents. This desire was shared by other groups organising around police brutality: the ERC felt that their mission was 'to provide the residents of South Central with a sense of empowerment over the institutions that control their lives,' while PODER agreed that 'the community should wield much more control over the institutions that affect our lives than we presently do.'[63]

The desire to implement wider spatial control was apparent through the campaigns these groups conducted. PODER looked to challenge how communities of colour had been criminalised, and the uneven application of law enforcement that these constructions had produced. They invoked the historical repression of immigrant communities, arguing that violence by sheriff's officers produced 'distasteful memories of Sleepy Lagoon', and criticised the L.A. legal system for 'still in 1991 tagging every young Chicano male in Boyle Heights as a gang member.'[64] Their specificity in identifying the historically Latinx neighbourhood of Boyle Heights underlines how intersections of race, gender, and criminality had been mapped onto particular places within the city in the minds of both law enforcement and community activists. In 1992, the city's school district board also banned the wearing of clothing that signified 'gang colours' in schools within particular locations such as South and East L.A. PODER highlighted how this decision was both the product of particular

[59] Los Angeles Equal Rights Congress, 'Monitoring and Organizing Center Funding Request', 1989, Liberty Hill Collection, Box 29, Folder 6.
[60] Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, p.122, 'C.A.P.A Report for 1979'.
[61] Coalition Against Police Abuse, 'C.A.P.A Report: 1971 to 1981', n.d., Munoz Papers, Box 40, Folder 6.
[62] *Ibid*.
[63] ERC, 'Monitoring and Organizing Center Funding Request', PODER, 'Liberty Hill Application for Funding', p.1.
[64] *The Newsletter of the Pro-Active Organization Dedicated to the Empowerment of Raza*, 1.1, October 1991, p.1, Liberty Hill Collection, Box 44, Folder 7.

constructions of place, and how it also reinforced the criminalisation of neighbourhoods. 'If the use of certain clothing is banned in certain public schools', they argued, 'then they should be banned in all schools in that school system, not just those with a high ratio of Mexicans and Blacks. This type of uneven application of a policy only serves to negatively carry over to all Mexicans and Blacks.'[65] They provided an implicit demand for spatial equality based on their right to determine policies of local schools, asking 'what is LAUSD thinking? Last time we checked, Blacks and Chicanos pay taxes for their neighbourhood schools.'[66] The attempt to frame the uneven application of law enforcement as an issue that could be improved through the community control of urban space was also apparent throughout CAPA's efforts to create a police review board. They argued that officers patrolling Black and Latinx neighbourhoods were 'not in reality members of the communities in which they patrol', and therefore were 'not sincerely working to help our community's progress.'[67] Instead, police were 'armed storm troopers' to repress 'any person who opposes the wretched and oppressive conditions of this society.'[68] These ideas clearly mirrored the 'internal colony' thesis of 1960s Black radicalism, but also illustrated their belief that their communities had been metaphorically isolated from the rest of the city, which had both justified their treatment by police and excluded them from participating in policy-making concerning criminal justice. The civilian police review board would therefore provide an inclusive means to reintegrate these neighbourhoods and their residents into urban policy-making and discourse surrounding crime and punishment. The board would be comprised of one representative from each council district in the city, elected by constituents, and would have power to investigate and punish officers accused of misconduct instead of the current police commission, operated by the LAPD themselves.[69] The review board was opposed by the department, and received little support from local politicians, including Mayor Bradley, who saw the plan as impractical.[70] Despite not securing the 116,000 signatures from city residents required to force a ballot initiative, the petition to create a review board still received 80,000 signees.[71] The majority of these came from residents of South Central, a sizeable proportion of the overall population of the area which suggests that claiming community self-determination was a high priority for residents during the 1980s.

These activists often connected problems of police violence and malpractice to the wider

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[65] *The Newsletter of the Pro-Active Organization Dedicated to the Empowerment of Raza*, 1.2, January 1992, p.4, Liberty Hill Collection, Box 44, Folder 7.
[66] *Ibid*.
[67] Costa Vargas, *Catching Hell*, Appendix: CAPA's Community Organizing Manual, p.236, p.239.
[68] *Ibid*., p.239.
[69] 'Los Angeles City Launches a "Campaign for a Citizen's Police Review Board"'.
[70] Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, p.135.
[71] *Ibid*., pp.133-136.

malaise and dispossession seen within communities of colour. Organising against police brutality was often only one facet of the work these groups conducted. The ERC, for instance, worked in neighbourhoods to protest welfare cuts, housing conditions, drug abuse, and demand rights for undocumented immigrants.[72] They pointed to 'massive plant closures', and overcrowded, 'substandard' housing as factors which had 'devastated the area' of South Central.[73] They hoped that by monitoring police abuse, they could help Black and Latinx residents 'comprehend that power structures lock them out of the benefits of our society.'[74] United Against Black Genocide 'organize alternatives to the established means of economic draining of our community', such as developing community gardens and food co-operatives.[75] They also demanded greater government spending on day-care services and support for single parents.[76] Throughout their public communications, activists saw police brutality and the criminalisation of communities as symptomatic of wider socioeconomic problems. As their name suggested, UABG felt that this was a deliberate ploy to eliminate African Americans from the United States. Their literature regularly invoked the United Nations definition of genocide, and felt this classification extended far beyond the actions of the police. 'Reaganomics threatens our very survival!' they announced in one newsletter, 'he and his gang of thieves have declared that the welfare of the people is not the concern of the government.'[77] They felt this attitude towards people of colour encouraged brutality on the part of police, arguing that 'with the advent of Reaganomics, we've seen political and physical repression increase at an alarming rate in this country.'[78] One UABG newsletter from 1983 began with unemployment figures for South Central, then swiftly moved on to discuss three recent police killings in the area, indicating the close relationship the group saw between these two problems.[79] CAPA concurred with this assessment. They issued a stark warning for residents in 1981. 'If control by the community is not obtained, prepare yourself; as the economic picture gets worse we will see more and more police in our neighbourhoods – a signal that another holocaust is near – only this time it may be you.'[80] Through these groups' emphasis on the relationship between police brutality and socioeconomic developments, we see a clearer picture of how activists understood spatial inequality and spatial self-determination. While they clearly argued that constructions of

[72] ERC, 'Documentary Video Tape Proposal', n.d., Liberty Hill Collection, Box 29, Folder 6.
[73] ERC, 'Monitoring and Organizing Center Funding Request', p.3.
[74] *Ibid*.
[75] UABG, 'Statement of Purpose'.
[76] *Ibid*.
[77] UABG, 'Black Genocide', n.d, Liberty Hill Collection, Box 19, Folder 14.
[78] Debra Url Greenwood, 'United Against Black Genocide Newsletter', October 20, 1982, Liberty Hill Collection, Box 19, Folder 14.
[79] Debra Url Greenwood, 'United Against Black Genocide Newsletter', January 23, 1983, Liberty Hill Collection, Box 19, Folder 14.
[80] 'C.A.P.A Report: 1971 to 1981'.

place and space contributed to discriminatory and violent methods of policing, this was not always their central focus. Instead, through these campaigns, activists argued that policing was in fact one symbolic component of how their communities were isolated, and that the social productions of space and place worked to further the economic and social disadvantaging of their neighbourhoods.

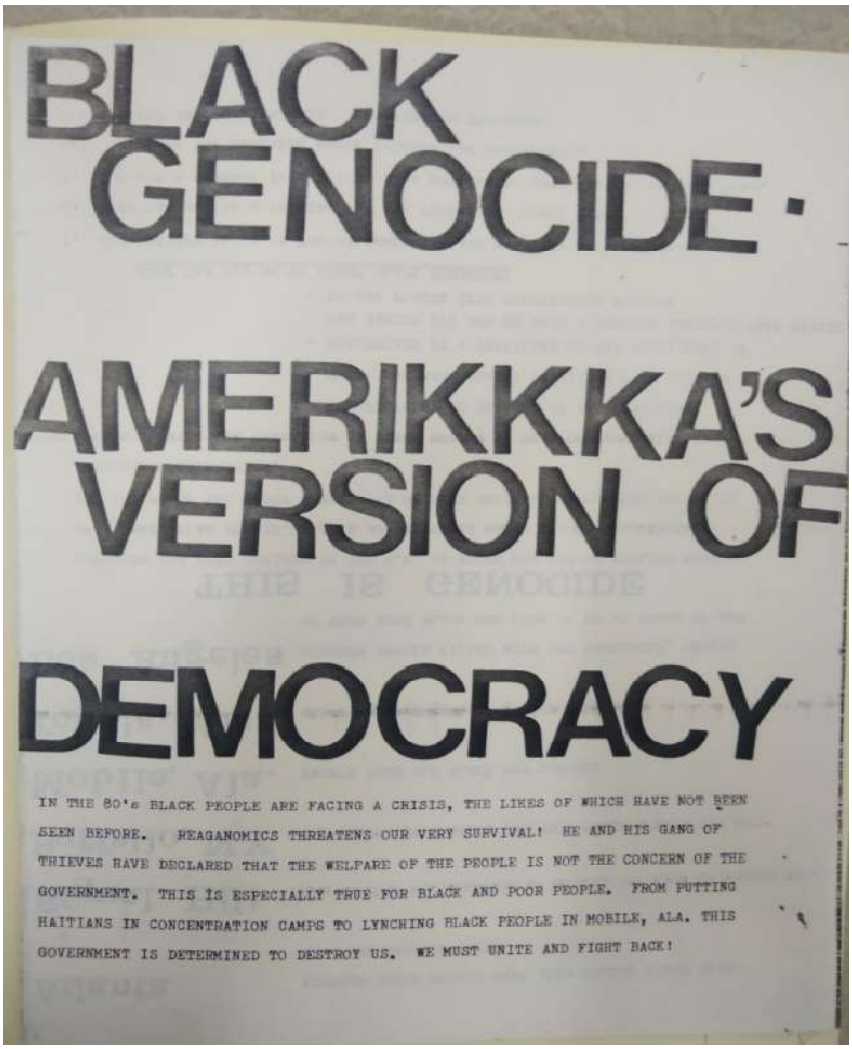

Figure 1: United Against Black Genocide poster, n.d.[81]

It has been suggested that the lack of a mass organised response to LAPD efforts such as Operation Hammer or neighbourhood barricades indicates tacit community support for aggressive policing measures during the 1980s.[82] This interpretation could be attributed to how, as ERC members mentioned, 'the struggle in Los Angeles against police abuse is fragmented and largely carried out on an individual basis.'[83] Yet it is clear that organising around issues of police abuse and brutality, while not always successful, remained a staple of grassroots activism and an important issue of community concern, as law enforcement continued to exercise their authority over Black and Latinx neighbourhoods during the 'war

[81] United Against Black Genocide Poster, n.d., Liberty Hill Collection, Box 19, Folder 14.
[82] Davis, *City of Quartz*, pp.291-292, Murch, 'Crack in Los Angeles', 163, 170.
[83] ERC, 'Documentary Video Tape Proposal'.

on crime'. This activism looked to empower residents by placing demands for greater community control on behalf of residents in determining how their neighbourhood was policed, but also for the control of urban space more broadly. In 1990, Mike Davis famously argued that the rise of the carceral state in Los Angeles, and the transformation of public space in order to repress and regulate people of colour, was an effort to maintain the social status quo in response to immense changes to the economic order of the city.[84] These sentiments were shared by activists throughout the 1980s. They connected the racialised productions of place that criminalised their communities to a wider sense of spatial injustice which deprived residents. These groups responded through new demands that rejected the narrow constructions of place that defined their communities through Black and Latinx male criminality. In order to achieve this, they hoped to foster community control over the institutions which facilitated this criminalisation and resulted in deadly consequences for many victims of police violence and abuse.

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The belief that communities of colour were more vociferous in their demands for punitive means of law enforcement to protect residents - an argument presented by Davis, Murch, and Felker-Kantor - is not entirely inaccurate. Academics have certainly understood and been sympathetic to the deleterious effects that drug and gang crime brought to these communities. Crime, in addition to police brutality, disproportionately impacted these neighbourhoods: African Americans in Los Angeles were six times more likely than white Angelenos to be victims of homicide.[85] Yet by focusing on the ways grassroots organisations supported punitive policing, we have neglected the nuanced ways activists often directly attacked criminal justice policies in L.A. These grassroots movements often felt that while the police provided a looming presence in their communities, they did very little to actually solve crimes, and appeared to ignore residents when an emergency called for intervention. Policies such as STEP and Operation Hammer were not initiated at the start of the gang and drug crisis, because, similar to morals policing in the 1960s, criminal activity seemed contained within the ghetto and barrio. When teenager Karen Toshima was killed when caught in a gang shooting in the wealthy white community of Westwood in 1988, police responded to local residents' calls for increased protection through more aggressive methods of gang suppression.[86] The $25,000 reward offered for information on her killer, and the 30 detectives placed on the investigation team, angered many in South Central who

[84] Davis, *City of Quartz.*
[85] Murch 'Crack in Los Angeles', 170.
[86] Davis, *City of Quartz,* p.270.

argued that the same concern was not in evidence when it came to the 114 people killed in the area in 1987. As South Central Councilman Robert Farrell lamented, the 'perception [is] that a life lost in South L.A. or East L.A. does not measure up to a life lost somewhere else.'[87] Organising against police neglect often focused on tackling the same spatial inequalities that motivated those fighting against police brutality and abuse. Both movements worked to highlight the imbalanced and uneven delivery of policing and justice in L.A. Similar to how those fighting for police accountability deconstructed the criminalisation of their communities, activists tackling police neglect often felt that the constructions of place and space had detrimental consequences on the way residents were treated by police in Los Angeles.

The United Neighbourhood Organization and the South Central Organizing Committee are the two activist groups most closely associated with the support of punitive justice policies.[88] The UNO was created as a coalition of Catholic churches in East Los Angeles, formed in 1976 as an attempt to increase Latinx representation and improve local communities. SCOC followed as their sister organisation in 1983, with both groups part of the national Industrial Areas Foundation umbrella organisation founded by Saul Alinsky. The groups, led by priests, sisters, or prominent laity, 'mixed law-and-order politics with maternalist advocacy for social welfare and youth programs,' and developed a reputation for their confrontational style.[89] UNO focused on uncovering the issues that most concerned local residents, and resolving them. Upon their founding UNO surveyed 80,000 residents and found that their biggest concern was the redlining of auto-insurance rates. They subsequently launched a lengthy campaign to lower premiums and end discriminatory spatial practices.[90] Many residents also had concerns surrounding crime in their community, and thus the UNO created a Police Committee in 1977. Immediately, they targeted the Sheriff's Department instead of criminals. They insisted that response times were too slow, and demanded new strategies that would improve the service that residents received.[91] Almost from their inception, then, the UNO were not concerned solely by punitive responses to crime, but in ensuring that police were responsive to the needs of Latinx residents, and attempting to find resolutions to the spatially uneven delivery of police protection throughout L.A.

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[87] Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, p.207.
[88] See *Ibid*., 169-170, Davis, *City of Quartz*, p.291, Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, pp.212-214.
[89] Murch, 'Crack in Los Angeles', 170, Scott Harris, 'Community Crusaders', *Los Angeles Times*, 29 November 1987.
[90] Foley, *Front Porch Politics* p.37.
[91] UNO Police Committee to Sheriff's Administrative Office, July 6, 1977, Sister Lucille Martinez to Sheriff Peter Pitchess, July 14, 1977, Frank Del Olmo Collection, Urban Archives, California State University, Northridge, Box 101, Folder 17 [Hereafter: Frank Del Olmo Collection].

As the UNO developed, they proposed a number of different strategies to help combat crime, many of which looked beyond punitive policing. Most notably, they worked to devise a new organisation to tackle gang crime. Their proposal for this 'crisis intervention network' in 1980 directly challenged contemporary emphasis on carceral solutions to criminal justice problems. Law enforcement's attempts at reform and community engagement often failed, they suggested, because they were 'largely based in a criminal justice conceptualization of how to deal with the problem. It naturally follows the uncoordinated and mostly reactive piecemeal approach since it finds justification in the failure of such programs to effectively curb violence.'[92] Moreover, they charged that current crime-reduction efforts were 'not programs that are owned by the community and can become an integral part of the community's development and healing.'[93] Their solution, therefore, was to demand better coordination between law enforcement, judicial and probation workers, and the community, in order to develop programmes that were 'based in and supported by the community.'[94] Their proposal for a crisis-intervention network, based on a successful model used in Philadelphia, would utilise local residents, including previous gang members, who were 'recognised by both adults and youngsters as indigenous leaders'.[95] Volunteers would be trained as violence mediators and employed, on a rotation, to patrol areas of the community on a 24-hour basis. Given this was a patrol force, the system would also have a communication centre through which concerned residents could call, so that 'in this way the program is community integrated on an everyday basis.'[96]

The UNO offered a justification for this programme which linked the continued spatial developments of Los Angeles with the need for structural change to achieve effective anti-crime measures. 'The Los Angeles area population, especially in ethnic enclaves, is larger every day,' they suggested, and that 'urban and suburban sprawl will yield on a continuous basis the class struggles, economic battles and inter-racial problems that emerge in human aggregates faced with many significant stresses.'[97] Like the anti-police abuse activists working at the time, the UNO's proposal recognised, and emphasised, the ways in which L.A.'s socioeconomic and demographic structure would ultimately be reproduced through the built environment of the city, and how this would impact upon crime, and law enforcement, throughout local neighbourhoods. To the UNO, therefore, the best solution for the problem of

[92] Briefing Sheet: U.N.O.'s Position on Gang Violence Reduction', 10 November, 1980, Mayor Tom Bradley Administration Papers, 1920-1993, Collection Number 293, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles, Box 5084, Folder 4, [Hereafter: Tom Bradley Papers].
[93] *Ibid*.
[94] *Ibid*.
[95] *Ibid*.
[96] *Ibid*.
[97] *Ibid*.

rising crime would be to allow residents themselves greater control over resources and strategies to ensure they directly benefitted the neighbourhood itself. The City Council agreed to provide $1.2 million in funding to the Crisis Intervention Network, later renamed Community Youth Gang Services, a service that would survive for over a decade, much to the fury of officials from the LAPD.[98] The UNO's efforts to reduce crime in local neighbourhoods did not rely entirely on demanding increased policing and harsh sentencing. In fact, their proposal for a crisis-intervention network offered a vision of a community force that in some ways replaced traditional law enforcement. These proposals, aware of the how urban space reflected and reproduced the social and structural conditions of the city, looked to place community members at the heart of their plans to resolve problems that had been ignored and exacerbated by the criminal justice system.

As the 1980s progressed and crime continued to drastically impact the lives of South Central residents, the UNO and their new sister organisation, SCOC, did begin to favour tougher policies on crime and justice. In November 1984, 4000 East L.A. residents attended the UNO's annual convention, to hear the group's leaders, alongside Mayor Bradley, Sheriff Block, and District Attorney Ira Reiner announce the organisation's new resolution on crime.[99] Members agreed that they were 'committed to redoubling [our] efforts to fight the terrible cancer of crime and violence that plagues our community and brings such deep pain and sadness into the lives of so many of our families.'[100] Moreover, the groups' core constituents, middle-aged homeowners, reinforced their entitlement to the spaces of the community, arguing that the 'UNO will not rest until it reclaims the parks and neighbourhoods of East Los Angeles.'[101] In 1989, UNO co-chair Lou Negrete wrote to the director of National Drug Control Policy arguing that 'law abiding citizens are being held hostage in their own homes. The situation is out of control.' The UNO, he declared, 'opposes liberal "slap on the wrist" law enforcement against drug deals and hard core gang members…we want them in jail or prison. We want them out of our community.'[102] This was not simply rhetoric. In 1985 UNO supported legislation to allow minors to be charged as adults on felonies in cases of

[98] 'Step Against Gang Violence,' *Los Angeles Times*, 29 October 1980. Bob Baker 'Change in Focus Renews Anti-Gang Group' *Los Angeles Times* 13 July 1989, Jesse Katz, 'Leaving His Turf', *Los Angeles Times,* 14 February 1993.
[99] Marc Igler, 'UNO's Crime Fight in East L.A. Wins Praise of Officials', *Los Angeles Times*, 19 November 1984.
[100] 'UNO Resolution on Crime and Violence', 18 November 18, Frank Del Olmo Collection, Box 101, Folder 17.
[101] *Ibid*.
[102] Lou Negrete to William Bennett, 27 July 1989, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 1182, Folder 7.

gun control, and that same year passed a motion that year supporting 'combat zone strategy and action teams' composed of law enforcement, courts and community residents.[103]

Clearly, in many cases the UNO and SCOC wanted the city to adopt more, rather than less, aggressive methods of policing to restore law and order to communities. Yet they also stressed their sense of community identity, and concern over the how the impact of crime would affect local urban spaces. In their call to return funding to South Central, including to arts programmes as well as law enforcement, SCOC declared 'most of us can't move, and we don't want to. This community is our home.'[104] They felt that crime would have multiple effects on their quality of life: 'legitimate businesses leave the area, employment opportunities decline, needed services become unavailable, insurance rates rise, neighbourhood pride dissipates, deterioration and abandoned buildings predominate.'[105] Recognising how urban spaces in the city were changing, they placed their hope in a revitalised community. 'The shiny new skyscrapers on the West Side are surrounded by increasingly poor, multi-ethnic communities. If these communities are safe and stable, the business community will be safer and more stable as well...a community with a sense of tangible hope is unlikely to destroy itself.'[106] Once more, these campaigners saw crime as a consequence of the broader disparities in urban society and economics that were being imprinted onto the physical landscape of the city. The strong impression of community pride and sense of place that was evinced by these activists suggests that their concerns regarding crime were not malicious efforts to incapacitate or isolate working-class youth of colour, but motivated by a desire to protect and improve the communities they inhabited.

SCOC and UNO's protests against the city's 'deployment formula' exemplify the complexity and nuance within struggles for better policing, and how these movements placed spatial equality above punitive criminal justice policies. Both groups held concerns regarding the police deployment formula, which calculated how many officers would be allocated to each bureau and district. They felt that it placed greater emphasis on the value of property destroyed or stolen ahead of the level of violence or potential for loss of life. The formula, they charged, would deploy officers where instances of burglary or auto theft were more common, but neglect areas where crimes against person, such as rape or murder, proliferated. 'One would expect that police resources would be allocated to areas reporting the highest incidence of the most serious crimes,' SCOC's report suggested, yet the 'sad

[103] Nancy Heffernan, 'Gun Control Bill Aimed at Street Gangs Moves Ahead', *Los Angeles Times*, 12 June 1985, 'Religious Groups Join in 'Battle Against Crime', *Los Angeles Times*, 1 March, 1985.
[104] South Central Organizing Committee, 'The S.C.O.C Report on South Central Los Angeles: The Call for a Permanent Olympics', July 23, 1984, p.16, Frank Del Olmo Collection, Box 40, Folder 6,.
[105] *Ibid*., p.14.
[106] *Ibid*.

fact' was that 'more police are allocated to areas reporting a higher incidence of offences against property.' SCOC argued that this was evidence that the LAPD discriminated against poorer communities.[107] Members of both groups attended and symbolically stormed out of a Police Commission hearing in October 1984, carrying red flags and singing 'We Shall Overcome' to protest the LAPD's reticence to alter the deployment formula.[108] When the Commission responded by moving eight officers out of Westside bureaus and placing them in South Central, SCOC leaders were not placated. 'We consider that a victory of sorts,' argued spokeswoman Frances James, 'but we only consider it a down payment on what we really want, which is to have the formula re-evaluated. We will insist on that.'[109] Activists were not satisfied with these token gestures that placed a fixed number of additional officers in their community. Rather, they demanded that the basis upon which such decisions were made be reassessed. They appeared most angered by the spatialised inequalities of the rationale for police deployment that automatically deemed residents of more privileged communities more deserving of police protection.

To the consternation of Chief Gates and the LAPD, UNO and SCOC withheld their support for a ballot initiative that would have increased property taxes in order to hire and train more police officers.[110] This was clearly neither a move to limit police excess, nor tacit support for punitive law enforcement strategies. James stated that their members 'recognize the need for an increase in officers' because 'South-Central Los Angeles residents are experts on crime.'[111] Yet they refused to support Proposition 1 because members had not received assurances from the LAPD that officers would be 'deployed equitably, fairly and in the most effective manner.'[112] Proposition 1 was subsequently defeated in June 1985. With a constituency comprised of older, religious, working-class residents of South Central and East Los Angeles, SCOC and UNO's efforts to secure more police officers provided ambiguous answers concerning questions of local support for punitive policing strategies and the increasing criminalisation of Black and Latinx youth. Politicians and Gates certainly publicised UNO and SCOC rhetoric as an endorsement of their hostile approach to law enforcement, even as they conveniently ignored criticisms around the deployment of officers.[113] While more aggressive means of law enforcement was one part of SCOC and UNO's strategies for the reduction of crime, it was never the central component. Arguments

[107]South Central Organizing Committee, 'The Call for a Permanent Olympics,' pp.4-5, 'Change in LAPD Policy Approved', *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, 10 October, 1984.
[108]'Change in LAPD Policy Approved'.
[109]Andy Furillo, 'Transfers Of Police Seen as 1st "Payment"', *Los Angeles Times,* 11 October, 1984.
[110]Frank Clifford, 'Gates Speaks Out on Deployment: Police Chief Chides 2 Complaining Community Groups', *Los Angeles Times,* 15 January, 1985.
[111]Rich Connell, 'Prop. 1 Pits Concern Over Crime Against Dislike of Tax Hikes', *Los Angeles Times* 28 May, 1985.
[112]*Ibid*.
[113]Igler, 'UNO's Crime Fight'.

concerning deployment demonstrate that activists' primary concern was securing what they saw as equitable treatment from law enforcement, ensuring police considered communities of colour with the same value and concern as wealthier white neighbourhoods. These groups placed spatial justice and equality at the centre of their crime-fighting strategies, and therefore refused to sacrifice these principles for piecemeal offers of more police officers in their communities.

Protests regarding police neglect, like efforts to stem police abuse and brutality, shared concerns regarding how law enforcement officials understood, imagined, and treated certain neighbourhoods of the city. A group called the Black Coalition Fighting Back Serial Murders provide an important example of this organising. The group was formed by Margaret Prescod, a 'striking, well-spoken Black woman in her 30s,' who was born in Barbados and worked as a community organiser in New York before moving to Los Angeles in the 1970s.[114] Prescod worked for a range of causes, but found most satisfaction leading the L.A. branch of the national Wages for Housework Campaign. Ostensibly, the group's main aim was to 'get their own and all unwaged work, and women's "double day"…recognized and counted as work productive to society; and to win compensation for that work.'[115] For instance, they held annual 'Time Off For Women' events that amounted to a 'housewives strike'.[116] Under the leadership of Prescod, the group campaigned on issues of racism, human rights, LGBT visibility, welfare rights, nuclear weapons, police brutality, and abuses of immigrants.[117] It reflected Prescod's direct approach to her activism, which was unsalaried and saw any speaking fees donated to her campaigns.[118] She was 'interested in economic equality for women and all the things that would mean for society if that existed…what bloody choice I have?'[119] This intersectional, broad approach to activism would be directly applied to the Black Coalition's critique of the LAPD.

As part of the Wages for Housework organisation, Prescod had been campaigning alongside sex workers for over ten years, advocating for the decriminalisation of their work.[120] In September 1985, the LAPD announced that a serial killer was operating in South Central Los Angeles, whose victims were Black women who, officers suggested, were all sex

[114]Kathleen Hendrix, 'Passionate Pursuer's Crusade Against the South Side Slayer', *Los Angeles Times,* 16 October 1986.
[115]Margaret Prescod, 'Liberty Hill Funding Application', 26 February, 1993, Liberty Hill Collection, Box 44, Folder 12.
[116]*Ibid*.
[117]*Ibid*.
[118]Hendrix, 'Passionate Pursuer's Crusade'.
[119] *Ibid*.
[120]*Ibid*.

workers, although this caveat was often contested.[121] Incensed that the police had already allowed eleven women to be killed in two years before publicly announcing the murders, and concerned by the lack of progress being made in the case, Prescod formed the Black Coalition Fighting Back Serial Murders in 1986 to protest the LAPD's actions. The Coalition grew to around 60-80 members, all unpaid volunteers and including family members of some of the victims, who worked tirelessly to both inform the public about the case and denounce the LAPD's inaction.[122] The group held weekly protests and vigils, often outside police headquarters, to remember the women who had died, and pressure police to find the culprit, branded the 'Southside Slayer'.[123] Demands included an increase and a greater diversity of officers assigned to the task force, better communication on behalf of the LAPD regarding their progress, and an investigation into why the case had been handled so poorly.[124] They also helped to publicise the case more widely to the community, producing 30,000 copies of a Southside Slayer information flyer, with a composite sketch of the killer, alongside information about his methods, and distributed them throughout public spaces in South Central.[125] They used this flyer to condemn the police's failure to resolve the case, and the 'low-profile media coverage and problems with the investigation' as evidence of 'women's lives not counting and Black prostitute women counting least of all.'[126] The Coalition managed to eventually pressure the city to institute a $25,000 reward for information on the killer, and won praise from Mayor Bradley for their efforts to publicise the case.[127] When police reopened the investigation in 1988, following another spate of murders, they again kept their inquiries secret for fear of further community unrest, a decision which roused the Coalition to restart their campaigning in 1989.[128] An exact number of victims became difficult to identify, but it is assumed around 30 Black women were killed by either shooting or strangling between 1983 and 1989, and police arrested and convicted multiple possible culprits without ever confirming if there had been a single serial murderer.[129] In their four

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[121] Margaret Prescod, 'Statement from the Black Coalition Fighting Back Serial Murders to the Los Angeles Police Commission', 21 February, 1989, p.1, Liberty Hill Collection Box 25, Folder 3.
[122]'Liberty Hill Interview Form', 5 November 1986, Liberty Hill Collection Box 25, Folder 3.
[123]'Counting Women's Lives: Organizing for Police Accountability in Black Communities', n.d.,'Take Back the Night March and Rally Flyer', n.d., 'Come Join an International Vigil', n.d., all in Liberty Hill Collection, Box 25, Folder 3.
[124]Eric Malnic, '2 Victims Called 'Street People', *Los Angeles Times*, 27 July, 1986, Black Coalition Fighting Back Serial Murders, 'Counting Women's Lives', 19 May, 1987, Liberty Hill Collection, Box 25, Folder 3.
[125]Black Coalition Fighting Back Serial Murders, 'Have You Seen This Man?', n.d., Liberty Hill Collection Box 44, Folder 12.
[126]*Ibid*.
[127]'Press Release: Mayor Issues Please for Public's Help in Finding L.A.'s Newest Serial Killer', 4 March 1986, Liberty Hill Collection, Box 25, Folder 3.
[128]Nieson Himmel and Edward Boyer, '2nd South Central Wave of Prostitute Slayings Probed,' *Los Angeles Times*, 17 February 1989, 3-4, John Crust, 'Gates Under Fire for Not Warning of Possible Serial Killer' *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, 22 February, 1989.
[129]Crust, 'Gates Under Fire for Not Warning of Possible Serial Killer'.

years of existence, the Coalition delivered a public service in keeping the community informed and aware of the existence of a serial killer specifically targeting Black women in the South Central community. Simultaneously, they offered a critique of the structural inequalities that facilitated police negligence forged through prejudice across lines of race, class and gender.

Primarily, Prescod and the Black Coalition saw the lack of media coverage concerning the killings, and the police's inaction, as a result of racist and sexist practices that valued the lives of Black women less than other members of the city. They rejected the police's labelling of the victims solely as 'prostitutes', as they argued that it facilitated police negligence and a lack of urgency in resolving the case, sensing that this label allowed them to dehumanise victims and devalue the threat faced by all women living in South Central. When initially demonstrating against the LAPD's handling of the killing, a police commander questioned whether they themselves were sex workers, and that 'if we were not, we should not be concerned about our safety, because only prostitutes were being murdered.'[130]The Black Coalition countered that regardless of their occupation, the Southside Slayer killings posed a serious threat to all women in South Central, and the public should have been made aware of this danger. Prescod argued that 'whether he is killing prostitutes or school teachers, NO WOMAN IS SAFE. The public has a right to know, has a right to take precautions, has a right to have access to information.'[131] The name 'Southside Slayer' itself may have appeared grisly and sensationalist, yet was a title of the Coalition's choosing to replace the LAPD's previous name for their investigation; 'The Prostitute Killer Task Force', in order to reduce the impression that only sex workers were in danger.[132] The implication behind such attitudes, as protestors noted, was that 'prostitute women are "asking for it" and that killers of prostitute women help to "clean up the streets."'[133] Even when the police could not link victims to prostitution, they still described them as 'street people.'[134] Not only was this another dismissive and derogatory term that avoided accountability for solving their murder, but also one that delegitimized the rights of working-class and poor Black women to inhabit the public spaces of South Central, by questioning their purpose outside their homes at night.

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[130]Prescod, 'Statement from the Black Coalition Fighting Back Serial Murders to the Los Angeles Police Commission',p.1.
[131] *Ibid*., p.3.
[132]'Counting Women's Lives: Organizing for Police Accountability in Black Communities', n.d., Liberty Hill Collection, Box 25, Folder 3.
[133]'Statement by U.S PROStitutes Collective for the Press Conference and Vigil organized by the Black Coalition Fighting Back Serial Murders', 1 February, 1989, Liberty Hill Collection, Box 25, Folder 3.
[134]Malnic, '2 Victims Called "Street People"'.

The Coalition emphasised the humanity of the victims, noting that they 'go into prostitution to support their families and most are single mothers.'[135] By focusing on their occupation, Prescod charged, the police were 'falsely dividing women' and using this label 'as an excuse not to defend the Black community or any woman.'[136] This rhetoric simultaneously demanded protection for the Black sex workers most at-risk, whilst also expanding the issue to correlate police negligence with entire neighbourhoods and their inhabitants. Residents of South Central appeared to agree with her. When the *Times* interviewed women at a shopping centre as the Coalition were handing out information sheets, some commented that they had only learned of the murders because of the leaflets, and felt that regardless of the occupation of victims, it was a threat to their own lives which required the police to take action.[137] The Southside Slayer Killings, in the view of the Black Coalition, 'expose[d] the double burden of racism and sexism faced by Black women,' as well as issues of class that denigrated and denied protection to poor and working women. The group offered both practical support for the community through raising awareness of the murders, while also attacking the structural conditions that allowed police to devalue the lives of Black women and place all South Central residents in danger.

Central to the Black Coalition's protest was the rejection of the practices and assumptions that facilitated the police's neglect of the Southside Slayer killings, and they angrily criticised the LAPD, the media and Black male 'leaders'. While they demanded that the police take greater interest in the murders, this did not translate to an acceptance of more police in their community. Instead, they argued that the 'LAPD seems to operate as an empire unto itself' and 'has a long history of racism, sexism, brutality and other illegality,' making reference to the 71 officer-involved shootings in 1986.[138] They suggested that concerns about 'drugs and prostitution' were used an 'excuse for saturation policing' which resulted in 'even more poverty and further criminalisation of a community with few options to survive.'[139] They demanded that the police provide a public information campaign and regular updates on the case for members of the community, but insisted that the LAPD 'not use their involvement in the South Side Slayers investigation as an excuse to invade and terrorise Black communities.'[140] This condemnation of police attitudes demonstrates the difficult balancing act faced by grassroots community groups between demanding inclusion and protection as

[135]'Counting Women's Lives' (19 May 1987), Liberty Hill Collection Box 25, Folder 3.
[136]Prescod, 'Statement to the Los Angeles Police Commission,' p.5.
[137]Edward J. Boyer, 'Women on Killer's Turf Haunted by the Threat' *Los Angeles Times*, 31 August 1986, 1, 7.
[138]'Counting Women's Lives: Organizing for Police Accountability in Black Communities' (n.d.), p.4., 'Counting Women's Lives' (19 May 1987), Liberty Hill Collection, Box 25, Folder 3.
[139]'Counting Women's Lives', 19 May 1987.
[140]*Ibid*.

citizens, whilst protesting police abuse and brutality. Their goals were not contradictory, but in L.A. they created a juxtaposition summarised by the Coalition themselves: 'leaders are afraid to be critical of LAPD for fear that when they need protection, they won't get it.'[141]

The group also challenged the media for helping to foment 'social attitudes as they relate to the undervaluing of the lives of the poorest among us.'[142] They accused them of parroting sensationalist claims regarding the women's sex work that had 'taken the word of the police at face value' and had thus denied the public an accurate portrayal of public danger.[143] Through this, they rejected the ways local media both legitimised police negligence whilst reinforcing spatialised understandings of criminality. Their mission statement in a funding application clarified this, declaring that they were 'concerned about the racist and sexist tendencies in the media…in particular, in the coverage of issues related to Black and poor immigrant communities.'[144] The media appears to have responded to the Coalition's continual criticism and their demand to prevent 'sensationalising these murders by referring to them as the "prostitute killings."'[145] Newspaper stories now led with the emphasis that Black women were being murdered in South Central, interviewed victims' families, and attempted to focus on Prescod and the Coalition's work to publicise the case.[146] In addition, the group attacked members of L.A.'s Black leadership who had previously ignored the murders. The Coalition proudly emphasised that they remained 'outside the power elite of church and civic leaders in South Central Los Angeles' to 'maintain their autonomy' and wishing to remain 'accountable only to those in our community with the least power – those with the least access to money, resources, and the halls of power.'[147] Prescod suggested that African American groups had requested that she stop conducting vigils for the victims, and asked 'who is convinced that some Black people in positions of power have made a difference for the poorest in our communities?'[148] Essentially, Prescod and the Black Coalition's efforts to publicise and demand action against the Southside Slayer encompassed a wide array of concerns and frustrations. They believed that the growing number of Black women who had been murdered were 'given barely a thought by those who are power brokers,' and therefore looked to confront ideologies and prejudices held by the police, media, and community leaders who had accepted or condoned the negligence of the

[141] 'Counting Women's Lives: Organizing for Police Accountability in Black Communities', n.d., p.4.
[142] *Ibid.*, p.3.
[143] *Ibid.*, p.4.
[144] Prescod, 'Liberty Hill Funding Application'.
[145] Prescod, 'Statement to the Los Angeles Police Commission,' p.5.
[146] Hendrix, 'Passionate Pursuer's Crusade Against the South Side Slayer', Scott Harris, 'Coalition Joins Effort to End Killer's Reign', *Los Angeles Times*, 16 July 1986, 1, 3.
[147] Prescod, 'Statement to the Los Angeles Police Commission', p.5.
[148] Hendrix, 'Passionate Pursuer's Crusade,' 'Counting Women's Lives', 19 May 1987.

South Central community.[149] The case had been imprinted onto a broader imagined geography that saw their community defined by criminality and vice, which thereby justified the LAPD's neglect and placed residents, particularly poor Black women, in even greater danger.

The Coalition sometimes directly confronted the methods through which policing, the protection of urban communities, and gendered assumptions had become spatialised. Prescod declared that 'the value of human life must not be determined by the size of one's bank account, the job they do, *or what neighbourhoods they live in* [emphasis added].'[150] This was a response to the ways police had justified their disregard for the murders through the stereotypes mapped onto local neighbourhoods. Task Force leader John Zorn had suggested that little progress had been made because it was difficult 'to distinguish the trademarks of the serial killer from the area's common violence against women.'[151] However, the Coalition resisted this continued criminalisation of the community, arguing that 'the claim that South Central is a high crime area is not to be used as an excuse to abuse basic human rights!'[152] Responding to the repeated failure of police to warn residents about the serial killer, Prescod accused the police of making a 'deadly calculation', but added that such a decision would not have been made 'were it any other community at risk.'[153] These comparisons to other areas of the city (and their residents) began to be directly referenced to demonstrate how these practices reflected injustice. Prescod suggested if victims of the Slayer had been 'married women from Beverly Hills' or 'San Marino housewives,' the lack of progress made in catching the killer would have been a 'scandal.'[154] Prescod repeatedly referred to wealthy white communities such as Beverly Hills, Westwood, and Santa Monica, as examples of neighbourhoods where, in the event of a serial killer, 'every resource available [would be] brought to help solve the crimes'.[155] This created a strong spatial representation; a geographical measuring stick to determine how police protected or ignored communities along lines of class, race and gender. Prescod utilised the imagined geography of the city to make comparisons between the levels of protection residents received. ''Imagine 12 women, or perhaps 13, or perhaps 29 women were killed in Westwood or, for

[149]'Counting Women's Lives', 19 May 1987.
[150]Black Coalition Fighting Back Serial Murders Press Release, 19 February 1986, Liberty Hill Collection Box 25, Folder 3.
[151]Bruce V. Bigelow, 'A Killer Continues in L.A. as Police Struggle For Clues', *Philadelphia Inquirer,* 10 August 1986.
[152] Prescod, 'Statement to the Los Angeles Police Commission', p.4.
[153]*Ibid*.
[154]Bigelow, 'A Killer Continues in L.A., Black Coalition,' The L.A. Slayer', n.d., Liberty Hill Collection, Box 25, Folder 3.
[155]*Ibid*., 'Counting Women's Lives: Organizing for Police Accountability in Black Communities', n.d., Prescod, 'Statement to the Los Angeles Police Commission', p.4.

that matter, in North Hollywood – would it have been such a well-guarded secret?' she asked. 'I think any resident in the City and County of Los Angeles know the answer to that question', indicating how the mapping of crime, race, and gender onto urban had influenced the production of assumed knowledge in L.A.[156] Thus, in addition to uncovering the racial and gender inequalities that enabled police negligence in the Southside Slayer case, the Coalition also felt that place, as a container for such identities, played an important role in legitimising the LAPD's failure to protect Black women.

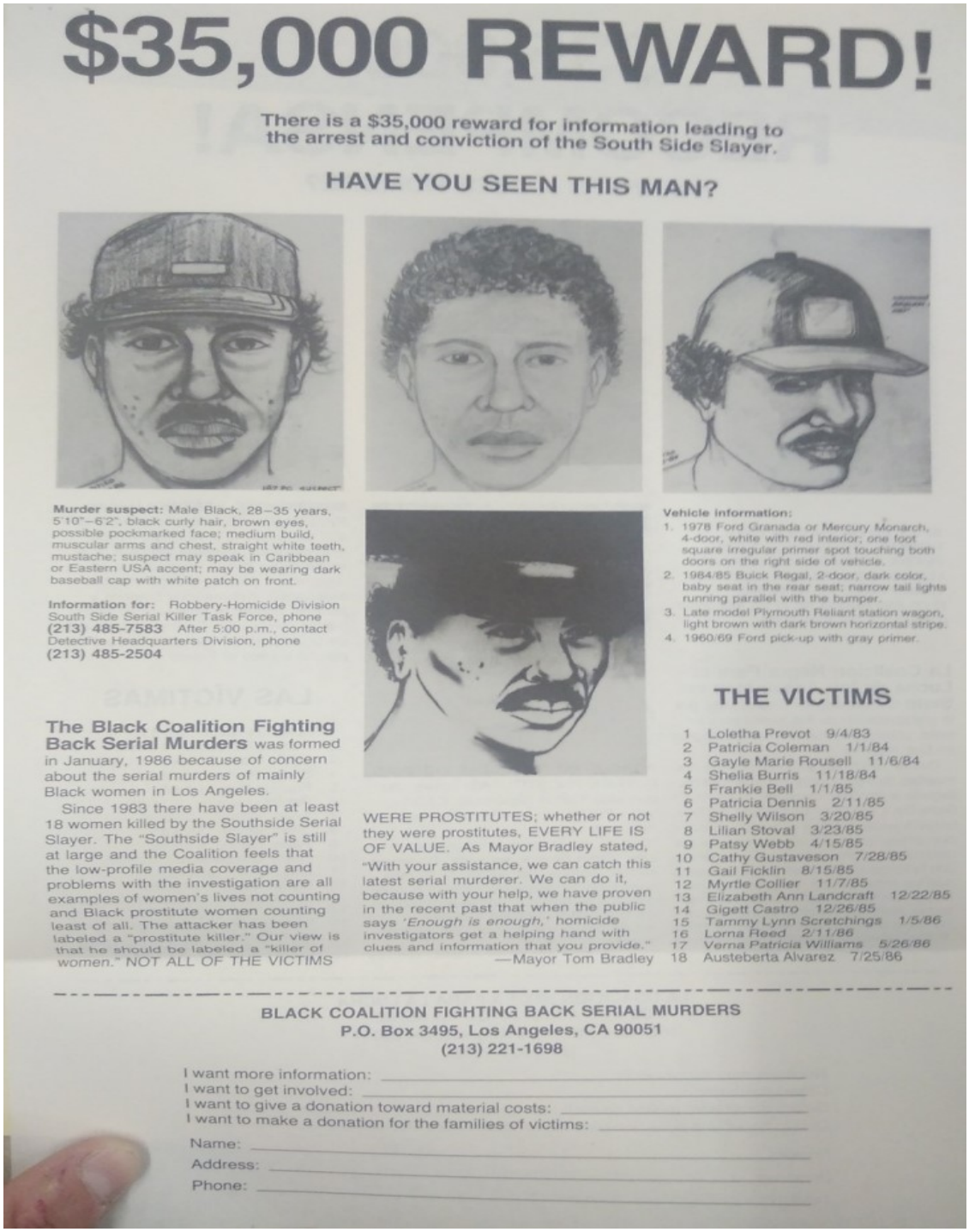
While Prescod opposed 'demands raised by some community leaders for additional money for policing in South Central', the Black Coalition held similarities with groups such as UNO and SCOC.[157] They demanded more information regarding how South Central was policed, including 'that the budget for policing South Central be made public, that we know what the cost is as a percentage of the total police budget, that we know how much overtime money has gone into policing South Central'. They also demanded more detail about how officers were deployed and resources were allocated, 'for example, how much goes into solving crimes of rape?'[158] Thus, to the Coalition, the Southside Slayer case was only one part of broader concerns regarding the spatialised inequalities inherent within the criminal justice system. The Coalition also felt that their work was able to transcend any constituency and speak to the broad concerns of South Central. They often referred to the entire community of South Central when attempting to convey their frustrations, suggesting that given the economic and social 'devastation' facing residents, they 'should not have to picket, vigil and protest for law enforcement and public officials to do what they are paid to for' when 'just surviving is so overwhelming a task.'[159] They emulated and replicated ideas that had guided Black women's activism throughout urban America, arguing that 'not only do women have to struggle to make ends meet but to defend our communities', in this instance against 'further police violence, illegality and racism.'[160] Their belief that they were defending 'their' community in its entirety, rather than sex workers or Black women alone, indicated that these women saw the protection or reclamation of urban space as part of their wider mission. Moreover, it demonstrates the ways activists created their own imagined geographies that strengthened their resolve. These constructions of place rejected the stereotypes of South Central that defined the area through Black male criminality, and instead placed radical Black womanhood at the heart of their imagined community. The ideals of Prescod regarding gender and racial equality, and economic justice, transcended

[156] Prescod, 'Statement to the Los Angeles Police Commission', p.3.
[157] *Ibid.*, p.5.
[158] *Ibid*.
[159] 'Counting Women's Lives', 19 May 1987.
[160] *Ibid*.

the story of the Southside Slayer to be applied to the struggle to defend and protect all South Central residents.

After a Sheriff's Deputy was arrested and charged with the murder of three women in 1989, the Black Coalition became inactive. The Deputy was later exonerated, and in 2002 the 'Grim Sleeper' serial killer was attributed to a number of the murders. Prescod and other members continued to organise for the Wages for Housework campaign. Following the Rodney King Crisis, the group designed and distributed thousands of copies of a 'Legal Defense Information Sheet', and held workshops to inform community members of their rights.[161] This work therefore continued to organise around ensuring the police did not abuse residents' civil and human rights. The Black Coalition Fighting Back Serial Murders have received mention, if not sustained attention, in literature concerning the racial and gendered components of serial killings.[162] Yet they have remained absent from studies of grassroots approaches to law and order in L.A. The Black Coalition's story - as well as their means of mobilising women of colour - may add greater nuance to our understanding of how the rise of the carceral state impacted communities of colour. The Coalition could hardly be considered conservative advocates for punitive policing. They condemned the LAPD for their failure to take the Southside Slayer killings seriously, and to properly inform the community of the danger faced by Black women. Through their slogans, such as 'Women Count, Count Women's Lives', we see the same values that would inspire and galvanise the Black Lives Matter movement 25 years later. They were determined to place value on the lives of those murdered, and insisted even if 'all the women were prostitutes, they were all drug addicts, that is not what is relevant to us…there is no hierarchy of human life, and we demand there be no double standard in police policies when it comes to prostitutes or alleged prostitutes.'[163] This emphasis on 'double standards' suggests they shared many of the same values and ideas as other activists concerned with the criminal justice system. These campaigners, while often fighting for quite different goals, all felt that vast iniquities proliferated in the way justice was delivered to the communities of Los Angeles, often determined through the criminalisation of Black and Latinx neighbourhoods and the socioeconomic patterns that constructed place. They demanded that law enforcement and the criminal justice system respected communities, and that all Angelenos were treated equally as citizens, regardless of where they resided.

[161] Prescod, 'Liberty Hill Funding Application', 'Legal Defense Information Sheet', n.d., Liberty Hill Collection, Box 44, Folder 12.
[162] Terrion L. Williamson, 'Why Did They Die? On Combahee and the Serialization of Black Death', *Souls,* 19.3 (2017), 328-341, Jane Caputi, 'The Sexual Politics of Murder', *Gender & Society*, 3.4 (1989), 437-456.
[163] Prescod, 'Statement to the Los Angeles Police Commission', p.3.



$35,000 REWARD!

There is a $35,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the South Side Slayer.

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS MAN?

Murder suspect: Male Black, 28–35 years, 5'10"–6'2", black curly hair, brown eyes, possible pockmarked face; medium build, muscular arms and chest, straight white teeth, mustache; suspect may speak in Caribbean or Eastern USA accent; may be wearing dark baseball cap with white patch on front.

Information for: Robbery-Homicide Division South Side Serial Killer Task Force, phone **(213) 485-7583** After 5:00 p.m., contact Detective Headquarters Division, phone **(213) 485-2504**

Vehicle information:

1. 1978 Ford Granada or Mercury Monarch, 4-door, white with red interior; one foot square irregular primer spot touching both doors on the right side of vehicle.
2. 1984/85 Buick Regal, 2-door, dark color, baby seat in the rear seat; narrow tail lights running parallel with the bumper.
3. Late model Plymouth Reliant station wagon, light brown with dark brown horizontal stripe.
4. 1960/69 Ford pick-up with gray primer.

The Black Coalition Fighting Back Serial Murders was formed in January, 1986 because of concern about the serial murders of mainly Black women in Los Angeles.

Since 1983 there have been at least 18 women killed by the Southside Serial Slayer. The "Southside Slayer" is still at large and the Coalition feels that the low-profile media coverage and problems with the investigation are all examples of women's lives not counting and Black prostitute women counting least of all. The attacker has been labeled a "prostitute killer." Our view is that he should be labeled a "killer of women." NOT ALL OF THE VICTIMS WERE PROSTITUTES; whether or not they were prostitutes, EVERY LIFE IS OF VALUE. As Mayor Bradley stated, "With your assistance, we can catch this latest serial murderer. We can do it, because with your help, we have proven in the recent past that when the public says *'Enough is enough,'* homicide investigators get a helping hand with clues and information that you provide."
—Mayor Tom Bradley

THE VICTIMS

1 Loletha Prevot 9/4/83
2 Patricia Coleman 1/1/84
3 Gayle Marie Rousell 11/6/84
4 Shelia Burris 11/18/84
5 Frankie Bell 1/1/85
6 Patricia Dennis 2/11/85
7 Shelly Wilson 3/20/85
8 Lilian Stoval 3/23/85
9 Patsy Webb 4/15/85
10 Cathy Gustaveson 7/28/85
11 Gail Ficklin 8/15/85
12 Myrtle Collier 11/7/85
13 Elizabeth Ann Landcraft 12/22/85
14 Gigett Castro 12/26/85
15 Tammy Lynn Scretchings 1/5/86
16 Lorna Reed 2/11/86
17 Verna Patricia Williams 5/26/86
18 Austeberta Alvarez 7/25/86

BLACK COALITION FIGHTING BACK SERIAL MURDERS
P.O. Box 3495, Los Angeles, CA 90051
(213) 221-1698

I want more information: _____
I want to get involved: _____
I want to give a donation toward material costs: _____
I want to make a donation for the families of victims: _____

Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____

Figure 2: Black Coalition Fighting Back Serial Murders information sheet on the 'Southside Slayer'.[164]

[164] Liberty Hill Collection, Box 25, Folder 3.

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As Chapter Five explores in greater detail, a myriad of proposals and strategies for urban regeneration were developed in the aftermath of the Rodney King crisis. Groups such as CAPA continued to demand greater community control of the police through an idea gathering support in other urban areas; 'community-based policing'. This was an attempt to make law enforcement departments responsive to, and at times embedded within, communities of colour.[165] Chief Gates rebuffed such suggestions, and defended the practices of the LAPD.[166] Under pressure, however, Gates was forced to retire in 1992, and was replaced with the city's first Black Police Chief, Willie Williams.[167] Mayor Bradley and the municipal government focused their efforts on rebuilding and redeveloping the economy of these communities, and continued to avoid close cooperation with the LAPD. President Bush looked to combine both of these responses, viewing L.A. as the perfect opportunity to retool and expand the federal government's latest urban policy, the 'Weed and Seed' strategy.

Announced nationally in late 1991, Weed and Seed was designed to provide federal funds under the jurisdiction of the Department of Justice, for local urban law enforcement to remove, or 'weed,' hardened criminals, gang members and drug dealers from small target areas.[168] Once achieved, the 'seed' element, also handled by the Justice Department, involved channelling funds to local social service providers in order to help revitalise communities, or in the President's words, 'to give people who call these neighbourhoods home something to hope for.'[169] Given the extent of the destruction within L.A.'s urban core, and the myriad social problems it faced, the plan was redesigned specifically for the city in the aftermath of the Rodney King crisis. Inner-city L.A. would receive a total of $19 million, with $1 million earmarked for the LAPD towards developing new community-based policing strategies, and the remaining $18 million towards social services programmes, a far greater ratio of 'seed' money than was given to other cities in the project. Their two target areas, Pico-Union/Koreatown and South Central, were also much larger than their urban

[165] For community policing see: Schiesl, 'Behind the Shield', pp.160-1, Moore, *Black Rage in New Orleans* pp.229-30
[166] Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, pp.225-6.
[167] Schiesl, "Behind the Shield", pp.160-1.
[168] U.S. Department Of Justice, 'The Weed and Seed Strategy', n.d., Rebuild L.A. Collection, CSLA-6, Department of Archives and Special Collections, William H. Hannon Library, Loyola Marymount University [Hereafter: Rebuild L.A. Collection], Box 23, Folder 380.
[169] For Weed and Seed, see: Lisa L. Miller, 'Looking for Postmodernism in all the Wrong Places: Implementing a New Penology', *British Journal of Criminology,* 41 (2001), 168-184, Blaine Brindenball and Paul Jesilow, 'Weeding Criminals or Planting Fear: An Evaluation of a Weed and Seed Project', *Criminal Justice Review* 30.1 (2005), 64-89.

counterparts throughout the nation, although the 'weeding' element would continue to focus on small parcels of land notorious for drug and gang crime.[170] Their plan, similar to those proposed by the UNO a decade prior, was to better coordinate the apparatus of the criminal justice system with one another alongside community organisations. Unlike the UNO's programme, however, the 'weed' component of Weed and Seed provided no involvement for local residents in determining how their community would be policed. This aspect would prove controversial for many activists.

