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“And Make the San Fernando Valley My Home:”

Contested Spaces, Identities, and Activism on the Edge of Los Angeles

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

by

Jean-Paul deGuzman

2014

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

“And Make the San Fernando Valley My Home:”
Contested Spaces, Identities, and Activism on the Edge of Los Angeles

by

Jean-Paul deGuzman

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2014

Professor Janice L. Reiff, Chair

Southern California’s San Fernando Valley is a huge expanse of land that comprises the northernmost section of the City of Los Angeles. Although it is currently the home to over 1.8 million residents with roots from across the globe and for several decades has been a city within a city, powerful and competing images of “the Valley” continue to shape public consciousness about this well-known American space. For better or worse, the San Fernando Valley has become a metonym for the rise and fall of post-World War II suburbia. This linear narrative – that privileges the transformation of agricultural fields into industrial plants and residential suburbs that later fell victim to urban sprawl – elides the histories of people of color in favor of broad generalizations about segregation or demographic change.

This dissertation challenges those assumptions and uses the San Fernando Valley as a site to understand the overlapping relationships between race, space, and activism in the twentieth century. I propose that the San Fernando Valley is an instructive site to examine those

relationships because of its historically multiethnic neighborhoods that have been shaped by the forces of such as war, metropolitan growth, and economic restructuring. Through an examination of major structural events and their social repercussions, such as the construction of railroads, the rise of the military industrial complex, various exclusionary laws or ballot initiatives, and a complex relationship with the City of Los Angeles, I show how African Americans, Latinas/os, and Asian Americans have claimed the San Fernando Valley for themselves, crafted their own communities, and fought against different forms of inequality. To be sure, their community building, political goals, and tactical strategies goals were informed by their respective racialization and distinctions based on class or migration status. Nevertheless, these individuals fashioned alternative forms of activism, community building, and knowledge that challenge dominant narratives of the San Fernando Valley.

The dissertation of Jean-Paul deGuzman is approved.

Paul M. Ong

Andrea Sue Goldman

Eric R. Avila

Janice L. Reiff, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2014

DEDICATION

To the people who have struggled to make the
San Fernando Valley a better place and, of course,
my mom, Felilia Lanete Rosas.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract		ii
Dedication		v
List of Figures		vii
List of Tables		viii
Acknowledgments		ix
Vita		vxi
Introduction		1
Chapter One	Migration, Labor, and the Making of the San Fernando Valley in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries	9
Chapter Two	Belonging and Visibility in the Shadow of War: The Social World of the Military Industrial Complex, 1941-1956	57
Chapter Three	“They’d Fence the Valley:” Racial Exclusions, Community-Building, and Cold War Activism, 1955-1964	120
Chapter Four	“The Valley Was the Last Place That Sort of Thing Would Happen:” Protest and Race at San Fernando Valley State College, 1968-1970	168
Chapter Five	Alternative Activism in the Age of Homeowner Revolts: The Raza Unida Party and the Movement for Redress and Reparations In the San Fernando Valley, 1972-1988	225
Chapter Six	Chasing Camelot, or, Better to Dance with the Devil You Know: The Racial Politics of the Secession Movement, 1996-2002	285
Conclusion		334
Appendix		341
Bibliography		343

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure I.1 The San Fernando Valley
- Figure 1.1 San Fernando Heights Lemon Association Crate Label, n.d.
Figure 1.2 Neighborhoods of the San Fernando Valley, 1924
Figure 1.3 The Sakaguchi Family, c. 1931
- Figure 2.1 Private David Gonzales
Figure 2.2 Tuna Canyon Detention Station, c. 1940s
Figure 2.3 Basilone Homes, 1949
Figure 2.4 Winona Trailer Camp, 1946
- Figure 3.1 “Accent on Suburbia,” 1955
Figure 3.2 Wounded Veteran Kakuo Terao, 1947
Figure 3.3 San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center
Figure 3.4 The McCraven Family, 1965
Figure 3.5 “She Can’t Remember 1942. But You Can,” 1964
- Figure 4.1 San Fernando Valley State College’s Administration Building, 1968
Figure 4.2 The Valley State 24, 1969
- Figure 5.1 Andres Torres Campaign Flyer, 1973
Figure 5.2 Paul Tsuneishi, Phil Shigekuni, and Other Redress Activists, 1979
Figure 5.3 Dr. Mary Sakaguchi Oda
- Figure 6.1 The Racial Future of the San Fernando Valley? 2002

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	City of San Fernando Latino Population (Percentage of Total) 1950-1980
Table 2	1972 San Fernando City Council Votes
Table 3	Population Change in the San Fernando Valley, 1990-2000
Table 4	Results of Measure F
Table 5	The Latina/o Vote on Measure F

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At its heart, this project examines how individuals remembered, interpreted, and attempted to make the San Fernando Valley a more equitable place. As such, I am quite thankful for all of the residents, teachers, activists, and others who sat down with me or other oral historians to share their stories. I extend my sincere gratitude to all of those interviewees, interviewers, and archivists who participated in those various endeavors.

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VITA

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Jean-Paul R. deGuzman, "Race, Community, and Activism in Greater Los Angeles: Japanese Americans, African Americans and the Contested Spaces of Southern California's San Fernando Valley," in *The Nation and its Peoples: Citizens, Denizens, Migrants*, ed. Shannon Gleeson and John S.W. Park (New York: Routledge, 2014), 29-48.

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Eunai Shrake and Jean-Paul R. deGuzman, "Understanding Oppositional Behaviors of Asian Americans: Critical Race Theory Approach" in *Adolescent Behavior Research Studies*, ed. Rene S. Grenell (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2007), 9-32.

Jean-Paul R. deGuzman, "Beyond 'Living La Vida Boba': Social Space and Transnational, Hybrid Asian American Youth Culture," *Amerasia Journal* 32:2 (2006): 89-102.

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"Claiming Race and Space: Japanese American and African American Political Identities in the Post-War San Fernando Valley." American Studies Association. 16 November 2012. San Juan, PR.

"Race, Space and the San Fernando Valley: Tales from the 'Damn Hills' and Beyond." California American Studies Association. 21 April 2012. Claremont, CA.

INTRODUCTION

Since 1915, the San Fernando Valley has been both a part of the City of Los Angeles and an entity unto itself with its own history, identity, and culture. Despite several unsuccessful secession attempts, the Valley remains administratively part of Los Angeles. For most of its residents, however, their primary identification is with the Valley, not with the larger city of which it happens to be a part. This sentiment is held by people of color and their Valley communities as often as by those who live in its primarily Anglo communities. Yet, like the Valley itself, these residents are tied by history, family connections, and current events to the city as well. As a result, the ways in which people of color and their communities articulated their needs, interests, and attachments to the Valley offers a different and often more complex history than that of those in the rest of Los Angeles.

It is this history that this dissertation explores. Specifically, it examines the nexus between racial formation, activism, and the many ways individuals and communities fashion meanings about the landscapes in which they live, learn, work, and play. At the heart of this confluence lie questions about what it means to be a part of a community, how place shapes that community, and how its members lay claim to the world around them. How do racialized peoples create lives, neighborhoods, institutions, and histories away from traditional sites of support such as the urban ethnic enclave? How do these communities articulate their own meanings about belonging and space in a region whose politicians, planners, and other power brokers worked mightily to create de facto and de jure systems of exclusion?

Historically, the San Fernando Valley has contained a small, but vibrant, set of multiethnic neighborhoods whose residents and leaders grappled with those questions on a daily

basis (figure I.1). Until recently, conventional narratives of the Valley focused upon European American settlement that began following California statehood in the middle of the nineteenth century and proceeded well into the mass suburbanization of the twentieth century. However, spaces conceived of as the destinations of American appropriation and later White flight were never blank canvases on which to inscribe portraits of progress and conquest. They were intense sites of daily struggle for basic rights, systematic political and economic reform, and self-determination. Approaching the history of the San Fernando Valley from the perspectives of its communities of color, whose lives were shaped by their own patterns of migration, settlement, and class formation within the systems of White privilege they encountered in the Valley offers a nuanced case study of the ways race and space often define each other.

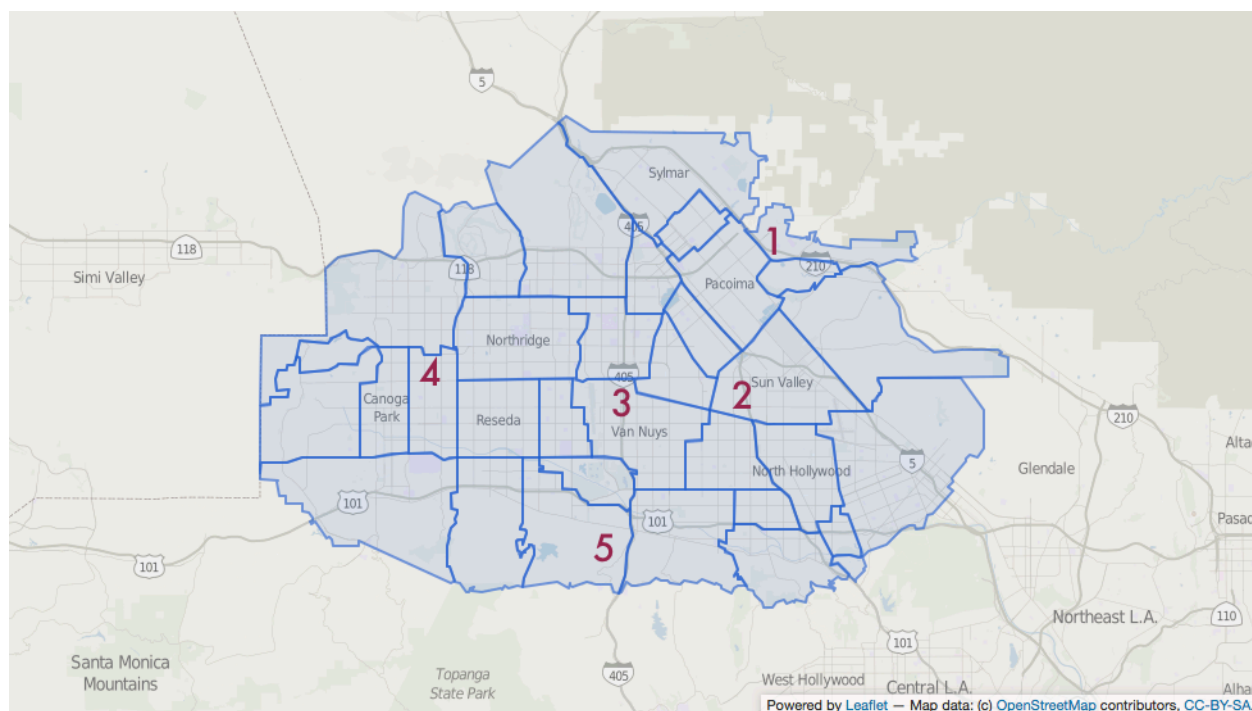


Figure I.1 The San Fernando Valley. Source © OpenStreetMap by CC-BY-SA, adapted by author.

Legend Region 1: Northeast Valley, the home to the Valley’s historically multiethnic neighborhoods of Pacoima, Arleta, and San Fernando. Region 2: The larger east Valley, which includes neighborhoods such as Sun Valley and North Hollywood. Region 3: Valley flatlands such as Van Nuys, Panorama City, and Mission Hills. Region 4: West Valley, the historically wealthier and more segregated part of the Valley that include neighborhoods such as Northridge, Woodland Hills, and West Hills. Region 5: The Valley’s hillside communities such as Encino.

What follows are chapters in the history of the San Fernando Valley, forgotten in the annals of conventional histories, that shed light on how African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans established themselves in the San Fernando Valley and articulated identities that straddled multiple worlds. Shaped by capitalism, war, metropolitan development, migration, and the social relations such forces engendered, these communities saw themselves as a part of the unique racialized landscape of the San Fernando Valley. At other times, however, they saw themselves as a component of a larger racial community that existed across Los Angeles. In other instances there was little difference between the two.

Chapter One lays the groundwork for the multiethnic history of the San Fernando Valley. It begins in Gilded Age California and narrates the story of migration from Mexico and Asia to the region as labor for railroad construction, infrastructural development, and the rise of mass agricultural production. During this time period, local developers transformed the San Fernando Valley from a patchwork of small arid farms into prime, subdivided real estate. Shut out from those lucrative parcels in much of the region, ethnic communities worked on tiny plots of land or in the large citrus and other produce fields in the east Valley. By the 1920s, in neighborhoods such as Pacoima, San Fernando, and North Hollywood, they created worlds that reflected connections to their homelands. Mexican and Japanese immigrants set up schools to ensure the American-born generation would maintain political and cultural ties to their parents' natal countries. Bachelor Filipino immigrants worked for independence for the Philippines even as they worked in a variety of agricultural jobs. Generally segregated from Whites and sometimes each other, these Mexican and Asian immigrant groups formed interracial relationships that were amiable at times, but also fragmented by racial ideologies imported from homelands and their respective economic circumstances. By the time of the Great Depression, the experiences of

these groups were swept up in larger geopolitical events, such the mass deportation of Mexicans and Mexican Americans.

Chapter Two focuses on World War II and its immediate aftermath in the San Fernando Valley. The exigencies of war facilitated very different fortunes for the Valley's ethnic communities as the region itself was dramatically transformed. Due to its strategic location near the railroads, an airfield, and far enough from the rest of urban Los Angeles, the east Valley became the site of a new defense-based industrial economy. Federally implemented anti-discrimination hiring laws, enacted due to the pressure of civil rights organizing, facilitated the growth of a new Black labor force. Mexican and Mexican Americans also joined the industrial labor force, which allowed many to leave behind grueling and often exploitative agricultural work. Whereas World War II offered new channels for economic empowerment as well as social citizenship for Mexican Americans and African Americans, the region's Japanese and Japanese American population suffered greatly. Japanese Americans, whose population was undercut by the 1924 Johnson Reed Act, were uprooted from their community and placed in desolate concentration camps beginning in February 1942. Following the war, returning Japanese Americans, along with other people of color, aroused the ire of realtors and other developers who viewed their presence as anathema to the growing development of racially exclusive suburbia.

Chapter Three considers the relationship between race, class, and development after World War II. In this section, I examine Black and Nikkei community building within the overlapping contexts of mass migration into the Valley, the marketing of the consumer-oriented, middle-class suburban dream, and Cold War militarism. These factors shaped the texture of organizing that was premised on etching each community's presence upon the San Fernando Valley. But, such tasks pivoted on their respective wartime experiences, migration, and

attendant class formation. Japanese Americans returned to the Valley, often with none of the capital and resources they had before the war. They challenged the erasure caused by wartime incarceration through the construction of multiple community institutions. Their activities reflected both a nascent critique of their treatment during World War II as well as racial politics during the Cold War. Meanwhile, newly emboldened African American professionals drew upon their economic status to affirm and enlarge their social and economic citizenship. Through expressions of activism that ranged from legal contests to daily protests, this generation of community members chipped away at the rigid walls of residential discrimination that characterized the San Fernando Valley. Both sets of strategies were ultimately concerned with property as an expression of the literal and cultural ownership of the San Fernando Valley. For working-class Japanese Americans who built community centers, language schools, and houses of worship to enshrine their presence in the Valley as well as middle-class African Americans and Japanese Americans who fought against residential color lines, these racial identities were inscribed in the landscape of the San Fernando Valley.

Chapter Four departs from the middle-class, fair-housing activism of the 1950s and early 1960s and examines student uprisings at San Fernando Valley State College in the affluent west Valley neighborhood of Northridge. Established in 1958, the four-year college grew along and developed a symbiotic relationship with the region's growing defense-related research and development sector. Reflective of the brewing racial radicalism in America's urban areas and university campuses, students at Valley State articulated a more daring understanding of race. Whereas previous activists argued their communities deserved integration and social equality due to their contributions during World War II or because of their economic consumer power, this new generation focused on the deleterious affects of racism at large and called for self-

determination. These young African Americans and Chicano activists consciously situated their experiences in the San Fernando Valley within a larger rubric that included people of color across the United States. To this end they fought for Ethnic Studies programs to unearth the histories of their own communities. Having come of age in the east Valley, these activists also recognized the importance of bridging the university with their working-class homes. Activists envisioned a college curriculum that would attend to the underserved and forgotten populations of places such as Pacoima.

Chapter Five moves to the 1970s and 1980s, a period of California's history characterized by White homeowner movements against busing and high property taxes. This chapter provides an alternative account of politics in this time through a comparison between efforts to elect members of the *La Raza Unida Party* (RUP) to the San Fernando City government and the movement for Japanese American redress and reparations for the World War II mass incarceration. For members of the RUP, an eclectic national movement that resisted the two-party system, the sheer concentration of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the city of San Fernando (nearly 50 percent by 1970) necessitated representation on the otherwise all-white City Council. Japanese Americans participated in a nation-wide campaign to demand an official apology and monetary compensation for their treatment during World War II. Unlike the RUP's electoral campaigns grew from the concentration of Mexican Americans in San Fernando, the movement for redress and reparations brought together the different sectors of the Valley's Japanese American community. They included working-class members from Pacoima who included the founders of local community institutions as well as newer, professional migrants who integrated into the larger San Fernando Valley.

Chapter Six examines racial politics at the end of the Twentieth Century and focuses

specifically on how people of color responded to efforts to break the San Fernando Valley away from the City of Los Angeles. White homeowners associations and the business community that sought to gain control over zoning and taxation policies spearheaded the movement for secession. Secession activists cut their political teeth in the racially rancorous politics of the 1970s through campaigns for Proposition 13 and against busing. Although their message of lower taxes and a smaller and more responsive government may have resonated with some Valley Latinos who felt neglected by City Hall, people of color living in the Valley and across Los Angeles could not ignore the troubled racial roots of secession. As the campaign for secession grew, ethnic, civil rights, and labor organizations highlighted how secession would undercut the hard-fought protections and legal structures that applied to ethnic communities across the city.

Taken together, these historical flashpoints, campaigns, and movements demonstrate how communities create intertwined meanings about race and space. In historical moments when these communities faced extraordinary examples of legal or social exclusions (or the threat or exclusion), they often situated their experiences and struggles with their larger racial group across Los Angeles and beyond. In the shadow of discriminatory immigration and land laws in the early twentieth century, for example, immigrants combined their resources to create worlds for themselves that reflected their cultural and political connections to Mexico or Asia. Several generations later, when Valley independence threatened to undermine the electoral power and other safeguards for which previous activists fought, civil rights leaders argued the need to place the future of the Valley's people of color with their co-ethnics in Los Angeles. However, in other moments, such as the post-war fair housing movement or RUP electoral organizing, communities of color strongly identified as constituents of the fabric of the San Fernando Valley.

That identification focused on access and ranged from desires for integration into the larger Valley landscape to political power and control. In other instances, multifaceted campaigns such as the student uprisings at San Fernando Valley State College demonstrated how activists articulated the need to transform the university to better serve the lives of the Valley's communities of color. Yet that project drew from understandings of Black and Chicano Power that placed their experiences within a larger framework of racial oppression and solidarity. The fact that these identifications did not remain consistent demonstrates the shifting grounds of race and space upon which communities made decisions about how to address issues of power and inequality. Overall, these stories demonstrate how the construction and negotiation of race can easily complicate the boundaries of space.

CHAPTER ONE

Migration, Labor, and the Making of the San Fernando Valley in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries

Although the San Fernando Valley was the site of two spirited battles at the Cahuenga Pass over Mexican governance of Alta California, one in 1831 and another in 1845, the region remained a small outpost of sprawling ranchos on the edge of Los Angeles for most of the nineteenth century.¹ With poor irrigation and isolated behind several mountain ranges, the Valley did not move at the same frenetic pace as other spaces on the Mexican and, by 1849, American frontiers. Yet, by the close of the century, social, political and economic revolutions blasted throughout the United States and the rest of the globe. The ripples of these radical changes appeared throughout the American West, including the San Fernando Valley, that ultimately transformed it into highly desirable destination for migrants from the rest of Los Angeles, the country, and the Pacific world.

Rapid industrialization and shifting political alignments at home and abroad set into motion mass waves of human migration across oceans, national borders and state lines. In the United States, consternation arising from the perceived “closing” of the western frontier, a geographical space and concept that had come to dominate American character, influenced domestic migration and settlement as well as increasing imperialist aspiration.² Simultaneously, Progressive Era activists ranging from journalists to settlement house advocates brought into the

¹ On the storied Battles at Cahuenga Pass in 1831 and 1845 see Robert Phelps, “On Comic Opera Revolutions: Maneuver Theory and the Art of War in Mexican California, 1821-45,” *California History* 84:1 (Fall 2006): 44-63.

² Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples At Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000).

public eye the perils of urban density and poor public health placing western destinations such as Los Angeles into sharper focus for weary city-dwellers in the nation's industrial metropolises.³ More locally, Los Angeles was in the midst of a powerful effort by civic leaders, realtors, captains of industry, and the press to portray itself as the next major Western mecca.⁴ A city by the sea that offered leisure, industry, homes, and a (purportedly) docile labor force, the making of modern Los Angeles, and what became the lucrative agrarian San Fernando Valley, rested largely upon the circuits of migration from Mexico, Asia, and the rest of the United States.

Across boundaries that ranged from a dusty border road to the entire Pacific Ocean, a variety of factors compelled individuals to find their fortunes in the United States. In Mexico, American capital investment reshaped the rural social and economic order while insurgent revolutionaries went on to overthrow the longtime autocrat Porfirio Diaz.⁵ Japanese society, for example, broke from its isolationist posture as the rise of the Meiji government encouraged global trade and Nikkei migration and settlement to the Americas.⁶ Meanwhile, America's imperialist reach had stretched to the Philippines where the US thwarted a centuries old freedom

³ Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967); Natalia Molina examines how discourses of urban density, race, and public health collided in Los Angeles in *Fit to Be Citizens? Public Health and Race in Los Angeles, 1879-1939* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006).

⁴ Carey McWilliams, *Southern California: An Island on the Land* (Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith, 1947/1973) and Robert Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967).

⁵ On the connections between Los Angeles and the Mexican Revolution see Jessica Kim, "Oilmen and Cactus Rustlers: Metropolis, Empire, and Revolution in the Los Angeles-Mexico Borderlands, 1890-1930," (PhD Dissertation, University of Southern California, 2012).

⁶ Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

struggle against Spain and installed a regime that facilitated migration between the tropical colony and the American metropole.⁷

Informed by these transnational moments and movements with local repercussions, this chapter explores the intertwined social and structural transformations that the San Fernando Valley faced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It argues that a global framework enables a new interpretation of the San Fernando Valley that seriously takes into account the lived experiences of the people of color who helped build the region. Previous histories of the Valley tended to focus on the settlement of European American fortune-seekers, land-developers, and small farmers. When acknowledged, the history of immigrant labor has been elided to uphold a cleaner, linear narrative of White conquest and progress Spanish Fantasy tropes (figure 1.1).⁸ This chapter disrupts the White/non-White axis and examines the forces that shaped the racialization of Chinese, Mexican, Filipino, and Japanese immigrants. Lured by employment opportunities in the railroads and agriculture, as social and economic conditions in their home countries became untenable, these immigrants found work in a racialized labor market in the Valley. Although immigrants from Asia and Mexico overwhelmingly came to the San Fernando Valley to work in agriculture, their experiences diverged due to the circumstances that facilitated their migration, placement within the region's racial hierarchy, and uneven relationships among each other. Segregated into neighborhoods such as Pacoima and San

⁷ Angel Velasco Shaw and Luis H. Francia, eds., *Vestiges of War: The Philippine-American War and the Aftermath of an Imperial Dream, 1889-1999* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

⁸ According to historian Phobe Kropp, “Anglo boosters of Southern California in the early twentieth century worked hard to promote a romantic version of the state’s Spanish past in the region. They invested in this cultural memory by fashioning a ‘built environment’—buildings and other structures of human design that mark the physical landscape—that echoed Spanish forms. This impulse arose both from their desire to honor local history and from their ambition to develop Southern California into a premier American place to live, work, and play,” *California Vieja: Culture and Memory in a Modern American Place* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 1. Kropp underscores the tension between the visibility of markers of Southern California’s Spanish or Latino past and the harsh treatment of Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans. The San Fernando Valley exemplifies this paradox. Local boosters implemented annual fiestas in the 1920s and 1930s while Mexicans faced segregation and as well as deportations.

Fernando, along with towns such as Canoga Park and North Hollywood, they created communities and institutions that reflected both their homeland politics as well as adaptations to a new land. While these interracial encounters paralleled similar experiences across California during this time period, they provided groundwork for race relations and spatial development in the San Fernando Valley that, despite manipulation from various exclusionary immigration and property laws, endured for generations to come.



Figure 1.1 San Fernando Heights Lemon Association crate label, n.d. Countless images such as this emphasized the San Fernando Valley's Mission past as well as its contemporary agricultural production. Placed on fruit crates that shipped across the country, these images introduce the San Fernando Valley to countless individuals. Source: Autry National Center.

Railroads and Race

The second half of the nineteenth century in California witnessed profound political changes that shaped the San Fernando Valley. The Gold Rush, from 1848 to 1855, sparked a migration stream that brought migrants from every corner of the globe. Meanwhile, the Mexican era of California came to a close in 1848 after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ended armed conflict between the United States and Mexico. Two short years later, California became 31st

state of the Union. Shaped by this successive chain of rapid events, California became a state on the move with thousands of new migrants coming west, from inchoate capitalists to everyday workers. Within this transitional orbit where the state's economic, political, and social infrastructures were all in flux, the San Fernando Valley slowly took shape.

In the two decades following the American seizure of Alta California and eventual statehood, the San Fernando Valley remained an outpost on the fringes of Los Angeles, a small town in comparison to the dominant city of San Francisco. However when a web of railroads connected Southern California to the rest of the region and nation in the late 1860s and 1870s, Los Angeles's fortunes quickly changed.⁹ In turn, major real estate developers purchased huge swaths of land in the Valley giving their names to the different towns and thoroughfares that developed in the years to come. In 1869 Issac Lankershim and Isaac Newton Van Nuys led the San Fernando Farm Homestead Association, which purchased 60,000 acres of land in the southern portions of the Valley and four years later, state senators George Porter and Charles Maclay purchased the northern regions.¹⁰ Historian Elizabeth Dixon notes that with the arrivals of Porter and Maclay heralded the founding of permanent European American settlement in the San Fernando Valley. In 1874 Maclay, who oversaw the sprawling "Maclay Rancho" founded the town of San Fernando as an entity independent of Los Angeles.¹¹ Within just a few months of the town's founding, according to the travel guide *California of the South*, "a free excursion train was run from Los Angeles to attend the first auction sale of town-lots. The lots were

⁹ William Deverell, *Railroad Crossing: Californians and the Railroad, 1850-1910* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994).

¹⁰ Elizabeth I. Dixon, "Early San Fernando Memories: Memoirs of Mrs. Catherine Dace," *Southern California Quarterly* 44:3 (September 1962): 219-267

¹¹ W.W. Robinson, *The Story of the San Fernando Valley* (Los Angeles: Title Insurance and Trust Company, 1961), np.

twenty-five by one hundred feet, and sold at prices ranging from six to twenty dollars.”¹²

Additional settlements of White migrants developed as well, including the town of Lankershim (now known as North Hollywood) in the southeast Valley and Chatsworth in the northwest Valley (figure 1.2).

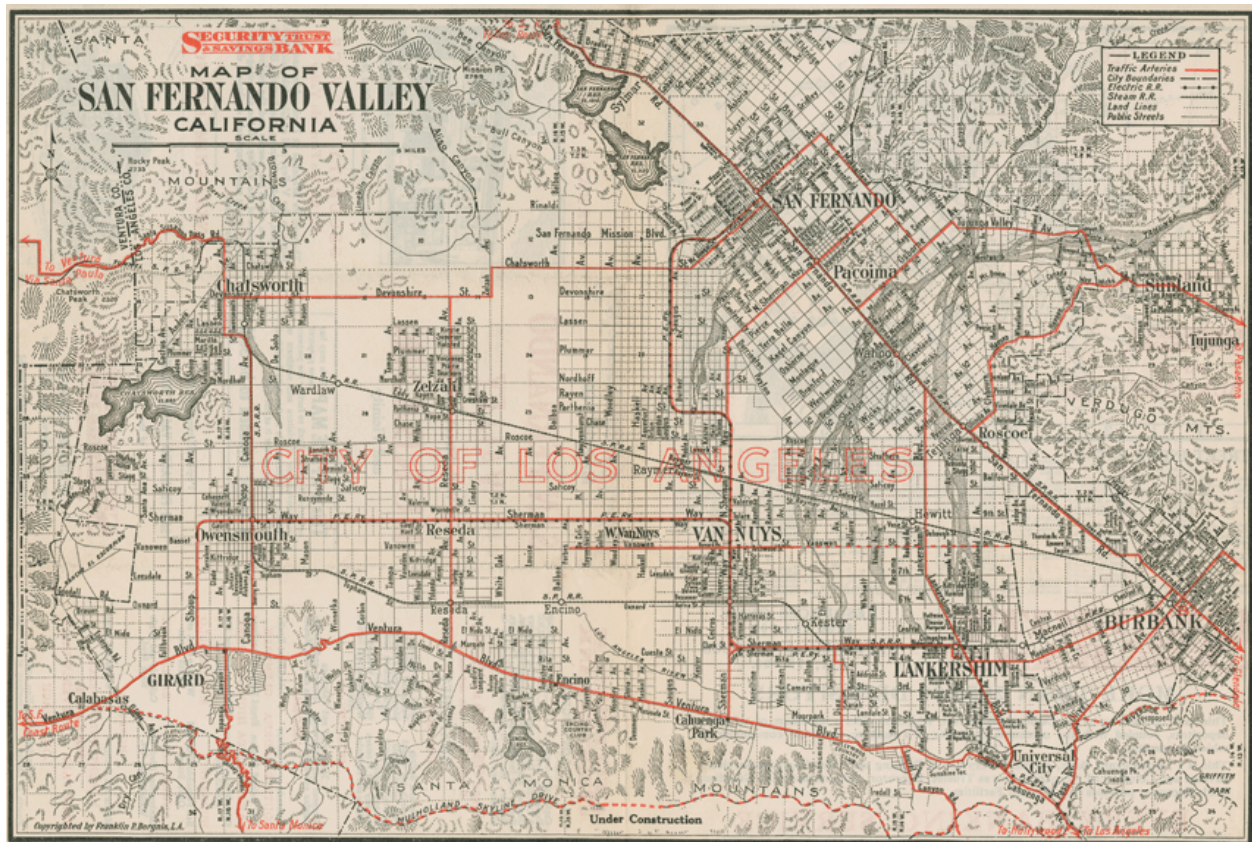


Figure 1.2 Neighborhoods of the San Fernando Valley, 1924. Isaac Lankershim and Isaac Newton Van Nuys’s land holdings became the towns of Lankershim (now North Hollywood) and Van Nuys in the southern Valley. Maclay’s properties became the town of Pacoima in the northeast Valley. Immigrant and communities of color developed in the neighborhoods of Pacoima and San Fernando, along the railroad that ran parallel to San Fernando Road in the east Valley. Source: Los Angeles Public Library/*Los Angeles Magazine*.

One of the first immigrant groups to contribute to the San Fernando Valley’s growth was comprised of male Chinese laborers who worked on the railroads, a technological innovation that hastened population and economic development across the American West. Chinese migration to California began following the turmoil of the Opium Wars during the 1840s and 1850s when

¹² Walter Lindley and J.P. Widney, *California of the South: Its Physical Geography, Climate, Resources, Routes of Travel, and Health Resorts* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1888), 127.

young men sought their fortunes in the Gold Rush. By the 1860s the Central Pacific Railroad recruited Chinese laborers to work on the transcontinental railroad, which was completed in 1869. Transitory in nature, and armed with the hope to eventually return to China, itinerant workers eventually settled in Chinatowns such as the one located in Los Angeles, along the Calle de los Negros near the city plaza.¹³ Although an anti-Chinese massacre that killed eighteen men and boys scarred the community, the expansion of the San Fernando Valley offered new employment opportunities for Chinese workers.

In 1876 engineers routed the Southern Pacific Railroad through the east Valley to connect the northern and southern branches by a tunnel, thus linking Los Angeles to agricultural outposts north and the state's major metropolis, San Francisco. Local chronicler and perpetual booster W.W. Robinson noted that when "The San Fernando Tunnel [was] completed . . . Southern California's isolation ends."¹⁴ Specifically, 1,500 Chinese workers were responsible for clearing the land and building the tunnel. On the job, they faced a variety of treacherous and fatal conditions ranging from quicksand to landslides. Although the local coroner never released his records, rumors of the high mortality associated with so called "coolies" working on the tunnel abounded. Even the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution admitted in their history of the Valley, "the problems of construction were many."¹⁵ This was part and parcel of a racialized division of labor where the most dangerous tasks were often designated to Chinese laborers. The racial segmentation of the Valley's labor market continued during the extended

¹³ Scott Zesch, *The Chinatown War: Chinese Los Angeles and the Massacre of 1871* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

¹⁴ Robinson, *The Story of the San Fernando Valley*.

¹⁵ San Fernando Valley Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, *The Valley of San Fernando* (San Fernando: Daughters of the American Revolution, 1924), 62 (hereafter, San Fernando Valley DAR, *The Valley of San Fernando*).

period of economic growth and setbacks that occurred after the railroad was routed through the region.

In the years after the construction of the railroad, the Valley, like much of Southern California, witnessed a development boom during the 1880s that laid the foundation for new neighborhoods and created the conditions for new migration. To be sure, this growth coincided with massive in-migration to California in general when almost 350,000 migrants made their way to the Golden State from 1880 to 1890.¹⁶ In that same period of time, Los Angeles's population grew from 11,093 to 50,395.¹⁷ In a sweeping synthesis of the San Fernando Valley, Jackson Mayers noted that before the advent of the railroads "growth of cities and towns, while slow, had kept pace with the shift to grain and citrus crops." Yet within ten years of the completion of the tunnel, the city of San Fernando was swept up in nothing less than "a forced urbanization."¹⁸ The construction of small residential homes as well as hotels and small businesses accompanied the development of towns such as San Fernando and Pacoima in the northeast and Burbank and Lankershim (North Hollywood) in the southeast Valley. San Fernando also became the site of the Valley's first sites of higher education when Maclay, who was also a Methodist clergyman, established a seminary, the Maclay School of Theology.¹⁹

Like much of Los Angeles, Pacoima struggled with economic boom and bust cycles towards the end of the nineteenth century. Because of Pacoima's strategic position in the north

¹⁶ US Census Bureau, *Population and Housing Unit Counts, Population Estimates 1790–1990* (Washington, DC: United States Census Bureau, US Department of Commerce Economics and Statistics Administration, 1993), 26-27.

¹⁷ Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, *Los Angeles Today* (Los Angeles: Neuner Company, 1917), np.

¹⁸ Jackson Mayers, *The San Fernando Valley* (Walnut, CA: John McIntyre, 1976), np.

¹⁹ Frank M. Keffer, *History of the San Fernando Valley: In Two Parts, Narrative and Biographical* (Glendale, CA: Stillman Printing Company, 1934), 67. In the 1890s, the school relocated to the University of Southern California and subsequently moved to the Pomona Valley.

of the San Fernando Valley located near the railroads, it contained the potential to become a center of much of the San Fernando Valley and Los Angeles' growth. Yet, the region faced a setback, however, with the busts that occurred in the 1890s. As a consequence, the itinerant Chinese laborers left Pacoima and many in the small clique of White professionals – lawyers, bankers, or teachers – turned to farming.²⁰ As the twentieth century began, however, the region rebounded. In 1906, the *Pacific Monthly*, an Oregon-based periodical dedicated to the politics and culture of the American West, noted that Pacoima “is fortunate in commanding a very strategic position in the lure of the Owens River water supply for” Los Angeles.²¹

The lucrative possibilities for agrarian and small-scale industrial development that existed in the San Fernando Valley piqued the interest of city leaders and developers in Los Angeles by the turn of the twentieth century. In 1909, one of many land syndicates that would eventually shape the Valley, the Los Angeles Suburban Homes Company, bought up huge swaths of land in the Van Nuys area. This set into motion a chain of events that further placed the San Fernando Valley in Los Angeles' public consciousness, made a handful of individuals millionaires, and sparked controversy about the construction of a massive aqueduct that resulted in the meteoric growth of the Valley as a center of agricultural production.

After increasing consternation about perpetual water shortages in the city, different municipal leaders including the iconic city engineer William Mulholland envisioned a plan to bring water from the Owens Valley. On November 5, 1913 his plans came to fruition when he opened the massive aqueduct that brought water from the Owens Valley to Los Angeles and

²⁰ San Fernando Valley DAR, *The Valley of San Fernando*, 106.

²¹ “The San Fernando Valley,” *The Pacific Monthly: A Magazine of Education and Progress* 15 (January-June 1906): 587.

made it possible to irrigate the San Fernando Valley.²² Indeed, surplus water was directed to the Valley giving rise to rumors of corruption on the part of the city officials and a syndicate of railroad magnates, real estate moguls, and newspaper owners known as the San Fernando Mission Land Company that purchased 16,000 acres at a cost of \$35 per acre in the Valley as early as 1905. Popular narratives suggest that the syndicate offered handsome bribes to municipal leaders in exchange for their initiative to route water to the Valley and then annex it for Los Angeles. As historian Norris Hundley points out, however, that “[Mayor Frederick] Eaton, not the members of the land syndicate, conceived and promoted the aqueduct idea that Mulholland subsequently adopted and persuaded city leaders to put on the ballot.”²³ The actions of the syndicate became all the more questionable when Moses Sherman, a member of the Board of Water Commissioners, soon joined the ranks of the land syndicate arousing suspicions of misuse of insider information. As Hundley argues, although “neither Sherman nor the other syndicate members originated the idea of the aqueduct . . . they profited handsomely from it, eventually securing most of the valley before reselling it.”²⁴

A mere two years later, and after much debate, the City officially annexed the San Fernando Valley.²⁵ Most of the towns and communities of the Valley supported annexation “in order to gain access to the surplus water supply secured by Los Angeles from the Owens

²² On the Los Angeles Aqueduct see Margaret Davis, *Rivers in the Desert: William Mulholland and the Inventing of Los Angeles* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993) and Catherine Mulholland, *William Mulholland and the Rise of Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

²³ Norris Hundley, *The Great Thirst: Californians and Water – A History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, rev. ed., 2001), 160.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 161.

²⁵ Carey McWilliams, “Water! Water! Water!” in *Southern California Country: An Island on the Land*, (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1946), 183-204.

Valley,” according to environmental historian Jordan Scavo.²⁶ Although towns such as San Fernando, Burbank and Glendale resisted annexation, the incorporation of the rest of the Valley into Los Angeles inaugurated a complex symbiotic relationship that brought thousands of migrants to the northernmost reaches of the city.

Around this time, land syndicates and other real estate interests based in the San Fernando Valley and the rest of Los Angeles began to market the Valley as a new pastoral frontier to potential homebuyers and small farmers. Charles Maclay, the land developer who founded the City of San Fernando surveyed the rolling hills of the Valley and famously called it nothing less than the Garden of Eden.²⁷ Yet, the promise of the Valley lay in far more than Maclay’s rhetorical flourish could encapsulate.

Agriculture, Law, Sojourners, and Immigrant Settlers the East San Fernando Valley

As the 20th century dawned, many scholars and other cultural observers lamented the closing of the American frontier, a feature so central to the definition of physical expansion and America’s character during the 19th century.²⁸ As Laura Barraclough argues, the marketing of the San Fernando Valley took place within these larger discussions of the frontier and thus highlighted the region’s rural potential. Marketers portrayed the Valley as the land of individual plots of residential farmland for the White “gentleman farmer.” One commentator, for example, suggested that by the early twentieth century, the Valley became “a place of charming little

²⁶ Jordan Scavo, “Water Politics and the San Fernando Valley: The Role of Water Rights in the 1915 Annexation and 1996-2002 Secession Campaigns,” *Southern California Quarterly* 92:2 (Summer 2010): 94.

²⁷ W.W. Robinson, *San Fernando Valley Calendar of Events* (Los Angeles: Title Guarantee and Trust Company, 1938, updated 1951), np.

²⁸ Frederick Jackson Turner, “Significance of the Frontier in American History” (1893); Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues*.

country estates,” owing to the vision and “foresight” of William Mulholland.²⁹ However, these expressions reflected land developers’ desire to create a middling to affluent, low-density landscape rather than the realities of the immigrant labor force that helped build the Valley.

Despite such efforts to portray the San Fernando Valley as a latter day Garden of Eden that catered to migrants of European ancestry, the growth of towns such as Pacoima was due to the efforts of people of color. The construction of railroads facilitated a small real estate boom and in 1887 the town of Pacoima, just south of San Fernando, was founded. Due to the speed with which the railroad economy and building booms necessitated a large labor force, Pacoima became a destination for different immigrant workers. A racially segregated labor force was responsible for the rise of the new town. Local narratives of the growth emphasized European American skill and ingenuity. The San Fernando Valley chapter of the *Daughters of the American Revolution*, for example, exalted “white men [who] did all the carpenter and cement work.”³⁰ However, armed with mule teams and sheer grit, Chinese laborers executed the unenviable task of flattening the land to build the first thoroughfares in Pacoima in the late 1880s.³¹ According to Josh Sides, Pacoima quickly “became an affordable and desirable suburb for railway workers. Consequently, it drew a small proportion of minority railroad laborers and became the Valley’s only interracial community, housing a small population of Mexicans, Japanese, and blacks living east of the Southern Pacific railroad tracks.”³² This small interracial

²⁹ Harry Carr, *Los Angeles: City of Dreams* (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1935), 211.

³⁰ San Fernando Valley DAR, *The Valley of San Fernando*, 10.

³¹ Mayers, *The San Fernando Valley*, 79.

³² Josh Sides, *L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 104.

community grew throughout the early twentieth century due to the development of an agricultural industry, which flourished in the newly irrigated and fertile San Fernando Valley.

Large-scale agrarian production, ethnic truck farming, and light industry were central to the region's growth and the development of local ethnic communities. One of the earliest and most noted agricultural endeavors was the cultivation of olives. *The Pacific Monthly* went as far as to exclaim that "perhaps the greatest claim to future industrial and commercial distinction is secured by the circumstance that San Fernando is situated in the center of one of the greatest olive-producing regions in the world."³³ By the 1910s, the Sylmar Olive Company became one of the largest firms in the Valley. Its operations included pickling olives, pressing olive oil and canning sweet peppers and figs. Furthermore, although the *Pacific Monthly* may have exaggerated their suggestion that the Valley was home to "the largest olive grove in the world," its insistence upon the vitality of the olive industry illustrated the growing role of agriculture in shaping the economic order and social face of the Valley. Just as the cultivation of olives brought new economic growth, it necessarily opened up opportunities for immigrant labor. Although the economic bust of the 1890s pushed many Chinese out of the Valley, by the twentieth century many other Chinese migrants came to work in the olive harvest.³⁴ The *Pacific Monthly* captured this labor force in two large photographs provided by the Los Angeles Olive Growers' Association that showcased Chinese men working in the orchards.

Chinese laborers also served as cooks in the mess halls of early twentieth century agricultural labor camps. In 1907, the *Los Angeles Times* included one brief and colorful reference to Chinese workers in the Valley when it covered how the historic Mission San

³³ "The San Fernando Valley," *Pacific Monthly*, 587.

³⁴ The San Fernando Valley DAR wrote that Chinese cooks had "provided a wonderful supper" at an 1875 wedding celebration at the Workman Ranch, *The Valley of San Fernando*. 67.

Fernando fared in the secular era. A few decades earlier, George Porter, the San Francisco shoe manufacturer turned Valley land baron, transferred a huge swath of this land in the northern half of the Valley, which included the Mission San Fernando, to the Porter Land and Water Company which in turn subdivided the property into 10 and 40-acre plots of navel orange orchards.³⁵

Shortly thereafter, the mission “was used as a kitchen for ranchers, and there many of them slept, played cards, and drank turpentine whiskey. A Celestial [Chinese] shaved-head cook in his blue blouse presided where the priest formerly held service, and the bell which tolled for the dead or summoned the faithful to service, now clanged for ranchers to come for their pork and beans.”³⁶

In another instance, a wandering artist documented only as “Carter,” made his way to the Valley in the early 1900s and recorded the “shock to one’s esthetic sense, and ideas of the fitness of things, to see a Chinese cook come out of the building [Mission San Fernando].”³⁷ Despite that sense of shock, Chinese laborers left their mark on the San Fernando Valley through the construction of railroads and the town of Pacoima, in addition to their service work.

Chinese immigrants never created a sustained community in the San Fernando Valley and their fates after they left the region’s olive orchards or the kitchens are unclear. Those Chinese workers who came to the Valley tended to be men, reflective of a larger pattern of bachelor migration, and their numbers likely did not grow due to the Chinese Exclusion Act, which curtailed the immigration of laborers beginning in 1882. Nevertheless, their transitory history disrupts Eurocentric narratives of the San Fernando Valley that emphasized conquest and

³⁵ Robinson, “San Fernando Valley,” 94.

³⁶ J.M. Scanland, “Historic San Fernando. Restoration of the Old Mission to its Former Purpose,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 3, 1907, 13. The Southern Pacific Railroad’s line stretching to the San Fernando Valley, built primarily by Chinese labor, was completed in 1876, Robinson, *Story of San Fernando Valley*, 26. A slim booster history of the “the great” San Fernando Valley noted, in 1923, that “The 1500 Chinamen were lined up with shovels at ‘present arms’ during the [opening] ceremonies,” Lankershim Branch Security Trust and Savings Bank, *A Daughter of the Snows: The Story of the Great San Fernando Valley* (Lankershim, CA: Author, 1923), 30.

³⁷ Quoted in Mayers, *The San Fernando Valley*, 89

settlement. In the shadow of racial exclusion, Mexican and Filipino immigrants came to the San Fernando Valley where they served as the backbone of agricultural labor.

Citrus production was one of the largest agricultural production in the San Fernando Valley. Although San Fernando Valley farmers had long cultivated citrus fruits, innovations in transportation and irrigation technologies led citrus to dominate the regional economy by the second quarter of the twentieth century.³⁸ The cultivation of lemons, oranges, tangerines and grapefruits in the Valley was hardly unique given the breadth of the industry in Southern California areas such as the Pomona and San Gabriel Valleys where a “citrus belt” developed. Indeed, the rise of citrus was exponential: the California Fruit Growers Exchange alone, which sold goods under the popular Sunkist and Red Ball labels, produced 11,262,185 boxes of citrus fruits in the 1913-14 fiscal year and, a decade later, 16,144,292 boxes in 1924-25.³⁹ The Valley was swept up in this booming agribusiness as shippers such as the San Fernando Foothill Association and the Fernando Fruit Growers Association participated in the larger California Fruit Growers Exchange.⁴⁰ By the late 1920s, five fruit packinghouses, all associated with the Growers Exchange.⁴¹ The San Fernando Heights Lemon Association and the San Fernando Heights Orange Association located adjacent to the Southern Pacific and Pacific Electric lines in and around the City of San Fernando along with packinghouses in Burbank and Van Nuys also

³⁸ The Fernando Fruit Association’s packinghouse produced lemons and other fruits as early as the first decade of the twentieth century, “Large Ranch Changes Hands,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 9, 1907, II10.

³⁹ *Summary of the Report of the General Manager of the California Fruit Growers Exchange* (Los Angeles: California Fruit Growers Exchange, 1914) and *Summary of the Report of the General Manager of the California Fruit Growers Exchange* (Los Angeles: California Fruit Growers Exchange, 1925).

⁴⁰ *Summary of the Report of the General Manager of the California Fruit Growers Exchange* (Los Angeles: California Fruit Growers Exchange, 1914).

⁴¹ Robert T. Lyans, “Old Mission Center of Citrus Industry,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 2, 1929, K11.

grew rapidly into the 1930s.⁴² Soon, citrus orchards began to carpet the west Valley as well, in neighborhoods such as Canoga Park, Encino, and, the area named after Edgar Rice Burroughs' creation, Tarzana. Citrus fruit from the San Fernando Valley was shipped to the different corners of the United States and, given advances in refrigeration, destinations as far as London.⁴³ At the onset of the Great Depression, the citrus industry in the San Fernando Valley remained strong. In 1932, for example, 8,000 acres of land dedicated to citrus cultivation and production returned \$3,000,000 in profits.⁴⁴

The rise of agribusiness in the San Fernando Valley dramatically reshaped the physical landscape of the region: rolling wheat fields and ranchos were transformed into verdant orchards. The rise of this new economic order necessarily wrought deep demographic changes. Just as the construction of the Southern Pacific tunnel and subsequent railroad lured Chinese laborers to the Valley with the promise of economic empowerment, the need for an agricultural workforce sparked the migration of thousands of Mexicans and, to a lesser extent, Japanese and Filipinos to the San Fernando Valley.⁴⁵ White growers in Southern California actively sought out Mexican and Asian workers for reasons that spoke to the secondary place of workers of color in the

⁴² *Manufacturer's Directory and Commodity Index* (Los Angeles: Industrial Bureau, Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, 1920), np in LA Chamber of Commerce Papers, USC Doheny Library Special Collections. See also James Lancaster and Paul Ayers, "Virtual Tour of Los Angeles County: San Fernando," Historic Packinghouses and Other Industrial Structures in Southern California Digital Collection, http://scph001.home.netcom.com/scph_la_san_fernando.html, page last updated November 12, 2008, accessed March 26, 2013.

⁴³ "Farm News of the Great Southwest: Down-to-Date Reports from Times Correspondents," *Los Angeles Times*, September 12, 1926, J4.

⁴⁴ "San Fernando Citrus Pays: Valley's 8000 Acres Return \$3,000,000 for Season's Crop; Two Orange County Associations Elect," *Los Angeles Times*, January 11, 1932. The San Fernando Valley itself is larger than 150,000 acres.

⁴⁵ One account of the Valley's citrus industry in 1928 noted that despite advances in "power farming" and other technological advances, a "small army of Filipino and Mexican laborers [remained] employed during the picking season," Robert T. Lyans, "Old Mission Center of Citrus Industry," *Los Angeles Times*, September 2, 1928, K11.

regional labor market and social hierarchy.⁴⁶ Growers could easily exploit Mexican and Asian workers due to their precarious status as immigrants or non-citizens, as opposed to native-born Whites. Further, growers, law enforcement, and other agencies could easily collaborate to control the mobility of workers of color. Lastly, growers easily manipulated the sheer diversity of the work force – divided by race, ethnicity, immigration status, language, and gender among other identifiers – to turn workers against each other and forestall the threat of union organizing. Differences that resulted from migration patterns existed among ethnic groups themselves, such as the large number of Mexicans who worked in the Valley’s groves and packinghouses and in their own small businesses.

Although Mexicans had been a part of the fabric of the San Fernando Valley since the era of Spanish colonization, the rapid changes in Mexico at the turn of the twentieth century catalyzed a new wave of migration to Southern California. As historian George Sanchez notes, the vast social upheavals wrought by the administration of Mexican President Porfirio Díaz (the “Porfiriato” lasting from 1876 to 1910) and the subsequent Revolution sparked unrest in Mexico. Mexican policies that facilitated the ascendancy of the hacienda system marginalized rural peasants; meanwhile the modernization of the national economy rested upon extensive railroad development and aggressive US capital investments. Collectively, these conditions led to widespread displacement that ushered the migration of numerous Mexicans to the north or *el norte*.

⁴⁶ Matt Garcia, *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 2.

Antonio Calvo, Sr. was one of the thousands of individuals caught within the vortex of revolution and economic restructuring in Mexico.⁴⁷ His migration story illustrates a variety of the different facets of Mexican settlement to urban Los Angeles and the agrarian San Fernando Valley in the first decades of the twentieth century. Born in 1900 in Alamos, Sonora, a mining town located about 400 miles south of the Mexico-US border, he was swept up in the rapid contests between warring factions. After he joined the army and the Constitutionalist faction that was opposed to the brief reign of Victoriano Huerta, he became disenchanted with the revolution. Drawing upon connections he had in Los Angeles, Calvo extricated himself from combat and made his way north where he was able to walk across the border to Arizona in the late 1910s.⁴⁸

The ease with which Calvo crossed the border was an important facet of migration for thousands of other Mexicans around the time he came north. This migration was facilitated, in part, due to “lax enforcement of immigration restrictions at the border, the concentration of Mexican workers in seasonal employment, and the liberal policies of railroad companies toward transporting workers back and forth.”⁴⁹ Despite the seemingly insatiable need for Mexican immigrant laborers to work in the American Southwest, unrestricted movement across the border did not last for long. In the midst of the First World War, Congress passed the 1917 Immigration Act that placed stricter guidelines for the admittance of immigrants. Although originally geared towards eastern and southern Europeans, immigration agents along the US-Mexico border soon

⁴⁷ Information on Calvo’s life comes from Antonio H. and Beverley Calvo, Interviewed by Rebecca S. Graff, October 12, 2004, Latino Cultural Heritage Oral History Project, Urban Archives, Center, Oviatt Library, California State University Northridge (hereafter, Latino Cultural Heritage Oral History Project).

⁴⁸ The “Certificate of Lawful Entry for Antonio R. Calvo,” states that Calvo arrived in the US in 1919, but his son Antonio, Jr. insists that his father arrived in 1917.

⁴⁹ George Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Life and Culture in Chicano Los Angeles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 49.

adopted practices such as health inspections, head taxes, and literacy tests among other requirements.⁵⁰ Mexicans, it should be noted, did not face wholesale exclusion like their Asian counterparts. Yet, efforts to distinguish between “desirable” and “undesirable” immigrants – often rooted in American fears about immigrant contagion – gained considerable footing. Ultimately, in 1924 the porous features of the US-Mexico began to close following greater surveillance by the establishment of the Border Patrol.⁵¹

Difficult and exploitative as they may have been, a variety of opportunities in the region’s agricultural industry awaited those Mexicans who did successfully make it to the Valley. Tranquilino and Vicenta Solis Ponce came to the United States around 1916 in their early twenties and, by their thirties, settled in Pacoima and tended to a large family of seven children.⁵² Their livelihood came from Tranquilino who worked as both a laborer in the Valley’s orchards and later for a smaller truck farming operation.⁵³ The Ponce’s daughter, Mary Helen, born in 1938, provided a finely textured account of growing up in Pacoima, *Hoyt Street*. She recalled the world around her during the 1930s and early 1940s.

Many men in the barrio worked in agriculture, en el fil, weeding, pruning, or watering various crops. Others worked as troqueros, as did Rocky, my father’s compadre, who each fall drove workers in his truck the walnut orchards of Camarillo. Men who owned their own trucks worked for themselves. They lugged fertilizer from poultry farms to nearby ranches or trucked produce into Los Angeles. Still others took the bus to the

⁵⁰ Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 55.

⁵¹ Kelly Lytle-Hernandez, *Migra! A History of the U.S. Border Patrol* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010).

⁵² Ancestry.com. 1930 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2002. Original data: United States of America, Bureau of the Census. Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1930. T626, 2,667 rolls.

⁵³ Ancestry.com. 1930 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2002. Original data: United States of America, Bureau of the Census. Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1930. T626, 2,667 rolls. Ancestry.com. 1940 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. Original data: United States of America, Bureau of the Census. Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1940. T627, 4,643 rolls.

union hall in San Fernando, where they hired out as “casual laborers” or found work in the packinghouse in the same town.⁵⁴

Ponce’s portrait of the agricultural landscape of the east San Fernando Valley illustrates the different facets of how Mexican immigrants were tied to agricultural production, whether as pickers, drivers, or packinghouse workers. Her discussion also gestures towards class nuances in the community where some individuals had enough capital to own their own truck and become self-employed while others worked on a temporary basis.

In addition to fieldwork, Mexican women found employment in the large packinghouses in the east San Fernando Valley. In 1936, the San Fernando Heights Orange Association redecorated its packinghouse “in colors of soft and literally dreamy hues [of] purple, blue, orange, yellow, green, silver, buff, tan and two shades of brown” that looked “resplendent on the various structural and mechanical units” all in an attempt to cater to and speed up the productivity of the “girl packers.”⁵⁵ Although the female employees’ response to the gendered décor is unknown – they would have likely enjoyed a safe workplace and equitable wages as well – the Orange Association’s attention nevertheless showed the visible presence of women in this labor-intensive industry.

The Mexican and Mexican American population of the Valley included both migratory laborers and immigrant settlers intent on building homes and lives in the region. Seasonal farm workers who traversed the California’s interior and coastline in search of temporary employment remained a part of the Valley’s Mexican population and thus, as Antonio Calvo, Jr. recalled, “the population even in those days was very fluid.” Meanwhile, an extensive Red Line interurban

⁵⁴ Mary Helen Ponce, *Hoyt Street: An Autobiography* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 3.

⁵⁵ “‘Rainbow’ Orange Plant Speeds Up Girl Packers,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 31, 1936, 10.

railway allowed Mexican farm workers to live in Los Angeles and commute to the east Valley.⁵⁶ “But,” as Calvo pointed out, “there were some families, like ours, who largely stayed throughout the year in San Fernando.”⁵⁷ The settlement of laboring families in Southern California’s agricultural communities was due in part to their own desires for economic stability as well as growers’ belief that a settled labor force would eschew union militancy.⁵⁸ Collectively, both the seasonal labor force and immigrant settlers were responsible for the development of the physical and cultural landscape of the east Valley. Although the initial settlement of Mexicans in the *colonias* surrounding the fields and packinghouses may have been temporary and at times appeared ramshackle, the foundation of a barrio, or, as Douglas Monroy puts it, “suburban neighborhoods of the working poor,” emerged.⁵⁹

Segregated into the neighborhoods of Pacoima and San Fernando, working-class Mexican families used various types of ingenuity and determination to build homes and neighborhoods. Mary Helen Ponce recalled the Pacoima of her youth in the 1930s as filled with “houses [that] were neither fancy nor ugly, but like the houses of poor folks everywhere,” yet her accounts nevertheless reveal the proletarian roots of the “rasquachismo,” an aesthetic that enlists everyday items to make art, or, the case of Pacoima residents, a home.⁶⁰ Although they shared some similarities in architectural design, houses were ultimately “not uniform.” “Others

⁵⁶ Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 69.

⁵⁷ Antonio H. and Beverley Calvo, Jr. Interview, 1.

⁵⁸ Garcia, *A World of Their Own*.

⁵⁹ Douglas Monroy, *Rebirth: Mexican Los Angeles from the Great Migration to the Great Depression* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 36. On the growth of working-class suburbs of people of color, see Andrew Weise, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

⁶⁰ Ponce, *Hoyt Street*, 5. See also Tomas Ybarra-Frausto, “Rasquachismo: A Chicano Sensibility,” in *Chicano Art: Resistance and Affirmation, 1965-1985*, Ed. Richard Griswold de Castillo, Teresa McKenna, Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano (Los Angeles: UCLA, Wight Art Gallery, 1991), 155-162.

appeared lopsided because of the many additions tacked on as a family grew,” whereas building materials differed when “different types of wood [were] bought for price and not appearance.” Some houses used rocks, while others even had a fireplace, all demonstrating that ultimately, in Pacoima “people were innovative.”⁶¹ As Mexicans and Mexican Americans began to fashion their own community in the east Valley, other immigrant settlers began to make their way to the region.

Although Mexicans and Mexican Americans formed the largest community of color in the East Valley during the early twentieth century, the opportunities agriculture provided led to the migration of several Asians as well. Much like the political ruptures in Mexico that catalyzed mass migration, Japanese came to the American West due to political transformations that reshaped Japanese society.⁶² The reinstatement of imperial governance in Japan that began in 1868, more commonly known as the Meiji Restoration, was a bundle of nationalistic domestic and foreign policies designed to fortify Japan as an equal among other contemporaneous colonial powers. Eiichiro Azuma’s study that situated Nikkei settlement in the United States within the crosshairs of dueling imperial and capitalist agendas noted that “migration constituted a pivotal part of these [nationalistic] state endeavors.”⁶³ The Meiji government encouraged the settlement of Japan’s northernmost region, Hokkaido, before permitting migration to Hawai’i and ultimately, the United States.

The earliest Japanese immigrants, known as the Issei, began to settle in Los Angeles around the 1880s. By 1900, the US Census recorded a lone Japanese immigrant in the San

⁶¹ Ponce, *Hoyt Street*, 5.

⁶² For general discussions of the Issei, see: Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924* (New York: Free Press, 1988); Akemi Kikumura, *Through Harsh Winters: The Life of a Japanese Immigrant Woman* (Novato, CA: Chandler and Sharp Publishers, 1981).

⁶³ Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, 19.

Fernando Valley town of Burbank, a W. Rameba, who was a servant for the Glassel family.⁶⁴

By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century a few Japanese immigrants found work as bellhops at the Van Nuys Hotel and by 1905, and 23 Japanese immigrants resided in San Fernando.⁶⁵ This type of service work was a common employment niche for transitory immigrants, but agriculture served as the primary magnet for Japanese immigrants. Young bachelor males participated in seasonal farm labor cycles across California and often made their way to the San Fernando Valley. Because Meiji-era immigration policies encouraged overseas settlement, unlike previous generations of sojourning male Chinese immigrants, Japanese women also migrated to the United States. Therefore, Japanese family farms slowly began to spring up in the San Fernando Valley as well as other agrarian areas across the West Coast. As early as 1907, the *Los Angeles Times* took note of a “Japanese colony” located just west of Burbank near the town of Tropic, now a part of Glendale.⁶⁶

The Japanese population in the Valley grew, despite various legal obstacles. A robust anti-Asian nativist movement, that pushed for Chinese exclusion, led to the prohibition of

⁶⁴ US Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States*, 1900, accessed through <http://ancestrylibrary.proquest.com>.

⁶⁵ William Mason and John McKinstry, *The Japanese of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, 1969), 7, 16.

⁶⁶ F.W. Reid, “By the Los Feliz Road: Picturesque Scenes to Which it Leads in San Fernando,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 13, 1907, 7 in Braun Research Library Vertical Files, Southwest Museum of the American Indian, Los Angeles, CA. Given the anti-Japanese sentiment in California that gave rise to the immigration restrictions institutionalized through the Gentleman’s Agreement of 1907, the inclusion of this colony in an otherwise lighthearted travel article is curious. In a local booster history of Glendale from 1922, John Calvin Sherer disparages Tropic’s Japanese immigrant population and their concentration in strawberry farming at the beginning of the twentieth century: “The business prospered and added greatly to the prosperity of the community for three of four years, but the Japanese gradually secured control of it and in their eagerness to get rich quick they allowed the growers’ association to go to pieces, and competition among the growers succeeded co-operation, with disastrous results.” Reflecting the anti-Japanese sentiment of the time, Sherer suggests that Japanese farmers forestalled “co-operation” without acknowledging how agricultural interests had long organized against the Japanese and other Asians, *History of Glendale and Vicinity* (Glendale: Glendale History Publishing Company, 1922), 79. By 1905, there were approximately 332 Japanese residents of Tropic, Mason and McKinstry, *The Japanese of Los Angeles*, 16.

migration by Japanese male laborers through the 1907 Gentleman's Agreement. However, because women were not included in the exclusion laws, several Issei men were able to secure "picture brides." Their marriages provided the basis for the rise of the second generation, also known as the Nisei. Migration to the rural regions north of urbanized Los Angeles and population growth continued slowly and by the 1920s, approximately 266 Issei, and a handful of California-born Nisei, spread out across the communities of San Fernando, Sherman Oaks, Burbank, and Lankershim – as North Hollywood was known at the time.⁶⁷

Immigrant Japanese settlement intersected with a variety of nodes in the Valley that connected them to other historic moments across the American West. Far from direct migration to the Valley, Issei, much like Mexican immigrants, followed a meandering migration circuit across the Pacific and west coast. For example, Kiyohachi Takeuchi was an Issei born in Hiroshima and later migrated to Hawai'i in 1898. Three years later he journeyed to the Valley where lived and worked as an agricultural laborer at the historic San Fernando Mission before he began to farm a plot of land with his wife, a picture bride, and their children.⁶⁸ The different generations of the Kawakami family also illustrate how migration took place across multiple locations and contexts. The family's patriarch initially set his sights upon California. However, in 1902 he migrated to Mexico where he worked on the railroads, a technological innovation that was often funded to support American business interests and shaped the lives of countless rural

⁶⁷ US Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States*, 1920, accessed through <http://ancestrylibrary.proquest.com>.

⁶⁸ Ritsuo Takeuchi, Interviewed by Jean-Paul deGuzman, November 15, 2004, Telling Our Stories: Japanese Americans in the San Fernando Valley Oral History Project, Urban Archives Center, Oviatt Library, California State University, Northridge (hereafter, Telling Our Stories Oral History Project); see also: Robinson, "San Fernando Valley," 95-6 and Larry Tajiri, "Immigrants and an Incredible Law," *Pacific Citizen* (December 21, 1956), A-10 in *Pacific Citizen* Archives, HNRC-JANM. The presence of Japanese workers at the mission aroused the same surprise as the Chinese cooks. Three years later when filmmaker D.W. Griffith began filming in the Valley (contributing to the lucrative entertainment industry that developed in and around Studio City) his wife bluntly remarked that "a few Japs were living in one habitable room" of the mission remains. She later went on to say the Japanese residents "mended bicycles." Quoted in Mayers, *The San Fernando Valley*, 99.

Mexicans whether through dislocation or providing a means to migrate north.⁶⁹ In addition to the labor opportunities afforded by working in Mexico, entry to the United States from the porous southern border allowed Kawakami to bypass the Pacific Coast immigration stations such as Angel Island in San Francisco. Although Japanese exclusion had not yet been written in to federal immigration law when Kawakami came to the United States, his migration story reflected a strategy used by Chinese immigrants seeking to circumvent the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act.⁷⁰ Kawakami's son soon followed in 1913, when he migrated to the town of La Jolla where found work as a houseboy, another common occupation for Asian immigrants. The two eventually moved to Los Angeles where they opened a nursery and, after they saved enough money, purchased a modest parcel of farmland in the Sunland area of the far northeast San Fernando Valley.

Although Japanese immigrants discovered means to evade the prohibitions of the Gentleman's Agreement, their lives in California remained subject to racially discriminatory laws. In 1913 California enacted Alien Land Laws that barred property ownership by aliens ineligible to citizenship, legislation targeted towards the Asian immigrants who were broadly barred from citizenship by the 1790 Immigration and Naturalization Act and cases such as *Ozawa v. US* (1922) and *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind* (1923). As a result, immigrant

⁶⁹ On Japanese migration to Mexico see María Elena Ota Mishima, "The First Stage of Japanese Migration to Mexico, 1890-1923," in Luz M. Martínez Montiel, ed., *Asiatic Migrations in Latin America* (Mexico DF: El Colegio de Mexico, 1981), 81-112; on the role of railroads in 19th century Mexico see Teresa Van Hoy, *A Social History of Mexico's Railroads: Peons, Prisoners, and Priests* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008).

⁷⁰ On Chinese migration in the age of exclusion see Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003) and Grace Delgado, *Making the Chinese Mexican: Global Migration, Localism, and Exclusion in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

Nikkei families throughout the state often purchased land in the name of an American-born Nisei child.⁷¹

The legal maneuver of purchasing land under the name of a Nisei child ended following the passage of the 1920 California Alien Land Law. This act prohibited aliens ineligible to citizenship to purchase or lease land under the name of an American-born *minor*.⁷² When Japanese farm land was assessed after their mass incarceration during World War II, Tharold Larson of the Farm Security Agency remarked that “We have found that a surprising number of Japanese have been renting tracts for 15 to 20 years on a month-by-month basis without ever having signed formal leases.”⁷³ Indeed Bo Sakaguchi, a Nisei born into the large Sakaguchi family that had farmed in Fresno, the Japanese colony in Tropic, and eventually the San Fernando Valley, recalled that his family was only able to buy their North Hollywood property once the eldest born Nisei child came of legal age (figure 1.3).⁷⁴ Such legislation, furthermore, translated into the types of crops that the Nikkei cultivated for, as one economic historian noted, the “worry over potential loss of leased or owned land . . . made it preferable for farmers to grow crops, such as vegetables, which required a commitment to only a single year of farming on any one plot.”⁷⁵ Largely engaged in truck farming, by the 1920s, Japanese immigrants and their

⁷¹ Ronald Takaki noted that although the 1790 Naturalization Act reserved citizenship for white immigrants, a rare handful of Japanese were actually able to obtain citizenship in lower courts. By 1906 the US Attorney General specifically barred Japanese from citizenship and the matter was officially resolved in the *Ozawa* (1922) case that ruled Japanese were not white, *Strangers from a Distant Shore: A History of Asian Americans* 2nd Edition (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1998), 203-209; Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 40, 46-7.

⁷² Takaki, *Strangers from a Distant Shore*, 203.

⁷³ Quoted in Mayers, *San Fernando Valley*, 158.

⁷⁴ Bo Sakaguchi, Interviewed by Jean-Paul deGuzman, October 15, 2004, Telling Our Stories Oral History Project.

⁷⁵ Robert Higgs, “Landless by Law: Japanese Immigrants in California Agriculture to 1941,” *Journal of Economic History* 38:1 (March 1978): 206.

families clustered around San Fernando, Pacoima, and North Hollywood, raised crops that ranged from apricots and green onions to carrots and flowers.⁷⁶



Figure 1.3 The Sakaguchi family, c. 1931. Pictured, from left to right are Chico, Mary, Lily, Sanbo, Chebo, Bo, Obo, and the family patriarch Shiichiro. Like elsewhere, immigrant children worked on family farms or in the fields in addition to attending school. Members of the second generation of the Sakaguchi clan became major pillars of the San Fernando Valley Nikkei community. Source: Bo Sakaguchi and the Telling Our Stories: Japanese Americans in the San Fernando Valley Oral History Project/Discover Nikkei.

