TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT IN LEIMERT PARK, LOS ANGELES: THE SPECTER OF GENTRIFICATION AND COMMUNITY CAPITAL AS LEVERAGE TOWARD TRANSFORMING REDEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

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TERMINAL PROJECT ABSTRACT

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Title: Transit Development in Leimert Park, Los Angeles: The Specter of Gentrification and Community Capital as Leverage Toward Transforming Redevelopment Projects

By situating unfolding protests and the recent political mobilization in Leimert Park, Los Angeles within Castells' framework for urban protest movements, this work uncovers how a community of color, specifically the primarily African-American Leimert Park community situated in South Central Los Angeles, prepares itself for potential impacts driven by the Crenshaw/LAX light-rail transit development. The work sets forth the question of whether and how communities can transform large, transit-oriented development (TOD), redevelopment projects. Through tracking the political mobilization of the Leimert Park community while 1) surveying the community impacts associated with the Crenshaw/LAX light-rail transit development, and its accompanying plans/projects, near the Leimert Park and Baldwin Hills neighborhoods 2) surveying and assessing the extent to which community impacts have been, are being, or will be addressed, this work highlights the political mobilization integral to intervening in redevelopment processes.

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INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary context of sustainable development, transit-oriented development (TOD) has been heralded as a contemporary move toward achieving sustainable development in an urban environment. The implementation of light rail transit has been an important component of this equation.[1] While light rail transit in and of itself does address aspects of sustainable development and offers upside along the lines of curbing traffic congestion and reducing sprawl,[2] for surrounding communities, there can also be repercussions to the installment of light-rail transit infrastructure. This work is in the interest of uncovering how a community of color, specifically a primarily African-American community situated in South Central Los Angeles, prepares itself for potential impacts driven by light-rail development. I have chosen Leimert Park because it has historically been considered a cultural hub for the African-American community in South Central Los Angeles. This work affirms that African-American communities can, through pushing institutions to comport themselves in new ways, transform urban redevelopment projects. At the same time, this report acknowledges that the community's concerns have not been entirely accommodated and therefore there is still more work to be done toward creating a just transportation system.

While financial capital is being mobilized, there has been a mobilizing of cultural; political; and social capitals to ensure the alignment of financial investment with competing and opposed value orientations of the community. It has been my task to trace

[1] Cervero, R., & Duncan, M. 2002. "Transit's value-added effects: light and commuter rail services and commercial land values." *Transportation Research Record: Journal of the Transportation Research Board*, *1805*(1), 8-15.

[2] Cervero, Robert. 2004. "Transit Oriented Development in America: Contemporary Practice, Impacts and Policy Directions." *Institute of Urban and Regional Development.* Pg. 9.

this iteration of light-rail transit's introduction to South LA and assess the ways in which this particular community of color prepares to resist transit-related impacts (displacement) and/or capitalize on the transit opportunity, may serve as a precedent for future communities that might endure the same process.

The central question of this work is whether/how communities of color in post-Fordist, contemporary globalization era resist and transform large development projects, transit-oriented development projects in particular. This work follows upon a previous study[3] that asked a comparable question. This work though, departs from Sandoval's work, in part, because of the differing social location of the neighborhood surveyed. Sandoval focused on the largely low-income, Latino immigrant Macarthur Park neighborhood in Los Angeles. This work aims to tell the story of how Leimert Park, a predominantly African American neighborhood, central to approaching or approximating any conception of contemporary Black Los Angeles, has adapted, is adapting and is planning to adapt to the burgeoning transit development in their neighborhood. It examines how this community, described by the African American Registry as a "cultural haven in LA"[4], in the midst of exogenous financial capital being mobilized, has mobilized cultural and political capitals to work toward ensuring that the ongoing influx of financial investment will be in alignment with the value orientations of the community.

[3] Sandoval, Gerardo. 2010. *Immigrants and the Revitalization of Los Angeles: Development and Change in MacArthur Park.* Cambria Press: New York.
[4] N.a. 2013. "Leimert Park, A Cultural Haven in LA." African American Registry: A Non-Profit Education Organization. http://www.aaregistry.org/historic_events/view/leimert-park-cultural-haven-la

Conceptual Framework

The overall framework for this paper is one that situates Leimert Park, the geography, the symbol, and the community, at the heart of an urban protest movement as defined by Castells, which he sets forth as movements that demonstrate an interaction between culture, politics, and consumption. Castells suggests that such movements develop around three major themes:

> "1) Demands focused on collective consumption, that is goods and services directly or indirectly provided by the state.
> 2) Defense of *cultural identity* associated with and organized around a specific *territory*
> 3) *Political mobilization* in relationship to the state, particularly emphasizing the role of *local government.*"[5]

While in line with Castells' description of urban protest movements, this work finds that the defense of a cultural identity, inseparable from or backed by a political mobilization, revolving around transit investment as collective consumption, creates a wealth of political power and pressure often necessary to alter the process and outcomes of the planning process.

Castells employs this framework to describe and comment on particular urban crises of a particular epoch. This urban protest framework, as an iteration of frameworks in his prior works, it has been applauded and critiqued by thinkers in the field. Among those critiques, the most relevant to this work, is a specific critique in terms of Castells commitment to collective consumption as sites of contestation, McKeown argues that the term collective, throughout Castells work, is unclear in terms of whether it refers to a

[5] Castells, Manuel. 1983. *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Pg. xviii.

"collective mode of provision or the collective mode consumption,"[6] suggesting that Castells does not offer a differentiation between consumption items collectively consumed (which can be both individually provided and collectively provided) and consumption of items individually consumed (which can also be individually provided or collectively provided). In reviewing *The City and the Grassroots*, Mayer applauds Castells, noting that "no work has been as influential as *The City and the Grassroots* in defining urban social movement research,"[7] but also suggests that urban movements have since transcended Castells' frameworks to some extent, given changing economies and political landscapes both domestic and abroad. Mayer suggests that urban social movements "can no longer be synthesized as challenges to a mode of development which is how Castells saw them: challenges initially to the industrial mode of development and, in *The City and the Grassroots*, challenges to the 'information' mode."[8] Still though, Mayer finds that one of the lasting legacies of his work is his very notion of collective consumption which for Mayer, "is more topical than ever in the current conjuncture…as local as well as supra-national manifestations of the anti-globalization movement are zeroing in on the privatization and (neo)liberalization of the public sector."[9]

In line with Mayer, Castells' framework might still have potential utility in commenting on urban crises of today and in framing how and why protests movements are successful, if we take success as the ability to transform institutional processes and influence whether prior demonstrated and dominant urban meanings remain as such. This

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[6] Mckeown, Kieran. 1980. "The Urban Sociology of Manuel Castells: A Critical Examination of the Central Concepts." *The Economic and Social Review*. 11, 4: 262.
[7] Mayer, Margit. 2006. "Manuel Castells' The City and the Grassroots." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. Pg. 202
[8] Ibid. Pg. 203
[9] Ibid. Pg. 205

capacity might be afforded to any myriad of institutional processes affecting urban spaces. This case study in particular is interested in the capacity of a movement, in mobilizing, to affect the institutional processes of urban planning.

Castells suggests that "we call urban planning the negotiated adaptation of urban functions to a shared urban meaning."[10] In other words, urban planning, the process out of which the everyday function of urban spaces are born, is also the process that is shaped by and reproduces some particular "shared" understanding or relationship to urban spaces – a "shared" urban meaning that is often predicated on the dominant class' relationship to the urban. Whereas "a social movement develops its own meaning over a given space in contradiction to the structurally dominant meaning"[11] and "a social mobilization (not necessarily based on a particular social class) imposes a new urban meaning in contradiction to the institutionalized urban meaning and against the interests of the dominant class."[12] A social movement then creates an opening, a potential, to unsettle and de-center whatever prior and presumed "shared," dominant, meaning shaping urban planning processes. This suggests that, at bottom, there is some potential for urban planning and social movements/mobilizations to be in direct conflict with one another.

In discussing the history of urban planning, Birch and Silver, in "One Hundred Years of City Planning's Enduring and Evolving Connections" communicate that inequity has long been entrenched as implicit in the planning process, suggesting at once that the urban meanings in question are preceded by and inclined to re-inscribe inequality, urban meanings that privilege a particular meaning and experience at the

[10] Castells, Manuel. 1983. *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Pg. 304.
[11] Ibid. Pg. 305
[12] Ibid.

expense of other meanings and people whose lives are an expression of those excluded meanings- meanings that have been intentionally excluded as part and parcel to histories of systemic and systematic oppression in the United States. Contemporary planning literature admits the history of exclusion and the continuance of inequality as part and parcel to planning as a practice; it overtly stresses the need for and the improvement of community collaboration – an improvement in the facilitation of a shared urban meaning that does not disprivilege historically marginalized urban meanings. Birch and Silver make note of a particular point of departure in planning history wherein there was a specific decision within the institution of professional planning to privilege 'narrower technical approaches' over 'major social and political reforms.[13] This suggests that the 'social'[14] aspect of planning, which ultimately is the practice of inclusive collaboration and equitable representation, had long been entrenched as non-essential in planning considerations. Urban planning then is situated as the medium through which 'meanings,' structurally dominant meanings have been and continue to be precipitated and mapped onto space conceptually and materially. However, this also renders urban planning as a space, and process, ripe for contestation and as a juncture in which the opportunity for transforming any destination of shared urban meaning. The Leimert Park case study is then an example of an urban protest movement , as it has, in a collective and grassroots fashion, contested that which will ultimately assume a particular shared urban meaning in its implementation—the transit investment in question. Specifically, the community has contested the implementation of the transit line through challenging the process of urban planning and creating a process that is more collaborative and

[13] Birch, Eugenie L. and Silver, Christopher. (2009). "One Hundred Years of City Planning's Enduring and Evolving Connections." *Journal of the American Planning Association.* 75, 2: 116
[14] Ibid.

inclusive of alternative urban meanings. It is at the same time, a movement that aspires to force a re-imagining of urban meanings that might be represented by the investment, that is not just different from the dominant meaning, but is specifically and categorically, an urban meaning that centers equity in process and outcomes of urban planning generally, and redevelopment planning as transit investment planning in particular.

Within Castells' urban protest framework, and in teasing out the contents of the Leimert Park movement, the movement is at the crossroads of separated but related discourse of transit-oriented development (as public infrastructure meets public-private partnerships), environmental justice, neoliberalism, gentrification and displacement. The transit investment includes but is not limited to the actual configuring of a transit line and transit stations. Accompanying projects intended to attract and amplify investment and ultimately facilitate transit ridership, are all components of transit-oriented development, or TOD. Often, while these projects ostensibly improve transit access to a space, or introduce new transit options to space, the spaces currently at the focus of these TOD projects are already developed urban areas. In that way, many of these projects are redevelopment projects. So, the central question of this work draws on a confluence of literatures that allow for a critical discussion of transit-oriented development as redevelopment and the impact that these projects have on neighborhoods. Required is supplementary literature that ground this critical discussion in this particular political-economic temporal moment.

Leimert Park and the Movement

In Leimert Park, the galvanizing force of this movement revolves around the impending influx of transit related investment along the Crenshaw Corridor. Being as this investment is toward public transit and is sourced publicly, or collectively, immediately then, we can see the movement as one revolving around collective consumption. While the mobilization has been a reaction to the anticipation of incoming investment, specifically the mobilization has been a reaction to what impacts the investment might have on the community. Here, we also locate Castells' framework wherein the mobilization has been one that is focused on a defense of Leimert Park and the African-American cultural identity represented by the continuity of the neighborhood. The defense of the cultural identity is one that aims to ensure the transit development is equitable and also sufficiently insulates Leimert Park and black communities along the corridor from disproportionately bearing the impacts of the development. This preoccupation can be seen through specific concerns expressed by the community. These concerns include 1) community inclusion in the planning process as well 2) direct and indirect quantitative/qualitative impacts on the community. Among these direct and indirect impacts, are concerns that 1) the transit line be constructed below-grade along the corridor in order to ensure safety of pedestrians and viability of business 2) environmental justice 3) gentrification and displacement—all of which taken together, can be seen as part and parcel to a larger call to secure or defend the cultural identity of Leimert Park, as defined by Leimert Park. It is around these major focal points and with the stakeholders involved, in the specific context of transit as a public good or service provided by the state that the fluidity of Castells' framework comes to life.

In an effort to appropriate the projects as their own, in order to meaningfully influence the planning and redevelopment process and ensure that development comes to fruition in a manner that best represents the interests of the community, stakeholders have collaborated over the past decade to resist and transform redevelopment pressures and processes. The case study reveals the process through which stakeholder and interest groups, within the neighborhood and outside the neighborhood, have worked toward actualizing the competing urban meanings of the community through the redevelopment project in question. Given a date of operation at least four years in the future, 2019, this work is not conclusive in terms of the rail outcomes. Instead, this work is intended as an intervention in the developments, identifying the myriad of involved stakeholder groups, cataloguing the process, observing neighborhood change.

The hope is to, within the particularities of the social and political histories of black Los Angeles create an opening whereby "it is still possible to develop a concept of justice relevant to what is within the city government's power."[15] This concept of justice is one that resists the allowance of City policy, and discourse at any level, to continue to be complicit in the displacement of communities of color or people with low-moderate incomes, either directly through implementation of transit or indirectly through transit-induced forces.

History suggests that black communities have unequivocally been the ethnic community that have fared the worst in terms of public policies affecting the lives and life choices of the people residing in these communities. From de jure segregation and racial covenants, through urban renewal exclusionary zoning and market disincentives for providing adequate housing, black communities have been explicitly targeted. This

[15] Fainstein, Susan S. 2010. *The Just City.* New York: Cornell University Press. Pg. 18

project, after grappling with and unpacking the complexities of the movement in question, moves to provide public policy recommendations that may address concerns at the forefront of the consciousness of community members, specifically the concerns of 1) gentrification and displacement and 2) environmental justice. The recommendations of this piece create openings where communities are not forced into what Tom Slater calls the false choice between "*either* unliveable disinvestment and decay *or* reinvestment and displacement,"[16] and moves to challenge the City of Los Angeles to integrate policies that meaningfully equip communities with tools to "stay put," not be displaced, not bear the burden of environmental injustice, and actually benefit from the presence of investment of which their communities, specifically the community of Leimert Park, have been deprived for so long.[17]

What follows next in this section, is a section contextualizing my interest in the project and my methods section, which outlines the process set forth in collecting the information off which this work is based. Chapter I will 'set the stage' and context of Leimert Park, using Census data to quantitatively describe the demographics and socioeconomics of Leimert Park. This chapter will also trace the history of Leimert Park as a contemporaneously contested black space, situating it in the context of a black history in Los Angeles. Chapter II will transition our discussion directly into an engagement with Castells' urban protest movement framework in describing the recent political mobilization of the Leimert Park community around the transit investment. It

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[16] Slater, Tom. 2006. "The Eviction of Critical Perspectives from Gentrification Research." International Journal of Urban and Regional Research. 30,4: pg. 753. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2427.2006.00689.

[17] Kudler, Adrian Glick. 2013. "Black-Owned Businesses Already Being Pushed Out of Leimert Park Ahead of the Crenshaw Line." *Curbed Los Angeles.* http://la.curbed.com/2013/7/10/10222400/blackowned-businesses-already-being-pushed-out-of-leimert-park-ahead

charts the timeline of key events over the course of the movement as well as stakeholders integral to the movements' success. In setting Castells' framework in motion, this chapter also begins to uncover the specifics of why the community has mobilized. Chapter III continues a description of the movement in relation to the movements' focal point being that of a collective consumption. This chapter locates transit investment and transit-oriented development as a collective consumption and continues the discussion of why the community has mobilized, situating some of the points of contestation, such as gentrification; displacement; and environmental justice; in literature. Chapter IV will continue the engagement with Castells' framework, teasing out the basis of the community's cultural identity, clarifying the urgency of this community's mobilization through the global ethnopolis framework described by Michael Laguerre. Chapter V is the conclusion which provides recommendations on how the City can more meaningfully and intentionally play a role, through policy, in addressing the concerns of the Leimert Park, specifically the equity concerns associated with gentrification and displacement of the community.

My interest

The integration of transportation planning and the planning of housing is at the core of my career goals; working to understand and implement housing policy/programs that meet the current and future housing needs of all households and the equitable distribution and function of public transit networks are closely linked. Transit is integral to dictating how people can access and participate in the resources and public spaces of a city or given locale; my goals include encouraging more equitable access to cities so that all citizens may enjoy all that a city has to offer. One of the ways to accomplish this goal is

through the increased implementation of low-cost transportation options that accommodate low-to-moderate income families and individuals. Together, innovation in housing policy and public transportation can limit the burden of disproportionate impact born by communities of color and low-to-moderate communities with respect to capital investment, or lack thereof, in their communities.

Much of this orientation is specifically born out of my familiarity with environmental justice literatures that contest the disproportionate distribution of environmental amenities and the specific environmental burdens often born by communities of color and low-income communities. My realization that these issues were effectively issues of land use opened a broader, multivaried lens of my understanding and interrogation of many of the ways in which these communities are impacted by professional planning.

Upon my becoming increasingly familiar with the work of one of my advisors, it became clear that, in the context of urban restructuring, communities of color and low-moderate income communities, when would regularly “lose out.” In some instances, losing out looked like communities being forcibly removed or displaced from their communities at the behest of the government and planning decisions. In reading Dr. Sandoval’s work around MacArthur Park and transit in LA, it started to become clear to me that a similar sequence of circumstances had begun transpiring near where I lived.

Having moved, although not entirely, from South Central Los Angeles in my pursuit for an undergraduate education from 2009-2013, I was not privy to the groundswell of activism that was engendered by the planned transit investment. While my ability to make it home during college was limited to semester breaks, in the instances

I did make it home, I noticed the urban fabric changing. Not only did I witness the demographics of the space changing, the built environment changed in the space as well. There was the development of a stand-alone Starbucks here and the presence of a Starbucks with a community grocery store there. In some of my conversation with folks in the community, I was made aware of discussions around the implementation of public transit along the Crenshaw Corridor. Happening concomitantly, it seemed, was the progressing of construction of a light rail station at La Brea and Exposition which caused impacted the community in its own right.