When Mayor Bradley and the City Council approved the plan in July 1992, a vociferous backlash emerged. Most vocal were the Labor/Community Strategy Center, a city-wide organisation consisting of community leaders, professional organisers and academics. Founded by white Civil Rights and New Left veteran Eric Mann, the group had gained prominence during a successful campaign to prevent the closure of the General Motors plant in Van Nuys, north-western Los Angeles, in 1982, but had since expanded to support environmental justice and quality of life campaigns. Their Urban Strategies Group, consisting of eleven LCSC members including Mann, African Studies Professor and environmental activist Dr Cynthia Hamilton, and former Black Panther Anthony Thigpenn, reviewed the proposal and issued a barrage of criticisms towards the programme.[171] In a city that had endured a crisis precipitated, in part, by violence and abuse on the part of law enforcement, they argued that tying much-needed social service funds together with increased resources for the LAPD, under the jurisdiction of the Justice Department, might not be a timely solution.[172] Moreover, they felt it would hinder necessary police reform at this critical juncture, and continue to impinge on the civil liberties of the city's communities of colour, forcing activists to silence their criticism of law enforcement in order to receive funding for their activities.[173] Their objections also stretched to how money for the 'seed' element of the programme would be used. Like many local activists, they were concerned that the money being invested into the city's poorest areas would be for 'enterprise zones' used to 'provide tax incentives to corporations to locate in designated "poverty areas" as well as the promise of relaxed environmental regulations and low-wage labor' in exchange for providing jobs.[174] The Urban Strategies Group therefore believed that Weed and Seed would perpetuate the spatial disparities that had damaged poor communities of colour in previous decades.

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[170] 'Weed and Seed in Los Angeles', 5 August 1992, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4380, Folder 7.
[171] Labor/Community Strategy Center Urban Strategies Group, 'A Call to Reject the Federal Weed and Seed Program in Los Angeles', 1992, Rodolfo F. Acuna Collection, 1857-2006, URB/RFA, Urban Archives, California State University, Northridge [Hereafter: Acuna Collection], Box 130, Folder 20.
[172] *Ibid*., p.3.
[173] *Ibid*, pp.1-2.
[174] *Ibid*., p.11.

Their critique of the federal Weed and Seed strategy was also motivated by the unequal application of law enforcement within the neighbourhoods of Los Angeles. Weed and Seed, they argued, was facilitating 'the process of criminalization of geographical communities' by placing select neighbourhoods under federal control.[175] This would 'impose a two-tiered justice system, with state laws applying to affluent, usually predominately white communities, and federal laws applying to low-income communities of color.' The implications of this would affect the arrest and sentencing of offenders, and whether minor crimes would be treated as felonies or merely misdemeanours. By highlighting this, the Urban Strategies Group reflected on how Weed and Seed would spatially exacerbate the unequal and racialised attitudes to juvenile delinquency that had prevailed during the previous two decades. 'Drug use, crime, and violence are increasingly widespread in predominately white, middle class communities as well,' their report commented, 'but in those communities, the policy of most parents is to clean up or cover up their children's behaviour and to have sentences commuted to probation and community service.'[176] The report highlighted the many spaces inhabited by white or affluent citizens where drug use may be common, such as 'every college dormitory…many private homes (including those in the wealthiest neighbourhoods) …every Century City law office,' yet were not subject to Weed and Seed initiatives.[177] These objections illustrated how the federal government's new urban policies spatialised, and in turn heightened, the ways Black and Latinx youth were criminalised for where they lived, instead of any supposed crimes that had been committed.

The Strategy Center directed their harshest criticism towards the name of the programme, and the connotations behind it. As Cresswell has explored, to describe anything, especially a citizen, as a 'weed' presents an interesting spatial metaphor, implying something that is out of place or invading, and needs to be removed.[178] To the Strategy Center, the suggestion that 'some young people in low-income communities, no matter how bad their individual behaviour, are simply "weeds" to be rooted out and burned' was 'an inhumane and unethical perspective.'[179] As well as dehumanising the residents of South Central and Pico-Union, the choice of the name 'Weed and Seed' offered insight into how federal officials viewed the spaces of these communities. If these neighbourhoods were to be revitalised, 'weeds', or criminals, who were destroying the community, would need to be entirely removed, in this

[175] *Ibid.*, p.8.
[176] *Ibid.*, p.7.
[177] *Ibid.*, p.10.
[178] Tim Cresswell, 'Weeds, Plagues, and Bodily Secretions: A Geographical Interpretation of Metaphors of Displacement', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 87.2 (1997), 330-345 (335-6).
[179] 'A Call to Reject the Federal Weed and Seed Program', pp.6-7.

case incarcerated. Once 'cleared', these spaces would be free from interference; a blank canvas which could be reshaped and redesigned. The 'seed' element of the programme would therefore allow the Bush administration to remake South Central and Pico-Union in their own image. As the Strategy Center identified, this ideological vision may have been reflective of neoliberal corporatism, particularly low-wage service jobs and environmental deregulation, which ignored the community's preferences for rebuilding.[180] Thus, to opponents of the programme, the federal Weed and Seed strategy was not simply a punitive response to crime, nor an innocuous opportunity to deliver much-needed funding for urban social services. Instead, it was a means for the government to establish territorial control of Los Angeles' urban spaces and built environment through an exploitation of the violence seen during the Rodney King Crisis.

The U.S. Attorney for California, Terree Bowers, quickly rebuffed the objections presented in the working group's report, and provided a public 'Q&A' document that reasserted that 'weed' money in Los Angeles would be used for community policing strategies, such as Spanish-language training, or bicycle patrols rather than squad cars, instead of punitive law enforcement. [181] He also denied that social service funds would be controlled by law enforcement. Yet the Strategy Center's work had clearly impacted some local residents and leaders. Council members representing South Central, Mark Ridley-Thomas and Rita Walters, who led the Council's Ad-Hoc Committee on Recovery and Revitalisation, publicly rejected the Weed and Seed programme in November, despite their initial support.[182] Writing to Bowers, Ridley-Thomas questioned whether 'seed' money was 'new' funding or simply reapportioned from other governmental departments, criticised the lack of community participation in the scheme's proposal, and wondered whether social service funding should be 'held hostage to the "weed" portion of the grant.'[183] He also took great offence at the name 'Weed and Seed,' suggesting that despite government promises, no effort towards community-based policing could consist of 'weeding,' and cast doubt on the LAPD's ability to 'determine the weeds from similar-looking, beneficial plants.'[184] Instead, Walters and Ridley-Thomas put forward a motion to the City Council that demanded that no social service funding be dependent on the approval of law enforcement programmes, and that the Weed and Seed strategy be replaced with a new federal grant for community-based policing with greater involvement on behalf of local residents.[185]

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[180] *Ibid.,* p.11.
[181] Terree Bowers to Thomas J. Rueter 30 September 1992, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4380, Folder 6.
[182] Carla Rivera, 'Panel Turns Down U.S. Riot Aid Proposal,' *Los Angeles Times*, 13 November, 1992.
[183] Mark Ridley-Thomas to Terree Bowers, 16 November 1992, Tom Bradley Papers Box 4380, Folder 2.
[184] *Ibid*.
[185] Mark Ridley-Thomas, 'Motion' 12 November 1992, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4380, Folder 2.

One of the Strategy Center's demands was for greater community participation in the creation of criminal justice and social service programmes, and thus they contended that community hearings should be held regarding the implementation of Weed and Seed.[186] Their efforts succeeded, with two meetings being held in October 1991, led by the Ad-Hoc Committee to Rebuild Los Angeles and chaired by Walters and Ridley-Thomas. These hearings demonstrated both the diversity of positions regarding crime and law enforcement, and the complex ways residents and leaders had to negotiate urban policy in the Reagan/Bush era. A wide array of residents representing multiple different local groups attended, from neighbourhood watch and improvement associations, to the Central American Refugees Center, and the Revolutionary Communist Party. Many argued that Weed and Seed represented an extension of 'tyranny,' that local law enforcement under federal control would be a threat to civil liberties, and that social service funding should not be tied to police programmes.[187] Others were also outraged by the name, resenting the idea that they were being perceived as 'weeds' and suggesting it was the LAPD, not the community, that required 'weeding.'[188] Few, however, did not mention the serious problems created by crime in the local community that had to be addressed, and that local social services desperately required more funding.[189] Some felt their communities were 'drowning in crime,' arguing that the programme did not do enough to support and fund policing in these neighbourhoods.[190] Crucially, some speakers criticised the Strategy Center, and resented their presence as a group working from outside the community, arguing that it was impossible to 'understand how we feel unless you are in the midst of these people,' while others resented that people from outside the community 'try to tell us what to do.'[191] Their words provide important reminders that activists, like city and federal officials, were sometimes guilty of imprinting their own subjectivities and ideologies onto the places and spaces of L.A.'s poorest communities of colour.

In an attempt to salvage the funding, Mayor Tom Bradley met with Ridley-Thomas, Walters, and new LAPD Police Chief Willie Williams for emergency negotiations. The programme once again saw revisions, with greater community participation promised, both as part of a

[186] 'Call to Reject the Federal Weed and Seed Program', p.2.
[187] 'Ad Hoc Committee on Recovery and Revitalization: Summary of Public Hearing Held October 21, 1992', Rebuild L.A. Collection, Box 201, Folder 8. See Lisa Duran (p.6), Esther Lofton (p.10), Dick Laird (p.14.), Jorge Mancillas (p.17), Rudy Acuna (p.20).
[188] *Ibid*. See: Jorge Mancillas (p.17), Catherine Young (p.22), David Bryant (p.27), Nestor Vaye (p.30)
[189] *Ibid.,* See: Eric Mann (p.11), Rudy Acuna (p.20), Catherine Young (p.22)
[190] *Ibid*. See: John Mills (p.9), Mike Hoy (p.9), Frank Tashiro (p.10), Nola Marie Mott (p.11), Maria Gonzalez (p.13) Jeffrey Thompson (p.27)
[191] *Ibid*. See: Frank Tashiro (p.10), Nola Marie Mott (p.11).

new steering committee, and the establishment of hearings to discuss new community-policing initiatives. A less insidious title was finally agreed on, with the project being renamed the 'Community Project for Restoration' (CPR) programme.[192] While the Strategy Center still demanded the Justice Department have less control of the programme, and the LAPD place more power in the hands of the community, they acknowledged that progress had been made.[193] Despite some concerns, South Central and Pico-Union representatives ultimately could not refuse the influx of federal dollars given the extent of devastation following the Rodney King crisis, both as a way to tackle the fear of crime in their communities, and to help fund desperately needed social services. The 'Weed and Seed' controversy shows the complexity inherent in any attempt to protest, or reform, law enforcement policies in the city during this period, with communities grappling with both the destructive impact of gang and drug crime, and concerns regarding police overreach and abuse. The resolution to this debate demonstrates that when communities had an opportunity to voice these opinions, however disjointed, and efforts were made to include residents in public discourse regarding urban policies affecting their neighbourhoods, some progress and compromises could be made.

The dehumanising images that were embodied by the term 'Weed and Seed' had long been a part of urban criminal justice policies, and were beginning to have visible long-term impacts. The criminalisation of urban spaces and their inhabitants, and increasingly punitive sentences such as 'three-strikes' laws and the reduction of parole considerations led to an incredible rise in the number of incarcerations in the U.S. In California alone, the state prison population grew 500% between 1982 and 2000, with African Americans and the Latinx population constituting two-thirds of the state's 160,000 prisoners.[194] As Thompson has argued, the rise of mass incarceration played a critical role in facilitating and exacerbating the 'urban crisis'. It drained communities of colour of their population and tax base, and had a widespread impact on urban education, employment and public health.[195] As the state and private industry disinvested from working-class minority neighbourhoods in the 1970s and 1980s, they replaced social services and well-paying employment with efforts to remove a 'significant percentage of the population' from these communities through incarceration.[196]

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[192] 'Press Release: Bradley and Councilmembers Ridley-Thomas, Walters, and Hernandez Announce Formation of Steering Committee for the Community Projects Restoration Program', 16 December 1992, Community Projects For Restoration, 'Summary of Community Meetings', 16 March 1993, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4380, Folder 2.

[193] Urban Strategies Group to Mark Ridley-Thomas, 14 December 1992, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4380, Folder 6.

[194] Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*, p.7.

[195] Thompson, 'Why Mass Incarceration Matters', 713-4.

[196] Murch, 'Crack in Los Angeles', 166.

Contrary to popular assumptions of the Reagan/Bush administrations' desire to contract and limit governmental intervention in public policy, the expansion of the carceral state constituted an immense act of state-building.[197]

These policies were being realised on both a personal and community-wide level by residents of inner-city L.A. by the early 1990s, and thus efforts to resist mass incarceration emerged. The most notable were Mothers Reclaiming Our Children (Mothers ROC or MROC), who formed as a partnership between several mothers whose children had been falsely imprisoned or given excessive sentences, and the Equal Rights Congress. Their work challenged the policies of incarceration by highlighting the disparities within sentencing, and projecting their own counter-production of 'place' that emphasised an inclusive and humanising understanding of community. Mothers ROC was founded by Theresa Alison and lifelong activist Geri Silva following the arrest and sentencing of Alison's son, Dewayne Holmes. The LAPD and INS were accused of arresting or deporting a number of participants in the 1991-1992 efforts to establish a gang truce in L.A., of which Holmes was a leader at the time of his sentencing for robbery.[198] Alison's activism began a year prior to the founding of Mothers ROC, at the Imperial Courts housing project, where her nephew George Noyes was killed by police in November 1991. She believed that 'the police would not think they could get away with shooting our children down in cold blood if we took better care of them', and therefore hoped to educate residents and politicise local acts of mothering.[199] Her belief that 'it was up to us to change things, by doing what we already knew how to do,' was based on generations of community practices of other-mothering.[200] Mothers, daughters and sometimes young sons gathered in communal rooms within the housing project to discuss grooming and nutrition, style hair, and even hold fashion shows.[201] These everyday practices also offered an opportunity to discuss the impacts of the criminal justice system; how children should interact with the police, and remembering loved ones who had died or were imprisoned.[202] By focusing on practices of mothering that were rooted in long traditions within the African American community, and occurring within the everyday spaces of social life in Imperial Courts, Alison's work encouraged residents to openly discuss the problems they encountered with the criminal justice system. Through this, her work 'provided

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[197] Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, p.10.
[198] Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, p.241. For more on the Gang Truce, see Kamran Afary, *Performance and Activism*: *Grassroots Discourse After the Los Angeles Rebellion of 1992* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009), pp.93-120.
[199] Gilmore, *Golden Gulag* p.198.
[200] *Ibid*. For other mothering see: Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*, (New York: Routledge, 1991).
[201] Gilmore, *Golden Gulag,* pp.198-200.
[202] *Ibid*.

contemporary means to choreograph interracial political solidarity among all kinds of caregivers losing their loved ones into the prison system.'[203] These efforts therefore utilised the spaces of everyday urban life to enliven a discourse of resistance towards the practices of the carceral state.

After Alison met Geri Silva of the Equal Rights Congress, the group were able to provide resources and assistance to the fledgling Mothers' ROC. They began holding weekly meetings for support, discussion and planning. Initially, public protests were held to support freeing Dewayne Holmes. Yet an increasingly diverse range of members, often with personal stories similar to Alison, encouraged them to tackle broader inequalities within the criminal justice system. By the mid-1990s, the group had around 100 members, and had created a board consisting of six women from various backgrounds, all of whom had family members caught within the 'system'.[204] Members were predominately (three-quarters) women, and included mothers, sisters, wives and daughters of those incarcerated or on trial.[205] Although in 1993, 80% of their membership was Black, as the number of Latinx prisoners in California surpassed that of African Americans in 1994, more Latina women emerged as members, joined by Asian-Americans, Native Americans and a small number of white women.[206] As Gilmore has noted, the majority worked for wages, while others were disabled or retired.[207] During weekly meetings, members sought to uncover their similarities beyond carceral concerns. This became difficult, because they encompassed a number of races, and not all were mothers (or women), or had children within the prison system.[208] Instead, Gilmore suggests, they defined themselves as 'poor people who work', indicating how disparities within the criminal justice system often involved interlocking prejudice against race and class.[209] Mothers ROC were keenly aware of the additional labour caring for the incarcerated created for these women; attending court session, contacting overworked public defenders and attorneys, arranging bail, and visiting loved ones, in addition to waged work and domestic labour, created a 'triple work-day'. Thus MROC looked to provide support and practical help for these women, who previously 'were alone in their fight.'[210] They offered information, legal workshops and hired researchers (such as Gilmore) to help defence

[203] *Ibid*., pp.236-7.
[204] Mothers Reclaiming Our Children, 'Mothers ROC Mission Statement', n.d., Liberty Hill Collection, Box 43, Folder 4.
[205] Equal Rights Congress, 'Funding Proposal, Mothers Reclaiming Our Children from Prison (Mothers ROC)', 15 August 1993, p.8, Liberty Hill Collection, Box 43, Folder 4.
[206] *Ibid.,* Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*, pp.225-6.
[207] *Ibid*., p.211.
[208] *Ibid*., p.237.
[209] *Ibid*.
[210] Mothers Reclaiming Our Children to Liberty Hill Foundation Community Funding Board, 15 March 1996, Liberty Hill Collection, Box 58, Folder 8.

cases. Even if police and judicial abuse did not exist, a researcher for the group explained, 'there still would be a need for Mothers ROC' to provide support and information for parents, and to act as 'a buffer to absorb the anxieties and frustrations.'[211] In addition to this support and assistance, they provided a 'vision of empowerment through collective action' that, similar to CAPA, was developed through participation 'as a response to crises or tragedies in their lives.'[212] It looked to 'train women leaders who are ready to become political participants instead of powerless victims,' and offered empowerment to those women for whom 'confronting the power structure is outside of their experience'.[213] Their slogan embodied these strategies, explaining that 'Mothers ROC is not about being weak; it is about finding strength. Mothers ROC is not about tearing down; it is about building up.'[214] Similar to efforts to prevent police abuse, Mothers ROC forged a broad and inclusive definition of community. They used their experience as working mothers to underline the ways in which mass incarceration was not an issue that affected one particular segment of society, but devastated entire communities.

MROC's activism looked to address multiple issues within the criminal justice system. They concurred with many other activists in L.A. by demanding an end to police abuse and brutality. Following the Rodney King crisis, they fought against an increased police presence in their community, 'which for our members translates into harassment, false arrests, and imprisonment.'[215] Members hoped to 'make the police part of the community and the community part of the police…it's not us against them', again suggesting that poor Black and Latinx neighbourhoods were becoming increasingly isolated.[216] Still, the main focus of their organising was to tackle the issues of incarceration. The Mothers leafleted public spaces around jails, police stations and courts to explain their purpose and gain new members.[217] They regularly attended trials, sometimes to support the child of a member, sometimes to observe proceedings, and held press conferences and demonstrations outside these trials.[218]As well as offering emotional support, they also met with public defenders and attorneys in cases to 'let them know we are on the case, we can help, and we are

[211]Larry Petrisky letter, 12 August, 1993, Liberty Hill Collection, Box 43, Folder 4.
[212] ERC, 'Funding Proposal', p.3.
[213]*Ibid*., p.4, Mothers ROC, 'Mothers ROC Mission Statement'.
[214]Theresa Allison, 'A Word from Our President,' *The ROC*, vol.1, no.1, May 1994, 1, Liberty Hill Collection, Box 43, Folder 4.
[215] ERC, 'Funding Proposal', p.1.
[216] 'Mothers ROC – Reclaiming Our Children', n.d., Mothers ROC Collection, Southern California Library, Box 1, Folder 1.
[217]Gilmore, *Golden Gulag,* p.182
[218]*Ibid*., p.210.

watching.'[219] They demanded to review and challenge the gang-tracking database, an overhaul to the system of public defenders ('which is a mockery of justice') and an end to forced plea-bargaining, which intimidated and coerced many youths to admit guilt yet still enacted lengthy sentences.[220] Their ultimate goal, they argued, was to achieve 'an end to the so called "War on Drugs", which in reality is a war on people of color.'[221]

To achieve this, the group sought a means to legitimise and publicise their belief that the policies of mass incarceration were unjust, and thus foster resistance against the spatialised implementation of discrimination. This required them to challenge the perception of crime (and criminals) within their own community. 'There has been no organized force to ensure success,' their mission statement declared, because the issues of police and judicial abuse had not been legitimated 'even with the communities where they were most prevalent.'[222] They recognised that crime remained a critical concern for many in the community, shaped by 'the powers that dictate and control our ideas', but argued that 'they never bother to mention that in California, violent crime has actually been on the decline' and had fallen 11% in L.A. during 1994.[223] Thus, the group looked to confront the ways neighbourhoods had been criminalised by the justice system and within public opinion, which justified the kinds of punitive sentencing laws that saw those stealing a 'slice of pizza' or 'a shirt' jailed for 25-years-to-life, or handed life sentences to nonviolent youth offenders.[224] This was apparent through MROC's attempt to deconstruct the racialised productions of place that had informed understandings of urban communities. 'Being a 16 –year-old named Ramirez, with a tattoo, having friends, and living in Ramona Gardens, does not make someone a gang member, nor does it make them a criminal,' they suggested.[225] By focusing their attention on the predominately Latinx housing project of Ramona Gardens in East Los Angeles, they highlighted how youth from both Black and Latinx communities had been criminalised and subject to unequal treatment by law enforcement, and the ways that conceptions of place contributed to this. Like many activists preceding them, they saw this stigmatisation as an effort to deny their right to inhabit public space and limit the mobility of people of colour. Alison demanded: 'who in the hell decided that the word suspicious means Black or Brown?'[226] Linking the long history of assumptions of Black and Latinx criminality with

[219]'Mothers ROC – Reclaiming Our Children'.
[220]*Ibid*.
[221]*Ibid*.
[222]Mothers ROC, 'Mothers ROC Mission Statement'.
[223]Mothers Reclaiming Our Children to Liberty Hill Foundation Community Funding Board, Geri Silva, 'Dear Supporter', n.d., both in Liberty Hill Collection, Box 58, Folder 8.
[224]*Ibid*.
[225] 'Mothers ROC – Reclaiming Our Children'.
[226]Theresa Allison, 'A Word From the President,' *The ROC*, June 1995, 2, Liberty Hill Collection, Box 58, Folder 8.

everyday life, she continued, 'what's suspicious about a Black man on his way home from work, from a movie, from a concert, from a neighbourhood bar? Where is it written that a Black or Latino man can't be out on any street in any neighbourhood any time of day or night?'[227] The implication - that white or wealthy citizens would not face such suspicion - evidenced the group's frustration at the ways such practices had been codified to allow youth of colour to be incarcerated at vastly disparate rates.

Mothers ROC also looked to highlight the uneven application of the law. The group avoided making judgements on the guilt or innocence of particular cases. Instead, they focused on structural inequalities, maintaining that 'our criminal justice system has nothing to do with justice.'[228] 'We are not saying these men should not be tried or punished for their wrongdoing,' suggested member Diane Wade when protesting the disparities within cocaine sentencing laws, 'it's just that these laws are unfair.'[229] They highlighted the spatialised nature of such laws, where five grams of cheaper 'crack' cocaine, seen predominately within poor communities of colour, carried a minimum sentence of five years in federal prison, when a similar amount of the more expensive powder cocaine - used more frequently and recreationally by wealthy and white citizens – would only lead to probation or a state prison sentence. Given these prejudices had allowed for so many community members to be arrested and charged, Mothers ROC also looked to confront the injustices manufactured by court proceedings. Trials and the sentencing of those convicted, like other elements of the criminal justice system, could often be manipulated to achieve desired outcomes. Throughout the early 1990s, numerous high-profile cases involving South Central residents were moved from local courthouses to those in more diverse or homogenously white areas. Soon Ja Du (accused of murdering Black teenager Latasha Harlins) saw her trial moved from Compton courthouse to Downtown. The officers accused of beating Rodney King were put on trial in the white suburb of Simi Valley instead of central Los Angeles. More immediate to Mothers ROC, Dewayne Holmes also saw his 1992 trial moved out of Compton.[230] This again combined racial and geographic injustice: lawyers often requested the movement of trials in order to ensure a greater proportion of white jurors and to isolate the case from the South Central community. Mothers ROC addressed this, demanding 'a change in the way juries are selected so you don't always get a jury of retired white people who don't know what's going on. The constitution says we have a right to a trial by jury of our

[227] *Ibid*.
[228] Ron Milligan, 'Mothers Protest Judicial System Inequity', *Los Angeles Wave*, March 3 1993.
[229] Malaika Brown, 'Families Want Equity in Crack Sentencings,' *Los Angeles Sentinel,* Liberty Hill Collection, Box 58, Folder 8.
[230] 'Why Dewayne Holmes Must Be Freed', n.d., Mothers ROC Collection, Box 1, Folder 1.

peers from our own community.'[231]Their emphasis on trial by 'peers from our own community' demonstrates MROC's recognition of the ways 'justice' had spatial connotations, and that discrepancies within the criminal justice system had potential solutions through the spatial reorganisation of these structures. This work, therefore, emphasised the ways that the criminal justice system had targeted, and criminalised, communities along lines of race and class, which in turn heightened a gendered division of emotional and practical labour. Mothers ROC disputed the criminalisation of urban spaces which facilitated unequal geographies of justice, and utilised these disparities to legitimise their challenge to the 'objectivity' of the practice of criminal justice in L.A.

While attempting to alter how criminal sentencing was administered proved difficult, Mothers ROC were also able to incorporate prisoners into the community, thus reducing the spatial isolation often felt by those on trial or in prison. Theorists from Ruth Wilson Gilmore to Michel Foucault have argued that prisons deliberately sit on the margins of social space, used as a method of social control to isolate and incapacitate inhabitants.[232] From the perspective of Mothers ROC, they represented 'the voice of the tens of thousands who are locked away and forgotten.'[233] Their activism represented an opportunity for empowerment for both those within the criminal justice system, and their families. Expanding on their definition of empowerment, they argued that this meant 'speaking up for justice, revealing deplorable conditions in jails and prisons…and letting judges and juries know that defendants are respected and cared for by their community.'[234] In addition to attending trials and sentencing, MROC developed a 'core of volunteers' to regularly visit institutions in order to 'hook up inmates with the community and to dialogue', while their newsletter encouraged readers to write letters of support to the incarcerated.[235] The Mothers hoped that this strategy offered an alternative vision of the rehabilitative possibilities of criminal justice reform, that would 'positively impact on the lives of incarcerated youth and adults' by ensuring that 'they will have a community to be involved in to replace a crime based support system' after their release.[236] It also provided a means to dismantle the isolation that was created by the criminal justice system in courts and prisons. By their definition, prisons worked to restrict and control the mobility of inmates. By engaging in activism and care within these secluded

[231]'Mothers ROC – Reclaiming Our Children'.
[232] Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*, pp.11-14, Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (London: Allen Lane, 1977).
[233]Mothers Reclaiming Our Children, 'You Have Touched a ROC,' *The ROC*, vol.1, no.1, May 1994, 1, Liberty Hill Collection, Box 58, Folder 8.
[234]Equal Rights Congress, 'Funding Proposal', p.2.
[235]Mothers ROC, 'Follow-Up Questionnaire', n.d., Liberty Hill Collection, Box 43, Folder 4,. Mothers ROC, 'Mothers ROC Mission Statement'.
[236]*Ibid*.

or segregated spaces, or by attending trials collectively, Mothers ROC bridged the physical and metaphorical spaces between 'criminal' and 'community'. The mobility of these mothers counteracted the immobility of prisoners to keep political networks and resistance alive, and to integrate prisoners back into communities. Mothers ROC humanised those incarcerated in ways that included them within a broader imagined geography of Black and Latinx communities struggling to tackle prejudice and discrimination in the criminal justice system. This once more expanded the definition of 'community' to humanise prisoners, and project a contrasting understanding of the 'place' of local residents, whether living within the neighbourhood or those who were incarcerated.

This work appeared to have concrete effects in demonstrating to prisoners and law enforcement officials that those within the justice system were not hopeless or inherently criminal, but part of a wider, complex community. Mothers ROC believed they were 'noticed at every court appearance they attend. We have been told that the judges and prosecutors feel a loss of power when aware observers are present in the courtroom', and that 'defendants, jurors and defense attorneys as well as the Mothers say that feel empowered by the observation tactics.'[237] Over two months, four cases which MROC became involved in were dropped.[238] Teenager Nathaniel Lewis, initially accused of murder, was eventually handed a suspended sentence, and thanked Mothers ROC for supporting him 'by letting the judge and the jury know somebody really cared about me.'[239] Attorneys now requested the presence of the Mothers within the courtroom to support defendants, while schools, colleges and juvenile detention facilities began asking them to speak.[240] The group struggled to maintain their early success, and eventually splintered after being incorporated as a non-profit in 1998.[241] Yet Mothers ROC continued a long history of activist mothering conducted by women of colour, and preceded groups such as Mothers of the Movement, whose work to prevent police brutality and officer-involved shootings saw their members speak at the 2016 Democratic National Convention.[242] Mothers ROC members, distinguished through specific acts of mothering concerned with those entwined with the criminal justice system, offered support and practical help to one another whilst developing a critique of the ideologies underpinning the politics of mass incarceration. Moreover, they recognised and sought to alter the spatial inequalities that criminalised and punitively disciplined their loved ones.

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[237] Equal Rights Congress, 'Funding Proposal', p.5.
[238] *Ibid*.
[239] Milligan, 'Mothers Protest Judicial System Inequity'.
[240] Mothers Reclaiming Our Children to Liberty Hill Foundation Community Funding Board.
[241] Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*, pp.230-235.
[242] For Mothers of the Movement see Blain, 'We Will Overcome Whatever it is the System has Become Today'. Activist mothering is considered in greater detail in chapter two.

Mothers ROC therefore used a broad and inclusive definition of community, as well as their roles as mothers and women of colour, to challenge the established logic that determined policies leading to increased prison sentences. This hinged on the deconstruction and critique of spatially unequal policing and sentencing, and was determined to bridge the physical and metaphorical distance between the community and the incarcerated.

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Activists, politicians and progressive police officials struggled to overhaul the practices of the criminal justice system throughout the 1990s. Overwhelmingly passed by voters less than a month following the Rodney King Crisis, Charter Amendment F was seen as a referendum on the behaviour of the LAPD. It proposed allowing the Mayor, with the support of the City Council, to appoint the Chief of Police, and for greater civilian participation in misconduct reviews.[243] The LAPD continued to obstruct progress in implementing further community policing programmes and recommendations made by the Christopher Commission, citing lack of funding.[244] It took the 'Rampart Scandal' that ensued throughout the late 1990s to truly alter the culture and policies of the LAPD. In 1998, after being arrested for stealing and distributing cocaine held as police evidence, Officer Rafael Perez of the Rampart-area anti-gang unit agreed to implicate officers in his department. He revealed a culture of corruption and brutality, accusing over 70 officers in the Rampart unit of assaulting suspects, planting evidence on them, and perjuring themselves on the witness stand.[245] In what was described by journalists as 'the worst scandal in the history of Los Angeles', investigators overturned 100 convictions, and awarded more than $75 million in damages to victims.[246] Subsequently, the City Council agreed to pass a consent decree in 2000, which allowed the Department of Justice to oversee and monitor LAPD reforms. It ensured annual integrity audits and strict regulation, which provided for computerised tracking of officer actions, a new department to investigate officer shootings, and an expansion to the Police Commission.[247] By 2009, satisfaction with the department had increased by 83%.[248] Many police actions, of course, remained contentious. A 2004 gang sweep of the Nickerson Gardens housing project, with very few arrests, was reminiscent of Operation Hammer activities, ripping houses apart and roughly evacuating residents.[249] The LAPD also remained reluctant to rescind the spatially

[243] Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, p.226.
[244]Schiesl, 'Beyond The Shield', p.160.
[245]Schiesl, 'Beyond The Shield', p.163, Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, pp.241-244
[246]Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, p.242.
[247]Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, p.243, Schiesl, 'Beyond The Shield', p.164.
[248] Felker-Kantor*, Policing Los Angeles*, p.245.
[249] Schiesl, 'Beyond the Sheild', p.165.

uneven protection of residents, with one review in 2006 commenting that 'we have only enough police officers here to make certain that the wealthier neighbourhoods stay safe.'[250] Nationally, too, racial disparities have continued to afflict the criminal justice system. By 2014, 70 U.S. police departments were arresting African Americans at ten times the rate of other groups.[251] More than 140,000 people were serving life-sentences in the U.S. by 2009, over 3000 of whom were nonviolent offenders. An ACLU report in 2013 found that 83% of these nonviolent prisoners were either Black or Latinx, demonstrating 'extreme racial disparities.'[252] Publicising arguments made by Mothers ROC throughout the 1990s, politicians and media figures have looked to rectify such sentences, with the 2010 Fair Sentencing Act and 2018 First Step Act receiving bipartisan support.

Donna Murch has argued that, 'as the first generation of carceral state historiography is written, Los Angeles' war on drugs is instructive.'[253] The city embodied the political and economic response to urban social ills that defined the Reagan era at a time when L.A. was at the centre of national concerns regarding crack cocaine usage and gang activity. The city responded to the dual drug and crime crisis with punitive, aggressive means of law enforcement and an upsurge in lengthy prison sentences that produced a rapid expansion of the carceral state, specifically targeted towards Black and Latinx residents and the urban spaces they inhabited. This was a geographically uneven implementation of justice policies, which often relied on identifying 'criminal' neighbourhoods through racial and class demographics and the imagined geographies they denoted. Yet it is critical to remember that the voices of these communities, whether criminalised or repressed, were never silenced. In rejecting municipal and federal attitudes and directives towards criminal justice policies, activists advanced a wide range of causes, from the elimination of police brutality and abuse, to demands for police protection, to an end to punitive and excessive incarceration. At times, these ideas may have appeared to be in opposition to one another. However, these organisations framed their arguments through recognition of the spatialised injustices inherent within the city's policing and justice strategies. They rejected the social constructions of place and space that had been imposed upon their communities, and demanded that the LAPD and politicians treated their neighbourhoods with the same respect and care as other, more privileged areas of the city. Their stories therefore elucidate the way inequalities within the criminal justice system were connected to a broader struggle for community control and self-determination over urban space owing to the dangerous effects

[250] Felker-Kantor, *Policing Los Angeles*, p.244.
[251] Taylor, *From #Blacklivesmatter*, p.122.
[252] Jennifer Turner, *Living Death: Life Without Parole for Nonviolent Offenders*, (Washington, D.C.: American Civil Liberties Union, 2013).
[253] Murch, 'Crack in Los Angeles', 173.

these disparities had on the lives of people of colour. Demands for equitable treatment across the spaces of the city would also influence the activists seen in chapter two. The expansion of the carceral state would have a dramatic impact on the physical landscape of communities as well as their population, and would therefore inspire new demands for spatial justice.

Chapter Two: "As a Homemaker, and a Resident of East L.A.": Activist Mothering, Environmental Justice and Community Identity within Mothers of East Los Angeles

If the state was pursuing a policy of geographically-concentrated policing and mass incarceration, then where would those arrested and prosecuted be placed? California required more prisons in order to accommodate this burgeoning population of incarcerated citizens. In 1982 the California State Assembly announced that at least one state prison (larger than federal or county jails) needed to be built in Los Angeles, which currently had none, before other jails in California could be constructed.[1] Prisons, however, are rarely welcomed by any community. After examining a number of sites, in March 1985 the California Department of Corrections selected the 'Crown Coach' site. The location once housed a school-bus manufacturing company, and was based on Santa Fe Avenue and 12th Street in Boyle Heights, a small, predominately immigrant community in East Los Angeles.[2] Plans for the prison, and the community consultations required for such a project, were not well publicised by the department, who hoped for a quick resolution to the plan. It was only when informed about the proposed plans by Gloria Molina, State Assemblywoman for the local 56th District, that many Boyle Heights residents became aware of the prison's location. In response, several local residents created the Mothers of East Los Angeles organisation (alternatively known as *Madres Del Este de Los Angeles* or Mothers of East Los Angeles Santa-Isabel, or simply MELA for the purposes of this chapter). Comprised mainly of middle-aged Mexican-American women who had lived in the community for decades, the group looked to publicise the proposal and challenge the siting. With thirty-four schools within a two-mile radius of the site, residents were concerned about the threat posed by the prison to the safety of local children. With four other prisons in East L.A., the predominately Latinx population felt they were already burdened with enough correctional facilities, and were frustrated with the lack of civic participation the department seemed to be offering to residents.

Across a seven-year battle, the Mothers were able to gain widespread support in Los Angeles and from environmental groups across the country. Eventually, in 1992, plans to build a prison in East L.A. were abandoned. During this time, MELA expanded to tackle other environmental issues adversely affecting their community. In another prominent struggle, MELA worked to prevent the construction of a commercial incinerator for

[1] Paul Jones and Leo Wolinsky, '4 Alternative Plans Tossed into Fray in Battle Over Los Angeles Prison Site', *Los Angeles* Times, 12 September 1986, I-2.

[2] 'California State Prison, Los Angeles County – Questions and Answers', n.d., Juana Beatriz Gutiérrez Mothers of East Los Angeles (MELA) Collection, 1978-2004, Urban Archives, California State University, Northridge [Hereafter: MELA Collection], Box 9, Folder 19.

hazardous liquid wastes such as oil and paint thinner. Proposed in 1987, the California Thermal Treatment Services incinerator would be located in the industrial area of Vernon. With Boyle Heights the closest residential location to Vernon, MELA were again concerned, this time that the outputs of the incinerator would be dangerous to the health of their children, and their marches now took them to the proposed site for the project. Alongside another local Mexican American politician, Lucille Roybal-Allard, MELA resisted the incinerator for four years, before financial problems again forced the abandonment of the project in 1991. MELA's efforts to prevent environmental hazards often faced defeats and setbacks, and ultimately their victories relied on the good fortune brought by budget constraints and political priorities. Their main strength, however, was their persistence in continuing their fight until such circumstances changed; through building alliances and interest in their story, through continued ardent protests during the seven year battle, and through local unity in opposing such projects. This chapter explores how Mothers of East Los Angeles framed and developed their protest, and how this activism reflected their conceptualisation of both local geographies and their own identities as Mexican-American mothers. The histories of spatialised injustice in this neighbourhood both strengthened the community's resolve to resist the prison and incinerator, but also forged a strong sense of place and community identity. This identity was deployed to counter the dominant productions of place which justified the siting of environmental hazards in East L.A. Crucially, MELA's understanding of Latinx motherhood in relation to the meaning of their community helped them formulate demands for self-determination within urban space, and therefore substantiates ideas regarding the important relationship between place and space, identity, and power.

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Representations of MELA in contemporary journalism and later scholarship have engaged the frame of activist mothering in various ways, but require some clarification. MELA's protests against the state prison and CTTS incinerator became the subject of journalistic interest. These depictions saw the women as conducting a novel form of activism: as a *New York Times* reporter described, mothers were seen 'pushing baby strollers and wearing white kerchief…they are not exactly a formidable sight.'[3] These reports stressed the age of activists, with the majority aged over forty, and their lack of political experience, characterising them as 'shy housewives' who 'emerged from nowhere three years ago.'[4]

[3] 'Mothers' Group Fights Back in Los Angeles', *New York Times*, 5 December 1989, A32.
[4] Louis Sahagun, 'The Mothers of East L.A Transform Themselves and Their Neighborhood', *Los Angeles Times*, 13 August 1989.

Some stories contained outright fabrications to support the images of timid, politically unversed immigrant mothers, such as suggesting that leader Juana Gutierrez was 'somebody who speaks broken English at best but has received national recognition.'[5] Yet as one story noted, MELA 'exhibited remarkable political savvy' and 'generated excellent press coverage', always willing to offer quotes to reporters even if they felt frustrated with constant questioning about the level of crime and gang violence in their community.[6] Scholars have subsequently developed a more nuanced picture of the group. Most notably, Mary Pardo has provided the most comprehensive study of the Mothers. Her work demonstrated how these women renegotiated the supposed barriers to local political participation - their ethnicity, income and gendered roles as mothers - and used these as sources of strength to organise around a collective identity.[7] Others have drawn on Pardo's extensive interviews and collections of the group's materials, exploring how these women connected their 'traditional' roles and identities to environmental justice, or how MELA expanded the concept of 'motherhood' to unite the community around ideas of care and nurture as the basis for civic engagement.[8] This work has also placed them in the context of a widening battle against 'environmental racism', or the specific targeting of communities of colour when locating environmental hazards.[9] While environmental racism was more common in rural areas of the United States, it also proliferated in urban Los Angeles. Nearby in South Central, African American women created Concerned Citizens of South Central Los Angeles (CCSCLA), in a similar effort to prevent the LANCER municipal waste incinerator from being installed in their community.[10] Their story overlaps with MELA, both chronologically and thematically, and their success in preventing the LANCER project in 1987 speaks to the importance of environmental concerns and uses of community space in mobilising women and families of colour to participate in local activism.

In both journalistic and academic accounts, there has been great focus on MELA (and at times, CCSCLA) as an archetype of 'activist mothering', even before the term gained academic usage following Nancy Naples' influential study of 1960s women involved in

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[5] Haya El Nasser, 'She Fought Toxic Racism and Won' *USA Today*, 24 October 1991.
[6] David Diaz, 'Eastside Story: The Failure of Latino Politics', *L.A. Weekly*, 24 February-2 March 1989, Pardo, *Mexican American Women Activists*, p.12.
[7] Pardo, *Mexican American Women Activists*, pp.1-16.
[8] Kamala Platt, 'Chicana Strategies for Success and Survival: Cultural Poetics of Environmental Justice from the Mothers of East Los Angeles', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 18.2 (1997), 48-72, Christopher Scott Thomas, 'The Mothers of East Los Angeles: (Other)Mothering for Environmental Justice', *Southern Communication Journal*, 83.5 (2018), 293-309.
[9] For environmental racism see: Robert D. Bullard, *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1990).
[10] For Concerned Citizens see: Jennifer A. Peeples, 'Trashing South Central: Place and Identity in a Community-Level Environmental Justice Dispute', *Southern Communication Journal*, 69.1 (2003), 82-95, Winton, 'Concerned Citizens', pp.343-359.

community work.[11] Activist mothering 'captures the way politics, mothering and labor comprised mutually constitutive spheres of social life', or more directly, how political and community activism was to many women an extension of the work involved in motherhood.[12] This is particularly relevant when considering the work of environmental justice activists, where several factors resulted in such groups being populated by women. Numerous scholars have connected this to a desire on behalf of these activists to protect children in the community as well as their own.[13] It is undeniable that Mothers of East Los Angeles, as their name implies, placed the needs of their children at the heart of their public appeals to stop the prison and incinerator projects. Gutierrez stated that 'the motivation for my becoming a community activist began and continues to be for my children and for my children's children.'[14] Aurora Castillo linked their work with transcendent values associated with motherhood, suggesting 'the reason we became active was because of our children. If a mother sees her children are being threatened, she'll turn into a lioness'.[15] This chapter therefore looks to expand on this argument by examining the ways motherhood, as a socially constructed identity, was intertwined with the everyday urban spaces of the community, and facilitated demands for self-determination amongst a disenfranchised population.

At points, MELA legitimated their opposition to the prison and incinerator through an emphasis of their particular skills as mothers. Their motto; 'not economically rich – but culturally wealthy, not politically powerful – but socially conscious, not mainstream educated – but armed with the knowledge, commitment and determination that only a mother can possess' stressed that mothers were best placed to determine the future of their community. Moretta had asked neighbourhood women to lead the protests, and had given them their name in the hope of emulating the success of the mothers' movements in Argentina, who had sought to protest the kidnapping and murder of their children by the military junta in the 1970s. Yet MELA also had to rely on broad and enthusiastic participation from diverse members of the community to ensure sustained opposition. Men played a variety of important roles in MELA, especially Father Moretta and Juana Gutierrez's husband, Ricardo. MELA women acknowledged that they received the 'support' of male relatives, who 'make

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[11] Nancy Naples, *Grassroots Warriors: Activist Mothering, Community Work, and the War On Poverty* (New York: Routledge, 1998)
[12] *Ibid*., p.111.
[13] Celene Krauss, 'Women and Toxic Waste Protests: Race, Class and Gender as Resources of Resistance', *Qualitative Sociology,* 16.3 (1993), 247–62, Diane-Michele Prindeville and John G. Bretting, 'Indigenous Women Activists and Political Participation', *Women & Politics,* 19.1 (1998), 39-58, Jennifer Peeples and Kevin Deluca, 'The Truth of the Matter: Motherhood, Community and Environmental Justice' *Women's Studies in Communication*, 29.1 (2006), 59-87.
[14] 'Juana Beatriz Gutierrez Biography', n.d., MELA Collection, Box 14, Folder 22.
[15] Diane Seo, 'Year of the Woman?' *Los Angeles Times,* 29 November 1992.

the placards and the posters…do the security [for protest marches] and carry the signs'.[16] Not all MELA activists were parents, and the group has been seen as creating an expansive definition of motherhood to include anyone 'fighting for a better life for children'.[17] Mothering was understood in this case not as an essentialised role only for women with biological children, but one in which the whole community participated. The central organising and decision-making of MELA was conducted by a small group of women, who were all long-standing residents and mothers, and at times their ideas clashed with Moretta's wishes. The group needed to appeal to as many residents as possible in order to maximise participation and gain greater public attention. Thus while city authorities constructed understandings of East L.A. based on tired racial and economic assumptions, MELA utilised their role as mothers to develop alternative meanings of place that legitimated their belief that residents should be responsible for determining urban land use.

In order to expand the significance and meaning of MELA's work as advocates for spatial justice, we need to place their campaigns within the urban and historical context. East Los Angeles had become home for the majority of L.A.'s Latinx population from the 1930s onwards. The area had often been shaped by and through the visions of politicians and urban planners, at the expense of residents' needs and desires. Yet these urban spaces sometimes offered the basis for cultural pride and resistance; an alternative conception of what the 'place' of East Los Angeles could mean. MELA's continued resistance to the proposed prison and incinerator relied on a strong sense of community identity. This identity had been shaped and reshaped through generations of families living in Boyle Heights, and was constructed in part by the social relations that unfolded through everyday community spaces. It was this sense of place, and pride within their community that formed the basis of their opposition to the prison. Protestors argued that this identity had been erased by planners who suggested that these sitings would prove beneficial to the economic and social fabric of the neighbourhood, and residents insisted that these hazards would never have been placed in more privileged areas of the city. MELA's opposition to the prison and incinerator sitings centred on protecting children and protecting the community. Yet they did not use these ideas interchangeably. Instead, campaigners saw the family and the neighbourhood as intertwined, resulting from the ways their collective class, racial and gender identities had been imprinted onto the social and cultural meaning of local urban space.

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[16] Pardo, *Mexican American Women Activists*, p.114. For gender roles and men's participation in MELA, see *Ibid*., pp.128-131.
[17] *Ibid*., p.115.

An expanding literature has connected the construction of gender identities with the use and representation of urban space, suggesting that gendered divisions in access, alongside the symbolic representations assigned to certain spaces have been important in the formation of notions of femininity and masculinity.[18] Others, such as Gillian Rose, have proclaimed the radical emancipatory potential of feminist geographies; that by understanding how women's mobility has been restricted or spatial organisation designed to enforce unequal access, we can begin to use space and place to liberate those oppressed.[19] When thinking more specifically about motherhood and space, scholars have often concentrated on the distinctions between the public and private spheres, while recognising these boundaries are often permeable.[20] For instance, bell hooks has explored the role of the home, however defined, in facilitating the resistance of Black women against white capitalist domination, by offering a space of agency, care and nurturing for children.[21] Most helpful for the purposes of this chapter, Doreen Massey suggests that 'geographical variations in the construction of gender relations also point…to the fact of differences among women (and indeed among men), not only in their construction as gendered people but also in the way in which they relate to particular political struggles, including those around gender itself.'[22] Understanding how these women blurred public and private notions of 'motherhood' and 'citizenship' as part of a redefinition of caregiving and activist mothering can help to explain how the spaces of the community were imbued with meaning and symbolism that encouraged Boyle Heights residents to fight tirelessly to protect them. This requires us to re-read the sources we have available. Oral histories conducted by Pardo, and a large collection of documents collated by Pardo and Gutierrez, enables us to create a holistic picture of the group. The oral interviews often support archival materials in pointing to the centrality of motherhood and their racial identity in these women's lived experience both before the formation of MELA and during their opposition to the sitings. However, these are components of a much broader worldview, and the sources reveal members' understandings of historical spatial reorganisation and urban neglect, political engagement and citizenship, and their own imagined geographies. Their roles as mothers and as Mexican American women acted as a connective, or a

[18] Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, Kumin and Usborne, 'At Home and in the Workplace' 310-312, Daphne Spain, *Gendered Spaces* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), Kathleen Canning, *Gender History in Practice* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), Henrietta Moore, *Space, Text and Gender* (New York/London: Guilford, 1996).
[19] See: Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*.
[20] Caroline Wiedmer and Sarah Hardy, 'Introduction: Spaces of Motherhood' in *Motherhood and Space: Configurations of the Maternal Through Politics, Home, and the Body*, ed. by Wiedmer and Hardy (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp.1-11 [p.4].
[21] bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), pp.41-51.
[22] Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, p.178.

discursive nucleus, to present a wider discussion of urban identity when framing their protest for the community and through media.

MELA's story provides an important insight into the role of place and space in constructing social movements amongst communities of colour. Activists' conceptions of what it meant to be a mother, or to live in a low-income Latinx neighbourhood, were shaped and influenced through their lived experience in urban space. When these spaces were under threat, we see these identities expressed through their forms of protest, which blended activist mothering with a demand for local self-determination and a right to the city. Their identities as Mexican Americans, and as mothers, helped conceptualise not only their own community, but the wider city around them and the role of space and place in producing environmental racism. They used this knowledge of urban space, and racial injustice, to deconstruct the arguments of state officials and proponents of the prison and incinerator. While preventing these hazards was clearly the most immediate objective for MELA, their work also offered an arena for activists to expand on their hopes and goals for the future of the community, presenting new uses for community space and urban futures. These again drew on their shared social identities and directly interacted with the racial and gendered implications of urban policy more generally. Providing a better understanding of these protests can illustrate the complex links between race, gender, class, motherhood, and the local spaces of the community. These interconnected identities helped to sustain the commitment of MELA's activists and construct a broad, successful movement to protect the local urban environment.

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The history of the Latinx community in East Los Angeles before the 1980s provides a basis for understanding how motherhood and demands for spatial justice were interwoven for member of Mothers of East Los Angeles. MELA's collective identity was formed through their interactions within the public and private spaces of East L.A., and thus the historical productions of place were critical to this development. When protesting, activists of MELA made multiple references to the ways their community had traditionally been perceived in relation to other neighborhoods. Leader Juana Gutierrez suggested that residents were 'sick and tired of East Los Angeles being the target of these types of projects' based on the 'assumption that low income communities would offer the least resistance.'[23] Others suggested that these weekly protests and direct action signalled a shift in how the community would engage with the state. Sarah Farfan, who protested the prison alongside four generations of her family, told newspapers that 'it's going to be different now. We're not

[23]'Juana Beatriz Gutierrez Biography'.

going to let them do whatever they want any more.'[24] The meaning and representation of the prison and incinerator campaigns hinged on decades of urban renewal and the lack of self-determination Latinx residents held in regards to their own communities.

Thirty years prior to the proposed prison siting, East Los Angeles experienced another large-scale imposition on their community. The Eastside had initially been a Jewish and Protestant commuter suburb in the early twentieth century, but had always contained a sizeable immigrant population. Despite being barred from certain housing tracts, East L.A.'s Mexican and Mexican American population rose substantially during the 1940s and 1950s.[25] This coincided with the city of Los Angeles' new plans for urban renewal, as they looked to remake the central city zone in order to facilitate economic and cultural investment. The proximity of Latinx immigrant communities such as Bunker Hill, Chavez Ravine, and East L.A. to the city centre was seen as an deterrent which alienated 'respectable' middle-class white citizens, owing to supposedly high crime rates and stereotypes dating back to the Zoot Suit Riots in 1943.[26] Most notoriously, the city evicted 1200 families in Chavez Ravine under eminent domain, with little compensation, in order to allow the Brooklyn Dodgers baseball team to relocate to Los Angeles in the 1950s.[27] In East L.A., the city constructed a total of five freeways throughout the 1940s and 1950s to connect the Eastern suburbs with the central city. To accommodate the construction of miles of roads, 29,000 homes were destroyed and more than 10,000 mainly Latinx residents of East Los Angeles and Boyle Heights were forced to move to other parts of the Eastside, affecting nearly ten-percent of the area's total population.[28]

It is difficult to overstate the impact of the freeway displacements on East Los Angeles. Although this construction was always accompanied by a level of opposition from residents, these evictions did not receive the fervent protests seen in Chavez Ravine or the opposition towards freeway construction led by Jane Jacobs in New York. As Eric Avila describes, residents, many recent immigrants from Mexico, 'played by the rules' and moved when instructed to by the Division of Highways.[29] MELA founder Juana Gutierrez remembered, 'we left, and we were angry, but no one said anything.'[30] The legacy of this displacement, both as a shared historical memory, and physical imprint on the community, was critical to

[24] Ruben Castaneda, 'East Siders Say: "It's Going to be Different Now"', *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, 1 January 1987, A6.
[25] Pardo, *Mexican American Women Activists*, p.25.
[26] Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight,* p.159.
[27] *Ibid.*, pp.144-184.
[28] Pardo, *Mexican American Women Activists,* p.61.
[29] Avila, 'L.A.'s Invisible Freeway Revolt', 834.
[30] Ruben Castaneda, 'Powerless No More', *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, 1986, A-29.

community identity. It spatialized the racial hierarchy of Los Angeles, with the interests of white urban developers, politicians and middle-class commuters being placed ahead of an immigrant community's housing, schools and social networks.[31] When it emerged that the freeways being constructed in Hollywood were constantly rerouted to protect churches (which had been destroyed in East L.A.) and celebrities' homes, it underscored the ambivalence the city held for Latinx neighbourhoods.[32] In East L.A., extended families and friends were separated, church and school attachments disintegrated and family homes bulldozed.[33] Precipitating the focal point of MELA's protests, children's health and safety were compromised in East L.A. By 1990, 60% of the area's schools were within three blocks of either industrial zoning or a freeway, and children were breathing some of the most polluted air in California, alongside a rise in residents suffering respiratory problems, premature births, and low birth-weights.[34]

These events were ascribed a significant cultural meaning, and seen as a period which galvanised community activism. East L.A. was the epicentre of the Chicana/o movement in California, and with cultural forms of expression so critical to their protest, Avila has explored the references to freeways through art and literature.[35] All except one of MELA's founding members were forced to move due to the construction of the freeways, with Gutierrez actually moving twice.[36] The freeways acted as a 'concrete reminder of shared injustice' for the group, and were frequently referenced by activists in relation to the construction of the prison and the incinerator.[37] The struggle against these environmental hazards was seen by some as a corrective to this past injustice. Irene Meras, for instance, recalled her family's eviction, stating that 'somebody had to stand in front of us and teach us how to fight. Now that we know, no one's going to do this to us again.'[38] East L.A. continues to have a disproportionate number of freeways in a city housing the world's most congested traffic. The construction of these freeways provides insight into how the spaces of the city were produced by disregarding the sense of place imbued within Latinx communities and the subjugation of these areas to benefit white, middle-class suburban neighbourhoods. Freeway construction, however, also provided Mexican Americans with a literal physical

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[31] Rodolfo Acuña, *A Community Under Siege: A Chronicle of Chicanos East of the Los Angeles River, 1945-1975* (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, 1984).
[32] Gilbert Estrada, 'If You Build It, They Will Move: The Los Angeles Freeway System and the Displacement of Mexican East Los Angeles, 1944-1972', *Southern California Quarterly*, 87.3 (2004), 287-315 [305].
[33] *Ibid*., 300.
[34] *Ibid*., 308, Kyle Arndt, Karen J. Buehrig and Helen Wagner, *UCLA Improving Environmental Quality*: *Community Empowerment in East Los Angeles and Santa Fe Springs* (California: UCLA, 1991).
[35] Avila, 'L.A's Invisible Freeway Revolt'.
[36] Pardo, *Mexican American Women Activists*, p.72, p.62.
[37] *Ibid*., p.257.
[38] Castenada, 'Powerless No More', A-29.

reminder of the city's discriminatory practices, and fostered a community identity which sought to reclaim control of local urban space and protect their neighbourhoods from future infringement.