Because of the continued growth of Nikkei farms, which White growers and farmers saw as competition, the US government again legitimized anti-Asian racism and ended Japanese immigration through the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act. That law curtailed immigration from most of Asia as well as southern and eastern Europe and effectively sealed off the Japanese American community. With these restrictions in place, growers looked to another labor supply.

Although Filipinos were a far smaller proportion of farm labor in comparison to Mexican immigrants, they nevertheless forged a very small and temporary community in the San

⁷⁶ Bo Sakaguchi Interview; Roy Muranaka, Interviewed by Machiko Uyeno, March 21, 2004, Telling Our Stories Oral History Project. By 1920, the US Census reported populations of Japanese in Burbank (135); Lankershim/North Hollywood (51); San Fernando (50); and Sherman Oaks in the southern Valley (24), *Fourteenth Census of the United States*.

Fernando Valley. Very little evidence is left of how these sojourners came to the San Fernando Valley specifically. In all likelihood their journey began in the rural Philippines, particularly in the northern provinces of Luzon, from whence most early agricultural immigrants hailed. After the American occupation of the Philippines following the Philippine Revolution of 1896-1898 and the subsequent Philippine-American War, US growers in Hawai'i and along the Pacific Coast looked to the nation's newest colonial possession as a source of cheap labor. Furthermore, given their ambiguous status as US "nationals," Filipinos were spared from 1924 Johnson-Reed Act.

Like their Mexican counterparts, Filipino workers, who largely tended to be men, moved between states and types of labor based on the season. As such, settlement patterns were sporadic outside of ethnic hubs such as downtown Los Angeles and Stockton, in Northern California.⁷⁷ Filipinos, who lived among their Mexican counterparts in the fields, developed a small community that was comprised of migrant workers and a few small families around San Fernando. The bachelor farm workers lived in bunkhouses.⁷⁸ Although the evidence is scant, 1940 Census data reveals that there were a few Filipina immigrants who had married Filipino citrus workers in the City of San Fernando, such as Katherine Aglanao who raised three children with her husband.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ The most detailed historical monographs on this understudied topic are: Linda España-Maram, *Creating Masculinity in Los Angeles's Little Manila: Working-Class Filipinos and Popular Culture, 1920s-1950s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); Dawn Bohulano Mabalon, *Little Manila is In the Heart: The Making of the Filipina/o Community in Stockton, California* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

⁷⁸ Year: 1940; Census Place: San Fernando, Los Angeles, California; Roll: T627_251; Page: 61A; Enumeration District: 19-655, Digitized and available at Ancestry.com. 1940 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. Original data: United States of America, Bureau of the Census. Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1940. T627, 4,643 rolls.

⁷⁹ Year: 1940; Census Place: San Fernando, Los Angeles, California; Roll: T627_251; Page: 10B; Enumeration District: 19-658.

A variety of different circumstances drove the migration and settlement of immigrants from Mexico and Asia in the San Fernando Valley that ranged from political restructuring in their homelands to the allure of employment in the region's vast agricultural industry. Nevertheless, community building for Mexican, Japanese, and Filipino immigrants was circumscribed by their treatment under systems that maintained White supremacy. Whether through federal and state laws that governed immigration or property, immigrants of color were cast as racial others whose presence needed to be contained if not completely eradicated. While the San Fernando Valley provided new economic opportunities for its immigrants of color, those racial policies, and the discourses they represented, shaped how Mexicans, Japanese, and Filipinos forged lives, communities, and relationships with each other and their homelands.

Social Relations at the Margins

Concerns over race structured various social and spatial relations in the San Fernando Valley. As towns developed, particularly in the east Valley a multiethnic labor force and overall population did not guarantee harmonious race relations and racial lines became increasingly distinct as the region grew. Although a handful of Mexican and Japanese immigrants settled in the west Valley areas of Canoga Park or Northridge, the east Valley, given its proximity to the railroads and packinghouses, became the stage for a variety of social negotiations based on race and class. Unsurprisingly, the most evident racial division existed between Whites and immigrants of color.

In the City of San Fernando, the railroad tracks that had opened the up the Valley to migrants and other fortune seekers had become a physical border between White settlers and

Mexican immigrants.⁸⁰ Gabe Rodriguez was born in San Fernando in 1924 and recalled that Mexican immigrants living south of the railroad tracks “were a forgotten people . . . we weren’t welcome” both as potential homebuyers and even temporary visitors. Young Mexican men in particular understood that walking on north side of the tracks could invite serious recrimination.⁸¹ Raul Calvo, another son of San Fernando grew up during the same time as Rodriguez and recalled that the major thoroughfare that ran parallel to the railroad tracks, San Fernando Road, was “the diving line.” He continued, “West was primarily where Mexicans and Mexican Americans lived” and White lived to the east.

Furthermore, businesses delineated service based on race given that the merchants with larger businesses were White. Ritsuo Takeuchi, the son of mission laborer and picture bride, recalled “most of our activities were among our own little community and most of the farm folks knew each other.”⁸² Developing ethnic institutions within that “little community,” and other Japanese American enclaves in the Valley must be read within the context of racist restrictions to physical mobility and social integration beyond east Valley ethnic enclaves.⁸³ “There was a certain amount of animosity,” recalled Takeuchi, “if you went to a theater, you had to go upstairs,” away from the European American patrons.⁸⁴

Public schools were an important site where the children of immigrants and other youth came into contact with each other and quickly learned about the region’s racial order. The iconic

⁸⁰ Antonio and Beverley Calvo Interview, 8.

⁸¹ Gabe Rodriguez quoted in Hector Tobar, “San Fernando Comes of Age: Railroad Tracks No Longer Segregate Latinos, Anglos,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 17, 1989.

⁸² Ritsuo Takeuchi Interview.

⁸³ Kevin Roderick, “Borders,” in *San Fernando Valley: America’s Suburb* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Times Books, 2002), 137-150.

⁸⁴ Ritsuo Takeuchi Interview.

Nisei draft resister Frank Emi was born in Los Angeles, but moved to the San Fernando Valley at a young age with his family. He recalled, for example, that in the town of San Fernando O'Melveny elementary school primary served European American students, while Mexicans were directed to San Fernando elementary, located west of the railroad tracks. Emi attended both schools in the 1920s after moving around the East Valley. His transfers suggest the racial ambiguity of Japanese but the daily level of racial aggressions remained a significant part of his memories of San Fernando elementary.⁸⁵ He recalled that European American students “liked to pick on the minority. I guess because there was so few of us there. I think I and my brother were the only ones there.”⁸⁶ Mary Sakaguchi Oda of North Hollywood assessed her time in elementary school even more bluntly: “we knew that we were never really accepted by the Caucasian... our Caucasian classmates, and so we never even bothered to make close friends. I never had any close Caucasian friends.”⁸⁷ Furthermore, some Japanese American youths quickly learned to defend themselves from verbal harassment. When a White youth called Oda or her friends the racial epithet “Jap,” she recalled that “boy, I would... I would hit him. I had three big brothers and they were tough, so I don't recall anybody every calling me a ‘Jap.’ But if they did, boy, I gave it to ‘em.”

While interpersonal relationships with fellow students quickly introduced youngsters to the difficulties of racial difference, the treatment by school officials also reflected ideologies about race and labor. In 1923 the principal of San Fernando elementary, whose student body

⁸⁵ Daniel G. Solorzano and Tara Yosso, “Critical Race Theory, Racial Microaggressions, and Campus Racial Climate: The Experiences of African American College Students,” *Journal of Negro Education* 69:1/2 (Winter-Spring 2000): 60-73.

⁸⁶ Frank Emi, Interviewed by Amy Ikeda and Peter Ngotngamwong, November 8, 2004, Telling Our Stories Oral History Project, 8.

⁸⁷ Mary Sakaguchi Oda Interview (no interviewer listed), April 23 and April 30, 1982, Japanese Americans in the San Fernando Valley Oral History Project, Urban Archives Center, Oviatt Library, California State University, Northridge.

was primarily Mexican American, sought to transform the school into a “Mexican Industrial School” that would prepare its students for lives of agricultural labor for men, domestic work for women, and general servitude. Although the principal never realized his plan, Mexican American students faced tracking once they reached higher grades as well. Once they reached junior high schools in the Valley, which were nominally integrated, Mexican American students were often placed in classes for students with mental disabilities or, in the language of the time, the “low-mentality track.” Often this was due to the placement of over-aged students, who likely had to disrupt their education to work in the fields, in the junior high when they would have better fit in the elementary school. Regardless, Mexican American students in that track faced a curriculum that included serving other students in the cafeteria or performing janitorial tasks around the campus. In addition to the humiliation students may have endured due to this segregation, these policies caused several consequences. Gilbert Gonzalez suggests those forms of tracking “contributed toward the greater isolation, segregation, and socioeconomic distinctiveness of the Mexican from the Anglo communities.”⁸⁸

Whereas the White/non-White distinction governed social interactions and various educational trajectories, relations among Mexicans, Japanese, and Filipinos developed through class and ideologies of race. Japanese and Mexican immigrants navigated a complex set of relationships where the lives of both groups were circumscribed by White supremacy. At times, White growers created false divisions between the two groups. In 1924, for example San Fernando Valley vegetable producers told a meeting of the Los Angeles County truck growers association that their spinach crops were often not sold because they could not be bundled properly. They claimed that the efforts of Mexican workers resulted in nothing more than “a

⁸⁸ Gilbert G. Gonzalez, *Chicano Education in the Era of Segregation* (1990; Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2013), 99; On the tracking of junior high students see 52.

sorry mess which would not sell.” Rather, the Valley growers urged their colleagues to co-opt a style of bundling, derisively called the “Jap tie,” that Japanese American gardeners and farmers had developed.⁸⁹ Although the goal of the growers’ explanation of techniques was to bolster productivity and profits for other growers, the dichotomy they used reinforced negative stereotypes about Mexicans while also using a racial epithet for Japanese Americans.

Relationships between the two communities, however, could hardly be reduced to the division in agricultural capabilities suggested by the White growers. To be sure, both groups formed friendships and other relationships given their concentration in agriculture and residential settlement in the east Valley. Raul Calvo, who grew up in the City of San Fernando during the Great Depression remembered that Japanese Americans “lived right among the Mexican Americans” and recalled befriending Nikkei students in elementary school.⁹⁰ Likewise, Frank Emi noted, “All of our friends and playmates were Mexicans.” Despite these positive memories among the second generation, the class position between immigrant Japanese farmers and Mexican workers also shaped how the communities came into contact with each other.

Class dynamics, based on patterns on employment, also shaped the relationships between Japanese and Mexicans. Although they shared friendships and both felt the brunt of segregation, Vicki Ruiz noted that the relationships between Japanese farmers and Mexican farm workers in the El Monte area, east of Los Angeles, “were familiar, but not friendly.”⁹¹ With families, and thus more labor, Japanese immigrants rented small plots of land and often hired Mexican and Filipino laborers to assist in the farming. Although Japanese farmers tended to hire bachelors,

⁸⁹ Ross H. Gast, “Preparing ‘Bunch Stuff’ for the Local Markets,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 22, 1924, H9.

⁹⁰ Raul Calvo, Interviewed by Rebecca S. Graff, November 3, 2004, Latino Cultural Heritage Oral History Project.

⁹¹ Vicki Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows : Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998/2008), 76.

families found work on Nikkei farms as well. The Emi clan of San Fernando “grew quite a number of crops: tomatoes, cantaloupes, corn, rhubarb [in addition to] watermelon, cucumbers, mostly that type of vegetables.” To help with this large number of crops, Frank Emi recalled his parents hiring both bachelor Mexican and Filipino laborers and “We had a little trailer house that some of the workers would live in.” The Kawakamis and the Sakaguchis also hired Mexican laborers to help out with their farm.

Some Japanese farms became extremely lucrative, due in part to the labor of non-Japanese workers. The Sakaguchi family’s plot in North Hollywood, which included crops such as onions and carrots, was one of the more productive farms in the local Japanese community. Mary Sakaguchi Oda recalled that before the outbreak of World War II, “We had at that time a big business going. We had the thirty acres that were thirty planted. And we used to have about five trucks and cars. And then all of us were going to college so we all had to have a car. So I would say that before the war, financially we were doing very well. It took a long time. It was kind of a long haul, because during the Depression, farmers had a rough time.”⁹² These economic advancements, however, did not take place in a vacuum and Japanese farmers soon had to reckon with organizing by Mexican American workers.

The relationships between Mexicans and Japanese, when refracted through the lens of labor relations, appear ambiguous. While Japanese farmers, such as the Emis or the Sakaguchis clearly never cultivated enterprises on the same scale as, say, the San Fernando Heights Lemon and Orange Associations, Mexican workers in the early 1930s nevertheless felt it necessary to enter into negotiations with a consortium of Japanese vegetable farmers to agree on wages. In 1933 Mexican berry harvesters allied with the leftist Cannery and Agricultural Workers

⁹² Mary Sakaguchi Oda Interview.

Industrial Union. Later, the workers switched allegiance to the Mexican-consul sponsored *Confederacion de Campesinos y Obreros Mexicanos* (Confederation of Mexican Farm Workers and Laborers), which benefited from the largesse of various Mexican politicians.⁹³ The *Confederacion* began talks with a variety of Japanese vegetable growers from Palos Verdes to San Gabriel, including the San Fernando Valley Japanese American Farmers' Association. The global dimensions of the strike grew when the Japanese consul also acted on behalf of the farmers. The different constituents were able to come to an agreement on wage scales by the status of worker (temporary versus "regular"), hours for the workday as well as overtime.⁹⁴ Female field workers were paid a quarter less than their male counterparts. While this episode strained relationships between the Japanese and Mexicans, what becomes evident is how class fragmented the interests and relationships between these immigrant communities. Furthermore, the strike and its resolution reiterated how transnational ties brokered relationships as well.

Relationships between Japanese and Filipinos were similarly complex and illustrated how transnational racial knowledge shaped interactions. To some extent, relationships were amicable and the two groups exchanged cultural knowledge through foodways.⁹⁵ Much like the shared interactions between Japanese and Mexicans, second generation Filipinos and Nikkei became friends as children. Nisei Ritsuo Takeuchi, for example, recalled befriending the son of one of the few Filipino families in San Fernando, who he described as "a good ukulele player," possibly suggesting that the Filipino family had migrated to work on Hawaii's sprawling plantations

⁹³ Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows*, 76.

⁹⁴ "Agreement between Confederacion de Campesinos y Obrero Mexicanos (CUCOM) and Japanese Vegetable Growers' Associations of Los Angeles, July 1933," reprinted in Stuart Marshall Jamieson, *Labor Unionism in American Agriculture* (North Stratford, NH: Ayer Company Publishers, 1946), 428.

⁹⁵ Tom and Michi Imai, Interviewed by Jean-Paul deGuzman and Michael Razon, November 12, 2004, Telling Our Stories Oral History Project, 9; Ritsuo Takeuchi Interview, 21.

before settling in the Valley.⁹⁶ That both groups came from Asia, however, did little to foster any sense of solidarity given Meiji-era ideologies of Nikkei racial superiority that were reinforced through racist portrayals of Filipinos in the mainstream press. Historians Eiichiro Azuma and Dawn Mabalon have both highlighted how these racial ideologies combined with tense class-based relationships between Japanese farmers and their Filipino workers to give rise to conflict in the northern California delta.⁹⁷ In the San Fernando Valley, the extant evidence also points to the complications that arose interethnic romantic intimacies. Although childhood friendships may have been informally sanctioned and even come to occupy sentimental memories, interracial dating and marriage was frowned upon. Bo Sakaguchi recalled one Nisei woman who married a Filipino “that caused some talk among the Japanese community.”⁹⁸ While it is unknown whatever happened to that couple, their transgressions and the “talk” they engendered, illustrated how Japanese immigrants were not immune to the contemporaneous fears about miscegenation and how they were themselves concerned with maintaining their own ethnic boundaries. Although immigrant groups built relationships among each other, whether they were based on economic interdependence or simple friendship, each community fortified itself through various transnational institutions.

Transnational Cultures and Communities

Laura Barraclough provides the most extensive study of how various boosters narratives portrayed migration to the Valley as linear processes where White newcomers arrive from across the US continent and transform the region from an outpost of the Spanish empire to the frontier

⁹⁶ Takeuchi Interview, 21.

⁹⁷ Azuma, “Ethnic Nationalism and Racial Struggle: Interethnic Relations in the California Delta,” in *Between Two Empires, 187-207*; Mabalon, “Toiling in the ‘Valley of Opportunity,’ in *Little Manila is in the Heart*, 61-100.

⁹⁸ Bo Sakaguchi Interview, 10.

of American consumerism.⁹⁹ Yet, the history of the region's Mexican and Asian immigrants reveals how the Valley was the home to various diasporic communities whose educational institutions and political engagement reached far beyond the confines of a single section of Los Angeles. Rhacel Salazar Parreñas and Lok Siu suggest that a diaspora comprises “an ongoing and contested process of subject formation embedded in a set of cultural and social relations that are sustained simultaneously with the ‘homeland’ (real or imagined), place of residence, and compatriots or coethnics dispersed elsewhere.”¹⁰⁰ These three dimensions played out across the Valley's immigrant groups as they balanced the domestic forms of racism with various connections to their migration origins. As Mexicans and Japanese immigrants began to form families, educational and cultural institutions became important centers of life that connected the young second generation to their parents' ethnic heritage and the politics of the worlds they left.

Reflective of Mexican settlements throughout Southern California, the barrios of Pacoima and San Fernando were transnational spaces that provided the stage for different linkages to Mexico. Mexican consuls were particularly powerful institutions that orchestrated and mediated cultural and binational politics for immigrants across the southwest and in Pacoima.¹⁰¹ Alejandro Gómez Maganda came to Los Angeles as the Mexican Vice Consul in

⁹⁹ W.W. Robinson's work best exemplifies this narrative. In addition to *San Fernando Valley Calendar of Events* and *The Story of San Fernando Valley* see *The Fabulous San Fernando Valley* (Los Angeles and Panorama City: Western Federal Savings, c. 1963). He writes: “The valley's rich heritage from the past includes Indians in the prehistoric and early period, Spanish explorers and Franciscan missionaries, revolutionary armies marching in Mexican days, a gold rush, ranchos, rancheros and longhorned cattle, vast sheep and wheat farms run by American pioneers, subdividers, squatters on the land, small farms, orchards, young communities, urbanization, industry, and population explosion” (1). For a deeper analysis of Robinson and his writing see Laura Barraclough, *Making the San Fernando Valley: Rural Landscapes, Urban Development, and White Privilege* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 64-67.

¹⁰⁰ Rhacel Salazar Parreñas and Lok Siu, “Introduction: Asian Diasporas—New Conceptions, New Frameworks,” in Parreñas and Siu, eds., *Asian Diasporas: New Formations, New Conceptions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 1.

¹⁰¹ Gilbert G. González, *Mexican Consuls and Labor Organizing: Imperial Politics in the American Southwest* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999).

1936 and quickly took to embodying the consul's role as a "vital link between the central government and the expatriate community."¹⁰² Within days of his arrival he took to the streets addressing organized Mexican political groups, workers, seamstresses and, making his way north, he spoke to a group of immigrants in Pacoima on topics ranging from the objectives of President Lázaro Cárdenas and the state of Mexican politics in general.¹⁰³ Although the impact of his speech is unclear, that Gómez Maganda even made Pacoima a stop on his busy itinerary indicates how the Mexican community was intertwined with historical contexts beyond the immediate confines of the San Fernando Valley.

Furthermore, consular-sponsored schools served as laboratory for inculcating Mexican American youth with a variety of cultural ethics and mores. These ranged from Spanish language skills and appreciation for the cultural heritage of their ancestral homeland to a deep patriotism for Mexico, refracted through "Porfirian ideals of law and order, obedience and discipline" that bolstered an "urgency to imitate the European experience" in the name of modernization at the expense of the nation's indigenous past.¹⁰⁴ These schools, which lasted largely through the 1920s, were concentrated in agricultural areas and thus, not surprisingly, in neighborhoods in the Valley such as Van Nuys and Pacoima.¹⁰⁵ With only about one hundred students per school, funding became a severe problem ultimately curtailing the existence of most schools, even as the Valley schools were two of the last to close. Although these schools may

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 117.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* and Monroy, *Rebirth*, 204.

not have had a lasting presence in the Valley, their curricula served as a mechanism for Mexican government officials and immigrants to fashion identities and spaces in the diaspora.

Ethnic schools were a particularly important bulwark in preserving Japanese culture in the American West as well a significant site in community cohesion, much in the same way consular schools served as a conduit between Mexican culture, history, and political ideology and the emerging second generation in the Valley. Educational Society buildings, or *gakuen*, served as cultural nexuses that provided language schooling and were often coordinated with instruction on other cultural arts such as *kendo*, or in the case of San Fernando, *judo*.¹⁰⁶ A 1939-1940 community directory published by the bilingual Japanese newspaper the *Rafu Shimpo* three language schools or education institutions - the “Japanese School,” Showa Gakuen, and Sun Land Gakuen - in San Fernando alone; a large language school existed in North Hollywood as well.¹⁰⁷ Mary Sakaguchi Oda from North Hollywood attended on Saturday language school for almost a decade before she went off to college in the late 1930s. Before the ruptures of World War II, Oda recalled, “language school was sort of the center of everything” as it became a community foci for picnics and other gatherings.¹⁰⁸

Yet, language schools were more than just a place to meet. As Eiichiro Azuma points out, the curriculum of language schools was at times deeply contested and represented larger

¹⁰⁶ Valerie J. Matsumoto, *Farming the Home Place: A Japanese American Community in California, 191-1982* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 54. The San Fernando Valley Judo Dojo was established in 1923, “Learn Judo at the CC,” *San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center News* (February 1979), 14 (hereafter, *CCN*). The head instructor was the Issei nurseryman Sego Seigoro Murakami, who led the dojo from 1923 until his retirement in 1969. Notably, he held the impressive *Hachi Dan* rank and was also the head instructor of the Oxnard Dojo (1930-37), the North Hollywood Dojo (1931-41), and the Manzanar War Relocation Dojo (1942-5), Harold Muraoka, “In Memoriam: Sego Seigoro Murakami, February 12, 1896-March 7, 1981,” *CCN* (April 1981), 3. The nursery that bears his name still exists as of 2014.

¹⁰⁷ “San Fernando, Calif.,” in *Rafu Shimpo, Year Book and Directory: 1939-1940* (Los Angeles: Rafu Shimpo, 1939), 234.

¹⁰⁸ Mary Sakaguchi Oda Interview.

debates about Americanization and, reflecting the Mexican consular schools, the transmission of dominant Japanese political ideologies. Much like the consular schools, Japanese schools often used textbooks published in the ancestral nation. Increasingly after the 1920s, schools used texts that emphasized Japanese nationalism and racial pride reflecting Issei consternation about the Nisei's assimilation.¹⁰⁹

Social organizations centered around labor and leisure activities that reflected both the domestic needs of the Issei and the family as well as their desire to retain cultural ties to Japan. Individual farmers' associations existed in San Fernando, Pacoima, Canoga Park/Van Nuys, and Burbank/North Hollywood.¹¹⁰ Shiichiro Sakaguchi, the patriarch of the large Sakaguchi clan of North Hollywood headed up one of the Issei farmers' associations, which helped form ethnic solidarity in the face of anti-Japanese racism.¹¹¹ Meanwhile, Japanese immigrants and their families also established several social and religious organizations such as the San Fernando Aces (a men's club) and their female counterpart, the Acettes; as well as the recreational North Hollywood Seinen Kai.¹¹² Devout Jōdo Shinshū Buddhists formed *howakai*, or gatherings to discuss Dharma teachings with guidance of ministers from the Los Angeles Hompa Hongwanji Buddhist Church.¹¹³

Unlike Mexican and Japanese community activities that sought to bridge their local circumstances with their homeland, immigrant Filipino activism focused specifically upon the

¹⁰⁹ Azuma, *Between Two Empires*, 125-128.

¹¹⁰ "Pacoima, Calif.," "Canoga Park, Calif.," and "North Hollywood, Calif.," *Year Book and Directory: 1939-1940*, 234-41.

¹¹¹ Mary Sakaguchi Oda Interview.

¹¹² "Clubs and Organizations of Southern California," *Year Book and Directory: 1939-1940*, 61-77.

¹¹³ Carolyn Sanwo, "Ninety Years of Nembutsu," in Jack Takeshita et al., *90th Anniversary: San Fernando Valley Hongwanji Buddhist Temple* (Pacoima: San Fernando Valley Hongwanji Buddhist Temple, 2011), np.

politics in the Philippines. Due in part to the sojourning mentality of the immigrants and the lack of a discernable second generation, Filipino organizing emerged out of a shared anti-colonial consciousness that sought to hasten the demise of American rule in the archipelago. Just as Mexican and Nikkei immigrants were attuned to the political climate of their home countries through consul talks or ethnic schools, Filipinos found a conduit to news of the independence struggle through the national organization, the Filipino Federation of America (FFA).

Established two days after Christmas in 1925 by the equally charismatic and controversial Hilario Camino Moncado, the FFA blended patriotism in the cause of Philippine independence with a conservative and moralistic outlook on the lives of Filipinos in the United States. Steffi San Buenaventura, in her corpus of work on Filipino folk religions, has documented how the FFA emerged as a Christian fraternal organization that competed with similar mutual-aid organization such as the Caballeros de Dimas Alang and the Legionarios de Trabajo. The FFA's emphasis on brotherly benevolence and mutual support surely attracted Filipino immigrants in the Valley and elsewhere, given increasingly anxieties over Filipinos as both labor and romantic competition in rural towns and big cities across the state of California.¹¹⁴

However, the political orientation of the FFA catalyzed a great deal of activity among the Valley's Filipinos. The FFA articulated a complex spiritual mysticism and moral code that sought to present Filipinos as worth of independence: the leadership discouraged members from attending taxi dance halls and engaging in any other vice activities from drinking alcohol to

¹¹⁴ For a discussion of ideologies of race, labor, gender and sexuality relating to Filipino migrant workers see Rhacel Salazar Parreñas, "'White Trash' Meets the 'Little Brown Monkeys': The Taxi Dance Hall as a Site of Interracial and Gender Alliances between White Working Class Women and Filipino Immigrant Men in the 1920s and 1930s," *Amerasia Journal* 24:2 (1998), 118-121. On anti-Filipino riots in California see Emory Bogardus, *Anti-Filipino Race Riots: A Report Made to the Ingram Institute of Social Science of San Diego* (San Diego: Ingram Institute of Social Science, 1930) Reprinted in Quinsaat, Jesse, ed. *Letters in Exile: An Introductory Reader on the History of Pilipinos in America* (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press, 1976), 51-62; Eric Martinez, "The Anti-Filipino Watsonville Race Riots: 1930," *Filipino American National Historical Society Journal* 4 (1996): 51.

smoking. Although the organization balked at any form of overt political resistance such as labor strikes, leaders remained determined to inspire in Filipino workers the desire to participate in the independence struggle. At the higher echelons of the organization, leaders such as Moncado attempted to place pressure upon lawmakers to hasten Philippine independence. FFA activities in the San Fernando Valley took place on a smaller, more grassroots level.

Although they lived and worked in the San Fernando Valley, Filipinos who lent their time and energies to the FFA saw themselves as independence –fighters. In the late 1920s, a laborer named Andres Caliboso, who lived in the City of San Fernando with fourteen Filipino immigrants, led the Valley branch of the FFA. In 1929, Caliboso and the San Fernando Valley branch organized a caravan of different FFA representatives from throughout southern California for a state-wide convention at the center of Filipino farm worker organizing and community, Stockton.¹¹⁵ In the following years, the leader of the FFA, Hilario Moncado, became a familiar sight in the San Fernando Valley’s Filipino community. In 1930 when the FFA convened in Los Angeles, the San Fernando branch organized a banquet in honor of Moncado for his vision and leadership. Because the FFA emphasized temperance for its members rather than labor organizing and independence through institutional means as opposed to calls for armed rebellion, various San Fernando city and business leaders also participated in the banquet, such as the mayor and president of the Chamber of Commerce.¹¹⁶ Their presence signified how those in power sought to quell labor militancy in the lucrative agricultural industry of the San Fernando Valley. As the Great Depression deepened, however, the nexus of race and labor reached the point where anti-union forces succeeded in attacking whole communities.

¹¹⁵ “Filipino Band to Accompany Motor Caravan,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 28, 1929, 11.

¹¹⁶ “Moncado Guest at Banquet,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 23, 1930.

Race, Immigration, and Labor During the Great Depression

Despite the continuing productivity of the citrus industry in the San Fernando Valley at the beginning of the Great Depression, the different effects and consequences of the economic crisis nevertheless came to shape the region particularly in regards to labor.¹¹⁷ By 1935, the San Fernando Valley branch of the Los Angeles County Farm Bureau expressed deep about a mounting labor shortage. The aggressively pro-business *Los Angeles Times* argued that workers would rather claim State Emergency Relief Administration assistance rather than do farm labor. Put more bluntly, “This means that a worker who doesn’t like to thin beets or top onions or plant tomatoes can say that he isn’t fitted for the work, can tell the farmer to go jump in the lake and then go get an S.E.R.A. or a direct relief check.”¹¹⁸ What is missing from this account, however, is the larger context of how the Great Depression shaped immigration policy for the vast majority of California’s workers of color.

With economic hardship and labor shortages sweeping across the country and a staggering internal migration of White southerners, midwesterners, and others affected by the Dust Bowl, the fate of immigration policy became a deeply contested political issue. Just as Chinese and Japanese faced exclusion laws in 1882, 1907, and 1924 due to intertwined racism and fears of economic competition, Filipinos and Mexicans bore the brunt of nativist hatred during the Great Depression. Debates over exclusion – now in the form of outright repatriation

¹¹⁷ It should be noted, however, that the motion picture industry developed in the San Fernando Valley during the 1920s and as the Great Depression progressed, providing an important economic engine. RKO, Disney, and Columbia Pictures had all established studios or location ranches in the Valley by 1940, Roderick, *The San Fernando Valley*, 89-90.

¹¹⁸ “Farm Labor Shortage, Due to Relief, Grows in the San Fernando Valley: Crop Losses May Result,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 31, 1935, A7.

and forced deportations – took place in Washington, DC and throughout the Southwest. The effects of those debates reached the San Fernando Valley by the early 1930s

As the Great Depression worsened and rioting against Filipino laborers erupted in Watsonville, California, the movement to exclude immigration from the Philippines gained increasing support.¹¹⁹ In early 1931 Hilario Moncado briefly returned to San Fernando to discuss the growing concern about Filipino exclusion. Speaking in San Fernando, he stated “Filipino exclusion can only be legitimized when it comes concurrently with Philippine independence. Seeking to make aliens of America’s territorials [*sic*] is a slap in the face at the Filipino people.”¹²⁰ Moncado’s speech illustrated the importance of the San Fernando Valley to the geography of the first generation of Filipino immigrants and how their daily lives were tied to larger colonial politics.

In the 1934, the Tydings-McDuffee Act granted commonwealth status to the Philippines and promised independence after ten years. The goal of Filipino exclusion came to fruition. Due to exclusion, the sex imbalance of Filipino migrants, and their transitory nature, a Filipino American enclave never developed in the San Fernando Valley. If one had, its members would have been subjected to continued anti-Filipino racism that led to a repatriation program. Because self-deportation was a voluntary process it failed – *Time* magazine called it a “flop.”¹²¹ The resentment towards Mexicans, however, was far more stringent as a compulsory deportation program sliced through the San Fernando Valley and elsewhere

¹¹⁹ On the 1930 anti-Filipino riots in Watsonville, that lasted for five days, see Celia M. Tsu, *Garden of the World: Asian Immigrants and the Making of Agriculture in California's Santa Clara Valley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 179-180.

¹²⁰ “Filipino Association Prepares to Act,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 11, 1931.

¹²¹ “Races: Philippine Flop,” *Time*, October 3, 1938. See also Rudy P. Guevarra, Jr., *Becoming Mexipino: Multiethnic Identities and Communities in San Diego* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 36-9.

Mexican immigrants and Mexican American citizens were subjected to repatriation campaigns that struck at the very heart of communities across California and beyond. From 1929 to 1939, as Francisco Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez argue, “In a frenzy of anti-Mexican hysteria, wholesale punitive measures were proposed and undertaken by government officials at the federal, state, and local levels. . . . Immigration and deportation laws were enacted to restrict emigration and hasten the departure of those already here.”¹²² As Mae Ngai points out, “Although the Immigration Service neither organized nor funded these repatriations, it encouraged repatriation by generating an atmosphere of fear of deportation” since dragnets and arrests were often based on little more than physical appearance and skin color.¹²³

The Mexican neighborhoods in the San Fernando Valley were not immune from Immigration Service raids and deportations that flaunted the rules of due process and created a precarious atmosphere. In 1931, a few weeks after immigration and local law enforcement authorities announced plans to expunge undocumented immigrants from the city, one particularly devastating raid left an indelible mark on the Mexican American community’s psyche. As the pages of the city’s historic Spanish-language newspaper *La Opinión* recorded, immigration agents swept through the *colonias* of San Fernando and Pacoima on February 18, the holy day of Ash Wednesday. They went door to door and arrested and incarcerated individuals who could not present documentation of their legal status. Since many immigrants passed across the border before the formalization of immigration regulation by the Border Patrol, producing such papers was not an easy task. One eyewitness, María Luna, whose memories were translated by Balderrama and Rodriguez, recollected the events as nothing less than:

¹²² Francisco Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 1.

¹²³ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 72-3.

. . . the day of judgment. The *marciales*, deputy sheriffs, arrived in late afternoon when the men were returning from working in the lemon groves. They started arresting people and holding them in the *rebote*, fronton. The deputies rode around the neighborhood with their sirens wailing and advising people to surrender themselves to the authorities. They barricaded all the exits to the colonia so that no one could escape. Some men showed up at the ball court with their suitcases so they could at least have a change of clothes en route. There were so many arrestees, the fronton was not large enough to hold all the prisoners. We the women cried, the children screamed, other ran hither and yon with the deputies in hot pursuit yelling at them that their time had come to surrender.¹²⁴

This dramatic scene, which along with a highly publicized raid of the historic *La Placita* in downtown Los Angeles, netted just under three hundred immigrants.¹²⁵ Although this number was only a minute fraction of the total number of Mexican and Mexican Americans repatriates that ranged from conservative estimates of 400,000 to one million, it was a significant flashpoint in the Valley's history of race as it left behind a traumatic legacy the struck at any sense of security in the Mexican community.¹²⁶ While this event was orchestrated at several governmental levels, its outcomes set the stage for a longer trajectory of the removal or segregation of people of color in the San Fernando Valley during World War II and in the years afterwards. Furthermore, those arrests reified Mexicans as outsiders and as racial others, rather than individuals who contributed to the productivity of the region's agricultural industry.

Despite the terrors of the Ash Wednesday raids, the Great Depression was also a time of labor organizing. The San Fernando Lemon Heights Company was one of the largest packinghouses in the region, as it supplied fruit to Sunkist (under the Silver Moon and Morning Sun labels), Red Ball (under the Evening Star and Meteor Labels), Orchard Run (under the

¹²⁴ María Luna, quoted in Balderrama and Rodriguez, *Decade of Betrayal*, 71-2.

¹²⁵ Gregory Rodriguez, *Mongrels, Bastards, Orphans, and Vagabonds: Mexican Immigration and the Future of Race in America* (New York: Random House, 2007), 159.

¹²⁶ Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*; Kevin R. Johnson, "The Forgotten Repatriation of Persons of Mexican Ancestry and Lessons for the War on Terror," *Pace Law Review*, 26:1 (Fall 2005): 5.

Ramona Memories label), and Standard (under the Southern Cross Label).¹²⁷ By the time the Great Depression struck Southern California, the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America union attempted to organize Mexican workers at the San Fernando Lemon Heights Company, but in the notoriously anti-union Los Angeles, was unsuccessful. The possibility of disrupting agribusiness hegemony through unionization was so grave that when Philip Bancroft, the anti-labor rancher and son of iconic historian Hubert Howe Bancroft, took his 1938 campaign for the United States Senate to Los Angeles he tackled not only the Lemon Heights case but organized labor and leader Harry Bridges in general. He proclaimed, for example, “The ultimate object is not simply unionization, but the taking over and confiscation of all farms which employ labor. When this is understood it will be easy to see why I regard Bridges as the United States’ undesirable alien No. 1.”¹²⁸ Bancroft’s speech withstanding, the CIO was able to organize a strike, but strikers were generally prevented from returning to work. This episode illustrated not only the animosity towards both organized labor and Mexican workers.

Conclusion

By the time the 1930s wound to a close, the San Fernando Valley was a far different place from what it was even fifteen years earlier, let alone from the time when the railroads were first routed through the eastern region. In the span of time from those early days when the Valley was still ranches and rolling golden wheat fields to the days when labor unrest came to the San

¹²⁷ San Fernando Heights Lemon Association business letterhead, 1937, digitized as “San Fernando Heights Lemon Association Membership Material,” MultiCultural Music and Art Foundation of Northridge, California, CSUN Digital Library, available online at <http://digital-library.csun.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/SFVH/id/3057>.

¹²⁸ “CIO Tactics Criticized as ‘Dictatorial,’” *Los Angeles Examiner*, August 28, 1938 in “Associations – San Fernando” Folder, *Los Angeles Examiner* Collection, Special Collections, Doheny Memorial Library, University of Southern California. See also Barralough, *Making the San Fernando Valley*, 57-8

Fernando Heights Lemon Association, the Valley had become center of agricultural production and in doing so gave rise to new towns and sparked the migration of thousands of immigrants. These immigrants crafted new worlds that were shaped by their treatment under the law, their relationship to the land and agriculture, and political developments in their home countries.

However, as a new era of global war neared, these communities could hardly anticipate the rapid-fire transformations their own people and the San Fernando Valley would soon face. While the agrarian dominance of the Valley remained a central component of the region's economic and cultural identity, war would bring a new, militarized landscape that would, in a sense, repeat many of the same transformations that had begun in the 19th century. New economic opportunities would open, although in heavy industry, not agriculture, causing the migration of whole new employment- and home-seekers. Meanwhile, echoes of the unconstitutional removal of Mexicans from Pacoima and San Fernando would emerge as Japanese Americans would be shunted off into desolate desert camps.

CHAPTER TWO

Belonging and Visibility in the Shadow of War:

The Social World of the Military Industrial Complex, 1941-1956

“Mother” Ada Robinson, a well-known local humanitarian and matriarch of Pacoima’s historic Black community, was one of the five million African Americans who, in the midst of the Second World War, forged a migration circuit that stretched from the rural South, branched northward to industrial metropolises such as Detroit, and for some, culminated in the City of Angels and its sunny neighborhoods in the San Fernando Valley. For Mother Ada, the world she found was a far cry from her balmy home in northern Louisiana, given the expanded opportunities for Black upward mobility within the sprawling military industrial complex that redefined the built and human landscape of the San Fernando Valley. Like many of the 1,700 African Americans who came to the Valley during the war, Mother Ada found employment at Lockheed Vega Aircraft Corporation, an anchor of the local defense industry. Reflecting on this era of her life, she proudly noted, “I had my own canteen.”¹ As she prepared hamburgers, baked pies, and served up countless cups of hot coffee, however, she witnessed another dramatic and largely forgotten consequence of the war that enveloped the Valley. “We could stand at Lockheed and look over there at them,” she recalled. “They had a camp. . . . They had them in prison. . . . They took ‘em from they [*sic*] place, in Los Angeles, and put them out there.”²

The ghostlike figures Mother Ada invoked were likely the hundreds of Japanese and Japanese American families from the San Fernando Valley and surrounding areas who had to

¹ Mother Ada Robinson, Interviewed by Emory Holmes II, May 7, 2002, Northeast Valley Oral History Project, Urban Archives Center, Special Collections and Archives, Oviatt Library, California State University, Northridge, 20 (hereafter Northeast Valley Oral History Project).

² *Ibid.*, 20-21.

report to a processing center in Burbank before heading off to uncertain futures in California's deserts or other rural parts of the interior west or south. For Mother Ada, the sight of the Japanese Americans, "children and all," remained with her for sixty more years. That she recovered such an obscure and tragic chapter of local history, alongside her own personal narratives of economic empowerment reveals the contradictory social and political landscape fostered by the rise of the defense economy as well as the complicated transformation of the San Fernando Valley in the shadow of war.

While popular narratives of the Valley emphasize World War II as a new wave of racially exclusive suburbanization, this chapter expands the brief stories of race, space, and war Mother Ada shared. With almost amazing speed, the war and its aftermath transformed the racial fortunes for three groups of Valley residents – African Americans, Japanese Americans, and Mexican Americans. This chapter elaborates how the events of World War II and the years that followed shaped not only the physical development of the San Fernando Valley, but also conceptions of race that were tied to that very landscape. Specifically, the economic and political ramifications of the war transformed the Valley in three overlapping phases. In the first phase, the Valley's agricultural character began to decline as the construction of defense plants in the east Valley provide vast new employment opportunities for a variety of new migrants including African Americans. Mexican Americans also reaped the benefits of this new economic order, whether they were new migrants or had lived in the Valley for generations, segregated into agricultural labor. These two long marginalized communities used the war, which demanded both laboring bodies in defense plants and soldiers on the frontlines, to rearticulate their places in the racial order of the United States and the San Fernando Valley.

However, Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans in the Valley and across the West Coast bore the deleterious effects of war. In the second phase of transformation, the government's racist campaign of forced removal and mass incarceration of innocent Nikkei changed the Valley in two ways. First, immediately after December 7, 1941, the Department of Justice transformed two Conservation Corps Camps in the San Fernando Valley into enemy alien detention stations. The larger of the two, Tuna Canyon Detention Station, housed thousands of Japanese immigrants, including many from the San Fernando Valley, along with Germans, Italians, and Peruvian Issei. Those Japanese immigrants and their children who were not netted immediately after December 7th hastily evacuated their homes, farms, and other properties and within months the Valley's small, but vibrant, Nikkei community disappeared. Japanese Americans found themselves in themselves in a precarious situation that tested the limits of loyalty and citizenship.

The final phase of development took place after the war ended and as Black, Mexican American, Japanese American White veterans flooded to the San Fernando Valley to make new lives in peacetime. They were joined by thousands of other Japanese Americans who returned to the Valley from the concentration camps. Two unique sets of sites illustrate the complex racialized built environment that offered a potential vision for the postwar Valley. They included the Basilone Homes, an integrated, state-subsidized housing project for returning veterans that was located in Pacoima and three resettlement camps opened for Japanese Americans, colloquially known as the Magnolia and Winona camps in Burbank and the Sun Valley camp. These camps were initially built under the auspices of the War Relocation Authority (WRA) and were later administered by the Federal Public Housing Authority (FPHA). While each site clearly has its own respective history, their stories intersect at nodes of race,

space, and the legacies of war. Both Basilone and the WRA/FPHA camps demonstrated the flexibility of racial discourse as the San Fernando Valley transitioned to a post-World War II order. As the Valley's neighborhoods swelled with new migrants from across the nation, it could hardly return to its pre-War agrarian and modestly industrial past. However, this short window represented a liminal time when municipal officers, local leaders, and everyday individuals had to grapple with the racial landscape that emerged during wartime. Taken together, the circumstances of the war and the post-war period in these three phases of development empowered and disempowered racial communities in very different ways and informed how they claimed the San Fernando Valley as their home.

The Rise of the Military Industrial Complex and Economic Empowerment for African Americans and Mexican Americans

The development of defense industries in Los Angeles in the 1930s hastened the city's brisk growth, which began decades earlier due to the intertwined booms in oil, real estate, housing, and other economic sectors. The construction of factories related to national defense created massive ripple effects that shaped demographic shifts, economic development, government policies, urban planning and social relations in metropolitan Los Angeles and throughout the American West.³ The most visible feature of this new economic order was the factory. Yet, the factories, whether they produced aircraft or jeeps, spawned a variety of secondary housing or service-based economies. This sprawling web of labor and employment

³ Gerald D. Nash, *World War II and the West: Reshaping the Economy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990). Nash refers to a "military establishment" that had been present in the West since the days of European settlement. World War II was a chapter in that much larger history. I use "military establishment" interchangeably with "military industrial complex."

included rank-and-file factory workers, soldiers, scientists, government bureaucrats, construction laborers, and service workers, such as Mother Ada, the canteen manager.

In their sum, these workers and the various sectors they represented, served the roots of what President Dwight Eisenhower labeled the military-industrial complex in his farewell address to the nation in 1961. President Eisenhower warned of an “immense military establishment and a large arms industry [that] is new in the American experience” and argued that, if not carefully checked, this military industrial complex posed “the potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power.”⁴ To be sure, Eisenhower’s address spoke to a nation that, within a single generation, saw World War II, the Korean War, and an escalating Cold War. But the quotidian effects of the rise of a defense economy – felt in employment, housing, metropolitan development and civil rights – began well before World War II in places such as the San Fernando Valley

As the specter of war in Europe became a reality in the 1930s, the defense industry already began to boom on the San Fernando Valley. Lockheed-Vega was established in Los Angeles in 1926, began operations in the San Fernando Valley city of Burbank two years later, and soon became a center of economic activity and a magnet for industrial workers.⁵ Situating a defense plant and airfield in Burbank was ideal since, as the Industrial Department of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce pointed out in 1930, the city sat at the “junction of three lines of the Southern Pacific Railway,” featured “paved highways leading out of the City in five

⁴ Farewell address by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, January 17, 1961, Eisenhower Library; available online at http://www.eisenhower.archives.gov/research/online_documents/farewell_address/Reading_Copy.pdf.

⁵ Arlene Elliot, “The Rise of Aeronautics in California, 1949-1940,” *Southern California Quarterly* 52:1 (March 1970): 1-32; Carol Tuller, *The Story of Burbank from Her Eventful Pioneer Days* (Burbank: Magnolia Park Chamber of Commerce, 1954).

direction,” provided “twenty passenger trains [that] serve Burbank,” and enjoyed “absence of fog and dryness of the air.”⁶ The city of Burbank and other nearby areas such as Glendale were the home to a variety of other airplane or airplane parts manufacturers such as Adel Precision Products, Menasco Manufacturing, Aircraft Accessories Corporation, Air Transport Manufacturing, and Timm Aircraft.⁷ Despite this proliferation, however, Lockheed remained the powerhouse in local industrial development, securing \$46,836,630 in defense contracts in 1940-1941 alone.⁸ The aircraft producer’s presence expanded in the Valley during the war in terms of sheer production and the construction of a new plant in Van Nuys. Needless to say, the growing clout of the Lockheed provided thousands of new employment opportunities for Los Angeles area residents and new migrants, including thousands of African Americans.

World War II, as many fine histories show, catalyzed the Second Great Migration of African Americans into the great industrial centers of the North and the West.⁹ Moreover, popular narratives of the San Fernando Valley written by academics, local history buffs, and boosters alike all privilege World War II as the engine of the region’s physical transformation at midcentury. Yet, with the exception of Josh Sides’ account of Black Los Angeles, the journey to

⁶ C.C. Richards, Jr., “Burbank,” in Industrial Department Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, *General Industrial Report of Los Angeles County, California and Surrounding Communities* (Los Angeles: Author, 1930), np in “Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce (LACC) Papers, Carton 052, Regional History Center, Doheny Memorial Library, University of Southern California; City Planning Commission of Los Angeles, *The Plan for the San Fernando Valley* (Los Angeles: LA Department of City Planning, 1945), 96.

⁷ Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, “Industries Employing Fifty or More Persons in Los Angeles and Metropolitan Region,” *Factual Data Showing the Economic Strenght [sic] of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: The Author, c. 1940-1941), np in Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce Papers, Carton 053, Regional History Center, Doheny Memorial Library, USC.

⁸ “Summary of Defense Contracts,” *Factual Data*, np.

⁹ Kenneth Kusmer and Joe W. Trotter, eds., *African American Urban History Since World War II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), esp. James N. Gregory, “The Second Great Migration: A Historical Overview,” 19-38; Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

the Valley that thousands of African Americans embarked upon is largely lost within larger accounts of Los Angeles.¹⁰ Needless to say, those two narratives were deeply intertwined.

The government's burgeoning military establishment redefined the physical landscape and human geography of previously agricultural areas such as South Gate and Lynwood to the south of downtown Los Angeles and San Fernando Valley neighborhoods such as Van Nuys and Burbank to the north.¹¹ With the construction of defense-related plants in the central and eastern Valley such as Lockheed-Vega, migrants from across the nation, including a significant number of African Americans, migrated west to find lucrative jobs and new housing opportunities.¹² The northeast San Fernando Valley was the primary residential destination for these black migrants because of its proximity to the defense plants but also because neighborhoods such as Pacoima were the only areas that welcomed people of color. The racial segregation of the San Fernando Valley that concentrated in Pacoima began well before the 1940s when African Americans, Mexicans and Asian immigrants settled there to work in the nearby agricultural industry or on the railroads. Its physical geography also reinforced segregation since the flood-prone landscape dashed attempts for commercial and residential development for whites.¹³ While these local

¹⁰ For general accounts see: Kevin Starr, *Embattled Dreams: California in War and Peace, 1940-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); in terms of the shifting terrain of race relations see Kevin Allen Leonard, *The Battle for Los Angeles: Racial Ideology and World War II* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006); Scott Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); and Eduardo Obregón Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

¹¹ Becky Nicolaides, "'A Beautiful Place,'" in *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 185-2-14; D.J. Waldie, *Holy Land: A Suburban Memoir* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996/2005).

¹² On African American migration to the West due to World War II see Quintard Taylor, "World War II and the Postwar Black West, 1941-1950," in *In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1999), 251-277.

¹³ On the destructive history of flooding in Pacoima see Carl A. Maida, *Pathways Through Crisis: Urban Risk and Public Culture* (Lanham, MD: Alta Mira, 2008), 188-90. A massive flood in 1891 halted the plans to build a tourist-friendly and residential district near the railroad, Maida, 188. HOLC assessors in the 1930s noted that Pacoima had "developed upon the location of an old abandoned subdivision which was platted and promoted some

contexts may have provided a foundation for the black community in the San Fernando Valley, civil rights activism at the federal level led to policies that ensured African Americans could equitably tap into the economic boon of the defense industry.

On June 25, 1941, thousands of miles away from the open spaces of the San Fernando Valley, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt signed an Executive Order that altered the direction of the industrial development and social interactions in the Valley. Delivered to the American public after mounting pressure from A. Philip Randolph, Bayard Rustin, and countless other labor and civil rights leaders, Executive Order 8802 sought to “reaffirm the policy of the United States that there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or government because of race, creed, color, or national origin”¹⁴ Executive Order 8802 set into place an inchoate civil rights architecture that included the establishment of the Fair Employment Practices Commission and helped hasten the integration of major war industries. Although civil rights organizers made incursions in Lockheed, Bethlehem Steel, and Ford and their affiliated unions before EO 8802, the struggle for workplace access and equity was far from over.¹⁵

Lockheed Vega became ground zero for the black struggle for economic empowerment in the war industries. In a 1943 issue of *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, the esteemed Black

25 years ago as a high class suburban resort. The enterprise involved the expenditure of considerable capital, but was unsuccessful,” “Pacioma Park.”

¹⁴ Franklin Delano Roosevelt, “Prohibition of Discrimination in the Defense Industry,” Executive Order 8802, June 25, 1941, text available at the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum online at <http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/od8802t.html>. On the creation of the Fair Employment Practices Commission and civil rights more generally see A. Philip Randolph, “Call to Negro America to March on Washington for Jobs and Equal Participation in National Defense,” *Black Worker* (May 1941), reprinted in Quintard Taylor, Jr., ed., *From Timbuktu to Katrina: Readings in African American History*, Vol. 2 (Boston: Thompson Wadsworth, 2008), 65-6; Andrew E. Kersten, *Race, Jobs and the War: The FEPC in the Midwest, 1941-1946* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007).

¹⁵ “Lots More Negroes Are Needed in War Plants,” *Life*, June 15, 1941, 88.

economist and adviser to President Roosevelt, Robert C. Weaver, suggested that “Perhaps the most significant, and certainly the earliest examples of a sound approach to the integration of Negroes in aircraft production occurred at the Lockheed-Vega Plant in Southern California.”¹⁶ To Weaver, the company’s leadership adhered to the integrationist initiatives of the Office of Production Management. However, intransigence from organized labor remained an issue for African Americans. The rise of black workers and the factory administration’s attempts to comply with fair employment laws compelled the powerful otherwise racially exclusive union, the International Association of Machinists (IAM), to momentarily allow African Americans to become members.¹⁷ However, the local eventually stopped issuing union cards to black workers because of the national organization’s racist membership policies.

As they witnessed a new chapter in civil and labor rights activism unfold, members of the Los Angeles Urban League took this opportunity to act on behalf of workers of color and insist upon racial integration in the industrial workplace.¹⁸ This activism combined with the oversight from the FEPC and a wartime labor shortage resulted in Lockheed-Vega gaining a reputation, in the eyes of the *California Eagle* at least, as “the bright spot of local aircraft employment.”¹⁹ The racially progressive newspaper reported that “Twenty Negroes are employed in all branches of skilled work at Lockheed and its subsidiary, Vega” and that any traces of hiring discrimination in the firms were “‘cracked’ by the Allied Organizations Against Discrimination in National

¹⁶ Robert C. Weaver, “Negro Employment in the Aircraft Industry,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 59:4 (August 1945): 608.

¹⁷ Herbert R. Northrup, “Organized Labor and Negro Workers,” *Journal of Political Economy* 51:3 (June 1943): 219.

¹⁸ Josh Sides, *L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 83.

¹⁹ Quotation from John Kinloch, “FEPC Faces Big Task in Bias Probe,” *California Eagle*, October 9, 1941, 3, quoted in *Ibid.*

Defense and President Roosevelt's executive order."²⁰ In a hearing before the FEPC in 1941, Lockheed's director of industrial relations claimed that there were at least 34 African American hired on to do mechanical work.²¹ Two years later, that number skyrocketed to approximately seventeen hundred.²² Because of both the allure of jobs, and in some cases, unionized work, Lockheed Vega quickly became a beacon of economic promise for African Americans and created a migration corridor that stretched from the South to the black urban enclaves of Los Angeles and eventually the San Fernando Valley. The Reverend T.G. Pledger, who came to the Valley in 1942 by way of the Civilian Conservation Corps' Camp Piedra Blanca, near Ventura, California recalled that for African Americans other than domestic work, "the biggest thing out here [in the Valley] was Lockheed Aircraft."²³

During the war, working-class African American women, men, and families came to the San Fernando Valley in droves because of those lucrative employment opportunities in the defense plants. Over 2,000 individuals migrated to the Valley during the war and another 6,000 followed in the next decade.²⁴ This migration stream was far from monolithic and its diversity illustrated the reach and impact of the military establishment. They ranged from scores of

²⁰ Kinloch, "FEPC Faces Big Task," 3. It appeared that Lockheed-Vega ranked among the most equitable plants in Southern California in the judgment of the FEPC when it held hearings in Los Angeles in the fall of 1941. FEPC chair Mark Ethridge found the small Vultee Company "the most negative company toward this investigation of discrimination in industries of any that has been cited here for these hearings." To underscore the committee's findings Ethridge stated "I want this to go in [the] record for the attention of the President," see "F.E.P. Committee Flays Big Defense Industries," *California Eagle*, October 23, 1941, 1, 3.

²¹ "F.E.P. Committee Flays Big Defense Industries," 3.

²² Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 83.

²³ Rev. T.G. Pledger, Interviewed by William Huling, December 22, 1977, Early History of the San Fernando Valley Oral History Project, Urban Archives Center, Special Collections and Archives, Oviatt Library, California State University, Northridge, 21 (hereafter, Early History of the San Fernando Valley Oral History Project).

²⁴ Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 104.

returning veterans to professionals such as engineers and research scientists to defense plant construction workers to teachers for the many children who accompanied, or were born into, this new community.²⁵ Moreover, African American women also reaped the benefits of the new defense economy in the Valley as they worked on factory floors building different types of aircraft.²⁶ Black women, like Mother Ada the canteen manager, also found employment in service work.

In most cases, Black migrants traversed a meandering path that followed military service and employment opportunities in other parts of Los Angeles before eventual settlement in the Valley. The diverse destinations on the journey of Mother Ada and her husband reflected the migration pattern of thousands of other African Americans. Robinson, who grew up in Louisiana where she cared for her formerly enslaved grandparents, came to California in 1942 when her husband found work as a roofer near downtown Los Angeles. Later, he became a janitor at Lockheed and she became employed as a cook. Initially, the couple did not live in the Valley, but in Bronzeville, the name bestowed upon Little Tokyo by its new African American denizens when the government incarcerated Japanese Americans. The couple made their home in an erstwhile Issei hotel in the shadow of City Hall and commuted to Burbank. The couple then briefly lived in Watts, but after Mr. Robinson took a job working in at a pipe manufacturer in the San Fernando area and the couple moved to Pacoima.²⁷ The experiences of the Robinsons encapsulate the tremendous influence that Lockheed and the defense establishment more generally had on the San Fernando Valley's black community. Lockheed equipped African

²⁵ NAACP San Fernando Valley Branch, "Ten Years of Responsible and Responsive Leadership," (Pacoima: Author, 1965), 1 in Container 92, Folder 23, NAACP Region I Records (BANC-MSS 78/180c), Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; Rev. Hillery T. Broadous, Interviewed by William Huling, December 22, 1977, Early History of the San Fernando Valley Oral History Project, 12.

²⁶ Karin L. Stanford, *African Americans in Los Angeles* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 32.

²⁷ Mother Ada Robinson Interview, 21-2.

Americans and, as the following section illustrates, Mexican Americans the tools necessary to accrue a modicum of wealth. Although discriminatory housing practices kept African and Mexican Americans in the east Valley, wages from the defense plants nevertheless provided savings and home ownership that, in turn, laid the foundation for a multiethnic community.

Because of the racial position of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Los Angeles, the war shaped this community in similar but also very different ways than it had for African Americans. Although the history of Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley is deeply interwoven with the Mexican and Mexican American communities, according to historian William Deverell, Whites went to great lengths in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when they “created distance (cultural or personal) between themselves and the Mexican past and the Mexican people in their midst.”²⁸ Through racialized spatial development, labor practices, and city policies Mexican Americans were cast as perpetual foreigners, racial outsiders, and distinctly not a part of the face of modern Los Angeles. Mexican Americans in the San Fernando Valley occupied an ambiguous space where on the one hand, boosters staged elaborate festivals colored by essentialized concepts about Mexican culture.²⁹ On the other hand, Mexicans themselves were restricted by segregation and subjected to forced deportations.

²⁸ William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of Its Mexican Past* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 8.

²⁹ Like many parts of Southern California, the San Fernando Valley’s White civic leaders adopted the “Spanish Fantasy Past” in local celebrations and narrations of the region’s history. A particularly popular practice was the annual fiesta in the City of San Fernando. The *Los Angeles Examiner* regularly sent reporters to the Valley to cover the fiesta and in 1935, the paper wrote that each summer the San Fernando Valley “recount[s] the ticks of time . . . living once again its glamorous past.” For a day, White residents of the Valley could discard the worries of daily life and don “color-splashed repozos, calico dresses, mantillas, sombreros, chaps and spurs.” Meanwhile, the “women-folk will have changed into senoras and señoritas; [the] male population [became] caballeros and hidalgos,” see “Old Mission Scenes,” *Los Angeles Examiner*, June 29, 1935 clipping in “Missions, San Fernando” folder, *Los Angeles Examiner Collection*, Special Collections, USC Doheny Memorial Library. For a more general discussion see Phoebe Kropp, *California Vieja: Culture and Memory in a Modern American Place* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

Within this context, then, World War II offered huge possibilities for the San Fernando Valley's Mexican Americans to overcome those examples of exclusion and oppression. The labor shortages that allowed for the economic mobility for African Americans and women of different races gave the similar boosts to Mexican Americans who, because of their race, had been strictly segmented in the labor market in agriculture and service or domestic industries.³⁰ Furthermore, Mexican Americans, many of whom traced their family roots back several generations in the San Fernando Valley yet remained outsiders to the larger fabric of the region, participated in the military establishment through service in the armed forces. This form of political participation attempted to create a sense of social citizenship following the tragedies of repatriation that rocked the community during the Great Depression.

Like the thousands of migrant African Americans who made their way to the Valley at the beckon of Lockheed, Mexican Americans found new means of employment and avenues towards the middle class. Although in not with the same magnitude of the Great Migration, many Mexicans created a migration pattern from the southwest to the west coast in search of employment. Pedro Beltran, for example, a Chihuahua-born farm worker, came west from El Paso, Texas during the war, lured by the opportunities in the defense industries. However, possibly because of his restricted English-language capabilities he could only find work in one of the more physically demanding sectors at Lockheed, testing tires.³¹

Mexican Americans from the San Fernando Valley, particularly the bilingual second generation armed with the language skills to navigate the workplace, flocked to the defense

³⁰ George Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Life and Culture in Chicano Los Angeles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) and Matt Garcia, *A World of Its Own: Race, Labor, and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900-1970* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

³¹ Pete Beltran, Interviewed by Jorge Garcia, September and November 30, 1995, Latino Cultural Heritage Oral History Project. Given the strenuous nature of his tasks, combined with the lack other workers who would speak Spanish on the shop floor, he eventually left.

plants during and after World War II. Carmen Amper was born in Los Angeles in 1925 and moved to Pacoima when she was less than one year old.³² She relocated in the 1940s to join her husband Valentin in Hollywood, where the two of them lived in a residential hotel. Valentin commuted to the Valley when he secured a position at Lockheed as a riveter. After they saved enough money the couple purchased their own home in Pacoima after the war in 1952.

Born in 1926 to laborers on a ranch in the west Valley neighborhood of Owensmouth (now known as Northridge), Robert Gallardo's life bridged both the experiences of military service and industrial work that shaped the lives of Mexican Americans in the San Fernando Valley. After he dropped out of high school to work full time in the Valley's asparagus fields, Gallardo left agricultural work and enlisted in the Navy at age 17. After returning from active combat, Gallardo availed himself of the GI Bill to attend a trade school and learned furniture upholstery. Soon after, he became an upholsterer at Lockheed, which he recalled as nothing less than "the Cadillac of the airways."³³ Gallardo stayed with Lockheed for thirty more years, and retired in 1989. His sister spent almost her entire working life at Hughes Aircraft, an electronics powerhouse that originally operated in Burbank and relocated to Culver City.³⁴ That Gallardo's sister also found lifelong employment at a defense plant gestures towards the important impact this new economic order had for Mexican American women in the Valley.

The well-known daughter of Pacoima Mary Helen Ponce, who recalled her youth in the east Valley in *Hoyt Street*, recalled how working in the defense industries transformed the

³² Carmen Amper, Interviewed by Emory Holmes II, June 20, 2002, Northeast Valley Oral History Project.

³³ Robert Gallardo, Interviewed by Robert Marshall, July 28, 2003, Latino Cultural Heritage Oral History Project, 30.

³⁴ Allen J. Scott, "The Aerospace-Electronics Industrial Complex of Southern California: The Formative Years, 1940-1960," *Research Policy* 20 (1991): 443. [439-456]; Elleni Sclavenitis, "Hughes Aircraft," *Industrial Los Angeles*, 2011-2013, <http://industriallosangeles.org/sites/hughes.html>.

expectations for and aspirations of young Mexican American women. Elizabet, Ponce's ambitious "career girl" older sister already set her sights on a future beyond the fields and packinghouses and found work as a legal assistant. However, when the war came, "she, like others in Pacoima, went off to work in the aircraft plants, where the pay was good and women got to wear pants."³⁵ In the post-War era, Lockheed continued to proffer opportunities for women to "wear the pants," or rather, become wage earners. As a recently divorced single mother during the 1950s, Ponce herself found employment at Lockheed. While those social identities would invite ostracism in the conservative years following World War II, employment at Lockheed afforded a sense of financial stability for Ponce. Work at the plant shaped the lives of thousands of "daughters, sisters, wives, mujeres [women] who for most of their lives had depended on men."³⁶ She continued, "many of them had never earned money," yet, "the consensus was that girls who could follow a recipe could learn to read blueprints." Ponce's memories of Lockheed show how the transition from agricultural work to industrial labor not only created the conditions for economic security for Mexican Americans but also an opportunity for women to break free from patriarchy. Lockheed was clearly an economic powerhouse for the Valley and its residents of different races and sexes and its presence itself created the opportunities for smaller economies that catered to factory employees.

Entrepreneurial Mexican Americans recognized the economic potential of tapping into the influx of co-ethnics into the defense industry while still catering to the market for Mexican food by agricultural workers. Antonio Calvo, the man who made his way to the Valley after

³⁵ Mary Helen Ponce, *Hoyt Street: An Autobiography* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993/2006), 22.

³⁶ Mary Helen Ponce, "Valley Perspective: As a Factory Falls, Memories of What It Means to Have a Job," *Los Angeles Times*, September 10, 2000, 15.

briefly fighting in the Mexican Revolution, for example, established a small lunch truck that catered to different Mexican laborers in the east Valley.³⁷ By the time the War was well underway, the Calvo family assembled enough capital to open their own restaurant on San Fernando Road – the same major thoroughfare that was the home to various Japanese American businesses. The restaurant, Las Delicias Café, grew throughout the duration of the war, despite constraints such as rationing. With a glint of humor, Calvo’s son Raúl noted, “During the war . . . meat was very hard to come by. I remember my dad had to go out to San Fernando [which] was very rural and there were ranches all over the place where they had dairy cows. And he would go to some of the ranches and they’d slaughter cattle. Whether it was legal or not, I don’t know.” Albeit brief, that transaction illustrated different dimensions of the social and economic world of Mexican Americans in the wartime Valley: Calvo’s small business bridged the traditional concentration of Mexicans in agriculture to the growing numbers of Mexican Americans in defense work.

For African Americans and Mexican Americans, Lockheed occupied a special place in each community’s respective historical consciousness. These communities fondly remembered Lockheed within a framework that equated the opening of the industrial workplace with the promise of material prosperity and American democracy. Ponce suggested that:

Being a Lockheed employee gave folks security and the means to buy automobiles, refrigerators and the ubiquitous bedroom sets that indicated we had arrived. The American dream of home ownership (nothing down!) became a reality for blacks and Latinos. Bedroom towns literally sprouted along San Fernando Road, all the way to Los Angeles. Panorama City had the prettiest tract homes.³⁸

³⁷ Raul Calvo, Interviewed by Rebecca S. Graff, November 3, 2004, Latino Cultural Heritage Oral History Project.

³⁸ Ponce, “Valley Perspective.”

This eulogy for Lockheed reflected an “economy of gratitude” that was central to narratives of the military industrial complex at midcentury.³⁹ Although sociologist Arlie Hochschild’s work ostensibly focused on the relationships between the gendered division of labor and gratitude, her theory is instructive to interpret with the ways in which the Valley’s African American and Mexican American communities embraced the military industrial complex. Ponce herself remarked, “When I had needed a steady, well-paying job, Lockheed saved me and many others from the welfare rolls. And for that I am eternally grateful.”⁴⁰ Lockheed offered regular employment and wages that helped build a consumer-oriented ethnic middle class in the San Fernando Valley that was not possible when Mexican Americans were segregated into low-paying and often exploitative agricultural work. As such, the Mexican American community (and as the next chapter further suggests, the African American and Japanese American communities) began to frame race and civil rights in terms of their class position and relations to the military establishment. Although their participation in defense industries provided a the wages with which they built their communities, military service was an important factor in how Mexican Americans renegotiated their identities during World War II.

For many multi-generational families the war was an Americanizing experience. The need to claim a sense of social citizenship was an imperative for many Mexican Americans, given the ways in which the deportation campaign of the 1930s attacked their community and their collective psyche. While individuals such as Robert Gallardo parlayed his military service into a GI Bill-funded education, the case of David Gonzales demonstrated how Mexican

³⁹ Arlie Hochschild, “The Economy of Gratitude” in D. Franks and M. McCarthy, eds., *Original Papers in the Sociology of Emotions* (New York: JAI Press, 1989), 95-113.

⁴⁰ Ponce, “Valley Perspective.”

Americans saw the war as an opportunity to demonstrate their patriotism to the United States and claim a sense of belonging within the fabric of Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley

Raised in Pacoima, David Gonzales was the brother of Carmen Amper (figure 2.1). As the war efforts enveloped the Valley Gonzales found work at the other industrial titan in the region, Douglas Aircraft. Soon thereafter, however, he enlisted in the US Army. Before he left, he forebodingly told young Carmen that he feared he would not return. “It’s a trend,” Carmen remembered him explaining, “We didn’t know our father. So my son’s not going to know me. But you’re gonna tell him about me.” His prophecy did indeed come true and left Amper, as well as the entire community of Pacoima, a great deal to tell her young nephew. Amper’s brother was locked in combat in Luzon, the Philippines when a bomb fell from the sky in early 1945. In his attempt to extricate his fellow soldiers from the debris, he was shot. As a result of his bravery, the government posthumously awarded him the Congressional Medal of Honor and city dignitaries descended upon Pacoima to honor the valor of Gonzales who has since been celebrated as a cherished son the east San Fernando Valley.⁴¹ A few years after his death the City unveiled a park in Pacoima named in his honor and a military recruiting station was also dedicated in his name.⁴² Nearly 70 years after his death, his memory remains a critical part of Pacoima’s identity, as demonstrated by his inclusion in a local mural highlighting the neighborhood’s multiracial past.⁴³

⁴¹ Amper interview; “Los Angeles’ First Hero Paid Honor by Notables,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 6, 1949.

⁴² “Honor Planned at Playground for War Hero,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 1, 1950.

⁴³ Alex Garcia, “Picturesque Pacoima City Hall Finally Opens,” *San Fernando Valley Sun*, August 4, 2011.

