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# ANGELENOS

By Vivian Liang

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Political Science in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

2018

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ANGELENOS

by

Vivian Liang

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Political Science in satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Angelenos

by

Vivian Liang

Advisor: Ruth O'Brien

The purpose of this paper is to explore the effects of Los Angeles's city myth on the lived realities of its minority populations. I assert that the abstract erasure of the city's Mexican past is mirrored in the physical concealment and removal of its minority populations. This paper pays particular attention to the ways in which the city's foundational myth is intertwined with both the racialization of Mexican-Americans in the early 20th century and the rising prominence of neoliberal urbanism in the latter half of the 20th century. The LAPD and city council's racialization of Mexican-Americans as dangerous and undesirable elements of society coincided with neoliberal redevelopment projects of the 1980s, which sought to remove people from city streets. Los Angeles's positioning as the model for a metropolitan utopia at the end of the frontier age has allowed private and public interests to create a repressive apparatus, as exemplified through its twin policies of containment and concealment, to control the daily lives of Mexican-Americans.

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## INTRODUCTION

I began this endeavor as way to understand a city that does not quite make sense. Los Angeles of the popular imagining is simultaneously a land of perpetual sunshine and the site of the Rodney King Uprising, one of the most infamous race riots in American history. Indeed, the City of Angels is rife with contradicting images: the city houses one of the largest and most diverse immigrant populations in the nation, yet segregates it. Edenic beaches and dreamy landscapes border some of the most dangerous neighborhoods in the nation. The differences between the lived experiences of the upper echelons of Angeleno society and the underclass are not only vast, but central to the notion of the city itself.

In Los Angeles as in other places, the ability for the mostly White upper- and middle-classes to maintain their safe and carefree lifestyles rests upon the repression of minority and immigrant populations. While repression takes many forms in the city, this paper focuses on the destruction of the city street and the removal of “street people.” Here, repression refers to the various forms in which Los Angeles residents are subject to rules and regulations that condition their behavior and therefore shape the way they experience their residences in the city.

Central to this type of repression is the mutually constitutive relationship between public and private interests at play. I assert that while the so-called public and private domains have always been intertwined throughout the history of Los Angeles, the neoliberal turn of the 1970s and 1980s blurred the two realms completely, allowing for the creation pseudo-public spaces. Such spaces operate under the guise of publicly accessible space, but actually severely regulate and monitor the behavior and appearances of their clientele. As a result, a variety of minority populations, ranging from the homeless to Mexican youth, are categorically excluded from such places.

Here, I am not concerned with the difference between “public” and “private;” rather, the central point of contention is the interplay between the two, and how these two realms have been engaged in a dialogic relationship since the first land developers arrived in Southern California in the 1880s. The public and private realms have affected and altered one another at various stages over time—as a result, what public and private meant in the 1960s is drastically different from what they meant in the 1880s. This relationship is mutually constitutive and ever-changing, and is becoming increasingly difficult to disaggregate in the era of late capitalism.

This complicated relationship is especially salient in urban governments not only because urban policies most directly affect the lives of residents, but also because neoliberalism of the 1980s globalized urban economies. While neoliberalism has affected the world in a multitude of ways, this paper focuses on the ways in which neoliberalism has affected urban governance. As an ideology focused on market competition as the driver for economic and political change, it has turned cities into aggressive fighters vying for international investment. Neoliberal urbanism therefore refers to the way in which urban governments have embraced this ideology and try to present their urban landscapes in the best light possible, turning city streets into bargaining chips.

Attracting foreign investment in urban landscapes has allowed land developers’ interests to take over many immigrant-populated neighborhoods under the guise of redevelopment. Redevelopment projects transform neighborhoods perceived as old, dangerous, and/or otherwise unfit into gleaming epicenters for the modern citizen. Buildings are torn down to be replaced by shopping malls and apartment complexes guarded by private security forces, and neighborhood residents become increasingly White and middle- to upper-classed.

As redevelopment projects create spaces for the desired modern citizen to reside, they necessarily relegate homeless and immigrant populations to other parts of the city. Los Angeles

is known for its urban sprawl. The city has long been an example of a modern American metropolis defined by suburban expansion. As redevelopment projects continue to define the urban landscape, however, sprawl no longer means that the city is characterized by expansion from the Downtown.

Instead, urban sprawl may now mean the distances which lower-class populations must travel in order to get to work every day, and the difficulties they face on the way there. Minority populations are persecuted on the streets of the Downtown not because they are dangerous, but because they are deemed unfit and antithetical to the modern metropolis. The desire of both shopping malls and gated communities to rid their spaces of “undesirable elements” reflects the idea that the Old World (immigrant) is unfit and incompatible with the modern city of the neoliberal age.

This type of urban governance has far-reaching consequences on minority populations in the city. In 2016, 48.5% of Los Angeles’s 10 million residents considered themselves Hispanic or Latina (U.S. Census, 2016). Blacks and Asian-Americans constituted 9.1% and 15.1% of the population, respectively (2016). 34.5% of the population was foreign-born (2016).<sup>1</sup>

Many of the policies introduced to improve the city’s global marketability function as a way to contain and conceal certain populations. Given Los Angeles’s large immigrant population as well as the fact that nearly half of its population considers itself Hispanic or Latina, the city offers a unique perspective on the impact of neoliberal urban governance on the lives of minority populations. From the homeless on Skid Row to Mexican youth in Cadillac-Corning, neoliberal policies manifest into a myriad of tactics designed to reinforce the idea that such people do not belong in a modern Los Angeles.

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<sup>1</sup> These figures do not include the estimated 1 million undocumented immigrants living in Southern California.

This paper is split into three sections. Part 1 focuses on the foundational city myth of Los Angeles, detailing how the wishes of land developers beginning in the 1880s shaped the region into the physical embodiment of the American metropolis of the future. Importantly, this city myth rests upon disassociating the land from its Mexican origins. Part 2 deals with the legacies of how the making of Los Angeles into the quintessential modern American city coincides with the rise of neoliberal forms of governance in the 1970s and 1980s. Part 3 then focuses on the ways in which neoliberal governance has translated into policies affecting the everyday lives of minority populations in the city.

Unpacking the relationship between neoliberalism and the city's foundational myth requires us to consider how Los Angeles came to represent the modern city. While neoliberalization has pushed many urban governments to seek investment through "modernity," Los Angeles remains a place apart because of its unique position at the end of the Western frontier. I begin this paper with a historical account of Los Angeles beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, hopefully providing a foundation and lens with which to view a place where (artificially planted) palm trees and one of the most densely packed homeless populations would eventually come to exist a few blocks apart.

**PART 1: THE CITY OF ANGELS**

She came to me in a dream and sang to me  
Move west young brotha'  
Oohhh weeee, (right near the beach)  
W\$TSDE, W\$TSDE, W\$TSDE, W\$TSDE

Dumbfoundead, “W\$TSDE”

**EXISTING LITERATURE**

Mike Davis begins *City of Quartz* by proclaiming that the “best place to view Los Angeles of the next millennium is from the ruins of its alternative future” (Davis, 1990). Indeed, the book is an endeavor to “excavate the future in Los Angeles.” For Davis, the city is always conditioned by both its past and its prescribed future. He charts the development of Los Angeles as an exercise in that does not exist in the present—rather, the city would always represent a yet-realized ideal. Davis notes that from the beginnings of land development in the area, the “specific cultural values and popular enthusiasms of Southern California [would translate into] a planned and egalitarian social landscape” (1990, 10).

Temporality, for Davis, is integral to his conception of Los Angeles and Southern California. Los Angeles was a commodity, a land of opportunity, to be sold before it existed. Led by Otis and Harry Chandler beginning in the late 1800s, a group of land developers, bankers, and transport magnates sought to sell the land “as no city had ever been sold” before (25). As the “affluent babbity of the Middle West” poured their savings into real estate and settled into the area, Southern California came to represent an ideal that was yet to be constructed (25).

Davis spends much of his analysis focusing on the interplay between temporality and spatiality in the region. He asserts that in Southern California, land was the requisite commodity (25). Carey McWilliams notes, however, that the land itself is not the source of value

(McWilliams, 1946). Rather, it would be the unique “subtropic climate” of Southern California that would prove to be the source of the region’s value (1946, 6). For McWilliams, Southern California is “a paradox: a desert that faces an ocean” (6). The semi-arid region lacks plentiful soil, natural harbors, forest and mineral resources, and most importantly, a naturally-occurring water source (6).

Yet this desert climate, the very reason Southern California lacks traditional resources, is its singularly alluring quality (6). McWilliams notes that “the real richness of the land... [is found] in the combination of sky and air and ocean breezes” (6). What land developers are marketing to the Middle Western babbity is the climate of the region, a subtropic climate unlike anywhere else in the continental United States, a paradise at the edge of the Western frontier.

Davis notes that the creation of Los Angeles necessarily entailed the “creation of a cultural monumentality to support the sale of the city to overseas investors and affluent immigrants” (Davis, 1990). This cultural monumentality of Los Angeles exists on two levels: first, it can be seen in the more contemporary elite importation of art and culture into the city, as part of its neoliberal marketing. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the physical creation and development of Los Angeles is inherently tied to its possible cultural significance.

Beyond building its physical structures, the creation of Los Angeles involved the idea that there was a paradise at the edge of the Western World, and that this paradise was the next and final step in the American frontier. Los Angeles was not only marketed as an “untouched” land, ripe for development—with the purchase of land came the notion of Los Angeles itself.

For Davis, then, the culture of Los Angeles was always about the “construction/interpretation of the *city myth*, which enters the material landscape as a design for speculation and domination” (1990, 23). Perhaps most greatly exemplified by the global

influence of Hollywood, the area was always marketed as a cultural beacon, a place that would emanate new, West Coast ideals of what a utopian planned community looked like. Davis notes the private-public coalition that sought to “build a cultural superstructure” that would present Los Angeles as a Global City (71).

The fates of land developers, then, were necessarily tied to the city myth. His analysis rests upon the connection between the city as myth and the city as constructed. Nestled within this, of course, is the temporality of the region: the land was bought for its speculated potential, and the idea of the city was created well before it existed. The idea and the way to analyze Southern California is always tempered by time. Southern California is always being constructed, always progressing toward something.

While Davis’s analysis proves fruitful in demonstrating the potency of space and time, it also succeeds in situating lived realities in these themes. In exploring this, Davis considers the power dynamics latent in the founding and creation of “Los Angeles,” beginning with the Chandler empire in the 1880s (114). He notes that the building of the city was largely left to market forces, with “rare interventions” from the state, social movements, or public leaders (105). As such, economic interests necessarily defined not only the power structure of the city, but also its physical infrastructure.

For Davis, the power structure of the region is necessarily decentralized. This decentralization manifests in many ways: firstly, public and private interests are always at play. Because the region was developed by private interests, they hold great influence over the government. This includes both traditional economic interests and regional interests, such as homeowners’ associations. Thus, traditional state power is conditioned by private interests.