Despite these hardships, the women of East Los Angeles had overwhelmingly positive memories of their community. Their reflections, seen through oral histories conducted by Mary Pardo, demonstrate how gendered identities amongst the East L.A. community were forged through, but often transcended, the spaces of the community. Positive memories of the community in the 1950s and 1960s stretched across two generations, with Erlinda Robles recalling; 'our neighbours were really close. In the evenings the kids would play together. Some of the mothers would sit on one of the women's porches and talk and keep an eye on us…we would build a big bonfire on the hill across the street and sing songs and tell stories.'[39] Residents' reflections on caregiving indicate the ways through which a gendered division of labour intersected with the spaces of the community and fostered a shared identity. In safeguarding local children, these women opened the private domestic space of their homes to other women, building the social networks crucial to their later activism, whilst directly protecting the public spaces of the community as part of the work of mothering.

These social networks appear a crucial component of the Mothers' recollections of East Los Angeles, and for acts of place-making for Mexican American women. Gutierrez, who had children in the 1960s, recalled that 'there were a lot of people in the area my age at that time…we had parties for all the barrios.'[40] This identification with the term 'barrio', often a pejorative for areas with high Spanish-speaking populations and poverty, also suggests a sense of ownership of the term, and a distinguishable cultural pride. The social meaning of space in the community could also extend beyond the geographical limits of East L.A. When asked to describe the boundaries of her neighbourhood, Rosa Villasenor instead discusses the 'style of life' and 'the values of the people' rather than any physical boundaries, also stating that she could 'not be happy anywhere else' other than East L.A.[41] When remembering East L.A., these women therefore created their own imagined geographies that counteracted the typical values mapped onto their community. These imprinted cultural values such as the importance of the family, or social occasions such as parties, are a significant part of what it meant to live in the 'barrio' in East L.A. These memories

[39] Pardo, *Mexican American Women Activists*, p.70.
[40] Mary Pardo, 'Interview Transcript: Juana Gutierrez', 15 July, 1988, Mary Santoli Pardo Collection, URB.MSP, Urban Archives, California State University, Northridge [Hereafter: Pardo Collection], Box 1, Folder 41
[41] 'Rosa Villasenor Interview', 7 March 1990, Pardo Collection, Box 2, Folder 21.

demonstrate how residents themselves constructed a definition of place through their own lived experience of urban life, and the positive meanings they attached to their community help to explain why activists fervently opposed the prison and incinerator sitings.

The cultural pride in East L.A. that was evinced through the Chicano/a movements and the Mothers' memories was also transmitted to a younger generation in the 1980s. One student, returning home to East L.A. after his first semester at college, relished 'the open air *mercados* (markets) and stores that lined the streets of East Los Angeles, with their fresh fruits, vegetables, *festive piñatas* and *aguas frescas*.'[42] Describing himself as 'an eighteen year-old, brown bag full of experiences and Mexican culture', he explicitly linked this racial pride to the spaces of the community, suggesting 'every time I return to East Los Angeles, I feel rejuvenated, and I regain my identity. I know who I am here!'[43] The romanticised views of East L.A. past and present were, as Pardo has argued, a response to the persistent negative stereotypes and cultural perceptions of the area. Despite being so close to the city's core in Downtown, most white citizens did not venture to the Eastside owing to its reputation as a dangerous place, cultivated by the media's focus on gangs and crime.[44] As Juana's husband Ricardo commented, 'we have educated people in the community, but the press always gives the bad news the coverage.'[45] The area was often used in popular culture to depict 'gang' scenes, yet East L.A. was often not deemed 'dirty' enough, so filmmakers threw trash and scrawled graffiti, and in protest residents disrupted filming.[46] This rankled MELA members, who were 'long-time, stable homeowners, most of whose children has already graduated from college' and for which 'gangs had never been a focus of their efforts.'[47] They disliked these perceptions of the community as 'the worst area with nothing but gangs and people with tattoos', and thus looked to stress the diversity of their community as part of their activism.[48] East Los Angeles as a neighbourhood and place therefore had multiple contested meanings, dependent on the scale through which it was viewed. To politicians, planners, and the media imagining its location within the wider city or state of California, the area was defined by political apathy, a heavily industrialised landscape, and widespread gang crime. This validated decisions to place dangerous land-use projects such as prisons or incinerators within their community. For many residents, however, the spaces of East L.A. were imbued with a cultural meaning that had been defined by, and sometimes

[42]Peter Arroyo, 'Good to be back home in good ol' East L.A', *Belvedere Citizen*, 20 December 1989.
[43]*Ibid*.
[44] Pardo, *Mexican American Women Activists*, p.2, p.12.
[45]*Ibid*., p.65.
[46]*Ibid*., pp.66-67.
[47]*Ibid*., p.12.
[48]*Ibid*., p.65.

helped construct, their identities as working-class Mexican American women and mothers. This collective identity helped galvanise their residents to prevent their community from becoming, as they often referred to it, a 'dumping ground'.

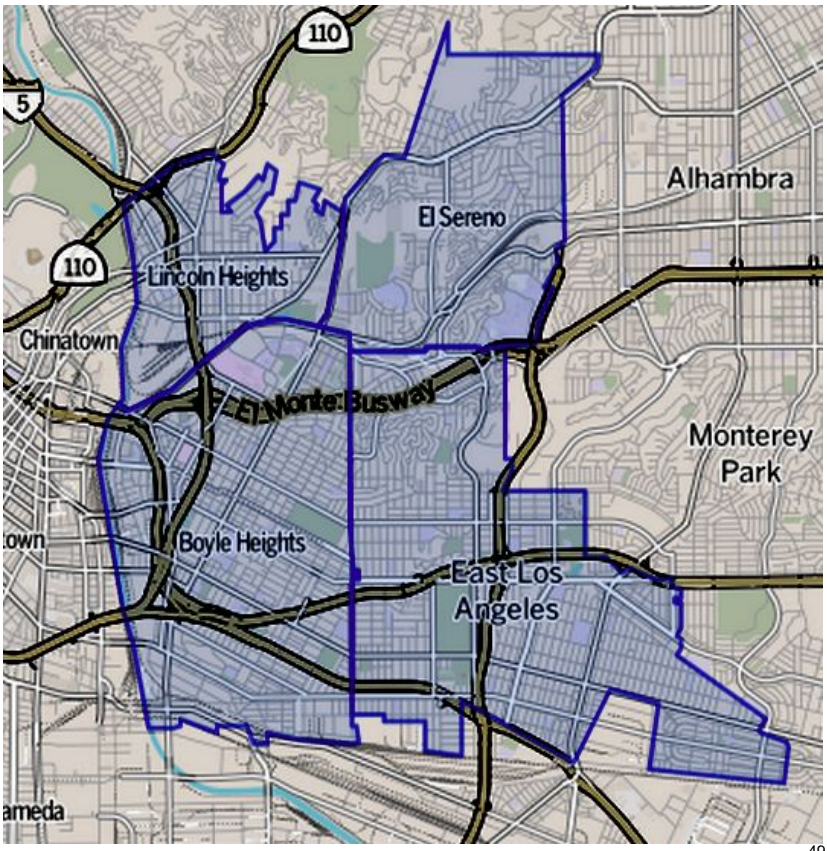

Figure 3: Map of East Los Angeles, including Boyle Heights, *Los Angeles Times*.[49]

The dislocation created by the freeways often helped strengthen this community identity and facilitated the early activism by the women of East L.A. prior to the creation of MELA. The freeways cut across the area, creating smaller parcels of land. Residents therefore saw the contraction of urban space that was accessible by foot, and would now attend churches or send their children to the schools nearest to them. Many of MELA's members began community work through the public performances of mothering that were attached to the gendered division of labour ascribed to parenting. For instance, they often cooked tamales in order to raise funds for local churches, or their children's parochial school.[50] In the fight against the state prison, MELA recruited predominately through the church, making announcements and passing out flyers on Sundays. Given the religious affinities of the predominately Latinx community in East L.A., the church was an imperative site of social,

[49] Map of East Los Angeles, including Boyle Heights, *Los Angeles Times,* http://maps.latimes.com/neighborhoods/region/eastside/ [Accessed 26 February 2020].
[50] Pardo, *Mexican American Women Activists,* pp.174-178

cultural and religious life, and like the main grassroots organisations in the area before them (the Community Service Organization and the United Neighborhoods Organization), MELA utilised the networks created through religious life in order to maximise participation. As the 1960s progressed, many future MELA activists also comprised the majority of members in local schools' Parents Teacher Associations.[51]

Through these activities, mothers in East L.A. developed social bonds, contacts, and organising abilities within a relatively segmented and segregated area. While theorists of space and gender have argued the spaces which women could inhabit were circumscribed by a public discourse on where mothers 'belonged', in bringing acts of mothering into the public sphere, MELA members built a network of women that broadened definitions of motherhood to include a collective community identity.[52] This work did not just benefit the community, and Pardo has also explored the ways it affected these women's' lives individually. Many remembered their time fundraising positively, and recalled challenging priests, male authority figures and their children's teachers in order for their views to be included in community events.[53]While men were often given the most senior leadership positions on committees, these women found ways to protest decisions they did not agree with, such as boycotting fundraising events or refusing to make food, and their oral histories display a keen awareness that they wielded power over male authority figures.[54] These porous hierarchies of power were influential in the overall functioning of Mothers of East Los Angeles in the 1980s. The group began with no official President, with decisions made by a core group of activists, and eventually a governing board. Early meetings were held in members' houses and front porches, occurring in the same spaces described in the oral histories that appear central to these residents' construction of community meaning.[55] Social networks were therefore critical to the formation and success of MELA, and the renegotiation of activists' identities as mothers and women of colour. This was fostered through the performance of motherhood occurring through, and within, the built environment and physical spaces that had been constructed in East Los Angeles in the decades prior to the prison siting decision.

The early grassroots campaigns conducted by women in East Los Angeles, including work by some future MELA organisers, demonstrated the burgeoning demands for community control over urban space. Despite being unconnected to MELA, in 1964 the 'Marching Mothers' of the Community Service Organization campaigned to redevelop the dimly lit

[51] *Ibid*., pp.177-82
[52] Wiedmer and Hardy, 'Introduction', p.6.
[53] Pardo, *Mexican American Women Activists,* pp.172-178
[54] *Ibid*.
[55] *Ibid*., p.70.

underpasses beneath the freeways following the sexual assault of several teenagers. After two months of picketing, the underpasses were replaced by overpasses with chain link fences so that children could be seen crossing, suggesting that the control and use of local spaces began to play a critical role in the maternalist ideas concerning the protection of children.[56] Erlinda Robles was also involved in a campaign to gain a free drivers' education programme for women as part of the adult education programme at the local recreation centre. Despite the Board of Education insinuating that women should not learn to drive, local activists argued that this programme would help them fulfil their maternal responsibilities as well as pursue employment. [57] With five freeways intersecting the community, East L.A. was heavily transit-dependent, and thus in order to fully participate in civic life, driving was 'not a luxury, it was a necessity.' [58] These campaigns provided an introduction to organising and public protest for some women, with Robles and 150 other campaigners boarding a bus to articulate their demands to the Board of Education. [59] Earlier activism in East L.A. thus helped to build upon local social networks in order to benefit facilities and access to everyday spaces for community residents. Given the long history of spatial impositions and subjugation faced by their community, campaigners therefore saw struggles for control of local space as an extension of their roles as mothers.

Residents became move involved in efforts to protect the spaces of the community as East L.A. underwent numerous developments throughout the 1980s. Juana Gutierrez formed a Neighbourhood Watch group, initially consisting of fifteen residents, in response to rising crime. While residents maintained that gang members and criminals were never the main target of their activism, East L.A. had a steadily increasing crime rate, and Juana was particularly concerned about drug-dealing taking place in the park across from her house.[60] To succeed, the group relied on their local churches and schools, and eventually grew to four different Neighbourhood Watch programmes, often consisting of women of senior citizen age and including a number of MELA founders, including Maria Roybal, Rosa Villasenor and Erlinda Robles.[61] They continued to blur the distinctions between public and private spheres, holding community meetings inside their homes and in their front yards.[62] When sixty residents wrote to their local councilman, Art Snyder, to complain about problems in the park, it was evident they sensed a threat to the community. The youths, they argued, 'take possession, as it was, of the playground and the surrounding streets, always

[56] *Ibid.,* pp.30-31.
[57] *Ibid.,* pp.182-186.
[58] *Ibid.,* p.185
[59] *Ibid.,* p.184.
[60] 'Juana Beatriz Gutierrez Biography'.
[61] Juana Gutierrez to Bruce Smith, (February 18, 1990), MELA Collection, Box 12, Folder 41.
[62] 'Rosa Villasenor, March 7, 1990'.

playing music extremely loudly, taking drugs and/or drinking alcoholic beverages.'[63] These complaints were an early indication of how MELA members projected their claims of ownership and entitlement to the spaces of the community, and positioned themselves as protectors of such space when they felt it was being threatened. As women such as Gutierrez and Villasenor became block captains, they grew to be seen as leaders within the community, and were often called upon by other residents to assist with local issues. As a result of their activism, lights were installed in the park, which Gutierrez became responsible for turning on and off as part of her daily routine, once more blending her gendered domestic and civic responsibilities with the maintenance of community space.[64] In 1984, when the Catholic Archdiocese attempted to sell Cathedral High School to developers for a reported $14 million, Gutierrez led successful efforts to retain the school.[65] In doing so, women in East L.A. had once again worked to protect a space designed to benefit the community's children, in response to city-wide efforts to rapidly develop private spaces.

This prior community work amongst MELA activists gained further importance in 1992 when Father John Moretta, one of MELA's founders, began publicly taking credit for organising the group.[66] In the view of many MELA members, however, the idea 'that he organised an already existing network of women is ludicrous.'[67] The activists of MELA had been participating in community work and campaigns for decades prior to prison siting, and had amassed a wide social network which would be used to great effect during the 1980s. As Moretta himself once suggested, 'people trusted them…when they came to share information it wasn't like a complete stranger trying to ask them to join and be political.'[68] The trust they had built stemmed from countless hours of community work. Women in East L.A. had begun their organising as working-class Mexican American women in an extension of their roles as mothers. The consequences of this work moved beyond the physical achievements of their labour; they had forged a collective urban character which renegotiated their identities as mothers to include a strong sense of community pride and an understanding of urban space which stressed the need for what Mary Pardo called 'the active street life of the barrio'.[69] Motherhood helped to construct the sense of place that would embody efforts to overturn decades of spatialised injustice and demand community control when determining local land use.

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[63] The Residents of the Boyle Heights Recreation Area to Councilman Arthur K. Snyder, 19 September 1984), MELA Collection, Box 9, Folder 19.
[64] Pardo, *MexicanAmerican Women Activists*, p.187.
[65] Gabriel Gutierrez, 'Letters', *Belvedere Citizen/Eastside Journal*, 9 October 1992.
[66] Rev. Msgr. John Moretta, 'For the Record', *Belvedere Citizen/Eastside Journal*, 9 October 1992.
[67] Gabriel Gutierrez, 'Letters'.
[68] Thomas, 'The Mothers of East Los Angeles', 298.
[69] Pardo, *Mexican American Women Activists*, p.60.

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With the State of California facing a 'landfill crisis', the California Waste Management Board commissioned the consultancy firm Cerrell & Associates to produce a report in 1983, concerning how to handle community opposition to the siting of incinerators in the state. The Cerrell report, while having a literal connection to waste incinerators placed in South Central and East L.A. communities, offers a fascinating example of the way space is socially and culturally produced, and provides insight into how wide-ranging environmental injustice can occur. While not directly addressing race, the report identified seven key indicators of how likely a community would be to resist the siting of waste-to-energy facilities. It stated that although all cross-sections of society would have some level of opposition to a siting in their neighbourhood, 'people with a college education, young or middle-aged, and liberal in philosophy are most likely to organize opposition to the siting of a major facility.'[70] In contrast; the elderly, long-time residents, Catholics and those who had not attended higher education, were the least likely to resist.[71] They suggested this was because 'the middle and upper-socioeconomic strata possess better resources to effectuate their opposition.'[72] The report also included a number of strategies to limit community opposition, including public relations campaigns, citizens' advisory committees and making economic benefits clear to residents.

The Cerrell Report and by extension the Board of Waste Management were figuratively shaping and segmenting urban and rural spaces according to the demographics of their residents. As Jennifer Peeples has explored, the Cerrell Report was mapping distinct characteristics upon them, a method Edward Said has detailed as a tactic to legitimise the othering of communities.[73] With these guiding principles, it would be only logical to place unwanted hazardous sites within the seemingly politically dormant, low-income Black and Latinx areas of South Central and East Los Angeles to avoid a community backlash. This report was leaked to the public in 1987, causing a public outcry, especially when revealed that it had cost $183,000 of taxpayers' money to produce, and had been sent to over 400 private and government organisations.[74] Local officials in waste management conveniently claimed not to have ever seen or used the report.[75] Despite this denial of its impact and

[70]Cerrell Associates Inc., *Waste to energy: Political Difficulties Facing Waste-to-Energy Conversion Plant Siting* (Los Angeles: Cerrell Associates Inc., 1984), p.26.
[71]*Ibid*., Appendix C, pp.52-53.
[72]*Ibid*., p.25.
[73] See Peeples, 'Trashing South Central', 86-87.
[74]Mike Ward, 'Study Finds Fewer Incinerator Foes Among Old, Poor', *Los Angeles Times,* 9 July 1987.
[75]*Ibid*.

relevance, the Cerrell Report provided just one piece of documentary evidence that exemplifies how the state institutions used political and racial geographies to plan and produce space. While they did not reference the report, MELA recognised how these imagined geographies created urban inequality, and sought to highlight them within their demands to protect the community against environmental racism.

The report elucidates how environmental racism was forced upon communities of colour. Although not representative of the community entirely, the working-class, Catholic senior citizens of MELA, many of whom had not completed high-school, were the exact population the Cerrell Report deemed least likely to resist hazardous sitings and therefore the optimal neighbourhood to place other projects such as a prison. Those subject to these geographies were also aware of how cultural perceptions of their neighbourhood affected the use of space, and refuting these assumptions became a central part of their public appeals. Contesting the LANCER siting, one Black Crenshaw resident wrote to Mayor Tom Bradley stating that 'the relative economic and political strength of a community is not a valid basis for determining where 1600 tons of garbage per day should be burned.'[76] The Cerrell Report was, of course, completely mistaken that the social indicators displayed by MELA residents would make them least likely to resist the siting of environmental hazards. As Aurora Castillo, one of MELA's founding members, stated to the media; 'they [the DOC] thought the people were a sleeping giant. Well, we're not sleeping anymore!'[77] When defining the characteristics of urban spaces, Massey has suggested that although distinctions may seem legitimate and inherent to these places, they are constantly being reconstructed by the social, political, economic, and cultural debates that result from these geographies.[78] The activists of MELA, feeling they had been the repeated targets of environmental racism, used this collective history of spatial injustice to mobilise the community around issues of land use and protecting community space.

MELA's struggle against the prison and incinerator therefore also became a battle for spatialized equality in the city, meaning that they demanded to receive the same consideration and community input around land use as wealthier white areas of the city. The environmental justice campaigns were, in many ways, a form of spatialising the Civil Rights Movement. Ben Chavis, a veteran of the Black Freedom struggle who coined the term 'environmental racism', also saw these battles as a continuation of freedom movements in

[76] Wilson Smith to Tom Bradley, 21 December 1985, Bradley Papers, Box 2845, Folder 1.
[77] Dick Russell, 'Environmental Racism: Minority Communities and Their Battle Against Toxics', *The Amicus Journal*, Spring 1989, 22-32 [22].
[78] Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*.

the U.S, suggesting the environment was 'not a side issue, but a primary issue.'[79] 'We must be just as vigilant in attacking environmental racism as racism in health care, housing, and schools', he argued, indicating the ways in which struggles for spatial justice were becoming intertwined with other battles for equality across the nation. Women, primarily from communities of colour, constituted 90% of the membership (and 60% of leadership positions) within environmental justice organisations.[80] One reason for this, as numerous scholars have discussed, is that women were the 'front line' when it came to the consequences of environmental hazards placed in their communities, from miscarriages and breast cancer, to diseases passed through breast milk.[81] Another reason for their high levels of participation was due to the health effects of environmental racism on children, most notably respiratory diseases and lead poisoning.[82] As Diane-Michelle Prindeville has suggested, the environmental activism of women of colour was continually intertwined with cultural preservation and creating a sustainable future for children, socially and culturally as well as literally.[83] If mothers and families were to imagine or construct safe, idealistic future environments for their children, it required them to have agency and control in determining the use and purpose of local community spaces, whether rural or urban. Organisations such as MELA were part of a broader environmental justice movement that looked to tackle issues such as racism in land use and hazardous waste siting, diverging from the typical campaigns of white-led environmental groups by focusing on social problems. In doing so, many linked the socially constructed roles of motherhood, in their focus on children's wellbeing, with their own experiences as gendered victims of environmental racism and struggles to protect their health. In doing so, these experiences merged, as mothers demanded dramatic change in how environmental health hazards were confronted and spatial justice was conceptualised.

MELA resisted the prison and incinerator sitings through appeals to spatial equality that rested on a relational understanding of place, arguing that more privileged communities would not tolerate such plans. These claims became more prominent after learning that community opposition had prevented the predominately white, rural community of Lancaster

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[79] Karl Grossman, 'Environmental Racism', *Crisis*, 98.4 (April 1991), 14-32 [32].
[80] Rachel Stein, 'Introduction' in *New Perspectives on Environmental Justice*, ed. by Rachel Stein (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004), pp.1-17 [p.2].
[81] Stein, 'Introduction', Dorceta E. Taylor, 'Women of Colour, Environmental Justice, and Ecofeminism', in *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*, ed. by Karen Warren (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1997), pp.38-81, Giovanna Di Chiro, 'Defining Environmental Justice: Women's Voices and Grass-roots Politics' *Socialist Review*, 22 (1992), 93-130.
[82] Platt, 'Chicana Strategies for Success and Survival', 51.
[83] Diane-Michele Prindeville, 'The Role of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Class in Activists: Perceptions of Environmental Justice' in *New Perspectives on Environmental Justice,* ed. by Stein, pp.93-108 [pp.99-101].

in Northern Los Angeles County from becoming the home of the state prison.[84] In referring to the large number of sites considered by the Department of Corrections before choosing East L.A., MELA restated their five reasons why the prison would not be suitable for the area: community opposition, proximity to schools, high cost of the land, toxins contained on the land, and insufficient land space for the proposal. The Mothers believed that '*any* of the five reasons we feel would be sufficient to reject the proposed prison in any other community should be enough to do the same here…for any *one* of these reasons, other sites have been turned down.'[85] The implicit meaning of this statement was that East L.A. was being targeted for projects based on their location, and the demographic constitution of their neighbourhood, instead of the suitability of the site. The prison was 'a racist signal that we are not worthy of the same treatment that other communities received when they rejected the prison site,' suggested activists.[86] Thus while MELA opposed the prison siting for an array of valid reasons, they focused their appeals on highlighting how prejudiced and uneven conceptions of place within the neighbourhoods of Los Angeles had subjected their community to an environmental hazard instead of other areas of the city.

When arguing that this siting was racially motivated, activists linked the prison issue to both the history of East Los Angeles and a wider story of environmental racism across the nation. One journalist for UCLA's Chicana/o student newspaper suggested that 'it is hard to prove that E.L.A. was chosen for reasons of discrimination, but the past indicates that Chicanos are perceived to be second class citizens.'[87] Activists also stressed the economic weaknesses of East L.A. were a reason for being chosen. In particular, they repeatedly used Beverly Hills as an example of a wealthy area where these hazards would never be placed.[88] Juana Gutierrez argued that 'they want to put these things in our area because no other community will accept such dangerous projects and because we are poor and don't have the influence of a Beverly Hills.'[89] The emphasis placed on Beverly Hills demonstrated how communities of colour also imagined and produced understandings of place and space. Their rhetoric constructed images of an affluent, largely white community who had the economic and political sway to oppose such a siting, and implicated politicians and decision-

[84] Carolina Serna, 'Eastside Residents Oppose Prison', *La Gente De Atzlan*, XVII.1, October 1986, 5, MELA Collection, Box 9, Folder 17.
[85] 'Mothers of ELA respond to Governor's comments', *Belvedere Citizen/Eastside Journal*, 24 January 1990, A-2. Emphasis added.
[86] Veronica Gutierrez and Antonio Rodriguez, 'State's Prison Plan Insults the Whole Latino Community', *Los Angeles Times,* 21 August 1986.
[87] Jose Mendivil, 'Incinerator Proposed – Dumping One More Project on East Los Angeles', *La Gente De Atzlan*, (March/April 1988), p.13, MELA Collection, Box 3, Folder 29.
[88] Mendivil 'Incinerator Proposed', John Elson, 'Dumping on the Poor', *Time Magazine*, 13 August 1990, p.47, Sahagun, 'The Mothers of East L.A Transform Themselves and Their Neighborhood'.
[89] Sahagun, 'The Mothers of East L.A Transform Themselves and Their Neighborhood'.

makers in acquiescing to their demands while ignoring East L.A. In defining themselves as targets of environmental racism, and other communities as too wealthy and powerful to be given such projects, MELA placed their knowledge of socially constructed urban space at the centre of efforts to mobilise the local community to stop both the prison and incinerator.

Demands for public notification and participation - such as ensuring the publication of an Environmental Impact Report and the holding of public hearings – became another way for MELA to involve residents in the redevelopment process and demand spatial equality. Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs) in the State of California were created following the California Environmental Quality Act in 1970, and attempted to fulfil the act's obligation to minimise environmental damage from public and private projects by offering authorities the information required to determine whether such projects should proceed.[90] The act required that all state and local agencies disclosed the potential environmental effects of proposed developments, yet the Department of Corrections would only offer an expedited 'environmental study' regarding the state prison.[91] Additionally in September 1988, the Department of Health Services (DHS) issued a permit for the CTTS waste incinerator without the requirement of an EIR, despite promises to lawmakers and residents from CTTS that they would do so.[92] In both cases, East L.A.'s representatives - Gloria Molina, Art Torres, and Lucille Roybal-Allard – fought in the State Legislature for the reports to be produced.[93]

Community groups saw this as a deliberate attempt to deceive residents about the effects of these projects, connecting this as a wider process that also saw authorities refuse to take public hearings seriously. Part of MELA's early work was to demand a full public hearing for the prison. They felt that such a hearing should allow residents to present testimony, should be at a reasonable time of the day to allow both mothers and working women to attend, and that a Spanish translator, who was not provided at earlier hearings, was essential.[94] After protests from Molina and MELA, a meeting was finally held at the Crown Coach site, where various participants estimated at least 600 residents arrived.[95] This completely disproved the assumptions of certain prison proponents that 'few had fallen in line' with Molina's protests

[90] Richard Hildreth, 'Environmental Impact Reports Under the California Environmental Quality Act: The New Legal Framework', *Santa Clara Law Review,* 17 (1977), 805-827.
[91] Leo Wolinsky, 'Compromise by Conferees May Advance Proposed L.A Prison', *Los Angeles Times,* 26 August 1986.
[92] Dario Frommer, 'Press Release: Torres asks EPA to Block Vernon Incinerator' (October 6, 1988), MELA Collection, Box 2, Folder 16.
[93] Saul Sarabia, 'Grass Roots – The Mothers of East Los Angeles', *La Gente De Aztlan*, 20.4 (February 1990), p.8, MELA Collection, Box 15, Folder 1.
[94] Pardo, *Mexican American Women Activists*, p.121.
[95] 'Maria Roybal Interview' 15 July 1989, MELA Collection, Box 2, Folder 8. 'Mary Pardo Interview with James Vigil, Jr.' , 27 September 1989, Pardo Collection, Box 2, Folder 20.

and that the prison issue was a 'one-person crusade.'[96] The hearing was described by James Vigil, one of Molina's staff, as 'like being in a big scene from the French Revolution. People were calling for their heads.'[97] The hearings thus offered an important opportunity, in the view of residents, for their voices to be heard as part of efforts to redevelop the community. The Department of Health Services did at least learn from Corrections' mistakes: meetings were held with a translator at an appropriate time. However, many residents were furious that they failed to actually inform the community: only 79 people in the immediate community received postal information about the hearing.[98] After Roybal-Allard sent notification of the public hearing to 2000 residents on her mailing list, the hearing was flooded with 500 participants, far more than CTTS anticipated, resulting in the meeting being cancelled due to a fire hazard.[99]

This obfuscation regarding public hearings and environmental impact reports was seen by many residents as a continuation of the government's refusal to include the Latinx population in decisions surrounding urban development. As Ricardo Gutierrez explained in relation to the incinerator; 'the local government in its usual way provided no information to the general public. Its' best weapon has always been and will always be the lack of information.'[100] These public hearings, and MELA's reaction to state bodies' reticence to produce EIRs, indicates the complex interplay between local activists and municipal authorities that explains why these groups were so determined to continue fighting. For state bodies, EIRs and full public hearings were seen as unnecessary, based on the cultural perceptions of East L.A. as apathetic and incapable of challenging decisions concerning land-use. For activists, however, public hearings and EIRs were crucial parts of the decision-making process that would have been instinctive elements of such debates in any other part of the city. These were instruments which offered several opportunities for activists: to achieve a modicum of environmental and spatial equality, to have their community and individual voices included in the discourse on local land-use, and to disprove cultural perceptions of East L.A. and demonstrate the active political culture of their 'barrio'. EIRs and public hearings therefore were seen as a means to provide residents with greater control over the processes that shaped productions of place, and a critical element in resisting the harmful consequences that these conceptions of urban neighbourhoods could engender.

Even when Environmental Impact Reports were produced, residents did not always agree

[96]KNX News Radio 1070, 'Editorial: Corrections vs. Molina' 15 March 1986, MELA Collection, Box 1, Folder 36.
[97]'Mary Pardo Interview with James Vigil, Jr.'
[98]Lucille Roybal-Allard to Kenneth Kizer, 20 October 1987, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 3653, Folder 5.
[99]*Ibid*., Julie Tugend to Mike Gage, 2 December 1987, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 3653, Folder 5.
[100]Ricardo Gutierrez, 'Environmental Justice Within Latino Communities, The Role of Local Government, Case Study Questionnaire', n.d., MELA Collection, Box 1, Folder 4.

with how they were conducted or what their findings concluded. The consultants who drafted the state prison EIR argued that the cultural and social impact of the prison was beyond their scope, and as it was not 'physical', was irrelevant to an environmental study, underpinning the frustrations of environmental justice organisations like MELA.[101] Directly ignoring the main concerns of MELA, the EIR made no mention of the 34 schools and 23,000 students within a two mile radius of the site.[102] The most vociferous criticism came from Lucille Roybal-Allard. Not only had the social impacts of the prison and the issue of schools been ignored, she argued, but the 30 community residents interviewed for the study had been entirely omitted from the report.[103] 'Essentially', she claimed, 'what the consultants have done with the study on community identity and character is ignore it.'[104] Once more, the meaning of 'East Los Angeles' constructed by state authorities had removed the social elements of the community, and deemed it suitable on the disputed basis of its physical characteristics. Just as popular culture and the Cerrell Report had deemed the Eastside as culturally and socially barren, residents felt the EIRs had flattened the complexity of the community's population. Roybal-Allard continued to relate the findings of the EIR to the spatial inequalities of the city. She said that the community 'was hopeful that the double standard which historically has plagued our community would be laid to rest' and wondered if the state would 'dream of placing such restrictions on the more affluent communities of this state?'[105] The results of these EIRs therefore only confirmed activists' suspicions: that the complex and multiple meanings of their community, and the voices contained within it, were being obscured for the purposes of political expediency. MELA and Latinx residents demanded not only that their voices were heard, but that their opinions be taken seriously and considered as part of the planning process as they would for other locations in Los Angeles.

Dissatisfaction with the EIR was certainly not limited to community residents; the certification panel also felt the lack of focus on community identity and character, as well as property values, was problematic.[106] Nor was this limited to just the state prison's EIR: the report for the LANCER project in South Central contained a very narrow definition of the danger posed to health, focusing primarily on the risk of cancer to residents, when CCSCLA had been

[101]'Hearing due in November on Prison EIR', *Belvedere Citizen*, 6 September 1989, A1.
[102] 'Arguments Against East Los Angeles Prison Site Environmental Impact Report', n.d., MELA Collection, Box 1, Folder 25.
[103]Martha Molina-Aviles, 'Testimony on Draft EIR by Assemblywoman Lucille Roybal-Allard', 26 July 1988, MELA Collection Box 2, Folder 6.
[104]*Ibid*.
[105]*Ibid*.
[106]'Hearing due in November on Prison EIR'

particularly concerned about the dangers posed to those with respiratory diseases.[107] These problematic EIRs eventually became a key reason why both the state prison and CTTS incinerator were defeated. A coalition of environmental groups, including MELA, staged multiple lawsuits against the certification of the reports, which would have permitted construction.[108] As these cases dragged into the early 1990s, the state underwent a budget crisis which forced the cancellation of plans for the prison, while those funding the CTTS incinerator also encountered financial difficulties. [109] The perseverance of the community and politicians like Molina and Roybal-Allard had ultimately protected the spaces of East L.A. The reluctance of State authorities to include the voices of the community, or acknowledge its social realities was expressed through their refusal to engage in meaningful environmental studies or community hearings until forced to by residents. This reticence was emblematic of how East L.A. had been culturally constructed as a politically apathetic and economically prostrate community. This refusal to provide the basic means of effective opposition ultimately galvanised residents to oppose these projects and demand that they receive equal control over local community space as other neighbourhoods within the city.

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Mothers of East Los Angeles' campaigns against the prison and incinerator were built upon a sense of place that employed the malleable social identities of residents. As Pardo has argued, although this was certainly an intersectional movement, these identities were never fixed, with the Mothers' social identity continually shifting.[110] Confronting racial discrimination was not always a prominent part of their discourse, but MELA often viewed the East L.A. sitings as an attack on Mexican Americans. At a community hearing, one MELA activist, Dolores Duarte, directly confronted a Latino representative of the Department of Corrections. She accused him of supporting 'these gringos' and allowing them to 'dump everything' on 'your OWN people.'[111] Her rhetoric defined a clear opposition between the predominately Latinx population of East L.A. and the mostly white state authorities determining the future of these projects. Moreover, when Mexican American Richard Polanco was elected to the State Assembly to represent areas of East L.A., he promised to campaign against the prison. Yet one of his first acts in the legislature was to vote for transfer over the proposed jail bill out of

[107] LANCER Peer Review Committee, 'Summary Critique of LANCER Risk Assessment Protocol', 6 October 1986, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4310, Folder 4.
[108] Frommer, 'Torres asks EPA to Block Vernon Incinerator', Sarabia, 'Grass Roots – The Mothers of East Los Angeles', 8, 'Mother of ELA respond to Governor's comments', *Belvedere Citizen/Eastside Journal*, 24 January 1990, A-1, 'Incinerator is challenged in court by locals', *Belvedere Citizen/Eastside Journal,* 8 November 1989.
[109] 'Funding is Rejected for ELA Prison Construction', *Belvedere Citizen/Eastside Journal,* 27 June 1990, A1-A2.
[110] Pardo, *Mexican American Women Activists*, p.112.
[111] *Ibid*., p.122.

the Assembly Public Safety Committee.[112] He was reviled by community residents opposing the prison, and was repeatedly labelled '*vendido*' (sell-out) for his actions.[113] Using this Spanish term indicated a sense that Polanco had not only betrayed the community he represented, but also his ethnicity, reinforcing the strong link between the two. In contrast, when Gloria Molina was campaigning against the prison, she invoked the Mexican War of Independence as a means of encouraging Latinx opposition, suggesting 'in 1810 we fought with cannons and guns, today we fight with one united voice.'[114] The implication of these mobilising tactics was that the protest against the state prison was both a community struggle as well as a battle against racial discrimination. Selling tamales, understanding the streets and markets of East L.A. to be part of Mexican culture, and invoking their shared history of displacement all demonstrated that the residents of East L.A. had defined their community as explicitly Mexican American, and thus protecting the neighbourhood became a matter of collective racial pride.

The women of MELA expressed and renegotiated a gender identity grounded in this racial culture of East Los Angeles, reinforcing Pardo's claims that 'ethnic, class, and community identity gave meaning to their activism beyond an expression of gender identity.'[115] As MELA themselves described; 'for generations the women of our Raza have been entrusted with the nurturing and upbringing of our community's future. With the utmost respect for our culture, history and people, this responsibility has been affectionately beared [sic].'[116] In referencing 'our community' instead of children explicitly, the group explored how they had transferred a wider collective meaning to the private acts of motherhood. This would reinforce the arguments of theorists that women often see their community work as an extension of housework and domestic responsibilities.[117] By empowering residents to contest environmental racism, these women also found opportunities to renegotiate the meaning of motherhood and the behaviour expected of Latinx women. On protests and weekly marches, MELA were initially known for wearing white scarves around their heads, a feature devised by Father Moretta which again linked to perceptions of Latina mothers, based on the

[112] Paul Jacobs, 'Polanco Joins Panel – East L.A Prison Voted' *Los Angeles Times,* 6 June 1986.
[113]'Maria Roybal, July 15, 1989', Gabriel Gutierrez, 'The Founding of Mother of East Los Angeles', December 1989, MELA Collection, Box 1, Folder 2.
[114]Gloria Molina, 'No Prison in East Los Angeles', n.d., MELA Collection, Box 9, Folder 14.
[115] Pardo, *Mexican American Women Activists*, p.196.
[116]'Mothers of East Los Angeles, Santa Isabel', n.d., MELA Collection, Box 1, Folder 1.
[117] Ida Susser, 'Working-Class Women, Social Protest, and Changing Ideologies' in *Women and the Politics of Empowerment* ed. by Ann Bookman and Sandra Morgan (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), pp.257-271.

Mothers de Plaza de Mayo in Argentina.[118] Many of the mothers did not approve of wearing the scarves, which they felt made them look like 'poor homebodies' and associated it with housework as well as distinctly 'Latin' women.[119]They gradually lost this element of their protest, replacing them with T-Shirts emblazoned with MELA's logo. Campaigners therefore resisted ideas regarding how mothers should dress and act when protesting, instead developing their own methods of resisting injustice. Juana Gutierrez demonstrated how the women of MELA had drawn from, but altered, their Mexican heritage to forge an empowered identity as mothers. 'When I was growing up in my barrio in Mexico… I saw things that made me mad, and my mother said "be quiet and you won't have any problems,"' while her father instructed 'that's not your business. Don't get involved in the community.'[120] Through these stories, we see that MELA members were not passive figures moulded into stereotypical depictions of Latinx motherhood to be symbolic faces of protest. Instead, they worked to redefine the meaning of 'traditional' Latinx motherhood, and this renegotiation of gender roles helped to construct a collective community identity which strengthened their demands for community control over urban space.

The siting of environmental hazards in low-income communities of colour also highlights gendered divisions in how space was conceptualised and imagined. Politicians provided differing responses to the prison and incinerator plans. It was Gloria Molina who initially informed the community about the planned prison, and Lucille Roybal-Allard who revealed plans for the CTTS incinerator. In contrast, while State Senator Art Torres provided vigorous opposition to the prison in the legislature, he had initially approved of the project, and other male politicians such as Richard Alatorre and Richard Polanco 'remained silent' or had given protesters 'token or very late support.'[121] This was not restricted to Latinx politicians or those representing East L.A. One of the key ways the state tried to 'sell' the prison to the community was to stress the economic benefits it would provide, including jobs and building contracts. The State Senate's Deputy Speaker Robert Presley seemed exasperated that this was not accepted by the community, stating 'for goodness sakes…the prison will provide hundreds of jobs, the building will look nice. We have even agreed to upgrade the streets surrounding it and to build a small park.'[122] The perception that the prison would be beneficial to the area was, once again, based on a very narrow and utilitarian understanding

[118] Marguerite Bouvard, *Revolutionizing Motherhood: The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 1994).
[119] Pardo, *Mexican American Women Activists*, pp.117-118.
[120] Sharon McDonald and Robert McGarvey, 'The Most Beautiful Women in L.A' *L.A Style*, September 1988, p.245, Marilyn Martinez, 'Legacy of a Mother's Dedication', *Los Angeles Times*, 7 September 1995, B3.
[121] 'Mothers of East Los Angeles, Santa Isabel', 'State's Prison Plan Insults the Whole Latino Community'.
[122]Sahagun, 'The Mothers of East L.A Transform Themselves and Their Neighborhood'.

of life in East L.A., based solely on economic gain and a lack of appreciation for the social meaning contained within community spaces. As one editorial supporting the prison suggested, 'anything would be an improvement over the dilapidated warehouses that blight the area now.'[123] Aurora Castillo retorted that 'if Presley wants it so bad, he can put it his own back yard.'[124] Male leaders had seen the potential benefits to the community in purely quantitative terms, but had ignored the key problem: that residents had little control or self-determination over the project. Castillo elaborated with an insightful view of the way mothers in East L.A. viewed the potential of land-use in the community:

"Because we are a poor and Hispanic community, they think we will accept destructive projects if they promise us jobs. But we don't want our children working as prison guards or in incinerators. We need constructive jobs – nurses, doctors, computer specialists, skilled workers, who can make a contribution to our community."[125]

To these mothers, the issue was not the current spaces of the community and their deficiencies, but rather, about imagining an urban future in East L.A., which could provide a better life for their children. *Las Madres* clearly grasped the potential economic benefits of the project. Nevertheless, they rebuffed the assumptions of male politicians that this should be the primary concern for residents, and instead projected a more holistic vision of local urban development that prioritised the needs and desires of families.

The attempts made by male politicians to 'buy off' communities with promises of economic benefits, and activists' refusal to accept these, were seen throughout Los Angeles. In 1987, the South Central Organizing Committee blocked longstanding Black councilman Gilbert Lindsay's plans to place a garment factory on vacant land near the University of Southern California. Despite Lindsay branding them a 'disgrace', SCOC demanded affordable housing on the site instead, with organisers Cecilia Nunez and Sister Diane Donoghue arguing they would be 'trading homes for minimum-wage jobs' if they did not oppose the project.[126] With regards to the LANCER project, Lindsay became an active proponent of the incinerator on the understanding South Central L.A. would receive a ten million dollar 'community betterment fund' to improve local services. He suggested that accepting LANCER would make the neighbourhood 'more like the Garden of Eden rather than the garbage dump it is

[123] KNX News Radio 1070, 'Editorial: Corrections vs. Molina'.
[124] Sahagun, 'The Mothers of East L.A Transform Themselves and Their Neighbourhood'.
[125] Eric Mann, 'Local Heroes', *Shades of Green*, April/May 1992, MELA Collection, Box 13, Folder 12.
[126] Scott Harris, 'A Bitter Battle on Home Turf', *Los Angeles Times,* 25 October 1987, Scott Harris, 'Eighth-Graders get Civics Lesson', *Los Angeles Times,* 10 February 1988.

now.'[127] While he placed discussion of this fund at the top of the agenda for the LANCER Citizens' Advisory Committee, members of the community continued to oppose the project.[128] CCSCLA founder Robin Cannon recognised the difficulties of rejecting this beneficial fund, suggesting 'this was money we badly needed, for housing and day care, but many people felt it was a bribe. Our health was worth a whole lot more.'[129] These two examples demonstrated the ways women involved in environmental justice activism understood urban space and land-use. As the most susceptible to the effects of hazardous sites, and with the primary responsibility to consider the welfare of children, they often judged the benefits and dangers of these projects as part of a holistic community vision. Understanding how jobs and renewal could benefit their area, they also considered the potential public health problems associated with these projects, and imagined more inclusive spaces for an urban future which was determined by residents themselves. This is not to essentialise the role of women's activists in these debates; a number of men including Ricardo Gutierrez and the urban planner Frank Villalobos also rejected the argument that the prison and incinerator would bring economic benefits to East L.A.[130] Yet with the number of male politicians aggressively attempting to 'buy' the support of working class communities of colour, female politicians and environmental justice activists responded firmly that these projects were not worth these benefits in exchange for their health and the blight brought to their neighbourhoods.

As Pardo and Thomas have explored, the prior community work and shared histories of the mothers helped them expand the definition of mothering to include the entire community. MELA, with no official organisational structure or membership, contained husbands of activists as well as those without biological children, seeing motherhood as a metaphor to engage in the principles of community care.[131] This has been linked to the process of othermothering; the assumption of responsibility and care for other's children, seen as a vital survival strategy in communities of colour.[132] Juana Gutierrez encapsulated this, suggesting 'the reason I started working for the community was for my kids and now it's for all the kids.'[133] Making children and families visible became a key part of MELA's protests. Rosa Villasenor brought her children and grandchildren along to marches, while Aurora Castillo believed the key to their success was that 'when they back you up in a corner, threatening

[127] Russell, 'Environmental Racism', 26.
[128] 'LANCER Citizens Advisory Committee', n.d., Tom Bradley Papers, Box 1628, Folder 2.
[129] Mann, 'Local Heroes'.
[130] Ricardo Gutierrez, 'Environmental Justice Within Latino Communities', Pardo, *Mexican American Women Activists*, p.137.
[131] Pardo, *Mexican American Women Activists*, p.140, Thomas, 'Mothers of East Los Angeles', 294-5.
[132] Collins, *Black Feminist Thought.*
[133] Diana Martinez and Mary Pardo, 'Mothers of East Los Angeles', *Hispanic*, April 1990, 18.

the welfare of our children, you're gonna start kicking like a bronco.'[134] This maternal identity was often directly tied to concerns about protecting the community as an act of civic engagement. Castillo, reiterating the strong relationship between mothers and children, suggested that the 'mother is the soul of the family, the child is the heartbeat', yet added that 'we must fight to keep the heart of our community beating', expanding this struggle as one of community as well as familial survival.[135] In interviews with English-language media, Gutierrez often restated the community's commitment to 'unite whenever children are threatened.'[136] Yet in an interview with *La Opinion*, she indicated her other considerations; saying 'I do this mostly for my community, and I say my community, because I feel like I am a part of it. I love my *Raza* as if it were part of my family.'[137] In understanding her community in racial terms, and linking this to familial commitments, Gutierrez showed how her own racial and gendered identity had been mapped onto her sense of place in East L.A. This is not to suggest that either maternal identities as other-mothers or community preservation was the salient reason motivating the women of East Los Angeles to mobilise against environmental racism. Rather, it appeared that they worked in tandem, and influenced one another to create, in many activists' minds, a close link between protecting children and protecting the spaces of the community. Activists had constructed their own meanings of the 'place' of East Los Angeles, and it was these definitions that became such a critical tool in protecting the community from environmental racism.

Through MELA's motto, 'not economically rich – but culturally wealthy, not politically powerful – but socially conscious, not mainstream educated – but armed with the knowledge, commitment and determination that only a mother can possess', we see how an intersectional understanding of motherhood intertwined with a distinct community identity. MELA conveyed many possible meanings within this slogan. Primarily, it complicated the usual assumptions held concerning East L.A. They recognised that the economic reality for many residents was unenviable, with the median income in the area being $12,767 per annum.[138] However they argued that their community was defined by more than economic poverty, and held greater cultural significance than was being acknowledged by politicians and planners. The motto implied that residents of East Los Angeles should be understood in ways that transgressed economic statistics, and that spatial reorganisation could not be determined through these methods alone. Juana Gutierrez once angrily insisted that 'we

[134] 'Rosa Villasenor', 7 March 1990, Russell, 'Environmental Racism', 27.
[135] Quoted in Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows*, p.143.
[136] Juana Gutierrez, 'Vernon Victory', *Los Angeles Times,* 24 June 1991.
[137] Raymundo Reynoso, 'The Tireless Struggle of a Community Activist', *La Opinion*, 6 August 1989. A version of this interview, translated into English by Reynoso, is available in MELA Collection, Box 9, Folder 17.
[138] Pardo, *Mexican American Women Activists*, p.24.

poor are also human beings with a desire to protect and improve our community.'[139] This statement can also be seen as a reflection of their citizenship and political participation despite many residents' lack of access to formal political channels. Only 30% of East L.A. residents were registered to vote, and there were only two Latinx representatives amongst the twenty-one most powerful elected positions in the city.[140] Yet this was rapidly changing: MELA had begun voter registration drives and campaigned in favour of politicians who opposed the prison. Moreover, many politicians now found their political careers dependent on their vigorous campaigning against the prison and incinerator. MELA's belief that they were 'socially conscious' instead of 'politically powerful' reflects Nancy Naples' belief that female grassroots activists did not see their work as overtly political, and were in fact distrustful of organised politics, supported by Juana Gutierrez's belief that she was 'just someone looking out for the community'.[141]

The assertions made through this slogan were an indirect challenge to, and deconstruction of, the logic that underpinned land-use and political decision-making seen through the Cerrell report. They showed awareness that by not being 'economically rich', 'politically powerful' or 'mainstream educated', they fit the categorisations that for many would make their neighbourhood the ideal location for environmental hazards. In response, this motto was also an act of place-making: they stressed that the positive characteristics of their community ensured they possessed the determination and capabilities to resist these impositions. These values and characteristics had not been acknowledged by bureaucrats and politicians, but MELA argued this was a socially produced 'knowledge', one possessed 'only' by mothers. Given the expansive definition of motherhood within the group, this cannot be seen purely as an affirmation of biological instinct. Instead, the shared meaning of community space was something that could only be learned, or understood, by residents of East L.A. It was this knowledge, they suggested, that was held by many residents but publicly projected by mothers. It provided the cornerstone of their claims to local self-determination, and that residents themselves were most capable of making decisions regarding the future of the community. MELA's slogan is illustrative of the ways these activists deployed their ethnic, gender, and class identities depending on the context and the message they were trying to convey. Through the connection of the community's economic and political circumstances with the traits of motherhood, we see how social identities become embedded within notions of urban meaning. These ties would become the basis for the counter-productions of place and space that were employed by MELA, and underpinned

[139]Sahagun, 'The Mothers of East L.A Transform Themselves and Their Neighborhood'.
[140]'Mary Pardo Interview with James Vigil, Jr.', 'Maria Roybal,' 15 July 1989.
[141]*Ibid*., Naples, *Grassroots Warriors*, p.12.

their insistence that residents themselves were best placed to determine the future of urban development.

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The main problems MELA forwarded regarding the prison site were that East Los Angeles already had four prisons, and the proximity of this proposed site to a number of schools in the community. The four prisons, within four miles of the Crown Coach site, already housed over 11,000 inmates, a quarter of California's entire prison population.[142] Again, to the community of East L.A. this was an issue of spatial equality, with Steven Kasten of the local Chamber of Commerce stating 'Beverly Hills doesn't have any prisons at all, and it ought to have at least have one', while Juana Gutierrez wrote to Deputy Speaker Willie Brown suggesting they had 'enough prisons' and asking 'please Mr. Brown be fair to the PEOPLE.'[143] Despite Boyle Heights being the closest residential area to the prison, it was still technically located in Downtown, demarcated by the Los Angeles River which divided the two areas. This distinction became clear in what the prison was colloquially referred to. To prison proponents it was described as the 'Downtown prison', while to members of MELA and the Coalition Against the Prison, it was always the 'East L.A. prison'.[144] There were undoubtedly many advantages to the site; it was close to the city's courthouse to transport prisoners, and had good public transport links for visitors. With Downtown L.A. being the heart of the city's economic and political core, to suggest it was being placed there created an image of the prison amongst the city's wealthiest citizens and most famed architecture. It indicated a sense of city-wide sacrifice, an unpleasant but necessary feature of urban life, rather than the targeting of a specific area. In addition, it implied that to protest this siting would be what proponent Michael Antonovich called 'the classic NIMBY argument that has been voiced over the past five years,' rather than the emerging voices of an overburdened community.[145] In altering the location of the state prison, real or imagined, the city was engaging in a discourse of spatial production. Supporters of the prison therefore looked to flatten issues of spatial inequality and injustice through the imaginary mapping of both the site and the city. In response, MELA looked to expose the cultural productions of place which had determined the siting and had justified placing environmental hazards within a poor Latinx neighbourhood.

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[142] Gloria Molina to Juana Gutierrez, 20 July, 1985, MELA Collection, Box 9, Folder 11.
[143] Wolinsky, 'Compromise by Conferees May Advance Proposed L.A Prison', Mothers of East Los Angeles to Willie Brown Jr. (July 31, 1986), MELA Collection, Box 9, Folder 12. Emphasis in original.
[144] KABC Radio Editorial, 'Prison Site', n.d., Pardo Collection, Box 2, Folder 1, 'The Great Prison Holdup', *Los Angeles Times*, 18 April 1986, Michael Antonovich, 'Prison Site in Downtown L.A', MELA Collection, Box 9, Folder 10, Pardo, *Mexican American Women Activists*, p.105.
[145] Antonovich, 'Prison Site in Downtown L.A'.