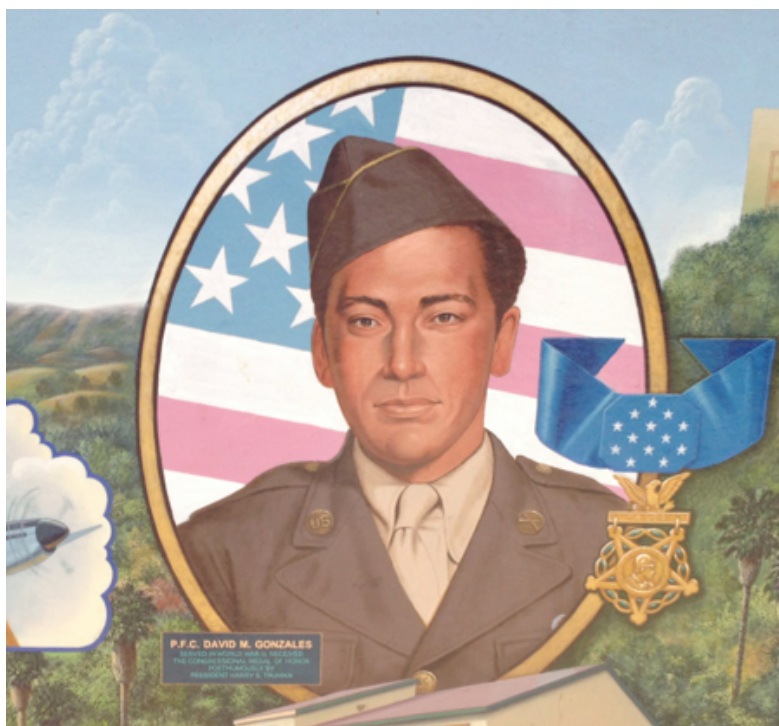


Figure 2.1 Private David Gonzales. Gonzales, portrayed in Pacoima’s City Hall Mural (2011), was killed in the Philippines during World War II. After the mass raids against the Mexican community during the Great Depression, his service bolstered Mexican Americans’ sense of patriotism during the War. Source: photograph by author.

Gonzales’s narrative illustrates how the war created interconnected discourses of nationalism and racialization from the bottom up. To be sure, narratives of heroism and subsequent recognition or legitimization by the government reflect a time-worn strategy that marginalized communities have used to combat racism: to lay down one’s life in service of the nation and thus challenge various forms of racism. However, within the context of the San Fernando Valley and the history of its Mexican and Mexican American population, Gonzales’ lived experiences, the community’s remembrance, and recognition from the city served as a marker in the assertion of space and belonging. Memorialized in the *Los Angeles Times* as “Los Angeles’ First Hero,” Gonzales’s experience not only brought positive attention to Pacoima but also helped establish a narrative of Mexican belonging in and ownership of the east San Fernando Valley. Read within the mutually constitutive contexts of the aggressive marketing

and the segregation of the Valley in the years after World War II, different commemorations of Gonzales produced new forms of understanding the region and who belonged there.

This circumstances of this historical moment allowed individuals who where in a tenuous socioeconomic class to enjoy new earning power and a sense of social belonging. As subsequent chapters demonstrate, the relationships that these communities shared with the defense industries informed civil rights activism in the 1950s, a radical backlash in the 1960s, and, as a response to their decline, toxic racial politics and a divisive secession campaign at the end of the twentieth century. Before moving to those historical moments, however, to fully grasp the reach of the war in the San Fernando Valley, I now turn to the experiences of Japanese Americans. Before the War, Japanese immigrants and their children created an ethnic outpost that was firmly embedded in the multiethnic fabric of the east Valley. However, because of the distinct history of organized anti-Japanese sentiment that existed along the West Coast that collided with wartime hysteria, the fate of Japanese Americans' relationship to the military-industrial complex was far different than their Mexican and Black neighbors. The conditions of World War II allowed other ethnic communities to claim the Valley as theirs, whether through new economic or residential opportunities. That empowerment existed, however, alongside the whole scale removal and demonization of Japanese Americans.

“Look, Even God in Heaven is Crying for Us:” The Politics and Social World of Forced Removal and Mass Incarceration⁴⁴

By the eve of World War II, the Valley’s Japanese Americans fashioned a lively community out of the various racial exclusions they endured.⁴⁵ In addition to the different family farms, nine nurseries were concentrated in Van Nuys, North Hollywood, and San Fernando.⁴⁶ By 1939 small pockets of ethnic businesses existed in the east Valley. Meandering down the artery of San Fernando Boulevard, one could find the Arco Food Center, and ethnic markets bearing names such as Sato, Ban Kee, and Fitzimon.⁴⁷ At that time, the City of San Fernando boasted the largest array of Japanese entrepreneurship with a market, three nurseries, two barbershops, and even a pool hall.⁴⁸ In an instant, this world the Issei and their children created faced near erasure.

The events of December 7, 1941 transformed the lives of the Japanese Americans across the West Coast. Immediately after the bombing of Pu’uloa (Pearl Harbor), Hawai’i, Federal Bureau of Investigation agents began detaining Issei community figures throughout the

⁴⁴ In a 1982 oral history interview, Dr. Mary Sakaguchi Oda recalled that the day that the Valley’s Japanese Americans had to report to an evacuation center, clouds assembled and rain began to pour down. A woman standing next to Dr. Oda uttered those words to her small children, Mary Sakaguchi Oda, Interviewer name not listed, April 23 and 30, 1982, Japanese Americans of the San Fernando Valley Oral History Project, Urban Archives Center, California State University, Northridge.

⁴⁵ The 1940 US Census reported that approximately 1,065 Japanese individuals resided in Valley communities including Pacoima, North Hollywood, Sylmar, Sunland, and Tujunga with around 2,000 more concentrated in the cities of San Fernando and Burbank, and sparse numbers of Nikkei in the west Valley. See Los Angeles City Planning Commission, “Distribution of Japanese: U.S. Census Data 1940,” YRL Special Collections; these numbers do not include the Cities of Burbank and San Fernando. Based on “Information Concerning Citizenship of L.A. County Farmers” Reports, T. Christian Miller ascertained the presence of some 3,177 Japanese and Japanese Americans in the Valley immediately before the War, Roderick, *San Fernando Valley*, 111. Jackson Mayers estimated the presence of some 3,177 Japanese and Japanese Americans living in the Valley on the eve of World War II, *The San Fernando Valley* (Walnut, CA: John D. McIntyre, 1975), 157.

⁴⁶ “Van Nuys, Calif.,” Rafu Shimpo, *Year Book and Directory: 1939-1940* (Los Angeles: Rafu Shimpo, 1939), 234; 239; “North Hollywood, Calif.,” *Ibid.*, 241; and “San Fernando, Calif.,” *Ibid.*, 234.

⁴⁷ “Burbank, Calif.,” *Year Book and Directory: 1939-1940*, 253; “San Fernando, Calif.,” *Ibid.*, 234.

⁴⁸ “San Fernando, Calif.,” *Ibid.*, 234.

Southland.⁴⁹ “Striking swiftly throughout Los Angeles and Southern California,” the *Los Angeles Times* reported, “civilian officers working under the direction of the Federal Bureau of Investigation agents took 500 alien Japanese into custody” on December 8, 1941 alone.⁵⁰

President Franklin Roosevelt demanded the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans through Executive Order 9066, which mandated that “all natives, citizens, or subjects of [Japan, as well as Germany and Italy] being of age fourteen years and upward, who shall be in the United States and not actually naturalized, shall be liable to be apprehended, restrained, secured, and removed as alien enemies.”⁵¹ Japanese Americans themselves met the news of the attack on Pu’uloa with utter disbelief. Bo Sakaguchi was a student at North Hollywood High School at the time and recalled “We were just shocked. It was a devastating day for all of us Something it’s hard to forget; we will never forget.”⁵²

The Issei members of North Hollywood’s Japanese farmers’ association acted with a level of foresight and evaded immediate arrest, however. With the rise of Japanese imperialist ambitions in the Pacific culminating in the bombing of Pu’uloa, the organization’s treasurer, the patriarch of the Sakaguchi clan, along with the rest of “the *Issei* felt that something bad was going to happen,” according to his daughter Mary Sakaguchi Oda. Mr. Sakaguchi’s son, Bo, likewise recalled that “a newspaper publisher in Little Tokyo had written an article suggesting

⁴⁹ “Japanese Aliens’ Roundup Starts,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 8, 1941, 1.

⁵⁰ “Roundup of Japanese Aliens in Southland Now Totals 500,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 9, 1941, 4.

⁵¹ Roger Daniels, “Words Do Matter: A Note on Inappropriate Terminology and the Incarceration of the Japanese Americans,” *Nikkei in the Pacific Northwest: Japanese Americans & Japanese Canadians in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Louis Fiset and Gail M. Nomura (Seattle: Center for the Study of the Pacific Northwest in association with the University of Washington Press, 2005), 192. On the wartime arrests of Italians and Germans in Los Angeles: “Sixty Aliens Held in F.B.I. Roundup,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 10, 1941, 2; “Sixty Aliens Held in F.B.I. Roundup,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 10, 1941, 2.

⁵² Bo Sakaguchi Interviewed by John Allen, November 6, 2002, Densho Digital Archive <http://archive.densho.org/Core/ArchiveItem.aspx?i=denshovh-sbo-01-0002&t=audio>.

that all officers of these farming organizations, Japanese organizations, be placed into US citizens names and a member of the North Hollywood organization, Mr. Higashida read that and really implored on the group to do that.”⁵³ According to Mary Sakaguchi, “my father used my big sister’s name as treasurer,” the Nisei child of the group’s president took over that position and so forth. With the American-born Nisei in place as officers, this deception recalled the resilient strategies of circumventing Alien Land Laws and spared several Valley Issei from detention.

As government agents combed through Nikkei communities to arrest individuals with leadership positions in ethnic organizations, such tactics provided a modicum of relief in the immediate days following December 7, 1941. Language school teachers, judo instructors, members of the clergy, and officers of immigrant associations were subject to interrogation and detention. FBI came to the doorsteps of the large Sakaguchi family, ostensibly on a search for shortwave radios, maps, firearms, or any other items deemed subversive if in the hands of Japanese. The agents, however, then proceeded to grill Chico, the oldest of the Sakaguchi sisters who had the misfortune of, on paper at least, serving as the treasurer of the North Hollywood Japanese farmers’ association. Furthermore, her job as a reporter for the *Kashu Mainichi* a Japanese–language newspaper in Little Tokyo, probably further aroused suspicion. Luckily, the government spared Miss Sakaguchi from arrest and detention.⁵⁴ Her American citizenship and status was likely the determining factor that mitigated the distrust caused by her employment at the *Kashu Mainichi* and spurious position as a farmers’ association officer. In any case, both Chico and several other Issei in North Hollywood were able to remain with their families before the journey to processing centers and, later, concentration camps. Or, as Bo Sakaguchi

⁵³ Bo Sakaguchi, Interviewed by Jean-Paul deGuzman, October 15, 2004, Telling Our Stories Oral History Project, 16.

⁵⁴ Bo Sakaguchi Interview, Telling Our Stories Oral History Project; Mary Sakaguchi Oda Interview.

remembered, “Whereas in San Fernando they didn’t [change the officers’ names] and those people were hauled away and taken away from their families for anything from a year to a period of the war, whereas us North Hollywood people, our families stayed in tact so we were lucky.”⁵⁵ As particular individuals were questioned for their allegedly subversive actions, war authority surveyors swept through the Nikkei-run farms of the Valley, taking note of their residents and crops.⁵⁶

Several other Japanese Americans, however, did not fare as well as the Issei of the North Hollywood Farmers’ Association. As wartime hysteria exacerbated old deep-seated prejudices, otherwise mundane affiliations with different community institutions both in the San Fernando Valley and Little Tokyo cast a thick cloud of suspicion over different individuals in the Valley’s Japanese American community. One such individual included the head of the Higashida clan that lived in North Hollywood.⁵⁷ Nisei James Higashida recalled “Because my dad was active with the Buddhist church, [the government] felt that he was one of the unfavorable so they sent him to Santa Fe, which is a camp outside, which is more restricted. And my brother, [since we] didn’t want my dad to go by himself, so he volunteered to go with him to Santa Fe.”⁵⁸ With the family patriarch shunted away to the military prison-like Santa Fe Internment Camp, operated by the Department of Justice and originally designed to detain Issei from California, the rest of the Higashida family faced an uncertain future as they relocated to Salt Lake City. While the government sent Mr. Higashida to Santa Fe for his allegedly subversive activities, thousands of

⁵⁵ Bo Sakaguchi Interview, 16.

⁵⁶ Roderick, *San Fernando Valley*, 111.

⁵⁷ Year: 1940; Census Place: Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California; Roll: T627_374; Page: 61B; Enumeration District: 60-19, digitized and available through ProQuest Ancestry.com.

⁵⁸ James Higashida, Interviewed by Joseph Kim and Dinah Nghiem, March 24, 2004. Telling Our Stories Oral History Project.

other immigrant Japanese both from the San Fernando Valley and elsewhere were detained in two detention camps within the Valley that up until recently were nearly erased from historical memory.

The Department of Justice and the Immigration and Naturalization Service transformed an old Civilian Conservation Corps camps into a detention and processing center for so-called enemy aliens immediately after the bombing of Pu'uloa. One of the first camps to house enemy aliens was located on the grounds of Griffith Park, located in the corridor that connects the Valley neighborhood of Burbank to Glendale. Originally a 3,015-acre plot of land, donated to the city by the Welsh-born industrialist Griffith J. Griffith in 1896, the eponymous park was entrusted to serve as a "place of recreation and rest for the masses, a resort for the rank and file."⁵⁹ Griffith's intentions were intriguing given that local folklore maintained the land was cursed. Nevertheless, as the federal government's employment programs rolled towards the West Coast during the Great Depression, the Civilian Conservation Corps took charge of a portion of Griffith Park. Camp Riverside, completed in May of 1934, was the home to "hardy [*sic*] C.C.C. enrollees [who] fought forest fires, constructed drainage ditches, and served as shock troops during floods and other disasters, constructed roads, planted trees and made themselves generally useful," as one journalist noted on the eve of an open house to introduce the camp to the wider public.⁶⁰ According to historian Marie Masumoto, Camp Riverside briefly closed and became a recreational outpost for soldiers. After the bombing of Pu'uloa, however, the Army fortified Camp Riverside turning it into an official internment camp for enemy aliens arrested by the FBI.

⁵⁹ Griffith J. Griffith, quoted in Leonard Pitt and Dale Pitt, "Griffith Park," *Los Angeles A to Z: An Encyclopedia of the City and County* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 184. More generally, see Mike Eberts, *Griffith Park: Centennial History* (Los Angeles: Historical Society of Southern California, 1996).

⁶⁰ "Here's Pictorial Preview of Open House at Riverside Camp: C.C.C. to Play Host Over Week-end," *Los Angeles Times*, April 5, 1940, A1-2.

Unlike the better-known concentration camps, internment camps were designed as stations specifically for the detainment of enemy aliens during wartime.⁶¹ Therefore, the general population of the Griffith Park Internment Camp also included a handful of German and Italian nationals. The vast majority of detainees, however, were figures in the larger Southern California Japanese community.

One such figure included Issei George Kumemaro Uno.⁶² Uno was born, ironically enough, on the 4th of July, 1886 in Sendai, Japan.⁶³ Early on, he developed close connections to the United States as he received his education in American missionary schools and was raised a Christian. Unlike many other monolingual Issei, Uno was fluent in English and worked in different Japanese railroad labor gangs across the Pacific Northwest and other Western states after crossing the Pacific in 1906.⁶⁴ Given his bilingual skills he was quickly promoted to foreman, but left the railroads to work with at his uncle Frank T. Domoto's lucrative import-export firm, the North American Mercantile Company based in San Francisco.⁶⁵ A true jack-of-all-trades, Uno continued to hit the road as a florist in Salt Lake City, a travelling salesman

⁶¹ Tetsuden Kashima, *Judgment Without Trial: Japanese American Imprisonment During World War II* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011).

⁶² The following biographical sketch is gleaned from Amy Uno Ishii, interviewed by Betty E. Mitson and Kristen Mitchell, July 9 and July 20, 1973, Los Angeles, CA in Arthur Hansen, ed., *Japanese American World War II Evacuation Oral History Project: Part I: Internees* (Fullerton: California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, 1991) digitized and available through *Calisphere: A World of Primary Sources and More* at <http://www.calisphere.universityofcalifornia.edu/> and government documents specifically cited below.

⁶³ National Archives and Records Administration (NARA); Washington, D.C.; Naturalization Index Cards of the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California, Central Division (Los Angeles), 1915-1976 (M1525); Microfilm Serial: M1525; Microfilm Roll: 106. Accessed through ProQuest Ancestry.com.

⁶⁴ For more on Japanese labor and the railroads Linda Tamura, "Railroads, Stumps, and Sawmills," in *The Hood River Issei: An Oral History of Japanese Settlers in Oregon's Hood River Valley* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 63-74.

⁶⁵ *Crocker-Langley San Francisco City Directory* (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Co., 1927), 1621 digitized by SFGenealogy and available at www.sfgenealogy.com/sanfranciscodirectory/1927/1927_1627.pdf.

across the West Coast selling men's apparel, and, leading up to World War II, an entomologist working for the US government.

Despite his nomadic pursuits, Uno managed to start a family that grew to include ten children. Eventually he settled in Los Angeles and, in the words of his daughter, he ensured his children “were raised in the true American way of living.” The family rarely spoke Japanese in the house, except when the children were in trouble, and Uno and his wife voraciously read about American history and yearned for US citizenship in the face of racially restrictive naturalization laws. Indeed, whereas other Nisei bristled under their duties to attend Japanese language school or learn other cultural practices, Uno's daughter recalled her father admonishing his children that such tasks were “not necessary. That doesn't make a good American. We must be Americans.”⁶⁶

Everything Uno had done to be a “good American” – registering for the draft during the Great War, insisting on the use of English, discarding remnants of his ethnic past, and even working for the US government - unraveled before his eyes in December 1941.⁶⁷ For the FBI quietly and swiftly arrested and brought the man who was born on Independence Day to the Griffith Park Internment Camp. His family speculated that it was precisely Uno's self-projected American identity and English skills made him suspicious in the eyes of government agents obsessed with rooting out Japanese spies and infiltrators. Thus the Issei were placed in a difficult bind: the FBI targeted men like Mr. Higashida because they were leaders in ethnic institutions but also individuals like Mr. Uno for assimilating seemingly *too* easily. Uno's

⁶⁶ Uno Ishii Interview, 45.

⁶⁷ See “U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918 record for Kumemaro Uno,” Registration State: Utah; Registration County: Salt Lake; Roll: 1983913; Draft Board: 2. Digitized by ProQuest Ancestry.com.

daughter Amy suggested, “Of course, later on in his life the English language became a bitter enemy to my father as it was turned against him.”⁶⁸

After the FBI ransacked the Uno household on December 7th, agents whisked the family patriarch away. Held virtually incommunicado by the FBI, the only way Uno’s family discovered his whereabouts was a tip-off from a family acquaintance who told them that several Issei were detained at Griffith Park. Three weeks later, armed with only that brief conversation, according to Amy Uno, “On Sunday morning--instead of going to church--we all jumped in the car. We took toothpaste, soap, washcloths, underwear, pajamas, Hershey bars, chewing gum, and all kinds of things with us, and we took a ride out to Griffith Park.”⁶⁹ When the entire family made it to the park they were greeted by military police guarding the first batch of Issei arrested on December 7th and immediately thereafter. Because the MPs forbade the internees from speaking Japanese the camp was virtually silent. The Uno family, however, used this to their advantage as a means to identify their English-speaking father. Amy Uno recalled:

We were very brave, and very young, so we stood out there on the sidelines of this enclosure and yelled, “Dad, Dad, if you recognize us, put your hands up.” All of us were yelling in unison at these men. Of course, these men were dumbfounded. They didn’t expect a family of young kids to come out and look for them. Of course, my father realized immediately that this couldn’t be anyone but his bunch of kids, so he was waving his hand, saying, “Great.”⁷⁰

From there, the children took turns throwing various toiletries to their father luckily without interference from the military police. That brief moment of relief, however, quickly dissipated when the government transported Uno once again to a special internment camp for enemy aliens in Fort Missoula, Montana. After a handful of unsuccessful attempts to deport Uno back to

⁶⁸ Uno Ishii Interview, 42.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 57-58.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 58.

Japan, he ended up in a Department of Justice internment camp at Crystal City, Texas while the rest of his family were sent to the concentration camps at Heart Mountain, Wyoming and Amache, Colorado.

Uno's life history up to the end of World War II is instructive on many levels relating to both the construction of race as well as the San Fernando Valley. First, his stubborn adherence to claiming an American identity reflected the ethos of some Issei who, unlike other first generation immigrants did not perceive themselves as sojourners or birds of passage. Despite his best efforts, however, and with the coming of the War his all-American worldview proved futile. Furthermore, his confinement at Griffith Park reveals an unsavory chapter in the Valley's history. Whereas people of other races quickly reaped the benefits of the San Fernando Valley's strategic place in the wartime landscape of Southern California, Uno's case demonstrated the opposite side of that coin. Just as the military-industrial complex reshaped the constraints of race, it likewise changed the Valley's landscape in different ways. Although the presence of defense industry factories and new homes for its workers left a lasting imprint on the Valley and were enlisted to paint an eventual portrait of post-War prosperity, the demands of the war combined with outright racism to transform mundane portions of green space or aging CCC camps into carceral sites. While Griffith Park may have been surprisingly visible – given its location in one of the city's largest parks and only a stone's throw from the Lockheed plant – the Valley's other site of confinement was tucked away several miles north.

Unlike the Griffith Park Internment Camp, which only housed about 77 detainees at its height of operations, Tuna Canyon Detention Station processed at over 2,500 enemy aliens (figure 2.2).⁷¹ Built during the first years of the Great Depression, one inspector called Tuna

⁷¹ Marie Masumoto, "Griffith Park (detention facility)," *Densho Encyclopedia* [http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Griffith%20Park%20\(detention%20facility\)/](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Griffith%20Park%20(detention%20facility)/) (accessed May 26 2014); Marie

Canyon, then a Civilian Conservation Corps site focused on local infrastructural development, a “fine camp setup” and praised the productivity of the workers.⁷² INS commandeered Tuna Canyon on December 8, 1941 just eight days later, as the *Los Angeles Times* reported, “the first busload of internees was convoyed to the former C.C.C. camp by a patrol car manned by deputy sheriffs.”⁷³

For Nisei Michi Imai, a founding member of the Valley chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League with her husband Tom, however, Tuna Canyon became the temporary home of her father. December 7, 1941 began like any other day for Mrs. Imai. “Well, the day you had Pearl Harbor my women’s group got together.” She continued that they even “had dinner at a nice restaurant.” Yet, over their meal, they heard the news that Japan had in fact

Masumoto, “Tuna Canyon (detention facility),” *Densho Encyclopedia*
[http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Tuna%20Canyon%20\(detention%20facility\)/](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Tuna%20Canyon%20(detention%20facility)/) (accessed May 26 2014).

⁷² Weston M. Hicks, “Report on Tuna Canyon,” March 18, 1934, in “Materials on California Labor Camps,” Collection Number 493, Box 1, Folder 30, Department of Special Collections, Charles Young Research Library, UCLA.

⁷³ “C.C.C. Camp Houses Aliens: Tuna Canyon Property Commandeered by Army; First Internees Arrive,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 17, 1941.



Figure 2.2 Tuna Canyon Detention Station, c. 1940s. This aerial shot of Tuna Canyon Detention Station, a former Civilian Conservation Corps Camp, captures how the facility was tucked away in the Verdugo Mountains. Even residents in nearby Sunland-Tujunga were unaware that an alien detention camp was in their midst. Source: Little Landers Historical Society.

bombed Hawai'i. "That night," Imai recalled, "my father was taken away."⁷⁴ For Mrs. Imai's father, his greatest offense was his service as the treasurer of a local Japanese association in another part of Los Angeles.⁷⁵ Reflecting the conventional narrative of Nisei perseverance, made all the more evident by their participation in the Japanese American Citizens League, the Imais chuckled as they called her father a "dangerous character." Nevertheless, the detention of Mrs. Imai's father signaled just how precarious the days after December 7, 1941 were for Issei across the Southland.

⁷⁴ Tom and Michi Imai Interview.

⁷⁵ It was unclear if Mrs. Imai's father was the treasurer of a Japanese association in Little Tokyo or elsewhere in Los Angeles.

Other local community leaders were unable to escape the grips of the FBI and found themselves interned at Tuna Canyon. Men and a handful of women who had any connection to Japan and Japanese culture immediately became suspect. Tuna Canyon processed individuals such as the leaders of farmers of business association, language school and martial arts teachers, as well as members of the clergy. Given their stature in Nikkei communities and role as a conduit to non-Western religions, Buddhist and Shinto priests were particularly targeted. According to Buddhist studies scholar Duncan Ryūken Williams, these ministers were “classified by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as the most potentially dangerous of Japanese aliens” and were thus “among the first people arrested by government officials beginning in December 1941. . . .”⁷⁶ In the months following the bombing of Pu’uloa, government agents apprehended the Reverend Daisho Tana, a Buddhist pastor who also taught Japanese language in Lompoc, just north of Los Angeles County. The FBI also collected Rev. Tana’s collection of books and other curricula for the language school. Although they did not bear the same brunt as Buddhist leaders, Christian ministers were also netted such as Reverend Daisuke Hohri who ministered to Methodist Japanese immigrants and their families.⁷⁷ Both men endured the duration of the War behind barbed wire in other detention facilities for enemy aliens.

Because of the transitory nature of these camps, internees had very little knowledge about when or where to the government would next transport them. The only certainty to their experience was their isolation. As he stared out at the undeveloped Tujunga corridor Rev. Tana

⁷⁶ Duncan Ryūken Williams, “Camp Dharma: Japanese-American Buddhist Identity and the Internment Experience of World War II,” in Charles S. Prebish and Martin Bauman, eds., *Westward Dharma: Buddhism Beyond Asia* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 191 [191-200].

⁷⁷ Danica Kirka, “Healing Wounds of War: Archives Tell Story of INS Camps for Civilians Held as Enemies,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 16, 1995, 3.

lamented to his diary, “We are prohibited to go within ten feet of the fence and it is most painful to be cut off from the outside world.”⁷⁸ The only succor authorities afforded the internees were brief visitation privileges from families. Nevertheless, such ephemeral visits could not salve the sheer trauma of incarceration. “After thirty minutes of the visit,” Rev. Tana relayed to his diary, “I can see people’s eyes filled with tears—of those internees who are waving their hands good-bye as their visitors go to the distant parking area.”⁷⁹ Yuriko Hohri was one of those visitors who at the age of 12 joined her grandmother to visit her father from behind the barbed wire. Although “it was a very long distance,” she nonetheless remembered, “I could see my father. And he was weeping.”⁸⁰ Rev. Tana’s diary further encapsulates the pain of the brief encounters: “And those who are in the camp might have just given up but they can only touch their fingertips through the fence when they say goodbye [*sic*]. It makes their visitors appear to pity them. And it seems that the people in my barracks did not feel well after that meeting. I think it is not kindness at all to the internees to let them meet with their families and friends without giving them satisfaction.”⁸¹ Sharing striking similarities to the scene of wives and children hurling toiletries and other goods to their incarcerated loved ones at Griffith Park, these brief meetings provided a fleeting sense of comfort in an otherwise precarious situation. Any chance of further visits, however, were dashed as Executive Order 9066 went into full effect as the government forcibly removed the remaining Japanese Americans to concentration camps in the county’s interior.

After the initial FBI sweep and arrests of various Issei, the demands of Executive Order 9066 forced the remaining Japanese and Japanese Americans throughout Los Angeles County to

⁷⁸ Rev. Daisho Tana, Diary entry for March 15, 1942, quoted in Kirka, “Healing Wounds of War.”

⁷⁹ Quoted in Kashima, *Judgment Without Trial*, 104.

⁸⁰ Quoted in Danica Kirka, “Documents Offer Glimpse of WWII Detention Center,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 14, 1995, 1.

⁸¹ Quoted in Kirka, “Documents Offer Glimpse.”

make wrenching decisions about their property and possessions before they embarked on uncertain journeys that ended at desolate concentration camps, such as the Owens Valley's Manzanar.⁸² The various farms, homes and small business that the Issei and Nisei had built in an attempt to stake their claim in the San Fernando Valley were in danger of theft or complete destruction. With their return remained shrouded in mystery, and only allowed to bring the bare essentials, many Japanese Americans hastily sold their belongings for quick cash.⁸³ Nikkei in the Valley had until March of 1942 to decide what to do with their property.⁸⁴ By the first of April, over 55 Japanese American farms in the San Fernando and neighboring La Crescenta Valleys had passed into the hands of non-Nikkei residents. Some 80 farms in total were confiscated, hastily sold, or entrusted to others.⁸⁵

The large Sakaguchi family fared comparatively well in the melee after the signing of Executive Order 9066. Mary Sakaguchi Oda rushed home from Berkeley where she was a student at the University of California to help her family in the days before the evacuation orders went into effect. Although the Sakaguchis had accrued an impressive amount of wealth before the War – ranging from thirty acres of land to durable goods such as cars - Oda recalled:

Then when the war came along, then we all had to sell within two weeks and my father had to sell everything for nothing practically. And the crops we sold for, I think, twelve hundred dollars, fifteen hundred dollars. I think at that time the doctor bill was about a thousand dollars. You know, seven kids going to the doctor. So we paid the doctor off and there wasn't that much left when we went [in]to camp.

⁸² On the semantics of the wartime treatment of Japanese Americans, see: Daniels, "Words do Matter," 190-214; On Santa Anita, see: Kurashige, *Shifting Grounds of Race*, 131, and Leonard Pitt and Dale Pitt, "Santa Anita Park," in *Los Angeles A-Z: An Encyclopedia of the City and the County* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 452.

⁸³ Valerie J. Matsumoto, *Farming the Home Place: A Japanese American Community in California, 191-1982* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 88-89.

⁸⁴ Jackson Mayers, *The San Fernando Valley* (Walnut, CA: John D. McIntyre, 1975), 158.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

Making a profit of, at best, \$1,500 was not an ideal way to prepare for the uncertainty of camp. However, any profit, modest as it may have been, was significant given the chaotic losses other families endured during this uncertain time.

As a response to the precarious political situation around them, one group of local Japanese Americans banded together to craft a political agenda to steer the community through tumultuous times after December 7th. Within this environment of increasing surveillance, interrogation and persecution of the immigrant generation that a handful of young Nisei established the San Fernando Valley chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League, or JACL, on February 16, 1942, only three days before President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066.⁸⁶ The JACL occupies a monumental and deeply contested place in Japanese American history for its controversial role during World War II.⁸⁷ Established in 1929 by Nisei professionals, the national JACL aggressively promoted a public relations campaign to make the second generation the face of Japanese America. Whereas immigration law rendered the Issei aliens ineligible to citizenship and social norms cast them as foreign others, the JACL sought to generate political capital for the Americanized Nisei. This narrative, as historian Paul Spickard writes, portrayed the Nisei as “well-behaved, hard-working, patriotic, and intent upon

⁸⁶ 1996 Installation Souvenir Program, 1996 Album, San Fernando Valley Chapter, Japanese American Citizens League (hereafter, SFVJACL); “JACL Influence Spreads as More Chapters Join to Strengthen National Body, *Pacific Citizen*, January 1942, 15.

⁸⁷ For an internal history of the JACL see, Bill Hosokawa, *JACL in Quest of Justice: The History of the Japanese American Citizens League* (New York: William Morrow, 1982) and Mike Masaoka and Bill Hosokawa, *The Call Me Moses Masaoka* (New York: William Morrow, 1987). Glen Kitayama, “Japanese American Citizens League,” in Brian Niiya, *Japanese American History: An A-to-Z Reference from 1868 to the Present* (Los Angeles: Japanese American National Museum, 1993), provides a general overview. For a more critical analysis see Paul Spickard, “The Nisei Assume Power: The Japanese American Citizens League, 1941-1942,” *Pacific Historical Review* 52 (May 1983): 147-74 and Lon Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict: A History of Ethnic Identity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002).

assimilation.”⁸⁸ During World War II, under the leadership of the vociferous Mike Masaoka, the JACL undertook the controversial stance of advocating cooperation with mass incarceration. In testimony before Congress, Masaoka argued that the “Citizens League,” as it was commonly known during the War and afterwards emphasizing the legal citizenship of the Nisei, firmly stood against prejudice or political opportunism against Japanese Americans. Nevertheless any critique of racism was muted by Masaoka’s admission that, “If, in the judgment of military and Federal authorities, evacuation of Japanese residents from the West coast is a primary step toward assuring the safety of the Nation, we will have no hesitation in complying with the necessities implicit in that judgment.”⁸⁹ Throughout the War, the JACL’s “behavior of collaboration with the Government,” in the retrospective view of Valley Nisei William Minoru Hohri, wrought deeply rancorous divisions with the Japanese American community that also affected the Valley’s Nikkei community.

Although very few records of the wartime San Fernando Valley JACL survive, the experiences of early members and supporters indicate the controversial legacy of the organization in the history of the Valley’s Japanese American community. As evidenced in other Japanese American communities, the establishment of the Valley JACL marked the

⁸⁸ Paul Spickard, “Not Just the Quiet People: The Nisei Underclass,” *Pacific Historical Review* 68:1 (February 1999): 80. There is a growing historiography that challenges the powerful “quiet Americans” narrative of the Nisei that includes Spickard’s 1999 essay, Glen Omatsu, “Always a Rebel: An Interview with Kazu Iijima,” *Amerasia Journal* 13:2 (1986-87): 83-98, Diane Fujino’s critical autobiographies including *Heartbeat of Struggle: The Revolutionary Life of Yuri Kochiyama* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005) and *Samurai Among Panthers: Richard Aoki on Race and a Paradoxical Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), and her work on the Nisei Progressives (“The Global Cold War, Asian American Radicalism, and Trans-generational Struggles” paper presented at the American Studies Association Annual Meeting, San Juan, Puerto Rico, November 16, 2012).

⁸⁹ Testimony of Mike Masaoka, House Select Committee Investigating Defense Migration, 77th Cong., 2nd Sess. (1942), 1137, excerpted and reprinted as “Japanese American Mike Masaoka Vows to Cooperate with Government Removal Plans, 1942,” in *Major Problems in Asian American History*, eds. Lon Kurashige and Alice Yang Murray (Boston and New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 2003), 295-6.

beginning of the transition of power from the Issei to the Nisei.⁹⁰ As the debates over the fate of the Japanese American community during World War II grew increasingly divisive, the stakes involved in that transition spoke to critical questions about identity, belonging, and loyalty.

Perhaps the most telling example of the complicated role the JACL played during the War, and that laid the ground work for post-war community politics in the Valley, is the case of the chapter's first president. Tom Imai, a Nisei who was raised on a flower farm in the San Fernando Valley served on the board of governors of the Los Angeles JACL went on to serve as the inaugural president of the Valley chapter.⁹¹ Imai and his wife Michi moved into their Lakeview Terrace home on the far northeast edge of the Valley around three months before the bombing of Pu'uloa. Imai remembered a festive installation at the Van Nuys American Legion hall over "spaghetti dinners...with all the trimmings."⁹² Interestingly, even the evening's menu

⁹⁰ Kurashige, *Shifting Grounds of Race*, 108.

⁹¹ Tom and Michi Imai Interview

⁹² "Los Angeles JACL," *Year Book and Directory: 1939-1940*, 69-70; Michi and Tom Imai Interview Imai's interview did not reveal much about the early JACL, whose records from that period are virtually non-existent. Nevertheless, this topic deserves much more attention regarding motivations for establishing a Valley chapter and the dynamics of the transition in leadership. The historic irony that the Valley JACL's first major event took place in a bastion of historic anti-Japanese sentiment is explained by the relationship Imai and the larger Los Angeles JACL shared with the unique Tokutaro "Tokie" Slocum, a young Issei born in 1895 and adopted by a European American family from South Dakota, proudly flaunted his pro-American credentials and, having served in World War I, gained entry into the American Legion (See Brian Niiya. "Tokutaro Slocum," *Densho Encyclopedia* <http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Tokutaro%20Slocum/> (accessed May 26 2014). What is more significant, is how his almost xenophobic political posturing shaped and reflected JACL activities in Los Angeles at the outset of the War. As urban historian Scott Kurashige documented, Slocum derided Issei community institutions as nothing more than "tools of the Imperial Japanese government," and went as far as to claim that Nisei associations were "Jap indoctrinated." His zeal in the promotion of the Americanization of the Nisei led him to become a sought-out spokesperson for the JACL (Kurashige, *Shifting Grounds of Race*, 114). In testimony before the US Senate in 1943, Slocum vigorously indicted at least a quarter of the American born Japanese population as subversive due to the influence of their parents "who are pro-Japanese" and may have been "ex-officers of the Japanese Army or Navy." Ultimately, Slocum urged that those Nisei and Kibei (Nisei educated in Japan), "They can not [*sic*] be trusted. They certainly should be disenfranchised and something done with them, and dispersed along with the others if such procedure is possible." Slocum's audaciously pro-American outlook and demand that Japanese American go to any lengths to prove their loyalty indicates the political tenor of Los Angeles JACL which gave rise to the San Fernando Valley chapter (Slocum was a member of Post 143 of the American Legion, based in Van Nuys, a neighborhood in the heart of the Valley, "Statement of Tokutaro Nishimura Slocum ["Tokie Slocum]," US Senate Subcommittee of the Committee of Military Affairs, January 27, 1943, digitized and available at <http://home.comcast.net/~eo9066/1943/43-01/TL06-6.html>).

reflected the JACL's Americanization ethos since, as Harvey Levenstein points out, by the 1930s the spaghetti dinner, a contribution of another immigrant group, had ascended to the center of the American palette.⁹³

Executive Order 9066, issued just days after the Valley JACLers celebrated their new chapter, set into motion a racial drama that drew the Imais into peril. After FDR signed the evacuation orders and the War Relocation Authority (WRA) established an incarceration infrastructure, the Imais, like many other Valley residents, were eventually sent to Manzanar.⁹⁴ Given his stature as a JACL official, camp administration appointed him Assistant Chief of Police.⁹⁵ When he reflected on their time at the camp, Imai parsed his words quickly and carefully: "We were at Manzanar and uh they had quite a few disturbances there and [Michi and I] were active in the JACL and things."⁹⁶

Those "disturbances" were the historic Manzanar Riots that took place on the evenings of December 5 and 6, 1942. Imai's terse stoicism belies the rancorous event and the deep divisions between camp residents because of the JACL. According to Imai's son Stuart, his father was easily identified as a "pro-government person" and thus "rioters broke into Tom and Michi's barrack."⁹⁷ As the dust settled from the Manzanar Riots, which left two deaths and nine injuries

⁹³ Harvey A. Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993/2003), 29-30.

⁹⁴ Tom and Michi Imai Interview.

⁹⁵ Harlan D. Unrau, *Manzanar National Historic Site, California: The Evacuation and Relocation of Persons of Japanese Ancestry During World War II: A Historical Study of the Manzanar War Relocation Center* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, 1996), 485, 493.

⁹⁶ Tom and Michi Imai Interview.

⁹⁷ Stuart Imai, "Tom Imai Eulogy," January 29, 2011, reprinted as "Reflections on Tom Imai," Official Website of the San Fernando Valley JACL, <https://sites.google.com/site/sfvjacl/hot-news-1/restinpeacetomimai1913-2011/tom-imai-eulogy>

in its wake, authorities scuttled the Imais to an old Civilian Conservation Corps camp in Death Valley and later relocated them to Chicago where they worked in a settlement house for European immigrants.⁹⁸ The American Friends Service Committee eased the Imais' multiple internal migrations, reflective of that organization's larger support for Japanese Americans during World War II, unpopular as it may have been.⁹⁹ After the War, the Imais returned to their modest home and continued their work with and support for the JACL until old age. However, the War remained a defining moment for them and the organization they led as young Nisei. For the Imais, their nascent activism and its repercussions exposed first hand the fissures within the Nisei community. Indeed, when relaying stories of their wartime lives they focused on either the festal (Tom Imai's recollection of the inaugural installation) or the conciliatory (Michi Imai's interjection "And I do want to say that the American friends were super"), rather than the details of establishing an organization that grew into a central place in the Valley's Japanese American political world. Imai's experiences signified the suspicion that the JACL aroused within different quarters of the Japanese American community during the war and for years after.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Tom and Michi Imai Interview. The *Pacific Citizen* reported that the Death Valley camp closed in February 1943 and that "Some of the Death Valley group have been resettled in Chicago where many already have obtained jobs. Others are located at an American Friends Service hostel in the Midwest city." The newspaper sympathized with Imai and his cohort by suggesting that "The Death Valley group, quartered at the Cow Creek CCC were outspoken in their loyalty to the United States and were threatened by the small group of pro-Axis agitators who precipitated the recent rioting," "Death Valley Camp Closed," *Pacific Citizen*, February 25, 1943, 5. For a more general study of Japanese Americans in Chicago during World War II see, Charlotte Brooks, "In the Twilight Zone between Black and White: Japanese American Resettlement and Community in Chicago, 1942-1945," *Journal of American History* 86:4 (March 2000): 1655-1687.

⁹⁹ On the relationship between Quakers and Japanese American Internment see: Theodore Wilbur, "American Friends Service Committee Efforts to Aid Japanese American Citizens During World War II," (Boise, ID: MA Thesis, Boise State University, 2009); Allan W. Austin, *From Concentration Camp to Campus: Japanese American Students and World War II* (Chicago and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

¹⁰⁰ This attitude is difficult to quantify, but as a member of the San Fernando Valley JACL since 2005, I have been privy to various conversations in which older board members have shared how even 70 years after World War II, the view of the JACL as collaborators lingers. Nancy Gohata, who raised in the Valley, served a chapter president in the 1970s and was active with both the Manzanar Pilgrimage and the Redress Movement, shared at a board meeting in late 2012, how her father, an avowed Buddhist, expressed disappointment when she joined the JACL, even though she was joining specifically to support its Redress efforts. Phil Shigekuni, who settled in the

When the war ended in 1945, War Relocation Authority began to release Japanese Americans from the camps. Uncertain of what they might find beyond the camps, thousands returned to the West Coast. For those who migrated to the San Fernando Valley, they encountered, and would participate in, a racial landscape that was very different from the one they had left in 1942. In the next section, I turn to the development of Basilone Homes in Pacoima and Japanese American resettlement camps in Sun Valley and Burbank. All of them were forms of public housing, although the history of Los Angeles' many resettlement camps are often excluded from the history of public housing even though they were administered by the Federal Public Housing Authority. Like Tuna Canyon and Griffith Park, race was a central feature of these sites, and they all contributed to a brief historical moment when the social and physical manifestations of wartime came up against the promise of the post-War era.

The Postwar Housing Crisis and the Social Construction of Race: The Different Manifestations of “Public Housing”

In the years immediately after the end of the war, debates over the role of the city government, housing, metropolitan development, and race played out in the physical landscape of the Valley. Owing to the profound role of defense production, the region was poised to become an industrial powerhouse. Yet, its enduring agricultural character and suburban potential added greater complexity to development. Because of this, the racial identities forged from the circumstances of World War II were called into question and transformed once more by planners, civic leaders, and people of color themselves.

Valley after the War, also worked on the Redress Movement and led the Valley JACL in the 1970s and has expressed on numerous occasions the contrition the JACL has had to evince to atone for its treatment of the draft resisters.

During the late 1940s and early 1950s the San Fernando Valley was the laboratory for two important experiments in housing and race: the integrated Basilone Homes public housing complex and the WRA/FHPA camps for returning Japanese Americans. These sites were experimental inasmuch as they represented the *uncertainties* posed by the racial and economic changes wrought by World War II. These gambles centered on their distinctly racial (and integrated, in the case of Basilone) populations as well as their status as state-operated institutions in a city increasingly characterized by privatized suburban sprawl and an aversion to any project that could be construed as “socialist.”¹⁰¹ Furthermore, both were sites where racial identities existed in flux given residents’ racial positioning during World War II and the immediate post-War period.

The Black exodus to Los Angeles did not cease when the war ended in 1945. The Valley became a destination for many veterans attracted to temporary, but integrated, GI housing at Basilone Homes in Pacoima and Rodger Young Village in Griffith Park. . Hillery T. Broadous, for example, was a retired veteran and shipbuilder, who set his sights on opening his own business as a barber. In 1946 Broadous, his wife Rosa, and their young family arrived in Los Angeles after they left their home in Arkansas and spent some time in Oregon; less than two years the family relocated to Basilone Homes, which was a key site in the establishment of a Black presence in the northeast Valley.¹⁰²

After the war, a small number of African American professionals contributed to the diversity of the Black community and the growth of Pacoima. Ray Carter left a teaching position

¹⁰¹ Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press), 36-40.

¹⁰² Rev. Hillery Broadous Interview; Mother Rosa Broadous, Interviewed by Emory Holmes II, June 7, 2002, Northeast Valley Oral History Project; Virgie W. Murray, “Broadous Funeral Set for Saturday,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 16, 1982, A1.

in Alabama after he discovered a huge pay disparity between Black and White teachers. In 1949, he packed up and headed to west where members of his family had settled in the northeast Valley and jobs at Lockheed-Vega beckoned. Carter recalled his “stress” upon arrival at Los Angeles’ Union Station when he found out that Pacoima “wasn’t on the map.” He continued, “I got my luggage and stuff [and] went to the information booth. They done look, look, look . . . [and] there was no Pacoima. They tried to send me to Pomona.”¹⁰³ Eventually, Carter made it to the San Fernando Valley and this experience, stressful at the time and slightly humorous in retrospect, encapsulated the fate of Pacoima and its black community.

In the span of just over a decade, World War II, the Cold War, and a new generation of African Americans and other communities of color transformed Pacoima from what the Home Owners Loan Corporation labeled in 1939 as a collection of “old residences” where “goats graze in the streets” to a growing destination for migrants seeking property and prosperity.¹⁰⁴ Tied together by their Southern roots and varying relationships to the military industrial complex, these people reveal the diversity of migration experiences of the newest faces in the northeast Valley. The range of migrants that reshaped the human geography of the Northeast Valley informed the struggle for housing and the contours of community building throughout the post-war period. After the war ended, African Americans and Japanese Americans cultivated the roots community in two temporary housing projects.

Faced with the staggering housing needs of returning veterans, war workers, and other migrants, Los Angeles became engaged in a heated and rancorous public debate over residential

¹⁰³ Ray Carter, Interviewed by Emory Holmes II, March 22, 2002, Northeast Valley Oral History Project, 6.

¹⁰⁴ Quotations are from “Pacoima Park (Los Angeles County, CA)” Security Map, Home Owners Loan Corporation (March 1939): digitized in “T-RACES: a Testbed for the Redlining Archives of California’s Exclusionary Spaces,” Richard Marciano, David Theo Goldberg and Chien-Yi Hou: accessed online at <http://salt.unc.edu/T-RACES>.

development that spoke to the future character of the city.¹⁰⁵ In 1946, Whittier College social scientist Charles B. Spaulding conducted a brief, but instructive, study of housing in Los Angeles.¹⁰⁶ His findings noted that the City's fragile housing situation was the result of poor residential opportunities for communities of color that existed well before World War II and were exacerbated by wartime housing shortages. The growth of the city's Black population was particularly dramatic. Whereas Los Angeles was home to approximately 75,000 African Americans in 1940, that number rose to 171,209 in 1950, and then skyrocketed to 334,916 in 1960, representing a stunning 95.6 percent growth.¹⁰⁷ Meanwhile, the resettlement of Japanese Americans from the concentration camps posed further constraints when they returned to what was left of their previous homes and farms. Others returned to their small businesses, of which many African Americans took over in Little Tokyo, or Bronzeville, as it was known during the war.¹⁰⁸ As the war came to a close, the Japanese Americans were no longer considered threats to national security and approximately 23,000 Nikkei returned to Los Angeles County (representing a decline from their pre-War population of 37,000).¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Don Parson, *Making A Better World: Public Housing, the Red Scare, and the Direction of Modern Los Angeles* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006).

¹⁰⁶ Charles B. Spaulding, "Housing Problems of Minority Groups in Los Angeles County," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 248 (1946).

¹⁰⁷ 1940 statistics from Spaulding, "Housing Problems of Minority Groups," 220. For the 1950 and 1960 numbers see: Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations, *The Urban Reality: A Comparative Study of the Socio-Economic Situation of Mexican-Americans, Negroes, and Anglo-Caucasians in Los Angeles County* (Los Angeles: Author, June 1965), 1 in Box 2, Folder 2, Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission collection of surveys, reports, and other material, Collection no.0427, California Social Welfare Archives, Special Collections, USC Libraries, University of Southern California.

¹⁰⁸ Kariann Akemi Yokota, "From Little Tokyo to Bronzeville and Back: Ethnic Communities in Transition," (M.A. Thesis, University of California, Los Angeles, 1996); Hilary Jenks, "Bronzeville, Little Tokyo, and the Unstable Geography of Race in Post-World War II Los Angeles," *Southern California Quarterly*, 93:2 (Summer 2011): 201-235.

¹⁰⁹ Spaulding, "Housing Problems of Minority Groups," 220, 224.

Within these overlapping contexts, the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA), an agency established during the Great Depression, began to develop public housing complexes to alleviate overcrowding.¹¹⁰ In its effort to build public housing projects such as Ramona Gardens, Pico Gardens, and several other sites after World War II, HACLA aroused the ire of the real estate industry. During this brief window, struggles for public housing in Chavez Ravine and other sites in the city proper existed alongside the rapid suburbanization and segregation of metropolitan Los Angeles, especially in the San Fernando Valley.¹¹¹ A small pocket in the northeast Valley also made headlines, as it became the home to small, but significant, experiments in integration and public housing.

As the city began to settle into the new post-War order, the Los Angeles City Council designated \$100,000 for the construction of the Basilone Homes, a public housing complex for veterans, in Pacoima (figure 2.3).¹¹² According to Don Parson's study of state-subsidized housing in Los Angeles, \$850,000 from the California state emergency housing funds and \$3.5 million from the Federal Public Housing Authority also bolstered construction.¹¹³ Named in honor of World War II Congressional Medal of Honor recipient Gunnery Sergeant John Basilone, an Italian American soldier from New Jersey, the housing project hosted 1,500 units and, due to the employment pipeline between retired soldiers and the defense industry, was

¹¹⁰ Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 115.

¹¹¹ On the Chavez Ravine struggle, particularly its architectural dimensions, see Thomas S. Hines, "Housing, Baseball, and Creeping Socialism: The Battle of Chavez Ravine, Los Angeles, 1949-1959," *Journal of Urban History* 8:2 (1982): 123-143; for a perspective on Mexican American agency in the Cold War context see, Ronald W. Lopez, "Community resistance and conditional patriotism in cold war Los Angeles: The Battle for Chavez Ravine." *Latino Studies* 7:4 (2009): 457-479.

¹¹² Parson, *Making A Better World*, 85-6.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 86.

located within 5.1 miles of Burbank.¹¹⁴ Basilone Homes, based on a set of surplus barracks originally from Washington State, was located near Hansen Dam, a flood control basin built in 1938 after a particularly destructive deluge.¹¹⁵ Although authorities designed Basilone as a temporary housing site, its significance lay in how it set the stage for residential settlement and struggles to come.

The inaugural residents moved into Basilone in 1946 and began to build families and homes. Two years later veteran Hillary Broadous, his wife Rosa, and their children moved in, after they faced rejection from an integrated public housing complex in Aliso Village due to a lack of space. Within a few years of their arrival, a small town developed around Basilone. Broadous, went into the ministry after the War and recalled that they “had a doctor’s office, drugstore, dentist, barber shop, theater, and everything . . . anything, but a church.”¹¹⁶ Years later his wife, or “Mother” Broadous, as she eventually became known in Pacoima, recalled that “we even started a congregation of non-denomination . . . and we were all kinds and colors.”¹¹⁷ Moreover, Basilone Homes likewise included a school for the children of residents and thus provided opportunities to Black teachers.¹¹⁸ Despite the community that Black Pacoimans build in Basilone Homes, race continued to shape the image of Basilone Homes and larger discussions of the future development of the San Fernando Valley.

¹¹⁴ “New 1500-Unit Veteran Housing Project Planned,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, June 17, 1946, A1.

¹¹⁵ John J. Kileen, “The Mystery of the Hansen Dam Barracks on the Hansen Dam Property in Pacoima, Los Angeles County, California,” *Proceedings of the Society for California Archaeology* 20 (2007): 4.

¹¹⁶ Rev. Hillery Broadous Interview.

¹¹⁷ Mother Broadous Interview, 30.

¹¹⁸ Priscilla H. Owens, “Pacoima,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 23, 1954, A5.



Figure 2.3 Basilone Homes, 1949. A surprise bout of snow hit Basilone Homes, an integrated veterans housing facility in 1949, three years after it opened its doors. Source: Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles, Southern California Library/Online Archive of California.

Photographs of adults and children at Basilone offer a window into which the ways HACLA constructed ideas about race and who was the most deserving of public housing. Children played a large role in the character of Basilone. Many of the surviving photographs of the complex taken by the Security Pacific National Bank or HACLA feature images of children smiling in school assemblies, at “clean ups” or even parades of young drum “majorettes” around the housing complex.¹¹⁹ Privileging images of children and families assuredly reflected the post-War baby boom. But, they might also be read as tools by the HACLA to demonstrate who deserved public housing: veterans and their families. Photographs of disciplined youths engaging

¹¹⁹ Photographs from the Housing Authority of Los Angeles, Southern California Library for Social Research, digitized and archived at the Online Archive of California.

in community service and parades of their older brothers in their finest military uniforms, combined with the understanding that Basilone Homes was a temporary housing complex, signified the making of good suburban neighbors who contributed to America's victory and not a commune of government-dependent socialists, an image promoted by critics of non-veteran public housing. Significantly, race likewise played a role in these images. Although photographs of the school assemblies may have been integrated, images of adults remained segregated. With this, HACLA portrayed a harmonious picture of life in the Valley's integrated veterans housing complex without commenting on the possible future of integrated private developments even though residents themselves such as Mother Broadous recalled reasonably amicable race relations.¹²⁰

Basilone Homes was intended as a temporary facility and funding difficulties hastened its closure in 1954.¹²¹ Pacoima, and Los Angeles more generally, encountered new housing difficulties and some 900 families from Basilone as and Rodger Young Village faced eviction.¹²² Although Broadous began earning good money as a barber and actually moved out of Basilone before it closed, he remained in the Valley to shepherd a new church the he established with his wife in 1955. Broadous recalled that many Black veterans had already gained a taste of the employment opportunities the Valley could offer and stayed in the area. However, as the next chapter explores, they did not, or in most instances could not, leave the neighborhood of Pacoima and moved into the privately developed Joe Louis Homes.¹²³ The story of Japanese Americans and public housing shares several similarities and many differences as the story of Basilone

¹²⁰ Mother Rosa Broadous Interview, 30.

¹²¹ "To Remove Veterans' Families," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 22, 1949, A3.

¹²² "900 Families Need Homes By Year's End," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, December 17, 1953, C5.

¹²³ Rev. Hillery Broadous Interview.

Homes. While Basilone Homes offered returning veterans a glimpse of the opportunities of the San Fernando Valley despite enduring anxieties over public housing, Japanese American resettlement remained constrained by many of those same concerns as well as abiding anti-Japanese prejudice.

Despite varying hardships, many Japanese Americans slowly returned (or migrated anew) to the northeast Valley due to racially restrictive covenants elsewhere in Valley.¹²⁴ Finding homes was a difficult, given the wartime housing shortage, racial discrimination, and since many Nikkei no longer maintained the same pre-War level of wealth, modest as it may have originally been because of the dispersion of personal assets before migration to the concentration camps.

Like Japanese Americans across the West Coast, some Valleyites were lucky enough to find benevolent European American neighbors or others to maintain their property, while other families, particularly those who rented land, came home to financial and material ruin.¹²⁵ San Fernando Valley JACLers Tom and Michi Imai, after their harrowing journey from Manzanar to and then Chicago, eventually returned to their Lakeview Terrace home.¹²⁶ They were two of the lucky ones as Mr. Imai recalled with a bit of laughter, “We had a very nice . . . real estate man in San Fernando. He took care of renting this place and we got money in the bank when we got back.”¹²⁷ Frank Emi, a noted draft resister who was incarcerated at Leavenworth Penitentiary in Kansas, recalled “my parents had a couple houses where they lived before the war and had

¹²⁴ “Say Hello To...” *CCN* (September 1988), 15.

¹²⁵ Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Distant Shore: A History of Asian Americans* 2nd Edition (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1998), 393, 405, Matsumoto, *Farming the Home Place*, 88-89, 156-7.

¹²⁶ By 1946, the Imais were listed at their Lakeview Terrace Home in the California Great Register of Voters (as Republicans). See State of California, *Great Register of Voters* (Sacramento, California: California State Library, 1946), digitized and available at ancestry.com. California, Voter Registrations, 1900-1968 [database online]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2008. They lived in that same house until a few years before Mr. Imai’s death in 2010.

¹²⁷ Tom and Michi Imai Interview.

rented out and the management company had taken care of it for us so we had a place to come back to.”¹²⁸

Unfortunately, others entrusted their lands to far less scrupulous individuals. “My folks . . . said that [returning to their San Fernando home] was terrible,” remembered Chiyoko Muto Shibuya “because the neighbor let people rent [the] main house and they did not take care of the house; it look[ed] like [a] forest.”¹²⁹ Then there were those who had to outright sell their property at a rate far below the actual value before they left for the assembly centers and concentration camps. These families returned to very little, and, as local historian Lawrence Jorgensen wrote, “one hell of a lot of people did ‘real well’ as a consequence of the forced sales and or the transition in land ownership.”¹³⁰ One of those people was a North Hollywood resident by the name of Rasmussen. The large Sakaguchi family reached an agreement with Rasmussen whereby he would maintain their home and pay rent on the property. However, less than one month into their incarceration, as Mary Sakaguchi Oda recalled, “he didn’t pay any rent. And then somebody else rented it and they never paid a cent of rent. So, we were gone for about three and a half years, and they used the land, they had lived in our house, didn’t pay us rent.”¹³¹ By far, the pre-War Nikkei enclave in the Valley was a skeleton of its previous self and

¹²⁸ Frank Emi, Interviewed by Amy Emiko Murase Ikeda and Peter Ngotngamwong, November 8, 2004, Telling Our Stories Oral History Project, 29. For more on Emi’s wartime resistance see Emi, “Resistance: The Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee’s Fight for Justice,” *Amerasia Journal* 17:1 (1991): 47-51 and William Minoru Hohri, with Mits Koshiyama, Yosh Kuromiya, Takashi Hoshizaki, and Frank Seishi Emi, *Resistance: Challenging America’s Wartime Internment of Japanese-Americans* (Lomita, CA: the Epistolarian, 2001).

¹²⁹ Chiyo Muto Shibuya, Interviewed by Yen Hoang, Burbank, CA, April 9, 2004, *Telling Our Stories*-CSUN; The Muto family resided at 10743 Foothill Boulevard, “San Fernando,” *The Year Book and Directory, 1939-1940*.

¹³⁰ Lawrence C. Jorgensen, “View from the 17th Floor,” in *The San Fernando Valley Past and Present* (Los Angeles: Pacific Rim Research, 1982), 234.

¹³¹ Mary Sakaguchi Oda Interview.

thousands of Japanese Americans, rather than returning to their homes, farms, nurseries, or small businesses, settled into rows upon rows of metal trailers.

In addition to the loss of real property, Japanese Americans had to contend with lingering anti-Japanese sentiment reinforced through rumors of the “luxuries” of the concentration camps and stories about the atrocities committed by the Japanese Imperial Army.¹³² Such prejudices informed a variety of social relations. Roy Muranaka, for example, grew up in the Valley immediately after the war and stated “remember being stoned walking home from school at times, if I walked the wrong way or wasn’t careful where I went, always being taunted. My sister used to beat up some kids to protect me cause I was getting picked on in grammar school.”¹³³

In addition to the sharp bitterness such mundane interactions could arouse, racism remained institutionalized through racially restrictive covenants and Alien Land Laws.¹³⁴ Japanese Americans, then, faced great challenges in finding housing upon their return to the Valley and the rest of Los Angeles.¹³⁵ Reflective of the general dearth of housing in Los

¹³² See Brian Niiya. “Return to West Coast,” *Densho Encyclopedia* <http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Return%20to%20West%20Coast/> (accessed May 26 2014) and, more generally, Greg Robinson, *After Camp: Portraits of Midcentury Japanese American Life and Politics* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012). A common anti-Japanese sentiment was that while the rest of the country saved, rationed, and did without for the war effort, camp residents were treated to a bounty of foods. This was not the case and many of those incarcerated reported various illnesses due to the food and punishing climates in areas such as the Mojave Desert, the home of Manzanar.

¹³³ Roy Muranaka, Interviewed by Machiko Uyeno, March 21, 2004, Telling Our Stories Oral History Project.

¹³⁴ Kevin Allen Leonard, “‘Is That What We Fought For?’ Japanese Americans and Racism in California, The Impact of World War II,” *Western Historical Quarterly* 21:4 (November 1990): 463-82. Although restrictive covenants shaped Japanese American urban history, such practices did not have the same impact as they did on African Americans, 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), 102-3. The Japanese American Community Center’s *Community Center News*, regularly printed biographies of Nikkei elders in the Valley and alluded to restrictive covenants facing Japanese Americans and other People of Color beyond the City of San Fernando in the biography of “pioneer” Fujino Mizushima, “Say Hello To...” *CCN* (September 1988), 15.

¹³⁵ Spaulding, “Housing Problems of Minority Groups in Los Angeles County,” 224.

Angeles County, the War Relocation Authority with the Federal Public Housing Authority constructed emergency housing for Japanese Americans throughout the Southland. A series of retrofitted Army barracks and trailers in the San Fernando Valley housed particularly distressed families. These camps contained around 100 trailers each and were available for purchase.¹³⁶ From 1945 to 1956 approximately 5,000 Japanese Americans lived in two sprawling government trailer camps located in east Valley neighborhoods of Burbank and Sun Valley.¹³⁷

The longevity of the temporary resettlement camps is a testament to the ways in which the racialization of Japanese Americans took place in the San Fernando Valley after the war. Despite the eventual abrogation of legal structures that stood as obstacles to Japanese and Japanese Americans in the late 1940s and early 1950s – such as the Issei’s ineligibility to citizenship, discriminatory Alien Laws, and racially restrictive covenants – the Valley’s Nikkei still needed shelter in the resettlement camps.¹³⁸ The need for the camps, the racial battles that accompanied their construction, and the difficulties Japanese Americans faced in their attempts to leave illustrate the changing manifestations of racism that were often encapsulated in the relationship between race and development.

Public animosity towards Japanese and Japanese American resettlement began well before the end of World War II. In 1944, when Tuna Canyon was still in operation, the San Fernando Valley Chamber of Commerce mobilized a resolution that called on Congress to thwart

¹³⁶ Niiya, “Return to West Coast.”

¹³⁷ Marc Iglar, “40 Years Later, Japanese Seek Reunion of Camp Veterans,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 4, 1986, A6, A11.

¹³⁸ In 1948, the US Supreme Court handed down *Shelley v. Kraemer*, which ruled the enforcement of restrictive covenants unconstitutional. In that same year, the court also determined that Alien Land Laws were unconstitutional in *Oyama v. California*. The 1952 McCarran-Walter Act provided for the naturalization of Issei.

any attempt at resettling Japanese Americans in the Valley.¹³⁹ A year later, on the same day that the *Pacific Citizen* reported a case of possible arson directed at two Japanese American homes in the Belvedere neighborhood of East Los Angeles, it likewise covered the Burbank City government's showdown with the WRA over Nikkei resettlement. As he claimed that land leased to the military during the War was needed for "recreational facilities," City Manager Howard Stites called on the "Army to vacate the premises immediately," lest Burbank become the home to a large concentration of Japanese Americans.¹⁴⁰ The City Council raised concerns about competition for housing in general and the possibly deleterious impact of integrated Japanese American in the schools. However, any pretensions that unease stemmed from the need for recreational facilities or concern about school children were undermined when the City Manager freely argued that housing Japanese Americans in that portion of Burbank city limits violated the terms of land deeds that excluded people of from the neighborhood. City Council member Horace V. Thompson was even more blunt in his assessment of the resettlement situation: "Our Japanese citizens are returning and have been accepted," he stated. But ultimately, "we don't want any dumping of large groups in our community."¹⁴¹

A year later, even as the government went ahead with their plans for the camps, Burbank residents' views did not soften. "It is unthinkable that any progressive group of educated people or government agencies," stated a petition against the camps, "should establish such a slum even temporarily."¹⁴² The ire that these 87 petitioners expressed through the word *slum*, even before the camp was built, is particularly instructive regarding attitudes about race and urban

¹³⁹ "San Fernando Opposes Return of Evacuees for Duration," *Pacific Citizen*, February 26, 1944, 8.

¹⁴⁰ "Burbank City Seeks to Bar Housing Plan," *Pacific Citizen*, October 6, 1945, 3.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² "Housing of Evacuees Protested in Burbank," *Pacific Citizen*, November 3, 1945, 2.

development in the Valley at this time period. As the struggles over public housing revealed, discourses of “blight” or urban decay, that dated from the 1920s and took center stage after World War II, animated often-vitriolic campaigns to either dislocate ethnic neighborhoods or prevent the settlement of people of color.¹⁴³ Although the protests clearly spoke to lingering anti-Japanese sentiment, the rhetoric these petitioners deployed reveals an even more fascinating story about the intersection of the construction of racial identities and metropolitan space.

Within this context then, the Burbank petition represents the larger historical pivot point for the city and the San Fernando Valley more generally. Was it to flourish as a residential development for Whites, or would it include a “slum” which connoted poverty, density, crime, and ramshackle structures? While a vocal group of individuals made their opposition to the camps well known, the emphasis on the potential for slum conditions to take root in the Valley reflects a curious transformation in the popular construction of Japanese Americans. One of the major ironies of the camps and the rancor they catalyzed, is the location of one of the larger camps that often appeared in the Japanese American ethnic press, Winona (figure 2.4). Built on Army land, Winona was literally across the street from the Lockheed Air Terminal in Burbank, a citadel of defense industry development and innovation in the San Fernando Valley. Fears that the camp would serve as a harbinger of slums, rather than a threat to national security clearly reflects Japan’s pacification but also a brief moment where Japanese Americans were racialized alongside other people of color since “slums” and “blight” were commonly deployed in a racially

¹⁴³ Mel Scott’s *Cities Are For People: The Los Angeles Plans for Living* (Los Angeles: Pacific Southwest Academy, 1942) represents a planning perspective on urban blight. For more on the discourses of blight see Avila, “The Spectacle of Urban Blight: Hollywood’s Rendition of Black Los Angeles,” in *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight*, 65-105.

coded grammar in debates over urban development.¹⁴⁴ Simply put Japanese Americans and their potential slum would threaten property values.



Figure 2.4 Winona Trailer Camp, 1946. The national newspaper of the Japanese American Citizens League, the *Pacific Citizen*, often covered the experiences of residents at Winona. Source: *Pacific Citizen*.

Nevertheless, despite the vociferous objections the WRA camps went ahead and families moved in immediately after the end of the War. On November 5, 1945, the first families settled into one of the Burbank barracks, known as the Magnolia Camp. The *Pacific Citizen*, which diligently tracked the divergent paths of returning Japanese Americans noted that the initial 35 families, or 130 individuals, had been residents of the pre-war Valley and all returned from the

¹⁴⁴ For more on the genealogy of “blight” as a concept in urban planning see Rachel Weber, “Extracting Value from the City: Neoliberalism and Urban Redevelopment,” *Antipode* 34:3 (Summer 2002): 519-540.

same concentration camp at Heart Mountain, Wyoming.¹⁴⁵ Despite the opposition to the camp, the Burbank Council of Church Women and a handful of ministers welcomed the “evacuees” as they were known in the mainstream and even the vernacular press. One of the families that found their way to the Burbank WRA camps was the Muraoka clan that had tilled the soil of a rented North Hollywood farm before the war.¹⁴⁶ Harold Muraoka, a youngster at the time, later explained, “my grandparents lost their farm and everything prior to the war. They did not get anything return[ed] back.”¹⁴⁷ While organizing a reunion of the trailer camp residents in 1986, he also recalled that after the war, “It was very frightening. We didn’t have any place to go, and we were broke.”¹⁴⁸

The construction of these camps and the hostility accompanied them marked a significant moment in the history of the construction of racial identities within the rapidly changing San Fernando Valley. While the presence of camps facilitated the rehabilitation of the pre-war community they also spoke to the changing definitions of Japanese Americans. Both individuals and community institutions participated in this renegotiation. Take for example, the way that the JACL newspaper, the *Pacific Citizen*, which balanced stories critical of racial prejudice with an abiding belief in American democratic values, covered the San Fernando Valley returnees. Reporters quoted at length “one of the leaders of the returning group who declared: ‘We are glad to get back to California. Most of us lived here all our lives before Pearl Harbor. We are loyal

¹⁴⁵ “Returning Evacuees Move Into Temporary Units at Burbank,” *Pacific Citizen*, November 10, 1945, 2. On the role of the *Pacific Citizen* and its editor, Larry Tajiri, in crafting a Japanese American political consciousness, see Greg Robinson, *Pacific Citizens: Larry and Guyo Tajiri and Japanese American Journalism in the World War II Era* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2012).