Secondly, the “downtown elite,” characterized by old Chandler-era business magnates in the East, is pitted against newer Jewish entrepreneurs in the West (105). He notes that by the 1940s, as militarization and the mass production industry took hold in the region, the Chandlerian East-side power hegemony began to break down (101).

Much like the Chandler empire, Jewish hegemony in the West was also built upon land speculation (121). The difference this time was the new set of rules implemented by the Federal Housing Administration in the wake of Keynesian suburbanization (124). As a result, the “federally subsidized build-and-thrift complex” of the West side complicated power dynamics in the region (125). He notes that “downtown redevelopment and Westside expansion [increasingly] appeared as zero-sum games” (125).

Davis’s analysis of power structures in Los Angeles is not a dichotomous one, however. His conception of power is not one between public and private, East and West. Instead, it is that these powers are always simultaneously at play, always struggling against but sometimes cooperating with one another. Moreover, Davis does not treat private elite power in Los Angeles as monolithic. Because different powers were at odds with one another at different junctures in time, the development of Los Angeles is not the simple tale of private interests merely co-opting public administration. This can be seen in his focus on homeowners’ associations, which both demonstrates a spatial decentralization as well as the cooperation between the government and private interests (160).

Though he acknowledges the interplay of forces, Davis does not shy away from the difference in lived realities, and the way these lived realities were created through institutions and infrastructure. He notes that this difference was necessarily a result of racial animosities,

exemplified in zoning policies that segregated based on race and architectural designs that limited public space (161).

Edward Escobar further demonstrates this by exploring the tension between the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and Mexican youth in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, citing this tension as a result of “virulent anti-Mexican racism and the resultant alienation among a growing segment of Mexican American youth” (Escobar, 1999). For Mexican American youth, their lived reality consisted of discrimination in employment, education, housing, and public accommodations (1999, 2). Escobar asserts that “it is hard to imagine a time when conflict was not the underlying theme in the relationship between Chicanas and the LAPD and, more broadly, in the relationship between racial minorities and the police” (3).

He traces the origins of this conflict to the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. For Escobar, the end of World War II marked a change in the relations between ethnic minorities and urban police (3). He notes that beyond racial prejudices and police professionalism, evolving police notions linking race and criminality have expanded to societal expectations at large and thus changed “the way in which society defines race and racial characteristics” (6). As society increasingly sees minority populations, and particularly youth, as inextricably linked to crime, police departments are granted more funding and more leeway to carry out their mission.

Moreover, Escobar asserts that police departments were necessarily created by urban elites to control the burgeoning working class in industrializing Northeastern cities during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (11). As the police force grew and evolved, it “continued to concentrate its efforts on maintaining order in the working-class sections of urban America.... to ensure that the refuse of industrialized society did not disrupt the genteel classes” (11). The police force as an

institution, then, functions as an arm of both the state and the elite to control undesirable masses, functioning as the “army of the status quo” (11).

Following Davis and Escobar’s analyses, this paper explores the mechanisms behind street-level repression in Los Angeles as it relates to the city’s foundational myth. This paper looks at the interwoven relationship between the spatial alienation of the city’s immigrant populations and the neoliberal push of the 1970s and 1980s that results in the repression of minority populations. The erasure of Los Angeles’s Mexican past in the city myth is mirrored in the physical erasure of—or rendering invisible of—minority populations in the era of late capitalism, particularly on the city street.

This paper hopes to explore how the Los Angeles urban system justifies its control of minority populations through a variety of means, including urban design, public policy, and gang injunctions. Specifically, how do street level interactions with the Los Angeles urban infrastructure, as informed by city government as well as private land developers, create a separate lived reality for minority populations? I assert that the historical regional development of “The Mexican” in Southern California, as informed by labor practices and the LAPD, coincided with the construction of both the infrastructure and city myth of Los Angeles, which allowed for neoliberal policies to fit seamlessly into the city’s mantra of modernity.

The treatment of the Mexican population in the area thus provides a glimpse into how the machinations of the mutually constitutive relationship between public and private interests in Southern California, further blurred and promoted by the neoliberal push of the 1980s, affects the everyday lived realities of minority populations. Ultimately, I hope this endeavor will shed some light upon how constructions of place and identity are informed by racializations as well as public and pseudo-public policies.

## **CONSTRUCTING THE CITY: THE ERASURE OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S MEXICAN PAST**

The notion of “the West” long precedes the history of Southern California that Davis explores in *City of Quartz*. Indeed, the very notion of the New World itself rested upon the notion that there was an undiscovered land, uninhabited and unclaimed, ripe for the taking. The founding myth of the United States itself tells the tale of a land filled with gold and opportunity, free from religious persecution and Old World social stratification. To this day, being an American means the freedom to be who you are and to pursue what you want.

The notion of Manifest Destiny further demonstrates this, portraying the West as uncultivated and thus free for the taking.<sup>2</sup> American freedom, then, is necessarily tied to land development. Thus, it is no surprise that Otis and Harry Chandler built their Southern California empire on land speculation. What is distinct about this development, however, is that these Western lands were necessarily tied to notions of uninhibited American freedom. Never mind the fact that there was a chain of missions left by the Spanish, and never mind the fact that the United States had only won the land thirty years prior in the Mexican-American War—these Western lands were marketed as an uncharted paradise.

Indeed, Greg Hise asserts that the “pueblo of Los Angeles and Alta California appeared to be on the edge of the world geographically and on the margins of world trade and of world history” (Hise, 2004). California was the last frontier, the last place untouched by the excesses of the Old World and the East Coast. Hise argues that for Americans, Los Angeles and California remain “a place apart” (2004, 546). California represents an “eternal present, a present that prefigures other cities’ futures” (546). Thus, the physical space of California itself—the land at

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<sup>2</sup> Native Americans were savages, of course, and therefore did not deserve the land.

the edge of the dream—helped to configure its place in time. Because it was the last frontier, California would always represent the future.

Hise further argues that this view of California required the notion of “Mexicans quiescently fading away, like the ‘old dilapidated landmarks,’ the adobe structures of Sonoratown” (547). The city of Los Angeles was founded in 1781 by forty-four settlers who came from the Mexican states of Sonora and Sinaloa (Estrada, 1999). Sonoratown, then, was a neighborhood in Los Angeles that housed many Mexicans from Sonora during the 1800s.

For Whites moving to Los Angeles following Chandlerian land development, the Mexican-populated Sonoratown was a “counter-space, everything their city was not” (Hise, 2004). As such, Sonoratown was viewed as a “counterweight” against which they would use to “elevate Los Angeles into the future” (2004, 548). Sonoratown and its Mexican residents could never be a part of the modern city they sought to construct. The legacy of Mexico, the Mexican population, and their adobe structures needed to fade away to make room for the creation of a modern Los Angeles.

Hise asserts that as the notion of Mexicans became disassociated with the land, it signaled “a past giving away inextricably to the present and the prospect of a future built on a blank slate rather than on the foundation of a Spanish-Mexican past; for many Yankees, history began today” (549). Thus, the material existences of the Spanish missions and Mexican populations in Southern California were irrelevant; the creation and history of Los Angeles began with the end of Mexicans.

This can be seen through the “restoration” of Olvera Street during the 1930s. Previously known as Paseo de Los Angeles, the plaza was the center of Mexican life and culture during Mexican rule (Estrada, 1999). Following Mexico’s defeat in the Mexican-American War in 1848

and the large influx of Anglo-Americans during the late 1800s, the plaza fell into disrepair and became “a forgotten remnant of the city’s Hispanic roots as Anglo-American cultural hegemony set in” (1999, 109).

The dissociation of Mexicans from Los Angeles’s past set the stage for a different narrative surrounding Mexican migration. Large agricultural needs in the Southwest coincided with national anxiety regarding immigration. While the 1924 Quota Act banned Eastern European and Asian immigration to the United States, for fear of race suicide and yellow peril, the Act does not mention migration within the Western Hemisphere (Telles, 2009). As a result, Mexican migration was, in fact, encouraged by agricultural interests.

In the 1920 Congressional Hearings on Mexican migration, Congress painted Mexicans as specifically suited for manual labor (Filindra, 2014). Citing biological factors, Mexicans were built to perform agricultural labor, simple-minded, and diligent (2014, 90). Culturally, they would never acculturate and follow the laws governing their labor contracts (93). The economic interests of the Southwestern regional elite thus dictated the very terms under which the group became racialized in the United States.

In this paper, I define racialization as a specific set of characteristics attributed to each racial group in the United States upon entrance and introduction, regardless of any previous history that may have existed in immigrant populations’ homelands. Thus, Mexicans could be molded into anything that was suitable for the US government’s agenda. In the context of the demand for agricultural production, their purpose was to toil on the land because they did not have the mental capacity to do anything else (95). Their very bodies were unsuited for the harsh winter months, and would thus return to Mexico after the harvest (96).

The Mexican—and by extension, any future Mexican migrant—was necessarily characterized by his temporariness (86). Most importantly, the Mexican was a free agent. He followed the American notion of liberalism, going when there was work, and returning home when there was not (93). The Mexican was constructed permanently temporary, and indeed, temporary migrant labor is synonymous with Mexican immigration to this day. The consequence of having a labor force construed to be permanently temporary is that it renders this group separate from spatial belonging. Though Mexicans were the ones who physically toiled on the land, they did not (and legally *could not*) own it.

Olvera Street, then, capitalizes upon this alienation. As a result of increased Mexican migration responding to agricultural demands, Los Angeles experienced a resurgence of Mexican culture (Estrada, 1999). Spearheaded by Christine Sterling in the late 1920s, the plaza and its deteriorating buildings were to be reinvigorated, aptly under a campaign to “save the adobe” (1999, 114). Estrada notes that this presented itself as a solution to the downtown elite, who had become wary of the radical protests that had been occurring in the area (114).

What is interesting about the Olvera Street restoration is that it was necessarily an “imagined tourist space” (115). Sterling herself marketed the revamped plaza as “A Mexican Street of Yesterday in the City of Today” (115). While the commodities sold by vendors included stereotypical Mexican fare such as colorful piñatas, hanging puppets in white peasant garb, Mexican poetry, serapes, mounted bull horns, oversized sombreros, the real commodity of Olvera Street was “romantic ‘old Mexico’” (115).

What Olvera Street sold, not only to the tourists who visited but to all of the United States, was an imagined pastoral past (Lewthwaite, 2007). The image of the simple Mexican peon, not unlike that of the temporary migrant worker, working on his fields in the days before

the complexities of American society thus became ingrained in the public imagination. Though now the site of struggle between downtown elites and Jewish business magnates, the land once experienced a simpler existence. Estrada asserts that Olvera Street allowed Sterling to popularize “an emerging creation mythology for Anglo Los Angeles originating with the defeat of Mexican forces in 1847” (Estrada, 1999).

In christening the restored adobe buildings, Sterling linked their importance to Anglo heroes of the past (1999, 116). These structures no longer belonged to the very people who built them; rather, they belonged to the Anglo heroes who defeated Mexican forces at these sites. As such, the death of Mexico meant the birth of Los Angeles. Literal white-washing underlies the foundational myth of Southern California.