The construction for the La Brea and Exposition station, for the Expo Line extension, disrupted the space visually and caused traffic congestion and was hotly contested by the community. No sooner than this station opened, while I've been in graduate school, the groundbreaking of the Crenshaw/LAX line's development along Crenshaw occurred. Equipped with a more informed set of analytical tools and through my interviews, I've come to understand what is at stake for black neighborhoods in South Los Angeles. The concern that the community will be taken is informed by an urban planning history of forcible neighborhood change whereby communities of color were targeted and deliberately and strategically disenfranchised, in terms of urban renewal stratagem and at times, to specifically make way for transportation infrastructure.

Ultimately, my research situated at the intersection of urban political ecology and urban sociology and aims to uncover and discover the political economic contexts and push-factors that may or already have contributed to the community concerns (mentioned earlier in the introduction) as a result of light-rail development. My work 1) surveys the community impacts associated with the Crenshaw/LAX light-rail transit development,

and its accompanying plans/projects, near the Leimert Park and Baldwin Hills neighborhoods 2) surveys and assesses the extent to which community impacts have been, are being, or will be addressed.

Methods

While quantitative census data was better to situate the community in question amongst demographic data and recent trends in relevant socioeconomic indicators, the majority of the data used in this work is qualitative. I began my research during the summer of 2015 using a qualitative approach to ascertain community perceptions of the nearby light-rail development with regard to the impacts of the development. Through conducting interviews, attending public meetings, and the collection of archived material from various literary and media sources (i.e. YouTube, online- news articles), and reviewing documentation included planning documents, I aimed to capture the perspectives of not only community members, but also the perspectives of individuals that work with the community (community organizers) and individuals that work directly with the Metro. Given my preliminary research, I gathered that the stakeholders could be segmented into three groups, albeit imprecise and fluid groups (because some interviewees occupied multiple groups), at the level of the neighborhood, local politics, and local planning. These perspectives in particular were perspectives that would clearly allow for a substantive and well-rounded discussion of the events unfolding in Leimert Park. These perspectives would also allow for a supplementary discussion of how the development has happened and why it has happened.

The interview data collection method used in this research includes audio-recorded, semi-structured, open-ended interviews. I received the contact information of

the majority of those whom I interviewed using the snowball sampling method, that is, I contacted many of my interviewees based off recommendations from other interviewees. I found the contact information of some interviewees as a product of my preliminary research wherein particular figures, given the frequency of their names being mentioned, appeared to be mainstays in the ongoing community process. All interviewees were initially contacted via email. As mentioned earlier, each interview was audio-recorded and following, interviews were transcribed. Transcribed interviewees were reviewed and coded according to recurring themes. Recurring themes included an emphasis on cultural identity as well as community concerns around the particular set of anticipated impacts of safety, environmental justice, and gentrification/displacement. Each of these themes, in concert, ultimately informed the framework used to comment on the events transpiring in Leimert Park–Castells' Urban Protest Framework. After organizing main themes in relation to one another, specific quotes that most succinctly articulated the recurring theme, were extracted from each interview.

I interviewed a total of 15 individuals occupying different stakeholder categories, at different levels of community involvement, and across the spectrum of those that had been living in the neighborhood or in adjacent black neighborhoods anywhere from two to thirty years. I developed questions specific for each stakeholder group, and in the instance that someone occupied multiple stakeholder categories, I interviewed the individual according to their preference of stakeholder category. Examples of common topics across questions asked of stakeholders included questions regarding the role of the community in the planning process, the roles of organizations involved in the planning process, community concerns, and neighborhood change associated with the transit

development. All of the interviewees were aware of the transit line, some from direct Metro notification, some by word of mouth, some through invitations to local groups meetings “to discuss and develop a plan to present to the planners” [18]some through their respective neighborhood council, others with children attending schools directly impacted by the train.[19,20,21] Participants primarily consisted of community members involved in the Leimert Park/Baldwin Hills neighborhoods including residents, community and service based organizations and non-profits, professional planners, and city officials who assumed a role in the project.

[18] Interview with Resident A 9/23/15
[19] Interview with Resident A 9/23/15
[20] Interview with Resident B 12/28/15
[21] Interview with Resident C 9/20/15

CHAPTER I

SETTING THE STAGE

A Community Profile

This section will provide an overview of demographic and economic data of the Leimert Park. The data is expected to be informative, serving as a supplementary context to the Leimert Park community, their concerns, and the urban protest movement. For the purposes of this study, the Census Tracts that comprise Leimert Park are Census Tracts 2340, 2342, and 2342 within Los Angeles County.

Overview

- *The relative percentage of Black-identifying individuals decreased from 1990 to 2014*
- *Median Household Income in the Leimert Park community increased from 1990 to 2014*
- *The percentage of renter-occupied units increased from 2000 to 2014; the community now has a higher percentage of renter-occupied units than owner-occupied units*
- *Cost-burdened for renters and owners increased from 2000 to 2014; more than half of renters and owners alike, are cost burdened.*
- *Increases in monthly rent outpaced increases in median household income*

Race

In Leimert Park, number and percentage of white individuals increased from 1990-2010. Aside from individuals identifying as "Other race,"[22] all other categories witnessed a decreasing representative percentage of the community population. Of the groups with a decreasing representative percentage, Black identifying individuals witnessed the largest decrease in percentage.

Race	1990		2000		2014	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
White	422	3.6%	453	3.9%	870	6.9%
Black	**9,774**	**84.1%**	**9,349**	**80.1%**	**9,476**	**75.7%**
American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut	36	0.3%	63	0.5%	37	0.3%
Asian or Pacific Islander	915	7.9%	598	5.1%	543	4.3%
Other race	474	4.1%	1,213	10.4%	1,599	12.8%
Total	11,621	100.0%	11,676	100.0%	12,525	100.0%

Table 1 Shows the distribution of race in Leimert Park from 1990 to 2014. Source: Social Explore, U.S. Census.

Median Household Income

The Median Household Income (MHI) in the area increased from 1990-2014. In 1990, the MHI was $26, 715 whereas in 2014, the MHI was $42, 661, an increase of $ 15, 946 or 59.7%.

				Change 1990-2014	
	1990	2000	2014	Number	Percent
Median Household Income	$ 26,715	$ 34,090	$ 42,661	$ 15,946	59.7%

Table 2Shows the median household income in Leimert Park from 1990-2014. Source: Social Explorer, U.S. Census.

Housing Tenure

From 1990 to 2014, renters in Leimert Park increased, Leimert Park became a predominantly renter community. In 1990, the community was 50% renter-occupied and in 2014, the community was 57% renter-occupied. Whereas the percentage of owner

[22] For consistency with 1990 Census Data, the categories of "Other Race" and "Two or more Races" represented in 2000 and 2010 Census data sets were combined and comprise the "Other Race" line item for years 2000 and 2010.

occupied units was also 50% in 1990, by 2014 the percentage of owner-occupied units dropped to 43%.

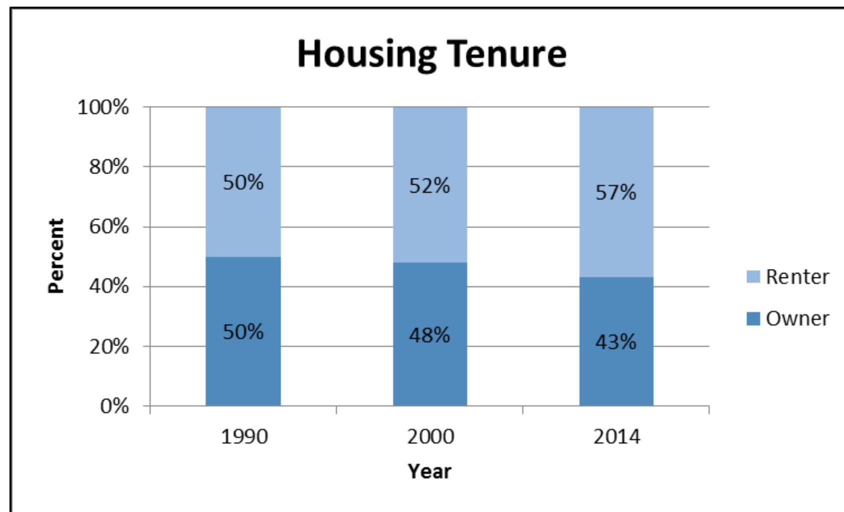

Figure 1 Shows housing tenure across Leimert Park from 1990 to 2014. Source: Social Explorer, U.S. Census.

Cost Burdened Renters

The percentage of cost-burdened renters increased from 1990-2014. In 1990, 47% of renters were cost-burdened in the Leimert Park community while in 2014, 64% of renters were-cost burdened. From 1990 to 2000, the percentage of cost-burdened renters slightly decreased, but from 2000 to 2014, the percentage of cost-burdened renters witnessed a 39% increase.

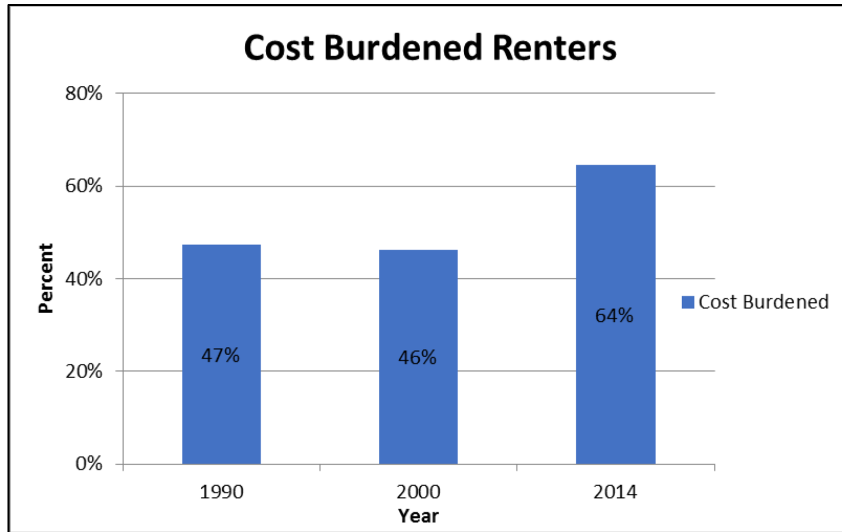

Figure 2 Shows cost burdened renters in Leimert Park from 1990-2014. Source: Social Explorer, U.S. Census

Cost Burdened Owners

The percentage of cost-burdened owners consistently increased from 1990-2014. In 1990, 29% of owners were cost-burdened in the Leimert Park community while in 2014, 52% of owners were cost burdened.

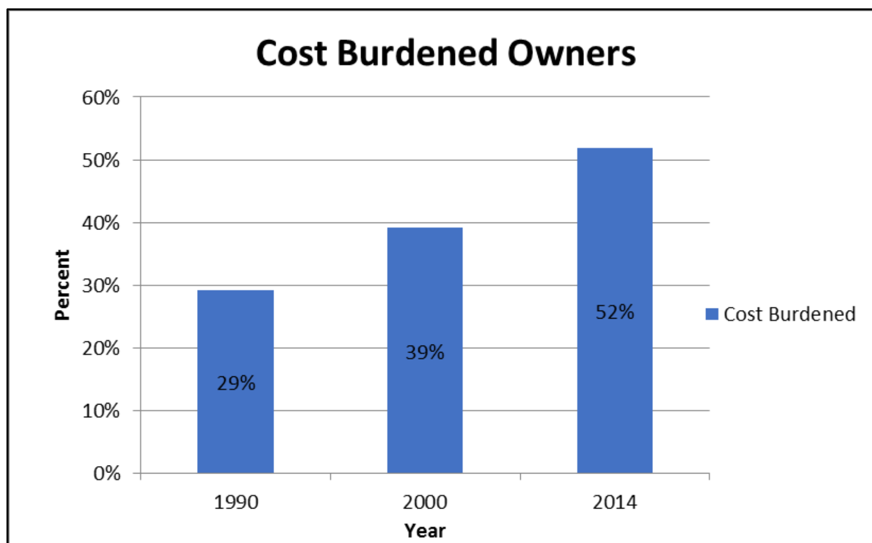

Figure 3 Shows cost burdened owners in Leimert Park from 1990-2014. Source: Social Explorer, U.S. Census

Rent to Income

In Leimert Park, while median household income increased from 1990-2014, monthly gross rent increased as well. However, demonstrated by the increases in the ratio of rent to income, increases in monthly gross rent outpaced increase in median household income. The ratio of rent to income decreased from .25 to .24 between 1990 and 2000, from 2000 to 2014, rent to income increased from .24 to .31.

	1990	2000	2014
Median Monthly Household Income	$2,226.25	$2,840.83	$ 3,555.08
Montly Gross Rent	$ 553	$ 675	$ 1,105
Ratio of Rent to Income	0.25	0.24	0.31

Table 3 Shows ratio of monthly gross rent to median monthly household income in Leimert Park from 1990 to 2014. Source: Social Explorer, U.S. Census

Leimert Park and the History of Black Los Angeles

Leimert Park, one of the first master planned communities built in the late 1920s/early 1930s, is named after Walter H. Leimert and according to Redfin, a site for real estate news and analysis, Leimert Park was the 4th "hottest," or most attractive neighborhood in Los Angeles in 2015. [23] Additionally, Leimert Park was described by a community organizer as having a "culture like no other."[24]As suggested in the community profile, Leimert Park is a predominantly black neighborhood. Leimert Park however, was not always a predominantly black neighborhood. Los Angeles for that matter was not. In post-emancipation America, subject to a continuing and stifling oppression via Jim Crow, African Americans in the South imagined Los Angeles as a refuge, distant geographically and presumed to be different in a number of the ways, namely distant from bigotry. Even

[23] Kirson, Antonio. 2015. "Redfin Predicts the Hottest Neighborhoods in 2015." *Redfin.* https://www.redfin.com/blog/2015/01/hottest-neighborhoods-of-2015-2.html#los-angeles-ca
[24] Interview with Community Organizer 12/17/15

as African Americans migrated, in droves, to western states and Los Angeles, California specifically, there would be some time before African Americans lived in Leimert Park.

In the mid-1900's, responding to a burgeoning and fast growing manufacturing sector with respect to defense industries in the Los Angeles area, African-Americans sought to capitalize on the proliferation of job opportunities. Pursuant to maximizing war-time production, African-Americans were all but recruited to supplement an industrial manufacturing labor force in which they had long been excluded from participating—a labor force that had been exclusively white, male, and skilled labor.[25] Engendering this shift, this inclination toward desegregating the work force, in part, was labor activism on behalf of black labor leaders catalyzing the 1941 Executive Order 8802 which "forbade discrimination in wartime defense industries and created the Fair Employment Practice Committee (FEPC) to investigate charges of racial discrimination."[26] This shift in employment opportunity was considered to be symbolic of larger changes to come, particularly in Los Angeles, wherein African Americans had previously been, at best, confined to employment opportunities in the city's service sector.

Between 1900 and 1930, the black population in Los Angeles grew from 2,131 to 38,898. With the optimism associated with a perceived escaping of racial violence of the South, and newly available employment opportunities, "between 1940 and 1970, the black population in Los Angeles grew faster than in any other large northern or western city, climbing from 63, 744 to almost 763, 000." [27] Unlike rust belt cities that saw

[25] Sides, Josh. 2006. LA. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Pg. 2
[26] Ibid. Pg. 3
[27] Ibid. Pg. 2

deindustrialization and a declining manufacturing industry as exacerbating inequality, Los Angeles ultimately tells a contrary story of persisting racial inequality even as the availability of high skill and low skill manufacturing jobs increased and retail and services industries expanded through the 1970s.[28] Even still black people continued to limited in the work landscape—a limitation that was strongly reflected in the residential landscape.

Ahead of WWII, Los Angeles' racial diversity "vast size and low population density"[29] and increasing dependence on private transportation, by default buffeted newly arriving black Americans from comparable magnitudes of racial trauma, in the forms of racial violence and racial segregation, endured in the South. Additionally, California was "admitted as a free state…outlawed de jure racial segregation in California schools, and passed a state anti-discrimination law in 1893."[30] However, the reaction to increases in black population during the war period was an increase to mandated black sequestering or isolation, revealing latent anti-black sentiments. Additionally, the presence of Blacks in these cities was swiftly accompanied by a precipitation of race-based hatred that manifested in numerous, overtly violent ways.[31]

The first black settlement in the Los Angeles area was established in the late 1890's near contemporary downtown, but as the black community expanded so did the footprint of their community. The community expanded south to South Central Avenue. This particular street, at the time, served to be the nexus for the economic and cultural heartbeat of the Los Angeles black community. As blacks increasingly concentrated

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[28] Ibid. Pg. 6
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid. Pg. 15
[31] Massey, D. S., & Denton, N. A. (1993). *American apartheid: Segregation and the making of the underclass*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. Pg. 30

around South Central Avenue, it became home to First African Methodist Episcopal (AME), Urban League and NAACP chapters, as well as black businesses.[32] Blacks increasingly concentrated around South Central. During the war though, any new black migrants, with few familial/social ties, settled in Little Tokyo, a neighborhood once occupied by Japanese residents stripped from their homes and forced into internment camps. In both situations though, black residents were subject to overcrowded, substandard living conditions, relegated to what amounted to slums. In a way that resonated across the country, the rationale was explained by Baltimore Mayor, J. Barry Mahool in 1910:

> "Blacks should be quarantined in isolated slums in order to reduce the incidents of civil disturbance, to prevent the spread of communicable disease into the nearby White neighborhoods, and to protect property values among the White majority."[33]

Inseparable from the narrative of increasing black population and limited housing opportunity, though, is the concomitance of de jure racially discriminatory practices that suppressed black Americans. In the 1890's, racial housing covenants that discriminated on the basis of race and restricted black residential mobility, began to appear in California. These covenants created a sort of "racial zoning" which "launched what became a comprehensive set of public policies to contain Black residential expansion."[34] Such covenants directly impacted black people in Los Angeles as there were overtly encouraged to exclude the presence of African Americans and other ethnic minorities from traditionally white neighborhoods in Los Angeles, such as Leimert Park. There were

[32] Sides, Josh. 2006. LA. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.16

[33] Quoted in Silver, Christopher. 1997. "The Racial Origins of Zoning Cities." In Urban Planning and the African American Community: In the Shadows. 26 London: SAGE Publications.