¹⁴⁶ Harold Muraoka, Interviewed by Yen Hoang, Northridge, CA, April 9, 2004, Telling Our Stories Oral History Project.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Marc Iglar, “40 Years Later, Japanese Seek Reunion of Camp Veterans,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 4, 1986, A11.

Americans. We are victims of the war but we feel no resentment.”¹⁴⁹ Much like the way in which Valley JACL leaders Tom and Michi Imai framed their wartime experience, this message conveyed conciliation and optimism. The *Pacific Citizen* originally reflected a sense of sanguinity for post-war race relations and concluded its report on the opening of the Burbank camp with this picturesque scene: “Nearly 40 children were included in the returning group. Shortly after arrival, while their parents rested in their new quarters, the children frolicked in their new surroundings and soon were joined by a few white children living in the neighborhood.”¹⁵⁰ This narration, combined with the words of the “leader” of the evacuees, explicitly attempts to jettison any of the wartime prejudices and makes a plea for post-war harmony. In contrast, Muraoka, who shared his memories a generation later to journalists and oral historians, called to mind the losses and trauma of the war. To be sure, the *Pacific Citizen* was itself a microcosm for the internal politics of the Japanese American community at large, with liberal editor Larry Tajiri pursuing a civil rights orientation while the national JACL favored the creation of a historiography predicated on Nikkei perseverance and wartime valor.¹⁵¹ But, for the purposes situating Japanese American history within the Valley, these conflicting interpretations of the first moments of resettlement cast a shadow over the community’s development in a historically multiethnic neighborhood in an increasingly segregated metropolitan region for generations to come.

Indeed, although national attitudes towards Japanese Americans may have slowly changed as the 1950s neared, the housing situation for the Valley’s Nikkei remained precarious. As the Winona camp made headlines in both mainstream and ethnic periodicals, it became a site

¹⁴⁹ “Returning Evacuees Move Into Temporary Units at Burbank.”

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Robinson, *Pacific Citizens*.

of debates over resettlement, housing, and the role of the government played. As early as March 1946, the WRA sent eviction notices to the residents of the Winona and Magnolia camps in Burbank, with plans to expedite the transformation the former location into emergency housing for all races.¹⁵² That plan did not immediately come to fruition. Rather, just a few months later, the number of residents at Winona spiked dramatically. As the number of returning Japanese Americans in Los Angeles County continued to swell, the WRA moved to expand Winona for at least 800 returning Japanese American families.¹⁵³ Due to a lack of coordination between the WRA, FPHA and the office of the Los Angeles County Superintendent for Charities, the new facilities lacked electricity, sanitary utilities, and kitchens. Of the few trailers equipped with stoves, one of them caught fire. County charitable agencies provided food for the initial group of evacuees, while the staff of the large Olive View sanitarium served as cooks. In response to the debacle, the Superintendent for Charities told the *Los Angeles Daily News*, “We were prepared to open up the trailer camp . . . but without notifying anyone the WRA trucked several hundred Japanese to the Burbank camp . . . and just dumped them there.”¹⁵⁴ This lack of infrastructure that compounded the existing housing crisis in post-war Los Angeles drove Los Angeles County Supervisor John Anson Ford to draft a Board resolution calling on the Interior Department to extend WRA operations in the County.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² “W.R.A. Orders 522 Nisei to Leave Burbank Camp,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 23, 1946, A3.

¹⁵³ “800 Moved to Winona Camp Find Facilities Incomplete,” *Pacific Citizen*, May 18, 1946, 1.

¹⁵⁴ Arthur J. Will, quoted in the *Los Angeles Daily News* and reprinted in “800 Moved to Winona Camp Find Facilities Incomplete.”

¹⁵⁵ Historian Shanna Berenstein writes that Ford “did not oppose internment itself, but he did express fear that the United States’ failure to act with restraint toward the internees would jeopardize the war effort. He urged U.S. attorney general Francis Biddle to resist being persuaded by people who viewed internment as an opportunity to remove Japanese Americans, since treatment of this problem ‘may have a very marked effect on the attitude of the hard-pressed millions of China’” who were a key ally, *Bridges of Reform: Interracial Civil Rights Activism in Twentieth Century Los Angeles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 76; “Los Angeles Supervisors Ask Interior Department to Keep WRA Offices Open in County,” *Pacific Citizen*, May 18, 1946, 2.

Coverage of the Winona incident rocked the Japanese American community as well. *Pacific Citizen* columnist Bill Hosokawa argued that the “tragic” placement of some 800 Japanese Americans into the unfinished portions of Winona was a “depressing commentary on the final stages of the evacuation’s aftermath.”¹⁵⁶ Hosokawa’s conclusion emphasized the gravity of the Winona case as he stated “The failure of the government to provide for the return of these people in peacetime in the same efficient, clockwork manner in which they were torn from their homes is *an indictment of a nation*” (emphasis added). The politically daring tone of the this piece is all the more poignant given that some twenty years later, Hosokawa was a key architect of the national JACL’s campaign to blunt criticisms of institutional racism and portray the Nisei as acquiescent “Quiet Americans.”¹⁵⁷

Although Executive Order 9742 ended the War Relocation Authority in June 1946, the Winona camp showed very few signs of closing, even as Japanese American elsewhere seemingly fared well in returning to society. In 1947, an editorialist in the pages of the *Pacific Citizen* lauded just how far the physical vestiges of the concentration camps had slipped into the pages of history: the WRA had largely disbanded, the actual camps were “mostly dismantled,” and the Topaz barracks became veterans housing. “And most important of all,” the editorial suggested, “practically all of the [relocation] centers’ 110,000 [former residents] have resettled in private life.”¹⁵⁸ Although resettlement was far from the clean cut as the editorial suggested, its congratulatory tone pivoted upon the Winona residents. “Only one group of those 110,000

¹⁵⁶ Bill Hosokawa, “Winona Incident,” *Pacific Citizen*, May 25, 1946, 5.

¹⁵⁷ Bill Hosokawa, *Nisei: Quiet Americans* (New York: Morrow, 1969); for criticism, within the context of the Asian American Movement, see Yuji Ichioka’s review in *Gidra*, January 1970, 17.

¹⁵⁸ “Winona Residents,” *Pacific Citizen*, April 26, 1947, 4. All subsequent quotations in this and the following paragraph are from this source.

persons today remains as the last remnant of relocation center [life]. Today, at Burbank California are nearly a thousand persons living in a trailer camps, still unable to find housing.”

The 197 families, or approximately 1,000 individuals, faced an uncertain future as the camp neared the end of its lease. A survey of the families indicated the level of ambiguity the future held: 155 families flatly stated they had no housing options if the camp were to close. The *Pacific Citizen* estimated that only about 27 families “have assurance of housing in other places.” Responses to the curious survey question, “Do you wish to move with the group?” were even more indicative of both the lingering effects of the camp experience as well as the psyche that shaped the post-War Japanese American community in the Valley. A little over half of the nearly 200 families stated that, when forced to move, they would want to move with the rest of the Winona residents. Only 19 families wanted to venture into the Southland alone. Bearing this mind, the *Pacific Citizen* opined, “The degenerative effects of camp life have not worn off yet.” The editorial ambiguously concluded with the historical ironies of the camp experience: “The perverse sort of security that the relocation centers provided has proven, in the long run, to be one of the worse effects of the entire relocation camp program.” Ending on this note, it is unclear if the editorialist was castigating the government or the residents of Winona themselves for their anxieties in returning to mainstream society. Regardless of the author’s intent, what remained significant for the future of the Japanese American community in the Valley was the “serious hardship” the families would face upon the closure of Winona.

By the end of 1947, the government hastened the closure of Winona as the land upon which the trailers sat neared its lease expiration. Government planners and enterprising residents themselves floated a variety of plans including extension of the lease, moving the entire site nine

miles away, and relocating the camp to a the back lot of a theater only four blocks away.¹⁵⁹ Ultimately, a large portion of veterans families were relocated, once more, to temporary government housing at the Los Cerritos trailer camp in Long Beach.¹⁶⁰ Others found private housing in nearby areas. Nisei veteran George Wada and Nori Yonemura, leased a five-acre portion of land nearby and the remaining Winona residents were able to move their trailers to the new plot.¹⁶¹ This last group of about 350 individuals was disproportionately comprised of children – nearly half of the population – and received further assistance in their transition from the American Friends Service Committee. This step towards “private” housing – inasmuch as the government was no longer overseeing the new trailer camp – signified the slow transition to replanting the roots of the Japanese American community in the San Fernando Valley. As one of the social workers with the AFSC stated, the ability to move out of the camp, but alongside fellow former evacuees was a “wonderful dream out of a horrible nightmare.”¹⁶²

The dearth of housing was indeed so pressing that the WRA camps remained open for years after the initial eviction notices placed in 1946. The Sun Valley camp closed in 1948 and the last of the Burbank camps remained open until 1956 when the remaining residents were able to purchase or rent homes in the east Valley.¹⁶³ Residents of the Sun Valley camp later went on to buy property in the area that became the Sun Valley Japanese Community Center in 1952.

¹⁵⁹ “Three Plans Advance for Future of Winona Project,” *Pacific Citizen*, June 7, 1946, 1.

¹⁶⁰ Los Cerritos camp in Long Beach was an integrated public housing complex that included many returning veterans, see “Returning Nisei to Resettle at Long Beach,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 21, 1945, A1; Jim Matsuoka, Interviewed by Martha Nakagawa, May 24, 2010, Interview Segment 14, Densho Visual History Collection.

¹⁶¹ “Winona Trailer Camp Group Begins One Last Move to New Site in Burbank Area,” *Pacific Citizen*, November 15, 1947, 3.

¹⁶² Helen Sawa, quoted in “Winona Trailer Camp Group Begins One Last Move to New Site in Burbank Area.”

¹⁶³ Iglar, “40 Years Later.”

While the specific points of arrival for each of the residents of the Winona, Magnolia, and Sun Valley camps remains unclear, given the rapid development of the Japanese American community in and around Pacoima in the 1950s and 1960s, it is safe to say that the pre-war enclave that had become infused with middle-class African Americans and Mexican Americans owing to the defense industries proved an attractive destination. The formative experiences of pre-war community building, wartime dislocation and incarceration, and liminality of the WRA trailer camps shaped a cultural civil rights agenda for a younger generation of Nisei.

Conclusion: Changing Landscapes and Conceptions of Race

The coming of World War II unequivocally transformed the physical and human geography of Los Angeles in the span of just a few short years. From South Gate and Lynwood on the southern edges of the city to the San Fernando Valley located at the far north, new defense industries and residential developments mushroomed throughout the city and county. The exigencies of wartime and the rise of the military industrial complex produced deep contradictions in terms of the construction of race and social citizenship. New economic opportunities in defense industries facilitated the migration of thousands of African Americans to the West who slowly became integrated into the national body politic. Mexican Americans, on the other hand, who had deep roots in the Valley, likewise used the newly integrated industrial workplace as a means of economic empowerment that marked a departure from their previous concentration in agricultural labor. Furthermore, for Mexican Americans the war signaled an Americanization process that fostered the rise of a Mexican American political consciousness.¹⁶⁴ Meanwhile, political figures, agricultural interests and the news media demonized Japanese

¹⁶⁴ Sanchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Life and Culture in Chicano Los Angeles*; Ignacio M. García, Hector P. García: *In Relentless Pursuit of Justice* (Houston: Arte Publico Press of the University of Houston, 2002).

Americans as treacherous Yellow Perils despite the best efforts of the all-American *Nisei* generation. Expanding the geographical reach of these analyses provides greater nuance to the wartime history of the Valley, which is largely characterized by the rise of defense industries and suburbanization, and provides context for the differential civil rights strategies communities deployed in the post-War period.

The juxtaposition of Tuna Canyon, Griffith Park, Basilone Homes, and the WRA trailer camps demonstrates the construction of race as it played out against a rapidly changing landscape. Tuna Canyon and Griffith Park most directly represented the culmination of anti-Japanese prejudice that enveloped the West Coast. In the span of a few years, however, the US vanquished Japan and both ethnic leadership and the government used examples of the valor of the all-Japanese American 442nd Regimental Combat Team to demonstrate the full extent of Nikkei Americanization. Yet, Japanese Americans who found homes in the WRA camps were far from the model minorities that dominated discussions of race by the 1960s. Rather, they faced lingering prejudice and as White residents of the Valley feared that the concentration of Japanese Americans and the relative poverty in which they lived might tarnish the burgeoning prosperity wrought by the defense industries. Similarly, the construction of Basilone Homes emerged from and represented a brief moment in San Fernando Valley and Los Angeles history where discourses of race and housing intersected. The fact that Basilone Homes was specifically for veterans partly may have ameliorated larger anxieties against public housing, yet it ultimately did not signal the end of segregation in the Valley. Taken together then, these case studies capture the rapid changes in the landscape of the Valley and the concomitant malleability of race in the immediate post-War period. Basilone Homes and the WRA/FPHA camps offered people of color a brief opening into the San Fernando Valley. In spaces such as Basilone Homes,

residents forged a vibrant community; yet, the promise of post-War prosperity remained circumscribed by race.

CHAPTER THREE

“They’d Fence the Valley:”

Racial Exclusions, Community-Building, and Cold War Activism, 1955-1964

World War II transformed the social geography of portions of the east San Fernando Valley, as African Americans rushed to new integrated veterans housing in Pacoima while Japanese Americans returned from dismal concentration camps. In the neighborhoods of Burbank and Sun Valley, they attempted to make homes in ramshackle trailer camps. For both the Black veterans and Japanese evacuees, their housing situation was temporary and thus their future in the Valley was difficult to anticipate. However, very little could have rivaled the shock that the historic African American newspaper, the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, and the Nisei-oriented *Pacific Citizen* delivered to their audiences in the Valley in the summer of 1947.

The *Sentinel*'s front-page expose, “They’d Fence the Valley,” and its counterpart in the *Pacific Citizen*, uncovered a nefarious plan by the presidents of the different chambers of commerce in the Valley to “cover every lot, every foot, every inch of land . . . with race restrictive covenants.”¹ Significantly, the *Sentinel* emphasized how the racial covenants would affect Asians, Native peoples as well as African Americans and offered this trenchant critique of the logic (or lack thereof) by the chamber of commerce presidents that undergirded racial exclusion:

Men [such as those who advocated covenants] have short memories of course.

They couldn’t be expected to remember the dark days after Pearl Harbor or the fact that the anti-aircraft unit that was stationed there to protect them and their precious homes was a Negro Unit.

¹ “They’d Fence the Valley,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, June 19, 1947, 1.

Of course, they've forgotten the bravery exhibited by the Neisi [*sic*] units in Italy²

With the juxtaposition of these two distinct racial groups, the *Sentinel* protested the insidiousness of racially restrictive housing covenants through racializing African Americans and Nikkei on a level register, predicated upon their participation in World War II. This editorial gestured towards the tradition of engaging in military service to demand political rights as it undermined predictions about racial hostilities within the context of post-War Los Angeles.³ Although the plan to completely layer housing restrictions upon the San Fernando Valley did not necessarily come to fruition, this moment of racial solidarity expressed in the *Sentinel* and re-circulated in the *Pacific Citizen* revealed both the post-war anxieties that the influx of these two racial groups caused and the potential for a shared critique of racial oppression.

This chapter demonstrates how, despite the *Sentinel's* vision of a united front for the Valley's Black and Nikkei populations, each community's post-War political histories were far more complex than that single article could have envisaged. As the article rightly suggested, the participation of African Americans and Japanese Americans in World War II provided them a moral arsenal with which to combat racism and lay claim to the post-war promise of a good home, material prosperity, and integration into the San Fernando Valley. Yet, to underscore active combat service elides the other dimensions of each community's overlapping relationships

² *Ibid.*

³ Contrary to popular assumptions, a race war did not occur when Japanese Americans returned to Little Tokyo, which African Americans had rechristened as Bronzeville. Scott Kurashige writes "Opportunistic white politicians and sensationalistic corporate media outlets raised public alarm that the return of Japanese Americans occupied by Blacks would incite a riot. Through projects such as Common Ground, African American and Nisei leaders worked with their respective communities to promote interracial education and forums for cross-cultural interaction," *Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 158. Hillary Jenks argues that although the attempt to cultivate "Little Bronze Tokyo" was fraught with tension, ultimately "Bronzeville ceased to exist less from disputes between African and Japanese Americans than as a result of racist spatial practices by local government" (e.g., the construction of the Los Angeles Police Department headquarters), "Bronzeville, Little Tokyo, and the Unstable Geography of Race in Post-World War II Los Angeles," *Southern California Quarterly* 93:2 (Summer 2011): 201.

to the military industrial complex, the development of the San Fernando Valley, changing concepts of race, as well as socioeconomic class.

At the heart of this chapter is how African Americans and Japanese Americans claimed the San Fernando Valley as their own. It builds from the previous chapter that examined how World War II threw the Valley into a state of flux where people of color were both attracted to and expelled from the region. In the aftermath of those demographic transformations, Pacoima became a point of entry for these groups given its history as one of the very few integrated neighborhoods in the San Fernando Valley along with its proximity to nearby defense industries. Both groups pursued a liberal civil rights agenda that coalesced around a critique of historical and contemporary forms of racial oppression: alien land laws, wartime dislocation and incarceration, and racially restrictive housing covenants. Their strategies were both literal - through fair housing activism - and figurative - through inscribing ethnic histories and institutions onto the Valley's landscape.

Yet, differences *within* each community shaped the divergence of political and cultural activism between African Americans and Japanese Americans. Neither group was homogenous and they differed over issues born of their wartime experiences: class and migration. As the previous chapter detailed, the Japanese American community in the Valley did not face a linear trajectory of incarceration and resettlement into private homes, but, lacking wealth and assets, found themselves in a state of limbo, as they lived in state-run barracks and trailers. The fact that the last of the War Relocation Authority, and later Federal Public Housing Authority, camps closed in 1956, a full 11 years after the end of the War, indicated the level of hardship and lack of capital that some Japanese Americans faced. This community, which still included a discernable working-class character, was concerned with restoring a basic sense of normalcy and

returned to the mixed race portion of Pacoima to build community institutions that, in their own implicit ways, were acts of political resistance. As the 1960s dawned and fair housing activism swept across the Southland, a handful of professional Japanese Americans did break through the racial barriers and integrated portions of the San Fernando Valley, yet the east Valley institutions remained a site of ethnic politics and cultural work.

Unlike post-War Japanese Americans who held historic roots in the east Valley, the rapidly growing African American community was largely comprised of members of the Second Great Migration of World War II. In addition to the numbers of rank-and-file factory workers who found lucrative employment opportunities in Lockheed-Vega and subsequent defense industries, this cohort included several professionals that were likewise tied to the military industrial complex. As Laura Barraclough noted in her study of the San Fernando Valley, this initial group of migrants tended to have greater education and social capital than Black communities found in other parts of Los Angeles. This community had the personal finances and middle-class aspirations to seek out new suburban homes in the integrated portion of Pacoima as well as the lily-white areas of the Valley as well.

The historic patterns of settlement by people of color in the east Valley, socioeconomic class, wartime and postwar migration, and relationships to the military industrial complex collided as the San Fernando Valley became a primarily middle-class, racially exclusive suburb. Out of these various contexts, African Americans and Japanese Americans produced paths of activism that overlapped, departed, and overlapped again. In this chapter I first trace how Japanese Americans launched a political agenda that used ethnic culture and local history to enact a critique of the historical traumas of incarceration and the literal erasure of their community. The collective movements to establish community centers, religious institutions,

and memorials were deployed as a strategy that foreshadowed the historic redress and reparations movement of the 1970s and 1980s, one of the topics of chapter five. Then, I move to the African American civil rights movement and explore how community leaders likewise concerned themselves with the politics of visibility, but executed activism that pivoted upon their collective capital and desire to forge a new Black community. This struggle focused on residential integration and larger efforts to codify fair housing. As the Japanese American community grew to include members who had no historical connection to the San Fernando Valley, professionals likewise sought break past the color line in the west Valley. Here, the political interests of African Americans and Japanese Americans once again converged. What tied each of these forms of activism together, however, was the San Fernando Valley itself. To provide better context for the stage upon which these communities claimed both Pacoima and the wider San Fernando Valley, and why the stakes for integration were so high, the following section examines how city planners, local boosters, realtors, and popular culture structured and marketed the Valley.

The Residential and Social Construction of the San Fernando Valley

Due to the city's history of horizontal growth, which was promoted through the Los Angeles Realty Board, maintained through an extensive interurban railway, and fortified by the rise of the automobile during the early twentieth century, Los Angeles was already home to low-density residential developments by World War II.⁴ The rapid cultivation of a suburban identity for Los Angeles during the war and the years that followed resulted from the intersection of city planning, mass culture, and the consumerism associated with postwar economic prosperity.

⁴ Laura Redford, "The Promise and Principles of Real Estate Development in an American Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1903-1923," (PhD Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2014).

In 1942 the Los Angeles City Planning Commission surveyed the San Fernando Valley and noted that although it had pockets of dense, urban space, “the majority portion is still agricultural or in large estates with a few scattered subdivisions with relatively few lots developed.”⁵ Here, planners recognized the vast potential of the Valley: “Because of its geographic location it is possible to plan this portion of the city practically independently of the rest of the city.”⁶ Although it is unclear if the planners referred to the literal distance between the Valley and the rest of Los Angeles (and the physical divide by the Santa Monica Mountains) and/or the presence of lucrative defense industries, what remains significant is the suggestion that the Valley could be developed as a region unto itself (the irony that centralized city planners worked to develop a region “independent” of the rest of the City speaks not so much to the dichotomy between “city” and “suburb” but rather how the development of the Valley took place within a larger metropolitan framework).⁷

By the mid-1950s, city planners ceased zoning any land in the Valley for agricultural purposes, its main economic engine before the war, and recommended the designation of upwards of 34,000 acres for residential and other “suburban” developments.⁸ After World War II, the Los Angeles zoning code defined “suburban” zones as a “minimum lot area of 20,000

⁵ City Planning Commission, “San Fernando Valley,” in *Accomplishments 1942* (Los Angeles: LA Department of City Planning, 1942), np; Three years later, the City Planning Commission identified “Van Nuys, North Hollywood, Chatsworth, Canoga Park, Sunland-Tujunga, and San Fernando” as the Valley’s major “town sites,” City Planning Commission of Los Angeles, *The Plan for the San Fernando Valley* (Los Angeles: LA Department of City Planning, 1945), 95.

⁶ LA City Planning Commission, “San Fernando Valley.”

⁷ See Herbert Gans’ early critique of the dichotomy between cities and suburbs, “Urbanism and Suburbanism as Ways of Life: A Reevaluation of Definitions,” *People and Plans* (1968), reprinted in Jan Lin and Christopher Mele, eds., *The Urban Sociology Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 42-50.

⁸ Los Angeles City Planning Commission, *San Fernando Valley: 1955 Master Plan Restudy...Zoning* (Los Angeles: City Planning Commission, 1955), 20, Box C-0944, City Planning Commission, LA City Records.

square feet for each two-family dwelling [lot].”⁹ Simultaneously, the commission recommended that *no* acreage be added for the purposes of agriculture nor did the report suggest zoning land for multiple dwellings. Planners’ attention to residential growth was reflective of the massive population boom that took place in the Valley: from 1940 to 1955, the Valley grew from 112,001 residents to 544,319.¹⁰

The physical growth of defense plants and the migration it caused, however, only tells one side of the story of the rise of post-war suburbs. “The suburbanization of the United States was not merely a matter of new infrastructures,” David Harvey writes. “As in Second Empire Paris, it entailed a radical transformation in lifestyles, bringing new products from housing to refrigerators and air conditioners, as well as two cars in the driveway and an enormous increase in the consumption of oil.”¹¹ In addition to their definitions of suburbia based on land use and acreage, planners wove cultural themes of consumerism, leisure, and middle-class comfort into development policies for the San Fernando Valley. The City Planning Commission directly emphasized its “accent on suburban living” in its *Master Plan Restudy*, released in 1955 (figure 3.1). The Commission, among other underlying concerns, “kept in mind the glamour and romance of the San Fernando Valley and the love of open space and attractive, safe, quiet neighborhoods which influenced hundreds of thousands of people to make the Valley their home.”¹² Indeed, the San Fernando Valley could boast the glamour of the celebrities who made the area their home. Sanitized imagery of the Spanish period, cultivated in the 1920s and 1930s,

⁹ Although it has been difficult to ascertain the specific definitions for each zoning code for 1955 at the moment information from the *City of Los Angeles Comprehensive Zoning Plan, 1960 Los Angeles City Code*, secs. 12.07-12.08, is instructive.

¹⁰ Los Angeles City Planning Commission, *San Fernando Valley: 1955 Master Plan Restudy...Zoning*.

¹¹ David Harvey, “The Right to the City,” *New Left Review* 53 (September-October 2008): 27.

¹² Los Angeles City Planning Commission, *San Fernando Valley: 1955 Master Plan Restudy...Zoning*.

evinced a romantic nostalgia for an era of dashing dons and sultry señoritas. Lastly, although real estate developers soon gobbled it up, the Valley's previous agricultural land did offer wide-open spaces.

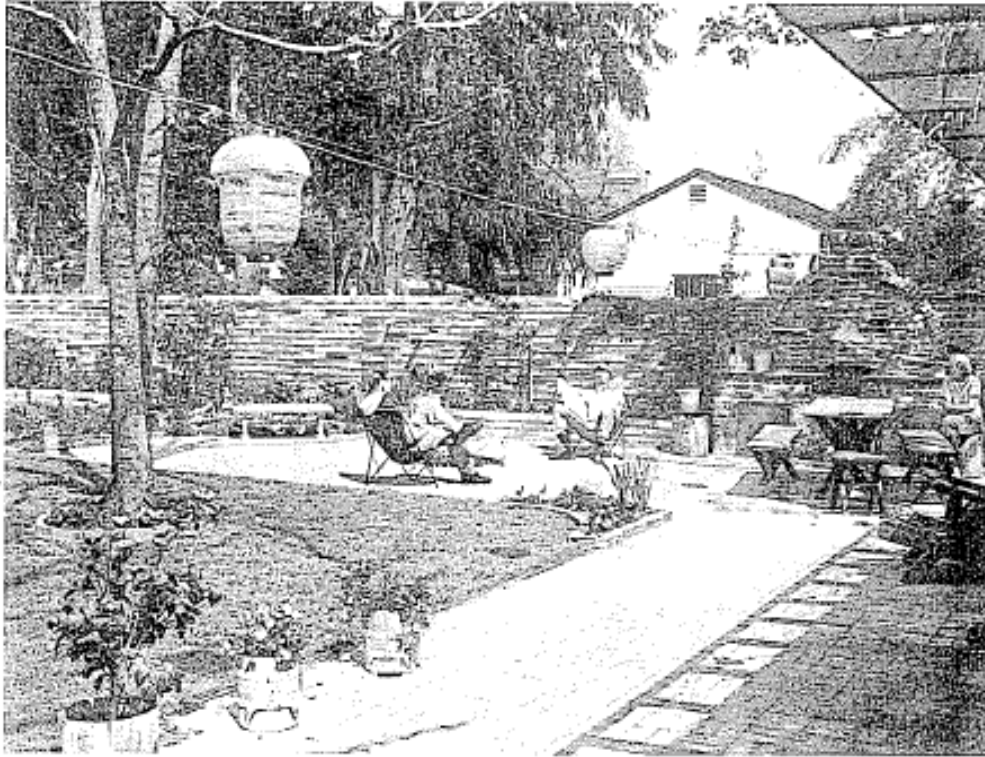


Figure 3.1 “Accent on Suburban Living,” 1955. Images of backyard swimming pools, barbecues, and other signifiers of leisure and consumerism became readily associated with the Valley through venues that included city planning documents. Source: Los Angeles City Planning Commission, *San Fernando Valley: 1955 Master Plan Restudy...Zoning* (Los Angeles: City Planning Commission, 1955), 23

The Industrial Association of the San Fernando Valley made no pretensions in their attempt to lure capital (whether through business investment or home ownership) to the Valley its 1955 report *San Fernando Valley: America's Fastest Growing City Area*. It outlined basic benchmarks of the making of a city, or at least a “city area:” transportation infrastructure, telecommunications, institutions of higher education, rapid population growth as well as the decline of land zoned for agriculture in favor of residential, industrial, and commercial development. It also noted the exponential transformation of the Valley “from farm lands to [the

site of a] nuclear reactor” in the span of a mere decade.¹³ However, it also emphasized the domestic and leisurely amenities of life in the Valley, drawing upon imagery and rhetoric often associated with postwar suburbia. The authors of the report emphasized the region’s distance from urban density in near downtown Los Angeles. They also reminded their readers that “More than a dozen miles larger than Chicago the Valley offers more than size: Better living with more comfort, a wedding of town and country”¹⁴ Citing the Valley as a “flowering desert,” the report proclaimed, “the family Bar-B-Q is a landmark in the Valley” just as “hundreds of middle income families have a family swimming pool.”¹⁵ Although slightly clichéd, the *San Fernando Valley: America’s Fastest Growing City Area* report encapsulated how the making of a cityscape and suburban living were not mutually exclusive as it suggested to readers that the Valley was indeed “a joining of work and play.”¹⁶

Lastly, different dimensions of popular culture both reflected and shaped the discourse of post-war suburban living. As early as the 1930s, the San Fernando Valley became a popular destination for movie stars given its proximity to film studios in Burbank, Studio City and, of course, Hollywood. Lifestyle and celebrity magazine portrayed the good life in the Valley through fleeting peeks into the homes of stars who ranged from Al Jolson to Bob and Dolores Hope.¹⁷ Furthermore, although Ricky and Lucy Ricardo moved from New York City to the

¹³ Jackson Mayers and the Industrial Association of the San Fernando Valley, *San Fernando Valley: America’s Fastest Growing City Area* (North Hollywood: Valley Times, 1955), 4 in Box CC-01-4331, City Planning Records, Los Angeles City Records Center and Archives, 16.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁷ “Pictures to the Editors: Hollywood Homes,” *Life*, September 6, 1937, 110. By the early 1960s, according to an account by local historian W.W. Robinson, major celebrities who “respond[ed] to the call of the Valley,” included Clark Gable, Bob Hope, Dinah Shore, Gene Autry, Barbara Stanwyck, Spencer Tracy, Betty Grable, Jane Russell, William Holden, Lucille Ball, Walter Brennan, Victor Borge, and Debbie Reynolds, *Story of*

“country” (in Connecticut), the iconic post-war couple who portrayed them, Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz, made their home in a comfortable ranch in the west Valley neighborhood of Chatsworth.¹⁸

Two Valley residents were particularly instrumental in bringing attention to their adopted home: crooner Bing Crosby and singing cowboy Gene Autry. Although both men played different genres, both released versions of Gordon Jenks’ 1944 wildly popular “San Fernando Valley.”¹⁹ As it painted the Valley as “cow country” where one had to pick up mail care of “RFD” (rural free delivery), the song reinforced a marketing and development strategy Laura Barraclough calls “rural urbanism.” Such imagery called attention the Valley’s rural character as an alternative to the frenetic pace of urban life, even as the city methodically zoned out agricultural land and private developers meticulously planned residential homes.²⁰ The migration trajectory the song expressed reflected a similar narrative of countless Valley transplants. Arguing that the Valley was a place to “forget my sins” and to make “new friends,” all “where the west begins and the sunset ends,” the protagonist of the song paints a portrait of a region largely commensurate with the agendas of local boosters and planners. They tirelessly portrayed the San Fernando Valley as a virtually clean slate where new residents could forget not only their sins, but also the hardships and austerity of war, and the overcrowding, poverty, and racial heterogeneity of cities elsewhere, whether they were New York or central Los Angeles.

San Fernando Valley, 42. The author of the Tarzan series, Edgar Rice Burroughs, notably purchased 550 acres in the southern portion of the Valley that later became known as Tarzana, Jackson Mayers, *The San Fernando Valley* (Walnut, CA: John D. McIntyre, 1975), 123.

¹⁸ Henry Chu, “Lucy’s ‘50s Love Affair With the Valley,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 28, 1997.

¹⁹ “San Fernando Valley” (Lyrics by Gordon Jenkins, Published by Edwin H. Morris and Company, 1944); available at <http://www.archive.org/details/SanFernandoValley1944>. “San Fernando Valley” even reached the number two spot on the national Billboard best-selling records chart in May 1944, “Best Selling Retail Records,” *The Billboard* (May 6, 1944), accessed online via Google Books.

²⁰ Laura Barraclough, *Making the San Fernando Valley: Rural Landscapes, Urban Development, and White Privilege* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011).

That the protagonist is “safe in statin” that his romantic partner “will be waitin’ when my lonely journey is done” gestures towards the thousands of returning veterans who, like the protagonist, settled down and declared, “it’s the San Fernando Valley for me.” Like the various planning documents or booster tracts from industrial associations and chambers of commerce, this song promised a new beginning for countless Americans. However, that allure was circumscribed and complicated by the issue of race. Boosters marketed the San Fernando Valley as racially pristine when racial diversity had a long history in the east Valley, bolstered by the same military industrial complex that initiated White migration. Conversely, people of color, whether they were Black teachers and psychologists or Japanese American veterans, had their dreams of suburban homeownership dashed by restrictive covenants, discriminatory selling and lending, and, at times, acts of terror.

Although the San Fernando Valley’s population of color was miniscule – 2,654 individuals out of a total of 402,538 residents in 1950 – they were at the center of debates over urban development and the face of the Valley in the post-War period.²¹ The racially mixed epicenter of the San Fernando Valley’s excluded populations remained Pacoima and its surrounding neighborhoods, which, by the end of the 1950s had a population of about 10,000 African Americans.²² At the middle of the 20th century, that integrated “peculiar community” of

²¹ By comparison, people of color made up 12.1 percent of the total population of Los Angeles County in 1950. See US Bureau of the Census, *Seventeenth Census of the United States*, 1950; Security First National Bank Research Department, *The Growth and Economic Stature of the San Fernando Valley* (Los Angeles: Author, 1960), 8; Joel Kotkin and Erika Ozuna, *The Changing Face of the San Fernando Valley* (Malibu, CA: Pepperdine University School of Public Policy and Economic Alliance of the San Fernando Valley: 2002), 8; Phillip J. Ethington, William H. Frey, and Dowell Myers, *The Racial Resegregation of Los Angeles County, 1940-2009*,” Public Research Report No. 2001-05, University of Southern California and University of Michigan Race Contours 2000 Study, May 12, 2001, 10.

²² Eugene I. Bender, *A Profile of Four Communities: Compton, Pacoima, Wilmington, Willowbrook* (Los Angeles: All Nations Center Study Committee, Welfare Planning Council, Los Angeles Region, March 1962), 7, in Box 10, Folder 3, Welfare Planning Council, Los Angeles, records, Collection no. 0434, California Social Welfare Archives, Special Collections, USC Libraries, University of Southern California.

Pacoima, as Josh Sides called it given the areas racial diversity amidst racial segregation, became a popular target for local boosters, real estate magnates, upwardly mobile middle-class residents in the rest of the region, and other outsiders who invested time and capital in the construction the Valley as a quintessential suburb and exclusive “White spot.”²³ In 1955 the *Los Angeles Times* described Pacoima as “A smear of sagging, leaning shacks and backhouses framed by disintegrating fences and clutter of tin cans, old lumber, stripped automobiles, bottles, rested water heaters and other bric-a-brac of the back alleys.”²⁴ Although journalist George Garrigues took note of the negative qualities assigned to Pacoima by the 1960s—“it conjures up images of a high crime rate, a slum neighborhood, and the war on poverty”—he rightfully reminded his readers “these images are only partial truths.”²⁵ Indeed, beneath veneer of the ghetto lay a complex pattern of migration, settlement, and economic diversity.

Japanese American Politics: Housing, Culture, and Memory

As the previous chapter detailed, the first wave of Japanese and Japanese American migrants to the Valley after the end of World War II was comprised of individuals on their return from the concentration camps. With little wealth or other resources, they attempted to recreate any semblance of normalcy as they lived in trailer camps in Burbank and Sun Valley. As they attempted to make new lives and communities outside of the resettlement camps, their fates became entangled with a variety of new laws that shaped Japanese Americans across California and in some instances the nation. In 1946, after an aggressive campaign by the national

²³ Mark Wild defines the White spot as a “racially pure space, a city built by white Americans for white Americans,” *Street Meeting: Multiethnic Neighborhoods in Early Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 28.

²⁴ Ed Meagher, “Pacoima Area Revamped by Awakened Citizenry: Los Angeles Program for Slum Clearance Puts End to Blight on Residence Section,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 18, 1955, A1.

²⁵ Garrigues, “Pacoima Striving to Ease Racial Feeling.”

Japanese American Citizens League, the California electorate voted down Proposition 15, which would have incorporated the 1920 Alien Land Laws into the State Constitution.²⁶ This landmark vote foreshadowed the eventual abrogation of Alien Land Laws through the *Oyama v. California* (1948) and *Sei Fujii v. California* (1952) cases in the US Supreme Court and California Supreme Court, respectively.²⁷ Although these were early victories for Asian American civil rights, racism still circumscribed the pathways to Nikkei integration into the San Fernando Valley.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, hundreds of families remained in the Winona, Magnolia, and Sun Valley trailer camps of the east Valley unsure of their future. The greatest concern for these individuals was simply living day to day. However, the *Pacific Citizen*, which exhaustively covered the re-genesis of Japanese American communities across the nation, reported two cases of housing discrimination in the Valley that targeted veterans of the widely acclaimed and highly decorated 442nd Combat Regimental Team. As a follow-up to the notorious 1947 plan to exclude *all* people of color in the Valley that appeared in the *Sentinel* and the *Pacific Citizen*, the latter paper introduced readers to Kakuo Terao, a 30 year old 442nd Combat Team veteran who lost the use of both legs and endured the amputation of an arm. A front-page story just beneath the paper's masthead noted "restrictive covenants bar disabled Nisei from housing" (figure 3.2).²⁸ As he recovered at the Birmingham General Hospital

²⁶ Kevin Leonard, "Is That What We Fought For? Japanese Americans and Racism in California, The Impact of World War II," *Western Historical Quarterly* 21:4 (November 1990): 463-82.

²⁷ The *Oyama* case affirmed the property rights of Nisei Fred Oyama whose name was used by his Issei father to purchase land, while the *Fujii* case ruled Alien Land Laws unconstitutional in the state of California. On *Oyama* see Mark Brilliant "Jap Crow," *The Color of America Has Changed: How Racial Diversity Shaped Civil Rights Reform in California, 1941-1978* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 28-57; "People of the State of California v. Fred Y. Oyama November 1, 1946;" "Letter from JACL Regional Director Sam Ishikawa to MO, 9/8/49;" and "Minutes of the Meeting Held Sept. 3, 1949 – 1:30PM at Miyako Hotel Conference Room, Los Angeles, Calif." Matsunosuke Oi Papers, Department of Special Collection, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California, Los Angeles [hereafter YRL]; "Naturalized Citizens," nd, Box 35, "Naturalization: Issei Citizenship" Folder, *Pacific Citizen* Archives (Harry Honda Collection), HNRC.

²⁸ "Restrictive Covenants Bar Disabled Nisei from Housing," *Pacific Citizen*, August 30, 1947, 1.



Figure 3.2 Wounded veteran Kakuo Terao, 1947. The San Fernando Valley made it to the front page of the national Japanese American Citizens League’s newspaper, the *Pacific Citizen*, in coverage of the housing discrimination a member of the highly regarded 442nd Regimental Combat Team faced. Service to his nation could not erase the racism many returning Japanese Americans still endured. Source, *Pacific Citizen*.

near Reseda, a neighborhood still largely segregated, Terao sought to find a home for his family in the Valley. The need for a place to live pressed on the veteran since the government began plans to sell the public housing complex where his family lived, the Richard Neutra-designed Channel Heights in San Pedro, to private developers.²⁹ His pursuit was met with prejudice and exclusion. Although it is unclear if the Terao family ever found a home in the Valley before they ultimately settled in Orange County, the *Pacific Citizen*’s final

²⁹ Channel Heights was the home to defense workers and was formally shut down in 1955, “War Housing to Be Close and Sold,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 14, 1955, A26.

commentary on the veteran's case spoke volumes about the limits of the promise of post-ar prosperity for people of color.³⁰ The author succinctly ended the story about Terao by invoking Bing Crosby's song:

There is a popular song which goes “. . . and make the San Fernando valley [*sic*] my home.”

The songwriters forgot to add: For whites only.³¹

Even after the US Supreme Court ruled the enforcement of racially restrictive covenants unconstitutional in the 1948 *Shelley v. Kraemer* case, the color line remained just as fixed. Rather than covenants, banks helped maintain the exclusion of people of color in the San Fernando Valley and elsewhere. Thus, in 1953 the case of another 442nd veteran who faced housing discrimination in the Valley made the front page of the *Pacific Citizen*.³² John Kanda, who served in France and Italy, placed a \$100 deposit, chose a lot, and even decided upon a “house model as well as decoration and landscaping details,” at Branford Manor, a private development that catered to veterans, located near Panorama City, just west of Pacoima.³³ Veterans paid upwards of \$5,000,000 in down payments in the summer of 1953 to move into a home with “covered terraces linked to living rooms by walls of glass and French doors . . . two-car garages . . . mahogany paneling and built-in TV outlets,” according to the *Los Angeles Times*.³⁴ The *Pacific Citizen*, however, was not concerned with the amenities and reported that

³⁰ Terao eventually passed away in Orange County in 1995. See *Social Security Death Index* Number: 559-18-8274; Issue State: California; Issue Date: Before 1951 digitized and available at Ancestry.com. *Social Security Death Index* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2011.

³¹ “Lily-White Valley,” *Pacific Citizen* August 30, 1947, 4.

³² “San Fernando Valley Home Denied to Vet,” *Pacific Citizen*, October 23, 1953, 1.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ “\$5,000,000 Sales Volume Exceeded at New Tract,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 5, 1953, D7.

Kanda's deposit was brusquely returned with little more than a "note stating that his application had been rejected by the loan company."³⁵

Although the two cases were in a sense very different – Terao faced exclusions through covenants while Kanda bore the brunt of discriminatory lending practices – they both spoke to the racism that Japanese Americans continued to face in the Valley during the immediate post-war years. The *Pacific Citizen* kept its readers abreast of the difficulties that residents of the resettlement camps faced, but the coverage of Terao and Kanda's housing struggles showed that most of the Valley was off limits even to those who were prepared to lay their lives down in service to the nation. The two veterans did not live in the homes they hoped for and the racism they faced set the stage for later forms of middle-class Japanese American fair housing activism. In the interim, however, Nikkei community leaders began to reassemble the community. Through their efforts, they sought to firmly plant the Japanese American experience on the Valley's landscape.

In the early 1950s, when two of the three WRA/FPHA camps were still in operation, the architecture of a Japanese American community slowly developed. A Gardener's Association grew and burgeoning ethnic economy developed as fish markets, appliance repair shops, restaurants, landscapers, hardware stores, and the occasional real estate agent dotted the major thoroughfares of the east Valley, which the working character of the post-war Japanese American community.³⁶ A handful of Issei and Kibei (Nisei who received education in Japan) began the process of rebuilding the different community institutions that existed before the War. In 1952 these community members established the Valley Japanese Community Center (VJCC)

³⁵ "San Fernando Valley Home Denied to Vet."

³⁶ Gleaned from the advertisements in various issues of the *San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center News* (hereafter, *CCN*).

in Sun Valley, an east San Fernando Valley neighborhood that had housed a one of the post-war resettlement camps. The VJCC also reorganized the Sun Valley's language school and Buddhist church. Although this nucleus of community organizers made modest, yet steady, gains in reasserting the Nikkei presence on the Valley, differences arose across generations. Nancy Inoue Oda, a third generation Japanese American grew up the east Valley when the VJCC was established and began to notice splits within the community. As Issei and Kibei, these community leaders represented both connections to the pre-war San Fernando Valley and Japan. As Oda recalled "I was a child then but even today [community members] say it was the Niseis [sic] . . . who split from the Kibei VJCC."³⁷

The divide between the Issei/Kibei and the Nisei reflected both legal and social identities. Up until 1952, the year the VJCC was established, the Issei were ineligible to citizenship. Under the McCarran Walter Act, they finally became entitled to naturalization rights. After the Issei faced decades of exclusion, and as the Kibei spent portions of their youth in Japan, they collectively retained a stronger orientation towards Japan and Japanese immigrants. To that end, the VJCC would advertise its activities in the Japanese, but not English, section of the *Rafu Shimpō*.³⁸ Like second generation Japanese Americans elsewhere, however, the Valley Nisei were Americanized, both by choice and through their experiences growing up in the Los Angeles and during the war. This schism was reflected in the nomenclature of the Nisei's later endeavor, the San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center (JACC) in Pacoima and its primary political organization, the local chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League (which previously only reserved membership for US citizens, effectively excluding their Issei

³⁷ Nancy Oda, E-mail communication with author, July 5, 2012.

³⁸ *Ibid.*; Mabel Takimoto, the former president of the San Fernando Valley JACL and former assistant to Mike Masaoka, shared similar sentiments with me at a conversation about the relationship between the two community centers at the San Fernando Valley JACC on May 19, 2012.

parents). This divide, however, did not necessarily suggest there was outright enmity between the different generations. Although the JACC and JACL represented the ascendancy of the Nisei as leaders, their community activism used the experiences of the Issei to inscribe Japanese Americans into the landscape of the Valley.

The need to redress the forced removal of Japanese and Japanese Americans and the subsequent erasure of their community served as a key impetus of the Nisei generation's construction of the JACC. As Mits Usui, a former editor of the *Community Center News* recalled, "The time was post-World War II. The setting was a nursery. Some Nisei gardeners and their friends were eating lunch and chatting," and pushed themselves to imagine more than a mere recreational space or clubhouse for their community (figure 3.3). Rather, "Wouldn't it be nice to have a nice large building of our own to promote adult welfare work?" Usui continued,

These men, together with a residuum of charter members of the pre-World War II Farmers Association who contributed everything they had left in the treasury, a sum of \$3,000, wanted to build a *living* memorial in remembrance of the hard struggle and sacrifices endured by their parents, wanted to commemorate their safe return from the evacuation, and wanted to build a monument for their boys who had served meritoriously in the armed forces (emphasis added).³⁹

Usui's narrative outlined the multiple directions of the center. Surveying the JACC's archives suggests that "adult welfare work" signified both a commitment to the general well being of the community and, as time progressed, direct services such as a hot meal program for local elders.⁴⁰ Generating construction funds to realize the ideas shared over that lunch was no easy task as the *Los Angeles Times* reported "The financing of the \$236,000 center . . . was accomplished mainly by donations from [about 300 to 330] families living on small incomes. They gave an average of \$500 each while at the same time struggling to reestablish

³⁹ Mits Usui, "The Community Center Story," *CCN* (April 1973), 3.

⁴⁰ Nancy Gohata E-mail communication to the author, April 30, 2012.



Figure 3.3 The San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center, 2013. The original gymnasium pictured here was built in 1959 and exists today. Courtesy of the SFVJACC.

themselves.”⁴¹ The aging members of one of the pre-war farmers associations contributed their entire treasury, approximately \$3,000, to help finance the center.⁴² Collectively the contributions of those families and associations captured the drive to honor the diligence and efforts of the community’s forbearers whom the government shunted away amidst the surveillance and hysteria surrounding December 7th, 1941. Like pre-war farmers associations and other community organizations, this generation of activism was concerned with the maintaining the welfare of the Nikkei community in the face of racism. But, mindful of the experiences of the war and the exclusions of the post-war period, the Nisei sought to affirm their collective roots and history in the Valley to honor of the Issei and for the benefit of the Sansei, or third generation.

⁴¹ Pat Bryant, “Third Generation Wooded,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 5, 1972, SF-A1; “Work Starts Tomorrow on Japanese Clubhouse,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 3, 1959, SF10; “Japanese American Club Will Dedicate Center,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 6, 1959, SF 5.

⁴² Usui, “Community Center Story,” 3.

A core concern of the JACC was respect for the various dimensions of the Japanese and Japanese American communal past, including the preservation of cultural heritage. The JACC expanded the scope of cultural projects whose roots were in the pre-war language schools and judo dojos. Over the years, the center has offered a bevy of courses for children and adults that have ranged from *odori* (traditional dance) and *taiko* (drumming) to *ikebana* (flower arranging). The *gakuen* (language institute), with roots dating back to 1924, instructed students until high school age.⁴³ While these types of programs necessarily reify the “authenticity” of a shared ethnic past, the institutionalization of cultural memory in this specific historical context can be read as both the preservation of cultural activism inaugurated before the war and an attempt to map Nikkei presence onto a landscape that may have been popularly seen as impoverished and blighted, but was nevertheless the historic home to the Valley Japanese Americans. Although several of these programs exist today, the most pressing and extensive forms of community development at the JACC reflected the commitment to public, collective memory.

The JACC crafted a community history grounded in the accomplishments of the Issei who, after World War II, gradually gained property and citizenship rights through the eventual abrogation of Alien Land Laws and passage of the McCarran-Walter Act. While the Issei may have secured citizenship, local leader Harold Muraoka articulated how “Our Issei and older Nisei founders and pioneers can no longer physically or financially help to keep the Center going therefore, we, their children and grandchildren should do all we can to make certain the Community Center remains strong as ever.”⁴⁴ Several years later, another memorial garden was constructed in 1974 for the immigrant generation because, as Yo Muranaga the commander of

⁴³ “Gakuen News,” *CCN*, June 1979, 1; Bryant, “Third Generation,” A1, A4.

⁴⁴ Harold Muraoka, “Candidly Speaking,” *CCN*, February 1980, 6.

the Valley's Nisei VFW Post told the *Los Angeles Times*, "In the San Fernando Valley we have yet to recognize and provide something to show the fast dwindling Issei generation that their sacrifices were not made in vain."⁴⁵

Reflecting the *Sentinel's* focus upon military service as a reason to gain entry into the San Fernando Valley's new private housing developments, the JACC memorialized the contributions of Japanese American veterans. Under the aegis of the VFW Nisei Memorial Post 4140, established in 1960, the community witnessed the construction of a Veterans Memorial Garden on the JACC grounds for those who served in the renowned 442nd Japanese American battalion, such as the two Nisei veterans who were denied housing in the all-White areas of the Valley in the late 1940s and early 1950s.⁴⁶

Projects dedicated memorializing and representing the past are necessary selective and demonstrates the contested nature of creating a metanarrative in place of multiple complex histories.⁴⁷ The memory-making projects of the Valley's Nikkei reflect a political mediation that highlighted immigrant settlement and military service in the face of racial prejudice. Pacoima's JACC, its cultural programs, and the "pioneer" garden parallel the memorials found in other greater Los Angeles Nikkei enclaves in Little Tokyo, Gardena, Sawtelle, Pasadena, and the East San Gabriel Valley.

However, spatial dimensions and histories also shape the different manifestations of historical memory. Therefore memory projects in the Valley differed from those in Little Tokyo,

⁴⁵ "Nisei Post Will Build Garden to Honor Isseis," *Los Angeles Times*, July 25, 1974, SF 11.

⁴⁶ "Nisei VFW Post 4140 Membership Drive," *CCN* (February 1983), 6; "Memorial Services for Deceased Veterans at CC," *CCN*, May 1981, 1.

⁴⁷ Kandice Chuh, *Imagine Otherwise: On Asian Americanist Cultural Critique* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

for example, which was long a cultural and economic hub of the Nikkei Angelenos.⁴⁸ The urgency of the JACC's memory and cultural activism takes on new meaning within the double erasures of World War II *and* the stigmatization of the multiracial neighborhood of Pacoima in the face of the rapid suburbanization and capitalization of the rest of the San Fernando Valley. Traces of Japanese and Japanese American prewar community, wartime experiences in the region, and postwar settlement were wiped from the Valley. Tujunga residents, for example, had little knowledge of the Tuna Canyon Detention Station. The Tujunga postmaster and an inveterate historian assumed Tuna Canyon housed prisoners of war.⁴⁹ As a teenager, east Valley Japanese American resident Mabel Abe visited family at Tuna Canyon but recalled, several generations later, "It was kind of hush-hush because they didn't want [local residents] to panic."⁵⁰ Not surprisingly, after the city scrapped the Winona and Magnolia camps by the end of the 1950s, the only historical traces of those sites remained in the pages of the *Pacific Citizen* and the minds of a handful of local residents. When the camp residents organized a reunion almost forty years later, the *Los Angeles Times* took note and approached the Burbank Historical Society for more information. Not surprisingly, the historical society did not even know there were Japanese Americans living there after the War.⁵¹ The presence of racially restrictive covenants and other discriminatory lending practices against Japanese Americans compounded those wartime erasures. Therefore, the construction of sites such as the VCC, the JACC, and by

⁴⁸ Jenks, "Bronzeville, Little Tokyo, and the Unstable Geography of Race in Post-World War II Los Angeles."

⁴⁹ Danica Kira, "Documents Offer Glimpse of WWII Detention Center," *Los Angeles Times*, September 14, 1995.

⁵⁰ Danica Kirka, "Healing Wounds of War," *Los Angeles Times*, September 16, 1995.

⁵¹ Marc Iglar, "40 Years Later, Japanese Seek Reunion of Camp Veterans," *Los Angeles Times*, June 4, 1986, A6, A11.

the mid-1960s, the San Fernando Valley Hongwanji Buddhist Temple, adjacent to the JACC, were acts that incorporated the history of Japanese Americans into the fabric of the east Valley.

Although the founders of the JACC may not have explicitly drawn upon the vocabulary of oppression and social justice per se, their actions and legacies speak to a transformative consciousness within the historical crux of racialization in postwar Los Angeles. By physically constructing Japanese American history and cultural works in the Valley, the founders mounted a critique, subtle as it may have been, of the racial logic that erased the community during World War II and, through housing covenants, alien land laws, and mainstream accounts of Pacoima, crafted a register of second-class citizens. This center affirmed the community's struggles and triumphs and served as, what Critical Race Theory scholars call, a counter-space. These spaces "serve as sites where deficit notions of People of Color can be challenged and where a positive . . . racial climate can be established and maintained."⁵² Even more than crafting a racial climate, as Cindy I-Fen Cheng has suggested, these acts were proto-demonstrations that foreshadowed the redress and reparations movement of the 1970s and 1980s.⁵³ The construction of these institutions relied on fairly conventional narratives within American immigration history: honoring the hard-fought struggles of the immigrant generation and the courage of the second generation that, as Americans, sacrificed their lives to defend their nation. However, their actions directly folded the history of race, resistance, and the different tests of citizenship and belonging into the otherwise linear narrative of the development of the post-war San Fernando Valley.

⁵² Daniel G. Solorzano and Tara Yosso, "Critical Race Theory, Racial Microaggressions, and Campus Racial Climate: The Experiences of African American College Students," *Journal of Negro Education* 69:1/2 (Winter-Spring 2000): 70.

⁵³ Thanks to Cindy I-Fen Cheng for this observation and pushing me to pursue this line of thought through her comments at a presentation loosely based on this chapter at the 2012 meeting of the American Studies Association.

The cultivation of these cultural institutions took place within the contexts of the growth of the San Fernando Valley and the reconstruction of race after World War II. This contestation also occurred as Japanese Americans became increasingly targeted as model minorities who, according to popular accounts, relied on an alleged set of cultural attributes that delivered them from wartime incarceration to ultimate economic success.⁵⁴ Like cultural narratives of the San Fernando Valley at this time, this telling of the Japanese American experiences portrayed the promise of middle-class affluence. However, the early JACC founders did not extol this rhetoric and rather, maintained institutions that served its working class constituents such as gardeners. Their heritage programs, moreover, represented the maintenance of a “community cultural wealth” that sustained multiple generations in the face of outright oppression and other assimilationist pressures.⁵⁵ Collectively, these early memory-making and services projects etched the Nikkei presence into the Valley. While Japanese American cultural activism emerged out of resettlement and the transition of power to the Nisei, entirely new waves of African Americans were migrating to the Valley.

The Struggle for Fair Housing: The Making of a Black and Japanese American Middle Class

Within the context of expanding economic opportunity, increasing numbers of African Americans continued to settle in the historically mixed neighborhoods of Pacoima and the City of San Fernando. The war catalyzed the migration of approximately 2,000 African Americans

⁵⁴ William Petersen, “Success Story, Japanese-American Style.” *U.S. News and World Report*, December 26, 1966.

⁵⁵ Tara Yosso, “Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth,” *Race, Ethnicity, and Education* 8:1 (2005): 69-91.

to the east Valley. By 1960 the San Fernando Valley at large had a population of 9,790 African Americans, out of a total 738,831 Valley residents, with a community based in Pacoima that ranged from professionals working in the military-industrial sector to returning veterans.⁵⁶

The migration of those professionals set into motion the making of a Black middle-class in the San Fernando Valley that was eager to participate in the post-war prosperity that was a central narrative of the region at large. Just as private developers began to divide portions of the middle and western Valley, Laura Barraclough noted that “some real-estate developers deliberately exploited the potential for creating a black enclave in Pacoima,” ostensibly away from the exclusive subdivisions in the central Valley (Panorama City) or west Valley (Reseda, Northridge, Granada Hills, and Porter Ranch).⁵⁷ The Joe Louis Homes, established in 1950, catered to returning African American veterans and the burgeoning middle-class. In September 1949 local builder Paul R. Truesdale partnered with Heavyweight Champion of the World Joe “Brown Bomber” Louis to petition the City of Los Angeles to zone a 53-acre portion of the east San Fernando Valley for a new residential development named after the boxer and World War II veteran.⁵⁸ Sited in Pacoima, the City Planning Commission green-lit the proposal the following month.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations, *The Urban Reality: A Comparative Study of the Socio-Economic Situation of Mexican-Americans, Negroes, and Anglo-Caucasians in Los Angeles County* (Los Angeles: Author, June 1965) in Box 2, Folder 2, Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission collection of surveys, reports, and other material, Collection no.0427, California Social Welfare Archives, Special Collections, USC Libraries, University of Southern California; Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 104

⁵⁷ Barraclough, *Making the San Fernando Valley*, 131. On other suburban developments in the Valley see Greg Hise, *Magnetic Los Angeles: Planning the Twentieth-Century Metropolis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

⁵⁸ “Joe Louis Plans Low Cost Bldg.,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 29, 1949, A1. For a general history of Louis see Randy Roberts, *Joe Louis: Hard Times Man* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

⁵⁹ “‘Go’ Sign on Louis Homes,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 27, 1949, A4.

With almost break-neck speed Truesdale's workers constructed the development and the Brown Bomber inaugurated his eponymous housing complex in March 1950. Unlike the aesthetically harsh barrack-like edifices at Basilone Homes, the Joe Louis development (alternately referred to as the more bucolic Valleyview Village) featured single-family, two or three bedroom homes. Applauded by the Black press as a "low cost non-restricted housing project" and for its "variety of 32 California styles in both a modern and contemporary design," the houses included broad porches and an abundance of windows that allowed for maximum sunshine in the homes.⁶⁰ Other than their geographical location in Pacoima, many of these homes would be indistinguishable from those found in the affluent and segregated west Valley neighborhoods.

The consumer power of a rising Black middle-class and demand for other places like the Joe Louis Homes, helped catalyze other privately developed housing subdivisions located in the east Valley. In 1952 the San-Fern Manor opened adjacent to the Joe Louis Homes.⁶¹ Whereas the Home Owners Loan Corporation had once described Pacoima as a dilapidated collection of migrant laborer's houses where with goats and cacti, San-Fern developers proudly assured buyers that the "Property is fully improved with paved streets, sidewalks, curbs, gutters and parkway trees."⁶²

In part because of these gains in forging a Black middle-class in Pacoima, community activists became increasingly empowered to test and ultimately break the color line in the San

⁶⁰ Quotation from "'Go' Sign on Louis Homes;" "Joe Louis Home Development Opens in San Fernando Valley," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, March 16, 1950, B6.

⁶¹ "San-Fern Manor Opening Slated," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 7, 1952, A13.

⁶² Pacoima Park (Los Angeles County, CA) Security Map, Home Owners Loan Corporation (March 1939): digitized in "T-RACES: a Testbed for the Redlining Archives of California's Exclusionary Spaces," Richard Marciano, David Theo Goldberg and Chien-Yi Hou: accessed online at <http://salt.unc.edu/T-RACES>; "San-Fern Manor Model Home Seen By Record Crowd," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 14, 1952, A5.

Fernando Valley. What began as a lack of housing in general evolved into a battle of residential integration and a fight for who had the privilege to claim the San Fernando Valley as their home. In 1946, the columnist John Marshall opined in the pages of the *Los Angeles Sentinel* “The housing problem has been aggravated by an over-all housing shortage that respects neither race nor color.” As the construction of public housing complexes Basilone Homes, Rodger Young Homes, San Fernando Gardens and the WRA camps demonstrated, housing was indeed a problem for a variety of races during the war and the years that followed. However, the columnist continued, “the Negro has been given an added burden through the tendency of most courts to enforce race restrictions on the slightest technicality.”⁶³

The magnitude of Marshall’s argument bore itself out in the San Fernando Valley as its Black community rapidly grew in the 1950s and 1960s, yet remained largely segregated into the Pacoima, San Fernando, and Arleta areas. Unfair housing practices in the Valley prevailed even after the 1948 *Shelley v. Kramer* case when, according to political scientist Daniel HoSang, “patterns of racial segregation actually *increased* after restrictive covenants were outlawed” (emphasis added).⁶⁴ Without the safeguard of covenants to keep neighborhoods all White, Realtors created two racially segregated housing markets.⁶⁵ Racism thus combined with, according to HoSang, “Open housing policies and practices [that] risked triggering wide fluctuations in property values instead of the steady increases that the industry most prized.”⁶⁶ These practices governed much of the development of postwar Los Angeles including the San

⁶³ John Marshall, Untitled Column, *Los Angeles Sentinel*, March 7, 1947, 7.

⁶⁴ Daniel Martinez HoSang, *Racial Propositions: Ballot Initiatives and the Making of Postwar California* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010), 58.

⁶⁵ Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 265.

⁶⁶ HoSang, *Racial Propositions*, 59.

Fernando Valley during the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, when the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations studied patterns of segregation they found that the small number of Blacks who lived in the Valley, but outside of Pacoima, had *decreased* from 1950 to 1960.⁶⁷ This consequence coincided with the greater numbers of middle-income and professional African Americans who sought residences beyond the Joe Louis Homes or even the Pacoima enclave, which, by the mid-1960s, was still the home to all but two percent of the Valley's 25,000 African Americans.⁶⁸

Amidst daily reminders of housing discrimination in their backyards and the rapidly intensifying tenor of the national Civil Rights Movement, sixty-seven residents established the Pacoima chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1955.⁶⁹ In 1959, the organization rebranded itself as the San Fernando Valley NAACP signaling the wider geographic reach the chapter envisioned for their fair housing agenda. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the Valley NAACP and other fair housing councils engaged the courts, tested the racial boundaries of "rooms for rent," and initiated various protests to chip away at the residential segregation that undergirded the suburb whose boosters crafted narratives of leisure and sunshine on a bevy of real estate ads, postcards and reports. To be sure, the

⁶⁷ LA County Commission on Human Relations, *The Urban Reality*, 41. The population of Blacks outside of Pacoima lived in areas such as Mission Hills, adjacent to the City of San Fernando, and Canoga Park, an enclave in the west Valley that also had a small Mexican population.

⁶⁸ *The San Fernando Valley and Low-Income Housing: A Community Self-Study* (San Fernando Valley: San Fernando Valley Board of Realtors, League of Women Voters, Housing Opportunities Center and Destination Ninety Forum/Urban Studies, n.d., c. 1966-1968), 9 in Box 1: Folder 5, Collection of Southern California housing reports and photographs, Collection no. 0436, California Social Welfare Archives, Special Collections, USC Libraries, University of Southern California.

⁶⁹ NAACP San Fernando Valley Branch, "Ten Years of Responsible and Responsive Leadership," (Pacoima: Author, 1965), 1 in Container 92, Folder 23, NAACP Region I Records (BANC-MSS 78/180c), Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. By the mid-1960s in Los Angeles, the NAACP also established chapters in Central Los Angeles and Hollywood, "Organizing Leadership of the Negro Community," *Proposals for the Improvement of Human Relations in the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area*, 59.

NAACP engaged in a variety of civil rights initiatives. A “militant membership” staged protest marches in the wake of the murder of activists in the South, and regularly initiated boycotts of local establishments such as Woolworths for their discriminatory practices in the South and challenged any perception that the Valley was insulated from the Civil Rights Movement.⁷⁰

Although this solidarity with the struggle in the South animated a great deal of organizing, the NAACP’s agenda in the Valley remained dominated by the needs and aspirations of the growing Black professional class.

Integration remained a slow struggle in the Valley, even as real estate agent James Robinson, who became the first African American member of the San Fernando Valley Association of Realtors in 1962, worked to find homes for Black professionals.⁷¹ New homebuyers often came up against crushing resistance to integration. In the “best” scenarios, African Americans faced opposition from recalcitrant Realtors. NAACP Southern California President Frank Barnes testified before the US Commission on Civil Rights on behalf of Lockheed missile research engineer Preston Morris, Jr. whose attempts to move out of Pacoima were met with stiff resistance by Realtors. In an attempt to move to the west Valley community of Granada Hills, Morris found the “prices for homes were quoted higher in his face-to-face contact with salesman than were stated in the newspapers advertisement. When he pointed this discrepancy he was told that the newspapers were ‘in error.’ In another attempt to move into the neighborhood of Northridge, the “salesman’s general attitude seemed to be an attempt to

⁷⁰ NAACP San Fernando Valley Branch, “Ten Years of Responsible and Responsive Leadership,” 4. John J. Mance (President, San Fernando Valley NAACP) Letter to Leon Levitt (President, San Fernando Valley ACLU), April 16, 1960. ACLU-SC Collection (900), Box 76, Folder “Sit-in Movement” (9), UCLA Young Research Library Special Collections. The Valley NAACP also challenged employment discrimination, de facto school segregation, and handled individual civil rights/liberties cases.

⁷¹ Barraclough, *Making the San Fernando Valley*, 132.

discourage [Morris]. The agent suggested that Mr. Morris consider a ‘used home.’”⁷²

Meanwhile, the Valley NAACP found cases where African American military workers were flatly denied housing and directed to the Black neighborhood in Pacoima. To fully expose the chicanery of Realtors, the Valley chapter pointed to the example of a Black soldier and his White wife before the Civil Rights Commission: “In an apparently exceptional instance the Caucasian wife of a Negro serviceman obtained an apartment. When the landlord learned that her husband was Negro, he asked them to leave. On two occasions this couple had a similar experience. It is our understanding that they were then advised by an administrative officer at the base to seek residence in Pacoima.”⁷³ Even though the case of the soldier and his wife was not representative of most experiences of African Americans who sought homes outside of Pacoima, it is instructive on different levels. Although the California State Supreme Court struck down anti-miscegenation laws in *Perez v. Sharp* (1948), racial prejudice did not abate. Their effort reflected one of a wide variety of practices fair housing groups used to test integration. Furthermore, the case of this serviceman and his wife further reveals the limits of the military industrial complex in the Valley: that participation could proffer a modicum of prosperity, which was ultimately restricted by race.

Despite the clear message that African Americans were not welcomed in the west Valley that both the Morris family and the interracial couple received, one of the most violent campaigns to maintain racial borders took place *within* the boundaries of Pacoima. For all of its reputation as a “ghetto,” despite its 1939 red HOLC grade, and even though Pacoima had long

⁷² “Statements of Frank Barnes, President, NAACP Southern California Conference and Henry W. Hodge, Committee on Racial Equality, Representing the Community Relations Conference of Southern California,” in *Hearings Before the United States Commission on Civil Rights: Hearings Held in Los Angeles, California, January 25, 1960, January 26, 1960 and San Francisco, California, January 27, 1960, and January 28, 1960* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1960), 230.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

history of integration, one portion remained racially exclusive for Whites only. The family of Dr. Emory Hestus Holmes found this out, in the most harrowing ways possible, in the late 1950s.

The chapter's service to the Holmes family in the late 1950s encapsulated the multifaceted vigilance the NAACP maintained in defending Black civil rights. In 1960, Frank Barnes, the regional president of the NAACP, working with the Valley chapter, shared the Holmes' story to the US Commission on Civil Rights and revealed the stakes invested in maintaining White privilege in the Valley.⁷⁴ Barnes noted that even the White man who sold Holmes his house faced protests and recrimination at his job for selling to a person of color, yet those actions paled in comparison to the level of trauma inflicted upon the Holmes.