The creation of The Mexican not only provided a group that could be molded to fit whatever type of agricultural worker the industry needed, but also molded the view of Los Angeles itself. Los Angeles has never, and will never, belong to Mexicans. Even Mexican-Americans, who had stayed on after the Mexican-American War, or were born to Mexican immigrant parents, were not allowed to hold any claims on their historical ties to the land.

Further, facing economic pressures during the Great Depression, California “repatriated” thousands of Mexicans to Mexico, 60% of whom were American-born (Telles, 2009). The Mexican Repatriation Program very clearly demonstrates how attitudes and views toward the Mexican population changed over time, especially when it benefitted both the local and federal government. Mexicans could easily be construed as the ideal workers as well as the reason for economic strain. Despite the American ideal of coming to a land free from persecution and social stratification to explore opportunities, law enforcement in California nonetheless forcibly removed thousands of Mexican-Americans from their homes. Indeed, the quality of being

American-born served Mexicans (among other groups) differently; when petitioning the United States government for citizenship rights, these ethnic individuals did not often succeed (2009, 74).

Aided by the dissociation of land, the specific racialization of Mexicans unsurprisingly violates the ideals of American liberalism. Although these workers toiled on the land, they were necessarily excluded from owning it. They were never meant to be tied to the land, but merely to labor upon it. This exclusion of Mexicans from Southern California therefore forces us to question to whom the American Dream is marketed, and who is ultimately allowed to achieve it.

### **REALIZING THE MYTH: BUILDING PARADISE**

Before moving forward in this consideration of Southern California, it is important to consider the dialogic relationships between the myth and the reality of Los Angeles. In this paper, a dialogic relationship is characterized by the consideration of relationships between entities as mutually constitutive, how these relationships change over time, how these relationships affect and permanently alter entities over time, and how each successive interaction between entities affect their future interactions.

In considering the city myth of Los Angeles, it is difficult to ignore the artifice involved at every level of its existence. Just as Los Angeles itself is seen in a perpetual state of progressing, its foundational myth also exists in an eternally-progressing state. The city myth exists within a set of interactions between the *idea* of Los Angeles, its *advertisement and deliberate imagining*, and its *reality*.

McWilliams points to this interaction, noting that Southern California truly began in 1888, with the creation of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce (McWilliams, 1946). Created in response to the fall of the land boom of 1887, the Chamber of Commerce was desperate to

draw potential buyers to the area (1946, 129). As a result, the advertisement of Southern California in the late 19th century rested upon two things: first, as other developers had done before, it emphasized the subtropic climate of the region. The Chamber organized train tours and exhibits at state fairs to promote the region as paradise (129).

By 1900, Los Angeles became the “best advertised city in America” (129). Second, it heavily developed the physical infrastructure of Los Angeles (129). Because the region was lacking in natural resources, the region relied upon technological advancements to develop the region (129). Southern California became the site for a “feverish drilling of new wells and tunnels for water” (129). Because it lacked wood and coal, developers employed the then-innovative use of electricity to power its endeavors (129). McWilliams notes that Los Angeles was the “first city in America, perhaps in the world, to be completely illuminated by electric lights” (129). By 1915, the city had one of the most developed public transit systems in the United States (130).

The technological innovations of the region are not incidental to the city’s positioning at the end of the frontierlands. These innovations not only help to cement the region’s reputation as the ideal futuristic paradise, but also demonstrate the importance of technological innovation in the city’s cultural monumentality—or rather, the city’s construction of its own cultural monumentality.

When discussing the development of the contemporary cultural superstructure, Davis laments what he perceives to be a lack of organically-developed culture in the region. Contemporary cultural institutions such as the Getty Villa are the creations of an elite-driven endeavor, a conscious attempt by the powers-that-be to import something that adds to the marketability of the city (Davis, 1990).

Cultural institutions in Los Angeles are therefore embedded in a type of artifice, glaring physical representations of an attempt to create culture. From the first day the Chamber of Commerce convened to begin the wholesale advertisement of the city, Los Angeles was created in an exercise of artificiality. McWilliams notes that “[the city] has been conjured into existence” (McWilliams, 1946). The relationship between the reality of Los Angeles and its prescribed vision are mutually informing: as the advertisement becomes more prominent, the very conception of the land itself changes. In other words, the idea forces the existence of the ideal, which may or may not be reflected in reality.

Los Angeles therefore exists somewhere between the idea of Los Angeles, its advertisement and prescribed ideal, and its reality. The subtropic climate allowed for the region to be marketed and sold as paradise, and its physical environment was built and developed to fit this description. Los Angeles has never existed (and could not exist) without its prescribed Edenic qualities; thus, it is impossible to consider the lived reality of the city without taking its foundational myths into serious consideration. Because Los Angeles viewed itself as the physical embodiment of the future of the United States, its infrastructure was developed under this assumption.

It is important to stress, however, that this is necessarily a dialogic relationship. The physical environment and the city’s prescribed ideals are mutually constitutive and permanently alter each other over time. As the environment adapted to fit these Edenic qualities, it also altered the ideals themselves. The development of the electrical grid occurred as a consequence of the city’s attempt to modernize, but its ultimate effect was to propel the city further as the metropolis of the future. The fact that Los Angeles was the first city in the United States to be entirely lit by electricity solidified its prophecy in a way that Chandler never would have imagined.

## **NUEVO L.A.: MAKING AN AMERICAN CITY**

The ways in which this foundational myth and the physical development of the city interact and mutually constitute one another demonstrate the artifice of “established” modes of living for different populations. By ridding Mexicans of their historical and connections to the land, the new city myth of Los Angeles became a blank slate. While traditional notions of land ownership use labor to denote possession, Los Angeles would instead use the land itself.

As mentioned above, the land was free for the taking because there was new and unclaimed. The Mexicans of the past had faded away, only to exist in Anglo America’s imaginations. As such, Otis Chandler’s scheme to sell plots of land as planned communities would mark the beginning of Los Angeles’s real development. Los Angeles, and by extension Southern California, would be marketed as a land free from the social stratifications of the East Coast, where anyone and everyone had an opportunity to achieve the American Dream. Indeed, even Black families could buy land in utopian Los Angeles (Nicolalde, 1999).

Most importantly, however, the construction of new Los Angeles entailed the construction of community. Though it was true that Black people were allowed to purchase property, which properties were available for purchase were pre-conditioned. Redlining policies nonetheless affected minority populations in the area, determining where specific peoples were allowed to live. As such, among its other attractions, Los Angeles is world-renowned for segregation.

This pattern can be seen throughout larger Los Angeles. Indeed, Hise notes “Californians’ propensity for innovations in popular and all forms of social experiments (Hise, 2004). Los Angeles’s problem with traffic is not merely a side effect of its large population,

sprawled across the county. The extensive use of freeways comes at the expense of a well-functioning public transportation system in order to limit public interaction.

While cities like New York City are designed for pedestrian walking, Los Angeles's urban sprawl is characterized by its freeways. The rise of the auto industry in the 1950s and 1960s not only resulted in the development of the freeway system across the United States, but also coincided with the notion that America of the future would be one defined by cars. Situated on the East Coast, New York City would represent older and more rigid ideals. Being on the West Coast allowed the city to keep its residents separated by transforming itself into a place that relies primarily on cars for travel.

This is complicated by the imagined notions of what Southern California is and what it can become. Hise notes that in Los Angeles, east and west are “markers of race-ethnicity, class, status, and prospect” (2004, 550). What is interesting about Hise's claims is that *prospect* is also conditioned by spatiality. As previously stressed, Los Angeles itself was marketed on the virtue of its potential value. If it is the case that Los Angeles is a place where people go to *become*, then such spatial limits are very telling about the extent to which this becoming can occur. Thus, only certain communities are allowed to access the utopia of West Los Angeles, exemplified by cities like Santa Monica, while others are to remain in East Los Angeles. Such visions are reinforced the city government, which catered increasingly to local homeowners' interests.

In the exchange between private interests and governments, local homeowners in local communities hold much influence over local policy. Dana Cutt argues that the neighborhood sits at the “intersection between space and politics” (Cutt, 2004). Cutt describes Los Angeles as a “patchwork of neighborhoods, politically institutionalized through neighborhood councils, public marked by municipal signage, and subjectively identified by their residents” (2004, 559). Indeed,

due to the decentralized nature of the city government, the sprawling land, and the existence of unincorporated and incorporated municipalities, Los Angeles provides an enormous amount of power to residents in influencing local policy.<sup>3</sup>

Davis notes the power and influence of homeowners' associations, which focused on the defense of the Southern California suburban dream "against unwanted development... as well as unwanted persons" (Davis, 1990). Davis chronicles the push toward "neighborhood power," which sought to bring land-use decision-making to the neighborhood level (1990, 158). The push to strengthen local identity combined with White residents' perception of local control led to the "legal recognition of self-defined neighborhoods" in 1969 (188). As such, notions of belonging were legally enforced on the basis of local (White) residents.

Unsurprisingly, this has proven to be extremely influential upon the restriction of movement and spatial location on minority communities. Homeowners' associations readily adopted the doctrine of N.I.M.B.Y., or Not In My Back Yard, to justify the exclusion of unwanted peoples. The backyard, constructed as a community space, dictates the type of person the everyday suburbanite wants to see in her neighborhood. Though racial segregation and restriction are nothing new in the United States, however, the specific way in which it plays out in Los Angeles is significant.

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to note here that up until this point, my analysis has equated Southern California with Los Angeles. This is not only due to common understandings of Los Angeles as representative of Southern California as a whole, but also speaks to the very nature of the municipal government in the area. The City of Los Angeles does not encompass the whole of Los Angeles County. Some municipalities within the county, such as Santa Monica, have their own city governments. These are referred to as incorporated territories. While the City of Los Angeles itself is geographically confined to the downtown, unincorporated territories within the county are subject to the laws of the County.

## **LIVING IN PARADISE: THE LAPD AND MEXICANS IN THE EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

The connective tissue underlying these forms of segregation in the city, whether it is redlining, NIMBYism, or policing of homeless populations, is that such social segregation is construed to be an established and natural way of life. McWilliams notes the way in which Southern California sunshine places a filter over the region, as the “most commonplace objects assume a matchless perfection of form; and the land itself becomes a thing of beauty” (McWilliams, 1946).

The promise of paradise therefore masks the realities of the city. The region’s Mexican past can be wiped away and Los Angeles can rise anew. Populations can be easily segregated and policed in the name of community. These are all instances of the city myth and the city’s physical development mutually informing one another. The repressive way city administration polices the homeless population on Skid Row is not a necessarily natural outcome, but rather the result of a long history of the interaction between private and public interests in the Downtown.

Similarly, the way Mexican communities are perceived in Los Angeles is not a natural progression of Mexican presence in the region. It is also informed by the interaction between the racialization of Mexicans and the actions of city administration and government agencies. Kathy Peiss chronicles how interactions Mexican-Americans and the Los Angeles Police Department culminated in what came to be known as the Zoot Suit Riots of 1943 (Peiss, 2011).