[34] Silver, Christopher. 1997. "The Racial Origins of Zoning Cities." In Urban Planning and the African American Community: In the Shadows. 26 London: SAGE Publications.

a sequence of legal challenges and court decisions between 1917 and 1945 that alternatingly contested and upheld the legality of racial covenants. In 1948, the Shelly v. Kramer U.S. Supreme Court decision outlawed the enforcement of racial covenants. In 1953, the Barrows v. Jackson decision ruled that individuals could not sue, for damages, those who violated covenants. However, the practice of enforcing racial covenants continued to persist, however sparingly, despite the ruling of Shelly v. Kramer and Barrows v. Jackson. "Until the 1950s, the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Real Estate Boards contained a provision explicitly prohibiting real estate agents from introducing minorities into white neighborhoods."[35] One real estate association in particular, the California Real Estate Association, pushed for the avowing of covenants into the 1960's.[36] Thomas and Ritzdorf affirm that "long after officially sanctioned racial prejudice subsided, racial oppression and inequality lingered."[37] In the defense of white neighborhoods, "the Los Angeles Urban League identified no fewer than twenty-six distinct techniques used by white homeowners to exclude blacks."[38] Such discriminatory housing practices, accompanied by racial discrimination in education and employment, galvanized black resistance movements. Through the Great Depression and up until WWII, anti-discrimination activism transpired in myriad ways where community organizations, such as the NAACP and black newspapers, such as the California Eagle

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[35] Sides, Josh. 2006. LA. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Pg. 106

[36] Ibid. Pg. 17, 18

[37] Thomas, June Manning and Ritzdorf, Marsha. 1997. "Introduction." In eds. Thomas, June Manning and Ritzdorf, Marsha. Urban Planning and the African American Community: In the Shadows. 26 London: SAGE Publications.

[38] Sides, Josh. 2006. LA. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Pg. 101

and Los Angeles Sentinel, actively contested racial discrimination in housing, education, and employment.[39]

This activism brought about, to some extent, integration of the workplace and neighborhoods whereby the economic gains of blacks conferred onto greater participation in homeownership. Despite this progress, though, what remained were white efforts to exclude black people from white communities, "buttressed by the policies of the California and Los Angeles real estate boards, lending institutions, and even the federal government." [40] Blacks in Los Angeles, comparable but to a lesser extent than other cities around the country, continued to be segregated.[41] Behind an eventual white flight from inner cities, due to the commitment to segregation and federal policy subsidizing suburbanization, inner cities were rapidly disinvested.

The disinvestment was institutional and bound up in propagating segregation beyond the decision to outlaw racial covenants. "Black areas were invariably…redlined"[42] and "federally sponsored mortgage programs systematically channeled funds away from minority neighborhoods, bringing about a wholesale disinvestment in black communities during the 1950s and 1960s."[43] In particular, both the Federal Housing Administration and "the Veterans Administration refused to guarantee home construction loans where racial covenants were on record."[44] Additionally, investment was also "redirected away from neighborhoods that looked as though they

[39] Ibid. Pg. 30
[40] Ibid. Pg. 96
[41] Massey, D. S., & Denton, N. A. (1993). *American apartheid: Segregation and the making of the underclass*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
[42] Ibid. Pg. 52
[43] Ibid. Pg. 58
[44] Sides, Josh. 2006. LA. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Pg. 108

might contain blacks in the future."[45] This directly impacted neighborhoods such as Leimert Park, which emerged as a neighborhood that "might contain blacks" after the lifting of racial housing covenants and blacks migrated westward from the Central Avenue community to areas of the City in closer proximity to resources.[46] "By the late 1950's and early 1960s, blacks had pushed west and south of West Adams into Leimert Park." [47]When blacks began to buy property in Leimert Park, in the late 1940s,[48] they were met with white resistance and "growing white hostility"[49] that "vigorously defended segregation."[50] Leimert Park and comparable communities, were considered "not worthy of credit" and were therefore "systematically cut off from mortgage monies and home improvement loans."[51]

Even while with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Fair Housing Act of 1968, the Equal Credit Opportunity Act of 1974, the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act of 1975, and Community Reinvestment Act of 1977, "the nation's largest black communities remained as segregated as ever in 1980."[52] A decade later, outside, the context of segregation, and even amidst the proliferation of black political representation and black communities amassing a more significant political voice in the electing of Mayor Tom Bradley, sentiments of racial discrimination continued to pervade the black experience in Los Angeles. A report published by the Los Angeles Commission on Human Relations

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[45] Massey, D. S., & Denton, N. A. (1993). *American apartheid: Segregation and the making of the underclass*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. Pg. 52
[46] Chapple, Reginald. 2010. "From Central Avenue to Leimert Park." In *Black Los Angeles: American Dreams and Racial Realities*. New York: New York University Press. Pg. 60
[47] Sides, Josh. 2006. LA. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Pg. 189
[48] Ibid. 102
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Massey, D. S., & Denton, N. A. (1993). *American apartheid: Segregation and the making of the underclass*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. Pg. 105
[52] Ibid. 83

noted that "167 racially motivated hate crimes during 1989, representing an increase of 78% over the prior year. About 60% of the crimes were directed against blacks and about 70% occurred at the victim's residence. The specific complaints included 54 instances of racist graffiti or literature, 53 assaults, 34 acts of vandalism, 19 threats, 6 cross-burnings, and one case of arson."[53]

As a result of this on-going racial violence, accompanied by police brutality, the Watts Riots in 1965 and the LA riots in 1992 transpired. Riots that resonated with separate but related resistance movements in the repetitive decades in which they occurred. The Crenshaw Corridor and "Leimert Park Village emerged as the new center of Black Los Angeles following the 1992 civil unrest in Los Angeles,"[54] becoming the "social, cultural and political heart."[55] In an interview with a local political representative this understanding was echoed.

> "Crenshaw has a legacy 50 years long of being a vibrant black corridor; it has replaced Central Ave. as this corridor… so it is the social and cultural fabric of Crenshaw that generates its power, its history."[56]

While this acknowledgment exists, though, the incoming transit line has raised questions about whether Leimert Park will be able to remain this black center of Los Angeles. The same local political representative followed the previous mention of the Corridors' importance by noting that in particular Leimert Park "became the black center of life…late 60s early 70s, and it has continued to be until probably now, when you're seeing gentrification."[57] The now being referenced by the local political representative, is

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[53] Ibid. 90
[54] Chapple, Reginald. 2010. "From Central Avenue to Leimert Park." In *Black Los Angeles: American Dreams and Racial Realities*. New York University Press: New York., pg. 76
[55] Ibid. pg. 71
[56] Interview with Political Representative A 12/18/15
[57] Ibid.

the now of the influx of transit investment. There is a suggestion here that gentrification, a community concern that will be flushed out further, will result in Leimert Park ceasing to be the central place that has been so meaningful to Black Los Angeles. Largely, this is the point of departure for much the Leimert Park urban protest movement. In the context of the aforementioned history and Leimert Park, a previously exclusive space ironically emerging as a refuge in society of racial violence and discrimination, the community as well as a myriad of stakeholders across levels of political influence, have mobilized, in resistance, to defend the cultural identity of a community forged by resistance. The following chapter discusses the political mobilization associated with the movement and the outcomes thus far.

CHAPTER II

POLITICAL MOBILIZATION

Political Capital and the Grassroots

Political capital as described by Healey et.al. 2003 is "the capacity to act collectively to develop local qualities and capture external attention and resources"[58] and in this instance is necessary for a 'governance transformation.' That is, in order to transform or alter the way in which spaces and resources are governed or administered in a particular place, it is necessary that there be some collective action to disrupt or unsettle the determined patterns of governance and resource allocation. The presumption here is that an aspect of the governance status quo is one where the local qualities of the place in question, already are not being particularly acknowledged and do not have the attention of resources being allocated. In a way then, as much as this political capital creates the potential for 'capturing attention,' in so doing, it is also elemental to marshaling a defense of local qualities. These local qualities of a place are what constitute a place's social significance. These local qualities are inseparable from the cultural capital that maintains social capital[59] or the networks of "trust and understanding" developed in a place. In defending the cultural identity of a place, taken as representative of the convergence of political, cultural, and social capitals, each of these capitals is mobilized via political mobilization strategies that work to not only capture the attention and resources of external institutions, but to do so in a way that emphasizes and foregrounds the local qualities of a place.

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[58] Healey, P. et. al. 2003. "Place, identity and local politics: Analyzing initiatives in deliberative governance." In Deliberative policy analysis: Understanding governance in the network society, ed. M.A. Hajer and H. Wagenaar. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press. Pg. 63

[59] Sandoval, Gerardo. 2010. *Immigrants and the Revitalization of Los Angeles: Development and Change in MacArthur Park.* Cambria Press: New York.

In protecting the cultural identity of the place, there's necessarily a protection of that place physically, but also conceptually, as identity becomes embedded in the place[60]. For Leimert Park, and the stakeholders working to preserve what is experienced as "a culture like no other," it's about protecting this "unique place, it is the center of African-American art, commerce, and culture for Southern California and it has been recognized as such, at least since the uprising of '92."[61]

> Place has emotional significance; "place is more than a physical locality or a collection of assets to be positioned…it refers to the congelation of meanings and experiences which accumulate around locales through the daily life experience of people living their lives and firms conducting their activities (Healey et al. 2003)."[62]

This suggests implicitly, then that the bodies of people that comprise these places are central to place as well. That is, as much as place is about the experience of people, it is also about the physical occupation of the place by people. Main and Sandoval note that "the personal and group identities associated with and communicated through the local physical environment strengthen the bonds between people and places."[63] In Leimert Park's call for protection of that place or defense of that place then, it is as much about defending African-American identities and it is about defending African-American bodies—both of which have been historically marginalized. In an article assessing the significance of place and placemaking, in and of themselves, but also as forms of resistance, Main and Sandoval find "a link between place identity and local action."[64]

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[60] Main, Kelly and Sandoval, Gerardo. 2014. "Placemaking in a translocal receiving community: The relevance of place to identity and agency." *Urban Studies.* 1-16. doi: 10.1177/0042098014522720
[61] Interview with Community Organizer 12/17//15
[62] Quoted In Sandoval, Gerardo. 2010. *Immigrants and the Revitalization of Los Angeles: Development and Change in MacArthur Park.* Cambria Press: New York.
[63] Main, Kelly and Sandoval, Gerardo. 2014. "Placemaking in a translocal receiving community: The relevance of place to identity and agency." *Urban Studies.* Pg. 4. . doi: 10.1177/0042098014522720
[64] Main, and Sandoval 2014. 13.

Importantly, Leimert Park Village has historically been the site for political mobilization of grassroots movements and community advocacy.[65] It has separated itself as a place of refuge and site of resistance for black people and their concerns. Recently, the park has demarcated itself as the very site of protest in the community, for the community. Many protests, pursuant to a 'governance transformation' in terms of community policing have been related to police brutality and demonstrated a solidarity within black communities and families across the nation that have endured the persistence of brutality in their respective communities. Comparable to MacArthur Park, which "has become associated with immigrant identity and provides a space for assertion of immigrant's rights and resistance,"[66] Leimert Park has provided a space imbued with African-American identity that's also a site for black resistance.

Figure 4. 1989 photo of the Los Angeles Free South Africa Movement. https://www.kcet.org/shows/departures/leimert-plaza-park-where-the-community-speaks

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[65] Nash, Ashley. 2012. "The Legacy of Leimert Park." *The Los Angeles Sentinel*. https://lasentinel.net/the-legacy-of-leimert-park.html

[66] Main, Kelly and Sandoval, Gerardo F. 2014. "Placemaking in a translocal receiving community: The relevance of place to identity and agency." *Urban Stud.*

Dating as far back as 1989, Leimert Park hosted protests challenging apartheid in South Africa. More contemporarily, Leimert Park hosted protests contesting after the killing of Trayvon Martin, after the killing of Michael Brown, after the killing of Eric Garner, after the killing of Freddie Gray, and after the 2014 beating by California Highway Patrol (CHP) officer. Additionally, the community rallied in 2008 to support then Senator Barack Obama, rallied to support a community staple, World Stage, in the face of an impending eviction, and ultimately rallied to celebrate the eventual decision to build a transit station in Leimert Park Village.

Political Capital and the Beginning of a Movement

The Crenshaw Corridor, of which Leimert Park is a part, as a site for redevelopment had been a topic of discussion since the 1960's. Though the recently dissolved Community Redevelopment Agency had largely been involved in and responsible the redevelopment of the Crenshaw area since the late 1980s[67], the redevelopment conversation was already underway. While local and regional planners identified the Corridor as a potential redevelopment area, much of the material redevelopment that occurred was endogenous, the point of departure being from within the community. The community organized to envision and encourage beautification projects and the restoration of iconic spaces within the community such as the Vision Theatre in Leimert Park. Some investment from exogenous entities, such as Capri Partners, contributed to the development of the neighborhood as well. In particular Capri Partners contributed to redeveloping the Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Plaza. The scale of these endogenous and exogenous investments combined, though, paled in comparison to what is anticipated by the line.

[67] The Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles. N.d. "Crenshaw Redevelopment Project Area." http://www.crala.org/internet-site/Projects/Crenshaw_Slauson/upload/FACTCrenshawedited[1].pdf

Much of the investment conversation came on the heels of the riots of 1965 and 1992. In particular, "following the urban riots of the 1960s in the USA, scholars and public officials turned their attention to public transit.[68] A Los Angeles specific report produced in 1964 by The McCone Commission, a California commission assembled, to study riots, was "explicit about the lack of transportation as a contributing factor in the Watts riots.[69] The report states:

> "The inadequate and costly public transportation currently existing throughout the Los Angeles area seriously restricts the residents of the disadvantaged areas such as South Central Los Angeles. This lack of adequate transportation handicaps them in seeking and holding jobs, attending schools, shopping, and fulfilling other needs."(Governor's Commission on the Los Angeles Riots, 1965, p. 65)[70]

Functionally in process of what the McCone Commission suggests as necessary, Metro is building a 'more adequate' public transportation network. Metro claims that the $2 billion Crenshaw/LAX rail extension will "offer alternative transportation to congested roadways and provide significant environmental benefits, economic development and employment opportunities throughout Los Angeles County." [71] But the concerns of anticipated impacts communicated by the community, adds a community specific, nuanced narrative that is in conflict with Metro's purported benefits. The competing community narrative highlights that in-fact there may be environmental drawbacks as well as impediments to the community actually benefitting from prospective economic development and employment opportunities. The Metro narrative then, is one that is consistent with the community perspective that the line, and the line's "benefits," may

[68] Grengs, Joe. 2005. "The abandoned social goals of public transit in the Neoliberal City of the USA." *City.* 9,1: 56. doi: 10.1080/13604810500050161
[69] Ibid.
[70] Grengs, Joe. 2005. "The abandoned social goals of public transit in the Neoliberal City of the USA." *City.* 9,1: 56. doi: 10.1080/13604810500050161
[71] Metro.nd. "Crenshaw/LAX Transit Project: Overview Fact Sheet." http://media.metro.net/projects_studies/crenshaw/images/factsheet_crenshawlax_eng.pdf

not necessarily be for the community as much as the community happens to be subsumed within the County where Metro has set forth these plans. It therefore paints with a broad stroke, however inadvertently, that if the line is good for the County, then it must also be good for the community, or more perniciously, that what's good for the community is not a priority. There becomes this universalization of a utilitarian public good as a particular economic good, not attuned to the needs of the community

Transit-oriented development, in which light-rail transit and its appendage programs are subsumed, are born out of a paradigm of sustainable development that mirrors Metro's claims.[72]While sustainable development has previously been a paradigm that initially encompassed an emphasis on equity, it is now considered, what Gunder calls a "neoliberal institutional agenda,"[73] and is "not necessarily…even socially just."[74]For Gunder, sustainable development has moved to a space where "the economic imperative embedded within sustainable development…has hegemonic primacy,"[75] and sustainable development is "concerned primarily with pursuing 'sustainable cities that balance environmental concerns, the needs of future populations, and economic growth' (Beauregard 2005, 204)."[76] This shift in sustainable development conversation and practices have occurred despite the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), pushing for the consideration of "social equity."[77] In particular, public transit has "shift[ed] meeting social goals toward the more narrow purpose of relieving

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[72] Cervero, R, et.al. "Transit-Oriented Development And Joint Development In The United States: A Literature Review." TCRP Research Results Digest, 52. 1-144.
[73] Gunder, Michael. 2006. "Sustainability: Planning's Saving Grace or Road to perdition." Journal of Planning Education and Research. 26,2: 215.
[74] Ibid. pg. 209
[75] Ibid. Pg. 217
[76] Ibid. 214
[77] Grengs, Joe. 2005. "The abandoned social goals of public transit in the Neoliberal City of the USA." City, 9:1, 62. doi: 10.1080/13604810500050161

traffic congestion, from achieving equity toward merely efficiency, is now influenced by a neoliberal political agenda that separates the social from the economic."[78] This is reflected in the "gradual separation of planning frameworks for either 'social' or 'economic' planning,"[79] in a way that prioritizes the economic.

Following Castells' suggestion that urban planning as the medium through which urban services are realized conceptually and spatially, and the contemporary moment of neoliberalism, there is a concern that the collective consumption in the form of the Crenshaw/LAX line investment might not encompass an urban meaning representative of the neighborhood. Community organizing though, from the bottom-up, and top-down, has acknowledged this possibility, with one community organizer noting that "it's always been a project built through South LA, not for South LA. And I can't really think of a transportation project in Southern California's history that hasn't had that same outcome."[80] In particular, one community organizer's perspective highlighted that Metro created a "baseline project that is in general not responsive to any community and you force communities to advocate for improvements."[81] In response to this, the community in concert with local politicians has done exactly that—advocated for itself.