In their most famous protests - the weekly marches and vigils - MELA directly confronted the proximity of their community to the prison. Every Monday, activists would begin at the Resurrection Parish and walk the short distance to the Third Street Bridge that connected East L.A. to Downtown, or the one-and-a-half miles to the proposed incinerator site in Vernon. These protests were very literal, with marchers carrying placards and holding a vigil at their destination, but also held a symbolic message for state authorities. Residents of all ages and abilities participated in the marches, from babies in strollers to the elderly with walking sticks and wheelchairs.[146] If these groups could navigate the short distance between the community and the proposed sites, it ridiculed the state's claims that the river and the railway track would protect local children from criminals, or that they were too far to be affected by any dangerous outputs from the CTTS incinerator. Similarly, in August 1986 the community donated, raised funds or made food to allow 400 residents to travel to the California State Legislate in Sacramento to protest ahead of a critical vote on the future of the prison.[147] For these residents, it offered a retort to politicians who, Villalobos claimed, 'didn't even acknowledge that we existed' and 'argued that there was no opposition in the community.'[148] Crucially, it brought Juana Gutierrez and others to the lawmakers who were 'yet to set foot in our community', and thus provided an opportunity to voice their concerns more directly.[149] Through the marches, activists reconceptualised the mobility of women in East L.A., to demonstrate how close this population actually were to both Downtown L.A. and the State capital of Sacramento. Tired of having the spaces of their community defined and organised from without, they used the marches to emphasise how close they, as a community and as citizens, were to sites of power, despite perceptions of them as a distant, 'othered' population. MELA utilised the mobilities available to protesters to ridicule the justifications presented by public officials for the prison, and to reduce the imagined isolation of their community that allowed these officials to ignore the objections of residents.

These identities, and how they influenced understandings of urban space, were inevitably shaped in some ways by wider political events. At times MELA confronted the federal and state proclivity for tougher policing and mass incarceration that contextualised the need for a new prison. Like all power relations, this politicised direction in criminal justice policy would become spatialized, and thus provided the main basis for the 'need' to build additional prisons in areas like East L.A. While criticising these policies was never a central part of

[146] 'Rosa Villasenor', 7 March 1990, Ruben Castaneda, 'East Siders Say'. A6.
[147] Roberto Rodriguez, 'Senator Torres to Ask for Environmental Study', *Wyvernwood Chronicle*, 14 August 1986, B-1.
[148] Pardo, *Mexican American Women Activists*, p.105.
[149] 'Mother of ELA Respond to Governor's Comments'.

MELA's opposition, they did at times question the wider political motives for the prison. 'We believe that an expanded prison population is nothing to be proud of,' suggested Gutierrez, and Aurora Castillo implored that 'we're not against a prison, but don't make our neighbourhood a penal colony.'[150] Moreover, they were incensed by the Governor's comments that 'convicted felons come from your backyard' and that criminals were the city's 'principal export.'[151] Activists pointed out that crime was decreasing in the area, and suggested that the Governor had failed to 'study or even glance at what has been happening in our community'.[152] MELA therefore felt the accusations being presented were an attempt by state to criminalise the spaces of East L.A. they inhabited. The Governor's comments came only a week after the proposal of the state budget, which sought to allocate over $3 billion for adult and youth correctional agencies, but only earmarked $81 million for programmes tackling drug abuse and gang-violence. Linking this with wider Republican cuts to schools and welfare, the mothers argued that 'it was blatantly clear that then Governor George Deukmejian and his Republican cohorts were more preoccupied with sending our children to prison than keeping them in school', and they took to carrying signs featuring a child's face behind bars.[153] Opposition to the underlying connections being made between East L.A. and criminality were made more explicit by activists writing to the *Los Angeles Times,* stating 'we won't allow this. We won't have a state prison in our community while our children are still waiting for decent schools.'[154]This was not just a critique of the punitive justice policies enacted by the state during the 1980s. It offered a further way of visualising and asserting the possible future of urban space in East L.A., where improved schools became the central core of community life instead of the 'penal colony' proposed. In addressing the policies underpinning the carceral state, MELA tackled the Governor's attempts to link the spaces and population of the community with criminality, which would create the impression that East L.A. was the most natural location for the prison. They offered an insight into an alternative political manifesto, one which placed their community's emphasis on the needs of local children as the top priority in the remaking of urban space.

[150] Laura Bleiberg, '250 Marchers Protest Plans for Prison in East L.A', *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, 31 March 1989, 'Mother of ELA Respond to Governor's Comments'.
[151] 'Mother of ELA Respond to Governor's Comments'.
[152] *Ibid*.
[153] 'Mades del Este de Los Angeles Santa Isabel'.
[154] Gutierrez and Rodriguez, 'State's Prison Plan Insults the Whole Latino Community'.

Figure 4: MELA supports carry signs with a child's face behind bars.[155]

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In 1991, the multiple lawsuits brought against the CTTS incinerator by groups such as MELA, Greenpeace and the City of Los Angeles led to CTTS, whose other waste disposal sites had been cited dozens of times for health and safety violations, to abandon their plans to place a commercial waste incinerator in Vernon.[156] The Coalition Against the Prison continued to try every possibility to prevent the state prison being built, including legal challenges to the certification of the jail's EIR, until the California Supreme Court rejected the appeal in July 1992, the last barrier to the prison being constructed.[157] However by 1992, California's new Governor, Republican Pete Wilson, inherited the worst economic conditions

[155] Laura Bleibger, '250 Marchers Protest Plans for Prison in East L.A', *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, 31 March 1989, A-2
[156] Schnitzer, 'Mothers of East L.A Fight Toxic Waste', Gutierrez, 'Environmental Justice Within Latino Communities'.
[157] Pardo, *Mexican American Women Activists*, p.56.

in the state since the 1930s. In an attempt to reduce the deficit, Wilson signed Senate Bill 97 which finally curtailed efforts to build a new state prison in East Los Angeles some seven years after it had first been announced.[158] In both instances, MELA's persistence and perseverance in protesting the sitings had been the critical reason for the projects' failures, by stalling approval of these projects until such political and economic developments forced their abandonment. They had gained media attention, built alliances, and expressed their disapproval for long enough to keep the issues alive in public debate, while forcing local Latinx representatives to see preventing these sitings as a political priority.

MELA activists continued to conduct campaigns surrounding local environmental issues. They developed a water-conservation programme with the city, where residents would be given free ultra-low-flush toilets in exchange for their old ones. The money made from recycling the old toilets allowed MELA to pay local residents to work installing the new ones. Within one year, MELA were providing 27 jobs with medical coverage and salaries above minimum wage, and were able to fund other projects such as graffiti abatement and lead testing in homes, as well as scholarships to local school children.[159] *Las Madres* also organised around issues of justice for the wider Latinx community. They worked with a large number of organisations to oppose Proposition 187 in 1994, a ballot initiative that would have prohibited undocumented immigrants from using state services such as schools and healthcare.[160] Gutierrez argued that in his support for the initiative, Governor Wilson had 'distinguished Latinos as being the only undocumented immigrants who are responsible for the economic troubles in California.'[161] Drawing together the environmental and the political, MELA stated that looking forward, 'the Mothers know that our barrios have a long way to go in the pursuit of self-determination.'[162] The continued usage of the term 'barrio' indicates that MELA saw their unfinished efforts to secure residents' power over their communities as a distinctly racialised issue.

The legacy of MELA and environmental justice activists in the 1980s had political, social and cultural ramifications for both Los Angeles and California more generally. In terms of public environmental policy, the work of groups like MELA and CCSCLA discredited the growing advocacy of mass-burn incinerators and instigated a shift towards their preferred methods of

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[158] *Ibid*., Hugo Cesar Garcia, 'Prison Killed by Wilson', *Belvedere Citizen/Eastside Journal*, 16 September 1992.
[159] Madres Del Este De Los Angeles Santa Isabel, 'ULFT Water Conservation Project First Anniversary Celebration', 31 July 1993, MELA Collection, Box 5, Folder 13. 'Conservation Project Yields Scholarships', *City Times*, 12 June 1994, 9.
[160] Ruben Martinez, 'Fighting 187: The Different Opposition Strategies', *NACLA Report on the Americas,* 29.3 (1998), 29-34.
[161] Juana Gutierrez, 'Letter from the President', *Madres Del Este De Los Angeles Santa Isabel*, 1.2, January 1994, p.1, Box 3, Folder 1.
[162] 'Mothers of East Los Angeles, Santa Isabel'.

handling the 'landfill crisis' through recycling and source reduction. These groups were part of a larger national consciousness to tackle discrimination in the land use and siting of dangerous projects, and by 1992 the number of community groups of colour engaging in such activism had swelled to allow Robert Bullard to compile an 81 page directory of organisations across the U.S.[163] Despite this, as the first histories of the Flint water crisis are being written, it seems clear that race and economic standing continue to play a critical role in determining environmental policy.[164] The emerging story of Flint also points to the continuing reality that the public health of communities of colour is often subjugated in order to satisfy political or economic directives.

In 2018, the No New Jails organisation was formed in New York in response to Mayor Bill de Blasio's plans to potentially close the notorious Rikers Island prison and replace it with four jails throughout the city.[165] While the proposals have drawn outrage from a diverse range of residents, No New Jails clearly borrow from organisations resisting mass incarceration such as Mothers Reclaiming Our Children in emphasis the human costs of mass incarceration. Yet they also reflect the arguments put forward by MELA in regards to prison sitings, arguing that de Blasio 'manipulated the political process to bypass any real community input on building new jails.'[166] No New Jails also project their own visions for the future of urban space which are determined by people of colour, stating that 'the billions of dollars budgeted for new jails should be redirected instead to community-based resources that will support permanent decarceration.'[167] The No New Jails movement has also spread to D.C. and San Francisco, applying the arguments for prison abolition to a range of local contexts. Clearly, the problem of prison expansion and sitings remains a controversial, divisive topic within many urban areas. MELA's efforts to demand spatial equality to resist the criminalisation of their neighbourhoods may therefore prove important in understanding the wider meaning of such resistance.

Mothers of East Los Angeles felt their 'major victory' was 'converting homemakers into political community activists.'[168] Gutierrez, reflecting the ways motherhood and identity had been intertwined, later stated that that their goal had been 'to change the consciousness of our community by giving the people living within it a voice, by letting them know that each

[163] Robert D. Bullard, *People of Color Environmental Groups Directory 1992*.
[164] Anna Clark, *The Poisoned City: Flint's Water and the American Urban Tragedy* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2018).
[165] Daniel Medina, 'Rikers 2.0: Inside the Battle to Build Four New Jails in New York City', *The Guardian*, 9 December 2019.
[166] https://www.nonewjails.nyc/ [Accessed 1 June 2020]
[167] https://www.nonewjails.nyc/background [Accessed 1 June 2020]
[168] 'Mothers of East Los Angeles, Santa Isabel'.

one of them is a great asset to their community, their families and to themselves.'[169] Through their campaigns against the prison and incinerator, MELA demonstrated the close ties activists saw between their identities as Mexican American mothers and the collective identity of the community. They utilised these identities to develop their own autonomous productions of place to fight the stereotypical depictions of their community, providing a value and meaning to the spaces of East L.A. beyond their physical or economic reality. This sense of place and community pride became the focal point of efforts to resist environmental racism, and pointed to a wider desire amongst residents to operate greater control over the spaces of their own community. MELA's story demonstrates how race, gender, and class altered how spaces and places were perceived, imagined, and utilised. The arrival of many new immigrants to Los Angeles during the 1980s, and the experience of those working in the janitorial industry, expanded how notions of autonomous urban meaning and spatial ownership could be applied to the workplace as well as the home and the local community.

[169] 'Juana Beatriz Gutierrez Biography'.

Chapter Three: Cleaning up the Service Industry: Justice For Janitors and The Creative Use of Space

'I remember I was dressed as a turkey' said Jono Shaffer, recalling his first protest as leader of the Service Employees International Union's (SEIU) 'Justice for Janitors' campaign in Los Angeles. 'I had a big costume on, and Richard was standing in [the] back of my pickup truck handing out turkeys to people, giving a speech'.[1] The campaign's 1988 'Turkey of the Year' award presentation was a rather peculiar act of protest, albeit one with an important message regarding economic injustice. This hardly seemed the beginnings of a movement that would captivate the city and transform the lives of thousands of janitors in the city. Yet throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, Justice for Janitors (JfJ) successfully organised and mobilised L.A.'s predominately Latinx janitorial workforce in creative ways that brought higher wages, representation, and critically, visibility for exploited service workers in Los Angeles.[2] This chapter will examine how a spatially conscious approach to protest and an effort to remake the meaning of the workplace in the imagined geography of the city helped to energise the janitorial sector's immigrant labour force and propel Justice for Janitors' struggle to the forefront of progressive organising in Los Angeles.

The SEIU faced numerous challenges in attempting to organise immigrant workers in the janitorial industry, and it is 'easy to tick off the reasons why the Justice for Janitors campaign in Los Angeles should not have succeeded.'[3] Labour historians have often viewed the Reagan/Bush era as a period which dismantled and decimated the traditional labour union.[4] Following a significant decline in wages due to the subcontracting of janitorial jobs, JfJ was an attempt to reorganise the city's custodians and force cleaning corporations to raise wages and reinstate many of the welfare benefits workers had lost. Labour officials and former janitors saw the decline in pay and working conditions as the result of the rapid increase in Central American immigration: by 1990, 64% of the city's janitors had entered the country in

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[1] UCLA Centre for Oral History Research, *Donde Haigaun Trabajador Explotado, Ahí Estaré Yo*: Justice for Janitors Workers, Organizers, and Allies, Interview of Jono Shaffer [Hereafter: Shaffer Interview], p.48. A number of other interviews with Justice for Janitors organisers and participants remain in this collection, both in English and Spanish. For reasons of time and resources, those in Spanish have not been translated by the author, but are a priority for further research.

[2] Throughout this chapter, 'janitor' denotes those whose primary responsibility was to clean buildings, but did not have any role in the maintenance of estates, as this job title sometimes refers to.

[3] Christopher Erickson, Catherine Fisk, Ruth Milkman, Daniel Mitchell, and Kent Wong, 'California's Revolt at the Bottom of the Wage Scale: Justice for Janitors in Los Angeles', UCLA: School of Public Affairs, California Policy Options (2002), 111-153 [135]https://escholarship.org/uc/item/74z8c302 [Accessed 14 May 2020].

[4] Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies* (London: Yale University Press, 2010), Louis Uchitelle, *The Disposable American: Layoffs and Their Consequences* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: New Press, 2010).

the previous decade.[5] While the idea that immigrant labour was impossible to organise had never been historically accurate, a suspicion of this increasingly prominent population ensured the labour community were rarely willing to risk time and resources to organise Latinx workers. For these immigrants, who lives were governed by their precarious legal and economic status (and who could be dismissed for merely talking to a union representative), their trepidation would be justified. Finally, cleaning services were 'an industry designed for abuse', with an easily expendable workforce plying their trade at night and out of sight in empty offices. As the union stated; 'to many, they are invisible'.[6]

Scholars have therefore sought to explain how JfJ were able to overcome these challenges and create a movement that both galvanised the Latinx community and secured material gains for janitorial workers. The most extensive study of the Janitors' movement has come from Cynthia Cranford. While campaigning in support of the group, Cranford also compiled interviews of members and field notes examining JfJ protests, which this chapter regularly considers. Her work, alongside several other sociological studies, details how organisers fostered racial solidarity amongst janitors, promoted progressive gender politics within the union, and built support through demands for public visibility and recognition which utilised theatrical protests and acts of civil disobedience. [7] By placing this campaign within the wider context of the redevelopment of Los Angeles, and understanding how Justice for Janitors employed a spatially conscious approach to organising and protest, this chapter contributes to this body of literature in two key ways. Firstly, studies of JfJ often begin in June 1990 - following the brutal actions of LAPD officers during a janitors' strike in the Century City complex – and culminate with their resounding victory in securing wage increases and improved benefits following a three-week strike in April 2000. I argue that the union's earlier efforts to organise and mobilise janitors and protest inequality in the city provided a critical foundation for the movement's later success. Organisers made creative use of public and private spaces in order to appeal to janitors and build a support, an aspect of their movement which would continue throughout the 1990s. Activists deconstructed the

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[5] Cynthia Cranford, 'Networks of Exploitation: Immigrant Labor and the Restructuring of the Los Angeles Janitorial Industry', *Social Problems*, 52.3 (2005), 379-397 [386].

[6] 'What is Justice for Janitors (1992)', University of California, Los Angeles, Charles E. Young Research Library, [1940], Service Employees International Union, United Service Workers West Records [Hereafter SEIU files], Box 7, Folder 2.

[7] Cynthia Cranford, 'Labor, Gender and the Politics of Citizenship', Cranford, 'Networks of Exploitation', Cranford, 'Constructing Union Motherhood: Gender and Social Reproduction in the Los Angeles Justice for Janitors Movement', *Qualitative Sociology*, 30.3 (2007), 361-381. See also: Ruth Milkman, 'New Workers, New Labor, and the New Los Angeles', *Unions in a Globalised World*, ed. by Bruce Nissen (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp.103-129, Amy Bridges, 'The Sun Also Rises in the West', in *The City Revisited: Urban Theory from Chicago, Los Angeles, New York*, ed. by Dennis Judd and Dick Simpson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), pp.79-103, Lydia Savage, 'Justice for Janitors: Scales of Organizing and Representing Workers', *Antipode* 38.3 (2006), 645-666.

distinctions between public and private spaces, particularly those which separated the workplace from the home, in order to increase participation by both female and male janitors by framing struggles for unionised jobs as an issue which had an effect on families. Organisers also sought to recruit members by subverting traditional arenas of union activity; by evading public spaces and utilising the secluded locations within workplaces, or offering home-visits, the union could engage workers who were fearful of losing their jobs or immigration status. This early organising was therefore a critical way for the movement to develop and garner active support, and employed a recognition of urban spatial practices that would dramatically influence their success in later years.

The second argument this chapter makes is that the union's approach to spatial justice underpinned the other factors that contributed to their success. The sources we use to understand Justice for Janitors - oral interviews, union newsletters and publicity material, and newspaper stories - often belie the complexity of the janitors' struggle. The majority of the union's contemporaneous material and later oral histories were produced by white, professional organisers. They often constructed a rather direct narrative which placed abusive employers against vulnerable Latinx immigrants, and offered few opportunities to hear the voices of janitors themselves beyond a corroboration of these accounts. Cranford's interviews provide far greater opportunity for janitors to elaborate on their life histories, and particularly their experiences as immigrant women. They, too, sustain a narrative focused on praising the union's success in empowering them to confront both exploitative working conditions and oppressive gender roles. Yet as spatial theorists and cultural geographers have argued, 'empowerment', or the reshaping of social identities, occurs through (not simply within) the spaces we inhabit. Understanding how and why the union conceptualised or employed the spaces of the city as part of protest can offer new perspectives on what the janitors' movement hoped to achieve.

Racial solidarity, empowering women, and flamboyant protests were all important elements in galvanizing service workers to demand union representation and fair wages, but were often enabled through the campaigns' efforts to re-imagine space and place within Los Angeles. Janitors used their colourful protests to make themselves and their exploitation visible within the city, by being noticed through their conspicuous presence in public space, or subverting the assumed behaviours these spaces imposed on immigrants. The ability of JfJ to mobilise supporters to inhabit and demonstrate within spaces often designed exclusively for the wealthy - where Latinx migrants were often only seen when working in subsistence-wage service work - was a vital reason why janitors achieved this visibility. This also broadens the meaning of Justice for Janitors' campaign, demonstrating their desire to

claim urban space for immigrant workers and struggle for their right to be seen and respected within public space. As social geographers have argued, public space is 'not self-evidently innocent, but also bound into various and diverse social and psychic dynamics of subjectivity and power.'[8] Thus by examining how JfJ contested access to public space, we see how the janitors' movement looked to utilise urban space as 'an active medium through which new identities are created or contested.'[9]

The Janitors' movement also looked to alter the meaning of urban space itself. JfJ's communications emphasised the physical reality of injustice in L.A. Through their appeals for better pay and working conditions for janitors, the union often highlighted how economic injustice manifested itself through the physical spaces of the city. As Doreen Massey has argued, sites and spaces have no fixed meaning, but can signify many things dependent on race, class, or gender.[10] The new Downtown offices that janitors cleaned provided an important example of this. To those who observed these buildings from outside, or worked in the offices during the daytime, they represented wealth, luxury, and opulence. To the janitors working at night however, these buildings were exploitative 'sweatshops in the sky', which paid them subsistence wages and intensified their social and economic exclusion in the city. JfJ therefore looked to empower janitors to gain control and self-determination over how they experienced and encountered the spaces of the city, and the opportunity to reshape urban meaning for the city's residents.

A.K Sandoval-Strausz has used the small Texas suburb of Oak Cliff to explore how Latinx communities remade the urban landscape of Reagan-era America.[11] Through 'the culturally specific ways they occupied and produced urban space: their everyday behaviors, residential practices…and commitment to public presence', migrants revitalised a troubled Southern city.[12] Janitors, too, looked to implement similar changes in Los Angeles, challenging the spatial practices and geographical organisation that had become ingrained within the city and compounded immigrants' exclusion. The janitors' movement utilised the diverse spaces of the city effectively in order to become one of U.S. labour's most notable success stories during the late twentieth century. In order to succeed, they recognised that securing economic and social equality for immigrant workers was intimately tied to the reclamation and remaking of urban space.

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[8] Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography,* p.37.
[9] Susan Ruddick, 'Constructing Difference in Public Spaces', 135.
[10] Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*.
[11] A.K. Sandoval-Strausz, 'Latino Landscapes'.
[12] *Ibid*., 808.

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Southern California labour movements had long relied on the participation and leadership of Latinx immigrants, and Justice for Janitors drew tactical inspiration from this legacy. Once known as a virulently anti-union metropolis, by the 1930s and 1940s Los Angeles saw widespread strikes in the garment, fruit picking and cannery industries. Given that these industries were comprised predominately of Latina women, such struggles often provided new opportunities for these immigrants to become involved with and lead union initiatives, and to reshape labour's demands to include issues such as health and childcare.[13] Justice for Janitors reflected the ambitions of these early movements, not only by encouraging the participation of Latinx immigrant women, but by reshaping the goals of their movement, moving beyond wages and working conditions to demand benefits for the families of workers. The janitors' movement also drew heavily from the social justice campaigns of the 1960s. The most obvious influence came from the United Farm Workers' strikes, who 'set the course for America's progressive campaigns'.[14] JfJ borrowed the UFW's mantra of '*Si, Se Puede*' ['Yes, it can be done'] throughout their campaigns, but also utilised their recruitment strategies; directing their message to California's exploited Latinx population through house-visits, street theatre, and music.[15] Their organising efforts also reinterpreted the meanings and messages of a broad array of 1960s activism. Shaffer believed that their strategies did not stem 'from the traditional labour movement' but 'radicals' from the Civil Rights, Farm Workers and Peace movements, who all 'used marches and direct action and protests, and they were successful.'[16] This encouraged JfJ's use of 'guerrilla' tactics to confront employers and garner support for L.A.'s invisible janitorial workers.

Finally, the group also embraced the ideas, and leaned on the memory, of the Chicano/a movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Inspired by the UFW and stemming from the often violent repression faced by Mexican-Americans, these movements hoped to reconceptualise the identities of Latinx men and women, tackling issues such as sexism and *machismo*, political powerlessness, and police brutality through the prism of cultural production.[17] Los Angeles, with a large Latinx population and deep-rooted discrimination seen through the

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[13] Milkman, 'Immigrant Organizing and the New Labor Movement in Los Angeles', *Critical Sociology* 26.1 (2000) 59-81 (60-62), Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American,* pp.188-207, Duron, 'Mexican women and Labor Conflict in Los Angeles', Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives*, pp.74-77.

[14] Randy Shaw, *Beyond the Fields: Cesar Chavez, the UFW, and the Struggle for Justice in the 21st Century*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

[15] 'Don't let this happen here!', n.d., SEIU Files, Box 6, Folder 17.

[16] Shaffer Interview, p.48.

[17] Rodriguez, *Rethinking The Chicano Movement*, Juan Gómez-Quiñones and Irene Vásquez, *Making Aztlán: Ideology and Culture of the Chicana and Chicano Movement, 1966-1977* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2014).

Sleepy Lagoon trial, Zoot-Suit riots and displacement created through urban renewal, understandably produced a wellspring of Chicano/a activism. This ranged from community-service organisations such as the Chicana Services Action Centre and The East Los Angeles Community Union, to overtly radical political organisations including the Chicano Moratorium and the Brown Berets.[18] Thus the janitors' movement retained these desires to empower Latinx immigrants through demands to economic and social justice in the workplace.

The janitorial industry in Los Angeles underwent numerous changes in the decade preceding the 1987 formation of Justice for Janitors, precipitated by both developments in national labour practices and the spatial transformation of L.A. Employment opportunities within the janitorial industry rapidly expanded in conjunction with the redevelopment of L.A.'s economic geography. As Mayor Tom Bradley looked to construct his vision of 'World City Liberalism' to attract investment, the city's Downtown area was rejuvenated as the capital of the West Coast's financial industry. With new luxury offices and skyscrapers appearing in the Los Angeles skyline, more janitorial staff were required to help ensure these working environments were clean and hygienic. Those newly hired staff; however, were non-union workers, employed by emerging multinational cleaning corporations. The Service Workers International Union (SEIU), America's second-largest union, representing building workers throughout the country, were a prime example of the flagging labour movement. Janitors in Los Angeles, who until the mid-1980s were predominately African-American and represented by SEIU Local 399, had endured a long struggle to achieve reasonable wages and working conditions.[19] At their peak in 1983, the average wage for janitors in the city was $7 per-hour, while some earned as much as $12 per-hour.[20] At this time, however, building owners throughout the country began to outsource their janitorial work to large multinational subcontractors in order to decrease building costs. Whilst some corporations hired union staff in principle, they also used 'double-breasting', the practice of employing non-union members alongside these workers in order to supplement this work.[21] The result was the steady decrease of janitors' wages across the sector, as the SEIU became willing to accept meagre settlements in order to compete with the growth of non-union service work.

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[18]For Sleepy Lagoon and the Zoot Suit Riots see: Pagan, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon*. For 1960s and 1970s Chicano/a movements see: Bauman, *Race and the War on Poverty,* Chavez, *''¡Mi Raza Primero!",* Oropeza, *¡ Raza Sí!¡ Guerra No!*.

[19]Rodger D. Waldinger, Chris Erickson, Ruth Milkman, Daniel Mitchell, Abel Valenzuela, Kent Wong, and Maurice Zeitlan, 'Helots No More: A case study of the Justice for Janitors Campaign in Los Angeles' in *Organizing to Win: New Research on Union Strategies*, ed. by Kate Brofenbenner (New York: Cornell University Press, 1998), pp.102-120 [pp.105-106].

[20]Laslett, *Sunshine*, p.290.

[21] *Ibid*., p.289, Cranford, 'Labor, Gender and the Politics of Citizenship', p.143.

This was exacerbated in L.A. by the flow of immigrants and political refugees arriving, particularly from El Salvador and Guatemala. Having recently arrived in the city, many accepted these new jobs from the expanding janitorial subcontractors. The remaining Anglo and African-American janitors largely disappeared from the trade. Within these new demographics emerged a sharp decline in wages: by 1988, the typical hourly rate had fallen to $4.50, an estimated 50% cut in real terms.[22] Janitors also now faced more arduous working conditions: the loss of health insurance, no paid overtime, and an increasing workload. With non-union subcontractors replacing nearly all unionised firms in the city, Local 399's membership fell to less than 1800 members.[23] The similar fortunes of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union and drywaller's unions saw a return to the nativism of the 1930s, with the belief that new immigrants could not be organised due to fear of deportation and a willingness to work for less money.[24] Economic and living standards for service workers were drastically reduced, and thus unions struggled to retain membership, often for failing to recognise and represent shifts in labour demographics.

However, the popular conceptions regarding the collapse of organised labour in the 1970s, or the idea that 'by the end of the 1980s, most Los Angeles unions were in free fall', are a somewhat tired narrative.[25] Unions representing traditional blue collar industries were most likely to falter as the United States progressed with deindustrialisation. Unions representing service industries, whose workforce substantially increased in the neoliberal era, often looked to develop new strategies to reengage members. The SEIU were one such union, and Justice for Janitors was a national campaign designed to reorganise workers such as janitors to reform collective bargaining. In late 1985, The Mellon Bank in Pittsburgh hired a non-union janitorial contractor, firing half of its current janitorial staff and offering the rest part-time contracts with drastic wage cuts and no health benefits. The union responded with a series of public protests and attempts to involve the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), gaining community support and heavy media exposure, leading to 'substantial public embarrassment' for the bank.[26] This attempt to draw attention to building owners, instead of the contractors who employed the janitors, became a staple of Justice for Janitors' strategy, despite protests against 'secondary employers' technically being outlawed. Eventual success in Pittsburgh led to an expansion of such protests, now under the name

[22] Paul Schimek, *From the Basement to the Boardroom…Los Angeles Should Work for Everyone* , August 1989, p.7, SEIU Files, Box 7, Folder 11.
[23] Laslett, *Sunshine*, pp.289-290.
[24] *Ibid*., pp.291-2.
[25] *Ibid*., p.291. For new interpretations of labour movements in the 1970s and 1980s, see Foley, *Front Porch Politics*, pp.189-200, Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), pp.246-276.
[26] Richard Hurd and William Rouse, 'Progressive Union Organizing: The SEIU Justice for Janitors Campaign', *Review of Radical Political Economics* 21.3 (1989), 70-75 [71].

'Justice for Janitors', and with greater agency given to local organisers. Outlandish, confrontational protests became another strong theme of the campaign: Denver, whose janitors allegedly raised 'enough hell in the downtown area that the industry caved', held a 'clean-in' in a building lobby.[27] In Philadelphia, demonstrators held aloft giant toothbrushes to protest being forced to use the utensil to clean toilets in office buildings, while protestors in Washington 'begged' for food in the neighbourhood of a building owner. [28] When Portman Company hotels instigated a lawsuit to stop Atlanta's JfJ campaign from organising 900 African-American women, the union responded with a boycott that was eventually endorsed by the AFL-CIO and stretched to hotels across the nation.[29] The early JfJ movement, then, demonstrated the potential for the SEIU and rank and file janitors to organise and overturn a decade of mistreatment from the competitive and lucrative cleaning industry. These tactics and efforts developed a template that would soon be applied in Los Angeles, garnering national headlines.

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The Los Angeles Justice for Janitors movement was designed by Cecile Richards, a staff member of Local 399, who organised the campaign from her home while on maternity leave.[30] Control of the campaign was then passed to Jono Shaffer, who, despite relatively little organising experience, travelled to other JfJ chapters to learn about their mobilisation tactics. The Downtown area of Los Angeles, with the largest proportion of unionised janitors (although still only 30%), was selected as the site of the first campaign.[31] Leaders of Local 399, including future president Jim Zellers, have suggested the local's primary goal was to redefine their purpose, and shift from a service model of unions (designed to protect members already part of the union) to an organising model, which assertively sought to mobilise unorganised janitors.[32] In the following years, the SEIU would spend 25% of its national budget on organising, an estimated five times more than other unions.[33] When, in 1987, the Southern California Gas Company hired a non-union subcontractor and removed nearly all of their present staff, 399 saw an opportunity to launch their campaign to the public. Despite the relatively small number of union members, Richards and Shaffer surprised SEIU leadership, and the Gas Company, when 150 janitors arrived in the union's

[27]Waldinger et al., 'Helots No More', p.109, Hurd and Rouse, 'Progressive Union Organizing', 72.
[28]Hurd and Rouse, 'Progressive Union Organizing', 72.
[29]*Ibid*., 73-74.
[30] Shaffer Interview, pp.35-36.
[31]Waldiner et al., 'Helots', p.105.
[32]'Interview with Jim Zellers', *Labor Looks at Mexico*, n.d., p.8, SEIU Files, Box 7, Folder 11.
[33] 'Waxing Dramatic: Blend of Theatrics and Pressure Gives a Big Membership Boost to Janitors Union', *Wall Street Journal*, 21 March 1994, A5.

parking lot for a *carne asada* dinner to discuss how to tackle the Gas Company's defection.[34] Following increased local interest in the union, JfJ decided to target buildings serviced by Century Cleaning, the non-union wing of a double-breasting company and one of downtown's largest cleaning companies.[35] This allowed them to demonstrate against some of Downtown's most notable buildings, including the newly completed One California Plaza skyscraper, where janitors still earned minimum wage despite the building being a centrepiece of L.A.'s redevelopment.[36] As JfJ drew more attention to the poverty wages of immigrant janitors, Jim Wood, leader of the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor and member of the Community Redevelopment Agency board, would support the movement by ensuring that any new constructions in Downtown would only be serviced by union janitors.[37] This, in addition to the range of inventive organising and protest tactics of the burgeoning movement, helped to secure the first new union contract in downtown for six years in 1989, providing a raise of $1 per-hour across the next three years, and a reinstatement of some health benefits for workers.[38] While this agreement still only covered 'just 55 or 60 percent' of the area, JfJ had earned their first milestone victory in halting the rapid reduction of wages and benefits for the janitorial industry.[39]

Justice for Janitors made innovative use of the city's private and public spaces, often blurring these distinctions, in order to produce effective recruitment strategies. Organisers went directly into the community in order to connect with members, often bringing unionised janitors along with them.[40] This strategy recognised the language barriers inherent in trying to organise immigrant workers, indicating that many were resistant to joining the union 'in part because they couldn't talk to anybody there.'[41] Thus, they borrowed from other groups attempting to lead a union renaissance by ensuring volunteers were Spanish-speaking members of the community.[42] Ironically, the social and community networks JfJ used to mobilise their campaigns were the same ones used to restructure the janitorial service in the early 1980s. The vast proportion of immigrant janitors were hired through 'recommendations' from friends they met in their neighbourhoods or through English classes, which would then enable entire families to be hired in the same building. However, this would often come at the expense of lengthy unpaid 'training' periods and an assumption they would accept the

[34] Shaffer Interview, p.46.
[35] *Ibid*., p.51.
[36] *Ibid*., p.58.
[37] *Ibid*., p.56,Waldinger et al. 'Helots', p.115.
[38] Cranford, 'Labor, Gender and the Politics of Citizenship', p.147.
[39] Shaffer Interview, p.63.
[40] *Ibid.*, p.64
[41] *Ibid*., p.43.
[42] Laslett, *Sunshine*, p.289, pp.300-301

same low wages and poor conditions of their peers, with the threat they could be easily replaced by another member of this rapidly expanding network if they protested.[43]

By the late 1980s, Latinx neighbourhoods of Pico-Union and East Los Angeles would become the focus of the union's mobilisation efforts. By talking to workers in their homes, JfJ strengthened their ability to reframe their movement as one that would benefit families and encourage the participation of women. Organisers initially found that the '*machismo'* of the traditional Latinx nuclear family inhibited their attempts to recruit women, often being met with the response 'I've got to talk to my husband'.[44] Some staff were initially hesitant to organise through home visits and canvassing, owing to the spatial disaggregation of L.A., suggesting this was 'an incredibly inefficient way to talk to people…you could drive forty miles in any one direction to find somebody.'[45] However, in an industry where over half of the workers were female, it was essential to the success of the Janitors' movement to involve as many women as possible. In 1988, Local 399 hired two women to work as field organisers and conduct house visits; Rocio Saenz, an experienced Mexican labour organiser, and Berta Northey, a Nicaraguan immigrant who had worked as a unionised janitor for fifteen years.[46] Cranford has suggested that initially, some women joined the union in order to broaden their social networks, with one anonymous interviewee suggesting that 'when one arrives in another country, she doesn't know anything' about her local community, and that the union drew her 'out of the closet'.[47] This also provided an opportunity for these women to renegotiate their gendered identities in relation to their families, and foster a new political identity in their new communities. As this anonymous janitor continued, 'in our countries, politics is almost always left to the men'. As her experiences with the union continued she became more empowered, proclaiming 'here, suddenly, I have done a million things.'[48] In this woman's experience, the union had helped to alter the spaces of engagement through which she viewed and participated in protest. Kevin Cox has made the distinction between spaces of dependence (through which everyday social relations unfold) and spaces of engagement (the geographies of political action). He has suggested that these 'spaces of engagement' are 'constructed through networks of association and these define their spatial form', therefore suggesting that the cultural scale and meaning of such spaces can be altered through the actions of other individuals or groups.[49] Through their home visits, JfJ

[43] Cranford, 'Networks of Exploitation', 379-397.
[44]Waldinger et al., 'Helots No More', pp.102-119, p.108, Shaffer Interview, p.53.
[45]Shaffer Interview, p.54.
[46] *Ibid*., p.64.
[47] Cranford, 'Labor, Gender and The Politics of Citizenship', p.182.
[48]*Ibid*.
[49] Kevin Cox, 'Spaces of Dependence, Spaces of Engagement and the Politics of Scale', 22. For more on the effects of spaces of engagement on activism, see Tyner, "Defend the Ghetto", 109-111.

were therefore expanding spaces of engagement through their efforts to organise within spaces of dependency. Their success in recruiting so many women to the janitors' movement suggests they blurred the private and public spaces of the city, and notions of the 'home' and 'workplace', to empower these women to participate in their campaign.

By focusing recruitment campaigns around ensuring support for the whole family, what Cranford has termed 'immigrant familialism', Justice for Janitors continued their challenge to the physical and symbolic practices that separated public and private spaces in ways that appealed to both men and women. Their initial newsletter stressed 'we all aspire to provide a better life for ourselves and especially for our families. We want our children to have a stable roof over their heads and earn their way in the world', with one father, a Guatemalan janitor, adding 'so they can do better than me.'[50] Like many communities of colour, families often relied on c*ompradrazgo* (co-parenting), in order to both work and look after children. JfJ made it clear that their movement was a 'family affair', with all extended family members and kin, especially children, were welcome to participate.[51] In an attempt to organise around the practicalities of caregiving while living in poverty, organisers sought to emphasise that union contracts aimed to achieve health insurance 'for the family', and would often schedule visits whilst children were at school, or drive mothers to schools to pick their children up.[52] There were further practical reasons for more women to join the union. The idea of one, male 'breadwinner' had never truly been an accurate picture of working-class family life in America. Within immigrant families, it was common for both parents to be working more than one job, and therefore a living wage was no longer a 'mens' issue'. One female organiser remembered that the reason many women joined the movement was 'very straightforward. We needed to have much more money. I mean that would help women too.'[53]

Local 399's efforts to recruit women by focusing on the family were not revolutionary, having been used often by unions across the twentieth century. Yet it appealed to the shifting identities of Central American and Mexican immigrants. Matthew Guttman has suggested that although the image of the Mexican 'hard-drinking, philandering macho' was difficult to dismantle, it was more likely that working-class men, particularly from urban areas, would consider roles as caring, hands-on fathers to be seen as normal.[54] Meanwhile in America, Lorena Oropeza has argued that the Vietnam War, and the Chicano Anti-War Movement

[50] *Acción y Justicia Para Los Janitors,* 1.1, October/November 1991, SEIU Files, Box 7, Folder 9.
[51] Cranford, 'Labor, Gender and the Politics of Citizenship', p.138.
[52] *Ibid*., p.145.
[53] *Ibid*., p.137.
[54] Matthew C. Gutmann, *The Meanings of Macho: Being a Man in Mexico City* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2006), p.1, pp.56-9.

shifted Chicano's traditional martial masculinity to one concentrated within the community.[55] Moving beyond the traditional view of family benefits as a gendered issue for unions, one organiser suggested that 'the Cal benefits [health insurance], men want them just like women.'[56] Cranford's field notes demonstrate that a growing number of fathers were bringing their children along to protests, suggesting that they too may have had caregiving concerns intertwined with their activism.[57] This focus on the family clearly connected the politics of the public and private spheres, but also had a number of practical benefits. The attendance of janitors' children at protests became good publicity for their movement. Photographers enjoyed focusing on children holding signs, chanting, and being pushed in strollers on JfJ's regular marches.[58] As the movement grew, glossy brochures explaining their latest campaign featured a smiling baby in a red Justice for Janitors' shirt.[59] Throughout the 1990s, union organisers brought the personal stories and ambitions of their members into both the public sphere and public space, to encourage the participation of all family members and make visible the struggles faced by immigrant janitors. In doing so, they reimagined spaces such as 'home' and 'work' in ways that engaged janitors and encouraged them to claim urban space.

The *Uno Por Uno* (one by one) approach to recruiting janitors may have personalised the needs of the Latinx community, but JfJ's 'quiet networking' was also a strategy of evasion.[60] In attempting to recruit union members in the late 1980s, JfJ looked to covertly organise in the workplace in ways that both circumvented and confronted the changing spaces of Los Angeles. With an expendable workforce, and little previous censure from the NLRB, multinational cleaning companies tended to simply dismiss workers who protested their conditions or attempted to work with the SEIU.[61] In addition, while undocumented workers were protected under the law to join and participate in union activity, it has been suggested that many declined to become part of union movements owing to fear of deportation, with such threats being made by employers towards those attempting to organise.[62] Therefore to protect the jobs of non-union janitors, and to be able to obtain the names and addresses

[55] Oropeza, *¡ Raza Sí!¡ Guerra No*.
[56] Cranford, Labor, Gender and Citizenship, p.138.
[57] Ibid., p.139.
[58] Monte Morin and Indraneel Sur, 'Janitors Take Protest to Beverly Hills Shops', *Los Angeles Times*, 6 April 2000.
[59] 'We'll give you ONE good reason to support the Justice For Janitors campaign 95', SEIU Files, Box 6, Folder 16.
[60] Ken Ellingwood, 'Union Strategy Targets High Rise "Sweatshops" To Organise Custodian', *Los Angeles Times*, 31 May 1992.
[61] 'What is Justice for Janitors?', 'ISS: International Service or Servitude Systems?', n.d., SEIU Files, Box 7, Folder 9.
[62] Cranford, 'Networks of Exploitation', 382-4.

necessary for house-visits, organisers had to work surreptitiously in order to speak to workers. Jono Shaffer remembers regularly lying to security about his purpose in the building, hiding in toilets after officers had closed to wait for janitors to clean them, and being chased out by security if he was caught trying to organise workers.[63] Shaffer would bring volunteer janitors to talk to workers from non-union buildings while they visited travelling food trucks that would serve snacks to the janitors on their breaks, thus finding spaces in which workers could congregate together away from supervisors and building managers.[64]While public spaces such as community centres, parks and buses were used to contact janitors, more discreet locations were often chosen. One story in *Union* magazine focused on Rocio Saenz travelling to a parking garage in the wealthy Westside enclave of Wiltshire, where she 'pries her way into the conversation' between three women. While, in this instance, the janitors were not convinced that anything positive could come from joining the union, Saenz was able to encourage them to attend further JfJ meetings.[65] Even after janitors joined the movement, those working in non-union buildings still met in these garages to avoid detection, in order to discuss the latest union plans, show encouragement to workers, or simply share gossip.[66]

Several scholars have pointed to Los Angeles as a primary example of the way urban public space had become 'militarised' during the 1980s, with housing projects and wealthy apartments increasingly resembling fortresses, and a growing emphasis on private security and surveillance.[67]Justice for Janitors, operating within this context, attempted to organise workers through a process of remapping spaces that were safe for immigrants to protest without retaliation. Not only did they look to domestic spaces to recruit members, they also selected secluded, semi-public spaces in order to avoid detection. Whether surprising workers in bathrooms, or sharing information in parking garages, JfJ elided the spaces that were controlled by employers or overseen by the city in order to build support. SEIU members therefore reacted and responded to the ways urban space has been transformed in recent years, which had enabled the suppression and exploitation of immigrant workers. The diverse spaces which the union used to organise janitors helped build a movement that empowered janitors to exercise resistance against economic injustice, despite the spatial forms of the city working to silence this opposition.

In direct contrast to this surreptitious organising, Justice for Janitors' public protests looked

[63] Shaffer Interview, pp.54-58.
[64] *Ibid*., p.45.
[65] Greg Goldin, 'Arriba – The New Surge in Latino Union Organising', *Union*, June/July 1989, Munoz Papers, Box 67, Folder 1.
[66] Ellingwood 'Union Strategy'.
[67] See Sorkin (ed.), *Variations on a Theme Park.*

to draw great attention to their cause. These protests were designed to make the struggles of janitorial work visible in the city, and therefore intended to subvert the spaces within which janitors were expected to be seen and heard. Janitors - working primarily at night when other workers had left - were marginalised not only for their race and class, but their occupation also made them largely invisible by working in an isolated environment. As Shaffer explained, 'everybody's alone on their floors. Everybody's an immigrant… it's not like a workplace where you have these co-workers that you bump into.'[68] Janitors therefore did not imagine the workplace as a space representing success or respect, but as an embodiment of economic inequality and the social isolation they suffered as a result of their status. In order to counteract this, the union looked to encourage these janitors to publicise their cause, and to maximise publicity in their fight for better wages and working conditions. The array of humorous costumes and themed protests conducted by the janitors was an effective way of achieving this, drawing on the guerrilla theatre of the Yippies and the 'zaps' of the gay liberation movement from the 1960s.[69] When protesting Century Cleaning and its owner, Marty Kleiman, the union staged street theatre outside his favourite restaurant, and took a busload of janitors to his golfing club, distributing 'scorecards' underlining their 'sub-par wages'.[70] JfJ were not content with protesting on the streets outside their targeted buildings. Instead, they decided to march into and through these buildings. In their first campaign against the Southern California Gas Company, Cecile Richards and Jono Shaffer led 30 protesters into the building. While some janitors expressed their frustration at low wages by trying to pay their gas bill in pennies and offering their jewellery to confused reception staff, leaders demanded to speak to the building manager. Despite building managers not directly employing janitors, the embarrassment caused by these confrontations became a popular tactic employed regularly in every building JfJ tried to organise, in addition to their protests against cleaning corporations. The confrontational, theatrical nature of these protests was attractive to the local media. Shaffer remembers dressing as a turkey on Thanksgiving and Santa at Christmas while journalists were 'shooting pictures like crazy', and would have further material to add to their stories when security tried to confiscate cameras and tape recorders.[71] In another instance, a visit to an executive of a medical building resulted in him ripping up a petition demanding health insurance and challenging janitors to quit their jobs in front of a reporter.[72]

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[68] Shaffer Interview, p.58.
[69] Benjamin Shepard, *Play, Creativity, and Social Movements: If I Can't Dance, It's Not My Revolution* (New York: Routledge, 2012), esp. pp.35-55.
[70] Shaffer Interview, p.59, Waldinger et al., 'Helots No More', p.110.
[71] Shaffer Interview, p.48, p.72.
[72] Goldin, 'Arriba'.

There were multiple reasons these tactics were successful. Leaders of Local 399 were aware their union needed to adapt in order to counter the impositions placed on them by the Labor Board during the neoliberal era. Shaffer argued that an immediate strike could not be effective in this industry as it was 'too easy to replace them, and too easy to get them [replacement workers] into the buildings'.[73] Yet companies needed 'peace and quiet' to work, especially during the daytime when these offices were used by a range of business, and therefore felt that 'noise is a huge advantage' for janitors attempting to gain leverage on employers.[74] These confrontations were not only used to embarrass large corporations and building owners for their use of exploitative subcontractors. The creative and theatrical protests also provided a window for the public to see the difficult conditions faced by immigrant janitors. The sensational media stories of these workers confronting their employers also detailed building workers cleaning the equivalent of twenty family homes in an eight-hour shift, no compensation for working overtime, and a lack of training and appropriate equipment needed for handling dangerous cleaning chemicals.[75] Thus by drawing attention to the union movement through these tactics, janitors were able to reveal the exploitation and injustice taking place in these spaces, often forgotten by observers. JfJ's more flamboyant protests also made a territorial claim on the city. Janitors' presence at golf clubs, expensive restaurants, or executive boardrooms garnered public attention because these were spaces that rarely included low-income people of colour. By occupying these spaces, organisers also hoped to empower members to challenge their subsistence wages and working conditions, but also to demand recognition and respect as inhabitants of Los Angeles equal to those white and wealthy residents who also worked in these buildings. Shaffer recalled that 'it was both hilarious and incredibly empowering for people to see that you could fuck with the power structure…we had fun, but mostly the workers had fun. They felt that they were hitting back.'[76] Justice for Janitors therefore both secured support for the union movement by making their struggle visible, and also encouraged janitors to claim the disparate spaces of the city in an effort to remake urban meaning for Latinx workers.

Exploring the early years of the SEIU Justice for Janitors campaign offers insight into how a labour movement was rejuvenated within the disadvantageous circumstances of the late 1980s. Drawing on labour and progressive tactics of direct action, the union created an inclusive movement that looked to increase the participation of women, focus on the concerns of the family, and publicise the difficulties faced by immigrant workers. These

[73] Shaffer Interview, p.56.
[74] *Ibid*.
[75] Schimek, *From the Basement to the Boardroom*, p.10.
[76] Shafer Oral Interview, p.55, p.59.

tactics saw the union garner the support and participation required to foster fundamental change within the industry. They also demonstrate how JfJ's utilisation of the myriad spaces of the city became an important tool in these strategies. Faced with conditions unfavourable to unions, the janitors' movement developed contrasting approaches to the spaces of the city. Organisers actively utilised the public spaces of the city to make economic inequality both visual and visible to garner public attention, and to circumvent difficulties presented to organisers through the retrenchment of urban space. This also sought to blur distinctions between normative conceptions of place and space, by highlighting how injustice within the workplace affected the private spaces of the home, and by involving families in public protest. Justice For Janitors' early attempts to organise janitors recruited members and built support through their innovative approaches to spatial justice in the city, but also initiated efforts to reshape subjective urban meaning for immigrants workers by making them a visible presence within the public life of the city.

Figure 5: J4J all-nighter vigil, Los Angeles, 1988[77]

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[77] Walter P. Reuther Library.

Justice for Janitors were catapulted into the national and international spotlight during their campaign to unionise janitors working in Century City, a business district in the west of the city. While the campaign was marred by police brutality, the protests themselves provided insight into how janitors looked to claim space in one of the wealthiest enclaves of Los Angeles, and how organisers envisaged spatial inequality in the city. Eleven buildings in the Century City development were owned by the JMB Realty Company, who contracted Danish firm International Service Systems (ISS) to clean offices, employing 190 janitors.[78] At this time, ISS were the world's largest cleaning company, and despite employing unionised janitors throughout Europe, South America, and even other cities in California, they refused to do so in Los Angeles.[79] Despite the size and international reputation of ISS, and JfJ's work in Downtown remaining unfinished (only half of buildings were unionised), the prospect of conducting a campaign towards one singular cleaning firm appealed to 399's directors.[80] As JfJ continued their energetic attempts to recruit workers throughout 1989, ISS responded by spying on and photographing employees talking to union activists, and firing those engaging in union activity, including one who wore a Justice for Janitors T-Shirt to work.[81] Eventually, the National Labour Relations Board cited 30 violations by ISS in L.A., including 'illegal transfers, threats, interrogation and coercion', vindicating JfJ's assertive campaign, which argued that their 'intransigence and viciousness portend a lengthy dispute'.[82] While non-union workers had minimal legal protections, they could not be permanently replaced when striking against unfair labour practices, and therefore only buildings cited by the NLRB were chosen for picketing. Moreover, janitors went on strike during their break at 10 P.M, while union staff sent letters to ISS informing them that employees would return to work the next night, limiting opportunities to punish workers.[83] With janitors only losing four hours pay despite creating significant disruption to ISS, these early strikes were a success. As ISS continually refused to allow JfJ to organise their employees, 399 determined that more radical action was required. On May 30, 1990, approximately 150 janitors went on strike in Century City and did not signal when they would return.[84] This strike by emboldened janitors,

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[78] 'Memorandum of Points and Authorities in Support', p.2, University of Southern California, Regional History Collection (0229), Independent Commission on the Los Angeles Police Department Records [Hereafter: Independent Commission], Box 42, Folder 20.

[79] 'ISS: Something Rotten From Denmark? …Why Janitors are Fighting for Justice in Los Angeles', n.d., Munoz Papers, Box 67, Folder 1, p.1. '399 Justice for Janitors Campaign Strikes Century City', *Voice of Local 399*, 14.6, June 1990, p.2, Box 7, Folder 9.

[80] Shaffer Interview, p.63.

[81] 'Something Rotten From Denmark?', p.1, 'ISS: International Service or Servitude Systems?', n.d., SEIU Files, Box 7, Folder 9.

[82] 'Janitors Go Out on Strike at Century City Theme Tower Protesting Multiple Labor Law Violations', 30 January 1990, Munoz Papers, Box 67, Folder 1. 'ISS Strike Wave Hits Century City', Winter 1989, SEIU Files, Box 6, Folder 16.

[83] Shaffer Interview, p.67.

[84] '399 Justice for Janitors Campaign Strikes Century City'.

supported by an increasingly confident union, embroiled the city in a bitter labour dispute.

It was during the campaign against ISS that Justice for Janitors looked to highlight the ways economic and social inequality were being reproduced spatially, a new component of their work to make janitors' struggles visible in the city. A 1989 report published by Local 399 looked to demonstrate injustices faced by poor communities of colour. They considered the subsistence wages of janitors, but also how residents in poorer areas of the city faced up to 70% higher grocery costs, nearly double the 'square-foot' renting cost of apartments, and higher automobile insurance costs than those in wealthier sections of the city.[85] Thus they illuminated how janitors often faced economic hardship not only due to exploitative working conditions, but the inequalities met through living in low-income communities of colour. The report, and subsequent flyers and leaflets, gave prominence to a 1988 quotation from Mayor Tom Bradley, which stated that 'Los Angeles cannot permanently exist as two cities…one amazingly prosperous, the other increasingly poorer in substance and hope.'[86] This quote clearly stressed that increased inequality within the city had become a concern for many. For the SEIU, the solution would come through making these disparities visible, and asking Angelenos to recognise and act upon them. JfJ asked supporters to sign a pledge card that not only 'recognized the important work janitors do' and believed 'janitors deserve basic benefits and job benefits', but also supported the idea that 'companies employing janitors should actively work against discrimination based on race, religion, or country of origin.'[87] In encouraging Angelenos to sign, JfJ leaned on a patriotic message; that communities needed to 'remain committed to the guiding principles of democratic life – justice, fairness and opportunity for all.'[88] Yet this was placed squarely within the urban context, stating it was 'time for us to reaffirm our belief that all who live and work in Los Angeles should share in its prosperity'.[89] Justice for Janitors therefore began to broaden their struggle, to situate their constituents' deprivation within a wider story of injustice that was manifested in the city's spaces. This strategy reflects Edward Soja's assertion that the city juxtaposed affluence and scarcity in close proximity.[90] JfJ utilised this argument in their campaign literature. One flyer showed a street-level photo of Skid Row, America's largest homeless enclave, with Downtown skyscrapers in the background, and was captioned 'poverty in the shadow of

[85] Schimek, *From the Basement to the Boardroom*, p.8.
[86] Schimek, *From the Basement to the Boardroom*, title page. 'A Penny and a Half Invested Today Could Save Millions in the Future', 18 August 1992, SEIU Files, Box 6, Folder 17.
[87] 'Something rotten from Denmark'.
[88] *Ibid*.
[89] *Ibid*.
[90] Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, pp.190-221.

wealth'.[91] Thus by demonstrating how issues of economic inequality were also problems expressed spatially, the union again utilised urban space as a tool to convey their message. Implicit in this message was the desire for workers to see the paradoxes inherent within the city, and gain greater control over these spatial disparities to improve their communities.