During the Second World War, Southern California attracted a large influx of workers due to its wartime manufacturing, aided by the US government’s aerospace development in the area (Peiss, 2011; Davis, 1990). Black and White Americans from the South and Midwest arrived alongside Mexican workers (2011, 107). At the same time, Japanese and Japanese-Americans were forced into internment camps, and their properties were bought by Black

Americans (107). Peiss notes that these in- and out-migrations of different racial and ethnic groups during this period destabilized the region, as “long-time and newly arrived Angelenos jostled for [the same] space” (107).

As traditional racial and ethnic borders were reconfigured, White backlash also grew (108). The Mexican community began to spread from their traditional residency in the Plaza district toward the Downtown (108). At the same time, the zoot suit became popular across the country amongst young men (17).<sup>4</sup> In particular, young Mexican-American men were wearing the suit when going out to nightclubs and dances (112).

As these young men fraternized with women and gathered in groups in public, they became a “conspicuous part of the Los Angeles scene” (112). Peiss notes that White Angelenos, who had “long celebrated the tourist’s version of the region’s Spanish heritage while staring past the working-class Mexicans in their midst,” finally noticed the presence of the ostentatious zoot suited-Mexican-American youth (112). The zoot suited-Mexican-American, then, became the (extremely conspicuous) symbol of changing racial and societal dynamics of wartime America as well as the object of Anglo anxiety and ire (112).

As the war raged on, though young men of all races wore the suit, both the local media and law enforcement began to specifically associate zoot suits with Mexican-Americans, criminality, and deviance (113). As a result, the very image of a young Mexican-American became linked to gang activity (113). In some news reports, the term “zoot suiter” was used interchangeably with “Mexican” (114). Peiss notes that by 1943, the zoot suit became “almost exclusively the [symbol] of young Mexican-American delinquents and offenders” (114).

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<sup>4</sup> Across the country, young men began to dress in zoot suits, which “pulled out the lines and shape of the traditional suit to widen a man’s shoulders, lengthen his torso, and loosen his limbs” (Peiss, 17).

By 1943, Mexican-American youth of Los Angeles had already become inextricably linked to notions of criminality and ganghood. White servicemen stationed in Los Angeles regularly clashed with zoot suiters, further escalating social tensions (106). On the night of June 3<sup>rd</sup>, a band of fifty sailors, armed with makeshift weapons, left their naval base and ventured into downtown Los Angeles in search of young Mexican-American zoot suiters (106). The servicemen searched the streets and nightclubs, beating zoot suiters and stripping them of their suits (106).

Over the next four days, many White civilians joined the servicemen, mainly seeking out and beating Mexican-American youths, though some Black and Filipino-Americans were attacked as well (106). Some Mexican-Americans fought back, while others retreated into their communities (106). The violence reached its zenith on the night of June 7<sup>th</sup>, when five thousand people gathered in the downtown area to join the brawl (106). As the fighting raged on, the LAPD finally raised a riot alarm and began arresting Mexican-American youths, believing them to be the instigators of the conflict (107). Of the servicemen involved in the violence, only two were arrested (107).

The entire affair came to be known as the “Zoot Suit Riots,” further cementing the widespread belief that Mexican-American zoot suiters were to blame for the violence (107). Peiss notes that in the weeks leading up to the “riots,” the suit itself took on a specific meaning for the White servicemen (117). The suit, as an ostentatious style of clothing, made visible these Mexican-American youths.

Moreover, the fact that the suits were worn during times of social fraternizing with White women fueled fears of interracial relations and threatened the social order, which was itself on shaky ground due to shifting work and residential boundaries in wartime Southern California. As

such, the suit was necessarily linked to the social tensions surrounding Mexican-American youths. Peiss asserts that the suit provided “a kind of heuristic value, providing a visual indicator of crime, guilt, and punishment” (118).

The Zoot Suit Riots help to demonstrate the role that the local media and law enforcement had in developing the public perception of Mexican-American men. This, in turn, helped to justify the LAPD’s repression of the population. During the 1940s, LAPD leadership sought to fix its public image by curbing rampant corruption in the department, establishing higher standards for incoming officers, implementing a rigorous training programs, instituting better pay for officers, and introducing more modern equipment and administrative procedures (Escobar, 2003).

During the 1950s, under the direction of Police Chief William Parker, the LAPD began a process of professionalization (2003, 175). Through professionalization, Parker sought to raise the status of policing, providing it the same level of respect as other professional occupations, such as doctors and lawyers (176). Most importantly, professionalization would allow law enforcement control over their profession.

Escobar notes that Section 202 of the Los Angeles City Charter gave “sole authority regarding internal department discipline... to a board of review composed of fellow officers” (176). In other words, the only disciplinary body for officers in the LAPD was a board comprised of LAPD officers. Moreover, the chief of police could review the board’s decision and lower the punishment, though he could not raise it (177). Thus, only the LAPD had the authority to review its officers’ actions (177).

As mentioned above, police professionalization allows law enforcement wide discretion in determining which populations are arrested. Escobar notes that the police professionalization

model also brought a “war-on-crime orientation” that degraded the relationship between the police and the community (177). Moving away from the model of community policing, urban police departments increasingly treated communities as antagonistic forces (177). Instead of acting as a *responsive force* that reacted to citizens’ complaints, the LAPD transitioned into a *preventive force* that “aggressively confronted the ‘criminal elements’ in society” (177). The LAPD thus engaged in aggressive policing tactics in neighborhoods deemed dangerous in order to “demonstrate that violation of the law brought certain and severe punishment” (177).<sup>5</sup>

The swiftness with which the LAPD targeted and blamed Mexican-American youth for the Zoot Suit Riots is therefore intertwined with the LAPD’s emergence as an autonomous, regulatory force for the region. Clashes with Mexican-Americans helped the LAPD become the “protector of the White middle and working classes against minority crime” (178). Escobar asserts that officers who believed that Mexican youth were in “criminally inclined” were more likely to look for criminal activity among these youth and to make arrests based on this belief (178).

Mexican-Americans are not merely racialized to be associated with criminality; rather, this association is integral to the formation of the LAPD’s identity. That the LAPD protects the White upper class is obvious—its identity as the protector of the White middle and working classes, however, that is extremely telling. The LAPD’s positioning alongside the White middle and working classes demonstrates the social tensions that arise when Whites and minority populations live and work alongside one another. Its treatment of the city’s Mexican-American population did not always exist as such; rather, the ways in which Mexican-Americans

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<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that the LAPD’s attitude toward the Mexican population is the result of a history of systematic discrimination. Beyond believing that some “bad elements” would infect the rest of the neighborhood, as in broken windows theory, this attitude is categorically directed toward all Mexican-Americans.

## ANGELENOS

experience life in Los Angeles is informed by the processes of racialization and development of the police force. More importantly, that the LAPD's war-on-crime mentality both draws from and focuses on racialized notions of Mexican-Americans forces us to question who is allowed a livelihood in the City of Angels.

**PART 2: TWO HUMANITIES**

No doubt, to live and die in L.A.  
California, what you say about Los Angeles  
Still the only place for me  
That never rains in the sun and everybody got love

2Pac, "To Live and Die in L.A."

This city myth demonstrates the notion of Los Angeles as a land that can be molded—and constantly so. Los Angeles is always constructing, its existing reality still being molded and challenged. The myth is never finished; the pastoral past of Mexico came back with Olvera Street, and the previously crime-ridden downtown was reworked to become a haven for white collar workers. As such, what it means to be a Los Angeleno is always changing.

More often than not, this definition results from the actions of the government. The Mexican residents of Chavez Ravine, unable to evoke the NIMBY doctrine, were forced out in order to build Dodger Stadium. If Angelenos are known for their land and their ability to maintain the integrity of their land, then it does not seem that Mexicans can be considered Angelenos. Forced out during the Mexican Repatriation Program and bought out in Chavez Ravine, the Mexican was racialized in a way that necessarily excluded her from being an Angeleno.

Los Angeles perpetually exists in a state of constructing. It is never situated in the present, but always looking toward the future. It is a land comprised of different interests. The interests of the downtown elite, the Hollywood starlets, homeowners' associations, overseas businesses, and the LAPD all coalesce to shape what Los Angeles *should* look like. The effect, however, is most felt in marginalized communities. The homeless population of Skid Row and

the Mexicans of Chavez Ravine, among others, are the communities that experience these interests played out.

### **TO BE AN ANGELENO: CREATING TWO HUMANITIES**

If the selling of a uniquely American paradise is the epitome of the American Dream itself, then equally American is exploitation. Southern California, as a region that lacks natural resources, prizes its land above all else. Undergirding the region's attractiveness is its land, untouched and therefore free for materialist consumption. Los Angeles developed an advanced electrical grid, water irrigation, and one of the best public transportation systems in the United States because it needed to.

Yet the need for technological innovation was not driven by a desire to improve the lives of residents; rather, it was driven by a desire for marketability. The development of the city's infrastructure was a means to an end, another push toward its idealized vision. Perhaps by understanding the motivations behind development of the city, we can begin to understand the processes that go into the justification for repression of minority populations.

To be clear, the discrepancy between the idealized Edenic metropolis and the lived realities of minority populations is inherent in the city itself. The idea of what Los Angeles is (and should become) is fraught with tension, always grasping between ideal and reality. The notion of the city is elusive and ever-changing; it is simultaneously the tale of an artificially created metropolis as well as the story of how this artifice grew into itself. The wiping away of Mexican ancestry and the creation of the blank city slate did not happen sequentially; these processes happened simultaneously over time and often retroactively. Mexican-origin people have always lived and worked in Los Angeles—it is merely that their existences are obscured within Anglo vision and history erased when convenient.

The city's unique positioning, with its back to the desert and facing the ocean, exemplifies its affinity toward obscuring "undesirable" elements (McWilliams, 1946). Actions such as slum clearing and street policing reinforce the city's desire to present itself as a utopia. The city administration's actions, then, are dictated by its desire for marketability. Real slums are not to be seen, but manufactured "cultural" areas are to be celebrated.

Cultural attractions such as Olvera Street and Chinatown manufacture imagined pasts for the tourist's gaze. The pasts of these communities are called upon when they are needed; otherwise, their histories are obscured. The merchants selling sombreros and the dragon gates of Chinatown are visual representations of fabricated cultural institutions, whose very existences are dependent upon their market potential and presentation to an audience. McWilliams laments that towns do not develop organically, but are "instantly created, synthetic communities of a strangely artificial world" (1946, 233). People move to Los Angeles to find utopia in the climate, lifestyle, and comfortable living. As such, towns are developed either for (White) residential use or as tourist attractions.

Yet this view itself obscures the existences of minority populations in the region. Minority populations similarly moved to Los Angeles in search of the American Dream; the difference is that they were (and are) not allowed a piece of this American paradise. Moreover, this inability to achieve paradise is reinforced through city administration and urban design. In Los Angeles, utopia and dystopia exist side by side (Davis, 1990). The ideal that the city aspires toward becomes real over time; the artifice becomes reified.