In the process of advocating for itself, the community has created an urban protest movement that has disrupted the status quo of Metro's goals of generality. This dovetails into Castells' suggestion that

[78] Ibid. 52
[79] Baeten, Guy. "Neoliberal planning: Does it really exist?" In *Contradictions of Neoliberal Planning. T.* Tas¸an-Kok, G. Baeten. The GeoJournal Library 102. doi: 10.1007/978-90-481-8924-3_11
[80] Interview with Community Organizer 12/17/15
[81] Ibid.

> "Without social movements, no challenge will emerge from civil society able to shake the institutions of the state through which norms are enforced, values preached and property preserved. Without political parties and without an open political system, the new values, demands, and desires generated by social movements not only fade (which they always do, anyway) but do not light up in the production of social reform and institutional change."[82]

Castells' highlights political mobilization as constitutive of an urban social movement and in the Leimert Park's instance, as a predominantly black community with black political representation, proved to be vital.

Ahead of the addition of the Leimert Park station to the plans for the transit line in question, the focal points of contestation with respect to the transit investment have been 1) community inclusion in the planning process and 2) the direct and indirect impacts associated with implementation of the Crenshaw/LAX transit line and its accompanying projects. These concerns are tethered to a realization, that as much as transit services will be collectively consumed, the impacts or burdens will also be collectively consumed, and to some extent, at the very least the consumption of these impacts or the burden of these impacts will be spatially disproportionate. Around these focal points community members including residents and business owners as well as non-profits, community based organizations, and political officials have worked to transform the rail project and mitigate the anticipated impacts around environmental injustice, gentrification, and displacement. It is around these major focal points and with the stakeholders involved, in the specific context of transit as a public good or service provided by the state that the fluidity of Castells' framework comes to life.

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority or Metro is responsible for all regional transportation related planning and visioning in Los Angeles

[82] Castells, Manuel. 1983. *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Pg. 294

County. Namely, Metro collaborates with the County of Los Angeles, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and local Cities to realize transportation projects. Within the aspect of the protest linked to the inclusion of the community in the planning process, the community has wanted to ensure that the projects are being developed and implemented equitably.[83] Accordingly, the community has mobilized to not only demand community participation in the visioning process, the community has aimed to translate this participation into materially transforming Metro's production of the line. Ultimately, having the station at Leimert Park incorporated into Metro's plans and budget, is an example of a product of the community's mobilization.

Community Inclusion: Getting a Station at Leimert Park

The Crenshaw/LAX, which was approved for preconstruction in 2012 and officially broke ground in 2014, is a 8.5 mile line which connects the Expo Line to the Metro Green Line, extending from the Metro stop at Expo and Crenshaw. The line will have new stations at Crenshaw/MLK, Crenshaw/Slauson, Leimert Park (Crenshaw/Vernon), Hyde Park, Fairview Heights, Downtown Inglewood, Westchester/Veterans and Aviation/Century. The portion along the Crenshaw Corridor, most directly affecting Leimert Park, is about 2 miles. Along this specific corridor, there were originally only stations at Crenshaw/MLK and Crenshaw Slauson with Leimert Park listed as optional.[84] The community marshaled a comprehensive mobilization across stakeholders, in order to secure a stop at Leimert Park.

[83] Interview with Non-Profit Stakeholder 9/29/15

[84] Metro. N.d. "Crenshaw/LAX Transit Corridor." http://media.metro.net/projects_studies/crenshaw/images/Crenshaw-LAX_transit_corridor_map_eng.pdf

Shortly after the passing of Measure R in 2008, a half-cent local sales tax, mobilization began to be more demonstrative. Led most noticeably by the Crenshaw Subway Coalition (CSC) in organizing and mobilizing the support and participation of community members and public officials, the community worked to have Metro commit to a stop at Leimert Park. The Crenshaw Subway Coalition is a collaborative, primarily volunteer organization that is the nexus for business; residents; and other stakeholders impacted by the Crenshaw/ LAX line. The coalition, formerly Fix Expo, formed around 2005 when the final EIR of the Metro Expo line was produced in response to community sentiments that the Expo line project was being built inequitably. The effort transitioned into a simultaneously organizing the movement in late 2007 when planning along the Crenshaw was mentioned as beginning soon.[85] The focus of CSC was to

> "ensure that the rail line was built the way the community wanted it and…make sure that the community development that is in some respects incumbent or naturally a product of mass transit investment, that that was a community driven process, that the community would have a say in the development and planning of the community and the changes that would take place as a product of the rail line."[86]

The CSC tasked themselves with informing and engaging stakeholder groups that, given the significance of Leimert Park to the broader African-American community, extended beyond the geo-spatiality of the alignment. These stakeholder groups included political officials such as County Supervisor Mark-Ridley Thomas, who has been considered a "key champion."[87,88]

Early on, County Supervisor Mark-Ridley Thomas' focus was to ensure that as the line "is being built we must also make sure the community doesn't pay too high a

[85] Interview with Community Organizer 12/17/ 215
[86] Interview with Community Organizer 12/17/ 15
[87] Interview with Political Representative A 12/18/15
[88] Interview with Political Representative C 12/30/15

price for its long-overdue rail service."[89] In Metro's original plans it listed the Leimert Park Station as optional. Through active participation in public hearings and working sessions, and through the collecting of signatures, the community challenged Metro and forcibly included themselves within the planning process.

[89] Sentinel News Service. 2011. "Supervisor Calls for Safety, Economic Protections for the Crenshaw/LAX Light Rail Corridor." *Los Angeles Sentinel.* https://lasentinel.net/supervisor-calls-for-safety-economic-protections-for-the-crenshaw-lax-light-rail-corridor.html

Crenshaw/LAX Transit Project

Figure 5 The Metro Rail Green Line extension from Expo to LAX with Leimert Park Station Update. http://media.metro.net/projects_studies/crenshaw/images/map_crenshawlax_eng.pdf

In 2011, stakeholders met formally with then Mayor Villaraigosa to lobby him for his support of the station.[90] The meeting including representation from groups integral to the grassroots community building, including the Los Angeles Urban League, the Crenshaw Chamber of Commerce, and Ward Economic Development Corporation, Brotherhood Crusade, and the Greater Los Angeles African American Chamber of Commerce. Additionally, faith-based organizations such as Holman United Methodist Church, Mt. Moriah MBC, First AME Corporation, and First AME Church were also central to the community building. There was also representation from the 9th District, for Congresswoman Maxine Waters, and from Councilman Bernard Parks. Other groups integral to the organizing are the West Angeles Development Corporation, the Empowerment West Area Neighborhood Council, and Community Build. The emphasis driving the addition of the Leimert Park station was voiced by Los Angeles County Supervisor, Mark Ridley-Thomas. Ridley-Thomas noted that "the need for a Leimert Park Village Station is obvious; a Crenshaw Corridor rail line must include the most prominent cultural center on its route."[91] Even still, the community was met with the decision by Metro that the station would be built only if the cost of the station would not exceed the already allocated budget for the project.[92]

Even as City Hall was criticized as being "silent" and city officials such as councilman Herb Wesson was criticized as being "largely uninterested in the fate of

[90]Simmonds, Yussuf J. "2011. Community Asks Mayor to Support Leimert Park Stop!" *Los Angeles Sentinel*. https://lasentinel.net/community-asks-mayor-to-support-leimert-park-stop.html
[91] Sentinel News Service. 20011. "Funding for Leimert Park Station." *Los Angeles Sentinel*. https://lasentinel.net/funding-for-leimert-park-station.html
[92] Sentinel News Service. 2013. "Verdict on Leimert Park Station Expected in May." *Los Angeles Sentinel.* https://lasentinel.net/verdict-on-leimert-park-station-expected-in-may.html

Leimert Park,"[93] it was with sufficient lobbying and resistance, across stakeholder groups that secured a station. From community based organizations (CBOs), non-profits, to local politicians, stakeholder collaboration amounted to "A united front of African American Leadership,"[94] in 2013, following a motion initiated by Ridley-Thomas[95], where the City of Los Angeles and Metro together committed $120 million to fully fund the Leimert Park station[96]. This decision came after several years of organizing and two particularly intense years of lobbying politicians.

Figure 6 Crowd celebrates securing the station in Leimert Park.
http://articles.latimes.com/2013/may/24/local/la-me-ln-leimert-park-celebrates-20130524

[93] Kaplan, Erin A. 2013. "Dead End for Degnan? World Stage Eviction Could be Harbinger for Leimert Park." *KCET*. https://www.kcet.org/socal-focus/dead-end-for-degnan-world-stage-eviction-could-be-harbinger-for-leimert-park

[94]Miller, Kenneth. 2013. "A United Front of African American Leadership Secures Crenshaw Line Station at Leimert Park Village." *Los Angeles Sentinel*. https://lasentinel.net/a-united-front-of-african-american-leadership-secures-crenshaw-line-station-at-leimert-park-village.html

[95] Supervisor Ridely-Thoma, et. al. 2013.. "Motion By _." http://ridley-thomas.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/05.23.13-Final-Leimert-Park-Station-Motion.pdf

[96] Miller, Kenneth. 2013. "A United Front of African American Leadership Secures Crenshaw Line Station at Leimert Park Village." *Los Angeles Sentinel*. https://lasentinel.net/a-united-front-of-african-american-leadership-secures-crenshaw-line-station-at-leimert-park-village.html.

In acknowledging the diligence demonstrated by the community, and in light of the city's goals for "more economic development," and "a train to the airport" a local political representative explained, in general, why the confluence of black stakeholders have organized in concert.

> "This is a long disinvested in community and I think what we don't want is to have those first set of goals mean that no people of color live there anymore and then we finally get the investment that we want. So, it's not that we are at counter-purposes, it's just that we wanted to demand that our neighborhoods got the investment that they have for so long deserved and haven't gotten and that the people that actually live there now will actually see the benefits and reap those benefits of the construction, the jobs, the economic investments, the creation of vibrant corridors." [97]

Moving forward there is an expectation that there will continue to be this level of concerted effort to dictate the outcomes of line, in particular, as local district politicians work closely with the Planning Department, Bureau of Street Services, Bureau of Street Lighting, the Bureau of Engineering, the Mayor's Office, the Supervisors office, Council President's office, each neighborhood council, and of course, Metro.[98]

Community Inclusion: Firsts for Metro

Metro has been pushed toward many 'firsts' within the context of this project, including adding a station at Leimert Park Village. One of these firsts came in response to community concerns that black workers in the community would not be staffed on alignment related projects.[99,100] In 2012, Metro adopted a Project Labor Agreement, which to some extent will guarantee employment opportunities for the community, a

[97] Interview with Political Representative A 12/18/15
[98] Ibid.
[99] Interview with Resident A 9/23/15
[100] Interview with Political Representative A 12/18/15

decision in which Ridley-Thomas also played an integral role.[101] In so doing, "Metro became the nation's first transit agency to adopt a Project Labor Agreement (PLA) with national targeted hiring goals for federally funded, Federal Transit Administration (FTA) approved projects valued over $2.5 million."[102]

In 2011, community groups came together to develop a project labor agreement to encourage a more intentional commitment around Metro encouraging the facilitation of community jobs by the hired contractors. These groups included non-profit, Los Angeles Alliance for New Economy in collaboration with community, faith, politician and labor stakeholders such as the Black Workers Center, the Black Contractors and other unions. Together these groups organized to get the votes at Metro for a PLA that establishes "a threshold of economic vulnerability, to ensure that communities around the line would qualify to have preferential hiring. So, the way that the project labor agreement was set up was that 40% of the workers would be from economically disadvantaged communities. 10% would be disadvantaged workers."[103]

The PLA is a binding, labor agreement that requires contractors to be intentional about hiring low-moderate income individuals. It creates the infrastructure of an accountability plan with the assignment of a job coordinator to interface with the labor unions and the contractor to make sure there is a constant and steady stream of workers that fit into those categories going on to the project.

Another first of Metro's is the business interruption fund, which to date has "60 grants of varying amounts to "mom-and-pop" businesses, most of them located along the

[101] Ibid.
[102] Metro. N.d. "Crenshaw/LAX Transit Project." https://www.metro.net/projects/crenshaw_corridor/
[103] Interview with Political Representative A 12/18/15

path"[104] and has allocated $1 million in funds to local small businesses. For Ridley-Thomas, "It demonstrates Metro's commitment to helping local small businesses not only survive, but be ready to thrive when the Crenshaw line reopens."[105] For others in the community, the perceived and anticipated quantitative and qualitative impacts of the line continue to persist in spite of these commitments.

Another first for Metro, but still a creation met with consternation, was the creation of a Community Leadership Council (CLC) which was established in 2011[106]. This, too, appears to be a product of the community organizing and the move to have the meanings of the community represented in whatever shared meaning precipitates in the outcomes of the transit investment. In an interview with an organizer, it was mentioned that "this has been a very new process for Metro…How did this come about? It wasn't necessarily Metro driven, Metro didn't have the idea to put this together…they've had a tough time in figuring out how best to use the advisory body."[107] The council is a group that meets bi-monthly[108] "composed of 25 community based activists with a history of advocacy and accomplishment in the area"[109] and has been tasked with supplementary community outreach. In particular, it played integral roles in the first two "firsts" mentioned in this section, working closely with the appendage to the PLA, Metro's

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[104] Sentinel Staff Report. 2015. "Crenshaw Corridor Embraces Change." *Los Angeles Sentinel.* https://lasentinel.net/crenshaw-corridor-embraces-change.html

[105] City News Service. 2015. "Metro Business Interruption Fund Reaches $1 Million Mark." *Los Angeles Sentinel*. https://lasentinel.net/metro-business-interruption-fund-reaches-1-million-mark.html

[106] Metro. 2014. "Crenshaw/LAX Community Leadership Council." *CLC Quarterly Update*. http://media.metro.net/projects_studies/crenshaw/images/141138_ntc_crenshaw_clc_newsletter_bg_web2.pdf

[107] Interview with Non-Profit Stakeholder

[108] Interview with Local Political Representative B

[109] Sentinel News Service. 2013. "Crenshaw/LAX Leadership Council Advocates for Crenshaw/Inglewood Community. *Los Angeles Sentinel*. https://lasentinel.net/crenshaw-lax-leadership-council-advocates-for-crenshaw-inglewood-community.html

Construction Careers Policy and the formation of the Business Interruption Fund. Additionally, the members "helped secure the Leimert Park station" and "established a process to identify potential safety issues." [110]

Transit Community and Concerns

The concerns of the community are inextricable from a concern that neighborhood changes might not meaningfully include the people and places that currently constitute the community. It's also born out of a more general concern about the fate of a community interacted with and embraced as an ethnopole by other similarly diasporic communities. It is a sentiment that is multifaceted and ranges the spectra from 1) how the neighborhood will be defined and who gets to define neighborhood and 2) who gets to work and live in the neighborhood.

Even as Metro, in concert with the community, have achieved some firsts, an organizer working closely with the CLC group suggests that "you have a Community Leadership Council that has no power"[111] and another organizer mentioned that, "at times you can see the level of impact of community input, but in other cases, no, there's a lot left to be desired around where the community wants it to be, the outcome of a particular issue and the community doesn't necessarily get included."[112] In response to the CLC's ability to influence the planning process, and by extension, the community's ability to influence the planning process, there's concern that the existence of the CLC and

[110] Metro. 2014. "Crenshaw/LAX Community Leadership Council." *CLC Quarterly Update.* http://media.metro.net/projects_studies/crenshaw/images/141138_ntc_crenshaw_clc_newsletter_bg_web2.pdf
[111] Interview with Community Organizer 12/17/15
[112] Interview with Non-Profit Stakeholder 9/29/15

comparable institutions may not be the appropriate indicators of an inclusive development. In an interview a community organizer poignantly stated that,

> "You can design a process that is intended to be responsive to community concerns, but it's all in the implementation and the capacity you give those engaged in that process, to alter the project goal. There has never been a process intended to meaningfully challenge what Metro already thought they would and should do." [113]

Reinforcing the skepticism of the community organizer, Mayer tells us that contemporarily, in the context of social movements and how the neoliberal restructuring has shaped social movements and has obscured the efficacy of the developments such as the CLC or PLA, that even with the 'firsts' that Metro has established, it's unclear whether these firsts will translate into meaningful moves toward equity. Mayer asserts that "ever since neoliberal policies ceased to ignore 'civil society', and especially since they began to pay attention to the zones of social marginalization and to activate and integrate civil society stakeholders into a variety of development and labor market policies, the political opportunity structures for urban movements have fundamentally changed."[114] The political opportunity structures referenced here, as those structures that might lead to a transformation in governance that would otherwise alleviate inequality.

Neoliberalism is a political-economic, as well as urban restructuring[115] that "impose[s] market-based regulatory arrangements and sociocultural norms"[116] that pushes for a public policy and economic development strategy in a way that focuses on

[113] Interview with Community Organizer 12/17/15
[114] Mayer, Margit. 2006. "Manuel Castells' The City and the Grassroots." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. Pg. 205
[115] Brenner, Neil and Theodore, Nik. 2005. "Neoliberalism and the urban condition." *City,* 9 1:, 101
[116] Ibid. Pg. 102

generating income “even if it overlooks the needs of the city’s indigenous population”[117] and results in “glossing over the socially regressive outcomes that are the frequent by-products of such initiatives.”[118] In this way neoliberal policy, in terms of public transit in particular, almost definitively reinforces unjust outcomes, and in the form of uneven development described by Harvey. Harvey notes that “the uneven development of neoliberalism, its frequently partial and lop-sided application from one state and social formation to another.”[119] At the national level though, insofar as an access to Harvey discussion around the neoliberal state, suggests, there may also be room for uneven development at the national level. In this context of pursuing development, it is conceivable that locales considered unfit for or less than optimal maximizing development potential (i.e. exchange value) be disinvested or neglected.

Importantly, these uneven process and outcomes of development have been intentionally neglectful of the needs of low-income communities and communities of color because these communities have been conceptually and materially typecast as communities unfit for capital investment. This is suggested by the process of disinvestment to which communities were intentionally subjected by formal city planning institutions, lending institutions, and federal government. This uneven development is more often than not articulated spatially through an apparent asymmetrical distribution of resources and capital—all histories and factors that the urban protest movement in question has internalized and mobilized to actively resist the re-iteration of the aforementioned outcomes.