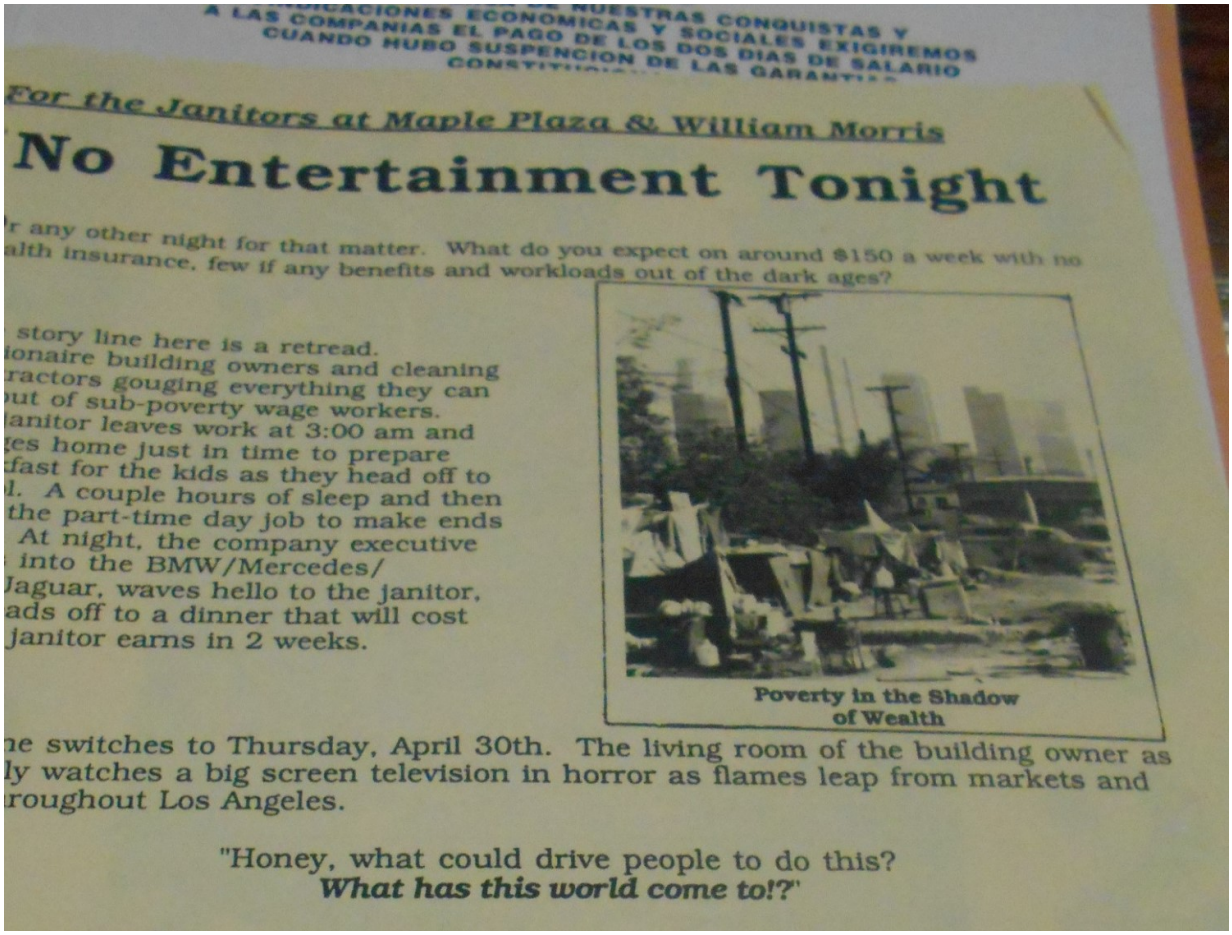

Figure 6: Justice for Janitors, 'No Entertainment Tonight', n.d.[92]

In Century City - which housed the offices of several movie studies - JfJ had chosen the ideal environment to illustrate these disparities. When SEIU president John Sweeney arrived to support the 1990 strike, he commented that 'Century City is an ugly study in contrasts – show business executives driving their Mercedes and Porches to work…passing picket lines of poverty-stricken Latino men and women'.[93] This again referenced the juxtaposition of how the same sites and buildings were being experienced in different ways based on race, class, and gender. As Eugene McCann has explored when considering Lexington, Kentucky, the

[91] Justice for Janitors, 'No Entertainment Tonight', n.d., SEIU Files, Box 6, Folder 17.
[92] Justice for Janitors, 'No Entertainment Tonight', n.d., SEIU Files, Box 6, Folder 17.
[93] '399 Justice for Janitors Campaign Strikes Century City', p.2.

everyday lives and social spaces of white, middle-class businesspeople often overlapped with poor and minority service workers, but never on an equal basis. When Black protest emerged in Lexington in response to racial profiling and discrimination in 1994, it provided an occasion where these different spatial practices connected and revealed the contradictions inherent within the city's Downtown area, which was perceived as homogenously white.[94] McCann's analysis coincides with how JfJ looked to build support for their movement by deconstructing the vast disparities faced by those encountering the city's sky-scrapers and luxurious offices. Local 399 were attuned to how these inequalities were reproduced within the workplaces occupied by both white-collar professionals and immigrant janitors. 'While architects such as I.M. Pei, Michael Graves and Cesar Pelli re-sculpt the image of downtown Los Angeles,' one leaflet read, 'cleaning companies such as ISS have turned its' buildings into vertical sweatshops.'[95] Through this remapping of offices as 'sweatshops', Justice for Janitors had found a simple and direct way of drawing attention to janitors' economic plight. Within the same buildings, 'by day, thousands of bankers, lawyers, businessmen and other professionals earn comfortable livings before returning to their suburban homes. By night, hundreds of janitors clean thousands of square feet in the same buildings, but only take home minimum-wage paychecks.'[96] Consequently, the straightforward slogan 'luxury by day, sweatshop by night' became a resounding message used by JfJ to illustrate the heretofore obscured inequalities experienced by janitors, both in the workplace and throughout the city.[97] By deconstructing ideas of what constituted a 'sweatshop', where they could be placed in the built environment, and who inhabited them, these slogans became a means to build support for the Janitors' movement. Through the metaphor of the 'sweatshop', JfJ looked to reshape the spatial imaginary of the city, and give meaning to sites and places that more accurately represented the experience of urban service workers.

While the initial campaign in Century City continued the theatrical and playful tactics used in Downtown, following the announcement of the May 1990 strike, protests became more directly confrontational. 'The fundamental job of this strike was to create disruption in terms of the day-to-day operations of the core business of Century City' suggested Shaffer.[98] This was achieved through daily pickets by janitors and their growing number of supporters, as well as weekly rallies where supporters marched throughout western sections of Los

[94] Eugene J. McCann, 'Race, Protest, and Public Space: Contextualizing Lefebvre in the U.S. City', *Antipode,* 31.2 (1999), 163-184 (177).
[95] 'What is Justice for Janitors?'.
[96] Schimek, *From the Basement to the Boardroom*, p.2.
[97] 'Luxury by Day, Sweatshop by Night', 28 January 1992, SEIU Files Box 6, Folder 17.
[98] Shaffer Interview, p.73.

Angeles, including the affluent Beverly Hills and Hollywood neighbourhoods. [99] Protestors also sought to enter Century City offices to demonstrate despite employers and building owners' efforts to restrict the union's access to buildings. This was not only because of the obstruction and noise made by protesters, but also JfJ's newest initiative: the 'trash-in'. Advertisements placed in the *Wall Street Journal*, and 399's newsletter asked readers to 'help Clean up Century City in Los Angeles – Send your trash to JMB Realty', and criticised the company's 'unbridled greed and exploitation of minority workers'.[100] Although JfJ felt the protest was 'our way of saying that ISS stinks and shouldn't be treating its workers like so much garbage', it was construed as an act of vandalism by building-owners who saw offices invaded and littered.[101] Again, this relied on conceptions of 'public' and 'private' space, deeming the low-income communities of colour that supported Justice for Janitors unable to access these spaces unless they were working. The increasingly antagonistic nature of these protests now also drew the attention of the Los Angeles Police Department, who handed out nearly 100 warnings to demonstrators for a range of offences including trespassing into Century City buildings, loud and unnecessary noise, and traffic infractions during marches. A demonstration on June 1, 1990, saw fifteen LAPD officers in riot gear attempt to disperse crowds and prevent protestors from entering buildings to drop trash, but were outnumbered and ignored by a crowd of over 400.[102] JfJ therefore continued their strategy of utilising both the public spaces and their workplaces to conduct defiant protests that violated the behavioural norms expected of poor immigrant workers to create a visible presence for janitors within the city. As employers became increasingly frustrated by the attention garnered by the union, they retaliated through the historically successful strategy of using law enforcement to reinforce their territorial control to subdue dissidence and discipline those who transgressed the racial and class conformities contained within social spaces.

Justice for Janitors did not appear very concerned by the LAPD's intervention. In one instance, they made an advance agreement with officers that twelve protestors - including several janitors and Local 399 president David Stillwell - would be arrested for civil disobedience.[103] The union used these confrontations to their advantage, and furthered the perception of a conflict between a marginalised immigrant community and the city's most powerful economic actors. Despite janitors working within the buildings they were demonstrating in, many felt that this was an insurgent struggle concerning immigrants' right to inhabit corporate economic spaces. One protestor's quote to the *Times*, stating that 'you

[99] 'Memorandum of Points and Authorities in Support', pp.3-4.
[100] 'Police Commission Report re. the 1990 June 15 Justice for Janitors Demonstration', Independent Commission, Box 42, Folder 24, p.30. '399 Justice for Janitors Campaign Strikes Century City', p.2.
[101] '399 Justice for Janitors Campaign Strikes Century City', p.2.
[102] Vicki Torres, 'Talking Trash: Strike Supporters Sweep Through Century City', *Los Angeles Times,* 2 June 1990.
[103] 'Memorandum of Points and Authorities', p3.

can't wall off poor people and people of color. We'll come here until we get justice' encapsulated this sentiment.[104] It demonstrated janitors' awareness of how urban inequality was not just a material divide, but a literal physical separation of communities, even when encountering the same spaces in the city. SEIU staff members used this opportunity to attack the apparent relationship between law enforcement and the Century City building owners, and to encourage supporters. John Sweeney announced that 'such a show of force will not deter us from exercising our constitutionally guaranteed right to speak out against the injustice being heaved upon striking janitors at those towers of wealth and greed.'[105] As Sweeney's statement implied, this was also a question of janitors' right to protest. In addition to their encouragement of protestors to trespass into buildings, JfJ also suggested campaigners block traffic on rallies despite LAPD instructions to obey road laws.[106] Eventually, lawyers for Local 399 would invoke first and fourth amendment rights, and various legal precedents, to establish that they had a constitutional right to congregate in public spaces such as parks and sidewalks, and that public officials could not prevent these groups from protesting.[107] As these protests grew more assertive, JfJ continued attempts to fulfil their wider ambitions; to empower poor workers of colour to be both seen and heard as actors within the public sphere. Working within the context of 1980s Los Angeles and the long history of contested citizenship for Latinx immigrants in the United States, these protests adopted a broader meaning concerning the ownership of urban public space and the right to the city.

Despite these antagonisms, the events that followed a June 15 march that culminated in Century City surprised Justice for Janitors' leadership. Exact details of the event differ: Local 399 claimed they had informed the 400 participants - comprised of rank-and-file janitors, their families, local labour leaders, and supportive politicians - to remain on the sidewalk, keep orderly, and avoid provocations.[108] Police, who had previously warned if marchers littered, blocked, or attempted to gain entry to buildings they would be arrested, claimed that protestors were blocking entry into Century City, had committed numerous traffic infractions, and had thrown objects at a motorcycle officer during the march.[109] What was certain was that police had withdrawn their permission for the march to continue, and blocked protesters' entry into the Century City complex. JfJ claimed that police would not inform 399 staff

[104] Torres, 'Talking Trash'.
[105] 'The Story of the Strike', *Voice of Local 399*, 14.6, June 1990, p.6.
[106] 'Police Commission Report', pp.1-2.
[107] 'Memorandum of Points and Authorities', p.14, p.18.
[108] Bob Baker, 'Police Use Force to Block Strike March', *Los Angeles Times*, 16 June 1990, 'Memorandum of Points and Authorities', p.5.
[109] 'Memorandum of Points and Authorities', p.4, 'Police Commission Report', p.2, 'Declaration of Michael Bagdonas', p.3, Independent Commission, Box 42, Folder 22.

members why they had stopped the march, and declared to protestors, in English only, that the strike was illegal and to disperse within 30 seconds. As protestors linked arms, the LAPD struck indiscriminately with their clubs, attacking 'men, women, old and young', reminiscent of 'hitting a piñata' in the view of one janitor.[110] Footage of the attack, shown on local news that evening, showed police clubbing demonstrators who had fallen to the ground, and following those who were retreating into a nearby parking garage.[111] Justice for Janitors also claimed that protestors were discriminated against based on their ethnicity. The LAPD were accused of demanding protestors' identification papers and social security numbers, threatening them with deportation, and describing the marchers as 'stupid Mexicans'.[112] Forty of the protestors were arrested and taken to jail, whilst others received medical attention in a nearby park and hospital. The list of injuries included a fractured heel, fractured jaw and skull, internal bleeding, and ultimately a miscarriage following one woman being struck in the stomach by an officer.[113] The local and national media attention that centred on the altercation was compounded by Police Chief Daryl Gates' comments, suggesting in a televised interview that he 'didn't see anything that was horrible' and that 'in the City of Los Angeles, we believe in keeping our streets peaceful.'[114] The backlash against the LAPD's actions created a crisis which forced the intervention of Mayor Tom Bradley and a decisive conclusion to the Century City strike.

The actions of the LAPD were reminiscent of the notorious 'Red Squads' disrupting union activities earlier in the century. They also evoked a long history of Los Angeles law enforcement's tensions with, and violence towards, the immigrant and Latinx community. In both instances, the police attack on Justice for Janitors echoed urban elites' deployment of law enforcement to contain and repress, through violence if necessary, those who attempted to reconstruct the normative social relations occurring within public space. While both Justice for Janitors and local media relied on a language based on traditional antagonisms between police and poor communities of colour, the union capitalised on the attack to support the need for systematic change within their industry. The responses of the media and JfJ to the assault also made allusions to the wider spatial processes that contextualised the incident. Echoing the sense of a unequal distribution of justice that angered many L.A. activists, Local 399's Bill Ragen stated that 'the billionaires snap their fingers and have massive police presence so their followers will be protected while the poor and people of color are left to

[110] 'Memorandum of Points and Authorities', p.8, 'Declaration of Rosa Aguilar', p.1, Independent Commission, Box 42, Folder 23.
[111] 'Memorandum of Points and Authorities', p.9.
[112] *Ibid*., p.11, p.20.
[113] *Ibid*., p.10, 'The Sacrifice Behind the Speeches', *Los Angeles Times*, 1 September 1990.
[114] 'Transcript of Daryl Gates Speaking via Telephone on Channel 9 TV 1990', 15 June 1990, Independent Commission, Box 42, Folder 21, p.2.

fend for themselves.'[115] One *Times* editorial also condemned the incident as a 'classic example of the use of police force to defend corporate interests against worker's movements.' The title of the article, "Corporate America's Security Guards-In-Blue", resonated with scholarly claims regarding the increasing privatisation of public spaces, implying that the LAPD were simply another private security force to act as surveillance and repression within spaces of the city intended to solidify L.A.'s desired image as welcoming to corporations.[116] This sense of a mercenary force was supported by JfJ in their insistence that they would continue to march, arguing they 'were not going to be driven out' by the LAPD, 'or the building owners they so faithfully served on June 15.'[117] As the attack gained increased attention and criticism, Mayor Bradley phoned Century City building owners to express his concerns, and Gus Bevona, President of the powerful SEIU Local 32B in New York, threatened the head of ISS that 'all hell would break loose' if a deal was not made.[118] Under this pressure, ISS relented and signed a union contract, which brought into immediate effect health care, sick leave and a pay rise to $5.20 per-hour for the 200 janitors working in Century City buildings.[119] JfJ's planned march for June 28 therefore became a victory parade, in which over 1000 supporters celebrated the union's victory, with speeches from union staff members, Tom Bradley, and a staged signing of the new contract.[120]

The Century City strike held great symbolic weight for the SEIU both in Los Angeles and beyond. Slogans popularised during the strike, such as 'from the basement to the boardroom' and 'luxury by day, sweatshop by night' were recycled on newsletters, flyers and any effort JfJ made to engage with the public.[121] June 15 became 'Justice for Janitors Day' for the SEIU, with marches, demonstrations and celebrations held internationally to celebrate and continue organising service workers.[122] Jim Zellers argued that the L.A. branch of the movement had 'built a base, but we weren't having much success extending it' until the 'unconscionable' police attack.[123] This suggestion is somewhat unfair. While the police attack had produced unprecedented publicity and attention for the movement, the janitors themselves had played a critical role in bringing these tensions into the public spotlight, prior

[115] 'Janitors Crack ISS Here: Contract Comes after Police Riot', *The Federation News*, 9.7, July 1990, Munoz Papers, Box 67, Folder 1.
[116] Antonio Rodriguez and Gloria Romero, 'Corporate America's Security Guards-In-Blue', *Los Angeles Times*, 26 June 1990.
[117] 'Century City demonstration Ends in Police Trap, Police Violence', *Voice of Local 399*, 14.6, June 1990.
[118] Waldinger et al., 'Helots No More', pp.112-116
[119] ''Janitors crack ISS here'
[120] *Ibid*.
[121] 'Luxury by Day, Sweatshop by Night', 'What's so advanced about a sweatshop?', 16 June 1992, 'An Apple a Day Has to Keep the Doctor Away, n.d., all in SEIU Files, Box 6, Folder 17.
[122] 'Justice for Janitor's Day', 1993, SEIU Files, Box 7, Folder 2. 'Century City anniversary flyer', 1992, SEIU Files Box 6, Folder 17.
[123] 'Interview With Jim Zellers', p.9.

to the dramatic confrontation in June 1990. Through the success of their recruitment and direct action strategies, janitors themselves forced employers to pay attention to their struggle. The innovative use of public space and a rhetoric that visualised the vast inequalities within L.A. helped make janitors visible while also making a claim to their right to the city. Their attempts to renegotiate their relational identities and draw attention to the paradoxes of 'abstract' space within the imagined geography of the population made them a distinctive presence in labour organising. This was part of a bold effort for janitors; to forge their own productions of place and space which interpreted the skyscrapers and offices of L.A. not as symbols of the city's success, but as exploitative 'sweatshops' for those who worked within them. These strategies emboldened workers to claim public and private corporate space within the city, acts which violated the accepted norms and behaviours expected by immigrants. In attempting to subdue Latinx janitors, employers and police therefore felt validated to reassert their territorial control over the Century City offices. The resulting brutality, however, allowed Justice for Janitors to claim a monumental victory for immigrant workers in Los Angeles.

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Throughout the 1990s, Justice for Janitors' campaign to organise janitors for improved wages, benefits, and recognition expanded throughout the city. The spatially-conscious organising to gain visibility and remake urban meaning for workers that had developed in these early years continued to play an important role in their success. The union proceeded with their westward expansion, attempting to organise janitors working in Westwood, La Brea Park, and Beverly Hills. They also targeted some of the most notable buildings in the city for their practices of sub-contracting janitorial work. The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), L.A. Music Centre, and Toyota headquarters were all picketed by JfJ supporters during 1992 and 1993. The janitors' thematic and theatrical protests became more ambitious. Janitors marched through Westwood wearing garbage bags to 'bring to light the reality of what happens here after dark', and protested outside LACMA in costumes for their Halloween festivities, 'where work is always a horror show for the janitors who keep the museum clean!'[124] In 1993 the Music Centre hosted the Academy Awards, and thus JfJ responded with their own 'Mopscar' awards, highlighting eight 'categories' including car manufacturers, defense contractors, and city agencies.[125] The union maintained their efforts to emphasise how space and place exacerbated inequality. During their work to organise janitors in Beverly Hills, supporters undertook a shopping expedition through Rodeo Drive,

[124] 'Why is this Janitor Wearing a Garbage Bag?', 13 February 1992, 'Horror, Fright, Surprise' 30 October 1992, both in SEIU Files, Box 6, Folder 17.
[125] Justice for Janitors Organizing Committee, 'Press Advisory' 29 March 1993, SEIU Files Box 6, Folder 17.

the famed exclusive retail district, which housed a range of expensive jewellery and clothing stores cleaned by non-union janitors.[126] JfJ stated that 'Beverly Hills is defined as wealth and luxury' but to janitors, the area 'is home to poverty wages, excessive workloads, no health benefits and no dignity or respect on the job'.[127] Thus in the years following the notorious Century City strike, Justice for Janitors continued to build support and organise members through strategies similar to their previous efforts. Whether protesting in flamboyant costumes or moving through the city's wealthiest enclaves, JfJ placed janitors at the centre of public social life in the city, and contested notions of place in order to make low-income workers a visible presence.

In the wake of the Rodney King Crisis, Justice for Janitors used the unrest to draw attention to issues of economic and social injustice not only in South Central and Koreatown, but other areas of the city in which janitors lived and worked. When 'denouncing the brutal and racist attacks by the Los Angeles Police Department', JfJ recounted the story of the janitors' strike and suggested 'our experience is not uncommon'.[128] The group made clear their belief that the Rodney King rebellion was a result of economic inequality in the city, proclaiming that the violence was the 'direct product of the deep frustration and anger that years of sub-poverty wages have created in Los Angeles…a city divided between the haves and the have-nots.'[129] Moreover, the janitors were not particularly subtle in their suggestions that without a legitimate overhaul of the city's economic structures, violence would erupt again. They suggested that the rebellion was 'like any volcano…the lava is still boiling and could explode anew at any moment', placing the onus upon 'property owners and cleaning contractors' to resolve tensions.[130] Drawing on Rodney King's call for peace in the title of their flyer 'Can We Get Along?', JfJ again reflected on the possibility of further unrest, hinting that they 'hope it won't be a long, hot summer here at Park La Brea – either for you or us'.[131] By suggesting that violence could erupt in La Brea – a mainly white area slightly westwards of Koreatown – JfJ implied that the social unrest seen in April 1992 was not an issue restricted to poor communities of colour, but something that affected and was affected by all areas of the city. Justice for Janitors therefore broadened the meaning of the Rodney King Crisis, to implicate injustice occurring within the segregated spaces of corporate Los Angeles as part of the issues agitating civil unrest in poor communities of colour.

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[126] '399 Janitors Go Shopping for Gifts in Beverly Hills', *Voice of Local 399*, 15.9, November 1991.
[127] 'There's Poverty in Them There Hills', 9 May 1992, SEIU Files, Box 6, Folder 17.
[128] 'Press Release', 12 March 1991, Munoz Papers, Box 67, Folder 1.
[129] 'Corporate Greed is the Seed to Social Unrest', 26 June 1992, SEIU Files, Box 6, Folder 7.
[130] 'There's poverty in Them There Hills'.
[131] *Ibid*., 'Can We Get Along? Only Management Can Answer that One!', 25 June 1992, SEIU Files, Box 6, Folder 7.

As chapter five explores, the Rebuild L.A. (RLA) commission, the city's formal response to the Crisis, unsuccessfully sought to bring corporate regeneration to isolated communities. Justice for Janitors felt that this continued faith in unregulated corporate capitalism was not only misguided, but a critical explanation for the unrest itself. Assigning RLA's chairman, Peter Ueberroth with the Mopscar for 'worst performance in addressing poverty', they argued that the organisation had failed to 'make corporations take responsibility for the low wages and sub-standard conditions which prevail for workers in Los Angeles.'[132] 'Of the 22 things that RLA asks companies to do to help Los Angeles', JfJ continued, 'not one mentions wages, benefits or working conditions' which they felt should have been a 'cornerstone' of the Rebuild effort.[133] JfJ were particularly riled by Ueberroth's comment that 'minimum wage jobs bring dignity to those who labor in them'.[134] Local 399 President Jim Zellers described this quote as a 'gross distortion' of minimum wage jobs in America, and that without 'basic commitments' to workers pay and conditions, 'we are doomed to a vicious cycle of masking problems only to have them reappear later with more force and more destruction'.[135] In response, Justice for Janitors held repeated demonstrations outside RLA headquarters, and sixteen were arrested following a 24-hour occupation of their offices.[136] Demanding Ueberroth's resignation, they argued that 'there is no dignity in trying to support a family on $150 a week', and that 'we believe that L.A. needs **good** jobs, not just jobs.'[137] The SEIU once again emphasised the need for spatial equality, stating that 'we stand for peace, justice and prosperity in our Los Angeles community and we will not stop until all three become a reality in South Central and Pico-Union as well as Brentwood and Encino.'[138] Their invocation of wealthier neighbourhoods clearly utilised the geography of the city to demand that low-income communities of colour required quality jobs instead of minimum-wage industries that RLA proposed. Both Justice for Janitors and RLA agreed that a dramatic redevelopment of Los Angeles was necessary in the wake of the Rodney King Crisis. Yet they diverged on how this should take place. Arguing that the unfettered corporate capitalism that had proliferated throughout the 1980s had contributed to, rather than resolved, the isolation and deprivation of Latinx communities, the SEIU demanded that the rebuilding of

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[132] 'Press Advisory', 29 March 1993, SEIU Files, Box 6, Folder 17.
[133] *Ibid*., 'Stop the War on the Working Poor', n.d., SEIU Files, Box 6, Folder 16.
[134] Henry Weinstein, 'Janitors Lash Out at Rebuild L.A. in Rally', *Los Angeles Times,* 18 December 1992.
[135] Jim Zellers, 'Third World Wages won't Rebuild L.A', *Los Angeles Times*, 28 January 1993, 'Stop the War on the Working Poor'.
[136] Ted Rohrlich, '16 Arrested in 24-Hour Sit-In at Rebuild L.A.', *Los Angeles Times,* 1 May 1993, A-1.
[137] Justice for Janitors, 'Rebuild L.A. Must Put L.A.'s Working People First', n.d., Rebuild L.A. Collection, Series 5, Box 156, Folder 787. Emphasis in original.
[138] SEIU Local 399, 'Statement of Purpose From SEIU Justice For Janitors to Rebuild L.A.' 29 April 1993, RLA Collection, Series 5, Box 156, Folder 787.

Los Angeles reshaped the city in ways that placed immigrant workers at the forefront of redevelopment.

Justice for Janitors saw even greater success when signing a new 'master' contract for janitors in April 1995. Their 'One' campaign that year looked to secure wage parity for all union janitors across L.A. County; an important issue for suburban workers paid less than their Downtown and Century City counterparts. A strike was averted with just one hour left of negotiations, achieving increased health coverage and improved wages over the next five years for all unionised janitors, who now numbered over 7000.[139] Yet the SEIU's continued focus on recruiting new members began to frustrate many janitors who were already part of the union, arguing that contract violations and advocacy on behalf of members was being neglected.[140] These janitors began to question the wisdom of a predominately white leadership comprised of professional organisers with little janitorial experience.[141] A multiracial group calling themselves the *reformistas*, involving other professions under the SEIU's purview (especially healthcare workers) contested these leadership positions and won 21 out of 25 places on the 399 executive board.[142] When 399 President Jim Zellers fired and suspended several staff members who supported the *reformistas*, the new board of Latinx workers embarked on a hunger strike to protest and the local was placed in a trusteeship under the leadership of Rocio Saenz.[143] Saenz's appointment, however, only underscored that these internal struggles were often conducted by male janitors and union organisers. She remained the only female member of both the local's executive board, and the Justice for Janitors campaign committee.[144] Yet, with so many women vital for recruitment and organisation in the early years of the movement, they too demanded representation in steering the future of the union. While all janitors in the movement faced economic exploitation, many women also faced sexual harassment and violence. Working in isolation did not allow many women to discuss this abuse, and JfJ indicated that those who protested would routinely be fired.[145] The growing voice of radical female service workers was seen during the ONE campaign, in which a protest was held on International Women's Day. Over 1,300 members participated in the action, which ended when 36 women were arrested by over 100 police for a sit-down protest in the middle of a busy Beverly Hills

[139] 'Janitors Tentatively OK Contract', *Los Angeles Times*, 4 April 1995.
[140] Evangeline Ordaz, 'Service Employees International Union Local 399 Hunger Strike Analysis' (unpublished draft paper), Frank Del Olmo Papers, Box 94, Folder 6.
[141] *Ibid*., Savage, 'Scales of Organising', pp.223-227.
[142] Savage, 'Scales of Organising', p.224.
[143] Ordaz, 'Service Employees International Union Local 399 Hunger Strike Analysis', Cranford, 'Labor, Gender and the Politics of Citizenship', p.160.
[144] Cranford, 'Constructing Union Motherhood', p.367.
[145] 'What is Justice for Janitors?', 'Justice for Janitor's Day 1993'.

intersection.[146] Eventually, the trusteeship merged with the Bay Area's Local 1877, and the union sought to appoint greater numbers of women to their staff. By 1999, 45% of the executive board's members were female as they looked to new campaigns in the new Millennium.[147] The struggles to secure racial and gender equality within the leadership of Justice for Janitors demonstrate the ways the union succeeded in mobilising immigrant workers. Efforts to make janitors a visible presence within public spaces of the city, and to create an inclusive urban meaning, helped empower the women and men who comprised L.A.'s janitorial sector to demand not only improved wages and working conditions, but genuine power over urban futures.

Justice For Janitors' most well-publicised, celebrated, and at times romanticised success came during their April 2000 strike. The culmination of thirteen years of organising and struggle, this strike captured the attention of the city's media and political establishment, and was an encapsulation of the union's spatially-conscious strategies. When negotiations over a new master contract broke down on April 3, over 2000 members voted in support of the strike. The crucial elements of the janitors' movement during the 1980s and 1990s – inhabiting public space in order to secure visibility, recognition, and to highlight inequality – remained central to the April 2000 strike. Labour laws prohibiting actions against building owners continued, and essentially prevented the janitors from holding pickets outside their workplaces during the day when buildings were in use.[148] JfJ, however, used these laws to their advantage. Instead of picketing the buildings they worked in, they decided to hold public rallies and marches through the city on a daily basis. Their route and destination changed each day, including marches through Downtown, the Westside, Bel-Air and Century City, sometimes marching up to ten miles a day as part of what they termed a 'rolling strike'.[149] Marches were colourful affairs, with street theatre, singing, and at times the blocking of traffic in an effort for the janitors to claim urban space.[150] As one union member, armed with a bullhorn declared, 'we clean out their toilets. We scrub their floors. We do their dirty work. Now we're going to take it to the streets, to let you guys know that we want what we deserve'.[151] These protests, and the sites selected by Local 1877, were similar to earlier

[146] Vicky Comelsky, '36 Women Arrested at Rally for Contract', *The Outlook*, 9 March 1995.
[147] Cranford, 'Labor, Gender and the Politics of Citizenship', pp.169-171.
[148] Erickson et al., 'California's Revolt at the Bottom of the Wage Scale', 128.
[149] *Ibid*., 136, Nancy Cleeland and Peter Hong, 'Striking Janitors March From Downtown to Westside', *Los Angeles Times* 8 April 2000, Morin and Sur, 'Janitors Take Protest to Beverly Hills Shops', Peter Hong, 'Jesse Jackson Leads Janitors' Protests', *Los Angeles Times* 7 April 2000, Nancy Cleeland and Peter Hong, 'Striking Janitors March From L.A.'s Downtown to Applause', *Los Angeles Times* 8 April 2000, Nancy Cleeland, 'Council Members Marching With Striking Janitors Are Arrested' 15 April 2000.
[150] Mike Downey, 'Janitors Hoping "On Strike" Means "It Can Be Done"', *Los Angeles Times* 5 April 2000, A3.
[151] *Ibid*.

protests in seeking to dramatise urban inequality. Century City, Bel-Air and the Westside were all wealthy enclaves that working-class immigrants were not expected to inhabit or be seen in if they were not conducting low-paid work. This was underscored by their protest in Beverly Hills on April 5. 400 janitors marched on Rodeo Drive, where items in some boutiques cost more than protestors' annual salary. Their presence surprised some regular workers in the area, with one stating 'this is incredible, simply unprecedented. One moment all of you see on this street are Rolls-Royces and Range Rovers and then this.'[152] The union felt that this reaction was helping to achieve their wider goals. Blanca Gallegos, a spokeswoman for the union, argued that 'we're showing the contrast in wealth. One of our themes is closing the gap between the rich and poor.'[153] As leaders of the janitors' movement recognised, this was not only a metaphorical separation between incomes, but often a physical and literal 'gap' as well.

Justice for Janitors gained widespread support for their efforts. As Soja recalled, 'it remains difficult for anyone not living in Los Angeles at the time to conceive of the positive public support the striking marchers received.'[154] The City Council voted unanimously to support the strike, and the County Board of Supervisors and California State Assembly passed motions supporting the janitors.[155] One march was led by Jesse Jackson; another was attended by Vice President Al Gore.[156] Some protests saw State Assembly members arrested for refusing to move from a sit-down protest at an intersection. As the journalist Harold Meyerson suggested, 'to have been missing in action, or deemed insufficiently pro-janitor, would have amounted to political suicide.'[157] While these political figures helped draw attention to the strike, the janitors also credited public support for their success. UPS drivers, trash collectors, repair workers, painters, and carpenters all refused to service picketed buildings.[158] Not only did drivers honk their horns in support of the janitors as they proceeded, but at times 'those on foot sometimes spontaneously thrust dollar bills into the hands of the strikers.'[159] After a three-week strike, Janitors overwhelmingly voted to approve a new contract offer from employers on 24 April. It was less than the $1 per-hour pay increase each year they had initially demanded, but still provided a substantial rise, over

[152] Morin and Sur, 'Janitors Take Protest to Beverly Hills Shops'.
[153] *Ibid*.
[154] Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, p.149.
[155] Erickson et al., 'California's Revolt at the Bottom of the Wage Scale', 138.
[156] Hong, 'Jesse Jackson Leads Janitors' Protests', Nancy Cleeland and Jeffrey Rabin, 'Gore's Presence at Rally Boosts Janitors' Spirits', *Los Angeles Times* 17 April 2000.
[157] Harold Meyerson, 'A Clean Sweep: How Unions Are Once Again Organizing Low-Wage Workers', *The American Prospect,* 11.15 (2000), 24-29 (29).
[158] Erickson et al., 'California's Revolt at the Bottom of the Wage Scale', 129, Cleeland and Hong, 'Striking Janitors March From Downtown to Westside'.
[159] Erickson et al., 'California's Revolt at the Bottom of the Wage Scale', 137.

25%, across three years.[160] By the end of the contract in 2003, all janitors would receive a raise of at least $1.50 per-hour, improved health and pension benefits, and five days of sick leave per-year.[161]

In May that year, *Bread and Roses*, a Ken Loach-directed dramatisation of the Los Angeles Justice for Janitors movement, was released in cinemas. While the film featured notable actors including Adrien Brody and Elpidia Carillo, the long-serving organiser Rocio Saenz also featured as a cameo to deliver a rallying speech for protesters.[162] The Justice for Janitors movement had not only fought for immigrant workers to receive union representation, improved wages, and increased benefits. They also fought for janitors to inhabit and be seen within the spaces of the city. To achieve the resounding successes of their April 2000 strike, JfJ needed to resolve the various challenges to the makeup and inclusivity of the union, and reckon with the changing urban context produced by the Rodney King Crisis. In doing so, the movement continued to develop and employ their approach to organising which centred on securing spatial justice for immigrant workers.

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In August 2018, cleaners at the Ministry of Justice in London conducted a two-week strike. Amongst their demands were receiving a living wage of £10.10 per-hour and improved sick-pay, which they did not receive for the first three days of illness.[163] The Ministry claimed they were unable to help because of their contract which outsourced cleaning work to contractor Amey, which one union rep claimed acted as 'a shield to hide from poverty pay and exploitative conditions.'[164] Some participating in the strike, organised by the United Voices of the World trade union comprised mainly of low-wage migrant service workers, also fought for broader concerns surrounding the dignity of their work. In an interview with *The Guardian* that echoed many of the ideas and concerns shared by JfJ members conveyed to Cranford, cleaner Nestor Rudea stated that 'we are considered the worst of the worst. But we want to be seen as equals.'[165] While this strike was not organised by SEIU, throughout the twenty first century the union expanded the Justice for Janitors movement beyond the United States

[160] Nancy Cleeland, 'L.A. Janitors OK Contract in Landmark Vote', *Los Angeles Times*, 25 April 2000, A1.
[161] *Ibid*.
[162] Duncan Campbell, 'Why Don't You Just Go Home, You Wetbacks?', *The Guardian*, 20 April 2001.
[163] Tom Wall, 'Cleaners To Strike in First Action by UK's Low-Paid Army', *The Guardian* 5 August 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/aug/05/london-cleaners-strike-over-living-wage-and-sick-pay [Accessed 1 December 2019].
[164] Haroon Siddique, 'Ministry of Justice Cleaners Begin Three-Day Strike Over Pay,' *The Guardian* 7 August 2018.
[165] Wall, 'Cleaners To Strike'.

to the Netherlands, Brazil, and the United Kingdom.[166] In Los Angeles itself, the Janitors' movement inspired the 'Latino labor revival' and 'Latino/Labor alliance'. Industries in the city with large numbers of Latinx workers, including hotel workers, drywallers, and bicycle manufacturers, all organised and conducted strikes during the early 1990s.[167] As JfJ themselves declared, 'after twelve years of Reagan/Bush, your bosses hoped that the labor movement would be dead. But your courage and militancy…has been a warning to bosses and their politician friends that we're not going to roll over and die.'[168] The ascent of Latinx and immigrant-led unions helped propel social justice organisations such as the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy during the late 1990s, and culminated with the 2005 election of Antonio Villaraigosa, a former labour organiser, as the first Latinx mayor of Los Angeles since its incorporation into the U.S.

The transnational impact and legacy of the Los Angeles Justice for Janitors movement demonstrates how the union spoke to a universalistic set of needs and desires for immigrant workers. Their work transcended the important issues of wages and benefits, also seeking to attain respect and visibility for janitors in ways which posed questions regarding the social status and nature of civic participation for Latinx workers. The manner in which JfJ recruited members and protested injustice provides clear lessons for labour movements. Their creative uses of spaces both public and private suggest that urban space can offer an effective platform to draw attention to injustice. Nevertheless, space can also inhibit participation and be used to restrict the mobility of people of colour in ways that need to be circumvented or surmounted in order to succeed. In looking to find these solutions, the janitors' movement concentrated upon the need to make workers visible and was thus designed to encourage these janitors to claim urban space: to remake the meaning of the city's sites and built environment within public discourse and popular imagination. Space thus provided an organising tool for the movement, but it also provided a goal and purpose. Through challenging the historical spatial practices designed by the economic and political establishment of the city, janitors were able to claim visibility, rights, and the repurposing of urban space in ways that benefitted low-income communities of colour. Attempts to claim control of place and space were not always contested between employers and workers, or establishment figures and people of colour. Chapter four explores how within South Central

[166] Ad Knotter, 'Justice for Janitors Goes Dutch: Precarious Labour and Trade Union Response in the Cleaning Industry, 1988–2012,: A Transnational History' *International Review of Social History*, 62.1 (2017), 1-35.
[167] Laslett, *Sunshine*, pp.298-320, Ruth Milkman and Kent Wong, 'Organizing the Wicked City: The 1992 Southern California Drywall Strike', in *Organizing Immigrants: The Challenge for Unions in Contemporary California* ed. by Ruth Milkman (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), pp. 169-198, Carol Zabin, 'Organizing Latino Workers in the Los Angeles Manufacturing Sector: The Case of American Racing Equipment', in *Organizing Immigrants*, ed. by Milkman, pp.150-168.
[168] '1500 Janitors Hold Westwood Convention (1992)', SEIU Files, Box 7, Folder 9.

Los Angeles, these struggles for control of urban space and meaning often involved many competing voices from within communities of colour themselves.

Chapter Four: The 'Liquor Store Problem' in South Central Los Angeles

The Black community of Los Angeles reacted to the killing of fifteen year-old Latasha Harlins with shock and anger. The schoolgirl had been shot to death by Soon Ja Du on March 15, 1991, after Harlins was accused of stealing a bottle of orange juice. The site of the incident, the Empire Liquor Market owned by Du's husband, was one of hundreds of South Central liquor stores which had been purchased by Korean migrants in the past decade, an issue that was already producing considerable tension in the community. Residents' frustration and anger became more palpable in November when Soon Ja Du was convicted of voluntary manslaughter instead of murder. She was spared prison, and instead sentenced to five years probation, 400 hours of community service, and a $500 fine. Brenda Stevenson, who has meticulously reconstructed the Harlins case, argued that her killing underscores 'the vulnerability of the most defenceless in the nation's socially constructed hierarchy – women and children of the racially, culturally, economically, and politically marginalised.'[1] Scholars have also seen this incident as a significant catalyst for the Rodney King Crisis, especially when analysing the specific targeting of Korean-owned businesses for vandalism, arson, and looting.[2] Harlins' murder, and the reaction of the Black community, is therefore seen as emblematic of the intercultural conflict between African Americans and Asian Americans that proliferated throughout urban areas across the nation during the 1980s and 1990s.[3] Yet while the death of Latasha Harlins was a traumatic and tragic event, it provides just one example of the damaging effects the vast number of liquor stores had on the South Central community, even before Korean merchants assumed control of them. This chapter therefore considers the various ways Black activists within South Central understood the liquor store to be a deleterious imposition upon their community, acting as both a symbol of spatialised injustice within the neighbourhood, and, as the Harlins case demonstrated, for the serious consequences such stores could have for residents' health and safety. We can only appreciate the complex responses to the murder of Latasha Harlins, and understand what was at stake in the aftermath of her death, by placing them within the context of a longer debate concerning liquor stores and the need for spatial justice and self-determination for the Black community of South Central. Through attempts to determine the future of liquor stores in South Central, these activists sought to secure a sense of ownership and control

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[1] Stevenson, *The Contested Murder of Latasha Harlins,* p.xvi.

[2] Mike Davis, 'The Rebellion that Rocked a Superpower', *Socialist Review*, 152 (June 1992), 8, Michael Omi and Howard Winant, 'The Los Angeles "Race Riot" and Contemporary US Politics', in *Reading Rodney King*, ed. by Gooding-Williams, pp.97-114 [p.107]. See also: Lou Cannon, *Official Negligence: How Rodney King and the Riots Changed Los Angeles and the LAPD* (New York: Times Books, 1997), pp.110-125, pp.148-173.

[3] See: Sumi K. Cho, 'Korean American vs. African Americans: Conflict and Construction', in *Reading Rodney King,* ed. by Gooding-Williams, pp.197-209, Abelman and Lie, *Blue Dreams,* Patrick Joyce, *No Fire Next Time: Black-Korean Conflicts and the Future of America's Cities* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2003).

over the spaces of their community, to decide how the urban built environment could benefit, rather than impair, residents in these neighbourhoods.

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In the wake of the Rodney King Crisis, the renewed determination to restrict the rebuilding of the hundreds of liquor stores destroyed in the unrest prompted Tom Bradley to convene a new task-force to examine the issue. The committee's report began by stating that 'the over concentration of outlets selling alcohol is not a new problem. Its impacts on the community have long been recognised as a problem in South Central Los Angeles.'[4] The onset of this long history of liquor stores in the community coincided with white flight from inner-city Los Angeles in the post-war era. It was not only the white population and employers who abandoned urban areas in favour of the suburbs during this time. Supermarkets, too, replicated these patterns in an effort to avoid rising crime rates and attract a wealthier customer base. [5] The "Mom'n'Pop" local convenience stores left behind - whose main source of income came through the off-sale liquor trade - could not provide the range of produce or low prices of supermarkets, and this fostered 'deep resentment toward local store owners.'[6] These were national patterns, and during the 1960s both government bodies such as the Kerner Commission as well as Black radicals such as Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael pointed to the lack of retail availability and the exploitative practices of convenience stores as a cause of Black anger in U.S. cities.[7] This discontent was articulated in L.A. during the Watts uprising in 1965, where many local liquor stores, primarily owned by Jewish merchants, were deliberately targeted and destroyed.[8] Despite this, many liquor stores were rebuilt and purchased by Black owners from the local community, yet their prevalence and the problems they created for residents' health and wealth continued to cause concerns. The initiation of a 'price war' amongst owners, long working hours, and the constant threat of violence resulted in many Black merchants selling their South Central businesses in the 1980s.[9] The new owners of liquor stores were predominately Korean immigrants, and by the time of the 1992 Crisis, it was estimated that this population owned around 350-400 stores in

[4] 'Mayor Bradleys South Central Community/Merchant Liquor Task Force Final Report', 18 November, 1992, p.1, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4153, Folder 1.
[5] Amanda Shaffer, 'The Persistence of L.A.'s Grocery Gap: The Need for a New Food Policy and Approach to Market Development', UEP Faculty & UEPI Staff Scholarship (2002), p.35, https://scholar.oxy.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1395&context=uep_faculty [Accessed 2 April 2020].
[6] Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, p.114.
[7] United States National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *The Kerner Report : The 1968 Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), Malcolm X, 'The Ballot or the Bullet' in *Malcolm X Speaks*, ed. by George Breitman (New York: Grove Press, 1994), Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation* (New York: Vintage, 1992), p.17.
[8] Horne, *Fire This Time*, p.109, p.211, p.309.
[9] Susan Moffat, 'Shopkeepers Fight Back', *Los Angeles Times*, 15 May 1992.

South Central alone.[10] The Korean occupation of local businesses was certainly not restricted to liquor stores; merchants also purchased a growing number of garages, laundromats, and swapmeet (flea market) stores.[11] Yet language barriers and cultural differences exacerbated the frustration many South Central residents already felt towards liquor stores, and thus they became the focus of nativist organising against the Korean presence in the Black community.[12] Thus despite the racialised discourse fostered by the murder of Latasha Harlins, liquor stores contained a much longer history as a site of local frustration and protest within South Central L.A.

Residents opposed liquor stores for the problems they created for the community, issues which were both literal and symbolic. The sheer number and proliferation of stores was certainly a significant cause of resentment. An exact number of such stores was difficult to identify, but it was estimated that anywhere between 650 and 800 liquor outlets operated in South Central.[13] One 1992 survey found that South Central contained 728 liquor stores operating within a seventy mile radius, or roughly ten per-square mile.[14] This was a much greater concentration of liquor stores than any other area in the city, especially those more predominately white and wealthy neighbourhoods. This disparity angered South Central residents, especially when compared with the scarcity of supermarkets. With only a small number of full-service supermarkets, and poor public transport links, many South Central residents were beholden to these liquor stores to provide basic groceries. Such stores could not provide the same standards of choice and quality, or the low prices, of supermarkets. The high price of groceries in liquor stores therefore offer a clear example of the 'ghetto' or 'poverty' tax often faced by low-income communities of colour.[15] Many campaigners also wanted to make local stores more hygienic by ensuring they sold fresh (instead of rotten) produce that were free from insects. South Central has thus been defined as a 'food desert', an urban area which lacked affordable, nutritious food, owing to the spatial practices through which supermarkets were scarce and liquor stores proliferated.[16] In addition, the saturation of stores which relied on the sale of alcohol to provide their income intensified social

[10] *Ibid*.
[11] Yoon Hee Kim to Mayor Bradley, 13 August 1991, Tom Bradley Papers Collection, Box 4247, Folder 22.
[12] Stevenson, *Contested Murder*, pp.59-106.
[13] See: Draft Table of Liquor Stores by Planning Area, 21 June 1983, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 320, Folder 12. This places the number of South Central liquor stores at 655.
[14] Rita Walters, 'Editorial Reply: Reply to "Regulating Liquor Stores"', KNX 1070 Radio, 27 May 1992, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4151, Folder 22.
[15] See: David Caplovitz, *The Poor Pay More* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), Howard Jacob Karger, 'The "Poverty Tax" and America's Low-Income Households', *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, 88.3 (2007), 413-418.
[16] See: Renee E. Walker,'Disparities and Access to Healthy Food in the United States: A Review of Food Deserts Literature', *Health & Place,* 16.5 (2010), 876-884, Shaffer, 'The Persistence of L.A.'s Grocery Gap'.

problems such as substance abuse, and merchants were accused of condoning loitering, gang violence, and drug dealing in the community. The neighbourhood liquor store and its deficiencies supply a clear example of how urban space was not value-neutral, but played a significant role in hindering the socioeconomic progress of communities of colour. As this chapter argues, this was recognised by residents and was the source of their campaigns to diminish the presence of liquor stores in South Central. Alongside the absence of banks, liquor stores provided residents with the most tangible evidence of how underdevelopment, and the general neglect of their neighbourhoods, impaired the quality of life within communities of colour.[17]

The lack of supermarkets and the high number of liquor stores was indicative of the broader spatialisation of urban poverty. South Central had a notable scarcity of banks, bakeries, hardware stores, or libraries; with liquor stores one of the 'few signs of normal neighbourhood life' where people could gather.[18] The public health consequences of liquor stores, however, made the need for improved retail opportunities a particular priority for many South Central residents. The failure of the city's Community Redevelopment Agency to develop any of these institutions in South Central - especially their inability to draw a single supermarket to the area in the years between the Watts and Rodney King uprisings - demonstrated the lack of control residents had to organise and produce urban space for themselves.[19] The extent of socioeconomic problems that were produced by the oversaturation of liquor stores therefore helped to make them a symbolic and literal representation of the Black community's deprivation and spatial inequality. This chapter therefore argues that through efforts to reduce or control the disproportionate number of local liquor stores, activists in South Central encapsulated the struggle for self-determination of urban space in order to improve the quality of life of local people of colour.

Campaigns to resolve the 'liquor store problem' and reclaim local space demonstrate the heterogeneity of political positions and social identities seen within the Black community of South Central. The employment of such identities altered how the problems of liquor stores and their proposed solutions were framed by these activists in their discourse. For the South Central Organizing Committee, who represented a base of religious law and order

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[17] For efforts to securing banking services see chapter five, Abigail Rosas, 'Banking on the Community: Mexican Immigrants' Experience in a Historically African American Bank in South Central Los Angeles' in *Black and Brown in Los Angeles: Beyond Conflict and Coalition*, ed. by Josh Kun and Laura Pulido (Berkley: University of California Press, 2014), pp.67-89, Jane Pollard, 'Banking At The Margins: A Geography of Financial Exclusion in Los Angeles', *Environment and Planning A*, 28.7 (1996), 1209-1232.

[18] Kyeyoung Park, 'Confronting the Liquor Industry in Los Angeles', *The International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 24.7 (2004), 103-136 [109].

[19] Davis, *City of Quartz*, p.242.

advocates, the clear issue presented by liquor stores was their contribution to rising crime rates in the area. They therefore perceived their struggle to be a moral crusade, demanding a reduction in the number of liquor stores and spatial equality in order to protect their members from the scourge of crime. In contrast, the Brotherhood Crusade did not see the concentration of liquor stores in the neighbourhood as an intrinsic problem. Instead, in the wake of Latasha Harlins' murder, they felt it was the Korean ownership of stores that was problematic. With a firm belief in economic Black Nationalism, the Crusade sought to buy liquor stores and ensure they were operated by Black merchants, in order to provide a greater sense of ownership and control to the local African American community. Finally, in the aftermath of the Rodney King Crisis, the Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment looked to capitalise on the increased attention towards liquor stores to reinterpret their presence as a public health problem. They therefore organised the community to resist the rebuilding of liquor stores that had been destroyed by attempting to deescalate racial tensions and emphasise the need for residents themselves to determine South Central's future. Despite these differences, all three groups shared similarities beyond their concentration on campaigning around liquor stores. Crucially, these activists worked to rectify the deleterious consequences liquor stores had on the Black community of South Central Los Angeles in ways that sought community control of urban space. Whether they were hoping to reap the economic benefits and claim ownership over what was already in place, or to entirely re-imagine the meanings and use of this space, these groups ultimately argued that the fundamental basis to resolving the community's problems lay in empowering residents to determine how urban space was utilised.

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As previously discussed, the South Central Organizing Committee used Catholic churches to organise around issues which concerned local residents, often revolving around problems of crime and law and order. Upon their formation, however, they immediately turned their attention to the issue of liquor stores, and appealed to their membership by interpreting the presence of such stores as an immoral plague upon their neighbourhood. Following their foundation in 1983, they found that the most pressing concern amongst the twenty-two churches they represented was local frustration regarding local markets and liquor stores, and a desire to rectify the social problems they created. As a 1987 newspaper report reflecting on the group's success suggested, 'SCOC have always had a thing about the local grocery' as 'to many in the barrio and the ghetto, there is perhaps no more tangible symbol

of economic injustice.'[20] They gained the attention of the media and politicians following a June 1983 conference which drew over 2,500 members to the Los Angeles Convention Center to discuss possible solutions to these problems. One of their earliest campaigns saw the group encourage shopkeepers to improve the quality of their products and cleanliness of stores. They arranged to meet with one owner, then 'danced around him carrying pictures of rodents' and activists dressed as cockroaches to imitate them 'invading' stores, before he eventually signed an agreement to keep the store clean.[21] It was not just produce and hygiene that troubled SCOC. Reflecting their growing concerns about crime in South Central, they argued that liquor stores tolerated or encouraged loitering, gambling, and drug dealing in their neighbourhoods.[22] A 1984 report by SCOC suggested that the stores contributed to the stereotypes and presumptions many held towards the community. As well as 'burning Watts…looting…drug dealing…and gang killings', they added that 'shady characters hanging out around liquor store fronts' were the images people now conjured when imagining South Central.[23] SCOC therefore felt that the liquor store and negative connotations associated with it had become ingrained in defining the 'place' of South Central to outsiders. The LAPD had angered SCOC by indicating that they could do little to discourage liquor store loitering and trespassing. In response, SCOC members informed the Mayor's office that 'since the Police department did not care about law abiding citizens in South Los Angeles, the SCOC was going to do something about hoodlums in their area'.[24] To activists, protecting the community involved tackling what they felt was the enabler of crime in South Central by limiting the prevalence of liquor stores in the neighbourhoods.

