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In Pursuit of A Double-Edged Sword: The Politics of Racial Liberalism and Racial
Triangulation in Seattle, 1940-1975

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

in

Ethnic Studies

by

Su-Shuan Chen

Committee in charge:

      Professor Kirstie Dorr, Co-Chair
      Professor Natalia Molina, Co-Chair
      Professor Luis Alvarez
      Professor Curtis Marez
      Professor Shelley Streeby

2017

The Dissertation of Su-Shuan Chen is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form

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Co-Chair

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Co-Chair

University of California, San Diego

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# VITA

2002          Bachelor of Arts, Asian Studies, Pomona College

2010          Masters of Arts, Ethnic Studies, University of California, San Diego

2009 – 2012     Teaching Assistant, Making of the Modern World Writing Program, University of California, San Diego

2012          Teaching Assistant, Department of Ethnic Studies, University of California, San Diego

2012 (Summer)   Lecturer, Department of Ethnic Studies, University of California, San Diego

2012 (Fall)      Graduate Student Researcher, Department of Ethnic Studies, University of California, San Diego

2013 (Winter)    Lecturer, Department of Ethnic Studies, University of California, San Diego

2013 (Spring)    Teaching Assistant, Department of Ethnic Studies, University of California, San Diego

2013-2014      Teaching Assistant, Making of the Modern World Writing Program, University of California, San Diego

2014 – Present   Assistant Professor, Long Beach City College

2017          Doctor of Philosophy, Ethnic Studies, University of California, San Diego

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION


In Pursuit of A Double-Edged Sword: The Politics of Racial Liberalism and Racial
Triangulation in Seattle, 1940-1975


by


Su-Shuan Chen


Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnic Studies


University of California, San Diego, 2017


Professor Kirstie Dorr, Co-Chair
Professor Natalia Molina, Co-Chair


"In Pursuit of A Double-Edged Sword: The Politics of Racial Liberalism and Racial

Triangulation in Seattle, 1940-1975" examines the historical constructions of racial

liberalism in Seattle and analyzes their impact on the sociopolitical standing of the city's

Asian Americans and African Americans, its two largest nonwhite communities. Between 1940 and 1975, programs and accomplishments in the area of racial politics reinforced a widespread notion that Seattle, a city amenable to liberal policies and social experimentation, had few racial problems. While many major cities experienced outbreaks of racial violence and witnessed development of expansive ghettoes during this period, Seattle was never site to any race riots, nor did it have any ghettoes comparable in size or deterioration to those that would capture the national spotlight in the 1960s. Bolstering perceptions of Seattle as a paragon of race relations were a series of prominent undertaking by city officials and residents that sought to promote core tenets of racial liberalism--such as racial integration, multiculturalism, and cosmopolitanism—as well as allocate unprecedented levels of civic resources and government assistance funds to nonwhite populations. Using four such projects as case studies, I explore the implications that Seattle's brand of racial liberalism bore for national constructions of racial hierarchies and white privilege during the height of U.S. liberal politics. Throughout my analyses, I will demonstrate that racial liberalism was a double-edged sword for Seattle's nonwhite populations. Even though Asian Americans and African Americans gained unprecedented access to socioeconomic mobility and governmental resources, a critical examination of Seattle's racial liberalist projects reveals that socioeconomic gains were very limited and were frequently circumscribed by political devices that served to reinforce white privilege and racial triangulation of the city's Asian Americans and African Americans. In the end, racial liberalism and racial triangulation served to position the city's Asian Americans and African Americans against one another in competition for resources while still allocating the lion's share to white populations. Such developments

in a city that labeled itself to be a paragon of racial liberalism is thus highly instructive of

how comparable projects functioned on a national scale.

# Introduction

In its December 12, 1977 issue, *Time* magazine dedicated its cover story to Dixy Lee Ray, the first woman to serve as governor of Washington State. Titled "Dixy Rocks the Northwest," the article charted the improbable rise of Ray, an unorthodox, nature-loving, Ph.D.-holding politician. Forming the backdrop to Ray's remarkable tale was the narrative of the Pacific Northwest region emerging as a national economic powerhouse, anchored by its two major cities of Seattle and Portland. In contrast to national images of major metropolitan centers as polluted, overcrowded, and crime-ridden spaces, the Pacific Northwest's economic ascendancy took place in a natural geographic setting that was characterized by scenic cities and happy residents. The impression conveyed by *Time* magazine was that residents of the Pacific Northwest were a fortunate constituency, blessed by picturesque settings, abundant natural resources, favorable living conditions, and harmonious relationships. In describing cities in the Pacific Northwest, the article stated:

> Even the city dwellers of the Northwest live close to the land, their concerns and dreams shaped by their environment. Other Americans worry about urban blight, street crime, racial trouble, chronic unemployment. But not the Northwest. Its economy, based on the renewable resources of forests and farms, is expanding strongly.... Its two major cities—Seattle (pop. 496,000) and Portland (377,000)—are bustling, clean and eminently livable. There are too few blacks for any real racial problems, and the small Indian minority—.8% of the population—is fighting in the courts, not the streets, for such goals as regaining water rights and tribal lands. In the Northwest, the issues that raise tempers and rile voters involve keeping the water clean to help the salmon and steelhead runs, keeping the air so clear that it smells pine-fresh, and keeping the majestic vistas of uncut forests that in so many places stretch to the skyline.[1]

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[1] "Dixy Rocks the Northwest," *Time*, December 12, 1977, 26-36.

Accounts such as these helped to establish a national image of the Pacific Northwest and Seattle as a region dominated by beautiful rugged landscapes and free of many pressing social problems that plagued other cities. Another article from the same issue titled "Those Movers Who Shake Seattle" lauded the city for decreasing its crime rate more than any other US city, enticing many young couples to move back into its metropolitan districts, and successfully combating urban blight by "[rebuilding] half of its city center...and [renovating] two previously downtrodden downtown districts, turning them into fashionable areas for restaurants, boutiques and offices."[2] As the articles suggested, Seattle by the late 1970s was burnishing a national reputation as a city that boasted high quality of life and successful programs of urban revitalization.

Linked to this characterization was the perception that Seattle was also free of the ghettos and racial problems that so frequently dominated national conversations during this era. Seattle in fact, had been presenting itself as national exemplar for values of racial liberalism. As articulated by cultural studies scholar Jodi Melamed, racial liberalism refers to the national valorization of antiracism that took place from the 1940s through the 1960s. Under racial liberalism, public disavowal of white supremacist policies and practices took precedence as did the adoption of democratic ideals that conferred citizenship, national membership, and socioeconomic privileges on all members of the national polity, regardless of race and ethnicity. This period of racial liberalism also coincided with the predominance of politically liberal frameworks that translated into expanded governments and increased federal assistance programs, first for whites during the 1930s and eventually for nonwhites by the 1960s. Starting in the 1940s with the

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[2] "Those Movers Who Shake Seattle" *Time*, December 12, 1977, 36.

emergence of racial liberalism on the national landscape, Seattle had sought to position itself as a vanguard of cross-racial harmony and racial equity through experiments in urban revitalization and social service projects that sought to service a multiracial constituency. By the time of the *Time* magazine article's publication in the late 1970s, Seattle's reputation as a center of progressive and racially liberal ideals had been decades in the making.

This dissertation analyzes the ascendancy of racial liberalism in Seattle from 1940 to 1975. On a national scale, this timeframe coincides with the development of racial liberalism from its start during the years immediately preceding World War II to its years of decline in the 1970s as Richard M. Nixon's administration slashed funding for major federal assistance programs from the Lyndon B. Johnson administration. Within the history of Seattle, this timeframe also encompasses the emergence of concerted efforts by civic institutions to depict their city as cosmopolitan and racially progressive. My dissertation seeks to examine the historical constructions of racial liberalism in Seattle and analyze their impact on the sociopolitical standing of the city's Asian Americans and African Americans, its two largest nonwhite communities. Moreover, I will explore the implications that Seattle's brand of racial liberalism bore for national constructions of racial hierarchies and white privilege during the height of U.S. liberal politics. Throughout my analyses, I will demonstrate that racial liberalism was a double-edged sword for Seattle's nonwhite populations. Even though Asian Americans and African Americans gained unprecedented access to socioeconomic mobility and governmental resources, a critical examination of Seattle's racial liberalist projects reveals that socioeconomic gains were very limited and were frequently circumscribed by political

devices that served to reinforce racial hierarchies and white privilege. In the end, racial liberalism served to position the city's Asian Americans and African Americans against one another in competition for resources while still allocating the lion's share to white populations. Such developments in a city that labeled itself to be a paragon of racial liberalism is thus highly instructive of how comparable projects functioned on a national scale.

In national imaginations, the era of racial liberalism ushered in critical shift of major racial frameworks, from that of white supremacy to that of a liberal democracy where racial equity and equal opportunity for all races emerged as a guiding principle. The era of racial liberalism is also framed as the critical period that nurtured the Civil Rights Movement and the dissolution of overt racial discrimination. Part of my study acknowledges that official implementations of racial integration and multiracial assistance programs indeed constituted an important hallmark of Seattle's racial liberalism. Between 1940 and 1975, programs and accomplishments in the area of racial politics reinforced a widespread notion that Seattle, a city amenable to liberal policies and social experimentation, had few racial problems. This dissertation looks at four key events that contributed to this perception. They are, the establishment of the nation's first racially integrated public housing facility in 1940; the emergence of one of the nation's first multiracial neighborhood associations (the Jackson Street Community Council) from 1946 to the late 1950s; the hosting of the widely-heralded cosmopolitan event, the 1962 World's Fair; and the implementation of the nation's first Model Cities Program, an ambitious experiment in liberal racial politics and social welfare programming.

In the context of racial developments occurring elsewhere in the nation, each of these events represents a noteworthy accomplishment in the promotion of racial integration, cross-race relations, and socioeconomic welfare programs. For instance, Seattle's decision to make its first public housing project racially integrated took place during an era when virtually all New Deal aid for housing was either restricted to white populations or distributed through arrangements that reinforced racial segregation. In another example, 1960s Seattle, unlike many major cities in the U.S., experienced virtually no racial riots and became the site of thriving local civil rights and Asian American movements. Such developments formed the backdrop to Seattle becoming one of first cities to implement the Model City Program, an initiative of Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society. The Model City Program allocated $2.3 billion in federal funds to tackle the inner-city poverty that plagued many of the nation's black and Latino communities.[3] In carrying out the Seattle Model Cities Program (SMCP), the city hoped to position itself at the vanguard of the nation's efforts to promote interracial harmony and to revitalizing impoverished racial districts.

In large part due to these four developments, Seattle was regarded as a city that exemplified racial liberalism during the World War II and postwar eras, as it surpassed its counterparts in promoting cross-racial harmony and rights for nonwhite populations. While nonwhite populations in most major cities lived in discrete districts and organized their politics along racial lines, blacks and Asians in Seattle shared neighborhoods and created one of the earliest multiethnic civic associations in the nation. And while some

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[3] "Seattle Municipal Archives Guide: 5400-00 Model City Program," Seattle Municipal Archives, accessed December 30, 2016, http://clerk.seattle.gov/~scripts/nph-brs.exe?s1=5400-00.ID.&Sect6=HITOFF&d=GRUP&l=20&p=1&u=%2F~public%2FARCH1.htm&r=1&f=G.

major cities such as Los Angeles, Detroit, and Chicago experienced violent unrest as others developed expansive ghettoes, Seattle was never site to any race riots or any notable outbreaks of racial tensions. It also did not have any ghettoes comparable in size or deterioration to those in New York City, Chicago, or Detroit that had captured the spotlight in the 1960s. The SMCP federal grant application in 1967 even proclaimed that Seattle was a city where "our problems are still small enough in scale to be solvable," and that as a result, "the work which will be done here…will be applicable to other cities and other situations."[4]

While these projects represented notable efforts to situate Seattle at the forefront of the nation's racial liberalist experiments, my dissertation will demonstrate that each of the four undertakings *also* functioned to produce and perpetuate covert forms of racial inequalities. This is consistent with Melamed's delineation of racial liberalism, whose purpose was not so much to eliminate white supremacy and racism, but to engender "a new worldwide racial project…that [ultimately] revises, partners with, and exceeds the capacities of white supremacy without replacing or ending it."[5] Indeed, numerous studies have demonstrated that even as events and discourses worked to dismantle overt racism in the U.S. from the 1940s through 1960s, such developments only served to replace racist ideologies with what sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva has called "colorblind racism"—ideologies that attack explicitly racist frameworks while using coded, nonracial paradigms to perpetuate the underlying structural inequalities that maintain racial

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[4] Urban Planning and Research Associates, *Model Neighborhoods in Demonstration Cities: City of Seattle,* (Seattle, WA: The Associates, 1967), part I, page 1. Seattle Municipal Archives, 5400-03, box 10, folder 25.

[5] Jodi Melamed, *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 7.

hierarchies, defined here as a system of racial stratification that orders racial groups from superior to inferior relative to each other.[6] As I analyze the racial implications of the four projects in this dissertation, I will demonstrate that each was consistent with the workings of *both* racial liberalism and colorblind racism. Even as they set out to dismantle white supremacy and outwardly expand racial inclusion and racial equality, each project also ultimately reinforced the city's racial hierarchy.

### Navigating the Literature on Multiracial Frameworks

Studies analyzing racial hierarchies, including this dissertation, belong to a burgeoning literature focusing on the study of race in multiracial and interethnic contexts. While studies of race in urban spaces have conventionally focused on black/white relations, the literature on interethnic and multiracial relations has emerged to offer frameworks that better reflect the demographic realities of different geographies

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[6] Major studies that discuss the persistence of racism in the era of racial liberalism include Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 1986); ); George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995); David Theo Goldberg, *Racial Subjects: Writing on Race in America*. New York: Routledge, 1997); Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight. Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Jodi Melamed, *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism*. For more extensive discussion of color-blind racism, see Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003). The concept of racial hierarchy—specifically its formation and early years—was notably expounded by historian Tomás Almaguer in his book, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). According to Almaguer, the concept of racial hierarchy in California through a host of political, social, and cultural institutional practices that promoted white supremacy. These practices also propagated a racial stratification system that ranked the state's racial population from good to bad. From the late nineteenth century to early half of the twentieth century, Whites stood atop this hierarchy and were followed by Mexican Americans, and African Americans, Asian Americans, with Native Americans occupying the bottom rung. Following the inception of racial liberalism during the 1940s, the country's racial ordering system underwent transformation, as Asian Americans were elevated to the second highest rung, right below whites and firmly over African Americans. As Asians garnered high levels of success in economic mobility, educational achievements, and cultural assimilation, they became heralded as the nation's "model minority," and ideal symbols of American democracy as the provider of opportunities for all racial groups. The rise of Asian Americans as model minorities is documented in detail by historian Ellen D. Wu in her book, *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

throughout much of U.S. history. Starting from the 1990s, many scholars began to recognize the possibilities of adopting comparative and relational frameworks to analyzing both historical racial interactions and processes of racialization (that is the social, political, or cultural ascription of characteristics or identities to a particular racial group). This new approach addressed key limitations of previous paradigms that addressed issues solely through the lens of a single race, or through black/white binaries. This approach also acknowledged the fact that lived experiences and processes of racialization rarely occur in isolation or binaries. This is particularly true in states along the west coast, where several ethnic groups besides blacks and whites (e.g. Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, American Indians, and South Indians) lived within proximity of each other in large numbers.

One group of scholars within the literature has adopted an interethnic framework by studying multiethnic communities and community formation.[7] These scholars utilize historical methodologies to reveal different dimensions to the questions of "How did multiple racialized groups interact with each other as neighbors and co-workers in the same community?" and "What collaborations or conflicts did such interactions generate?" These works generally focus on topics such as neighborly relations, marriage and family life, employment and economic relationships, construction of cultural and racial identities, youth kinships, and political activism. A second group of scholars has

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[7] Scholars whose works fall under this category include Eiichiro *Azuma Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: University of Oxford Press, 2005); Mark Wild, *Street Meeting: Multiethnic Neighborhoods in Early Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Allison Varzally, *Making a Non-White America: Californians Coloring outside Ethnic Lines, 1925-*1955 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); and Shana Bernstein, *Bridges of Reform: Interracial Civil Rights Activism in Twentieth‑Century Los Angeles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

adopted relational and comparative frameworks to examine different ways in which

processes of racial formation—or the social construction of racial categories—are shaped

by interplays between the white mainstream establishment and multiple nonwhite groups.

These authors often examine details of lived experiences in multiracial settings.

However, they are even more interested in analyses of how political, social, or cultural

formations surrounding one race bear strong consequences for the socioeconomic statuses

of other racialized groups.[8] They articulate frameworks such as racial hierarchy, racial

triangulation, or racial scripting to reveal different ways in which state laws and

institutions construct processes of relational racialization between different racial groups.

According to the theories of racial hierarchy and racial triangulation, processes of

racialization by state and mainstream cultural institutions typically occur in a relative

manner in which the positioning of one racial group is highly dependent on how this

particular population ranks against other racial groups. For instance, the historical

positioning of whites on top of the racial order has been accomplished by laws and

practices that demonize or limit citizenship rights for other racial groups, while the

sociopolitical rise of Asian Americans in the latter half of the twentieth century has been

made possible by concurrent denigrations of African Americans as well as racializations

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[8] Authors whose works fall under this category include Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California*; Neil Foley, *The White Scourge Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Claire Jean Kim, *Bitter Fruit: The Politics of Black-Korean Conflict in New York City* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000); Najia Aarim-Heriot, *Chinese Immigrants, African Americans, and Racial Anxiety in the United States, 1848-82* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003); Natalia Molina, *Fit to Be Citizens? Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Laura Pulido, *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); Scott *Kurashige The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); Luis Alvarez, *The Power of the Zoot: Youth Culture and Resistance during World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Natalia Molina, *How Race Is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

of Asians as "definitively not black."[9] And according to the theory of racial scripts by historian Natalia Molina, legal maneuvers and social discourses that have been used to racialize one racial group are frequently re-deployed towards racialization of other racial groups, either concurrently or at a later point in time. In this way, "the lives of racialized groups are linked across time and space and thereby affect one another, even when they do not directly cross paths."[10]

My work falls within the second group of scholarship to examine how the racialization of African Americans and Asian Americans takes place in relational and interconnected ways. At the same time, my study of relational racialization is highly predicated on case studies of interethnic collaboration between Seattle's white, black, and Asian American communities. This dissertation is in part a history of cooperation and co-existence of Asians, whites, and blacks as through various projects, but it is also an analysis of these endeavors through the lens of relational racialization. What I conclude is that even when Asian Americans and blacks collaborated in Seattle, they were compelled through histories of differential racialization to respond to divergent expectations and hence operate in separate parallel spheres. Thus, my analysis of interethnic interactions is informed by frameworks of relational racialization, which then highlights the limitations inherent in racial liberalism that constrain the possibilities of interethnic collaboration.

The framework of racial hierarchy was a critical development in the literature of interethnic scholarship and it was first expounded by historian Tomás Almaguer to address the multiracial realities of Western states that hosted populations of whites,

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[9] Wu, *The Color of Success*, 2.
[10] Molina, *How Race is Made in America*, 6.

African Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans. The notion of racial

hierarchy posits that political, economic, and cultural institutions combine to rank

different racial groups against each other. Between the early and middle decades of the

twentieth century, the ordering of nonwhite groups in the racial hierarchy underwent

dramatic shifts in their positioning vis-à-vis each other. What invariably remained

unchanged, however, was the fixed status of whites at the very top of the hierarchy.[11]

Given the close ties between racial liberalist projects and the maintenance of

colorblind racism, a critical analysis of Seattle's racial projects will reveal that such

endeavors were complicit in the production of racial hierarchies in the city. To

understand how this was carried out, I turn to political scientist Claire Jean Kim's

framework of racial triangulation, which is pertinent to an analysis of Seattle's postwar

demographics, which were dominated by whites, Asian Americans, and African

Americans. The theory of racial triangulation posits that a "simple vertical hierarchy (A

over B over C)" of superior/inferior races is insufficient for fully understanding the

workings of racial ordering between whites and two groups in particular—Asian

Americans and African Americans. Rather, their racial positioning must be studied

through the conceptualization of a racial order scaffolded by at least two axes: that of

superior/inferior *and* that of insider/foreigner. In Kim's words: "Asian immigrants and

their descendants have been 'triangulated' insofar as they have been racialized both as

inferior to Whites and superior to Blacks (in between Black and White), and as

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[11] For more information on Almaguer's exposition on the racial hierarchy, consult Almaguer, Tomás, *Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins of White Supremacy in California*.

permanently foreign and unassimilable (apart from Black and Whites)."[12] Prior to World

War II, the racialization of Asian Americans as foreigners was carried out through a

combination of legal maneuvers that operated to deprive them of avenues to citizenship

and to enact immigration bans targeting Asian countries. In the words of Kim, Asian

Americans during this era were "seen as both unfit for and uninterested in the American

way of life and were the only group in American history to be legally rendered 'aliens

ineligible for citizenship," through federal laws and court cases.[13] As the sociopolitical

fortunes of Asian Americans began to improve during the postwar years however, the

nation also began dismantling legal barriers to citizenship and immigration that

previously targeted them. Nonetheless, Asians would continue to be racialized as

foreigners and cultural outsiders, though this would now be achieved primarily through

cultural representations (e.g. films and media reports depicting Asians as exotic Orientals

and overachieving, robotic subjects) rather than overtly discriminatory laws.

My analysis of Seattle's racial politics affirms the theory of racial triangulation by

demonstrating that Asians and blacks were in fact racialized along the dual axes of

superior/inferior *and* insider/foreigner during the wartime and postwar years. An analysis

of Seattle's racial ordering during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries would

first indicate trends consistent with literatures on single-axis racial hierarchy. Scholars of

racial hierarchy in the Western U.S. typically assert that racial hierarchies during this

period placed whites at the top and Latinos in the second rung, followed interchangeably

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[12] Kim, Claire Jean, *Bitter Fruit: The Politics of Black-Korean Conflict in New York City* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 16.
[13] Claire Jean Kim, "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans," *Politics & Society* 27.1 (1999), 112.

by Asians and African Americans.[14] This system of racial ranking then underwent

dramatic change following World War II with the emergence of Asian Americans as

model minorities. After having been placed firmly below Latinos and on par with African

Americans for nearly a century, Asian Americans were elevated to the second rung

(underneath whites) of the racial ladder in the postwar years. This transformation of

fortunes occurred as an integral part of the nation's efforts to frame the relatively high

levels of socioeconomic success enjoyed by Chinese and Japanese Americans as

evidence of liberal democracy's efficacy in extending opportunity to multiracial

demographics.[15] In other words, becoming the nation's model minorities enabled Asian

Americans to leapfrog over African Americans and Latinos, and in the process attain a

status of superiority over their racial counterparts.

### A History of Racial Hierarchy and Racial Triangulation in Seattle

This narrative of Asian Americans moving up the racial hierarchy is consistent

with the history of white-Asian-black relations in twentieth century Seattle. During the

early decades of the 1900s, the statuses of Asian Americans and African Americans in

Seattle were relatively comparable to each other--both groups were relegated to less

desirable neighborhoods, both were excluded from the city's mainstream white collar

professions, and both were subjected to discriminatory laws and practices. Throughout

this period, districts in the city enacted racially restrictive covenants, which were legally

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[14] For more information on this, see Tomás Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines*, or Natalia Molina, *Fit to be Citizens?*

[15] For works that chronicle and analyze the rise of the model minority thesis and within the context of Cold War U.S., please consult Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); Cindy I-Fen Cheng, *Citizens of Asian America: Democracy and Race during the Cold War* (New York: New York University, 2013); and Ellen Wu, *The Color of Success*.

enforceable contracts embedded in title deeds that prohibited specific races (typically

nonwhite groups) from purchasing, leasing, and occupying the property. These covenants

had the effect of rendering all but Seattle's least desirable and most overcrowded districts

off-limits to nonwhite populations. After 1900, the vast majority of Seattle's racial

population converged in two districts—Chinatown (which became the city's cultural

center for its Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino communities) and Central Area (which

became the cultural center and major district for the city's African American community.

In addition to facing unequal access to adequate housing and livable districts, African and

Asian American residents in Seattle also found themselves discriminated against in

virtually all areas of life, including employment and working conditions. African

Americans were, in historian Quintard Taylor's words, "relegated to the periphery of the

economy in Seattle" until the 1940s as they were confined to menial employment

positions, such as janitors, domestics, porters, or unskilled laborers, although many found

jobs as skilled shipyard laborers following World War I.[16] Asian Americans also faced

limited employment prospects as racism served to keep Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinos

out of professional careers. A sizeable number acquired capital from personal savings or

ethnic associations to run their own businesses while others worked in stores, hotels,

gambling houses, or in canneries.[17]

Even though Asian Americans and African Americans faced many similar

challenges prior to the 1940s, one important distinction separated their experiences.

Consistent with the workings of the racial triangulation during the pre-World War II era,

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[16] Quintard Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community: Seattle's Central District from 1870 through the Civil Rights Era* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), 3, 49-59.
[17] Doug Chin, *Seattle's International District: The Making of a Pan-Asian American Community* (Seattle, WA: International Examiner Press, 2009), 35, 47.

Asian American populations in the city were racialized as noncitizens and foreign threats, thus becoming visible targets of nativism and racial hysteria while African Americans were racialized as insiders. During this prewar era, Asians made up the city's largest nonwhite population, as the West Coast had been the primary destination for Asian immigration, especially Japanese immigration, prior to passage of the 1924 Johnson Reed Act, which outlawed virtually all immigration from Asia. Their high visibility combined with their reputation as foreigners made the city's Chinese and Japanese populations primarily targets of the region's discriminatory acts that encompassed a series of anti-Asian legislations (most notably Alien Land Laws) throughout the 1900s-1920s. This tide of racial hysteria would eventually culminate in the mass evacuation of Japanese Americans to internment camps during World War II. While African Americans encountered intermittent episodes of racism, Taylor notes that on the whole Seattle's anti-black racism was mitigated by the small number of blacks living there, who were few enough to not be seen as a threat to white dominance. [18]

Starting from the postwar period however, Asian Americans in Seattle gained access to professional, white-collar job sectors along with the ability to move to desirable neighborhoods and suburbs. This development coincided with the national rise of the model minority myth and the federal granting of previously-withheld citizenship rights (most notably naturalization) to Asian Americans.[19] Having boasted some of the highest

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[18] Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community*, 22-23. According to Taylor, blacks also fared better in Seattle relative to other cities. For one, blacks in Seattle enjoyed higher rates of home ownership than in other cities. In addition, Seattle never had a "teeming ghetto" such as ones in Chicago that would grip national discourse in later decades of the twentieth century. Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community*, 86.
[19] Starting from the mid-1960s, national media outlets began to issue articles touting astonishing levels of economic and educational success amongst Chinese and Japanese Americans. These articles would proclaim Asians to be a "model" minority and give rise to the notion that the cultural superiority of Chinese

education level of any demographic in the city even prior to World War II, Asian

Americans found themselves in a position to capitalize on their education when they were

given entry into professional sectors following the war. Large numbers of Chinese

Americans, for instance, were recruited to work for defense industries in the region.[20]

Boeing alone hired approximately 200 Chinese Americans to work as scientists,

engineers, and technicians by 1962.[21] Asian Americans, particularly Chinese and

Japanese Americans, also gained the newfound ability to move into communities

throughout greater Seattle, including adjacent suburbs, without fear of violence or

exclusionary practices against them. A steady out-migration thus took place from city

centers, including the Chinatown, which also became known as the International District

after 1951 when Mayor William F. Devin issued an official proclamation designating the

area as "International Center" in a nod to the area's longtime history of racial diversity

and recent proliferation of multicultural celebrations.[22]

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and Japanese Americans enabled them to overcome years of racial discrimination, unlike African
Americans. For more information on the emergence of the Model Minority Myth, please see Keith
Osajima's often-cited essay, "Asian Americans as the Model Minority: An Analysis of the Popular Press
Image in the 1960s and 1980s," in *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader*, ed. Min
Zhou and James V. Gatewood (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 449-458.
[20] Chin, *Seattle's International District*, 79.
[21] "Oriental Flavors: A Guide to Seattle's Chinatown" (Seattle: Chinese Publishing House, 1962), Wing
Luke Special Collections, 1992.022.363.
[22] For more information on the context surrounding the 1951 "International District" designation, please see
Dan Abramson, Lynne Manzo and Jeffrey Hou, "From Ethnic Enclave to Multi-ethnic Translocal
Community: Constructed Identities and Urban Design in Seattle's Chinatown-International District,"
*Journal of Architectural and Planning Research* 23, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 341-360. A history of place name
designations surrounding the neighborhood will reveal decades-long contestations between the district's
Chinese American associations and other members of the Asian American community. Chinese American
organizations, particularly the powerful Chong Wa Benevolent Association and the Chinese Chamber of
Commerce have advocated preservation of the Chinatown name as a means of honoring the area's
historical designation and more importantly, of preserving the tourist appeal and economic viability of the
area. Other Asian American organizations, most notably the International District Improvement
Association (Inter*IM) have objected to Chinatown designation as exclusionary towards the
neighborhood's non-Chinese communities, and have pushed vociferously for use of the International
District as the area's official name. In 1999, the City Council of Seattle officially proclaimed a compromise
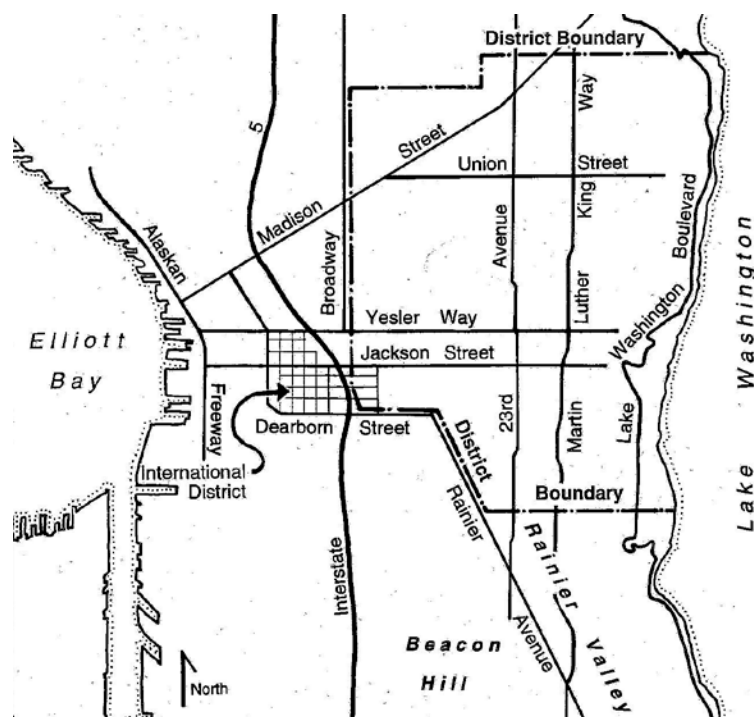
**Figure I.1. Map of Central District in 1970**
The International District is directly southeast to the boundaries of the Central District
Taylor, Quintard. Foreword by Norm Rice. *The Forging of a Black Community:*
*Seattle's Central District from 1870 through the Civil Rights Era* © 1994. Reprinted with
permission of the University of Washington Press

While Asian Americans in Seattle experienced "steady if not spectacular

economic progress" during the postwar period, the same could not be said for the city's

African Americans, who continued to experience job discrimination, housing exclusion,

and high poverty levels.[23] Seattle experienced a dramatic increase in its African

American population during World War II and the Second Migration when millions of

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designation of the area as Chinatown-International District (C-ID), which remains the neighborhood's
name to this day.
[23] Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community*, 223.

blacks migrated out of the South into burgeoning defense industries in major cities

throughout the North, Midwest, and West Coast. During the war (from 1940 to 1945),

Seattle's African American population grew from 3,789 to 10,000, and reached 26,901 by

1960 (which then comprised 4.8% of the city's population).[24] The wartime increase

resulted in African Americans surpassing Japanese Americans to become the largest

nonwhite demographic in the city. During the 1940s, Seattle's defense industry absorbed

much of the influx of African American migration due to labor shortages created by

white employees being drafted for war as thousands of blacks found employment as

skilled and semiskilled workers in aircraft construction companies, shipyards, and

nonmilitary government agencies. While the war opened employment opportunities for

blacks in the defense companies and segments of the public sector, black workers faced

rampant discrimination and segregation throughout the war. Following the war, African

Americans continued to confront employment challenges in the form of exclusion from

major sectors including electronic firms, chemical industries, manufacturing firms

numbering less than 200 workers, retail sales, health care facilities, banking, and

elsewhere in the city's "white collar economy".[25] By 1960, unemployment rates for

African Americans were significantly higher than those of the city's whites and Asian

Americans.[26]

In addition to their high unemployment rates, blacks in Seattle also encountered

widespread housing discrimination throughout the wartime and postwar years. Even

though Asians benefited from the loosening of housing restrictions throughout the city

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[24] Ibid, 159-160, 192.
[25] Ibid, 161, 165-177, 187.
[26] Ibid, 187.

and surrounding suburbs during the postwar period, African Americans continued to be confined to the Central Area, particularly in its oldest sections which contained many substandard housing units. In spite of the fact that the U.S. Supreme court handed down its ruling for *Shelley v. Kramer* in 1948 outlawing restrictive covenants, blacks faced fierce resistance from white owners and real estate associations that prevented virtually any of them from leaving Central Area. Thus between 1950 and 1960, the percentage of African Americans living within ten of Central Area's 118 census tracts increased from 69% to 78% even as the population increased by 11,000 residents.[27] Atop this foundation of housing and employment discrimination, Central Area's African American neighborhoods became the site of socioeconomic problems such as juvenile delinquency drug abuse, crime, and poverty by the 1950s.[28]

While Asian Americans in Seattle moved up the superiority/inferiority continuum and acquired privileges not extended to African Americans during the postwar decades, the narrative of how these two groups were racialized relative to each other is in fact more complicated. This is where racial triangulation and the thesis of dual-axis racialization comes into play. As Kim asserts, framing Asian Americans as simply being racialized as superior to African Americans oversimplifies the reality of the nation's racial ordering system. In addition to being racialized as superior to blacks during the latter half of the twentieth century, Asian Americans were simultaneously framed as perpetually foreign and unassimilable, in contrast to whites and blacks who were assumed to be insiders whose assimilability was unquestioned. This device in

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[27] Ibid, 178-179.
[28] Ibid, 187-188

racialization accomplishes two purposes. Deployment of the foreigner label ensures that

Asians will never achieve full whiteness nor challenge white dominance atop the racial

order. It also serves effectively to exclude Asians from civic membership and reinforce

logics of Asians as racial "others," a process called civil ostracism.[29]

Injecting racial triangulation into the picture allows one to obtain a more complex

and comprehensive understanding of the racial politics shaping white-Asian-black

relations in wartime and postwar Seattle. Throughout the timeframe of this dissertation, I

demonstrate that the politics of racial triangulation persisted as a key mechanism for

managing Asian and black populations in Seattle. Consistent with Kim's notion of civic

ostracism, framing Asians as foreigners had the powerful effect of denying important

public resources to Seattle's Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino populations throughout

much of the twentieth century. In the first phase examined in this dissertation of the

immediate pre-World War II years, Asians in Seattle (like in much of the country) were

racialized as unassimilable foreigners and were subject to a host of exclusionary policies

barring their access to citizenship and its attendant privileges, such as property ownership

and enfranchisement.[30] African Americans on the other hand were racialized in Western

cities as second-class citizens to whites, but nonetheless as desirable residents whose

small numbers, non-foreigner status, and typical middle-class backgrounds rendered them

a favorable contrast to incoming Asian residents. [31] Within this context in Seattle, the

legal status of citizenship and non-citizenship was the mechanism utilized to determine

eligibility for residency in Yesler Terrace, which was not only the city's first public

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[29] Kim, *Bitter Fruit*, 16, 45-48.

[30] Wu, Ellen D., T*he Color of Success*, 2.

[31] Kurashige, Scott, *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008) 20-21.

housing complex but also the first in the nation to be racially integrated. As large numbers of Asian American families were headed by immigrants ineligible for citizenship, they automatically became ineligible for public housing. Thus, even as Seattle municipal leaders came to highlight Yesler Terrace as evidence of the city's progressive and liberal stance on race relations, racial triangulation functioned as a veiled yet powerful strategy for the city's management of Asian and black populations in this highly publicized project. As Seattle worked to integrate African American and white residents of Yesler Terrace, it simultaneously denied public housing access to Asian Americans, thereby carving out divergent racialization policies for Asian and African Americans in the midst of a landmark experiment in racial integration. This is consistent with historian Scott Kurashige's analysis of early to mid-1900s Los Angeles that racial triangulation was the key device in which "white elites played Black and Japanese Americans off against each other to solidify white hegemony."[32] The implication for Seattle and Yesler Terrace is that even as civic leaders sought to promote racial progressivism and integration during the 1930s and 1940s, that embedded in their efforts was a strategy critical to maintenance of white supremacy through a "conquer and divide" approach towards the city's Asian and African American populations.

As Seattle entered the postwar period, the city's racial ordering system for African and Asian American residents underwent a shift. In a development documented extensively by historians and social scientists, Asian Americans in the country experienced a transformation of racialization, from being regarded as "Yellow Perils" and foreign threats, to being recast as "model minorities" lauded for their strong work ethic,

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[32] Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race*, 4.

high levels of educational and economic accomplishments, and in the words of historian

Ellen Wu, for being "a racial group distinct from the white majority" that was "political

nonthreatening and *definitively non-black*."[33] This evolution certainly applied to the

Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino American communities of Seattle. While Asian

American Seattleites were previously subjected to a series of ethnic violence, negative

stereotypes, constitutional deprivations, and denials of economic opportunities during the

prewar era, they found themselves increasingly portrayed as model citizens and eligible

for paths to upward socioeconomic mobility by the postwar period. Throughout the

nation, Asian Americans in the postwar period gained increased access to opportunities

for socioeconomic mobility and residence in desirable geographies previously exclusive

to whites.[34] However, the model minority framework also bore deleterious implications

for other racial populations, especially African Americans. Described by historian Vijay

Prashad as "a weapon against African Americans," the model minority myth was a

constructed expressly for the purpose of negating postwar black critiques of racist

legacies that had long been embedded in America's liberal democratic system.[35] In the

context of postwar Seattle, the ascendancy of Asian Americans resulted in an inversion of

their prewar positioning vis-à-vis African Americans. Whereas the racial liberalist system

of prewar Seattle offered African Americans increased access to public housing facilities

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[33] Wu, *The Color of Success*, 2.

[34] For a detailed examination on the emergence of Asians with model minority frameworks, please consult Wu, *The Color of Success*. Additional works that will provide instructive background on the historical construction and manifestations of model minority frameworks include: Won Moo Hurh and Kwang Chung Kim, "The 'Success' Image of Asian Americans: Its Validity, and Its Practical and Theoretical Implications," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 12 (1989): 512-538; Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Charlotte Brooks, *Alien Neighbors, Foreign Friends: Asian Americans, Housing, and the Transformation of Urban California* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Cindy I-Fen Cheng, *Citizens of America*.

[35] Vijay Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folk* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 157-183.

through a racial integration initiative that simultaneously excluded Asian Americans, the racial liberalism of postwar Seattle deployed model minority frameworks that boosted Asian Americans' socioeconomic status while concurrently suppressing the fortunes of African Americans, as evidenced by the divergent experiences of the two groups in the arenas of employment and housing.

As a tool for analyzing Asian and African American positioning within the nation's prewar and postwar racial order, the framework of racial triangulation has been valuable in highlighting the divisive techniques that have helped maintain white dominance throughout the twentieth century. According to studies by Kim and Kurashige, racial triangulation produces important effects. First, by deploying not one, but two axes of racialization, racial triangulation increases "opportunities" for nonwhite racial groups to be denigrated, thereby enhancing reinforcement of white hegemony. For instance, even as Asian Americans experienced an elevation in positioning along the superior/inferior axis, their lingering status as perpetual foreigners along the foreigner/insider axis rendered it impossible for them to ever attain parity with whites. Second, the studies by Kim and Kurashige show that racial triangulation frequently manifests itself through interracial conflict between Asian and African Americans, due to the framework's proclivity to pit nonwhite races against one another. Indeed, conflicts and politics of undermining one another have played important roles in the reinforcement of racial triangulation, such as instances when Korean Americans have engaged in acts of racism against African Americans in 1990s New York City, or when African Americans sought to capitalize on the World War II evacuation of Japanese Americans from Los

Angeles city centers. Situations such as these shed light on the hegemonic and adversarial nature of racial triangulation systems.

Although interracial conflicts are often central to operations of racial triangulation, they do not present a complete picture, especially in the case of prewar and postwar Seattle. Relations between Seattle's African Americans and Asian Americans were rarely publicized or documented, and evidence suggests that they likely they were tolerant, if sometimes uneasy and distant neighbors. Race relations between blacks and whites, although present, also rarely boiled over in the overt sense. As historian Roger Sale remarks, Seattle was no Detroit, Newark, or Watts, as it never experienced any race riots during the 1940s and 1960s when intense episodes of violence broke out in Los Angeles and several Northern cities.[36] Moreover, Seattle's relatively small black population in comparison to cities such as Chicago and New York meant that the Central Area's few blocks of physical deterioration would pale in comparison to the densely populated ghettos and slums of the east and Midwest that gripped the nation's attention. Nonetheless, racial triangulation still dictated interactions and political dynamics between Seattle's white, black, and Asian populations in profound ways.

In my dissertation, I demonstrate that as a response to histories of differential racialization, racial triangulation can manifest itself in through divergent strategies and political outcomes *even* in projects involving collaborations between the racial populations in question (black and Asian community leaders along with white establishment officials). This is tied to dual standards that exist between the allocation of civic resources to white and nonwhite groups. Whereas the distribution of resources and

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[36] Roger Sale, *Seattle: Past to Present* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976), 219.

funding to white communities is often assumed to be proper or necessary, history has shown that resources earmarked for racial communities are more likely to be derided as handouts for the undeserving. When coupled with histories of differential racialization that framed Asians as foreign threats and blacks as second-class cultural insiders, this context enables racial triangulation to ensure that blacks and Asian Americans will adopt different strategies for self-advocacy and self-depiction, even within the same projects. As I examine Asian American and African American participation in a series of postwar experiments in racial liberalism and multiculturalism, I will show that African Americans in Seattle adopted more vocal and strident approaches in pursuing resources for racial communities, often attaining the bulk of the resulting benefits. However, the acquisition of civic resources for nonwhite group was often a double-edged sword and in the process, these same African American communities invited higher degrees of state surveillance and became more vulnerable to social and cultural denigrations. Seattle's Asian Americans by contrast were more likely to enact a politics of self-denial characterized by far more restrained endeavors for resources. They were also willing to reinforce invocations of Asian Americans as exotic subjects in certain situations to garner greater acceptance and economic gains from the mainstream communities. Ironically Asian Americans were able to gain esteem and independence from state surveillance as a result their self-exoticization and self-denial.

### Asian Americans and African Americans: A History of Divergent Political Strategies

To better understand how this played out in Seattle, it will be instructive to discuss the history of differential racialization enacted upon the city's Asian Americans

and African Americans. Consistent with the theoretical basis of racial triangulation, Asian American groups were racialized by the early 1900s as foreign and exotic "others" whose status as "good" or "bad" residents were determined by their success in assimilating to American culture, accumulating capital, and being productive members of U.S. society. In response, Asian Americans in Seattle shaped their political strategies to conform to these expectations. Eschewing the politics of overt resistance, Asian American mobilization techniques instead strove to depict communities as model citizens, and to embrace politics of moderation and accommodation. This resulted at times in self-depictions as All-American, fully-assimilated citizens. In other times during the postwar era when promotions of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism— sociopolitical frameworks that celebrate cultural diversity and ethnic pluralism as a pillar of American liberal democracy—became crucial to bolstering Seattle's national profile as a progressive world city, Asian Americans in the city did not hesitate to adapt by reframing their communities as tourist havens of exoticism and by depicting themselves as liaisons to the Far East. Throughout this disparate strategies to gain communal esteem, Seattle's Asian Americans never wavered in their delicate approach towards campaigns for civic resources, where utmost effort was made to request the resources in minimal numbers or in ways that would not threaten perceptions of Asian Americans as self-sufficient members of society.

African Americans by contrast adopted different political strategies to seek resources and sociopolitical mobility in Seattle. This was in part due to the histories of differential racialization that have shaped the experiences of racial groups in the West. Whereas Asian American activists generally responded to acts of racial exclusion by

highlighting their cultural or economic success in assimilation, and by downplaying overt

resistance, African American communities developed thriving traditions of activism and

protest in response to successive waves of physical, social, and political violence levied

against them at the hands of white supremacy, especially following the end of the Civil

War and slavery. In light the primacy of black/white frameworks in dictating national

conversations of race, African Americans quickly rose to the forefront of pushing

boundaries of inclusion for racial citizenship. By the first half of the twentieth century,

this manifested itself not only in fights for civil rights and civil liberties, as is widely

known, but also for access to a host of benefits tied to social citizenship, such as access to

economic opportunities and civic resources. As the twentieth century went on, issues of

poverty, overcrowding, and police brutality became more pronounced in African

American communities, particularly following the First and Second Great Migrations

triggered by the two world wars, developments that intensified activist efforts. Due to the

different trajectories of racialization and historical developments, African American

activism and politics took on more visible and contested overtones than their Asian

American counterparts, and did not display the same overriding pressures for self-

restrictions in requesting civic resources for impoverished communities.[37] Moreover,

African Americans' status as cultural insiders influenced the strategies and possibilities

of their activist politics. Discussing the insider status of African Americans in California,

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[37] Studies analyzing histories of African American activist strategies include Marable Manning, *Black American Politics: From the Washington Marches to Jesse Jackson* (London: Verso, 1985); Marable Manning, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America, 1945-1990* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1991); 9); and Steven F. Lawson, *Running for Freedom: Civil Rights and Black Politics since 1941* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993); Christopher Robert Reed, *The Chicago NAACP and the Rise of Black Professional Leadership, 1910-1966* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1997); Cedrick Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983); and Harvard Sitkoff , *Toward Freedom Land: The Long Struggle for Racial Equality in America* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2010).

Almaguer's asserts, "Black and Asian immigrants…were culturally deemed to be somewhere between the 'half civilized' Mexican and 'uncivilized' Indian populations. Although anti-black animosity was widespread, blacks who settled in California were at least Christian, spoke English, and had…assimilated important European cultural patterns."[38] In a time and place where Asians were racialized as foreign, African Americans, despite their low positioning, were acknowledged to be cultural insiders. These effects further contributed to the ability of African American leaders to engage in overt challenges and requests for full membership and greater racial equality in U.S. society.