The Edenic metropolis is achievable for certain populations, but this paradise is predicated upon the repression of minority populations. Angeleno identity is expressed through the ability for a citizen to influence decisions affecting her life in the city; NIMBYism cannot be

practiced without such citizens' claims on their neighborhoods. But NIMBYism itself depends on the idea that certain neighborhoods should not be encroached upon by undesirable elements of society. There cannot be a safe neighborhood unless the criminal Other is confined within a dangerous one. Utopia and dystopia are mutually constitutive—one does not exist without the other.

Moving forward, then, it is necessary to reconsider the role of repression in city governance and how this repression has evolved over time. The difference in lived realities for minority populations (including the homeless population) in Los Angeles is not limited to residential segregation. The demonization of minority populations is integral to the development of the LAPD as well as the city itself. During the mid-20th century, the professionalization of the police force established both the criminality of Mexican-American youth as well as solidified the LAPD's position as the protector of "law-abiding, White, middle-class Americans who longed for security" (Escobar, 2003).

The LAPD positioned itself as ideologically opposed to the criminally inclined elements of society, which it defined to include racial minority groups (2003, 195). Escobar notes that after World War II, the LAPD "officially adopted sociological explanations for Mexican-American crime... and institutionalized it in the training and deployment of officers" (178). As such, beginning in the 1950s, the LAPD's goal and justification for its actions rested upon the repression of racial minorities.

By the 1990s, then, the violence and aggression of the LAPD toward racial minorities was well-institutionalized. The beating of Rodney King and subsequent Rodney King Uprising became national symbols of the city's repressive policing tactics as well as its newfound status as "America's most dangerous city" (Klein, 1997). Escobar notes that from the 1950s to the 1980s,

the police professionalism model made the LAPD the “most powerful institution in the city as well as the envy of other big city police departments” (Escobar, 2003). The self-regulatory nature of the LAPD gave it the reputation of being one of the best-run police departments in the United States, mainly because outside institutions were unable to publicly criticize it (2003, 197). For the same reason, Los Angeles itself was viewed very favorably by the American press “as the burgeoning Pacific Byzantium, a hub for Asian investments, a polyglot city of the future” (Klein, 1997).

Both the LAPD and NIMBYism lend to different ways in which minority populations experience life in the city, effectively creating two humanities, two modes of existence. Mexican-Americans during World War II attracted ire because their zoot suits rendered them visible to White sailors, sparking underlying racial animosities from local communities. Thus, in order to understand how minority populations live and understand life, we need to think about how repression functions in the contemporary age, especially in terms of their visibility to the powers-that-be.

### **DIALOGIC RELATIONSHIPS: UNDERSTANDING THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE**

Crucial to understanding the ways in which minority populations are repressed is the complicated relationship between private and public interests in urban governance. Up until the 1980s, this relationship could be understood as an interaction between private interests and public interests, both with separate goals that sometimes coincided. It is very clear that the development of the region was dictated by the interests of land developers, which were then imposed upon city administration.

Indeed, both McWilliams and Davis point to the ways in which early development of the city were clearly driven by private interests. In order to realize the “ultimate speculator’s dream,” the city would develop one of the most advanced infrastructure systems in the nation (Davis, 1990). In order to recover from the land bust of the 1880s, the city would establish the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce (McWilliams, 1946). The city would function as such, but its policies could be co-opted by these private interests. It is clear that land developers directed the development of the city.

Yet to assume that such private and public interests function separately oversimplifies their complicated interplay. While the designations of “public” and “private” are seemingly distinct entities, Los Angeles’s own development says otherwise. This relationship should not be understood as private interests sometimes co-opting public administration; rather, the two have been intertwined since the beginning. As mentioned above, the development of such an advanced infrastructure for the city was not done so for the wellbeing of its residents, but in order to increase marketability.

Similarly, the establishment of the Chamber of Commerce demonstrates the city’s longtime connectedness with private interests. The Chamber of Commerce not only came to be as a result of the fall of a privately-funded and developed land boom, but also facilitated Southern California tours for potential homebuyers and put on exhibitions at state fairs as a matter of official business. It also goes without saying that the city’s condoning of redlining policies and deed restrictions reinforces its privately-minded interests.<sup>6</sup> The actions of the city

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<sup>6</sup> In the early 1900s, deed restrictions mandated and prohibited homeowners from engaging in certain activities. Davis notes that while such restrictions also specified details on lot and home design, the overall goal was to maintain “social and racial homogeneity,” as dictated by community builders (Davis, 161).

thus force us to question what “public interest” in Los Angeles ultimately means, and perhaps whether or not a truly “public” interest has ever existed to begin with.

The nation-wide push toward conservatism and neoliberalism in the 1980s further complicates this dynamic. In this paper, neoliberalism refers to “an ideology as well as a form of governance and a driver of urban change” that developed prominence in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Quiroz-Becerra, 2013). Neoliberalism believes that “open, competitive, and unregulated markets, liberated from all forms of state interference, represent the optimal mechanism for economic development” (2013, 21).

By the time *City of Quartz* is published in 1990, this ideology, as governance, had become institutionalized in the actions of the city government. When Davis mentions how the city cut off virtually all traditional pedestrian paths to the Downtown, he is speaking of *redevelopment projects*. The construction of pseudo-public spaces is a result of larger neighborhood redevelopment projects, in which redevelopers take down existing buildings, possibly disrupting existing communities, and dictate what they believe the area should become and what kind of people they want in this new and improved neighborhood. Redevelopment projects seek to “modernize” existing neighborhoods that are deemed unsafe or having fallen behind by building new structures and cleaning up the streets. Persecution of the street person is therefore part and parcel of the redevelopment process itself; in order to (re)create the ideal neighborhood, undesirable elements must be obscured, if not removed.

Thus, private and public interests work in tandem to repress minority populations. It is not simply the case that the LAPD targets Mexican-Americans, and redevelopers remove pedestrian links. Rather, these two feed into each other in order to form a hegemonic reality that minority populations must live under. The city’s underfunding of public parks and playgrounds

reinforces the need for people to spend time in pseudo-public spaces, which in turn allows private security forces to dictate notions of belonging in such spaces.

This is further compounded by the LAPD's aggression toward street people and harassment of street vendors and homeless people, as well as private security forces that "protect" luxury developments from minority populations. The very existence of luxury development and pseudo-public spaces signals the increasing influence of private developers in determining which populations are considered acceptable.

This is especially complicated when considering the way in which public and private security forces work together (Davis, 1990). Davis notes that public police services act as "necessary supports" for private services, with private security forces performing many of the labor-intensive roles while public forces function behind technologically-advanced security macro-systems (1990, 251). As such, a multiplicity of factors come together to create an extremely repressive environment for specific people, leading to a "physical separation of two humanities" (234).

As public and private forces becoming increasingly intertwined in policing and urban design, it becomes increasingly difficult to disaggregate sources of power in Los Angeles. The dialogic relationship between public and private interests demonstrates the futility in attempting to locate sources of power or find some sort of origin to a phenomenon.

Davis attributes part of the power structure to the competition between Downtown and the Westside (101). He notes that the "sprawling character of the city's modern development" weakened the city's development of a single, centralized municipal Establishment (101). Because manufacturing was not confined to one single region, different enclave manufacturing

economies existed throughout the city (120). The sprawl of industry helped to decentralize economic and political power in Los Angeles.

This decentralized elite power structure was also complicated by the strong influence of homeowners' associations, which further decentralize and regionalize centers of power. City sprawl thus describes not only Los Angeles's geography, but also the city's power structure. For Davis, different modes of land speculation over time "have tended to determine the nature of Los Angeles's power structure" (105). Merchant building and home mortgaging helped to propel the power of the Westside, prompting the Downtown elite to seek out new ways to return to prominence.

The solution for the Downtown return to power came in the 1970s and 1980s, when leaders such as Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher began to promote neoliberalism on a global scale. Neoliberalism not only promotes a limited role for the state, but is necessarily a global project (Leitner, Sheppard, Sziarto, & Maringanti, 2006). Davis notes that the Downtown redevelopment project was accompanied by a meteoric rise in Asian (mainly Japanese) investment in the area (Davis, 1990). This led to a "complex combination of generational succession and foreign takeover," reconfiguring the traditional power structure (1990, 131).

As such, the power structure was no longer a competition between the Downtown and the Westside, but rather an intertwined web that was spurred on the neoliberal projects of redevelopment and international investment. Downtown Los Angeles was thus redeveloped to become the Central Business District (CBD), a hyperstructure that would eliminate middle-class contact with minority populations that use the street (230). One consequence of the CBD redevelopment was increased land scarcity, which turned space into a "luxury good affordable only to a shrinking minority of local residents" (129). Beyond traditional redlining policies and

homeowners' associations hiring private security forces to prevent the entrance of undesirable elements, redevelopment drives less visible forms of segregation.

### **NEOLIBERAL URBANISM: GOVERNANCE IN THE GLOBAL AGE**

Neoliberal ideology thus proves to be the defining characteristic of contemporary urban life in the City of Angels. Neoliberalism is necessarily a global project and operates within a larger global trend of neoliberal capitalism. Here, I understand neoliberal global capitalism as a global trend that prioritizes market outcomes and the privatization of goods and services.

The relationship between neoliberalism and urban governance (neoliberal urbanism) is characterized by targeted government intervention and regulation while simultaneously scaling back regulations of capital (Dunn, 2013; Quiroz-Becerra, 2013). Neoliberal urbanism is at the forefront of neoliberalization due to the unique qualities existent in city life (Leitner et. al, 2006). Because cities are the sites in which concentrated numbers of people live and work, and in which local interests hold much sway, they are ideal sites to implement new policies and measure public reactions (2006, 2).

Governmentality assumes a “particular form under neoliberalism” (3). As an economic model, neoliberalism follows “market-driven ‘truths’ and calculations,” which requires particular technologies of governance (Quiroz-Becerra, 2013). It specifically envisions the market as the internal regulator of the state—thus, the state loses its role as the external regulator of the market and must govern from a distance (Leitner et. al, 2006).

Neoliberal governmental technologies are therefore indirect; instead of directly regulating activity, it sets targets and monitors outcomes (2006, 3). Agencies are given autonomy to act, as long as they are held accountable to outcomes that are based upon auditing, targets, and rankings (4). The “ethos of government” shifts from bureaucracy to business: municipal bureaucracies

previously dedicated to social missions are increasingly replaced by “professionalized quasi-public agencies” that are instead dedicated to promoting economic development, privatizing urban service, and catalyzing competition among public agencies (4). Public policy decisions are thus driven by cost-benefit calculations based upon economic competition (4).

The neoliberal city is a global “entrepreneurial city” that is primarily focused on aggressive economic competition with other cities for investments, innovations, and creative classes (4). It is necessary to foreground the fact that neoliberalism emerged in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, partially as a response to the fall of Fordism (6). Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, as the US, UK, and Japan began the process of deindustrialization, state agencies began to feel fiscal pressures that made Fordism’s agendas unaffordable (Sassen, 1991; Leitner, 2006). Exacerbated by the 1973 global economic recession, states became more open to experimentation (Soja, 2014). As a result, international capital and investment became a top priority for nations’ economic development.