As SCOC gained local prominence, they began to connect the dual issues of liquor stores and crime through a demand for great community control of urban space. This relied on a symbolic religious discourse which appealed to the Catholic constituency the group represented. In November 1983, SCOC held a 'delegates assembly', drawing 7000 members of 22 churches to L.A.'s famed Shrine Auditorium.[25] Here, they retold the story of Moses wandering the desert to find the 'promised land' that would be claimed in the name of God. They added that 'the promised land would have to be taken by force and could not be given to them', which appeared telling of their enthusiasm for mixing religious fervour with

[20] Scott Harris, 'Community Crusaders', *Los Angeles Times*, 29 November 1987.
[21] *Ibid*., Louis Sahagun, 'Boys Market Seeks Help of UNO', *Los Angeles Times* 22 November 1984, G1.
[22] 'South Central Organizing Committee Target Liquor Stores', n.d., Tom Bradley Papers, Box 320, Folder 12.
[23] South Central Organizing Committee, 'The S.C.O.C Report on South Central Los Angeles: The Call for a Permanent Olympics', 23 July 1984, p.16, Frank Del Olmo Collection, Box 40, Folder 6.
[24] Gary Boze, 'The South Central Organizing Committee', n.d, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 320, Folder 12.
[25] Rev. Hartshorn Murphy to Tom Bradley, 17 October 1983, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 320, Folder 12.

direct action.[26] SCOC suggested that in the 1980s, 'God's children are held in an economic and political bondage in South Central Los Angeles.'[27] The reasons for this bondage were crime, poor education, substandard housing, unemployment, and the matter that they were 'continually plagued by an overabundance of liquor stores and an under supply of decent markets.'[28] To SCOC leaders, therefore, their campaign was the call to 'let my people go!' and to 'free us from the chains of bondage which trap us: assaults, robbery, drug dealers, prostitutes, loitering by our children and all the other crimes associated with more than 1000 liquor stores in our community.'[29] They felt that some elected officials had 'bent the knee to the Golden California of profit and to the lobbyists of the false gods with their pockets lined with gold of political contributions,' and thus it was the responsibility of their members to initiate change in the handling of the liquor store problem.[30] The programme reconstituted South Central Los Angeles as the 'promised land', and imagined SCOC's members, primarily middle-aged African Americans, as being engaged in a biblical struggle against neighbourhood liquor stores. Through this, they made claims to the right of the community to determine local land use and urban development: their campaign to reduce liquor stores was 'a long and bitter fight to reclaim God's promise for his people.'[31] This struggle implied a wider meaning for the residents of South Central, and thus they were determined that 'we shall not turn back until the land is ours once again!'[32] The ways the South Central Organizing Committee utilised religious allegory and imagery clearly reflected the makeup of their membership and organising base of Black Catholics, and suggested this was a moral struggle for the future health of their community. The language they employed suggested that the moral issue at stake was not simply liquor stores or increased crime, but the struggle to reclaim urban space on behalf of local African American residents.

With this emerging support in South Central, SCOC developed a plan to rectify the LAPD's failure to curb crime associated with liquor stores, and eventually to reduce the number of liquor stores entirely. These proposals relied on establishing greater community participation when determining where liquor stores could be placed, and ensuring a spatial equality with other areas of the city. 'Phase I', a short-term solution, looked to encourage a crackdown by

[26] South Central Organizing Committee, 'S.C.O.C. Delegates Assembly Programme', 11 November 1983, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 320, Folder 12.
[27] *Ibid*.
[28] *Ibid*.
[29] *Ibid*.
[30] *Ibid*.
[31] *Ibid*.
[32] *Ibid*.

law enforcement around liquor stores.[33] They produced a list of thirteen target liquor stores, not to advocate for their closure, but for their businesses to act responsibly in working to reduce crime around their stores.[34] When visiting these sites, investigators found code violations such as dirty floors and shelves, debris, and stores in need of structural repair.[35] This therefore provided a vital opportunity for residents to voice concerns regarding the hygiene and safety of local stores where previously they had been ignored. 'Phase II' consisted of their longer-term goals for the community, which included the enactment of legislation to reduce the number of liquor stores by altering how licences were granted or retained, and the ceding of greater control of these matters to local residents.[36] These plans were presented to the city council in July 1983, and suggested establishing Conditional Use Permits (CUPs) that would have required potential new stores to meet certain conditions (such as not being located near a school, or to ensure safe lighting around the premises) to be agreed by the city before proceeding to the state's Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) department to secure their liquor license.[37] While a piecemeal solution, it provided a first step for residents to have greater control over the usage of urban space. If the city council - rather than the state ABC – could wield influence over how liquor stores were operated, residents could also feel a greater sense of control and ownership over the processes that determined community space.

SCOC also looked to secure greater parity between South Central and other areas of the city when determining how urban space was planned and organised. The ABC placed limits of one liquor store for every 2,500 residents in the city.[38] Yet this was calculated throughout the entirety of Los Angeles County, amounting to 7.5 million urban and suburban Angelenos. This allowed for significant imbalances between the neighbourhoods and communities of the city, which often reflected inequalities within the demographic and economic makeup of these areas. The predominately Latinx immigrant community of Pico-Union, for instance, was estimated to have one liquor store for every 258, nearly ten times greater than the required limit.[39] Los Angeles County as a whole contained an average of 1.56 liquor stores per square-mile, yet in South Central, this number was 8.51.[40] SCOC hoped to alter the way

[33] Hartshorn Murphy to Tom Bradley (October 17, 1983).
[34] 'South Central Organizing Committee Target Liquor Stores'.
[35] Ken Spiker, 'Working Group on Liquor Store Outlets, Report and Recommendations', August 1983, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 320, Folder 12.
[36] Hartshorn Murphy to Tom Bradley (October 17, 1983).
[37] Spiker, 'Working Group on Liquor Store Outlets, Report and Recommendations'.
[38] Marc Lacey, 'Last Call for Liquor Outlets?', *Los Angeles Times,* 14 December 1992.
[39] 'A Shift in Power', *New City,* 3.1 (Fall 1995), 4, MELA Collection, Box 8, Folder 21.
[40] David C. Sloane, 'Alcohol Nuisances and Food Deserts: Combating Social Hazards in the South Los Angeles Environment' in *Post-Ghetto*, ed. by Sides, pp.93-108 [p.98].

liquor licenses were granted, to place limits based on the number of stores in each zip-code or census tract, rather than across the whole city.[41] They also call for an immediate moratorium on new licenses in areas which exceeded the 2,500 average in order to allow the city to investigate the relationship between crime and the over-concentration of liquor stores.[42] Thus the South Central Organizing Committee's work to tackle the saturation of liquor stores and the social problems they produced also touched on issues of spatial equality and the community's right to determine the physical forms of urban space. While primarily focusing on the produce and hygiene of stores or the crime that was associated with them, their efforts to alter how liquor licenses were granted placed emphasis on the need to South Central residents to have a greater role in debates surrounding how the spaces of the city should be utilised.

[41] Vivian Porter, '93 KHJ Radio Editorial Transcript: Liquor Store Crack Down', 1 June 1983, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 320, Folder 12.
[42] Spiker, 'Working Group on Liquor Store Outlets, Report and Recommendations'.

Figure 7: SCOC's strategy to tackle liquor-store related crime in South Central.[43]

SCOC's actions prompted Mayor Bradley to create a task force in June 1983 that would examine the proliferation of liquor stores in South Central and explore ways to reduce the level of crime and antisocial behaviour they produced. SCOC representatives were part of the task force, alongside political delegates and members of police, fire and public safety departments.[44] The main recommendations were for the bolstering of police powers to regulate behaviour, including the drinking of open alcohol containers in unlicensed public spaces, and reducing the presence of arcade machines within liquor stores.[45] SCOC were

[43] South Central Organizing Committee, 'S.C.O.C. Delegates Assembly Programme', 11 November 1983, Tom Bradley Papers Box 320, Folder 12.
[44] *Ibid*.
[45] *Ibid*.

also successful in establishing the creation of Conditional Use Permits (CUPs) for all new liquor stores, which became a permanent requirement in 1987.[46] This reduced the exponential growth of liquor stores in South Central, and ensured that any new stores would at least be required to show concern for public safety. Yet it also presented one clear problem. As future activists lamented, it could do little to reduce the hundreds of liquor stores already in business in South Central, where it was difficult to revoke licenses already acquired.[47] SCOC's efforts had therefore provided a partial solution to the problems created by liquor stores, but had failed to eradicate the overconcentration of outlets in South Central. Given the extent of support SCOC received; with thousands attending assemblies and meetings regarding their campaign to resolve problems of crime and hygiene, the issue of liquor stores was clearly of great concern to the Black population of South Central that would not recede with the establishment of CUPs.

The increasing rates of Korean ownership of South Central began to produce a new wave of protests and campaigns in the late 1980s and 1990s.[48] While these often employed a more distinct nativist sentiment and occurred beyond just liquor stores, the case of the South Central Organizing Committee suggests that stores' Korean ownership was not the only, or even the central, reason for these protests. Not only were liquor stores a lingering cause of urban blight, but as crime rates escalated during the 1980s, many felt that such stores contributed to social problems within the community. The impact such stores had on the everyday quality of life of residents pushed groups such as SCOC to demand a greater role in determining how urban space was produced. Thus the ubiquity of liquor stores in relation to the absence of supermarkets became the defining symbol of residents' inability to remake urban space in ways that improved the neighbourhood. The deficiencies of local convenience stores, and their reliance on the sale of alcohol, were a problem for many Black residents of South Central long before questions regarding the ethnicity of owners emerged in public debate. Demands for a broader sense of control and reclamation of urban space would continue as organising around liquor stores reached a crescendo in the wake of Latasha Harlins' murder.

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[46] Jane Blumenfield 'Chronology of Action Taken on Liquor Stores', Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4151, Folder 22.
[47] Karen Bass, 'Re-Establishing Destroyed Businesses: Perspective of the Community', n.d., Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4153, Folder 2. Alison Whalen and Derrick Boston, 'Memorandum Re: Proposed Liquor License Repurchase and Relocation Program' 12 June 1992, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4151, Folder 16.
[48] Joyce, *No Fire Next Time*, pp.121-125, Stevenson, *Contested Murder*, pp.76-83.

Despite SCOC's attempts to reduce the number of liquor stores in South Central, the death of Latasha Harlins was a catalyst that shifted the debate surrounding liquor stores to focus on their Korean ownership and the economic deprivation of Black residents. When making calls to remove Korean merchants from stores and to buy back local convenience stores for the community, these activists retained SCOC's desire to restore a sense of control and ownership over urban space that many Black residents felt was currently absent. Still, African Americans also accused Korean-American merchants of racism, disrespect, rudeness, and not hiring residents from the community to work in these stores.[49] When combined with liquor stores' broader insufficiencies compared with supermarkets, these stores presented a clear platform for advocates of economic nationalism to organise around. The anger surrounding the murder of Latasha Harlins also provided a tragic backdrop which demonstrated the lack of control African Americans held over the spaces of their own community, and the dangers this posed to residents. Danny Bakewell, President of the Brotherhood Crusade group, led these renewed calls for Black ownership. The Crusade began in 1968 as a 'community chest' for war on poverty organisations, and provided over $2,000,000 annually to community agencies; offering seed money, emergency funding, office space, and technical and supportive assistance.[50] When Bakewell – a millionaire property developer and former member of the Nation of Islam – assumed leadership of the Crusade in 1974, the group began to take a more direct role in community organising.[51] These campaigns often focused explicitly on redeveloping or improving spaces within South Central. He mobilised Crusade supporters to campaign for a new supermarket he was hoping to build in the West Adams district, despite protests from white preservationists.[52] Bakewell also demonstrated his continued public support for the controversial Nation of Islam Leader Louis Farrakhan, arguing that 'for Black people, Farrakhan is always positive.'[53] His outspoken views, and public displays of his financial success, had earned Bakewell a reputation as a strong Black community leader. Congresswoman Maxine Waters argued that 'he symbolizes a kind of strength that a lot of people in our community are looking for…they want a strong voice; they want heroes.'[54]

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[49] Stevenson, *Contested Murder*, p.76, Los Angeles City Human Relations Commission,'Doing Business in South Central Los Angeles – A training Design for Newcomer Merchants', December 1991, p.32, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4247, Folder 7.
[50] 'Pertinent facts about Brotherhood Crusade', n.d., Tom Bradley Papers, Box 307, Folder 17.
[51] Stevenson, *Contested Murder*, p.110.
[52] Rebecca E. Rumbo, 'Boys Mart Builder Buses in Support', *Downtown News*, 16 January 1989.
[53] Charisse Jones, 'Farrakhan to Speak to 900 Gang Leaders to "Stop the Killing"', *Los Angeles Times*, 6 October 1989.
[54] Sheryl Stolberg and Frank Clifford, 'Danny Bakewell: A Taste for Street Politics, Business', *Los Angeles Times*, 20 October 1991.

One particular campaign demonstrated how Bakewell and the Crusade applied the logic of traditional Black Nationalism to issues of spatial control and ownership. The Crusade's anti-gang crime initiative, named 'Taking Our Community Back', looked to recruit groups of volunteers, named 'Brotherhood Protection Teams', to patrol the neighbourhood around Green Meadows Park and the Avalon Gardens housing project in Watts. They also employed 'cleanup crews' to paint over graffiti and sweep alleys, and encouraged all local businesses to hire one person from the local area.[55] The name 'Taking Our Community Back' made a direct claim to the ownership of the South Central area on behalf of the Black population. Yet the programme also fused elements of Black Nationalist ideology to bolster this sense of ownership. Bakewell returned to demands for the community to have a greater role in criminal justice policy, asking; 'why should we expect police that live in [the suburb of] Sherman Oaks to demonstrate more concern than we do?' [56] This campaign also stressed a desire to restore racial pride and Black masculinity within the community. While the Crusade employed both men and women, their appeals in newspapers, radio adverts, and in local churches called specifically for Black male volunteers. [57] Bakewell stated that 'it is irresponsible to ask our women and children to do what we as African-American men are not willing to do.'[58] The Crusade appealed to Black youths to abandon the gang colours of red and blue, and instead embrace the red, black, and green of Black nationalism, because 'this is a new gang being formed, united by our Africaness.'[59] While the TOCB campaign had limited success in securing jobs for residents, police reported a 60% decrease in emergency calls to the programme's target area. [60] Taking Our Community back therefore demonstrated how Bakewell's charismatic leadership combined with appeals to a sense of community ownership and control for Black residents resonated with many local African Americans. These demands for the reclamation of urban space would become even more important as the Crusade turned their attention to the issue of liquor stores.

Bakewell appears to have felt particularly aggrieved by the death of Latasha Harlins. His father had been shot to death inside the premises of his own South Central business, and Bakewell had two teenage daughters of his own. He was the first public figure to reach out to the Harlins family, offering to pay for Latasha's funeral.[61] Many politicians, including Tom Bradley, condemned her murder, but appealed for calm and to avoid reprisals against

[55] 'Support the Brotherhood Crusade: Dignity and Commitment', n.d., Tom Bradley Papers, Box 307, Folder 17. Charisse Jones, 'In South Central, A Move to Reclaim the Street', *Los Angeles Times*, 5 August 1989.
[56] Charisse Jones, 'South-Central Forum Maps Strategy to End Gang Violence', *Los Angeles Times* 17 April 1989.
[57] Jones, 'Move to Reclaim the Street'.
[58] *Ibid*.
[59] Charisse Jones, 'Residents Show Spirit in Drive to Save Home Area', *Los Angeles Times* 6 August 1989.
[60] 'TOCB Update', *Brotherhood Crusade*, 1.1, March 1990, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 307, Folder 17.
[61] Stevenson, *Contested Murder*, p.112.

Korean-American businesses.[62] Bakewell and the Crusade did not echo these sentiments. Four days following Harlins' death, the Brotherhood Crusade and a newly-formed sister organisation; Brotherhood Crusade Mothers in Action, held a protest outside the Du's Empire Liquor Market, attended by 150 demonstrators.[63] Bakewell announced to the crowd that 'we are closing their store because of murder and disrespect on the part of these people toward us and our community.'[64] His discussion of 'these people' made little effort to disguise that he was referring to Koreans, and his belief that Du's actions were a racially targeted attack towards the entire Black community. A sign was taped across the market's entrance, stating 'closed for the murder and disrespect of Black people.'[65] In front of an 'incensed crowd', Latasha's aunt, Ahneva Harlins, told demonstrators that 'we should teach and tell our children to shop with our own.'[66] These protests not only highlighted the divisions between African Americans and Koreans, but also stressed the economic isolation of South Central and the need for Black control of local economic space. Bakewell argued that Korean shop owners were those who looked to take 'money out of our community, but who don't live here or hire Blacks.'[67] Their actions, one flier suggested, was a deliberate 'attempt to rape our community of profits and pride'.[68]

This continued emphasis on 'our community' in a case with so many racial connotations reflected the Crusade's desire to reclaim and return a sense of ownership over the businesses within South Central, and to make clear that outsiders were not welcome. The Crusade reiterated their slogan from previous campaigns, arguing that a just solution to this tragedy would be to 'take our community back from undesirable merchants'.[69] They therefore presented Korean merchants as a threat to the safety and wellbeing of African Americans comparable to that of gang crime. In addition, this statement indicated that the shops and businesses within South Central, even liquor stores, belonged to the residents of the community. These spaces, and those operating within them, therefore had a responsibility to respect African Americans and benefit the community. Clearly, Bakewell and the Brotherhood Crusade's response broadened the death of Latasha Harlins to attack the presence and practices of Korean merchants, and to demand economic justice for the

[62] 'Statement of Korean American Leaders on the death of Latasha Harlins', 21 March 1991, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4248, Folder 7.
[63] George Ramos and John Lee, 'Demonstrators Demand That Korean Market Never Reopen', *Los Angeles Times*, 22 March 1991.
[64] *Ibid*.
[65] *Ibid*.
[66] *Ibid*.
[67] *Ibid*.
[68] 'Brotherhood Crusade *Mothers in Action* Say: No Respect No Business in Our Community', 27 March 1991, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4247, Folder 27.
[69] *Ibid*.

African American community of South Central. Unlike the South Central Organizing Committee, the number of liquor stores within the community was not problematic for the Crusade, and instead they focused on the behaviour of Korean business owners in a way that barely disguised their racial animosity. Underpinning these ideas, however, were the same concerns which prompted SCOC's organising: that African Americans in South Central had lost control and ownership of 'their' community, and reiterating activists' desire to reclaim urban space on behalf of these Black residents.

This campaign to remove Korean merchants from local liquor stores encapsulated the growing uncertainty many African Americans felt regarding their place within the city in an era of multiculturalism. Once the nucleus of the city's Black social and cultural life, South Central was dramatically changing in its demography in the 1980s. In Los Angeles more generally, African Americans were beginning to leave the city at a time when vast numbers of Latinx and Asian migrants were arriving. While most Asian-Americans congregated in Koreatown, many of the Mexican-American and Latinx arrivals moved to South Central, dramatically reducing the Black population's majority. This undoubtedly created opportunities for interracial cooperation and organising. Black activists had consistently collaborated with Latinx and Asian-American groups during the height of L.A.'s Civil Rights Movement, and organisations such as Parents of Watts and the Watts Century Latino Organization had continued this work into the 1980s.[70] Yet the need to compete for a limited pool of resources in order to satisfy their respective populations often fostered resentment and bitterness. Everyday life brought the potential for numerous inter-cultural conflicts, from Latinx fears of Black gang violence to African Americans' irritation at immigrants keeping chickens in their yards.[71] Some African Americans appear to have become frustrated by these changes. In one *Times* story, auto-salesman Tim Riley suggested that he wished to move his family to Atlanta, 'where Black people are in power,' as he did not feel that 'a multicultural place like Los Angeles is good for Black people.'[72] Therefore while the Harlins' controversy centred on the actions of Korean shopkeepers, it also recognised the shifting sense of place and contested the meaning of South Central Los Angeles. When Bakewell announced that 'the African American community will no longer sit back and accept disrespect, racism and murder and write it off as "cultural differences"', he was perhaps referring to the wider

[70] Bernstein, *Bridges of Reform*, Brilliant, *The Color of America Has Changed*, Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race*. For Parents of Watts see: Charisse Jones, 'Changing the Face of South Central', *Los Angeles Times*, 30 March 1990, Charisse Jones, 'Watts Shows Diversity for Cinco De Mayo', *Los Angeles Times* 5 May 1991.
[71] See Bauman, *Race and the War on Poverty*, Camarillo 'Cities of Color', Sandy Banks, 'Blacks, Latinos in Neighborhood Effort', *Los Angeles Times* 5 February 1985.
[72] Itabari Njeri, 'Blacks: Enraged or Empowered?', *Los Angeles Times*, 12 July 1990.

changes being seen within South Central's cultural landscape.[73] The long history of the liquor store as a symbol of urban blight, and the tragedy of Latasha Harlins' murder, made Korean-owned liquor stores the most appropriate site for Black activists to reassert African American control of the neighbourhood. Liquor stores provided an opportunity for a renewed Black nationalism in Los Angeles to challenge both economic dispossession in the form of local businesses, and the impuissance of African Americans to control the meaning of place in South Central. The undertones of the Crusade's protest therefore suggested that their broader aim was to restore South Central to the thriving symbol of Black pride that it had previously obtained.

TABLE 2: Population of South Central Los Angeles, 1990

	Number	*Percentage*
White	6,147	1.2
Black	278,213	53.2
Hispanic black	12,363	2.4
Hispanic, nonblack	218,941	41.8
Asian and Pacific Islander	4,889	0.9

Figure 8: Population of South Central Los Angeles by ethnicity, 1990.[74]

Bakewell's statement was 'met with thunderous applause and screams of support from onlookers,' as he indicated the Crusade's plans were not limited to the Empire Liquor market.[75] He announced a programme to collect information on other 'undesirable merchants' and target them for 'corrective measures' that were 'designed to make doing business in the African American community unprofitable for disrespectful merchants .'[76] The Crusade proposed that this strategy could close problematic liquor stores, not permanently, but to allow for 'opening the door to purchase that enterprise on behalf of the people.' [77] KAGRO estimated that Korean-Americans owned 350-400 stores in South Central,

[73] 'Brotherhood Crusade Mothers in Action Say: No Respect No Business in Our Community'.
[74] Raphael Sonenshein, 'The Battle over Liquor Stores in South Central Los Angeles: The Management of an Interminority Conflict', *Urban Affairs Review*, 31.6 (1996), 714.
[75] Ramos and Lee, 'Demonstrators Demand That Korean Market Never Reopen'.
[76] 'Brotherhood Crusade Mothers in Action Say: No Respect No Business in Our Community'.
[77] *Ibid*.

compared to around sixty owned by African-Americans, and Bakewell hoped to rectify this imbalance through community ownership.[78] To aid this, he created a 'community economic development fund' to purchase problematic stores, and personally donated $5000.[79] These plans were furthered during an April 1 meeting held by the Brotherhood Crusade at the African American Unity Center in South Central. 400 people attended, including legendary figures within L.A.'s Black organising movements such as Ron Karenga and Johnnie Tillman.[80] The meeting was intended to 'inspire the African American community to hold disrespectful merchants accountable for their actions', but as Stevenson describes, the issues the Harlins' murder raised often became blurred, with 'speaker after speaker…espousing traditional Black-nationalist goals of self-determination and economic development for predominately Black communities.'[81] Bakewell announced that 'it is time that we looked at what needs to be done in our community'.[82] He proposed developing specific standards, complaints, and action committees to identify how merchants should behave, identify problem stores, and work to have them closed down. [83] President of the L.A. chapter of Southern Christian Leadership Conference Mark Ridley-Thomas and fellow real-estate entrepreneur Lonnie Bunkley also contributed $5000 each to the development fund, suggesting the campaign appealed to a wide audience of Black figures within the local community.[84] Bakewell echoed historical 'Buy Black' efforts by insisting that 'this selective buying campaign is designed to serve notice on merchants…that it was time to change their ways or move on.'[85] The reclamation of urban space, under the Crusade's plans, was literal rather than metaphorical. Here, 'control' of the community by residents meant the actual ownership of businesses located in South Central, in order to restore a sense of local pride, provide economic development, and to protect residents from the dangers of 'disrespectful' Korean merchants.

The demand to reclaim local stores prompted further boycotts of Korean businesses in South Central. While these protests evinced a wide range of concerns, they too emphasised the need for ownership and control of urban space. In June 1991, a 42 year-old Black man, Lee Arthur Mitchell, was shot to death following an alleged (although contested) robbery attempt at Korean-owned John's Liquor on South Western Avenue. Bakewell and the Crusade organised a demonstration outside the store on June 17, where they criticised the

[78] Moffat, 'Shopkeepers Fight Back'.
[79] *Ibid*.
[80] Stevenson, *Contested Murder*, p.113.
[81] *Ibid*.
[82] *Ibid*.
[83] *Ibid.*, p.114.
[84] *Ibid*.
[85] *Ibid.*, p.128.

killing and the treatment of Black customers at the hands of Korean owners, as protestors displayed placards stating "we will not shop with killers" and "don't shop where you can't work" while chanting “boycott Korean" and "no justice, no peace."[86] In these protests, they were joined by Reverend J. Edgar Boyd, pastor of the Bethel A.M.E. church which was situated opposite the liquor store. Boyd had long opposed the presence of liquor stores in the community, and his views demonstrated the multiple grievances many South Central residents held towards liquor outlets. Mayor Bradley had ‘concerns’ that Boyd ‘mixed several issues’ in his campaign against John’s liquor store, including the presence of liquor stores and interethnic tensions.[87] Even before Mitchell’s death, Boyd was annoyed by the proximity of John’s Liquor store to his church. He ‘complained long and hard about the negative impact that neighbourhood liquor stores had on the vicinity, the social problems created by storekeepers who do not even live in the neighbourhood, and the kind of “bad element” such business establishments attracted.’[88] Boyd encouraged parishioners to paint over billboards advertising alcohol, covering them with banners stating ‘Jobs-Not Alcohol’.[89] Boyd himself argued that ‘this is not about Korean storekeepers, specifically, it's a concern about absentee storekeepers.’[90] The addition of Reverend Boyd to the protests surrounding the death of Lee Arthur Mitchell demonstrated how the multiple problems associated with liquor stores in South Central often merged and became incoherent. While some picketers outside John’s Liquor demanded the removal of Korean merchants and their replacement by African American owners, others demanded that local stores stop selling alcohol or were closed altogether. Despite this confusion, these boycotts provided an opportunity for local African American residents to voice their concerns regarding the many problems presented by liquor stores, and to vocalise their opinions on how the local spaces of the community could be reshaped to satisfy calls for racial and economic justice.

The boycotts held by the Brotherhood Crusade against Korean stores drew sustained local and national attention, and the racialised nature of the campaigns produced serious consequences. The boycott of John’s continued for 109 days with tensions becoming increasingly more hostile. One newspaper story photographed a four year-old child holding a placard stating ‘GET OUT OF OUR COMMUNITY’ outside the store.[91] A Molotov cocktail

[86] Rick Holguin and John Lee, ‘Boycott of Store Where Man Was Killed Is Urged’, *Los Angeles Times,* 18 June 1991, Ron Wakabayashi to Board of Human Relations Commission, 28 June 1991,Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4247, Folder 10.
[87] Wakabayashi to Board of Human Relations Commission.
[88] Stevenson, *Contested Murder*, p.126.
[89] George White and Marc Lacey, ‘Liquor Industry Takes On Activists in Political Arena’, *Los Angeles Times* 15 December 1992.
[90] Holguin and Lee, ‘Boycott of Store Where Man Was Killed Is Urged’.
[91] John Lee, ‘Diary of a War of Attrition in Volatile Urban Dispute’, *Los Angeles Times*, 2 July 1991.

was also thrown at the store's entrance in front of protestors.[92] The dispute was eventually resolved when the Mayor's office, KAGRO and Bakewell agreed that John's would be sold to the organisers of the boycott, yet did not come with the store's liquor license to ensure that alcohol would not be sold there.[93] Bakewell noted the symbolic reclamation of space this victory signified, suggesting that it 'represents the restoring of dignity to the community. That's what we set out to achieve.' [94] For many in South Central, however, demand for community control of local space and the expulsion of Korean merchants did not end with the purchase of just one store. The liquor store debate, inflamed by the murder of Latasha Harlins, had ignited interracial conflict. 1991 saw a large increase in the reporting of hate crimes committed against Asian Americans, including boycotts and firebombings, the murder of two Korean shopkeepers, and the burning of a six-foot cross outside a Japanese restaurant.[95] These hostilities spilled into popular culture. Ice Cube's 1991 album *Death Certificate* contained a song entitled 'Black Korea'. Its lyrics referenced Korean suspicions of Black customers, a 'nationwide boycott', and demands that merchants 'pay respect to the black fist/or we'll burn your store right down to a crisp'. The song ended by referencing Black opposition to the remaking of historical African American urban meaning, stating that 'you can't turn the ghetto into a Black Korea'.[96] Eazy-E and Dr Dre also recorded songs referencing Harlins, and the film *Menace II Society* opens with an abusive Korean shop owner being shot to death by two young black men. Tupac Shakur's music video for 'Keep Ya' Head Up' (1993) was not only dedicated to Harlins, but also depicted Shakur as the Black shopkeeper of a local convenience store. Alongside an African American woman, he served a young patron groceries, instead of alcohol, in a throwback to the black-owned "Mom'n'Pop stores the Crusade wished to restore. These depictions highlighted liquor stores as the most visible site of injustice towards the African American community in Los Angeles. Yet they also popularised the notion that Black efforts to secure spatial self-determination were intimately connected to an inexorable cultural conflict between African Americans and Korean migrants.

Reflecting on the destruction caused by the Rodney King crisis, Black resident Ivor Allen, who had lived in South Central for forty years, said that the catastrophe was 'no mystery to those in the inner city'. He argued that 'many of us don't feel like it's our community

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[92] Wakabayashi to Human Relations Commission.
[93] 'Mayor's Office, African-American and Korean-American Representatives Announces Agreement to End Boycott of Korean-Owned Store', n.d., Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4253, Folder 4. 'John's Liquor Store Sale/Purchase Agreement', 28 April 1992,Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4248, Folder 11.
[94] Stevenson, *Contested Murder*, p.130.
[95] Julie Tugend to Bill Chandler, 'Hate Crime Statistics', 27 January 1992, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4247, Folder 22. Korean Federation of Los Angeles to Tom Bradley, 30 May 1991, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4248, Folder 7.
[96] Ice Cube, 'Black Korea' from *Death Certificate* (EMI, 1991).

anymore.'[97] His statement has many possible meanings, and succinctly surmised African Americans' frustration at their loss of economic and cultural power in the historically segregated community of South Central. Danny Bakewell and the Brotherhood Crusade's efforts to remove Korean merchants and buy back liquor stores for Black residents was an attempt to rectify this lost sense of ownership and control. The literal reclamation of urban space through the ownership of local liquor outlets stores demonstrates once more how these stores acted as the central representation of racial injustice in the community, a perception which was significantly heightened by the murder of Latasha Harlins. Yet it also shows how demands for spatial justice were not just rhetorical (or indeed academic) debates, but had serious consequences for people of colour in Los Angeles. Korean businesses were one of the primary targets of participants during the five days of unrest in April and May 1992. Liquor stores accounted for 10% of this damage, with around 358 stores partially or completely destroyed.[98] This is not to argue that Bakewell's campaign was solely responsible for the violence of rioters towards the Korean population, or that the anger seen in response to Harlins' murder was unjustified. Rather, this evidence suggests that Black activists continued to organise around local liquor stores because they provided the most tangible example of how the lack of power and control over urban space could affect communities of colour. By focusing on the Korean ownership of stores, rather than on the presence of liquor outlets themselves, the Crusade developed demands for spatial justice through a discourse that heightened interracial hostility. The liquor stores' inherent problems provided a vehicle for Black nationalists to imagine an exclusionary vision of community control and self-determination, which further aggravated tensions and ultimately led to violence and destruction.

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The devastation caused during the Rodney King Crisis provided an opportunity for residents of South Central to re-imagine the spaces surrounding them, and to call for a greater role in determining how the city was rebuilt. Many made clear that one of the most pressing issues was whether the rebuilding of liquor stores destroyed in the unrest would proceed. The Coalition Against Police Abuse's manifesto for rebuilding explored in the introduction demanded a 'moratorium on the rebuilding or new construction of liquor stores.'[99] Public hearings regarding the rebuilding process saw many local residents voicing that they were 'sick and tired of liquor stores in the community', arguing that they encouraged delinquent

[97] Miles Corwin, 'Coalition Seeks to Reshape, Not Just Rebuild, Torn City', *Los Angeles Times*, 5 July 1992.
[98] *Ibid*., 'Memorandum Re: Proposed Liquor License Repurchase and Relocation Program', n.d., Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4151, Folder 10.
[99] Coalition Against Police Abuse, 'Now That the Smoke has Cleared…WHAT NEXT?', p.3.

behaviour and were a threat to public safety.[100] On May 27, Councilwoman Rita Walters delivered a radio editorial in which she reflected on the history of organising against liquor stores, stating that 'for decades, residents of South Central Los Angeles have complained angrily about the overconcentration of liquor stores in the area.'[101] She declared that 'as we seek to build a better South Central from the ashes of the old, we must not let these stores that trade on human misery proliferate once again.'[102] Nowhere within these widespread calls to reduce the oversaturation of liquor stores were there clear references to the actions of Korean merchants, or demands for African Americans to take ownership of liquor stores. Instead, South Central residents appear to have returned to their focus on liquor stores themselves, and the socioeconomic consequences they produced within the local community as the source of spatialised injustice in their neighbourhood. The most vocal and successful group organising around this issue was the Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment. The Community Coalition reframed the debate surrounding liquor stores and galvanised local residents through a more direct and explicit demand that communities of colour should have a greater role in controlling urban space and determining the future development of South Central Los Angeles.

The Community Coalition was formed in 1989 following the completion of an academic conference held by public health professionals and sponsored by the SCLC to study the crack-cocaine epidemic in South Central. The conference endeavoured to 'develop a progressive response to drug and alcohol problems in South Central that would serve to counter the historically repressive response.'[103] Coalition leaders therefore disapproved of the increasingly carceral response developed by the LAPD to tackle drug use and crime in the community, and were frustrated that the traditional Black community leadership was not promoting an alternative to this strategy.[104] The new Community Coalition hoped to 'address the environment which contributes to drug and alcohol problems in South Central Los Angeles.'[105] Members spent their first year getting to know the community – working with grassroots organisations, government agencies, block clubs, and churches - to identify issues of shared local concern.[106] Through this effort, the Community Coalition were supported by over 200 local organisations, and joined by 200 individual members. Their

[100] 'Ad Hoc Committee On Recovery and Revitalisation', Rebuild L.A. Collection, Series 9, Box 201, Folder 9. See Hearings on June 3 and June 4: Brenda Robinson (p.4), Isabel Vasquez (p.6), Nola Marie Nott (p.13), Joe Guadalajara (p.3).
[101] Rita Walters, 'Editorial Reply'.
[102] *Ibid*.
[103] Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment, 'Liberty Hill Foundation Grant Application' 1 March 1993, Liberty Hill Collection, Box 43, Folder 2.
[104] *Ibid*.
[105] *Ibid*.
[106] Community Coalition, 'Community Coalition 1991Overview',Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4151, Folder 1.

communications canvassed local residents' opinions, asking 'what problems do you see around your neighbourhood? You're the expert! Tell us what you think.'[107] Lead organisers such as Bass and Norma Lattimer had worked as public health experts at USC and UCLA, but also had long histories of community organising, working with anti-police abuse and anti-apartheid movements.[108] The Coalition hoped to attract a broader demographic which was more representative of the South Central population in order to create an inclusive movement. In particular, they hoped to garner greater participation from the Latinx community of South Central. Given SCOC represented Black churches, and the Brotherhood Crusade had espoused Black Nationalist principles, these campaigns offered little opportunity for Latinx residents to express their thoughts on the liquor store problem. The Coalition also argued that 'the media has rendered the Latino population of South Los Angeles invisible' by neglecting their opposition to liquor stores in the community, which their organisation hoped to rectify.[109] By embracing both African American and Latinx communities, they sought to reduce intercultural conflict by defining the 'war on drugs as a quality of life issue' that affected all residents.[110] While the majority of members were senior citizens, the Coalition also looked to involve several recovering drug addicts and former sex-workers as part of their organisation.[111] Thus as the Community Coalition worked to develop new perspectives on liquor stores, they hoped to organise across traditional divisions in race, class, and gender to help re-imagine the liquor store issue as one of shared spatial injustice, rather than a sectional or interracial dispute.

In early meetings, the Coalition found that issues of urban blight within the built environment remained troubling for many residents. People were concerned about the social ills brought about by poorly-lit alleyways, abandoned houses and cheap motels, which provided 'office space for drug sales and the transmission of the HIV virus.'[112] They therefore helped to remove couches and crates from alleyways and business fronts (which encouraged loitering), and paint over graffiti from fences, homes and businesses.[113] The intertwined problem of poor retail access and the over-proliferation of liquor stores, however, remained residents' primary concern. Meetings saw attendees complain about local stores with 'maggot-filled lettuce' and fly-infested stock rooms.[114] One resident suggested he would 'like to see neighborhood stores, family markets as opposed to liquor outlets. We don't want our

[107] Community Coalition, 'A Community Where We All Can Live', n.d., Liberty Hill Collection, Box 43, Folder 2.
[108] Community Coalition, 'Liberty Hill Foundation Grant Application'.
[109] Community Coalition, 'The South Central Liquor Store Issue', n.d., Liberty Hill Collection, Box 43, Folder 2.
[110] Community Coalition, 'Liberty Hill Funding Application'.
[111] *Ibid.*
[112] *Ibid*.
[113] Community Coalition, 'A Community Where We All Can Live'.
[114] Shaffer, 'The Presence of L.A.'s Grocery Gap', p.17.

children thinking that liquor stores are where you go to shop.'[115] This encouraged the Coalition to highlight liquor stores as the primary target of their work. They wished to underline that they were not prohibitionists, with Lattimer stating that 'I like to have a glass of wine. I have nothing against liquor at all. It's the excess that's the problem.'[116] Instead they reflected the views of the community; that the over-saturation of liquor stores in South Central impinged on local quality of life and exacerbated a range of social ills. Prior to the Rodney King Crisis, they hoped to broaden and strengthen the powers of Conditional Use Permits. Yet the destruction of so many liquor stores during the unrest allowed them to develop their most widespread and popular campaign: 'Rebuild South Central Los Angeles Without Liquor Stores'. An initial petition created by the group demanding a moratorium on the rebuilding of liquor stores hoped to garner 1000 signatures. It received nearly 8000 supporters in just ten days, and was eventually delivered to Mayor Bradley in July 1992 with 34,000 signatures, over 10% of South Central's entire population.[117] The devastation of the King Crisis, in the Coalition's view, offered an opportunity to 'transform the hopelessness and despair that characterise parts of the South Los Angeles community into effective action and community building'.[118] The long-standing frustration many residents continued to feel towards liquor stores therefore provided a useful basis to organise residents around an issue of shared concern, and to work towards a common goal which would improve the lives of local residents. The spatialised inequality produced through the overconcentration of liquor stores therefore once again offered a vehicle to empower residents to demand power and self-determination over their communities.

The Community Coalition organised residents by encouraging them to fight publicly against the rebuilding of liquor stores, and to demand greater community control in terms of local planning. They framed this as a struggle to achieve spatial equality relative to more privileged communities. One leaflet told residents their mission was to help the community 'enjoy the same rights and quality of life as the Valley!'[119] To achieve this, however, they argued that control over development and urban space was essential. 'Any community has the right to remove a blight that contributes to crime, disease and a depressed quality of life' they suggested, even when this conflicted with the right of merchants to do business in their

[115] Penelope McMillan, 'Liquor Will Tip the Scales', *Los Angeles Times* 22 July 1992.
[116] Lacey, 'Last Call for Liquor Outlets?'.
[117] Community Coalition, 'Make A Difference – Join Us', n.d., Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4151, Folder 1. Community Coalition 'Rebuild South Central Los Angeles Without Liquor Stores', n.d., Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4254, Folder 10. Raphael Sonenshein, 'The Battle over Liquor Stores in South Central Los Angeles: The Management of Interminority Conflict', *Urban Affairs Review*, 31.6 (1996), 710-737 [722].
[118] 'Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Leaflet', n.d., Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4151, Folder 1.
[119] Community Coalition, 'A Community Where We All Can Live'.

neighbourhood.[120] The implication behind this rhetoric was that the collective right to self-determination over the spaces of the neighbourhood was a liberty already assumed by many more privileged areas of the city, but was conspicuously absent from communities of colour such as South Central. The Coalition therefore supported a council ordinance passed in May 1992 in response to local public pressure, which exempted liquor stores from streamlined rebuilding procedures, and required public hearings before each store was granted permission to rebuild.[121] Much like the Environmental Impact Reports and hearings demanded by Mothers of East Los Angeles, public hearings were seen as vital because they represented Black and Latinx participation in the development process. Hearings signalled a sense of spatial equality, as the voicing of public opinions was the basis upon which redevelopment was permitted in other locations. The Coalition celebrated that the process 'allows community input', and organised 'street action teams' to encourage and prepare residents to provide testimonies.[122] They also organised to protect these hearings from interference, drawing on public support for their continuation. When lobbyists for the alcohol industry sponsored a State Assembly bill attempting to bypass the hearings, the Coalition coordinated a community response. Activists travelled to Sacramento to protest, 200 residents attended a meeting with the Deputy Mayor, and over 2000 letters opposing the bill were sent to political representatives.[123] By May 1993, local residents had participated in over 140 hearings.[124] Through their efforts to support residents to participate in these hearings, the Coalition was able to progress both short and long-term goals for their movement. By encouraging community members to give evidence in these meetings, the Coalition could publicise the myriad problems associated with the oversaturation of liquor stores and limit their rebuilding. Hearings also worked to empower residents, to provide the community with a sense of spatial autonomy and greater control over determining the future of urban space.

Through an emphasis on the need for community control over urban space, the Coalition sought to reduce the racial connotations and anti-Korean sentiment that had dominated the liquor store debate. Karen Bass argued that 'the historic problems related to alcohol sales in South Central transcend the ethnicity of merchants' and that 'everyone involved, including the news media, has to stop calling it a racial dispute'.[125] They reminded residents that SCOC's work to reduce the presence of liquor stores occurred when the majority of

[120] Karen Bass, 'Neighbors Have the Right to Fight Liquor-Store Blight', *Los Angeles Times*, 2 June 1992.
[121] Moffat, 'Shopkeepers Fight Back'.
[122] Community Coalition, 'The South Central Liquor Store Issue'. Community Coalition, 'Liberty Hill Follow-Up Questionnaire' 27 September 1993, Liberty Hill Collection, Box 43, Folder 2.
[123] Community Coalition, 'Liberty Hill Follow-Up Questionnaire'.
[124] *Ibid*.
[125] Karen Bass, 'Liquor Stores: Give a Helping Hand to Owners', *Los Angeles Times*, 23 November 1992.

merchants were African American, adding that 'the ethnicity of many owners have changed but the problems have continued.' [126] The Coalition emphasised that the issue was not the 'fault' of merchants, 'but rather the fault of historically poor planning in South Central and an outdated state formula that allowed for licenses to be concentrated in one area.'[127] They looked to contest the media's 'characterisation of this issue as having a hidden anti-Korea agenda' by bypassing comment on the behaviour of merchants and instead focusing on the deleterious effects of liquor stores themselves.[128] 'Although not all of South Central is impoverished or suffers from drug and alcohol problems,' Bass commented, acknowledging the pathologies attributed to the community, 'when poverty, drug and crime problems do converge in a community saturated with alcohol, tragedy often results.'[129] This discourse suggested that conflicts and tragedies such as the murder of Latasha Harlins were not the responsibility of one particular racial group, but the inevitable consequence of an abundance of liquor stores within a complex neighbourhood. The Coalition therefore channelled their approach to consider the environmental causes of substance abuse, moving away from apportioning guilt to specific minorities and towards exploring how the underdevelopment of South Central perpetuated such problems. By constructing a more diverse coalition than previous efforts, they worked across racial lines to argue that the liquor store problem was not an issue that affected the Black community in isolation. Understanding this as a spatial problem, which could therefore only be resolved through the empowerment of local residents to determine the future of urban space, played a critical role in efforts to build support for demands to reduce the presence of liquor stores in the community.

The Coalition still recognised that the majority of merchants who wished to rebuild liquor stores in South Central were Korean, and looked to find solutions which would also satisfy them. 'They should not be driven into poverty,' Bass argued, but this did not supersede the right of spatial self-determination, as 'neither should residents have to suffer from the return of problem liquor stores.'[130] This difficult balance could be made easier to achieve through the Coalition's insistence that merchants receive compensation and assistance in converting their businesses for other uses.[131] With this concession, the Coalition found support from another new group working to construct new ideas regarding L.A.'s multicultural future; the Asian Pacific Planning Council (APPCON), a progressive Asian American coalition of various human service agencies in the Los Angeles area. APPCON shared the Coalition's belief that the liquor store problem and the violence that had prevailed were not the result of

[126] Community Coalition, 'The South Central Liquor Store Issue'.
[127] Community Coalition, 'Media Advisory', n.d., Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4151, Folder 22.
[128] Community Coalition, 'Liberty Hill Foundation Grant Application'.
[129] Bass, 'Liquor Stores: Give a Helping Hand to Owners'.
[130] *Ibid*.
[131] Community Coalition, 'Liberty Hill Funding Application', Community Coalition, 'Make A Difference – Join Us'.

inexorable cultural differences between Koreans and African Americans; but rather 'can only be understood in the broader context: frustrations, feeling of victimisation and powerlessness underlie the explosive nature of the debate on this issue.'[132] This context, they suggested, was the result of African Americans inability to control and determine the spatial forms of their community. APPCON saw the conflict as a contest over the control of urban space, and a matter of spatial equality. Political struggles in the wake of the Rodney King Crisis had significance for all communities of colour because it was 'a test of whether historically powerless communities like South Central will be able to determine their future and take control of development. They are demanding the right to control what gets built and rebuilt within their own neighbourhoods, to ensure that development actually services their needs and improves the quality of life.'[133] Recognising the relational struggles for spatial equality that guided this struggle, they suggested that this was 'a right that is taken for granted in wealthier communities.'[134] They indicated that they supported South Central in this effort to reduce the number of liquor stores in the community on the condition that merchants received support and compensation to repurpose or relocate stores.[135] This was construed as an act of interracial solidarity and empathy over the wider meaning of the liquor store problem; stating that 'we must support for other communities what our own communities desire – the right to have control over our community's development to meet our needs.'[136] The Coalition worked alongside APPCON to develop plans to rebuild liquor stores as new businesses. In September 1993 they held a press conference together to announce a new city-funded pilot programme that had been awarded $260,000 to convert former liquor stores into self-service Laundromats.[137] These efforts demonstrate the ways the Community Coalition worked to deescalate the racial animosity that surrounded the liquor store controversy. Their focus on the problems that liquor stores themselves created, instead of merchants (Korean or Black), allowed them to construct a campaign that worked beyond racial distinctions to emphasise the need for spatial self-determination within communities of colour.

Renewed calls for a reduction in the number of liquor stores in South Central, led by the Community Coalition, appeared to popularise conceptions of spatial injustice and inequality within public discourse. Rita Walters referenced a recent study which concluded that South

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[132] Asian Pacific Planning Council & Asian Pacific Americans for a New L.A, 'Statement of Position on Liquor Stores in South Central Los Angeles', October 1992, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4151, Folder 3.
[133] *Ibid*.
[134] *Ibid*.
[135] *Ibid*.
[136] *Ibid*.
[137] 'Liberty Hill Follow-Up Questionnaire', Sonenshein, 'The Battle over Liquor Stores in South Central Los Angeles', 732.

Central contained one liquor store for every 686 residents. In Walters' view, this was 'a number that would never be tolerated in more affluent areas of the city'.[138] Mark Ridley-Thomas, who had previously donated to Bakewell's fund to buy back liquor stores, now also publicly stated that the issue was one concerning spatial dispossession. He suggested the presence of liquor stores was a sign of 'neglect', and 'institutionalised oppression' on the part of the city, primarily due to stores' contributions to a decreased quality of life among residents.[139] The controversy prompted Bradley to create another task force, nearly a decade following the first, to investigate the role of liquor stores in the South Central community. Their final report made allusions to some of the wider issues that motivated hostility towards liquor stores, rather than the problems fostered by Korean ownership. They suggested that residents 'should not be forced to accept any rebuilding of their community that replaced the very uses that everyone acknowledges was a problem…now is the time to correct the mistakes of the past.'[140] Despite this, the task force contained representatives from the alcohol industry, and the report could only achieve 'an agreement to disagree', as the city struggled to find ways to fund and support the relocation or repurposing of liquor stores during a recession.[141]

Despite this stalemate, the Community Coalition did see success in limiting the rebuilding of liquor stores. In total, 1400 residents participated in a number of campaign activities led by the Community Coalition across a sixteen month period to prevent the rebuilding of liquor stores.[142] Only 56 of the several hundred stores that had been destroyed received approval to rebuild with liquor licenses intact, often with requirements to improve security and hygiene.[143] The battle over liquor stores culminated in 1994 with the introduction of California State Assembly Bill 2897, which now required the Alcoholic Beverage Control department to automatically deny all liquor license applications that 'would result in or add to an undue concentration of licenses.'[144] For the Coalition, this was a major success. 'For the first time since the ABC's creation' they celebrated, 'residents of primarily low-income, inner-city neighborhoods have been given the opportunity to help shape the process of issuing, or not

[138] Rita Walters, 'Editorial Reply'.
[139] Lacey, 'Last Call for Liquor Outlets?'.
[140] 'Mayor Bradleys South Central Community/Merchant Liquor Task Force Final Report', p.2.
[141] Sonenshein, 'The Battle over Liquor Stores in South Central Los Angeles', 729.
[142] Community Coalition, 'Campaign to Rebuild Without Problem Liquor Stores Ends in Victory for South Central Residents', *The Movement*, Winter Edition, 1994, 1, Liberty Hill Collection, Box 43, Folder 2.
[143] *Ibid*.
[144] 'A Shift in Power', 4-5. California State Assembly, 'BILL NUMBER: AB 2897', http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/93-94/bill/asm/ab_2851-2900/ab_2897_bill_940920_chaptered [Accessed 5 May 2020].

issuing, liquor licenses in their own neighborhoods.'[145] This bill, in the Coalition's view, therefore marked significant progress in efforts to establish community control over the most blatant symbol of spatial injustice and inequality in the city.

The Community Coalition For Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment clearly built upon the work of earlier efforts to resolve the liquor store problem in South Central. They regularly referenced SCOC's previous struggle to secure CUPs as evidence of the community's long-standing problems with liquor stores, and similarly emphasised how the stores impinged on local quality of life by facilitating crime and urban blight. They also retained the Brotherhood Crusade's insistence that community residents reclaim local urban space by having a greater degree of control and sense of ownership over their neighbourhood. Yet their work as public health advocates also led them to provide unique insight that reinvigorated the movement to curtail the oversaturation of liquor stores. The Coalition's focus on the environmental factors which hindered local quality of life allowed them to more clearly present a coordinated programme arguing that underdevelopment and spatial neglect produced serious consequences for communities of colour. To build support for this position, they constructed a diverse and holistic campaign which utilised widespread and historical frustration on behalf of the community towards liquor outlets. By refusing to blame the behaviour of individual merchants and actively seeking to support Korean store owners, the Coalition bolstered their argument that the desire to prevent liquor store rebuilding was a matter of self-determination to improve local quality of life, rather than an attack against a particular segment of the population. Finally, the Coalition was more direct and explicit in their demands for South Central residents, regardless of race, to obtain a greater role in determining the future of urban space. While a reduction in the number of liquor stores in South Central was their immediate goal, the Coalition made a clear argument which influenced public discourse that this was an issue of residents' right to choose how their community was rebuilt and to decide how urban development should proceed.

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The city council created the 'Liquor Store Business Conversion Program' in July 1992, which eventually became the Alliance for Neighborhood Economic Development. With their assistance, some former liquor stores were transformed into self-service laundrettes, garment shops, and even a mini-mall with five new businesses.[146] The equitable redevelopment of South Central Los Angeles, of course, was far from complete. The loss of

[145] Abraham Torres 'Caldera's Revenge: A New Liquor Landscape', *New City,* 3.1, 1995, 28, MELA Collection, Box 8, Folder 21.
[146] Park, 'Confronting the Liquor Industry in Los Angeles', 127.

liquor stores would require a greater building of full-service supermarkets, an ambition that never truly materialised. Over a quarter of the residents surveyed in May 1992 indicated that there was 'an absolute critical need' for more supermarkets and grocery stores in South Central, a much greater percentage of residents in other underdeveloped areas of the city who saw supermarkets as an imperative for rebuilding.[147] Supermarket chains, like many corporations, remained sceptical about investing into South Central. Only half of the thirty-two supermarkets that were promised by Rebuild L.A. were actually built, with several closing in the early 2000s.[148] A decade following the Rodney King Crisis, communities of colour in Los Angeles still had access to significantly fewer supermarkets than their counterparts in suburban white and middle-class neighbourhoods.[149]

These disparities between the number of liquor stores and full-service supermarkets were crucial to understanding why liquor outlets were such a source of conflict and protest amongst the Black community of Los Angeles. Liquor stores overwhelmingly charged higher prices for lower quality products, while their overconcentration exacerbated serious problems of crime and substance abuse in the community. Supermarkets, in contrast, represented improved service and availability of produce, and symbolised a more respectable form of retail for communities. Residents' inability to reduce the number of liquor stores or attract new supermarkets was therefore a fundamental demonstration of how the community lacked autonomy to determine spatial forms, and the serious material consequences this subjection produced. The murder of Latasha Harlins was clearly a shocking and tragic act that underscored the vulnerability of Black - particularly Black women's - lives within a racialised system of justice, and is therefore justifiably seen as a prelude to the Rodney King Crisis. Responses to her murder, however, took many forms. The most vocal protests looked to highlight the intertwined issues of territorial control, 'outsiders', and Black ownership of local businesses. These approaches were successful partially because her murder had taken place in a liquor store, a site which represented African Americans' historical dispossession and the concrete repercussions of spatialised injustice. These protests were part of a much broader spectrum of organising against the presence and proliferation of liquor stores in South Central. While these protests differed in their demands, their approach, and the ideology of their supporters, they all shared a desire to claim urban space as their own and gain control over how development in their community should proceed. Chapter five returns to these issues of ownership and control over urban development, by exploring how bus

[147] Yankelovich Partners, 'Executive Summary L.A Community Survey', 31 March 1993, pp.6-29, Rebuild L.A. Collection, Series 3, Box 66, Folder 181.
[148] Shaffer, 'The Persistence of L.A.'s Grocery Gap', pp.39-40.
[149] *Ibid*., p.13.

tours became an unexpected means for activists to exert power over the cultural productions of place and space for communities of colour.