The history of African American activism in Seattle is consistent with that of other parts in the nation in that civil rights organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP) and Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) were fully established in the city by the early 1920s. These two organizations created branches in cities throughout the country that sought to coordinate organized responses to racist legislation and practices on local and national scales. The NAACP, for instance, relied on a combination of protests, lawsuits, and recruitment of middle-class interracial membership to challenge formal racism and educate mainstream audiences about racial equality. The UNIA, for its part, was a working-class organization that advocated black nationalism, worldwide black unity, and economic self-sufficiency for African American communities.[39]  With events including the Great Depression followed by the dramatic influx of African Americans into major urban centers during the

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[38] Almaguer, *Racial Fault Lines*, 8.
[39] Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community*, 88-91.

start of the 1940s, the black community in Seattle established multiple additional

African-American organizations (which ranged politically from the more conservative

Seattle Urban League to the Communist-leaning League of Struggle for Negro Rights)

that sought to promote different forms of economic and political reform that would

address economic hardships and inequalities affecting African Americans.[40]  During this

period, another notable development emerged in that black leaders in the nation's cities—

including Seattle—led the call for government agencies and commissions dedicated to

tackling racism and socioeconomic problems plaguing racial communities. This national

push led to a "civic unity movement" where over one hundred cities including Seattle

created government communities boasting interracial memberships comprised of

government officials and community leaders to tackle racial tensions between whites and

blacks. Seattle's Civic Unity Committee (CUC) educate the public about race relations,

public and private entities to hire African Americans, and diffuse racial conflicts through

mediation.[41]

The proliferation of African American activist organizations and the creation of

government commissions such as the Seattle CUC propelled black-white relations to the

forefront of public conceptions of race relations, even in a city that boasted a sizeable

Asian American population. And although the Seattle CUC was constrained by budgetary

limitations, it undoubtedly highlighted the primacy of socioeconomic challenges faced by

the African American community in government official's perception of racial issues in

greatest need of addressing. Taken together, the emergence of African American

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[40] Ibid., 92.
[41] Howard A. Droker, "Seattle Race Relations during the Second World War," *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (1976): 163-174.

activism, the creation of governmental race commissions centered around black-white relations, and the urgency of African American socioeconomic problems during the Great Depression and World War II combined to situate blacks as primary targets for governmental and social service programs aimed at tackling racial inequality. Thus, when Seattle set out to integrate its public housing in 1939, African Americans were the key population highlighted for racial inclusion. And as the city initiated additional liberal experiments to channel civic resources and national funding into racial communities, the strong activist foundations in black communities enabled them to take the lead in negotiating with civic leaders and frequently obtain the lion's share of resources earmarked for nonwhite populations.

**The Double Standard of Racial Citizenship**

This narrative of divergent racial histories and political tactics in Seattle raises the question, "Why were efforts by Asian Americans and African Americans to acquire civic resources so fraught with difficulties and drawbacks, even in the age of racial liberalism?" Drawing connections between the politics of racial triangulation to scholarship on race and citizenship can yield valuable insight to this question. As described by sociologist Lisa Sun-Hee Park, social citizenship—defined as set of rights (such as cultural legitimacy and equal economic opportunities) that extend beyond legal and political rights, but that also determine one's entitlement to legitimacy and respect in their society—carries an expectation that full members of society *earn* their "social rights" *without* the help of "handouts."[42] In other words, social citizenship is predicated

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[42] Lisa Sun-Hee Park, *Consuming Citizenship: Children of Asian American Entrepreneurs* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 4. The concept of social citizenship was first defined by sociologist T.H.

on one's economic viability and on prevailing assumptions that "real" citizens are hardworking and economically productive, while takers of handouts are lazy and unworthy citizens. Historian Evelyn Nakano Glenn makes it clear however, that this particular expectation of full social membership was differentially applied and enforced across racial boundaries.[43] During the Progressive Era, for instance, poor white families were given access to poor relief and social welfare programs, such as pensions for mothers, due to prevailing beliefs that their financial straits was due to economic forces beyond their control. Black and Latino families in contrast were routinely denied such resources, as it was assumed that their impoverishment was due to a lack of initiative in finding work. Glenn's example illustrates a historical conception of citizenship that allowed for the possibility of whites to obtain governmental assistance, but not for nonwhite groups in similar situations. Having had no access to the vast majority of social welfare and government aid programs pre-dating the advent of racial liberalism, nonwhite populations were compelled find total sustenance and to prove their worthiness of citizenship through their labor and economic self-sufficiency.

My dissertation affirms Glenn's assertion that constructions of white citizenship and racial citizenship were forged through differential allocations of welfare resources. But by situating my dissertation in the varying contexts of the prewar and postwar years, I also add nuance to understandings of how racialized citizenship's relationship with governmental assistance programs operated and evolved. During the late 1930s and early 1940s, the inception of racial liberalism ushered important changes to racial groups'

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Marshall in his 1949 book, *Citizenship and Social Class, and Other Essays* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1950).

[43]Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 91.

access to governmental assistance and welfare programs, as exemplified in Chapter 1's

discussion of Seattle's 1939 decision to racially integrate its public housing projects.

While the racial integration of Yesler Terrace represented an important landmark in the

nation's history of race relations, it also exposed the critical role that citizenship

eligibility played in determining allocations of government welfare resources. In

analyzing case studies featuring displacements of racial populations in 1930s and 1940s

Los Angeles, historian George Sanchez posits that municipal officials specifically

targeted *noncitizen* residents (primarily of Latino and Japanese American descent) to

comprise the city's most "disposable people" and "expendable neighborhoods."[44]

According to Sanchez, developments during the New Deal and World War II years:

> "enabled [Los Angeles'] racial ordering to be carried out through
> massive [displacements] of those considered outside 'the citizenry.'
> Ethnic cleansing of local geographies was attempted throughout the era
> by local officials in order to solidify the claims of white Los Angeles
> residents to the benefits of citizenship, while placing racialized
> populations outside the boundaries of citizenship status that should be
> protected or granted by government action."[45]

In other words, even though the New Deal and World War II eras ushered in landmark

extensions of public assistance and welfare resources to nonwhite populations (most

notably black citizens), they also embodied severe limitations. Those who found

themselves to be noncitizens or what historian Mae Ngai refers to as "impossible

subjects,"—namely Asian Americans, who during this period were unable to legally

immigrate or become naturalized citizens—in fact faced legal, insurmountable barriers to

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[44] George Sanchez, "Disposable Peoples, Expendable Neighborhoods," in *A Companion to Los Angeles*, ed. William Deverell et al. (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 129.
[45] George Sanchez, "Disposable Peoples, Expendable Neighborhoods," 131.

welfare resources and crucial benefits of social citizenship.[46] This would be all-too-true for the Japanese American populations in Seattle who were displaced to accommodate Yesler Terrace's construction and subsequently rendered ineligible for residency due to their "alien," noncitizen status.

While the eras preceding World War II utilized citizenship status to dictate allocations of governmental assistance, the postwar period would mark a second stage of racial liberalism. Referred to by sociologist Howard Winant as the "racial break," the postwar racial liberalism marked the period when the U.S. officially began disavowing white supremacy by embracing antiracist frameworks and the Civil Rights Movement. Central to this racial break was an elevation of frameworks that highlighted displays of multiracial harmony such as racial integration, multiculturalism, and cosmopolitanism. Also critical to the racial break was the evolution of Asian American citizenship from being racialized as alien racial threats to becoming model minorities who now gained avenues to naturalized citizenship[47] and were at times extolled for demonstrations of socioeconomic success (although they also continued to be exoticized at times as foreign and Oriental). As racial liberalism gained increased acceptance, government welfare and civic resources also became available to larger numbers of nonwhite populations, including many of those previously shut out due to their noncitizen status. The unfolding of this development is charted from Chapters 2 through 4 in this dissertation, which examine key moments when multiple levels of American government—including the

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[46] Mae Ngai, Impossible Subjects; George Sanchez, "Disposable Peoples, Expendable Neighborhoods," 130-139.
[47] The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 (also known as the McCarran-Walter Act) enabled Japanese American immigrants to naturalize and become U.S. citizens. This marked the elimination of the final barrier to Asian American naturalization.

federal, state, and municipal levels—converged to delegate landmark programs and unprecedented amounts of resources to communities of color, and to also extend discourses of celebration and inclusion to these demographics. As I navigate the progression and implementation of racial liberalist experiments in Seattle from the 1940s through 1970s, I acknowledge that these undertakings helped increase allocations of important resources and/or social esteem to the city's African Americans and Asian Americans. However, I will also reveal that the double standards separating American citizenship for whites and nonwhites continued to exist in the realms of labor, civic resources, and government aid. Even as Seattle's racial groups garnered more resources and government assistance programs, they were still unable to escape assumptions that their request for resources connoted inadequate work ethics, self-sufficiency, or social citizenship on the part of the recipients. This is where racial citizenship becomes a double-edged sword. If a racial group were to receive government resources and assistance, such acceptance would exact a toll in the group's social status, as epitomized in the situation for African Americans in Seattle. And in order to retain societal respect, the racial population would have to forgo social services and resources, as embodied by the political strategies of Asian Americans. At the same time, such demands and tradeoffs are not exacted from white populations. This racial differentiation of social citizenship and access to civic resources forms another layer to how racial liberalism and colorblind racism functions to perpetuate white hegemony and white privilege.[48] It also forms the

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[48] Scholars such as Bonilla-Silva, (*Racism without Racists*), Lipsitz (*Possessive Investments in Whiteness*), and Kim ("Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans") posit that colorblind racism, postwar racial politics, and racial triangulation reinforce white privilege by disavowing the continued existence of racism, thereby forgoing the need for race-conscious programs such as Affirmative Action. Actions such as these then strengthen white privilege by enshrining the political, economic, and cultural advantages that have

basis for why Asian Americans and African Americans in Seattle grappled with tradeoffs in their disparate strategies to increase their socioeconomic status and shares of governmental assistance.

There have been many studies that have examined the histories of Asian and African American politics by focusing on a single race. The African American historiography for instance, contains works that document the multifaceted and dynamic traditions of political activism in the African American community along with studies that analyze the allocation of welfare resources to black neighborhoods. Other studies have examined Asian American activist strategies based on frameworks of model citizenship, racial uplift, and self-denial.[49] But what the framework of racial triangulation compels me to do is to examine the disparate tactics adopted by Seattle's Asian and African American community in a concurrent and relational manner. By "pulling back the lens" in this situation, I reveal not only similarities and critical differences characterizing the historical trajectories and political strategies of Seattle's two major racial groups, I also reveal how the workings of racial power manifested themselves in the setting of wartime and postwar Seattle. As I delve into the experiences of Seattle's

historically been accumulated through mechanisms of white privilege, white power, and racial exploitation. While my dissertation agrees that dynamics of postwar racial politics (including postwar racial liberalism) serves to reinforce white power, my chapters are primarily focused on analyzing the role played by differential, race-based distributions of welfare resources. While racial populations are forced to make a choice between acceptance of welfare resources and sociopolitical racial denigration, whites do not have to grapple with this dilemma. Thus, my dissertation offers another dimension as to how postwar racial politics bolsters white privilege.

[49] See footnote 25 for studies analyzing histories of African American activist strategies. Studies analyzing Asian American frameworks of model citizenship and racial uplift include Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides*; Lon Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict*; Scott Kurashige, *Shifting Grounds of Race*; and Ellen Wu, *Color of Success*. It is important to note that this dissertation does not argue that the disparate strategies of protest resistance by African Americans and model citizenship by Asian Americans are mutually exclusive. In fact, there is a substantial literature detailing strategies of racial uplift by African Americans as well as protest activism by Asian Americans. Furthermore, both strategies can co-exist within the same racial community. The strategies and racial alignments discussed in this dissertation only reflects the predominant trends in the context of Seattle urban politics during the mid-twentieth century.

Asian and African Americans, the inverse and divergent trajectories of their histories and politics reveal a foundational principle that undergirds the workings of American racial liberalism. That is, processes of racialization and resource allocation for racial groups frequently operate according to a zero-sum game. In the area of resource allocation, the antithetical approaches adopted by Seattle's African Americans and Asian Americans suggests that both groups were forced to compete for resources in same pool, one designated specifically for nonwhites and far smaller than those allocated for whites. African Americans' vocal push for racial equality and resources contrasted with Asian Americans' overall approach of self-denial and far more circumspect pursuit of resources suggests that Seattle's absence of direct confrontation or competition between blacks and Asians was the result of both groups finding ways to negotiate their positioning in accordance with the zero-sum game that dictated their shared allocation of resources. The popular elevation of "self-sufficient" Asian Americans combined with the denigration of "welfare-dependent" African Americans then reinforces Glenn's assertion on the existence of differential standards of citizenship for whites and nonwhites. Even though U.S. history has demonstrated that whites can receive governmental aid and resources without being maligned, such possibilities do not exist for nonwhite groups, as the histories of Asians and blacks in Seattle highlight.

## Linkages to Seattle Historiography

In addition to being a work of scholarship intent on complicating historical understandings of racial triangulation, racial citizenship, and racial liberalism, this dissertation is also seeks to present a regional history of racial formation in Seattle. An assessment of Seattle historiography yields two key perspectives on issues of race. The

first presents Seattle as a center of racial liberalism and ethnic harmony. Two often-cited

works falling under this category are accounts written in the 1960s and 70s by historians

Murray Morgan and Richard Sale. Widely regarded as foundational histories on Seattle,

both portray the city through a romanticized and nostalgic lens emphasizing an

atmosphere of cosmopolitanism and racial tolerance that came to characterize the city

during the twentieth century. [50] Later works on Seattle would inject a more critical

analysis of Seattle's mixed legacies in the histories of its racial districts, but would

continue to stress the prevailing theme of racial liberalism. For example, Quintard

Taylor's study provides the most comprehensive history of Seattle's black community

and serves as one of the most detailed and authoritative accounts on Seattle's ethnic

history in general. Charting the emergence of a smaller, middle-class black community

during the late 1800s and covering the subsequent expansion and interethnic connections

experienced by the black community, Taylor's work offers robust scholarship and a

wealth of compelling details on the triumphs and struggles of Seattle's black residents.

But ultimately in summarizing his stance on Seattle's racial legacy, Taylor concludes that

the "vast majority" of Seattleites embody the "ideal of racial toleration and

egalitarianism."[51] Historian Connie So echoes this sentiment in her dissertation on the life

of Chinese-American city councilmember Wing Luke (1925-1965). Her analysis of

Luke's life is premised upon a stance that twentieth century Seattle was capable of

electing a Chinese-American officeholder because the city was "exception in a

willingness to "accept pluralism and equality of opportunity" for residents of different

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[50] See Murray Morgan, *Skid Row: An Informal Portrait of Seattle* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1960) and Sale, Roger, *Seattle: Past to Present*.
[51] Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community*, 4.

races.[52] Even though two additional recent studies by John Putman and Jeffrey Craig Sanders do not focus particularly on race, they do add nuance to prevailing understandings of Seattle as a progressive and liberal space. Putman's book traces the development of a thriving progressive movement that emerged between 1850 and 1920 when Seattle's organized labor and middle-class white women forged alliances to implement a series of progressive economic and political reforms (such as suffrage and unionization), while Sanders's book examines the critical role of multiracial and cross-class grassroots alliances in fostering the city's thriving contemporary environmental activist movement.[53]

In the 1990s, a small but notable body of scholarship emerged to provide more critical analyses of histories of Seattle's nonwhite populations—Asian Americans, African Americans, and Native Americans. Each offers valuable insights into Seattle's racial histories, either by studying populations that had previously been neglected in scholarship, by applying new analytical frameworks to their narratives, or by complicating understandings of previously-studied populations.[54] For instance, works by American Studies scholars Dorothy Fujita-Rony and Megan Asaka utilize interdisciplinary methods to excavate and analyze long-neglected histories of nonwhite transient workers, highlighting Seattle as one of the nation's most important nexuses of

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[52] Connie So, "Seattle Exceptionalism: The Life and Legacy of Wing Luke," (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2000), 39.

[53] John Putman, *Class and Gender Politics in Progressive-era Seattle* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2008); Jeffrey Craig Sanders, *Seattle and the Roots of Urban Sustainability: Inventing Ecotopia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010)

[54] Coll Thrush, *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-Over Place* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007). Thrush's work sheds light on the dearth of archival information on Native Americans in urban centers such as Seattle and provides a critical analysis of Seattle's long-running erasure of its American Indian populations.

migrant organization and congregation.[55] While works such as those by Fujita-Rony and

Asaka look to excavate historical silences in Seattle's racial population, historian Shelley

Lee presents a study that adds new perspectives to the widely studied history of Japanese

Americans in Seattle. Lee asserts that the Japanese American experience in the city was

not only shaped by racial segregation and nativism, as is well-documented in studies on

Asian Americans on the West Coast in the first half of the twentieth century. The reality

was more complicated; even though Japanese Americans in prewar Seattle suffered

racism, they did at times gain positive visibility and reap socioeconomic benefits from

efforts by civic boosters to promote Seattle as the nation's gateway to Asia.[56] One

additional work by historian Matthew Klingle merits mention, for it presents an

environmental history that uncovers the damaging efforts of the city's 150-history of

environmental engineering, physical regrades, urban planning on poor working

communities and those who did not fit the racial or political preferences of the city's elite

class.[57] Together, all of these studies on Seattle epitomize a sentiment express eloquently

by Lee that:

> On the one hand, for much of the last two centuries, [West Coast cities]
> have been viewed from within and without as "promised lands" boasting
> brighter opportunities and fewer obstacles compared to other parts of the
> United States. Yet they were also battlegrounds where struggles for racial

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[55] Dorothy Fujita-Rony. *American Workers, Colonial Power: Philippine Seattle and the Transpacific West, 1919*-1941 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). Fujita-Rony's work, in contrast to many preceding works analyzing Filipino American history, examines the role of U.S. colonialism and Manifest Destiny in shaping Filipino immigration and community formation in Seattle. Fujita-Rony effectively demonstrates that understanding of Seattle's Filipino community (along with its gender, class, and ethnic formations) is inadequate without thoughtful consideration of the U.S.' imperialist policies and racializing discourses. Megan Asaka, "The Unsettled City: Migration, Race, and the Making of Seattle's Urban Landscape," (PhD diss., Yale University, 2014).

[56] Lee, Shelley Sang-Hee. *Claiming the Oriental Gateway: Prewar Seattle and Japanese America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011).

[57] Matthew Klingle, *Emerald City: An Environmental History of Seattle* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007).

privilege, economic resources, and social status took on a particular intensity.[58]

This statement is of particular applicability to Seattle's racial historiography. While a large body of ethnic studies scholarship has documented histories of racial contentions and contradictions in California history, episodes of racial strife in Seattle have received far less attention, in part due to their lesser frequency and in part due to the lingering depictions of Seattle as an exceptionally progressive American city.[59] Nonetheless, this group of important works demonstrate that the city was the site of intense contestations over citizenship, social statuses, and resources even if tensions rarely boiled to the surface.

Taken together with the above works, my dissertation offers insight into power inequalities shaping the socioeconomic fortunes of Seattle's racial groups underneath the progressive and liberalist reputation of the city. I examine four developments that have either been framed as liberalist success in Seattle's historiography or have been little-examined from a racial perspectives. I acknowledge their progressive characteristics on one hand, but also reveal more problematic implications behind their implementations and outcomes. In the process, I hone in on particular manifestations of racial order and racial triangulation that are in fact made apparent through the lack of conflict as well as any unstated tensions characterizing Asian-black relations in Seattle. Therefore, my

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[58]Lee, *Claiming the Oriental Gateway*, 16

[59] Studies that document racial tensions and Conservative political trends that have contradicted California's reputation for racial progressivism and political liberalism include Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Mark Brilliant, *The Color of America has Changed: How Racial Diversity Shaped Civil Rights Reform in California, 1941-1978* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Martinez Daniel HoSang, *Racial Propositions: Ballot Initiatives and the Making of Postwar California* (Berkeley: University of California, 2010).

project consists more than simply examinations of racial groups' mixed histories and encounters with progressivism and racism in the city. I use a relational and comparative analysis of Asian and black history as a tool to produce new ways of understanding how systems of racial order deploy "multiple marginalities" that operate in overt and covert fashion to suppress the socioeconomic fortunes of nonwhite groups and support white power, even in the age of racial liberalism.[60]

### Research and Areas of Inquiry

My project began as an inquiry into twentieth century histories of multiracial formations in Seattle. As I delved into archival research on the city's interethnic community formations and politics, two observations became apparent to me. First, Seattle's history of exceptional liberalism factored heavily in shaping government-community and interethnic relations when it came to managing the city's racial populations. Secondly, even though Seattle's legacies of liberalism frequently compelled the city's officials and residents to embrace racially progressive initiatives and discourses, critical analyses revealed that these developments, while admirable in many ways, also invariably harbored pitfalls that disproportionately affected Seattle's racial populations. It was through this process of discovery that I decided to focus my dissertation on landmark undertakings that epitomized both governmental officials' and communities' commitment to promoting racial progressivism, interethnic harmony, and racial equality. On the surface, these projects have all been extensively documented in archival materials and represent the most visible manifestations of civic commitment to

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[60] Kathleen S. Yep, "Peddling Sport: Liberal Multiculturalism and the Racial Triangulation of Blackness, Chineseness and Native American-ness in Professional Basketball," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 35 no. 6 (2012): 973.

racial progress. This is because they embraced official discourses that disavowed white supremacy in favor of celebrating racial equality and cosmopolitanism, and often incorporated provisions to delegate unprecedented levels of funding or civic resources for impoverished racial communities. At the same time however, each of these projects contained covert mechanisms that served to shortchange the socioeconomic fortunes of racial communities. In other words, Seattle's landmark racial experiments provide a site where the possibilities and limitations of twentieth century racial citizenship are brought to light.

At the same time, these projects also serve as critical sites for analyzing how racial liberalism and colorblind racism were historically reinforced and set in motion across different social arenas. In articulating their foundational theory of racial formation, sociologists Michael Omi and Howard Winant conceptualized race and racial formation as a "social and historical process by which racial categories were created, inhabited, transformed, or destroyed."[61] As the dissertation navigates the creation of racial categories, it will become apparent that the vicissitudes of racial triangulation politics in Seattle is very much rooted in particular intersections of events and configuration of demographics linked to the history of the city. By the conclusion of my study, I will conclude that racial triangulation manifested itself through covert yet consequential deployments of power structures, discourses, and resource allocations to create a postwar racial order that cemented white privilege and Asian American ascendancy firmly over African Americans. Yet, it is critical to recognize that the creation of this order was not a

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[61] Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 55.

result of preconceived scheme, but as a response to particular events, historical actors, and strategic decisions.

In their exposition on racial formation, Omi and Winant place particular emphasis on "racial projects" as being a "matter of both social structure and cultural representation."[62] Accordingly, my research approach is partly premised on the study of cultural representation through analyses of racial imagery, stereotypes, and most importantly, discourses. In this discussion of philosopher Michel Foucault's works, cultural theorist Stuart Hall states that discourse can be defined as "a group of statements which provide a language for talking about—a way of representing the knowledge about—a particular topic at a particular historical moment."[63] When applied to racial histories of Seattle, this means that I analyze my sources with particular attention to the various linguistic devices that are used to depict (or self-depict) the city's Asian and African Americans. Beyond analyses of cultural representation and their repercussions and legacies, "social structure," defined as state activity and policy—comprises the second critical component to understanding Omi and Winant's concept of racial formation.[64] In his discussion of Foucault, Hall also notes that solely analyzing meanings of discourses is never adequate. In Hall's words, discourse "is not a purely 'linguistic' concept. It is about language *and* practice." In other words, a sufficient analysis of discourse must also take into consideration how discourses are put into practice.[65] This notion is echoed by Omi and Winant who state that understanding cultural

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[62] Omi and Winant, 56. Molina, Natalia, *How Race is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014) 3.

[63] Hall, Stuart, "Foucault: Power, Knowledge, and Discourse," *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader*, eds. Margaret Wetherell, Stephanie Taylor, and Simeon J Yates (London: Sage, 2001) 72. (72-81)

[64] Omi and Winant, Racial Formation in the United States, 57.

[65] Hall, "Foucault," 72.

representations and discourses can provide audiences with "an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics" while an analysis of social structure's interplay with culture can reveal the contours of "[efforts] to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular racial lines."

This is why I analyze the archival materials with particular attention to interpreting differences between the lofty discourses of racial liberalism of landmark events in Seattle, and the sobering realties faced by the nonwhite populations supposedly being extolled and helped. In my analysis, I adopt Antonio Gramsci's conception of hegemony which posits that the dominant class in a state (which in this project is embodied by Seattle's white establishment) always seeks to attain the consent of the governed, including subordinate populations. This consent is frequently manufactured through state- and media-produced discourses ideologies which frame the dominant class' interests as aligned with those of subordinate populations. Within the context of World War II, racial liberalism emerged as a discourse that increasingly served to depict the American nation as one amenable to the interests of all populations, regardless of race. Racial liberalism succeeded largely in positioning the United States as an international paragon of democracy and liberty, and in gaining the cooperation of a significant segment of its minority population in subscribing to its ideologies and projects. In the case of Seattle, racial liberalism managed to enhance Seattle's national profile and convince many racial organizations and nonwhite leaders to subscribe to model citizenship and seek state cooperation in community improvement projects. Nonetheless, as I highlight in my project, hegemonic discourses often serve to conceal underlying inequities and perpetuate the dominant class' power structures. In the case of

racial liberalism, its celebration of multiculturalism, multiracial harmony, and ambitious assistance programs for nonwhite communities served to divert attention away from underlying conditions (i.e. unequitable allocation of resources) that perpetuated white subordination of racial populations.

This project began because of my interest in examining the state's role in forming policies and discourses of racial liberalism. As the principal arena of political power, legal authority, and policymaking the state was absolutely critical to the formation of racial liberalism. As I began my inquiry into state-centered productions of racial liberalism in Seattle, I looked to the Seattle Municipal Archives (SMA), which was the official repository of municipal-issued documents (including meeting notes, state-sponsored reports, government correspondence, government statistics) on the city's government-commissioned projects pertaining to management of race relations and racial populations. Collections at the SMA contained the most comprehensive official histories, statistics, and budget figures for Yesler Terrace and Seattle Model Cities Program (SMCP). In the case of SMCP, the SMA's SMCP Collection also contained a plethora of internal meeting notes and government-commissioned studies that provided candid glimpses into tensions, critiques, and differences of approach pertaining to the implementation of the program. These rupture points served as an ideal starting point for analyzing the divergent strategies adopted by SMCP's African American and Asian American proponents.

While the SMA contained invaluable governmental documents pertaining to the Yesler Terrace public housing project and the Seattle Model Cities Program (SMCP), I turned to Seattle's second major archival repository, the University of Washington

Special Collection to obtain perspectives on Seattle's racial liberalist projects from non-governmental organizations and individuals. For Yesler Terrace, the SMA housed invaluable reports and statistics issued by the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA), but the Special Collections at UW contained personal papers, press scrapbooks, and an oral history of Jesse Epstein, head of SHA, that revealed a wealth of nuance behind the decision-making process and particular strategies pertaining to Yesler Terrace's implementation of racial integration not revealed in the official government reports. In addition to offering perspectives of government projects not found at SMA, the UW Special Collections also housed the official Jackson Street Community Council archive as well as multiple personal collections, reports, and scrapbooks related to the 1962 Seattle World's Fair. These collections would then serve as the basis for Chapter 2, centered on the Jackson Street Community Council, and Chapter 3, which examines racial politics and citizenship at the 1962 world's fair. Combined together, the collections at SMA and UW round each other out by providing governmental, institutional, and individual perspectives on a range of racially progressive experiments embarked by Seattleites during the era of racial liberalism, from 1940 to 1975. In the process, they not only revealed how the government set out to manage Asian and African American populations in Seattle, these archival collections also revealed different ways in which leaders of the Asian and African American communities produced their own sets of strategies to assist their communities and obtain resources from the government.

## Chapter Plan

The chapters in this dissertation chart the progression of racial triangulation and racial liberalism through multiple phases in Seattle. Chapter 1 details a critical event that

epitomized one of the city's earliest implementations of racial liberalism: the 1940-1942 establishment of Yesler Terrace—the city's first public housing project—and the decision to racially integrate residents of this facility. Being the first public housing project in the country to do so, Yesler Terrace is frequently regarded even to this day as a landmark moment in the implementation of racial liberalism and progressivism. However, an analysis of municipal archival documents and first-hand accounts of public housing officials reveals that the Yesler Terrace's project came at a steep price for a Japanese American community displaced to make way for the construction. Although relocated residents were guaranteed first-priority consideration for Yesler Terrace, the majority of the Japanese Americans were ultimately deemed ineligible due to a federal requirement that public housing families be headed by U.S. citizens. Ultimately, the history of Yesler Terrace demonstrates that the facility's racial integration experiment was enabled by the displacement and permanent loss of housing for Japanese Americans in the neighborhood. This development serves to highlight the fact that Seattle's implementation of racial liberalism in Yesler Terrace was enabled through a system of racial triangulation premised upon legal structures that served to facilitate black-white racial integration through the denial of citizenship and governmental resources to Asian American communities. And even though African Americans were admitted to Yesler Terrace in larger numbers, the reality of the project was that whites consistently occupied at least 92% of the facility during its early years.

Chapter 2 then charts the evolution of racial triangulation in a postwar context when multicultural frameworks were beginning to be extolled throughout Seattle as well as the nation. This chapter analyzes manifestations of racial triangulation as they

unfolded in the emergence of the Jackson Street Community Council (JSCC), the most prominent neighborhood organization in Central Area and Chinatown/International District from 1946 to 1960. During this period, JSCC garnered national attention for epitomizing racial liberalism as it began to embrace outward celebrations of diversity and multiculturalism. Comprised of multiple races and ethnicities—Asian Americans, Caucasians, Jews, and African Americans—and dominated by its Chinese and Japanese contingent, JSCC embarked upon a series of public health and public sanitation self-help projects designed to improve the neighborhood landscape and garner resources from municipal government. Through these endeavors, JSCC embodied a multicultural brand of racial uplift and received favorable press coverage from local and national media outlets. Nonetheless, I demonstrate that such strategies also served to glorify (rather than dismantle) the racial segregationist practices that accounted for Jackson Street's diversity and absolve the city of the decades-long neglect of infrastructures responsible for much of the community's socioeconomic problems. As I delve into the implications of JSCC's racial uplift strategies for Seattle's early urban renewal projects for racial communities, I will also reveal a pattern of differential racialization emerge around management of Asian and African American populations. With active participation from JSCC, the predominantly Asian and Caucasian neighborhood of Cherry Hill would receive a minute allocation of municipal funds for its urban renewal projects in contrast to the predominantly black Yesler Atlantic community which received over three million dollars in federal funding. This would further reveal a governmental allocation pattern of framing Asians as self-sufficient and African Americans as dependent and in greater need of resources. Yet, in accordance with the double-edged nature of their racial citizenship,

delineations of Asians as self-sufficient would simultaneously facilitate their entry into model minority citizenship while the framing of African Americans as governmental dependents would pave the way for increased surveillance, criminalization, and denigration of their community.

Chapter 3 chronicles persistent yet shifting manifestations of racial triangulation in an event that epitomized Seattle's continued investments in multiracial configurations, the 1962 World's Fair (also known as the Century 21 Exposition). Century 21 was a seminal event when civic leaders thrust their earlier embrace of multiculturalism onto a global stage and used highly visible displays of cosmopolitanism to enhance Seattle's status as a major American city. Analyzing various sources (internal documents by fair planners, publicly circulated World's Fair materials, tourist publications, World's Fair cultural products, and press coverage), I demonstrate that underneath the event's outward promotion of cosmopolitanism and postwar liberalism rendered it progressive in relation to previous world's fairs which frequently presented iterations of overt racism and nationalism. Yet, an analysis of local Asian American and African American participation in the fair shows that patterns of racial triangulation continued to dictate both racial activist strategies and civic management of Seattle's two major racial populations. Given the context of Century 21's emphasis on cosmopolitanism, Seattle's Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino American communities were given positions of visibility in the event as local representatives and cultural liaisons to the fair's international exhibitions (for Republic of China, Japan, and the Philippines, respectively). Nevertheless, this form of participation was predicated on very public displays of self-exoticization for Seattle's Asian communities along with the downplaying of their status

as Seattleites and U.S. citizens. Meanwhile, African Americans were not deemed exotic

or foreign enough for cultural participation in the fair's international and cosmopolitan

components, and received virtually no representation in the event's exhibitions. In

contrast however to the Asian American community which opted to self-fund much of

their participation in the fair, the African American community worked to tackle hiring

discrimination at the fair and as a result, received a greater share of employment

opportunities from the fair.

Chapter 4 explores an important moment that bookends Seattle's history of racial

liberalist experiments. Whereas Yesler Terrace represented one of the city's first

governmental investments in racial liberalism, this chapter's subject of inquiry, the

Seattle Model City Program (SMCP), which marked the city's participation in a last-gasp

federal effort to implement liberalism before its demise at the hands of conservatism by

the mid-1970s. In the process, this chapter also caps the progression of racial

triangulation as a system that originally stemmed from overt legal structures during the

Yesler Terrace years into a system that is eventually produced by covert structural racism

and divergent strategies of political agency (in this case, by Asian Americans and African

Americans) during the postwar period.

As a War on Poverty Program that allocated millions of dollars in federal funding

to eradicating urban socioeconomic problems and to improving inner city infrastructures,

the Model Cities Program embodied high hopes and lofty goals when it came to national

hopes of ameliorating racial inequality and ghettoes. In the case of Seattle, municipal

leaders had proclaimed that their city's ghetto problem was still in its incipient stages;

therefore, the SMCP would have a high probability of success as well as glittering

potential to become a template for solving the nation's racial problems. However, an analysis of SMCP reports, meeting notes, publicity materials, and budget documents, in addition to local media coverage, shows that by 1970 the high hopes of the late 1960s would devolve into competition amongst the program's black and Asian constituency for a limited pool of resources. SMCP's black participants focused their energies on acquiring both direct service funds, designed to provide critical social services (e.g. in areas such as unemployment, job training, youth delinquency, crime, and homelessness), and to a lesser extent, infrastructural funds designed to improve neighborhood infrastructures and construct new buildings. For their part, Asians shunned direct service funds in favor of infrastructural funding (such as park and housing construction funds), which they sought aggressively. In the end, SMCP allocated more resources to black communities and their software investments, while Asians found more limited levels of success in funding their hardware programs. The black populations in Central Area continued to be criminalized in state and media depictions while Asian populations found themselves cut out of the welfare system, a development that would have major ramifications with the influx of Southeast Asian refugees into the International District after the 1970s. The example of SMCP illustrates that by the late 1960s and 1970s racial liberalism operated by making nonwhite segments make choices that would never be demanded of whites, who occupied the dominant position atop the city's racial hierarchy. Moreover, racial liberalism as exemplified by SMCP also operated by paving way for future associations of blacks with welfare and crime, as well as the intensification of Asian model minority myth following the 1970s, a myth that served to foreclose Asian access to welfare and social assistance during the critical decades following the 1970s.

**Charting Racial Liberalism through the Chapters**

The four chapters in this dissertation all examine critical moments when configurations of racial liberalism operated to create mixed legacies for Seattle's Asian and African American communities. Each chapter reveals the workings of racial liberalism through different historical phases and will in the process also highlight the centrality of differential governmental resource allocations and racial triangulation to the maintenance of evolving racial liberalist frameworks from the 1940s through the 1970s. Using Yesler Terrace as its case study, Chapter 1 situates racial liberalism in the New Deal years immediately preceding World War II. The years of Yesler Terrace's establishment and construction (1939-1942) marked a threshold period that anticipated the national emergence of racial liberalist tenets, namely repudiations of overt racial segregation and racial discrimination public spaces, housing, and employment. During these years, initial efforts to combat black/white segregation and confer increased economic opportunities and governmental resources to African Americans garnered attention from officials and the American public. Asian Americans, however, remained racialized as foreigners who resided outside the realm of U.S. citizenship and therefore not entitled to governmental aid programs.

Chapters 2 and 3 then examine racial liberalist projects in Seattle spanning 1946-1962. Chapters 2 and 3 chronicle years in Seattle's history following the pivotal "racial break" moment, and grapple with the mixed legacies of these decades. As has been widely documented, this era ushered in critical political and socioeconomic gains for African Americans and Asian Americans, and the two chapters will highlight different ways in which both communities in Seattle deployed multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism,

and antiracism to acquire increased social standing and resources. At the same time

however, this was also an era when structural racisms persisted and differential

allocations of public resources worked to separate the experiences of Asian and African

Americans in Seattle, even within projects that brought the two groups together in

collaboration. It would be within this context that the city's Asian and African American

community would develop their divergent political strategies with Asian Americans

emphasizing projects highlighting self-reliance and pull-yourself-up-by-the-bootstrap

mentalities, and African Americans emphasizing projects centering around civil rights

and protests of racial discrimination.

Chapter 4 concludes the examination of racial liberalism by focusing on SMCP,

which spanned a period spanning both the height of government experimentation in racial

liberalism as well as its twilight years. Under the Johnson administration, racial

liberalism took on the form of ambitious federal projects that sought to triumphantly cap

years of civil rights struggles by infusing billions of dollars into eradicating poverty and

racial inequality in urban areas. Representing one of the last programs in this era of

"liberal revolution" as coined by historian Carol A. Horton, SMCP generated tremendous

optimism among the city's Asian and African American communities at its outset. As the

program proceeded through the years however, it became apparent that its budget

allocations would not be sufficient to eliminate issues of poverty, inadequate housing,

and crime affecting Central Area and the International District in spite of impassioned

efforts by Asians and blacks to mobilize community participation and collaborate with

SMCP officials. What SMCP did produce however, was another set of divergent political

strategies by Asians and blacks in the city whose ultimate result was to further

criminalize black Seattleites and further restrict Asian residents' access to social services and welfare programs.

Collectively, these four chapters and their case studies highlight the evolution of racial liberalism through multiple phases of its incipient stage, post-racial break period, liberal revolution period, and ultimate decline. By situating the evolution of racial liberalism in Seattle, my dissertation also enables one to track the centrality of racial triangulation to the maintenance racial liberalism. This is due to the fact that racial liberalism embodies two seemingly contradictory components, which are the public embrace of principled stances against racism, and the implicit continuation of structural inequalities such as inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities for nonwhite populations. It is under this context that differential racialization of blacks and Asians following the postwar period serve to pit the two populations against each other, especially in competition for socioeconomic opportunities and governmental resources. At the same time, the divergent political strategies adopted by Asian and African Americans to navigate their differential racial landscapes ultimately serve powerfully to reinforce racial triangulation frameworks and bolster white privilege.

**Chapter One:**
**Excavating the Mixed Legacy of the Yesler Terrace Housing Project, 1939-1945**

In a *Chicago Sun* editorial published on June 24, 1946, writer Robert Lasch

singled out Seattle for praise in an otherwise glum assessment of several Western cities'

struggles with housing shortages and racial tensions. Noting that "Seattle's tradition of

political progressivism offered a refreshing contrast to the big-business conservatism of

Oregon and California," Lasch cited the city's public housing policy as the primary

evidence of its open-mindedness towards race relations as he exclaimed that:

> [Seattle's] public housing projects are among the few in the country which
> permit no racial segregation whatever, not even the compromise kind
> which locates Negroes in one section and whites in another of the same
> development. Jesse Epstein, the aggressive former secretary of the Seattle
> Housing Authority, now regional director of the [Federal Public Housing
> Administration], says there is only one way in deal (sic) with racism—
> never make a single concession to it…Seattle, like Cleveland, can teach
> the country a lesson.[1]

As one of few cities to integrate its public housing projects by the 1940s, Seattle began to

receive acclaim from national outlets for blazing the trail in dismantling racial

segregation. Indeed, Seattle's first public housing project, Yesler Terrace, had become

the first in the nation to implement and enforce a racial integration policy in 1939. In

subsequent years as racial integration became the widely accepted norm of the country,

Yesler Terrace's claim to fame in the annals of race relations would only become more

solidified as its story became entrenched in most official histories of the city.

When Yesler Terrace is mentioned today in the historiography of Seattle or public

housing, its pioneering status in racial integration is generally cited as evidence that

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[11] Robert Lasch, "Lesson of a Travelogue: Our Oneness in Diversity," *The Chicago Sun*, June 24, 1946.

the city was racially progressive and ahead of its time. As I acknowledge in this chapter,
there was certainly truth to this interpretation, and Seattle's implementation of racial
integration was an unprecedented step made more notable for the fact that it took place
during an era when public housing projects were constructed for the purpose of offering
dignity and improved quality of life to its residents, a stark contrast from the subsequent
decades when such projects would evolve into densely populated high rises designed to
house predominantly black communities. However, this chapter will also engage in a
critical analysis of Yesler Terrace's implications for race relations and racial formation in
Seattle. Although Seattle housing authorities took the bold step to de-segregate Yesler
Terrace's residents, even overcoming some resistance in the process, a close examination
of housing documents and autobiographical admissions by housing staff will reveal that
severe limitations characterized the implementation of racial integration at the housing
project. For in the process of making de-segregation palatable to city residents and
government officials, the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) placed restrictions on the
numbers of nonwhite residents that would be accepted into Yesler Terrace and employed
an approach of strategic reticence towards initial publicity on the projects housing
integration policy. These actions add another layer to understandings of the early
implementation of racial liberalism—defined here as the rejection of overt racism in
favor of governmental protections promoting civil liberties and racial equality for all
citizens. Even though racial integration and racial liberalism were eventually accepted
and extolled throughout the country, their initial success was often fraught with
uncertainty and required delicate strategies. More troubling in the narrative of racial
liberalism and Yesler Terrace is the role played by racial triangulation. As I examined

background histories behind the establishment of Yesler Terrace, it became clear that the project's actual construction was only made possible with the forced displacement of hundreds of Asian American residents. Coupled with the fact that Asian Americans were largely ineligible for residency in Yesler Terrace, this development reveals one powerful manifestation of racial triangulation, that gains by African Americans and whites in Seattle's public housing were in large part, made possible by the destruction of an Asian American community and by subsequent restrictions on Asian American tenancy. Thus, racial triangulation undergirded the establishment of racial liberalism in Seattle.

**Yesler Terrace and the Early History of Public Housing**

Initiated in 1939, the Yesler Terrace housing project was completed and formally dedicated to the public on June 17, 1942. Boasting 690 units located atop a hill featuring views of downtown Seattle and the Pacific Ocean, Yesler Terrace beckoned city officials and tenants with hopes of a promising and comfortable future. As government officials and press outlets gathered for the ceremony, a tone of excitement and optimism permeated the keynote speeches. Mayor William F. Devin proudly predicted that "Yesler Terrace will become one of the beauty spots of Seattle." Langden Post, regional director of the Federal Public Housing Authority, proclaimed that "This is one of the most dramatic stories in America. Rotten decay has disappeared. An entire slum district has been wiped out. Seattle should be proud of such an achievement."[2] For many in attendance, the construction of Yesler Terrace marked an important accomplishment for Seattle as the city became the first in the state, and one of the earliest in the nation, to construct a public housing project—government-subsidized housing designed for low-

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[2] "Yesler Terrace Draws Praise at Dedication," *Seattle Times*, June 17, 1942, 28.

income residents. Many residents of Seattle, like many in the rest of the nation, had still been reeling from the devastating effects of the Great Depression, and Yesler Terrace offered the potential of new beginnings.

In contrast to the high-rise slum tenements that would come to characterize public housing in the 1960s, Yesler Terrace was the product of an earlier era whose ideas on government-subsidized housing were more idealistic and experimental. Built prior to the introduction of "super-blocks" that would utilize extreme cost-cutting measures to house high densities of indigents, public housing in the 1930s and 1940s were dictated by principles of the New Deal era, intended as public works projects that would provide the working class with jobs as well as decent, affordable residences reflecting middle-class sensibilities. As such, these housing projects were often sturdily built, and in the words of urban studies scholar, Edward G. Goetz, were "among the best surviving examples of New Deal architecture."[3] Yesler Terrace falls under this framework as it was designed to showcase living spaces that were dignified and aesthetic, and to also provide communal amenities that would promote family and community life. It offered what would seem inconceivable luxuries for public housing of later eras: low-rise two-story structures whose units each featured yards, and whose communal facilities included daycare and job training centers.

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[3] Edward G. Goetz, *New Deal Ruins: Race, Economic Justice, and Public Housing Policy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 5.

**Figure 1.1. Photograph of Yesler Terrace, 1943**
University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, [DM1969]

While Yesler Terrace reflected the aesthetics and amenities of New Deal public housing, it deviated from its counterparts by implementing a policy of racial integration. Commenced in 1941, the Seattle Housing Authority's move towards racial integration highlights both the possibilities and the limitations of racial liberalism's early history. With this development taking place during a period often overlooked in literatures on public housing and racial liberalism, this chapter examines municipal archival documents, interviews, Seattle scholarship, and first-hand accounts to first demonstrate that Yesler Terrace's integration of black and white residents did in part represent a triumph of racial liberalism, as it was successfully pulled off against a backdrop of white supremacist institutions prevalent in both city and national politics.

With tacit cooperation from city and federal officials, the head of Seattle Housing Authority (SHA), Jesse Epstein, placed residents from racially diverse backgrounds into Yesler Terrace during the New Deal and early World War II eras when public housing was widely regarded as resources exclusive to middle and working-class whites.

Federally-funded public housing facilities such as Yesler Terrace emerged as products of

New Deal progressivism which, under pressure from ravages of the Great Depression,

saw successful passage of the Wagner-Steagall Act of 1937 (also known as the Housing

Act of 1937), which allocated $500 million dollars in low-interest loans to cities for slum

clearance and construction of low-rent housing projects that would provide residents with

"decent, safe, and sanitary dwellings."[4] Although the wording of the Housing Act of

1937 identified "families of low income" as the target demographic for public housing,

the reality was that public housing was not intended for the poorest of the poor, but rather

for the submerged middle class and working class members who had found themselves

temporarily jobless as a result of the Depression.[5] Reflecting these attitudes, public

housing projects throughout the country enforced strict criteria for tenancy between 1937

and the mid-1950s. Tenants above stipulated income levels were typically disqualified,

though the poorest residents unable to pay subsidized monthly rents were also rendered

ineligible.[6] Moreover, public housing facilities also set stringent criteria that required

tenants to demonstrate characteristics of middle-class, proper citizenship. Only nuclear

families with married parents, employed heads of households, and demonstrated

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[4] *United States Housing Act of 1937*, Section 1. For a more detailed discussion on the history of public housing during the New Deal era, please see Gail Radford, "The Federal Government and Housing During the Great Depression," in *From Tenements to the Taylor Homes: In Search of an Urban Housing Policy in Twentieth-Century America*, ed. John F. Bauman, Roger Biles, and Kristin M. Szylvian (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000) 102-120. Radford's discussion delves into greater nuance on differences in New Deal public housing legislation and construction between the Public Works Administration housing programs created by the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 and the later public housing projects built under the Housing Act of 1937. According to her, projects constructed prior to the 1937 were of even higher quality because they were unhindered by per-unit spending caps that would later be placed by the 1937 Housing Act. For purposes of this chapter's discussion on the public housing project as implemented in Seattle, I focus on the superior quality and living spaces provided by New Deal projects for the 1930s and 1940s in comparison to the subsequent high-rise, high-density projects of the 1950s and 1960s.
[5] *United States Housing Act of 1937*, Section 1.
[6] Lawrence Friedman, "Government and Slum Housing: Some General Considerations," *Law and Contemporary Problems*, 32 (1967): 357.

housekeeping proficiency were eligible for public housing, and as A. Scott Henderson

asserts in his analysis of popular press coverage prior to 1960 reveals, such occupants

were typically portrayed positively and sympathetically in the media.[7]

Consistent with national conceptions of public housing as economic uplift for

deserving and normative citizens victimized by events such as the Great Depression,

design elements and amenities of earlier housing projects emphasized efforts to provide

residents with lives of dignity and comfort. This was especially true from the 1930s to the

early 1940s, when experimental designs for public housing were likely to be sturdily built

and thoughtfully designed. Iberville and Lafitte projects in New Orleans, for instance,

promoted walkable, pedestrian-friendly facilities that boasted quality construction

materials and aesthetic details such as "detailed brickwork, tile roofs, and wrought-iron

balustrades" that "[represented] a level of craft more likely found on an Ivy League

campus" than the housing projects of later decades.[8] They also featured green spaces and

communal courtyards flanked by oak tree canopies that served to promote tranquility and

closeness with nature.[9] Teachwood Homes in Atlanta featured open airy common spaces

and notable design elements such as doorway canopies and stone-trimmed buildings

while Outwaithe Homes in Cleveland showcased art deco structures.[10]

Designed by an illustrious team of five renowned architects in the Seattle area—J.