Moreover, as the core manufacturing countries deindustrialized, the Global South rapidly industrialized, connecting different countries through economic transactions and facilitating “rapid internationalization of the financial industry” (Sassen, 1991). The process of rapid deindustrialization and industrialization, increasing interconnectedness of global capital, decline of Fordism, and commitment to neoliberal economic policy during the 1980s characterize what Edward Soja terms the “New Economy” (Soja, 2014). Sassen notes that this New Economy changed the relationship between cities and the international economy (Sassen, 1991). Cities became key locations for finance and specialized service firms, which replaced manufacturing to become the leading global economic sectors (1991, 2).

Global capitalism is not all-determining, however (Ong, 2010). The influx of overseas investment and global industry manifests differently depending on local context (2010, xx). In the New Economy, as global production and consumption become increasingly intertwined, so do global capital and urban governance (xx). Cities must evolve and adapt to changes in the global economic structure, which then affects the way that capitalism operates within localized contexts (xx).

Ong contends that everyday experiences are shaped by dominant meanings and practices that are informed by “a specific distribution of political and economic forces” (3). In other words, the way people experience reality is dictated by their socioeconomic status, which itself is determined by the specific way in which global capitalism has affected their localized context. For Ong, capitalism is hegemonic.

The treatment of street vendors in urban settings exemplifies the complicated relationship between the New Economy and a hegemonic capitalist way of life. For New York City, the 1973 economic recession was exacerbated by its own fiscal crisis in 1975. In an effort to save the city from fiscal ruin, city administration sought to rebrand its image as the Global City, a beacon of modernism unmoored by the vices of the Old World (Dunn, 2013). The Global City would become a modern cosmopolitan mecca of finance and tourism as a means to attract investors. Immigrant-origin street vendors, seen as dirty and inextricably tied to their home countries, did not fit into this vision of New York City.

As a result, New York City imposed a permit cap for vendors in an effort to curtail such highly visible vending activity on the street (Dunn, 2014). The dirty Old World immigrant has no idea what the clean, designer city should look like; as a result, visibility of the poor on city streets was antithetical to and undesirable for the Global City. Indeed, the control of public space

is central to the goal and function of neoliberalism (Low & Smith, 2006). The experience of vendors on the street—and by extension, their experience of American city life—is thus filtered through their experiences of city administration making it difficult to secure a living.

Interestingly, while both New York City and Los Angeles have embraced the notion of the Global City and adopted neoliberal urbanism as governing ideologies, the foundational myth of Los Angeles sets the city apart. Because the city myth of Los Angeles is predicated upon the notion of the quintessential American metropolis of the future, sitting on the edge of the Western frontier, it is uniquely situated to fit into the mold of the modern Global City. It is more difficult for New York City to fully embrace the notion of a clean city street due to its history as a pedestrian-friendly city, as reflected by its commitment to maintaining a well-functioning and easily-accessible public transportation system.

The notion of the bustling city street is central to the idea of New York City, *especially* due to its history as an immigrant hub. From the beginning, Los Angeles, partially due to the nature of its urban sprawl, was built to separate its people. From the extensive freeway system (itself exemplifying the modern American metropolis during the 1950s) that keeps people in their cars to redlining and zoning policies preventing the mixing of races in residential areas, the infrastructure and central notion of Los Angeles has been to keep people separated, *despite (and due to)* its large immigrant population.

### **PART 3: AIN'T NO CITY QUITE LIKE MINE**

Hittin' corners, thuggin' with the blower, barrel louder than a motor  
Keep the engine runnin' when a n\*\*\*\* run up on ya  
Another day in sunny California  
The FEDs takin' pictures and they tappin' Motorolas  
Everybody snitchin', gotta live with paranoia

Vince Staples, "3230"

Understanding how neoliberal ideology affects the public street in the City of Angels requires understanding the history of public space in the city. In the 1940s and 1950s, federal housing policy allowed private interests to co-opt the public housing program and turn former slums into redevelopment projects. Following this, the fall of Fordism in the late 1960s, along with the 1973 Global Economic Recession, led to the adoption of a neoliberal agenda that sought to mold Los Angeles into a modern Global City. As we shall see below, almost as if it were destiny, the destruction of public housing during the 1940s paved the way for land developers to take control of the public street in the 1980s.

#### **SOCIALISTS AND SOCIAL CANCER: THE DESTRUCTION OF PUBLIC HOUSING**

It goes without saying that the notion of a modern city plays right into Los Angeles's wheelhouse. Redevelopment of the Downtown into the Central Business District, in particular, exemplifies the city's commitment to modernity. Don Parson contends that Los Angeles began its process of urban redevelopment with the Housing Act of 1937, which mandated that one unit of public housing had to be built for every unit of substandard housing demolished (Parson, 2005).

Public housing and slum clearance were thus mandated to be linked, one-for-one. Los Angeles officially instituted this policy in 1941, and the push for slum-clearance thus became a

goal for the city (2005, 137). By 1945, the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) was established, endowed with the rights to make plans, hold hearings, conduct investigations, and acquire and demolish sites for redevelopment (139).

The city's push toward redevelopment was fueled by notions of "blight" and "slums" (140). "Slums" were the object of the public housing program, and referred to areas of substandard housing and their accompanying social maladies (140). "Blight" was the object of urban redevelopment, and referred different types of land use, ranging from industrial to residential, that were not functioning economically at their highest and best level (140). The CRA defined blight to include "structures with defective design, deterioration, dilapidation, or a shifting use; areas of economic dislocation due to faulty planning; areas with a depreciated tax base; and areas with improper utilization of land" (140). Parson notes that all slums were blighted, but not all blighted areas were slums (140).

Blight was seen as a "social cancer" that could not be simply fixed with public housing (140). Because the CRA defined blight to encompass economic underperformance, merely replacing slums for public housing would not prove sufficient to fix the city. Cancer spreads; a new public housing unit is a "small island in a sea... bound to be engulfed and to revert quickly to blight" (140). As a result, the 1948 annual report of the California Housing Authority attempted to present public housing as a component of redevelopment (141).

Similarly, then-mayor Fletcher Bowron understood public housing and urban redevelopment as entirely different solutions for the city's problems (144). Public housing would replace old dilapidated buildings, but urban redevelopment would create a "healthy, safe, wholesome environment... essential for the development of good citizens" (144). For Fletcher, "good neighborhoods" would lead to "good citizenship." (144). Blight could only be fixed

through urban redevelopment; it would not only cure the city of social ills and bad influences, but also make better citizens (144). Thus, similar to the LAPD's view of Mexican-Americans as biologically-inclined for crime, notions of blight reinforced the notion that Black and Latina peoples lived in blighted neighborhoods that created bad citizens. This type of discourse propagated by the CHA and the mayor's office thus began to undermine the need for public housing.

At the same time, anti-Communist sentiments of the 1950s helped to paint public housing as un-American (103). In December 1949, the CHA entered a preliminary loan contract with federal authorities to look into seventy-three possible locations for the building of 10,000 public housing units (104). The Los Angeles City Council, containing an anti-public housing majority, publicly denounced the housing contract (106). Though Bowron and the CHA were proponents of urban redevelopment, they also supported the federal contract, with Bowron stating that though he would prefer privately-funded housing, it would be "structurally impossible" to build low-income housing without federal subsidies (110).

Regardless, the City Council was pitted in an ideological war against Bowron and the CHA. In 1952, City Council unanimously approved a motion to have the CHA investigated by the House of Un-American Activities (119). Ultimately, the painting of public housing and all public housing proponents as Communist and socialist polarized the Los Angeles electorate, and Bowron lost the 1953 mayoral election to Norris Poulson. Poulson would go on to replace five CHA commissioners and cut 5,649 housing units from the original federal contract (135). The war waged by City Council had successfully made public housing inherently un-American, and Los Angeles would never turn to it again.

The decline of public housing cleared the way for urban redevelopment to be introduced into federal policy (141). The Housing Act of 1949 de-coupled slum clearance and public housing, and cleared land could now be used for private housing or commercial and industrial uses (141). The Housing Act of 1954 then expanded the role of commercial over residential land uses in urban renewal areas (146). Parson notes that the 1954 Housing Act changed the name “urban redevelopment” to “urban renewal,” cementing its role in defining “the space of modern Los Angeles” (147). Backed by local politicians and federal legislation, urban renewal areas would now be slotted for commercial use instead of public housing (147).

### **REMAKING THE CITY: SITUATING THE GLOBAL METROPOLIS**

The rise of urban renewal in federal policy thus coincided with the push toward neoliberal urban policy. Edward Soja argues that the Watts Uprising of 1965 marked the end of Fordism, signaling that the postwar economic boom had come to an end (Soja, 2014). Urban governments would have to come up with new ways to stimulate economic activity (2014, 27).

Soja contends that urban governments turned to *crisis-generated urban restructuring* as a solution (27). In this paper, crisis-generated urban restructuring refers to the ways that global neoliberal ideologies and economic forces affected and shaped urban economic policy in the 1970s and 1980s, as a response to the fall of Fordism and social upheaval of the 1960s.

Economic restructuring during the 1970s almost exclusively manifested as deindustrialization across the United States, which was considered necessary to handle the social upheavals of the 1960s as well as the 1973 global economic recession (31). As a result, however, formerly well-paying manufacturing jobs shifted toward tertiary or service activities (31). Furthered by the globalization of capital in the 1980s, jobs and income have become increasingly

polarized, ushering people either into high finance and specialized service firms or into fast food chains (31).

In Los Angeles, however, economic restructuring took a different form (31). Soja specifically points to the fact that although Los Angeles was never in the Frostbelt, it had always been a large industrial metropolis (31). In the 1980s, the city hosted the “largest concentration of manufacturing employment in the United States” (34). Although it did experience some deindustrialization in the 1970s, it also experienced what Soja refers to as “reindustrialization” (34).

Though Fordist industries and factories shuttered in traditional manufacturing neighborhoods, new kinds of post-Fordist and information-based industries rose in suburban municipalities, thus reindustrializing Los Angeles (35). Soja notes that “deindustrialization and reindustrialization were occurring simultaneously and with almost equal force in LA” (41). However, because reindustrialization occurred under neoliberal-minded economic restructuring, business owners focused on cutting costs by cutting wages; as a result, the majority of these jobs paid low wages, had few (if any) benefits, and were typically nonunionized (41).

Unsurprisingly, immigrant labor plays a key role in upholding the reindustrialization process in Los Angeles (49). From garment factories to hotel services, the New Economy is held up through cheap and often undocumented immigrant labor (49). Consequently, the income gap between those working in high finance and those working in restaurant services increasingly widened (49). Beyond other complications that result from increased income polarity, one necessary consequence is that income dictates place of residence.

Segregation in the 1980s is therefore characterized by socioeconomic class instead of ethnic differences (46). Indeed, Soja notes that ethnic segregation had actually decreased in the

1980s, reflecting the role of economic restructuring as the dominant policy shaping contemporary Los Angeles (147). In the era of late capitalism, residential segregation tells one part of the story of how the underclass lives in Los Angeles. The ways in which minority populations experience their everyday lives is another.