The Alabama-born Holmes went onto a distinguished career in civil rights and administration in the California State University and the University of California, but in 1955 he was an Army veteran of the Pacific Theater and a recent transplant to Los Angeles in search of a good home. Initially hired as a psychologist for the RAND Corporation in Santa Monica (and the first individual at Systems Development Corporation to be promoted to a senior research analyst without a doctorate), in 1959, Holmes his wife, a teacher, and their three young children relocated to Pacoima.⁷⁵ More specifically, they found a home in the part of Pacoima that remained White and exclusive, and thus set off a concerted backlash. The intimidating acts committed against the Holmes were wide-ranging and included the annoying: the delivery of milk without the Holmes' placing an order; the exhausting: sending television repairer, a taxicab, a veterinarian, a swimming pool installer, and an exterminator to their house at all hours of the

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ "Distinguished Resident: Former Angeleno Dr. Emory Holmes Succumbs at Age 70," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, April 27, 1995, C2; Stephen Schwartz, "Emory Holmes," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 15, 1995. Holmes later earned a PhD from UCLA in 1972. Dr. Holmes' son, Emory II, remained a long-time Pacoima resident and is well-known local journalist as well as oral historian.

night; and the clearly violent: the assault on the family home with rocks and bullets. Both Barnes and California State Attorney General Stanley Mosk remarked on the “most amazing type of harassment” that Holmes faced especially in regards to death threats. Mosk relayed that the Holmes’ “would have an ambulance and a hearse back up to their front door and an attendant would come out and say ‘I have come for the body,’” a crude, if not simply bizarre, scare tactic intimating that death or other bodily violence might await Blacks who chipped away at the walls of Valley segregation.⁷⁶ Barnes later described how on different occasions undertakers appeared at the Holmes’ doorstep: one asking to for a deceased male, the other asking for a deceased female. As if this barrage was not enough, some individuals took it upon themselves to paint “Black Cancer here. Don’t let it spread!” on the walls of the Holmes’ house. Although it appeared that the White residents of Pacoima, and possibly other neighborhoods who were intent on preventing the “Black Cancer” from spreading to the rest of the San Fernando Valley, were intent on reinforcing the walls of racism, members of the NAACP were just as committed to fighting against exclusion. For, as bell hook reminds, “marginality [is] much more than a site of deprivation . . . it is also the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance.”⁷⁷

The travails of the Holmes family marked a watershed in fair housing in the San Fernando Valley. The everyday fight against the array of racial aggressions directed at the Holmes family “reach[ed] the point where volunteer NAACP members took turns at night standing guard” at the household.” Ultimately, after rallying other Pacoima community groups

⁷⁶ “Statement of Hon. Stanley Mosk, Attorney General of the State of California,” in *Hearings Before the United States Commission on Civil Rights*, 37.

⁷⁷ bell hooks, “Marginality as a Site of Resistance,” in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, eds. Russell Ferguson, Martha Gever, Trinh T. Minh-ha, and Cornel West (New York and Cambridge, Mass: New York Museum of Contemporary Art and Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1992), 341.

and organizing a legal challenge, the violence abated.⁷⁸ The *Los Angeles Sentinel*, which vigorously railed against the actions to exclude as many people of color from the Valley as possible, later remarked that “Dr. Holmes’ court fight against the terror and harassment attacks by his neighbors resulted in the first successful anti-discrimination housing suit in California state history.”⁷⁹ In 1960, the courts found in favor of Holmes and convicted, for the first time in California, a “white man for racial harassment against a person of color.”⁸⁰ The urgency of Holmes’ case also led to the formation of the Fair Housing Council of the San Fernando Valley, which, along with the NAACP, different religious and civil rights groups, continued to advocate on behalf of open housing. Both Holmes and Frank Barnes went on to serve on the board of the Valley Fair Housing Council, which later worked to integrate the west Valley.⁸¹ The Holmes case of 1959-1960 placed housing front and center of a political agenda that dominated discussions of the future of the San Fernando Valley.

Holmes’ background provided a compelling narrative not only in the quest for individual justice, but also for the African American community in the San Fernando Valley. Unlike other African Americans who traced their life in the Valley to the pre-war railroads or even factory

⁷⁸ NAACP San Fernando Valley Branch, “Ten Years of Responsible and Responsive Leadership,” 3. Emphasis in original.

⁷⁹ “Distinguished Resident.”

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ “Distinguished Resident;” Los Angeles Citizens’ Committee for Fair Housing Legislation press release on the proposed 1962 Los Angeles fair housing ordinance, n.d. circa spring 1962 in Max Mont Collection, Series III: Community Relations Conference of Southern California, Box 7, Folder 9 “Fair Housing Ordinance: City of Los Angeles, Feb-Jun 1962; n.d., Urban Archives Center, Oviatt Library, Cal State Northridge. The Fair Housing Council of the San Fernando Valley and other organizations kept databases of “homes [that] are available on a non-discriminatory basis.” In 1963, for example, they identified houses in the east Valley (Studio City, Cahuenga Pass), the central Valley (Sepulveda), and the west Valley (Canoga Park, Woodland Hills, Northridge, and Reseda), see American Friends Service Committee “Clearing House” Leaflet (typed), May 1, 1963 in Box 300, Folder 1 “Fair Housing,” American Civil Liberties Union-Southern California Collection (900), Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA (hereafter, ACLU-SC).

workers such as Mother Ada Robinson and her husband, Holmes's narrative added an element of gravitas to the Black community. He was a war veteran, highly educated, a professional married to a professional, and patriarch of a young family. In 1965, the NAACP presented their new president, the literal face of the chapter, in the exact same light. The periodical *Human Relations* dedicated a photo-essay to the "Valley NAACP's New President," Carl McCraven (figure 3.4).⁸² The article sketched an impressive curriculum vitae for McCraven: education at Howard University with graduate training at the National Bureau of Standards, the University of Maryland, and UCLA and employment as both a physicist and a research engineer at Lockheed. In his capacity as an engineer, McCraven and his family moved to Pacoima in 1955 to work for Lockheed. A series of photographs complimented the text of his accomplishments, crowned by images of McCraven's installation and him authoritatively addressing an NAACP meeting. The article carefully portrayed McCraven's family as well, with a photograph of his teenage son Carl Bruce at the family credenza showing "his preference in record collection." The piece concludes

⁸² "Valley NAACP's New President," *Human Relations Magazine* (1965), clipping in NAACP Region I Records (BANC MSS 78/180c); Carton 92; Folder 31. San Fernando Valley NAACP, *Annual Report* (1965), 5.

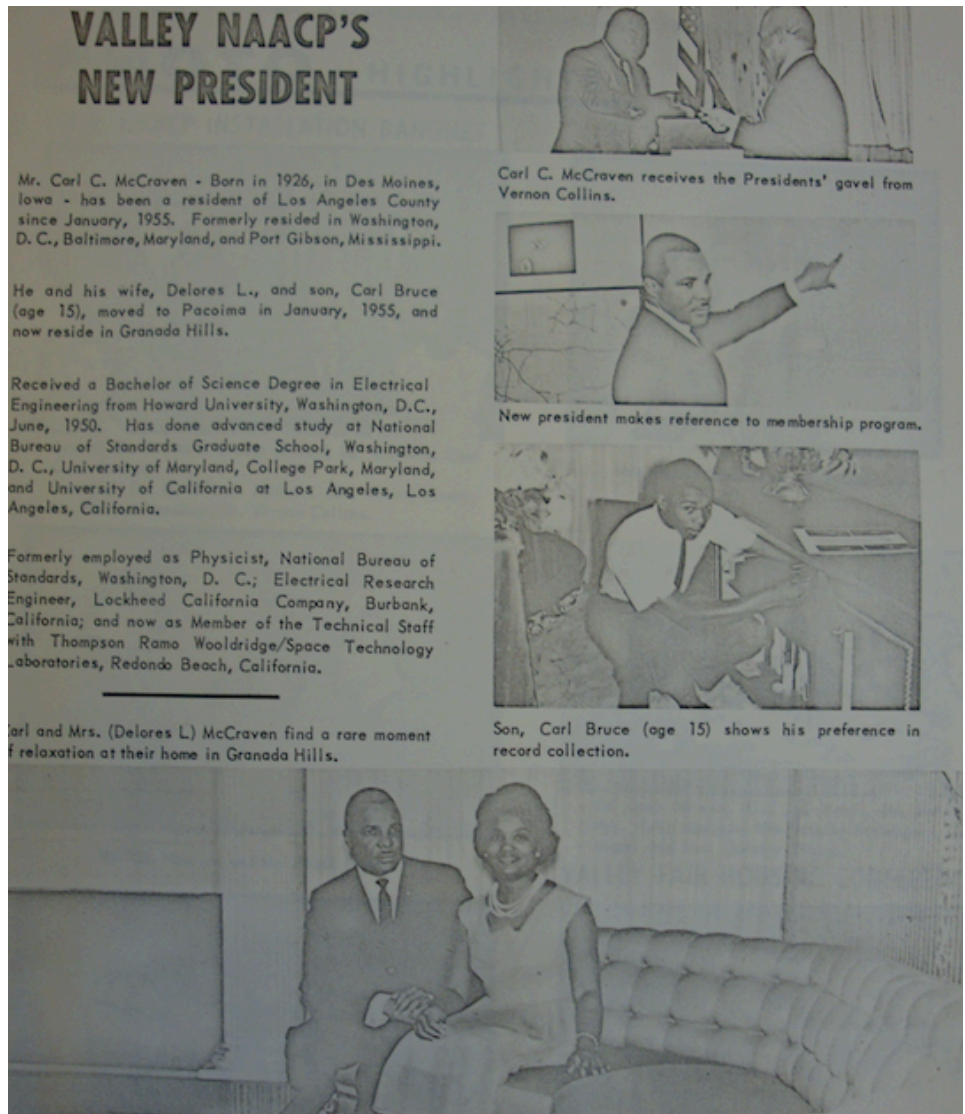


Figure 3.4 The McCraven family, 1965. These portraits of San Fernando Valley NAACP leader Carl McCraven and his family capture the middle-class aspirations of the Valley’s professionally trained Black migrants. Source: *Human Relations Magazine*.

with a photograph of the chapter president and his wife sitting on a nicely upholstered sofa with the caption “Carl and Mrs. (Dolores L) McCraven find a rare moment of relaxation at their home of Granada Hills.” This last image, and its caption, provided an ideal model for the middle-class, Black professional in the Valley. Although Carl Bruce enjoyed the leisure of listening to his radio collection, McCraven and his wife were ambitious and on the go, thus unable to find even a rare moment to relax. Most significantly, readers learned that the McCraven family

successfully moved out of Pacoima and entered the largely White neighborhood of Granada Hills.

These portraits reflected the larger national affirmation of material prosperity, the nuclear family and presented an ethos of professional respectability.⁸³ Exercising this rhetoric was an assuredly palatable strategy to build a Black community in Pacoima and integrate the rest of the San Fernando Valley. Unlike the campaigns for different cultural institutions by the Nikkei population that explicitly referenced the agrarian, pre-war community to lay claim to the Valley, the Holmes' case, reinforced by the brief introduction to McCraven's life, can be read as a result of the military industrial complex's appeal for middle-class empowerment and a strategic distancing from the working-class forbearers of Pacoima's Black community. As such, Holmes' case was a major cornerstone for Valley NAACP activism as it proceeded to not only defended the property aspirations of individuals but also take on the entire California electorate in the battle over Proposition 14.

Bolstered by victories such as the Holmes lawsuit and the development of a greater infrastructure within the NAACP to identify Realtors committed to fair housing principles, the chapter began work against a plan to enshrine housing discrimination into state law. In the early 1960s, fair housing ordinances slowly gained support across California and opposition fomented.⁸⁴ In the San Fernando Valley, the moment was particularly urgent given the staggering demographics of the region's Black community. As sociologist Jackson Mayers noted, "While [the] Negro population of Pacoima had risen by 15,000 for a five-fold increase in [between 1951 and 1964], fewer than 1,000 Negroes had found living quarters in the rest of the

⁸³ Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Random House, 2008).

⁸⁴ See "Fair Housing" Folder (2), Box 30, ACLU-SC.

Valley.”⁸⁵ In 1962, the Los Angeles Welfare Planning Council suggested that “In certain respects, Pacoima might be considered a port of entry area” for African Americans, many of whom sought to break the color line.⁸⁶ It appeared, however, that a popular ballot initiative in 1964 would undercut those efforts.

Proposition 14 is one of the defining electoral battles in the history of housing in California and added a greater pressure to the Valley’s civil rights movement. The growing trends towards liberal housing reform, engineered and put into place by a Democratic-controlled legislature, “set off the real shock waves,” as one *Time* reporter observed.⁸⁷ The nexus of resistance to open housing and its advocates in the state Democratic Party caused one embittered Valley resident to affix a sign crudely stating “Democrats are for Niggars [*sic*]” to the home of Emory Holmes in the White area of Pacoima.⁸⁸ Catalyzed by the Rumford Fair Housing Act— lambasted by its opponents as “forced housing”—the California Real Estate Association initiated a ballot initiative to not only repeal Rumford’s legislation, along with previous laws prohibiting in other public venues such as public housing and construction, but also enshrine the supremacy of “property rights” into the California State Constitution.⁸⁹ As Daniel HoSang noted, Proposition 14 “would establish constitutional immunity for those who discriminate in the sale or rental of their property and would exempt them from present and future fair housing laws.”⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Mayers, *The San Fernando Valley*, 197.

⁸⁶ Bender, *A Profile of Four Communities*, 7.

⁸⁷ “California: Proposition 14,” *Time*, September 25, 1964.

⁸⁸ “Statement of Frank Barnes.”

⁸⁹ HoSang, “‘Get Back Your Rights!’ Fair Housing and the Right to Discriminate, 1960–1972,” in *Racial Propositions*; Robert O. Self, “White Noose,” in *American Babylon*.

⁹⁰ “A Legal Opinion on Prop 14 and a Description of Its Effects on the Constitution and the Laws of the State of California,” quoted in HoSang, *Racial Propositions*, 65.

The significance of Proposition 14 rested not only in the mass appeal it garnered from the majority of the California electorate (64 percent) but also the field of opposition it catalyzed. While the NAACP necessarily took up the fight against Proposition 14 as a major plank of its civil rights platform, the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) also became involved as the Valley's Nikkei community grew and became economically diverse.

In 1954, the San Fernando Valley chapter of the JACL reactivated and elected a new board of governors that combined prewar roots in the Valley with an eagerness to integrate Japanese Americans into the prosperous post-war Valley.⁹¹ Four years later, JACL national legal counsel Frank Chuman testified before the President's Commission on Civil Rights. He noted that time and time again he observed that "When the Japanese American presents himself to the real estate agent handling the sales, he is politely turned down on the grounds that all the homes have already been sold." However, he zeroed in on the insidious role of "lending institutions" that also "join in the conspiracy to refuse to approve loans submitted by non-Caucasians." Specifically, he highlighted the case of a Japanese American atomic engineer who attempted to move into the Ponty Homes in the west Valley neighborhood of Canoga Park.⁹² "Soon after they had deposited the money," he testified, "they were advised by the real estate agent that the loan company had refused to approve the loan." Chuman tenaciously pursued the case with the real estate company and the lending institution, whose representatives all "feigned ignorance of the entire situation." The JACL attorney eventually pursued his client's grievance with the developer who, fearing further legal action, oversaw the successful processing of the loan. After Chuman's

⁹¹ "Reactivate CLers in San Fernando," *Pacific Citizen*, April 40, 1954, 4. Chibo Sakaguchi, whose sister was interrogated by the FBI after December 7, 1941 was elected president for example. Chiyoko Shibuya, whose family's farm was ruined after the War became the chapter's recording secretary.

⁹² Statement of Frank Chuman, President's Commission on Civil Rights, January 26, 1959 in Max Mont Collection, Series III: Community Relations Conference of Southern California, Box 6, Folder 10 "US Commission on Civil Rights: Calif. Hearings; Minority Housing, Jul 1959; 15-26 Jan 1960," Urban Archives Center, Oviatt Library, Cal State Northridge.

intervention, the family was eventually able to move into a new home. Because this case ended in a victory, the Valley JACL became more vigilant in defense of housing rights and made fair housing a plank in its political platform. Thus, the chapter became situated in the same political orbit as the local NAACP.

An early example of the collaboration between the JACL and NAACP occurred as early as 1960. Although the NAACP readily acknowledged, “other minorities, although suffering from discrimination, have achieved a greater level of integration in housing,” the JACL chapter nevertheless participated in a multiracial, middle-class fair housing campaign.⁹³ In late June of that year, the campus of San Fernando Valley State College, located in the segregated neighborhood west Valley neighborhood of Northridge, hosted an inaugural conference on equity in housing. Bluntly titled “Where Shall We Live,” this program was the brainchild of the San Fernando Valley Fair Housing Council and set an agenda for the day that covered topics ranging from public policy to testimonies of racial exclusion and violence and strategies for “promoting integrated housing.”⁹⁴ The Valley chapters of the NAACP and the JACL contributed their knowledge and expertise on housing, alongside various professors at Valley State and ecumenical faith leaders such as Rev. Hillary Broadous, the war veteran and former barber who spent a brief time raising his young family in Basilone Homes. Although it is unclear what short-term impact the conference had, what remains significant is the wide coalition of

⁹³ John J. Mance (President, San Fernando Valley NAACP) Letter to Frank H. Barnes (President, Southern Area Conference of the NAACP), January 12, 1950 [*sic*; most likely 1960 given a reference to events in 1959 and that this letter was in response to Barnes’ solicitation of information about housing to deliver before the 1960 US Civil Rights Commission hearings in Los Angeles.], Max Mont Collection, Series I: California Committee for Fair Practices, Box 3, Folder 10 “US Commission on Civil Rights, Housing Discrimination Cases,” Oviatt Library, Cal State Northridge.

⁹⁴ “Where Shall We Live? Toward Equality in Housing” Pamphlet, Max Mont Collection, Series II: California Against Proposition 14, 1946, Box 6, Folder 7 “Housing Correspondence, Oct 1959-Feb 1980,” Urban Archives Center, Delmar Oviatt Library, California State University Northridge.

community organizations that came together for the one day gathering and served as resources for the fair housing struggle that continued throughout the decade.

As opponents of Proposition 14 gathered support from a variety of constituents – organized at the state level through the group, Californians Against Proposition 14 – various groups in the Valley took up the campaign as well. Carl McCraven and Edward Kussman, whose longtime presence in local multiethnic politics earned him the nickname “Mr. Pacoima,” led the Valley NAACP’s housing protests and raised funds to support the legal actions challenging Proposition 14.⁹⁵ The chapter coordinated a great deal of its advocacy with the larger San Fernando Valley Fair Housing Council. According to the Valley NAACP’s *Annual Report*, the chapter’s direct activities focused upon educating their membership and sympathetic Valley residents on specific arguments for fair housing that ranged from the morality of racial equality to a challenge to the California Real Estate Association’s corporate interests that were masked as populism. The organization also worked towards aggressive fundraising to strengthen the Southern California Regional NAACP’s coffers dedicated to the Proposition 14 campaign. Taken together, these forms of organizing reflected the middle-class character of the NAACP’s leadership and membership. Education was an important avenue to reinforce the urgency of upholding the Rumford Act to individuals who may have been content having moved to the San Fernando Valley at all.

The JACL’s investment in fair housing and Proposition 14 more generally, emerged as new, professional Japanese American families migrated to the San Fernando Valley. By the 1960s engineers and other Japanese Americans who found employment with the defense industry’s research and development departments settled in the Valley. Meanwhile, Nisei

⁹⁵ San Fernando Valley NAACP Annual Report (1965), 5 in NAACP Region I Records (BANC MSS 78/180c); Carton 93; Folder 23.

doctors Sanbo Sakaguchi and Mary Sakaguchi Oda, who grew up on their North Hollywood family farm, returned to the Valley where they established a general practice in San Fernando that served the local communities of color.⁹⁶ In 1960 2,364 Japanese Americans populated the eastern environs of Pacoima and Sun Valley alone.⁹⁷

In terms of a civil rights architecture, Nikkei activists across California mobilized the Japanese Americans Against Proposition 14 campaign, with the memory of restrictive property laws that targeted the Issei in the 1910s and 1920s etched into the community's collective consciousness. Kats Arimoto, who lived in Canoga Park, was responsible for coordinating efforts in the San Fernando Valley as well as Los Angeles. The Valley JACL, like their counterparts in the NAACP, worked towards educating its members about the legal issues surrounding fair housing and how they pertained to the Japanese American experience. Robert Moriguchi joined the chapter in 1960 and eventually became the president. He recalled, "We were also fighting to overturn many of the discriminatory laws and [for] civil rights" through donating books to local schools about the Japanese American experience and participating in cross-racial dialogues in the community.⁹⁸ Meanwhile, Mamoru Iga, a recently appointed professor of sociology at San Fernando Valley State College was also involved with the Valley JACL and lent academic credence to the fight for fair housing.⁹⁹ Former chapter presidents Sam

⁹⁶ Mary Sakaguchi Oda, Interviewed by Jean-Paul deGuzman, Northridge, CA, February 2, 2008.

⁹⁷ James Allen and Eugene Turner, *The Ethnic Quilt: Population Diversity in Southern California* (Northridge: Center for Geographical Studies, CSU Northridge, 1997), 128; Commission on Human Relations, "Comparative Statistical Analysis of Population by Race," cited in Wilbur Sato, "Statement of Wilbur Sato, Chairman, Civil Rights Committee, Pacific Southwest District Council, JACL to the Senate Fact Finding Committee on Race Relations and Urban Problems," *Pacific Citizen* Archives, Box 2, "Census: Japanese in U.S." Folder, Hirasaki National Research Center, Japanese American National Museum.

⁹⁸ Robert Moriguchi, E-mail communication to the author, October 1, 2012.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*; "Where Shall We Live" Pamphlet. Although Iga, an immigrant from Japan, was primarily a scholar of Japanese society, he conducted research on the acculturation of Nikkei in Utah, see "Acculturation of Japanese Population in Davis County, Utah," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Utah, 1955).

Uyehara and Tom Endow were advocates for the JACL's Statewide Committee Against Proposition 14. Indicative of the close networks of the Valley's Nikkei community, and particularly the Nisei, other Japanese Americans who supported the statewide committee included JACC co-founders Mits Usui and Harry Nakada.¹⁰⁰ Warren Furumoto a biologist at San Fernando Valley State College, who, five years later, became a central ally in the Chicana/o Movement on campus also lent his support. In its sum, the efforts to generate opposition to fair housing among Japanese Americans not only represented a movement to support their own interests, but also ongoing efforts to inscribe the history of Japanese Americans into the larger history of the San Fernando Valley. Through education and publicity, fair housing activists demonstrated that Japanese American activists sought to claim the Valley through integration, but also by showing how the community's history had the power to inform contemporary consciousness.

Significantly, the larger JACL infrastructure appealed to Japanese Americans' legacy of historic injustices and compelled them to stand with other oppressed groups. In the run up to the 1964 election, the JACL urged Japanese Americans to go against the emerging image of the quiet Nisei and other Japanese Americans to get out the vote.¹⁰¹ The JACL, a leading force in the California State Committee of Japanese Americans Against Proposition 14 further repudiated the largely fabricated image of the acquiescent Nisei and bridged the generations through a particularly evocative poster (figure 3.5). Featuring a young Japanese American girl holding a Japanese doll, the poster boldly stated, "She can't remember 1942. But you can." In an

¹⁰⁰ JACL California Statewide Committee of Japanese Americans Against Proposition 14 poster (n.d., c. 1964) in Max Mont Collection, Series II: California Against Proposition 14, 1964, Box 5, Folder 19 "Japanese-Americans, May-Aug 1964; n.d.," Urban Archives Center, Oviatt Library, Cal State Northridge.

¹⁰¹ Bill Hosokawa, *Nisei: Quiet Americans* (New York: Morrow, 1969).

imagined dialogue with the average Nisei, the poster says “You know what it means to be deprived of your civil rights. You remember how it felt to be unfairly and illegally *segregated* from other Americans because of your Japanese ancestry. But that was long ago, you say, another generation” (emphasis added).¹⁰²

Here, the JACL Committee played on both the assumption by some Nisei that it was best to leave the ugly history of the concentration camps in the past and the perceived complacency of some Japanese Americans who embraced their racialization as model minorities or had successfully integrated into White neighborhoods. The use of “segregation” has a double meaning. On the one hand it could reference the legacies of Alien Land Laws and racially restrictive covenants that shaped the development of pre-war communities. On the other hand, by strategically using the word “segregation,” rather than a reference to “internment,” “incarceration,” “evacuation,” or even simply “camp,” the JACL encouraged Japanese Americans to connect the unconstitutional treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II to the housing discrimination Nikkei and other people of color faced in the 1960s. The dialogue then asks “Who says racial discrimination has ended?” and then bluntly answers “It can’t have . . . in California, since Proposition 14 seeks to write it into our Constitution.” The JACL concludes its reference to the Constitution with an admonition to “Protect it. For ourselves and found our children.”

In this brief, but illuminating poster, the JACL and other Nikkei fair housing advocates demonstrated that the wartime experience was a source of shame, but a call to combat inequality. Furthermore, the poster’s language subtly suggested that the struggle of African Americans was related (but not identical) to Japanese Americans. Jerry Enomoto reminded Japanese Americans, “Let’s not kid ourselves about Proposition 14, it favors no minority. Taking away all the tricky

¹⁰² JACL California Statewide Committee of Japanese Americans Against Proposition 14 poster.

words of the California Real Estate Ass. [*sic*] and their ilk, it simply gives legal license to refuse us housing on the basis of our Japanese ancestry, our Negro birth [or] our Jewish faith.”¹⁰³

Ultimately, the campaign against Proposition 14 animated Japanese American civil rights activism that drew upon a collective history of exclusion and dislocation.



Figure 3.5 “She can’t remember 1942. But you can,” 1964. This JACL poster linked the wartime experience of Japanese Americans to fair housing politics in the 1960s. Source: JACL California Statewide Committee of Japanese Americans Against Proposition 14.

The San Fernando Valley JACL’s campaigns against housing discrimination contributed to the larger struggle, while Japanese Americans made inroads into the previously all-White

¹⁰³ Quoted in Southern California JACL Regional Office Press Release, “50 JACL Chapters Called to Register Voters,” July 30, 1964 in Max Mont Collection, Series II: California Against Proposition 14, 1964, Box 5, Folder 19 “Japanese-Americans, May-Aug 1964; n.d.,” Urban Archives Center, Oviatt Library, Cal State Northridge.

areas of the Valley. Because of the relatively small numbers of Japanese Americans and their middling racial position in larger discourses of race, some Nikkei were able to move into the west Valley without incident. Philip and Marion Shigekuni were able to move into an apartment in Van Nuys in the late 1950s. Albert and Mitzi Kushida found a home in Canoga Park in 1964 and Ellen and Harold Kameya moved to Granada Hills, the home of NAACP president Carl McCraven, in the 1967. Their ability to settle in the west Valley may have been due in part to the changing positive perception of Japanese Americans *vis-à-vis* African Americans, as one minority group more acceptable than another. Socioeconomic class and the different migration trajectories of these families are important factors that shaped their settlement. Each family was middle-class and, interestingly, none were from the Valley: the Shigekunis came from Los Angeles proper, while the Kushidas and Kameyas had roots in Hawai'i. As the west Valley became a center of research and development for the defense and aerospace industries, therefore Asian American engineers, such as Mr. Kameya and his wife may have been more tolerable than African American neighbors. Nevertheless, the first two families, reflecting the JACL's Committee Against Proposition 14 logic, were not merely content with finding good housing in a largely White area. Rather, the weight of the history of discrimination against Japanese Americans compelled them to join the JACL, as a civil rights organization, in the 1960s and take on the movement for redress and reparations.

Ultimately, the populations of Los Angeles and California more generally voted overwhelmingly for Proposition 14 owing to its appeal to individual property rights. As historian Andrea Gill notes, the success of this movement rested upon the rearticulation of the discourse of claiming "rights" by White homeowners. She argues: "Support for Proposition 14, which had especially high approval among white Angelenos, was premised on the idea that civil rights were

incompatible with property rights, which were paramount and had to be defended. At a time when African Americans used law and the constitution to seek equal citizenship, Californians claimed their ‘rights’ as homeowners as constitutional guarantees.”¹⁰⁴ Although the California Supreme Court ruled Proposition 14 unconstitutional in 1966, the campaigns it catalyzed helped shape the consciousness of a variety of communities in the San Fernando Valley and beyond. For both the Valley’s African Americans and Japanese Americans, the fight against Proposition 14 was filtered through the intersections of class and racial identification. For African Americans, the fight for fair housing laws helped open the door to the rich opportunities afforded by the military industrial complex. Japanese Americans, on the other hand, may have benefited from changing views of Asians within the context of the Black civil rights struggle, yet the campaign’s use of history motivated various Nikkei to take up fair housing as a cause. In the shadow of the campaign against and later to repeal Proposition 14, the Valley continued to grow and develop.

Conclusion

When *Los Angeles Sentinel* and *Pacific Citizen* readers learned of the 1947 plot to completely exclude people of color from the sunny San Fernando Valley, the fate of those ethnic communities already living in areas such as Pacoima, Sun Valley, and Burbank remained unclear, as were the aspirations of those who wanted to break free from those neighborhoods. Although editorialists from both periodicals rightly sounded metaphorical alarm bells about the rise of restrictive covenants in the Valley, they did not anticipate the sheer power of the military industrial complex and its role in bringing a whole new generation of African Americans to the

¹⁰⁴ Andrea Gill, “‘A Decent Home in a Suitable Environment:’ The Struggle to Desegregate Public Housing in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles,” (PhD Dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2010), 331.

Valley. Nor did they foresee the collective drive to render Japanese Americans visible within the physical landscape of the east San Fernando Valley. After World War II, the Valley's political atmosphere was thick with lived debates over how the confluence of the defense industries, urban development, migration, class, and the right to a home in a neighborhood of one's choosing would shape the future of the region.

African Americans and Japanese Americans were important actors in this post-war moment when the rise of suburban residential developments comfortably developed alongside, color lines. In the immediate years after the end of World War II and as Japanese Americans were slowly attempting to rebuild their pre-war community, with what little capital they still possessed, the Nikkei outlined plans to build cultural institutions. Whether they were community centers, temples, or gardens these truly were "living memorials" that placed Japanese American history and cultures onto the landscape of the San Fernando Valley. The ideological currents that honored the Issei, military services, and cultural heritage in the making of these institutions balked the ideals of assimilation and showed how Japanese Americans saw their histories and lives firmly embedded in the San Fernando Valley. African American civil rights organizing in the San Fernando Valley, staged through the NAACP, likewise concerned itself with the politics of visibility. In their pursuit of residential integration, the NAACP crafted a politically effective narrative about the San Fernando Valley's Black community. Owing to the migration wrought by the needs of the large defense industries in the region, the NAACP captured an image of the upwardly mobile, educated, Black professional.

Ultimately, these were strategies and means, rather than long-term goals and political ends for these different communities both in terms of social justice activities and reconceptualizing the meanings of the San Fernando Valley. Within the context of the Cold

War, both communities' actions spoke directly or indirectly to the military industrial complex, whether it was valorizing the service of the all-Japanese American 442nd Regimental Combat Team, or highlighting the injustice that a research scientist at Lockheed was shut out of a good home. As the end of the 1960s neared, however, the tensile strength of these strategies began to wear thin. When San Fernando Valley State College professors Mamoru Iga and Warren Furumoto signed on to support the campaign against Proposition 14, little did they know how dramatically the tenor of political organizing would change on their very own campus. As the next chapter will further discuss, Valley State became a cauldron where students, staff, faculty, administrators, and interested community members participated in heated and at times violent debates over war, imperialism, and nationalism. In the span of only a few years, insurgent African Americans and Chicanas/os at Valley State quickly unraveled claims to the suburban good life that were articulated through participation in the military industrial complex.

CHAPTER FOUR

“The Valley Was the Last Place That Sort of Thing Would Happen:”

Protest and Race at San Fernando Valley State College, 1968-1970

On January 10th, 1969 Paul Blomgren, a local executive in the San Fernando Valley, quit his job. In a pithy letter to one of his subordinates, Delmar T. Oviatt, Blomgren explained that, because his diabetes “went out of control,” his personal physician “insisted” he should not “see or hear news or talk to anyone [since] complete rest would speed recovery.” He then turned over the reigns of power and acknowledged “I am extremely sorry to have left you with this responsibility, but I’ve had no choice. Do what you feel best.” Blomgren concluded with a note of sincerity as he bid his replacement, “I am truly sorry, Del!”¹

While other resignations might quickly fade from institutional history, Blomgren’s departure from the presidency of San Fernando Valley State College in Northridge took place amidst, and marked a turning point in, a student protest that shook the Valley.² These protests aroused attention from educators, students, homeowners, and politicians throughout Los Angeles, the state of California, and the nation. This movement had been brewing for a few years, but erupted into public view following the student occupation of the college’s administration building in November 1968. A series of walkouts, open forums, marches, arrests, and legal maneuvers followed. Valley State students, staff, faculty and the larger community proceeded to monitor tensely how administrators, now led by Oviatt, negotiated with insurgent

¹ Paul R. Blomgren letter to Delmar T. Oviatt, January 10, 1969 in California State University, Northridge Urban Archives, Campus Unrest Collection-Dr. Richard Abcarian Collection; RG 10.03; Box 1; Folder 12.

² In June 1971 the campus changed its name to California State University, Northridge (CSUN).

student activists who challenged the state of race relations at the school, the San Fernando Valley, and American society.

Ostensibly, the bucolic campus of San Fernando Valley State College (or VSC as it was often referred to in local press) was an unlikely stage for student rebellions that wove together critiques of imperialism, militarism, and racism. VSC's student body was largely White and the campus was located in a White neighborhood in a region marked by battles over racial integration. The students tended to be commuters and a journalist from *West* magazine suggested in 1969 that "Going to Valley State is like going to a regular job Young men and women run from their cars to the classroom buildings, just as through they had clocks to punch."³ Barbara Rhodes, an African American scholar activist who spent a portion of her youth in Pacoima, was likely not alone when she watched reports of student uprisings at VSC on the nightly news and assumed "the Valley was the last place that sort of thing would happen."⁴ Indeed, the uprisings during the 1968-1969 academic year and their subsequent reverberations represented an anomaly on an otherwise quiet campus, but the students' actions took place within several other large structural and political contexts that suggest that it was only a matter of time before students revolted at Valley State.

Although students sparked a movement that addressed many issues immediate to Valley State College campus, forces beyond the campus paved the road to the day when over twenty members of the Black Student Union occupied the college's administration building. These included, but were not limited to, the transformation of California's system of tertiary education that coincided with a burgeoning movement against America's wars in Southeast Asia, an

³ Art Seidenbaum, "Whatever Happened to the Silent Majority?" *West*, April 13, 1969, 14.

⁴ Barbara Rhodes, quoted in Bob Baker, "Did CSUN Takeover Win? '69 Rebels Disagree," *Los Angeles Times*, June 24, 1969, SF B1.

increasingly muscular articulation of ethnic nationalism in the America's urban centers and college campuses, and, more locally, the continued growth of the Valley's military-industrial complex which came to include a sizeable research and development apparatus. Furthermore, the heady student activism of the late 1960s capped over a decade-and-a-half of concerted civil rights activism primarily that chipped away the San Fernando Valley's residential color line.

A small handful of scholars, students, journalists and other observers have produced overviews of the movements that took place at Valley State. One early account by Earl Anthony examined the experiences of the Black Student Union within a larger, stinging critique of White supremacy that reflected the author's position as a former Black Panther.⁵ Written in 1971, *The Time of the Furnaces* was as much of a reflection of black student activism as it was itself a primary document of the Black freedom struggle. Later accounts attempted to provide greater details about the genesis of a student movement. Newspaper stories written through the lenses of post-1960s multiculturalism to mark anniversaries of the student revolt were at times celebratory as they acknowledged the importance of the establishment of Afro-American Studies. At other times, reports were more restrained. Most recently, historian Martha Biondi included Valley State in her works on radical Black campus-based activism and the rise of Ethnic Studies.⁶ Biondi's research situates the punishments BSU students faced within the larger context of the rise of "law-and-order" conservatism in California.

⁵ Earl Anthony, *The Time of the Furnaces: A Case Study of Black Student Revolt* (New York: The Dial Press, 1971) draws on interviews from many of the Valley State Black Student Union (BSU) leaders and thus provides an important trove of primary sources not found in mainstream accounts. Unfortunately, it lacks endnotes and/or a bibliography and I have identified at least one passage lifted, almost verbatim, from the *Los Angeles Times*, without reference. Anthony left the BPP sometime before 1971 over the organization's concern with class liberation as a component of revolutionary nationalism.

⁶ Martha Biondi, "Student Protest, 'Law and Order,' and the Origins of African American Studies in California," *Contested Democracy: Freedom, Race, and Power in American History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007) and *The Black Revolution on Campus* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012).

Each of these accounts provides a compelling reading of the events of 1968 and 1969, yet they do not fully situate the campus within the social, economic, and political contexts of the San Fernando Valley and the rest of Los Angeles. As a result, this chapter offers a new perspective on the campus uprising that also reinterprets the history of the post-war San Fernando Valley. Local newspapers published a prodigious amount of articles tracking the moves of students, administrators, and homeowners (although residents antagonistic to the students tended to receive more coverage). Student activists, and the efforts of their faculty and community supporters contributed to existing, and engendered new, conversations about “suburban” spaces, access, and the needs of different communities in the Valley. Therefore, this chapter is not meant to be an exhaustive account of student activism at San Fernando Valley State College in the chaotic 1960s. But rather, I examine how campus organizing in the 1960s reinforced and ruptured how different racial communities envisioned the San Fernando Valley and their relationship to its landscape.

Certainly, the student activism at Valley State College took place within a relatively short time frame and did not dramatically change the lives of the majority of the residents of the San Fernando Valley. Yet, I argue that the disconcerting images of protests, vandalized campus property, and the occasional student bloodied from physical altercations that saturated the local press, coupled with reports of draconian arrests and indictments, compelled individuals and communities to fully evaluate and rearticulate narratives they had crafted about the San Fernando Valley, its neighborhoods, and its institutions. The shocking events at VSC jarred many middle-class and wealthy Whites, particularly in the west Valley, and challenged their perception of the Valley as a comfortable retreat from the urban unrest of the 1960s. Through various public statements they expressed their disapproval of the BSU’s actions and, in some cases, the

programs designed to open the doors of the university to economically marginalized students. For African Americans and Mexican Americans, however, the flashpoints at VSC marked a shift in consciousness in race and about the San Fernando Valley. Student activists at Valley State rejected the moderate tone of earlier civil rights activism that emphasized integration into the middle-class residential landscape of the Valley. Whereas the Valley NAACP once made the plight of upwardly mobile Black professionals their cause célèbre, these young students envisioned an entrenched pipeline between the college and Pacoima. That conduit of education would serve the needs of the Valley's Black and Mexican populations while fostering political consciousness and a sense of racial solidarity with the struggles of people of color across the nation and the world. These conflicting outlooks came to a boiling point in late 1969 and early 1970 when almost a dozen BSU students were tried on charges of conspiracy, kidnapping, and false imprisonment and three were sentenced to one to 25 years in state prison. The pathway to that decision began a decade earlier when the post-World War II San Fernando Valley found itself in an economic boom tied to the region's military industrial complex.

San Fernando Valley State College in the Context of Cold War

The land upon which the California State College system built a campus in Northridge is a palimpsest of the different histories of race and development in the San Fernando Valley in the first half of the twentieth century. Built in 1958, the campus of San Fernando Valley State College became woven into a landscape that, in less than a generation, went from modest homes adjacent to sprawling farmland to sprawling residential developments whose residents were tied to the region's booming military-industrial complex. Immediately after World War II, a Japanese American family farmed approximately 60 acres of land on and near the present

northeastern edge of campus, which was unusual given the financial difficulty and social and political isolation so many other Nikkei families faced when returning to the Valley. The Muranaka family tilled the soil where they grew green onions and radishes in the years after the family returned from Utah. With the passage of time and as farm land in general gave way to the construction of tract houses, however, the Muranaka's moved north to Simi Valley and sold their land that eventually became the Valley's first four-year college in 1958.⁷

The planning for and eventual construction of a California State College in the Valley took place within the context a flourishing new post-World War II industrial economy tied to the nation's national defense imperatives. By the early 1960s corporations such as Atomic International, Bendix-Pacific, Rocketdyne, Marquardt, Northrop, and RCA, set up operation in the Valley that complemented older industrial bases such as Lockheed, which opened a Missiles and Space Division after the war.⁸ Whereas the first boom in wartime manufacturing lured thousands of migrants to the Valley with the promise of unionized factory employment, this second wave required workers who would toil at drafting tables rather than the floor line. This new economy was firmly embedded in the demands of the Cold War and therefore corporations needed engineers and other research scientists to work on the development of nuclear power, computer science, and electronics for space exploration, among many others. Within this context, San Fernando Valley boosters and business leaders recognized the utility of a college that could produce research and train future scientists. Although the state established two junior colleges in the San Fernando Valley in 1947 (Pierce College in Woodland Hills) and 1949 (Los

⁷ Roy Muranaka, Interviewed by Machiko Uyeno, March 21, 2004, Telling Our Stories Oral History Project. Once Simi Valley became increasingly developed, the family and their farm relocated once again to Moorpark.

⁸ Fact Sheet, February 1961, in Valley Industry and Commerce Association (VICA) Papers, Box 12, Folder 10, "General Facts on San Fernando Valley Devel., Feb 1961," Urban Archives Center, Oviatt Library, California State University, Northridge (hereafter, VICA).

Angeles Valley College in Valley Village), the time was ripe to build a bachelor's and master's degree granting institution to strengthen the educational linkages in the Valley from residents to the lucrative defense and transportation industries.

The goals of state college supporters coincided with the larger aspirations of educators and legislators in the Golden State who worked throughout the 1950s to reform California's system of higher education and meet the needs of the staggering post-World War II population boom. Indeed, California's population grew dramatically from 6,907,387 on the eve of World War II in 1940 to 15,717,204 in 1960.⁹ Los Angeles grew from 1,504,277 to 2,479,015 during the same twenty year period.¹⁰ The successive chain of development based around World War II defense production had a huge impact on the San Fernando Valley, as the region grew from 402,538 people to 750,000 during the 1950s alone.¹¹ With this huge rise in population, from the end of World War II up until 1965, the state government opened eleven public colleges which were often sited in communities located in the suburban peripheries of large metropolises such as Hayward in the San Francisco Bay, Fullerton in Orange County, and Northridge in the San Fernando Valley.

The genesis of Valley State originally began with the decision to open a satellite of Los Angeles State College, which had only been founded in 1947. Just like the tidy bedroom

⁹ US Census Bureau, "1990 Census of Population and Housing, Unit Counts, United States, 1990 CPH-2-1," in *Population and Housing Unit Counts, Population Estimates 1790-1990* (Washington, D.C.: United States Census Bureau, US Department of Commerce Economics and Statistics Administration, August 20, 1993): 26-27. Available online at <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen1990/cph2/cph-2-1-1.pdf>

¹⁰ Riley Moffatt, *Population History of Western U.S. Cities & Towns, 1850-1990* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 1996), 41.

¹¹ 1950 population statistics based on US Bureau of the Census, Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950 and Security First National Bank Research Department, *The Growth and Economic Stature of the San Fernando Valley* (Los Angeles: Author, 1960), 8; For 1960: Marchia Meeker, *San Fernando Valley Profile* (Van Nuys: Welfare Planning Council, San Fernando Valley Area, January 1, 1964) in Box 3, Folder 2 in Welfare Planning Council, Los Angeles, records, Collection no. 0434, California Social Welfare Archives, Special Collections, USC Libraries, University of Southern California.

communities that surrounded the campus, Valley State owes its origins to lofty visions of aggressive boosters. Originally, the State College System announced plans to break ground in Baldwin Hills, located north of Inglewood, west of Culver City, and only about 8 miles away from Downtown Los Angeles. Valley boosters swiftly pounced on the opportunity and, as acknowledged by Valley State's institutional history, "organized to successfully overturn the legislation and to later ensure that a four-year college would be sited in the San Fernando Valley."¹² The boosters' advocacy blossomed into a college in 1958 when Valley State was established in an affluent portion of the Valley which was approximately 95% white at the time.¹³

The growth of the student body at Valley State in its early years was tied to different regional and statewide factors. In the Fall of 1958 the college enrolled 2,525 students and less than five years later, the number spiked to 8,700 representing the population boom in post-War metropolitan Los Angeles.¹⁴ At that time, women comprised about half of the study body, although the college's president predicted, before an audience of Valley business leaders, that the ratio of men to women grow alongside the development of the engineering department.¹⁵

California's system of higher education underwent a variety of rapid changes by the time the first students at Valley State enrolled in classes and debated what mascot they would adopt (reflecting the region's love of Spanish-era fantasies, the student body selected the matador). In

¹² "CSUN History," available online at <http://www.csun.edu/aboutCSUN/history/>, last updated February 24, 2010

¹³ "1960 Census Tract - % White Persons," *Social Explorer*, accessed at <http://www.socialexplorer.com/pub/maps/map3.aspx?g=0> (based on data from U.S. Census Bureau).

¹⁴ "CSUN History."

¹⁵ "Dr. Ralph Prator's Remarks to the Industrial Association of the San Fernando Valley Luncheon Meeting, October 31, 1962, San Fernando Valley State College Campus," 2, in Box 15, Folder 5 "Speeches, 1962," VICA.

a series of negotiations and draft plans, legislators devised an educational design that clarified the roles of the University of California, the California State College System, and the California Junior College System. The outcome of was the landmark California Master Plan for Higher Education, which was signed into law two short years after San Fernando Valley State College was founded.¹⁶ One effect of the Master Plan was to tighten acceptance rates for students into the University of California and California State Colleges: specifically, the latter institution would only accept the top third of graduating seniors where it previously accepted the top half. While this turn may appear restrictive, the overall founding of several new state colleges slowly began to open the door to increased Black and Mexican American enrollment. That opening, in turn, laid the foundation for student activism to bolster those numbers even further.

The aspirations for Valley State were intimately tied to the military industrial complex that had reshaped the Valley's geography since World War II. In 1953 real estate economist Fred E. Case estimated that a whopping "90% of all industrial employment is connected with defense production" in the Valley.¹⁷ Less than a decade later, in speech before the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce's Industrial Development Committee, Seymour H. Mann, the president of the Industrial Association of the San Fernando Valley, boasted about the progress of the growing college in relation to industry. "Its engineering school is well along," he noted, before moving to the symbiotic relationship between Valley State and the research end of the defense field. "Some of [the college's] scientific faculty functions as consultants to industry" while

¹⁶ John Aubrey Douglass, *The California Idea and American Higher Education: 1850 to the 1960 Master Plan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

¹⁷ Fred Case, "The Impact of Industrialization on the San Fernando Valley," address to the Industrial Association of the San Fernando Valley, February 11, 1953, 4, in Box 15, Folder 3 "Speeches, 1952, 1953," VICA.

“conversely the college provides some of the scientists in industry an opportunity to teach.”¹⁸

That same year, President Ralph Prator assured members of the Valley Industrial and Commerce Association that Valley State’s student body would contribute to the ranks of the industries that boomed during the Cold War. Prator envisioned that, of 4,200 graduating seniors per year, “600 will be going into science, 700 into teaching, 500 into business, and 250 into engineering.”¹⁹

Administrators invested a great amount of energy into cultivating the university as a center of thermodynamic, nuclear, and aerospace engineering research for the Valley and the rest of Southern California. President Prator assured members of the Valley’s commercial elite that the college would develop an engineering curriculum that “is science oriented [and] related to the kind of business that the Valley is engaged in.”²⁰ Although Prator’s remarks certainly reflected the interests of his direct audience, in a sense they also encapsulated much of the economic restructuring of Valley at large. Gone were the fields that had once brought generations of migrants to the Valley. Sprawling and sleek factories and offices where research, design, production, and national defense came together, bolstered by a local educational institution committed to science and engineering education, replaced those verdant agricultural lands. The school’s firm investment in the defense and aerospace industries, however, did not necessarily mean that it valued unrestricted growth for the surrounding environs.

As the 1960s progressed, college administrators valued the development of the institution, but were careful not to disrupt the low-density, residential district in which Valley State was located. In 1966 Prator went before VICA’s Legislators Luncheon and praised city

¹⁸ “Address, June 5, 1962, by Seymour H. Mann, President, Industrial Association of the San Fernando Valley before the Industrial Development Committee of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, Los Angeles, Calif.,” n.p., in Box 10, Folder 37 “Speeches, 1960-2; 1965-66; 1968; 1970; 1973; 1976,” VICA.

¹⁹ Prator Address, 3.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

planners for their efforts to defend the residential flavor of the neighborhoods surrounding the college against “a recurrence of the expensive processes of urban development experienced at USC, Columbia and Chicago and the continuing problems of blight such as are in evidence at San Jose and Berkeley.”²¹ Prator’s conception of Valley State’s place in Northridge signaled how the school balanced the dominant twin identities of Valley at the time. That is to say, Valley State was built into both the profitable industrial sector that required a strong knowledge-class in addition to the well-defined homeowner character of the San Fernando Valley. Valley State would complement the former but not upset the social landscape of the latter. Such assurances about development, however, could not control for the campus protest and unrest.

The Anti-War Movement on Campus

An important predecessor to the racial activism at San Fernando Valley State College was student advocacy for peace and an end to America’s wars in Southeast Asia. As the casualties in Southeast Asia continued to rise in the 1960s, increasing numbers of students at VSC began to protest both military actions in Viet Nam and elsewhere as well as the production of chemical weapons in the San Fernando Valley and greater Los Angeles. The anti-war movement in Los Angeles grew to include a diverse assembly of individuals and groups that ranged from members of the New Left to racially conscious organizations. Although much of the San Fernando Valley resembled the “silent majority” that President Richard Nixon later appealed to, it was not completely isolated from anti-war activism. The Valley Peace Center, for example, staged protests against the draft and the war more generally in the San Fernando Valley. In the fall of 1967 members of the center picketed at the Valley Draft Board in North

²¹ “Remarks by Dr. Ralph Prator, Industrial Association – Legislators Luncheon,” December 16, 1969, 1, in Box 15, Folder 6 “Speeches, 1964; 1966,” VICA.

Hollywood.²² In addition to the Valley Peace Center's organizing, protests emerged at Los Angeles Valley College. Despite (or because) of its connections to the defense industry, San Fernando Valley State College soon became a center of anti-war activism in the Valley.

Although the vast majority of students who participated in this movement were White, it helped establish a space for student activism at the college. By the middle of the 1960s, a handful of VSC students organized a chapter of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the New Left organization that emerged from a meeting of students at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor in 1960. The SDS along with several supportive faculty members, orchestrated several classroom walkouts and rallies to encourage students to protest the draft and the administration's common practice of inviting recruiters for the military, the Central Intelligence Agency, and corporations, such as Dow Chemical, that contributed to and benefited from the war.²³ Leftist student Paul Shinoff exhorted students to understand that, as one student journalist paraphrased him, "college students [were] being conditioned for the defense industry."²⁴ Because the region's identity was so closely tied to the military industrial complex and the material good life it could proffer, anti-war activism piqued special alarm among local residents. By the end of the 1960s, the SDS, which catalyzed a backlash from the Young Republicans on campus, continued their anti-war advocacy. The center of activism soon shifted to explicit issues of racism on campus and in the San Fernando Valley.

²² "Pickets Slated to March at Valley's Draft Board Today," newspaper clipping in CSUN Campus Unrest Collection, RG 10.01, Box 1. Possibly from the *San Fernando Valley Times* or the *Van Nuys News and Valley Green Sheet*.

²³ Ron Hale, "SDS 'Drafts' Class 'Walkout' to Fight Apathy," *San Fernando Valley State College Daily Sundial* [hereafter, *Sundial*], October 5, 1967; Ina Schneider, "200 'walkout' to attend forum," *Sundial*, October 19, 1967; Pat Bryant, "Rally at Valley State Attacks Draft Policy," *San Fernando Valley Times*, October 19, 1967; Pat Bryant, "CIA Recruit Visit to VSC Called Off," *San Fernando Valley Times*, November 15, 1967.

²⁴ Kathy Williams, "Arrests called 'bum rap,'" *Sundial*, September 29, 1967.

Race, Power, and Rebellion at Valley State College

By the late 1960s, as the fervor of decolonization movements swept across the globe, America's ethnic youth joined forces with an array of leftist community-based organizations.²⁵ These students and their allies outlined goals that ranged from the recovery of their collective buried pasts to the transformation of historical and systemic political and economic inequalities to the founding of Ethnic Studies curricula that tied education and community. In California, the multifaceted struggle for Ethnic Studies at campuses such as San Francisco State College, UC Berkeley and, to a lesser extent, UCLA, are prominent examples of student activism. A similar movement developed at San Fernando Valley State College.²⁶

Although state education planners may not have directly had them in mind, the rapid growth of African Americans in the San Fernando Valley accompanied the larger population boom in the region. The neighborhood of Pacoima grew to 69,000 residents between 1950 and 1960 and matched the rate of growth for other well-known black suburbs such as Compton.²⁷ During the 1960s, the Black and Mexican working class population of the east Valley grew as well. In 1962, the Los Angeles Welfare Planning Council found that "San Fernando and Pacoima, the only two communities with a sizable minority population in the Valley, have the

²⁵ Laura Pulido, *Black, Brown, Yellow and Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005).

²⁶ See Steve Louie and Glen Omatsu, eds., *Asian Americans: The Movement and the Moment* (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center Press, 2001); Meredith Eliassen, *San Francisco State University* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2007); Claudia Mitchell-Kernan, ed., *Forty Years of Ethnic Studies at UCLA: 1969-2009* (Los Angeles: UCLA Graduate Division, 2009). The San Fernando Valley had an interesting connection to the events at UCLA of the late 1960s. A major point of contention regarding the direction of the campus involved the termination of Professor Angela Davis, noted philosopher, theoretician and member of the Communist Party and the Black Panther Party. Then chancellor Charles E. Young received great pressure from the UC Regents to fire Professor Davis. Regent John Canaday, of the Valley city of Burbank, led the charges. See Jackson Mayers, *The San Fernando Valley* (Walnut, CA: John D. McIntyre, 1976), 213.

²⁷ Eugene I. Bender, *A Profile of Four Communities: Compton, Pacoima, Wilmington, Willowbrook* (Los Angeles: All Nations Center Study Committee, Welfare Planning Council, Los Angeles Region, March 1962) in Box 10, Folder 3, Welfare Planning Council, Los Angeles, records, Collection no. 0434, California Social Welfare Archives, Special Collections, USC Libraries, University of Southern California

lowest median incomes and the highest proportion of low income families, and the non-white and Spanish surname populations have smaller incomes than the Anglo-white population living in the same communities.”²⁸ 1965, the same year as the Watts Rebellion, the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Rights, listed Pacoima as one of the county’s “well-defined” “Negro Ghetto[s].”²⁹ By the end of the decade, the City of Los Angeles went ahead with plans to construct a public housing complex in Pacoima, against the wishes of the local NAACP who felt it would burden the community.³⁰ As Andrea Gill points out, the Valley NAACP was critical of Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles and the city government for conceiving of Pacoima as nothing more than a dumping ground for city’s housing problems. One member of the NAACP succinctly remarked “Anybody can build anything in Pacoima, but it takes courage to go into white suburbia and convince them that low-cost housing in their community is their moral responsibility.”³¹ At the end of the day, the NAACP could do little to halt the construction of public housing in Pacoima. The rise of a new wave of lower-income migrants to Pacoima and its surrounding neighborhoods may have disrupted the vision of suburban respectability the Black middle class had carefully cultivated and fought for, but it helped create the conditions for community-oriented student activism at Valley State.

²⁸ Meeker, *San Fernando Valley Profile*.

²⁹ Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations, “Thwarting the Expansion of the Negro Ghetto,” *Proposals for the Improvement of Human Relations in the Los Angeles Metropolitan Area* (Los Angeles: Author, November 2, 1965, 32 in Box 2, Folder 2, Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission collection of surveys, reports, and other material, Collection no.0427, California Social Welfare Archives, Special Collections, USC Libraries, University of Southern California; “[word blocked out] Agrees With NAACP Pres. Stand on 221(D) (3)-Too Late!” *San Fernando Valley NAACP Newsletter*, April 1968, 1.

³⁰ “LA 221 (d) (3) Project Called Segregation Aid,” *San Fernando Valley NAACP Newsletter*, April 1968, 1 in NAACP Region I Archives, Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley.

³¹ Quoted in Andrea Gill, “‘A Decent Home in a Suitable Environment:’ The Struggle to Desegregate Public Housing in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles,” (PhD Dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2010), 394.

Daily life and the campus climate was isolating for the few students of color at San Fernando Valley State College. The *Los Angeles Times* described it as “one of the most lily-white of the California state colleges” with a student body that was “white, middle- to upper-middle class, and conformist” (although that last assessment ignored the anti-war activity that had taken place).³² In 1967 the college enrolled 15,600 students yet only 23 were black and 11 were Mexican American. Furthermore, the Eurocentric curriculum in the social sciences and humanities also let down students. An article in *Life* explained, “The blacks found the education they were getting singularly inapplicable” and “did not have much meaning in their lives.”³³

Social relations at the school were far from harmonious as well. Archie Chatman was a student from East Los Angeles who came to Valley State through a football scholarship in the late 1960s. He remembered how he was “shocked to find more overt racism [at Valley State] than I had ever seen in my life.” Any attempt to be treated with respect from other students was met with derision as he recalled, “I became ‘the uppity nigger.’”³⁴ Northridge business owners who refused service to Black students, many of whom were from Pacoima, further alienated African Americans and strained campus social relations. One White student even acknowledged that Black students were treated “like intruders” when they attempted to make purchases at local establishments or were subjected to random police harassment when walking the streets of Northridge.³⁵

Because of the abysmally low numbers and poor state of education and campus climate for student of color, and with the nudging of and funding from the state and federal governments,

³² Leonard Greenwood, “How Valley State Moved to ‘New Kind of Education:’ Understanding Resulted from Heated Clashes,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 2, 1969. B2.

³³ David Nevin, “Uneasy Peace at Valley State,” *Life*, March 14, 1969, 60, 59.

³⁴ Archie Chatman, quoted in Greenwood, “How Valley State Moved,” B2.

³⁵ Seidenbaum, “Whatever Happened to the Silent Majority?” 15.

the college implemented an Educational Opportunities Program to help bolster the enrollment and retention of Black and Mexican American students.³⁶ Headed up by Stanley Charnofsky, an energetic and young White assistant professor of education, the EOP remained fragile in its infancy. Yet, Charnofsky and his student assistants remained determined in their pursuit to boost the presence of students of color.

The students who reached out to their respective communities were Chatman, the football player, Mike Verdugo, and Bill Burwell. Verdugo came to the EOP program as a student activist with the United Mexican American Students, or UMAS, a precursor to the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicana/o de Aztlán (Chicana/o Student Movement of Aztlán or MEChA). Burwell was a particularly curious individual because of his political trajectory that developed well before he enrolled at Valley State. He came to campus well equipped with a social justice and liberationist background. Raised in the South, educated at the multiethnic San Fernando High School, and a resident of Pacoima, Burwell occupied spaces with very distinct racial histories. By the time he left high school he was already a member of the NAACP and CORE and had increasingly aligned himself with Black Power ideologies, such as those articulated in the works of Malcolm X and Ron Karenga. Grounded in the teachings of self-determination against a White racist government and society, Burwell founded Afro-Pac (short for Afro-Pacoima) around 1965, an organization that sought to radicalize Pacoima's residents and reject middle-class integration as an ultimate political goal.³⁷ Although African American Pacoimans did not immediately embrace Afro-Pac's message of Black nationalism, due in part to the middle-class background of many Blacks and the established tradition of moderate civil rights activism, Burwell brought his passion and vigor for serving his community to the EOP.

³⁶ "The Early Years: San Fernando Valley State College," *Los Angeles Times*, September 21, 1998.

³⁷ Anthony, *Time of the Furnaces*, 23.

With this strong trio taking a lead, Charnofsky and other students went into the Black and Mexican enclaves of Pacoima and elsewhere to spread the word about EOP and encourage potential students to apply. Their efforts did modestly boost student of color enrollment. In 1968 the total number of enrollees was 18,000 students; 200 were Black and 23 Mexican American.³⁸ Despite this small victory, many African American and Mexican American students worried about the fate of the program. Concerned students questioned the administration's commitment to diversity while outside observers worried that students held too much power in handpicking "students who were committed to militancy."³⁹

As a result of these conditions, and reflective of a growing movement to establish Black student spaces and African American Studies programs across the country's colleges, a handful of students founded a Black Student Union (BSU) at Valley State. The Associated Students of Valley State chartered the BSU as a campus student organization in 1967, due in part to the support of several SDS members who combined their anti-war activism with a critique of the intertwined forces of racism and poverty.⁴⁰ In the formative months after the school officially chartered the BSU, Burwell was a central figure who helped connect the organization to Pacoima, primarily through his other group, Afro-Pac.⁴¹ However, due to the community's reticence to embrace the nationalist Afro-Pac organization, the BSU faced some difficulties with outreach. After the careful and deliberate civil rights activism by groups such as the NAACP to empower the middle-class, the African American community, in the words of Archie Chatman,

³⁸ Statistics drawn from Roderick, *The San Fernando Valley: America's Suburb*, 148; Greenwood, "How Valley State Moved," B2.

³⁹ Greenwood, "How Valley State Moved," 4 .

⁴⁰ Robert Gerald Rice, "San Fernando Valley State College: A Microcosm of Campus Unrest," unpublished proseminar paper, CSUN History Department, December 1980, 14 in CSUN UA RG 10.01 Campus Unrest Collection, Box 6, Folder 24.

⁴¹ Anthony, *Time of the Furnaces*, 32.

“viewed Afro-Pac as a bunch of crazy niggers trying to stir up trouble, and in general thought of the Afro-Pac-BSU alliance as more of a threat than a benefit.”⁴² But, Chatman did not blame the people Pacoima for their hesitance to embrace the BSU. It was, in his estimation, “a large community of blacks and browns, but it is a suburban community, and the people in it labor under the illusion that they don’t have the same problems as urban blacks.” In this view, the promise of a home in the San Fernando Valley, even in its segregated neighborhood, was better than life in other segregated enclaves. As a result, Black Pacoimans of all classes chose to “stick their heads in the sand” and draw a line between themselves and the “politicization that occurs in urban areas.”⁴³ Nevertheless, individual BSU members made it their mission to bridge such class divides and ideological differences.

Another compelling figure in the genesis of the BSU and its struggles for African American Studies was a 21-year-old student named Uwezo. Born Richard Lewis, he was raised in Pacoima by middle-class Black parents who attained a measure of upward mobility through jobs in civil service and the local defense industry. Despite his family’s background, Lewis learned about the obstacles that working class African Americans faced in Pacoima and recalled, “by the time I was 12 years old I knew that the only real people, or at least the only ones I could really relate to, were the people on the street.”⁴⁴ As a student at San Fernando High School he became radicalized and jettisoned his self-declared “slave name” in favor of a Swahili word for “power” when he became, in his own words, “a black man instead of a Negro.”⁴⁵ Schooled in the tradition of Black nationalism propagated by Ron Karenga, Uwezo, went on to found the

⁴² Chatman, quoted in Anthony, *Time of the Furnaces*, 32.

⁴³ Chatman, quoted in, *Time of the Furnaces*, 32.

⁴⁴ Uwezo, quoted in Nevin, “Uneasy Peace,” 68.

⁴⁵ Uwezo, quoted in Anthony, *Time of the Furnaces*, 24 and Nevins, “Uneasy Peace,” 59. “Uwezo” roughly translates to “capacity,” “capability,” or, “power.”

House of Umoja in Pacoima around 1967. Taking its name from the Swahili word for unity, Uwezo recalled that House of Umoja “was like a black cultural and political community center. We would have counseling on the evils of dope addiction, teach brothers and sisters from the community how to shoot a gun, and go out and pick weeds from a black family’s house if they needed it.”⁴⁶ Although police raids forced him to close the House in 1968, he brought that same zeal to the fight for African American Studies at Valley State.

In the spring of 1968 representatives from BSU, UMAS, and other organizations convened the Coalition of Concerned Students and began a concerted and multipronged campaign to create a more equitable college.⁴⁷ Student leaders carefully, but doggedly, met with faculty members, department chairs, administrators and eventually the college’s acting president, Paul Blomgren, to increase the school’s racial diversity on three fronts: undergraduate recruitment, the curriculum, and the college library. The Eurocentric curriculum in the Department of English compelled two black student leaders to request the use of texts by African American authors. Although a sympathetic department chair did allow the students to state their case before the faculty, the professors denied their request. Paraphrasing the chair, historian Robert Gerald Rice, suggests that the “white faculty was not overly concerned with black culture [or maintained] an out-right unwillingness to teach black literature. A feeling of ‘we can’t teach it to everyone’ prevailed.”⁴⁸ The swift reaction to the proposed inclusive curriculum emboldened students to push harder and further for a relevant education. Progress by the administration towards those goals was slow to say the least. Even mainstream media outlets

⁴⁶ Uwezo, quoted in Anthony, *Time of the Furnaces*, 24.

⁴⁷ Student Coalition Statement, May 7, 1968, in Richard Abcarian Collection, University Archives, Oviatt Library, California State University, Northridge.

⁴⁸ Rice, “San Fernando Valley State College: A Microcosm of Campus Unrest,” 13-14.

suggested, the “college was willing” to meet with students, “but lackadaisical” in their efforts to implement change.⁴⁹

Although the inertia of any large educational bureaucracy could slow even the most popular of initiatives, the demands of the students of color faced a particularly protracted back-and-forth game. The leftist Black newsletter, *Crisis and Action*, spoke of students’ “building frustration” that emerged from the process of “inventing [proposals], submitting [them for review], and maneuvering” with the administration to implement demands in their three areas of concern.⁵⁰ Although two White faculty members who were sympathetic to the BSU later attributed the slow process to various “misunderstandings,” and the tenuous position of the chief executive (Prator was one of several acting presidents) exacerbated the slow pace of action, the Black students were far less forgiving.⁵¹ *Crisis and Action* indicted the “administration [of] refusing this, accepting that, and taking all the bows and brownie points” for the negotiations and the appearance of working with students. Mainstream journalists singled out acting president Prator, who was the dean of the business school before taking the reigns of power, for his slow response to the students.⁵² His inaction, combined with an unanticipated clash in the Athletic Department, unleashed a torrent of protest that placed Valley State at the center of larger tensions anxieties between urban rebellion and the sanctity of suburbia.

The fragile relationship between student activists and the administration reached a breaking point after accusations of racism in the Athletic Department and the physical altercation

⁴⁹ Nevin, “Uneasy Peace,” 61.

⁵⁰ “Repression at Valley State,” *Crisis in Action* 1:1 (December 1968): 1 in Campus Unrest Collection, University Archives, Oviatt Library, California State University, Northridge.

⁵¹ “The Case for Amnesty by M.M. Auerbach and J. Richfield,” 1969, in Campus Unrest Collection, RG 10.01, Box 2, Folder 23, CSUN Urban Archives Center.

⁵² Greenwood, “How Valley State Moved,” 4.

of a Black football player at the hands of a White volunteer coach in the fall semester of 1968. The fact that the part-time coach, Don Markham, was a member of law enforcement also aroused enmity by African Americans who had been long weary of the treatment meted out by the Los Angeles Police Department.⁵³ The BSU called for the coach's termination, but their meeting with Athletic Director Glenn Arnett on November 4, 1968 proved fruitless.⁵⁴ When he told the students that only the college president could fire staff, the BSU proceeded to the administration building to meet with the Blomgren. That meeting became the occupation that shook the campus, its students, and the Valley's residents for months to come.⁵⁵ Approximately thirty BSU students occupied the fifth floor that contained the office of the president (figure 4.1). Once there, the students held acting president Blomgren, thirty lower level administrators and clerical staff for four hours.

⁵³ The Watts Rebellion took place only three years before the altercation between the coach and the student. See Gerald Horne, *Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1995) for background.

⁵⁴ According to later court proceedings the meeting was only supposed to take place between Arnett, Chatman and two others. However, the meeting was erroneously advertised in the *Daily Sundial* as open to all Black students.

⁵⁵ Kevin Roderick, *San Fernando Valley: America's Suburb* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Times Books, 2002), 148-9.



Figure 4.1 San Fernando Valley State College's Administration Building, 1968. The normally placid Valley State campus made the front page of local newspapers after members of the BSU occupied the president's office. For several months following this event, future protests, arrests, and negotiations would capture the minds of countless newspaper readers across the Valley the rest of Los Angeles. Source: *Van Nuys News and Valley Green Sheet*, November 5, 1968.

Accounts of the events in those four hours differ regarding how the BSU treated the workers in the administration building. While students claimed there was no violence or even forced detention, staff and administrators told the local media a different story. Some of the staff claimed that BSU members brandished knives and “implied threats of violence,” according to the president’s executive assistant. George Holland, an associate dean for the fine arts division emerged from the fracas “frightened, outraged and disgusted” after he was physically assaulted. Some office staff said they were also kicked, hit, and, in one instance, sprayed with a fire

extinguisher.⁵⁶ One faculty member claimed that BSU leader, Eddie Dancer, threatened the life of Athletic Director Arnett with a razor and assaulted him in a chair.

The occupation culminated in a negotiation between the activists and the administration over the immediate and long-term trajectory of the college. Although the BSU originally planned to only discuss the issue of Coach Markham, they seized the moment and presented President Blomgren with a list of twelve demands. According to BSU chair Archie Chatman, “We came to the obvious conclusion that we had the opportunity this time to confront the policy makers—the administration—with the major problems facing black students at that campus.”⁵⁷ Their points revealed a wide-reaching agenda that addressed the immediate concerns about the Athletic Department but spoke to larger goals of transforming the college into an equitable educational space for students, faculty and staff of color (see Appendix).⁵⁸ The twelve individual demands addressed the need for 1) a relevant and inclusive curriculum that would increase Black enrollment and bridge Black education with community empowerment; 2) a democratic and participatory model of administration; and 3) transparency and accountability for college decision-making.

One key demand was for a Black Studies program that would blend instruction on African American history life, society, and culture with attention to the needs of local Black communities such as Pacoima. One journalist paraphrased Uwezo when he urged the need for “a truly black education, one that can be put to work in the black community.”⁵⁹ Defining that

⁵⁶ Quoted in Greenwood, “How Valley State Moved,” 4.

⁵⁷ Chatman, quoted in Anthony, *Time of the Furnaces*, 56.

⁵⁸ “‘Demands’ at San Fernando State College,” (c. 1969), typed list in “San Fernando Valley Problem, 1969” Folder, Box 200, ACLU-SC Records.

⁵⁹ Nevins, “Uneasy Peace,” 59.