Lister Holmes (the project's chief architect), William Aitken, William T. Bain, John T.

Jacobsen, and George W. Stoddard—Yesler Terrace architectural plans were informed by

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[7] A. Scott Henderson, "Tarred with the Exceptional Image: Public Housing and Popular Discourse: 1950-1990," *American Studies*, 36, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 31 and 34.

[8] Goetz, *New Deal Ruins*, 26 and Nicolai Ouroussoff, "All Fall Down," *New York Times*, November 19, 2006.

[9] Ouroussoff, "All Fall Down."

[10] Goetz, *New Deal Ruins*, 26.

ideas that the poor were as entitled as rich residents to comfortable, aesthetic, and

spacious homes that imparted them a sense of dignity.[11] Located atop a hill that offered

sweeping 180-degree views of Seattle's city and harbor, Yesler Terrace was a 60-acre

complex of low-density two- and three-story buildings. [12] Its designers embodied Garden

Community ideals, defined by Romina Richmond in her M.A. thesis on Seattle's public

housing projects as an "open cottage- and garden type of housing" that included:

> …structures built of local materials (stone, wood) often with chimneys,
> pitched roofs, and generally picturesque details. They were
> asymmetrically massed with large centralized common areas of land;
> although many times the houses had some private garden areas either in
> front or in back of the structure.

Many of the units came with private yards, and the complex provided incoming tenants

with pleasing landscape features (shade trees, flowering shrubs, and perennials) along

with community amenities such as open spaces, courtyards, greenery, a gymnasium-

auditorium, a child care center run by University of Washington staff, a playground, and

a steam plant that provided residents with an economical water heating system. [13] In

addition to running the child care center, the University of Washington's Adult Education

Department also sponsored onsite classes in cooking, sewing, and home management.

Thus, the facility stood as an important example of this brief period in American history

when public housing complexes were designed to reflect amenities associated with

upstanding citizenship and middle-class domesticity.

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[11] Romina Richmond, "The Design of Public Housing in Seattle" (master's thesis, University of Washington, 1981), 21-22-24.

[12] Trevor Griffey, "January 2004: Preserving Yesler Terrace," Preservation Seattle, January 2004, accessed July 10, 2016, http://ehealthforum.com/health/topic36010.html

[13] *Yesler Terrace Redevelopment: Historic Resources* (Seattle: BOLA Architecture + Planning, 2010), 17-23; Irene Burns Miller, *Profanity Hill* (Everett, WA: Working Press, 1979), 64

When it comes to academic discussions on the history of public housing and race, much of the literature tends to concentrate on the complicity of housing projects in facilitating new technologies of segregation, particularly in the postwar period when federal agencies facilitated mass migrations of white urban residents to newly-constructed, meticulously-landscaped suburbs while they simultaneously worked to deny suburban housing to black residents. As famously documented in Arnold Hirsch's classic work, *The Second Ghetto*, multiple policies and actions by municipal officials, real estate boards, financial institutions, and white neighborhoods converged to prevent blacks from moving into white neighborhoods; these forces worked instead to confine African Americans into deteriorating and overcrowded inner-city districts where the only available housing frequently came in the form of high-rise, high-density, and inadequately funded public housing.[14] Thus, public housing in urban studies literature has come to symbolize modern racial segregation and discrimination in its most underhanded yet systemic forms.

While race also factored heavily in determining the tenancy, locations, and functions of public housing projects during the 1930s and 1940s, it did so in ways different from the more famous iterations of the postwar era. While public housing projects came to be viewed by government officials and the public alike as low-cost,

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[14] Arnold Hirsch, *Making of the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983. Additional studies analyzing the role of public housing in formalizing spatial segregation of African American populations in high-density projects situated in ghettos include: Thomas Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); John F. Bauman, Roger Biles, and Kristin M. Szylvian, eds., *From Tenements to the Taylor Homes: In Search of an Urban Housing Policy in Twentieth-Century America* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000); Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh, *American Project: The Rise and Fall of a Modern Ghetto* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002) D. Bradford Hunt, *Blueprint for Disaster: The Unraveling of Chicago Public Housing* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2009); and Preston H. Smith II, *Racial Democracy and the Black Metropolis: Housing Policy in Postwar Chicago* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2012).

maximum-density housing for undesirable populations during the postwar period, particularly after the 1960s, they were conceptualized very differently during the 1930s and 1940s. Public housing during this period was instead conceived as government assistance for a deserving, yet victimized middle and working-class families, and this meant that such facilities did not carry the racial or economic stigmas they would bear in future decades. Public housing was, in fact, often highly prized and regarded as desirable housing in many communities. Associated with New Deal legislation, which extended governmental forms of aid primarily to white populations, the majority of housing projects sponsored during this era serviced white populations.[15] Falling in line with the nation's decades-long legacy of utilizing racial segregation to demarcate the most desirable urban geographies and the most sought-after housing as off-limits to nonwhites (particularly African Americans), most public housing projects during this period were built in all-white neighborhoods or designated as off-limits to nonwhites if constructed in an area that previously housed nonwhite residents,[16] a marked contrast to the concentration of public housing in black ghettos that would commence in the postwar era.[17]

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[15] Goetz, *New Deal Ruins*, 36.

[16] The prevailing segregation trend of pre-1960s public housing is discussed in Thomas Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*; Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides*, 225-250; and Edward G. Goetz, *New Deal Ruins*.

[17] Many important studies have been dedicated to exploring the history of racial segregation to urban spaces. These works extensively document racial segregation in cities through the nation as enforced through various strategies, most notably racial restrictive covenants, unstated collusions between local real estate boards, and even violence by white residents. Studies analyzing such histories include Arnold Hirsch, *Making of the Second Ghetto*; Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York Oxford University Press, 1985); Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); Thomas Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*; Stephen Grant Meyer, *As Long As They Don't Move Next Door* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000); and John F. Bauman et al., eds., *From Tenements to the Taylor Homes*.

A notable number of projects, however, did provide housing for black populations during the 1930s and 1940s due to the fact the Housing Act of 1937 called for facilities to be located in districts designated as slums and singled out for clearance. Given that the small number districts open to nonwhite urban populations were overwhelming plagued by a host of problems including slum conditions brought on by infrastructural neglect, and overcrowded and squalid living conditions engendered by unscrupulous landlords, several of the districts identified for slum clearance housed large populations of nonwhites, most notably blacks. In these situations, public housing officials proceeded with the construction of facilities in black neighborhoods, but took steps to ensure that such housing projects would remain segregated by which separate facilities were constructed for the city's white and black neighborhoods. In studies analyzing public housing and race in this context, two conclusions emerge. First, these works note that public housing segregation was typically enforced to allay white anxieties over the sharing of residential spaces with African Americans. In Chicago, for example, white populations agitated in the 1940s and 1950s to exclude blacks from public housing facilities. Integration was by and large outside the realm of possibility for the vast majority of projects with Henderson noting that "racial strife could and did erupt over attempts to integrate specific projects."[18] And in Detroit, racial tensions reached a violent head as whites rioted on February 28, 1942 to prevent African Americans from moving into the Sojourner Truth Homes public housing facility.[19]

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[18] Henderson, "Tarred with the Exceptional Image," 34.

[19] For more information, see Dominic Capeci, *Race Relations in Wartime Detroit: The Sojourner Truth Housing Controversy of 1942* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984).

Moreover, in some cases where segregated public housing was constructed for a city's white and black districts, municipal officials made sure that such facilities served to reinforce, not bridge, the emerging material inequalities separating their white and African American populations. In her dissertation, Rebecca Kinney argues the Detroit Housing Commission created and formalized a racial policy that not only institutionalized racial segregation, but also enshrined the development of "separate and unequal public housing" for the city's white and black communities. Upon receipt of a federal allocation for slum clearance and low-cost housing in 1934, the Detroit Housing Commission proceeded with plans to construct two housing projects--Parkside Housing Project would be built on vacant land in an all-white district while Brewster Housing Project would be built as a slum clearance project in a predominantly black district. While both facilities appeared "equal" on paper and were intended to receive equal oversight and resources from governmental agencies, notable disparities dictated that both projects ended up exerting differential impacts on Detroit's white and black populations. Parkside Housing Project was built on vacant land and boasted lower density for its residents (775 units on 31 acres) while Brewster Housing Project was built only after the traumatic displacement of an existing black community and housed a higher density of residents (701 units on 22 acres).[20]

Within the context of contentious race relations and glaring racial inequalities in public housing during the 1930s and 1940s, Yesler Terrace's precedent of racial integration makes it an especially valuable case study, one that offers a divergent

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[20] Rebecca Kinney, "The Mechanics of Race: The Discursive Production of Detroit's Landscape of Difference" (PhD diss., University of California, San Diego, 2011), 29-59.

trajectory from the prevailing narrative of racial segregation. On one hand, the Seattle

Housing Authority (SHA) succeeded in building a racially integrated public housing

facility without inciting any strife within the city. Such an accomplishment became a

landmark development in dismantling racial segregation and marked an important gain

for nonwhite Seattleites' access to valuable governmental and housing resources. At the

same time, a deeper and more critical analysis of Yesler Terrace's impact on Seattle's

nonwhite population indicates that the city's housing policy actually served to

institutionalize glaring racial inequities and establish the racial triangulation of the city's

black and Asian populations. In studying the story behind the construction and early

history of Yesler Terrace, this chapter asks, what factors allowed for racial integration in

Yesler Terrace, and how do the answers to these questions shed light on the successes,

limitations, and lingering questions raised by the early history of racial liberalism?

Furthermore, what does the history of Yesler Terrace about the creation of a new racial

order in Seattle following the emergence of racial liberalism?

## Implementing Racial Integration at Yesler Terrace

By all accounts, the decision to integrate Yesler Terrace was made by Jesse

Epstein (1911-1989), director of the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) from 1939 to

1945. Epstein was a Russian Jew whose family had moved to Seattle from Montana

during his high school years and a recent graduate of the University of Washington,

where he embraced the campus' liberalist and activist politics.[21] A tireless New Deal

Democrat, Epstein learned of the 1937 Housing Act while working for the Bureau of

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[21] According to Connie So, the University of Washington was known as a center of liberalist and populist sentiments throughout the early 1900s. So, "Seattle Exceptionalism," 71.

Government Research at the University of Washington. Excited by this opportunity to

attain federal funding for construction of low-rent public housing and slum clearance

projects, Epstein soon threw his efforts into getting a state law passed that would

authorize the creation of a public housing agency in Seattle. Epstein convinced the

Washington State Planning Council to appoint a citizen board, and in the process was

appointed to oversee an 8-person committee that drafted legislation enabling cities in

Washington State to accept federal public housing funds. Epstein was instrumental in

ensuring the passage of two laws: the Housing Authorities Law, which gave cities and

counties the power to create local housing authorities, and the Housing Cooperation Law,

which gave state and local agencies power to work directly with housing authorities in

getting public housing projects off the ground.[22] Following these developments, the City

Council of Seattle passed resolutions in March of 1939 establishing the SHA and

appointing Epstein as its first chairman.[23] One of Epstein's first actions was to apply for

public housing federal funding, and in May of 1939, the SHA received word that the

federal government had authorized $3 million to go towards construction of Seattle's first

public housing project.

As the SHA set out to choose the site of its first housing project, the south end of

First Hill—located in the heart of Seattle's Japantown, and in an area adjacent to

Chinatown—emerged as a popular choice among business interests and civic groups,

including the Downtown Builders Association, Seattle Real Estate Board, and the

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[22] Examples include having local agencies forgo its land-use rules, change zoning and, in this case, waive its flood rules, and help the housing authorities clear slums to hasten the process of constructing public housing.

[23] Roger Sale, *Seattle: Past to Present* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1978), 164; Jesse Epstein oral history interview transcript by Howard Droker, page 1, March 13, 1973, Howard Droker Papers, University of Washington Special Collections.

Women's Federated Clubs.[24] The area, known as Yesler Hill (and nicknamed Profanity

Hill by locals),[25] contained many abandoned houses and substandard apartment

complexes, along with several houses of prostitution. By 1940, the area had developed a

reputation for being a slum, a characterization that was frequently bolstered by SHA

reports and Seattle newspaper articles on the area.[26] The selection of Yesler Hill was also

a popular choice because having a run-down neighborhood so close to the police station,

city offices, and the financial district was an embarrassment to the city. [27] Especially

vocal was the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* which posted numerous articles and editorials

praising the Yesler Hill project as a slum clearance[28] whose "improvement contemplated

in the nineteen square blocks on Yesler Hill would prove of benefit to the entire city."[29]

Moreover, Profanity Hill was regarded as suitable for public housing because it was

accessible via street cars to downtown centers, schools, shopping centers, industrial areas,

and the county hospital.[30] By October of 1939, the SHA finalized its decision to construct

its first housing project in Yesler Hill.

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[24] "The History of the Low-Rent Program in Seattle," mimeographed training document, February 1953, page 4, http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&file_id=8992; and "Sunlight on Yesler Hill, Choice of Site for Housing Wins Acclaim," Seattle Post-Intelligencer, October 7, 1939. Citation taken from The City of Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board, "Report on Designation," page 10, accessed August 12, 2014,
http://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/Neighborhoods/HistoricPreservation/Landmarks/RelatedD
ocuments/mt-baker-presbyterian-designation.pdf.

[25] This nickname was a reference to the steepness of the hill. According to city lore, the hill elicited much cursing from judges and lawyers having to walk to the King County Courthouse located at its crest.

[26] Griffey, "Preserving Yesler Terrace."

[27] Sale, *Seattle*, 165; Richard C. Berner, *Seattle in the 20th Century Vol. 2* (Seattle: Charles Press, 1992), 183-187.

[28] "Drive Spurred to Eliminate Shack Towns," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, January 14, 1939. Article taken from Jesse Epstein scrapbook, box 2, Jesse Epstein Papers, University of Washington Special Collections.

[29] Dan Markel, "Yesler Hill Proposed for Housing Plan," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, October 1, 1939. Article taken from Jesse Epstein scrapbook, box 2, Jesse Epstein Papers, University of Washington Special Collections.

[30] Sale, *Seattle*, 165.

**Figure 1.2. Photograph of Fist Hill Neighborhood, c. 1940**.[31]
University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, [UW531]
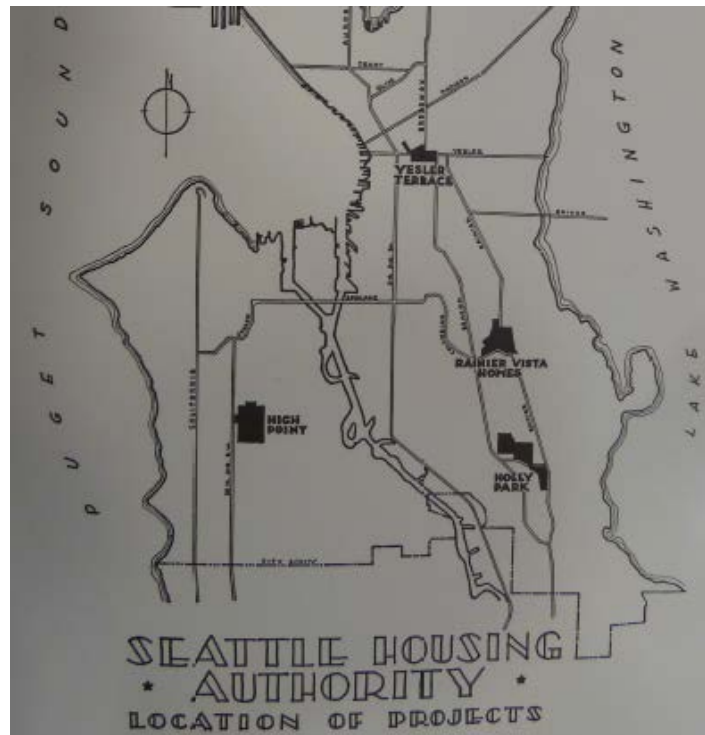


**Figure 1.3. Map of public housing projects in Seattle**.[32]
Seattle Municipal Archives, 1802-I4.

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[31] Images such as these were utilized by housing officials to depict the Yesler Hill community and validate their assessment of the community as a dilapidated slum.

[32] *Housing Authority of the City of Seattle: Second Annual Report* (Seattle: Housing Authority of the City of Seattle, 1941), 32. Box 1, folder 1, 1802-I4, Seattle Municipal Archives.

Once plans for constructing Yesler Terrace were set in motion, Epstein and the

SHA had to set up tenant eligibility policies for the facility. In contrast to most public

housing facilities in the country, the decision was made to accept nonwhite tenants into

Yesler Terrace. Epstein and SHA also took the additional step of not only mandating that

Yesler Terrace accept black and Asian residents along with white residents, but that all

buildings in the housing complex be fully integrated. In other words, there would be no

discrete black, white, and Asian sections in Yesler Terrace. In his 1973 oral history with

Howard Droker, Epstein discussed his decision-making process:

> I made the decision administratively, early, that there would be no
> discrimination, no segregation, and, to me, that particular approach or way
> of handling the matter was so obvious that I did not ask the Board to
> declare a policy in writing. I felt that it could be handled administratively
> and I was also a little concerned that if I raised the question there might be
> some consideration given to such matters as quotas, maybe even
> segregation. The Board went along as did the Mayor's office which was
> very cooperative.[33]

What this quote demonstrates is that Epstein's success in administering racial integration

was made possible in part by tacit cooperation from important political players at both the

municipal and federal levels. According to Epstein, the Board of the SHA and Seattle

mayor Arthur B. Langlie simply "went along" with his plans and never attempted to

interfere with racial integration, offering instead full cooperation when Epstein presented

plans to combat Seattle's housing shortage through application for federal public housing

funds. [34] Three out of five city councilmen threw their support behind Epstein and the

construction of Yesler Terrace, and none of them raised objections to Yesler Terrace

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[33] Jesse Epstein oral history interview transcript by Howard Droker, page 1, March 13, 1973, Howard Droker Papers, University of Washington Special Collections.

[34] Howard Droker, "Seattle Race Relations during the Second World War," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (October 1976): 165.

housing blacks and Asians.[35] Likewise, Epstein also noted that federal officials never

sought to influence or change his decision. As Droker explained in his article on Seattle's

wartime race relations, "The Roosevelt administration, while maintaining a low profile

on racial matters, was willing to let local [Seattle] administrators use their discretion."[36]

The United States Housing Authority, which at the time oversaw all of the nation's public

housing projects, did not oppose this decision, despite the fact housing developments in

America at the time were typically built for low-income white families. All of this

indicates that noninterference by city and federal officials was an important factor

allowing Epstein to follow through with his racial integration policies.

## Press Coverage on Racial Integration at Yesler Terrace

While municipal and federal officials showed their support for racial integration

through tacit cooperation with Epstein, an analysis of local press coverage on Yesler

Terrace from 1939 to 1942 highlights a curious pattern that may shed additional light on

the housing project's success in implementing racial integration. Even though hundreds

of articles on the Yesler Hill housing project (and its subsequent transition into Yesler

Terrace) were produced in Seattle during these years, the subject of racial integration is

practically never mentioned.[37] During these years, Epstein worked tirelessly throughout

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[35] Sale, *Seattle*, 164.

[36] Droker, "Seattle Race Relations during the Second World War," 165.

[37] These articles were collected in two scrapbooks belonging to the Jesse Epstein Papers in the University of Washington Special Collections. The majority of the articles on Yesler Terrace were published by *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, while smaller numbers of articles by *Seattle Daily Times*, *Seattle Star*, and the *Northwest Enterprise* were also included (along with occasional articles from non-local press, such as San Francisco, Chicago, and New York). These articles comprehensively documented the Yesler Terrace Project through its various stages of funding, slum clearance, construction, opening, and operation. Throughout the process, race was primarily mentioned in the slum clearance process, as the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* and Seattle Times both mentioned the diverse demographics of the Yesler Hill neighborhood. The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* even included a picture of a Japanese family about to be relocated in its one of its articles on the relocation process, Carlton Fitchett, "Yesler Hill Residents Fond of Their Homes,"

the city to win support for Yesler Terrace by writing articles and giving speeches. Epstein

also found an important ally in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, one of the city's two major

newspapers during this era.[38] Owned by William Randolph Hearst, from 1936-1943 the

newspaper was published by President Roosevelt's son-in-law, John Boettiger, and

Roosevelt's daughter Anna Roosevelt Boettiger served as women's page editor and

special contributor to the newspaper. During these years, the *Post-Intelligencer* became a

mouthpiece for New Deal politics and lent vocal support to the Yesler Terrace project.[39]

Epstein (frequently supported by the *Post-Intelligencer*) emphasized three main

reasons for advocating this project. First, Epstein appealed to pragmatism and pointed out

Yesler Terrace's potential to create over 2,000 new jobs. Given that this argument was

taking place in the end of the Great Depression and in the midst of a housing construction

slump where over a third of jobless workers since 1929 came from the construction

industry, it became highly effective in galvanizing support for Yesler Terrace from

Seattle's labor unions and construction industries.[40] Second, Epstein and his supporters

framed public housing around issues of social welfare and housing shortages. They

argued that public housing provided much-needed homes for low-income families unable

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*Seattle Post Intelligencer*, February 24, 1940. Throughout the coverage of Yesler Terrace's opening ceremonies and operation however, no mention was ever made of the facility's landmark racial integration policy. The only allusion to Yesler Terrace's racial integration was a photograph of seven white children and one black child posing in the facility's playground that was published as part of an article by *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* titled "Children Christen Playgound," in the June 22, 1942 issue.

[38]The other major newspaper was the *Seattle Daily Times* (later renamed *Seattle Times*.)

[39] The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* was by far the most vocal newspaper proponent of the Yesler Terrace Project from 1938 to 1943. This was partly demonstrated by the sheer number of articles published by the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* on Yesler Terrace through its various stages of planning and implementation (especially in comparison to *Seattle's Daily Times* sporadic coverage), and partly demonstrated by the lack of critical perspective on the project (also in contrast to the *Seattle Daily Times*, which published both supportive and critical articles).

[40] Jesse Epstein, "Housing Program Supported by Workers, Epstein Says," *Washington New Dealer*, April 11, 1940. Article from Jesse Epstein's scrapbook, box 2, Jesse Epstein Papers, University of Washington Special Collections.

to afford market rents, alleviated housing shortages in overcrowded slum areas, and combatted a whole host of social ills related to inadequate housing facilities, such as disease, infant mortality, and crime. (One such article, titled "Social and Economic Costs of Poor Housing," appeared in the *Seattle Federation of Women's Clubs Journal*.)[41] Third, proponents of Yesler Terrace, notably the *Post-Intelligencer*, pointed out that the housing project brought benefits to Seattle because its construction would necessitate the clearance of slums.[42] Even *The Seattle Daily Times*, which expressed ambivalence about the construction of Yesler Terrace, proffered grudging acknowledgement that steps needed to be taken to address Yesler Hill's status as "the city's most conspicuous eyesore."[43]

Throughout all these public discussions on behalf of Yesler Terrace from 1938-1942, topics surrounding race and racial integration were virtually never invoked. In one of the *Post Intelligencer*'s more high-profile articles extolling Yesler Terrace to Seattle readers, Anna Roosevelt Boettiger depicted the housing project as a site where noble and all-American behaviors were fostered amongst low-income residents. She credited Yesler Terrace for offering decent housing for residents who otherwise would not have been able to afford such comfortable dwellings. She went on to imply that the homes served to promote pride and exemplary conduct among the residents who were eager to keep their apartments. Nowhere was the issue of race or multiracial residency ever invoked. Instead,

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[41] Jesse Epstein, "Social and Economic Costs of Poor Housing," *Seattle Federation of Women's Clubs Journal*, undated. From box 1, folder 7, Jesse Epstein Papers, University of Washington Special Collections.

[42] Dan Markel, "Yesler Hill Proposed for Housing Plan," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, October 1, 1939. Article from Jesse Epstein's scrapbook, box 2, Jesse Epstein Papers, University of Washington Special Collections.

[43] "Project Worth While," *The Seattle Times*, August 22, 1939, 6.

Boettiger wrote of sitting in on a homemaker's class, watching dedication ceremonies for

the housing project, and witnessing a Boy Scout troop bringing in an American flag as

evidence that a thriving all-American community was taking root in Yesler Terrace. This

collective silence about race in Yesler Terrace suggests that racial integration was not yet

a widely accepted concept, even in a city as progressive as Seattle. In a decision echoing

the tacit approval of government officials, the local press extolled the virtues of Yesler

Terrace, but virtually never mentioned race or the public housing project's pioneering

status in racial integration. This suggests that the press, particularly the supportive *Seattle

Post-Intelligencer*, facilitated the possibility of racial integration at Yesler Terrace by

discussing this action in as low profile a manner possible so as to minimize the ruffling of

feathers and opportunities for public outcry. This point was affirmed by Epstein's

admission in his oral history interview that he intentionally opted not to put any

integration policy in writing.[44] Any overt admission of racial integration was regarded as

a liability and source of controversy that could potentially hinder Yesler Terrace's

development and public support.

The press articles and public discourses surrounding Yesler Terrace highlight the

fact that there were limits as to what mainstream Seattle could accept with regards to

racial integration. These limitations would also manifest themselves in Epstein's decision

to severely restrict numbers of nonwhite tenants in Yesler Terrace. As Epstein extended,

for the first time in Seattle's history, the possibility for blacks and Asians to reside in new

and spacious public housing units, he expressed high hopes that were also moderated by a

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[44] Jesse Epstein oral history interview transcript by Howard Droker, page 1, March 13, 1973, Howard Droker Papers, University of Washington Special Collections.

sense of realism towards the milestone of housing integration: "We have an opportunity

to prove that Negroes and whites can live side by side in harmony...but it's going to

require skill and patience to make it work."[45] This suggested that racial integration

represented a drastic and shocking social change in which whites needed to be delicately

spoon-fed racial integration and gently coaxed through the disintegration of white

supremacy. In an account of an SHA meeting on the subject of racial integration, SHA

staff member Irene Burns Miller describes an illustrative exchange between Epstein and

Ray Adams, a new SHA employee:

> Epstein: We have an opportunity to prove that Negroes and whites can live side by side in harmony…but it's going to require skill and patience to make it work. Seattle's population is 368,302 including 3,789 Negroes…Minorities will, of course, increase as defense industries speed up recruitment.
>
> Adams: But Negroes' needs will be greater because of discrimination in wages and housing…will you set up a quota to keep Yesler Terrace from turning into a ghetto?
>
> Epstein: Let's avoid the ugly word quota, Ray…but we must limit the number of Negroes if we are to achieve integration. Keep in mind that we are determined on that. Colored and whites will live side by side; this in itself is revolutionary."[46]

In this exchange, Epstein acknowledged the pressing need to accommodate blacks in

public housing, especially in light of existing housing shortages and projected increases

in Seattle's black population. Nonetheless, his priority was to allay white fears—the sort

reflected in Adams' allusion to ghettos and the anticipated difficulties of having whites

accept black neighbors—by minimizing the numbers of blacks allowed to reside in

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[45] Miller, *Profanity Hill*, 63.

[46] Miller, *Profanity Hill*, 63. Epstein would go on to say, "Tenant selection staff will need both patience and skill in dealing with this delicate problem." To delicately manage racial conflicts between tenants SHA officials employed the strategy of shuffling around tenants; neighbors who clashed were quickly reassigned to other units. Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community*, 169.

Yesler Terrace. Epstein was content with the fact that having whites and blacks live "side by side" was already, in and of itself, a "revolutionary" accomplishment.[47]

## Analyzing Limitations in Yesler Terrace's Racial Integration Policy

Examining the quotas established by SHA is not only instructive for shedding light on the anxieties harbored by housing officials in introducing integration to white Seattleites, it is also a useful starting point for analyzing the limitations and complications of Yesler Terrace's racial policy. Even as Epstein and public housing officials lauded the progressive principles of Yesler Terrace in compelling blacks, Asians, and white residents to live alongside each other, the reality of the situation was that numbers of nonwhites accepted into the project were extremely limited. A quota for nonwhites was placed at 20%, partly to "avoid creating a ghetto" in the words of SHA housing officials.[48] And even though the quota was established at 20%, statistics in SHA's annual reports between 1941 and 1945 indicate that African American tenancy in fact never exceeded 5% while Asian American tenancy hovered between 1-2%.[49] This meant that white tenancy at Yesler Terrace never dipped below 92% during these years, and that the facility likely never came close to meeting the housing needs of Seattle's black and in

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[47] It is worth mentioning that blacks in the community also expressed trepidation at the prospect of having white neighbors. At a public meeting of over 1,000 people at an African American church, blacks themselves vociferously that they be given their own assigned sections or buildings. (Jesse Epstein oral history interview transcript by Howard Droker, page 1, March 13, 1973, Howard Droker Papers, University of Washington Special Collections.)

[48] Miller, *Profanity Hill*, 19 and 63.

[49] *Housing Authority of the City of Seattle: Second Annual Report* (Seattle: Housing Authority of the City of Seattle, 1941), 18 and 31. *Housing Authority of the City of Seattle: Third Annual Report* (Seattle: Housing Authority of the City of Seattle, 1942), 16. *Housing Authority of the City of Seattle: Fourth Annual Report* (Seattle: Housing Authority of the City of Seattle, 1943), 33. *The Housing Authority of the City of Seattle: Housing the People, Sixth Annual Report* (Seattle: Housing Authority of the City of Seattle, 1945), 21. All of these reports are housed at the Seattle Municipal Archives.

particular, Asian populations.[50] This also indicates that SHA's solution to the anticipated difficulties of integration in Yesler Terrace was to suppress the numbers of blacks and Asian tenants. Such a policy of minimizing nonwhite tenants to enable racial integration is consistent with SHA's overall approach of downplaying public discussions and visibilities surrounding Yesler Terrace's racial composition in order to allay white anxieties and circumvent potential obstacles.

In addition to highlighting previously obscure breakages between wartime and postwar manifestations of racial liberalism, SHA's implementation of racial integration at Yesler Terrace also offers insight into the historical construction of racial triangulation and white privilege. Examining the background to Yesler Terrace's site selection and clearance process is an important first step to understanding how this occurred. As previously mentioned, city newspaper articles as well as municipal surveys and SHA reports all characterized Yesler Hill as a dilapidated slum that was in dire need of

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[50] The 1940 Real Property Survey placed the city's housing population of blacks at 1.2%, Japanese Americans at 1.4%, and "Other" nonwhite races at 0.5%. *Real Property Survey, 1939-40: Seattle, Washington, Volume 1: General Report* (Seattle: Housing Authority of the City of Seattle, 1940), 35. Meanwhile, SHA's First Annual Report in 1941 stated that 3.3% of Yesler Terrace's residents were black, 1.1% were Japanese, 1.4% were Chinese. While the percentage of black and Asian residents in Yesler Terrace is comparable or in excess of their overall population percentage, the 1940 Real Property Survey also noted that the percentage of blacks, Japanese, and "Other" races living in substandard housing was three times that of whites: "Between one-fifth and one-sixth of the white households reside in [substandard] units while over half of the non-white households are in structurally inadequate dwelling units." *Real Property Survey, 1939-40*, 36. By 1945, Yesler Terrace was 5% black and 2% "other races," *Housing the People: Sixth Annual Report Supplement* (Seattle: Housing Authority of the City of Seattle, 1945). Seattle's black population by 1945 had gone up to 2.7% of Seattle's population numbering approximately 10,000. This population experienced severe housing shortages their housing stock remained virtually the same. Therefore, the 10,000 blacks in 1945 were forced to occupy the same overcrowded buildings that had housed 3,700 in 1940. Taylor, *Forging of a Black Community*, 168-169 and 244. Yesler Terrace did not solve the severe housing shortages experienced by the African American community. However, it consistently hosted higher occupancy rates (even after accounting for population proportions) for African Americans than Asian Americans.

clearance.[51] For instance, the SHA's Annual Report in 1940 claimed that 95% of Yesler

Hill's housing structures were substandard before going on to depict the area as a

threatening presence to the rest of the city by stating, "A blighted district such as this is

socially and economically injurious to the community's welfare."[52]  There are

indications, however, that there was more nuance and complexity to the Yesler Hill

community than its portrayal in the government reports. In discussing methodologies for

the study of state archives and records, postcolonial anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler

affirms the utility of the "archival turn," that is, adopting an "archive-as-subject"

approach in favor of the more simplistic "archive-as-source" analytical technique. In

other words, it behooves the scholar to analyze official documents "against the grain," by

not simply mining them for their content, but by also framing them as products of state

power, and thus being mindful of the omissions, silences, and inconsistencies they may

contain.[53]

Stoler's approach assumes keen relevance in light of several primary sources and

studies that complicate the official portrayals of Yesler Hill. Accounts by Miller, and

Japanese American anthropologist S. Frank Miyamoto recount details that add

complexity to Yesler Hill's popular portrayal as a dilapidated "eyesore." As the SHA

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[51] In all, three government reports were conducted that identified Yesler Hill as the site in greatest need of slum clearance. They were: a Real Property Survey conducted in 1934 as part of a federal project to assess housing stock in 64 cities across the country, a 1939 preliminary summary on Seattle's housing conditions sponsored by the Seattle Advisory Housing Commission, and the most comprehensive of the reports, a 1940 Real Property Survey conducted as part of the Works Progress Administration to assess "first, how much housing is needed, second, what kind of housing is needed—that is, according to family size and income; and third, where housing is needed." "The Place and Placing of Public Housing Projects," (Seattle: KOMO, 1940), radio show transcript housed at the Seattle Public Library Seattle Room.
[52] *First Annual Report of the Housing Authority of the City of Seattle* (Seattle: Housing Authority of the City of Seattle, 1940).
[53] Ann Laura Stoler, "Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance," *Archival Science* 2 (March 2002): 87, 92-93, 99-100.

coordinator in charge of relocating Yesler Hill residents who lived on the anticipated site of Yesler Terrace, Miller described elements about the community in an SHA narrative and also in her memoirs on interactions with Yesler Hill residents during preparation phases for the construction of Yesler Terrace. She noted that Yesler Hill was home to 1,201 people including 161 white families, 127 Japanese families, 66 black families, 5 Chinese families, and 20 single Filipinos in addition to "a smattering of Indians, Greeks, and Eskimos."[54] Elaborating on the Japanese community, Miller stated that they had established three churches, four grocery stores, a meat market, and four hotels. She added that, "Most owned their homes and had good incomes; often several members of the family were employed. They moved here because property was cheap and it was near their places of business."[55] Miyamoto in his study of the Japanese American population in Seattle mentioned that First Hill was one of three major residential districts for the city's Japanese residents.[56] Even though many Japanese families lived in *Nihon-machi*, the Japanese business section of the International District, Miyamoto noted that "many more grew up in…First Hill, where many single-family and multiple-family units, typically aging clapboard structures, were to be found," before also adding that, "the majority of these houses were occupied by Japanese families."[57]

These details suggest that Yesler Hill was in fact much more than simply a dilapidated slum, it was actually home to a thriving Japanese business and residential

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[54] Miller, Irene Burns. "Relocation of Tenants on the Site of Yesler Terrace," Seattle Housing Authority, 1941, Seattle Public Library Seattle Room.

[55] Irene Burns Miller, untitled document, page 8, Jesse Epstein Papers, 3043-001, University of Washington Special Collections.

[56] Frank S. Miyamoto, Introduction to *Nisei Daughter*, by Monica Sone (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979), ix.

[57] Frank S. Miyamoto, *Social Solidarity among the Japanese in Seattle*, 2nd ed. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984), xii.

community, a fact not acknowledged by any press coverage or governmental surveys of the area, yet tellingly alluded to decades later in an obscure archival description of a Yesler Terrace photographic collection housed at the University of Washington Special Collections. Embedded in the summary was the following description of Yesler Hill: "A diverse range of people, most with low incomes, inhabited the area designated for the Yesler Terrace development. In contrast to the prevailing poverty there was a thriving Japanese community comprising of a third of the families in the neighborhood. Many of these families operated businesses in the area."[58] Interestingly, the photographs of Yesler Hill contained in this archival collection were very limited in numbers and consistent with popular conceptions of the area as a slum, as they focused on deteriorating and crumbling housing stock, and were taken in fact, to serve as evidence of blight in the area by public housing officials.[59] The existence of these inconsistent portrayals of Yesler Hill suggest that in the process of building a case for the neighborhood to serve as the site to the first public housing facility in the city, housing officials chose to project a one-dimensional delineation of the area as a dilapidated, diseased, and threatening geography, even if this strategy functioned to efface the existence of a vibrant Japanese American community.

The demographic composition of the population cleared out to make room for Yesler Terrace also brings to light another stark racial reality of this project. In the process of constructing Yesler Terrace, a community of 1,201 individuals (of which approximately 35% of the residents were Asian American and 15% African American)

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[58] "Photographs of Yesler Terrace, 1940-1943," Archives West: Orbis Cascade Alliance, accessed August 10, 2016, http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv48791.
[59] Ibid.

was displaced in order for 2,300 people in the city (92% of whom were white) to receive

federally-subsidized housing. On the surface, these statistics might appear encouraging

given that Yesler Terrace provided housing to twice the number of residents displaced to

make room for its construction.[60] Yet, Yesler Terrace's differential impact on Seattle's

white, black, and Japanese American population merit closer examination. The

comparison of statistics between Yesler Hill's relocated population and Yesler Terrace's

demographics suggests a pattern of racial triangulation being established in Seattle's

delegation of public resources. As previously noted Asian Americans (primarily Japanese

Americans in this case) were by far the largest minority group to leave behind homes and

businesses for the construction of Yesler Terrace. Yet compounding the trauma of their

forced displacement from their homes and the physical destruction of their community,

Yesler Hill's Japanese Americans were largely shut out of Yesler Terrace's resident

rosters upon the facility's opening. The absence of Japanese Americans from Seattle's

early public housing projects has been little-examined and likely written off due to their

mass evacuation to internment camps starting in April 1942. Nonetheless, there are

indications that Japanese Americans faced an uphill battle to obtaining housing in Yesler

Terrace during the facility's first few months, and would have continued to experience

this even if the mass internment had not occurred. In a first-hand account from 1941,

Miller indicated that despite SHA's promise to give priority consideration for Yesler

Terrace residency to displaced First Hill populations, that "many of the Japanese families

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[60] Contrast this, for instance, with the example of the Gratiot Redevelopment Project in Detroit, which displaced 1,238 dwelling units and 7,000 residents, only to have the site sit vacant for over a decade. For more information, see Robert J. Mowitz and Deil S. Wright, "The Gratiot Redevelopment Project: Regenerating the Core City" in *Profile of a Metropolis: A Case Book* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1962), 11-80.

would be ineligible because of excessive income.[61] Given the federal practice of

determining public housing residency requirements by family income, the Japanese

American families in First Hill would have faced two disadvantages. According to

Miyamoto, many Japanese Americans in Seattle were likely to be financially afloat due to

high rates of business ownership and the existence of strong community support systems,

where more establishment members of the community (such as business owners and

association leaders) provided networking, employment, job training, and money lending

opportunities to those in need of assistance.[62] Japanese American families were also more

likely to be larger, multigenerational, and comprised of more adult income earners than

white and black counterparts.[63] Both of these factors would have severely compromised

their chances of obtaining access to Seattle's public housing facilities, regardless of racial

policy.

Further complicating the likelihood of Japanese Americans from getting housing

at Yesler Terrace were the citizenship eligibility requirements for residency. Policies

outlined by federal guidelines stipulated that heads of households needed to be U.S.

citizens in order for them to gain public housing. Up to this point, naturalization was not

possible for Asian immigrants, and many of Seattle's Japanese families at this time would

have been headed by *Issei*, or first-generation Japanese immigrants, who were dominant

in the city's Japanese American communal affairs.[64] As many scholars have noted, Asian

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[61] Miller, Irene Burns. "Relocation of Tenants on the Site of Yesler Terrace," Seattle Housing Authority, 1941. Document housed in Seattle Public Library Seattle Room.

[62] Miyamoto, *Social Solidarity among the Japanese in Seattle*, 20-21.

[63] The large family sizes of Japanese families is documented in the *Real Property Survey of 1940*, 41-43.

[64] In his account of life in Seattle during the 1930s and 1940s, Japanese American activist Bill Hosokawa writes "I returned to Seattle late in the fall of 1941, just a few weeks before the outbreak of war. The Issei were still dominant in Japanese American community affairs. The Nisei [second generation Japanese

Americans' ineligibility for citizenship was symptomatic of the era of Exclusion, a period

from the 1880s until the 1940s when the U.S. government used a series of legal, social,

and cultural tactics to subject Chinese and Japanese to what historian Ellen D. Wu calls

"a shock of discriminatory and dehumanizing limitations."[65] Restrictions and

humiliations such as immigration bans, mass denigrations in popular culture, and denial

of naturalized citizenship, enfranchisement, and property ownership have been well-

documented by a large body Asian American scholarship.[66] What the example of Yesler

Terrace makes abundantly clear however is that their inability to obtain naturalization left

much of the Asian American community ineligible not only for legal citizenship, but also

for critical benefits of social citizenship, such as access to welfare resources and

government-subsidized housing. In light of all these details, it is therefore not surprising

that virtually none of the displaced Japanese Americans found housing in Yesler Terrace;

although 127 Japanese families were forced to relocate, only 1.1% of Yesler Terrace's

690 units went to Japanese Americans upon its first year of operation in 1941 (which

documented Japanese tenancy in the facility before the start of their World War II

internment).

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Americans]…had made considerable economic progress, but the Issei were still in charge." Bill Hosokawa, "The Uprooting of Seattle," in *Japanese Americans: From Relocation to Redress*, ed. Roger Daniels, Sandra C. Taylor, and Harry H.L. Kitano (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 19. This indicates then that with Issei being the dominant force in Seattle's Japanese American community, that they still made up a sizeable, if not predominant number of heads of households. In other words, the ineligibility of non-citizens to receive public housing would have affected large segments of the Japanese American community in Seattle.

[65] Wu, Ellen D, *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 2.

[66] For more scholarship on the racialization of Asian Americans during the Exclusionary Era, see Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1998); Robert G. Lee, *Orientals: Asian Americans in American Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999); Erika Lee, *At American's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of a Modern World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); and Erika Lee, *The Making of Asian America: A History* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015).

In sum, the narrative of Yesler Terrace contains an ironic arc as the actions of city officials and federal law combined to raze a Japanese American neighborhood and render most of the displaced Asian American residents ineligible for public housing for the sake of constructing the nation's first racially integrated low-rent housing facility. This irony suggests two trends in the complex racial legacy of Yesler Terrace that also hint at the formation of racial triangulation, especially as it relates to Asian American populations and their relationship to public resources. First, Yesler Terrace's impact on the displaced Japanese Americans offers a compelling demonstration of legal citizenship functioning as a gatekeeper for determining different populations' access to full social citizenship. A historical review reveals that the impossibility of naturalization for Asian Americans prior to World War II generated material consequences[67] and functioned to deprive them of socioeconomic opportunities linked to social citizenship. This development consistently occurred throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as Alien Land Laws were passed throughout the West Coast barring Asian Americans from owning land, and as additional discriminatory laws emerged to disadvantage Asians in various industries (such as mining and agriculture),[68] all enacted under the pretext of Asians' non-citizenship. This historical legacy of depriving Asian Americans of social citizenship through the ineligibility of legal citizenship also carried over into the realm of government welfare, as a host of social services including public housing was deemed eligible only for U.S. citizens. This was especially true of New Deal Programs, as the example of Yesler Terrace brings to light. In spite of their progressive nature and limited

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[67] Claire Jean Kim, "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans," 114.
[68] Ibid., 114.

extension of resources to African Americans, New Deal Programs remained largely off-limits to Asian Americans, [69] whose eligibility for governmental welfare resources during the 1930s and 1940s was in large part hindered by their ineligibility for citizenship, as Sanchez's article—"Disposable People, Expendable Neighborhoods—makes clear.[70]

At the same time, the example of Yesler Terrace also highlights a particular pattern of racialization that is being affixed to Asian Americans. This is, the construction of a racial population that is relatively economic self-sufficient and thus in lesser need of social services, especially in relation to other racial populations such as African Americans. As scholars have argued, Asian Americans in Seattle developed community kinship networks, business networks, and prefectural associations as a response to racial hostilities and racial laws that barred their access to financial and social resources such as loans, medical services, and housing.[71] While these communal networks and institutions provided the Asian American community with valuable financial and social resources that bolstered their levels of self-sufficiency, these avenues of support also helped to elevate the financial statuses of Asians above those of their black counterparts, thus solidifying perceptions that Asian Americans were not in need of welfare and social services. This would essentially lead to Yesler Terrace's focus on blacks as the target racial population to be serviced and integrated, in the process establishing a governmental

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[69] For more information, see Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2013).

[70] George Sanchez, "Disposable People, Expendable Neighborhoods," in *Companion to Los Angeles*, ed. William Deverell and Greg Hise (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 130-139.

[71][71] For more information, see Miyamoto, *Social Solidarity among the Japanese in Seattle*; and Sylvia Junko Yanagisako, *Transforming the Past: Tradition and Kinship among Japanese Americans* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985).

pattern of focusing on the needs of African Americans when tailoring social and welfare services for racial populations.

## Conclusion

At the end of the war, segments of the nation's press would seize upon racial integration in Yesler Terrace as an exceptional tale of success. Famed journalist Carey McWilliams wrote in a 1945 article that, "The housing projects in Seattle, under the brilliant direction of Jesse Epstein, constitute the one bright spot in the Federal picture." And in 1948, *The Rotarian* (the official magazine of Rotary International) made references to Yesler Terrace in an article titled, "It Was Called Profanity Hill: Here's A Heartening Story of How Five Races Working Together Have Transformed A Slum in Seattle." The article noted that "Yesler Terrace [is] a low-rent housing development of 868 units housing some 3,000 people of all races, colors, and creeds. There was no discrimination, no segregation—and there isn't!"[72] These and many similar descriptions would characterize Yesler Terrace as a paragon of interracial harmony and American democracy operating at its finest. Not surprisingly, such representations have bolstered Seattle's progressive and liberal reputation over the years. However, this chapter demonstrates that representations and public conversations over Yesler Terrace were in fact very different during the initial years after its construction. The glorification of Yesler Terrace and Jesse Epstein was a development that did not occur until a few years after the opening and implementation of racial integration. This chapter thus strives to

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[72] Howard E. Jackson, ""It Was Called Profanity Hill: Here's a Heartening Story of How Five Races Working Together Have Transformed a Slum in Seattle," *The Rotarian*, October 1948, 22-23. The discrepancy between Yesler Terrace's number of units given here and the beginning of the chapter lies in the fact that Yesler Terrace originally opened in 1942 with 690 units. At the end of that same year, SHA received funding to expand Yesler Terrace by 178, which was why it had 868 units by 1948.

retrieve the period of historical amnesia surrounding Yesler Terrace's construction in order to shed light on the tentative and precarious nature of racial liberalism's earliest years.