For Soja, one of the most important effects of the New Economy, as it manifested in Los Angeles, is its function as a *spatial fix* (51). This draws from David Harvey's notion of a spatial fix, in which an "almost habitual effort by capitalist interests, usually assisted by the state, [shapes] material geographies to suit their needs, especially and most urgently in times of crisis" (51). Soja's spatial fix focuses on the ways in which economic restructuring has impacted Los Angeles after the 1970s. For Soja, capitalist interests change over time and are challenged during periods of crisis. (51). As a result, the existing geography and built environment become outdated and incompatible with these interests (51). A spatial fix occurs when a new and different geography is created to meet the needs of capital (51).

Thus, it is imperative to remember the multiple and constitutive processes that have affected the process of economic restructuring in the 1960s and 1970s, and how this economic policy has then affected the ways minority groups began to be policed in 1980s Los Angeles. Understanding economic restructuring requires recognizing the neoliberal push toward the globalization of capital and the desire for a Global City to solicit and obtain foreign capital. As economic restructuring became the dominant form in which deindustrializing cities attempted to salvage their local economies, it took the form of *urban* restructuring in Los Angeles. Foreign capital proved integral in redevelopment projects that were bolstered by the policy of urban renewal.

Neoliberal urbanism thus completely blurs the distinction between public and private. It is the Los Angeles city government that promotes (and continually seeks) an idealized modern metropolis in order to secure foreign investment. The promotion of the city is not only based upon the removal of street people and undesirable elements, but also reinforces its enacting.

Moving forward, I use the spatial fix framework to discuss how crisis-generated economic restructuring has shaped the Downtown, Cadillac-Corning, and Palos Verdes, as well as how it affects the different experiences of communities in each area.

### **TRANSFORMING THE DOWNTOWN**

The Downtown was redeveloped into the Central Business District in the late 1970s. In many ways, the CBD represents the neoliberal push toward urban governance at its zenith. By the late 1980s, Downtown had extended along Wilshire Boulevard to encompass Beverly Hills, Century City, and Westwood (49). It boasted an “almost unbroken ribbon of office development [with] nearly fifty major corporate headquarters and... one-third of the region’s hundred million square feet of high rise office space” (49). Soja notes that most of this development resulted from an influx of Japanese, Canadian, and British capital (49).

The processes of deindustrialization and reindustrialization have also contributed to a demographic change in the CBD, as well as Los Angeles at large. Deindustrialization spurred mass suburbanization for Whites as well as the immigrant working class (196). As traditional manufacturing sites have shuttered, new industrial zones further from the CBD have developed (196). Places such as Irvine in Orange County and Simi Valley near Ventura County have become new sites for high technology production (146). Even the movie and television industry has moved from Hollywood to Burbank, Culver City, and Santa Monica (145).

The diffusion of production drew immigrant populations to outer cities in search of work (196). Soja notes, however, that not all reindustrialization in the outer cities is equal (152). While the success of ethnic enclaves such as Monterey Park in the San Gabriel Valley allow its residents to live and work in the same city, those in less successful ethnic enclaves still experience long commutes to get to work (151). 15-17% of people living in the region travel two hours or more for work every day (151).

The out-migration of immigrant groups has allowed for population changes in the CBD. Young urban professionals (yuppies), themselves reflective of the neoliberal thought of the 1980s, now populate the inner city (159). Unlike their Fordist parents, yuppies live in downtown areas instead of suburbs (159). Importantly, yuppies are “aggressive infighters in the public domain of planning and urban policy” (159). Soja therefore views yuppies as “the primary agents of gentrification” who transform the landscape in order to maintain their lifestyles and living spaces (159).

Such demographic changes are further complicated by a large influx of new immigrants into the urban core (160). Soja notes that this new influx of immigrants differs from those of the past, such as immigrant groups who have formed ethnic enclaves in the outer cities, due to increasing economic polarization brought about by the New Economy (160). These newer immigrants are immediately shuttled into the expanding underclass as the middle class continues to shrink (160).

The effects of income polarization are therefore most glaringly seen in the CBD due to the juxtaposition of the lifestyles and influence between yuppies and the immigrant underclass. As the primary agents of gentrification, yuppies drive the direction of economic development in the CBD. They shape which old storefronts become coffee shops, movie theaters, and trendy

boutiques (159). As such, yuppies are engaged in a reciprocal relationship with redevelopment projects in Los Angeles.

Redevelopers remake the downtown in order to attract this professionalized clientele, who in turn also drives economic development that reinforces developers' vision. Both aspire toward the designer Downtown, through both large-scale development (macro) as well as lifestyle preferences (micro). The very landscape of the CBD is thus transformed by the demographic changes caused by the decline of Fordism and rise of neoliberalism.

Thus, Davis's "Citadel" not only shuts out unwanted populations from entering the urban core, but also renders invisible the new underclass within its walls. The everyday experiences of these old and new immigrant groups are shaped by private and public policing, as well as urban policy. While yuppies who now populate the Downtown dictate the policy affecting the neighborhood, minority groups are told, in various ways, that they do not belong in the CBD—and therefore, the modern Los Angeles.

Modernity takes on a new meaning under the guise of neoliberal international competition between Global Cities. Modernity necessitates getting rid of Old World influences; the Global City's Downtown should function as a continuous stream of middle class work and entertainment. The placement of these groups within the neoliberal framework shapes their everyday realities. Neoliberalism not only affects how the city government seeks to present itself in its best light in order to attract investors; it also brings about private investment that shapes the way the Downtown views "dirty street people" as well as the existence of yuppies. The result is that minority populations experience life through the hegemony of neoliberalism.

## **STREET PEOPLE OF THE CBD**

As minority populations become seen as “street people” by the police and investors, they are subject to various forms of street-level repression. This type of repression is not obviously seen but is ubiquitous in the ways it shapes the experiences of everyday life. It is therefore no surprise that so much of *City of Quartz* focuses on street-level repression that happens in the everyday.

Davis directs much of his attention to the notion of fortress cities, which “merge urban design, architecture, and the police apparatus into a single, comprehensive security effort” (Davis, 1990). Inequality in Los Angeles is maintained through a security apparatus that is expressed through everyday interactions. The boundaries experienced by minority populations occur in “upscale pseudo-public spaces” that are “full of invisible signs warning off the underclass ‘Other’” (1990, 226).

Places such as malls and office spaces signal to minority populations that they do not belong—and if they try to invade these spaces, then they will be policed (226). Malls are private spaces that employ private security forces to regulate mall-going behavior. As such, “mall cops” have wide discretion in determining whom does or does not belong in this private space.

Similarly, office buildings regularly employ private security forces to regulate access to the space. What is interesting about office buildings is that many actually contain *public* parks on their premises, often on exposed rooftops. However, although these parks are supposedly open to the public, the only people who truly have access to them are those deemed acceptable by private security forces.

For Davis, the rise in pseudo-public spaces coincides with the destruction of accessible public space (226). Central to this destruction is the demonization of the street itself as the city

increasingly hands over control of the street to redevelopers (226). Free beaches, luxurious parks, and “cruising strips” of the past have been replaced by luxury malls, arts centers, and gourmet strips (227). Parks are decaying and becoming “temporary receptacles for the homeless” while beaches become more segregated (227). As the middle class spends more and more time in luxury malls, the underclass is left on the under-funded and decaying street (227).

The “street person” is therefore something to be feared, exemplifying the threat to middle class safety (226). The solution of developers has been to limit interaction between the middle class and the street (234). Parking structures, containing beautifully landscaped micro-parks, allow white-collar workers to walk directly to and from the office and shopping malls without interruption and minimizing exposure to the street (234). The Downtown itself becomes a fortress “programmed to ensure a seamless continuum of middle-class work, consumption, and recreation” (231).

Importantly, the fortressing of the Downtown involves literally cutting off access for minority populations by removing traditional pedestrian paths in the area (230). As a result, the design of the Downtown literally discourages walking on the street. Anyone not walking to or from the parking garage therefore becomes an undesirable anomaly in the area. It is not only that middle-class safety exists inside fortified buildings, but also that the street itself becomes a demonized space, and anyone who regularly spends time on the street is deemed dangerous.

The destruction of the public street is reinforced by the fact that Downtown redevelopers “viewed property values... as irreversibly eroded by the area’s very centrality to public transport, and especially by its heavy use by Black and Mexican poor (230). Not only are “street people” antithetical to middle-class safety, but the very presence of Black and Mexican people also had to be eradicated. Thus, the loitering street person is not allowed to exist: they must either deal

with private security forces in pseudo-public spaces or on the public street with a police department that has a history of associating Black and Mexican populations with criminality.

Perhaps the most glaring example of repression is Los Angeles's treatment of its homeless population. The city government "contains" a large homeless population within a ten-block radius known as Skid Row (232). This is achieved through police harassment as well as urban design (233). Whenever a homeless person tries to occupy space outside of Skid Row, she is met with public benches designed uncomfortably so as to deter sleeping, a deliberate lack of public toilets, outdoor sprinklers "programmed to drench unsuspecting sleepers at random times during the night" (233). In addition to officially sanctioned police harassment, the homeless population is forced to stay on Skid Row as a result of minute everyday deterrents enacted through urban design. Davis notes that this policy has ironically transformed Skid Row into "probably the most dangerous ten square blocks in the world" (233).

Along with the homeless population, street vendors have also become demonized as street people. Street vending became popularized in the city during the 1980s with increased immigration of people from Mexico, Guatemala, and El Salvador (Bhimji, 2010). During this time, street vending was a misdemeanor offense, and could lead to fines up to \$1000 and imprisonment for 180 days (2010, 466). Because vendors necessarily work on the street, engaging in what was (and in many cases, still is) considered illegal activity, they exemplify the illegality and criminality associated with minority populations. It is not surprising that street vendors, who primarily came from Latin American countries, are deemed criminal.

Moreover, because vendors work on the public street, they were "constantly harassed, ticketed, [and] arrested" (466). Latina women in particular were the objects of police harassment and violence (466). One woman recalls being punched in the chest by LAPD officers, while

another was “called a ‘shit’ because she [did] not speak English” (466). Latina street vendors were thus affected by both the association of the Mexican-American with criminality and the demonization of the street person. These were further exacerbated by xenophobic sentiments that call back to the notion of a Temporary Mexican who is therefore unfit and undeserving of American residence.

On the other side of the coin, luxury developments have become “fortress cities,” in which it is “simply impossible for ordinary citizens to invade the ‘cities’... without an invitation from a resident” (Davis, 1990). The closing of parks on weekends, resident-only parking restrictions, and the use of security fences “exclude Latina and Asian families from adjacent communities” from coming into luxury developments (1990, 246). Most importantly, in true Los Angeles form, many communities now employ private security forces to police and restrict outsiders (248).

The aggregate result of this type of regulatory activity in Los Angeles, whether it is how private parking garages are designed, the actions of private security forces, or the city’s deliberate elimination of public toilets is that certain people are not only policed in where they are allowed to go, but in their very behavior. Restricting the movement of a person conditions not only where her body physically goes, but also her own notions of belonging. Ultimately, the city is letting minority populations know that they do not belong.