[117] Purcell, Mark. 2009. “Resisting Neoliberalization: Communicative Planning or Counter-Hegemonic Movements!” *Planning Theory*. 8, 2: 141.
[118] Brenner, Neil and Theodore, Nik. 2005. “Neoliberalism and the urban condition.” *City,* Vol. 9, : 103.
[119] Harvey, David. 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pg. 13.

This is particularly relevant to this case study because in the context of neoliberalized public policy, that "has increasingly shaped state policy to benefit capital rather than citizens,"[120] the "social purpose of public transit is becoming supplanted by the economic imperative of efficiency and competitiveness."[121] Further Grengs notes that "public transit is being transformed to fit the larger political project that we call neoliberalism, driven by the same forces that are stripping the social purpose from other public programmes."[122] Following Grengs suggestion that Los Angeles is a neoliberal city, and knowing that the Crenshaw/LAX line is specifically born out of a need a want to increase the mobility of capital, we return to the community organizers indecision about whether the alignment, Metro and its community engagement process will meaningfully meet the needs of the community.

The governance transformation aimed at by this movement, like others in the neoliberal context, and represented by interventions such as the CLC, face dilemmas where: 1) "they are tied into 'civic engagement' discourses, where voluntarism and community work are easily mobilized for a neoliberal agenda" and 2) participation of social movement organizations can become a mechanism to diffuse or co-opt dissent and political challenges, thus turning the movement organizations into manufacturers of

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[120] Purcell, Mark. 2009. "Resisting Neoliberalization: Communicative Planning or Counter-Hegemonic Movements!" *Planning Theory*. 8, 2: 143.

[121] Grengs, Joe. 2005. "The abandoned social goals of public transit in the Neoliberal City of the USA." *City*, 9,1: 53. doi: 10.1080/13604810500050161

[122] Ibid. pg. 58

consent."[123] This manufacturing of consent is often arrived at through the vehicle of building consensus, or "broad community consensus" [124] with which the CLC is tasked.

This consensus, often attained through community participation, aims at universalizing the public interest, in a way that does not reconcile power differential across participating parties and therefore "relatively more powerful groups can ensure their interests are met (indeed it is a requirement), and so there is no possibility of fundamentally transforming existing relations of power."[125] In this way, a consensus as consent is manufactured that "is really always a temporary hegemony of some interests over others."[126] Therefore there is likely that few to no outcomes will represent the meeting of the needs of the community. Contemporarily, even while there has been an increase in the appropriation of "equity vocabulary" in the plans that support the project, in terms of environmental justice and gentrification, there appears to be at best, an insufficient engagement and strategy for how the equity outcomes will be ensured outside of community participation. Neoliberal ideology is one that even while appealing to social marginalization in vocabulary and even in process, there ends up being a prioritization in opposition to this social marginalization in terms of outcomes. Even as decisions are made that have potential to create equitable outcomes, such as the incoming Crenshaw/LAX transit line, universalizing and utilitarian rhetoric within which the decisions are steeped, obscure the potential for these decisions to have benefits and impacts that are distributed equitably.

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[123] Mayer, Margit. 2007. "Contesting the Neoliberalization of Urban Governance." In *Contesting Neoliberalism.* E.d. Leitner, Helga et.al. New York: Guilford Press. pg. 109
[124] Metro. "What's New Archive." https://www.metro.net/projects/crenshaw_corridor/whats-new-archive/#safety
[125] Purcell, Mark. 2009. "Resisting Neoliberalization: Communicative Planning or Counter-Hegemonic Movements!" *Planning Theory*. 8, 2: 156.
[126] Ibid. 153

Direct and Indirect Impacts: Quantitative and Qualitative

The direct and indirect impacts span quantitative and qualitative assessment. The direct quantitative impacts associated are generally related to the extent to which the construction of the line and its projects will disrupt businesses in the corridor, increase traffic congestion. Interviewees expressed discontent around closures of major arterials that have complicated commutes and in some instances resulted in the re-direction of heightened traffic through their neighborhoods.[127] These direct impacts also include the inability of some commercial establishments to be readily accessed, either because of street closures or limited parking availability due to construction.[128] In terms of indirect impacts, the quantitative impact is the affordability of residential rental properties and commercial rental properties. Residents, organizers, and business owners have all expressed concern about increasing rents. These quantitative aspects confer onto the qualitative aspects that pertain to both direct impacts and indirect impacts, including how the quality of life in the community will be impacted by the presence of the train and also how safe the community feels in relation to the train running through the community.

The community has attempted to transform the understanding of the public interest as one that is representative of the community's needs, that is, a public interest that in part maintains the material basis of everyday life in the community. To some extent this has been addressed by the demanding a station at Leimert Park so that 1) this historic community is directly apart of the project 2) the small businesses here could take part in whatever delayed economic benefits are expected to transpire from the influx of

[127] Interview with Resident A 9/23/15
[128] Interview with Resident C 9/20/15

investment. However, despite the community organizing and activism, all battles have not been won.

Out of the concern of safety came the rallies to have the line along the entirety of the Crenshaw Corridor be underground.[129] Concomitant with the mobilization to have a station a Leimert Park was the push to have the line grade-separated along the corridor. The emphasis between Expo/Crenshaw and 60th street was to have the line placed underground. Along the three mile stretch of the Crenshaw Corridor, originally the line was slated to be underground for only .9 miles.[130] The community wanted the entire three miles of the line to be underground, lobbying for grade separation in order to allay the safety concerns expressed around the line passing near schools at-grade level. This stretch of the in particular is where the line passes between 48th Street and 59th Street along the corridor. Metro would eventually propose an alignment that situated 2 miles of line underground. However, the organizing spearheaded by grassroots groups and behind the Crenshaw Subway coalition, “It ain’t over ‘til it’s under,” was to no avail. In May 2011, the Metro board rejected a Ridley-Thomas proposal to put the rail line underground in the Park Mesa Heights community, between 48th Street and 59th Street along Crenshaw Boulevard.[131]

What remains, in addition to an above the ground train, is the facilitation of rent increases at the level of state institutions, through ideology, public policy or the lack thereof, at the expense of the qualitative material basis of everyday life within communities. The qualitative aspects of both direct and indirect impacts revolves around

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[129] Interview with Resident E 9/21/15

[130] Crenshaw Subway Coalition. N.d. *Issues*. http://www.crenshawsubway.org/issues

[131] Sentinel News Service. 2011. “Supervisor Calls for Safety, Economic Protections for the Crenshaw/LAX Light Rail Corridor.” *Los Angeles Sentinel.* https://lasentinel.net/supervisor-calls-for-safety-economic-protections-for-the-crenshaw-lax-light-rail-corridor.html

the extent to which quality of life will be impacted as a result of the train and its accompanying projects, have not yet been addressed in meaningful ways.[132] The qualitative aspects will be further flushed out in Chapter 3.

[132] Interview with Political Representative A 12/18/15

CHAPTER III

LOCATING A COLLECTIVE CONSUMPTION

History of Transit Investment and the Community

The history of the conception of the Crenshaw Corridor as an area that would be targeted for public transit can be traced to back to the 1967. In 1967, the Crenshaw Corridor was included in the Southern California Rapid Transit District's first rail system plan.[133] By 1970, the Corridor made its way into the City Concepts Plan[134] of the 1970. The City Concepts plan was the production of a General Plan that "attempted to concentrate future growth in walkable, urban communities that contained all of the necessities for living, while allowing neighborhoods that preferred a low-density character to avoid development."[135] The plan would serve to guide the City's growth through comprehensive planning to integrate and coordinate land-use and transportation networks.[136] The plan focused on the tailoring the growth of the city to the "development of high intensity activity centers and their satellites and the preservation of low density Suburban areas,"[137] in order to densify Los Angeles, creating intensified hubs of commercial activity with housing near subway stations. The report included emphasis on a rapid transit network (rail) and bus transit. The concept highlights 56 potential growth

[133]Metro. 2001. *Crenshaw-Prairie Corridor Major Investment Study: Mobility Problem and Statement of Purpose and Need.* http://libraryarchives.metro.net/DPGTL/eirs/Crenshaw_LAX_Transit_Corridor/2001-crenshaw-prairie-corridor-major-investment-study-mobility-problem-purpose-need-statement.pdf
[134] Department of City Planning Los Angeles. 1970. *Concept Los Angeles: The Concept for the Los Angeles General Plan*. Pg. 13; www.planetizen.com/files/los-angeles-centers-plan.pdf
[135] Elkind, Ethan N. 2014. *Railtown: The Fight for the Los Angeles Metro Rail and the Future of the City*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Pg. 73
[136]Department of City Planning Los Angeles. 1970. *Concept Los Angeles: The Concept for the Los Angeles General Plan*. www.planetizen.com/files/los-angeles-centers-plan.pdf
[137]Ibid. pg. 7

centers, 37 of which were in LA centers[138]—the Crenshaw Corridor was highlighted on the concept-map diagram as one of these centers.[139] While the Centers Concept faded in its prominence due to difficultly to secure funding for the lines, it ultimately was pursuant to centralizing and improving convenience of transit to the Central Business District (CBD), while connecting the CBD to the other hot spots of economic activity, and high capital flows. It lasted as framework reference for "strategies for joint development and value capture around station areas"[140] in the development and land use policies for the Metro Rail Project. In 1983, SCRTD published a report for The Metro Rail Project, "the first element of the rail system that will link the development centers"[141] somewhat highlighting the centrality of the Centers Concept.

> "The Metro Rail Project shall support the centers concept for land development in the Los Angeles region. The centers concept contained in the City of Los Angeles and Los Angeles County General Plans calls for the location of new development in high density centers interconnected by high capacity rail transit lines. The implementation of this concept will make it possible for RTO to serve a much larger proportion of the travel generated by new growth and land development in the region."[142]

Despite criticism as 'wasteful and inefficient,'[143] calls to simply make the automobile more affordable for the low-moderate income communities, this report meaningful re-introduced rail transit as competitive and viable means of public transit. Even with the

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[138] Southern California Rapid Transit District. 1983. *Metro Rail Projec.t* "Milestone 6: Land use and development policies." (III-8) http://libraryarchives.metro.net/DPGTL/scrtd/1983_SCRTD_LandUseAndDevelopmentPolicies.pdf
[139] Elkind, Ethan N. 2014. *Railtown: The Fight for the Los A3ngeles Metro Rail and the Future of the City*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Pg. 72
[140]Southern California Rapid Transit District. 1982. "Thousands Attend Public Meetings." *Metro Rail News*. http://libraryarchives.metro.net/DPGTL/employeenews/Rail_1982_Dec.pdf
[141] Southern California Rapid Transit District. 1983. *Metro Rail Projec.t* "Milestone 6: Land use and development policies." (III-8) http://libraryarchives.metro.net/DPGTL/scrtd/1983_SCRTD_LandUseAndDevelopmentPolicies.pdf
[142] Ibid. II-9
[143] Elkind, Ethan N. 2014. *Railtown: The Fight for the Los Angeles Metro Rail and the Future of the City*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Pg. 3

forced acknowledgement of environmental concerns brought on by the Clean Air Act, and represented by Metro publishing its first rail-specific Environmental Impact Statement in 1983[144], "except for brief periods of dormancy, the system has been in a continuous state of expansion since the early 1990s,"[145] and by 1991, the Corridor was added to "the list of transportation corridors to be evaluated for possible inclusion in the agency's Long Range Transportation Plan."[146] By 1994, rail transit was considered "viable" and "that it would represent not only a significant mobility improvement, but would also serve to focus other public and private economic investment efforts in the Corridor."[147]

Parallel to the City Concepts Plan, rail already preoccupied the consciousness of Los Angeles politicians. As early as the early 1970's, Tom Bradley long supported rail and "promised voters a world-class rail system" as a part of his campaigning for Mayor. While in office, he campaigned for sales tax measures that would support the funding of transit in the County. Proposition A was one of these campaigns in which he emphasized that transit dependence of "high bus-ridership areas of South Central, Watts, and Compton" could be alleviated and "residents will be able to get to employment, medical and recreational areas much easier than ever before."[148] In response to largely unsuccessful ballot appeals, Supervisor Kenneth Hahn, into the 1980s, continued in the

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[144] Metro. 2016. *Environmental Impact Reports/States Core Collection*. https://www.metro.net/about/library/library-research/research-tools/environmental-impact-reportsstatements-core-collec/

[145] Elkind, Ethan N. 2014. *Railtown: The Fight for the Los Angeles Metro Rail and the Future of the City*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Pg. 3

[146] Metro. 2001. *Crenshaw-Prairie Corridor Major Investment Study: Mobility Problem and Statement of Purpose and Need.* http://libraryarchives.metro.net/DPGTL/eirs/Crenshaw_LAX_Transit_Corridor/2001-crenshaw-prairie-corridor-major-investment-study-mobility-problem-purpose-need-statement.pdf

[147] Ibid.

[148] Elkind, Ethan N. 2014. *Railtown: The Fight for the Los Angeles Metro Rail and the Future of the City*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Pg. 17

vein of work Mayor Bradley initiated, sat on the board of the Los Angeles County Transportation Commission, or LACTC, formed in 1976. Hahn introduced another ballot measure, also Proposition A, which proposed a sales tax increase, and through his organizing, garnered support from the "Los Angeles County League of Women Voters, the AFL-CIO, Los Angeles County Lung Association, and the Los Angeles Taxpayer's Association."[149] Proposition A passed and transit organizations including Southern California Transit District (RTD), performed analysis and produced maps of prospective subway rail.[150]

Since as early as 1980, the emphasis of linking LAX to the CBD of downtown Los Angeles was palpable.[151] Around the same time though, this interest of political officials and planning proponents were met with resistance by environmental justice issues were associated with rail and voiced by NAACP and environmental groups[152]Even still, in automobile-dominant Los Angeles, the call for rail persisted for transit-dependent communities, African American communities in particular.[153] By 1985, there was accompanying concerns around gentrification impacts associated with Metro Rail in Los Angeles, expressed by Henry Waxman, then local congress representative.[154] In the midst of conflict, rail however, persisted with support from both African American and Latino communities, as a means to provide access to cities without residents having to purchase cars—a dependence that "exacerbated racial in Los Angeles as low-income African

[149] Ibid. Pg. 45
[150] Ibid. Pg. 50
[151] Ibid. Pg. 58
[152] Ibid. Pg. 55
[153] Ibid.
[154] Ibid. pg. 1

American and Latino residents without cars now had to travel longer distances to dispersed job centers often on slow-moving and crowded buses."[155,156]

Through decades worth of lobbying federal government and local constituents by local politicians, in 2008 MTA secured funding via Measure R, accompanied by a long-range expenditure plan that "listed four rail projects that agency leaders hoped to fund" with a line extending the length of the Crenshaw Corridor and eventually to LAX, as one of the lines. However, "transit planners had been discussing the light rail line down Crenshaw Boulevard ever since the 1992 riots. By 2008, MTA staff began seriously examining either a light rail or busway down Crenshaw."[157] All along there has been progressing integration and coordination between the Los Angeles City Planning vision, the Transportation Plan, and Community Specific Neighborhood plans that also signaled the coming of some transit-oriented development strategy down the Crenshaw Corridor.

Transit Investment as Collective

Pursuant to framing an understanding of collective consumption, Castells' refers to Mancur Olson's, *The Logic of Collective Action*, and his description of collective goods as collectively consumable. Olson writes "A common, collective, or public good is here defined as any good such that…those who do not purchase or pay for any of the public or collective good cannot be excluded or kept from sharing in the consumption of the good."[158] Following this trajectory, transit investment is surely a medium of collective consumption. The projects accompanying the transit as well are can be considered a

[155] Ibid. pg. 5
[156] Ibid. pg. 8
[157] Ibid. pg. 272, 273
[158] Castells, Manuel. 1983. *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Pg. 293

collective consumption, such as the Crenshaw Streetscape Plan. These projects are publicly funded and will be publicly consumed.

The project is being funded by Measure R, half-cent local sales tax. Following Castells' framework, and the history of the line, the influx of these investments makes them ripe for such a movement currently transpiring in the study area, not only because of the investment's collective use, but also because of the investment's lack of collective impact. In Los Angeles, when investment has been a large scale public works project near a black community, specifically related to transit investment (i.e. highways and streets), black communities were disrupted and displaced[159]. Silver 1997 notes that "street and highway planning served as a means to erect racial barriers as early as the 1920's."[160] In particular, black communities in Los Angeles were displaced by the development of the Santa Monica (I-10) freeway in the mid-1950 with the resounding sentiment being "the selection of the route was at best insensitive and at worst racially motivated."[161] This development compromised "much of the physical fabric that might remind Black Los Angeles of its historical geography, as well as the social, political, economic, and cultural ways that it developed in these early black centers."[162]Community organizers are aware of this history, mentioning that there are residents in the community that were displaced by the Harbor Freeway and I-10 freeway, "transportation projects in general, that we have to be engaged to see improvements on, and that they can be built in a manner that they're wholly destructive to communities…there's not really a good history of them

[159] Bullard, Robert D. and Lee, Charles. 1994. "Racism and American Apartheid." In Residential Apartheid: The American Legacy. Eds. Bullard, et.al. CAAS Publications: Los Angeles.
[160] Silver, Christopher. 1997. Eds. Thomas, June Manning and Ritzdorf, Marsha. In *Urban Planning and the African American Community: In the Shadows*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. pg. 38.
[161] Chapple, Reginald. 2010. "From Central Avenue to Leimert Park." In *Black Los Angeles: American Dreams and Racial Realities*. New York: New York University Press. pg. 70
[162] Ibid. pg. 71

going through a community of color."[163] When that transit investment is spanning the length of a historic corridor, and a corridor integral to predominantly black communities, that has been in the works for decades, and the trajectory of this transit investment has been absent of direct community participation from the outset, some alarms arise. So the move by the community has been to have the transit line and the Leimert Park station become what according, to organizers transit is supposed to be about, "it's supposed to be transformative for the communities in which they're brought in."[164]

While there has been a long-standing, city-wide fixation of creating a transportation network that would connect Los Angeles International Airport to the remainder of the City, and the Crenshaw/LAX line came to fruition in large part because of the citywide emphasis to connect LAX to the public transportation network, there will be a particular set of communities disproportionately impacted by this collective consumption—black communities, that in the history of urban planning and redevelopment, haven't fared favorably. This re-hashes the concern of the community organizer mentioned in Chapter 2, that transit projects in Los Angeles have "always been a project built through South LA, not for South LA. And I can't really think of a transportation project in Southern California's history that hasn't had that same outcome."[165] Professional urban planning, in the context of redevelopment, has a history of approaching neighborhoods in ways that haven't been particularly conducive to adjusting to and respecting the particularities of different communities. Redevelopment projects in particular, projects that re-visit an already and/or previously established space,

[163] Interview with Community Organizer 12/17/15
[164] Ibid.
[165] Ibid.

have often forced a confrontation between prevailing ideologies of growth with local ways of being, and cultural identities bound up in those ways of being. These confrontations largely arise because of disconnects between the values of a community, communities of color and low-moderate income communities, and the non-compatible value orientation of City governments. These confrontations are most apparent in literature on urban renewal. In terms of urban renewal while linked to policies of growth and incredibly racialized, it was a deliberate mandate endowed by federal funding and federal and local policies that removed entire communities of color, and eventually dubbed negro removal.[166] As much as urban renewal and the re-investment associated could have been reparative work, it instead visited communities deemed blighted, with intentions and outcomes often indifferent to the lives of people that withstood decades of intentional disinvestment.