In one sense, Yesler Terrace is a case study for the successful implementation of racial integration in a public housing project. However, it is also a historical example of racial triangulation in establishment during the early period of racial liberalism. To make Yesler Terrace a reality, resources were taken from a Japanese American community (through the combination of displacement and subsequent ineligibility for public housing) for a racial integration experiment in which Asians were largely shut out. As Yesler Terrace powerfully demonstrated, the very combination of relative economic superiority and foreignness/non-citizenship operated to make Asian Americans ineligible for public aid in the 1930s and 40s. On the flip side, blacks' relative impoverishment and status as insiders/citizens combined to make them eligible and visible targets for social welfare programs, though notably in token levels. Yet, overshadowing this entire arrangement is the looming specter of whites atop Seattle's racial hierarchy as they emerged as the greatest beneficiaries of Yesler Terrace by occupying the overwhelming majority of its units at 92%. The sheer proportion of whites in the city's welfare recipient rosters (as in Yesler Terrace) speak loudly, and as future chapters will demonstrate, will come without the same strings of increase state surveillance and social denigration that will eventually be attached to black social service recipients. In sum, the racial triangulation of Seattle's three major races is made manifest through the uneven distribution of benefits and complex implications for the city's whites, blacks, and Asian Americans.

**Chapter Two:**
**The Jackson Street Community Council and the Politics of Racial Uplift and**
**Multiculturalism**

In October 1948, the official magazine of Rotary International, *The Rotarian*,

featured an article that heaped effusive praise on the multiracial membership of the

Jackson Street Community Council (JSCC). Lauding JSCC's Chinese, Japanese, Filipino,

black, and white members for a willingness to band together and "overcome…distrust,

ignorance, and prejudice," *The Rotarian* proclaimed that JSCC was an inspiration case

study of interethnic cooperation that would "give new heart to the United Nations."[1] The

article also credited a remarkable transformation in the Jackson Street area's living

conditions and improved interracial relations to "a community spirit so vigorous and so

hopeful that in it can be seen the possibility of a similar spirit throughout the world."[2]

Following the publication of this article, the narrative of JSCC would continue to capture

the attention of local and national press outlets as an exceptional model of early

interracial collaboration. During its existence from 1946 to 1967, JSCC initiated many

community projects that aimed to improve cross-racial relations, enhance the

neighborhood's physical landscape and sanitation, and provide medical services to

indigent members of the community. In the process, leaders of JSCC frequently deployed

tropes of multiculturalism (that is, celebrations of ethnic diversity) and self-help

citizenship to publicize their organization and its activities.

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[1] Jackson, Howard E., "It Was Called Profanity Hill: Here's a Heartening Story of How Five Races
Working Together Have Transformed a Slum in Seattle," *The Rotarian*, October 1948, 23.
[2] Jackson, "It Was Called Profanity Hill," 22.

This chapter examines the history of the Jackson Street Community Council and asks, how did leaders of the organization deploy discourses of multiculturalism to remake ideas of racial space and citizenship? What inroads did these strategies forge, and what limitations did they impose on the community? Based on my analysis of JSCC archival records, municipal records on urban renewal projects, and *Seattle Times* articles from the early postwar period, I show that JSCC utilized discourses of cosmopolitanism to re-cast the Jackson Street community from being a neighborhood that had been largely denigrated to one that became exceptional for its interracial harmony and diversity. From 1946 to the early 1960s, JSCC organized a series of social events and neighborhood improvement projects designed to strengthen interracial communal bonds and promote notions of racial uplift. These projects would succeed in bring much-needed civil resources and public esteem to the local community, while also opening up unprecedented avenues of sociopolitical advancement for many leaders and residents.

At the same time however, the JSCC pursued moderate political strategies that were highly constrained by the middle-class sensibilities of racial uplift projects, and by heavy reliance on self-help, "pull yourself up by your bootstraps" frameworks. As a result, JSCC's tactics often had the effect of reinforcing the institutional racist structures—particularly racial triangulation frameworks—that dictated Seattle's management of racial populations and accounted for the widespread poverty, social ills, and physical deterioration in the neighborhood. To demonstrate this point, the chapter will conclude with an examination of JSCC's complex relationship with Seattle urban renewal projects. JSCC's collaboration with urban renewal officials centered largely on

self-help projects serving Cherry Hill, a diverse neighborhood that had a large population

of whites, Jews, Asians, and African Americans. Although these self-help endeavors

temporarily enhanced the physical landscape of Cherry Hill, they also placed the burden

of infrastructural and socioeconomic improvement onto residents of the neighborhood

and absolved the federal and municipal government of critical responsibilities. Cherry

Hill's outcome is largely emblematic of consequences stemming from JSCC"s embrace

of racial-uplift and self-help tactics during an era when the organization's politics was

dominated by Jews, Japanese Americans, and Chinese Americans. With the departure of

Jews and Asians from JSCC starting in the 1960s, JSCC would initiate on a second urban

renewal project with Seattle situated in the adjacent and predominantly African-American

neighborhood of Yesler-Atlantic. In contrast to the Cherry Hill Urban Renewal Project,

the Yesler Atlantic Urban Renewal Project would successfully obtain a large allocation of

federal and municipal urban renewal funds. While this would appear on the surface to be

a victory for the Yesler-Atlantic community, the ultimate implementation of ambitious

urban renewal plans would bear damaging consequences for the area's African American

residents.

## The Founding of JSCC and its Historical Context

The idea behind the creation of JSCC came out of a 1945 study commissioned by

the Seattle Council of Social Agencies that set out to assess the availability and condition

of recreational facilities for nonwhite residents of Seattle.[34] One of the neighborhoods in

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[3] The Seattle Council of Social Agencies was a municipal agency dedicated to promoting social welfare and to overseeing recreational facilities for the City of Seattle. Social agencies from throughout Seattle had membership and representation in this council.

[4] Gene Walton, untitled document, March 1, 1953, page 2, box 28, Central Seattle Community Council Federation Records, University of Washington Special Collections.

the study was the area surrounding Jackson Street, a major east-west arterial and

shopping corridor that ran through Seattle's Chinatown (which represented the center of

Seattle's Chinese, Filipino, and Japanese American communities) and the western portion

of Central Area (which housed the city's largest concentration of African Americans).

The study revealed a host of overriding infrastructural and social problems connected to

the neighborhood's lack of adequate playground spaces and recreational facilities. These

issues included substandard housing, residential overcrowding, a lack of volunteer

leadership, inadequate sanitation, and an overall lack of city services, particularly in the

areas of fire, safety, and health. On top of these pressing issues, agency workers also

raised the question of how to bridge racial divides and discover "techniques" for bringing

together a racially diverse population.[5] According to a JSCC account, members of the

agency grappled with a challenge particular to the Jackson Street area: the presence of "a

series of minority race communities in themselves well organized and tending to divide

the total area rather than unify it."[6]

Prompted by these factors, the agency put out a call for Jackson Street community

leaders to organize themselves into a neighborhood association. In response, prominent

residents of the community united to create JSCC in April of 1946. Comprised of Asian

American, African American, Jewish, and white residents, JSCC obtained sponsorship

funds and chapter status from the United Good Neighbors (UGN). It also received

funding from the Community Chest and Council of Seattle and King County, and drew

its membership from local well-known civic leaders, members of the local press, local

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[5] "Community Organization in Seattle—the Jackson St. Area," undated, page 1, box 10, folder 1, Central Seattle Community Council Federation Records, University of Washington Special Collections.
[6] Ibid.

business leaders, representatives of public and private agencies operating in the area (such as unions, churches, schools), and representatives of lodges such as the Elks. The objective of JSCC was to serve as a voluntary social service agency aimed at improving living standards, promoting businesses, and advancing civil rights causes for residents of the Jackson Street neighborhood.[7] JSCC also embraced its commitment to fostering neighborhood interethnic harmony and set in place a practice of installing an ethnically diverse panel of officers and rotating positions each year. In this process of becoming a neighborhood association designed to unify and serve a diverse population, JSCC emerged as one of the nation's first and most vibrant multiethnic neighborhood associations.

JSCC's establishment occurred during the pivotal moment when national attitudes towards race were undergoing profound shifts. Whereas the United States managed race relations through the frameworks of white supremacy and racial segregation prior to World War II, its World War II victory and newfound superpower status compelled power brokers to take steps that would position the nation as an international beacon of democracy and civil liberties. As the nation seized upon this portrayal to depict itself as the enlightened alternative to oppressive fascist and Communist regimes, its pre-existing systems of white supremacy and Jim Crow became unfeasible, as it made the United States increasingly vulnerable to charges of hypocrisy from both overseas Communists

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[7] Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community*, 174. "JSCC letter from Ruth A. Brandwein to Alice," undated, box 10, folder 1, Central Seattle Community Council Federation Records, University of Washington Special Collections; "Community Organization in Seattle—the Jackson St. Area," box 10, folder 1, Central Seattle Community Council Federation Records, University of Washington Special Collections; "Pulling Together in 1947: A Report to the Members of the Jackson Street Community Council, November 20, 1947, box 10, Central Seattle Community Council Federation Records, University of Washington Special Collections.

and domestic racial groups. It was under this context that racial liberalism became the

new national framework for managing racial populations and racial diversity. This shift

in systems of racial management also ushered in important transformations in

relationships between racial attitudes and acceptable behaviors of U.S. citizenship. In

discussing the implementation of postwar racial liberalism, Jodi Melamed notes that the

nation "[instituted] a massive and multifaceted program of national education designed to

dispel prejudiced belief…and popularize new images, histories, and narratives attesting to

the racially inclusive nature of U.S. citizenship."[8] With these changes came the

construction of a new racial logic that valorized tropes of racial pluralism and integration

as proof that American democracy was thriving, committed to the preservation of civil

liberties, and worthy of global admiration.

In the context of this shift in national understandings of race and racial pluralism,

the notion of multiculturalism assumed heightened importance. Multiculturalism can first

be understood as a critical break from the assimilation frameworks that dominated

American attitudes towards race and culture prior to the 1960s. Under assimilation, the

nation valorized "the melting pot," a metaphor for the social expectation that immigrant

and minority cultures erase their distinctive identities over time until they are fully

absorbed into white, mainstream culture.[9] With the emergence of multicultural

movements in the 1960s and 1970s, erasure of one's no-mainstream culture and identity

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[8] Melamed, *Represent and Destroy*, 22.

[9] The concept of assimilation is most famously articulated by sociologist Robert Ezra Park in his article, "Our Racial Frontier in the Pacific," in *Race and Culture* (New York: Free Press, 1950 [1926]), 150, where he presents the "race relations cycle." According to Park, "in the relations of races, there is a cycle of events which tends everywhere to repeat itself." (Park, "Our Racial Frontier in the Pacific," 150). This cycle describes four sequential stages that occur when two races come into contact with each other. The stages are: contact, conflict, accommodation, and assimilation.

no longer stood as the prevailing expectation. Rather, the multicultural movements

adopted by the nation's power brokers sought to highlight cultural pluralism by

encouraging what cultural theorist Lisa Lowe calls the "aestheticization and

commodification of racialized ethnic cultures."[10] This meant that racial and ethnic

populations were no longer pressured to hide their cultural identities; rather in the age of

multiculturalism, they were encouraged to celebrate their cultural traditions (i.e. festivals,

cuisines, displays of traditional arts and costumes) and their histories in public forums.[11]

Popular understanding generally frames multiculturalism and its breakage from

assimilationist frameworks as a product of the Civil Rights Movement's demands for

racial equality and social justice. While Americans of different ethnicities no longer had

to suppress their cultural identities following development, scholars have pointed out

problematic elements to American multiculturalism. For even though multiculturalism

encourages open expressions of cultures and ethnic pluralism, it does little to address the

historical legacies and sociopolitical structures that have accounted for inequalities in

material conditions between different racial groups. This means that multiculturalism

frequently functions by simultaneously elevating token, light-hearted, and essentializing

displays of ethnic traditions, and doing nothing to tackle socioeconomic problems

affecting communities of color or dismantle existing racial hierarchies. Race theorist

Angela Y. Davis even goes as far as to caution that "…multiculturalism can become a

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[10] Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 30.

[11] This definition of multiculturalism is often closely associated with cosmopolitanism. Both of these terms embody highly visible celebrations of cultural diversity and ethnic identity, particularly when done in a festive and commodified context. Some scholars imbue cosmopolitanism with the "framing of domestic diversity as a phenomenon of international networks" and an acknowledgement of a common humanity in the midst of myriad cultural differences.

polite and euphemistic way of affirming persisting, unequal power relationships by representing them as equal differences."[12]

My analysis in this chapter will help impart historical context to this particular framing of multiculturalism. To date, the literature discussing the ambivalent effects of multiculturalism has done so in the context of post-Civil Rights U.S. [13] This is due to the fact that popular understanding generally frames multiculturalism and its breakage from assimilationist frameworks as a product of the Civil Rights Movement's demands for racial equality and social justice. Limiting the timeframe to the post-Civil Rights Movement period also reinforces the assumption that multiculturalism did not gain favor with mainstream establishment and audiences prior to this era.[14] With the narrative of JSCC however, I show that multiculturalism was in fact starting to emerge in forceful ways by the emergence of postwar racial liberalism. As cultural pluralism and

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[12] Angela Davis, "Gender, Class, and Multiculturalism: Rethinking 'Race' Politics," in *Mapping Multiculturalism*, ed. Avery F. Gordon and Christopher Newfield (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 44.

[13] Works that adopt this critical perspective towards multiculturalism include: Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Studies*; the essays in the famous multicultural anthology edited by Christopher Newfield and Avery Gordon, *Mapping Multiculturalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); James Kyung-Jin Lee, *Urban Triage: Race and the Fictions of Multiculturalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); and Monika Seibert, *Indians Playing Indian: Multiculturalism And Contemporary Indigenous Art In North America* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2015)

[14] Several historians have documented the existence of multiculturalism during the prewar era. They are: Gary Gerstle, *Working-Class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City, 1914-1960* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); George Sanchez, "'What's Good for Boyle Heights is Good for the Jews," *American Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (September 2004): 135-164; Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008; Daniel Katz, *All Together Different: Yiddish Socialists, Garment Workers, and the Labor Roots of Multiculturalism* (New York: New York University Press, 2011). This body of literature, however, adopts a different framing of multiculturalism from the one used in this chapter. According to the authors of these works, the multiculturalism that occurred during prewar era assumed the form of interethnic coalitions whose primary reason for mobilization was to forge oppositional politics against a mainstream establishment that was regarded as unjust. The actors of prewar multiculturalism were not interested using their interethnicity to gain the respect and esteem of business owners, governmental agencies, or white populations. Multiculturalism as the basis of American exceptionalism did not emerge as a possibility until the postwar period. Proponents of prewar multiculturalism were instead interested in using multiculturalism to forge cross-ethnic alliances to agitate for more rights or higher wages.

celebrations of diversity found political potency during this period, JSCC set out to promote its multiracialism as a means of bolstering its reputation and organizational power. At the same time, JSCC also sought to employ multicultural celebrations to elevate the reputation of the Jackson Street community by promoting unity amongst its different ethnic groups. In the process of pursuing these objects however, JSCC's deployment of multiculturalism would also carry the effect of reinforcing existing structures of institutional racism and spatial segregation.[15]

As racial liberalism and multiculturalism assumed heightened political capital, JSCC seized upon these new developments to reframe the Jackson Street area as a geography of exceptionalism due to its racial and ethnic diversity. Many Seattleites had harbored negative perceptions towards the Jackson Street area prior to 1946. According to Taylor, nonwhite residents in Jackson Street shared their community with the downtown Seattle's white underclass, which consisted of "transients, homeless women and men, prostitutes, pimps, and gamblers," and "Jackson Street became a metaphor for a particular lifestyle associated with its risqué street life" by the early twentieth century.[16] Moreover, continued infrastructural neglect and declining housing stock during this period meant that by 1946, Jackson Street was associated not only with impoverished,

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[15] While critiquing multiculturalism, some scholars have also simultaneously framed multiculturalism as a potential tool that can be utilized by racial groups to mobilize for greater rights and inclusion in modern U.S. society. (See Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts* and *Mapping Multiculturalism*, ed. Christopher Newfield and Avery Gordon, for example). The distinction between these two iterations lies in intricacies over power relations and who in particular is deploying multiculturalism in a given situation. When deployed by the state and mainstream institutions, multiculturalism has the effect of advancing superficial cultural celebrations and token diversities/representations without tackling structural inequalities and systemic racisms. At the same time however, the ethnic and racial groups that seek redress against racism and inequality also have the ability to use the widespread acceptance of diverse cultural representations that resulted from multiculturalism as a space to assert their own agency, critique structural inequalities, and advocate more equitable solutions (e.g. in the fields of literature, education, politics, and the workplace).
[16] Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community*, 87.

downtrodden populations, but also slum conditions.[17] As Cold War racial politics placed

new premium on displays of interracial harmony as emblematic of American democracy,

JSCC came across the opportunity to transform its communal reputation, physical

landscape, and economic prospects by showcasing the multiracial composition of its

district. In order to depict itself as a thriving hub of ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity

however, JSCC had to organize activities that offered public performances of interracial

and intercultural harmony and offer new layers to what it meant to be an American

citizen.

One of JSCC's primary strategies for performing diversity and multiculturalism

was to sponsor a series of social events, carnivals, and celebrations for the Jackson Street

community. From 1946 through the early 1960s, JSCC devoted substantial energy to

organizing social and entertainment events such as potlucks, annual gatherings, festivals,

holiday parties, and arts and crafts shows.[18] These events were held multiple times each

year and were publicized in JSCC's monthly newsletters and news releases. Perhaps the

most anticipated yearly event was the Annual Meeting, which was always prominently

advertised in the newsletter with hand-drawn cover illustrations. Highlights of the Annual

Meeting included the selection of a new leadership board, the presentation of awards such

as Man of the Year (given to an individual demonstrating exemplary community service

and volunteer work with JSCC), a multicultural talent show, and an "international" dinner

party. This dinner party known as the "International Smorgasbord," represented perhaps

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[17] Shelley Lee, *Claiming the Oriental Gateway: Prewar Seattle and Japanese American* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 207; Doug Chin, *Seattle's International District: The Making of a Pan-Asian Community* (Seattle: The International Examiner, 2009) 82.

[18] One good source that highlights several of these activities is Jackson Street Community Council, "Shoulder to Shoulder: A Five-Year Report of the Jackson Street Community Council," c. 1950, pages 10-31, Wing Luke Museum Collections.

the most overt display of cosmopolitanism in the Annual Meeting. It featured foods from

different cultures prepared by an interethnic group of women active in the organization.

The 1949 International Smorgasbord, for instance, served the "exotic foods" of Japanese

sukiyaki, Chinese chow fun, and Jewish tzimmes for 285 guests.[19] The following year,

the event served an expanded menu of "Japanese tempura, Chinese chow mein, New

Orleans lamb curry, Filipino sinigang and float cakes, Jewish kevtes ovas macaron, and

chopped chicken livers" to an audience numbering over 500.[20] In the words of historian

Shelley Lee, events such as the Annual Dinner fostered the idea that multiculturalism

"was not just an idea but also something to be seen and experienced."[21]

On the surface, it would appear that JSCC's emphasis on dinners and festivals

indicated merely an affinity for lively entertainment. But JSCC's motivations for

organizing these events were very much informed by the findings from 1946 study that

tensions as well as divisions characterized interracial relations in the Jackson Street area.

First, the wartime and postwar period had ushered tumultuous changes for Jackson

Street's racial populations.[22] Seattle's black population had nearly tripled between 1940

and 1945 with the vast majority being made to live in Central Area and International

District due to the restrictive covenants. Compounding this influx, Japanese Americans

began to resettle in International District starting in 1945 for the first time after their

release from World War II internment. Not surprisingly, the prospect of racial hostilities

became a significant source of concern for city officials and leaders of the Seattle Council

of Social Agencies,' particularly in the context of World War II race riots occurring

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[19] Ibid.

[20] Lee, *Claiming the Oriental Gateway*, 208.

[21] Ibid., 208.

[22] Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community*, 178-179 and 244.

elsewhere in the nation. At the same time, geographic racial divisions existed in JSCC's service area; for as heterogeneous as its population was, the area was nonetheless comprised of distinct community sections each bearing a predominant culture and demographic. The official demarcation of the JSCC service area designated the following streets to be the official boundaries: Jefferson Street (north), 23rd Avenue (east), Dearborn Street (south), and 4th Avenue (west). Chinatown stood in JSCC's southwestern quadrant, Central Area occupied the southeastern quadrant, and the Cherry Hill residential neighborhood took up its northeastern quadrant. This linking of Chinatown, Central Area, and the diverse Cherry Hill neighborhood played an important role in allowing JSCC to depict itself as racially and ethnically pluralistic. However, the existence of distinct racial geographies in the JSCC community also meant that interracial harmony was not a presupposed reality. Rather, JSCC needed to adopt concrete steps in order to cultivate interracial unity in its service area.

In light of the fact that JSCC's existence was intended to address interethnic community fissures and to merge disparate business districts and neighborhoods into its service area, its social activities represented an important strategy for fostering cross-cultural affinities and enhance a sense of community among JSCC's diverse and sometimes fragmented population. Phil Hayasaka, who served as JSCC executive secretary from 1962-1963, alluded to this when he stated that the purpose of organizing neighborhood potluck parties was for the neighbors to take the first step to "get to know each other." An April 1962 JSCC newsletter referenced the same sentiment in its announcement of the upcoming Annual Meeting: "How we have Unity in our Community will be illustrated by entertainment of the Chinese, Japanese, Filipino,

Negro, Jewish, the Youth and the Senior Citizen groups representative of our area."[23]

Social events such as the annual meetings functioned not merely for entertainment, but

also for the sake of abolishing interracial barriers through shared gaiety and festivities.

Such events also bolstered JSCC's political capital in the early era of racial

liberalism. This was apparent in the 1950 Annual Meeting and International

Smorgasbord, which scored a major coup by convincing Mayor Devin to host the event.

Devin's willingness to participate so visibly in the event suggests that he stood to benefit

politically by positioning himself as a supporter of JSCC's cosmopolitanism, and that his

previous apprehensions over Japanese American resettlement in his city had all but

melted away. Devin's embrace of JSCC's cosmopolitanism was echoed by a round of

positive publicity surrounding the organization's interracial and intercultural elements

during the late 1940s and 1950s. Soon after JSCC's formation, the *Seattle Times*

rhapsodized in 1946 that "Jackson Street Council is a Lesson in Race Cooperation" and

expressed praise that the "minority groups" of Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, and black

residents "have sat down with their white neighbors to work out a program of

'community betterment.'"[24] *The Rotarian* article introducing JSCC to a nation-wide

readership followed in 1948, and in perhaps the most dramatic endorsement of JSCC's

multiculturalism, the U.S. State Department employed JSCC's interethnic collaborations

to bolster its Cold War propaganda machine as when JSCC was featured in a 1952 radio

show produced jointly by The Ford Foundation and Columbia Broadcasting System

(CBS). Called "The People Act," this show narrated stories to the American public—and,

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[23] Jackson Street Community Council Newsletter, April 5, 1962, page 1, box 28, Central Seattle
Community Council Federation Records, University of Washington Special Collections.
[24] "Jackson Street Council is Lesson in Race Cooperation," *The Seattle Times* July 28, 1946, 4.

according to JSCC, also to Iron Curtain countries—that showcased real-life examples of

U.S. citizens working together to solve day-to-day problems.[25] In light of the acclaim it

received for epitomizing interethnic cooperation and U.S. democracy, JSCC was also

considered for the subject of a U.S. State Department documentary. According to a JSCC

news release from 1953,

> The film is planned to counteract current Russian propaganda dealing with
> the mistreatment of minorities in the United States. The activities of the
> Jackson Street Community Council…were selected as an outstanding
> demonstration of how members of minority groups can and do participate
> democratically in community affairs.

Although this documentary appears to have never been completed, it is still apparent that

JSCC's narrative of interracial democracy was resonating with media outlets and was

significantly improving public perceptions towards the Jackson Street area.

Although the publicity surrounding JSCC delineated the Jackson Street area as a

geography that was exceptional for its multiculturalism, it also had the effect of

deflecting critical questions away from the very segregation policies and practices that

accounted for the diverse populations in Chinatown and Central Area. Like most

American cities prior to World War II, Seattle had employed restrictive covenants to

mark its most desirable geographies as off-limits to nonwhites and ethnic whites.[26]

According to Taylor, the housing patterns upheld by restrictive covenants constituted the

primary factor that accounted for the concentration of "virtually all" Asians, American

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[25] Gene Walton, untitled document, pages 1-2, March 1, 1953, box 28, Central Seattle Community Council Federation Records, University of Washington Special Collections. The Radio Gold Index databases states that JSCC was the subject of the April 20, 1952 episode titled, "A Racially Mixed Area Learns the Power of Teamwork." (Program #16) "The People Act," http://radiogoldindex.com/cgi-local/p2.cgi?ProgramName=The+People+Act, accessed August 5, 2015.

[26] For more information on this, see Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993); and George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 26-31.

Indians, and approximately 65% of Central Area's African Americans into the boundaries

of the community by the 1940s.[27] This meant that Jackson Street's racial and cultural

diversity was not the result of self-selecting housing and migrating patterns, but of

segregation that was legally enforced. Although the official use of restrictive covenants

was outlawed after 1948, Seattle and other American cities continued to enforce spatial

segregation through a series of informal practices adopted by realtor associations and

fearful white residents who bore implicit support from governmental agencies, such as

the Federal Housing Administration (FHA).[28] In Seattle, restrictive covenants were

replaced by "voluntary agreements" and collusions between realtors and residents to

prevent nonwhites, particularly blacks, from moving into desirable neighborhoods. JSCC

and several Jackson Street community members were well aware of these spatial

restrictions, as a 1955 survey sponsored by the organization made several references to

formidable challenges facing Jackson Street residents wishing to move into other

districts.[29]

Nonetheless, JSCC did not raise any critiques towards Seattle's widespread use of

restrictive covenants and informal segregationist practices throughout its existence. Even

as the Seattle NAACP branch initiated an open housing campaign with support from the

Central Area Community Council to outlaw neighborhood segregation and outlaw

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[27] Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community*, 87.
[28] For more information on spatial segregation practices in Seattle that continued after 1948, refer to Taylor, 178-181.
[29] "A Survey of Attitudes and Opinions in the Jackson Street Area," January 13, 1955, pages 11-12, box 8, folder 2, Elmer Ogawa Papers, University of Washington Special Collections. The document noted the following examples of obstacles preventing residents from moving out of the JSCC area: "There's some difficulty in moving to other areas, 'Exclusive' signs make it hard to locate in certain areas," "Movement of people from Jackson to other districts is resented," and "Real estate salesmen still cannot sell or buy for their clients because of prejudice and 'no orientals' (sic) rulings."

housing discrimination in Seattle, the JSCC stayed silent on this topic.[30] By choosing to extol Jackson Street's multicultural configurations as emblematic of democracy without raising any critiques towards the city's long history of exclusionary housing practices, JSCC was in fact helping to reinforce the racist underpinnings of postwar racial liberalism. This tactic allowed the city of Seattle to depict itself as racially inclusive, which emerged as a marker of U.S. exceptionalism in postwar racial liberalism, yet take no steps to dismantle the legal and social structures responsible for confining most of Seattle's nonwhite population into the overcrowded districts making up the Jackson Street area. Thus in this situation, multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism assumed a double-edged sword. On one hand, it provided JSCC and its constituency with valuable opportunities to transform its community's negative reputation, to depict itself as exceptional, and to forge new vocabularies of belonging into American citizenship. On the other hand, celebratory associations of JSCC with multiculturalism also helped reinforce city-wide discriminatory housing practices by commending one of its consequences—the diversity resulting from the concentration of Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, blacks, and Jews into Jackson Street.

## Neighborhood Improvement and Racial Uplift

To better understand what was at stake with JSCC's deployment of multiculturalism, an examination of JSCC's utilization of racial uplift discourses is instructive. While JSCC sought to enhance its communal reputation through multicultural celebrations, the organization also looked translate these its newfound sociopolitical

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[30] The Seattle Municipal Archives webpage contains a brief history of the Seattle Open Housing Campaign (1959-1968) at http://www.seattle.gov/cityarchives/exhibits-and-education/digital-document-libraries/the-seattle-open-housing-campaign (accessed February 1, 2016). Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community*, 179-180.

capital into acquisition of civic resources that could help reverse the trend of physical

deterioration in its service area. This is why JSCC's multiculturalism and racial uplift

must be treated as intertwined political strategies. In the context of the 20th century, racial

uplift refers to the activities of minority groups seeking to "elevate" the socioeconomic

status of their race by modeling desired citizenship, civic engagement, and cultural

behaviors.[31] While models of racial uplift existed during the 18th and 19th century in the

forms of black communities struggling to attain equal citizenship rights, the notion

became increasingly associated with middle-class norms and racial populations by the

20th century. In other words, racial uplift embodied efforts by minority groups to gain

sociopolitical advancement through the cultivation (and at times enforcement) of

mainstream norms, white middle-class sensibilities, and social respectability within their

communities. Many proponents of racial uplift embarked on charitable, self-help, and

service-oriented projects designed to both service members of their racial group and to

inculcate them with what the boundaries of acceptable middle-class behaviors were. To

date, several historians have created an important body of scholarship on racial uplift—

along with the accompanying politics of respectability, which refers to efforts by racial

groups to police and enforce mainstream norms upon members of their own

community—demonstrating efforts by African Americans, Asian Americans, and Jewish

Americans to garner civic advancement for their communities throughout the twentieth

centuries.[32] While these studies demonstrate that racial uplift projects were adopted by

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[31] Michelle Boyd, "The Downside of Racial Uplift: The Meaning of Gentrification in an African American Neighborhood," *City & Society* 27, no. 3 (December 2015): 274.

[32] For studies discussing racial uplift and respectability politics at length, see Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994); Kevin Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and*

different racial groups throughout various moments in U.S. history, they also demonstrate that strategies of racial uplift were as much about cultivating middle-class sensibilities and norms as it was about race.

Given the linkages that tied racial uplift frameworks to middle class behaviors, it is not surprising that JSCC's leaders utilized racial uplift to promote positive images of their neighborhood to mainstream political and media establishments, and advance self-help approaches towards projects relating to neighborhood beautification, housing, and heteronormative practices such as birth control and child care. At the same time, JSCC's brand of racial uplift also employed the politics of respectability to silence both criticism towards municipal agencies and potentially embarrassing complaints about their neighborhood. Even though JSCC and press outlets consistently emphasized the multiethnic composition of its constituency and leadership, and even though subsequent scholarly discussions also affirm to JSCC's exceptionalism in this regard, a review of JSCC's archival documents suggests that the organization's leadership was dominated by Asian Americans and whites (while blacks participated in notably smaller numbers) from 1946 to 1960. While an internal report notes that the Jackson Street area's population was approximately 1/3 black, 1/3 white, and 1/3 Asian, reviews of board of trustees photo and lists from 1946 to 1963 consistently show lowest levels of representation for African

*Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Victoria Wolcott, *Remaking Respectability: African American Women in Interwar Detroit* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); *Nayan Shah, Contagious Divides Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Caroline E. Light, *That Pride of Race and Character: The Roots of Jewish Benevolence in the Jim Crow South* (New York: New York University Press, 2014); and Lon Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict; A History of Ethnic Identity and Festival, 1934-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). Hazel Carby's analysis and critique of America's tradition of utilizing famous male figureheads to represent the African American race is also instructive for furthering understanding of how racial uplift politics operates in the country—*Race Men* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

Americans.[33] From 1946 to 1960, the board of trustees was chaired by whites nine times, Asians four times, and blacks twice, and in lists of board of trustee names during this same period, Asians consistently made up 50% of JSCC's leadership body. An assessment report of JSCC from the early 1950s indicated a need for the organization to increase levels of participation in organizational participation and leadership from "the Negro, Caucasian, and Filipino groups and continued development with the Japanese and Chinese groups."[34] What these intricacies in JSCC's racial composition suggest is that the organization's promotion of racial uplift, self-help projects, and politics of respectability discourses was carried out by an interracial coalition that was actually dominated by Asians (particularly Japanese and Chinese Americans) and whites. This composition is in fact consistent with class stratifications within Seattle's racial groups, as the city's Japanese, Chinese, Jews, and ethnic whites experienced noticeably greater socioeconomic mobility (as well as entry into the middle class) than black and Filipino populations during the postwar period. Thus, even though JSCC's brand of racial uplift is typically couched as a multiethnic effort, it is important to still recognize the ethnic nuances and power dynamics—that is the dominance of Asians and white leaders—that dictated the organization's leadership, strategies, and activities.

As the creation of JSCC offered the possibility not only of enhanced communal esteem for Seattle's racial groups, but also unprecedented civic resources, leaders of the Jackson Street community moved to leverage their cross-racial ties to collaborate with urban planners and convince them to sponsor much-needed infrastructural improvements

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[33] "Community Organization in Seattle—The Jackson Street Area," c. 1950, box 10, Central Seattle Community Council Federation Records, University of Washington Special Collections.

[34] "Report: Committee on Review of Jackson Street Community Council," c. 1950, box 10, Central Seattle Community Council Federation Records, University of Washington Special Collections.

in the area. The following sections will show that the leaders of JSCC were keenly aware

of the fact that the existence of blight was typically blamed on the individual deficiencies

of the affected residents,[35] and that the task of organizing self-help projects to convince

city planners that Jackson Street area residents were respectable citizens and worthy of

municipal resources assumed pressing urgency. Self-help projects, according to music

historian Lawrence Schenbeck, served the functions of rehabilitating a race's image and

instilling respectable middle-class behaviors into a racial community. [36] While the cross-

racial element factored strongly in JSCC's membership, the class dimensions of the

membership cannot be ignored as a review of the organization's infrastructural

improvement strategies and discourses will reveal heavy investments in model citizenship

and the politics of respectability, both frameworks linked to the enforcement of middle-

class norms. JSCC's interracial brand of model citizenship would successfully garner

both resources and public esteem for their neighborhood. However, JSCC's approach

towards infrastructural improvements and urban renewal projects was predicated on self-

help frameworks and a conscious effort to pursue highly limited forms of governmental

aid. This would severely constrain the possibilities for change in tackling structural

racism or permanently improving neighborhood infrastructures. Moreover, JSCC's

strategy would necessitate the silencing of narratives that did not conform to the model

citizenship and "pull yourself up by the bootstraps" frameworks espoused by its leaders,

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[35] This attitude was well-documented in the classic 1987 study by William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

[36] Lawrence Schenbeck, *Racial Uplift and American Music* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2012), 5. In Schenbeck's words, "Uplift marked out self-help as its territory, hoping to rehabilitate the race's image by stressing visible class distinctions, respectable middle-class behavior, and an ethos of service to the masses."

further reinforcing beliefs that Jackson Street residents were responsible for their

community's infrastructural and social ailments, and ultimately working to absolve

governmental institutions of infrastructural racism.

JSCC's initial approach towards neighborhood improvement was to initiate a

series of individual projects that aimed to address sanitation, health, and physical

landscaping problems along with poverty. These projects were limited in scale and

started off as individual clean-up drives, health clinics, and holiday toy drives. As JSCC

leaders organized these events, they campaigned hard to elicit assistance from municipal

agencies and departments in hopes that these collaborations would lead to more

permanent and recurring programs. For its first neighborhood improvement project, in

1946 JSCC organized a TB Chest X-Ray campaign with participation from the Anti-TB

League. At the time, the Jackson Street district had one of Seattle's highest per-capita

death rates from tuberculosis; the X-Ray campaign brought in a specially equipped truck

to provide free chest X-rays for local residents, attracting 878 people in 5 days.[37] These

health campaigns also helped elicit positive publicity for JSCC in Seattle's press, as in a

July 28, 1946 *Seattle Times* article titled, "Jackson Street Council is a Lesson in Race

Cooperation." In following years, these campaigns were repeated and they paved the way

for future health-oriented projects such as a long-running well-baby clinic staffed by

volunteers, a public health nurse, and neighborhood physicians to provide free physical

exams for babies and toddlers.

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[37] "Shoulder to Shoulder: A Five-Year Report of the Jackson Street Community Council," c. 1950, Wing Luke Museum Collections. The pamphlet cited the following statistic from 1947: "22% of all TB deaths in Seattle were among the Jackson Street district's 3% of the population."

JSCC also embarked upon a series of successful neighborhood aid projects throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s. In one, JSCC organized three annual neighborhood cleanup drives, enlisting the help of municipal planners to send garbage trucks into the Jackson Street community for a day. Residents were urged through a series of community meetings, press releases, and door-to-door drives to clear out all garbage and unwanted items from their homes and to leave them out in streets for a one-day pickup campaign by the municipal garbage collectors. JSCC also organized an in initiative to repaving and redesign a major street and sidewalk that had been badly damaged by four decades of mudslides. According to accounts and photographs, the mudslides blocked the entire sidewalk plus one fourth of the busy street. After a successful fund-raising campaign by JSCC to collect donations from neighborhood businesses, landlords, and tenants, city engineers finally came into Jackson Street to design new mud control and drainage methods, and to repave the sidewalk between 1948 and 1949.[38] Such projects represented a channeling of interethnic cooperation into citizen attempts to proactively tackle community problems in health, physical landscaping, and housing. And rather than launching protests against years of infrastructural neglect, these projects represented a remarkable exercise in racial uplift where members of the Jackson Street community took the initiative to raise funds, coordinate logistics, and make arrangements for municipal agencies to come in and make the necessary repairs.

As shown in the above projects, JSCC engaged in performances of racial uplift adopting self-help discourses and initiatives that depicted its community members as

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[38] "Shoulder to Shoulder: A Five-Year Report of the Jackson Street Community Council," c. 1950, pages 2 and 6, Wing Luke Museum Collections.

proactive agents in cleaning up their community and in helping those in less fortunate

stations. At the same time, JSCC also deployed the politics of respectability by

moderating and discouraging potential criticism towards the pervasive poverty, racism,

and municipal neglect that had long plagued their community. A survey of JSCC

materials reveals that the organization consistently expressed little anger and frustration

over their community's socioeconomic ills, opting instead to portray Jackson Street

residents as upbeat citizens who refused to be dragged down by poverty and who always

looked inward rather than outward when seeking solutions to problems in their

community. In 1955, JSCC sponsored a study titled, "A Survey of Attitudes and Opinions

in the Jackson Street Community" that set out to record residents' views of the Jackson

Street community and major issues shaping it. Responses were compiled and assessed

from a Neighborhood Study Group meeting organized by JSCC on January 13, 1955.

Much more than an information-gathering study, however, "A Survey of Attitudes and

Opinions in the Jackson Street Community" was also written for the purposes of shaping

residents' attitudes into thought patterns that could be harnessed to make the community

more vital and productive.[39] In the words of the survey:

> The whole purpose of the Jackson Street Neighborhood Study Group is to
> strengthen and promote the vitality of neighborhood life. This kind of
> effort we feel is essential to the strengthening of democracy and the
> American heritage of human freedom. Therefore, if a neighborhood has in
> it certain basic characteristics that tend to prevent or retard neighborhood
> improvement and democratic action, it is the job of this group to ferret out
> these characteristics, bring them into the open, and examine them for what
> they are so that the people may be better able to understand them and thus
> be in a position to devise intelligent means of dealing with them.[40]

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[39] Jackson Street Community Council. "A Survey of Attitudes and Opinions in the Jackson Street Area.
Part I," 1955, page 1, box 8, folder 2, Elmer Ogawa Papers, University of Washington Special Collections.
[40] Jackson Street Community Council. "A Survey of Attitudes and Opinions in the Jackson Street Area.
Part I," 1955, page 1, box 8, folder 2, Elmer Ogawa Papers, University of Washington Special Collections.

The wording of this report makes it clear that survey organizers sought to "ferret out" "certain basic characteristics" that tended to hold back the community.

The survey asked 72 participants in the Neighborhood Study Group meeting to express their thoughts on a variety of subjects related to the Jackson Street area including race relations, community relations, communal institutions, community social services, neighborhood reputations, and other pressing neighborhood issues. Many of the questions on Jackson Street race relations elicited strong emotions and sharp responses from those surveyed. A question asking whether respondents felt racial "factions," "cliques," or conflicts existed in the Jackson Street community prompted responses alluding to communal apathy on this subject as well as interracial jealousies, apathies, and conflicts. In their analysis of these responses, the authors of the JSCC report summed up their assessment in a paragraph that bemoaned "jealousies, personal and petty differences" as detrimental because "community development is retarded, democratic processes are defeated, and problems remain unsolved."[41] Two more questions asked respondents to identify community problems that existed between residents of Jackson Street and residents of adjacent communities, and between residents of the Jackson Street area versus the rest of Seattle. [42] Respondents pointed to wealth gaps and socioeconomic disparities, racial segregation, slum conditions of the Jackson Street area in contrast to other Seattle communities, black and white racial divides, and patronizing attitudes by

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[41] Jackson Street Community Council. "A Survey of Attitudes and Opinions in the Jackson Street Area. Part I," 1955, page 10, box 8, folder 2, Elmer Ogawa Papers, University of Washington Special Collections.
[42] Jackson Street Community Council. "A Survey of Attitudes and Opinions in the Jackson Street Area. Part I," 1955, pages 11-16, box 8, folder 2, Elmer Ogawa Papers, University of Washington Special Collections.

whites towards blacks. In their analysis of these questions, the report authors implied that any changes must come from within Jackson Street itself: "Are there some attitudes, activities or programs we can create within our own area by which we can help to bring about more constructive attitudes on the part of nearby neighborhoods?" and "Is there anything this group or other groups of citizens can do to change attitudes upon the part of Seattle residents?"[43] Rather than using respondents' testimony as an opportunity to raise complaints about the racism and socioeconomic disparities experienced by Jackson Street residents, the survey report urged Jackson Street residents to alter their own behaviors and seek ways to make themselves more acceptable to the mainstream population. This reluctance to voice complaints also carried over into the report authors' analysis of survey questions that asked respondents to list main problems in the Jackson Street community. Despite acknowledging the existence of community problems that likely stemmed from municipal neglect (e.g. lack of basic city services such as lighting and garbage collection) survey organizers adopted the approach of deference and silence.[44]

The survey report authors adopted this tone in spite of the fact that JSCC, in several of its other publications, had actually attributed their community's pervasive dilapidation and disrepair to years of neglect on the part of Seattle's municipal government. This was articulated in a 1950s internal report summarizing JSCC's first 5 years. It notes: "For many years residents of the area in the vicinity of Jackson Street in Seattle have been aware that many needs there were not being touched or adequately

[43] Jackson Street Community Council. "A Survey of Attitudes and Opinions in the Jackson Street Area. Part I," 1955, pages 11-16, box 8, folder 2, Elmer Ogawa Papers, University of Washington Special Collections.

[44] "Jackson Street Community Council. "A Survey of Attitudes and Opinions in the Jackson Street Area. Part II." 1955, box 8, folder 2, Elmer Ogawa Papers, University of Washington Special Collections.

covered by the existing community agency contacts in that area."[45] The document then went on to identify specific instances of municipal neglect: deficient recreation spaces and playgrounds, poor sanitation infrastructure, large numbers of health and fire hazards, substandard housing, transiency, juvenile delinquency, and prevalent low income. Such inadequacies were attributed by the report to a dearth of municipal public services such as fire, safety and health departments, along with the virtual non-existence of governmental youth and recreation agencies in the Jackson Street community. [46]

Part of JSCC's unwillingness to express anger or voice complaints in their assessments of hardships surrounding their community can be traced to the state of the postwar American economy and to prevailing national attitudes towards poverty during this period. On the surface, the postwar years of the late 1940s and 1950s represented an era of prosperity, optimism, and conformity for the country. After the U.S. emerged as the biggest victor of World War II, with a thriving postwar economy and rapidly expanding military industrial centers throughout the country, citizens enjoyed a rise in living standards while popular culture extolled the plethora of consumer goods and spacious single-unit homes being made available as never before. As American culture bathed in the euphoria of newfound victory, international prominence, and domestic prosperity, the circulation of these ideas flourished at the expense of groups that continued to struggle with poverty and discrimination. According to historian Frank Stricker, U.S. politics and culture from the late 1940s to the late 1950s turned a blind eye

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[45] Jackson Street Community Council. "Shoulder to Shoulder: A Five-Year Report of the Jackson Street Community Council," Wing Luke Museum Collections.
[46] Jackson Street Community Council, "Community Organization in Seattle—the Jackson St. Area," undated, box 10, folder 1, Central Seattle Community Council Federation Records, University of Washington Special Collections.

to plight of the poor due to widespread belief in the infallibility of the U.S. economic growth machine coupled with overriding obsessions over anticommunism. [47] If poverty was ever mentioned in policy or studies, it was generally attributed not to social injustices and economic policies, but to individual defects.

In this context of national postwar prosperity, Seattle had itself been transformed into a center of national defense industry, and functioned as a poster child for national images of growth and prosperity. As active participants in the construction of this national myth, city officials in Seattle embraced the national trend of attributing poverty to individual defects, not sociopolitical or structural inequalities. In initiating projects to improve their community and in collaborating with municipal officials to garner infrastructural resources, JSCC itself incorporated these prevailing attitudes towards poverty into their discourses. In accord with JSCC's aversion to engaging in complaints and externally directed critiques in the face of impoverishment, JSCC materials also highlighted a reluctance to adopt a critical stance towards the existence of racism in the Jackson Street community. In a 1947 brochure publicizing its tasks, JSCC employed language poking fun at critical issues related to racial inequality and racial tension in Seattle.[48] Titled "Pulling Together in 1947," the document employed colorful and catchy headings such as:

> "We Solved the Housing Shortage. For ourselves, that is!...we finally located an office…"[49]

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[47] Frank Stricker, *How America Lost the War on Poverty—And How to Win It* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 1.

[48] "Pulling Together in 1947," November 20, 1947, box 10, Central Seattle Community Council Federation Records, University of Washington Special Collections. UW Special Collections.

[49] "Pulling Together in 1947," November 20, 1947, page 1, box 10, Central Seattle Community Council Federation Records, University of Washington Special Collections. UW Special Collections.

"Tuberculosis is One of Our Problems. There is 'discrimination' as far as T.B. is concerned…"
"86 Babies 'Shot'"[50]
"We Really Cleaned Up. Conscious that every neighborhood needs a 'shot in the arm' to make it look its best after a dreary winter, the Council sponsored its second Clean-Up Campaign in May to stimulate civic pride."[51]

The statements in "Pulling Together in 1947" are remarkable given the suspicion and dissatisfaction that residents of the city's ethnic neighborhoods bore against Seattle's mainstream establishment. Residents in the International District and Central Area suffered daily from the negative effects of racial discrimination in the form of physical segregation, overcrowded and substandard housing units, and widespread perception of police racism and brutality. But rather than acknowledging the gravity of such challenges, this document opted for jocular references to housing shortages, racism, and police brutality through the use of light-hearted puns.

The delicate nature of racial politics in Seattle precluded the possibility of not only overt expressions against the government, but also the initiation of ambitious reforms that could be regarded as provocative. Instead, JSCC initiated non-controversial, modest projects that filled the following criteria: the projects had to be noncontroversial and politically neutral in nature, appealing to a wide range of constituencies in the Jackson Street community, and executable with the limited resources available to JSCC. In his study of Chinese American model citizenship during the 1930s and 1940s, Nayan Shah notes that "By engaging prevailing norms of conduct, Chinese American activists

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[50] "Pulling Together in 1947," November 20, 1947, page 2, box 10, Central Seattle Community Council Federation Records, University of Washington Special Collections. UW Special Collections.
[51] "Pulling Together in 1947," November 20, 1947, page 3, box 10, Central Seattle Community Council Federation Records, University of Washington Special Collections. UW Special Collections.

could argue for the worthiness of Chinese Americans to participate in and draw upon the resources of American society."[52] Likewise, the multiethnic membership of JSCC had to prove the community's worthiness to receive municipal aid. They chose to do so by demonstrating their interethnic harmony, by invoking their collective congeniality, and as the following sections will describe, by adopting self-improvement neighborhood projects that showcased their proactive investments in municipal upkeep.