“truly black education” in relation to the community reflected both personal and political imperatives. Recognizing his place of privilege as a college student and child of the Black middle class, he urged fellow black students to repudiate the mores of individualism. Put bluntly, “we cannot afford to be individuals. People on top of society can afford that, but those on the bottom can’t. I am inseparable from my brothers.”⁶⁰ Although Uwezo was the product of the type of middle-class civil rights activism that energized a generation of African Americans in the Valley, in the contexts of the late 1960s he was radicalized to put aside those privileges and work for the empowerment of the entire Black community.

Beyond his personal investments, Uwezo’s articulation of an education that was explicitly relevant and applicable to African Americans outside of Valley State reiterated a central tenant of the Ethnic Studies movement: cultivating an education that would “serve the people.” Indeed, Uwezo once reminded the White members of the SDS of the imperative for students of color to “get an education and take it home to our people.” Or, put in more colorful, if not direct, language, he advised the SDS, “Don’t give me any of that crap about revolution for revolution’s sake.”⁶¹ Furthermore, while an anti-colonial Black studies educational program necessarily upended the traditional curriculum in the humanities and social sciences, it also implicitly challenged the supremacy of the ostensibly “objective” science fields that undergirded the establishment of Valley State.

It is worthwhile to remember that Valley State was indeed founded to serve “the community.” Or rather, the college cultivated its science, technology, engineering and mathematical instruction to help bolster the Valley’s military-industrial complex. To be sure, a

⁶⁰ Uwezo, quoted in *Ibid.*, 70.

⁶¹ Uwezo, quoted in *Ibid.*, 64.

handful of African Americans did benefit in part from this new economy. Dr. Emory Holmes, who successfully fought his way past the housing color line, is one example. Even Uwezo's mother found employment in an airplane factory. However, the BSU was not content with using existing pathways to secure economic and social justice for the Valley's black community. Their call was for an entirely new educational endeavor that would begin with "a fundamental change in attitude toward black students [by] themselves" and proceed to serving the neglected Black community of the Valley and throughout Los Angeles.⁶² As Uwezo explained, black students "went to school to get out of the ghetto, to make it in the white world." But, "now black people are proud of themselves. They want to know their own culture and heritage They don't want to take away from the whites—they just want to bring their own community up with the white community."⁶³

Informed by their experiences on campus, in Black enclaves, and as people of color in a White world, the BSU's demands encapsulated a wide-ranging agenda for a more equitable college that coupled education with service to their communities. They represented a new, assertive worldview for young people and, to return to the afternoon of November 4, that ideology came very close to becoming policy.

Recrimination and the Negotiations for Peace and a "New Kind of Education"⁶⁴

After several hours, President Blomgren relented and signed the list of demands, which effectively ended the student rebellion. Archie Chatman on behalf of the BSU and Stanley

⁶² *Ibid.*, 59.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁶⁴ Greenwood, "How Valley State Moved to 'New Kind of Education:' Understanding Resulted from Heated Clashes."

Charnofsky, the acting director of the EOP, also signed the document. Along with the list of demands Blomgren also granted amnesty to all students who participated in the takeover. For a brief moment, it appeared that the students had triumphed.

Less than a day later, however, Blomgren quashed any celebrations. Emboldened by Governor Ronald Regan's zeal to do away with the "anarchy and insurrection" on California college campuses, Blomgren claimed his decisions were made in a cloud of fear and violence and called for the swift arrest of the student activists.⁶⁵ Speaking to the press soon after he rescinded his agreement with the BSU, Blomgren stated that he signed in the interest of safety for his staff, "who were obviously being held hostage."⁶⁶ He continued:

Any document arrived at when people are held hostage or by force is not a mutual agreement...It is simply a list of terms dictated by those who have the force...It appeared to me that the personal safety of my college personnel was definitely in jeopardy...From that point on, my first and only concern was for the safety of those individuals...I signed the statement because I saw faculty and staff being held...I repudiated the document, but that does not mean that we will not try to work out the grievances in the future.⁶⁷

While Blomgren quickly pledged to "build a solid program for minority students," without furnishing any other details, he received immediate praise by politicians and other leaders who welcomed his tough stance to halt, what they interpreted as, the creeping radicalism on California's campuses.⁶⁸ In a speech before an audience in the wealthy enclave of Pacific Palisades, Governor Reagan stoked outrage at campus unrest in general and targeted Valley State

⁶⁵ Ronald Reagan, quoted in "Governor Will Seek Action Ending Campus Disorders" (January 9, 1969," newspaper clipping in "San Fernando Valley Problem, 1969" Folder, Box 200, ACLU-SC Records; Roderick, *The San Fernando Valley: America's Suburb*, 148-9.

⁶⁶ Greenwood, "How Valley State Made," 4. Quotation from "College Information Bulletin Supplemental Issue," November 5, 1968 in CSUN Urban Archives, Campus Unrest Collection; 10.01; Box 1; Folder 30.

⁶⁷ Ralph Sanders, "Black Amnesty Denied," *Valley State Daily Sundial*, November 6, 1968. See also "College Information Bulletin Supplemental Issue," November 5, 1968.

⁶⁸ Quoted in "College Information Bulletin Supplemental Issue," November 5, 1968.

in particular. The BSU students, in Reagan's opinion, should have been "taken out by the scruffs of their necks" and stated that their move to "hold captive administrative personnel" and attempt negotiations was "utterly ridiculous." Ultimately, he was left with a "feeling of disgust."⁶⁹ Aside from Governor Reagan, local politicians lined up to laud Blomgren. Los Angeles's conservative Democratic mayor Sam Yorty, whose racially tinged populism after the 1965 Watts Rebellion appealed to frustrated suburban Valley voters, expressed his solidarity with Blomgren.⁷⁰ Meanwhile leaders from the Northridge Civic Association congratulated the president for his response to the BSU's disruption to the otherwise placid neighborhood. The general faculty, after listening to harrowing stories from the hostages, voted to support Blomgren.⁷¹ The Associated Students Senate also moved quickly to support Blomgren's decision as they revoked the BSU's charter two days after the takeover.⁷²

All of the acclaim for Blomgren's actions did not bode well for students. With the college's intent to press charges known, the Los Angeles Police Department, already vilified for its ongoing harassment of Los Angeles' ethnic communities, arrested 28 students on multiple accounts of kidnapping, conspiracy, and false imprisonment, among other charges.⁷³ Police officers stood guard at Northridge Hall, the dormitory where many African American students

⁶⁹ Ronald Reagan, quoted in "Reagan Praises Blomgren," *Valley State Daily Sundial*, November 6, 1968, 6.

⁷⁰ Sanders, "Black Amnesty Denied." On Yorty and the San Fernando Valley see also, Charles G. Mayo, "The 1961 Mayoralty Election in Los Angeles: The Political Party in a Nonpartisan Election," *Western Political Quarterly* 17:2 (1964): 325-337 and Raphael J. Sonenshein, *Politics in Black and White: Race and Power in Los Angeles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 36-114. Yorty went on to win huge swaths of the vote in the Valley in the 1969 mayoral election against city councilman Tom Bradley.

⁷¹ Greenwood, "How Valley State Made," 4.

⁷² "Senate Revokes BSU Charter," *Valley State Daily Sundial*, November 6, 1968.

⁷³ On the LAPD and Black communities see Josh Sides, *L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 136-137.

lived, waiting to apprehend BSU students or went directly to Pacoima.⁷⁴ While the president did eventually lift the suspensions against the involved in the November 4 action, he steadfastly maintained that “. . . the gravity of the charges made in the criminal proceedings are such that they greatly over-shadow the possible campus discipline. Thus the students charged must first and foremost be concerned with defense against the criminal charges.”⁷⁵

The initial group of students the LAPD netted were all students of color. The overwhelming majority was Black but one student was a Mexican American (it is unknown at the moment if he claimed a politicized identity as a Chicano) and another was identified as both “Asian” and “Hawaiian” in the mainstream and Black press.⁷⁶ As the presence of Asian Americans in the Black Panther Party has shown, many people held the principle of Third World solidarity dear and worked on behalf of the Black freedom struggle.⁷⁷ The NAACP uncovered the fact that although large numbers of White members of Valley State’s Students for a Democratic Society were present for the occupation, only these 28 students were arrested for their alleged role in taking administrators and staff hostage. However, charges were later dropped against three students while one, Donna Jean Lashley, plead guilty to the two charges of false imprisonment she faced. The remaining twenty-four students became a lightning rod of controversy.

⁷⁴ Anthony, *Time of the Furnaces*, 66-68.

⁷⁵ “College Information Bulletin Supplemental Issue,” November 19, 1968 in CSUN Urban Archives, Campus Unrest Collection; 10.01; Box 1; Folder 30.

⁷⁶ “NAACP Defends College Students,” *The Crisis*, November 1969, 368. Although specific census data remains obscure, anecdotal evidence as well as a review of several years of *The Orange Blossom* (San Fernando High School’s yearbook) demonstrates the presence of a small Pacific Islander and Filipino community in the San Fernando-Pacoima section of the Valley.

⁷⁷ See Diane C. Fujino, *Samurai Among Panthers: Richard Aoki on Race, Resistance, and a Paradoxical Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011) and *Heartbeat of Struggle: The Revolutionary Life of Yuri Kochiyama* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

The remaining defendants were charged with criminal conspiracy to engage in kidnapping, false imprisonment, robbery, and burglary. In total a grand jury indicted twenty-four students with 1,730 felonies on December 20, 1968.⁷⁸ The sheer severity of the outcome was striking. Radical black students interpreted the indictments as an effort to chill future activism. In a statement only titled “The Black Students View,” BSU supporters argued that their “brothers and sisters” were targeted for building an educational curriculum that would cultivate Black women and men who would demand “freedom” and “fight in the name of liberation of all oppressed peoples of color.”⁷⁹ The NAACP’s newsmagazine, *The Crisis*, noted that the sheer number of felonies was surely “some sort of record of cases of this kind.”⁸⁰ It was indeed a record since this was the first time a college students faced mass prosecution for felony.⁸¹

Although the mid-academic year break promised a respite for campus members, the winter of 1968-1969 began with different constituents quickly taking sides in a drama that reflected the larger political discourse of the late 1960s. The BSU assembled support among African American students who staged a “Black Moratorium,” or class boycott, after the November 4 incident.⁸² Although the UMAS did not directly participate in the November 4 occupation, its members expressed solidarity with the BSU. In turn the BSU insisted that their Chicano allies have a seat at any further negotiating table when they released their own set of

⁷⁸ “NAACP Defends College Students,” 368.

⁷⁹ “The Black Students View,” undated document in CSUN Urban Archives; RG 10.01; Campus Unrest Collection; Box 6; Folder 34.

⁸⁰ “NAACP Defends College Students,” 368.

⁸¹ Baker, “Did CSUN Takeover Win?”

⁸² Anthony, *Time of the Furnaces*, 66.

demands included the establishment of a Chicana/o Studies Department.⁸³ The SDS, which had rallied students outside of the administration during the November 4 takeover, reaffirmed their support of the BSU.⁸⁴

Needless to say not all students were as optimistic. Campus conservatives, guided by the SDS's foil, the Young Americans for Freedom, prepared to do ideological battle.⁸⁵ Through their own alternative media such as the broadside *Open Campus*, these students claimed to expose the dangerous thinkers who allegedly undergirded the BSU's actions. In one issue, writers provided a (slightly mangled) quotation from Mao Tse-Tung about firearms and political power to tap into enduring anti-Communist sentiment and an aversion to violence on the suburban campus.⁸⁶ A little over a month after the November 4 incident, *Open Campus* ran an article condemning Marxist philosopher Herbert Marcuse and other leftist intellectuals who "loung[e]" as "mentally enslave[d] young fanatics serve[d] their evil ends."⁸⁷

Conservative students attempted to generate antagonism against the BSU by portraying the peaceful students of Valley State, Black and White, as victims of the BSU's inflated sense of importance, their "preachings [*sic*] of hate," and an administration overly concerned with race

⁸³ Rodolfo Acuña, *The Making of Chicana/o Studies: In the Trenches of Academe* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 49.

⁸⁴ "Time for Re-Evaluation," *Outcry*, January 8, 1969, 1.

⁸⁵ The principles of the Young Americans for Freedom and the post-war conservative movement are encapsulated in the "Sharon Statement," adopted in September 1960. For the full text see, "The Sharon Statement," available at the Online Archive of California:
http://www.oac.cdlib.org/view?docId=kt5q2nb12s&brand=oac4&doc.view=entire_text.

⁸⁶ *Open Campus*, December 17, 1968, 1. The writers included the quotation "Power grows out of the power of a gun," whereas Mao's statement is generally translated as "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun," see his 1938 essay "Problems of War and Strategy."

⁸⁷ Wm. B. Steel, Jr., "While Marcuse Lounges....," *Open Campus*, December 17, 1968, 1.

and appeasement.⁸⁸ The “preachings” that aroused so much ire focused less on any actual inflammatory rhetoric from the BSU, but rather the organization’s critique of racism in the Athletic Department that ignited the November 4 actions. To the BSU’s opponents, the claims of racism were unfounded and, if anything impossible, because of the administration’s move to implement an EOP program that recruited athletes of color. The administrators’ use of race as a metric for admissions, limited as they may have been, compelled one leader of the United Students organization to reflect, “One can only wonder what type of discrimination this is.”⁸⁹ This remark, an early accusation of “reverse racism,” or the belief that programs designed to address racial inequality necessarily harmed Whites, captured the backlash against any disruption of the status quo. Conservative students made their position well known, and they soon found sympathetic residents in the west Valley. The local press echoed those sentiments and the *Los Angeles Times* evocatively spoke of how “Faculty members were kicked, hit, called ‘pigs’ and hand their lives threatened during four hours as prisoners of Negro militants at a sit-in at San Fernando Valley State College.”⁹⁰ Despite this language, faculty members themselves held far more diverse opinions on the BSU and their demands.

As the campus reeled from the arrests, a cadre of sympathetic faculty members attempted to cultivate the conditions for dialogue to proceed. However, the series of arrests, indictments, and police presence, along with the timing of these events at the middle of the academic year undercut even their best efforts. In a striking expression of solidarity, the Valley State College local of the American Federation of Teachers, led by California historian Leonard Pitt, voiced

⁸⁸ Dwight Ham, “Does this Justify the Takeover,” *Open Campus*, December 17, 1968, 1.

⁸⁹ Ham, “Does this Justify the Takeover,” 1.

⁹⁰ Leonard Greenwood and Dial Torgerson, “Faculty Members Tell of Being Hit, vilified at Sit-in,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 8, 1968.

support for an Afro-American Studies department and “the hearing of grievances of minority students, and the resolution of these problems through negotiations.”⁹¹ Other faculty members called for a campus “convocation” to bring an earnest dialogue about the histories, contemporary experiences, and demands of the students of color to the campus’s larger student body, faculty, and representatives of the Black and Mexican American communities.⁹² Due to the frenetic pace of trying to reassemble a normal academic semester, the convocation was delayed until the beginning of the spring semester of 1969. Just as the new term began, President Blomgren, citing his diabetes, resigned and placed Vice President for Academic Affairs Delmar Oviatt as the head of the college in early January.⁹³ The Canadian-born Oviatt served as the chair of the School of Education at California State College, Los Angeles before coming to Northridge to build the fledgling campus.⁹⁴ The change in leadership further fueled the tensions and uncertainty on campus.

On January 7, the day Oviatt took over the presidency, approximately 500 students descended upon the entrance to the administration building where they demanded to meet with the college’s new leader. Two physical altercations flared up as students waited to see Oviatt. Larry Labovitz, a White student who founded an organization to challenge campus militancy, defended the new president and exclaimed, “[Oviatt] doesn’t have to discuss anything.” Two Black students picked up Labovitz and threw him to the ground. When another White student attempted to help Labovitz, “Negro militants,” as the *Los Angeles Times* called them,

⁹¹ “Local AFT chapter to present grievances,” *Valley State Daily Sundial*, January 7, 1969, 3.

⁹² M. Morton Auerbach Memorandum Re: Faculty Convocation and Workshop, Monday, January 6, 1969, December 18, 1968 in CSUN Urban Archives; Campus Unrest Collection; 10.01; Box 1; Folder 32.

⁹³ Paul R. Blomgren letter to Delmar T. Oviatt, January 10, 1969 in Campus Unrest Collection-Dr. Richard Abcarian Collection; RG 10.03; Box 1; Folder 12.

⁹⁴ David E. Brady, “Early CSUN Administrator a Potent Force,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 13, 1997.

subsequently threw him to the ground. A dramatic picture of three African American students standing over the second white student, accompanied the *Times*'s coverage.⁹⁵ When Oviatt attempted to meet with students on campus he claimed that he "was treated rudely." It is unclear what exchanges occurred between the students and Oviatt, but the students were certainly unsatisfied. The new president expressed an openness to meet with students in Pacoima in an attempt to recognize the importance of that neighborhood to the BSU or simply to diffuse tensions on campus. However, the BSU flatly refused to participate. The radical African American student newspaper *Black Star* opined that student leaders wanted to make "sure that Mr. Oviatt didn't come to Pacoima to make negotiations, because he would only lie to us, and go back to the college and tell a different story."⁹⁶ This move ensured that the urgency of their demands would remain a part of the campus, which had gained considerable media attention by this point.

The following day, on January 8, another contingent of students marched to the administration building to speak with Oviatt. "It seemed to me the students demanded to see me purely to show the power they had," he later reflected, "determined[,] I would not see them."⁹⁷ Oviatt ordered the police to fortify the administration building and a brief scuffle developed when a student hurled a planter through the lobby windows. Fourteen students were arrested. It appeared that the line was drawn and that Oviatt, building upon Blomgren's actions and

⁹⁵ Lee Dye, "500 March in New Student Protest at Valley State College," *Los Angeles Times*, January 8, 1968.

⁹⁶ "A Evening in Pacoima," *Black Star* 1:1 (January 18, 1969), 1; Pat Wholey and Barry Lane, "Oviatt opposes BSU talks: Rejects campus meeting in favor of Pacoima dialogue," *Valley State Daily Sundial*, January 8, 1969, 1.

⁹⁷ Quoted in Greenwood, "How Valley State Made," 4.

Reagan's ideology, would do whatever it would take to ensure Valley State would not erupt in the same manner as San Francisco State.

As campus protests ended in mass arrests, the larger San Fernando Valley community began to take note and many were quite unhappy. *Life* magazine put it best when it observed "People in the San Fernando Valley—suburban, conservative, largely white—are upset, confused, and angered by what has happened at Valley State."⁹⁸ While individuals in the tonier neighborhoods of the Valley such as Northridge or Encino may have privately groused about the turbulence at the local college, a physiologist named Richard Hill took up the battle to stir resistance against the BSU and those who expressed sympathy to their cause. Freely granting interviews to the press or speaking before living room coffee klatches, Hill, the former president of the Valley State Alumni Association, warned of an international conspiracy that underpinned the protests at his former college. Although Hill may have sounded like a holdover from the Cold War paranoia of the previous decade, his warnings to suburbanites about impending communist infiltration helped set into motion a rapid-fire chain of events.

During the first week of January, BSU students met off campus to discuss strategy for navigating negotiations with Oviatt and other administrators. The alternative newspaper, *Black Star*, which invoked Malcolm X in its byline, "Dedicated to the amnesty of all black students by any means necessary," noted that BSU students assembled on the evening of January 7th at Pacoima's Truth Coffee House. Rather than that meeting with Oviatt in Pacoima, they planned to convene a meeting with the new president and seven BSU representatives the next day on campus. For reasons that remain unclear, that meeting did not occur. The BSU's vow to "march over to the Administration building" and "conduct a rally . . . with the bull horn until the cops

⁹⁸ Nevin, "Uneasy Peace," 66.

start coming to move us away for trespassing and loitering” in the event Oviatt did not meet with them, also did not materialize.

Rather, BSU students, a handful of faculty, and other observers met again in Pacoima that evening and although the documented details of what transpired remain murky, one account sparked a controversy that marked a major turning point for the campus. As the evening of January 8 slipped into the early morning of January 9, the LAPD produced an intelligence report on that meeting and delivered it to a weary President Oviatt. With tantalizing details, it suggested that the BSU had on-call as many as 2,000 “black militants” who were prepared to storm Valley State if the administration proved recalcitrant in the second major round of negotiations. The report also claimed that the BSU was prepared to murder Oviatt.⁹⁹ The report did not name sources, but that was irrelevant to Oviatt who quickly moved to declare a state of emergency at the college.¹⁰⁰

The emergency order did little to quell campus unrest. Indeed, if the LAPD’s allegations were made public, but revealed to be unfounded, the emergency orders had the unanticipated consequence of sparking further tensions. The text of the state of emergency declared, “all demonstrations, assemblies, rallies, and meetings in the open forum or elsewhere, except for classes are prohibited.”¹⁰¹ While classes proceeded as usual, the move to curb campus protest was clear. Despite, or perhaps because, of the emergency declaration, hundreds of students converged once more on the administration building. Ignoring the orders from the Associate

⁹⁹ "VSC Campus Blood Bath Plan Bared" Valley Times, January 14, 1969, front page banner headline and Oviatt Memo Re: "Rationale for State of Emergency on January 9, 1969.

¹⁰⁰ Leonard Greenwood, "Valley State Peace Meeting Breaks Up After Accusation," *Los Angeles Times*, January 15, 1969.

¹⁰¹ D.T. Oviatt, Acting President, Memorandum to All Students, Faculty, and Staff of Valley State College, "A State of Emergency Has Been Ordered by the Acting President," January 9, 19698 [*sic*, 1969] in "San Fernando Valley Problem, 1969" Folder, Box 200, ACLU-SC Records.

Dean of Students to disperse, students held firm. Although none of the students engaged in violence – there were no fisticuffs or vandalism as in days past – police still arrested 286 students on counts of unlawful assembly or trespassing.¹⁰² Several Chicano students with the UMAS were also arrested, reflecting their shared aims with the BSU. Police also took into custody supportive faculty members including English professor Richard Abcarian, a firm supporter of civil rights and academic freedom, and Warren Furumoto, a Japanese American biologist who stood with anti-war student protesters and later became an adviser to the UMAS.¹⁰³ In a later trial, a White student named Vicki Whitaker testified that although police targeted all of the assembled students for arrest, only Black students received brute violence. Archie Chatman, the BSU chairman, sustained damage to his right eye and another Black student suffered blunt trauma to his skull.¹⁰⁴

Behind the scenes an executive committee met to plan a course of action to address the upheavals on campus. History professor Vern Bullough served as the president of the faculty association and represented the sympathetic wing of the campus' professoriate. Although the committee did not make any long-term recommendations regarding student discipline, voices such as Bullough's prevailed when members urged Oviatt "to call upon the services of the Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission in an attempt to open a dialogue between the various contending factions."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Greenwood, "How Valley State Made," 4.

¹⁰³ Acuña, *The Making of Chicana/o Studies*, 49. Furumoto was also active with the Latin American Civic Association.

¹⁰⁴ "San Fernando Valley State Students Face Trial as Felons," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 25, 1969, A2.

¹⁰⁵ Vern Bullough, Memorandum, "Some information on the current situation," (n.d., c. January 1969), in Campus Unrest Collection. In his capacity as a leader of the local ACLU, Bullough also worked to secure the release (on bail) for students arrested in the earlier protests.

With the large number of arrests standing as a warning to students and prepared to negotiate with students through the County Human Relations Commission, Oviatt felt comfortable enough to lift the state of emergency the following day on January 10. His decision quickly opened the floodgate to one of the campus's largest student gatherings, an outpouring of support by 1,200 students at the open forum for the BSU as well as UMAS and their similar set of demands. The tone of this assembly was different as even the *Los Angeles Times*, which had earlier warned of the "Negro militants" on campus and meticulously covered the cases of vandalism and violence, noted the "jubilant" feel of the assembly. BSU leaders Archie Chatman and Bill Burwell acknowledged their supporters and suggested that the college was poised to enter a new era of social relations. After various other students addressed the crowd, Chatman led the assembly in a silent, single-file march to the administration building. "They were so quiet," wrote one newspaper reporter, "the loudest noise was the sound of the campus police walkie-talkie radios."¹⁰⁶ In a dramatic scene the students raised their hands and then quietly disbanded.

A variety of factors shaped the growing support for the BSU on campus. As hundreds of students faced arrest, beginning with the original BSU activists and later their generally peaceful supporters, the rest of the student body had to make decisions about their own political investments. When proposed draconian charges leveled at BSU members came into sharper relief as they went to trial, support grew beyond ostensibly leftist students. Many White students and community supporters framed their support for the BSU as a statement in favor of academic freedom. This issue, which had so galvanized anti-war activists in the previous years, was significant as faculty and students became increasingly uncomfortable with the police

¹⁰⁶ Greenwood, "How Valley State Made."

presence on campus. An otherwise apolitical political science major named Mike Silverberg, for example, told the *Los Angeles Times*, for example, "...after I watched those arrests [on the day President Oviatt declared a state of emergency], I couldn't eat or sleep. I made up my mind that if there were any more demonstrations, I had to be in them."¹⁰⁷ The president of the graduate student association similarly voiced concern over the top-down approach to handling student unrest: "We, the students, must demand that negotiations begin immediately and that action be taken—action based on justice, not on channels of administration."¹⁰⁸

Despite the haranguing from Richard Hill, the suburban warrior who headed up the Valley State Alumni Association, negotiations on the original set of BSU demands continued. On January 10, 1969, the day President Oviatt lifted the state of emergency order and over 1,200 students assembled in support of the BSU and UMAS, 40 campus stakeholders met to discuss the student demands and the future of the school. This advisory committee represented the administration, staff members, the "Faculty for Democratic Institutions," which was the wing of professors sympathetic to the BSU, UMAS, and SDS, faculty critical of the student organizations, representatives of the student organizations, the wider student body, various outside educators such as Bert Corona, and the larger Black, White, and Mexican American communities with members who ranged from a Realtor, to a housewife, to a plumber.¹⁰⁹ Herbert Carter, the chair of the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations, also participated as a facilitator and consultant. The unwieldy committee was fractured from the beginning, as the student representatives demanded that body push the administration to call for an amnesty for the

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ "VSC Black Demands Negotiated By 44 Member 'Phantom Committee,'" *North Valley Mail-Reseda Post*, January 22, 1969, 15.

students arrested in the original takeover on November 4, 1968. Although the committee did ultimately recommend amnesty, the administration members did not participate in the vote.

Representatives of the wider Northridge community of homeowners bristled at the tone of negotiations, which they felt was too lenient towards the BSU students. Further, they determined their voices were not adequately respected. As residents of the neighborhoods that surrounded Valley State or as alumni, these individuals felt that they too were invested in the campus and deserved representation at the negotiating table. Helen Waisgerber spoke on behalf of her neighbors and asserted, “We feel this campus should remain an institute of learning . . . and not a platform for social change.” By drawing a distinct line between “learning” and “social change” Mrs. Waisgerber expressed both unease with the demonstrations but also the proposed curriculum that challenged the reproduction of power through the existing educational structure.¹¹⁰ Speaking on the prospect of recruiting students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, she said, “We are also concerned about the lowering of entrance standards for certain groups.” That Mrs. Waisgerber presented herself as “a taxpayer from the community” was an important reminder of the larger landscape Valley State occupied and the politics of its residents.¹¹¹ Her self-identification and general commentary revealed the backlash fomented by west Valley homeowners who wanted to conserve the perceived serenity of their suburban neighborhood. Her concern about the recruitment of those “certain groups” also spoke to a belief in meritocracy, an ideology that student activists saw as bankrupted through racism. Guided by a firm belief that their worldview was not represented, these homeowners selected, not surprisingly, Richard Hill to serve as their voice on the advisory committee. To appease their

¹¹⁰ On schools as sites of social reproduction and resistance see Peter McLaren, *Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education*, 5th ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2007).

¹¹¹ All quotations from Greenwood, “How Valley State Made.”

complaints and perhaps live up to former president Prator's promise that the college would not disrupt the high quality of life in the west Valley, Hill was granted a seat at the table.

On Sunday, January 12 the negotiations resumed when President Oviatt attempted to strike a moderate tone. Unlike Blomgren, who critics accused of insensitivity to the needs of students of color, Oviatt did express support for one of the major demands: the creation and sustenance of Ethnic Studies programs. To many, this was a surprise, and his address to the advisory committee was met with silence at first. However, Oviatt was careful to avoid framing his support for Ethnic Studies in the same way students had articulated its need. For President Oviatt, Ethnic Studies was not necessarily about creating educational spaces to foster self-determination and excavate the histories of marginalized communities. "I see the programs not so much as a need for black and brown students," he stated, "but as a necessity for white children so they can understand these problems."¹¹²

President Oviatt was quickly lauded for his leadership. The *Los Angeles Times* recorded his speech as his "finest moment in a hard weekend."¹¹³ One of the representatives of the Black community and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference said that Oviatt spoke with "soul." Meanwhile Herbert Carter, from the County Commission on Human Relations, said that he could not "commend [Oviatt] too highly for the words [he spoke] and the actions [he took]." That the acting president of a regional campus that primarily attracted White commuters would publicly support ethnic studies, or any of the demands of the students, is indeed striking. Yet, it is important to note that the accolades he received also addressed his pragmatism, rather than outright support for the students. He expressed that pragmatism through the way he framed

¹¹² Quoted in *Ibid.*,

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

ethnic studies as a benefit to white students. Nevertheless that practicality, in the confines of the San Fernando Valley, was fairly daring.¹¹⁴ Even BSU leader Archie Chatman expressed some pleasure with the turn of events as he suggested, “a new spirit of hope has emerged this morning.”¹¹⁵

Riding high from the positive outcomes from the weekend’s meeting with the advisory committee, on Monday January 13 Oviatt released a campus-wide memorandum that explained his logic for declaring the previous state of emergency that took place less than a week earlier on January 9.¹¹⁶ At first, Oviatt detailed a report he received from several faculty who attended a community meeting in Pacoima on January 8. They left the meeting with the feeling that “violence is probable on campus” and made several recommendations that encouraged moderation and reconciliation. First, they urged Oviatt to cancel classes for the 9th and convene an open forum. Significantly, and reflecting the concerns of many students and faculty dating back to the anti-war protests, they requested that the LAPD stay away from campus. Lastly, they advised Oviatt to use the open forum as a stage to “publically affirm . . . that the administration

¹¹⁴ It is instructive to situate his decisions within the larger context of unrest in California’s public institutions. During the same time that Oviatt and other administrators met with students and community members, San Francisco State College was in the midst of its own strike. The Third World Liberation Front was comprised of different revolutionary student organizations representing African Americans, Chicanos, Natives and Asian Americans who demanded, among other issues, the founding of a College of Ethnic Studies. The united organizations posed a formidable threat to the successive number of campus presidents including the conservative Canada-born Nisei, S.I. Hayakawa who struck a decidedly defiant tone. Perhaps Oviatt, much like UCLA’s chancellor, Charles E. Young, determined that negotiating with the students early on would provide the most productive outcomes. Rather than stoke the ire of students and compel them to engage in a San Francisco State College-style strike, and thus further alienate the college’s suburban neighbors and critics, the best means for achieving campus peace was to earnestly sit down with the students. Indeed, when the Valley State College 40-member advisory committee assembled to begin the process of negotiations, San Francisco State was still mired in the second month of its student strike. It would not end until March 21, 1969. See “Chronology of Events,” *The San Francisco State College Strike Collection*, J. Paul Leonard University Library, <http://www.library.sfsu.edu/about/collections/strike/choronology.html>.

¹¹⁵ Quoted in Greenwood, “How Valley State Made.”

¹¹⁶ Delmar T. Oviatt, Memorandum to Faculty, Students and Staff of San Fernando Valley State College, “Rationale for State of Emergency Order, January I, 1969,” January 13, 1969, reprinted in “VSC Black Demands Negotiated By 44 Member 'Phantom Committee,” North Valley Mail-Reseda Post, January 22, 1969, 14.

of V.S.C. will start meaningful negotiations toward implementing the B.S.U. demands.” These suggestions reflect the views of several sympathetic professors, such as faculty association president Vern Bullough.

However, the inclusion of snippets of the LAPD intelligence report that also informed Oviatt’s decision to declare the emergency orders overshadowed the ostensible good will of the advising faculty. This was the first time that the public was made aware of the intelligence report, due in part to the actions of alumni association president Richard Hill who convened a press conference immediately after Oviatt issued the memorandum to discuss the provocative accusations. The next day the *Valley Times*, a local rival to *the Valley News and Green Sheet*, blared the sensationalistic front-page banner headline, “VSC CAMPUS BLOODBATH PLAN BARED.”¹¹⁷

Another small neighborhood periodical, the *North Valley Mail and Reseda Post*, procured a copy of the memorandum and republished it.¹¹⁸ Along with the memo, the newspaper referred to the advisory committee as a “phantom” body that included Black and Mexican American community members and educators as well as 22 students who were “awaiting trial in regard to campus disturbances.” It was clear that the newspaper, and likely its readers, felt that the bulk of committee did not adequately represent the interests of White homeowners.¹¹⁹ The memorandum, it should be noted, only included brief clips of the LAPD intelligence report. The imagery portrayed in the memo bordered on the sensationalistic and tapped into anxieties about

¹¹⁷ “VSC Campus Blood Bath Plan Bared,” *Valley Times*, January 14, 1969, front page banner headline. In contrast to that sensationalistic headline, the newspaper announced news of the college’s new ethnic studies programs with the headline, “VSC Oks Black Class,” *Valley Times*, January 13, 1969, front page banner headline.

¹¹⁸ See “VSC Black Demands Negotiated By 44 Member ‘Phantom Committee,’” *North Valley Mail-Reseda Post*, January 22, 1969, 14.

¹¹⁹ The article describes, “The ‘phantom’ committee [that] is at present *purportedly* representing the community as well as the students at the negotiating table,” *Ibid.*

campus radicalism spilling onto to streets. Residents and other observers of the San Fernando Valley learned of the details of the report that covered a plot for a potential gun battle between 2,000 “militants from the black communities and outside agitators.”¹²⁰ This “blow up” was intended to occur during an open forum after Oviatt’s address. The “militants,” needless to say, did not hold the president in high regard. One purportedly said that Oviatt’s “blood [would be] spilled” while another stated he personally wanted to shoot the president.¹²¹ While the organizers cautioned against “force . . . used against the [fellow] students,” they did state, “If necessary, we’ll burn and bomb the buildings on campus” and guaranteed, “police will be hurt.”

The invocation of “outsiders” assuredly raised consternation among the west Valley residents who still lived in the mostly segregated part of the San Fernando Valley. They bristled at the contested campus politics and the incursions into the peaceful vision of suburban by social unrest usually associated with the urban landscape. “No longer is non-violence the key,” the students warned. Rather, they demanded of themselves and their fellow travelers “all action, and to be violent.”

For their part, African American students also attended to the issues related to the social geography of the San Fernando Valley and its sites of racial and economic privilege. In an essay entitled “Liberals and Other White Hopes,” one commenter reflected on White liberal supporters: “The real missionary areas for whites is not Pacoima or Watts but Granada Hills, Mission Hills, and Beverly Hills, and all those other damn hills white people have fled to trying to avoid confrontations with Blacks. . . It is there in the heart of the white camp, that the white

¹²⁰ Delmar T. Oviatt, Memorandum to Faculty, Students and Staff of San Fernando Valley State College, “Rationale for State of Emergency Order, January I, 1969,” January 13, 1969.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

liberal must make his stand.”¹²² This reflection hinted at the dynamic relationship between Pacoima and the rest of the suburban Valley and that to understand the larger region one necessarily had to be attuned to the role of race and privilege.

These conflicts over the ways different communities either rushed to protect or critique the San Fernando Valley’s status quo were also reflected in the efforts to bring together the advisory negotiation committee after the intelligence report became public. The allegations were explosive and slowed the otherwise positive momentum of the negotiation process. On the one hand, the newspaper accounts and Hill’s press conference stoked White homeowner outrage that a shadowy cabal of students and adult Pacoima residents would play such an important role in determining the future of the college. On the other, frustrated African American students and community leaders decried the allegations as “fallacious and unsubstantiated.”¹²³ What little good will had developed for Oviatt – that “new spirit” Archie Chatman spoke of – quickly disintegrated. Hill became so reviled that when the committee met the evening after his press conference, the college arranged a police escort for him to ensure his safety. The committee attempted to meet again the next day, on January 15, but representatives of the BSU, UMAS, and SDS staged a boycott. Disgusted with the memorandum, they demanded an apology from Oviatt and the removal of Hill (two days later, a public accountant and two ministers from Pacoima held a press conference to condemn the allegations as false).¹²⁴ Representatives of the Black community left the meeting as did sympathetic White members. Corona, representing Mexican Americans and the Mexican American Political Association articulated his frustration with this

¹²² “Liberals and Other White Hopes,” *Black Star* 1:1 (January 18, 1969): 2

¹²³ Quoted in Greenwood, “How Valley State Made.”

¹²⁴ Greenwood; “\$50,250 Libel Suit Filed in VSC Furor,” *San Fernando Valley Times*, January 16, 1969.

latest roadblock. To him, the negotiations became futile. Addressing the administration Corona charged, “you will have to be moved by escalation and confrontation,” before he joined the other community and student representatives.¹²⁵

President Oviatt reiterated his earlier position that he acted in the best interest of the student body but returned to a conciliatory approach. He declared the state of emergency out of a growing concern for, and desire to forestall, the “steady escalation of disruptive activity.”¹²⁶ Not impressed, a few other remaining committee members left. However, Oviatt did acknowledge that there was “no way of checking the veracity” of the LAPD report and that he acted against the seeming trend of “driving toward chaos.” In a surprising turn of events, Oviatt issued a *mea culpa* that acknowledged the frustrations of the students: “If my apology will bring back to this table the people who should be here, I will gladly say I am sorry.”

Oviatt’s apology led the faculty to issue resolutions increasingly attentive to the original student demands. The day after the Oviatt apologized, the heretofore neutral student body president exhorted the faculty to support the BSU and UMAS demands, citing the growth of support for Ethnic Studies departments. Faculty senators then proceeded to pass a resolution urging the County to lessen the charges leveled at the original students who participated in the administration-building take over. The general faculty supported the same resolution as well.

As the campus returned to a cautious calm – salvaged by Oviatt’s apology, a relatively supportive faculty, and the demands of final examinations week – Human Relations Commission Chair Herbert Carter convened several closed doors meetings with the advisory committee. However, these meetings were significantly smaller than previous ones: only six faculty members and representatives from the BSU (Archie Chatman and Bill Burwell) and UMAS

¹²⁵ Greenwood, “How Valley State Made.”

¹²⁶ Quoted in *Ibid.*

(Mike Verdugo) were invited. Administrators and community members were left out of this round of negotiations. Curiously, the SDS was also omitted, despite, or perhaps precisely because, of their longer history of campus activism and early steadfast support of the BSU and UMAS. Carter did not publically elaborate on their omission, only suggesting that the SDS was not actually interested in cultivating a campus peace.

The omission of the SDS notwithstanding, the leaner advisory committee agreed on a set of terms that went before the Academic Senate on January 23. The faculty voted unanimously in support. President Oviatt lent his support as well and, despite his deep reservations about the “mistakes in some of [the students’ strategies], he “never questioned their ability, their dedication and the basic justice of their cause.”¹²⁷ Faculty association president Vern Bullough, remembered as “quiet, scholarly and conservative in appearance,” even suggested that the “militancy of these students [was] the best thing to happen to this campus.”¹²⁸

The final “peace pact,” as the *Van Nuys News and Valley Green Sheet* called it, incorporated many of the original elements of the student demands. While the major components of the agreement addressed recruitment and curricular issues, taken together the new policies represented a fairly holistic approach to higher education and campus climate. The original demands to increase campus diversity came to fruition as the college vowed to recruit and admit 350 African American and 350 Chicano students for the 1969-1970 academic year, continue its support for the Educational Opportunities Program, and establish independent departments of Pan-African Studies and Chicano Studies.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Quoted in *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ Elaine Woo, “Vern Bullough, 77; Prolific Author was Scholar of Sex History,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 2, 2006; Bullough quoted in Greenwood, “How Valley State Made.”

¹²⁹ Other components of the agreement included the following: The hiring of black and Chicano co-directors for EOP; The establishment of a committee to investigate the possibilities of an institutionalized channel

A cautious sense of relief swept across the campus and the San Fernando Valley for a few brief moments after the signing of the agreement. According to one local newspaper, the outcome was “called by college officials the most progressive action to date taken by a California State College.”¹³⁰ Human Relations Commissioner Carter suggested that the plan might serve as a template for other colleges witnessing similar student unrest. Even the local press, which had previously warned of the dangers of various nefarious outsiders, whether they were “bearded speakers” from San Francisco or Black militants, moderated some of their coverage. The *San Fernando Valley Times* remarked, at the end of January 1969, that it was “Spring on [the] VSC Campus,” suggesting new beginnings and growth.¹³¹ A day after that headline ran, the *Van Nuys News and Valley Green Sheet*, observed that the weary campus was now the site of a “bright peace picture.”¹³² Despite the relatively positive tone of these headlines, the state of campus relations at Valley State remained tenuous.

The major stakeholders in the negotiations acknowledged that while their agreement may have set the stage for positive outcomes, it was far from a panacea. Carter suggested that the administrative fragility wrought by a lack of a permanent president would not bode well for the implementation of structural change. Indeed, one wonders what path the negotiations would have taken had the former business school dean-turned-acting president Paul Blomgren, who was

for bringing student grievances to the administration; Request the Fair Employment Practices Commission to survey the college’s non-academic personnel; Recruitment of black and Chicano counselors; Establish information centers in communities of color; Establish more inclusive community advisory board; Opposition “interference” from outside institutions such as the California State College Board of Trustees in decisions over what constitutes a legitimate campus organizations; Develop library holdings for Pan-African Studies and Chicana/o Studies; Allow EOP co-directors to vote on college housing committee; Institute consultation between BSU, UMAS and administration on implementation.

¹³⁰ Brad Ritter, “Valley State Peace Pact Reached,” *Van Nuys News and Valley Green Sheet*, January 24, 1969.

¹³¹ Pat Bryant, “Spring on VSC Campus,” *San Fernando Valley Times*, January 25, 1969, 2.

¹³² “Valley State Tell of Bright Peace Picture,” *Van Nuys News and Valley Green Sheet*, January 26, 1969,

slow to meet with students over their demands, had stayed in office. Meanwhile, both Carter and Oviatt expressed concern over finances for the new Ethnic Studies departments as well as the low-income students. Financial officers noted that the college would have to cobble together funding for the students from federal and state agencies and fundraise for college scholarships. Oviatt, further reflecting a moderately liberal position, “hope[d] Californians will recognize that this drive to help raise a whole section of our community is the best investment they can make.”¹³³ BSU leader Archie Chatwell was careful to not blindly celebrate the agreement either. When the *Los Angeles Times* asked him if he was “satisfied” with the outcome he simply responded: “Ask me in six months . . . When I see those black and chicano kids on this campus. I’ll believe it.”¹³⁴

In Defense of the BSU

While the different college constituents made slow but tenacious progress towards an agreement to address curricular and campus climate changes, a parallel campaign took place regarding the legal fate of the indicted students. Two-dozen students faced a series of court battles that stemmed from their participation in the November 4 occupation (figure 4.2). Several others faced charges from subsequent protests. People within and beyond the San Fernando Valley voiced both support and criticisms for the students during their criminal proceedings.

¹³³ Quoted in Greenwood, “How Valley State Made.”

¹³⁴ Quoted in *Ibid.*



CHARGED WITH 1,730 FELONIES: *These 24 students of San Fernando Valley State College in California are on trial in the Superior Court, Los Angeles, for acts allegedly committed during campus disturbance last November: From left, front row—Lidwina Apo (Hawaiian), Arnold Boyd, George Brady, Benjamin Caraveo (Mexican-American), Archie Chatman and Jethro Collins; second row—Vaye Crockett, Eddie Dancer, Deardis Davis, Robert Dyer, Larry Hardison, Arrinita Holloway; third row—La Frida Jamison, Howard Johnson, Arthur Judge Jones, Jr., Schelton Jones, Marian Kindle, Robert Lewis; fourth row—Linda Nichols, Marita E. Pette, Yvonne Robinson, Leaman Scott, Michael Wrice and Sharon Emory. All are being defended by NAACP attorneys.*

Figure 4.2 The Valley State 24, 1969. This photograph of the BSU students arrested for the November 1968 occupation appeared in the NAACP’s national publication, *The Crisis*. That organization later represented the students in their criminal trials. Source: *The Crisis*, November 1969.

Members of the BSU and their supporters worked to generate support from the residents of Pacoima for the students who faced criminal charges. In order to make the case of the BSU students compelling to Pacoima’s Black community, organizations such as the Education and Defense Fund for Minority Students at San Fernando Valley State College emphasized the educational agenda for which students fought, would serve the needs of the Black community at large. The organization circulated a “fact sheet” for residents that spoke of the “immediate goals

[of] a Black Studies Program, designed to change the historical and cultural image of the black man in America, and the *recruitment of more black students* into the colleges” (emphasis in original).¹³⁵ Ultimately, these immediate goals were a part of a larger, national movement that rejected “One of the most blatant forms of oppression in the black community;” that is to say, “the irrelevant and destructive educational experience of its youths, from elementary school through college” that “related to white middle class society only.”

The fund organizers introduced the BSU to the larger Black community, explained their strategies for combating those educational deficits, and provided a counterpoint to mainstream portrayals of the student organization. The members of the defense fund proposed, “If the black community is to have a meaningful, healthy existence, its racial and cultural personality must be preserved.” Recognizing that larger numbers of African American students were attending college, the education fund’s members noted, “The BLACK STUDENT UNIONS on the college and high school campuses have accepted this responsibility – preserving the black community.” By positioning the BSU as the defenders of this new politicized education, the members of the defense fund debunked mainstream portrayals of “militant” students and make their struggles relevant to the Black community beyond Valley State. Similarly, whereas dominant media outlets such as the *Los Angeles Times* suggested that the BSU unleashed “an orgy of violence that has obscured any solid progress toward educational opportunity,” the education and defense fund tied the student organization to the larger Black freedom struggle. Indeed, nothing less than “the future of the black community” was at stake in securing the freedom for the BSU students. The BSU supporters implored community members to support students at their court hearings, to

¹³⁵ Education and Defense Fund for Minority Students at San Fernando Valley State College, “Fact Sheet,” n.d., c. December 1968-January 1969 in CSUN Urban Archives, Campus Unrest Collection, 10.01, Box 5, Folder 40.

donate monetary funds or services, and launch letter writing campaigns to elected officials and, ultimately, “Be there to help black people break the chains of oppression.”¹³⁶

Support for the BSU also came in the form of calls for amnesty by community organizations and sympathetic faculty. An interfaith council presented a “case for amnesty” to the Valley State Academic Senate on January 15 that stated the felony charges “will only exacerbate the hostility of students toward the administration and society, and further handicap the future of Black and Chicano students already severely disadvantaged.”¹³⁷ Likewise, Professors M.M. Auerbach and Jerome Richfield issued their amnesty resolution to their colleagues.¹³⁸ They recognized the implications of choosing a path of punishment versus reconciliation and suggested “It is unrealistic to expect limited retraction [of the criminal charges] to counteract the black community’s feeling that the response to the November 4th incidents has been motivated primarily by a quest for vengeance.” Their recommendations urged “mutual forgiveness” in the interest of “a fresh start.” Despite the passionate pleas, their resolution for amnesty failed a secret vote by the general faculty and the BSU students headed to trial.

In the autumn of 1969 the trial against the students began. Represented by attorneys from the national NAACP, each student faced 72 felony charges of conspiracy, assault false

¹³⁶ Scott Moore, “Cal State Minorities Find Path Other Than Violence,” *Los Angeles Times, Sunday Orange County Edition*, February 3, 1969; Education and Defense Fund for Minority Students at San Fernando Valley State College, “Fact Sheet.”

¹³⁷ “The Case for Amnesty,” Statement delivered to the San Fernando Valley State College Academic Senate (January 15, 1969) in “San Fernando Valley Problem, 1969” Folder, Box 200, ACLU-SC Records.

¹³⁸ “The Case for Amnesty by M.M. Auerbach and J. Richfield,” 1969, in Campus Unrest Collection, RG 10.01, Box 2, Folder 23, CSUN Urban Archives Center.

imprisonment and kidnapping.¹³⁹ From the beginning of the trial, attorneys for the defense and prosecution made it clear that the implications of this case went far beyond the incidents at Valley State College. The prosecution, comprised of Deputy District Attorneys Vincent Bugliosi, who later gained notoriety in the Charles Manson trial, and David Kenner, reflected the conservative turn to law-and-order politics by the late 1960s. To them, the trial could put a stake in the heart of the “militant uprising” that took over Valley State’s administration building and represented a larger trend across America’s college campuses.¹⁴⁰ Bugliosi further stated that the judge’s verdict would send a message to the public “on whether colleges or universities should be run by administrators or by students, and more urgently, whether campus militants are above the laws of this state.”

The defense attorneys, Morgan Moten, Loren Miller, Jr., and Halvor Miller, Jr. who were veteran civil rights attorneys with the NAACP, also recognized that the trial centered on more than the events that took place at Valley State on November 4, 1968. To them, however, the significance of the case lay in its relationship to free expression and racial equality. In his riposte to Bugliosi’s earlier remarks, Moten said his colleague’s “statement was meant to inflame the minds” of observers, whether in the courtroom or reading from a newspaper. He then reminded the court that “these black students were seeking the same rights and privileges so long denied them as black students . . . They are exercising their constitutional rights under the first amendment.”¹⁴¹ Just as Bugliosi rhetorically spoke to suburbanites concerned about campus

¹³⁹ “San Fernando Valley State Students Face Trial as Felons,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 25, 1969, A2; Ron Eistoss, “Valley State Students Waive Trial by Jury,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 19, 1969, C1A.

¹⁴⁰ Bugliosi quoted in San Fernando Valley State Students Face Trial as Felons.”

¹⁴¹ Quoted in *Ibid.*

unrest across California and the nation, Moten indirectly addressed the countless students who engaged in various forms of civil disobedience to achieve educational and societal equity.

After a trial that only lasted two months, Judge Mark Brandler acquitted three students due to a lack of evidence. He later found 20 of the 21 remaining students guilty of the various felony charges. Of those 20 defendants, the judge found 13 guilty of conspiracy, the main charge that prosecutors sought for all of the BSU students. All but one of the 13 were also found guilty of kidnapping; all were found guilty of false imprisonment. All of the seven female defendants were cleared of the conspiracy charges.

The sentencing commenced in January of 1970s and reflected the concern, expressed from the outside of the trial, that law and order should rule college campuses and not student demands. Although eight students were sentenced to jail terms of no more than one year and others were placed on probation, Archie Chatman, the BSU chair, along with Uwezo and Eddie Dancer bore the brunt of the convictions. Judge Brandler, who came out of retirement for the sentencing, ignored recommendations from the Probation Department that encouraged a modicum of leniency.¹⁴² The jurist found all three men guilty on all charges and sentenced each of them to one to 25 years in prison.¹⁴³ Although BSU leaders were fully aware that theirs was a highly politicized case, they were still taken aback at the severity of the conviction. Uwezo remarked “Although we all felt from the beginning that we would be convicted, because it was necessary for Reagan and the other fascists in California to set the correct example for their followers, we never thought for a moment that our sentences would be as severe as they

¹⁴² Ron Einstoss, “Judge Raps Probation Reports in Valley State Takeover Trial,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 27, 1970.

¹⁴³ Ron Einstoss, “20 Found Guilty in Disturbances at Valley State,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 19, 1969.

were.”¹⁴⁴ Former Black Panther Earl Anthony’s perceptive and blunt reaction to the harsh sentence likewise reflected the connections between the rise of California’s homegrown conservatism, the sentencing of the BSU students, and the accumulation of political capital by enterprising politicians. When handed a copy of a vernacular newspaper from Pacoima that bore the headline “1-25 Years for Taking Over a Building,” he immediately responded “It could only happen in jive-ass John-Birch California.”¹⁴⁵

However, in April of 1970, after psychiatrists and parole officers interviewed the three leaders during their first few months of incarceration and recommended clemency, Judge George M. Dell modified Judge Brandler’s sentence, which allowed Chatman, Uwezo, and Dancer to return to society. Upon their release, Chatman earnestly stated that they got “involved in [the] politicization of Pacoima,” through sharing consciousness-raising information with community members.¹⁴⁶ As they returned to different forms of activism for Black liberation, that stretched to Guyana and back to Los Angeles, these men and the movement they led left behind a legacy of racial protest that compelled various constituents to rethink their place in the San Fernando Valley.

¹⁴⁴ Uwezo, quoted in Anthony, *Time of the Furnaces*, 98-99.

¹⁴⁵ Anthony, *Time of the Furnaces*, 116. Anthony referred to the John Birch Society, a fiercely anti-Communist conservative organization that was opposed to government intervention in over issues such as fair housing and other civil rights initiatives. Although the organization originated in Indiana, it gained popularity in Southern California during the 1960s among White suburbanites affiliated with the military-industrial-research complex. See Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001). The John Birch Society was active in the San Fernando Valley and opened its own book store in the west Valley neighborhood of Canoga Park in 1964, “Birch Book Store to Open,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 9, 1964, SF A8.

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in Anthony, *Time of the Furnaces*, 121.

Conclusion

Taken together, this action packed episode, from the founding of Valley State up to the trial of its BSU's leaders, brought to light conflicting interpretations of the social meanings people construed about the San Fernando Valley. Students affiliated with the White leftist newspaper, *Outcry* philosophically stated the travails at Valley State led Black and Brown people to see beyond the lies of the government and reject the false promise of "suburban good times."¹⁴⁷ However, for the BSU students, life in the suburbs had never been a goal and they certainly did not need experiences at Valley State to teach them that. Whereas a previous generation of Black activism in the Valley was premised on access to the dream of material comfort in parts of the Valley beyond the segregated enclave of Pacoima, the BSU students, in the words of Howard Johnson, "knew we had to work on programs that affect the day-to-day existence of our people in the community. We had to take our commitment from the ivory-tower world of academe to the grass roots [*sic*] where it really counts. That's where we come from, and where our sisters, brothers, mothers, and fathers still are."¹⁴⁸ With those goals in mind, the BSU used their privileged position to return to Pacoima where they instituted free lunch programs for children, offered tutoring in math and reading along with classes in black history and culture for local youth, and organized grocery deliveries for poor families.¹⁴⁹

For their part, the Black community of Pacoima overcame their initial weariness of Black student organizations and eventually came to embrace the BSU. Previous efforts to by Afro-Pac and the BSU to politicize Black Pacoimans were met with hesitance and derision. However, the events of November 4, 1968 transformed Black Pacoima's relationship to groups such as the

¹⁴⁷ "Violence and the Northridge Community," *Outcry*, c. January 1969, 2.

¹⁴⁸ Johnson, quoted in Anthony, *Time of the Furnaces*, 82.

¹⁴⁹ Anthony, *Time of the Furnaces*, 82-83.

BSU. According to Chatman, the community recognized that when the BSU demanded increased Black enrollment, they knew those potential students “would be their sons and daughters.” When the BSU called for more Black employees, the community recognized that the BSU “was talking about them.” After the initial punitive actions by President Blomgren and the subsequent legal battles set in, the BSU was “legitimized in the black community” an advocate. Furthermore, the community’s support not only signaled a new relationship with the BSU, but also with Valley State. The BSU helped Black Pacoimans, particularly from the working class, see the college as their institution too. As they drew upon ideologies and rhetoric that cut across geographical lines and sought to raise consciousness among all African Americans, the BSU’s activism allowed Black Pacoimans to further stake their claim in the San Fernando Valley.

The promise of suburbia remained a defining feature of many of the Valley’s middle-class White homeowners. The defense of that ideal transformed otherwise private citizens, such as Richard Hill or Helen Weisgerber, into champions for the preservation of a placid and idyllic San Fernando Valley. Drawing upon the righteous anger of tax-payers, one anonymous Valley resident implored her or his comrades to “kick out the pig-callers,” echoing Governor Reagan’s concerns about “anarchy” at California’s public colleges and universities.¹⁵⁰ In an editorial, Kathy Warrick, a suburbanite who carefully tracked the developments at VSC from her home in Redondo Beach, California criticized *Life* magazine’s sympathetic treatment of the student uprisings and argued that the BSU “would destroy the freedom, life, and property of those who do not agree with them.” Warrick rendered the connections between suburbanism, property-ownership, and the maintenance of the political status quo legible for a national audience. She continued, “They seek not to understand but to demand. They seek not equality but

¹⁵⁰ “Kick Out the Pig-Callers,” *Valley Times*, January 16, 1969, 4.

superiority.”¹⁵¹ Her editorial encapsulated fears of any critique of White supremacy, maintained in the suburban landscape. These anxieties translated into significant gains for the California’s conservative movement and law-and-order candidates, as evidenced by the electoral successes of Governor Reagan, Los Angeles District Attorney (turned State Attorney General) Evelle Younger, and Mayor Sam Yorty.

As the 1970s dawned, the Valley State campus and the larger San Fernando Valley calmed. The campus’s Ethnic Studies programs fought for survival but student protest did not erupt in the same fashion as it had in 1968 and 1969. Meanwhile newspaper headlines no longer warned of “bloodbaths” or “militant Negroes” hell-bent on destroying the San Fernando Valley. However, a new set of political struggles soon emerged that once again focused on the basic, but persistent, tension between exclusion and inclusion. Whereas White suburbanites circled the wagons once more over the explosive policy of busing, the multiethnic communities of the east Valley engaged in diverse campaigns take political ownership of their neighborhoods, their seats of government, and their own histories.

¹⁵¹ Kathy Warrick, Letter to the Editor, *Life*, April 4, 1969, 21.

CHAPTER FIVE

Alternative Activism in the Age of Homeowner Revolts:

The Raza Unida Party and the Movement for Redress and Reparations in the San Fernando Valley, 1972-1988

In 1981 two individuals with ostensibly very different backgrounds used the written word to reach the large numbers of apolitical individuals in their respective communities in the San Fernando Valley. Eugenio Hernández, a young Chicano organizer, told his peers “What counts is letting the Chicano/Mexican community [that] they *have a voice*” (emphasis added).¹ Meanwhile, Phil Shigekuni, a civic-minded guidance counselor, exhorted his fellow Japanese Americans to speak out with “a story to tell about how the [World War II] evacuation affected *their lives*” (emphasis added).² Although both men had very different goals in mind – Hernandez sought to elect politicized Chicanos in the City of San Fernando while Shigekuni wanted Japanese Americans to recover their wartime experiences to push for federal redress and reparations – they wanted their respective communities to claim their voice and agency. Both men, and the larger movements they represented, challenged varying levels of marginalization, silence, disillusionment, fear, or apathy that rendered Mexican American and Nikkei identities outside of the mainstream body politic. Their activism, which began a decade earlier, elicited everyday individuals to realize their responsibility to combine grassroots action with mainstream political venues to create a more equitable present and redress the injustices of the past.

¹ Eugene Hernandez, “Raza Unida Party Urges Chicano Representation,” *El Popo* 16:2 (November-December 1981): 6. In other writings, the author lists his name as Eugenio.

² Phil Shigekuni, “Redress 1981,” *San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center News* (February 1981), 12 (hereafter, *CCN*).

This chapter dissects the campaigns to which activists such as Hernandez and Shigekuni dedicated their time, effort, and energy. Their actions in the 1970s and early 1980s took place in a unique historical moment in California's post-World War II history. Although earlier scholars and observers have labeled the years bookended by the heady activism of the late 1960s and the 1980 presidential election of Ronald Reagan a "winter of civil rights," recent works demonstrate how activists in California continued to tackle issues of racial, economic, and educational inequality.³ The San Fernando Valley itself was the home to political movements that reflected the confrontation between the liberalism of the 1950s, the radicalism of the 1960s and the rise of conservatism in 1970s. The Chicano and Japanese American movements looked very different when juxtaposed at first glance. Furthermore, their distinctive goals and strategies reflected the historic and contemporary social, economic, and spatial circumstances each group faced. Yet they were bound by one over-arching force. Whereas previous organizing emphasized integration in the 1950s, and the transformation of the relationship between communities of color in Pacoima and Valley State College in 1960s, this activists in this era activists encouraged their respective communities to take ownership of politics around them that directly shaped their lives.

Race and Politics in California after the 1960s

During the 1970s and 1980s, issues of race, racism, and inequality were often translated through the inseparable discourses of taxes and homeownership in California and beyond. Conservative politicians successfully crafted a narrative that linked skyrocketing property values and costs of living with the sprawl of government programs that began under the Great Society

³ Glenn Omatsu, "'The Four Prisons' and the Movements of Liberation: Asian American Activism from the 1960s to the 1990s," in Karen Aguilar-San Juan, ed., *The State of Asian America: Activism and Resistance in the 1990s* (Boston: South End Press, 1994), 19-70; 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).

to assist marginalized people of color and the poor. In California, too, rancorous battles over busing to address educational disparities or tax rates for homeowners (and the programs those funds supported) took place against the backdrop of rapidly changing racial demographics. Suburban warriors such as the “unlikely prophet” Howard Jarvis led a highly successful crusade to ease the tax burden upon homeowners. The fruit of his activism, Proposition 13 (1978), slashed finance for public services and education for generations to come and reinforced economic inequality that was already fractured by race.⁴ In his sophisticated spatial analysis of voting patterns and demographics, Philip J. Ethington found “a very strong indication . . . that Proposition 13 was powered by feelings of animosity toward the Black residents of the central core of the [Los Angeles] metropolis, and that these feelings, even controlling for the direct effect of race and class, increased as a function of spatial distance.”⁵ Meanwhile other activists such the west Valley’s own Bobbi Fiedler transformed her critique of “forced” busing into a thriving career in Republican politics. According to Fiedler, she was “pushed into politics by necessity, not by plan.”⁶ Indeed, during the 1970s thousands of otherwise ordinary Californians and Angelenos found themselves thrust into the center of different political movements.

However, these decades were remarkable in terms of race relations for other reasons as well. In 1973 City Councilman Tom Bradley became Los Angeles’s first black mayor through

⁴ Howard Jarvis, *I’m Mad As Hell* (New York: Berkeley Books, 1985); Clarence Y.H. Lo, *Small Property Versus Big Government: Social Origins of the Property Tax Revolt* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990); Philip Ethington, “Segregated Diversity: Race-Ethnicity, Space, and Political Fragmentation in Los Angeles County, 1940-1994,” A Final Report to the John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes Foundation, 2000, http://www-bcf.usc.edu/~philipje/Segregation/Haynes_Reports/FINAL_REPORT_20000719g.pdf [cited with permission of the author].

⁵ Ethington, “Segregated Diversity,” 46.

⁶ Susan Khanweiler Pollock, “Bobbi Fiedler,” in *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*. 1 March 2009. Jewish Women's Archive. (Viewed on December 10, 2013) <<http://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/fiedler-bobbi>>. For an analysis of Fiedler in the context of Jewish politics see Amy Hill Shevitz, “At the Intersection of Gender, Ethnicity, and the City: Three Jewish Women in Los Angeles Politics,” in Karen S. Wilson, ed., *Jews in the Los Angeles Mosaic* (Los Angeles: Autry National Center of the American West and Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2013), 57-74.

the efforts of a coalition of African Americans, Westside Jews, and liberal Whites. Meanwhile, Yvonne Brathwaite Burke rose to prominence through decisive victories in California's Assembly, the US House of Representatives, and the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. On a grassroots level, the Chicana/o Movement in Los Angeles matured as it tackled political and socioeconomic issues germane to the city's growing Mexican and Mexican American population.

Space played an important role in all of these political developments, whether it was Chicano activism in East Los Angeles or liberal Jewish voter mobilization on the Westside. For good reason, dominant narratives of these experiences tend to situate the San Fernando Valley within the conservative orbit of homeowner revolts. White homeowners in the Valley made their criticism of student activism at San Fernando Valley State College well known in the late 1960s and 1970s. They circled the wagons once again by 1976 when busing became a cause célèbre for homeowners already uneasy with the Valley's relationship with downtown Los Angeles. As Mike Davis documented, by the 1980s a colony of restive homeowners in the Valley, who were dissatisfied with changes in the region's sprawl as well as racial and economic demographics, began efforts to carve new boundaries in the west San Fernando Valley. The creation of an affluent "West Hills" out of the large and diverse Canoga Park – an area that had a historic and growing concentration of Mexicans and Mexican Americans – was largely symbolic on a structural level.⁷ The designation led to the placement of new blue and white demarcation signs, a common sight throughout Los Angeles. However, West Hills was not a break away city and residents were still subject to the laws of the City of Los Angeles. This example of homeowner

⁷ On the Mexican American community in Canoga Park see "Most Chicanos Don't Know It: Canoga Park Barrio," *El Popo* 3:1, 1970, np; Carlos Ortega, "Redevelopment threatens barrios," *El Popo* 14:1 (October-November 1979): 3-5.

activism encapsulated what Davis deemed a “simple fact” of suburbia in Los Angeles. Namely, that “the most powerful ‘social movement’ in contemporary Southern California is that of affluent homeowners, organized by notional community designations or tract names [such as West Hills], engaged in the defense of home values and neighborhood exclusivity.”⁸ However, these contests elide the complexity of ethnic political thought and action within the San Fernando Valley. Even Davis’s “facts” of suburbia failed to address exactly how individuals on the other side of the proverbial (and at times literal) railroad tracks created and interpreted the political landscape of the Valley. Although residents of the east Valley grappled with issues of property taxes as well, they engaged in sustained movements that spoke to broader issues of governance, race, accountability, and redress.⁹

The Demographic, Political, and Social Landscapes of the City of San Fernando

The primary stage for the social and political ethnic activism in the east San Fernando Valley during the 1970s and 1980s remained the City of San Fernando and Pacoima. The segregated Mexican districts, or barrios, were fertile ground for enacting the lofty goals of community empowerment. Chicano activists at San Fernando Valley State College envisioned after the implementation of Ethnic Studies on campus. Although the Mexican and Mexican American population spread across the central and east Valley, community organizers continued to see San Fernando as a key battleground for reforming municipal government to meet the needs of their underserved and marginalized community.

⁸ Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Vintage, 1992), 153.

⁹ It should be noted that Los Angeles Councilman Robert Ronka helped establish the Pacoima Revitalization, Inc. organization, which helped Pacoima residents get loans to purchase homes or refurbish their existing homes, see Pacoima Revitalization Inc. Collection, Urban Archives, Oviatt Library, California State University, Northridge.

Whereas other parts of the Valley, such as Van Nuys and Burbank, became sprawling industrial suburbs leading up to World War II and long after, the City of San Fernando retained a strong small-town character, reinforced by the city’s independence from Los Angeles.

Comprised of homes, parks, and a modest commercial thoroughfare, the post-war city was the type of place where, according to one resident’s recollection, “you call a cop and he’s here before you hang up.”¹⁰ Like so many other quaint examples of small town America, however, race deeply divided San Fernando.

Table 1: City of San Fernando Latino Population (Percentage of Total) 1950-1980.

District	1950	1960	1970	1980
North-Latino	<250 residents	6.0%	30.5%	56.3%
South-Latino	69.9%	69.7%	80.1%	91.6%
Total Latino	33%	31.4%	48.9%	68.9%
Total Population	12,992	16,093	16,571	17,731

Sources: US Census, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980 and Tobar, “San Fernando Comes of Age.” Latino is defined as “Spanish surname” in the 1950 and 1960 Census, as “Spanish language or Spanish surname” in the 1970 Census and “Hispanic origin” in the 1980 Census. Thanks to Jan Reiff for making this table more accessible.

Before World War II and well after, San Fernando’s Mexican and Mexican American population remained segregated to the southern portion of the town (table 1).¹¹ Furthermore, despite their growing numerical strength after World War II, Mexican Americans remained largely outside of the city’s political scope. As early as 1945 individuals such as Gabe Rodriguez attempted to register Mexican American voters, yet they were still largely shut out of government politics.¹² Manuel Flores made a modest incursion when he was elected to the council in the 1950s, but due to tensions with city officials, the electorate soon recalled him. In 1966, Albert Padilla also served briefly on the council. In both cases, these men had to run on a

¹⁰ Hector Tobar, “San Fernando Comes of Age: Railroad Tracks No Longer Segregate Latinos, Anglos,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 17, 1989.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

campaign palatable to the middle-class White electorate since residents voted for city councilors in at-large races.¹³

By the 1970s, Mexicans and Mexican Americans comprised nearly half of the city's total population of just over 16,500 residents, yet the council remained completely White.¹⁴ To a new generation of activists who rejected the precepts of assimilation or the hope for patronage from White politicians, this situation was absolutely unacceptable. For these young Chicanos, whose political consciousnesses were forged from their experiences growing up in the marginalized barrios and sharpened by the fervor of Third World activism at San Fernando Valley State College, one step towards self-determination was the election of fellow Chicanos to the San Fernando city council.¹⁵ Developed from a vast network of Chicano liberation, empowerment, and service projects, Chicano activists began a determined campaign to transform politics as usual in the City of San Fernando.

Mexican and Mexican American activists who sought to challenge the historic and contemporary forms of racial and economic subjugation against their communities founded several organizations such as the Brown Berets de Aztlán, the Chicano Moratorium, the United Farm Workers, and social service organizations such as the *Centros de Accion Social Autonomo* (Centers for Autonomous Social Action or CASA). College students who consciously adopted a politicized Chicano identity at Valley State breathed vitality into the campus's chapter of the

¹³ Pat Bryant, "Suit Attacks 'at Large' Election of Councilmen," *Los Angeles Times*, March 14, 1974, SF1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ For the purposes of this chapter, I avoid using "Chicano" and "Chicana" completely interchangeably with "Mexican" and/or "Mexican American." I use Chicana/o to refer to individuals of Mexican heritage who were politicized by the Third World and Chicano Movements of the 1960s and 1970s or, in the words of Ignacio M. García, the "militant ethos that became the impetus for this social upheaval." This generation rejected the organizing principles of the "Mexican American" generation and its organizations such as the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) that emphasized education, Americanization, and US patriotism as avenues for racial justice. See García, *Chicanismo: The Forging of a Militant Ethos Among Mexican Americans* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997), 4, 19.