Chapter Five: Selling South Central: Guided Bus Tours as Visions of Los Angeles' Spatial Future

As the National Guard withdrew and the dust settled following the most costly instance of civil unrest in modern American history, an array of voices considered what should happen next. 'For a brief period,' the Labor/Community Strategy Center stated, 'the social explosion in L.A.…sparked a national discussion about urban policy.'[1] Community leaders, politicians, academics and journalists of all backgrounds entered this debate with a range of possible solutions. The *Los Angeles Times* and *Sentinel* published weeks of editorials, special editions and interviews from a broad spectrum of public figures. As chapter one has explained, the Bush administration's 'Weed and Seed' initiative focused closely on policing within Los Angeles, but met considerable resistance from the community. Three days after the rebellion subsided, Mayor Tom Bradley created the 'Rebuild L.A.' organisation, the city's only formal response to the Crisis. Led by former baseball commissioner and organiser of the 1984 L.A. Olympics, Peter Ueberroth, the programme worked as a clearinghouse to foster local investment and development, and provide disaster relief funding for those who had lost businesses. [2] Upon RLA's inception, however, the organisation was heavily criticised for lacking inclusion of local minority leaders and community groups, and placing power in the hands of corporate executives instead of residents.[3] Scholars need to pay greater attention to this period of Los Angeles' history, both to evaluate the successes and failures of Rebuild L.A., and to consider how the marginalised residents of areas destroyed during the Crisis envisioned the reconstruction of their communities. To gain a more holistic insight into the long-term causes of the Crisis, and to better understand urban communities at this time more generally, we need to emulate the ambition (if not the reality) of RLA: to 'listen to local residents in the most heavily damaged areas as they describe their ideas for needed reconstruction and additional development'.[4] Recent scholarship by historians of Black radicalism has outlined the academic insight gained by exploring activists' visions for spatial futures.[5] These activists used urban space as 'the medium through which Black Power adherents expressed their vision of the alternative future that would follow from racial

[1] The Labor/Community Strategy Center, *Reconstructing Los Angeles From the Bottom Up: A Long-Term Strategy for Workers, Low-Income People, and People of Color to Create an Alternative Vision of Urban Development* (Los Angeles: Labor/Community Strategy Center, 1993), p.1, Acuna Collection, Box 130, Folder 23.

[2] James H. Johnson, Walter C. Farrell Jr. and Maria-Rosario Jackson, 'Los Angeles One Year Later: A Prospective Assessment of Responses to the 1992 Civil Unrest', *Economic Development Quarterly*, 8.1 (1994), 19-27 [20].

[3] Johnson, Farrell Jr. and Jackson, 'Los Angeles One Year Later', Labor/Community Strategy Center, *Reconstructing Los Angeles From the Bottom Up*, p.2.

[4] 'Rebuild L.A: The Blueprint For Our Future', 2 May 1992, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4253, Folder 4.

[5] Goldstein, 'The Search for New Forms', Rickford, 'We Can't Grow Food on All This Concrete', Matlin, 'A New Reality of Harlem'.

self-determination.'[6] The destruction caused during the Rodney King Crisis may have been disastrous for many, but for some it offered their communities an opportunity for a fresh start, and a blank slate to redesign their neighbourhoods. This chapter therefore examines how two groups – John Bryant's Operation Hope, and the Tourism Industry Development Council – used guided bus tours through L.A.'s communities of colour to convey their new visions of how these neighbourhoods could be transformed, and re-imagine the urban meaning applied to these communities.

Bus tours may appear an inconsequential means of illuminating how activists' constructed urban futures. Yet as Fabian Frenzel has argued, guided tours of 'slum' communities in the Global South should be seen as a form of activism for how they encourage and reconceptualise ideas of care, and their potential to challenge preconceived stereotypes.[7] This was what Operation Hope and the TIDC looked to achieve; to deconstruct the culturally instilled knowledge of 'place' which constructed L.A.'s communities of colour, and encourage intervention and participation on the part of the city's economic and political establishment in order to help these groups achieve their visions of a new Los Angeles. For Operation Hope, this meant corporate investment which incorporated Black and Latinx communities into the prosperity of neoliberal capitalism enjoyed by white America. For the TIDC, in contrast, these tours were aimed at restructuring the city's second largest industry – tourism - in order to direct attention towards communities of colour and their inhabitants as legitimate sites of tourist interest, and thus deserving of inclusion into the material benefits of this industry. This relied on controlling and managing what Lefebvre described as 'representation space'; the way ideas and symbols were mapped onto physical places.[8] Theories exploring the rise of global cities help explain why this was of vital importance. As Sharon Zukin and David Harvey have argued, the post-industrial economic function of cities relied on the construction of imagery and symbolism. The competition between cities to secure investment capital led to increased emphasis on differentiated urban meanings, transforming cities into products and currency of their own.[9] We have already seen how these processes benefitted some areas of Los Angeles, with Tom Bradley transforming the economic landscape of Downtown L.A. to project his vision of 'world city liberalism'. Yet low-income communities of colour such as South Central or East Los Angeles were absent from these carefully constructed

[6] Goldstein, 'The Search for New Forms', 376.
[7] Fabian Frenzel, *Slumming It: The Tourist Valorization of Urban Poverty* (London: Zed Books, 2016)
[8] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, pp.39-42.
[9] David Harvey, 'From Managerial Capitalism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism', *Geografiska Annaler. Series B. Human Geography* 71 (1989), 3-17, Harvey, *The Urban Condition* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1989), Sharon Zukin, *The Cultures of Cities* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 1995), Zukin, 'Space and Symbols in an Age of Decline' in *Re-Presenting the City: Ethnicity, Capital and Culture in the 21st Century Metropolis,* ed. by Saskia Sassen and Anthony D. King (London: Palgrave, 1996), pp.43-59.

projections of urban life. The cultural constructions of place for these neighbourhoods, as we have already seen, were overwhelmingly pejorative and often stifled investment or development. The news media's sensationalistic focus on crime and urban conflict, and popular culture's glamorisation of poverty and gang violence, encouraged 'the belief that South Central cannot be understood or restored; it must be abandoned.'[10] Bus tours therefore offered an opportunity for activists to challenge these conceptions of place by constructing their own narrative which emphasised the more complex or positive aspects of local communities of colour. Through crafting their own images and productions of place, these activists could encourage investment and development which corresponded to their particular visions for spatial and economic justice for the community.

The TIDC and Operation Hope differed markedly in their ideologies and ambitions for what their respective tours hoped to achieve. Crucially, they diverged on the degree to which community residents were to be consulted on, and to participate in, the development of the tours. This significantly altered how the tours were designed, which sites they visited, and what attendees experienced. Clearly, the tours were not an objective or unfiltered reconstruction of daily life in these communities. Instead, they were carefully designed to cultivate a particular meaning, and demonstrate the potential the spaces of South and East Los Angeles presented. In Operation Hope's case, this meant 'normalising' daily life in these areas, and debunking stereotypes of ubiquitous crime and violence, to subdue corporate executives' apprehensions regarding investing into these communities. The TIDC looked to celebrate the vibrant cultural life and diversity of these neighbourhoods, to challenge what constituted a tourist destination in the city, and secure a greater role in determining tourism policy in L.A. for local residents. But despite these differences, both Operation Hope and the TIDC shared a belief that guided bus tours provided the most effective means to reshape productions of urban place and meaning in order to best serve their broader goals for economic justice. This was because the mobility offered by these tours helped them best convey their message regarding the potential of these spaces, and the possibilities of an urban future. For outsiders, the tours provided an opportunity to encounter life in communities of colour first-hand, to experience a 'reality' which challenged popular perceptions of urban areas and their inhabitants. Through this, the tours provided a means to encourage people to move in and out of communities of colour, a difficult task given the ways South Central and East L.A. had been isolated and ostracised in the imagined geography of the city, and how those outside these communities rarely ventured into them. Both Operation Hope and the TIDC therefore utilised the spaces and mobilities available to

[10] Bennett, 'Looking for the 'Hood and Finding Community', p.227.

them as an organising tool to reduce the spatial isolation felt by communities of colour, and reintegrate these areas into the wider conception of 'place' that defined Los Angeles. The ideas that were conveyed and promoted through these bus tours would go on to have dramatic implications, both for development within low-income communities of colour, and for the direction of progressive organising in the city for the next two decades.

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Operation Hope's bus tours looked to rebuild South and East Los Angeles in a way which corresponded to the worldview of the group's founder. John Hope Bryant was born and raised in Compton during the 1970s and early 1980s, and was a self-made millionaire by the age of 26. He worked as a negotiator for an investment bank during the 1980s and early 1990s, before starting his own financial services company. He claimed to have been deeply affected by the Rodney King Crisis, stating that he had previously been 'a black man who had left his community and become successful, thinking discrimination didn't exist.'[11] Following the trial verdict, 'part of me was out there on the streets rioting, too' and thus he founded Operation Hope on May 5, 1992, as his 'guilt-ridden response' to the unfolding crisis.[12] Operation Hope (later stylised as HOPE) was 'a non-profit investment banking consortium, professional service and advocacy corporation committed to the revitalization and sustenance of inner-city and underserved communities.'[13] Translated, this meant that Bryant and his team of staff would use their professional expertise in negotiating 'difficult and complex loan transactions' to help secure investment for inner-city communities.[14] Bryant set aside his other business ventures and promised to donate, for free, at least half of his working hours to the organisation. He appointed former bank chairman Christopher Blaxand as director and project manager, and employed a range of volunteers to staff the programme.[15]

Bryant and Operation Hope worked alongside groups such as the official Rebuild LA organisation and the First African Methodist Episcopal Church, who were providing micro-loans to 'build a solid economic and social foundation for all our futures' as part of their 'FAME Renaissance' program.[16] These groups worked to tackle the lack of financial services in South Central that was part of the broader underdevelopment of the community, and had

[11] Scott Denenberg, 'His Bottom Line is HOPE', *Sky Magazine,* June 1996, 32, Rebuild L.A. Collection, Series 5, Box 160, Folder 853.
[12] *Ibid*.
[13] Operation Hope, 'Outline of Program' (May 10, 1993), Rebuild L.A. Collection, Box 160, Folder 853.
[14] *Ibid*.
[15] *Ibid*.
[16] Johnson, Farrell Jr., and Jackson, 'Los Angeles One Year Later,' 23.

become a key concern for many grassroots organisations. CCSCLA had fought the closure of South Central's last Bank of America branch in 1988, while the Black Employees Association had their credit union charter rejected in 1992 because the National Credit Union Administration did not deem this area a 'community'.[17] Given South Central's close proximity to the recently redeveloped financial nucleus in Downtown, the inaccessibility of banks and financial services appeared to residents a deliberately exclusionary process of spatial production. During RLA's preliminary research surveys, around one-fifth of South Central residents agreed that there was 'an absolutely critical need' for an increase in the number of both banks and financial services in the community.[18] Thus as well as seeking to revitalise Los Angeles through public-private economic investment, these groups also looked to satisfy residents' aspirations for just and equal treatment by remapping access to financial services in South Central. Operation Hope therefore looked to remake South Central in the image of Bryant's own personal financial success. He placed great faith in the potential of corporate economic investment to counter the historical underdevelopment that had been the result of pejorative constructions and interpretations of place.

Operation Hope's initial goal was to rectify the government's slow response to providing emergency loans covered by disaster relief, but transformed into providing commercial real-estate, residential and business lending to the underserved communities of Los Angeles. Bryant, as the main spokesperson for the project, was extremely forthright in his criticism of the federal government's response to the crisis, suggesting that President Bush was 'severely out of touch' and that simply 'the fucking guy never responded.'[19] He, like many others, felt that a dramatic overhaul of urban policy and development was needed, adding that 'otherwise this country's going to disappear up its own ass in ever-decreasing circles.'[20] Yet he also brought his own worldview and experiences to his vision of South Central's future. He described himself as a 'hard-core capitalist with a heart,' and therefore stressed the need to move beyond social service provision and local campaigns.[21] 'It's got to be about more than church and social meetings,' he suggested, 'it's got to be about getting in on the ground floor and being part of the system…interweaving ourselves into the power structure, but not at the expense or exclusion of the mainstream or other minorities.'[22] Bryant therefore looked to foster economic development in South Central not by challenging the orthodox

[17] *Ibid*., Concerned Citizens of South Central Los Angeles, 'History and Description of Activities', n.d., Liberty Hill Collection, Box 50, Folder 8.
[18] Yankelovich Partners, 'Executive Summary L.A Community Survey,' p.11, Rebuild LA Collection Box 66, Folder 181.
[19] Alex Demyanenk, "The Real Deal" *Village View*, 6.47, 26 June 1992, 20, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 4248, Folder 15.
[20] *Ibid*.
[21] Denenberg, 'His Bottom Line is HOPE,' 33.
[22] Demyanenk, "The Real Deal", p.21.

ideological interpretation of U.S. neoliberalism, but by using his experiences to harness these ideas, and to ensure the inclusion of L.A.'s communities of colour within this structure.

Operation Hope emerged from an initial bus tour organised by Bryant just one week following the onset of the King crisis. He chartered two luxury buses to escort forty executives representing financial institutions such as City National and Wells Fargo banks around South Central in a three-hour tour.[23] Bryant and co-organiser Carlton Jenkins (partner of Founders Bank, the only black-owned commercial bank in L.A.) went to great lengths to foster a sense of security on the tours, with five LAPD cars escorting attendees, and two officers aboard each bus. With ten more officers guarding each stop, some participants felt this presence was 'overkill' and portrayed a message that 'you can't go into the area without this kind of police escort'. [24] This partially obscured the tours' efforts to normalise everyday life in these communities and bring financiers closer to the 'reality' of South Central. Nevertheless, the tour itself looked to communicate a number of complex ideas. The first was to 'sensitize' attendees to the reality of life in South Central, and the destruction created by the uprising to executives who were 'exposed to the rioting only through CNN or local news stations.'[25] Bankers could experience for themselves the 'twisted metal and still-smouldering buildings' in the hope that it would stir them into taking action. As one attendee noted, 'you have to touch it, and feel it, and smell it' in order to have comprehended the scale of the crisis.[26] This reaction was what Bryant wished to achieve, as the physical reality of being in South Central stirred emotions within this attendee which could not be attained through a passive engagement with news media or popular culture.

The tour also looked to demonstrate how bankers had failed to support L.A.'s communities of colour in the years preceding the Crisis. Organisers pointed out the long queues for check-cashing services, a 'half-block line' at one of the few ATMs in the area, and the difficulties many faced in securing credit in a community with so few banks.[27] They did not simply want to shock or guilt attendees into donating money, but rather alter perceptions of economic life in the community. Various stops were made at businesses destroyed by the unrest, but organisers emphasised these were 'thriving' businesses that 'disappeared within a matter of two days'.[28] The implication of these stops was not simply to emphasise the need for assistance in rebuilding, but to demonstrate that successful businesses already operated in South Central. Their cooperation would therefore become an investment rather than a

[23] James Bates, 'Bankers Get Taken on a VIP Tour of L.A.'s Devastation' *Los Angeles Times,* 6 May 1992.
[24] *Ibid*.
[25] *Ibid*.
[26] *Ibid*.
[27] *Ibid*.
[28] *Ibid*.

charitable donation. The tour had a limited level of success. One banker in attendance certainly recognised the spatial dislocations apparent in the community, noting 'the juxtaposition of a charred liquor store on one side of Vermont Avenue with tranquil USC tennis courts on the other.'[29] These observations indicated that tour had succeeded in demonstrating the complex and idiosyncratic landscape of the South Central community. Following this tour, several lenders agreed to provide funds for the rebuilding of Handler's Pharmacy, a small family-owned store in South Central.[30] This hastily organised initial bus tour, which provided the basis for the creation of Operation Hope had to convey a number of different and contrasting images of inner-city Los Angeles. The tour needed to both demonstrate the scale of destruction and extent of suffering, while also dismantling the commonly-held perceptions of the area to show the vitality and viability of the neighbourhood. In their pursuit of these goals, Bryant's bus tour essentially used the opportunity to introduce financiers to South Central - possibly a new experience for many attendees - to deconstruct the cultural production of place and project his own vision for the potential new meanings and physical landscape within this community.

The success created by the financing of Handler's pharmacy proved to Bryant and others that bringing investors into South Central to see the economic opportunities for themselves was a viable strategy, and so the 'Bankers Bus Tour' became an annual event from 1993 until 1996. Operation Hope looked to encourage 'CEOs of major financial institutions and public officials (national and local)' to participate.[31] Like their previous effort, the tours hoped to project a more positive image of the community, but also, to provide an awareness of the scale of help South Central needed. The tours aimed to educate investors regarding the 'needs and realities of life in the inner-city,' as well as the progress that was already being made.[32] In order to encourage investment, organisers had to demonstrate the potential for economic vitality. Therefore the Bankers Bus Tours focused on the ways many South Central locations had already made progress in building and rebuilding in the years following the Rodney King crisis, often with corporate or large financial backing. The tours became a 'salute to urban investment, urban accomplishment, new markets, [and] working communities,' and what Operation Hope described as 'enlightened self-interest.'[33] This was critical to Bryant's vision of a new South Central; he believed strongly that in order to avoid a repeat of the civil unrest in 1992, residents required ownership of the community. He noted that very few residences, only businesses and commercial buildings, were burnt during the

[29] *Ibid*.
[30] Operation Hope, 'Mission Statement', n.d., Rebuild LA Collection, Box 160, Folder 853.
[31] Geoff Harper to Bernard Kinsey, 22 April 1993, Rebuild LA Collection, Box 160, Folder 853.
[32] Operation Hope, 'Media Advisory', n.d., Rebuild LA Collection, Box 160, Folder 853. Rebuild L.A, 'Media Advisory', n.d., Rebuild LA Collection, Box 71, Folder 276.
[33] Operation HOPE, 'Concept Paper for Bankers' Bus Tour 96', n.d., Rebuild LA Collection, Box 114, Folder 197.

Crisis, because 'people don't destroy what they own.'[34] Reflecting on the lack of retail and banking in the area, he recognised that African Americans represented a $300 billion consumer-force, but yet 'we don't own shit.'[35] Operation Hope therefore hoped the tours would link 'the promotion of local stakeholders, increased business activity and opportunities, and capital access,' in order to create what Bryant called 'pride in ownership.'[36] Again, John Bryant and Operation Hope's staff used their background and experiences in the finance industry to formulate a strategy to deliver solutions to the problems faced by his community. Bryant conflated terms such as 'investment,' 'markets,' and 'self-interest' with those such as 'achievement' and 'community'. [37] These terms reveal the ideological underpinnings of the bus tours, by demonstrating how Bryant measured urban progress. These 'Bankers Bus Tours' were therefore designed by Operation Hope to become a catalyst for this particular vision of community economic development, by renegotiating meaning within the real and imagined spaces through which such development could take place in South Central.

The tours were utilised by Operation Hope to explore positive stories of economic investment and renovation through the spaces of the inner-city, mainly focused in South Central but also travelling north and eastwards. For their tour in May 1993, this meant creating stops at around 20 independent and chain businesses that had been built or rebuilt in the twelve months following the civil unrest, and companies that had publicly committed to hiring inner-city residents. They stopped at the previous year's success story, Handler's Pharmacy, as well as visiting Homeboy Tortillas, which in the aftermath of the Crisis had hired former gang members to work in a bakery at Grand Central Market in Downtown.[38] The tour made several stops at independent businesses, including H&L Furniture and B&H shoes, whose Korean owners saw their life savings destroyed in the Crisis, but rebuilt within months, offering evidence of the region's entrepreneurial spirit.[39] Another stop was at the Toyota/Urban League Training Center, a collaboration between the auto manufacturers and the community organisation, which would train 100 residents a year in vocational skills.[40] Supermarket chains, who had largely abandoned the inner-city in the post-war period, recognised the desperate need for affordable grocery services within South Central, and both Vons and Smart & Final had committed to building twelve new supermarkets each by

[34] Denenberg, 'His Bottom Line is HOPE', 32.
[35] Demyanenk, 'The Real Deal'.
[36] Denenberg, 'His Bottom Line is HOPE', 34.
[37] 'Concept Paper for Bankers' Bus Tour 96'.
[38] Operation Hope/FAME/RLA 'First Anniversary Bankers Bus Tour, Tour Route' 13 May 1993, Rebuild L.A. Collection, Box 71, Folder 276.
[39] *Ibid*.
[40] *Ibid*.

1997.[41] The tour stopped at one of each chains' stores which were under construction, and attended the opening of a rebuilt 7-11 on Sunset and Normandie Avenue, the symbolic centre of the 1992 Crisis.[42] In perhaps the most positive reinforcement of the renewed commitment to redeveloping South Central, the tour also stopped at the new Watts Civic Center, the first office block to be built in the neighbourhood since the destruction seen in 1965.[43] The centrepiece of the new building was a new American Savings Bank branch.[44]

By 1996, the bus tour evinced far greater optimism. Promotion of the event explained the changing role of the tour, shifting from a 'rolling needs assessment' designed to educate and inform investors, to repeatedly stressing the 'viability' of the area and imagining what the future could hold.[45] The tour itself had expanded greatly, with 38 stops to examine well over 100 sites.[46] Yet they now seemed far more interested in exploring the large corporate investments in South Central, visiting multiple KFC's and Ralph's supermarkets instead of local independent stores. HOPE explained that the 1996 iteration would be 'a highlights tour of more than $250 million in major corporate investments for the inner-city, from companies such as Taco Bell, Chief Auto Parts…Smart & Final, Fat Burger, Macy's Department Store, [and] Sony Corporation.'[47] Operation HOPE had always aimed to secure large corporate investment to act as a vehicle for economic development in South Central. As the Bankers' Bus Tour evolved, it shifted its emphasis from community entrepreneurs to corporate expansion. The sites the tours visited were designed to demonstrate that the South Central and East Los Angeles communities were functioning neighbourhoods, capable of securing and sustaining businesses in the same way any other area of the city would do. It therefore presented a justification for spatial equality, presenting these neighbourhoods as safe spaces for capitalism to unfold, and therefore worthy of the same attention and investment from the city's financial elite.

[41] *Ibid*.
[42] *Ibid*.
[43] *Ibid*.
[44] *Ibid*.
[45] 'Concept Paper for Bankers Bus Tour 96'.
[46] Operation HOPE, 'Draft Bankers Bus Tour 96' Tour Route', n.d., Rebuild L.A. Collection, Box 114, Folder 197.
[47] 'Concept Paper for Bankers' Bus Tour 96'.

Figure 9: Los Angeles Urban League/Toyota Automotive Training Centre, 3833 Crenshaw Boulevard.[48]

In some regards, the Bankers' Bus Tours appear to be a reflection of the dominant logic of the federal government, city, and Rebuild L.A.'s response to urban civil unrest. RLA emphasised public-private partnership as the key to regeneration, stressing the creation of enterprise zones, financial incentives such as tax breaks, and deregulation. It offered 'a private-sector, no-nonsense strategy that promised jobs and prosperity for the city's most desperate communities.'[49] It was largely an ideological continuation of the policies of the Reagan-Bush administration, which shunned social service in favour of private sector growth and urban redevelopment on a national scale. Bryant reflected this, insisting that although he was 'a banker with compassion and perspective,' he 'wasn't interested in giving a handout, but a hand *up*.'[50] His faith in private or corporate regeneration, however, was often popular amongst certain activists and segments of the community. Bryant's belief that South Central residents needed to become 'stakeholders' and his desire to 'make these people owners!' was shared by another entrepreneur-activist, property developer Danny Bakewell. Bakewell also felt that government social service programmes have failed the working poor, and that it was the responsibility of communities themselves to rectify social problems.[51] This was apparent during the Brotherhood Crusade's effort to demand Black ownership of liquor

[48] Operation Hope/FAME/RLA 'First Anniversary Bankers Bus Tour, Tour Route', 13 May 1993, Rebuild L.A. Collection, Box 71, Folder 276.
[49] Labor/Community Strategy Center, *Reconstructing Los Angeles From the Bottom Up*, p.1.
[50] Denenberg, 'His Bottom Line is HOPE', 33. Emphasis in original.
[51] 'Danny Bakewell: Portrait of a Powerful Leader', *Los Angeles Sentinel*, 31 October 1985.

stores following the death of Latasha Harlins. Following the Rodney King Crisis, Bakewell campaigned tirelessly to ensure neighbourhood residents were being employed in local reconstruction work, famously climbing atop a bulldozer to prevent one such rebuilding effort, and picketing contractors who were not involved with the local community, before eventually joining the Rebuild L.A. board.[52] While this only considers two African American male leaders, both Bakewell and Bryant were figures who had the economic and political influence to effect change in Los Angeles, and advocated for public/private partnerships and community ownership as priorities in the reconstruction of L.A. Others may have disagreed, but required RLA's assistance in order to make progress. As the Labor/Community Strategy Center lamented, 'even many community leaders, focusing on who does and does not have a seat in RLA, have done little to dispute the project's basic assumptions.'[53]

Operation Hope's vision for the future of South Central involved residents 'working *within the system*' to begin 'building a community, and by extension a larger society, that ***works*** again.'[54] Their faith in the private sector and the mainstream economic logic of the time was reflected in the outcomes the bus tours looked to secure. Their feedback sheet, in addition to requesting suggestions for improvement, also explicitly asked attendees how they might want to invest. They could select to invest in the 'creation of a new secondary market for commercial and residential loans,' with options over $25,000-$250,000, $300,000-$1,000,000, or $1 million and over. There were also options to provide start-up, residential or faculty improvement loans, or invest in community-based groups organising job-training or education services.[55] The early responses from some corporations working alongside RLA after the Crisis showed positive signs that vindicated Bryant's faith in the private sector. General Motors donated one-hundred vans to community organisations and promised to work with local minority businesses in the future. The L.A. Clippers paid for basketball courts to be created in local parks, while Disney opened a new store in Baldwin Hills and offered summer jobs for South Central youth at Disneyland.[56] The literature accompanying the tour recognised and celebrated this, noting that 'each one reflects an awareness of the need for the private sector to help reverse the trend of 40 years of neglect towards the inner cities.'[57] Given how this 'system' and the private sector had helped Bryant, Bakewell, and many

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[52]Ronald Walters, 'The Imperative of Popular Black Struggle: Three Examples from Miami, Los Angeles and Chicago,' *The Black Scholar,* 24.4 (1994), 32-38 [35], Jube Shiver, 'Reconstruction Meeting Turns Fiery', *Los Angeles Times*, 13 June 1992.

[53]Labor/Community Strategy Center, *Reconstructing Los Angeles From the Bottom Up,* p.1.

[54]'Concept Paper for Bankers' Bus Tour 96'. Emphasis in original.

[55] Operation Hope/FAME/RLA 'First Anniversary Bankers Bus Tour, 'Feedback Form', 13 May 1993, Rebuild L.A Collection, Box 71, Folder 276.

[56] Anderson, 'A City Called Heaven', p.361. Operation Hope/FAME/RLA 'First Anniversary Bankers Bus Tour: Investing in the Inner City', 13 May 1993, Rebuild L.A Collection, Box 71, Folder 276.

[57] 'Investing in the Inner City'.

others succeed during the 1980s, they envisioned a prosperous future, and used the bus tours to show 'the potential of what could be', so that their organisation could 'serve as both the catalyst and the bridge for economic empowerment between the minority and mainstream communities.'[58] Through an emphasis on how the infrastructure of these communities could support businesses, and the success that 'mainstream' private corporations had already seen, Operation Hope looked to renegotiate the cultural production of place which had previously hindered efforts to secure development.

Throughout these tours, Operation Hope had to continually balance contrasting images of the inner-city. They had to demonstrate that these communities required significant support and assistance, but also that building within these neighbourhoods was a safe and reliable investment. The group presented an optimistic picture of the opportunities available for private corporations and investors. They explained that they saw in Los Angeles the potential 'for a working model of inner city sustenance and success' that could be achieved with help from the private sector.[59] With Bryant's insistence that he was a socially conscious financier, Operation Hope looked to encourage the creation of some form of moral economy within Los Angeles, and institute the belief that investing in the area would be to 'do well by doing good.'[60] The programme had to demonstrate the potential and investment opportunities that were available in the community were not risky ventures, and that bankers and corporations' capital would produce sound profits. They explained in their promotional material that Operation Hope 'recognise the challenges that bankers face, and no one is asking a banker to make loans on an unsafe and unsound basis.'[61] Yet the group felt that this was an imagined risk, one which could be eradicated once financiers had a strong grounding in the realities of South Central, experienced through their bus tours. As a member of Operation Hope's staff explained, the tours were designed to 'get the message across that it is good business to do business in the City of Los Angeles.'[62] Thus Operation Hope chose to design the tours to 'sensitise, educate and focus their [investors] attention on an area of viable business and lending opportunity that has been largely ignored or otherwise not understood for years.'[63] On the first anniversary of the crisis, Operation Hope's efforts to 'sensitise' bankers argued that 'at a time when much publicity continues to be given to the problems of Los Angeles it is important to show examples of the positive work that has

[58] Operation Hope, 'Outline of Program.'
[59] Operation Hope, 'Mission Statement.'
[60] John Bryant to Second Annual Bankers Bus Tour Participants, 7 June 1994, Rebuild L.A Collection, Box 160, Folder 853.
[61] *Ibid*.
[62] JoEtta Brown to RLA Staff, 11 May 1993, Rebuild L.A Collection, Box 21, Folder 335.
[63] Operation Hope, 'Mission Statement.'

been carried out in the last year.'[64] By demonstrating the progress that had been made, and by structuring a tour around independent and chain businesses who had both invested and thrived in the inner-city, the organisation challenged the negative stereotypes that had previously dominated understandings of the 'place' of South Central within the wider city.

Operation Hope also recognised and emphasised that South Central was a complex, heterogeneous community, and attempted to move beyond the sweeping generalisations that often vilified the neighbourhood. While explaining the demographics and economic realities of the community, they noted that 'no portion of Los Angeles is 100% anything. Pockets of prosperity co-exist with pockets of poverty. Tenants and homeowners share neighborhood space. Racially homogenous neighborhoods are passé.'[65] By complicating the way South Central was perceived, Operation Hope sought to renegotiate how ideas of 'poverty' and 'prosperity' were mapped onto physical places. They hoped to show that these kinds of investments were 'in their [bankers] own long-term best interest,' by stemming the spatialised reproduction of inequality that had underpinned the recent unrest.[66] Bryant felt that a greater reflection on the human impact of underdevelopment and financiers' neglect of these communities was necessary. As a financier himself, he clearly understood the quantitative basis upon which the historic redlining of communities of colour had been determined. Yet he also wished to restore a moral dimension to banking and investment practices. Bryant suggested that 'the best return on investment is human capital,' and tried to convey the message that by investing, 'you'll be making your city – and by extension, your society – a better place.'[67] Bringing bankers into South Central to see the consequences of spatial isolation and neglect for themselves, Bryant felt, was the most effective way to communicate this need for greater investment and inclusion on behalf of financial industries. In order to succeed, Operation Hope could not just portray South Central as a blank canvas, as the conventional stereotypes applied to low income communities of colour had already been mapped onto the community. Bus tours were therefore used to reshape these ideas. These expeditions sought to portray the area as troubled, and that to invest into this community would be an act of social philanthropy and care. At the same time, this had to be balanced with projecting positive images of the community, providing concrete, observable evidence that businesses had the potential to thrive and return profits. The Bankers' Bus Tours were therefore organised around deconstructing the meanings often attributed to

[64] *Ibid*.
[65] Operation HOPE, 'Noteworthy Facts About Our Community', n.d., Rebuild L.A Collection, Box 160, Folder 853.
[66] Denenberg, 'His Bottom Line is HOPE,' 34.
[67] *Ibid*.

South Central, and reformulating them to accentuate the potential vitality of an area often marginalised by traditional economic policies.

Ultimately, both Operation Hope and Rebuild L.A. set too great a task in looking to bring mass private investment into the inner-city, and often misplaced their priorities. A consultant for RLA estimated that between 75,000 and 90,000 jobs were required in South Central alone. One year later, only 5,000 new jobs could be accounted for, which did not consider the 20,000 who had lost jobs and businesses during the Crisis.[68] Of the 500 buildings heavily damaged or destroyed in April 1992, 200 still remained vacant by 1997.[69] 1900 of the 5000 businesses provided with disaster loans had defaulted or were in liquidation by 1996.[70] As critics noted, RLA and Operation Hope celebrated the private and corporate investment that emerged in the months following the crisis, without considering how many jobs it had actually brought to local communities. Pioneer Electronics and Toyota may have built job-training facilities, but these did not offer long-term or any guaranteed employment. IBM and Southern California Edison donated over $30 million each for buildings, services and computer equipment, but again did not provide any jobs for residents.[71] Moreover, Operation Hope did not question the extent to which the jobs they were hoping to provide would actually benefit community residents. The impact of deindustrialisation had forced many workers, particularly those from communities of colour, to take minimum-wage jobs in the service sector, within similar businesses and industries that were courted by Operation Hope. Groups such as Justice For Janitors had argued that the civil unrest was the 'direct product of the deep frustration and anger that years of sub-poverty wages have created in Los Angeles…a city divided between the haves and the have-nots'.[72] Ironically, Bryant had also argued in an interview that urban problems were exacerbated by the deepening divide between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' in terms of ownership, but did not appreciate how his vision may have actually exacerbated this stratification.[73] It would have been immensely difficult for the majority of residents to become 'stakeholders' or have 'ownership' within these proposals; the most likely source of jobs would have been unstable work for a chain company or corporation, receiving subsistence wages with little benefits. Given these circumstances, one representative for the community-based Esperanza Housing Corporation

[68] Johnson, Farrell Jr., and Jackson, 'Los Angeles One Year Later,' 21.
[69] Hector Tobar, 'Riots' Scars Include 200 Still-Vacant Lots', *Los Angeles Times* 2 April 1997.
[70] John Emshwiller, 'Empty Stores Still Dot the Riot-Torn Areas of L.A', *Wall Street Journal* , 22 May 1996, B-1.
[71] Labor/Community Strategy Center, *Reconstructing Los Angeles from the Bottom Up*, p.1.
[72] Justice for Janitors, 'Corporate Greed is the Seed to Social Unrest' , 26 June 1992, SEIU Files, Box 6, Folder 17.
[73] Denenberg, 'His Bottom Line is HOPE', 32.

asked 'why would a business want to build in South Central if people are too poor to buy their products?'[74]

Operation Hope also failed to truly engage residents in how the tours should proceed through South and East Los Angeles, or even how they felt about how their neighbourhoods were portrayed through these efforts. While working with corporations and local business owners to design the tour, there remained a distinct lack of participation from other community residents who, as we have seen, were often sceptical regarding urban development and minimum-wage service jobs. Despite attempting to restore a sense of ownership to communities, the Bankers Bus Tours was Bryant's vision for the urban future of South Central, and did not deliver the 'ownership' or control over productions of place and space that many residents desired. Yet we should not assume that because of these problems that Operation Hope was a failure. The group facilitated $7,000,000 of loans to inner-city communities, with Bryant claiming that not a single loan had defaulted.[75] Moreover, groups such as RLA and Operation Hope helped to reduce the critical need for services within the inner-city. Only around half (sixteen) of the supermarkets promised by chains were built in South Central, and a lack of financial services continues to blight the community.[76] Yet any increase in the number of retail and financial services offered an improvement, providing residents with greater opportunities to both shop and bank in their community, and the sense that their neighbourhood was being recognised by developers and corporations. Finally, John Bryant's Operation Hope offered one, albeit flawed, vision of an urban future for low-income communities of colour. It did not see the dominant ideologies behind economic and social policies as inherently flawed, but as neglectful. In Bryant's view, the failure of corporate America to include low-income communities of colour was the result of a misunderstanding caused by historic generalisations and stereotypes which demonised these neighbourhoods. He therefore felt that this could be remedied through the renegotiation of representational space, or recreating productions of place which demonstrated the viability of these communities. Bus tours therefore provided the ideal medium to achieve this, by providing financiers whose knowledge of South Central was formulated by media images and stereotypes with the opportunity to physically experience Bryant's construction of what South Central meant, and what it could become.

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[74]Tobar, 'Riots' Scars Include 200 Still-Vacant Lots'.
[75]Denenberg, 'His Bottom Line is HOPE', 33.
[76] Shaffer, 'The Persistence of L.A.'s Grocery Gap', pp.39-40, Pollard, 'Banking at the Margins'.

If Operation Hope was flawed due to an inability to increase the number of jobs in underserved areas, then another series of bus tours hoped to restructure urban meaning by highlighting these neighbourhoods' greatest source of employment. The Tourism Industry Development Council (TIDC) was the organised, grassroots response to the release of the 1992 report *Accidental Tourism*. The report had been a collaboration between eight community organisers, representing various unions and groups such as Concerned Citizens of South Central L.A., the South Central Organizing Committee, Little Tokyo Service Center, and Jobs With Peace, alongside six graduate students and two professors at the School of Urban Planning at UCLA. Tourism was Los Angeles' second largest industry, employed 400,000 Angelenos, and generated an annual revenue of six-billion dollars. Yet, as *Accidental Tourism* highlighted, the Black and Latinx people who comprised the majority of this industry's workforce, rarely received much benefit from these substantial profits. Neither did the neighbourhoods these employees lived in, as tourist attractions were almost entirely located in the city's most privileged locales, such as Hollywood, Santa Monica, or Downtown. [77]

Accidental Tourism therefore explored the widespread exploitation of low-income communities of colour and workers within L.A.'s tourist industry. They considered the large number of non-union workers within the industry and their low wages comparative to that of other tourist hotspots in the U.S.[78] The report questioned how the city council heavily subsidised redevelopment projects, such as the regeneration of the Los Angeles Convention Center. The project would cost taxpayers $1.4 billion, but promised 3000 jobs for local workers, a number which authors of the report found dubious.[79] Finally, they criticised how the Los Angeles Convention and Visitors Bureau advertised tourism in the city, which 'promotes development for some and underdevelopment for others.'[80] This critique engaged directly with the anger felt by many communities of colour in the years preceding the Rodney King crisis; that economic inequality and injustice were being expressed through the spaces of the city. In terms of tourism, this meant that 'great efforts, including those made by the Visitors Bureau, are made to promote large attractions' such as Disneyland and Universal Studios, yet 'no such effort is made to promote East Los Angeles and South Central.'[81] These perceptions of spatial inequality were important. As tourism scholars have suggested,

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[77] Phil Ansell, Fred Broadwell, Robin Cannon, Sharon Delugach, George Givens, Ellen Goodman, Kirsten Grimm, Patricia Larsen, Sara Martinez, Lillibeth Navarro, Judy Nishimoto-Aguilera, Marc Norman, Alice Salinas, Leonardo Vilchis, *Accidental Tourism: A Critique of the Los Angeles Tourism Industry and Proposals for Change* (Los Angeles: UCLA, 1992), p.1, Rebuild L.A. Collection, Box 223, Folder 234.
[78] *Ibid*., p.3.
[79] *Ibid*.,
[80] *Ibid*., p.1.
[81] *Ibid*., p.143.

the industry relies on a symbolic economy that can only succeed through the successful cultivation of a particular set of images and ideals, and tourists bring with them a set of perceptions that 'filter and refract the urban scene'.[82] *Accidental Tourism* recommended that 'given the current crisis, the time has come to organise an economic development strategy on tourism that will provide better living conditions' for all workers and communities in Los Angeles. They suggested that as well as organising workers, the city should promote 'ethnic' tourist attractions in East and South Central Los Angeles; locations such as the Japanese-American National Museum, Watts Towers, Olivera Street and the Dunbar Hotel, and argued for the creation of a 'Minority Advisory Council' to assist with this.[83] Through advocating for a greater diversification in how tourism was promoted by the city, this report and the activists involved were part of the broader effort explored throughout this thesis which aimed to reorganise how community spaces within urban Los Angeles were both imagined and utilised.

The report was not simply a list of criticisms which derided tourism policies in Los Angeles. *Accidental Tourism* believed that if communities could gain greater control of this industry, then tourism held great potential to revitalise inner-city neighbourhoods. To support these claims, the report explored various previous efforts to structure an inclusive urban tourism. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, U.S. cities developed tourism programmes as a means of combating the reverberations of America's 'urban crisis', both as a remedy to economic problems and to counteract the narrative of inner-city decline, crime, and conflict.[84] These worked to reconstruct urban meaning and the symbolism attached to 'place', efforts which had consistently been a critical tool for tourist destinations across the United States.[85] In order to make cities appear 'safe' and attractive to visitors, municipal officials were often required to construct enclosed or segmented spaces for tourism, to foster appealing images which eliminated all recognition of a city's less desirable realities.[86] The inequalities fostered through this approach both in terms of the uneven focus away from poor communities of colour, and the economic disadvantages produced through an increasingly low-wage service industry, encouraged some to demand greater participation for minorities. Perhaps the most notable was in Philadelphia in the late 1980s. The city created the Multicultural Affairs Congress, who worked to bring a greater number of Black visitors to the city by highlighting

[82] Susan S. Fainstein, Lily M. Hoffman and Dennis R. Judd, 'Introduction' in *Cities and Visitors*: *Regulating People, Markets, and City Space*, ed. by Fainstein, Hoffman and Judd (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), pp.1-18 [p.2], Hal K. Rothman, 'Selling the Meaning of Place: Entrepreneurship, Tourism, and Community Transformation in the Twentieth-Century American West', *Pacific Historical Review*, 65.4 (1996), 525-557.
[83] *Accidental Tourism*, pp.143-4.
[84] See Dennis R. Judd, 'Building the Tourist City: Editor's Introduction', in *The Infrastructure of Play: Building the Tourist City*, ed. by Judd (New York: M.E Sharpe, 2002), pp.1-18.
[85] Rothman, 'Selling the Meaning of Place'.
[86] Judd, 'Building the Tourist City', p.7, p.14.

areas of Philadelphia's history which they believed would interest African American tourists. As Elizabeth Grant argues, by developing tours and trails specifically designed to highlight the city's Black history - including the houses of W.E.B. Du Bois and Paul Robeson, and institutions such as the Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church and the Pennsylvania Abolitionist Society - Philadelphia reconstructed urban meaning as part of an effort to promote tourism.[87] The Congress' work proved successful, with Philadelphia being ranked amongst the top destinations for African American tourists by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and this segment of the industry became a generator of revenue for the city.[88] However, by attempting to appeal to middle-class Black visitors, the plan continued to concentrate primarily in the city's social and economic core in the Downtown area, rather than venturing into communities of colour, thus continuing to neglect the potential for tourism to ignite economic rejuvenation in these areas.[89] Nevertheless, their efforts indicated to activists that a market for minority tourism sites could prove profitable, and could help alter the socially constructed meanings of urban space.

Los Angeles itself had also seen efforts to develop more inclusive tourism sites for visitors and Angelenos alike. Dolores Hayden organised 'The Power of Place' programme in 1986 in an effort to reinstate the role of women, workers, and minorities into the historical narrative of L.A.'s urban development, which had often focused on commemorating white male politicians and civic elites. As a public historian, Hayden looked to broaden social history beyond academia, and to allow her experiences as a curator to guide her scholarship. She believed that by reframing urban public spaces to highlight their symbolic importance to the histories of marginalised groups, public heritage could alter present identities and power structures, creating 'narratives of cultural identity, embedded in the historical urban landscape,' which could 'be interpreted to project their largest and most enduring meanings for the city as a whole.' [90] The programme developed walking tours and public exhibitions throughout the 1980s to highlight sites and spaces of Black, immigrant, and women's history often obscured by the modern city and processes of redevelopment. This culminated in 1989 with the opening of several art installations celebrating the life of emancipated slave and noted midwife Biddy Mason, the founder of the First African Methodist Episcopal church and Los Angeles' most famed Black resident of the nineteenth century.[91] Having purchased space within a new city parking garage built on Mason's former homestead; her work with local artists recreated the home and developed a mural exploring the life and experiences of

[87] Elizabeth Grant, 'Race and Tourism in America's First City', *Journal of Urban History*, 31.6 (2005), 850-871.
[88] *Ibid*., 850.
[89] *Ibid*., 861.
[90] Hayden, *The Power of Place*, p.13.
[91] Dolores Hayden, 'Biddy Mason's Los Angeles 1856-1891', *California History* 68.3 (1989), 86-99.

'Grandma Mason'. The project looked to both highlight the role of women of colour in the city's history, with the intention of 'drawing citizens to claim the history as their own,' whilst also placing this story 'as part of the overall historical narrative' of urban development, encouraging visitors to 'contemplate change on Spring Street in both space and time' in the redeveloped Downtown area.[92] Hayden's work inspired her writing of the influential theory of public history, *The Power of Place*, in which she argued that social history was embedded within urban built environments that needed to be understood by preserving and experiencing 'vernacular' landscapes, and recognising the social identities contained within spatial practices. The Power of Place project, while producing an impressive work of public history and an influential theory of cultural geography, replicated Philadelphia by focusing on reconstructing urban meaning within an already prosperous Downtown nucleus. The programme declined an opportunity to invest in the Fire Station 30 in South Central, a site of historic importance owing to the struggle for integration of the fire service, fearing a lack of visitors who would be willing to venture into the neighbourhood.[93] Hayden does not appear to have contributed to the *Accidental Tourism* report, and the TIDC make no reference to her work in their organising efforts. The Power of Place, however, had once again demonstrated that efforts to remap tourism and heritage attractions to include marginalised urban residents could garner an audience, and have important implications for the socially constructed meaning and usage of urban space.

The TIDC formed in November 1993 as an attempt to realise the advisory council recommended by *Accidental Tourism*, although they were not city-funded as was suggested by the report and had been seen in Philadelphia.[94] In funding applications, the TIDC proudly stated the diversity of their board, creating an amalgamated group of some of L.A.'s most prominent organisers and campaigners.[95] Gilda Haas, David Hayes-Bautista, Manuel Pastor and Kent Wong from UCLA had all been actively publicising and participating in struggles for social and economic justice within the city throughout the 1980s and 1990s as part of the Community Scholars Program. Several members of L.A.'s Hotel Workers and Restaurant Workers Union (HERE) Local 11, who had played key roles in the upsurge of Latinx union activity, were part of the board.[96] Robin Cannon, whose work with Concerned Citizens of South Central LA had prevented a waste incinerator being built in South Central, brought the organisations' new concerns over housing and development to the board, alongside South

[92] Hayden, *The Power of Place*, p.187.
[93] *Ibid*., p.171.
[94] *Accidental Tourism*, p.145.
[95] Tourism Industry Development Council, 'Liberty Hill Foundation Application for Funding', 29 August 1994, p.3, Liberty Hill Collection, Box 48, Folder 3.
[96] See Laslett, *Sunshine Was Never Enough*, pp.300-312.

Central resident Ezekiel Mobley.[97] Given their variety of other commitments, the board only met on a bi-monthly basis, but had a full-time executive director in the form of Madeline Janis-Aparicio, who had previously led the influential Central American Refugees Center (CARECEN). The TIDC's mission statement indicated that their goal was to 'search for opportunities to address, through a tourism-related strategy, both the roots of poverty (i.e. wages and unemployment) and the quality of life of LA's inner-city, multi-cultural neighbourhoods.'[98] The first part of this strategy concentrated on improving conditions for the city's 400,000 tourism employees. These were primarily non-union immigrant workers from Mexico and Central America, who earned an average wage of $5.35 per-hour, one of the lowest of any major tourism market.[99] Like janitors, hotel staff from low-income communities of colour were some of those who suffered most from these structural economic shifts and thus who community groups and unions fervently looked to organise.

In addition, the TIDC also wanted to redefine what actually constituted a 'tourism site' in L.A., and influence policy on how tourism was understood and promoted. The TIDC argued that 'some of the most interesting history, culture and communities in Los Angeles are located in the poorest, inner-city neighbourhoods – the neighbourhoods where most tourism workers live.'[100] Maria Elena Durazo, President of HERE Local 11, noted that 80% of her union's members lived in the same neighbourhoods neglected by tourism and its supposed economic benefits for the city.[101] They looked to promote the concept of 'community-based tourism', which for the TIDC meant 'the notion that tourism can and should serve as an economic development tool for neighbourhoods.'[102] Community-based tourism, defined crudely by one scholar as 'pro-poor tourism', has since become popularised in the Global South as an attempt to ensure community participation and management of tourism projects to help promote sustainability and economic development.[103] To suggest that tourism strategies would involve the communities who lived within them may seem obvious, yet many previous attempts at 'ethnic' tourism did not engage with residents' concerns about how their neighbourhoods would be marketed. These problems became salient during

[97] For full board members see World City Media Bureau, '1994 Los Angeles Insight Tours', n.d., Liberty Hill Collection, Box 48, Folder 3.
[98] 'Liberty Hill Foundation Application for Funding', p.6.
[99] *Ibid*., p.1.
[100] *Ibid*., p.2.
[101] Leslie Berestein, 'Selling the City', *Los Angeles Times*, 6 August 1995.
[102] 'Liberty Hill Foundation Application for Funding,' p.5, *Accidental Tourism*, p.5.
[103] Colin Michael Hall (ed.), *Pro-Poor Tourism: Who Benefits?: Perspectives on Tourism and Poverty Reduction* (Bristol: Channel View Publications, 2007). See also: Andrea Giampiccoli and Oliver Mtapuri, 'Community-Based Tourism: An Exploration of the Concept from a Political Perspective', *Tourism Review International,* 16.1 (2012), 29-43, Rachel Dodds, Alisha Ali and Kelly Galaski, 'Mobilizing Knowledge: Determining Key Elements for Success and Pitfalls in Developing Community-Based Tourism', *Current Issues in Tourism* 21.13 (2018), 1547-1568.

efforts to redevelop and market the historic Black district of Harlem in New York during the 1980s and 1990s. The corporatized tourist restructuring that followed resulted in a lost sense of community ownership by residents, who complained that their communities were subject to voyeurism from 'whites on safari', the romanticising of social ills and invitations to tourists to observe daily life in these communities without engaging with residents or providing any money to local businesses.[104] As the critical race theorist Patricia Williams noted about these Harlem tours, 'what astonished me was that no one had asked the people in the churches if they minded being stared at like living museums. I wondered what would happen if a group of blue-jeaned Blacks were to walk uninvited into a synagogue on Passover or St. Anthony's of Padua in the middle of High Mass. Just to peer, not to pray.'[105]

The TIDC hoped to avoid this potential for exploitation. They used their vast connections as organisers to work alongside over one-hundred community groups in devising their tours. With the assistance of these groups, the TIDC hoped to develop bus tours which - much like Operation Hope's Bankers Bus Tours - transformed the imagined geography and popular understandings of low-income communities of colour. Organisations such as Mothers of East Los Angeles became closely involved in planning specific tours where their expertise was valued. Other groups, such as the long-standing antipoverty organisation Watts Labor Community Action Committee, actually became one of the tour's destinations. In opening their headquarters to visitors on these tours, President Teryl Watkins hoped to show that 'good things happen in Watts every day.'[106] They also looked to connect communities to the industry, and provide residents and workers with more information on tourism policies, aiming to help them demand a role in the decision-making process. The TIDC hoped to foster an awareness of the unequal and unfair policies surrounding tourism within communities of colour, stating that one of their goals was 'to measurably affect the terms of the debate about the tourism industry and its relationship to social equity for tourism workers and neglected communities.'[107] Organisers hoped to utilise this greater awareness of inequalities within the tourism industry to foster long-term efforts to rectify these disparities. They planned a series of informal meetings in nine target areas, and looked to create several autonomous Neighbourhood Tourism Councils for each community.[108] In this endeavour, the TIDC clearly differed from the directives of Operation Hope, where the design and intended outcomes of the tours were John Bryant's alone. By organising around issues within the tourism industry, and seeking solutions through the means of community-

[104] For tourism in Harlem see Lily Hoffman, 'Tourism and the Revitalisation of Harlem' in *Constructions of Urban Space* , ed. by Ray Hutchinson (Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing, 1999), pp.207-223.
[105] Patricia Williams, quoted in Ford, 'Urban Space and the Color Line', 129.
[106] Kevin Baxter, 'A Tour of the Countries', *Los Angeles Times*, 27 April 1997.
[107] TIDC, 'Follow-Up Questionnaire', 9 August 1994, Liberty Hill Collection, Box 48, Folder 3.
[108] 'Liberty Hill Foundation Application for Funding,' p.5.

based tourism, the TIDC looked to harness the opinions and expertise of local activists to reshape urban meaning. Through initiating greater attention towards these communities as legitimate tourist destinations and sites of cultural interest, the TIDC's reshaping of urban space could have positive material consequences for these residents. Crucially, their plans could also restore residents' control and autonomy over the future of their urban communities.

The TIDC took particular issue with the way the city subsidised certain projects. From the LAPD to the Cerrell Report, the mapping of racial and class stereotypes onto the neighbourhoods of Los Angeles had serious material consequences for people of colour. The TIDC charged that L.A.'s official map of tourist destinations, paid for primarily by public funds, 'effectively conceals most of LA's historical, multi-ethnic communities.'[109] Public investment into the tourism industry extended well beyond maps, however, and they accused the city of 'unconditionally' investing billions of public money into the infrastructure of tourism (such as into the Convention Center in 1992), and spending millions annually to promote tourist attractions 'to a few affluent areas in and around the city.'[110] The TIDC argued that the main beneficiaries of these policies, such as hotel chains and entertainment companies, offered little in the way of good wages, benefits, or training to their workers. This was based, they suggested, on the unchallenged assumptions about how economic benefits of tourism would be equitable. They were sceptical of the claim that the full $8 billion of revenue this redevelopment would generate would 'ripple throughout all communities in Los Angeles,' and that the creation of jobs - regardless of wages or security - would remedy urban ills.[111] Given the background of many of the TIDC's board members as organisers and activists, they clearly reflected community groups' frustration with redevelopment strategies which only reproduced social and economic inequality. By focusing on these subsidies, the TIDC highlighted their concerns with the ideologies underlying urban redevelopment, and questioned who would actually benefit from these municipal policies. They remained optimistic that tourism could benefit both low-income communities of colour and the city as a whole, but insisted that this was dependent on 'a strategy that involves low income, inner city communities and tourism workers in crafting a new vision for the industry.'[112] This interpretation of economic development stemmed once again from the *Accidental Tourism* report, which believed that subsidies should only be given to projects which guarantee 'progress toward the creation and maintenance of quality jobs with liveable wages, increased

[109] *Ibid*. p.1.
[110] *Ibid*.
[111] *Ibid.,* p.7
[112] *Ibid.,* p.4.

participation in political decision-making processes, and improved availability of services.'[113] In linking how the city subsidised projects that both failed to promote communities of colour and underserved tourism workers, activists were again creating a crucial link between urban development and spatial justice as intertwined components of rebuilding essential to communities. The TIDC's bus tours therefore emulated Operation Hope's efforts to incorporate communities of colour in private-sector redevelopment plans. Unlike Bryant and the Hope initiative, however, it also looked to empower residents of these communities to have a greater role in determining economic and development policies within the city.