### Urban Renewal and Racial Triangulation

After spending much of the 1940s and early 1950s mobilizing self-help projects and discourses to attract more respect and resources from city establishments, JSCC came across a significant opportunity in the form of urban renewal. Starting in the mid-1950s, the advent of urban renewal programs ushered in unprecedented possibilities for both municipal governments and individual neighborhoods to acquire substantial funding from the federal government.[53] Of particular interest to organizations such as JSCC was the fact that urban renewal funds were specially earmarked to implement infrastructural and housing improvements aimed at alleviating poverty. This development elevated the stakes for JSCC's discourse production and political activities, and in response to the emergence of urban renewal, JSCC would press for increased collaboration with municipal agencies. The organization would also intensify its promotion of multicultural self-help discourses to garner favor from city officials and press outlets.

To date, the majority of urban renewal literature has examined race from a black/white framework; but as the case study of JSCC and Seattle demonstrate,

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[52] Shah, *Contagious Divides*, 9.

[53] Urban renewal refers to projects that are often funded by the government to redevelop and revitalize an urban district. Urban renewal often involves the clearance of deteriorating housing and business districts, followed by the construction of newer housing, business, and social service facilities.

multiracial coalitions did at times participate in urban renewal projects, and their

activities have the potential to shed new light on understandings of how urban renewal

simultaneously helped redefine constructions of blackness, Asian identity, and multiracial

formations during the postwar era. In this section, I analyze the Cherry Hill Urban

Renewal Project, which involved a collaboration where Seattle urban planning officials

and JSCC leaders worked together to a neighborhood beautification initiative in Cherry

Hill, a multiracial district on the northeastern edge of the Jackson Street community.

Many studies have highlighted urban renewal's role in reinforcing black/white spatial

segregation and exacerbating black/white inequalities in the postwar and post-Civil

Rights era. These works correctly assess that urban renewal institutionalized the postwar

subordination of blacks to the bottom of the racial hierarchy by exacerbating the housing

shortage crisis prevalent in many African American communities, as urban renewal

projects ultimately served as political mechanism for demolishing black housing without

having to construct replacements.[54]

While these studies offer important insight into urban renewal's destructive

legacies on the material conditions and racial positioning of blacks, the Cherry Hill Urban

Renewal Project suggests that urban renewal also had the potential to reinforce racial

triangulation mechanisms, as was the case in Seattle. The narrative of the Cherry Hill

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[54] Important works analyzing the relationship between urban renewal, race, and racial segregation include Martin Anders, *The Federal Bulldozer: A Critical Analysis of Urban Renewal, 1949-1962* (Cambridge, MA: The M.I.T. Press, 1964); Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*; Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*; Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*; Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960*; Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*; Josh Sides, *L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003); and Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

project runs counter to conventional black/white histories of urban renewal in a few ways. First, both Cherry Hill and JSCC hosted multiracial populations. Cherry Hill was an 83.6-acre residential neighborhood of 2,100 residents, whose racial demographics were in the process of transitioning from being predominantly Jewish American to becoming equally divided between whites, blacks and Asians by the 1950s. JSCC, as previously mentioned, also boasted an ethnically diverse membership, but had a leadership dominated by Asians and whites. Secondly, the Cherry Hill project did not receive any substantial allocation of urban renewal funds from either the federal or municipal governments. Instead, much like projects undertaken by JSCC, the Cherry Hill project was primarily run as an experiment in self-help neighborhood beautification. Many of its undertakings bore remarkable parallels to the neighborhood projects run by JSCC, and Cherry Hill essentially became another example of racial uplift and respectability politics in postwar Seattle. In the end, this strategy had the effect of producing improvements that temporarily upgraded Cherry Hill's neighborhood appearance, but soon faded into ineffectuality as they did little to quell the municipal neglect of the area.

Cherry Hill might seem on first glance to represent another complete failure of urban renewal policies. Its fate however is consistent with the racial triangulation legacies of Seattle which stifled allocation of sizeable federal resources to communities with large Asian populations, as previously seen in the example of Yesler Terrace. While the destruction of a Japanese community and the simultaneous withholding of public housing from Asian communities was all accomplished without any participation or consent from Seattle's Asian populations in the case of Yesler Terrace, racial triangulation was

accomplished in the case of Cherry Hill with enthusiastic consent from many Asian American leaders, specifically those who were in positions of leadership in JSCC. What the self-help politics of JSCC and Cherry Hill established was an emerging logic that respectable racial subjects who strove for racial uplift and middle-class respectability proved their worth precisely by pulling themselves up by the bootstraps and by not making solicitations for governmental aid. And the example of JSCC would suggest, this logic was embraced by a multiracial organization, but most forcefully by its white- and Asian-dominated leadership. While this strategy would appear to have led to a failed urban renewal project, the fate of the Cherry Hill project was relatively favorable when compared to that of another urban renewal project in Seattle targeting a predominantly black community, the Yesler Atlantic Urban Renewal Project. Unlike the Cherry Hill project, the Yesler Atlantic project would receive Seattle's largest allocation of federal urban renewal funds. Yet the funds for this urban renewal project would ultimately be deployed to wreak significant damage on Seattle's African American community—falling in line in fact with the black/white urban renewal literature—and thus revealing the role of urban renewal allocations in revealing and reinforcing a racial triangulation frameworks that simultaneously withheld resources from Asian/white community and earmarked significant governmental aid to a black community, albeit at a significant price.

**A History of Urban Renewal in Seattle**

Emerging as the principal national concept behind urban policymaking and urban intellectual movements during the early 1950s, urban renewal forged collaborations between lawmakers, social scientists, designers, planners, and business community

organizations to produce laws and planning projects that would modernize cityscapes and improve dilapidated districts.[55] Urban renewal initiatives became popular throughout the 1950s and 1960s during the height of liberalism, epitomizing government's desire to frame itself as socially activist in solving the nation's problem of declining overcrowded cities. According to historian George Lipstiz, urban renewal was often sold to communities during this period by "pro-growth" coalitions and liberal mayors as a means of creating more housing for impoverished populations, thus accounting for the widespread optimism that accompanied news of early urban renewal projects.[56] Indeed, urban renewal was publicly framed as a program that sought to allocate federal funds to cities for two important purposes. First was the elimination of blight—defined as slum areas characterized by infrastructural deficiencies such as dilapidation, overcrowding, lack of ventilation, poor lighting, and inadequate sanitation facilities, or any combination of these problems—and second was the improvement of housing conditions and housing shortages affecting the poor.[57] Urban renewal seemingly provided an unprecedented opportunity for active collaborations between the federal, state, and city levels of government, and represented the nation's most ambitious response to date targeting the socioeconomic problems of poverty.

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[55] Christopher Klemek, *The Transatlantic Collapse of Urban Renewal: Postwar Urbanism from New York to Berlin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 10.

[56] Lipsitz, *Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, 7.

[57] According to historian Colin Gordon, this was the national definition of blight that emerged in the 1930s. Colin Gordon, "Blighting the Way: Urban Renewal, Economic Developm/ent, and the Elusive Definition of Blight," *Fordham Law Journal* 31 (2003): 309-310. However, Gordon also notes that the nation struggled to calibrate a precise definition of blight during the first half of the twentieth century, and that several definitions of blight circulated amongst major cities. In the case of Seattle, blight was defined as an area plagued by physical deterioration and detrimental to public health, safety, and sanitation. Untitled document, undated, box 8, folder 1, 2810-08, Seattle Fire Department Records, Seattle Municipal Archives.

In response to the Housing Act of 1949, passed by Congress to alleviate housing shortages and frequently regarded as the first urban renewal legislation in the country, Seattle sponsored a series of city planning commission studies surveying blighted areas in Seattle to identify the neighborhoods in greatest need of aid. Pockets of land in the International District and Central Area were among several areas identified as blighted. With the 1957 passage of legislation authorizing urban renewal on the state level, the City of Seattle passed ordinances aimed at initiating municipal urban renewal programs (i.e. the rehabilitation and redevelopment of blighted areas) and creating administrative departments to execute urban renewal projects. As part of this development, the city council created a new post—the Coordinator of Urban Renewal—and called for the appointment of a citizen's advisory committee as well as an official advisory board of urban renewal comprised of department heads from the city government (including the Superintendent of Buildings, Director of Planning, Director of Public Health, City Engineer, and the Seattle Housing Authority's Executive Secretary.)[58] This promising beginning appeared to indicate a serious commitment by Seattle's city officials to implement urban renewal programs.

Early on in the process of implementing urban renewal programs, the City of Seattle leveraged its pre-existing relationship with JSCC to solicit funding and resources for pockets of land in the Jackson Street neighborhood. The area selected for Seattle's first urban renewal project was Cherry Hill. According to city documents, Cherry Hill was selected in part because it was one of the earliest pockets of land to be identified as

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[58] "Cherry Hill – Urban Renewal Conservation Report (non-assisted)," 1962, page 1, box 1, folder 4, 1624-11, Department of Community Development Records, Seattle Municipal Archives.

blighted. In data collected by the city planning officials in 1954 and 1958, Cherry Hill was identified as having "a high percentage of substandard dwellings, poor streets and lighting, unsanitary conditions and health hazards resulting from accumulation of refuse, and insufficient traffic control and police protection."[59] The selection of Cherry Hill, however, was also based on another important factor—the existence of an active organization of citizens dedicated to improving living conditions in the area, a direct reference to JSCC's presence in Cherry Hill. City documents in fact identified "a desire, expressed through an active organization of its citizens to improve living conditions in the area" as a primary reason behind the selection of Cherry Hill.[60] In other words, the prevalence of Jackson Street's self-help, proactive self-improvement attitude was cited as a major factor behind the city's decision to situate its first urban renewal project in Cherry Hill, as JSCC's presence convinced city officials that the neighborhood was "deteriorated but not beyond saving."[61]

While urban renewal was frequently promoted by city officials as an injection of much-needed federal funding into impoverished communities, the selection of Cherry Hill highlights the importance of self-help and racial uplift frameworks in defining early urban renewal projects. Once the city of Seattle embarked upon the Cherry Hill project, it actively enlisted JSCC's assistance in carrying out project goals, the most important of which was to encourage neighborhood residents and landlords to make improvements on

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[59] "Cherry Hill – Urban Renewal Conservation Report (non-assisted)," 1962, page 1, box 1, folder 4, 1624-11, Department of Community Development Records, Seattle Municipal Archives.
[60] City of Seattle, "Cherry Hill," March 1, 1959, page 3, box 1, folder 6, 1624-11, Department of Community Development Records, Seattle Municipal Archives.
[61] City of Seattle, "Cherry Hill," March 1, 1959, , page 5, box 1, folder 6, 1624-11, Department of Community Development Records, Seattle Municipal Archives.

properties deemed not up to housing codes. In contrast to the country's most high-profile urban renewal projects during the 1950s and 1960s, Cherry Hill was significantly more modest in scope and sought to implement neighborhood improvement on a house-by-house basis, rather than the more common tactics involving clearance, relocation, and reconstruction of deteriorating housing facilities. Actively involved in the selection and designation of Cherry Hill as an urban renewal project, JSCC worked with city officials to have Cherry Hill receive federal approval as a "non-federally assisted program." This was partly due to a lack of available federal funds that resulted from to Congress' inability to pass a new Federal Housing Act in 1958. Receiving designation as a non-federally assisted program meant that Cherry Hill would be funded solely with city funds and private investments. Seattle urban renewal documents elaborate that "under this provision, the project had no federal funds available for expenditure, but provided means whereby citizens in the project were encouraged to proceed on a self-help basis."[62] The very success of Cherry Hill would come to depend on self-help initiatives, such as ones to be spearheaded by JSCC.

Thus in the minds of city officials and JSCC leaders, the success or failure of the Cherry Hill urban renewal project would hinge not on the extent of the municipality's commitment to allocate resources to Cherry Hill, but upon resident's initiatives in taking action to improve their homes and neighborhood. Throughout the duration of the Cherry Hill project, JSCC initiated projects and produced discourses that sought to encourage in residents a pull-yourself-up-by-the-bootstraps mindset in executing neighborhood improvement and in attaining respect from city establishments. For its publicity materials

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[62] "Beginnings of Urban Renewal in Seattle," 1973, pages 2-3, VF-0000 1037, Seattle Municipal Archives.

on Cherry Hill, JSCC collaborated with urban planners to center discussions of housing

and neighborhood blight around themes of individual responsibility and individual

conduct. Such discourses reinforced notions from the early postwar period that urban

blight, like poverty, was a phenomenon rooted in individual deficiencies. [63] A 1959

pamphlet by JSCC stated:

> Home and neighborhood decay doesn't just happen…it is caused and
> helped along by people. One man's carelessness and neglect encourages
> another's. Blight's best friends are careless tenants and homeowners, the
> types who permit good homes to become shabby and run down. Neglect
> over a long period of time…not taking care of little things as they
> occur…invariably leads to blight."[64]

JSCC's decision to depict blight as devastating and rooted in individual behaviors was

likely a concerted effort to impart to neighborhood residents and landowners a sense of

gravity as to the urgency and time-sensitive nature of commencing home improvement

projects. Passages such as these undoubtedly also strove to generate a sense of social

responsibility that was perceived as lacking in the community.

However, by solely relying on discourses such as this and by choosing never to

publicly discuss the role of structural racial inequalities (such as inadequate housing

supplies and inequitable delegation of municipal public services) in accounting for

Cherry Hill's socioeconomic problems, JSCC's approach helped perpetuate widespread

beliefs that placed blame for poverty onto the shoulders of its victims. Such statements by

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[63] The concept of blight first emerged in national discourse during the 1940s in federal literature on urban renewal. Rarely defined with much precision, the term blight referred to widespread housing and infrastructural deterioration in an urban neighborhood. Legislators throughout the country used the term blight to justify and call for urban renewal projects. When it came to definitions of blight, federal lawmakers typically deferred to city planners and politicians to conceptualize their own definitions of blight. Colin Gordon, "Blighting the Way: Urban Renewal, Economic Development, and the Elusive Definition of Blight," *Fordham Urban Law Journal* 31, no.2 (2003): 305-337.
[64] Jackson Street Community Council, "Tomorrow is Today," 1959, front cover, Wing Luke Museum Collections.

JSCC implied that blight in Cherry Hill had resulted from the negligence and laziness of individual tenants and homeowners. And in line with the era's conceptions of poverty and blight, JSCC materials likened blight to a disease. Just as diseases could be contagious, blight and individual neglect were depicted as contagious developments that had to be halted in their tracks. In JSCC's words, "When a home is rehabilitated, the blight process is halted. When an entire neighborhood unites to fight blight, deterioration not only can be stopped, but a better community environment can be had for all."[65] By attributing a community's blight and rehabilitation squarely on the figure of the individual homeowner or tenant, and by deploying self-help improvement projects as the primary antidote to blight and deterioration, JSCC worked once again to absolve municipal institutions and structural inequities of responsibility for problems associated with blight in the Cherry Hill community. Even though JSCC's deployment of racial uplift was intended to benefit the residents of Cherry Hill, over the long term such images reinforced the ideas that blight stemmed from individual pathologies and that sole responsibility for alleviating it rested on the victimized residents.

In reality, a variety of scholarship by urban studies scholars, historians, and cultural geographers has demonstrated the emergence of blight as a direct outgrowth of neglect, racism, and widespread social inequality from both governmental institutions and the private sector.[66] Studies by historians such as Natalia Molina, Shah, and Robert Self

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[65] Jackson Street Community Council, "Tomorrow is Today," 1959, front cover, Wing Luke Museum Collections.

[66] Studies have offered a variety of perspectives on the causes of urban blight. Cultural geographers such as Doreen Massey and David Harvey and have characterized blight as the result of efforts by city leaders to house large numbers of easily accessible, low-paid laborers close to industrial zones and manufacturing districts, areas often inhospitable for residency. For more information, see Doreen Massey, *Spatial Divisions of Labour: Social Structures and the Geography of Production* (London: Macmillan, 1984);

have revealed that West Coast city officials consistently neglected the infrastructures and

municipal services (such as sanitation services, sewage systems, health care, and access

to clean water) for the few overcrowded districts where nonwhite populations were

allowed to reside.[67] Racial discrimination in hiring practices only exacerbated the

challenges experienced by nonwhite urban communities by raising levels of poverty, as

was the case in Seattle where labor unions consistently excluded African Americans and

where employers hiring blacks typically did so under a "last to fire, first to hire"

system.[68] In addition to municipal neglect and widespread poverty, historian Robert Self

also attributed blight to "'slum landlords' who kept residents trapped in poor living

conditions."[69] A 2011 report by the city of Seattle acknowledged that postwar blight in

the Central Area was a direct outgrowth of city planners' policy of exempting the

neighborhood's homes from inspections in an effort to cater to white slumlords, a move

that "[pushed] an aging housing stock to deteriorate to the point of crisis."[70] Nonetheless,

as Benjamin Leland Lorch suggests in his master's thesis, images of blighted

neighborhoods and homes during the mid-1900s tended to highlight individual

negligence, squalor, and the "failure of domesticity," thereby shifting blame away from

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David Harvey, "Contested Cities: Social Process and Spatial Form," in *Transforming Cities: New Spatial Divisions and Social Transformation*. Ed. Nick Jewson and Susan MacGregor (New York: Routledge, 1997). Ethnic Studies scholars, urban studies scholars, and historians (such as George Lipsitz, *Possessive Investments in Whiteness* and Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*) note that postwar urban slums stemmed from a host of federal, state, and local policies that siphoned resources into white suburban communities at the expense of nonwhite urban communities. Money spent on urban renewal and public housing, for instance, paled in comparison to federal projects associated with suburbanization, such as highway construction and mortgage insurance. Moreover, urban communities tended to be saddled by unfavorable tax policies that further chipped away from their wealth and infrastructural resource allocations. (Colin Gordon, "Blighting the Way," 315)

[67] See Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides*; Robert O. Self, American Babylon: *Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Natalia Molina, *Fit to Be Citizens?*

[68] Taylor, *The Forging of A Black Community*, 49-79.

[69] Self, *American Babylon*, 139.

[70] John Hoole, "Public Housing in Wartime Seattle: 1940-Present" (Seattle: Department of Neighborhoods, Historic Preservation Program, 2011), 6.

municipal negligence of infrastructures and supporting white power brokers who sought

to continue civic divestment from racialized impoverished districts.[71]

In another affirmation of the mindset that urban deterioration stemmed from

individual behaviors, city planners and JSCC created a City of Seattle Urban Renewal

Honor Award program in an effort to maximize the Cherry Hill project's chances for

success.



**Figure 2.1. The City of Seattle Urban Renewal Honor Award official emblem, c. 1960.**
Seattle Municipal Archives, (Record series 9900-01) [72]

To encourage "good citizenship" and model behaviors, the Urban Renewal Honor Award

committee bestowed awards on property owners in Cherry Hill who made standout

improvements in the neighborhood by constructing new buildings or by making

renovations to pre-existing structures. JSCC played a key role in facilitating the contest,

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[71] Benjamin Leland Lorch, "Vertical Reservations – Imaging Urban Blight and Renewal in Chicago" (master's thesis, University of Chicago, 2004), 23-27.

[72] The emblem of the Urban Renewal Honor Award was an amalgamation of different shapes and symbols. On the left side of the emblem is an image of a black thorn, connoting "an immediate reminder of discomfort, distress and possible infection" represented by blight. On the right side of the emblem is a leaf of gold and green, representing the possibility of hope and renewal stemming from "citizens' efforts to eliminate blight [and]…efforts to improve the community, to save the good, remove the bad, and meet the constant challenge of the present and future need." "The City of Seattle Urban Renewal Emblem and General Procedure for its Award," c. 1960, page 1, box 1, folder 9, 1642-11, Department of Community Development Records, Seattle Municipal Archives.

as its leadership bore main responsibility in forwarding nominations to the awarding committee.[73] Between 1960 and 1963, the committee granted a total of nine awards. Landowners received colorful silkscreen plaques of the Honor Emblem to prominently display on property windows.[74] While it may have been a source of pride for property owners to display their awards, there was no financial component to the honor: this program existed for the purpose of encouraging property owners to finance neighborhood improvement themselves, without government aid. In this particular situation, model citizenship and racial uplift worked to deflect blame and financial burdens of neighborhood improvement away from the federal government.

Throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, efforts by JSCC to promote tropes of self-help and racial uplift paid off in heightened public regard for the Cherry Hill community. A series of articles from the *Seattle Times* during this era glowingly depicted Cherry Hill as a community of self-motivated citizens who were highly invested in the well-being of their community. Praising the Cherry Hill community for its determination to better itself and for possessing the right attitudes towards tackling its problems, these articles attributed a series of positive community developments to residents' behavior: $100,000 worth of property improvements by 1959, increases in area property values in 1959, and

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[73] "The City of Seattle Urban Renewal Emblem and General Procedure for its Award." c. 1960, page 3, box 1, folder 9, 1642-11, Department of Community Development Records, Seattle Municipal Archives.
[74] "The City of Seattle Urban Renewal Emblem and General Procedure for its Award." c. 1960, page 3, box 1, folder 9, 1642-11, Department of Community Development Records, Seattle Municipal Archives. This committee was comprised of the Seattle Urban Renewal Coordinator and Superintendent of Buildings along with one representative from various groups including JSCC, Seattle Urban Renewal Enterprise, Seattle Home Builders' Association: Seattle Chapter, American Institute of Architects; and the Municipal Art Commission. Ibid 3. Awards were handed out in different categories such as new construction of multiple family dwelling, new construction of single family or duplex dwelling, rehabilitation of existing structure-multiple dwelling, rehabilitation of an existing structure, or conservation of an existing structure with recognition of landscaping and general maintenance.

construction of new community facilities such as churches by 1961.[75] A 1959 article from the *Seattle Times* even went so far as to urge greater Seattle's community and civic organizations to draw inspiration from Cherry Hill's neighborhood improvement activities and from the neighborhood's "initiative in improving their own neighborhood without waiting for formal federal approval of their urban-conservation project."[76] Based on the tone of newspaper articles during this period, it is clear that Cherry Hill's model citizenship and self-improvement efforts elicited admiration and esteem from the city's mainstream press.

Under JSCC's stewardship from 1958 through 1963, the multiracial district of Cherry Hill was set up to receive extremely limited amounts of governmental urban renewal aid. In this experimental undertaking, self-help and racial uplift served as the primary strategy to sustain an urban renewal project. Not surprisingly, the success of Cherry Hill could not be sustained primarily on self-improvement with continued neglect from the municipal government. Soon after JSCC ended its brief partnership with Seattle city officials over Cherry Hill, urban renewal funding and private investments to the neighborhood dried up and Cherry Hill once again fell into disrepair. By the 1960s, Cherry Hill had largely vanished from the agenda for urban renewal officials and JSCC, and by the 1970s, the area was referenced in *The Seattle Times* as having battled city hall

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[75] John Haigh, "Cherry Hill Begins Own Renewal Drive," *The Seattle Times*, March 16, 1959, 5; "Neighborhood Spirit Sets the Race," *The Seattle Times*, March 22, 1959, 1; "City Council: Urban Renewal," *The Seattle Times*, August 25, 1959, 18; Pat McGee, "Urban Renewal—A Cure for Ailing Neighborhoods," *The Seattle Times*, April 9, 1961, 9.

[76] "Neighborhood Spirit Sets the Race," *The Seattle Times*, March 22, 1959, 1.

over a long list of issues including prostitution, rat control, traffic, sidewalk repair, and playground maintenance.[77]

JSCC's self-help, pull-yourself-up-by-your-bootstrap approach nonetheless produced a complicated legacy for Seattle's conceptions of racial citizenship and multiracial populations. Although JSCC's emphasis on these frameworks facilitated the city's justification of minimal urban renewal aid for Cherry Hill (along with continued neglect of infrastructures), it also solidified the notion that residents of racial districts who embraced self-help and refrained from insistent demands for municipal resources were worthy of admiration, esteem, and recognition as model citizens. This was demonstrated by the influx positive publicity received by JSCC and the Cherry Hill community from the 1940s through early 1960s.

JSCC's adoption of self-help model citizenship frameworks towards urban renewal also carried an unanticipated effect of sheltering Cherry Hill from the ravages of urban renewal that would not yet be apparent during the early years of implementation. Although urban renewal was initially received with tremendous hope and optimism by many racial communities, most projects carried out in nonwhite communities (particularly African American districts) would end in failure and produce devastating effects. Many urban studies scholars and geographers have pointed out that urban renewal ultimately functioned as "slum clearance" by destroying African American homes and replacing them with business districts for mainstream populations or with vacant lots. Seattle was no different, as city and federal urban renewal officials allocated $6.4 million towards the Yesler Atlantic project shortly following the decision to allocate

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[77] "Cherry Hill Coalition Readies for New Battles," *The Seattle Times*, July 29, 1979, A26.

no federal funds to Cherry Hill.[78] Unlike Cherry Hill, which was multiracial in

composition, Yesler-Atlantic was a predominantly African American community

bordering Central Area.[79] Although the Cherry Hill community suffered from continued

decline and neglect after 1963, urban renewal left far more damaging effects on Yesler-

Atlantic. Consistent with the "slum clearance" approach of urban renewal projects in

black neighborhoods, much of the government expenditures in the Yesler-Atlantic urban

renewal project were used to demolish residential facilities and to displace their residents.

According to a 1993 *Seattle Times* article, Yesler-Atlantic housed 1,000 fewer people and

300 fewer housing units as a result of urban renewal projects. Moreover, a survey

conducted by the newspaper found that "27 percent of the land in Yesler-Atlantic is still

vacant. The amount of land devoted to housing has declined from 46 percent before

renewal to less than 20 percent."[80] The differences between the outcomes of Cherry Hill

and Yesler-Atlantic projects indicates that African American populations received a far

greater share of urban renewal resources than mixed-race neighborhoods in Seattle.

However, such resources exacted a terrible price on the African American neighborhoods

impacted by urban renewal. This suggests that Seattle's African American community

came under the scrutiny of government officials, and that the urban renewal funds were

applied towards Yesler-Atlantic in a way so as to surgically remove the housing quarters

regarded as most blighted and diseased. Therefore, even though JSCC's efforts resulted

in minimal financial payoff and municipal investments in Cherry Hill, what it did

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[78] "Yesler Atlantic Neighborhood Improvement Project," Seattle Municipal Archives, accessed August 15, 2016, https://www.flickr.com/photos/seattlemunicipalarchives/4885950518/in/photostream/
[79] Jeffrey Craig Sanders, *Seattle & the Roots of Urban Sustainability: Inventing Ecotopia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 150.
[80] Terry McDermott and Susan Gilmore, "The Grand Plan that Went Awry," *The Seattle Times*, March 18, 1993.

successfully accomplish was to frame Cherry Hill and its residents as self-sufficient model citizens and in the process, shelter the community from the devastations and disruptions wrought by urban renewal.

## Conclusion

The story of JSCC presents a compelling case study of how multiculturalism operated in conjunction with racial uplift to produce mixed legacies on the racial populations in the Jackson Street community. While historians have documented cases of multiethnic organizing in eras prior to World War II, such examples generally occurred in the context of oppositional politics where communities of color converged to organize labor strikes or protest activities against power establishments. JSCC stands out from these organizations by being one of the first associations to deploy multiracial and multicultural configurations in a postwar, racial liberalist era. Doing so within this context enabled JSCC to utilize multiculturalism not simply as a method of unifying multiethnic populations, but also as a means to garner respect and resources from governmental agencies. Analyzing the outcomes of JSCC's strategies then offers insights into the possibilities and limitations of a multiculturalist-based politics in a racial liberalist context. On one hand, changes in postwar racial frameworks enabled JSCC to tout its multiculturalism as a marker of exceptionalism and translate its enhanced reputation into increased esteem and resources for the Jackson Street area. On the other hand, JSCC's promotion of multiculturalism produced mixed implications for the socioeconomic fortunes of the organization's racial constituency. This is because JSCC, in seeking to garner mainstream support for activities, opted to fuse its multicultural activities with endeavors that embodied racial uplift, self-help models, and politics of

respectability. Being merged with these particular frameworks meant that JSCC's embrace of multiculturalism assumed a disciplinary component where critiques against mainstream institutions had to be silenced and requests for civic resources had to be tempered by efforts to simultaneously demonstrate self-sufficiency and respectable citizenship. Therefore, even though multiculturalism did garner JSCC a certain degree of enhanced respect and valuable governmental resources, such gains were necessarily constrained by the self-censorship and self-policing strategies that were perceived as necessary for the maintenance of governmental support for the organization.

An examination of JSCC's institutionalization of multiculturalism and racial uplift frameworks also yields important insight on the organization's role in reinforcing processes of racial triangulation in Seattle's racial politics and racial geographies. JSCC's presence was a critical factor in convincing the city to situate Seattle's first urban renewal project in Cherry Hill. And consistent with JSCC's commitment to racial uplift politics, the Cherry Hill Urban Renewal Project was ultimately carried out with extraordinarily little governmental funding and expected to succeed on self-help projects throughout the neighborhood. While the project failed to produce long-lasting change in Cherry Hill, what it did establish was a tradition of withholding governmental resources from particular ethnic communities and enshrining self-help frameworks as adequate responses for addressing neighborhood deterioration. As made evident by the racial composition of JSCC and Cherry Hill, such an approach was developed towards racial communities dominated by ethnic whites and Asians with consent from both governmental officials and ethnic community leaders. And as the following chapters will demonstrate, the approach of reliance on self-help, racial uplift, and politics of respectability frameworks

will be continued by leaders of Seattle's Asian American communities as they proceed to

seek enhanced communal esteem from the 1962 World's Fair and governmental

resources from the Seattle Model Cities Program.

**Chapter Three:**
**The Cosmopolitan Spectacle of the 1962 Seattle World's Fair**

In November of 1960, Seattle outmaneuvered a competing bid from New York City to score a major victory by garnering official rights to host the 1962 World's Fair.[1] Such an accomplishment had resulted from years of lobbying aimed at winning over officials in the International Expositions Bureau (BIE), the governing body for all world's fairs. Bearing the prestigious certification of the BIE, the 1962 World's Fair (also known as the Century 21 Exposition) would open in April 1962 as the first to take place in postwar America. By the time it concluded in October, the Century 21 Exposition would be regarded as a resounding success: the first world's fair to generate a profit in 30 years and the catalyst in transforming Seattle's national profile from backwater village to major West Coast city.[2] While the fair is best remembered for its futuristic space-age theme and for imparting to Seattle its most iconic structure, the Space Needle, one cannot overlook the event's indebtedness to cosmopolitanism—what historian Shelley Lee describes as the celebration of cultural diversity and the power of international networks and global intersections.[3] This is due to the fact that the cosmopolitan aspect of Century 21 was precisely what lent the event its legitimacy as a true *world's* fair. Fair organizers had realized early on in the planning process that Century 21 could not meet its economic goals or attract sufficient audiences without BIE accreditation, as it served as a

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[1] Paula Becker, Alan J. Stein, and The HistoryLink Staff, *The Future Remembered: The 1962 Seattle World's Fair And Its Legacy* (Seattle: Seattle Center Foundation in Association with HistoryLink, 2011), 29; Don Duncan, *Meet Me at the Center: The Story of Seattle Center from the Beginnings to the 1962 Seattle World's Fair to the 21st Century* (Seattle: Sasquatch Books, 1992), 40-41.

[2] "Seattle World's Fair Likely to be First One in 30 Years to Profit," *Wall Street Journal*, July 13, 1962.

[3] Shelley Sang-Hee Lee, *Claiming the Oriental Gateway: Prewar Seattle and Japanese America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 5.

prerequisite for not only the official world's fair designation, but also the international

participation and foreign-sponsored exhibitions that would render a world's fair genuine.

In the end, fair organizers would successfully convince forty-nine countries to

participate in Century 21, thereby imparting "world's fair" legitimacy to their event. Yet

the benefits of international participation and cosmopolitanism extended beyond the

realm of official titles and designations. Cosmopolitanism also provided event organizers

with numerous attractions and marketing messages with which to attract large audiences.

According to surveys taken at the end of the 1962 World's Fair, international exhibitions

sponsored by foreign government consistently received high numbers of visitors

throughout the event's six-month run. Moreover, international participation in the fair

also translated into large numbers of concession stands from various countries. The

event's *Official Souvenir Program* describes such concessions in the following manner:

> Boulevards of the World—the magic land of Century 21 with no end of
> things to do and sights to see. The delights are varied: exotic bazaars,
> dining in the sky, colorful and beautiful fountains, food (foreign and
> familiar), sculptures and murals, and fun!...The gay kiosks and native
> marts, the cheerful bistros and charming cafes create a romantic air of
> faraway places. A walk is a travel adventure. Shops display the wars of
> five continents. Restaurants specialize in international cuisine.[4]

From this characterization, it is apparent that cosmopolitanism played an important role

in Century 21 by enticing visitors with alluring marketing images of exotic cuisines,

entertainment, and consumer goods. Given the centrality of cosmopolitanism to the 1962

World's Fair, it is important that one also studies this development in the context of

Seattle's emerging legacies in racial liberalism and multiculturalism, which is what this

chapter seeks to do.

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[4] *Official Souvenir Program: Seattle World's Fair* (Seattle: Acme, 1962), 52.

In my previous two chapters, I posited that postwar liberalism produced

configurations of racial integration and multiculturalism in Seattle's urban politics. These

formations in turn bolstered popular depictions of the city as racially progressive. Like

the urban projects studied in previous chapters, the 1962 World's Fair is also a salient site

to study the role of cultural celebrations and racial liberalism in Seattle's developing

cosmopolitan image.[5] In fact, the international scale of Century 21 meant that it

essentially introduced these images of Seattle to much larger national and international

audiences. In their study of world's fairs in the United States, historians Robert W.

Rydell, John E. Findling, and Kimberly D. Pelle stated that world's fairs served as

important vehicles for the cultural dissemination of national values to American and

international audiences.[6] The scope of Century 21, combined with its entertainment and

popular cultural dimensions, further ensured that the event's discourses would reach

larger audiences than any urban project. Compared to the urban projects examined in

previous chapters, the world's fair produced notable political, cultural, and economic

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[5] For purposes of maximizing clarity in this dissertation, I am making a distinction between the particular celebrations of cultural diversity as discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. I anchor Chapter 2's discussion in the concept of multiculturalism, whose focus is on celebrations of cultural diversity and pluralism as a domestic asset to U.S. society. Cosmopolitanism's embrace of cultural diversity, in contrast, is rooted in a particular framing of a geography as a nexus of international cultural, political, and economic forces. Lee, for instance, argued that imaginations of Seattle as a cosmopolitan space during the prewar era were generated by both white civic boosters and Japanese American community leaders eager to establish their city as the nation's preeminent "gateway to the Orient" and Pacific Rim region. In the case of the 1962 Seattle World's Fair, celebrations of diversity rested on the event's imaginations of the cultures embodied by its international participants. Moreover, particular characteristics that Lee ascribed to cosmopolitanism—such as "fetishizing differences [and] reifying groups of people as racial and cultural types"—were more pronounced in this chapter's discussion of cultural diversity celebrations (versus those of Chapter 2). Lee, *Claiming the Oriental Gateway*, 6. Additional studies analyzing notions of cosmopolitanism also emphasize the importance of cross-national cultural, political, and economic encounters to the concept. See, for instance, Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen, eds., *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context and Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) and Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010).
[6] Robert Rydell, John E. Findling, and Kimberly D. Pelle, *Fair America: World's Fairs in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), 1-13.

possibilities for its nonwhite populations. Yet at the same time, these openings would be limited and the sociopolitical gains attained by Asian Americans and African Americans would be offset against one another.

As the first international exposition in the U.S. to espouse racial liberalism, Century 21 presented a brand of cosmopolitanism that set it apart from the overtly racist and imperialist world's fairs of prewar America, which have been the object of most scholarship examining race in world's fairs. But even though Century 21 stood out from its predecessors by eschewing the aggressively racist discourses of its predecessors, the event's liberalist iteration of cosmopolitanism still produced a mixed legacy on the socioeconomic standing of Seattle's nonwhite populations. In this chapter I ask, how did the multicultural and cosmopolitan frameworks of Century 21 both create and foreclose avenues of economic opportunity and socioeconomic mobility for Seattle's nonwhite populations, in particular its Asian American and African American groups? Moreover, how did Century 21 both reflect and catalyze changes taking place in the racial hierarchy of the city's different racial populations? As Seattle stood to bolster its world's fair with gestures towards international and multicultural participation, corresponding ethnic populations in Seattle—such as Asian Americans—found themselves in a position to capitalize on the world's fair's "exotic" exhibitions and celebrations. In this brief yet seminal moment, Asian Americans in Seattle carved out avenues to capitalize on Century 21 by facilitating the event's celebrations of their "cultures." Participation in these tropes bore consequences, however, as it required ethnic populations to reinforce their "foreignness" and historic marginalization and erasure. In the meantime, Century 21's association of cosmopolitanism with foreign cultures and international exhibitions

foreclosed visibility for Seattle's black population in the event's exhibits and public images. Although African Americans would find alternate ways of participating in the world's fair, their status as the least visible racial group represented there stood in stark contrast to their status as the city's largest nonwhite population.

In one respect, Seattle's Asian American population—particularly the Chinese American community—discovered ways to subvert one element of their racial triangulation by converting their "foreignness" into cultural and economic capital, an avenue that was not available to African Americans. Participation in this system did come at a price, however. The promotion of Asian American exoticism necessitated large degrees of self-negation and self-erasure for Seattle's Asian American communities (as well as erasing their 100+ year history as residents in the city), thus reinforcing the double-edged implications that Asian Americans are foreigners in US society. At the same time, it is telling that the Asian American community sought to elevate their cultural and exotic appeal through methods reminiscent of the self-help, "self-sufficient," racial uplift frameworks examined in Chapter 2.

Meanwhile, African Americans neither received nor campaigned for cultural visibility in Century 21. Instead, through the Seattle Urban League (SUL), an African American advocacy group, they aimed to protest the fair's inequitable hiring practices and vie for greater access to employment opportunities. Thus, although Century 21 differed in both nature and target audience from the developments analyzed in Chapters 1 and 2, the world's fair still managed to reveal the centrality of racial triangulation to the city's ordering system towards Asian and African Americans, albeit in a somewhat different fashion.

## Analyzing the Prewar Fairs and their Literature

As previously noted, Century 21 distinguished itself from its predecessors by rejecting the overt imperialism, nationalism, and racism that had dominated the early world's fairs in the United States. Many studies have analyzed the racial legacies of world's fairs, but these have primarily focused on the period between 1876 and 1930 when major exhibits employed notions of Manifest Destiny, imperialism, and scientific racism to promulgate the superiority of Anglo-Saxon American civilization over non-Western and nonwhite populations.[7] In their discussion of the US world's fairs during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Robert W. Rydell, John E. Findling and Kimberly D. Pelle noted that the major exhibits in these fairs coalesced around two themes. First, the early American world's fairs set out to convince the American public

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[7]These types of exhibits began to abate by the early 1930s, as valorizations of futurism assumed primacy over glorifications of colonialism and racial conquest in world's fairs in the United States. Nevertheless, fairs from this era (for instance in New York and Chicago) continued to assert US nationalism through celebrations of Manifest Destiny and imperialistic projects, both of which contained racist strains. Reginald Horsman's foundational study discusses at length the role of white supremacy and eugenics in driving the ideology of Manifest Destiny starting from the mid-nineteenth century. Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986). When celebrated in the context of world's fairs, Manifest Destiny typically took on the form of Wild West performances (e.g. cowboy and gunshow performances such as the "Buffalo Bill's Wild West" series), exhibitions commemorating pioneers and famous figures of Western expansion, exhibitions glorifying American Indian conquests, and shows or "villages" featuring American Indians as objects of ethnotourism. Works exploring these types of exhibits include Rosemarie Bank, "Representing History: Performing the Columbian Exposition," *Theatre Journal* 54, no. 4 (December 2002): 589-606; Robert A. Trennert, Jr., "Selling Indian Education at World's Fairs and Expositions, 1893-1904," *American Indian Quarterly*, 11 no. 3 (Summer 1987): 203-220; Lisa Blee, "Completing Lewis and Clark's Westward March: Exhibiting a History of Empire at the 1905 Portland World's Fair," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 106, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 232-235; Nancy J. Parezo and Don D. Fowler, *Anthropology Goes to the Fair: The 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007); Melissa Rinehart, "To Hell with the Wigs! Native American Representation and Resistance at the World's Columbian Exposition," *American Indian Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (Fall 2012): 403-442. Works that examine the salience of imperialism in U.S. world's fair include Robert Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); Eric Cheyfitz, "Science fiction, the World's Fair, and the Prosthetics of Empire, 1910-1915," in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease, eds. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1993) 129-163; Sarah J. Moore, "Mapping Empire in Omaha and Buffalo: World's Fairs and the Spanish-American War," *Bilingual Review* 25, no. 1 (January 2000): 111-126; and Bonnie M. Miller, "The Incoherencies of Empire: The "Imperial" Image of the Indian at the Omaha World's Fairs of 1898-99," *American Studies* 49, no. 3/4 (Fall/Winter 2008): 39-62.

that the nation's progress and prosperity rested on the success of imperialistic projects

and on American expansion of overseas military and economic activity. Displays falling

under this category often bore what postcolonial scholar E. Ann Kaplan has termed the

"imperial gaze." According to Kaplan, the imperial gaze denotes projects of cultural

production in which a colonial power seeks to depict colonized subjects in ways that

reinforce the subjects' subordination and "otherness."[8] Such projects do not function as

reflections of reality, but as reifications of racialist discourses towards racialized

populations. These displays also reinforce the notion that progress is to be understood in

"terms of allegedly innate racial characteristics."[9] Thus, imperialistic and racist displays

in the late 1800s and early 1900s, particularly displays of countries with histories of

being colonized by Europeans or Americans, were frequently subject to the imperial

gaze. As Robert W. Rydell put it, "world's fair[s], often christened 'world's universities,'

put the nations and people of the world on display for comparative purposes. Americans

had often measured their achievements against those of different nations. But at the fairs,

the idea of technological and national progress became laced with scientific racism."[10]

Such themes subsided in world's fairs held between 1930 and 1940, as scientific

racism was discredited; instead, notions of progress coalesced around utopian visions in

which national prosperity hinged more on scientific and technological advancements than

overseas conquests. These world fairs, specifically the 1933 Chicago World's Fair and the

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[8] E. Ann Kaplan, *Looking for the Other: Feminism, Film and the Imperial Gaze* (New York: Routledge, 2012). Kaplan framed the imperial gaze as a racializing process of knowledge production that reinforces unequal power relations of colonizer and colonized subjects, and in the process is predicated on a power structure that "fails to understand that …non-American peoples have integral cultures and lives that work according to their own, albeit different logic. The imperial gaze reflects the assumption that the white western subject is central." 78.

[9] Rydell et al, *Fair America*, 8-9.

[10] Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, 5.

1939 New York World's Fair, took place in the midst of the Great Depression and engineered a shift in the conception of progress from something that was socio-politically driven to something that was materially driven and rooted in consumerism.[11] Despite the elimination of scientific racism and imperialism from the core exhibits of 1930s world's fairs, organizers of these events continued patterns of racial discrimination by engaging in employment discrimination and by relegating nonwhite Americans to sideshows and minor exhibits that highlighted negative stereotypes. And even though the core exhibits on science, technology, and progress eschewed overt messages of racism, as historian Cheryl R. Ganz has noted, they were undergirded by a popular national belief that progress was inherently rooted in whiteness. As Ganz put it, "white Americans identified themselves as the focal point of progress. They saw progress, like Manifest Destiny, as a God-given right and, in fact, a way of life. This ideal shaped the way they created their world and all their pursuits, including those of science and technology."[12]

As the first of the Depression-era fairs, the 1933 Chicago World's Fair was named Century of Progress and emphasized the power of science, technological innovation, and consumerism to forge a more promising future. The second Depression-era fair was the 1939 New York World's Fair was called "Building the World of Tomorrow." It envisioned a utopian futuristic society, most prominently epitomized by the event's diorama display called "Democracity" which showcased a city from the year 2039. In addition to eliciting wonderment from audiences, the science and futuristic-theme exhibits served to herald the ascendancy of American civilization to international

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[11] Cheryl R. Ganz, *The 1933 Chicago World's Fair: A Century of Progress* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008) 55. Rydell et al., *Fair America*, 11.
[12] Ganz, *The 1933 Chicago World's Fair*, 53-54.

audiences. Both of these fairs broke with tradition by downplaying the eugenicist and

imperialistic exhibits so widely embraced by preceding world's fairs.[13] Yet, as Rydell

noted in his analysis of America's world's fairs during the Great Depression:

> In the midst of America's worst crisis since the Civil War, these fairs
> were designed to restore popular faith in the vitality of the nation's
> economic and political system, more specifically, in the ability of
> government, business, scientific, and intellectual leaders to lead the
> country out of the depression to a new, racially exclusive, promised
> land of material abundance.[14]

Even though the Depression-era fairs were noteworthy for their bold gestures towards

futurism, they were nonetheless anchored to historical tropes that celebrated "the

reproduction of existing power relations" in race and gender.[15] While their exhibits on

technology technological and scientific advancement seemed to be race-neutral, these

expositions still used a variety of spaces to promulgate racist and imperialist themes, such

as the glory of America's western expansionist histories, the primacy of American

imperialist ambitions, and the backwardness of nonwhite cultures.

The 1933 Century of Progress exposition featured a Native American village and

a General Motors display that depicted American Indians as inhabitants of wigwams and

tepees and ordered the actors portraying Native Americans to "live primitive existences

as their ancestors did before them."[16] The event also incorporated exotic bazaars and

anthropological exhibits that featured a concession named "Darkest Africa" and

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[13] Having said this, the 1930s certainly did not signal a complete break from the fairs of preceding eras that centrally featured empire and imperialism as the principle theme. The 1930s would close with an international exposition in San Francisco, titled Golden Gate Exposition that set out to promote the continuation of American Westward expansion into the Pacific Rim. This exposition prominently highlighted the political and cultural superiority of American civilization, in contrast to a host of backwards cultures from Latin American and Asia. For additional details, consult Robert Rydell, *World of Fairs*, 85-91.

[14] Robert Rydell, *World of Fairs*, 9.

[15] Ibid., 9.

[16] Ibid., 104.

portrayed Africans as primitive "dusky natives" who lived in the jungles of the Congo River.[17] Exhibits in the 1939 New York World's Fair were noticeably less anthropological and imperialistic than those in Chicago, and they were far more centered around exhibitions highlighting "pure science" and futuristic architectural and technological utopias.[18] For the most part, the problematic anthropological and overtly racist exhibits of the Chicago World's Fair were absent from the New York exposition (titled World of Tomorrow). Nonetheless, the World of Tomorrow's exhibits were still linked to underlying celebrations of American culture, history, and racial order. For one, the displays at the fair were still heavily premised on celebrations of American history that served to provide a level of cultural continuity between the fair's dazzling visions of futuristic cities and its commemoration of a superior and glorious national heritage. The fair juxtaposed technological and futuristic displays with commemorations of historical milestones, such as the 150th anniversary of George Washington's inauguration as president. Art historian Christina Cogdell has argued that the futuristic displays of World of Tomorrow were in fact grounded in notions of eugenics, even if race was never explicitly mentioned.[19] In analyzing the sleek, streamlined, and sterilized designs of the event's futuristic aesthetics, Cogdell noted:

> Eugenicists adamantly rejected ugliness of the body as a sign of inner genetic deficiency and disease and demanded functional, hygienic, and physically fit bodies as the basis of a beautiful and healthy future race. So too did streamline [? typo? missing word?] industrial designers abhor the superficial ugliness, decoration and dirt-catching surfaces of pre-design-

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[17] Ibid., 84.
[18] Ibid., 109.
[19] Christina Cogdell, "The Futurama Recontextualized: Norman Bel Geddes's Eugenic "World of Tomorrow,"" *American Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (June 2000): 193-245.

era products that seemingly masked inner corruption and functional impotence and contributed to an unsanitary germ-rich environment."[20]

Thus, even though scientific racism was not as prominently discussed in New York as it was in other American world's fairs of the 1930s, the World of Tomorrow's designs were still very much informed by notions of eugenics and white supremacy. In the process, the exhibits in the New York World's Fair would reinforce popular imaginations of global racial hierarchy dominated by whites.