### **GANG INJUNCTIONS: CONTROLLING YOUTH OF COLOR**

Elsewhere, repression of the street person took on new forms. Cadillac-Corning, located in West Los Angeles, set the template for gang injunctions in Los Angeles (Muñiz, 2015). Gang injunctions are “civil lawsuits against neighborhoods based on the claim that gang behavior is a nuisance to nongang-involved residents” (2015, 33).

Injunctions are targeted against youth in an effort to curb “street gang behavior” (33). The growing fear of street gangs and crack cocaine in the 1980s led to a civil against the Los Angeles Crips, establishing the first gang injunction in Southern California (33). Perhaps one of the most infamous street gangs in the nation, the Crips were mainly comprised of Black and Latina youth. As such, young people of color are particularly vulnerable to targeting by the police.

Civil gang injunctions are court orders that criminalize many behaviors that would otherwise not be considered criminal activities (Caldwell, 2010). Wearing gang paraphernalia in traditional Crips territory, for example, would constitute grounds for the LAPD to charge that an individual be added to a gang injunction. Not every individual listed on an injunction is necessarily gang-affiliated. Individuals in contact with alleged gang members can be added to an injunction if a certain prosecutor decides to do so (Muñiz, 2015). Beyond naming 10 to 30 specific names on an injunction, prosecutors can list hundreds of Jane and John Doe’s who can be identified at a later time (2015, 34). Importantly, because gang injunctions are civil orders, individuals listed are not entitled to public defenders if they want to appeal the order (34).

Individuals listed on the injunction as gang members are therefore subject to certain rules governing their everyday behavior (Caldwell, 2010). They cannot engage in otherwise normal and legal behavior, such as congregating in groups of two or more, standing in public for more than five minutes, making gang gestures, or communicating with other alleged gang members listed in the injunction (Muñiz, 2015). If alleged gang members are seen engaging in these activities, they are subject to arrest.

Moreover, injunctions function as restraining orders because they also confine alleged gang members to specific geographic areas. Because the geographic area of an injunction can

range from one neighborhood block to several square miles, entire populations of people are unwittingly subject to a rigid system of behavioral rules that are themselves dependent upon wide police discretion.

Current police tactics are not designed to rid the streets of drugs or gangs, but rather to “take people off the street” (Hangartner, 1994). Matthew Werdegar asserts that there are two provisions that lie at the heart of every gang injunction: restrictions on public association with other gang members, and restrictions against annoying or harassing third parties (Werdegar, 1999). Beyond the obvious vagueness of “associating” with gang members, the notion of “annoying or harassing” third parties is absurdly broad. Werdegar notes that entire notion is premised upon an attempt to curtail “public nuisances” to the necessarily White community (1999, 422).

Similarly, Ana Muñiz asserts that the implementation of the first gang injunction in Cadillac-Corning was informed by White apprehension (Muñiz, 2015). She asserts that injunctions are “meticulously designed to control the movement of Black [and Latina] youth by criminalizing activities and behavior that is unremarkable and legal in other jurisdictions” (2015, 35). As otherwise normal behavior in public space becomes stigmatized and deemed as deviant, youth of color are further relegated away from the street. Moreover, as redevelopment projects increasingly take over neighborhoods in the city and regulate street behavior, the street becomes further stigmatized not only as a place where the middle class should be, but also as a breeding ground for gang activity.

As such, what a “public nuisance” can mean differs in different neighborhoods. The public nuisance doctrine is premised upon a centuries-old common law practice, allowing wide police discretion in determining which behaviors are nuisances, and which populations engage in

such behavior (Werdegar, 1999). Given the LAPD's history of systematic discrimination against the Black and Latina populations of the city, it is not surprising that these groups are much more likely to be stopped and accused of gang activity.<sup>7</sup>

More importantly, however, the public nuisance doctrine is not only reflective of the attempt of the institutionalized police department to control minority populations—public nuisance is characterized by nuisance to the *community*. Thus, local politics and homeowners' associations have undue influence over what “nuisance” can mean.

Muñiz asserts that the Crips injunction came about as a result of White and middle-class anxieties due to the proximity of Cadillac-Corning to wealthier neighborhoods (Muñiz, 2015). The primarily working-class Black and Latina-occupied Cadillac-Corning is surrounded by middle- and upper-class White Jewish neighborhoods (2015, 42). Since the 1970s, the police, the City Attorney's Office, organized business owners, and homeowners associations in bordering neighborhoods have tried to exert influence on the neighborhood (13). Beyond gang injunctions, Cadillac-Corning was also a site for the SARA (Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment) policing model, which brought officers together with neighborhood prosecutors, landlords, and community groups to fight “quality of life” offenses and nuisances on the street (14).

## **PARADISE IN PALOS VERDES**

The public nuisance doctrine also extends to wealthier gated communities. Soja asserts that the “privatopian paradise” of Palos Verdes is perhaps the world's “largest concentration of [gated communities] aggressively acting as private residential governments to prevent incursions of the poorer classes” (Soja, 2014). Comprised of four geographically interwoven cities, the

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<sup>7</sup> I should note here that beginning in the 2010s, injunctions have begun to out of favor in Los Angeles. In December 2017, thousands of alleged gang members received letters from the city attorney informing them that they have been removed from injunctions (Queally, 2017).

Palos Verdes privatopolis includes Rolling Hills, Rolling Hills Estates, Palos Verdes Estates, and Rancho Palos Verdes, each exhibiting the intensity with which homeowners' associations and private citizens operate (2014, 156).

Rolling Hills, in particular, exemplifies the private nature of such gated communities. Soja notes that the Rolling Hills Gatehouse, now acting as the main entrance to the community, once functioned as city hall and community center in the neighborhood for thirty years (155). The gatehouse, as the literal gatekeeper of the neighborhood, thus dictated matters of everyday life for residents, which included limiting entrance for non-residents. Moreover, residents can put up signs claiming the beaches are for "locals only" and set up surveillance cameras to make sure their streets are free from intruders.

Interestingly, Rolling Hills contains no public infrastructure, traffic lights, or city-owned roads, sewers, and services (156). At the same time, the Rolling Hills Community Association, a private organization acting as a second layer of government, controls access to the city, monitors architectural design, and maintains the "lifestyle" of the community (156). As such, these types of private organizations effectively functioning as public agencies dictate what life looks like in these communities while simultaneously shrugging off responsibility for providing public services.

As mentioned above, certain Latina and Asian populations are excluded from entering gated communities through a variety of means. Minority populations cause a nuisance because they do not *belong*. Werdegar asserts that the public nuisance doctrine requires the "community's right to security and protection must be reconciled with the individual's right to expressive and associative freedom" (Werdegar, 1999). As pseudo-public organizations such as the Rolling Hills Community Association continue to monitor the quality of life in specific neighborhoods,

the line between public and private becomes blurred. And perhaps more telling is that the Los Angeles City Council and city administration's willingness to allow this type of co-optation of public regulation is revealed.

As a result, the everyday lived experiences of minority populations in Los Angeles are conditioned by a myriad of rules and regulations. Their very understandings of the world, and the ways in which their physical bodies inhabit the city, are necessarily framed through such experiences. For Mexican youth today, regular confrontations with the LAPD may simply be a fact of everyday life due to the culmination of a history of oppression by redevelopers, homeowners' associations, the Los Angeles city government, and police department.

The mutually constitutive relationship between the city government and redevelopers has an effect on nearly every aspect of the lives of Los Angeles residents. Because minute everyday activities are necessarily conditioned by neoliberal forms of urban governance, life in Los Angeles is controlled by neoliberalism. The ideology creates a hegemonic way of life, particularly for minority populations.

## CONCLUSION

Ultimately, governing ideals such as the public nuisance doctrine not only indicate to minority populations that they do not belong in the modern city, but also manifest in policies designed to render such populations invisible and contained within prescribed geographical limits. Street vendors, homeless populations, and minority youth are particularly vulnerable to the rules and regulations implemented by both public and private entities.

The twin policies of containment and concealment therefore function, more than adequately, to control minority populations deemed undesirable, or unfit, for the modern city. The homeless population is contained within Skid Row not through an official policy banning the homeless to venture beyond its borders, but rather due to clever urban design and police harassment.

As gated communities close their parks, parking spaces, and literal gates, people are contained to areas beyond middle- and upper-class residential neighborhoods. Likewise, as they are excluded from pseudo-public spaces such as shopping malls and entertainment centers, minority populations are further pushed to other spaces. However, because the street itself is also off limits (as individuals can be added to gang injunctions for congregating on the street in groups of two or more), there seems to be nowhere for people to go.

Such policies of containment also reinforce the agenda of concealment. Beyond cutting off access for Black folk, the removal of pedestrian links to the CBD also facilitates the visual concealment of minority populations to white collar workers in the area. Moreover, as low-wage immigrant workers are increasingly relegated to periphery cities, their commutes to work are also visually concealed. While white collar workers travel by car, going directly from private parking structures to privately-guarded office buildings, many low-wage workers travel by bus for

upwards of two hours each way. Los Angeles's extensive freeway system is itself designed to minimize the possibility of interaction.

The physical concealment of minority populations is mirrored in the abstract erasure of the city's Mexican past. Not unlike the perception against zoot suits, many of the "violations" of gang injunctions are pointed at physical attributes of Black and Mexican youth. Individuals can be charged on the basis of wearing certain colors or hairstyles, performing hand signals, or even being seen by police for speaking with alleged gang members. Just as zoot suits provided a visual heuristic function for the LAPD to institutionalize its discrimination against Mexican youth, the demonization of the street person provides a justification for the oppression of minority populations.

The contemporary city myth of Los Angeles is informed by these interactions. It is simultaneously the matter of a city adapting to a global post-Fordist economy as well as the effects of this transition on the lives of minority populations in the area. The city myth, in its founding, depended upon the erasure of the region's Mexican past in order to create a blank slate for Anglo co-optation.

This allowed land developers to advertise the region as paradise and develop certain infrastructures to support this vision. Localized powers such as homeowners' associations and the LAPD have thus been able to control minority populations in the name of protecting the paradise. Redlining policies preventing ethnic minorities from purchasing properties in certain neighborhoods and the police department's understanding of Mexican-Americans as inherently criminally-inclined both demonstrate the notion that minority populations are undesirable elements within the grand scheme of the City of Angels.

With the introduction of neoliberal urbanism beginning in the 1970s, forms of repression became further institutionalized. The modern paradise of Los Angeles was no longer a blank slate—rather, it relied upon previously-established notions of White and middle-class safety and comfort. Increasingly, minority populations are considered incompatible with the Global City. Containment and concealment are therefore not designed to remedy racial and socioeconomic disparities so as to decrease residential segregation or police profiling, but simply to visually put aside entire populations.

The contemporary city myth of Los Angeles is therefore dependent upon the repression of minority populations to realize its neoliberal aspirations. The destruction of the city street is inherently tied to the ways in which minority populations are persecuted by the LAPD and redevelopers for being “street people.” Unlike New York City, Modern Los Angeles absolutely demands that its streets be clear. It is unfortunate that achieving this goal requires sacrificing so many of its people.

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