Movimiento Estudiantil Chicana/o de Aztlán (Chicana/o Student Movement of Aztlán or more commonly known as MEChA).¹⁶ The multiplicity of these organizations and causes – that ranged from immigrants workers rights to police brutality to rehabilitation for *los pintos* or the recently incarcerated – reflected different constituencies and tactics but a shared commitment to Chicano social, political, and economic empowerment.¹⁷

A variety of organizations in the San Fernando Valley emerged in the 1970s to build the local Mexican American community that concentrated in the east Valley. These organizations and the services they provided revealed the needs of the working-class and immigrant Mexican American population. Early on, organizers recognized the importance of education to alleviate the neglect Mexican American youth faced in public schools that reached back to the tracking and segregation of the beginning of the twentieth century. At San Fernando Valley State College, the Chicano Studies Department secured a grant from the Ford Foundation to implement Operation Chicano Teacher and “prepare Chicano Teacher candidates wishing to teach in barrio schools.”¹⁸ Reflective of the critical network of organizers who linked the campus and barrios, the selection committee for Operation Chicano Teacher was comprised of Chicano faculty as well as members of MEChA and the larger community. Politicized Chicanos also began summer programs for local *Chicanitos* “to develop their creativity by participating in art festivals, bailes folkloricos [folk dances], etc.” to build “a stronger bond of carnalismo

¹⁶ For a history of MEChA on California’s university campuses see Gustavo Licón, “‘¡La Unión Hace La Fuerza!’ (Unity Creates Strength!): M.E.Ch.A. and Chicana/o Student Activism in California, 1967-1999,” (PhD Dissertation, University of Southern California, 2009).

¹⁷ “Pinto Strives for Better Causa,” *El Popo* 11:3, December 1977, 7; Ernesto Chavez, *Mi Raza Primero! Nationalism, Identity, and Insurgency in the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles, 1966-1978* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 7.

¹⁸ “Operation Chicano Teacher” Announcement, California State University, Northridge (c. 1974), Chicano Studies Archives (CS ARC 2009/1), Carton 11, Folder 27, UC Berkeley Ethnic Studies Library.

[brotherhood]” between youngsters in the community and organizations such as MEChA.¹⁹ By the end of the 1970s, Pacoima residents and CSUN students founded the *Escuela de la Gente* (People’s School), a bilingual pre-school and “working-class daycare,” informed by the teachings of Paulo Freire and funded by the state’s Office of Child Development.²⁰

For adults and families more generally, direct service providers also filled the void left by a lack of bilingual staff or interest in Mexican American clients by other organizations or government agencies. In San Fernando, longtime community activist and Pacoima-native Irene Tovar ably led the Chicano Community Center, which also partnered with MEChA. The Center maintained a library, provided tax preparation and consultation, guidance counseling for primary and secondary students, and organized various other fundraisers and toy drives.²¹ In the mid-1970s, activists established organizations such as the Youth Contact Center in Van Nuys and *El Proyecto del Barrio* (the Barrio Project) to tackle the intertwined detriments of substance abuse and gang violence that began to plague the Valley’s Mexican and Mexican American community. Counselors with the Youth Contact Center, including a few CSUN Chicano Studies alumni, often mediated between clients, probation officers, and the courts. They also encouraged at-risk youth to pursue avenues of higher education.²² Staff members at *El Centro de Amistad* (the Friendship Center) began to cater to the increasing diversity of the San Fernando Valley’s Latino community that, by the early 1980s, included immigrants from El Salvador and

¹⁹ “Barrio Summer School,” *El Popo* (1:5): c. 1970, np.

²⁰ Carlos García, “Escuela de la Gente, Working-Class Daycare,” *El Popo* 17:5 (May 1983): 3, 5.

²¹ “MEChA’S Chicano Community Center Continues to Serve the People in the Communities,” *El Popo* 4:3 (1972): 5.

²² Juan Cárdenas, “Youth Contact Center Combats Drug Problem,” *El Popo* 10:2 (November-December 1976): 5.

Guatemala.²³ Chicano activism rooted in ethnic pride and a critique of political and economic inequality in the San Fernando Valley did not end with service-oriented projects such as *El Proyecto del Barrio* or *Escuela de la Gente*. They co-existed with efforts at political mobilization towards the voting booth. The vehicle that young activists in MEChA looked to was the *Partido Nacional de La Raza Unida* (National United People's Party; hereafter Raza Unida Party or RUP).

The RUP and the Groundwork for a “Peaceful Revolution” in the City of San Fernando

Although other radical movements of the 1960s outright rejected mainstream political participation as a strategy to challenge racism and class exploitation, Chicana/o Movement activists in the American Southwest used voting to assault what scholar-activist Armando Navarro calls the “two-party dictatorship” of American politics.²⁴ Disgusted with the benign neglect of Democrats or transparent racism of Republicans, Texas activists José Ángel Gutiérrez and Mario Compean called for a third party alternative. Their organizing resulted in the founding of the Raza Unida Party

According to Navarro, the Raza Unida Party's “peaceful revolution” grounded itself in a political challenge to the internal colonization of Chicanos that was reinforced through the dominant two-party system.²⁵ Founded in Texas in 1970, the La Raza Unida Party leadership

²³ Danny Miramontes and Rudy Negrete, “El Centro Offers Services to Latinos,” *El Popo* 17:3 (December 1982): 1, 4.

²⁴ Armando Navarro, *La Raza Unida Party: A Chicano Challenge to the U.S. Two-Party Dictatorship* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000).

²⁵ Navarro, *La Raza Unida Party*, 21. Within the US context of the history of race and racism, internal colonialism refers to the structural forces that produce political, economic, and social inequalities directed towards minority groups. Specifically, historian Ramon Gutierrez writes, “Black nationalists and Chicano radicals embraced, transformed, and further elaborated on the idea of Internal Colonialism to explain their own subordinate status in the United States which was the product of forced enslavement and military occupation. As a colonized

established one national platform: elect Chicanos into positions of power. The party's fluidity on other issues reflected the different regional needs and circumstances of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in areas such as Texas, Colorado, and California. Therefore, the Raza Unida Party variously focused on elections, social service programs, and policy advocacy. At different times and locations their motley ideology included strains the Marxism, ultranationalism, racial separatism, or, most evident in the San Fernando Valley, reform within the existing system.²⁶

The Raza Unida Party had their earliest electoral victories in the early 1970s in Crystal City, Texas, a town where Mexicans and Mexican Americans made up more than 80 percent of the population.²⁷ Afterwards, the party began to take root in other areas with significant Mexican and Mexican American populations. In 1971 longtime labor activist and educator Bert Corona took the lead in organizing the party in Southern California. Along with his students at California State College, Los Angeles, Corona convened a conference that expressed dissatisfaction with the Democratic Party, which Mexican Americans had generally supported since the New Deal era.²⁸ This conference sowed the roots of what became several Raza Unida Party chapters in areas such as East LA, City Terrace, La Puente, San Bernardino, and the City

population in the United States, Blacks and Chicanos suffered the effects of racism, were dominated by outsiders, much as colonial subjects in the Third World, and had seen their indigenous values and ways of life destroyed," see "Internal Colonialism: An American Theory of Race," *DuBois Review* 1:2 (September 2004): 281.

²⁶ Navarro, *La Raza Unida Party*, 280. Richard Santillan, "The Cloning of La Raza Unida Party for the Twenty-first Century: Electoral Pragmatism or Misguided Nostalgia?" in Rodolfo D. Torres and George Katsiaficas, eds., *Latino Social Movements: Historical and Theoretical Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 181-206.

²⁷ Armando Navarro, *The Cristal Experiment: A Chicano Struggle for Community Control* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 48.

²⁸ On the history between the Democratic Party and Mexican Americans, also see Ignacio M. García, *Viva Kennedy: Mexican Americans in Search of Camelot* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2000).

of San Fernando.²⁹ Shortly after the conference, the Chicano newspaper *La Causa*, noted the party's commitment to "winning control over local institutions that effect the people's every day lives." The paper proceeded to assure readers that "The R.U.P. will be a political party with a difference in that it will be controlled by the people and not by a handful of rich party contributors."³⁰

The San Fernando chapter of the Raza Unida Party emerged from the political committee of San Fernando Valley State College's MEChA, through the efforts of individuals such as Xenaro Ayala.³¹ Rodolfo Acuña, the founding chair of Chicano Studies at Valley State, recalled that students who worked with the Raza Unida Party received "special help" from his department to support their activities.³² Local student organizers with the party received course credit for their service, for example. Meanwhile the department funded over a dozen students to participate in Raza Unida Party organizing in its original base, Crystal City, Texas. This form of politicization was crucial for students, many of whom had never left California before, to witness the birth of a Chicano Movement. The opportunity to learn about Chicano consciousness from a variety of geographical perspectives shaped and emboldened the students as they returned to empower the residents of the barrios of San Fernando and Pacoima.

The bulk of MEChA activism for the Raza Unida Party took the form of raising the consciousness of local Mexican Americans to stake their claim in political representation for the benefit of their community. They accomplished this on campus, with party publicity in the

²⁹ Chavez, *Mi Raza*. By 1973 the Raza Unida Party established six chapters in Los Angeles County alone. Four were in East Long Angeles and the remaining two were in San Fernando and La Puente, Frank del Olmo, "Chicano Party to Seek Spot in Governor Race," *Los Angeles Times*, August 30, 1973, B1.

³⁰ Chavez, *Mi Raza*, 84.

³¹ Eugene Hernández, "Raza Unida Party Urges Chicano Representation," *El Popo* (December 1981), 6.

³² Rodolfo Acuña, *The Making of Chicano Studies: In the Trenches of Academe* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 111.

MEChA newspaper *El Popo*, and in the barrios of the east Valley by reaching out to individuals disillusioned with the Democratic Party or were outwardly apolitical. “La Raza Unida is not very dramatic,” noted party activist and MEChA member Richard Loa, “but its implications are greater and the people know it.”³³ Indeed, while party organizers did not promise outright revolution, they did tap into a complete lack of ethnic representation and frustration about municipal neglect, a theme that resonated with White tax-payers and homeowners on the other side of the Valley, albeit for completely different reasons.

The initial stages of Raza Unida Party organizing took place within the political constraints of the Valley from both above and below. Party activists set their sights on the small City of San Fernando, the independent town in the northeast San Fernando Valley that neighbored Pacoima. Through their focus on the City of San Fernando, rather than the larger San Fernando Valley which was split into several Los Angeles City Council districts, party activists targeted and cultivated a concentrated Mexican American voter bloc. Furthermore because the position of city mayor rotated among council members there remained a possibility that a Raza Unida councilmember might be elevated to the highest office in the city (although the position was ultimately a weak one, since the mayor was not directly elected).

Mexican Americans comprised almost one half of the town’s total population of 16,571 in 1970 yet remained in the shadows of city politics.³⁴ Despite the best efforts of previous community organizers such as Gabe Rodriguez, who registered Mexican American voters in the 1940s, a voting bloc was remained elusive. Raza Unida Party activists wanted to elect someone

³³ “Young Chicanos Actively Recruit for New Party,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 30, 1971, 23.

³⁴ Pat Bryant, “Suit Attacks ‘at Large’ Election of Councilmen,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 14, 1974, SF1.

who explicitly pledged support for the socioeconomic needs of Mexican Americans and thus hoped to consolidate the Mexican vote.³⁵

Much like Pacoima's Black community that initially hesitated to support Valley State's BSU students, Mexican American in the east Valley were carefully guarded in their political activities. Many either did not participate at all or were "conditioned" to vote for the Democratic Party, according to Richard Loa, the RUP activist.³⁶ In an effort to nurture these potential voters into an influential voting bloc, Loa also remarked, "We've learned that demonstrations [such as those sponsored by the anti-war Chicano Moratorium Committee] are dramatic and get attention, but they don't change the *politicos*. They only understand power."³⁷ Such politicized actions also may not have changed the outlook of potential voters who moved to the Valley for opportunities for economic upward mobility. Therefore, party activities did not discuss separatism or particularly overt challenges to the capitalist system in order to appeal to outwardly non-politicized Mexican Americans and build a base to break into the world of San Fernando city politics.

Nevertheless, younger party activists, particularly those in college, remained unstinting in their condemnation of the existing political system and its record of racial oppression. In the article "Join La Raza Unida Party: Democrats and Republicans Are the Same," which appeared alongside a cartoon of a donkey and an elephant dancing together in a 1972 edition of *El Popo*, Valley State MEChA members, or Mechistas, charged, "Support must come from all Chicanos for the partido. The elections coming up in San Fernando and elsewhere are important in the

³⁵ Jeffrey Hansen, "Simi, San Fernando Council Appointments Bring Criticism," *Los Angeles Times*, December 5, 1974, SF1.

³⁶ Richard Loa, quoted in "Young Chicanos Actively Recruit."

³⁷ Richard Loa, quoted in Chavez, *Mi Raza*, 85.

step for Liberation of our people. Without true evaluation of the uselessness and destructive system in this country we will continue to be fooled by it.”³⁸ By situating the vote within a larger “Liberation,” the students certainly appealed to the revolutionary fervor that existed among Chicanos on campus following the student uprisings of the 1968-1969 academic year. With these ambitious goals in mind, Valley State students and other RUP supporters took on the task of registering new voters, an important first step to generate an electoral movement.

The San Fernando chapter of the Raza Unida Party began its efforts in 1971 with signature-gathering campaigns to register as many Mexican American voters as possible. Students from MEChA of Valley State College (which became California State University, Northridge the following year) regularly contributed their time and organizing efforts to the party; they claimed to have registered at least one thousand new voters. As students, organizers targeted their peers, especially since the passage of the Twenty-sixth Amendment in 1970 lowered the voting age to eighteen.³⁹ To cultivate a solid bloc, party volunteers reached out to the older generation as well. MEChA students tirelessly canvassed shopping centers, churches, popular *taquerías*, and other public spaces in the Mexican American neighborhoods.⁴⁰

For many who had never participated in the electoral process before the Raza Unida Party’s outreach, the organizers’ message of the need to support a party responsive to the needs of Mexican Americans resonated. As one middle-aged construction worker remarked, when a college student told him about the Raza Unida Party and its goal to elect Chicano leaders, “*era*

³⁸ “Join La Raza Unida Party: Democrats and Republicans Are the Same,” *El Popo* 4:3 (1972), np.

³⁹ “Young Chicanos Actively Recruit.”

⁴⁰ Chavez, *Mi Raza*, 85; “Young Chicanos Actively Recruit for New Party,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 30, 1971, 3B.

tiempo,” or “it’s about time.”⁴¹ After that concerted voter registration drive, Raza Unida Party activists set their sights on the municipal government of San Fernando.

In November 1971 San Fernando party activists convened an open forum for party members and other interested individuals to collaboratively create a party platform. Reflective of the party’s attention to regional differences, party organizers such as Loa stressed “We want the people who make up the party to decide what programs to support to solve the problems in the Chicano community.”⁴² Furthermore, by eliciting the direct testimony of Chicanos, organizers hoped to reiterate the need for an electoral alternative because, in Loa’s words, the existing “two-party system has failed in the barrios.”⁴³ As a result of the community’s feedback, the Raza Unida Party’s platform focused on the need to fund social services to tackle substance abuse, support bilingual education, end urban renewal, provide access to housing and healthcare, and improve the transportation infrastructure to the Mexican American barrio of San Fernando.⁴⁴ Although this reformist agenda may have differed from other politically audacious RUP chapters, its genesis from the ground up reflected a concern with the quality of life for Mexican Americans and the national party’s emphatic belief that moneyed interests governed Democrats and Republicans.⁴⁵

In the spring of 1972, voters in the City of San Fernando went to the polling booths to elect two members of the city council. Although Mexican Americans only comprised 37 percent

⁴¹ Anonymous quoted in “Young Chicanos Actively Recruit.”

⁴² Richard Loa quoted in “La Raza Unida Group Sets Platform Meeting,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 22, 1971, SF6.

⁴³ Loa quoted in *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Navarro, *La Raza Unida Party*, 153.

⁴⁵ “Join La Raza Unida Party: Democrats and Republicans Are the Same,” *El Popo* 4:3 (1972), np. Interestingly, in an attempt to link economic and racial oppression for people of color in general, RUP supporters at Valley State, for example, told the readers of *El Popo*, that individuals with a stake in west coast agribusiness influenced the decision of the iconic liberal Franklin Delano Roosevelt to incarcerate Japanese Americans.

of the total registered voters, the Raza Unida Party fielded candidates Richard Corona, a community organizer, and Jess Margarito, an administrator in the city's recreation department.⁴⁶ Both men were young, Corona was 23 and Margarito was 24, and their age represented the vitality of the new party that sought a path different from the two-party system. They faced four other candidates in the non-partisan race; they included the main contenders J.B. Van Sickle, an automobile businessman, and accountant Quentin Johnson. Van Sickle and Johnson enjoyed the advantages of incumbency. Alfred Bernal, Jr., another Mexican American community activist entered the race before Margarito and Corona and attempted to bow out lest the presence of three Chicanos on the ballot dilute the electoral chances of any of them. Unfortunately the city clerk forbade his withdrawal. Wanita Godshchalk, a saleswoman and scion of an influential local family, also ran.⁴⁷

The arrival of the Raza Unida Party in the electoral landscape catalyzed a spirited campaign. Corona and Margarito accentuated the need for equal representation on the council that would be accessible to the community. Corona, for example, proposed holding satellite council meetings in parks and community centers "to bring government closer to the people." He suggested "this kind of positive action to break the apathy people have toward city government has never been tried."⁴⁸ In an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, Margarito stated that "the existing council has no social consciousness" and that he and Corona "are

⁴⁶ Ken Fanucchi, "Chicanos Make Strong Drive for City Council," *Los Angeles Times*, April 9, 1972, SF_A1. Three Mexican Americans were elected to the San Fernando City Council in the past, but did not run on the same type of platform as the Raza Unida Party candidates.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Richard Corona quoted in Ken Fanucchi, "Chicanos Make Strong Drive for City Council," *Los Angeles Times*, April 9, 1972, SF_A1.

concerned with the social needs of the people.”⁴⁹ In an effort to appeal to non-politicized Mexican Americans (and perhaps even disenchanted non-Mexicans) the campaign deployed these messages of participatory democracy and transparency as opposed to the language of “Liberation” that emanated from *El Popo*’s early coverage of the RUP.

The Raza Unida Party’s populist message, along with the group’s overt concern with racism, disrupted the existing political order and thus led to various smear tactics. Corona, Margarito, and the Raza Unida party at large faced accusations of political subversion, radicalism, and communist sympathies.⁵⁰ The invectives were fairly ironic. Although the candidates and their party may have critiqued the functioning of city government they never called for its abolition and, as the RUP matured, their platform came to include support for Mexican American small businesses. Conversely, both the *Los Angeles Times* and *El Popo* reported accusations that government staff had harassed Mexican American voters.⁵¹ In a nod to both the historic racism that Mexican Americans had faced as well as the power of homeowners, the two candidates stated in a press release “City officials are attempting as a last resort to win an election by scare tactics and intimidation through the infringement of constitutionally guaranteed civil rights of the tax-paying citizens of our City of San Fernando.”⁵²

Corona and Margarito’s statements reflect the flexibility of the RUP’s approach to regional platforms and thus the political discourse of the San Fernando Valley itself. Whereas other party chapters could run openly Marxist candidates, the San Fernando RUP carefully calibrated a message that situated political redress within the grammar of self-determination but

⁴⁹ Jess Margarito quoted in Fanucchi, “Chicanos Make Strong Drive.”

⁵⁰ Navarro, *La Raza Unida Party*, 153.

⁵¹ Fanucchi, “Chicanos Make Strong Drive;” “Racism Evident in San Fernando Election” *El Popo* 4:4 (1972), np.

⁵² Untitled article, *El Popo* 4:4 (1972): center spread.

also constitutional rights, citizenship, and the dutiful payment of taxes. These themes not only reflected the political rhetoric of upwardly mobile African Americans who sought to break the residential color barrier in the 1950s and 1960s but also, ironically, the rising political tide that emphasized the centrality of the taxpayer.

During the campaign, the role of the Raza Unida Party in general came under scrutiny. Candidate Quentin Johnson exploited a central paradox of the Raza Unida Party's campaign in this specific election. The primary way to elect a Chicano to the council was through the concerted efforts of the Raza Unida Party; however, because the election and council were formally non-partisan, Johnson argued that Corona and Margarito were the beneficiaries of unfair assistance and endorsement.⁵³ For their part, Corona and Margarito attempted to bring attention back to issues of class and the neglect that low-income Mexican Americans faced from the city to encourage a heavy voter turn out in the barrios. In response to the accusation that the Raza Unida Party was interfering in the non-partisan race, Margarito stated that "the United Auto Workers, individual Democrats, individual Republicans and independent voters" also endorsed him and Corona.⁵⁴

Despite their best efforts, the Margarito and Corona lost. According to Navarro's study of the Raza Unida Party, the "vilification of the RUP candidates resulted in a large White voter turnout" which bode poorly for their campaign.⁵⁵ Indeed, a staggering 95 percent voter turn out marked the election. Out of a field of six candidates, Corona came in third and Margarito came in fourth while the ultimate victors were Johnson and Van Sickle (table 2).⁵⁶

⁵³ Fannucchi, "Chicanos Make Strong Drive."

⁵⁴ Jess Margarito quoted in Fannucchi, "Chicanos Make Strong Drive."

⁵⁵ Navarro, *La Raza Unida Party*, 153.

⁵⁶ Fannucchi, "Chicanos Make Strong Drive."

Table 2: 1972 San Fernando City Council Votes

Quentin Johnson	2,009
J.B. Van Sickle	1,807
Richard Corona	1,007
Jess Margarito	1,000
Alfred Bernal, Jr.	279
Wanita C. Godschalk	192
Total	6,294
Total Registered Voters	6,636

Sources: Navarro, *La Raza Unida Party*, 153. Data for registered voters comes from Registered Voters As of April 13, 1972: *Official Statement of Registration* (Los Angeles: County of Los Angeles Office of the Registrar-Recorder, 1972), 12.

Although Corona and Margarito did not make it onto the San Fernando City Council the campaign's outcomes still gave reason to continue organizing. The two Raza Unida Party council candidates, despite their loss, nevertheless garnered more votes than Bernal and Godschalk.⁵⁷ This suggests that their overall goal of politicizing Mexican Americans to vote for equitable representation and a platform sensitive to working-class barrio circumstances reverberated with individuals previously ignored by mainstream politicians. Even Bernal, who was not a member of the Raza Unida Party and feared its name was too exclusive, felt that the party had the potential "to be a strong force for organizing the community."⁵⁸ For the party faithful, informal estimates that suggested at least 90 percent of registered Mexican American voters came to the poll at all served, regardless of the actual percentage, as a cause to celebrate and move forward. Given their previous registration efforts, such estimates also suggest that the Mexican American voting pool included many young people. RUP supporters hoped this

⁵⁷ Although the RUP did not run a candidate for city treasurer, they did endorse the incumbent, Elvira Orozco, who was appointed to the position in 1970. She ran un-opposed, but was elected in her own right in the 1972 election, Navarro, *La Raza Unida Party*, 153; Fanucchi, "Chicanos Make Strong Drive."

⁵⁸ Alfred Bernal, Jr. quoted in Fanucchi, "Chicanos Make a Strong Drive."

momentum would also encourage politicized Chicano high school students to vote once they turned eighteen.⁵⁹

Among young party supporters, Corona's and Margarito's candidacies were an ideological watershed. The challenges that the two politicized Chicanos faced brought to light, in the eyes of *El Popo* staff, the "white racist majority determined to dominate and literally ignore the existence of 40% of the population, which is Chicano."⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the party succeeded because it "united peoples in the Chicano community and . . . made them aware of the inequality which exists in the political systems of the USA." *El Popo* staff memorialized the first RUP campaign as the opening volley in a much larger war. Met with failure during this campaign, the student writers warned, "But Anglos, keep in mind Que Nosotros Los Chicanos 'Venceremos.' Y QUE VIVA LA RAZA!" [that we Chicanos will overcome. LONG LIVE THE RACE!].⁶¹

Interestingly however, the student supporters crafted a racial rhetoric that defied easy dichotomies. Despite the overt overtures to cultural nationalism, *El Popo* castigated the White "reactionary vote" that was "unable to realize that Corona and Margarito concentrated on social problems and the betterment of the San Fernando community *as a whole*. They did not run on an ethnocentric platform but on one of social and educational reform" (emphasis added).⁶² Perhaps *El Popo* writers crafted this seeming contradiction as a way to subvert accusations of ethnic tribalism. However, this stance also challenged a zero-sum, or "reactionary," assumption that Chicano empowerment could only be achieved at the expense of non-Chicanos. With a particular

⁵⁹ "Racism Evident in San Fernando Election."

⁶⁰ Untitled article, *El Popo* 4:4 (1972): center spread.

⁶¹ "Venceremos" was a famous cry of Ernesto "Ché" Guevarra and the name of a radical, leftist Chicano organization established in Redwood City, California in 1969.

⁶² Untitled article, *El Popo* 4:4 (1972): center spread.

focus on social services and education, the *El Popo* staff also implicitly reiterated the party's concern for the working-class. An agenda to bolster resources for working peoples would ideally improve the entire community. Regardless of the stated or underlying goals of *El Popo*'s post-election analysis, the RUP readied itself for another electoral contest.

In 1973 the emboldened party backed Andres Torres, a speech instructor at Los Angeles Valley College, to fill a vacant seat in the State Senate for the district that encompassed San Fernando (figure 5.1).⁶³ Following the untimely death of State Senator Tom Carrell of the twenty-second district, Torres joined a field of 14 candidates in a contentious campaign where the balance of power in the State Senate was at stake (Democrats and Republicans each held nineteen seats).⁶⁴ Party organizers continued their grassroots efforts when they held a two-day conference with over one dozen workshops to gather feedback on the needs of local constituents to craft Torres's platform.⁶⁵

Torres promised to run on a "people's platform" that included many of the previous issues dear to the RUP as well as an expansive vision for American society. The planks included legislation to bolster employment, health care, and housing that reflected the needs of the Mexican American community but would ideally provide a safety net for all working-class and working-poor individuals in the district and possibly California. In addition to these economic concerns, the "people's platform" also advocated for an end to America's wars in Viet Nam and an end to racism in general. While it was unclear exactly how Torres planned to accomplish these herculean tasks in the California Senate is unclear, the significance of these promises lies in

⁶³ Navarro, *La Raza Unida Party*, 161-163.

⁶⁴ Kenneth Reich, "Runoff Considered Likely: Light Vote Predicted in Valley Senate Race," *Los Angeles Times*, January 30, 1973, C1.

⁶⁵ "La Raza Rallies for Senatorial Battle," *Los Angeles Times*, December 10, 1972, SF_A8.

their connection to the multiple prongs of the Chicana/o Movement. Good housing and access to health care were intertwined with issues of race. So too was the relationship between access to employment (or lack thereof) and the pipeline between the barrios and combat frontlines in Southeast Asia.

Lastly, the platform assured potential voters that Torres would fight for “justice under the law.”⁶⁶ Elsewhere, conservative politicians from President Richard Nixon down to Mayor Sam Yorty gained political capital through appeals to “law and order” or “justice under the law” in the face of urban unrest. Yet the RUP’s invocation of this rhetoric begs the question of for whom is justice under the law necessary? Given the contentious relationship between Mexican American youth and law enforcement in the San Fernando Valley, the RUP potentially wanted to ensure that those victimized by the police would also receive justice within (rather than overturning) existing legal structures. This emphasis on justice for the aggrieved and validation of the larger structures parallels Margarito and Corona’s campaign which spoke of Mexican American voters as both a neglected community but also tax-paying citizens.

Despite Torres’s general message of reform, because the seat carried the potential to shift power dynamics in Sacramento, the other candidates attacked Torres. Although he formally ran as an independent, his link to the Raza Unida Party was enough to cast a shadow over his capacity to represent the people of the twenty-second district. Already labeled as a radical, the Democratic Party, which backed developer Alan Robbins, painted Torres as a “spoiler” who would divide Mexican American votes and deliver a handy victory to the Republicans.⁶⁷ Torres

⁶⁶ Andres Torres campaign flyer, printed in *El Popo* 5:4 (1973), np.

⁶⁷ Navarro, *La Raza Unida Party*, 162.



Figure 5.1 Andres Torres campaign flyer, 1973. Torres was a longtime candidate for the La Raza Unida Party, often running as a candidate for the party or an independent affiliated with the party. His platform spoke to the everyday bread-and-butter needs of San Fernando’s working class in addition to issues such as the war in Viet Nam. Source: *El Popo*, 1973.

and the RUP also faced harassment by the Los Angeles Police Department, which raided an RUP fundraising party.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Specifically, Torres pointed to arrests meted out to Raza Unida Party organizers at Valley State who were accused of selling beer without a liquor license. The LAPD arrested other party organizers and supporters in a

Although Torres lost in the first round of voting to Democrat Alan Robbins and Republican Phillip Johnson, who faced each other in a runoff election, the perceived harassment the party faced from the police and other political figures reinvigorated Raza Unida Party supporters to continue their challenge to the entrenched mainstream political structure. The immediate goal of electing Torres may have ended in failure. However, the larger mission to politicize Mexican Americans to reject the moneyed two-party system was a success as evidenced in the continued growth of the party. Even the *Los Angeles Times* admitted that during the campaign Torres had articulated “an eloquent plea for an alternative to the two-party system.”⁶⁹

After Torres’s loss, the San Fernando Raza Unida Party redoubled its efforts on community action in the place of electoral participation from 1974 to 1976. In part, the attrition of members and volunteers drove this change. Many students, who had once comprised the base of the party, graduated and needed to focus on full-time employment.⁷⁰ A new crop of faculty at Valley State’s Chicana/o Studies Department who focused on legitimizing the discipline within the institution also weakened the connection between the party and campus. Meanwhile, others left because participation in the party led to various forms of blacklisting.⁷¹ Chapter founder and

separate incident where they were charged with serving alcohol to minors at a fundraising dance. Police subsequently broke up the dance.⁶⁸ In a statement after the incidents at the dance, Torres stated that the police “said they would come back and start making arrests if we did not stop . . . so the dance was ended and we started cleaning up.” The police department later stated that they had provided the dance organizers warning to stop serving alcohol to minors. When they returned and noticed the consumption did not cease, they dispersed the approximately 150 attendees, Frank del Olmo, “Chicano in Senate Race Raps Police: Says Volunteers in 22nd District Were Arrested,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 25, 1973, A3.

⁶⁹ Kenneth Reich, “Candidates in Valley Senate Campaign Clash,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 23, 1973, A3.

⁷⁰ Mike Castro, “La Raza Quits Politics for Community Action,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 1, 1974, SF1.

⁷¹ Navarro, *La Raza Unida Party*, 153.

Pacoima junior high school teacher Xenaro Ayala remained committed to the party even though his school's administration forbade him from making announcements without the prior approval of the principal.

Nevertheless, a core group of organizers kept the party relevant to local Chicanos through various forms of advocacy, direct service support, and cultural activism. When individuals came to their headquarters, exasperated with a lack of resources elsewhere, the party did their best to provide assistance. For example, when a Mexican American minor was arrested and held as an adult, his agitated mother went to the Raza Unida Party office. Party activists accompanied her to the police station where they successfully secured his release.⁷² Party organizers also assisted with several mundane yet important tasks such as translation for limited-English speakers along with help with taxes and notarization.⁷³ Lastly, the party instilled in east Valley Mexican Americans pride in La Raza through cultural activities such as Cinco de Mayo and Mexican Independence Day celebrations. Party organizers also partnered with students from Ayala's school, Pacoima Junior High School, to paint a mural. Taken together, these tasks illustrate how the RUP utilized different means to strengthen the local Mexican American community and cultivate a Chicano identity when elections were not a viable option. These forms of activism demonstrated how party activists believe that cultural and political empowerment went hand-in-hand. A strong ethnic identity could potentially translate into votes in the next election cycle

One significant development during this period was the relationship between the RUP and undocumented immigrants. The issues surrounding undocumented immigration became

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Eugenio Hernandez, "La Raza Unida En San Fer," *El Popo* 9:1 (1976), 4.

increasingly publicized in the 1970s throughout California and the Southwest.⁷⁴ Furthermore, whereas the previous campaign may have stressed that Mexican Americans in San Fernando were tax-paying citizens, in the interregnum between elections, the RUP became, in the words of *El Popo*, “the only voice and spokesman which the non-documented person can turn to in . . . times of difficulties.”⁷⁵ The San Fernando RUP stood in defense of undocumented workers and staged protests against immigration raids and the local Chamber of Commerce when it issued a proposal to restrict hiring undocumented workers.⁷⁶ These activities demonstrated the porous definition of the San Fernando RUP. Due to the structures of exclusion that existed in San Fernando Valley, the organization was at once a political party, an advocacy and educational group, and an informal social services provider. Each of these areas showed how the party strove for relevance in and service to the Mexican American community.

The matrix of race and politics became more complex around the time the Raza Unida Party temporarily shifted to community-based organizing. In the March 1974 municipal elections, a recent Mexican American transplant from Sun Valley (a neighboring town under the jurisdiction of the City of Los Angeles), Edward Díaz, narrowly lost a seat on the city council.⁷⁷ Nine months later, when then-mayor Mayor Phil Johnson resigned his seat on the council, and thus the mayoralty as well, he appointed Díaz to fill the position. After only a fifteen minute

⁷⁴ On Mexican and Latino immigration since the 1970s see David E. Hayes-Bautista, “Latinos Define Latinos, 1975-1990” in *La Nueva California: Latinos in the Golden State* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), 89-117; for Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley see James P. Allen and Eugene Turner, *The Ethnic Quilt: Population Diversity in Southern California* (Northridge: CSUN Center for Geographical Studies, 1997) 39-40; W. Tim Dagodag, “A Note on the Intraurban Settlement of Illegal Mexican Aliens in the San Fernando Valley of California,” *Proceedings of the Conference of Latin Americanist Geographers* 9 (1983): 59-68.

⁷⁵ Eugenio Hernandez, “La Raza Unida En San Fer,” *El Popo* 9:1 (1976), 4.

⁷⁶ Castro, “La Raza Quits Politics for Community Action.”

⁷⁷ Hansen, “Simi, San Fernando Council Appointments Bring Criticism;” Jeffrey Hansen, “Only 5 Votes Separate Loser, Winner in San Fernando Race,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 7, 1974, SF1.

meeting the rest of the council members approved appointment. It appears that after the Raza Unida's concerted efforts along with a lawsuit by the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund and the San Fernando Improvement Council to reform the city's at-large voting structure, the all-White council became increasingly attentive to the potential to elect a politicized Chicano. That lawsuit was ultimately unsuccessful and the choice of Ed Diaz was likely engineered to address his previous near-win, but also to quell Mexican American calls for equitable representation on the council, without the perceived risks of electing an RUP member.⁷⁸ Indeed, Díaz's ethnic background and personal history in the city (or lack thereof) did little to garner support among the entire Mexican American community of San Fernando.

A central impetus of the Raza Unida Party lay in the importance of vernacular leadership: the need to elect a Chicano from the barrio on a platform crafted from the needs of its residents. Díaz, however, represented just the opposite. A self-proclaimed conservative, Diaz had moved to San Fernando only three years before the election. Although he may have appealed to the entire San Fernando electorate, perhaps as a politically conservative Mexican American, and almost won a seat on the council, he raised suspicion among racially progressive Chicanos. Therefore, activists scrambled to present an alternative candidate for the out-going mayor to consider. Their choice was Héctor Barragán, a twenty-six year old student at CSUN was a lifelong resident of San Fernando and a community activist. His connection to the local Mexican American community led to endorsements from Flores and Padilla, the previous Mexican American council members, as well as, Gil Sáenz of the San Fernando Improvement Council.

⁷⁸ David Wharton, "Grass-Roots Work Credited for Latino's Upset Victory," *Los Angeles Times*, April 12, 1984, V1.

One of Barragan's supporters, a law clerk by the name of Alfredo Flores, put it simply: "his ties to the community are stronger and he's the only one who could drum up this kind of support."⁷⁹

Nevertheless, Díaz's was appointed and he stated that, unlike Barragán and, implicitly, the Raza Unida Party's past candidates, he was not beholden to racial interest groups. "I can represent the community as a whole and not just those organizations," he announced after his appointment was certified. Drawing upon the rhetoric of racial liberalism that stressed universality as opposed to difference, he continued, "[the RUP's] causes are not my causes. I want to help the poor Mexican. I want to help the poor white. In order to help the city, you have to help the whole city and not just one segment."⁸⁰

This episode demonstrated the diversity of Mexican American political thought in the City of San Fernando. Although Barragán did not receive any formal or informal endorsements from the Raza Unida Party, the support he garnered suggested that Mexican Americans would not simply support a candidate based solely on her or his ethnicity. Indeed, Flores, the law clerk who backed Barragán, stated that "It isn't that we don't like Diaz," per se, but "It's just that if they're [the city council] going to give us a Spanish surname councilman, then it should be someone acceptable to all of us."⁸¹ While it would be impossible to find any candidate who would be acceptable to the entire community, the appointment of Díaz, or rather the opposition it caused, illustrated the increasing transition to a Chicano political consciousness. With the thirst for a responsive Chicano candidate grounded in the barrios evident, the Raza Unida Party mobilized once more for the 1976 city council elections.

⁷⁹ Alfredo Flores quoted in Hansen, "Simi, San Fernando Council Appointments."

⁸⁰ Edward Diaz quoted in *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Alfredo Flores quoted in *Ibid.*

Los Angeles Times journalist Mike Castro underestimated the party when he prematurely proclaimed that “La Raza Quits Politics” in 1974.⁸² In 1976 Raza Unida Party leaders Marshal Díaz and Xenaro Ayala fought hard for a place on the San Fernando City Council. For politicized Chicanos in the Valley, Ayala’s credentials were unrivalled. Not only had he helped found the San Fernando Raza Unida Party as a Valley State Mechista, he returned to the community as a teacher at Pacoima Junior High School where he mentored a youth branch of MEChA.⁸³ Their platform called for equal representation for Mexican Americans in city affairs along with the larger issues of immigration, and health, thus reflecting many of the same concerns from the last Raza Unida Party foray into city council elections.⁸⁴ The two candidates also promised to help alleviate the problem of unemployment in the Mexican American community that, according to conservative estimates, hovered around 35 percent.⁸⁵ The party was particularly concerned with supporting local measures that mirrored legislation that eventually became the federal Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment Act in order to provide opportunities for individuals regardless of their age or background.⁸⁶

According to San Fernando RUP leader Eugenio Hernández, the party continued to instill in Mexican Americans a belief in the democratic participation in order to elect individuals attuned to the socioeconomic conditions of poor and working-class Mexican Americans. He noted, for example, “the Partido feels it is essential that control be passed from the clique of

⁸² Castro, “La Raza Quits Politics for Community Action;” “Six Indicate Intention to Run for 2 Council Seats,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 14, 1975, SF_B2.

⁸³ Hernández, “Raza Unida Party Urges Chicano Representation,” 6.

⁸⁴ Navarro, *La Raza Unida Party*, 168.

⁸⁵ Eugenio Hernandez, “La Raza Unida En San Fer,” *El Popo* 9:1 (1976), 4.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

businessmen, salesmen and insurance agents who currently hold sway over politics to people directly involved in the day-to-day struggles and trials of the common man.”⁸⁷ Yet, the RUP continued to emphasize that ethnic representation would accomplish little if elected leaders did not bring explicit support for and from the barrio. In a likely barb against the appointed Mexican American councilman Edward Díaz, Hernández wrote, “The election is important to focus on *true* Chicano representation, most importantly because we have seen enough tokenism and ‘puppet tacos’ who say nothing for the Chicano.” Unlike Díaz, who sought to represent San Fernando “as a whole,” RUP supporters believed that “true representation requires courage and knowledge to speak on the issues which are tormenting our people.”⁸⁸ Hernandez’s vitriol against Díaz centered upon what he considered the appointed councilman’s “back-stabbing politics,” when, in an effort to stem crime in the south side barrio, he supported efforts to close Chicano businesses, discouraged the council from supporting the Humphrey-Hawkins Bill, and failed to speak out against undocumented immigrant raids.⁸⁹

Despite the enthusiasm of the party’s foot soldiers who aggressively canvassed the barrio and the impressive weight of Ayala’s community-based credentials, the campaign faced several obstacles. In addition to a lack of resources, Ayala and Díaz contended with a Mexican American spoiler whose campaign was orchestrated by Díaz and the local Catholic parish. Supported by Mexican American businessmen and a handful of Cuban refugees, Luz Márquez succeeded in splitting an already low Mexican American voter turnout.⁹⁰ Furthermore, reflective of the same problems that drove the party to focus on community organizing in 1974 and 1975,

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Eugene Hernandez, “LRUP: Success at the Polls,” *El Popo* 9:5 (April-May 1976), 7.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

the candidates found it difficult to proverbially preach beyond the choir. Whereas Torres participated in debates with his fellow state senate candidates, Díaz and Ayala were prevented from speaking in election forums.⁹¹

Although the two only received just over 800 votes combined, a number considerably smaller than the 2,007 votes RUP council candidates won in 1972, Ayala was far from pessimistic. After the election, he reiterated to the Chicano paper *The Militant*, that “the purpose of the Raza Unida is to politicize people Especially in this city, the working-class people are the Méxicanos and Chicanos, the people with no support.”⁹² RUP leader Eugenio Hernandez reiterated Ayala’s point when he called the party’s performance a “success at the polls” in terms of the “Partido’s ability to withstand pressures from conservative elements, both in the Chicano and Anglo community, while still succeeding in bringing out vital issues.” These accomplishments comprised “a victory in itself.”⁹³ That concept of victory mirrored the ways in which MEChA students analyzed the RUP’s first campaign: because mainstream politicians could not be trusted to meet the needs of marginalized Mexican Americans, the capacity to nurture a politicized Chicano electoral movement was itself a great accomplishment. Therefore, the party continued their fight with even greater resolve.

The closest the Raza Unida Party came to winning a seat of power in San Fernando occurred in 1978, due in part to a renewed focus on economic issues. Fresh off of a failed bid for the state assembly in 1976, Andres Torres ran for the San Fernando City Council with the San Fernando Election Coalition, an organization of different Mexican Americans who shared the

⁹¹ Navarro, *La Raza Unida Party*, 168.

⁹² Quoted in *Ibid.*

⁹³ Hernandez, “LRUP: Success at the Polls.”

Raza Unida Party's goal of electing Chicanos to the city government.⁹⁴ Taking a cue from Ayala's assessment following his defeat, Torres ran an economic populist campaign that pressed the need for a city government sensitive to the needs of working people and the poor, without making direct overtures to the ethnic nationalism that had defined the Raza Unida Party elsewhere.⁹⁵ His rhetoric stressed the need to strengthen services and protections for all of the city's economically distressed and faced stiff opposition from other Chamber of Commerce-endorsed candidates who wanted to re-orient the council towards industrial and retail investment.⁹⁶ Torres's campaign managed to win some liberal White voters as well. RUP leader Eugenio Hernández even suggested "attempts are being made to bridge the gap" and that "alliances must be made."⁹⁷ Torres himself stated that "This campaign had the most widespread support The election cut across racial lines and normally recognized boundaries (such as the railroad tracks) and economic status to a certain extent."⁹⁸ As ethnic studies scholar Richard Santillan points out, a central tension within the RUP at the national and local level existed between activists who privileged racism versus class oppression.⁹⁹ When Torres campaign shifted towards economic issues, victory almost seemed apparent.

Despite the positive trajectory of the campaign, Torres lost. However, the margin of loss was only fifty-five votes and thus it appeared that "México voters in San Fernando were much

⁹⁴ "State Election Laws Oppress Independent Parties," *El Popo* 10:1 (September-October 1976), 7.

⁹⁵ Navarro, *La Raza Unida Party*, 169.

⁹⁶ "Councilman and 4 Others Seek 3 San Fernando Jobs," *Los Angeles Times*, January 8, 1978, SF_C2.

⁹⁷ Eugene Hernandez, "San Fernando City Council Elections," *El Popo* 12:2 (May 1978), 5.

⁹⁸ Andres Torres quoted in Juan Cardenas, "Andres Torres Reflects on His San Fernando Election Race," *El Popo* 12:2 (May 1978), 5.

⁹⁹ Santillan, "The Cloning of the Raza Unida Party."

more willing to respond to a nonpartisan approach,” according to Armando Navarro.¹⁰⁰ Although the same could have been said about Ed Díaz’s first run for the council, Torres’ campaign demonstrated how the Mexican American electorate also wanted to support a candidate sensitive to economic class. The RUP faithful pointed to several factors that likely contributed to such a narrow defeat. In addition to the difficulties of running any campaign against Chamber of Commerce candidates, the late mailing of sample ballots to newly registered voters, the last minute change in polling place in the primarily Mexican American sixteenth precinct, and a short window of voting hours complicated efforts to bring out Torres’s voters.¹⁰¹ These variables, combined with Torres’s near win, validated the RUP’s efforts. “The election was a disappointment,” Torres later reflected, “but it’s not considered anywhere as a set-back to us.”¹⁰² If anything, RUP members felt a sense of vindication since Torres collected more votes than Ed Díaz who lost his attempt to win an election to the council in his own right.¹⁰³ Although Torres revealed his openness to running again two years later as a “solution to a problem,” the RUP faced a huge crisis in the 1980s.

By the early 1980s the Raza Unida Party in California fell into disarray due to factors that ranged from restrictive election laws to harassment by law enforcement to internal power politics.¹⁰⁴ A “leadership drain” exacerbated these statewide issues across chapters.¹⁰⁵

Dedicated figures in the San Fernando chapter, such as Jess Margarito and perennial candidate

¹⁰⁰ Navarro, *La Raza Unida Party*, 169.

¹⁰¹ Hernandez, “San Fernando City Council Elections.”

¹⁰² Torres quoted in Cardenas, “Andres Torres Reflects.”

¹⁰³ Louis Sahagun, “Bitterness Festers After Latino’s Election Loss,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 19, 1982, VI.

¹⁰⁴ Navarro, *La Raza Unida Party*, 272-282.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 171.

Andres Torres who ran unsuccessfully for governor of California in 1978, left the party in the 1980s. Nevertheless, in 1981 the San Fernando RUP's stalwart leader Xenaro Ayala became the national chairman. According to party activist and political scientist Armando Navarro, "there was little left of RUP at the national level for Ayala to lead."¹⁰⁶

Within these contexts, the party struggled to remain relevant in the San Fernando Valley. Along with Ayala, Valley State's Chicano Studies students maintained their commitment to a party alternative that would fully address the needs of Mexican Americans. *El Popo*, for example, reiterated that "a strong people's organization" as opposed to political parties dominated by influential donors, "is necessary to get the message across that one person in office will not change things . . . but constant pressure from the community will."¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, factionalism continued to plague the Mexican American electorate. In 1980 Ralph Arriola, the Mexican American director of San Fernando's Head Start Program, unsuccessfully ran for the San Fernando council and throughout the campaign disavowed connection to the RUP in an attempt to gain the support of a wider base. Ayala ran for the council once more in 1982, but finished a poor ninth out of eleven candidates.¹⁰⁸ The fear of militancy and distaste for the Raza Unida's past record of protests over issues such as farm workers rights alienated Whites and moderate Mexican Americans from Ayala. As one local resident suggested, the Raza Unida Party "brought Cesar Chavez here once with their red and black signs, waving and chanting Ma and pop, in their little stores, don't like that stuff very much. The don't forget."¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 260.

¹⁰⁷ Hernández, "Raza Unida Party Urges Chicano Representation," 6.

¹⁰⁸ Richard Simon, "San Fernando Rejects Latino Representation," *Los Angeles Times*, April 15, 1982, v1.

¹⁰⁹ Sahagun, "Bitterness Festers After Latino's Election Loss."

The lack of Mexican American electoral representation ceased when Jess Margarito, the RUP apostate, won a seat after running a spirited, door-to-door campaign in 1984. Certainly, some of his White opponents flooded precincts with mailers reminding voters of Margarito's association with the Raza Unida Party. Although Margarito's campaign shared many of the same grassroots traits as his previous runs, he repudiated the Raza Unida Party in this election, as he did during Ayala's run for the council in 1982. But, according to the winning candidate himself, "The public attacks launched against me backfired," as he attempted to visit almost every home in San Fernando, including in the White neighborhoods, to remind voters of his years of municipal service in the parks department and youth programs.¹¹⁰

The sum of RUP organizing points to an eclectic and dynamic set of political circumstances, influences, and outcomes shaped by the needs of Mexican Americans and the larger political atmosphere of the San Fernando Valley. From 1972 until the early 1980s, the Raza Unida Party activists staged a boldly optimistic movement that never won an election. The party could never harness enough votes to elect one of its members to office. Yet, their greatest success lay in the ways in which the party sparked a new consciousness and ethos of self-determination for everyday Mexican Americans who may have seen political participation as utterly futile. As party leader Eugenio Hernández wrote in the partido's heyday, "a political campaign run by principles does not always mean it has the best chance of winning, rather, it has a greater chance of being attacked as radical." Because the party rooted itself in the direct concerns of the working-class barrio and its residents who felt they had no voice in politics, leaders and organizers necessarily recognized that "elections are but one method of politically

¹¹⁰ Jess Margarito quoted in Wharton, "Grass-Roots Work Credited." The San Fernando RUP largely folded by the 1990s, although Ayala continued to carry on the spirit of the party through his community organizing well into the 21st century.

educating the people . . . and in this respect the Partido feels it scored a significant victory in San Fernando.”¹¹¹

The Raza Unida Party in 1970s San Fernando represented a unique type of political activism that combined rhetorical and tactical elements of both the Valley’s moderate fair housing activism of the 1950s and 1960s as well as the radical organizing of CSUN students in the late 1960s. Unlike other Chicano activists, and indeed some other RUP chapters, the San Fernando Raza Unida Party’s leaders were not overtly concerned with overt expressions of nationalist separatism or the abolition of capitalism. In many respects they were pragmatists, similar to the middle-class professionals who joined the San Fernando Valley chapters of the NAACP or JACL, inasmuch as they were content to work within existing political structures to support their larger quest for racial justice. In some cases, such as Corona and Margarito’s early campaign, the RUP even used the language of civil rights entitled to tax payers.

However, it is unfair to suggest that the RUP was ultimately a party of racial liberalism. Whereas earlier racial organizations drew upon their respective communities’ capital as war veterans or middle-class professionals embedded in the defense industries as a strategy to claim inclusion into the larger fabric of the largely White San Fernando Valley, the RUP’s activism emerged from the tenor of the Chicano Movement. Driven by relatively younger organizers who were often formed through experiences growing up in the working-class barrios of the east Valley and/or their Chicano Studies education, the RUP dedicated itself to the empowerment for the Mexican American community as it was. The RUP’s efforts, whether through electoral politics or its various social services, provided the support needed for working-class Mexican American immigrants, families, and youth. Theirs was an assorted mandate and perhaps because

¹¹¹ Hernandez, “LRUP: Success at the Polls.”

of the multiple demands RUP activists sought to meet, the fact the organization lasted as long as it did was impressive.

The depth of the Raza Unida Party's activism may have only been a drop in the bucket relative to both the vast panorama of Chicano activism in Los Angeles, which included the Chicano Moratorium and militant groups such as the Brown Berets, as well as the increasingly aggressive forms of homeowner politics in the San Fernando Valley in the 1970s. Yet, the history of the RUP provides nuances to both of those established sets of stories. Unlike other RUP chapters that operated in other parts of Los Angeles, the San Fernando unit came the closest to electoral power given the large concentration of Mexican Americans in the small city.¹¹² As such, leaders carefully delineated the chapter's political agenda, which evolved over time to reckon with the intersections between racial and economic inequality. With the promise of a government that would facilitate job growth, support undocumented immigrants, and bolster social services to residents the RUP projected a glimpse at the flip side of middle-class homeowner activism in the San Fernando Valley that had grown increasingly hostile to government. Whereas the RUP and its followers set its sights on extremely local struggles, Japanese Americans in the San Fernando Valley turned their attention to a nationwide social justice campaign. While the experiences of the two communities were remarkably different, they both shared the task of politicizing everyday individuals within an already fraught political environment.

¹¹² Although Mexican Americans were part of the Los Angeles city government in a variety of capacities, with Councilman Edward Roybal as the best example, RUP chapters in East Los Angeles did not achieve any major electoral successes.

The Movement for Japanese American Redress and Reparations

Japanese Americans in the San Fernando Valley experienced a different type of political organizing than Mexican Americans in the 1970s and early 1980s. Japanese Americans and other Asian Americans comprised a far smaller proportion of the San Fernando Valley's population at the time. By 1980 just over 27,000 Asian Americans lived in the Valley.¹¹³ Yet the campaign for federal monetary reparations and an official apology for the forced removal and mass incarceration of west coast Japanese Americans slowly, but assuredly, galvanized the region's Nikkei community. Just as dedicated RUP organizers took to the streets, markets, and other public spaces to reach politically reticent Mexican Americans, Japanese American activists endeavored to reach out to their otherwise silent friends, neighbors, and family members.

Whereas Chicano voter mobilization rested in part upon the benefit of a large concentration of Mexican Americans in San Fernando, the movement for redress and reparations took place again the backdrop of residential dispersal. As chapter three outlined, given the shifting paradigms of race in post-war California and the San Fernando Valley itself, some Japanese American professionals experienced relatively easier residential mobility. Although the Japanese American-owned nurseries, markets, and other small businesses, along with their local gardeners' association remained in the east Valley, individuals such as engineers and teachers moved beyond the multiethnic neighborhoods of Pacoima, San Fernando, and Sun Valley.

Nevertheless, the east San Fernando Valley remained an ethnic hub for Japanese Americans. Institutions in Pacoima and Sun Valley, such as language schools and houses of worship such as the Holiness Church and the San Fernando Valley Buddhist Church fortified

¹¹³ Josh Getlin, "Minorities Just Start to Feel Political Clout," *Los Angeles Times*, June 29, 1980, 9.

community cohesiveness and maintained various aspects of ethnic heritage.¹¹⁴ Meanwhile, the San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center in Pacoima served as a locus of cultural activity and published a newsletter that attempted to cultivate a civically minded membership. During the 1970s and 1980s the center's newsletter editors regularly printed news about municipal and state campaigns along with encouragement for Japanese Americans to vote and hold their elected representatives accountable. As one article entitled "Do Japanese Americans Mean Anything to Politicians?" noted, "Politics! That's the name of the game! It's who you know that brings about opportunities, and if this is what it takes to secure benefits that we have paid for from our tax dollars, let's act now."¹¹⁵

Furthermore, local Nikkei political actors such as Harold Muraoka, a leader of the Community Center, hoped that Japanese Americans along with other Asian Americans in the Valley could form a voter bloc, in a sense similar to the Raza Unida party.¹¹⁶ However, the sheer diversity of post-1965 Asian American population – that ranged from Korean immigrants to Vietnamese refugees – confounded the possibility for a wider movement. Another politically minded leader, Paul Tsuneishi of the local Japanese American Citizens League, admitted as much when he cited a lack of common language, religion, or migration history to bind different Asian Americans together.¹¹⁷ Muraoka at times expressed the difficulties of organizing even a

¹¹⁴ The San Fernando Valley Buddhist Church, which had been a branch of the Los Angeles Nishi Hongwanji Betsuin, became the independent San Fernando Valley Hongwanji Buddhist Temple in 1981, Carolyn Sanwo, "Ninety Years of Nembutsu," in Jack Takeshita et al., *90th Anniversary: San Fernando Valley Hongwanji Buddhist Temple* (Pacoima: San Fernando Valley Hongwanji Buddhist Temple, 2011), np.

¹¹⁵ Harold Muraoka, "A Message from SFV-JACC Member: Do Japanese Americans Mean Anything to Politicians?" *CCN* (December 1973), 2.

¹¹⁶ Harold Muraoka, "A Message from SFV-JACC Member: Do Japanese Americans Mean Anything to Politicians?" *CCN* (December 1973), 2. Harold Muraoka, "Community Involvement," *CCN* (Feb 1981), 16.

¹¹⁷ Josh Getlin, "Minorities Just Start to Feel Political Clout," *Los Angeles Times*, June 29, 1980, V1.

Japanese American political voice, which he called “all too typical and extremely frustrating.”¹¹⁸ At only about 3 percent of the total population of the San Fernando Valley in the early 1970s, political apathy may have contributed to Muraoka’s frustration. After the forced removal of Japanese Americans during World War II, the detainment of immigrant Issei in Tuna Canyon and Griffith Park, and the difficulties of resettlement left many Japanese Americans inwardly focused or non-political. Silence served as an enduring coping mechanism for that time period. Nevertheless, Nikkei institutions in the east Valley continued to push local Japanese Americans stake their claim in politics. The movement for redress and reparations provided a key opportunity.

Among the Nikkei in the San Fernando Valley, the collective move for redress began in the mid 1970s. A handful of determined Nisei and Sansei community activists came together to rally to call for a corrective to history – to underscore the innocence and loyalty of the internees – and in doing so free them from the shame and silence that had long suppressed them. Furthermore, through the excavation of that past, community leaders stressed that by bringing the wartime experience out of the shadows every day Japanese Americans could help build a better, more just future for themselves and later generations. Although the campaign for redress stretched across the nation and Valley activists collaborated with organizations throughout greater Los Angeles the evolution of support for redress in the Valley reflected the institutional and migration histories unique to the region. In the process, the redress movement was one of, if not the most, divisive issues to face the Valley Nikkei community.

Japanese American communities across the nation engaged in heated debates over divergent strategies, the appropriate forms of reparations, and even if the topic should be broached at all. Education and dialogue was the key, both nationwide and within the San

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

Fernando Valley as an oppressive culture of silence foreclosed any discussion of the incarceration period. Even after resettlement, and despite the legal gains made in terms of property ownership (the defeat of Proposition 15) and citizenship (the McCarran-Walter Act) questions of Japanese American loyalty during the War remained. “There was a noticeable reluctance to talk about the years just past and about the effects of the concentration camps,” both within the home and in the public sphere, as Tetsuden Kashima observed in a study published at the height of the redress movement.¹¹⁹ Beginning in the early to mid 1970s a handful of Valley JACL leaders, along with Nikkei civil rights leaders in Japanese American neighborhoods such as Little Tokyo or Gardena, sought to eradicate the “social amnesia” that became a way of life after World War II.

The Japanese American Citizens League, as the oldest and largest Japanese American civil rights organization, was tempered in its initial support for redress. Moreover, many Japanese Americans themselves still held deeply resentful feelings towards the organization due to its wartime reputation of collusion with the government and antagonistic attitudes against individuals critical of mass incarceration and the draft resisters. The San Fernando Valley JACL, which was housed at the JACC, grappled with its own contentious history and contemporary place within the Japanese American community. The very first president of the San Fernando Valley JACL, Tom Imai, was implicated in the notorious Manzanar Riots, a rebellion against perceived government collaborators. Moreover, after JACL members “reactivated” the chapter after World War II, it became a medium for recently-arrived middle-class Japanese Americans professionals to contest, for example, housing discrimination in the 1950s and 1960s. By the 1970s, its reputation as a professionals club contrasted with the working-class, agricultural

¹¹⁹ Tetsuden Kashima, “Japanese American Internees Return, 1945-1955: Readjustment and Social Amnesia,” *Phylon* 41:2 (1980): 111.

origins of the JACC, which still served as a meeting place for the Valley's Nikkei large number of landscape gardeners. Nancy Nakata Gohata, a San Fernando Valley schoolteacher, recalled how the JACL represented the "division" within the community. "The JACL people," she remembered, "were engineers, [a] lot of engineers" who "provided intellectual things" as a chapter. Those "intellectual" pursuits included lectures on the Japanese American community by scholars such as Harry H.L. Kitano, and helped compel Gohata to eventually join the JACL. However, "most of [the JACL-ers] came from Los Angeles," as well as Hawai'i, and did not have the type of filial roots in the region as, say, the farmers, gardeners, and veterans who established the JACC. In other words, the latter were "really Valley people."¹²⁰ Despite this controversial legacy and its well-defined place within the community, the San Fernando Valley JACL pressed for redress, at times more actively than the national body.

Dissatisfied with the national JACL's practice of passing resolutions sympathetic to the idea of redress – first in 1970, then again in 1972 and 1974 – but without and formal action, Valley JACL leaders Phil Shigekuni and Paul Tsuneishi, organized a community forum in April 1975 to begin dialogue on the issue and ascertain the community's pulse regarding reparations.¹²¹ Edison Uno, a lecturer at San Francisco State University's Asian American Studies Department and an early advocate for redress and reparations served as the keynote speaker. Although Uno already enjoyed a reputation as an educator and civil rights leader, his family's wartime history was intimately tied to the San Fernando Valley. His father, George Kumemaro Uno was an accomplished Issei who was unjustly detained at the Griffith Park

¹²⁰ Nancy Nakata Gohata, Interviewed by Sharon Yamato, November 29, 2011, Segment 29 *Densho Digital Archive*, available at <http://archive.densho.org/Core/ArchiveItem.aspx?i=denshovh-gnancy-01-0029>.

¹²¹ "Brief Chronology on Redress and E.O. 9066 Inc. (1970-1980)," EO 9066, Inc. Collection, compiled by Paul Tsuneishi. Thanks to Phil Shigekuni for allowing me to examine these documents.

Internment Camp at the outset of World War II.¹²² Other speakers included Japanese American congressional staffers, regional and national JACL representatives, as well as the Los Angeles city councilman for the northeast Valley, Robert Ronka.¹²³ Ethnic media such as the *Rafu Shimpō* covered the meeting in great detail. The conservative *Valley News and Green Sheet* also reported on the event, although in a more staid manner and under-reported the number of attendees.¹²⁴

The meeting attracted around 200 attendees that included both members of the JACL and other interested individuals. As the *Rafu Shimpō* reported, among the major arguments for pursuing redress put forth included:

1. It would make the U.S. government admit liability for false imprisonment, wrongful detention, loss and denial of civil and constitutional rights.
2. It would pay monetary damages for mental anguish, loss of employment, hardships, suffering, etc.
3. It would admit legal liability—thereby reversing the judicial cases and admitting the whole episode was illegal, unjust, and wrongful.
4. It would vindicate the entire question of loyalty and patriotism of all persons of Japanese ancestry.
5. It may prevent the government from taking future similar actions which violate the integrity and rights of American citizens.¹²⁵

¹²² Amy Uno Ishii, interviewed by Betty E. Mitson and Kristen Mitchell, July 9 and July 20, 1973, Los Angeles, CA in Arthur Hansen, ed., *Japanese American World War II Evacuation Oral History Project: Part I: Internees* (Fullerton: California State University, Fullerton Oral History Program, 1991) digitized and available through *Calisphere: A World of Primary Sources and More* at <http://www.calisphere.universityofcalifornia.edu/>.

¹²³ Ellen Endo, “Interest in evacuee reparations rekindled,” *Rafu Shimpō* (April 30, 1975), 1.

¹²⁴ Ovid Goode, Jr., “Japanese-American Unit Seeks War Reparations,” *The Valley News and Green Sheet*, April 29, 1975 stated only 100 people attended whereas the *Rafu Shimpō* and panel organizers estimated the number at 200.

¹²⁵ Quoted in Endo, “Interest in evacuee reparations rekindled.”

Although there was no consensus on forms of reparation – individual payments, community-wide compensation, or scholarship programs – several of the panelists concurred that congressional lobbying was the most effective strategy.¹²⁶

Long-term strategies aside, the panelists agreed an immediate objective was to determine the community’s feelings towards redress and generate support. Uno observed, “The total consequence of that traumatic experience has yet to be established . . . the individual hardships are untold, the personal sacrifices of the Issei and Nisei are not really known as many are too proud to discuss the indignities, the contempt, the adversities, the grief and the tragedies of that period in their lives.”¹²⁷ A handful of organizers took up that challenge through a concerted, multifaceted program to help the local Japanese American population recover their wartime experience, while also educating them about the legal possibilities of redress. To avoid the constraints of the larger JACL, activists established a new organization specifically dedicated to redress and reparations.

One key vehicle for redress was EO 9066, Inc., a non-profit group named after the Executive Order that authorized the creation of military zones and eventual removal of Japanese Americans. The organization was composed of Valley Nikkei and others that specifically grew out of the April 26, 1975 meeting at the JACC. Although it worked closely with the Valley JACL, through its connections to Paul Tsuneishi and Phil Shigekuni, it remained a separate entity (figure 5.2).¹²⁸ Tsuneishi, an EO 9066, Inc. founder remarked that:

The primary reason for starting a grass-roots movement for redress was two-fold: the belief that [the national] JACL would not move beyond resolutions unless public pressure

¹²⁶ Endo, “Interest in evacuee reparations rekindled.”

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ “Brief Chronology on Redress and E.O. 9066 Inc. (1970-1980),” EO 9066, Inc. Collection.

from within the Japanese American community was brought to bear . . . [and] that JACL could not, and did not speak for many within the Japanese American community because of JACL's track record of cooperating with the government to the extent of informing on persons they thought held loyalty to Japan or perhaps could not be trusted at loyal Americans."¹²⁹

EO 9066, Inc. gained momentum during its four-year existence, as it secured redress endorsements from a wide variety of religious and civic organizations, including the California Democratic Central Committee.¹³⁰ EO9066 was also responsible for the launch of a survey that gauged individual Japanese Americans' opinions on redress and its potential forms. Lastly, the organization endeavored to educate individual groups about incarceration and redress to procure endorsements that did not necessarily contain any specific policy recommendations. Through their educational efforts, EO 9066, Inc. and their partners in the Valley JACL sought to break the refusal of many Japanese Americans to speak about the war.

Japanese American activists in the San Fernando Valley saw the erasure of silence as the first step in creating a critical consciousness about the wartime past and that redress was necessary. One visceral way to help the community collectively remember the pain and shame of the past was to visit the site of their degradation. At the height of the Asian American Movement, a collective of politicized Japanese Americans began to unearth the wartime past and, in 1969, the Manzanar Committee, led by individuals such as Warren Furutani and Sue Kunitomi Embrey (herself a member of the San Fernando Valley JACL), began to organize

¹²⁹ Quoted in Mitchell T. Maki, Harry H.L. Kitano, S.Megan Berthold, *Achieving the Impossible Dream: How Japanese Americans Obtained Redress* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 71. See also Phil Shigekuni, "Senior Moments: My Tribute to Paul Tsuneishi," *Rafu Shimpo*, July 18, 2012, available at <http://www.rafu.com/2012/07/my-tribute-to-paul-tsuneishi/#print>.

¹³⁰ Various multiethnic Protestant congregations offered their support for redress including: The California-Nevada conference of the United Methodist Church; the Lutheran Churches of America; Western Baptist Churches of California; and the American Baptist Convention, EO 9066, Inc. Collection. See also: Paul Tsuneishi letter to Russell Leong, December 4, 2005 (Reprinted in *Amerasia Journal* 33:3 [2007]).

multigenerational pilgrimages to Manzanar.¹³¹ As a result, the pilgrimage “transform[ed] Manzanar from a place of shame to a symbol of solidarity.”¹³² The pilgrimage – which inspired journeys to other camps – served as a catalyst to foment a wide community consciousness about the wartime experience and garner support for the redress movement.¹³³

Inspired by that political moment, in 1976 Valley JACL and JACC leaders began to sponsor participation in the annual Manzanar Pilgrimage. With the JACC newsletter and the resources to offer transportation to the desolate camp in Owens Valley, redress activists impelled the Valley’s Japanese Americans to reflect upon their camp experience.¹³⁴ An unsigned article in the *Community Center News* asked its readers “What does Manzanar mean to you?” As they recognized that reluctance to speak about the wartime period still plagued Japanese Americans, the authors reminded their readers that “Old or young, the camp experiences was real and a part of our lives. East story adds a dimension to stories unfolding in the courts, Congress, and our community.”¹³⁵ Later, the *Community Center News* announced simply, “The pilgrimage symbolizes the camp experience for all internees” as well as their families and relatives.¹³⁶ The link between young and old within the experiences of Manzanar exposed how camp unified the Japanese American community in the Valley and elsewhere, whether they lived in Pacoima or

¹³¹ Maki et al., *Achieving the Impossible Dream*, 61-2.

¹³² Linda Lin, “From Community Son to Sundance,” *Pacific Citizen*, February 15 – March 6, 2008, 9.

¹³³ Maki et al., *Achieving the Impossible Dream*, 61-2.

¹³⁴ At the 1987 pilgrimage, Gohata was recognized by the Office of Mayor Tom Bradley “for her diligence in organizing the bus trips [from the Valley] to Manzanar for eleven years,” “San Fernando Valley Makes Annual Trip to Manzanar,” *CCN* (June 1987), 18.

¹³⁵ “San Fernando Manzanar Bus Fund Celebrates 10th Anniversary,” *CCN* (April 1986), 7.

¹³⁶ “Manzanar Pilgrimage,” *CCN* (April 1988), 4.

had moved to tonier areas in the West Valley, whether they ran nurseries or taught elementary schoolchildren.