In comparison to its predecessors, Century 21 moved even further in the direction of racial liberalism and cosmopolitanism. In place of exhibits that promoted Manifest Destiny, Anglo-Saxon expansion, and scientific racism, Century 21 officials chose to organize their event around the central themes of science, technology, and the space race. The Seattle World's Fair embraced the technological and futuristic themes that had characterized its Chicago and New York predecessors, updating them for a historical context that was highly receptive to racial liberalism and in the midst of the Cold War and the civil rights movement. Reflecting these dynamics, Century 21's exhibits made no mention of race, culture, or ethnicity. Instead, Century 21 embraced uplifting celebrations of technological innovations and futuristic designs that, as the following section will demonstrate, set out to be more inclusive and less overtly nationalist in tone.

Seattle organizers of the 1962 World's Fair had originally conceptualized the event as a 50th anniversary commemoration of the 1909 Alaska-Yukon Pacific Exhibition (AYP), which was the city's first international exposition and a crucial milestone in positioning Seattle as the major city of the Pacific Northwest. This commemorative plan

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[20] Cogdell, "The Futurama Recontextualized," 193.

met with lukewarm response from national sponsors, and it was definitively scrapped

after the Soviet Union launched *Sputnik*, the world's first man-made satellite, into orbit.

Sputnik set off a wave of Cold War anxieties that the United States was lagging behind

its rival in science and technology. The organizers of the 1962 World's Fair capitalized

on this national preoccupation and re-conceptualized the event as "America's Space Age

World's Fair," seeking to reflect a nationalistic focus on space, science, and technology.

This theme was well received and fair organizers succeeded in securing sponsorships

from the federal and state governments, major American corporations—including

Boeing, AT&T, Ford, General Electric, and International Business Machines (IBM)—

and 49 foreign governments. After seven years of planning, the world's fair—officially

titled the Century 21 Exposition—opened on April 21, 1962 on a 74-acre site bordering

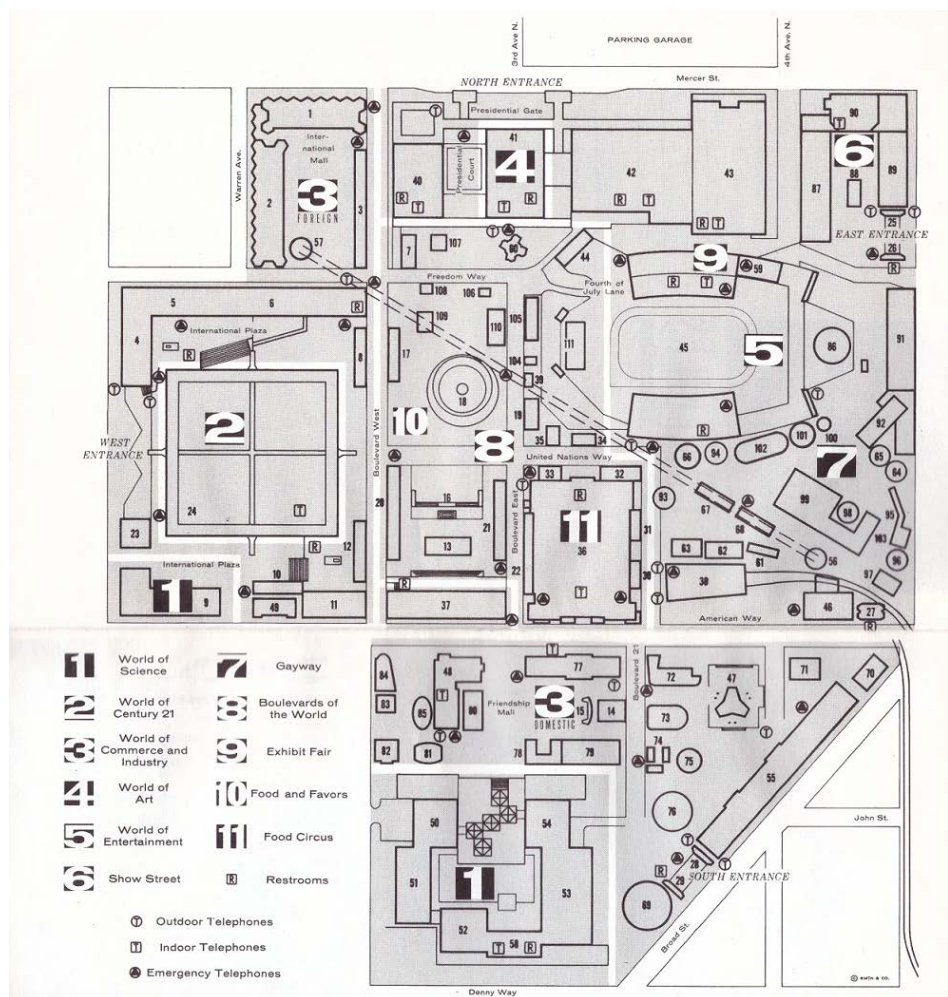the northwestern edge of downtown Seattle.

**Figure 3.1. Map of the 1962 World's Fair Site**
From *Official Guide Book: Seattle World's Fair 1962*, copyright © 1962 Acme Publications.

The central exhibition hall of Century 21 was the Science Pavilion, a $9.9 million structure sponsored by the federal government and home to the event's key space and science exhibits. Located in the World of Science section of the fair and described by historian John Findlay as "the brightest gem in the jewel-box fair" of Century 21, the modernist pavilion was located along the southeastern edge of fairgrounds. It was divided into six main exhibit areas: House of Science, Development of Science, Methods of Science, Horizons of Science, Junior Laboratory of Science, and the Boeing-sponsored

Spacearium, which simulated a rocket ride into space. Consistent with the US world's

fairs of the 1930s, Century 21 set out to promote America's greatness by highlighting the

themes of scientific progress and futurism. Like its predecessors in the 1930s, Century 21

used science and progress-themed presentations to promote America's international

superiority, this time in a world dominated by Cold War politics. In fact, the event's

"Space Race" theme was a direct allusion to US efforts to assert its technological

superiority to the Soviet Union, even if some exhibitions' confrontational language would

ultimately be downplayed.



**Figure 3.2. Photograph of aerial view of U.S. Science Pavilion**
University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, [UW13106]

**Figure 3.3. Photograph of Mercury Space Craft display in the U.S. Science Pavilion**
University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, [UW14118]

Nonetheless—as argued by Rydell, Findlay, and Pelle—Century 21 stood out from its predecessors by more openly promoting racial liberalism and by expressing more earnest efforts to underscore the existence of a common humanity and peaceful global relations. In contrast to the prewar fairs, the 1962 Seattle World's Fair shied away from exhibits and components that openly promoted American racial superiority over nonwhite races or non-American cultures. Informed by a new era of postwar racial liberalism where scientific racism and eugenic philosophies were no longer socially acceptable, Century 21 offered a whimsical array of exhibits focusing on scientific and futuristic themes. These centerpiece exhibitions were consistent with Rydell, Findlay, and Pelle's observation that postwar American world's fairs eschewed the racist and imperialist messaging of previous world's fairs, opting instead to focus on "[proclaiming] the

existence of one world and a common humanity."[21] In line with this approach, Century

21's exhibits and published materials consistently couched its science, space race, and

futuristic displays in celebratory, hyperbolic terms as representative of the pinnacle for all

of humanity. Exhibits and publications in the fair made no mention of race in their

framing of science and space technology. Century 21 officials opted instead to frame

"pure science" and space as a "common universal language" that united "all of mankind"

by utilizing language and exhibition components that highlighted the themes' broad

appeal and accessibility.[22] Textual and visual references to utopian lifestyles and

futuristic inventions (i.e. "automatic highways," and "supersonic air travel")[23] appeared

throughout exhibition panels and pamphlets as epitomized by the following description:

"We'll work shorter hours. We'll have more time for art, sports and hobbies. Some of us

will fly; some drive our air cars. But most of us will use rapid transit jet-propelled

monorail systems…Executives will earn a minimum of twelve thousand dollars a year for

a twenty-four hour work week."[24] In addition, hands-on activities and demonstrations

related to scientific experiments on nature, physics, and astronomy enticed audiences of

various ages. Displays of various space vehicles and equipment—most of which were

replicas, but some of which, most notably astronaut John Glenn's spaceship, the

*Friendship 7*, were original—added to the visual spectacle of Century 21's central exhibit

attractions. Designers of the Science Pavilion housed all these displays in the exposition's

most inspiring architecture—a six-acre complex of exhibition buildings that contained an

entrance gateway of five soaring arches as well as a central reflecting pool with multiple

[21] Rydell et al., *Fair America*, 13.
[22] *Official Souvenir Program: Seattle World's Fair*, 6 and 15.
[23] Ibid., 17 and 18.
[24] Ibid., 19.

fountains—in order to "present science not as an intimidating world or a potentially

destructive activity, but as a quite understandable and engaging process."[25]

Under this framework, science was also portrayed as vehicle that offered the

world a path to a future characterized by peaceful international relations, material

abundance, and high standards of living.[26] This sentiment was echoed by President John

F. Kennedy' official welcome message (in the event's official program), which described

science as an honorable endeavor that existed to benefit all of humanity:

> I extend a special invitation to every visitor to the Seattle World's Fair to
> attend the United States Science Exhibit. An outstanding group of
> scientists has developed the story of pure science in terms that all of us
> can appreciate. Here you will see one of the noblest efforts of man—the
> search of truth in the universe.[27]

This approach was certainly in line with efforts by organizers to make the world's fair a

welcoming and inviting destination for all audiences. The event's organizers strove to

eliminate any hint of exclusion and aggression, in spite of Century 21's positioning in

national politics as an instrument of the Cold War. To be sure, organizers' decision to

center their event around the themes of science and the space race was motivated by a

desire to capitalize on Cold War-era anxieties. As this decision paid off with federal

funding and participation, Century 21 was transformed into a Cold War vehicle, as can be

seen in the limited participation of Eastern bloc countries and the fair's promotions of

national investments in science education, the space race, and the defense industry. On

the other hand, as Findlay noted, exposition organizers went to great lengths to downplay

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[25] John M. Findlay, *Magic Lands: Western Cityscapes and American Culture after 1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 234. Bill Cotter, *Seattle's 1962 World's Fair* (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing), 18-21.
[26] Findlay, *Magic Lands*, 231-238.
[27] *Official Souvenir Program: Seattle World's Fair*, 6.

any displays of overt anticommunist messages or displays of nationalism. For instance,

during the early planning stages of the fair, the Advertising Council proposed an exhibit

titled "The Present Danger" that conveyed explicit anticommunist themes. However, they

were asked by fair officials to remove "negative" themes in favor of a "positive 'free

world' sales effort" that would minimize any hint of hostilities and direct confrontation.[28]

## International Exhibits at Century 21

As discussed earlier, Century 21's legitimacy as a world's fair rested on

organizers' ability to attract state-sponsored exhibitions from countries throughout the

world. Author Bill Cotter noted as much in his photographic book, *Seattle's 1962

World's Fair*: "Century 21 had been planned as a true world's fair, so a significant

international participation was a necessity. Without it, the fair would have been little

more than an over-glorified trade show or state fair."[29] This statement indicates that even

though the foreign exhibits were not as highly publicized as the space and science

exhibits, their presence in the fair was every bit as important.[30] It was precisely the

incorporation of official foreign participation that that demarcated the difference between

a regional and world's fair, and much of this rested on the fact that BIE accreditation both

hinged on and enabled the presence of international exhibits. In other words, a formal

international presence not only lent an air of legitimacy to the entire event, but

constituted a necessary element should fair organizers have any hope of receiving an

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[28] Findlay, *Magic Lands*, 230-231.

[29] Cotter, *Seattle's 1962 World's Fair*, 63.

[30] Articles on the Century 21 Exposition in local and national media outlets focused overwhelmingly on the space and science exhibits of the events, including "The World of Science" and "The World of Tomorrow." Structures such the Space Needle and monorail also attracted significant attention. This includes coverage of the World's Fair by *Life Magazine*, *Time Magazine*, *The Seattle Times*, and *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. Articles compiled in scrapbook collections housed at the University of Washington Special Collections also bear out these trends. (For instance, see Edward E. Carlson, The Century 21 Exposition: the 1962 Seattle World's Fair scrapbooks, volumes 1-5, 1956-1962.)

official "world's fair" designation. Within this context, the task of attracting international booths and exhibitions marked a priority for exhibition organizers, who devoted considerable energy to traveling around the world and convincing different governments to sponsor booths at Century 21. By the end of this process, exposition leaders had persuaded forty-nine countries to take part.

Located in the fairground's northwestern corner, a section called "Foreign Commerce and Industry" housed 17 foreign displays representing the 49 countries who participated in the event.[31] The international exhibits displayed a variety of photographs, artifacts, curated features, and commercial products that aimed to introduce audiences to the hosting countries and to promote overseas tourism. Consistent with the traditional setup of international booths in world's fairs, most of the international booths highlighted desirable products and commodities native to their countries. The Brazilian booth, for instance, brewed coffee and tea for visitors; the Republic of China Booth presented samples of textiles and Chinese-themed furniture; and the Danish booth showcased examples of Danish craftsmanship such as glassware, silverware, and decorative objects.[32] To be consistent with the scientific and futurist theme of Century 21, the international booths also highlighted each host country's technological advancements. Japan's display, called the Japan Pavilion, featured the obligatory traditional sections introducing Japanese culture and commodities to fairgoers. Occupying the center of the pavilion space was a Japanese rock garden flanked by two sections highlighting the country's silk and handicrafts industries through displayed kimonos, lacquerware,

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[31] Several countries were exhibited as a collectivity. For instance, a single African Nations Pavilion was used to represent 30 African countries. Paula Becker et al, *The Future Remembered,* 248-250.
[32] *Official Guide Book: Seattle World's Fair* (Seattle: Acme, 1962), 71-84.

ceramic art, and textiles. Additional spaces in the pavilion shed light on Japan's

burgeoning electronics, communications, medical technology, and space technology

industries.[33] The Republic of China Pavilion followed a similar arrangement by featuring

traditional Chinese design elements (such as the use of Chinese-styled roofs, gateways,

windows, and motifs in the exterior front panel of the pavilion) as well as two exhibit

sections, one featuring Taiwanese handcrafts and the other featuring Taiwanese industrial

products.[34]

These foreign exhibits lent legitimacy to Century 21 as a true world's fair, and the

*Seattle Times* proclaimed Century 21's success in promoting appreciation or world

cultures by writing on the closing day of the fair that "Foreign pavilions have achieved

'most gratifying results' in projecting a new images of their countries to the American

public."[35] A survey released after the conclusion of the exposition revealed that foreign

exhibits were the most visited components of the event, a surprising statistic considering

that exhibits on the US space program and science topics consistently received the bulk

of media attention throughout the duration of Century 21. Asian displays occupied

positions of special significance among the foreign exhibits, as fair organizers used them

as opportunities to highlight Seattle's ties to the Pacific Rim and attract overseas

investors. Asian countries—including Japan, Philippines, Thailand, and the Republic of

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[33] Japan External Trade Organization, "Japanese Pavilion/1962: Century 21 Exposition," Century 21
Digital Collection, object ID spl_c21_2251191, Seattle Public Library.
[34] Cotter, *Seattle's 1962 World's Fair*, 75.
[35] "Foreign Nations Pleased with Images of Fair Revealed," *The Seattle Times*, October 21, 1962, 12.

China—were assigned prominent exhibition spaces, and organizers designated weeklong celebrations across the fair for each country hosting an exhibit.[36]

## Century 21 and Seattle's Asian American Community

Century 21's foreign exhibits and weeklong celebrations not only paid tribute to the host countries and to cosmopolitanism itself, they also offered Asian American populations visible avenues of participation in the world's fair. Seattle's Asian American communities each assumed a role in facilitating the Century 21 weeklong celebrations that corresponded to their communities—Republic of China Week (October 8–15, 1962), Japan Week (July 23–30, 1962), and Philippines Week (July 9–16, 1962). Each week's commemorative events and performances were the result of collaborations between the host country's embassy, Century 21 officials, and representatives of the city's Chinese, Japanese, or Filipino communities. Celebrations featured speeches by dignitaries and officials along with an array of festivities showcasing each country's traditional cultures, performed by overseas and local troupes. Japan Week, for instance, showcased traditional Japanese culture with a performance by the local Bon Odori Folk Dancers, a tea ceremony demonstration, a flower arrangement display, a performance by the Bunraku Doll Theater, as well as an "extravagant silk fashion show."[37] Organizers of Philippine Week presented a Filipino sports demonstration, a Filipino fashion show, and a performance by the Bayanihan Folk Dancers (the oldest dance company in the

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[36] Martin Halliwell, *American Culture in the 1950s* (Edinburgh, Scotland: University of Edinburgh Press, 2007), 220-221. Halliwell writes Seattle used the fair as a forum to highlight its status as a Pacific Rim world city, and the nation's "gateway to the Orient." According to Lee, Seattle's history of promoting itself as the "gateway to the Orient" dated back to the late nineteenth when civic boosters and Asian American populations sought to depict their city as a cosmopolitan and prominent port city to the Pacific Rim. (See Lee, *Claiming the Oriental Gateway*).

[37] "Japanese Charm Evident at World's Fair," *The Seattle Times*, July 23, 1962.

Philippines),[38] while the Republic of China Week offered Chinese documentary film viewings as well as performances by the Taiwan-based Foo-Hsing Theater.[39] For the Republic of China Week, Chinese business leaders in Seattle went so far as to provide guest hospitality, bus tours, and walking tours for dignitaries and performing troops traveling from Taiwan.[40] In addition to gaining visibility through Century 21's celebrations of their corresponding countries, Seattle's Asian American communities— particularly the Chinese American district—also utilized the fair as an opportunity to initiate self-promotion projects that would enhance their local profiles and tourist appeal.

Even though Century 21 offered the city's Asian American communities valuable publicity and collaboration opportunities, an analysis of Asian American participation in the fair must make note of one important reality: fair organizers and city promoters conceptualized Seattle's Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino communities not so much as local American neighborhoods, but as symbols of a foreign culture and as extensions of the Asian exhibitions at the fair. This strategy of portraying Seattle's Asian districts as exotic extensions of Asia can be interpreted as an economic decision and symbiotic collaboration between Seattle's civic boosters, the world's fair leadership, and Asian community leaders to simultaneously raise the profiles of Century 21 and the International District. Yet this arrangement is also consistent with important elements of modern Asian American citizenship. Sociologist Lisa Sun-Hee Park has asserted that the co-existing projects of promoting liberal democracy and racial hierarchies bear contradictory implications for Asian American citizenship and national belonging. Park

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[38] "Philippine Week Begins at Fair," *The Seattle Times*, July 9, 1962.
[39] "Republic of China in Fair Spotlight," *The Seattle Times*, October 10, 1962. Becker et al, *The Future Remembered*, 189-190.
[40] Becker et al., *The Future Remembered*, 190.

argued that in order to be accepted and assimilated into U.S. citizenship and social

membership Asian Americans "are compelled to adapt their history to fit into an

Orientalist drama that requires they play the outsiders repeatedly, all in an effort to

establish their legitimate role as insiders. In essence, Asian Americans must be foreign in

order to fit into the United States."[41] Indeed, the relationship between Century 21 and

Seattle's Asian Americans offers a primary example of Asians performing the part of

foreigners to bolster their legitimacy and membership in US society.

Park's assertion and the example of Century 21 add complexity to the prevailing

argument in Asian American scholarship that labels of exoticism and foreign status are

always used to denigrate Asians or foreclose opportunities.[42] In fact, as Century 21

demonstrates, there are occasions when Asian Americans' decisions to depict themselves

as foreign or exotic can actually facilitate their social membership and enhance their

economic opportunities. In the context of the racial liberalism and cosmopolitanism that

served as a backdrop to Century 21, the foreign and exotic labels assumed by Seattle's

Asian Americans were converted into a form of cultural capital, lending legitimacy to the

city's claims of cosmopolitanism. As the following sections will demonstrate, business

leaders of Seattle's Chinatown were able to gain positive press coverage and raise their

communal profile by depicting their district as a site of exoticism and ethnotourism

where visitors could instantly be transported to the sites and cuisines of China. In the end,

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[41] Lisa Sun-Hee Park, "Assimilation," *Keywords for Asian American Studies*, ed. Cathy J. Schlund-Vials, Linda Trinh Vo, and K. Scott Wong (New York: New York University Press, 2015) 17.

[42] See Robert Lee, *Orientals*. See also Darrell Y. Hamamoto, *Monitored Peril: Asian Americans and the Politics of TV Representation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Gina Marchetti, *Romance and the "Yellow Peril"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Dorinne Kondo, *About Face: Performing Race in Fashion and Theater* (New York: Routledge, 1997); and Sheng-Mei Ma, *The Deathly Embrace: Orientalism and Asian American Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

however, even though Chinatown leaders managed to elevate their district's

socioeconomic standing, there were still notable constraints to their gains. Claire Jean

Kim's theory of racial triangulation examines the function of the "foreigner" label in the

modern American racial order. According to Kim, even though Asians are frequently

valorized as superior to African Americans (based on socioeconomic merits), they are

concurrently racialized as perpetual foreigners. This serves to ostracize Asians as

"permanently unassimilable," and renders them racially deficient vis-à-vis whites (and

culturally foreign vis-à-vis blacks). Thus, by embracing depictions of their community as

a tourist haven of a foreign and exotic culture, Seattle's Chinese American business

leaders ultimately embraced a framework that reinforced their own unassimilability and

outsider status.

During Century 21, Chinese American business leaders took steps to promote

their district as a tourist attraction. In seeking to capitalize on the influx of tourists during

the World's Fair, several Chinatown organizations produced a 40-page tourist book

called *Oriental Flavors*, which reinforced the depiction of Chinatown as an exotic tourist

destination for visitors wishing to experience Asia without having to travel there, and for

World's Fair guests yearning to continue their immersion in the Chinese or Japanese

Pavilions. The opening article, for instance, beckoned Chinatown visitors with the

following statements:

> Come to Chinatown to stroll along the streets, delighting your senses
> with the Oriental atmosphere—the courteous manner of the people—the
> musical tone of a Chinese conversation—and decoration—the silken
> touch of a jade necklace—the pungent pleasure of a Chinese kitchen. Do
> you enjoy Chinese dishes cooked in the traditional Chinese way? Many
> fine restaurants cater to your palate in Chinatown. Are you a do-it-
> yourself gourmet? You can obtain all the ingredients of exotic Chinese

> dishes in Chinatown. Are you a collector of Oriental handicrafts, a searcher for unusual gifts, a souvenir collector? The Chinatown specialty shops and import houses will serve you inexpensively.[43]

Passages such as these promoted Chinatown as a multi-sensorial evocation of "Oriental" delights, and they were reinforced by articles, advertisements, and illustrations promising tourists additional cultural attractions such as Chinese fashion shows, Peking Opera, a Chinese art exhibit, and a "splendid Oriental" parade featuring a 120-foot dragon.[44] Although these components of *Oriental Flavors* may have appealed to Century 21 visitors looking to experience exotic sights and sounds, they also had the effect of reducing Chinatown's rich community into an attraction akin to an amusement park. By producing materials and discourses that reinforced such characterizations of their district, Asian American civic organizations demonstrated that they were willing participants in circulating narratives of exoticism. Even as Chinatown's residents and associations stood to benefit economically, such depictions of their community also helped Seattle flatten their representation from full-fledged citizens with over a hundred years of history in the city's sociopolitical fabric to one-dimensional symbols of the exotic orient.

It is important to note that when business leaders of Chinatown took steps to capture Century 21 audiences and increase tourism into their district, such actions were reinforced by the fact that media and world's fair publications consistently depicted Chinatown as a geography where fair visitors could sample the cuisines and cultural traditions of Asia. Passages in the *World's Fair Guide Book* and *Official Souvenir Program* emphasized the selection of Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino restaurants in the

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[43] *Oriental Flavors: A Guide to Seattle's Chinatown* (Seattle: Chinese Publishing House, 1962), 4-5.
[44] *Oriental Flavors,* 6-9

district, while the *Guide Book* reminded visitors that "in the traditional Japanese custom,

patrons remove their shoes before entering" "the best sukiyaki in town."[45] The program

also added that:

> …many owners live above their stores and display colorful Oriental
> designs on the buildings—so by all means look up. Seattle's Chinatown
> really comes alive during Seafair, which is a time of balloons and street
> dancing and parades, and the Orientals are particularly happy any time
> the city provides an excuse to hold a parade.[46]

Lost in these references to Asian restaurants, "Oriental" design elements, and parade-

happy folk is the rich, century-old history of Chinese American presence in Seattle's

political and socioeconomic fabric; and even more concealed are details surrounding the

lived experiences of Chinese Americans in their identities as Seattle residents. These

passages also cast light onto the shifting and contested nature of Chinatown's official

name. As mentioned in the Introduction, Mayor William F. Devin renamed the

Chinatown neighborhood as the International District in 1951 as part of postwar efforts to

celebrate the district's ethnic pluralism. Yet by 1962, in the context of the World's Fair's

emphasis on cosmopolitanism and ethnotourism, Century 21 materials once again began

referring to the district as Chinatown. This was not a politically neutral act; for according

to cultural geographer Kay Anderson, Chinatowns were not neutral designations of

neighborhoods in the Western world where Chinese immigrants lived. They were

sociopolitical constructs imbued with connotations that whites associated with Chinese

communities. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these characteristics

included foreignness, vice, disease, and danger. By the middle of the twentieth century,

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[45] *Official Guide Book*, 152.
[46] *Official Souvenir Program*, 80.

public imaginations of Chinatown shifted to connote tourist appeal, "quaint

peculiarity,"[47] and (as memorably described by a 1943 newspaper article on Vancouver's

Chinatown) "a glint of the Orient in an Occidental setting."[48] Given this shift in public

conceptions and imaginations of Chinatown, it is evident fair officials' decision to refer

to the International District as Chinatown was strategically made. This decision and

particular method of representation also reveals that the value of Chinese American

Seattleites lay in their ability to evoke exoticisms, foreignness, and ethnotourism for

Century 21's white tourists.

In a work that sheds light on the political ramifications of Chinese American

Seattleites' decision to highlight the exoticism and Orientalism of their district, *Empress*

*San Francisco* by historian Abigail Markwyn reveals that local Chinese American

communities were fully cognizant of the pitfalls inherent in self-delineations as foreign

and Orientalized geographies during the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition

(PPIE) in San Francisco. In contrast to the eagerness displayed by Seattle's Chinese

community in highlighting the oriental and ethnotourist dimensions of their district,

Chinese Americans in 1915 San Francisco demonstrated greater hesitation and anxieties

over exhibitions and performances that had the potential to frame their community as

foreign. When the PPIE opened an immersive exhibition that portrayed Chinatown as an

exotic district filled with opium dens, prostitution houses, and "deviant, exotic others,"

members of the Chinese community organized a letter-writing campaign and community

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[47] Kay Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991), 155.

[48] Anderson, *Vancouver's Chinatown*, 175. The newspaper reference appeared in the May 1, 1943 edition of *The Vancouver Sun*. The demonization of Chinatown is discussed in Anderson's study in Chapter 3 while the geography's conversion into a tourist attraction is explicated in Chapter 5.

meetings to voice their protest as well as demands that the attraction be shut down.[49] And for performances and speeches slated in conjunction with PPIE's China Day and official China exhibit, Chinese American organizers chose to downplay elements of traditional Chinese culture, such as costumes, folk dances, and cultural demonstrations. They opted instead to put forth presentations that highlighted China's modernity or Chinese Americans' status as US citizens. Performers for the China exhibit dedication ceremony were local Chinese American children who sang American and Chinese songs in English, while speakers for China Day shunned traditional Chinese costumes and all of the cultural pageantry that other nations typically featured in their celebrations, opting instead to focus on China's economic progress and friendship with the United States.[50] Although key differences existed between the circumstances surrounding the 1915 exhibition and the 1962 World's Fair, the case study of 1915 Chinese Americans demonstrates that self-exoticization was not universal, and that alternatives to exotic, fetishized elements did exist in the history of American world's fairs. Seattle however, chose not to pursue such paths of protest and resistance, nor did Seattle's Chinese leaders shy away from exhibits, performances, and visual elements that highlighted traditional Chinese culture. Instead, Seattle's Chinese American civic leaders chose to endorse and participate in exoticizing their district through the production of a pamphlet highlighting Chinatown ethnotourism and, as the next section will show, through self-funded installations of Chinese lanterns in the business district.

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[49] Abigail Markwyn, *Empress San Francisco: The Pacific Rim, the Great West, and California at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 111-114.
[50] Ibid., 129 and 161-162.

In the midst of the Seattle World's Fair, the Chinese Community Services Organization (CCSO)— a chamber of commerce run by young Chinatown civic leaders—initiated a project called "Operation Bootstrap."[51] Operation Bootstrap was inspired by San Francisco Chinatown's success during the 1950s in transforming itself into a tourist destination offering what historian Nayan Shah has called "sanitized exoticism,"[52] in which stereotypical Chinese decorative elements were used to enhance Chinese America's tourist appeal to white Americans. For Operation Bootstrap, the leaders of CCSO marshalled their resources to upgrade the appearance of certain areas of Chinatown, or as the *Seattle Times* put it, "to give the old and neglected part of town color and personality" for Century 21 tourists.[53] After mulling over various ideas, the CCSO pursued plans to permanently install 115 red lanterns in a four-square-block area. Architect and co-founder of CCSO Ben Woo designed the Chinese-style lanterns to be 40 inches high, made of plastic, and stamped with gold-colored Chinese characters for good luck and longevity. With this design in hand, the CCSO then raised $10,000 from residents and business leaders to fund the making of the lanterns.[54] Chinatown organizations agreed to foot the monthly $50 electricity bill for this project, and CCSO and the City of Seattle dedicated the lanterns on October 9, 1962, just in time for China Week festivities at Century 21.

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[51] More more information about the CCSO, consult Connie So, "Seattle Exceptionalism," 243-305.

[52] Shah, *Contagious Divides*, 235.

[53] John J. Reddin, "Faces of the City: Gay Lanterns to Decorate Chinatown," *The Seattle Times*, August 26, 1962, 23.

[54] Ibid.

**Figure 3.4 Photograph of Lanterns designed for Operation Bootstrap**
The Wing Luke Museum, 1992.066.006.1

Out of Operation Bootstrap, the CCSO and Chinatown garnered positive publicity

from the *Seattle Times*, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, and *American City Magazine*.[55]

With headlines like "Lanterns Add Gaiety to Town," and "Faces of the City: Gay

Lanterns to Decorate Chinatown," articles covering the project praised the value of the

lanterns in upgrading the appearance, festive atmosphere, and tourist appeal of

Chinatown and Seattle. The city's press also covered the dedication ceremony, which

featured an impressive roster of speakers that included Washington Lieutenant Governor

John Cherberg, Seattle Mayor Gordon S. Clinton, Seattle's Superintendent of Lighting

Paul J. Raver, Taiwan's Minister of Overseas Chinese Affairs Chu-Kau Chow, and

Taiwan's Consul-General Chia-Chiu Lai. Eventually followed by additional projects such

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[55] Copies of these articles are housed in the Wing Luke Museum Collections (Object ID 1992.066.006).

as the planting of fifty plum trees (the official flower of Taiwan) and installation of

bilingual street signs, the installation of the lanterns jump-started beautification initiatives

adopted by Chinatown businesses and would subsequently be considered by Chinatown

activist Doug Chin to be arguably CCSO's greatest achievement.[56]

While Operation Bootstrap was carried out successfully, it is important to note

that its execution intersected with Seattle's complex legacy of racial triangulation in

important ways. First, the project worked in conjunction with the previously discussed

efforts to disseminate city-wide representations of Chinatown as a stand-in for a foreign

tourist spectacle, particularly in the context of the world's fair. Thus, even though

community leaders succeeded in raising their district's city-wide reputation, tourist

appeal, and economic prospects by tapping into the cultural capital derived from

exoticization of their community, their actions also reinforced the cultural ostracism of

Chinatown in Seattle's public imagination. Secondly, it is telling that Chinatown's

Century 21 endeavors, such as Operation Bootstraps, rely on a continuation of the self-

sufficient, pull-yourself-up-by-the-bootstraps model of racial uplift employed by JSCC

and discussed in the previous chapter. Aptly, given its title, Operation Bootstraps was

almost completely self-funded by Chinatown's residents and businesses (as was the

*Oriental Flavors* guide book). The similarities between CCSO and JSCC are likely

attributable to an overlap between the leadership of both organizations, as CCSO's

founding officers were also active in JSCC. But the self-funding model of Chinatown

activities during Century 21 indicates that the actions of Chinese American community

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[56] Wing Luke, letter dated March 30, 1964, Object ID 1992.066.007, Wing Luke Museum Collections; Chin, *Seattle's International District*, 85.

leaders reinforced the overall notion that Asian Americans in Seattle would raise their own funds and carve out their own resources when seeking neighborhood beautification and landscape improvement.

## African Americans at the World's Fair

Despite being the largest nonwhite demographic in Seattle by 1962, African Americans were barely represented in fair exhibits, performances, and publicity materials. Their absence was in part attributed to the lack of exotic and foreign connotations attached to black Seattleites, which made their cultures unsuitable for display given Century 21's conception of cosmopolitanism as international in flavor. African Americans were kept out of Century 21 publicity materials, whose images of fairgoers and attendants were almost exclusively white; however, they opted not to protest their exclusion, unlike notable past examples such as the 1933 World's Fair in Chicago when African Americans fought for inclusion of their histories in exhibition spaces. Instead, Seattle's African American community chose to fight for visibility and resources in the realm of employment opportunities at the fair. Under the leadership of the Seattle Urban League (SUL), a prominent advocacy group for African Americans, black Seattleites challenged Century 21's leadership and personnel department to provide them with staff positions, particularly ones that offered them public visibility.[57] The SUL collaborated with the Century 21 personnel department from January 1961 through April 1962 to increase the number of black employees at the fair. This cooperation consisted of

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[57] Founded in 1929, the Seattle Urban League (SUL) was an advocacy group that worked closely with Seattle's municipal government to combat racial discrimination in the areas of housing, employment, and education. Although SUL had a multiracial membership, its leadership and constituency were predominantly African American, and the SUL would emerge alongside the Seattle NAACP and Seattle Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) to become one of their city's most prominent black activist organizations.

several meetings between SUL and Century 21 Personnel Director Max Berland, and the subsequent forwarding of numerous African American job applications and name referrals to Century 21's hiring staff. In the end, over one hundred African Americans were hired, primarily as janitors, maintenance crews, laborers, ticket sellers, ticket takers, and attendants.[58] Publicly, SUL commended the World's Fair for its hiring of blacks and additional nonwhite employees. In a *Seattle Times* article titled, "Fair's Lack of Bias in Hiring Praised," SUL Industrial-Relations Secretary James E. Johnson stated, "Not only has the fair demonstrated the technology of the twenty-first century, but it has pointed the way to equality of opportunity for all citizens regardless of race, religion or national origin." In the same article, SUL Executive Secretary Edwin T. Pratt gratefully stated that "Fairgoers from around the country have gained a favorable impression of our employment patterns."[59]

Behind the scenes, however, SUL internal documents painted a more candid assessment of world's fair hiring practices. Even though SUL's meetings and referrals with fair officials translated into a sizable number of hires, the fact remained that black employees were primarily hired for the same kind of behind-the-scenes menial labor that African American workers in the city had long been relegated to. A handful of African Americans were hired for visible positions in the crowd control, clerical, ticket-selling, and attendants departments, but these amounted to at most 4% of workers. Instead, "nonwhite" workers (presumably mostly African American) occupied a disproportionate percentage of positions in the grounds maintenance department. According to data from

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[58] Seattle Urban League, untitled document/report, September 1962, pages 1-4, Seattle Urban League Records, 0607, box 15, folder 13, University of Washington Special Collections.

[59] "Fair's Lack of Bias in Hiring Praised," *The Seattle Times*, September 26, 1962, 2.

SUL, nonwhite workers made up over 30% of Century 21's maintenance staff, 45% of

the janitorial staff, and 35% of the fair's laborers. Moreover, SUL detailed considerable

difficulty in acquiring management and white-collar positions for blacks and noted an

absence of black staff in the vast majority of exhibition spaces. Century 21's overall

reluctance to hire nonwhite staff in leadership, clerical work, and exhibition gallery

monitoring appears to have extended to other nonwhite racial groups, as the SUL only

documented token numbers of Asian and other nonwhite staff in these areas.[60]

### Conclusion and Analysis

Century 21's seeming unwillingness to hire blacks and Asians in positions of

visibility and importance reveals that under the world's fair's brand of cosmopolitanism,

nonwhite cultures and faces were useful solely for the exoticism they offered up for white

consumption. Multicultural celebrations (including foreign pavilions and Chinatown

publicity efforts) went hand in hand with unwillingness to place actual members of

Seattle's nonwhite communities in visible staffing positions. This juxtaposition sheds

considerable light on what palatable cosmopolitanism looked like to white 1960s

audiences. Much in line with the concept of Spanish fantasy past,[61] this cosmopolitanism-

as-spectacle celebrates foreign cultures and nonwhite faces, while remaining

uncomfortable with the presence of nonwhite communities in Seattle's daily life.

Although the World's Fair may have helped heighten appreciation of and curiosity about

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[60] Seattle Urban League, untitled document/report, September 1962, pages 1-8, Seattle Urban League Records, 0607, box 15, folder 13, University of Washington Special Collections.

[61] The term "Spanish fantasy past" derives from journalist and writer Carey McWilliams' 1948 essay, "The Fantasy Heritage." In his essay, McWilliams identifies a contradictory practice in which Anglo-Americans idealized mission-style Spanish architecture as the defining aesthetic of California's heritage, yet consistently marginalized and denigrated the actual Mexican residents, communities, and culture present in the state. Carey McWilliams, "The Fantasy Heritage," in *North from Mexico: The Spanish-Speaking People of the United States* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lipponcott Co., 1948), 35-47.

nonwhite cultures, the event's brand of cosmopolitanism did not necessarily translate into greater validation or social mobility for Seattle's actual nonwhite populations, particularly in the realm of employment and community resources. Taken together, the complex depictions of Chinatown and the challenges facing black employment highlight the complex and problematic relationship between Seattle's white establishment, conceptions of cosmopolitanism, and nonwhite communities.

The differential impact of Century 21 on Seattle's Asian American and African American populations also speaks to the workings of racial triangulation. Fair organizers and Chinese American business leaders capitalized upon Century 21's commodification of cosmopolitanism to publicize the Chinatown-International District as a tourist haven of Orientalized sights and cuisines. Even though publicity generated during the World's Fair led to a higher profile and increased tourism in the Chinatown-International District, such benefits were rooted in the characterization of Asian Americans, especially Chinese Americans, as exotic foreigners in their own city. In other words, the Chinese American business community elevated their socioeconomic situation and gained more visibility (especially in comparison to Seattle's African Americans) but did so in ways that markedly reinforced their foreigner/outsider status. Meanwhile, African American Seattleites received noticeably less visibility in Century 21 exhibitions than their Asian American counterparts did, despite outnumbering Asians three to two in the city.[62] While Asian Americans could and did participate in international exhibits that highlighted their "home" countries' cultural traditions, African Americans were shut out of exhibition

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[62] Calvin F. Schmid and Wayne William McVey, *Growth and Distribution of Minority Races in Seattle, Washington* (Seattle: Seattle Public Schools, 1964), 14. In 1960, African Americans numbered 26,901; Japanese Americans numbered 9,351; Chinese Americans numbered 4,076; and Filipino Americans numbered 3,755 in Seattle.

spaces. Instead of fighting for visibility in exhibitions, Seattle's African American leadership opted to campaign for employment opportunities, where they encountered mixed success: some employment gains for black workers in low-level positions, but not in management and leadership positions (except in janitorial and maintenance services). The divergent strategies adopted by Chinese Americans and African Americans in Century 21 reveals another layer of nuance to racial dynamics Seattle. As Chinese Americans relied on strategies of self-reliance and pull-yourself-up-by-the-bootstrap projects, African Americans pressed Century 21 organizers for access to civic employment opportunities. This parallels Kim's observation that African Americans in New York City (as well as other major cities) during the twentieth century found opportunities for upward social mobility in the public sector, particularly with the passage of equal opportunity legislation in the 1970s.[63] Strains of these divergent strategies were suggested in previous chapters As the next chapter will demonstrate, such strategies would continue to lead Seattle's Asian American and African American communities on divergent paths of racialization, as each pursued the double-edged opportunities stemming from differential racial citizenship.

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[63] Kim, *Bitter Fruit*, 30-31. According to Kim, the concentration of upwardly mobile African Americans in the public sector had mixed consequences. It opened opportunities for many middle-class African Americans and sheltered them from overt discrimination and financial difficulties. However, Kim noted that "the concentration of Black energies on networking within city government and the failure of Blacks to effectively penetrate any part of the private sector (including low-skilled jobs) have been two sides of the same coin." Kim, *Bitter Fruit*, 30-31.

**Chapter Four:**
**Unpacking Asian American and African American Politics in the Seattle Model City Program, 1969-1974**

In 1963, the municipality of Seattle issued a pamphlet aimed at inspiring excitement and optimism about an upcoming urban renewal project that promised "new vitality" for the Central Area. The project was called the Yesler Atlantic Neighborhood Improvement Project (YANIP) and the pamphlet gave readers tantalizing glimpses into a future of ample employment and business opportunities, "[modernized] shopping facilities with adequate off-street parking," as well as "public and community facilities such as residential street lighting; street, sidewalk, and alley paving; [and] a park and community center."[1] Over the next six years, the city would receive urban renewal federal funds to demolish hundreds of homes and relocate residents in anticipation of upgraded housing and development, only to see federal housing subsidies dry up in 1969 and the cleared land remain vacant for decades.[2] In addition to the collapse of urban renewal, the 1960s also saw a continuation of social problems in the Central Area such as unemployment, poverty, crime, and juvenile delinquency. A 1968 report by the Seattle Urban League noted an increase in unemployment along with a drop in median income for Central Area residents from 76% to 54% of the city's average.[3] An article in the

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[1] City of Seattle, Division of Urban Renewal, "New Vitality: The Outlook for Yesler-Atlantic," 1963, box 3, folder 33, 1642-10, Seattle Municipal Archives.

[2] Historic Seattle Preservation and Development Authority, "Central Area: An Inventory of Buildings and Urban Design Resources," accessed January 10, 2016, http://historicseattle.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Central-Area-1.pdf; Elise Bright, *Reviving America's Forgotten Neighborhoods: An Investigation of Inner City Revitalization Efforts* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 17.

[3] Frank Lee Hruza, "Seattle Model Cities Program: A Case Study of Citizen Participation in the Planning Process during the Initial Year, 1967-68" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1970), 62. See Hruza, 61-68 for additional details on Central Area social problems during the 1960s.

*Seattle Times* also reported that between April and August of 1968, 24% of reported "homicides, robberies, aggravated assaults, automobile theft and purse snatches in the entire city" occurred in the Central Area.[4] Meanwhile, as the Central Area staggered from the fallout of failed urban renewal experiments, the International District also struggled with what Urban Planning and Seattle scholar Franklyn Lee Hruza described as "the pathologies of inner city slums and ghettoes," such as "ill health, poor education, bad housing, inadequate housing facilities, [and] high unemployment."[5] Although the International District's social and infrastructural problems were not as widely publicized as those in the Central Area, this neighborhood too continuously struggled with inadequate housing, prostitution, and poverty throughout the 1960s.[6]

Urban renewal failed in its promise to revitalize the Central Area and the International District, and both districts remained in a state of socioeconomic stagnation during the 1960s. Beset by rapid deterioration of infrastructure and housing stock along with an intensification of social problems, both the Central Area and the International District found themselves in a state of crisis. However, these two neighborhoods and their Asian American and African American populations ultimately had different experiences and experienced disparate impacts as they struggled to navigate local and national aid programs. On the national landscape, the 1960s represented the era of the Civil Rights Movement where African Americans took the lead in pushing for increased political and economic power, often collaborating with other racial groups and inspiring them to

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[4] "Mayor Braman Resists Reduction of Police in Central Area," *Seattle Times*, September 1, 1968, 12. The article goes on to note that over a four-day period in 1968, 98% of serious crimes by juveniles in the city occurred in the Central Area.

[5] Hruza, "Seattle Model Cities Program," 72.

[6] Chin, *Seattle's International District*, 85 and 88; John Wilson and Marshall Wilson, "Pike Street Girls Move Uptown to Pike," *Seattle Times*, September 6, 1968, 21.

take similar actions.[7] At the same time, however, the 1960s was also an era when the

socioeconomic fortunes of African Americans and Asian Americans diverged. Large

numbers of Asian Americans, especially Chinese and Japanese Americans, gained access

to institutions of higher learning and professional white collar jobs.[8] And while African

Americans experienced some increase in political rights and won significant victories in

dismantling segregation and overt racism, widespread poverty and unemployment

continued to plague their communities.[9]

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[7] Major studies that examine the history and political gains of the Civil Rights Movement include Morris Aldon, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: Free Press, 1984); Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945-2006* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2007); David Levering Lewis, *The Civil Rights Movement in America: Essays* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1986); and Jack M. Bloom*, Class, Race, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1987).

[8] For more information on the entry of Asian Americans into white-collar professions and on the subsequent emergence of the model minority myth, see: Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (Boston: Twayne, 1989), 121 (Chan's data was taken from L. Ling-chi Wang, "The Politics of Assimilation and Repression: The Chinese in the United States, 1940-1970," unpublished manuscript at the University of California, Asian American Studies Library); Ron Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1989); and Erika Lee, *The Making of Asian America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 276-279; and Ellen Wu, *The Color of Success*.