The TIDC developed their guided bus tours (named 'Insight Tours') to coincide with the 1994 FIFA World Cup, where Los Angeles would be hosting eight tournament matches. The free tours were targeted at journalists arriving for the tournament, and they hoped that they would draw attention towards human interest stories beyond the sporting spectacle, and provide more positive coverage concerning urban areas two years after the Rodney King Crisis. In total, 103 local, national and international journalists took part in these tours, alongside foreign dignitaries visiting L.A. for the World Cup. These tours were recorded and collated into a 15 minute video, *On Any Day*, which was to be used by the Convention and Visitors' Bureau for promotional purposes. In 1996, the TIDC worked alongside the Bureau to redesign and repeat the tours, as part of a larger programme in aid of a large convention for 5,500 tourism professionals worldwide. Naming themselves the 'World City Media Bureau,' the TIDC promised that the tours would be 'a unique look into the heart and soul of our multicultural city.'[114] These tours provided the clearest indication of how the TIDC wished to contest the production of knowledge and representations of urban space. As John Urry's concept of the 'tourist gaze' details, visitors often hold certain expectations regarding the behaviour and actions of a local population, based on their desire to experience 'authenticity'.[115] Ignored by civic boosters who concentrated their efforts on the white enclaves of the city, the assumptions of what constituted 'authenticity' within these communities of colour were often produced through sensationalised media stories, LAPD fear-mongering, and crude depictions in popular culture. Neighbourhoods such as South Central and East L.A. were inscribed with images and ideas which suggested 'that life here is consumed by violence, crime, smog, traffic, [and] congestion.'[116] As one Universal Studios visitor commented when asked to describe South and East L.A., 'the pictures I have of these

[113] *Accidental Tourism*, p.11.
[114] World City Media Bureau, '1994 Los Angeles Insight Tours', n.d., Liberty Hill Collection, Box 48, Folder 3.
[115] John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage, 1990).
[116] TIDC, 'Background to the Making of the Video, "On Any Day"', n.d., Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy Records (Collection 2252), UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles [Hereafter: LAANE Collection], Box 17, Folder 39.

neighbourhoods are of gangs and crime and slums…I mean, is there another side?'[117] Positive perceptions of L.A., which had been historically constructed by city boosters, municipal governments, and now the tourism industry, were often traditionally associated with affluent 'white' areas of the city: Hollywood, Beverly Hills or Malibu, that offered visions of 'blue skies, beaches, palm trees, [and] Disneyland.'[118] As Eric Avila has argued, this was a carefully constructed means of situating and promoting L.A. as 'the nation's white spot,' a reflection of the postwar suburban ideals manifested through popular culture.[119] The TIDC were therefore required to invert this 'tourist gaze': to offer a legitimate, authentic experience of these communities while attempting to move away from the derogatory assumptions that had prevented them from being seen as tourist destinations. Much like Operation Hope, the Insight Tours needed to balance a number of competing messages, and project several contrasting images of Black and Latinx communities. While attendees may have been limited in their numbers, they 'seemed to agree that they had learned about a part of town hitherto obscured in news reports of drive-by shootings and other misdeeds,' and thus brought a sense of 'normality' which humanised residents, alongside seeing these regions' potential as tourist attractions.[120]

The TIDC wanted attendees to recognise the problems faced by L.A.'s communities of colour, and to acknowledge them as they would other neighbourhoods in the city. The tour travelled to meet former gang members during the tour of East Los Angeles as part of the visit to Homeboy Tortillas, spoke to school children playing football in Pico-Union, and met community activists at the Dunbar Hotel. The opportunity for attendees to meet residents themselves, to talk to them about their communities' problems, and to ask questions, allowed participants to confront the more complex realities inherent within these isolated communities. As Janis-Aparicio believed, 'it's much better and safer for people to see the whole picture, negative and positive.'[121] Again, the tours had to convey and balance two overlapping images. Organisers had to deconstruct ideas of the city's Black, Latinx, and immigrant communities as 'little more than dangerous wastelands to be avoided en route to Disneyland or the beach.'[122]Yet they also had to 'go beyond' the generic impressions of L.A. as 'a palm-lined playground for the rich and famous, dotted with theme parks and populated by suntanned blondes,' that were attributed only to the white spaces of the city, in order demonstrate the unique attractions available to tourists.[123] *Accidental Tourism* perceptively

[117]Berestein, 'Selling the City'.
[118]TIDC, 'Background to the Making of the Video, "On Any Day"'.
[119] Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White,* pp.20-64. For Disneyland, see pp.106-144.
[120] Patrick McDonnell, 'Cultural Mystery Tour' *Los Angeles Times*, 7 July 1994.
[121] Berestein, 'Selling the City'.
[122]*Ibid*.
[123]*Ibid.*

noted that 'choices about what is promoted and who benefits are conscious efforts, and these decisions frequently revolve around the image rather than the substance of Los Angeles.'[124] This TIDC therefore used the tours to alter this 'image', and carefully reveal the 'substance' of these neighbourhoods, by demonstrating the vibrant cultural life of inner-city locations and challenging the production of imagined geographies. Through this, they hoped to restructure decisions and policies regarding which areas of the city would be promoted as legitimate tourist attractions, and therefore bring economic development to communities of colour.

Figure 10: Illustrated map of Insight Tours offered by the TIDC.[125]

[124] *Accidental Tourism*, p.2.
[125] LAANE Files, Box 17, Folder 40.

In both 1994 and 1996, the TIDC conducted four tours to explore communities underserved by the tourism industry. The locations chosen, and the sites that were selected, were indicative of the imagery and symbolism the Council wished to portray. The tour of South Central, for instance, was titled 'South Central Renaissance: The Struggle for Community.' To explore the themes of 'renaissance' and 'community,' one site chosen was the historic Dunbar Hotel. Originally opened in 1928 as the first hotel in Los Angeles designed specifically for African-American patrons, the Dunbar Hotel hosted the leading Black musicians, entertainers and celebrities when they travelled to L.A. in the 1940s and 1950s.[126] Despite being a national heritage site, the building fell into disrepair in the 1970s. Plans for its renovation were devised in 1978, but a number of financial and structural problems delayed this until 1990. Upon reopening, the Dunbar hosted both an African American history museum and 72 low-income housing units for residents and senior citizens, becoming the first residential accommodation to be built around the Central Avenue area of South Central for 25 years.[127] Utilising a site which both recognised the long history of economic and cultural vitality in South Central, while simultaneously tackling the pressing contemporary issue of low-income housing encapsulated the innovative use of urban space and the 'positive story' that the TIDC was attempting to convey.[128]

In 1996, the South Central tour also visited the headquarters of the Watts Labor Community Action Committee (WLCAC), who had been one of South Los Angeles' leading community service providers since forming during the War on Poverty.[129] Having been destroyed during the Crisis, the WLCAC rebuilt their home on South Central Avenue. The new centre housed a sculpture entitled 'Mother of Humanity', a 99-seat theatre, an art gallery, and a gift shop, sitting alongside the organisation's main offices where employees attempted to secure social services for the local community.[130] It was created by the WLCAC with the hope of attracting visitors from outside the community, with President Teryl Watkins saying that they looked to 'use art and culture as an economic base…if I bring you here to see this exhibit, when you leave you may need gas, you may stop to get a soda.'[131] This stop therefore challenged the assumptions made regarding the culture of poverty in Black communities. By mixing social service provision with art and theatre, both the TIDC and WLCAC condensed the nuance and complexity of everyday life in South Central to demonstrate the wealth of experiences

[126] 'History of the Dunbar Hotel', n.d., Tom Bradley Papers, Box 3882, Folder 7.
[127] William Elkins to Ali Webb, 16 March 1987, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 3882, Folder 7. 'Bradley Celebrates Opening of Historic Dunbar Hotel', 10 July 1990, Tom Bradley Papers, Box 3880, Folder 3.
[128] World City Media Bureau, 'The World City Media Bureau; Get the Inside Story on the Best of L.A.', n.d., Liberty Hill Collection, Box 48, Folder 3.
[129] For WLCAC, see Bauman, *Race & The War on Poverty,* pp.69-89.
[130] Baxter, 'A Tour of the Countries'.
[131] *Ibid*.

and stories within the community. The South Central tour was one of the most popular attractions offered by the Visitors Bureau to tourism professionals in 1996, second only to a tour of Disneyland.[132] In creating this success, the TIDC selected sites for their South Central tour that shared their vision and strategies for the future of Los Angeles. These were spaces that embraced the history, culture and optimism of their community, whilst also looking to provide social services and foster economic development to help rebuild and improve the neighbourhood. It reconstructed popular images of the 'place' of South Central as a viable tourist destination of interest to visitors, which in turn hoped to produce economic revitalisation for the communities within the area.

The Council's other tours also looked to blend cultural attractions with revealing insight into the lived experience of L.A.'s communities of colour. The Pico-Union/Koreatown tour was marketed as an opportunity to meet L.A.'s 'newest community', where half of all residents - Korean or Central American - had arrived into the area within the past decade.[133] Led by geographer Manuel Pastor, the tour offered the opportunity to watch the local high school football team and 'meet the players and their families after the game and learn about life in LA's immigrant communities.'[134] Their Hollywood tour, titled 'The Hollywood Magnet – What's the Attraction?' offered perhaps the clearest engagement with, and inversion of, the typical stereotypes of the city. Shunning the area's reputation for entertainment attractions, the tour stressed Hollywood's multicultural reality, with 80 languages spoken in the local high school, explained the reasons behind the 15,000 homeless youth living there, and visited the Gay and Lesbian Community Service Center to understand how they were tackling the AIDS epidemic.[135] Meanwhile during the East L.A. tour, filmmaker Jesus Salvador Trevino, the assigned guide for the excursion, used the journeys between stops to discuss the history of the Chicano/a Movement and the displacement created by urban renewal, noting that 'the story of Mexican Americans is the story of dislocation.'[136]

The tours offered an opportunity to celebrate the artistic and cultural imprint of these communities. East L.A. was marketed as 'the world's largest street gallery,' and advertised as an opportunity to see the birthplace of the 'mural' movement that had proliferated across the Southwest U.S., while attendees also visited a food market in Koreatown.[137] The TIDC had to be even more nuanced than Operation Hope in how they constructed these

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[132] *Ibid*.
[133] World City Media Bureau, 'The World City Media Bureau: Get the Inside Story on the Best of L.A.'
[134] *Ibid*.
[135] *Ibid*.
[136] McDonnell, 'Cultural Mystery Tour'.
[137] Baxter, 'A Tour of the Countries', Larry Gordon, 'Tourism Video Touts L.A's Ethnic Neighborhoods', *Los Angeles Times*, 19 May 1985, B8, 'The World City Media Bureau; Get the Inside Story on the Best of L.A.'

community spaces in the imagination of tour attendees. They looked to acknowledge the negative stereotypes of gangs, crime and drugs that dominated media stories, while also counteracting them with positive stories which promoted these neighbourhoods as welcoming and safe. Yet they also had to find marketable sites that could be interpreted as an alternative to the artificial and predominately white spaces traditionally associated with L.A., and tell stories which connected outside audiences to the social reality of the inner-city. The opportunity for attendees to experience these 'realities' for themselves, and to physically inhabit these communities, provided a basis which allowed the TIDC to construct these stories.

In addition, by working with a number of community organisations to design these tours, organisers could develop this journey in a way which displayed 'authenticity', by including destinations deemed socially or culturally important to residents, and by encouraging members of the community to speak to attendees themselves. This helped the TIDC further another of their key ambitions: creating a sense of spatial reclamation and ownership of urban space which had been at the heart of many activists' demands for spatial justice during the previous decade. Their appeal to a more equitable distribution of tourism profits, to assist 'the economic and social development of all communities in the greater Los Angeles area,' was inherently based around the manner in which economic inequality had been reproduced through the spaces of L.A.[138] By demanding that areas such as South Central and East Los Angeles were marketed and promoted as tourism sites, activists were positioning residents of these communities as citizens amongst a much larger L.A., equally valued by both the tourism industry and municipal politics more generally. As the TIDC explained, their work was designed to 'empower minority communities, provide decent wages for workers, and thus make Los Angeles (*all of Los Angeles*) a nice place to visit, work and live.'[139] The TIDC were encouraging residents to claim recognition of their belonging within the metropolis, as residents who contributed to the city's economy, history and culture. They believed their tours created 'a powerful "sense of place", and an equally powerful sense of confidence among the people who live and work in that place.'[140] Hayden believed that The Power of Place project could act as a vehicle to reconceptualise local spaces and empower residents, and the TIDC felt they had achieved a similar objective.[141] Through working with a variety of multi-ethnic community organisations, they looked to inspire this 'confidence' by establishing what residents wanted to exhibit as attractions for their tours. They were not simply searching for marketable landmarks, but discovering what

[138] '1994-95 TIDC Program' 10 August 1994, Box 15, Folder 58, LAANE Collection.
[139] 'Liberty Hill Foundation Application for Funding', p.7. Emphasis in original.
[140] TIDC, 'Background to the Making of the Video, "On Any Day"'.
[141] *Ibid*.

made these various neighbourhoods proud of their communities and seeking to promote them, hence why their South-Central tour encompassed 'late-night jazz cafes, art galleries and African clothing boutiques' as well as the more recognisable Watts Towers.[142] The TIDC were therefore not only looking to foster economic development through a re-imagining of the tourist industry, but to encourage residents to claim their right to the city. Organisers wished to see South and East Los Angeles developed as tourist destinations, but they did not want this to be an autocratic or unidirectional process. Instead, by highlighting inequalities within the city's tourism policies, and developing tours alongside residents, they looked to encourage these communities to take control and play a greater role in determining the spatial development of Los Angeles.

One further way of developing South Central and East Los Angeles as tourist destinations came through the TIDC embracing and promoting L.A. as a multicultural city. Tom Bradley had dedicated significant effort and financial resources in an effort to reconceptualise L.A. as a 'World City' throughout the 1980s. Yet following the Rodney King Crisis, and especially given the level of interethnic violence between African Americans and Korean immigrants, commentators began to suggest that this diversity had created chaotic tension and instability.[143] The TIDC, however, saw this multicultural landscape as a potential attraction for visitors. They therefore felt that one of the innovations of their 'new definition of tourism' was that it 'celebrates rather than hides the city's diversity.'[144] Los Angeles housed the largest Mexican, Armenian, Korean, Filipino, Salvadoran, and Guatemalan populations outside of their respective countries, and the TIDC looked to capitalise on this. 'You can experience the cultures of eighty countries in a half-hour drive through L.A.' became one of the slogans deployed by Janis-Aparicio's as she promoted the tours.[145] The TIDC actively sought out examples of interracial cooperation. For instance, one of their South Central tour stops was the Watts/Century Latino Organization, the area's first community service organisation for Latinx residents, who worked extensively with the Black residents of Watts, and organised a multicultural Cinco de Mayo festival in 1990.[146] The Council did not portray this as a simple tale of intercultural harmony, however. Although they celebrated the patchwork cultural hegemony of L.A., they were also respectful of cultural differences within the various neighbourhoods, and generally assigned tour stops relevant to the predominant

[142] Berestein, 'Selling the City'.
[143] Mia Hyoung Song, *Strange Future: Pessimism and the 1992 Los Angeles Riots* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).
[144] TIDC, 'Follow-Up Questionnaire'.
[145] McDonnell, 'Cultural Mystery Tour', Gordon, 'Tourism Video Touts L.A's Ethnic Neighborhoods', B8, Baxter, 'A Tour of the Countries'.
[146] 'Watts Shows Diversity for Cinco De Mayo', *Los Angeles Times* 5 May 1991.

population of the specific areas. By working with these organisations, and promoting the cultural heritage of African American, Mexican American, and Asian American populations, the TIDC projected an image of a complex but congruous urban landscape, working together for a new Los Angeles through the remaking of urban space. To the TIDC, the reclamation of urban space was not a goal to be attained by one racial or ethnic group alone. They saw the city's diversity as a 'selling point', and worked to bring these distinct communities together under the broader goal of securing spatial self-determination and autonomy for all residents throughout the city.

The TIDC's work to challenge inequalities within L.A.'s tourist policies appears to have fostered immediate changes to the industry. Moreover, their approach towards organising and spatial justice had important consequences for social justice movements in Los Angeles. It is difficult to uncover detailed accounts regarding how either attendees, or residents, felt about the tours. Some community groups, however, indicated they were satisfied. Mothers of East Los Angeles President Juana Gutierrez was painfully aware of how negative perceptions and media-fuelled stereotypes could impact the physical spaces of her community, and MELA had previously worked to oppose the media's attempts to stigmatise their neighbourhood. Gutierrez had helped plan the East L.A. tour, and commented that she was 'glad people have come to see that our community is not as bad as it is painted.'[147] After attending this particular tour, journalist Daniel Bernheim, who already lived in and reported on L.A., stated he previously held a 'certain image' of these areas. He noted he was surprised when he visited East L.A. by the number of people walking on the streets, suggesting to him that they were neither afraid of gangs and crime, nor as reliant on cars as other residents.[148] His comments suggest that the TIDC's goals of removing the stigma of the inner-city and revealing the cultural plurality of L.A. were being fulfilled, albeit on a limited scale. In terms of influencing municipally-funded promotion of tourism, by 1997, the city's Convention and Visitors' Bureau had created a cultural tourism advisory board which sought to promote attractions in L.A.'s communities of colour. The Bureau also organised materials for self-guided tours of diverse neighbourhoods, creating 'ethnic itineraries' to sites of cultural significance not on the usual tourist agenda. In total, over one million flyers advertising these were distributed to hotels, airlines and other tourist centres.[149] While this evidence does not suggest a widespread or sweeping restructuring of the tourism industry in Los Angeles, it does demonstrate how efforts to re-imagine and reshape the meaning of urban space held great potential to benefit low-income communities of colour.

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[147] McDonnell, 'Cultural Mystery Tour'.
[148] *Ibid*.
[149] Baxter, 'A Tour of the Countries'.

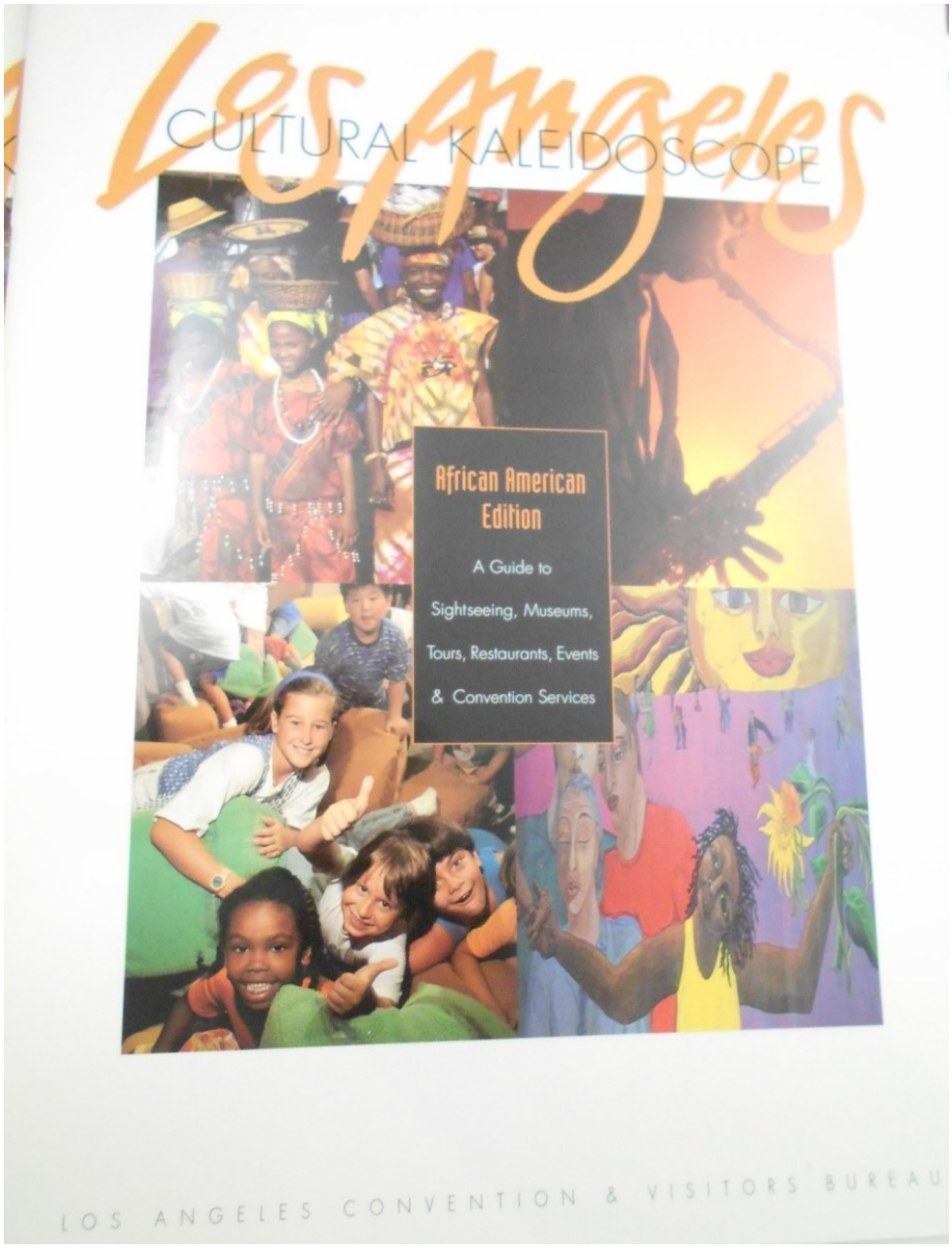

Figure 11: Los Angeles Convention and Visitors Bureau's guide to African American tourism sites in the city, 1997.[150]

The TIDC's success in assembling a broad range of progressive activists to focus on issues of spatial inequality and redevelopment would fundamentally alter the nature of social justice organising in L.A. The TIDC's emphasis on the deficiencies surrounding state subsidies

[150] Los Angeles Convention and Visitors Bureau, *Los Angeles Cultural Kaleidoscope, African American Edition: A Guide to Sightseeing, Museums, Tours, Restaurants, Events & Convention Services*, 1997, LAANE Files, Box 17, Folder 39.

given to developers creating minimum-wage jobs was clearly applicable beyond the tourism industry. The TIDC board formed the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE), an umbrella organisation looking to tackle broad issues of social and economic justice, with Madeline Janis-Aparicio remaining as director. LAANE brought together academics, labour unions, block clubs, environmental groups, and progressive politicians, to tackle regional issues, and primarily focused on problems created by redevelopment and municipal subsidies.[151] Their first major victory came in 1997 when the Council approved the city's Living Wage Ordinance, which mandated that any company holding contracts with the city worth $25,000 or above must pay their employees a living wage of at least $7.25 per-hour with benefits (or $8.50 without).[152] LAANE's most common strategy to achieve what they called 'accountable reinvestment' came through demands for 'community benefits agreements'. Whenever contractors and developers agreed subsidies with the city regarding large developments, LAANE and their subsidiary groups protested to ensure that developers would 'give back' to the communities they were building in. Taxpayer subsidies were becoming an increasingly popular policy on the part of local and state governments: in 1996, over $26 billion was given to private firms across the U.S. In 2001, California alone devoted $8 billion to these incentives.[153] LAANE believed that if the state was to provide such high levels of support to these private firms, then developers had a responsibility to improve the quality of life amongst low-income communities of colour. This meant more than agreeing to pay those who would work in these developments a living wage, but also included local hiring, as well as building housing, parks, childcare centres, and mitigation for the environmental impact of their developments.[154] Working alongside residents to design lists of priorities and desires for neighbourhoods, these community benefit agreements were signed by developers of the Hollywood Boulevard project in 1998, the Staples Center expansion in 2000, and the North Hollywood Mixed-Use Redevelopment Project in 2002.[155]

LAANE's most notable victory came through the prevention of a Wal-Mart being built in the primarily Black neighbourhood of Inglewood in 2004. While, like many communities of colour, Inglewood lacked retail facilities, Wal-Mart was a controversial employer that brought questionable economic benefits for communities. The corporation, which was vehemently

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[151] See Harold Meyerson, 'The Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy: A New Model for American Liberalism', *American Prospect*, 24.4 (2013), 28-41, Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, pp.150-155, pp.181-186.
[152] Pastor, 'Common Ground at Ground Zero?', 279, 'How the City of Los Angeles Subsidizes Poverty, and How the Taxpayers End up Paying for it', n.d.,, LAANE Collection, Box 15, Folder 3.
[153] Lee Romney, 'Making Builders Do More', *Los Angeles Times,* 18 March 2002.
[154] Romney, 'Making Builders Do More', Roxanna Tynan, 'Progressive Coalition Building in Los Angeles', *Democratic Left*, 33.3, (Winter 2006), 10, Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, p.152, p.181.
[155] Meyerson, 'The Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy', 37, Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, pp.181-182, 'North Hollywood Mixed-Use Redevelopment Project Community Benefits Program', November 2001, https://www.laane.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/NoHo20CBA.pdf [Accessed 20 May 2020].

anti-union, was subject to near-daily lawsuits in U.S. federal courts during the 2000s.[156] When Inglewood's city council attempted to pass a 2003 law banning the construction of 'big-box' stores such as Wal-Mart, the company gathered enough signatures to place a ballot initiative before voters in April 2004. If passed, Measure 04-A would have allowed Wal-Mart to build a superstore the size of seventeen football fields, providing 'virtual fiefdom' on the site.[157] It would have invalidated any city laws regarding land use, development standards, or living wages, and would bypass the typical process of public hearings or environmental impact reports.[158] LAANE led a wide range of local movements, such as Inglewood chapters of ACORN and the Nation of Islam, to organise a campaign to encourage residents to reject the measure.[159] Campaigners found that while residents were supportive of a new supermarket in the area, they were angered that, as LAANE Vice-President Roxanna Tynan pointed out, 'Wal-Mart did not respect their community enough to go through the folks they'd elected, to hold hearings, to get input on how to build or what to build.'[160] In a phrase which harkened back to the Black and Latinx struggles of the 1980s, Tynan indicated residents' concerns were based around 'this basic, fundamental notion of a community's right to control its development.'[161] Despite spending over a million dollars on the campaign, and predictions of a comfortable victory, Wal-Mart were handily defeated in the referendum, with 60% of voters (over 7000 residents) rejecting the measure.[162] As Tynan declared, it indicated a clear vote in favour of LAANE's policies, and a warning that 'no longer should we be grateful to Wal-Mart or to other developers for providing our communities with poverty-level jobs and very little else.'[163]

LAANE were clearly a critical force driving the renaissance of progressive activism in Los Angeles at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and contributed to the rise of the 'Latino-labor alliance'. The spatial theorist Edward Soja has praised them as 'critically postmodern' for their 'awareness of the geography of worker injustices'.[164] When the TIDC has been mentioned by scholars, it has often been solely in reference to their role as predecessors of

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[156] Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, p.183.
[157] *Ibid*., p.185.
[158] Nancy Cleeland and Abigail Goldman, 'Wal-Mart Trying to Put Plan on Ballot', *Los Angeles Times*, 30 August 2003, Robert Greene, 'Sam and His Pals', *L.A. Weekly*, October 10-16 2003,Tynan, 'Progressive Coalition Building in Los Angeles', 9, Scott L. Cummings, 'Law in the Labor Movement's Challenge to Wal-Mart: A Case Study of the Inglewood Site Fight', *California Law Review,* 95 (2007), 1927-1998 [1960].
[159] Tynan, 'Progressive Coalition Building in Los Angeles', 10.
[160] *Ibid.,* 9-10.
[161] *Ibid*, 10.
[162] Sara Lin, 'Voters in Inglewood Turn Away Wal-Mart', *Los Angeles Times*, 7 April 2004, A1, Cummings, 'Law in the Labor Movement's Challenge to Wal-Mart', 1970.
[163] Greene, 'Sam and His Pals'.
[164] Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, p.153

LAANE. [165] Yet as this chapter has explored, the Tourism Industry Development Council offered a critical site for theorising and planning community organising around issues of spatial justice. The TIDC's work to transform the tourism industry highlighted important questions regarding the material consequences of private redevelopment in the city. This challenged the assumptions and ideological basis which supported redevelopment substantially paid for by the taxpayer, and asked which groups and individuals benefitted most from the development of urban community spaces. Their campaigns therefore illustrated the important link between the production of urban space - both real and imagined - and problems of economic inequality and injustice in the city. The TIDC's 'insight tours' provided a demonstration of how problems of economic exploitation and spatial underdevelopment could be resolved while restoring local control and autonomy to communities of colour. The tours allowed attendees to experience a 'reality' of urban space which had been designed and imagined by residents and activists themselves, built around challenging the cultural constructions of place and space which had been historically produced. It therefore explored how the reformulation and re-imagining of these practices could benefit residents and improve local quality of life. The TIDC were thus an incredibly important organisation, who linked the activism and organising seen in the years preceding the Rodney King Crisis, and the emergence of a reinvigorated 'Latino-Labor alliance' to confront new challenges created by the spatialisation of urban injustice in the twenty-first century.

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Both the TIDC and Operation Hope's bus tours ended in the late 1990s as their leaders moved onto other projects. Yet guided tours have continued to be used as a vehicle for activism. Several former gang members created the non-profit LA Gang Tours in 2010. Their service provides tourists with a three-hour luxury bus tour of Southern Los Angeles, which encompasses oral histories of gang life in the city, but also features visits to the Watts Towers and adjacent arts centre, and a discussion of the juxtaposition between the homeless slum of Skid Row and the city's financial district.[166] The company received criticism from white and Black commentators alike, with the tours perceived to be exploiting and profiting from the negative stereotypes and assumptions made about life in South

[165] Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, p.151, Pastor, 'Common Ground at Ground Zero?', 279.
[166] Armond Towns, 'The "Lumpenproletariat's Redemption": Black Radical Potentiality and LA Gang Tours', *Souls*, 19.1 (2017), 39-58 [40-42].

Central.[167] Scholar Armond Towns – once a critic of the business – has instead argued that the tours have to potential to enact 'radical change' through their 'complex critique of institutional racism' which seeks to emphasise the humanity of Black and Latinx people and challenge their exclusion from capitalism.[168] South Central has undergone substantial redevelopment in recent years: the expansion of Expo Park, new Metro rail links, and large stadia built to accommodate new sports franchises have once again transformed the landscape of the neighbourhood.[169] In the 1990s, Operation Hope and the TIDC were both optimistic about the possibilities such developments could have for Black and Latinx residents of South Central. Still, as the TIDC (and later LAANE) warned, the remaking of urban space could also carry significant threats for local residents. Fears of 'gentrification' have raised concerns surrounding how the low-income residents who have populated South Central for generations will be able to afford to remain in the area. These transformations have therefore also posed questions regarding who controls development, which sections of society benefit from the remaking of urban space, and what the social character of this 'new' South L.A. will look like.[170] As the story of the L.A. Gang Tours suggests, guided bus tours may continue to help us encounter and comprehend residents' interpretations and expectations of urban life within historical communities of colour. Bus tours, as seen in this chapter, can demonstrate how activists and residents look to construct visions of idealised or utopian urban futures based on the selective interpretation of an area's social and cultural history.

When forming their tours, the TIDC were clearly more engaged with residents' ideas regarding these interpretations than Operation Hope were. John Bryant certainly became a more prominent public figure through his work: Operation Hope morphed into a national project, bringing similar bus tours to other urban areas such as Oakland and Atlanta. He also earned a reputation as a financial literacy expert, becoming a best-selling author and serving in federal positions under both Presidents Bush and Obama supporting programmes for economic empowerment. Yet it was the TIDC who had the greatest success in forging a clear connection with residents and mobilising them to take action around issues of development and spatialised injustice. The group's early focus on state subsidies and the flawed logic of urban development dramatically remade the future of organising in L.A., as

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[167] Randall Archibold, 'A Gangland Bus Tour, with Lunch and a Waiver', *New York Times* 16 January 2010, Sarah Sharma and Armond Towns, 'Ceasing Fire and Seizing Time LA Gang Tours and the White Control of Mobility', *Transfers: Interdisciplinary Journal of Mobility Studies* 1.6 (2016), 26–44.
[168] Towns, 'The Lumpenproletariat's Redemption'.
[169] Andre Comandon and Paul Ong, 'South Los Angeles Since the 1960s: Race, Place, and Class', *The Review of Black Political Economy*, 47.1 (2020), 50-74 [68-70].
[170] *Ibid*., 69.

LAANE became the leaders of social justice activism in the city in the following decade. Both Operation Hope's 'Bankers Bus Tours' and the TIDC's 'Insight Tours' reveal much about the nature of activism in L.A. in the wake of the Rodney King Crisis. These groups based their organising around attempts to restore community control and ownership over urban space. Both groups therefore responded to the Rodney King Crisis in a way which acknowledged the key issues which had caused the uprising, and drew inspiration from the activists who had been organising around these problems in the years preceding the Crisis. Most notably, this meant recognising how residents lacked control and autonomy over urban space in multiple ways; both in how communities of colour could not control the way their neighbourhoods were portrayed and represented, and through local powerlessness to challenge, foster, or determine development.

The TIDC and Operation Hope's plans for rejuvenation therefore relied on an appeal to the spatial imaginations of both residents and tour attendees. The tours allowed these activists to construct their own visions of an urban future which they hoped would empower local residents, and provided the opportunity to project these ambitions to a wider audience. Bus tours offered a means to physically realise these imagined geographies; to encourage attendees to personally experience activists' interpretation of daily life in these communities, and to demonstrate the potential contained within these spaces. Even when these ideas were flawed or misplaced, they succeeded in bringing attention and investment to these communities, and motivating residents to demand a greater role in determining the future of their neighbourhoods. Crucially, both Operation Hope and the TIDC worked to re-imagine the spaces of South and East L.A. within the context of the entire city of Los Angeles. By demanding that financiers provide communities of colour with fair and equal consideration when investing, or that the city take these neighbourhoods seriously as tourist destination, these activists were looking to establish spatial equality between the racially segmented areas of Los Angeles. Both groups worked to reduce the isolation of these communities, who had been ostracised owing to the derogatory assumptions and stereotypes that comprised definitions of 'place'. Operation Hope and the TIDC therefore utilised their bus tours as a tool to construct counter-spaces and counter-places: they imagined an urban future for Los Angeles which both improved quality of life for the city's poorest people of colour and sought to help these communities gain greater control over the construction of urban space.

Conclusion: "There's Nothing Wrong With Being From the Hood"

In 2003 a largely neglected but symbolically important campaign achieved victory in South Central Los Angeles. It was centred around the name 'South Central' itself. After several years of sporadic local campaigning, the Los Angeles City Council unanimously voted in favour of renaming the area 'South Los Angeles'. The new name would be used in all areas of municipal governance, while journalists also agreed to use the new title in the media.[1] Linguistically, this was not a significant departure. Nor was the renaming of neighbourhoods particularly unusual or controversial. In previous years in Southern California, Sepulveda had renamed itself Panorama City, and certain businesses in Compton had marketed themselves as being located in 'Crystal City' to avoid being tarred with the area's reputation.[2] Yet for some residents, this represented a dramatic alteration to the imagined geographies of Los Angeles' communities of colour. The physical boundaries of 'South Central' had always been extremely vague. While technically it defined a sixteen-square-mile rectangle (with two additional 'prongs' in the southern part), the historical association of South Central with 'blackness' saw it applied to every bordering area with a sizeable African American population.[3] The name 'South Central' had accrued so many cultural connotations it bore little resemblance to the actual community who lived there. It had become a 'racially charged shorthand' for Black violence, criminality, and despair; an archetypal 'ghetto' or 'hood' for which the associations this conjured only exacerbated challenges faced by residents.[4] As Mark Ridley-Thomas (now a member of the State Assembly) suggested, South Central was 'a moniker that tends to stigmatize rather than uplift'.[5] With the influx of Latinx people, who by the year 2000 had become the largest racial group within the area, the associations between 'South Central' and 'African Americans' appeared outdated, inaccurate, and redundant. While many were sceptical regarding whether altering the area's name would produce significant changes, supporters hoped that this change would bring greater optimism, and economic and cultural rejuvenation to South L.A. Much like the bus tours presented by Operation Hope and the TIDC, they hoped that the new designation would provide greater positive attention being turned towards their community, 'instead of ignoring us', as resident Carol Black suggested.[6]

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[1] Stephen Gregory, 'New Name Sought to Fight Poor Image', *Los Angeles Times*, 28 May 1995, H3, Matea Gold and Greg Braxton, 'Considering South-Central by Another Name', *Los Angeles Times*, 10 April 2003, B3, Calvin Sims, 'In Los Angeles, it's South-Central No More', *The New York Times*, 10 April 2003.
[2] Sims, 'In Los Angeles, it's South Central No More'.
[3] *Ibid*. This is an imprecision the author has played fast and loose with throughout this thesis.
[4] *Ibid*.
[5] *Ibid.*
[6] Gold and Braxton, 'Considering South-Central by Another Name'.

2003 also saw the beginning of a more widely-recognised campaign to prevent the closure of the 'South Central Community Garden'.[7] The farm was created in 1994 on a small parcel of land on East 41st and South Alameda Streets. It had been the site of the proposed LANCER municipal waste incinerator in 1985 until the campaign organised by Concerned Citizens of South Central forced the abandonment of the project. It was then offered to the L.A. Harbor Department, who donated the land to the L.A. Regional Food Bank, a non-profit food distribution service.[8] For nearly a decade, over 300 Latinx families cleared and worked the fourteen-acre site, the largest urban community farm in the nation, located in one of the most polluted districts of California.[9] Most produced food and a small amount of medicinal plants, which was used to supplement the diets of some of the city's poorest residents.[10] In addition, the farm provided families with an opportunity to expand social networks, find cultural expression, develop skills, protect the environment, and supplement their own income.[11] Following a 2003 lawsuit, the city was forced to sell the site back to its original owner, Ralph Horowitz.[12] During a contentious four-year battle, residents and activists from across the city looked to save the farm from demolition. Protests in 2006 saw a number of arrests, including celebrities such as Joan Baez and Daryl Hannah.[13] Despite an offer from Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa to purchase the land from Horowitz for $16 million, farmers were evicted from the site in June 2006.[14] The land was bulldozed the following year, and, remarkably, still remains vacant in 2020.

Taken together, the renaming of South Central and the battle to preserve the South Central Community Garden demonstrate how both place and space remain in continual flux, as well the role of communities of colour themselves play in shaping these processes. These two campaigns demonstrated clear continuities with earlier organising in the 1980s and 1990s, and illustrate the main themes of this dissertation. Firstly, it displayed the role that

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[7] For the South Central Community Garden see: Rufina Juarez, 'Indigenous Women in the Food Justice and Sovereignty Movement: Lessons from the South Central Farm', *NACCS Annual Conference Proceedings Plenary Address* (2010), 1-10, https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1165&context=naccs [Accessed 20 May 2020], Clara Irazábal and Anita Punja, 'Cultivating Just Planning and Legal Institutions: A Critical Assessment of the South Central Farm Struggle in Los Angeles', *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 31.1 (2009), 1-23, Mark Purcell and Shannon Tyman, 'Cultivating Food as a Right to the City', *Local Environment*, 20.10 (2015), 1132-1147, Laura Lawson, 'The South Central Farm: Dilemmas in Practicing the Public', *Cultural Geographies*, 14 (2007), 611-616, Barraclough, 'South Central Farmers and Shadow Hills Homeowners', 164-186.

[8] Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, pp.187-188.

[9] Juarez, 'Indigenous Women in the Food Justice and Sovereignty Movement', 2.

[10] Irazábal and Punja, 'Cultivating Just Planning and Legal Institutions', 1, Purcell and Tyman, 'Cultivating food as a right to the city', 1141.

[11] Lawson, 'The South Central Farm', 611.

[12] Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, p.188.

[13] Lawson, 'The South Central Farm', 613, Hector Becerra, Megan Garvey and Steve Hymon, 'L.A. garden shut Down: 40 Arrested', *Los Angeles Times*, 14 June 2006.

[14] Lawson, 'The South Central Farm', 613.

productions of place and space played in forging discrimination, and how this shaped residents' understanding of inequality. Those supporting the renaming of South Central felt that the ways the community had been portrayed in popular culture and the media had tangible impacts on the neighbourhood's economic and cultural vitality. 72 year-old Helen Johnson, who proposed the council motion to rename the area, was clear about who she felt was responsible for the denigration of the community. 'Anything bad happens,' she argued, 'you get on TV, and the first thing you say was "South Central"…when you report the news about anything south of the freeway, I wish you'd be fair and just and please get your facts right.'[15] The Community Garden, meanwhile, exposed the precarious sense of control and ownership that such communities endured. Members of the community were ejected from a site that they had toiled and farmed for local benefit in favour of a private developer from outside the area. Constructions of place emerged through many channels, not just popular culture and the media. Politicians, planners, and developers also helped to facilitate the production of knowledge which defined and organised understandings of place within L.A. Places were produced through the assumptions and characteristics that comprised relational and intersectional social identities in the city, and were given value and meaning in relation to other, more privileged, locales in whiter and wealthier neighbourhoods of suburban L.A. Such processes allowed decision-makers to deny communities of colour the right of self-determination, and facilitated the continued efforts to remake urban space without the permission or participation of local Black and Latinx communities.

Across so many facets of life within L.A.'s low-income communities of colour, the way places had been constructed altered the spatial practices of the neighbourhood, and had clear material consequences for residents. By portraying areas such as South and East Los Angeles as plagued by gangs, drugs, crime, and violence, these communities suffered a consequential geography which impaired local quality of life. Such perceptions repelled businesses from building in neighbourhoods which were allegedly dangerous and mired in poverty, while economic institutions refused to invest or provide loans to those located within these communities. Simultaneously, the portrayal of such communities as 'dumping grounds' encouraged politicians and developers to site potentially controversial projects within these areas. Thus hazardous sites that were deemed unsuitable for other communities - such as prisons, oil pipelines, or incinerators - were often placed within communities of colour. Sweatshops and other low-wage industries could find plentiful workers by building facilities in such areas, which only perpetuated economic disparities, while liquor store proprietors capitalised on the lack of available supermarkets and substance abuse problems by building in numbers many times that of wealthier communities. Constructions of place also altered

[15] Gold and Braxton, 'Considering South-Central by Another Name'.

policies that regulated inhabitants' behaviour within these locations. This is seen most clearly through policing. By deeming certain neighbourhoods inherently criminal, and placing all those within them under suspicion, the LAPD could often act with impunity while enjoying the support of many Angelenos. Residents were thus subjected to brutality and incarceration at greater rates than those who lived in other areas of Los Angeles, while also facing neglect and the absence of police protection within these communities.

Despite the renaming of South Central, the denigration of communities of colour still continues in Los Angeles. Although the two are often intertwined, one 2020 study argued that economic and social disparities between neighbourhoods in L.A. now far outweigh those determined by race.[16] Therefore this thesis is not just the story of how racialised characteristics and stereotypes are mapped onto predominately Black and Latinx communities, although this inevitably plays an important role. Rather, it is also the story of how such acts of place-making have dramatic, often deleterious effects, on such communities. Place shaped myriad factors in Black and Latinx residents' lives: their expectations, health, occupation, housing, income, and overall quality of life. The role of place and space in forging discrimination and inequality was therefore a key reason why so many members of Black and Latinx communities were galvanised into protest in L.A., and subsequently calls for further research into these factors across all histories of civil rights organising and resistance movements more generally.

The campaigns of 2003 also reflected how grassroots organising movements ultimately sought to gain control of these productions of place and space. Those behind the effort to rename South Central hoped that by altering the designation of their community, residents could now have a greater role in shaping the imagined geography of the area. While their control over land use was precarious and ultimately rescinded, the South Central Community Garden offered residents an opportunity to remedy historic inequalities in wealth and access to food through a reimagining of local space. In both cases, these movements' ultimate goal was to improve the quality of life within the South Los Angeles community. Flowing through all of the movements explored throughout this thesis was the desire to gain control of urban space in order to improve material conditions and daily life within communities of colour. Recognising the aforementioned effects created through productions of place and space, activists demanded the right of self-determination, or autonomy, over their communities. They sought to claim or reclaim space, determine the present and future of land use and development, to have access to and be seen within urban space, and to have a role in producing place and space that they argued was already taken for granted by other

[16] Comandon and Ong, 'South Los Angeles Since the 1960s', 51.

communities. Concepts such as 'equality' and 'justice' were therefore interpreted by communities through relational ideas regarding control, entitlement, and ownership of urban space. Efforts to claim and control productions of space were extremely diverse. Campaigns encompassed where people worked, where they lived, where they shopped, and more generally all of the spaces through which social relations transpired. Moreover, when demanding the right to control urban space, activists employed a wide range of social identities that had often been partially constructed through and by the spaces of L.A. They applied their own broad, inclusive definitions and meanings of 'community' to challenge those that had been imposed on their neighbourhoods. Organisers stressed the racial, class, and gender inequalities that forged such productions, and appealed for self-determination within space as remedies to these injustices. They invoked these community identities - using motherhood or the multicultural composition of groups – to create their own productions of knowledge. This knowledge legitimised their understanding of the 'reality' of their communities, and therefore validated their right to participate in determining the future of urban development. While the injustices they confronted were myriad and expansive, both the awareness of place and space as a factor in the lived experience of discrimination, and the demand for community self-determination to rectify such prejudice, underpinned grassroots community organising throughout Los Angeles during the 1980s and 1990s.

It is within this diversity that we also see the complexities of spatial justice organising. While some residents and politicians were sceptical when it came to the potential benefits of renaming South Central, others were disappointed by the way it renounced the cultural heritage of the community. Local restaurant owner Evann Tavares argued that 'there's nothing wrong with being from the hood. You should be proud of your roots. It's nothing to be ashamed of.'[17] Furthermore, although Juanita Tate was one of the original founders of Concerned Citizens of South Central (which prevented the construction of the LANCER incinerator), she felt there were better uses for this site than an urban farm. She supported the closure of the garden in favour of building a recreation centre and soccer field that had been promised by Horowitz.[18] These views suggest that even within communities with shared racial and economic compositions, 'spatial justice' had no fixed meaning and could be interpreted in multiple ways. Such contentions can be seen throughout this thesis. Some Black and Latinx men imagined a redevelopment of urban space that prioritised jobs and industry. Yet this was contested by the many women of colour who argued that the protection of residents' health should supersede these concerns, or activists who demanded quality jobs with living wages for communities of colour. Those attempting to solve the liquor

[17] Sims, 'In Los Angeles, it's South Central No More'.
[18] *The Garden*, 2009, Scott Hamilton Kennedy.

store problem debated what this 'problem' actually was, and whether reclaiming control involved transferring ownership of stores to African Americans, or gaining the power to decide how many stores operated in their community. Operation Hope and the TIDC's bus tours presented two very different visions of what the 'place' of South Central could become: one advocating for unfettered private development, the other demanding that any development include community participation and ensure benefits for the neighbourhood's poorest residents. These differences reflected the heterogeneous political positions and social identities within communities. Recognising this complexity is important to our understanding of Los Angeles during this critical time. This thesis shows that the simplified generalisations and reductions seen through discussions of the Rodney King Crisis, and at times popular culture, are not helpful to understanding how daily life unfolded and was experienced in low-income communities of colour. Distinctions between race, gender, and income do not fit easily when illustrating how communities understood and organised around issues of space and place. Yet these complexities also support the contention that space was intrinsic to community life and grassroots organising at this time. Proposals for how urban space should be remade may have differed, but this demonstrates how concerns surrounding productions of place and space proliferated at the heart of community organising. The diversity of interpretations and meanings applied to 'spatial justice' show us how ubiquitous the desire to gain control of development and to remake urban space proved to local communities.

The renaming of South Central and the creation of the Community Garden may have lacked the colourful street theatre of Justice for Janitors, or the ambitious bus tours of the TIDC. Nevertheless, these stories highlight the inherent spatiality of protest, or more precisely, how activists invoked the discourse of spatial justice and used the spaces of the city to garner attention and build support. By campaigning for their community to be renamed 'South Los Angeles', residents were able to stress that 'image is important', and draw attention to the various ways the area had been subject to neglect and denigration.[19] As several scholars have argued, the South Central Community Garden was not simply a farm, but developed into a counter-space through which residents could confront historic inequalities and discrimination in ways that were both practical and symbolic.[20] By employing the discourse of spatial injustice, and through the innovative utilisation of space, these movements displayed continuities with those campaigns of the 1980s and 1990s explored throughout

[19] Sims, 'In Los Angeles, it's South Central No More'.
[20] Irazabel and Punja, 'Cultivating Just Planning and Legal Institutions', 6, Purcell and Tyman, 'Cultivating food as a Right to the City', 1141-1142, Barraclough, 'South Central Farmers and Shadow Hills Homeowners', 180.

this thesis. Space was not just a neutral container through which protest occurred. It was an active component in shaping how protest was formed, and how activists constructed their campaigns. Utilising a relational understanding of inequalities fostered by space and place was critical in how these movements deconstructed the logic of such processes, and disrupted the productions of knowledge which facilitated disparities between the different neighbourhoods of L.A. Groups such as the Black Coalition Fighting Back Serial Murders, MELA, and the Community Coalition argued that the development of their community and the treatment of residents would never have been attempted or accepted in those wealthier, whiter, or more privileged neighbourhoods of L.A. These were appeals for the right to self-determination, framed in a way that spoke to a universal desire for residents' control of community space. As white and suburban communities increasingly organised to oppose redevelopment and the remaking of space in the 1970s and 1980s, Black and Latinx Angelenos demanded they receive the same opportunities to participate in determining the future of the inner-city. This was a fundamental way of building support and resisting spatial impositions, by underscoring the concrete physical realities of discrimination.

Activists also employed this physical space to build support and secure much-needed visibility and recognition for their struggles. MELA members marched across the third-street bridge towards Downtown, Justice for Janitors campaigned in Beverly Hills to highlight economic inequalities, and Mothers ROC visited prisons and courtrooms to organise. Operation Hope and the TIDC took those with economic and cultural power on bus tours of South and East L.A. to deconstruct the stereotypes and denigration of these communities and to explore the potential contained within them. These were deliberate ways to directly confront power, and tackle injustices that could easily be ignored through the isolation – the imagined geographical distances created by cultural productions of place – of Black and Latinx communities. These movements utilised the mobilities available to them within urban space to contest the consequential geographies of discrimination. By organising around issues of place and space in addition to race, class, and gender, these campaigns could include the entire community. By framing the problems residents faced as issues that affected entire neighbourhoods, these movements could galvanise residents who had never participated in grassroots action before, and at times could unite communities across traditional social divisions. While the desire for spatial self-determination and community control was the central reason for organising within these movements, their creative utilisation of urban space and the spatially-consciousness nature of their rhetoric became critical tools within protest. This raises questions, and possible lessons, regarding how those looking to effect social change may be able to harness the social production of space.

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The stories of grassroots campaigns in the 1980s and 1990s, understood through the lens of spatial justice, can challenge what constitutes – or what is political about – activism. It also challenges what is 'local' about such movements, posing questions about how relations of power are conceptualised at an everyday level. The renaming of South Los Angeles and the campaign to save the South Central Community Garden were just two examples of a flurry of activism that unfolded during the late 1990s and early 2000s. The aforementioned success of LAANE and Justice for Janitors' 2000 strike, alongside several other organisations, coalesced into what has been referred to as the 'Latino-labor' alliance. These groups helped to organise a wide range of service workers, improve public transport, and secure living wages and community benefits for major new redevelopment projects in the city.[21] Scholars have rushed to celebrate the 'postmodern' composition of such movements, and analyse their multicultural regional focus and spatially-conscious organising. Crucially, they believe that the Rodney King Crisis 'marked a turning point for labor and the working poor' in L.A., with 1992 being 'ground zero' for progressive organising in the city.[22] Such an interpretation is problematic. Assuming that geographically-conscious organising only emerged in the wake of Rodney King Crisis reproduces the idea that the Crisis itself can be easily understood, or that the problems that fostered civil unrest could be easily rectified. The aftermath of the Crisis, much like the event itself, does not provide a coherent narrative, and it is problematic to assume that it provided clear lessons that could be applied to the city's malaise. As the psychologist David Sears quipped, if Rodney King had been a 'wake-up call' for Los Angeles, 'somebody keeps pressing the snooze button.'[23]

This thesis has uncovered the longer history of social movements and activism amongst communities of colour that has been denied by many commentators of the 1992 Rodney King Crisis. While many recognise the historical and multiple root causes of the unrest, they do not appreciate the many attempts made by Black and Latinx communities to effect change. These efforts reveal how people of colour themselves understood concepts as diverse as inequality, discrimination, community, and resistance. By considering these movements, we see a more complex and heterogeneous population that has been obscured

[21] See: Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, pp.114-155, pp.181-200, Manuel Pastor, 'Common Ground at Ground Zero?' 260-289, Rita Burgos and Laura Pulido, 'The Politics of Gender in the Los Angeles Bus Riders' Union/Sindicato de Pasajeros', *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 9.3 (1998), 75-82, Meyerson, 'The Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy'.
[22] Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, p.114, Pastor, 'Common Ground at Ground Zero?', 261.
[23] David O. Sears, 'Urban Rioting in Los Angeles: A Comparison of 1965 with 1992', in *The Los Angeles Riots*, ed. by Baldassare, pp.237-254 [p.253].

by our fixation on the scale and meaning of the violence and destruction seen during the Rodney King Crisis. These were not protestors concerned solely by police brutality, or deviants who mindlessly destroyed their 'own' communities as a way to communicate untold rage. This organising may have been neglected because it rarely focused on issues that fit our conventional definitions of 'radical' or 'political' activism. While some groups organised workers or illuminated the social implications of the Reagan/Bush administrations on their communities, many chose to work to resolve problems within their own individual neighbourhood, or organise movements to contest the use or meaning of specific sites. Holding bus tours for bankers and journalists, or contesting the presence of liquor stores, do not easily fit within a narrow definition of progressive political activism. Yet when taken together, they demonstrate the centrality of place in fostering inequality, and the common desire to reclaim community control of urban space. Understanding these multiple forms of activism thus repositions grassroots movements in L.A. as engaged in an ongoing struggle to achieve self-determination and remake the meaning of the city. The longer history of grassroots organising in L.A. demonstrates that residents were moved by a wide range of concerns which, as many activists recognised, stemmed from the injustices fostered through productions of place and space. Through an understanding of these movements, this thesis decentres the Rodney King Crisis and suggests it is one part of a much longer history of efforts to remake urban space, a story in which Black and Latinx residents themselves play a central role.

Exploring L.A.'s grassroots activism in this way therefore challenges historians to rethink how marginalised communities play a critical role in shaping space and place throughout history. It provides opportunities, as critical geographers have encouraged, to reposition space as an important lens through which we can understand the formation of social and political relations. This thesis has suggested that space and social identities played a dialectic role in forging such relations. While space and place helped organise or reinforce notions of race, gender, or class, communities used these social constructions as a lens to imagine the city and contest control of urban space. This interpretation also requires us to question *why* Black and Latinx residents were so intrinsic to spatial productions, given historic efforts to exclude people of colour from these processes. Space and place are themes that run throughout protest in all its forms because they provides the clearest and most tangible ways in which communities of colour experience relations of power. Discrimination and disparities fostered by racism, sexism, and class prejudices were all experienced through the consequential geographies of power. Movements to challenge and resist these inequalities, therefore, have significance far beyond their own neighbourhoods. Claiming ownership of space, and the right to self-determination over their communities

provided an opportunity to secure power in ways that could clearly improve the lives of local residents. The ‘local’ was therefore at the heart of efforts to tackle injustice on a national and global scale because of how decisions at these scales played out in the lived experience of communities of colour. Efforts to eradicate inequality through local urban space were not microcosms or metaphors that encapsulate the inherent injustice within society, but how such processes and power relations are made real to those most directly affected by these formations. ‘Spatial justice’, in all its many forms, was subsequently at the heart of struggles to transform the city and to achieve a more just and equitable society.

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