In Castells' historical investigation of urban movements, a similarity across them is that the "the reaction against rent increases expressed the resistance to the commodification of the material basis of everyday life."[167] This is a similarity shared by the trajectory of community protest around Leimert Park and the Crenshaw Corridor. In the context of today's movement many of the community concerns, each of which confer on the material basis of everyday life, connected to both the direct and indirect, qualitative and quantitative impacts resonate with concerns that have prior surfaced in the history of rail transit development in Los Angeles: environmental injustice and gentrification. Understanding the propensity for environmental injustice as well as

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[166] Logan, John R and Molotch, Harvey L. *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Pg. 114

[167] Castells, Manuel. 1983. *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Pg. 69

increased rents, due to the incoming transit investment, to impact the ability for both residents and businesses to stay in a given community, there is necessarily a tension in how increasing rents may indirectly compromise the material basis of everyday life in the community. The material basis of everyday life is the vibrancy of Afro-centric small business, both restaurants and retail. The material basis of everyday life is the place that community here has made out of the space. The material basis then aligns with that which Logan and Molotch call the use value of place. As Logan and Molotch describes, use values are the qualitative, sentimental value attributed to a place, generally by those who live in or frequent that space. Use values are "the specific meaning residents give to place" and is "shaped by the ways they use the material and social resources at hand."[168] Use values are constituted by the daily routine, identity, and informal networks established in a space.[169] It is around these values that the Leimert Park protest movement has galvanized. This resistance ultimately functioning to prioritize use values and resist the prioritization of what Logan and Molotch call exchange values, or that which can be gained in commodifying the space that the community occupies. Exchange values are market based valuation of a place that "appear as 'rent'"[170]and the pursuit of an increase in these values, have not often accounted for the material basis of everyday life within communities, specifically for black communities. Logan and Molotch note that "black people's access to use values was so casually and pervasively left to the whim of the exchange value apparatus in labor or property markets) that opposition to the pattern had

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[168] Logan, John R and Molotch, Harvey L. 1987. *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Pg. 103
[169] Ibid. pg. 112
[170] Ibid. pg. 23

been as comprehensive as the threat." [171] Specific to the general mobilization of the community, the mobilization has been particularly informed and comprehensive in terms of delineating the specific concerns of the community.

Transit and Environmental Injustice

In an interview, a community organizer highlights the continuity of environmental injustice (in relation to rail installments) as environmental racism. The interviewee mentioned that Metro and "their process in and of itself leads to environmental racism within their project disparities, it's not just this project." [172] In *Confronting Environmental Racism,* Robert Bullard notes that "environmental racism is racial discrimination in environmental policymaking…It is racial discrimination in the official sanctioning of the life-threatening presence of poisons and pollutants in communities of color." [173] The term environmental racism ultimately resonates within the larger applied theoretical framework of environmental justice, acknowledging that "structural roots of environmental inequities are very likely the same as those that produce other forms of racially disproportionate impacts."[174] In terms of the disproportionate impacts in question, "environmental justice is increasingly understood to incorporate access to environmental amenities in addition to its traditional focus on exposure to environmental risks,"[175] commenting on the unequal distribution of environmental burdens and

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[171] Ibid pg. 138

[172] Interview with Community Organizer 12/17/15

[173] Bullard, Robert D. 1993. *Confronting Environmental racism: Voices from the Grassroots*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press. Pg. 3

[174] Lazarus, Richard. 1993. "Pursuing 'Environmental Justice': The Distributional Effects of Protection *Northwestern University Law Review*. 87, 3: 807.

[175] Heckert, Megan. 2012. "Access and Equity in Greenspace Provision: A Comparison of Methods to Assess the Impacts of Greening Vacant Land." *Transaction in GIS*. 1-20. Pg. 1

amenities. Environmental justice then identifies and pushes for the amelioration of environmental inequalities as environmental injustices.

Dorceta Taylor notes that, broadly, environmental justice has its "roots in the social justice struggles emanating from the period of conquest and slavery."[176] Environmental justice, in accordance with the Civil Rights movement, draws out the ways in which the siting of hazardous pollutants, environmental health, and worker safety disproportionately impacted communities of color[177]. While marking-out these injustices and making visible the discrimination inherent in distributional inequities, environmental justice aims to "eliminate[e] racial discrimination and its self-perpetuating vestiges on the broadest social scale."[178] As suggested by the community organizer, there are parallels in the work of the current protest at hand and larger frames of environmental justice work.

One of the particular disparities mentioned in this interview was specific to the lack of noise pollution mitigation present in the project design along parts of the rail that would be above ground. In interviews with residents, noise pollution was an expressed concern as well, but more pertaining to the present construction activities.[179]Often mentioned along air pollution as an environmental justice issue, although less emphasized discursively, noise pollution too is an environmental justice issue. The Title IV of the 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments, sutures noise pollution into the fore as a necessary component of mitigation strategy, noting that "this 'annoyance' can have major

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[176] Taylor, Dorceta E. 2000. "The Rise of the Environmental Justice Paradigm: Injustice Framing and the Social Construction of Environmental Discourses." *American Behavioral Scientist*. 43,4: 514.
[177] Ibid. 562
[178] Lazarus, Richard. 1993. "Pursuing 'Environmental Justice': The Distributional Effects of Protection." *Northwestern University Law Review*. 87, 3: 857
[179] Interview with Resident A 9/23/15

consequences, primarily to one's overall health." [180] Such impacts include noise induced hearing loss, high blood pressure, and sleep disturbance, and cardiovascular disease[181,182] among other effects. While normatively associated with proximity to airports and road traffic, light-rail transit also contributes to noise pollution. A recent report re-emphasized noise pollution as an environmental risk pertaining to light-rail. In particular, a study assessing light rail expansion in Denton County Texas, residents ranked environmental risks of air pollution and noise as their highest concerns.[183] This assists in situating noise pollution concerns particular to light-rail amongst environmental justice concerns.

Documentation relevant to the Crenshaw Corridor community comments on noise pollution. In particular, noise pollution is mentioned in the West Adams-Baldwin Hills-Leimert Park plan, with different strategies, non-specific to the transit-line, for mitigating noise impacts on residents. [184] In relation to the alignment itself, a 2002 Major Investment Study of the Crenshaw Corridor completed by Metro cited noise and air pollution as expected impacts of the Crenshaw/LAX alignment on the community.[185] The Final Environmental Impact Statement/Final Environment Impact Report clarified and delineated the extent to which noise from the train's operation might impact the community. In this study, Metro suggests pursuant to mitigation measures that the "construction contractor shall develop and implement a Noise and Vibration Control Plan

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[180] United States Environmental Protection Agency. 2016. "Title IV-Noise Pollution." *Clean Air Act Overview.* https://www.epa.gov/clean-air-act-overview/title-iv-noise-pollution

[181] Matheson, Mark P. and Stansfeld, Stephen A. 2003. "Noise Pollution: Non-auditory Effects on Health." *British Medical Bulletin*. 68: 243-257.

[182] Van Kempen, Elise E.M.M. et. al. 2002. "The Association between Noise Exposure and Blood Pressure and Ischemic Heart Disease: A Meta-analysis." *Environmental Health Perspectives*. 110, 2: 307-317.

[183] Moynihan, Colleen T. *An environmental justice assessment of the light rail expansion in Denton County, Texas.*. Denton, Texas. UNT Digital Library. http://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc3934/.

[184] http://planning.lacity.org/cpu/WestAdams/DraftPlan/WAdams_CP.pdf

[185] Los Angeles County Metropolitan Authority. 2002. "Crenshaw-Prairie Transit Corridor Major Investment Study." ebb.metro.net/board/agendas/2003/01_January/plnng/item13att1.doc

demonstrating how to achieve the more restrictive of the Metro Design Criteria noise limits and the noise limits of the city noise control ordinance."[186] Through the CLC, Project Oriented Discussion or PODs[187] were held to facilitate public work groups around "business sustainability (during construction), economic development, joint development, safety, and environmental quality/mobility/quality of life." The environmental quality group was tasked to discuss and review mitigation strategies of noise and air pollution. In May 2015, Metro's monthly project status report for the Crenshaw LAX project listed that Noise and Vibration Control Plan had been submitted, reviewed, and commented on.[188] Despite this, though, an organizer mentioned that the noise accommodations are expected to be unsatisfactory compared to the investment in sound buffers along lines in proximity to more affluent communities. [189]

Another issue emphasized has been the loss of trees and the urgency in tree re-planting. Though not framed as an environmental justice issue in interviews or supplementary materials, environmental justice literature suggests that this issue, too, might be one of environmental justice. While Metro has promised to re-plant trees,[190] the reduction in mature urban tree cover will have impacts and impacts that are disproportionate. The construction of the line is expected to displace upward of 175 trees,

[186] Metro. 2011. "Affected Environment/Environmental Consequences of the Alignment and Stations." *Final Environmental Impact Statement/Final Environment Impact*. Pg. 4-292. Reporthttp://media.metro.net/projects_studies/crenshaw/images/FEIS_FEIR/4.0_Affected_Environment_Part6.pdf.
[187]Metro. N.d. "Crenshaw/LAX Community Leadership Council Fact: Project Oriented Discussions." Sheethttp://media.metro.net/projects_studies/crenshaw/images/131866_ntc_crenshaw_council_pod_fact_sheet_bg_mech.pdf
[188] Metro. 2015. *Crenshaw/LAX Transit Project: Monthly Status Report.* http://media.metro.net/projects_studies/pm/images/report_pmo_crenshawlax_2015-05.pdf
[189] Interview with Community Organizer 12/17/15
[190] Hymon, Steve. 2014. "Trees to be removed fro Crenshaw/LAX Line along Crenshaw Boulevard." *TheSource*. http://thesource.metro.net/2014/04/02/trees-to-be-removed-for-crenshawlax-line-along-crenshaw-boulevard/

roughly a third of the trees along the corridor.[191] This reduction of urban trees has environmental implications insofar as “nationally, urban trees and shrubs (hereafter referred to collectively as "trees") offer the ability to remove significant amounts of air pollutants and consequently improve environmental quality and human health.”[192] Specifically, without urban trees and the services they provide, the presence of toxic pollutants is expected to persist. This persistence of toxic pollutants “can bear out in threats to physical health, but can also bear out as threats to mental health and “contributes to stress and negative mental well-being.[193]

These environmental injustices, in this particular case given the demographic of the neighborhoods in question, are specific to low-income populations and racial minorities being disproportionately impacted by pollutants as a result of their near proximity to the production of these pollutants. In line with the suggestion of the community organizer, in effect, the lack of committing resources to mitigate these pollutants proportionate to other communities is a ‘sanctioning’ of the presence of these pollutants. While there is documentation that comments on noise pollution as a concern that must be mitigated, the outcomes of these strategies are integral to assessing whether there will be sufficient mitigation. Further, even in the efforts to enforce environmental protection, and in the instance that mitigation does suffice, there are ways in which minority populations further experience more of the burden of these installments than the benefits. One of these ways is connected to the community concern of gentrification,

[191] http://articles.latimes.com/2014/mar/30/local/la-me-crenshaw-trees-20140331

[192] Nowak, David J.; Crane, Daniel E.; Stevens, Jack C. 2006. “Air pollution removal by urban trees and shrubs in the United States. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*. 4: 115

[193] Miles, Rebecca; Coutts, Christopher; Mohomadi, Asal. 2011. “Neighborhood Urban Form, Social Environment, and Depression.” *Journal of urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Science*. 89, 1: 3.

where there's an "outcome-in which a certain kind of neighborhood is destroyed-can be just as complete as in wholesale urban renewal."[194]

Transit and the taking of a community

In an interview with a local political representative, this individual noted that

> "I haven't been to a community meeting in the past several years where someone hasn't expressed one of two things: the first is put the train underground…and gentrification. There is no public forum that doesn't ask the question about gentrification and it happens, it's expressed itself in multiple different ways. One is the Leimert Park plaza and the Leimert Park Village" [195]

Gentrification and the specter of gentrification aren't particularly new phenomena. Gentrification, a term coined in 1964 by urban sociologist Ruth Glass, developed in order to comment on the observed phenomena of middle class families displacing and replacing lower class families in London.[196] Since, the term has broadened to be considered as global a phenomenon as globalization, geographically specific yet generalizable. Gentrification being described as the process by which the poor are being deliberately "evicted from public as well as the private spaces of what is fast becoming a downtown bourgeois playground"[197], it is a process often framed within the discourses of re-vitalizing and re-making spaces. In so being, it is a process that not only comments on the built environment and the edifices that are soon to be present, but is also a process in which particular *bodies* are (un)welcome, included or deliberately excluded. This process of displacing and replacing is the result of an influx of investment in the form of capital that, as mentioned previously, can include transit investment. Gentrification, as a process,

[194] Logan, John R and Molotch, Harvey L. *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Pg. 115
[195] Interview with Political Representative A 12/18/15
[196] Sheppard, Stephen. N.d. "Why is Gentrification a Problem?" *Center for Creative Community Development*.
[197] Smith, Neil. (1996). *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the revanchist city*. New York: Routlege.

is a manifestation of capital flows contingent on a landscape of uneven development that in turn propagates uneven development and corresponding "uneven geographies."[198] It's a process that is predicated on the acquisition and then appropriation of space and its uses pursuant to a profitable end. It's a process that has been described as "elitism of the utmost and exclusionary politics to the core"[199] and propped up by a paradigm of profiteers across the stakeholder sectors of government, real estate, financial, and investor. This discourse around the process of displacing and replacing is one that for long had been confined to residential uses, albeit inseparable from the backdrop of broader economic and urban restructuring,[200]has recently broadened to encompass commercial uses as well.

Literature shows that one of the downsides of transit investment in the form of transit development includes spurring gentrification, a process which may limit if not exclude poorer households from partaking in the benefits offered by the light rail transit development.[201] What accompanies transit development is an unfolding by which property proximate to the new development experiences increases in value which relates to a concomitant rise in housing costs.[202] Will Dominie, through chronicling neighborhood change around transit stations, challenges the notion that smart growth (via the pursuit of transit-oriented development) is just growth. Dominie chronicled the gentrification of neighborhoods around light-rail transit stations in order to determine the

[198] *Brenner, Neil and Theodore, Nik. 2005. "Neoliberalism and the urban condition." City, Vol. 9, No. 1, 103*
[199] Wharton, Johnathan L. (2008). "Gentrification: The new colonialism in the modern era." *The Forum on Public Policy*, 2: 1-12.
[200] Smith, Neil. (1982). "Gentrification and Uneven Development." Economic Geography, 58, 2: 139-155
[201]Godschalk, David R. (2007) "Land Use Planning Challenges: Coping with Conflicts in Visions of Sustainable Development and Livable Communities." *Journal of the American Planning Association*. 70, 1: 5-13.
[202] Pollack, Stephanie et. al. 2010. "Maintaining Diversity In America's Transit-Rich Neighborhoods: Tools for Equitable Neighborhood Change." Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy.

relationship between transit-investment induced gentrification and travel behavior. Dominie notes that while over the past two decades there are some transit station-proximate neighborhoods "have not changed appreciably,"[203] there were many neighborhoods that experienced significant gentrification. The changes articulating this gentrification included rising housing costs in station areas and, counter-intuitively, increases in vehicle owning households. Accompanying these changes were also a decrease in transit ridership and an overall shift in travel behavior of the neighborhoods around transit stations. In the context of Dominie's research, the decreases in ridership signify the displacement of low-income households, previously patrons of public transit.

In line with literatures around how transit investment impacts communities, interviewees considered neighborhood change and gentrification to be a concern—a concern that is tethered to tension between use values and exchange values of a space as described by Logan and Molotch. In the concern for the neighborhood being gentrified, we locate a concern that is legitimate in and of itself, but a concern that is aware of the history of not only Los Angeles, but Los Angeles in the context of the United States. In these concerns, we uncover concerns that are tethered to a fear of history repeating itself, in terms of outcomes if not process, in any number of ways. There is a recognition that neighborhoods, demographically comparable to Leimert Park, have been disrupted before. There is also recognition of either an observed or experienced/lived power differential between those that live in the community and those who might be intending to take the community. Further, there's recognition that to some extent, what's unfolding

[203]Dominie, Will. 2012. "Is Just Growth Smarter Growth? The Effects of Gentrification on Transit Ridership and Driving in Los Angeles' Transit Station Area Neighborhoods." *UCLA.*

is par for the course and a repeat of the past wherein, the "losers" are the same folks that have always lost out—black folks and poor folks.