[9] To examine the prevalence of poverty and social ills amongst the black community, the U.S. government commissioned several reports, the most famous of which is *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (also known as the Moynihan Report).  Written in 1965 by Daniel Patrick Moynihan, then Assistant Secretary of Labor, the Moynihan Report presented data on growing African American poverty in metropolitan areas as well as sociological analyses that posited slavery, breakdown of the black nuclear family structure, lingering racism, widespread unemployment, and increased reliance on welfare programs as the root causes of that increase. Office of Policy Planning and Research, *The Negro Family: The Case For National Action* (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Labor, 1965). Many scholarly works have also analyzed the increase of African American poverty in urban areas, arguing that it resulted from federal segregationist policies that encouraged "white flight" into newly constructed suburbs along with black confinement in deteriorating metropolitan neighborhoods suffering from government divestment. Such works include Arnold Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto*; Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid*; and Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*. Additional works examining the concurrent rise of African American poverty and welfare enrollment with institutional racism from the 1960s through the 1990s include: Kenneth J. Neubeck and Noel A. Cazenave, *Welfare Racism: Playing the Race Card against America's Poor* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Joel F. Handler and Yeheskel Hasenfeld, *Blame Welfare, Ignore Poverty and Inequality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Robert C. Lieberman, *Shifting the Color Line: Race and the American Welfare State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); and Jill Quadagno, *The Color of Welfar*e*: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). One final work that provides important context as to how black poverty increased during the Civil Rights era is the landmark study by William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago:

This divergence in the fortunes of African Americans and Asian Americans also played out in Seattle's International District and Central Area. Seattle's postwar African American population expanded through the early 1960s, increasing by 169 percent between 1944 and 1960.[10] Most of this population growth was absorbed by the Central Area due to the existence of a vibrant black community in the district and lingering practices of residential segregation elsewhere.[11] This growing population strained the Central Area's infrastructure and resources during a time when the its residents already contended with a host of social problems including rising unemployment, rates of illegal drug use, juvenile delinquency, and crime.[12] As a result, African Americans tended to remain at the lowest rungs of the city's social economic ladder. Meanwhile, the fortunes of Asian Americans in the city throughout the 1950s and 1960s were more mixed. Most prominently, Chinese and Japanese American men entered Seattle's white collar professional workforce in substantial numbers amidst a postwar atmosphere that was increasingly amenable to Asian Americans in the areas of education, housing, and employment. Chin notes that by 1960, Seattle's Chinese Americans were graduating college at twice the rate of whites (19% vs. 9%); 25% of the Chinese American male workforce was working in professional or technical sectors, and Chinese Americans were taking advantage of rising economic fortunes and dissolving segregation barriers to

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University of Chicago Press, 1987). Having noted the persistence of institutional racism and lingering socioeconomic inequalities, it is important nonetheless to acknowledge that the post-World War II period did provide opportunities for the emergence of a new professional black middle-class (Preston Smith, 7-8) who are the object of Preston Smith's study, *Racial Democracy and the Black Metropolis: Housing Policy in Postwar Chicago* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

[10] Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community*, 187.
[11] Ibid., 178-181.
[12] Ibid., 188-189.

purchase homes outside the International District.[13] Similarly, Japanese Americans

boasted the highest levels of college graduation out of any demographic in Seattle and,

much like their Chinese American counterparts, found employment in white collar

professions and bought homes beyond the confines of the International District and the

Central Area.[14] Also notable, but less publicized, was the fact that residents "left behind"

in the International District and unable to obtain middle-class jobs or middle-class homes

continued to contend with socioeconomic woes such as housing shortages, poverty, and

crime—and continued to be neglected by governmental aid programs.

It was during this period that President Lyndon B. Johnson introduced an

ambitious collection of liberal programs known as the War on Poverty to tackle racial

inequality and poverty. Seizing momentum offered by heightened public support for the

civil rights movement and the mandate afforded by Democratic control of Congress,

between 1964 and 1972 the Johnson administration pushed forth a "dazzling array" of

experimental programs, institutions, and grants aimed at combatting racial socioeconomic

gaps and enhancing community services for poor communities.[15] This chapter examines

one piece of the War on Poverty legislation—the Model Cities program, which allocated

billions of dollars in federal funding towards educational opportunities, job training, and

social services for the poor in addition to grants for infrastructural projects in

deteriorating neighborhoods. I am especially interested in analyzing the Model Cities

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[13] Chin, *Seattle's International District*, 77-78.

[14] David A. Takami, *Divided Destiny: A History of Japanese Americans in Seattle* (Seattle, WA: Wing Luke Museum, 1998), 80.

[15] Self, *American Babylon*, 199. For a detailed description and analysis of the War on Poverty program, see David Zarefsky's *President Johnson's War On Poverty: Rhetoric and History* (University: University of Alabama Press, 1986), (which examines the program from the federal policy level) or *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980*, Annelise Orleck and Lisa Gayle Hazirijian, eds. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011).

program's role in perpetuating and reinforcing the processes of racial triangulation identified in the previous chapters. In the case of SMCP, the political strategies adopted by African Americans would garner large shares of Model City resources for Seattle's black community in the form of funding for both infrastructures and social services. By contrast, SMCP's Asian American activists would restrict their funding requests to the infrastructure arena and as a result, receive comparatively fewer resources from the program. These strategic decisions would produce negative consequences for both Central Area and the International District—Central Area's acceptance of social service funds (particularly in areas such as resource centers for delinquent youths, unemployed residents, and drug addicts) would pave the way for increased criminalization and denigration of the community in future decades, while International District's self-imposed restrictions in funding requests would set the stage for continued neglect and deterioration of the neighborhood. By the end of SMCP, these concurrent outcomes would solidify the patterns of racial triangulation first examined in Chapter 1 in which Asian Americans are positively racialized as self-sufficient citizens and deprived of civic resources while African Americans are given relatively greater shares of governmental assistance, but are consequently deemed to be unworthy dependents of the stage. The superior/inferior ordering scheme of racial triangulation as described by Kim is now borne out (where Asians are racialized as superior and African Americans are marked as inferior). But what SMCPs (as well as Yesler Terrace and JSCC) reveal is that allocation of resources can reveal an additional dimension to the triangulation process by which Asian American "superiority" is attained through the self-denial of governmental resources, and African American "inferiority" is premised upon an acceptance of civic

services and funds. SMCP's divergent impacts on its Asian and black populations form

the two primary subjects of this chapter, and in the process, also raise questions about the

limits of liberalism and racial equity programs.

To date, most of the literature on the Model Cities Program has not examined the

relationship between the Model Cities Program and Asian American communities,

choosing instead to focus on ties between Model Cities and their communities of black

and white residents.[16] In Seattle, however, Asian Americans constituted a major player in

vying for SMCP funds, particularly through the city's most prominent Asian American

community organization during the 1960s, the International District Improvement

Association (Inter*IM). A major part of this chapter takes Inter*IM and its relationship

with SMCP as a case study for analyzing Asian Americans' relationship with welfare,

federally funded programs, and the Great Society during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

For Asian Americans, the 1960s were an era of social mobility that also saw the rise of

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[16] Bret A. Weber and Amanda Wallace, "Revealing the Empowerment Revolution: A Literature Review of the Model Cities Program," *Journal of Urban History* 38, no.1 (January 2012): 173-192; this article provides a thorough review of the body of scholarship (including books, academic articles, and dissertations) on the Model Cities Program from 1968 to the present. Studies examining race in the Model Cities Program on the federal level tend to focus only on black-white relations. See for example: Charles Haar, *Between the Idea and the Reality: A Study in the Origin, Fate and Legacy of the Model Cities Program* (Boston: Little Brown, 1975); Burton David Dunlop, "Minority Resources and Community Involvement in Model Cities," (PhD diss., University of Illinois, 1973); Eddie N. Williams, *Delivery Systems for Model Cities: New Concepts in Serving the Urban Community* (University of Chicago Center for Policy Study and Center for Urban Studies, 1969); and Bernard J. Frieden and Marshall Kaplan, *The Politics of Neglect: Urban Aid from Model Cities to Revenue Sharing* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1975). Like the literature on the national Model Cities program, articles and dissertations on Model City programs in individual cities—including SCMP—also tend to focus on white/black communities and politics. Examples of studies that have been conducted on SMCP that analyze race through a black/white framework include Frank Lee Hruza, "Seattle Model Cities Program: A Case Study of Citizen Participation in the Planning Process during the Initial Year, 1967-68"; Robert Self, "'To Plan Our Liberation': Black Power and the Politics of Place in Oakland, California, 1965-1977," *Journal of Urban History* 26 (September 2000): 759-792; and Jeffrey Craig Sanders, *Seattle & The Roots of Urban Sustainability: Inventing Ecotopia* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 65-98.

the model minority myth. [17] For the first time in U.S. history, Asian Americans joined the ranks of the nation's white-collar workforce in large numbers, moved into previously all-white suburban neighborhoods, and experienced the recasting of their public image from foreign aliens to model citizens. While these developments allowed some Asian Americans to achieve middle-class prosperity, those who found themselves left behind in inner-city neighborhoods and lower economic status then found themselves at a disadvantage when it came to receiving resources from welfare antipoverty programs such as Model Cities because they were not presumed to need governmental assistance. Uncovering this story of Asian American civic participation in the Model Cities narrative is instructive as it complicates conventional understandings of how race operated in War on Poverty programs. The story of SMCP demonstrates that Asian Americans were key players in shaping its geographical service areas, funding allocations, and programs. Adding Asian Americans to the narrative not only sheds light on operations of racial ordering systems within the Model Cities Program, it also adds additional layers of understanding to ongoing scholarly debates on whether Model Cities should be regarded as a success or failure. [18] In assessing the literature on the Model Cities Program, urban

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[17] By the mid-1960s, the application of the model minority myth to Asian Americans would capture the attention of many American scholars and journalists. Most famously coined by journalist William Peterson in an article he wrote for the *New York Times Magazine*—titled "Success Story: Japanese American Style"—the term "model minority" was used to describe the stereotype of the submissive and successful Asian American (particularly Japanese Americans but also Chinese Americans). According to the model minority thesis, Asian Americans were successful in society because of their positive cultural attributes, such as an emphasis on hard work, family values, and education. (William Petersen, "Success Story: Japanese American Style," *New York Times Magazine*, January 9, 1966). For a more extended discussion of the origin of the model minority myth, see Ellen Wu, *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015) and Madeline Y. Hsu, *The Good Immigrants: How the Yellow Peril Became the Model Minority* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).

[18] Refer to Bret A. Weber and Amanda Wallace, "Revealing the Empowerment Revolution: A Literature Review of the Model Cities Program" for a literature review on studies of the Model Cities Program.

historians Bret A. Weber and Amanda Wallace note that early scholarly assessments on

Model Cities during the 1970s and 1980s tended to conclude that the program was a

failure and made little headway in alleviating the socioeconomic problems experienced

by blacks in urban neighborhoods. After a period of scholastic silence and neglect on this

subject, the 2000s witnessed a resurgence of academic interest in Model Cities. These

studies, most notably ones by historians Robert Self and Jeffrey Craig Sanders,

acknowledge that while Model Cities failed in most of its goals, it did made an important

contribution to African American communities by laying the groundwork in nurturing a

new generation of black activists and political leadership.[19] The analysis in this chapter

seeks to add a different angle to current assessments of Model Cities' legacy. While I am

in agreement with Self and Sanders that Model Cities produced mixed legacies for many

of their African American constituencies, I argue that one cannot fully evaluate the

impact of Model Cities without considering the programs legacy in reinforcing systems

of racial triangulation along with differential racialization of Asian Americans and

African Americans in urban spaces.

    This chapter draws upon archival primary sources from the Seattle Municipal

Archive's Model Cities Collection—including task force meeting minutes, internal

SMCP documents, and newspaper clippings—to analyze the factors behind SMCP's

unequal impact on the different racial populations it was implemented to serve. I argue

that SMCP's varied impacts on different populations were fundamentally tied to the

national constructions of liberal welfare programs (such as the War on Poverty and the

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[19] See Robert Self, "'To Plan Our Liberation,'"; Robert Self, *American Babylon*; and Jeffrey Craig Sanders, *Seattle and the Roots of Urban Sustainability*.

Model Cities program) as responses to the black civil rights movement and as solutions to anti-black racism. In 1960s Seattle, as in much of the rest of the nation, welfare and social service programs increasingly shifted their target populations from poor white communities to poor communities of color, particularly black populations.[20] This shift set the stage for a competitive situation in which African Americans and Asian Americans found themselves pitted against each other for access to antipoverty resources that were limited to begin with. Ultimately, African Americans' superior history of political organization, coupled with pre-existing national conceptions of their communities as impoverished and in need of rehabilitation, would make them the most successful constituency in accessing Model City resources. Nonetheless, gains made by the black community in the social services and welfare arena came at a price, in particular that of perpetuating popular representations of blacks as criminal, delinquent, and deficient citizens. Meanwhile, even though Asian Americans rose up the rungs of the social mobility ladder during this era, their gains came at a price as well, as Asian advocates for social welfare would not encounter success on par with those attained by their African American counterparts.

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[20] Political scientist Robert C. Lieberman, in a critical analysis of the welfare state's legacy of racism, makes an argument that on the national level, key welfare components of the Great Society took New Deal programs originally designed to "precisely not reach African Americans" during the 1930s and modified them to specifically incorporate African Americans in ways that "perpetuated and deepened their political, economic, and social isolation" (Lieberman, *Shifting the Color Line*, 118, 118-176). Sociologist Jill Quadagno discusses the national shift of poverty programs from white to black target populations during the 1960s, noting that such a change took place not only in a context of growing black poverty, but also as "an oblique response" designed to "evade forceful action on civil rights while maintaining the political support of African Americans" (Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare*, 27-28).

## Introduction to the Model Cities Program

Model Cities was an experimental federal antipoverty program that represented the last major effort by the Johnson administration and the War on Poverty initiative to address rampant social ills plaguing inner-city neighborhoods. It was created as part of the 1966 Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act, which allocated grants to cities throughout the country over a period of five years. Described by Weber and Wallace as "the most comprehensive, urban-focused effort in the nation's history," the goals of the Model Cities program were spectacularly ambitious and far-reaching, as evidenced by the language of the 1966 Demonstration Cities Act calling for cities to achieve:

> greater collaboration among, and more rational processes within, local bureaucracies and human service agencies; the development of new and improved community development practices; enhanced infrastructure and transportation systems; better housing, employment, and educational opportunities; reduced welfare rolls; lower crime rates; greater participatory democracy. [21]

With the passage of the Demonstration Cities Act, a special division in the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) was created to oversee federal components of the Model Cities program, granting a total of $2.3 billion to 151 cities from 1969 to 1974. Each recipient municipality was given a mandate to collaborate with the federal government in carrying out a variety of individual projects, each of which was to be approved by HUD and aimed at fulfilling one of the Model City goals.[22]

Fueled by the sympathetic tone and earnest concern for the plight of nonwhite communities that characterized the Great Society, the Model Cities program sought to

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[21] Weber and Wallace, "Revealing the Empowerment Revolution: A Literature Review of the Model Cities Program"; Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act, 42 U.S.C. § 103, 1256 (1966).
[22] John H. Mollenkopf, *The Contested City* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 92.

transcend the failures of previous urban renewal programs. While urban renewal

programs focused solely on physical development, the Model Cities Program set out to

address not only dilapidated landscapes and infrastructure but also a wide range of social

issues including employment, crime and youth delinquency, social services, and political

participation. It also sought to counter the lingering sense among poor and nonwhite

communities that urban renewal projects only paid lip service to the needs and voices of

impoverished populations. At the time of Model Cities, many of the communities

targeted by urban renewal programs were still reeling from the "federal bulldozer"

approach of demolishing housing, evicting residents, and failing to construct replacement

housing.[23] Partly in response to the critiques surrounding urban renewal, the Model Cities

program encouraged municipal governments to expand advisory input and political

participation among residents of impoverished communities, especially those with large

populations of blacks and Latinos. This mechanism addressed the sentiment that a major

shortcoming of previous programs such as urban renewal was the lack of political

participation and input from the residents of the districts being serviced. Once Model

Cities implemented resident participation processes into its organizational structure and

decision-making channels, program proponents expressed high hopes that cities equipped

with this wealth of first-hand knowledge and participation would be ideally positioned to

conceptualize improved methods for tackling urban deterioration along with widespread

poverty and its intrinsic social ills. In essence, Model Cities recognized the failures of

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[23] Nathan Glazer, "The Asphalt Bungle," *New York Herald Tribune Book Week*, January 3, 1965, 1; In
Robert Self's words, "[Urban] renewal in theory embraced a broad set of efforts to revitalize older
neighborhoods. In practice, renewal often meant redevelopment: denuding neighborhoods of low-income
housing and small businesses for the benefit of industry and middle-class homes" (Self, *American Babylon*,
139-140).

previous urban antipoverty programs and sought to create programs that would genuinely

redistribute resources and power to the urban poor.

From the 1930s through the 1970s, national attitudes towards poverty and

impoverished populations evolved in significant ways. At the time of their inception

during the New Deal, federal welfare programs were intended as temporary solutions to

help individuals who had fallen victim to the economic ravages of the Great Depression.

As exemplified by its most famous public symbols—such as the Dust Bowl "Okies"

featured prominently in John Steinbeck's novels (*East of Eden* and *Grapes of Wrath*) and

Dorothea Lange's documentary photographs on 1930s impoverished farm workers—

national attention on the victims of the Great Depression focused on the plight of poor

white communities as the intended recipients of welfare.[24] During its first two decades of

existence, federal welfare programs serviced predominantly white populations and

systematically denied aid to black communities.[25] Following the national prosperity of

World War II and immediate postwar period, images of indigent subjects faded into the

background; blame for poverty in this more affluent era shifted from the vagaries of the

national economy to defects in the impoverished individual.[26] By the late 1950s and early

1960s, however, issues and images associated with poverty once again headlined national

conversations and by this time blacks and Latinos had emerged as the new symbols of

destitution. In the academic world, anthropologist Oscar Lewis introduced the notion of a

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[24] Although Dorothea Lange's photographic series for the Farm Security Administration (FSA) covered the lives of white, Mexican, and black farm workers, her images of white subjects garnered more fame and publicity, as most notably exemplified by the series' most iconic photo, "Migrant Mother" (1936). Nicholas Natanson, *The Black Image in the New Deal: The Politics of FSA Photography* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), 4.

[25] For more information on the racial history of federal welfare programs, see Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare*.

[26] Frank Stricker, *Why America Lost the War on Poverty*, 1-2.

"culture of poverty," arguing that poor Mexican families were hampered by a cultural deficiency that precluded them and future generations from social mobility.[27] The concept made its way to the political front, as demonstrated by Assistant Secretary of Labor (and later Senator) Daniel P. Moynihan's 1965 congressional report, *The Negro Family*. Widely discussed in public forums, *The Negro Family* linked widespread poverty in urban black communities to single-mother households, absent and unemployed fathers, and deficient ghetto cultures.[28]

This shift in national definitions of welfare recipients produced two important and double-edged implications. First, blacks were no longer invisible or seen as unworthy of aid in media depictions, as had been the case during the origination of welfare institutions during the New Deal era.[29] Instead, the unfolding of the civil rights movement had elicited public sympathy—particularly outside of the South—for the plight of African Americans in their struggles with political and socioeconomic inequality. As leaders and participants utilized speeches, protest movements, grassroots organizations, and media productions to turn the public tide against overt demonstrations of racism, the American public also became more amenable to the cause of directing public resources and social services to improving the employment opportunities and living standards of blacks, which lagged behind those of white populations. African American organizations, many of whom had long histories of civic and political organization, seized upon the civil rights

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[27] The term "culture of poverty" was introduced in Oscar Lewis' ethnography, *Five Families: Mexican Case Studies in the Culture of Poverty* (New York: Basic Books, 1959).

[28] Office of Policy Planning and Research, *The Negro Family: The Case For National Action* (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Labor, 1965). James Patterson's *Freedom Is Not Enough: The Moynihan Report and America's Struggle over Black Family Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2010) presents a detailed account of the content and sociopolitical legacies engendered by this famous and controversial document.

[29] Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare*, 21-24

movement and shifts in public opinion to successfully dissolve racial exclusions in the nation's welfare program and to garner substantial national aid for disadvantaged and nonwhite communities.[30]

It was in the context of the civil rights movement, changing racial attitudes, and increased national attention to the existence of black ghettos in major cities that President Johnson declared the War on Poverty in 1964. As de-segregation and liberalist attitudes assumed prominence in national politics, ambitious undertakings such as the War on Poverty Program, the Model Cities Program, and other Johnson administration welfare initiatives sought to elevate the social and economic standing of blacks. In particular, these programs set out to eliminate the racial barriers that had been enacted around 1930s welfare programs, and to address the calls by civil rights proponents to integrate black populations into the nation's political economy.[31] Accompanying a growing acknowledgement that the nation had deprived African Americans of equal political and economic opportunities for centuries, these programs were inspired by an effort to rectify historic wrongs and provide unprecedented levels of funding and social service programs designed to improve material conditions, social mobility, and political power for impoverished blacks. It was within this context that the Model Cities program, in the words of Weber and Wallace, "served as a safety valve to vent the strident demands of racial minorities, especially urban African Americans. This was largely accomplished through the provision of jobs and what amounted to civics training in the mechanics of local politics and, ultimately, the creation of a new tier of political leadership."[32]

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[30] Ibid., 25-31.
[31] Ibid., 160-162.
[32] Weber and Wallace, "Revealing the Empowerment Revolution," 174.

Although the nation in the 1960s demonstrated a newfound willingness to provide

welfare aid to large populations of African Americans, this infusion of resources came at

a cost to the very populations being serviced by the aid programs. Blacks indeed gained

access to welfare programs during the liberalist initiatives of the 1960s. However, these

programs were limited in scope and carried ambivalent connotations for racial

citizenship. For instance, 1960s reforms primarily opened up public assistance programs

to black communities but did nothing to improve access to the more generous social

insurance programs (such as Social Security) that continued to service a predominantly

white demographic.[33] Meanwhile, as public assistance programs such as Aid to Families

with Dependent Children (AFDC) became the main mechanism for offering government

assistance to blacks, they became increasingly perceived as federal handouts and

remedial aid for populations falling victim to their own cultures of poverty or deficient

behaviors.[34] AFDC by the 1960s became increasingly associated with negative black

stereotypes as more and more African American families subscribed to the program. In

line with the discourses circulated by the Moynihan Report and the culture of poverty

studies, by the 1960s AFDC came to be seen as a servicer and enabler of lazy,

irresponsible, and overly fecund black women. Federal leaders then responded by

saddling the public assistance recipients with behavioral modification stipulations, added

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[33] As blacks had lower life expectancies in relation to whites and paid a disproportionate share of their income to the Social Security Program, they found themselves funding a federal retirement insurance program that they were much less likely to reap benefits from (Quadagno, 160-162). Moreover, many New Deal Programs, most notably Social Security contained stipulations that excluded employees in industries overrepresented by blacks (e.g. agriculture and domestic labor) from receiving any benefits.

[34] According to Martin Gilens, African Americans were increasingly subject to negative media depictions of the poor starting from the 1960s. Martin Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 152-153.

work requirements, and increasingly stingy benefits.[35] As observed by legal race scholar

Dorothy E. Roberts, recipients in these programs "are stigmatized as shiftless and

irresponsible…, scrutinized by government workers, and…must conform to behavioral

rules in order to receive their benefits."[36]

As a result, even though black populations were now eligible to receive

unprecedented levels of federal aid and resources, they were still only eligible to receive

aid through programs that pigeon-holed them as less capable and less worthy than

members of the mainstream population. This was the case with the 1960s liberal

programs aimed at alleviating the plight of inner-city black communities, including the

Model Cities program. On one hand, the Model Cities program sought to infuse much-

needed federal resources into impoverished black and brown communities. At the same

time however, the program deliberately channeled the bulk of its funding to social service

programs that pegged recipients as inadequate (programs such as those geared towards

youth delinquency, homelessness, drug addiction, and indigence), and in turn, refused to

provide equitable funding for essential city services and infrastructure, resources

indispensable to meaningful improvement in the lives and socioeconomic stations of

black and minority communities. In sum, the Seattle Model City Program, while offering

funds and social services to black communities, also used these very same resources to

reinforce prevailing stereotypes of African American inadequacy, ineptitude, and

criminality. Asian Americans, on the other hand, succeeded in escaping the negative

labels affixed to the African American community, but then found themselves contending

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[35] Dorothy E. Roberts, "Welfare and the Problem of Black Citizenship," *Yale Law Review* 105, no. 6
(1996): 1572.
[36] Ibid., 1565.

with governmental programs reluctant to dedicate resources to racial populations not deemed as deficient or in enough need.[37]

## The Story of Seattle and the Model Cities Program

With the passage of the Demonstration Cities Act in 1966, organizations in Seattle along with city officials contemplated the possible utility of this new legislation in tackling the disproportionately high rates of poverty, crime, and joblessness in the city's black and Asian districts. The idea of having Seattle join the Model Cities program was born in the summer of 1966, when several African American community leaders approached an assistant to mayor James D. Braman to encourage the mayor's office to submit an application for Model Cities funding.[38] Mayor Braman had already been aware of Congressional efforts to enact a Model Cities program but expressed concerns over the practicality and usefulness of submitting a Seattle application. Given his beliefs that socioeconomic problems in Seattle's poorest districts still paled in comparison to the problems documented in other cities, Braman also harbored concerns that Congressional passage of the Model Cities program would siphon funds from other anti-poverty initiatives such as urban renewal programs. [39] Nonetheless, he did not want to publicly express opposition to the Model Cities program and initiated steps to compile an

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[37] Meanwhile, mainstream white populations did not have to contend with the trade-offs among citizenship, reputations, and access to substantial governmental resources that were required of black and Asian communities. For a compelling discussion of the mechanisms enabling whites to access both full levels of citizenship and the bulk of government resources, see Dorothy E. Roberts' article, "Welfare and the Problem of Black Citizenship."

[38] Hruza, "Seattle Model Cities Program," 71; Marshall Kaplan, Ganz, and Kahn, *The Model Cities Program*: The Planning Process in Atlanta, Seattle, and Dayton (New York: Praeger, 1970), 43-44, suggests that these individuals were acquaintances of Mayor Braman, and were "ministers, probably."

[39] Hruza, "Seattle Model Cities Program," 72-75.

application for Seattle. This decision was well-received by black organizations in the city and went unopposed by municipal agencies and city council members.[40]

One of Braman's first steps was to convene an ad hoc committee in late November of 1966 tasked with preparing a Model Cities grant application for Seattle. This committee was comprised of community leaders and professionals from city government, state government, businesses, labor, educational fields, philanthropic foundations, civil rights organizations, and Central Area community associations.[41] Without specific federal guidelines to follow during this time, however, the ad hoc committee took no concrete steps to write an application until its second meeting in March 1967, two months after the release of federal guidelines. In this meeting, the committee established five subcommittees to prepare different sections of the grant application. They included the Environment and Planning, Employment, Education, Housing, and Health and Welfare subcommittees. Over the next month, these five committees would compile a Model Cities application proposing a slate of federally-funded social service and infrastructural projects to be implemented in three of the city's poorest districts, or what the application identified as its Model Neighborhood. Seattle's Model Neighborhood was comprised of the Central Area, the International District, and Pioneer Square, (known as the Skid Row district of Seattle). The application acknowledged that Seattle's ghetto and racial problems had yet to reach the magnitude of those plaguing the metropolises of Detroit, Chicago, and New York. Yet it put a positive spin on this apparent drawback, noting that because "Seattle is a city which is still short

[40] Kaplan et al., *The Model Cities Program*, 44.
[41] Kaplan et al., *The Model Cities Program*, 45; Hruza, "Seattle Model Cities Program," 77.

of the crisis situation of older urban centers" and its Model Neighborhood "is in the

initial stages of decay, not the final stages," Model Program funds would help stave off

full-fledged ghettoization of the city's Model Neighborhoods and also allow Seattle to

serve as a template for the rest of the nation in the area of finding racial solutions.[42]

Using this approach, in April 1967 the City of Seattle formally submitted a Model Cities

planning grant application to the HUD regional office requesting $374,670.

After a 7-month wait, word arrived from Washington D.C. that the City of Seattle

would receive $154,000 out of the original requested amount. The mayor appointed a 10-

member committee to select a Director for the SMCP who would then oversee the

process of establishing SMCP's organizational structures and priorities within the

parameters of the revised budget. The committee quickly selected Walter Hundley, the

African American Director of the Central Area Motivation Program (CAMP), which at

the time was Seattle's largest anti-poverty organization. Originally from Philadelphia,

Hundley held multiple degrees (including bachelor's degrees from Lincoln University,

Yale Divinity School, and the University of British Columbia; and a master's degree in

social work from the University of Washington). After his arrival in Seattle, Hundley had

worked as a minister of a liberal, nondenominational church and later as a staff member

of the State Department of Public Assistance. [43] He also boasted a long history of

community service and African American advocacy in Seattle as an active member of the

Seattle branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

(NAACP), the Seattle branch of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and the Central

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[42] Urban Planning and Research Associates, *Model Neighborhoods in Demonstration Cities: City of Seattle* (Seattle, WA: The Associates, 1967), part I, page 1, Social Indicators Data, box 30, 5401-01, Seattle Municipal Archives.
[43] Kaplan et al., *The Model Cities Program*, 45-55.

Area Civil Rights Committee. With his in-depth knowledge and connections in the arenas of government bureaucratic operations and community organization, Hundley was widely regarded as the top candidate by the committee.

Following the appointment of Hundley as Director, the SMCP proceeded to create an organizational structure for the management and implementation of its programmatic components. One side of the organizational structure was comprised of Model City staff (including Hundley, his assistant, and his support staff) and the City Working Group, represented by employees from numerous city departments in the areas of social services, law enforcement, and city planning. To solicit continuous input from residents and community leaders of the Model Neighborhood throughout the planning and implementation processes, SMCP also instituted a two community councils—the Model Neighborhood Advisory Council and the Steering Committee—to serve in advisory and collaborative capacities to SMCP staff and the City Working Group. The Advisory Council consisted of 100 members representing organizations serving the Model Neighborhood, and it represented the highest level of oversight in the community organization arm of SMCP. The primary responsibilities of the Advisory Council were to establish policies and approve plans before submission to the Mayor for formal approval. Immediately below the Advisory Council in the organizational structure, the Steering Committee was made up of Advisory Council members and additional citizen representatives; its primary tasks were to screen proposals and recommend action for the Advisory Council.[44]
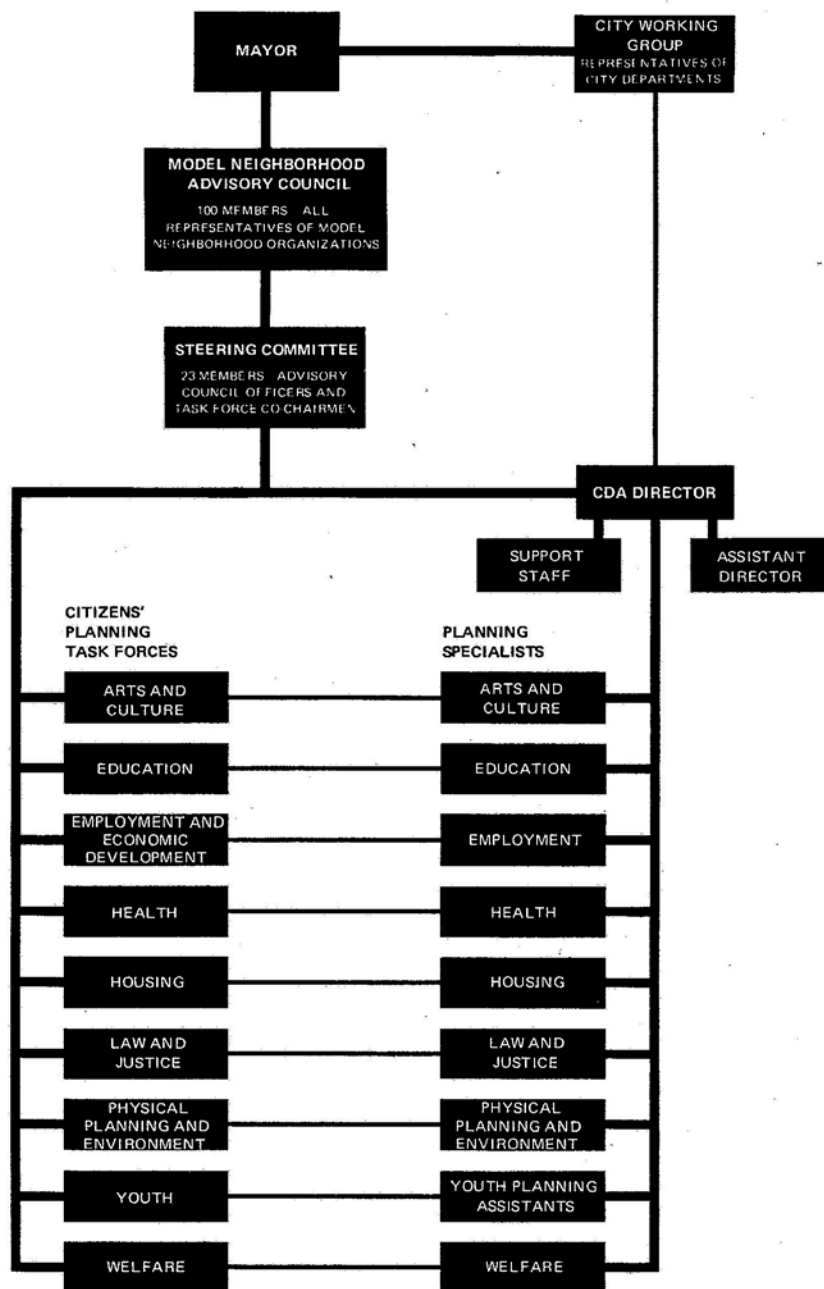
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[44] Kaplan et al., *The Model Cities Program*, 51-53.

**Figure 4.1. The Organizational Structure of SMCP.**
Marshall Kaplan, Gans, and Kahn, and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 1970[45]

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[45] Marshall Kaplan, Gans, and Kahn. *The Model Cities Program: The Planning Process in Atlanta, Seattle, and Dayton* (New York: Praeger, 1970), 52.

With the organizational structure of SMCP bifurcated into a city staffing branch and a citizens' groups branch, each branch oversaw nine groups representing the types of projects that would be prioritized and undertaken by SMCP. The nine groups were: Arts and Culture; Education; Employment; Health; Housing; Law and Justice; Physical Planning and Environment; Youth; and Welfare. Under the city staffing branch were nine groups of planning specialists representing each project priority, while nine Citizens' Planning Task Forces lay under the purview of the Advisory Council and Staffing Committee. As these nine project areas shared funding from the same source, SMCP leaders and project participants competed with each other for resources, and this struggle revealed important underpinnings of Seattle's delegation of resources as well as the city's racial hierarchies. In turn, this story of SMCP also highlights important aspects of what it meant to be white, black, and Asian American in 1960s America.

### African American and Asian American Politics in SMCP

Throughout the duration of SMCP, interactions between the program's African American and Asian American participants alternated between collaboration and competition. Early in the process of the SMCP application planning, African American activists and community leaders made their mark as the most vocal constituency in pushing for the application and in advocating funding for the black community. As a result of their leading role in SMCP, they would come to shape the program components to align most closely with African American interests. Although SMCP's application and early literature defined the city's African American and Asian American communities as equal targets to be served, African American interests quickly moved to the forefront of the program's planning and implementation processes.

This was in large part because of black communities' much longer history of political organizational activities not only in Seattle, but also in the rest of the nation. In the 1960s, for example, black activists were the first nonwhite leaders to initiate national conversations on race, centered around the civil rights movement and Black Power Movement. In Seattle, municipal racial politics were dominated by black political and civic organizations. From the beginning of the application process, Seattle's black community had taken on a leadership role in pushing city officials to get involved in the Model Cities Program. Four African American organizations in Seattle's Central District—the Central Area Motivation Program (CAMP), the Central Area Neighborhood Development Organization (CANDO), the Central Seattle Community Council (CSCC), and the Seattle Central Area Advisory Group (SCAAG)—had vocally pressed the mayor, city council, and other municipal officials to submit an application to the Model Cities program. And when city officials and the mayor stalled the process to concentrate on the election season of 1966, these Central Area citizen groups became the ones to renew the push to complete the application when President Johnson passed the National Demonstration Cities Act in early November. Such developments demonstrated the primacy of black civic organizations when it came to racial political activism in Seattle and other cities in the nation during the 1960s.

In Seattle, the groups that made the initial push for the Model Cities application were also the city's most organized activist associations in the inner-city neighborhoods that SMCP sought to serve. By the 1960s, the Central Area had at least five major neighborhood councils dedicated to providing social services, enhancing political mobilization, and providing economic opportunities (i.e. job training) in the surrounding

community.[46] Moreover, the Central Area also was home to additional social service neighborhood organizations such as CAMP and CANDO that offered anti-poverty services and were well-versed in navigating municipal politics to garner resources and funding for their constituencies. The black community's political organizing capacity was further strengthened by the ties that Central Area leaders and Model City participants like Walter Hundley, David Ernst (Director of CANDO and key advisor for the SMCP application), and Charles V. Johnson (a leader from the Central Area Civil Rights Committee) had to NAACP and CORE—national black civil rights organizations that had decades of presence and strong activist legacies in Seattle.

As the ad hoc committees convened to discuss the Model City application for Seattle, groups representing the predominantly black Central Area came to exert the greatest degree of influence. This was apparent early in the process of delineating boundaries for the Model Neighborhoods—the specially designated areas to be serviced by Model City funds. The matter of determining Model Neighborhood boundaries was assigned to the Planning and Environment Committee (will need to explain its formation later), whose membership was approximately 50% black.[47] The official account recorded in *The Model Cities Program* by the consulting firm Marshall Kaplan, Gans, and Kahn describes a straightforward process behind the delineating of the Model Neighborhoods:

> The ad hoc committee had little trouble defining the MN. The Central
> Area was the obvious prime target, and to it were added Pioneer Square
> (the nation's original skid row, locally known as Skid Road, and the oldest
> part of the city) and the International District (largely Oriental). Altogether

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[46] Examples of such neighborhood councils include Leschi Improvement Council, Madrona Community Council, Cherry Hill Improvement Club, and Yesler-Atlantic Citizens' Conference. (Rumley, Larry, "Pioneer and 'Newcomer' Groups Join Efforts to Upgrade the Central Area," *The Seattle Times*, February 12, 1967, 134.)

[47] Hruza, "Seattle Model Cities Program," 79.

these three areas border the downtown section on the east and south, and
their population comprises about 10 percent of the city's total.[48]

This account implied that black, white, and Asia American proponents from Central

Area, Pioneer Square, and International District were united in their endeavor to jointly

seek Model City designation. However, according to Hruza, the reality was more

complicated. Within the Planning and Environment Committee, representatives from the

Central Area operated as a solidarity group and "implicit in their thinking was the

assumption that if and when the city did submit an application, the MN would be the

Central Area."[49] In fact, Hundley (then executive director of CAMP) argued for

designating the Central Area as Seattle's sole Model Neighborhood, and he was supported

in this stance by other members of the Central Area coalition. This position was rooted in

the reality that Central Area activists and proponents had, from the very beginning of the

Model Cities planning process, compelled the city to submit an application, comprised

the largest segment of minority representation in Model City ad hoc committees, and

provided direction in setting Model City agendas. In the end, however, proponents of

Pioneer Square social service organizations and redevelopment projects, such as United

Good Neighborhood member Roger Thibaudeau, pushed to include Pioneer Square and

the International District within the boundaries of the Model Neighborhood.[50] While this

issue of model neighborhood boundaries was not resolved at the first meeting, records

and notes indicate that by the second meeting Hundley no longer opposed the inclusion of

Pioneer Square and International District, suggesting that an off-the-record agreement

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[48] Kaplan et al., *The Model Cities Program*, 42.
[49] Hruza, "Seattle Model Cities Program," 87.
[50] Ibid., 88-89.

had been reached.[51] Nonetheless, by the time boundaries and Model City staffing were

established, blacks would emerge as the dominant nonwhite constituency in SMCP,

making up 75% of residents in the Model Neighborhood and 52% of SMCP staff hired by

the city (vs. 38% for whites and 10% for Asians in regards to staffing).[52] African

Americans also made up much of SMCP's staff and community leadership, often pushing

for the channeling of program resources into the Central Area.[53]

Compared to the Central Area, the International District, which was the other

nonwhite neighborhood targeted in SMCP, possessed much weaker mechanisms for

Asian American political organization, particularly within the contexts of anti-poverty

and social service programs. In contrast to Seattle's African American neighborhood

organizations, several of the most powerful and politically active Asian American

organizations in the International District—such as the Chinatown Chamber of

Commerce, the Chinese Community Service Organization (CCSO), the Chong Wa

Benevolent Association and the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL)—existed to

promote cultural activities, cultural appreciation, business interests, and anti-racist

legislation on behalf of Asian American communities.[54] During the period of their

establishment during the 1910s and 1920s, these organizations performed two primary

functions. First, they provided forums for Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans in

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[51] Ibid., 90.

[52] Ibid., 156; the June 30, 1969 Bi-Monthly Report issued by SMCP stated that the program employed 39 blacks, 29 whites, and 7 Asians. Seattle Model City Program, "Bi-Monthly Report (6/30/69)," unpublished document, Model City Program, 5400-03, box 1, folder 23, Seattle Municipal Archives.

[53] Chapter 8 of Hruza's dissertation notes that African American leaders and organizations from the Central Area constituted a highly vocal group in dictating programmatic and organizational decisions within SMCP. African American leadership within SMCP was not without challenges, however, as program leaders frequently struggled to enlist black community participation in neighborhood meetings (Hruza, "Seattle Model Cities Program," 141-158).

[54] For more information behind the histories of these organizations, see *Seattle's International District* by Doug Chin and *Divided Destiny: A History of Japanese Americans in Seattle* by David A. Takami.

Seattle to preserve their cultural heritages. Chong Wa, for instance, operated a Chinese language school, and all of these organizations held heritage-themed fairs and competitions designed to promote elements of Chinese and Japanese arts and culture in Seattle's Asian American communities. In addition, a host of organizations and events in the International District emerged to highlight the model citizenship and exceptional talents of Asian American residents. Boy Scout Troop 54 (established in 1923), Girl Scout Troop 75 (established in 1940), and the veterans group Cathay Post #186 of the American Legion all demonstrated Chinatown's investments in All-American and model citizenship investments. Cathay Post, in particular, highlighted the patriotism of Seattle's Chinese Americans and worked to remind the city of Chinatown residents' military service during World War II. A 1937 water color club and the internationally acclaimed Community Girls Drill Team (founded in 1952) showcased skills and talents possessed by members of the Chinatown community. These associations and activities spanned the period ranging from the early 1900s through the time of the Model Cities Program in the 1960s, and in regards to SMCP, they imparted an overriding sense that Seattle's Asian American residents were an outstanding and self-sufficient demographic, not an impoverished community in need of social services and governmental welfare.

By the 1960s, one important factor in the International District's reticence in seeking welfare funding was the increased prosperity of Seattle's Asian Americans: many International District residents found themselves upwardly mobile and no longer in need of governmental assistance. Starting in World War II, the social barriers to Asian Americans' entry into white collar professions began to dissolve. Chinese Americans were the first to enter professional occupations, capitalizing on wartime labor shortages

and a wartime reprieve of anti-Chinese sentiment in the country to enter fields such as

architecture, medicine, law, and engineering. Boeing, for instance, began by employing

Chinese Americans in a variety of occupations including riveters, janitors, mechanic

helpers, secretaries, draftsmen, and eventually incorporated additional Chinese

employees into the ranks of scientists, engineers, and technicians.[55] Although the

Japanese Americans in Seattle faced mass relocation and internment during the war, upon

their return they followed the Chinese Americans into professional fields, capitalizing on

their status as the most educated ethnic group in Seattle.[56] Given these circumstances,

Asian Americans engaged in only limited political mobilization around social services

(especially compared to African Americans' efforts), partly out of practicality and a

decreased need for governmental assistance.

The evolution of JSCC in the 1960s shows this transition in action. As discussed

in Chapter 2, JSCC emerged in the immediate postwar period to combat impoverishment

in the area and seek a variety of governmental aid in the process. While JSCC boasted an

active Asian American presence in its leadership and membership throughout the 1940s

and 1950s, this changed as large numbers of Asian American residents moved up the

socioeconomic ladder and out of the area by the 1960s. By the inception of the Model

Cities program in 1968, JSCC no longer boasted large Asian American representation,

nor did it even exist to serve the International District. Instead, JSCC had merged with

the Central Area Community Council to become the Central Seattle Community Council

(CSCC). As narrated by prominent International District Asian American activist Robert

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[55] Chin, *Seattle's International District*, 77 and *Oriental Flavors: A Guide to Seattle's Chinatown* (Chinese Publishing House, 1962).

[56] Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community*, 145-146.

Santos, "By 1968, the JSCC no longer had a presence in the International District. Many

of the Asians who had served on the Council left. JSCC had moved their office to Rainier

Avenue South and turned its attention toward improving conditions in the Central

District."[57] This shift demonstrates the improved economic fortunes of Asian Americans

in the International District manifesting in decreased Asian American mobilization for

social services in the late 1960s. Nevertheless this account in itself fails to capture the

whole story.

Asian American political mobilization in Seattle was also affected by leaders'

and organizations' embrace of the model citizenship ideology. As historian Nayan Shah

demonstrated in his study of Chinese American political activism in 1950s San Francisco,

model citizenship manifested itself in the Asian American community's efforts to depict

itself as culturally mainstream, law-abiding, and self-reliant (inasmuch as this was

possible in the face of appeals for governmental assistance).[58] In the case of Seattle's

Asian Americans, model citizenship took on disparate forms. As shown in Chapter 2,

JSCC enacted model citizenship through modest community self-help projects and

through collaborations with urban renewal officials aimed at eliminating blight.

Following the withdrawal of JSCC from the International District, a new organization

would emerge to take JSCC's place as the primary advocate for governmental resources

in the International District, and it would continue the principles of model citizenship in a

different fashion. This organization, called the International District Improvement

Association (most frequently referred to as Inter*IM, but also as IDIA), was founded in

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[57] Robert Santos, *Humbows, Not Hot Dogs!: Memoirs of a Savvy Asian American Activist*, (Seattle, WA: International Examiner Press, 2002), 76.
[58] Shah, *Contagious Divides*, 15-16 and 225-250.

1968 by a group of Asian American businessmen and residents. Inter*IM's mission was to the revitalize the International District and to encourage private development through improvement projects targeting public and community facilities.[59] Its leaders sought to stem the tide of decline sweeping through the International District as a result of several factors, including the recent construction of Interstate 5 (which bisected the neighborhood), hotel closures and housing shortages in the area resulting from stricter fire code enforcement, and a slumping national economy. Acknowledging that recent increased economic opportunities had resulted in an upswing Asian Americans' socioeconomic statuses, Inter*IM nonetheless emphasized that the area's elderly population remained vulnerable, unable to capitalize on the surge in Asian American employment to escape the deteriorations plaguing the International District. Therefore, Inter*IM expressed a commitment to providing sociopolitical advocacy for the International District's disadvantaged population, in particular its elderly residents.

Guided by the premise that "something must be done to help [the International District] before it dies of neglect," Inter*IM was established partly because its founders wanted to reverse the trend of commercial and residential deterioration in the district, and also because they saw opportunities for resource acquisition (particularly in the form of funds for infrastructure and housing facilities) through new government programs such as SMCP. One of the founders of Inter*IM was Ben Woo, a prominent Chinese American architect who became one of the International District's most active representatives and political organizers during the 1950s and 1960s. According to Woo, the implementation

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[59] Letter by Tomio Moriguchi and Lien Tuai, November 25, 1968, Model City Program Records, box 9, folder 19, 5402-04, Seattle Municipal Archives; Inter*Im, Letter (untitled), October 1, 1968, Model City Program Records, box 9, folder 19, 5402-04, Seattle Municipal Archives.

of SMCP in 1969 represented a valuable source of municipal funding that Inter*IM founders wanted to help channel into the International District. He stated, "I started getting involved in Model Cities because money was flowing everywhere. I started getting active in Model Cities in order to get a project designated for the Chinatown area. Actually, Tomio (Moriguchi) and Shigeko Uno had started Inter*IM at that time, and I started to help them get money from Model Cities."[60]

Unlike the majority of historic International District community organizations (with the exception of JSCC), Inter*IM directed its efforts to addressing indigence in the neighborhood and to acquiring governmental funding earmarked for impoverished communities. This strategy, combined with the fact that Central Area organizations boasted larger memberships and more established procedures and relationships in place for attaining municipal resources, placed Inter*IM at a disadvantage compared to Central Area proponents in acquiring SMCP funds. At the same time, African American success in attaining the lion's share of SMCP resources would exact a price from Seattle's black community. The following section will examine how Asian American strategies differed from those of their African American counterparts, and the implications of these differences for both communities in Seattle.