Considering the Leimert Park community's concern around gentrification, popular media suggests that this concern has been long-standing. "The concern has been for a very long time that the vendors that are there, that have that space, that don't own that property…they're renters, that they're going to get pushed out and that Leimert Park Village is going to disappear as a cultural institution." [204] It is a sentiment that, specific to the Leimert Park community, has been present as early as 2002 when residents reacted to rising rents through the creation of Save Leimert. Save Leimert aimed to secure a Historical Preservation Overlay Zone for the neighborhood in order to limit not only will the use values change, but to highlight that the anticipated change in use values would be less about the needs of the community and more about making the community "slick" or ripe for an increase of exchange values in that place.

One resident of the community, in the face of the transit development, articulated this concern as a worry that the community will be taken through neighborhood change.[205] Another resident mentioned:

> "I have noticed different nationalities of people coming in. I've noticed that there are a lot more white people coming into our area, which I think that is very suspect. That just all of a sudden, there are a lot of them coming into our area…why should we have to fight for a place to live? We have to fight for everything, but we shouldn't have to, and it seems like they can just move in."[206]

This is connected to skepticism that whatever general economic goods that transpire from the implementation of the transit are economic goods that won't meet the needs of the

[204] Interview with Political Representative A 12/18/15
[205] Kaplan, Erin A. 2014. "Leimert Park, Take II: 1992." *KCET.* https://www.kcet.org/shows/departures/leimert-park-take-ii-1992
[206] Interview with Resident D 9/20/15

community – largely the need to stay in their community. The concept of need, though, in this sense is as much economic as it is social. That the overall quality of life will be altered, that the use value of the community will change, and in a way that dispossesses those that have lived in the community. Chiefly, the fear that in the neighborhood being taken revolves around a concern that there will be a change in the manifestation of use values in the place. The change of these use values precipitating in two mutual reinforcing ways: the actual transition of bodies present in the place and the change of "things" in that place (enterprises, social institutions, etc.). In response, merchants in the community organized in order to limit construction and somewhat preserve the make-up of the community which revolves around the consensus of Leimert as a black cultural center and a space with black small businesses and black restaurants. Laura Hendrix, a 68 year old owner of the Gallery Plus art gallery, noted "The artists, the music, the culture, that's what makes the area what it is. The developers come in and want to build condos and make it all slick."[207]

In terms of housing and direct displacement, this concern is largely one represented by renters. In terms of business owners, this concern is one expressed by renters but also individuals that feel as though their specific goods may no longer be of value in the community. However, homeowners also express this concern in terms of how their community might be changing. "Pieces of Leimert Park have already disappeared…concern that the African culture, the ESO Won bookstore, the Jamaican food place, like, all of that is going to disappear and it's going to become very

[207] Associated Press. 2007. "South Central confronts identity crisis." *NBC News*. http://www.nbcnews.com/id/18369703/ns/us_news-life/t/south-central-confronts-identity-crisis/#.VwnRz6QrLIU

Brooklyn…a very gentrified formerly black space."[208] This sentiment is in alignment, in however a complex a fashion with gentrification literature that suggest that are myriad of factors that might confer onto displacement or this fear of displacement—not simply a fear that you will be directly displaced, but the community within which you live, might be conceptually displaced.

Peter Marcuse differentiates his discussion of displacement across forced displacement and displacement indirectly caused by gentrification. Marcuse frames his discussion of gentrification induced displacement, or displacement engendered by shifts in market trends, through conceptualizing four types of displacement: direct last-resident displacement, direct chain displacement, exclusionary displacement, and pressure of displacement.[209] In terms of the presumed economic displacement of gentrification these categories are difficult to assess quantitatively insofar as wherever it is one would go to look for those displaced, the displaced population in question is often no longer present. The last category, though, is possibly the most insidious wherein the gentrification can indirectly impact the displacement of bodies from a space. Marcuse distinguishes the pressure of displacement "from the subjective fear of a remote possibility of displacement by looking not only at the perception but also the reality of what is happening in a neighborhood: subjective concern plus prices rising over the city average, for instance."[210] It is here where we see the doubling down of downsides expressed through gentrification. Not only does gentrification-induced displacement result in the requirement that individuals re-locate, it is sometimes accompanied by the inability of

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[208] Interview with Political Representative A 12/18/15

[209] Marcuse, Peter. (1986). "Abandonment, gentrification, and displacement: the linkages in New York City." In *Gentrification of the City*. Massachusetts: Allen & Unwin Inc.

[210] Ibid. pg. 157

individuals to find comparable housing. In these instances, gentrification contributes to an increase in unhoused or homeless individuals in a city. Further,

> "Gentrification breaks up the social structure of existing neighborhoods because residents, in an effort to find affordable housing, become scattered throughout the entire city. This has a psychological effect on many long-time residents who become depressed by the loss of their neighbors and a sense of community."[211]

Following, Marcuse, in addition to the witnessing of price increases, pressure of displacement might also be located in the qualitative change that takes place in neighborhoods vis a vis gentrification. The changing use values of a space might create an additional pressure for residents, even those not particularly directly vulnerable of economic displacement, to leave their respective neighborhoods. In an interview with a resident of Leimert Park, a contributor to this pressure of displacement is also with respect to speculative real estate behaviors that are bearing out in residents being solicited to sell their homes by investors.[212] Another resident mentioned that:

> "What you see now, what you didn't see in the past, you actually see people walking the streets and asking 'Do you want to sell your house.' You never saw that before…if they don't call, they'll walk the streets and come ask...It happens a few times a week, probably three or four times a week where you'll have people try to contact you either by phone, or they'll leave a note, or they actually physically knock on the door."[213]

In response to witnessing neighborhood changes, A 2007 NBC News article surveying community sentiments captures not only the fear of the neighborhood being taken but highlights an accompanying feeling that there may be little the community can do to resist neighborhood change. One merchant, Odell Farris, 73, is quoted as saying "This is

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[211] Lawrence, Deliah. (2002). Community Development: Can Communities Effectively Fight Displacement Caused by Gentrification? *Journal of Affordable Housing & Community Development Law*. 11, 4: pp. 357-373.
[212] Interview with Resident C 9/20/15
[213] Interview with Resident E 9/21/15

like a hurricane"…"You can't stop it. All you can do is try to protect yourself."[214] What was being observed at the time was considered by another resident, Jackie Ryan, as being a part of process wherein, "The whole thing is to remove black people." Interspersed with community preoccupation and concern about the prospect of Leimert Park being "taken" from them, that is repurposed and reconstituted in ways that overwrite the particular use values to which community members subscribe, is the embedded concern of the community not being able to partake in what 'benefits' do come for the train.[215] That is, the community will be excluded from the process of collective consumption.

While residents have noted neighborhood change, a local politician suggests that there has not yet been any definitive evidence of gentrification in the residential sense.[216] In this case specifically, there is more immediate evidence that black businesses are being readily displaced. As early as 2013 it was reported that "several commercial properties have changed hands and tenants say they're being forced out.[217] In a community with the "highest concentration of black business [in the city],"[218] "most of the businesses that will have to close are not only black-owned, but also specialize specifically in African-American wares and art."[219] This engenders a spatial dislocation of black business with the impact being, not only the limitation of commercial options that are black owned, but

[214] Associated Press. 2007. "South Central confronts identity crisis." *NBC News*. http://www.nbcnews.com/id/18369703/ns/us_news-life/t/south-central-confronts-identity-crisis/#.VwnRz6QrLIU
[215] Kudler, Adrian Glick. 2013. "Black-Owned Businesses Already Being Pushed Out of Leimert Park Ahead of the Crenshaw Line." *Curbed Los Angeles.* http://la.curbed.com/2013/7/10/10222400/blackowned-businesses-already-being-pushed-out-of-leimert-park-ahead
[216] Interview with Political Representative B 12/30/15
[217] Kudler, Adrian Glick. 2013. "Black-Owned Businesses Already Being Pushed Out of Leimert Park Ahead of the Crenshaw Line." *Curbed Los Angeles.* http://la.curbed.com/2013/7/10/10222400/blackowned-businesses-already-being-pushed-out-of-leimert-park-ahead
[218] Ibid.
[219] Ibid.

the limitation of intra-community wealth generating economies. For those owners, it can also be inferred that there would be an impact on their own incomes. This however, might definitely reduce their income, potentially resulting in difficulty or inability to continue to finance their respective living situations. This could lead to, if not hasten whatever residential gentrification and displacement that is transpiring.

Either way, noted in a case study of U.S. cities, the problem isn't simply the process of displacing businesses and less affluent residents—gentrification itself. The problem is also the specter of gentrification, the possibility or presumed gentrification forthcoming. Shepphard notes that communities that are at risk of gentrification bear a social cost in excess of the actual displacement of individuals whereby there's a dampening of "incentives that residents have to engage in any of the variety of activities that can improve a community."[220] In affected neighborhoods, decline in community improvement expenditures are estimated at 52-72 percent. This is an impact that the whole community might endure, not just those at risk of being displaced.[221] The lack of community improvement action could, in turn, negatively impact the availability of programs for neighborhood children, result in fewer training opportunities for new business and accordingly fewer employment opportunities available within the community.[222]

[220] Sheppard, Stephen. N.d. "Why is Gentrification a Problem?" *Center for Creative Community Development.*
[221]Ibid.
[222]Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

DEFENDING A CULTURAL IDENTITY

Defining a social movement

In Leimert Park we find the social movement as one that is specifically in relation to a medium of collective consumption, the transit development, in the form of local political mobilization, ultimately in defense of a cultural identity. The cultural identity in question is one specific to the particular Leimert Park territory, given this territory as the contested site in which the transit development is taking place. However, in this case, we find the defense of the cultural identity, through the political mobilizations, as heightened. This is demonstrated through the rhetoric used in the organizing and mobilizing of the defense of Leimert Park. We find that the rhetoric, while necessarily about protecting a community, its rhetoric that emphasizes Leimert Park as a cultural hub. One resident is quoted as saying, in alignment with the defense of the community, that "our (black) culture is 500 years old, something for which we've all fought and survived…That's why people come here to Leimert. This is your black home."[223] Leimert Park is a space that is a landing point of financial, social, cultural and political capital. The neighborhood is not only predominantly comprised of black residents it is also one of the only contiguous black centers of black business and political mobilization in Los Angeles. So, beyond the community members not wanting the neighborhood to change in and of itself, much of the organizing related to the defense of the community has to do with neighborhood's signification at-large.[224] An interview with a resident clarified this sentiment:

[223] Kaplan, Erin A. 2014. "Leimert Park: At the Crossroads of Change." *KCET.* https://www.kcet.org/shows/departures/leimert-park-at-the-crossroads-of-change
[224]Interview with Community Organizer 12/17/15

> "I think the people who struggled to get here, mostly African American, mostly black, from the late 60s all the way up to where we are today, feel concerned that work is now being undermined and in their efforts to stay and keep it a community."[225]

In this way, the resistance movement ultimately has revolved around Leimert Park functioning as a global ethnopolis of African-American identity and expression. This functioning, while serving as an impetus for a heightened political mobilization, also serves to suggest that this neighborhood might be more apt to affect the redevelopment of their community.

Framing a global ethnopolis

Leimert park is a geography, a symbol, a community, that is central to any understanding and engagement with black history in South Los Angeles (formerly known as South Central Los Angeles) specifically, and Los Angeles generally. More broadly, given the history of black migration from the American South to Los Angeles, Leimert Park as a hub of Black Los Angeles, also to some extent invites a foray into an engagement with the history of black life in the United States, a history of black life that is, however temporally tenuous, irrevocably transnational.

Leimert Park finds itself, today, as an ethnic enclave, yes, but importantly, it finds itself as an ethnopole for contemporary black history culture and a repository, by its constitution, of black life in South Central Los Angeles, Leimert Park is a black enclave nestled amongst other predominantly black neighborhoods. In his book *The Global Ethnopolis*, Michael Laugerre refers to an "ethnic enclave as the ethnopolis, a concept that stresses both the ethnic concentration and polarization of the area and its characterization as a sublatern city" (Laguerre 2000: 11). Now while Leimert Park is a

[225] Interview with Resident C 9/20/15

concentration of African Americans and the history of the community suggests a subalterity, the community and its constitution isn't entirely congruent with Laguerre "global logic."

Laguerre notes that even in the context of ethnic enclaves, already lexically subaltern given the history of which they are conceived, that is, dwelling spaces for a particular minoritized, non-white peoples, "at the bottom of the heap are those enclaves that have been inferiorized by the mainstream by being designated as "little continents," such as Little Africa in New York City. This designation came about during the colonial era at the peak of Anglo American discrimination against both slaves and free people of color as a way to further denigrate inhabitants of these enclaves." [226] Even while marking out the subalterity in excess of African American communities, and pointing out being named in reference to a continent, as opposed to a country, the tracing of his logic confers onto a framework that to some extent conceptually displaces, if not erases, the history of the African-American situation. His global logic is one that to some extent moves on to forget the African-American specific subalterity that makes the experience of this ethnicity unique and set apart. His framing is one in which there is implicitly a suggestion that these communities aren't equipped to access that which he holds up as sufficiently transnational to be welcomed into a globality.

Laguerre's frame for a global ethnopolis is one wherein, in order to be considered a global ethnopolis, an ethnic enclave in question "must fulfill a minimum condition: its resident population must maintain ongoing relations with the homeland and with other diasporic enclaves. By definition, the diasporic ethnopolis has a binational or

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[226] Laguerre, Michel S. 2000. *The Global Ethnopolis: Chinatown, Japantown and Manilatown in American Society*. New Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. Pg. 7.

transnational orientation. It becomes global when these relations encompass more than two nation-states and affect and shape in a significant way social conditions in the enclave"[227] Further, that "the ethnopole is global when the community becomes involved in transnational border-crossing activities that link it to the homeland and to other extraterritorial diasporic sites as well."[228] All of these conceptions unfold within a logic of globalization that is specific to a particular temporal moment of globalization, a globalization that has transpired over the last three decades. He suggests that "in the past three decades, ethnic enclaves have been projected as business centers that give commercial life to the neighborhood and as heritage places that serve as storage space for the immigrants' memories of their homelands. The genealogy of these enclaves informs us about the trajectories of the enclaves, and it tells us how oppressed people have used the space of place as an instrument of their liberation struggle – how they have appropriated a negative label, turned it on its head, and used it for their own benefit."[229] Leimert Park, though, offers us a unique situation, via the trajectory of the situation of blacks in America that provides a rupture in the limitations of Laguerre's framework. Leimert Park further allows for an intervention and repurposing of the redeeming aspects of Laguerre's theoretical framework pursuant to legitimating Leimert Park's importance to the community of people which call neighborhood home. Further it then pushes to frame largely the capacity that this community has demonstrated to shape the planned redevelopment of their community thus far.

[227] Ibid. Pg. 12
[228] Ibid. Pg. 21
[229] Ibid. Pg. 14

Laguerre notes that ethnopolis is comprised of a quadripartite disaporic economy. The diasporic economy's component parts include the enclave economy, the ethnic economy, the transethnic economy, and the transnational economy. The enclave economy entails businesses within the enclave, the ethnic economy entails those who live in, but own businesses outside the enclave. The transethnic economy is the product of having to "interface with the mainstream economy." The transnational economy "comprises those transactions with an overseas headquarters or subsidiary in another country" and has an explicit international process of exchange associated.[230] Leimert Park has all of the economic and commercial institutions that comprise the first three categories of what Laguerre considers as a prerequisite for this global ethnopolis consideration, however, as the aspect of the transnational economy is not so much discretely present. This is where Laguerre runs up against its limits in terms of its particularly exclusive parameters when interrogating African American history in this country.

Depending on one's temporal and conceptual departure for globality, one locates the black experience in America (undoubtedly diverse and temporally and geographically discontinuous) amongst any discursive articulation of global, diasporic unfoldings out of which the local precipitates. We know, at bottom, that African American communities are transnational communities. However, the adjective of immigrant communities does not categorically apply, given any historically honest situating of immigration and its connotations. Many African-Americans are descendent from nationally and culturally differentiated African peoples that were forcibly brought, against their will, to the land mass now called the United States of America. Therefore, the overwhelming situation of

[230] Ibid. Pg. 12

African-American communities while undoubtedly transnational, these communities are not per se immigrant communities. Black, though, is not a monolithic category. In fact black is a transnational category within which varying ethnicities and generational temporalities are couched. Some thinkers in critical race theory and tracing Black as a transnational category do so in order to "to denote how colonization and the slave trade created nation states composed of multinational populations who are situated both within and without a given territorially-bound nation"[231] An enclave, such as Leimert Park, in all of its historical complexity, in the context of the violent dispossession of American coloniality and colonialities of other nations, with its representation across national iterations of blackness, ought to be considered within a comparable context of a globality, that might find a particular ethnic enclave to be a global ethnopole even without the transnational social or economic networks.

In Leimert Park, the maintenance of the international orientation that Laguerre suggests as a requirement is not one that has formal political and economic relations with a homeland, but in terms of Leimert Park, there is definitely "a market for homeland goods." The homelands in question are, by consequence of history, incredibly diverse and discontinuous. The homelands in question are Pan-African. The black community is for too complex to elide a confrontation with the community as a global ethnopolis. Therefore, the transnational connection and relationships may prove to not be as conventional or discrete. The transnational doesn't necessarily manifest in terms of flows of capital or finance or any formal, discernable social networks. Leimert Park doesn't

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[231] Winkiel, Laura. 2006. "Nancy Cunard's Negro and the Transnational Politics of Race." Modernism/Modernity. 13, 3: 508. https://muse.jhu.edu/journals/modernism-modernity/v013/13.3winkiel.pdf

have any patently African American institutions that are international in terms of their enterprises and operations. Instead the transnational connection is revealed, unveiled, in tracing cultural practices and expressions.

Figure 7 Leimert Park Drum Circle. Sulaiman, Sahra. "Leimert Park Invites You to Participate in Preparations for the Festival of Ancestors." ***StreetsBlogLA*****. http://la.streetsblog.org/2014/06/10/leimert-park-invites-you-to-participate-in-preparations-for-the-festival-of-ancestors/#more-96273**

These forms of cultural production, artistic expression in particular, constitute a local place-making that is always re-producing, referencing, and centering ways of living with transnational origins. Further, to the point of having relations with other diasporic enclaves, Leimert Park in fact serves in the manner in which Laguerre suggests an ethnopole ought to serve. Laguerre notes that "for members of the ethnic group living outside the enclave, it is their capital city: it is the place they do their marketing for

homeland products, where they visit on holidays, eat native foods, meet friends, and keep in touch with homeland traditions."[232]

Figure 8 "Mask festival procession in honor of the ancestors in Leimert Park." ***StreetsBlogLA*****. http://la.streetsblog.org/2014/06/10/leimert-park-invites-you-to-participate-in-preparations-for-the-festival-of-ancestors/#more-96273**

This is something that Leimert Park definitely represents with its depth of iconic commercial institutions and art institutions such as Eso Won Bookstore, Zambezi Bazaar, Barbara Morrison Performing Arts Center, World Stage, Vision Theatre[233], Kaos Network, Papillion Gallery, and Gallery Plus. From establishments like Sika with African clothing, jewelry, and imports; African Colour Scheme with custom attire in Kente Cloth patterns and fabric; African Family Fashion, a boutique and tailor shop for African cloth and fabric; to restaurants such as Phillip's Barbecue, R&G Soul Food, Ackee Bamboo Jamaican Cuisine, J J's Belizean Cuisine, and Top Taste Caribbean Restaurant, Leimert Park is undeniably transnational in commercial representation.

[232] Laguerre, Michel S. 2000. *The Global Ethnopolis: Chinatown, Japantown and Manilatown in American Society*. New Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. Pg. 15
[233] https://lasentinel.net/the-legacy-of-leimert-park.html

Additionally, an Urban Land Institute report assessing the village highlighted that "sidewalks along Degnan Boulevard, for instance, are lined with plaques inscribed with the names of African American cultural icons, and the People Street Plaza is marked by Adinkra symbols of the Akan people, an ethnic group in Ghana."[234] Additionally, what Main and Sandoval might consider "purposeful cultural practices,"[235]annually, on Labor Day weekend, the vibrant and dynamic Leimert Park Festival brings community together to partake in the artful expression of black culture with over "100 vendors and 27 performers"[236] and hundreds of participants. "The vendors had everything from fine African arts and crafts to hair, health, and beauty"[237] products. In June, facilitated by the Kaos Network, Leimert Park Village hosts a day-long celebration of masks, processions, dance, and art to connect with and commemorate the African Diaspora and pan-African heritage.[238]

Laguerre also highlights these enclaves as sites of contestation and struggle. Not only as sites where struggle unfolds but as sites that are products of struggle and resistance. Sites, that as products of a history of struggle, become sites of celebration if not, "liberated turf"[239] in a fabric of otherwise unwelcoming, unsafe, and un-liberated turf. These spaces create a locus of identity remembrance in which people have "been

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[234] Urban Land Institute Los Angeles. 2015. *A Uli Advisory Services Technical Assistance Panel Report: Leimert Park Village*. http://la.uli.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/26/2011/12/20151209_LeimertParkVillageTAP_WEB.pdf
[235] Main, Kelly and Sandoval, Gerardo. 2014. "Placemaking in a translocal receiving community: The relevance of place to identity and agency." *Urban Studies.* Pg. 13. doi: 10.1177/0042098014522720
[236]Hill, Shannen. 2015. "Leimert Park Festival takes Labor Day Weekend." *Los Angeles Sentinel.* https://lasentinel.net/leimert-park-festival-takes-labor-day-weekend.html
[237] Ibid.
[238] Sulaiman, Sahra. "Leimert Park Invites You to Participate in Preparations for the Festival of Ancestors." *StreetsBlogLA*. http://la.streetsblog.org/2014/06/10/leimert-park-invites-you-to-participate-in-preparations-for-the-festival-of-ancestors/#more-96273
[239]Laguerre, Michel S. 2000. *The Global Ethnopolis: Chinatown, Japantown and Manilatown in American Society*. New Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. Pg. 11

able to develop strategies of resistance that prevented them from being completely assimilated into the mainstream and from totally losing their ethnic identities. Thus enclaves are also sites where people protest city policies and the racist practices of the larger Anglo community, and make requests for city services."[240] This is the very resistance that Leimert Park has symbolized and has taken up.

Laguerre suggests that since the Civil Rights movement these communities have come to symbolize such a commitment to resistance. Leimert Park mirrors this type of community described by Laguerre given its fixity since the Civil Rights era.[241]It just so happens that the resistance being meted out in this community is a much an expression of refusing to be further subjugated as it is an expression of transnationality. That is, the resistance is one that not only revolves around and is rooted in a strident refusal to be moved or re-moved against one's will, but is bound up with artistic and cultural expression that resonate at the frequencies of the global and local. Leimert Park has long been considered a contested black space,[242] and as described throughout this work, the most recent manifestation of this struggle or as Leimert Park being a contested site, is in the context of the unfolding transit development.

Despite the slight departure from Laguerre's ethnopolis, the invitation to reimagine the ethnopolis finds Leimert Park at the juncture of a community defending a transnational cultural identity through resistance. This particular protest movement has been and continues to be complex – this resistance has been one that hasn't tried to wholly prevent the transit development from occurring, but one that has attempted to

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[240] Ibid.
[241] Interview with Political Representative A 12/18/15
[242] Chapple, Reginald. 2010. "From Central Avenue to Leimert Park." In *Black Los Angeles: American Dreams and Racial Realities*. New York: New York University Press.

force an acknowledgement of a community deprived of resources. That is, as putting the transit line down Crenshaw has a lot to do with fulfilling the long-standing goal to connect the Los Angeles CBD to other hubs of capital influence, the community wants to ensure that the line will be built in collaboration with and attuned to the needs and concerns of the community. In effect the goal, on behalf of local government officials and community organizers as the political liaisons of the community, has been to have the transit line be the most equitable development possible. In so doing, and in-line with Castells' framework, the community's mobilization has made a concerted effort to highlight the defense of Leimert Park's cultural identity as a global ethnopolis as inseparable from any concept of equitable development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This section makes recommendations associated with 1) gentrification and displacement 2) environmental justice. While recommendation one largely centers around the City of Los Angeles policies, recommendation two focuses on Metro and is a two-part recommendation.

While perceived benefits of gentrification might be the onset of economic development and rising property values, the aforementioned comprise of use of values of a community invites a vital critique of gentrification. The City is well aware of this critique; in its Health Plan for LA states, "the real and perceived threat of displacement and gentrification cause stress and other serious health consequences for families and can move them away from key resources and social networks, which is a particular concern in areas undergoing rapid change due to new transit infrastructure and catalytic development."[243]

With respect to gentrification, a local political representative mentioned "we've heard about it [gentrification] in Leimert Park where, with property being bought up, that people are being priced out already without the line even opening and it's an issue that we take very seriously…how do you improve the quality of life but create carrots and tools to allow the existing community to benefit from it."[244] Another political representative acknowledged "There're lots of different pieces to the gentrification puzzle. It's about businesses, it's about homes, it's about who has the capital, who has the actual money to be able to stay."[245] This same representative mentioned that "I don't

[243] Los Angeles City Planning Department. 2013. "Plan for a Healthy Los Angeles: A Health and Wellness." Element of the General Plan.
[244] Local Political Representative C 12/30/15
[245] Local Political Representative A 12/18/15

know that anyone has the solution to gentrification yet…no one has a magic bullet solution… We're committed to figuring out what we can do, in our office, but a political office can't fight the real estate market and can't fight gentrification." [246] This representative, in part, suggests that much about gentrification and displacement resides in market forces. However, authors argue that actually gentrification is an issue of public policy as well and there are ways that cities can intervene in the processes to support residents. Specifically related to curbing the potential of displacement, Shepphard suggests policies that "ensure provision of affordable housing and limit involuntary displacement."[247] In order to limit the impacts of transit development on low income communities Pollack suggests similar yet more specific and all-inclusive policies taken from case studies around the U.S. Suggested policy tools include inclusionary zoning, and programs that protect and preserve affordable housing stock, tax credit incentive programs for prospective affordable housing developers.[248]

A report by Eunice Kim regarding tools for mitigating displacement lists five categories of useful tools including "1) Create new affordable housing, 2) Convert or preserve units as affordable housing 3) Generate revenue for housing programs 4) Manage Development 5) Assist residents."[249] For the most part, the recommendations that follow adhere to these general categories of impact.

At the time of Kim's article, Los Angeles is mentioned as participating in category 1 through its community benefits agreements, which are "negotiated with

[246] Local Political Representative A 12/18/15
[247] Pollack, Stephanie et. al. (2010). "Maintaining Diversity In America's Transit-Rich Neighborhoods: Tools for Equitable Neighborhood Change." Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy
[248] Ibid.
[249] Kim, Eunice. 2011. "Mitigating Displacement Due to Gentrification: Tools for Portland, Oregon." Tufts University. Pg. 10

developers, these agreements allow communities to secure benefits in exchange for concessions for new projects. Benefits can range from the inclusion of affordable housing to first source hiring systems."[250]Los Angeles has a history of community benefits agreements across various projects, one in particular, a TOD community benefits agreement at Hollywood and Vine.[251] Currently, the PLA agreement mentioned in Chapter 2 would qualify as such an agreement. According to Kim, since 2007, Los Angeles also makes tenant displacement assistance available, in the form of relocation assistance.[252] Not listed is the existence of a Los Angeles Rent Stabilization Ordinance, which generally "applies to rental properties that were first built on or before October 1, 1978."[253] These accommodations, however, as suggested by this study of the Leimert Park community, have not been sufficient in addressing gentrification.

The Housing Element of the Los Angeles General Plan has a number one goal which is: "a City where housing production and preservation result in an adequate supply of ownership and rental housing that is safe, healthy and affordable to people of all income levels, races, ages, and suitable for their various needs." [254] This however does not, in a targeted way, reduce gentrification and displacement of communities. Throughout the Housing Element, there appears to an implicit assumption and concession to the fact that there will be people without adequate housing. One of the contributors to, what can be implied as an inadequate provision of housing as of yet, is the conversion of

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[250] Kim, Eunice. 2011. "Mitigating Displacement Due to Gentrification: Tools for Portland, Oregon." Tufts University. Pg. 10
[251] "Policy & Tools: Community Benefits Agreements and Policies in Effect." 2015. *Partnership for Working Families*. http://www.forworkingfamilies.org/page/policy-tools-community-benefits-agreements-and-policies-effect
[252] Los Angeles Housing + Community Investment Department. 2014. "Rent Stabilization Bulletin." *Relocation Assistance*. http://www.cesinaction.org/Portals/0/Relocation_Assistance_2014.pdf
[253] Los Angeles Housing + Community Investment Department. 2016. RSO Overview. http://hcidla.lacity.org/RSO-Overview
[254] Ibid. 6-3

affordable housing units into condominiums. The Housing Element notes, that even while condominium conversions have been decreasing, from "2007 through July 2012, 64 apartment buildings containing 1,039 units were approved for conversion to condominiums."[255]The City notes that because of these conversions, affordability of housing is being compromised as "much of the approved condominium conversions involve older housing stock that includes rent-stabilized properties."[256]

As a result the City does "provide some mitigation for the loss of rental units, condominium conversion developers now pay an increased Rental Housing Production fee to the City's Affordable Housing Trust Fund to fund the development of affordable rental housing. The fee started at $1,500 in 2007 and increases every year thereafter based on inflation."[257]Additionally, the City has the L.A. Preservation Working Group (LAPWG) and, since 2009 the Los Angeles Housing and Community Investment Department (HCIDLA), has actively collaborated with the group's members by helping to develop the agenda topics and by meeting with member organizations of the LAPWG on an ongoing basis. The LAPWG is comprised of the federal and local housing agencies in the City, affordable housing advocates, non-profit developers and legal services organizations.[258] The City also has an Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF) and an Affordable Housing Preservation Program (AHPP).[259]This preservation program is under HCIDLA which has a focus of preserving 500 units annually and adding 500 units annually. Despite these efforts, though, the Housing Element plainly concedes the occurrence of gentrification in the City. The Housing Element states plainly, "apartment

[255] Ibid. 1-64
[256] Ibid. 1-64
[257]Ibid. 1-65
[258] Ibid. 1-74
[259]Ibid. 1-66

buildings built 30 or more years ago, may well continue to be attractive sites for new development, especially as the economy improves. These development projects will displace low- and moderate-income households, whose ability to find replacement housing at comparable rents will be challenged by the rising price of market-rate rental housing and the overall gentrification of some of the City's previously low-cost neighborhoods."[260]

Recommendation I

Commit to a no-net loss policy as mentioned in Kim, where "a city is required to maintain a certain amount of affordable housing through preservation or replacement of lost units."[261]

- Increase the fee of condominium conversion to the extent that will provide an offset in terms of development of affordable rental housing.
- Lengthen the contract duration of at-risk of conversion units with soon-to-be expiring contracts.
- Collaborate with Metro in order to integrate their affordable housing plans with those of the City.

[260] Ibid. 1-65

[261] Kim, Eunice. 2011. "Mitigating Displacement Due to Gentrification: Tools for Portland, Oregon." Tufts University. Pg. 11

Recommendation II

Develop a targeted, comprehensive anti-displacement/gentrification prevention strategy for geographies anticipating influxes of public investments, large public investment in particular.

- The City uses the term at-risk to define units that are expecting condominium conversion. Broaden definition of at-risk, to incorporate areas wherein large scale, public investments are planned.
- Develop comprehensive index of gentrification indicators for assessing risk and "identify and classify neighborhoods into a typology that represents different stages of gentrification."[262]
- Develop coordinated plan across stakeholders to mobilize resources in a way that mitigates alarming indicators.

While it is clear that with Environmental Impact Statements performed by Metro which apart from Metro, as mentioned, earlier it is unclear whether either will be sufficient in mitigating observed anticipated environmental injustice associated with lack of mature urban trees. As it pertains to Metro, while its community process is functionally democratic and communicative given its process, stakeholders continue to be wary of whether their concerns are being incorporated into the process. Part "a" is explicit to a project specific environmental justice concern and Part "b" broadens the discussion to environmental justice to include Metro's public participation process.

[262] Bates, Lisa. 2013. "Gentrification and Displacement Study: Implementing an equitable inclusive development strategy in the context of gentrification." *City of Portland.* Pg. 5.

Recommendation III

a. Metro should transform language around tree re-placement, to a frame that intentionally strives for environmental justice.

- Collaborate across stakeholders specifically to the ends of environmental justice in devising a plan for urban greenspace.

b. Transform participation process generally, but especially in terms of environmental justice or other equity considerations.

- Create a process by which implementation highlights community input or a contribution to a particular implementation.
- Create specific avenues for community in-put in order address the mitigation of environmental justice in concrete and tangible ways.

Each of these recommendations, in directly addressing the specific quantitative and qualitative concerns of the community, dovetail into the larger frame of how integral concerns of gentrification and environmental justice factor into that which constitutes the material basis of everyday along the Crenshaw Corridor and in the Leimert Park community. These recommendations, then, in working toward sustaining the material basis in the community, and then necessarily, the cultural identity of a community, moves the Crenshaw/LAX line toward a more equitable position mobilized for by the community. Ultimately, these recommendations amount to being helpful in terms of planning future rail-transit investments in communities of color.

CONCLUSION

Leimert Park is the product of a gradual re-creation of space—a place-making that is central to its significance today. Leimert Park is a community where historically, racism is confronted by "fortifying community from the rubble of past barriers."[263] This fortifying of community is precipitated by Leimert Park's history as "a pivotal site in the production of Afro-centric, community-based art in Los Angeles."[264] The community expects to continue to trumpet its cultural identity as means to resist a development that has a disproportionate racial impact and doesn't meet community needs. In this case study, what's foreground is the constant tension between which urban meanings ought to be privileged, a constant tension in what might be identified as the prioritization of the general economic good, or economic good of the state, over the good of the people of the community in which development is taking place. This catalyzed the mobilization of a community. The movement was driven by residents, business, grassroots community based organizations and supported across non-profits, local black politicians and eventually the Mayor of Los Angeles.

While this case study is one that is currently unfolding and at the current juncture, the extent to which the construction of the transit line and the development slated to take place along the Crenshaw Corridor will impact the community is still to be determined, the community expects to continue its tradition of confronting the potentiality of injustice through cultural expression as resistance and activism. It is through this resistance and activism that the community has been able to transform the planning process associated with the installment of the Crenshaw/LAX line.

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[263] Gordon, Eric. 2003. "Fortifying Community: African American History and Culture in Leimert Park." In *The Sons and Daughters of Los: Culture and Community in L.A.* Temple University Press: Philadelphia. Pg. 82
[264] Ibid. pg. 63

Many a discourse suggests that this transit investment, called the largest public works project ever in the history of South LA, is an opportunity to transform planned investment in a way that meets the needs of the community. Despite the community's ability to push Metro to make unprecedented accommodations to their planning process, there is no assurance that these accommodations will be sufficient toward engendering just outcomes. Concerns that remain are those of environmental justice and gentrification, concerns that are expected to remain salient through the completion of the line and once the line is in operation. As mentioned earlier, there are plans both from Metro and the City of Los Angeles that approximate environmental justice in terms of the specific contexts of environmental injustices discussed here: noise pollution and urban trees. However, with respect to gentrification, there has been, nominally, less of a concerted effort, in particular by the City of Los Angeles in their planning policies. In terms of gentrification, literature suggests that addressing gentrification and displacement is difficult. While techniques of intervention differ, across metropolitan areas, gentrification should not be viewed as inevitable nor should there be a wait and see approach.

As practitioners, we must realize that re-investment, even if in the form of transit-oriented development, is not enough unless it not only assumes a permanence that works toward rectifying the accumulated and cumulative impacts of disinvestment. It must be actualized in a way that people in and of these communities can be the beneficiaries. Importantly, we must return to, or move to and encourage discourse that centers the voices and experiences of individuals and communities that are often underrepresented or have been historically marginalized, in order to challenge the norm where social equity "at best, is addressed with

intangible platitudes,"[265] and instead ensure that equity is addressed in meaningful and transformative ways.

[265] Gunder, Michael. 2006. "Sustainability Planning's Saving Grace or Road to Perdition?" *Journal of Planning Education and Research*. 215. doi: 10.1177/0739456X06289359