### "Hardware" and "Software" Components of SMCP

Upon the establishment of SMCP, the program's African American and Asian American constituencies employed different strategies to obtain Model City funding for their communities. Generally speaking, SMCP funding requests by constituent groups fell

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[60] Ben Woo oral history by Ron Chew, February 9, 1992, transcript page 7, Wing Luke Museum Collections.

into two major categories. The first was "software investments," defined by social historians Bret A. Weber and Amanda Wallace as "people programs[,] such as increased participation in the governing process, job training, legal representation, cultural events and awareness, etc." The second category was "hardware" investments, defined as infrastructural, construction, and capital improvement projects.[61] When it came to the solicitation of hardware funding, Asian American and African American representatives of SMCP both harbored similar attitudes. But as this chapter will demonstrate, these groups would adopt divergent viewpoints towards software funding, and this disparity would hold important consequences for the statuses of Asian Americans and African Americans in Seattle.

From the start, hardware funding was highly sought after by both African American and Asian American organizations within SMCP. The program's proponents from Central Area, for instance, quickly obtained SMCP funding for a spate of hardware projects, including construction of small housing complexes, parks, a swimming pool, neighborhood centers, infrastructural improvements, and the beginnings of transportation systems in their area.[62] For their part, Inter*IM channeled tremendous energy into seeking funding for smaller numbers of more ambitious projects, including a large housing complex, a neighborhood-cultural center, a mini-park, and district-wide infrastructural improvements. SMCP initially responded to the high hopes for hardware projects by earmarking a substantial portion of its first-year project budget into construction and land improvement undertakings. Among the nine major programmatic

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[61] Weber and Wallace, "Revealing the Empowerment Revolution," 173-192, 175.
[62] Seattle Model City Program, "Second-Year Action Plan," February 1970, pages B2-B4, Model City Program Records, box 4, 5401-02, Seattle Municipal Archives.

components in SMCP's 1968 budget, (Arts and Culture; Education; Employment and

Economic Development; Health; Housing; Law and Justice; Physical Planning and

Environment; Welfare; and Youth), the components of Housing and of Physical Planning

and Environment were allocated by far the largest portion of funds—$1.5 million out of a

$4.3 million budget. Staff and advisory committee members overseeing SMCP's housing

component were tasked with upgrading and expanding housing facilities in the Model

Neighborhood while physical planning and environment representatives were placed in

charge of overseeing infrastructural improvement projects throughout the Model

Neighborhoods. Such projects included sewer and water line rehabilitation, street lighting

installation, and freeway construction proposals, along with construction of parks,

housing, and community facilities.[63] Taken together, these budget allocations indicate

that Model City planners harbored ambitious hopes for the potential of SMCP funds and

projects to upgrade the physical environment of the Model Neighborhoods.

In spite of SMCP's aspirations, its efforts to undertake hardware projects and

improvements were marked by obstacles and disappointments.  Documents throughout

SMCP records indicate that red tape, non-transparent decision-making processes, budget

shortages, and infighting among governmental and community entities worked to stall or

undermine project after project. Coming on the heels of urban renewal's failed promises,

community activists had looked upon SMCP as a chance for government entities to atone

for past failures and enact meaningful change. Among the numerous goals articulated

early on by SMCP, land use, housing construction, and physical improvement projects

featured prominently on priority lists outlined by program officials and press outlets. In

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[63] Kaplan et al., *The Model Cities Program*, 59-61.

its opening statement, for instance, the first problem addressed by the SMCP proposal

was Seattle's severe housing shortage for nonwhite populations:

> A number of unskilled and semi-skilled workers from culturally marginal areas have migrated to the Seattle community in the past three years in response to the economic boom caused by The Boeing Company's escalating expansion program. Many of these people are non-white and have been forced to take up residence in the proposal area which, prior to this influx, contained the highest percentage of overcrowded and sub-standard housing in the Seattle area. This industrial boom, viewed by many as the needed 'shot in the arm' for Seattle's economy, has, in this case, worsened the living conditions in the proposal area; the conditions which, before, were considered chronic but treatable, are now taking on proportions of the acute with a negative prognosis for the future.[64]

The language of this passage asserted in no uncertain terms that unless additional housing

facilities were quickly constructed, overcrowding in nonwhite districts could transform

the recent Boeing expansion from the city's greatest economic blessing to Seattle's

greatest urban disaster.[65] Throughout the proposal, the authors would continue to stress

the importance of increasing housing stock, easing overcrowding, and making physical

improvements to "ghetto" landscapes. Numerous newspaper articles introducing SMCP

echoed this sentiment.[66] Moreover, community representatives harbored lofty

expectations for SMCP's potential to upgrade neighborhoods and community landscapes.

Meeting notes from the Physical Planning Task Force, for instance, were filled with

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[64] Urban Planning and Research Associates, *Model Neighborhoods in Demonstration Cities: City of Seattle,* (Seattle, WA: The Associates, 1967), part I, page 1, Model City Program, box 30, 5401-01, Seattle Municipal Archives.

[65] Urban Planning and Research Associates, *Model Neighborhoods in Demonstration Cities: City of Seattle,* (Seattle, WA: The Associates, 1967), part I, page 1, Model City Program, box 30, 5401-01, Seattle Municipal Archives.

[66] Numerous articles from local newspapers collected in a scrapbook compiled by SMCP staff made references to SMCP's potential to abolish Seattle's ghetto zones, provide funding for new housing projects and community facilities (such as pools), and abolish zones of degradation and filth. Seattle Model City Program Scrapbook, Vol. 2, Model City Program Records, 5400-04, Seattle Municipal Archives. A *Seattle Times* article discussing SMCP plans also made several connections between SMCP and physical improvements, such as housing projects, freeway construction, and landscape improvements. William Gough, "Model Cities Plan Remains on Schedule," *Seattle Times*, August 4, 1968, 43.

requests by community councils and neighborhood associations for SMCP to construct

new parks and structures, address land-use problems, update infrastructure and roads, and

make land-planning decisions.[67]

However these requests, along with projects proposed by city staff, accumulated

so quickly that Model City administrators found themselves short-staffed and

overwhelmed by the workload.[68] On top of the sheer volume of physical improvement

requests, such projects also tended to be slow and painstaking in nature. From the outset

of SMCP, members of the Physical Planning Task Force identified the completion of the

Seattle Model Cities Land Use Review Project as a high-priority undertaking. To carry

out this project, a 10-member Model Cities Land Use Review Board (MCLURB) was

created; it included an architect, an urban planner, and a transportation specialist, along

with representatives from Model Cities committees, the city council, and the mayor's

office. The Land Use Review Board hired San Francisco-based architectural and planning

firm, Okamoto-Liskamm, Inc., to study housing, recreational, and commercial land-use

patterns in the Model Neighborhood and make recommendations for improvements.

Completion of the project was regarded as critical to SMCP's success and ability to

improve physical landscapes in the Model Neighborhood.[69] As SMCP would be tasked

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[67] Physical Planning Task Force Weekly Reports, 1968-1970, box 9, folders 15-17, Model City Program Records, 5402-04, Seattle Municipal Archives.

[68] In weekly reports written in 1968 and 1969, SMCP staff members Lem Petersen and Diane Bower reference being short-staffed and overworked. In his May 20, 1968 weekly report, Lem Petersen writes, "Although technically only on half time, I believe that I am putting in more than that." In her June 9-13, 1969 weekly report, Bower writes, "It is quite a drain on one's physical resources to go to 3 intense night meetings par (sic) week and also maintain a double schedule during the daytime hours. And, it is impossible to get any PBS's or writing done. Adding to our happy office routine is the fact that Shirley Jones has quit." "SMC Weekly Report," Physical Planning Task Force Weekly Reports, 1968-1969, , box 9, folders 15-16, Model City Program Records, 5402-04, Seattle Municipal Archives.

[69] "Model Cities Review Board is Recommended," *Seattle Times*, December 19, 1968, 25.

with overseeing future zoning and construction decisions, creation of a viable land use plan was seen as an important foundation for these future efforts.

Although various SMCP committees working in conjunction with MCLURB would devote substantial energy to seeing through the Model City Land Use plan, progress was painfully slow. It would take three years to complete the first draft of the land use plan in 1971 and two additional years of meetings with city staff and local citizens to finalize the plan. Although the final draft of the land use plan served as the basis of city council decisions regarding rezoning of Model Neighborhood areas as well as projects for unit developments, the plan was finalized so close to the dissolution of SMCP that it was ultimately only implemented for one year, as MCLURB itself was dismantled upon the conclusion of SMCP. The slow progress of the land use plan could be attributed to the extensive information-gathering, compilation of maps, planning of meetings and vetting of proposed plans through several layers of community and city bureaucracy.  While the timeline of the Model City Land Use Plan posed a glaring example of the glacial pace often found in physical improvement projects adopted by SMCP, even smaller individual projects required a certain amount of time for completion. For example, after Seattle voters approved a $118 million bond in February 1968 to construct parks and recreational facilities in the city, plans were made to build a pool at Garfield High School in the Central Area, which lacked a community pool.[70] Of the $810,000 projected total budget for the pool, the municipal government only had $475,000 in available funding. It would take an additional year for the Model Cities

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[70] "Swim-Pool Fund Drive Will Open Sunday," *The Seattle Times*, March 15, 1968, 66.

Physical Planning Task Force to pass a vote allocating $410,000 in funding for the pool, and another year after that to construct it.[71]

In contrast, SMCP's software projects typically required substantially less output in time, energy, and expenses. For most hardware projects, proponents were required to lay painstaking groundwork before producing tangible buildings and structures: filing paperwork and garnering approval from multiple levels of government, compiling data and producing reports of community patterns, and drawing up long-term master plans before any actual construction could begin. Such undertakings however were dramatically shortened for software projects. SMCP's approach to software ventures typically involved reviewing grant proposals from existing community organizations for projects in the areas of social services, job training, youth counseling and arts and culture education. When evaluating proposals for software projects, SMCP staff and representatives emphasized making sure those selected for funding met pre-established criteria, such as significant improvement to public institutions, far-reaching impact, long-term impact, complementarity to city program capabilities, visible short-term impact, and support from different levels of community and government.[72] Since software projects did not require lengthy phases of information-gathering, political negotiations, funding delegation, and building construction, they were generally initiated and completed with substantially less time and resources. As a result, they often received positive publicity from the local press and provided SMCP with much-needed success stories and anecdotes to serve to the public. Not surprisingly, the majority of success stories on SMCP would

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[71] "Decision Due on Pool in Near Future," *Seattle Times*, February 14, 1969, 6;
"Pools Cheaper in Country: City's Dollar Buys Less Swim Space," *Seattle Times*, July 20, 1973, 1.
[72] Seattle Model City Program, "Seattle Model City Program East Branch: Fourth Year Action Plan, Draft," June 1972, box 3, folder 10, Model City Program Records, 5400-03, Seattle Municipal Archives.

come to focus on software projects, and such emphasis would bear important

consequences for Seattle's nonwhite populations.

## Divergent Strategies by African American and Asian American Organizations in SMCP

In the face of to the challenges surrounding hardware funding, black organizations

and representatives in SMCP devoted substantial resources to soliciting Model Cities

program funding for software programs. For instance, the four organizations responsible

for spurring city officials to action in submitting the Model Cities application received

SMCP funds for programs to provide free meals, shelter, employment training and

placement, youth counseling, and free heat for homes.[73] One such program was the

Central Area Motivation Program (CAMP), whose executive director, Walter Hundley,

went on to become director of SMCP. Founded by Seattle's civil rights leaders with

funding from the War on Poverty Program, CAMP acted as a subcontractor to SMCP in

providing various social and community services to Central Area residents, such as after

school programs, community organization leadership and training, family support

services, youth services, creative arts programs, employment training and placement

services, anti-gang services, and university recruitment.[74] Two creative arts organizations

funded by SMCP through CAMP received press attention for their popularity in the

Central Area community. [75] One was Black Arts West, a performing and creative arts

company; the other was Oscar Productions, an organization that provided studio facilities

[73] "CAMP: Central Area Motivation Program (Seattle)"
http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&file_id=9243. Accessed May 2, 2014.
[74] Taylor, *Forging of a Black Community*, 288-289. King, Ivan, *The Central Area Motivation Program: A Brief History of a Community in Action* (Seattle: Central Area Motivation Program, 1990), 5-8.
[75] "Revised 5th Year Budget Approved." *The Medium* Volume IV (no date), box 1, folder 6, Model City Program Records, 5403-01, Seattle Municipal Archives.

and a training program for high school and college students interested in photography,
cinematography, and television production. In the words of SMCP's final project
evaluation on its Afro-American Arts program, companies such as Black Arts West and
Oscar Productions provided valuable services because they addressed a community-wide
lack of funding, facilities, and educational opportunities in arts and culture for blacks in
the Model Neighborhood.[76] One section in the final evaluation articulated the
transformative effect Black Arts West had on its performers:

> Early productions reflected the cries of anger and anguish present in black
> communities throughout the country, providing a needed outlet for such
> feelings that would otherwise have been self-destructive or disruptive to
> the community. As months and years of growth and discipline began to
> take effect, performances have become more steady and mature. The
> emphasis on professional training of actors and actresses, much help from
> national theatres, resources of talent, and professional directors, and a
> community orientation has seen a significant development of a
> community-based professional company that can articulate the cultural
> concerns of the black neighborhood, as well as become a cultural force
> region-wide.[77]

Passages such as these highlight both the possibilities and pitfalls of SMCP's software
programs for the Central Area. On the one hand, software programs represented a more
effective method of translating SMCP funds into public success stories and dramatic
stories of transformation. This may be one reason why the majority of success stories in
SMCP press coverage focused on software programs, such as successful performances
organized by previously-delinquent black youths.[78] On the other hand, the appeal of such

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[76] Seattle Model City Program, "Final Project Evaluation – Dec, 1974: Afro-American Arts," 1974, box 9, Model City Program Records, 5401-02, Seattle Municipal Archives.

[77] Seattle Model City Program, "Final Project Evaluation – Dec, 1974: Afro-American Arts," 1974, page 4, box 9, Model City Program Records, 5401-02, Seattle Municipal Archives.

[78] This assessment of SMCP press coverage was observed from the collection of articles in scrapbooks compiled by SMCP staff. Overall, SMCP success stories are outnumbered by articles detailing problems with SMCP funding obstacles or sentiments of pessimism about SMCP. However, the success stories about

success stories was predicated on the presumption of social or cultural deficiencies in line with prevailing notions about the culture of poverty. This meant that in order for Central Area constituencies to demonstrate need for software programs (as well as demonstrate the positive impact of their implementation), they first had to acknowledge they harbored a social shortcoming, whether it was a predilection to youth delinquency, inadequate education levels, crime, or alcoholism.

In contrast to African American organizations, SMCP's Asian American representatives shied away from software funding. A survey of SMCP projects pursued by International District leaders such as Inter*IM reveals a clear emphasis on hardware programs, and a relative dearth of software programs. This approach was likely in line with an overriding perception amongst municipal leaders that Asian American activist Robert Santos alluded to in his memoirs: "There was still a perception that Asian Americans had no problems."[79] Countering this belief, Santos described the following social conditions in the International District:

> The District hit a low point in the mid-1960s, when assaults and shootings were common occurrences. Tough looking streetwalkers had replaced the call girls of the past whose services had been an accepted necessity for thousands of single male District residents. Lines of cars circled the block from Jackson Street to King Street and Seventh Avenue South to Maynard Avenue to pick up the women who ran in and out of the taverns, alleys, and doorways. The streets were dark and mean. The International District was in serious decline. It was a ghetto.[80]

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SMCP largely centered on Central Area human interest stories and software programs pertaining to social service programs for the elderly, social services for unwed mothers, homeless centers, job training programs, and dance and media productions by youth. (Seattle Model City Program Scrapbook, Vols. 3-6, Model City Program Records, 5400-04, Seattle Municipal Archives.)

[79] Santos, Robert, *Humbows, Not Hot Dogs!*, 78.

[80] Ibid., 76.

Corroborating Santos' recollections, the 1972 "General Statement and Analysis of Need"

assessment by the International District Neighborhood Resource Center also noted an

"in-migration of skid road transients" as contributing to the overall deterioration of the

International District. [81] Nonetheless, International District representatives generally did

not place great emphasis on issues related to transiency, crime, and unemployment,

preferring instead to concentrate primarily on hardware funding, and to focus on

acquisition of cultural and educational resources during the rare times software funding

was sought.

The International District's clear need for social services thus begs the question,

why were Asian Americans leaders in SMCP so reluctant to pursue software funding for

their neighborhood? The leaders never discussed their disinclination openly to the press

or in oral history interviews, so plausible answers are left to conjecture. However, it is

probable that Inter*IM was cognizant of how public perceptions of Asian Americans

might be affected should their community openly seek software funding. Given the

historical Asian American preoccupation with model citizenship and the model minority

myth throughout the twentieth century, public advocacy for funding projects in the areas

of crime, youth delinquency, drug abuse, and homelessness must have been regarded

with dismay by Seattle's Asian American establishment as detrimental to their public

image.

Instead of going after software programs, SMCP's Asian American advisory

committee members, along with Inter*IM, chose to place the most emphasis on acquiring

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[81] Unpublished document, "General Statement and Analysis of Need," International District Neighborhood Resource Center, SMCP May, 1972, section A, page 1, box 15, Model City Program Records, 5401-02, Seattle Municipal Archives.

hardware funds, a strategy that persisted even in the face of obstacles to hardware

funding set up by SMCP and city officials. A survey of SMCP meeting notes and

Inter*IM documents between 1968 and 1972 reveals that discussions over land-use plans,

infrastructural improvements, and construction projects preoccupied Model City

representatives from the International District.[82] Inter*IM in particular raised a

continuous stream of meeting discussions and letter correspondence with SMCP officials

over pressing needs to improve International District's deteriorating housing stock,

reverse physical blight, improve infrastructure, and enhance use of district spaces.[83]

A summary produced by the International District Neighborhood Resource Center

in the later years of SMCP focused on "an intensive and multi-faceted deterioration of the

International District."[84] Foremost among the report's discussion of factors leading to the

decline of the International District was a list of conditions associated with housing and

physical decline, such as blighted housing stock, obsolescent public utilities, outdated

land uses, ineffective/obsolete zoning controls and zoning plans, outdated automobile and

pedestrian circulation systems/networks, and substandard levels of physical amenities

(such as street beautification, bus stop shelters, landscaped open areas, multi-purpose

community center).[85] Multiple additional assessments and studies produced by Inter*IM

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[82] SMCP and Inter*IM Meeting Notes, 1968-1972, box 9, folders 18-20, Model City Program Records, 5402-04, Seattle Municipal Archives.

[83] Examples of discussion subjects raised by Inter*IM include meeting conversations over mudslides, construction projects (e.g. freeways, parking lots, housing, retirement homes, parks), street light replacement, alley improvements, and zoning decisions. Box 9, folders 18-20, Model City Program Records, 5402-04, Seattle Municipal Archives.

[84] Unpublished document, "General Statement and Analysis of Need," International District Neighborhood Resource Center, SMCP, May, 1972, section A, page 1, box 15, Model City Program Records, 5401-02, Seattle Municipal Archives.

[85] Unpublished document, "General Statement and Analysis of Need," International District Neighborhood Resource Center, SMCP, May, 1972, section A, page 1, box 15, Model City Program Records, 5401-02, Seattle Municipal Archives.

and SMCP representatives from the International District expressed similar levels of concern with infrastructural and housing issues. Reflecting this sentiment, Inter\*IM representatives devoted much of 1968–1972 to campaigning for major housing projects and land use improvements with SMCP. Major examples of such projects included a multiple-year push (1968–1970) for SMCP officials to facilitate construction of parks in the International District (including at least a mini-park, a vest-pocket park, and a hillside park), and most notably, a call for new housing stock culminating in the 1969 International District Turnkey Project . (Add picture of the Turnkey Project.)

## The International District Turnkey Project

From 1966 through the 1970s, all of Seattle's public housing projects were constructed by private companies under the Turnkey Program, which called for the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) to solicit construction bids and proposals from different companies.  The idea behind the program was that private builders would oversee the entire construction process and then sell the completed housing facility to the city (hence the term "turnkey," meaning the builder transferred the key to the city).[86]  As part of their efforts to have SMCP and the City of Seattle delegate resources to infrastructural inadequacies in the International District, one of Inter\*IM's priorities was to petition for construction of a turnkey apartment facility for elderly residents, in response to a long-running housing shortage for seniors in the International District. Inter\*IM filed a petition with the SHA requesting construction of a turnkey project in order to alleviate problems of dilapidated housing structures and encourage future improvements  in the community.

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[86] Romina Richmond, "The Design of Public Housing in Seattle,"; Polly Lane, "Apartments for Elderly Due in International Area." *Seattle Times*, May 24, 1970, A11.

This petition was followed by a collaboration with SMCP to develop plans for upgrading area infrastructure, to develop criteria for the turnkey project, and to select the most suitable developer for the project.[87] These efforts resulted in the construction of the International Terrace, a 100-unit public housing project for International District's elderly residents, in 1972.

To an extent, construction of the International Terrace demonstrated the value and success of SMCP in bringing a much-needed housing facility to a model neighborhood. When Inter*IM first explored avenues for bringing an elderly housing facility into their district, the SHA lacked funding allocations for such a project. It was in fact a Model City allocation of housing funds that made the construction of the International Terrace possible. SMCP lent their cooperation during this process, shifting allocations to enable development of the turnkey. Despite its successes, however, the process of bringing the turnkey project to the International District was fraught with frustration, conflicts, and ultimate disregard for community voices. At the behest of Inter*IM and SMCP, the SHA placed a call for contractors and developers to submit proposals for the International District turnkey project. Nine proposals were submitted, with each offering a location and a set of design plans for the facility. On July 8, 1970 Representatives of Inter*IM and SMCP's Housing and Physical Environment Task Force reviewed the proposals and made recommendations for three of the proposed projects, basing their decisions on guidelines for elderly housing prepared by HUD and the SHA.[88] The most important criteria used to evaluate the proposals were location, proximity to commercial and

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[87] Untitled document (Letter of complaint by Inter*Im and SMCP over turnkey project proposal selection), page 1, box 7, folder 8, Model City Program Records, 5402-04, Seattle Municipal Archives.
[88] Ibid., 1.

shopping districts, and impact on future developments in the area.[89] According to

Inter*IM, a two-year planning study of the International District sponsored by SMCP had

identified the optimal locations for the Turnkey Project to be the south side of South

Jackson Street, or the south side of South King Street, sites that were flat and close to the

"social activity" of the area.[90] However, the SHA's Board of Commissioners selected a

proposal that was not among the selections recommended by Inter*Im and SMCP, one

that was in fact in direct contradiction to the SHA and HUD guidelines for elderly

housing sites. The selected proposal had been submitted by developer Riley Pleas, Inc.,

contractor Chris Berg, Inc., and architectural firm Dudley and Ekness, and was located on

the hillside intersection of Sixth Avenue South and South Main Street. Citing the need to

proceed quickly before funding for the turnkey expired at the end of the year and blaming

the failure to transmit Inter*IM/SMCP recommendations to SHA on "clerical oversight,"

in late July of 1970 the SHA Board of Commissioners made the recommendation to the

city council to work with a developer, contractor, and architect that had already

collaborated with the city in constructing at least seven of Seattle's twenty-two turnkeys

to date.[91] Moreover, this project also coincided with an upcoming city urban-design study

recommending that the entire hillside for be developed for housing.[92]

Outraged by SHA's disregard of the citizen participation process that Inter*Im

and SMCP had invested their energies in, parties from both organizations logged several

protests attempting to reverse the SHA's decision. Expressing his disappointment that the

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[89] Ibid., 1.
[90] Alf Collins, "Hillside Housing Site in for a Rough Time." *Seattle Times*. July 26, 1970, H3.
[91] Untitled document (Letter of complaint by Inter*Im and SMCP over turnkey project proposal selection), page 4, Model City Program, 5402-04, box 7, folder 8, Seattle Municipal Archives.
[92] Alf Collins, "Hillside Housing Site in for a Rough Time."

SHA "entirely ignored" the voices of Inter*IM and the SMCP task force, Inter*IM

President Tomio Moriguchi called for the SHA Board to reconsider the recommendations

submitted by his organization.[93] Proponents of Inter*IM and SMCP also drafted and

submitted an 11-page statement on August 10, 1970 detailing their opposition to the

SHA's decision. In this report, Inter*IM reiterated the turnkey site's multiple

infringements of the SHA and HUD guidelines, including its difficulty of access by the

elderly due to its steep location, its 50-year history of landslides, and its long distance

from transit routes.[94] The report further criticized the proposal's architectural design as

too monotonous in appearance and urged SHA officials to reconsider their decision.[95]

While the report did postpone a final decision on the International Terrace proposal by a

few weeks, SHA ultimately stuck to its original position and the Seattle City Council

awarded contract to Riley Pleas, Chris Berg, and Dudley and Ekness.

**Analysis and Conclusion**

The story of Inter*IM and the International District Turnkey Project demonstrates

both the potential and the pitfalls of Asian American efforts to acquire hardware funding

from SMCP. On one hand, Inter*IM's success in garnering a housing project represented

the successful culmination of years of endeavor. Upon the establishment of the turnkey

housing program in Seattle in 1968, Inter*IM  leaders made it a priority to bring an

elderly housing facility into their neighborhood by hosting community town halls,

submitting petitions to SHA and SMCP officials, and ushering the housing project

proposal through various planning and implementation stages. Compared to its

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[93]  Alf Collins, "Hillside Housing Site in for a Rough Time."

[94] Untitled document  (Letter of complaint by Inter*Im and SMCP over turnkey project proposal selection), pages 6-10, box 7, folder 8, Model City Program Records, 5402-04, Seattle Municipal Archives.

[95] Ibid., 4.

organizational counterparts from Central Area districts, Inter*IM exerted a much more concerted effort to bring a housing project into its district. Given that the International Terrace turned out to be the only turnkey housing facility constructed in any of the original Model Neighborhoods, it is likely that Inter*IM's emphasis on bringing hardware funding into its district resulted in this notable accomplishment.

Sadly, the victory of International Terrace's construction did not represent the complete story of the diligent efforts carried out by Inter*IM and residents of the International District. Embedded in the tale of International Terrace's construction and public opening were a series of disappointments revealing the pitfalls of the Asian Americans' decision to focus their mobilizations on hardware projects. It is true that Inter*IM's efforts paid off in the sole turnkey construction to be built in any Model Neighborhood. Upon approval of the International Terrace, however, SHA leaders mitigated the facility's benefits for International District residents by placing a 35% cap on the number of minority residents allowed to live in the housing complex. According to Donald Phelps, Chairman of the SHA Board: "Even if we wanted to, we could not discriminate by giving preference to orientals despite the fact that [International Terrace's] proposal was initiated at the request of oriental community [sic]."[96]  In other words, Asian American proponents of the International Terrace could declare victory for successfully persuading the City to construct a much-needed housing facility in the International District, and SMCP and SHA leaders could outwardly claim that they heeded the cries of their Asian community by constructing the International Terrace. Nonetheless, the story of International Terrace also highlights the coveted value of

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[96] Alf Collins, "Hillside Housing Site in for a Rough Time."

hardware investments, and the challenges faced by Seattle's minority communities in

acquiring equitable funding in this arena. The Asian American strategy of pursuing

hardware investments held the potential of paying off in constructions of urgently-needed

permanent facilities for their community. Such a strategy, however, also forced the Asian

American community to confront a public housing funding structure that was reluctant to

prioritize the needs of minority communities over whites. In spite of the fact that

Inter*IM produced reports identifying a pressing need for elderly facilities in the

International District and despite the fact the primary objective of SMCP funds was to

improve the plight of minority neighborhoods, SMCP and SHA officials ultimately chose

to reserve 65% of the International Terrace—a facility constructed with funding from

SMCP—for white residents. It is especially telling in this context that SHA Board Chair

Phelps referenced the need to "not discriminate" as justification for the strict minority cap

placed on International Terrace, and for the city's decision to funnel Model City funds

towards other city priorities.

Following the construction of the International Terrace in 1973, SMCP would

continue to operate for another year before President Richard M. Nixon made the

decision to de-fund the federal Model Cities Program in 1974. In the decades since then,

urban studies scholars have largely ignored the impact of Model Cities, assessing the

program as failed and negligible in impact.[97] Many of these assessments were rooted in

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[97] When it comes to the 1960s and 1970s, additional urban developments have garnered greater scholastic attention. Most studies on War on Poverty, for instance, focus on its first phase—the creation of the Office of Economic Opportunity—which is generally regarded as the central pillar of the War on Poverty program. Most of the literature on the War on Poverty, in fact, include no references to the Model Cities program. (Weber and Wallace also allude to this on page 183). Besides the War on Poverty program, additional urban studies scholarship on this era tends to center around social issues such as immigration, race relations, urban/suburban segregation, family relations, and juvenile delinquency. "Revealing the

scholars' conclusions that the Model Cities program failed in its hardware investments and fell short of its original promise to "rebuild or revitalize slum and blighted areas; to establish housing, job, and income opportunities;…and to establish better access to homes and jobs."[98] Indeed, the decades following the Model Cities program witnessed the accelerated decline of city centers, pushed along by intensifying white flight, increasingly inequitable tax structures, and federal divestment from urban resources. SMCP's impact on the landscape of Seattle's Model Neighborhoods was deemed negligible, as Central Area and International District continued to struggle with widespread poverty, housing shortages, and deteriorating infrastructure at the end of the program.[99] Within the last several years however, various studies have emerged to complicate the legacy of the Model Cities program. Starting from 2000, the scholarship on Model Cities revealed subtle benefits forged by the program in the area of software investments. While acknowledging the program's failure to upgrade physical landscapes and alleviate widespread poverty, these scholars assert that Model City nonetheless provided political platforms, empowerment, and training opportunities that fostered a new generation of minority and female civic leaders.[100]  Seattle's Model City program

Empowerment Revolution: A Literature Review of the Model Cities Program" by Weber and Wallace notes that the limited scholarly attention devoted to Model Cities during the 1970s generally assessed the program negatively, while scholarship of the 1980s and 1990s did not discuss it at all (Weber and Wallace, 180).

[98] U.S House of Representatives Committee on Banking and Currency. 89th Congress, 2nd session, Pub.L. 89-754, *Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966).

[99] Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community*, 235 (for Central Area) and Chin, *Seattle's International District*, 88 (for International District).

[100] These scholars include Robert O. Self (*American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Alice O'Conner and Gwendolyn Mink, eds, *Poverty in the United States: An Encyclopedia of History, Politics, and Policy* (Oxford, UK: ABC/CLIO, 2004); Walter Thabit, *How East New York Became a Ghetto* (New York: New York University Press, 2003); and Guian A. Mckee, "'I've Never Dealt with a Government Agency Before': Philadelphia's Somerset Knitting

was no exception: according to historian Jeffery Craig Sanders, SMCP produced an

enduring legacy for African American community activism through the Environmental

Health Project, whose staff and volunteers worked to improve the Central Area's physical

landscape through cleanup and inspection campaigns. In Sanders's words, "As MC

Environmental Health Project activists surveyed their neighborhood for rats, inspected

dilapidated housing, or began to address the dearth of green space in their community,

they consciously connected these environmental and human problems to blocked access

to capital, jobs, and political power."[101] Thus like many Model City programs, even

though SMCP appeared on the surface to have failed due to its lack of progress in

hardware investments, Seattle's program nonetheless produced a level of success through

its software investments' contributions to leadership and activist training opportunities

amongst the city's nonwhite groups, particularly the black population.

The story of SMCP's successes and failures highlights a national turning point in

definitions of welfare and public assistance. From the inception of New Deal welfare

programs to the late 1940s, federal public assistance programs were conceptualized as

temporary assistance for middle-class white Americans who found themselves victimized

by an unforgiving national economy. By the time of SMCP and the federal Model Cities

Program, however, welfare programs were increasingly viewed by politicians and the

public as longer-term assistance run by a benevolent national government that was eager

to provide solutions to the self-inflicted impoverishment of marginalized communities,

particularly black populations. This proved especially true in the 1960s as liberalism

Mills Project, the Local State, and the Missed Opportunities of Urban Renewal," *Journal of Urban History* 35 (March 2009): 387-409.  See also Weber and Wallace, 182-185
[101] Sanders, *Seattle and the Roots of Urban Sustainability*, 71.

dominated the national political climate and President Johnson pioneered public welfare

programs as well as programs seeking to promote political and racial equality. The

interracial politics at work in SMCP shed valuable light on the events and implications of

the nation-wide shift in the definition of welfare.

To acquire funds from SMCP, African American and Asian American leaders

adopted divergent strategies with respect to hardware and software funding. African

American representatives and organizations focused more heavily on attaining software

funding for their communities while Asian American organizations downplayed software

programs in favor of hardware capital. From one perspective, the strategy utilized by

Asian Americans backfired because they ultimately found themselves at odds with both

SMCP's primary objective (which was to provide software assistance such as social

services, job training, and employment opportunities to minority communities) and with a

city-wide political and financial structure that prioritized hardware funds for white

mainstream interests.[102] By downplaying their community's for software projects and

social assistance programs, one can argue that Asian American leaders shortchanged their

community by forgoing access to the bulk of SMCP funds. In contrast, African American

leaders, by highlighting their community's need for social assistance and welfare

programs, successfully garnered the lion's share of funding and positive publicity (in the

form of success stories) from SMCP. However in the long run, their success in attaining

SMCP software funds had negative consequences as declaring black need for social

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[102] Along these lines, Sanders writes, "City planners and the mayor expended tremendous political energy and money on grandiose downtown redevelopment plans, such as the proposed redevelopment of the Pike Place Market. They emphasized modernization to create a consumer utopia for white, middle-class shoppers while actively beating back civil rights activists' efforts to pass open-housing initiatives in the city" (Sanders, *Seattle and the Roots of Urban Sustainability*, 67).

welfare programs eventually served to cement Seattle's public perceptions of black

residents and neighborhoods as criminal, inept, and in perpetual need of assistance.

Geographer Elizabeth Brown asserts that the SMCP parameters established by municipal

leaders for Central Area projects were in fact, predicated upon decades-long

"geographical imaginations" in which "the Central area was still envisioned as an

exceptional space where modern pathologies, diseases, and crime lurked."[103] This meant

that even though black community leaders and municipal officials assigned substantial

SMCP resources (especially software programs in areas such as youth delinquency,

unemployment, crime, and education) to African American populations, such allocations

were in fact based on pre-existing imaginations that framed Central Area as an

exceptional space for its proliferation of criminality and deficient citizenry. This

criminalization and "welfare-ization" of Seattle's African American population would

take place during the same time that national representations of welfare programs homed

in on images of indigent black communities unable to care for and provide for themselves

without government assistance.

Ultimately, the story of SMCP functions to shed light on the workings of

America's racial ordering system through the middle decades of the twentieth century,

even during an era when notions of liberalization rose to the forefront of national politics.

SMCP originally emerged as a hallmark of America's concerted efforts during the 1960s

to channel funding and welfare programs into nonwhite and ethnic neighborhoods that

needed governmental aid. On the surface, SMCP symbolized racial progress and the

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[103] Elizabeth Brown, "Race, Urban Governance, and Crime Control: Creating Model Cities," *Law Society Review* 44, no. 3/4 (September/December 2010): 770 and 775.

dawn of a political atmosphere that was newly amenable to more comprehensive forms of governmental aid and social servicing of nonwhite populations. Beneath the promise of this newfound governmental generosity, however, lay a more complex reality in which acceptance of governmental assistance necessitated a tradeoff in public image and cultural representations, a cost not demanded of white populations. For Seattle's African Americans, acquisition of software funding afforded their communities increased access to SMCP funding, especially in comparison to Asian Americans who limited their funding requests to the hardware arena. In the long run, however, acceptance of software funding served to reinforce popular perceptions of their neighborhood as criminal and socially diseased, a representation that has been shown time and time again to choke off avenues of socioeconomic opportunity for African Americans over the past fifty years. For Seattle's Asian Americans, their decision to avoid the pitfalls of pursuing software funding contributed to subsequent representations of their population as self-sufficient, productive, and model citizens. Nonetheless, this positive portrayal came at the cost of denying their community—particularly its most vulnerable members—access to substantial amounts of governmental assistance. Thus, even though 1960s welfare programs such as SMCP seemed to provide unprecedented avenues of socioeconomic mobility for ethnic and racial populations, their restrictive budgets and high social costs only served create new and disguised mechanisms for confining Asian Americans and African Americans to positions of inferiority within the country's racial triangulation system.

## Epilogue

In this dissertation, I have looked to complicate understandings of racial liberalism and racial triangulation by highlighting their intricate links to one another and by shedding additional light on how they work in tandem to uphold white privilege. Through the four case studies examined in this dissertation, I have shown that Seattle very much embodied the antiracist platforms of racial liberalism by embracing a range of experimental projects and organizations aimed at promoting progressive values such as racial integration, multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, and greater equitability in delegation of civic resources. Endeavors such as those discussed in each chapter bolstered the project of racial liberalism by helping to imbue Seattle with a burgeoning reputation for racial progressivism and sociopolitical liberalism. These actions not only helped lay the foundation for the 1977 *Time* magazine article extolling Seattle as a stronghold of liberal values and harmonious race relations[1], but also for countless subsequent references in print media and published literatures depicting the city as a national liberal sanctuary. Notably in a 2014 widely publicized study that appeared in the *American Political Science Review*, Seattle was declared to be one of the three most liberal cities in the country.[2]

While the era of racial liberalism signaled the dissolution of the overt white supremacist frameworks that dominated American politics and society prior to the 1930s, numerous works in ethnic studies have also demonstrated that racial liberalism did not abolish racial inequalities, it simply re-enshrined them under the guise of colorblind

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[1] "Dixy Rocks the Northwest," *Time*, December 12, 1977, 26-36.
[2] Chris Tausanovitch and Christopher Warshaw, "Representation in Municipal Government," *American Political Science Review* 108.3 (2014): 608.

racism and multiculturalism, all the while leaving structural racist frameworks intact. In this regard, one can argue that Seattle functioned as an ideal example of racial liberalism, not only in its promotion of progressive frameworks but also in its reinforcement of structural racism. This is where racial triangulation factors critically in racial liberalism. I demonstrate through each of my chapters that federal and city officials consistently utilized systems and discourses of racial triangulation to limit allocations of governmental resources into Asian American and African American communities, place the two groups in competition for the same limited pool of resources, and prevent both groups from attaining socioeconomic parity with whites.

The example of Yesler Terrace's prewar years highlights the fact that when racial liberalism was still incipient, implementations of racial triangulation centered around Asian Americans' inability to become naturalized citizens. On one hand, Yesler Terrace was a product of the New Deal (itself a progressive experiment) and represented an unprecedented step in the racial integration of public housing facilities. On the other hand, the construction of Yesler Terrace was only made possible by the displacement of a Japanese American neighborhood, and the facility's racial integration policy was ultimately unable to accommodate noncitizens, resulting in disproportionately low levels of Asian American tenancy. With few Asian Americans residing in the complex prior to the war, African Americans made up 3.3% of residents while whites made up 93.4%.[3] This suggests that the early years of racial liberalism and progressive experimentation was premised upon the allocation of the lion's share of government assistances resources

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[3] *Housing Authority of the City of Seattle Second Annual Report, 1942* (Seattle: Housing Authority of the City of Seattle, 1942), 31.

to whites, limited resources to African Americans, and virtually none to Asian Americans on account of their noncitizen status. Even though blacks and Asians were both subordinated below whites, Asians had to contend with one additional barrier to full social membership, which \was their ineligibility for citizenship and perpetual foreigner status. In this way, structural racism during the early years of racial liberalism was dependent upon a particular configuration of racial triangulation that racialized blacks as inferior and Asian Americans as both inferior *and* absolutely foreign.

Following World War II, a series of domestic and international pressures converged to generate the "racial break" moment when policies and discourses of racial liberalism gained increased prominence throughout the nation. For African Americans, developments such as the Civil Rights Movements and the War on Poverty program worked to elevate their political standing, dismantle overtly discriminatory and segregation practices, and dramatically increase their access to civic resources. For Asian Americans, this period ushered the reversal of immigration and naturalization bans from previous eras, and also resulted in notable socioeconomic gains for Chinese Americans and Japanese Americans to the point where they lagged only behind whites. Such developments were certainly true for Seattle politics, and Chapters 2-4 chronicles different phases in the city's history that reflect a gradual expansion of racial liberalism taking place, Through these three chapters, racial liberalism functioned to extol (rather than shun) visible celebrations of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism, open up avenues for multiracial political collaborations and civic engagement projects, and channel unprecedented levels of government resources into nonwhite communities. And as highlighted by the activities of JSCC and SMCP's community participants, racial

liberalism not only (encouraged more) blacks and Asian Americans to collaborate with each other, it also increased opportunities for both groups to gain funding and community empowerment from government officials.

In spite of these important gains however, structural inequalities and racial triangulation remained critical to enactments of racial liberalism in post-racial break Seattle. For one, projects undertaken by JSCC and SMCP carved out mixed legacies for the city's blacks and Asian Americans. As both groups mobilized and developed a stronger presence in city politics, they each began carving out divergent strategies that suggested the continued importance of racial triangulation (albeit in an evolved form) not only in the realm of external pressures stemming from racialization by mainstream society, but also in the arena of internal pressures stemming from self-representation and self-racialization. Asian American community leaders actively sought governmental resources, but in the process emphasized self-help frameworks that aimed to display their self-sufficiency and status as citizens deserving of aid. These leaders also made efforts to avoid seeking any type of governmental aid (such as funding for social services, youth delinquency, or crime reduction) that might suggest designations of criminality, unworthiness, and non-model behaviors upon Asian American neighborhoods in Seattle. Instead, they opted to seek funding for infrastructural projects (such as housing and parks) that carried more "neutral" connotations for public conceptions of aid recipients' social citizenship. By the end of racial liberalism in the 1970s, Asian Americans had received limited degrees of government funding for community improvement and infrastructural projects, but their allocation of resources lagged notably behind those of whites and African Americans. At the same time, they also had to contend with lingering

racial discourses that continued to exoticize their citizens and neighborhood. What these bring to light is the racial construction of Asian Americans as model citizens—self-sufficient, law abiding, and definitively superior to blacks—yet exotic, foreign, and last to be considered for delegation of civic resources.

African Americans during this period were racialized according the parameters of racial triangulation in ways different from Asian Americans. African Americans were consistently racialized as cultural insiders and quickly deemed to be primary recipients of expanded funding sources that sought to eliminate racial tensions, racial inequalities, and socioeconomic problems that plagued racial communities. Under this context, African American activists and community leaders also mobilized effectively to out-mobilize their Asian American counterparts in acquiring government funding and civic resources, especially those earmarked specifically for racial causes. And unlike Asian Americans, African Americans sought *both* infrastructural and social service funding. While black leaders in Seattle attained more civic resources than Asian American leaders, such victories exacted a heavy price on popular conceptions of African Americans and on the well-being of the Central District. Consistent with Glenn's argument about linkages between race and social citizenship, African Americans' acceptance of government assistance, welfare funds, and social services connoted unfit citizenship for members of their community, a standard that was not equally applied to whites. And even though city officials during the 1940s-1970s delegated far more government assistance funds into the Central District than Chinatown-International District, such a development also invited oppressive government surveillance onto the Central District and paved the way for its criminalization in subsequent decades. Thus these differential racializations of Asian

Americans and African Americans attest to the lingering power of racial triangulation

frameworks, and also to their importance in maintaining inequitable distribution of

resources along racial lines.

The power of racial triangulation combined with the divergent histories of Asian

Americans and African Americans also sheds additional light on current understandings

of how white privilege operates. In his landmark study, *The Possessive Investment in*

*Whiteness*, historian George Lipsitz argues that modern-day white privilege has largely

been forged by colorblind and race-neutral discourses that work to enshrine centuries of

political, economic, and cultural advantages that have historically been accumulated

through white supremacy and racial exploitation.[4] Kim makes an additional point that

colorblind discourses also have the effect of reinforcing perceptions that racism is no

longer existent; therefore, restorative racial policies such as affirmative action now stand

as "reverse discrimination" and are no longer needed. While my dissertation agrees that

dynamics of postwar racial politics serve to reinforce structural racial inequalities and

white privilege, my chapters primarily examine the effect of differential, race-based

distributions of welfare resources on white privilege. On one hand, racial populations are

forced to grapple with tradeoffs (such as sociopolitical racial denigration and

disparagement of social citizenship) when it comes to their acceptance of welfare

resources. At the same time, whites do not have to contend with this dilemma, as the

government funds delegated for white communities vastly outnumber those delegated to

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[4] George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*. Examples of colorblind mechanisms that function to reinforce pre-existing inequalities between whites and nonwhites include lowering of inheritance taxes (since white families, having accumulated far more government housing assistance prior to the 1960s, are much more likely than nonwhites to own property), court cases upholding white refusals to desegregate neighborhoods and schools, and cultural refusals to acknowledge the fact that whites have reaped centuries of economic advantages in areas such as housing, education, and employment.

nonwhite communities and are typically not stigmatized or even marked as welfare.[5]

What the circumstances of Chapters 2-4 reveal is that Asian American and African

American groups in Seattle are forced to delicately contest each other—even in situations

of outward interracial cooperation—for limited, often inadequate pools of resources,

while their white counterparts are spared.

While my work aims to shed new light on lingering manifestations of racial

triangulations and its relationship to racial liberalism, I also hope to use this dissertation

to open up new avenues of inquiry. Moving forward from my main arguments, a

worthwhile undertaking would be to examine the trajectories of racial triangulation and

racial liberalism in Seattle following the timeframe covered in this dissertation. As

national politics begins its transition from racial liberalism into the successive phases of

liberal multiculturalism and neoliberal multiculturalism, what are the implications of this

evolution on Seattle's racial ordering systems and urban nonwhite populations? And

through eras of increased immigration and changing demographics, particularly in

Seattle's Asian American community, how are systems of racial triangulation evolving

and/or remaining the same? In sum, what is the relationship between the racial

triangulation forged during the era of racial liberalism and new structures of racial orders

being forged in the age of neoliberalism, changing demographics, *as well as* evolving

dynamics of race, class, and space? Studies analyzing these questions would have the

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[5] George Lipsitz's *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness* engages in detailed discussions of this dynamic (Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, 1-23). Historically, the era of racial liberalism and its progressive experimentations also took place during an era of unprecedented government investments into federal infrastructures and assistance programs, the overwhelming majority of which exclusively benefitted white populations. Such assistance for white communities, however, was never labeled as welfare aid. Such aid flowed into Seattle as well, which like much of the nation, received generous government funding for freeway constructions and mortgage assistance programs, both of which bolstered white socioeconomic mobility while leaving out or harming the city's nonwhite urban districts.

potential not only to (shed new light) on the historical workings of racial hierarchies and

racial politics, but also on Seattle's ongoing relationship with the national transition from

liberalism to neoliberalism.

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