Figure 5.2 Paul Tsuneishi, Phil Shigekuni, and other redress activists, 1979. For their efforts to raise awareness about the mass incarceration of Japanese and Japanese Americans through the Day of Remembrance (the day President Roosevelt signed EO 9066), longtime civil rights supporter Los Angeles County Supervisor Kenneth Hahn (third from left) presents a commendation to (left to right): Lori Higa, Shisei Tsuneishi, Paul Tsuneishi, Phil Shigekuni, and Miles Hamada. Source: *Rafu Shimpo* and the Nikkei for Civil Rights and Redress-Los Angeles Day of Remembrance Archives.

The excavation and dispersal of these stories were key to raising consciousness about the need for redress. One important voice in this process was Mary Sakaguchi Oda, the respected Nisei physician who grew up on a North Hollywood farm and left her medical studies at UC Berkeley to join her family at Manzanar (figure 5.3). In many respects, Dr. Oda represented many of the Nisei who wrestled with their wartime past. With the recommendation of a former

professor she was able to leave camp and resume her medical studies on the East Coast.¹³⁷ In the early 1960s she returned to the San Fernando Valley to build a medical practice with her older brother, Sanbo. The two of them became household names in the eastern Valley as they provided care and medical expertise to the Japanese American and Mexican American communities. By many measures, Dr. Oda was quite the success, yet the war continued to haunt her.

As a part of the redress campaign she shared how the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans and the harsh fates of her family members in camp weighed on her:

[It] took me twenty years before I realized that it was the anger and the frustration of losing everything, getting kicked out of medical school. I constantly had palpitation. And it caused other physical problems, too. I'm lucky I'm alive. My sister died. My brother died. And I'm lucky I didn't get a mental illness like my sister did. I think maybe because I didn't allow myself to feel anything. I could never feel anything. You just numb yourself. What happened to you was so horrible that you... just at the moment you don't feel it. I could never cry. For twenty years I never cried.¹³⁸

That sense of numbness permeated throughout countless members of the Japanese American community. As she recognized this, Dr. Oda felt a profound duty to speak out and encourage others to do the same.

One particularly harrowing moment in Dr. Oda's evolution occurred in 1976. Following the redress panel at the San Fernando Valley JACC along with a growing nationwide awareness of the movement, a local television news network invited Dr. Oda, her husband, World War II veteran James Shimpei Oda, along with Valley JACL and EO 9066, Inc. leader, Phil Shigekuni. While the three Japanese Americans earnestly attempted to explain their experiences during the war and why redress was necessary, the fourth panelist, Lilian Baker, ferociously defending the

¹³⁷ Her undergraduate professor Hiram Wheeler Edwards from UCLA wrote on her behalf.

¹³⁸ Mary Sakaguchi Oda Interview.

US government's decision to incarcerate Japanese Americans.¹³⁹ Through a network of her newsletters and savvy media appearances Baker clung to the myth of military necessity and the belief that Japanese Americans lived privileged lives in what were nothing more than state-sponsored summer camps. Her appearance alongside with the Valley's redress representatives was no different.

The day after the panel was broadcast, when Dr. Oda left her practice, she discovered her car draped in an American flag. Shigekuni later recalled that incident marked a turning point for the "normally soft-spoken, subdued Dr. Oda." The traumas of the war and public ignorance led her to become an "awakened woman, wanting to get the truth out about our experience during WWII."¹⁴⁰ Her moment came in the early 1980s, after years of advocacy by everyday individuals the US government began to take seriously the calls for redress.

The lobbying by organizations such as the National Coalition for Redress and Reparations (NCRR), the National Council for Japanese American Redress, the national JACL, various Nikkei legislators such as Senator Daniel Inouye (D-Hawai'i) and their allies, along with countless on-the-ground activists eventually garnered bipartisan support for the establishment of a special federal commission to examine the history of mass incarceration and its legacies. In 1980, President Jimmy Carter signed Public Law 96-317 that established the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Citizens (CWRIC), which endeavored to collect the

¹³⁹ Robert Ito, "Concentration Camp or Summer Camp?" *Mother Jones*, September 14, 1998, available online at: <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/1998/09/concentration-camp-or-summer-camp>.

¹⁴⁰ Phil Shigekuni, "Senior Moments: A Tribute to Dr. Mary Oda," *Rafu Shimpo*, November 16, 2013, available online at: <http://www.rafu.com/2013/11/senior-moments-a-tribute-to-dr-mary-oda/>.

testimonies of Japanese Americans and others who lived during the war from throughout the nation.¹⁴¹

As momentum for redress grew, EO 9066 Inc. was absorbed into the JACL, yet redress activists in the Valley quickly recognized the importance of the CWRIC and reached out to the Japanese American community.¹⁴² Phil Shigekuni became a member of the national JACL's redress committee and, reflective of his background as an educator and counselor, vigorously advocated for a commission to educate the wider public and thus prevent falsehoods, spread by individuals like Baker, to dominate public discourse.¹⁴³ In his appeal to the Valley's Japanese American families, Shigekuni implored: "We are interested in present testimony from any persons in our community with a story to tell about how the evacuation affected their lives."¹⁴⁴ The editors of the *Community Center News* were so committed to ensuring the Valley was represented at the LA hearings that they included in the February 1981 issue brochures on the CWRIC along with Shigekuni's plea to the community. With the encouragement of the Valley JACL, Dr. Oda spoke at the first day of the hearings on August 4, 1981.

Dr. Oda was called to speak on the psychological impact of the forced removal and mass incarceration of Japanese Americans. She eloquently spoke of the "anger and bitterness" that calcified over several decades. Like many other Nisei, Dr. Oda coped through the tragedies of the war through silence, an act that shaped her own role as a mother: "I could never tell my four

¹⁴¹ On the CWIRC see: Maki et al., *Achieving the Impossible Dream*, 85-116. Text of the law is available at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/STATUTE-94/pdf/STATUTE-94-Pg964.pdf>.

¹⁴² The fusion took place in the summer of 1979, Maki et al., *Achieving the Impossible Dream*, 71.

¹⁴³ Maki et al., *Achieving the Impossible Dream*, 88; Phil Shigekuni, interviewed by Sharon Yamato, August 29, 2011, Northridge, CA, Segment 17, *Densho Digital Archive*, available online at: <http://archive.densho.org/Core/ArchiveItem.aspx?i=denshovh-sphil-01-0017>.

¹⁴⁴ Phil Shigekuni, "Redress 1981," *CCN* (February 1981), 12.

children my true feelings about that event in 1942. I did not want my children to feel the burden of shame and feeling of rejection by their fellow Americans. I wanted them to feel that in spite of what was done to us, this was still the best place in the world to live.”¹⁴⁵



Figure 5.3 Dr. Mary Sakaguchi Oda. Portrayed here in Pacoima’s City Hall Mural (2011), Dr. Oda is often remembered for her role as a longtime and respected physician in the northeast San Fernando Valley. However, she was also a passionate advocate for redress and reparations and encouraged the Valley’s Japanese Americans to seek out their own histories to address the injustices of the past. Dr. Oda retired from her medical practice in 2006 and, at the age of 93, passed away in 2013. Source: photograph by author.

In addition to Dr. Oda, two other San Fernando Valley Japanese Americans testified.¹⁴⁶ Phil Shigekuni spoke on behalf of the Pacific Southwest District of the JACL, the umbrella for JACL units that included the San Fernando Valley chapter. On August 5, 1981, a day after Oda and Shigekuni spoke, Mitsuo “Mits” Usui also provided testimony. Usui was a decorated World

¹⁴⁵ Testimony of Dr. Mary Sakaguchi Oda, Commission on the Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, August 4, 1981, Los Angeles, California, quoted in Leslie T. Hatamiya, *Righting a Wrong: Japanese Americans and the Passage of the 1988 Civil Liberties Act* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 96.

¹⁴⁶ Paul Tsuneishi’s Issei father also sent a letter to the commission, critical of the treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II. He expressed support both for Japanese Americans who served in the military as well as the resisters, see Satoru Tsuneishi, “Testimony Prepared for the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians....Los Angeles, California,” reprinted in *Amerasia Journal* 33:3 (2007): 105.

War II veteran and helped co-found the JACC in the late 1950s. He spoke to themes that reverberated for the Valley's Japanese Americans such as the economic hardships of hurriedly selling off precious family property.¹⁴⁷

The testimony of three Japanese Americans from the Valley was an important service to persuade other members of the community grapple with their own histories. Dr. Oda cited her personal experience before the commission to help end the culture of silence that surrounded World War II and encourage other Japanese Americans in the Valley to share their histories. "I had become a witness," she wrote in the pages of the JACC's newsletter...

...and was able to expiate the shame, anger, humiliation and pain inflicted by our government's Executive Order 9066. After 3 days of listening to the devastating effects of relocation and shedding buckets of tears, I feel born again and have regained my identity as a Japanese-American and for the first time feel a special closeness to other Japanese Americans and minority people. I'd like to take this opportunity to urge all the Japanese-Americans to write to the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians to do the same . . . The testimony will go into a permanent Archive recording this important historical event. *Every testimony will be read by the Commission*" (emphasis added).¹⁴⁸

As an esteemed Nisei figure in the community who delivered several generations of local Japanese American babies and endowed generous high school scholarships, Dr. Oda's stature lent great support for the redress campaign. The raw emotions Dr. Oda shared upended the "quiet American" image of the Nisei generation that the national JACL once ardently endorsed and served to inspire her fellow otherwise reluctant Japanese Americans to speak up. Furthermore, although she most likely appealed to Japanese Americans to write letters simply because the commissioners left Los Angeles long before her newsletter article appeared, her suggestion also

¹⁴⁷ See "CWRIC Hearings Site Abstract: Los Angeles, California," in Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga and Marjorie Lee, eds., *Speaking Out for Personal Justice: Site Summaries of Testimonies and Witness Registry from the U.S. Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians Hearings (CWRIC), 1981* (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian American Studies Center and Civil Liberties Public Education Fund, 2011), 61-62.

¹⁴⁸ Mary S. Oda, M.D., "Relocation Testimonies Needed," *CCN* (Sept 1981), 2. See also, Craig Ishii, "A New Day," *Pacific Citizen* (April 18 – May 1, 2008), 3.

provided a private medium for Japanese Americans who may have still been reluctant to publically speak about their past.¹⁴⁹ The testimony of Dr. Oda and others was later screened at the JACC to continue to get the word out about the need to keep redress at the top of the community's agenda.¹⁵⁰

Support from other non-Japanese Americans may have also helped reticent members of the Nikkei community to address their past whether in an official or informal capacity. During the CWRIC's hearings in Los Angeles, commissioners and the public heard testimony from several Japanese Americans who endured the camp experience, but also scholars, social workers, members of faith communities, elected officials, and representatives of the ACLU, among others.¹⁵¹ However, the only organization that specifically represented residents of the San Fernando Valley was the *Frente de los Pueblos Unidos* (United People's Front), a Chicano civil rights organization. Gilbert Sanchez, spoke on behalf of his organization and explained that Mexican Americans who were employed as laborers on Japanese American farms faced economic deprivation when their former employers went to camp. He also drew parallels between government raids of Nikkei homes during the war and the increasingly aggressive actions of the Immigration and Naturalization Service in their pursuit of undocumented immigrants. "This really makes me angry right now," he testified, "because in the San Fernando Valley, for example, the same kind of terror, the same kind of abuses have been happening right

¹⁴⁹ Thanks to Nancy Kyoko Oda for this insight.

¹⁵⁰ "SFVJACL and NCRR to Present the CWRIC Hearing Video at JACC March 27," 1982 Photo Album, SFV-JACL.

¹⁵¹ Overall, 161 witnesses testified. See "Hearing Site: Los Angeles, California" and "CWRIC Hearings Site Agenda," in Aiko Herzig-Yoshinaga and Marjorie Lee, eds., *Speaking Out for Personal Justice*, 43-51.

now day to day.”¹⁵² His conclusion emphasized the need to respect the “pride, dignity, and rights of all oppressed nationalities.”¹⁵³ Whether this particular moment of solidarity actually moved any Japanese Americans in the Valley is unclear. Yet, Sanchez’s testimony reflected the human geography of the east Valley where Japanese Americans and Mexican Americans had historically come into contact whether on farms, in schools, or, since 1960, Dr. Oda’s medical practice where she served countless Nikkei and Latino families. Furthermore, his connection between the events of the 1940s and the contemporary world was also a feature that motivated several other Japanese Americans to push for redress.

The redress movement galvanized the community in the need to exonerate the Issei and older Nisei, but also create a future where another incarceration would never occur. Shigekuni exhorted the community to read up on the CWIRC, “keeping in mind the great impact Redress shall have on Isseis, Niseis, Sanseis, Yonseis and the entire nation, now, and in the future, please act.”¹⁵⁴ An anonymous 20-year-old sansei, moreover, wrote to the *Community Center News* that the CWIRC hearings “serve[d] as the beginning of educational awareness for the people of the United States . . . [e]xposing the racism of and overturning the legal basis that has justified the evacuation and the camps.” It is through the activism of everyday community members, the author argued, that in the future, “no group of people regardless of race, religion, ideals or opinions, suffer nor be subjected to any type of mass incarceration or violation of their

¹⁵² Testimony of Gilbert Sanchez, Commission on the Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, August 5, 1981, Los Angeles, California, quoted in Nikiko Rose Masumoto, “Witnessing *What We Could Carry*: A Critical Reflection on Performing Japanese American Collective Memory (MA Thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 2011), 74-75.

¹⁵³ Sanchez Testimony, quoted in Herzing-Yoshinaga and Lee, eds., *Speaking Out*, 63.

¹⁵⁴ Shigekuni, “Redress 1981,” 12.

constitutional rights ever again.”¹⁵⁵ Indeed, in that same issue Harold Muraoka reminded the community that the breach of constitutional rights endured by the Issei and Nisei could easily occur again. He cited Republican Senator S.I. Hayakawa – the former San Francisco State College president who attempted to crush Third World student activism and fiercely opposed redress – and his advocacy for the internment of Iranian students during the hostage crisis. With public figures such as Hayakawa, a Canada-born Nisei who avoided incarceration, casting the war experience as a positive, Americanizing experience and supporting the same treatment for Iranians, Muraoka concluded, “It is not only the issue of reparations but the education of the American people as to what happened to Americans of Japanese descent”¹⁵⁶

After the CWRIC concluded their business in Los Angeles, the Valley JACL returned to the work of fundraising for the national JACL’s redress efforts.¹⁵⁷ Through fundraising dinners, garage sales, “redress deserts,” and donation drives the chapter inched closer and closer to raising the monies needed for the \$300,000 redress budget to conduct the campaign as determined by the national JACL at their 1982 national convention.¹⁵⁸ Simultaneously, the chapter continued their educational work screening documentaries about the legal hurdles faced by individuals who resisted the evacuation orders such as Fred Korematsu, Gordon Hirabayashi, and Min Yasui, who would later go on to contest their wartime convictions.¹⁵⁹ Similarly the

¹⁵⁵ “Relocation Testimonies Needed,” *CCN* (September 1981), 4.

¹⁵⁶ Harold Muraoka, “Redress and Reparations,” *CCN* (September 1981), 4. As president of San Francisco State College, Hayakawa is also remembered for his virulent opposition to the 1968 Ethnic Studies strikes at SFSC.

¹⁵⁷ The CWRIC concluded in their February 1983 report *Personal Justice Denied* that “The promulgation of Executive Order 9066 was not justified by military necessity . . . The broad historical causes which shaped these decisions were race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership,” quoted in Maki et al., *Achieving the Impossible Dream*, 111.

¹⁵⁸ “Redress Fund Raiser,” *CCN* (January 1983), 1.

¹⁵⁹ “Unfinished Business,” *CCN* (April 1985), 2.

chapter sponsored a lecture by Peter Irons, a legal scholar who helped develop the 1983 *coram nobis* writ to overturn the wartime conviction of Korematsu, and author of *Justice at War*.¹⁶⁰

The educational efforts began to pay off. By the early to mid 1980s support grew strong with some twelve organizations under the JACC umbrella actively fundraising to generate support for the redress campaign.¹⁶¹ Furthermore, whereas early editorials in the *Community Center News* had simply invited community members to think about their wartime experiences, the JACC leadership flatly stated on the front page of a 1983 issue, “Redress represents a form of justice which has been long-delayed.”¹⁶²

Additionally, various community members began or continued to pound the pavement on behalf of the redress efforts. Every day folks heeded the typical call of Harold Muraoka who, in 1981, urged community members that “It will take involvement in one form or another and the more that you are involved, the more you can accomplish.”¹⁶³ In 1987, west Valley residents Yo and Flo Ando engaged their congressional representative, Anthony Beilenson at a public forum, asking if he would be a co-sponsor of redress legislation, namely H.R. 442. Although initially hesitant, he later recanted his previous misgivings and became a supporter.¹⁶⁴

The impossible dream, as many called it, was realized on August 10, 1988 when President Ronald Reagan signed into law the Civil Liberties Act, which mandated an educational fund regarding incarceration, an official apology, and the individual \$20,000 payment to former

¹⁶⁰ Maki et al., *Achieving the Impossible Dream*, 123-4; 128-30.

¹⁶¹ “Redress Fundraiser,” *CCN* (March 1983), 1.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ Muraoka, “Redress and Reparations,” 4.

¹⁶⁴ It remains unclear exactly what caused his change of heart. The *CCN* news only reported that Mary Miyashita of the San Gabriel Valley was able to persuade the Congressman. Phil Shigekuni, “Redress.....” *CCN* (March 1987), 11.

internees.¹⁶⁵ Valley redress activists participated in a Little Tokyo press conference immediately after President Reagan signed the act. Shigekuni remarked, “I feel a great deal of sadness and a great deal of joy. When I sing ‘This Land Is Your Land,’ when I repeat ‘with liberty and justice for all,’ from now on it’ll have more meaning for me.”¹⁶⁶

Although the San Fernando Valley’s history of redress was only thread in the larger fabric of the national movement, it also revealed the complexity of the region’s Japanese American post-war community. Configured within the dual contexts of residential integration and the enduring presence of cultural institutions in the east Valley, Japanese American activism represented what social scientists Dean Toji and Karen Umemoto called a “paradox of dispersal.” In their study of Los Angeles’s Little Tokyo, they note that “as Japanese Americans experience greater mobility and disperse regionally, the early spatially concentrated centers such as Little Tokyo become less important in the daily matters of livelihood and existence.”¹⁶⁷ This rang true for Japanese Americans and their relation to Pacoima. Certainly, nurserymen and landscape gardeners based in the east Valley, who tended to the suburban homes of the entire San Fernando Valley, remained a visible presence in the Japanese American community and built many of its post-war institutions.¹⁶⁸ However, newer Japanese American migrants to the Valley who staffed the engineering departments in the west Valley’s research and development firms were not necessarily tied to Pacoima for employment or residence. Therefore, historic

¹⁶⁵ On the mechanics of the legislation, see Maki et al., *Achieving the Impossible Dream*, 137-212.

¹⁶⁶ Michael Kodama, “Redress Legislation Signed by Reagan,” 1988 Photo Album, SFV-JACL.

¹⁶⁷ Dean S. Toji and Karen Umemoto, “The Paradox of Dispersal: Ethnic Continuity and Community Development Among Japanese Americans in Little Tokyo,” *AAPI Nexus* 1:1 (Summer/Fall 2003): 25.

¹⁶⁸ See for example, the exhibit *Landscaping America: Beyond the Japanese Garden*, Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles, June 17, 2007-January 6, 2008, <http://www.janm.org/exhibits/landscaping/home/>; Joe Robinson, “Backyard Zen: Japanese Gardens—and the Men Who Tend Them—Have Long Inspired L.A.’s Suburban Soul,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 14, 2007 profiles San Fernando Valley gardener Roy Imazu.

spaces whether in Little Tokyo or Pacoima, “become ever more important as sites for the maintenance of *ethnic identity* and a sense of *ethnic community*” (emphasis added).¹⁶⁹ The movement for redress and reparations had explicitly political end goals. But, as a larger project of remembrance, it took place in these spatial, social, and economic circumstances and helped reinforce institutions in Pacoima as inseparable sites of ethnic and political identities.

Conclusion

The young CSUN Mechista who tried to register her elders as voting members of the Raza Unida Party and the Japanese American school teacher who fundraised for the redress and reparations movement shared little on the surface. Further, their immediate goals were quite different: the RUP was locally oriented while redress activists worked within a national framework. Yet, they were both fundamentally concerned with encouraging their respective communities to claim ownership of issues they largely thought were out of their control. Both movements recognized how structural racism shaped the lives of their communities in very intimate ways.

Their responses, though varied, reflected the spatial circumstances and local histories of each community. Chicano activists drew upon the growing concentration of Mexican Americans in the City of San Fernando in their attempt to elect a politicized candidates prepared to address the needs of their working-class and immigrant community. Candidates for the city council or state assembly ran campaigns that emphasized the need for job growth, the development of social services, and protection for the undocumented. Although a member of the Raza Unida Party never officially joined the ranks of city hall officials, the party left an imprint on Mexican American voters that showed the need to become politically engaged. Japanese Americans

¹⁶⁹ Toji and Umemoto, “The Paradox of Dispersal,” 25.

activists had to grapple with a community that was increasingly less concentrated in Pacoima and diverse in terms of class and occupation. While redress was a controversial issue for those who wanted to remain silent about the war, activists worked with unstinting resolve to emphasize the community's shared history. In doing so, the movement breathed new meaning into Japanese American institutions and showed the community the inseparable political ties between their past, present, and future.

Taken together then, these histories demonstrate the diversity of political organizing in the San Fernando Valley in an age anti-government activism across greater Los Angeles and California. Anti-taxation crusaders and anti-busing champions launched screeds and legislation against the power of government and in defense of White privilege. But these alternative forms of homeowner activism focused on the government's capacity to both oppress and redress racial oppression. As demographic changes and economic restructuring began to alter the landscape of the Valley once more in the 1980s and 1990s these opposing views would very quickly come into contact and at times even mesh.

CHAPTER SIX

Chasing Camelot, or, Better to Dance with the Devil You Know:

The Racial Politics of the Secession Movement, 1996-2002

A band of San Fernando Valley homeowners, business leaders, and their supporters hoped that the voters of Los Angeles would support their so-called “Declaration of Independence” from the city through a municipal election on November 5, 2002.¹ Their hopes, born from nearly three decades of on-the-ground agitation to break the Valley off from the rest of Los Angeles, were soundly dashed. The ballot initiative at the center of this homegrown revolution, Measure F, failed. Nearly 70 percent of the electorate of Los Angeles voted against the measure. Furthermore, it barely won a majority in the San Fernando Valley itself with only 51.6% support.²

The secession campaign spoke to an ongoing the struggle between competing visions for the San Fernando Valley. A little over a year before the secession vote, local journalist and commentator Kevin Roderick noted how Van Nuys Boulevard, which once served as the unmistakable artery of post-World War II White suburban leisure and consumerism became emblematic of the “New Valley.” The graceful department stores, small pharmacies, and family diners became just faint memories by 2001.

¹ Some secessionists directly couched their movement within the language of the American Revolution as they issued a “Declaration of Independence,” and considered large donors to the campaign, “founding patriots.” See “The Declaration of Independence of the People of the San Fernando Valley,” n.d. c. 2001-2002, in Valley VOTE Collection Administrative File Folders, Box VOTE 12, Folder 6R, Urban Archives, Oviatt Library, California State University, Northridge (hereafter, Valley VOTE Collection); San Fernando Valley Independence Committee Donation Form, n.d., in Valley VOTE Collection Ephemera, Box VOTE 24, Folder “San Fernando Valley Independence Committee.”

² Raphael J. Sonenshein, *The City at Stake: Secession, Reform, and the Battle for Los Angeles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 232.

All around the Van Nuys business district are pupuserias and mueblerias and travel agents specializing in discount tickets for international travelers such as Avianca and Aeromexico. Storefront diners in Van Nuys serve the native fare of El Salvador, Peru, India, Armenia and a dozen other nations.³

Roderick's observations touched upon growing trend in journalism and social science research on the Valley that focused on the demographic and economic changes that deeply altered the fabric of the region in the years that led to secession. By the end of the 20th century, writers produced a corpus of works with titles such as *The Changing Face of Suburbia: California's San Fernando Valley* (Los Angeles Times Books, 1980), "Beyond Suburbia: The Changing Face of the San Fernando Valley" (UCLA Department of Urban Planning, 1993), and *The Changing Face of the San Fernando Valley* (Pepperdine University School of Public Policy and San Fernando Valley Economic Alliance, 2002).⁴ Whether these pieces lamented the demise of the golden age of suburbanization of the 1950s and 1960s in the shadow of deindustrialization or gestured towards the economic potential of new ethnic communities they all contained the basic truth that the Valley was no longer an anchor of racially exclusive suburbia.

Those different narratives – the nostalgia for the Valley of the past or the Valley as its own immigrant metropolis – came into conflict during the late 1990s and early 2000s and literally threatened to tear Los Angeles apart. The prospect of breaking off from Los Angeles to create a new Valley city tantalized thousands of homeowners and business people with the promise of a smaller, more responsive government with the capacity to control zoning and taxation. Many secessionists envisioned a return to the residential oriented pace of the San

³ Kevin Roderick, "The Big Breakup," *Los Angeles Times*, July 22, 2001. Pupuserias are establishments that sell pupusas, a popular Salvadoran dish. Mueblerias are furniture stores.

⁴ Los Angeles Times Staff, *The Changing Face of Suburbia: California's San Fernando Valley, A Series of Articles Reprinted from the Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Times, 1980); Kathy Dixon, Diane Foray, Jim Gilbert, Christina Simon, "Beyond Suburbia: The Changing Face of the San Fernando Valley," (MA Comprehensive Project, University of California, Los Angeles, 1993; and Joel Kotkin and Erika Ozuna, *The Changing Face of the San Fernando Valley* (Malibu, CA: Pepperdine University School of Public Policy and Economic Alliance of the San Fernando Valley: 2002).

Fernando Valley fifty years earlier that was built upon middle-class single-family homes. Valley independence meant that residents would finally get their “fair share” of municipal services and avoid funding, in their opinion, a leviathan and corrupt downtown government. For opponents of secession, a break from Los Angeles represented a dangerous, reactionary, and poorly researched gamble. Anti-secessionists outside of the Valley feared the loss of the region’s huge tax base; detractors within worried that independence would backfire and lead to even higher taxes required for new utilities and public services.

On both sides of the issue, race played an unmistakable role in the reasons for and implications of secession. The campaign secession at the end of the 20th century marked the latest iteration of ongoing debates over race, governance, and inequality that stretched back to the 1960s. Many anti-secessionists viewed cityhood - whose supporters once fought tirelessly to prevent school integration, protect homeowners at the expense of social welfare programs, and break up the Los Angeles Unified School District – as a smokescreen for the defense of White privilege. Supporters of an independent Valley pressed upon the public their color-blind agenda: that a smaller city government would benefit all residents of the new San Fernando Valley. However, the Valley’s communities of color were far more complex than either of these two narratives suggested.

In varying levels of engagement, previous studies have acknowledged how discourses of race saturated debates over secession.⁵ However, with the exception of Michael Andrew

⁵ Kim DeFronzo Haselhoff, “Motivations for the San Fernando Valley Secession Movement: The Political Dynamics of Secession,” *Journal of Urban Affairs* 24:4 (2002): 425-443; Michan Andrew Connor, “These Communities Have the Most to Gain from Valley Cityhood’: Color-Bind Rhetoric of Urban Secession in Los Angeles, 1996-2002,” *Journal of Urban History*, 40:1 (2013): 48-64; Jim Fraught, “Breaking Up Is Hard To Do: Explaining the 2002 San Fernando Valley Secession Vote,” *Journal of Urban Affairs* 28:4 (2006): 375-398; Tom Hogen-Esch and Martin Saiz, “An Anatomy of Defeat: Why the San Fernando Valley failed to Secede from Los Angeles,” *California Policy Issues* (November 2003): 39-66; Raphael J. Sonenshein and Tom Hogen-Esch, “Bringing the State (Government) Back In: Home Rule and the Politics of Secession in Los Angeles and New York City,” *Urban Affairs Review* 41:4 (March 2006): 467-491; Sonenshein, *The City at Stake*.

Connor's recent article on color-blind rhetoric, scholarly accounts of race and secession have focused exclusively upon the implicit and explicit racism of secessionists.⁶ This chapter intervenes into the literature through an examination of the circumstances that led to the fragmented views people of color, both within and beyond the San Fernando Valley, held regarding secession. The movement for Valley independence was articulated through the experiences and worldviews of middle-class to affluent, White homeowners and business owners. Despite their efforts, pro-secessionists' one-size-fits all arguments for secession did not account for the alternative histories of class formation, migration, and political empowerment that informed how Latinas/os, African Americans, and Asian Americans understood their place in the Valley and Los Angeles at large.

Previous San Fernando Valley Secession Attempts

Although the apex of secession aspirations occurred in 2002 when the matter finally came to a vote, various Valley residents held restive feelings about their relationship to Los Angeles, basically since annexation in 1915. In the 1920s some residents attempted to break away from Los Angeles to no avail. During World War II and the rapid suburbanization through the 1960s support for secession grew among residents who were "usually frustrated with the city's failure to adequately respond to matters of infrastructure development, quality of life, and adequacy of political representation," according to San Fernando Valley-based political scientists Tom Hogen-Esch and Martin Saiz.⁷ These concerns, particularly regarding infrastructure, resonated with residents of overwhelmingly White west Valley and racially mixed portions of

⁶ Connor, "These Communities Have the Most to Gain from Valley Cityhood."

⁷ Saiz and Hogen-Esch, "An Anatomy of Defeat," 49

the east Valley, yet calls for secession were most pronounced in the west. Although new council districts were added to the Valley in 1952 and 1956 to bolster Valley representation, residents and particularly the business community still chafed under downtown control.⁸ In December 1961, an organized movement for secession emerged from the West Valley Associated Chamber of Commerce, which led the Valleywide Better Government Committee. This committee only lasted for about one year and faded after the election of Sam Yorty.

In 1961, 1965 and 1969 city elections, White Valley voters enthusiastically supported conservative law-and-order Democrat Sam Yorty.⁹ A former congressman who resided in the affluent Studio City neighborhood of the San Fernando Valley, Yorty tapped into White middle-class voter frustration over the power of downtown power brokers.¹⁰ Once in office White Valley voters renewed their support for him as he deftly “positioned himself as the antiblack political spokesman in the city,” according to Raphael Sonenshein.¹¹ While Yorty did direct more attention to the Valley during his tenure in office, and another Valley council district was created in 1964, residents still felt shut out of city political power and representation. Meanwhile, White Valley voters felt increasingly alienated from the rest of Los Angeles following the 1965 Watts conflagration. Their anxieties about reckless disorder were further bolstered when racial

⁸ According to Raphael J. Sonenshein, “Until 1971, city council districts were reapportioned every four years on the basis of voter registration, not population. As a middle-class area with many homeowners, the Valley had high voter registration,” *Politics in Black and White: Race and Power in Los Angeles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 68.

⁹ Sonenshein, *Politics in Black and White*, 38, 74, 95. Sonenshein notes that “the high-turnout anti-Bradley vote coming from the San Fernando Valley reveals the critical role of conservative racial ideology in the 1969 election. The overwhelming vote for Yorty in the northwest San Fernando Valley Twelfth District helped turn the tide for the mayor,” 95. Despite the near lack of integration in beyond Pacoima, “Valley whites were enthusiastic, mobilized listeners to Yorty’s message” of race baiting against his opponent, the moderate Black councilman Tom Bradley, *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Sonenshein, *City at Stake*, 74.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

unrest struck the campus of San Fernando Valley State College in the 1968-1969 academic year. Afterwards, secession activism rapidly reemerged in the 1970s.¹² Not coincidentally, Valley antagonism towards the perceived failures of city government occurred as Tom Bradley, the city's first African American mayor, came into office in 1973 through the efforts of a liberal Westside Jewish and Black political alliance.

By 1975 the Valley's chambers of commerce once again rallied their troops as they groused against an unresponsive government and lack of voice in city governance. Their critiques grew sharper as Bradley's liberal coalition settled into the halls of power in downtown and throughout the city's various agencies and commissions. To stake their claim, business people established the Committee Investigating Valley Independent City/County (CIVICC) in 1975. However, a viable secession movement failed to coalesce due to CIVICC's aggressively pro-growth agenda that alienated several homeowners. Furthermore, frustrated with Valley posturing, city officials led by Mayor Bradley lobbied the state government to enact the Municipal Organization Act of 1977 that endowed city councils with the right to veto secession plans in the interest of an existing city.¹³ Despite those immediate obstacles, the supporters of secession still had plenty of political projects to captivate their hearts and minds.

The San Fernando Valley was rife with conservative political activism in the 1970s. Through fights against busing and high property taxes, the Valley became a microcosm for statewide politics where homegrown activists, according to Daniel Martinez HoSang, deployed the language of rights and freedom to maintain White racial dominance.¹⁴ Such movements,

¹² *Ibid.*, 147

¹³ Sonenshein and Hogen-Esch, "Bringing the State (Government) Back In," 475.

¹⁴ Daniel Martinez HoSang, "Genteel Apartheid," in *Racial Propositions: Ballot Initiatives and the Making of Postwar California* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010).

along with secession, brought business owners, homeowners, individuals critical of government power, and Whites weary of the effects of Civil Rights Movement and President Johnson's Great Society into the same political milieu. Bobbi Fiedler, who cut her political teeth railing against busing with Bustop, became an early proponent of secession, for example.¹⁵ Although Proposition 13 became law and busing was effectively vanquished, the flicker of secession never fully extinguished. The intertwined contexts of economic restructuring and demographic changes that reshaped the San Fernando Valley in the 1980s and 1990s helped fuel secessionists who wanted to maintain the middle-class, single-family home, and to some, racially homogenous character of the post-war San Fernando Valley.

Economic Change and the Politics of Immigration in the 1980s and 1990s

As the new millennium dawned, the San Fernando Valley looked less like a bedroom suburb than a sprawling, economically and ethnically fragmented city unto itself. The regional transition away from a manufacturing-based economy and its effects drove this transformation. Coupled with recessions and the closure of important centers of employment such as the Van Nuys General Motors plant and the Burbank Lockheed-Martin plant, the San Fernando Valley's class character became increasingly heterogeneous.¹⁶ Connor found that more than 60,000 jobs in the aerospace industry disappeared in the Valley and the overall rollback in employment led to poverty rates that grew the fastest in all of Los Angeles.¹⁷

¹⁵ However, Fiedler came out against Measure F due to the fiscal risks of the proposed plan. See "A Message from Retired Congresswoman Bobbi Fiedler," L.A. United, c. 2002 in Valley VOTE Collection Ephemera, Box VOTE-24, Folder "Vote No on F & H Flier, [2002]."

¹⁶ Connor, "These Communities Have the Most to Gain from Valley Cityhood," 54.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

As the city’s economy reoriented towards the service sector, flexible production, the use of “unskilled” labor, and the reliance upon an immigrant workforce, the city’s demographics rapidly changed as well. During the 1980s the racial landscape of the Valley became more diverse and clear patterns of segregation and animosity emerged. From the 1980s to the 1990s, the population of Latinos in the San Fernando Valley doubled to 385,000.¹⁸ Meanwhile, the overall population of Whites declined by about 4.5 percent.¹⁹ Whites became a minority in the east Valley, the home of the dying manufacturing base, yet neighborhoods in the West Valley and South Valley remained around 85% White.²⁰ The decline in Whites became even more pronounced in the 1990s (table 3).

Table 3: Population Change in the San Fernando Valley, 1990-2000

Race/Ethnicity	% of the 1990 Population	% of the 2000 Population
Whites	56	42
Latinos	32	42
Asians	8	12
Blacks	4	4
Total	100	100

Source: 1990 and 2000 US Census and Raphael J. Sonenshein and Tom Hogen-Esch, "Bringing the State (Government) Back In: Home Rule and the Politics of Secession in Los Angeles and New York City," *Urban Affairs Review* 41:4 (2006): 476. The numbers only account for portions of the San Fernando Valley within Los Angeles city limits (i.e., San Fernando and Burbank were excluded).

To an extent, these demographic changes reflected many of the transitions that took place in America’s suburban areas during the last decades of the 20th century.²¹ The decline in Whites in the San Fernando Valley represented two phenomena.²² Namely, a growing exodus of Whites

¹⁸ Rodolfo Acuña, *Anything But Mexican: Chicanos in Contemporary Los Angeles* (London: Verso, 1995) 139.

¹⁹ Connor, “These Communities Have the Most to Gain from Valley Cityhood,” 51.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Wendy Cheng, *The Changs Next Door to the Diazes: Remapping Race in Suburban California* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

²² Connor, “These Communities Have the Most to Gain from Valley Cityhood,” 51.

to newer suburban developments in the Santa Clarita and Antelope Valleys, north of Los Angeles, as well as the aging of the San Fernando Valley and its own decline as a primary destination for Whites. White migration to the northernmost reaches of Los Angeles County also took place in the aftermath of the 1992 Los Angeles Uprisings, which unleashed several days of looting and arson in South Los Angeles, Pico Union, and Koreatown. Meanwhile, as San Fernando Valley neighborhoods that were once completely White became integrated and as the historically racially mixed areas of the northeast Valley became almost entirely Latina/o, conditions arose to for increased Latina/o political participation.

Whereas it was a difficult task to elect a progressive Chicana/o in the tiny City of San Fernando, electing any person of color in the rest of the San Fernando Valley's council districts was almost seemed nearly impossible until the 1990s. For several generations, White politicians such as Everett Burkhalter, Louis Nowell, and Robert Ronka represented the historically mixed neighborhoods of Pacoima and Arleta in the 1st Los Angeles City Council District. Meanwhile, the fiscally conservative former big band saxophonist Ernani Bernardi represented the 7th District on the council that, by the 1980s, included large Latina/o populations in Sun Valley and Sylmar.²³ As the northeast Valley became increasingly brown, many Latina/o activists felt the needs of their immigrant and working class communities were not met. Despite efforts such as the Pacoima Revitalization Inc., a set of initiatives through Councilman Ronka's office designed to bolster commercial investment and homeownership, the community still felt underserved.

The moment for Latina/o political empowerment occurred when the US Department of Justice redrew the 7th District and Councilman Bernardi retired following a failed bid for the

²³ Prior to redistricting in 1986, working-class Whites who supported Proposition 13 comprised most of Bernardi's district, Richard Simon, "Ernani Bernardi: Council's Gadfly Relentlessly Pursues Lost Causes by Reform Measure Gives Him His Day in the Sun," *Los Angeles Times*, February 17, 1985.

mayor's office in 1993.²⁴ Grassroots organizing through, what political consultant Leo Briones calls the “comadre network” of women who often hailed from the same regions in Mexico, helped launch the career of Richard Alarcón.²⁵ A former aide in the Bradley administration, Alarcón was a homegrown son who had deep ties to the northeast Valley's historic Mexican American community as well as the Japanese American population.²⁶ A former teacher, Alarcón cultivated strong relationships with and electoral support from different non-profits and community-based organizations in the northeast Valley, as he campaigned against Lyle Hall, a member of the Firefighters Union.²⁷ Despite some reticence by leaders in the district's communities of color who had become accustomed to working through White politicians, Alarcón's on-the-ground campaign succeeded.

The early 1990s may have been a heady time for Latina/o activists who felt they finally broke the color line in the Valley's city council representation. However, for many Whites in the west Valley, these demographic tides were nothing to celebrate. Indeed, the same year that the northeast Valley elected Alarcón, residents of the rest of the Valley, which felt shut out of Tom Bradley's multiethnic coalition, ardently threw their support behind Republican businessman Richard Riordan's successful campaign for mayor.

For many long-time residents of the San Fernando Valley, adjusting the new “Mestizo Valley,” was a difficult task fraught with concerns over land use, the character of the Valley,

²⁴ Acuña, *Anything But Mexican*, 144.

²⁵ Quoted in Simone Wilson, “AD 39: Alarcon Is Trailing Bocanegra Because He's Lost Touch With ‘Comadre Network’ in Northeast Valley, Says Political Consultant,” *L.A. Weekly*, June 6, 2012. Comadre can refer to a godmother or a woman's close female friends.

²⁶ Alarcón often shared his experiences growing up in Pacoima where he took judo lessons at the San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center. See Richard Alarcón, letter to Members of the Planning and Land Use Management Committee, June 10, 2013, available through the L.A. City Clerk's Office at http://clkrep.lacity.org/onlinedocs/2012/12-1625_misc_a_6-11-13.pdf.

²⁷ Acuña, *Anything But Mexican*, 144.

and, at times, unalloyed racism. The rise of a large immigrant workforce, that was also fairly young, led to an increase in renting and apartment use, practices that were historically seen to lower property values when compared to homeownership.²⁸ In neighborhoods located in the central Valley's flatlands such as Van Nuys, North Hollywood, and Reseda, single-family home ownership dropped precipitously in the 1980s and 1990s just as the population of non-White immigrants grew.²⁹ Wealthier neighborhoods located in the west Valley and along the southern hillsides adjacent to Highway 101, however, retained a much of its single-family and racially homogenous character. There, homeowners, who were already overwhelmingly against any threats to the residential fabric of their neighborhoods, became critical of the effects of Latina/o immigration. Like homeowners in other parts of Southern California, they complained, for example, about the presence of day laborers who solicited employment on street corners.³⁰ The presence of these day laborers represented the shift to casual labor in Los Angeles's economy. Ironically, Latina and Latino workers in general often provided the labor to maintain the Valley's construction of homes and businesses, its manicured lawns, and other services. Other homeowners, still vigilant in their defense of low taxes, feared that undocumented immigrants drained public healthcare and educational services, an accusation launched across California in the 1990s.

Indeed, Valley residents pulled no punches when they discussed the rise in undocumented immigration and what they saw as the degeneration of the city. In 1993, just

²⁸ Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 242.

²⁹ Hogen-Esch and Saiz, "An Anatomy of Defeat," 52.

³⁰ For a study of day laborer rights in Redondo Beach, California see Victor Narro, "Impacting Next Wave Organizing: Creative Campaign Strategies of the Los Angeles Worker Centers," *New York Law School Law Review* 50 (2005-2006): 465-514.

before Republican Richard Riordan swept into the mayor's office after almost two decades of Bradley rule and in the immediate aftermath of the 1992 Uprisings, Richard Close, the president of the Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association, told the *Los Angeles Times*, "There is a perception that the Valley is being overrun by illegal immigrants who are causing most of the crime, who are causing most of the graffiti and who are causing the physical decline."³¹ In that same year protesters at Los Angeles Valley College in the Valley Village neighborhood greeted President Bill Clinton with placards that read "L.A. is a Third World Cesspool" and, more directly, "Deport Illegal Aliens Now."³² A year later, Guy McCreary, a member of the North Hollywood Chamber of Commerce bluntly told his fellow business moguls, "It is an invasion and very upsetting."³³

Taken together, the Valley's antipathy towards immigration and the perceived ills it wrought became almost legendary in its capacity to catalyze action. Owing to pressure from their constituents, Valley lawmakers in Washington, D.C. introduced draconian legislation that sought to overturn birthright citizenship for the children of undocumented immigrants and institute a national identity card, among other proposals.³⁴ When California voters went to the ballot boxes to consider Proposition 187, a harsh bundle of laws that would bar undocumented immigrants from social services in 1994, they resoundingly supported the measure.³⁵ Valley

³¹ Alan C. Miller, "Outcry Against Immigration Is Loud in Valley," *Los Angeles Times*, August 1, 1993.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Quoted in Sam Enriquez, "Proposition 187 Valley Business Groups Back Measure," *Los Angeles Times*, September 17, 1994, 3.

³⁴ Miller, "Outcry"

³⁵ On the background and effects of Proposition 187 see: Daniel Martinez HoSang, "'They Keep Coming! The Tangled Roots of Proposition 187,'" in *Racial Propositions*; Sasha Khokha Cervantes and Bobbie Murray, "Hate Unleashed: Los Angeles in the Aftermath of Proposition 187," *Chicano-Latino Law Review* 1 (1995): 1-23. The so-called "Save Our State Initiative" was eventually ruled unconstitutional.

residents, especially those in the conservative west Valley, were no exception and assorted anti-immigrant advocates pointed to the region's rise in poverty and crime as reasons to take a tough stance on undocumented immigrants.³⁶ Although policy analysts point to the closure of Lockheed and General Motors between 1989 and 1993 as the main engine of the Valley's perceived decline, Latina/o immigrants became popular scapegoats for homeowners, business leaders, and everyday voters.³⁷ After the Proposition 187 battle, activists further pushed redistricting for the Los Angeles Unified School Districting, which critics charged would create a segregated, poor, and Latino sector in the north Valley.³⁸ In his account of Chicanas/os in contemporary Los Angeles, published in the midst of these changes, Cal State Northridge professor Rodolfo Acuña soberly summarized these trends. To him, the San Fernando Valley was nothing less than "the citadel of L.A. nativism and anti-immigrant hysteria."³⁹ Within this politically charged atmosphere, the secession movement gathered momentum.

On the Road to Independence?

Even after the election of Richard Riordan in 1993, as Raphael Sonenshein and Tom Hogen-Esch noted, the Valley's "most active residents [still] chafed under what they saw as

³⁶ On Valley voting patterns see William A.V. Clark, *The California Cauldron: Immigration and the Fortunes of Local Communities* (New York: Guilford Press, 1998), 176.

³⁷ Tara M. Lennon, "Proposition 187: A Case Study of Race, Nationalism, and Democratic Ideals," *Review of Policy Research*, 15:2-3 (June 1998), 85 [80-100]. Notably, the business community, which relied upon a flexible labor pool and balked at the potential for further government oversight, was cool to the proposition. Although the San Fernando Valley's federation of 21 chambers of commerce eventually voted in support of the Proposition, it did not garner unanimous support. James Stewart of the Mid-San Fernando Valley Chamber of Commerce voted against the proposition. As he explained, "We know we have an illegal immigration problem. But the solution is to do a better job at the border. This doesn't do anything besides create more bureaucracy," quoted in Enriquez, "Proposition 187."

³⁸ Kristina Sauerwein, "Study Finds Little Ethnic, Economic Gap in Schools Split," *Los Angeles Times*, April 6, 2000; Acuña, *Anything But Mexican*, 139.

³⁹ Acuña, *Anything But Mexican*, 139.

continued restrictions placed on them by city hall.”⁴⁰ That feeling collided with the emphatic, yet erroneous, belief that the San Fernando Valley did not receive their “fair share” of government services in exchange for their taxes, reactions against spatial and demographic changes, and the persistent belief that the Valley simply was not (nor should it become) like the rest of Los Angeles. Out of this confluence, real estate broker Jeff Brain along with Sherman Oaks Home Owners Association president Richard Close established a new vehicle for secession in 1996: the Valley Voters Organized Towards Empowerment (Valley VOTE). The founding of Valley VOTE by representatives of the business community and homeowners was no coincidence. The organization’s leaders projected a vision of an independent city that could control zoning to effectively “protect single-family areas and to attract revenue-generating, high-end retail and white-collar firms that cater to the middle class,” according to one policy analysis.⁴¹

The new movement learned from past failures and attempted to cultivate friendships and alliances with powerful individuals beyond the immediate Valley business and homeowners community. To be sure Valley VOTE garnered the support of powerful lobbying groups that represented those interests but they also looked to Sacramento to instigate secession from above. In 1996 Republican State Assemblywoman Paula Boland, a former realtor who represented the west Valley neighborhood of Granada Hills, introduced a bill that would specifically allow only residents of the Valley to vote on secession. Her bill would have left the Municipal Reorganization Act of 1977 intact throughout the state *except* for the San Fernando Valley. While this measure failed, the state legislature passed a compromise measure in 2000 known as the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act. This law sought to

⁴⁰ Sonenshein and Hogen-Esch, “Bringing the State (Government) Back In,” 476

⁴¹ Hogen-Esch and Saiz, “An Anatomy of Defeat,” 52.

reconcile the state's existing laws that gave city councils the power to quash secession with Boland's audacious secession bill that gave overwhelming power to Valley voters alone. According to the new law, if secessionists could gather the signatures of 25 percent of the registered voters of the proposed secession area in support of a secession financial study, the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) of Los Angeles County would proceed with an investigation of "revenue neutrality" under proposed separation. If the study found that separation would not cause a fiscal impact to both the original city and the proposed new city, a secession initiative would appear on the ballot.

Valley VOTE found support in the scores of San Fernando Valley chambers of commerce and homeowners associations, including those in the east Valley. However, perhaps the most influential supporter of secession, which had the power to keep anti-city sentiment pulsating throughout the San Fernando Valley, was the *Los Angeles Daily News*. A politically moderate periodical, the *Daily News* grew out of the long running *Van Nuys News and Valley Green Sheet*, and was a popular rival to the *Los Angeles Times* for San Fernando Valley readers. In addition to its parent company's financial donations to the secession movement, the paper published regular articles and op-eds on the leviathan of Los Angeles government, ineffective city resources, and crumbling infrastructure, among other topics.⁴² Valley VOTE found such a trove of evidence in support of their cause that in the early 2000s the organization regularly blasted out e-mail digests to its supporters that included *Daily News* articles. The e-mails began innocuously enough with the suggestion that "We thought you would find the [*sic*] this story in the *Daily News* [date of article] interesting."⁴³ What followed were stories of city incompetence

⁴² Sonenshein, *City at Stake*, 80.

⁴³ Valley VOTE E-mail Communication, February 10, 2000 in Yvonne Braithwaite-Burke Papers, Collection 218, Box S195, Folder 32 "Valley VOTE," USC Libraries. Valley VOTE also included *Los Angeles*

with titles such as “L.A. Management Rated Lowest of State’s Cities;” lackluster economic performance, “Cities Revel in Windfalls [except Los Angeles]”; and, in contrast, the valiant quest for Valley cityhood, “Not a Hobby,” a riposte to Councilwoman Ruth Galanter’s suggestion that secession was the brainchild of perennial losing candidates.⁴⁴

From its inception secession movements have had their fair share of detractors and the push for Valley cityhood in the 1990s was no different. Mayor Richard Riordan, once the darling of west Valley voters, fought to preserve the integrity of the city, so much so that he personally helped fund a special charter commission to placate secessionist anger. That charter commission, which was elected by voters, along with another commission appointed by the City Council overcame their disputes to present a proposal that contained “participatory mechanisms” for Los Angeles citizens.⁴⁵ These included area planning commissions and neighborhood councils, apparatuses that promised to make government more responsive to local needs.⁴⁶ Although voters approved the new charter in 1999 and assuaged some ambivalent Valley residents, it did little to please hard-core secessionists. Mayor James Hahn, who received a great deal of support from west Valley voters during his 2001 campaign against former Assembly Speaker Antonio Villaraigosa, quickly found himself in the position of leading the charge against secession. Hahn, colorfully castigated as a modern day King George III by Valley secessionists, led a coalition of organized labor, downtown business interests, and other local politicians to

Times articles it thought lent credence to the secession movement. However, the *Los Angeles Times* did not support secession nor charter reform, Sonenshein, *The City at Stake*, 133.

⁴⁴ “L.A. Management Rated Lowest of State’s Cities,” *Daily News*, January 31, 2000; “Cities Revel in Windfalls,” *Daily News*, February 10, 2000; “Not a Hobby,” *Daily News*, February 11, 2000; all found in the Yvonne Braithwaite-Burke Papers, Collection 218, Box S195, Folder “Valley VOTE,” USC Libraries.

⁴⁵ Sonenshein and Hogen-Esch, “Bringing the State (Government) Back In,” 478.

⁴⁶ On charter change more generally see Sonenshein, *The City at Stake*, 95-214.

preserve the city.⁴⁷ Ethnic communities were also a part of this coalition, but their participation represented a complex set of circumstances with which the larger secession movement could not grapple.

The Case for Secession

As Valley VOTE gathered support among homeowners, business people, and other libertarian-minded organizations around the time of the passage of the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act in 2000, it sought to distance itself from previous secession activism. As Sonenshein points out in his study of reform in Los Angeles, “Secessionists began to draw on a set of ideas about the proper size of local government to generate an intellectual rationale for a municipal breakup.”⁴⁸ Whereas the grist of the secession mill was comprised of complaints about trashcans in the 1960s or busing in the 1970s, Valley VOTE enlisted economists and policy analysts to give their arguments intellectual authority. Secession advocates carefully couched their arguments in economic terms that only addressed race and racial disparities with generalizations.

Valley VOTE’s principles were woven together by a larger critique of government ineffectiveness due in part to the sheer size of Los Angeles. As the nation’s second largest city with 3.6 million residents in 2000, secessionists argued that the city was just too large and unwieldy to cater to its residents in the San Fernando Valley. The Yes on F campaign circulated maps that fit the cities of “Boston, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, Minneapolis, Milwaukee, Cleveland, St. Louis, and Manhattan inside of Los Angeles.” The text emphasized that there

⁴⁷ “The Declaration of Independence of the People of the San Fernando Valley.”

⁴⁸ Sonenshein, *The City at Stake*, 80.

would “*still [be] room to spare*” (emphasis in original).⁴⁹ Because of the sheer physical size of Los Angeles, secessionists argued that the San Fernando Valley did not receive an equitable return on its taxes and that the city government marginalized the interests of Valley residents and business owners.

Secession advocates feverishly played upon the view that Valley residents simply did not receive their fair share of the proverbial pie. Whereas the huge Valley, home to 1.6 million people in 2000, paid massive amounts of taxes its residents received little more than unfilled potholes, poor police protection, poverty, and crime. Despite the popularity of blaming an unresponsive and greedy City Hall, Valley VOTE quietly deemphasized actual numbers in 1998 when its intellectual doyen, CSUN economist Shirley Svorny, found that the Valley contributed approximately 31.5 percent of city taxes and in turned received 29.8 percent of the city’s services.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, secession advocates played to *perceptions* that a huge, bumbling city government used Valley taxes to dole out largesse to programs in the rest of the city. This critique reflected earlier complaints that suburban taxes funded social and economic programs designed to alleviate inequality for urban communities of color.⁵¹ Such concerns contributed to the argument for the wildly popular statewide Proposition 13 in 1978. Supporters of Proposition 13 were homeowners who “had arrived in the great wave of optimism” of California in the 1950s

⁴⁹ “A Vote for Valley Cityhood Is A Vote For:” Vote Yes on F/San Fernando Valley Independence Committee, n.d. c. 2001-2002 in Valley VOTE Collection Administrative File Folders, Box VOTE 15, Folder “A Vote For Valley Cityhood Is A Vote For:” CSUN Urban Archives.

⁵⁰ Connor, ““These Communities Have the Most to Gain from Valley Cityhood.”” 58.

⁵¹ Philip Ethnigton, “Segregated Diversity: Race-Ethnicity, Space, and Political Fragmentation in Los Angeles County, 1940-1994,” A Final Report to the John Randolph Haynes and Dora Haynes Foundation, 2000, http://www-bcf.usc.edu/~philipje/Segregation/Haynes_Reports/FINAL_REPORT_20000719g.pdf [cited with permission of the author].

and 1960s only to see their property values skyrocket.⁵² Even after the passage of Proposition 13, such feelings lingered to the end of the twentieth century for many residents of the Valley. Of course, it could be argued that Proposition 13 created the conditions that secessionists fought against, such as a lack of government services and the rise of commercial development, a favored source of sales-tax revenue.⁵³ Nevertheless, secessionists sought total control of the municipal purse strings to ensure taxes were used to protect a specific middle-class vision of the San Fernando Valley.

Secession advocates repeatedly emphasized that a smaller San Fernando Valley city government would be best equipped to meet the needs of the population efficiently (although the new municipal entity would not become a quaint small town, but the nation's sixth largest city). In a new Valley city, according to Valley VOTE's literature, residents "will see their hard-earned dollars spent on the kinds of projects *they* prefer and will have a greater assurance that interests groups will not usurp local government for their own benefit" (emphasis added).⁵⁴ Those "projects" likely referred to infrastructure and land-use policies designed to promote single-family homes and businesses free of burdensome regulation. Meanwhile, the San Fernando Valley Independence Committee ran a campaign that promised the new city would enact the "elimination of the transfer tax [which] will save homeowners and property owners \$30 million a

⁵² Peter Schrag, *Paradise Lost: California's Experiences, America's Future* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004), 142.

⁵³ Brian P. Janiskee and Ken Masugi, *Democracy in California: Politics and Government in the Golden State* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2011), 107.

⁵⁴ Valley VOTE, "Questions & Answers Concerning Valley Cityhood," (Sherman Oaks, CA: Valley VOTE, n.d.) in Valley VOTE Collection Administrative File Folders, Box 8 Folder "Frequently Asked Questions."

year.”⁵⁵ Although these arguments roused the secession movement’s base and attracted some new supporters, they faced great criticism from other constituencies in the San Fernando Valley.

Race, Inequality, and Power in the Secession Movement

Because of the secession movement’s contentious roots, along with the racial diversity and concomitant and unequal distribution of power that existed in the San Fernando Valley, race dominated debates over secession, often to the chagrin and detriment of cityhood advocates. Observers quickly noted that some of the earliest secession supporters such as Paula Boland and Bobbi Fiedler were important figures in the fights against busing and high property taxes, two issues that conjoined arguments about local control with racist anxieties. Valley VOTE co-chair Richard Close was a member of both the Bustop Movement and the campaign for Proposition 13 in addition to his leadership role in the Sherman Oaks Home Owners Association. In the 1990s Close entered the immigration fray, as mentioned earlier, when he spoke about the perceived decline of the San Fernando Valley at the hands of a tide of undocumented immigrants. These inescapable truths shaped Valley VOTE in its early years because they needed to win support from Latinas/os, the fastest growing population in the Valley. As early as 1996 Rodolfo Acuña perceptively observed Valley VOTE’s past and warned the Spanish-speaking readers of *La Opinión* that the secession movement was just one more example of a struggle to maintain White privilege.⁵⁶ Valley VOTE was aware of, but could never fully jettison, its controversial racial past.

⁵⁵ “San Fernando Valley Independence: Good for the Valley, Good for Los Angeles!” Brochure, San Fernando Valley Independence Committee, n.d., c. 2002 in Valley VOTE Collection Ephemera, Box VOTE 24, Folder “Brochure: Building a Better Community.”

⁵⁶ Rodolfo Acuña, “El Valle de San Fernando Raices de un Movimiento Secesionista,” *La Opinión*, Agosto 4, 1996, 1C.

Valley VOTE leaders attempted to persuade voters that their movement, despite some skeletons in the closet, was ultimately free of the racism or racial undertones that characterized previous homeowner revolts. Scholars have disagreed over the extent to which racial discourses during the secession campaign continued or diverged from narratives of race and space that animated White middle-class homeowner activism from the 1960s to the 1970s. Hogen-Esch and Saiz argued that the secessionists failed to tap into the large middle-class population of Latina/o homeowners and relied upon “a campaign playbook more appropriate for the demographics of the 1970s than the reality of the Valley’s diversity in 2002.”⁵⁷ They posit that had Valley VOTE and other secessionists promoted a vision of “multicultural suburbia,” secession gained much greater traction. In his later study, Connor argues that Valley VOTE, cognizant of its own genealogy and the realities of demographics, *did* attempt to promote an inclusive version of suburbia. However, this strategy derived less from an egalitarian view of the San Fernando Valley than from the need to deploy color-blind rhetoric that masked the maintenance of White privilege in the economic sphere.

Valley VOTE’s color-blind agenda rested upon assumptions about geography and population statistics rather than an analysis of power. Its leaders claimed that their proposal for an independent city that included the poor and overwhelmingly Latino northeast Valley automatically meant their motives were devoid of racism. Valley VOTE also tried to persuade African Americans and particularly Latinas/os to join their movement as they suggested a smaller government could better attend to underserved neighborhoods such as Pacoima.⁵⁸ On face value, these arguments were persuasive.

⁵⁷ Hogen-Esch and Saiz, “An Anatomy of Defeat,” 53.

⁵⁸ “Questions & Answers” Flyer.

The notion that communities of color would reject secession was not necessarily a foregone conclusion. Valley Latinas/os, who by some estimates reached numerical parity with Whites by 2000, were economically diverse and often their interests were presumably in line with secession arguments. By the end of the twentieth century, middle-class and wealthy Latinas/os exerted their consumer power through homeownership. In 2000, for example, the top ten surnames for homebuyers in Los Angeles County included Garcia, Rodriguez, Hernandez, Lopez, Gonzalez, Martinez, and Perez. Meanwhile, at the end of the twentieth century, modest Valley houses in the \$200,000 and \$300,000 price range offered the promise of homeownership in a very competitive market.⁵⁹ Middle-class Latinas/os availed themselves of these opportunities and made residential inroads in neighborhoods such as Valley Village, Valley Glen, and even Woodland Hills in the west Valley. Meanwhile, Arleta, a neighborhood that broke away from Pacoima around 1960, had a population that was nearly 85 percent Latina/o and other communities of color, yet had a poverty rate beneath the regional median.⁶⁰ Therefore, the message of a smaller government that could provide better resources to families and homeowners resonated with the Latina/o middle-class in the Valley. Although the Latinas/os concentrated in the northeast Valley neighborhoods in and around Pacoima represented the opposite end of the economic spectrum, they too were amenable to the possibilities of secession.

Due to various economic circumstances, northeast Valley voters could have been some of the most vociferous supporters of an independent Valley city. The closure of manufacturing plants hit most of the Valley hard, but devastated the northeast Valley, which spiraled into poverty and deterioration. By the end of the twentieth century, Pacoima had the highest

⁵⁹ Kotkin and Ozuna, *The Changing Face of the San Fernando Valley*, 17, 16.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 14. On the break-up between Arleta and Pacoima see George Garrigues, "Pacoima Striving to Erase Racial Feeling," *Los Angeles Times*, February 13, 1966, SF A1.

unemployment rate in the San Fernando Valley at 9.6 percent to 9.9 percent, whereas the unemployment rate for the entire Valley hovered around 5.6 percent.⁶¹ More startlingly, upwards of 30 percent of Pacoimans fell under the poverty line, while the poverty rate for the entire county was only 22.1 percent. Meanwhile, residents of Pacoima faced a dire housing shortage and over-crowding in what residences were available. Renters fared poorly as well, because apartments in and around Pacoima had the highest number of safety violations in Los Angeles. Poor healthcare compounded the residential situation in the northeast Valley, which included a lack of resources for poor and indigent residents. Medical specialists were also elusive in this area of the Valley which meant low-income individuals and families had to make the trek, often on public transportation, to the Los Angeles County Hospital in East Los Angeles. Lastly, Pacoima residents faced a crumbling infrastructure that included unpaved roads and little protections against flooding during rainstorms.⁶²

To many community organizers, the city government treated the northeast Valley as nothing more than “forgotten stepchild.” Non-profit organizations in the northeast Valley (and other working-class islands such as Canoga Park in the west Valley) lamented that government funding for community economic development, social services, and infrastructure bypassed their neighborhoods. Terri-Lei Robertson, who directed the Habitat for Humanity in the northeast Valley told the *Los Angeles Times* that “In some ways, it’s worse than Watts. It is definitely where the housing need is the greatest.”⁶³ Rumors abounded that the Los Angeles City Council refused to fund projects in the northeast Valley to punish Councilmember Bernardi, a longtime

⁶¹ Patrick McGreevy and Hillary E. MacGregor, “Lack of Decent Homes Plagues a Corner of Suburbia,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 27, 2000.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

foe of redevelopment in the city. Or, perhaps because so much of political discourse focused upon disgruntled middle-class and affluent suburbanites, low-income and underserved neighborhoods in the Valley appeared to be oxymoronic. In any case, these examples of neglect informed how northeast Valley residents thought about their relationship with the city.

These economic and infrastructural inequalities were on the minds of northeast Valley residents in 1998 when they were approached to sign the Valley VOTE petition for Valley secession study.⁶⁴ In sum, Valley VOTE collected over 201,000 signatures (well over the required 132,000) and the neighborhoods with the largest percentage of signatures indicated the frustration that northeast Valley residents had with the lack of attention they received. 40.88 percent of the petition signatures came from the northeast Valley and the top three communities to express support for the study were Pacoima (54.04 percent of registered voters), Sylmar (50.22 percent), and Sunland (48.74 percent).⁶⁵

Although three northeast Valley neighborhoods that included large immigrant and working-class neighborhoods topped the petition with the largest proportions of signatures, this fact alone did not suggest that those communities would fully support secession. Issues of class and power, that reflected earlier patterns of migration, complicated how Latinas/os, African Americans, and even Asian Americans expressed support or opposition to secession. These interrelated circumstances animated public debates, closed-door forums, and everyday discussion as communities of color asked themselves if they would be better off in Los Angeles or in

⁶⁴ Valley VOTE paid workers to gather signatures.

⁶⁵ “San Fernando Valley Petition Drive Summary: Break Down of who Signed the Petition,” n.d. c. 1998 in Valley VOTE Collection – Administrative File Folders, Box 8, Folder “Petition Drive – LAFCO Study? Backgrnd Info, Stats,” CSUN Urban Archives.

“Camelot,” one of the best known, and often mocked, proposed names for the new San Fernando Valley city.⁶⁶

Secession’s Face of Diversity

Admittedly, secession did attract supporters of color whose investment in Valley cityhood rested on the perceived economic benefits of secession. Although Valley cityhood’s base remained White, affluent homeowners, various organizations and individuals in African American, Latina/o, and Asian American communities did believe that a smaller San Fernando Valley city government could meet their needs. Reflective of the larger independence movement itself, these secessionists tended to represent homeowners and the business communities. The chambers of commerce and residential associations of immigrant-rich neighborhoods such as Arleta, Pacoima, Panorama City supported the studying secession early on.⁶⁷ The San Fernando Valley Filipino American and Korean American chambers of commerce also supported secession.⁶⁸ Their endorsement reflected the bifurcated pattern of post-1965 Asian immigration that included large numbers of professional immigrants armed with capital and social networks in the United States in addition to working-class migrants and refugees.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Karima Hayes, “Camelot for Valley City Name? Surely, You Joust,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 4, 2002, B3. Other proposed names included: Rancho San Fernando, Mission Valley, and Valley City.

⁶⁷ See Valley VOTE petition letter, n.d., in Valley VOTE Collection Administrative File Folders, Box VOTE 8, Folder “Petition Drive – LAFCO Study? Backgrnd [sic] info, Stats.”

⁶⁸ “It’s Time to Take Back Our Communities and Take Back Our Schools,” Yes on F Campaign Flyer, San Fernando Valley Independence Committee, n.d., c. 2002 in Valley VOTE Collection Ephemera, Box VOTE 24, Folder “It’s Time to Take Back Our Communities and Take Back Our Schools.”

⁶⁹ See Paul M. Ong, Edna Bonacich, and Lucie Cheng, eds., *The New Asian Immigration in Los Angeles and Global Restructuring* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994) and Edward J.W. Park and John S.W. Park, eds., *AAPI Nexus: Policy, Practice, and Community* [Special Issue on Immigration] 10:1 (2012).

Meanwhile, individual business and political leaders in ethnic communities spoke out for secession. Frank Moran, the past president of the Latin Business Association and Mel Alfarero, a Filipino immigrant and Republican Party activist, for example, added diversity to the public figures who supported secession.⁷⁰ Alfarero sat on the board of Valley VOTE and as early as March 1998, as the organization gathered signatures for their petition, cautioned Jeff Brain, “Participation of Ethnics [*sic*] in the Cityhood movement is important, especially [because] they may become the majority in the future.” He directly noted that “The organization[’s] credibility rest[s] in getting the participation of all people to be included in this democratic process.”⁷¹ Indeed, credibility among ethnic communities was a key concern for Valley VOTE and, for African Americans, a local son was an important source of legitimacy for the secession movement.

Perhaps the most prominent public figures in the northeast Valley to invite African Americans and others in the northeast Valley to consider, if not completely support secession was the Rev. Zedar Broadous. Rev. Broadous’s civil rights and community pedigree were almost unrivalled. As the son of pioneering Pacoima civil rights and religious leaders Rev. Hillery T. and Mother Rosa Broadous, he took on the mantle of the ministry as well as leadership of the San Fernando Valley NAACP. The ambit of his civil rights work extended beyond the Valley through his place on Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission. Rev. Broadous also worked in graphics and published the *San Fernando Valley African American Chronicle*, a community newspaper that covered civil rights and educational issues at a national and local scale. Further, perhaps reflective of Rev. Broadous’ role as chair of the Black Chamber of

⁷⁰ “Valley Cityhood: Yes on F” Flyer, n.d., c. 2002 in Valley VOTE Collection Administrative File Folders, Box VOTE 12, Folder IL.

⁷¹ Mel Alfarero Letter to Jeff Brain, March 30, 1998, in Valley VOTE Collection Administrative File Folders, Box VOTE 8, Folder “National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials NALEO.”

Commerce of the San Fernando Valley, the *Chronicle* also dedicated a great deal of space to the promotion of local Black businesses and resources for their owners. Despite their small population, African Americans cultivated an economic base of small businesses in the northeast Valley. Given his background in both civil rights and the commercial sector, and reflective of the larger legacy of middle-class Black activism in Pacoima, Rev. Broadous joined Valley VOTE as an observer in 2000 and announced his support secession as a strategy to refocus resources on the northeast Valley in 2002. As he lent his gravitas to the secession cause he noted “We in the Valley will have better access to our government, more representative government and control over our own resources.”⁷² However, this message never gained enough momentum among the Valley’s communities of color, not only because of the suspicion of Valley VOTE’s past, but also because of secessionists’ misunderstanding of Latina/o, African American, and to an extent, Asian American politics and histories in the San Fernando Valley.

Racial Critiques of the Secession Movement

Residents of the northeast Valley, the Valley’s central flatlands, the wealthy hillsides and West Valley agreed that the Los Angeles government did not meet their respective, and admittedly disparate, needs. Yet, the promises Valley VOTE made could do little to assuage enduring concerns over racism and the secession movement’s troubled history with race and immigration. Latina/o leaders and everyday denizens realized very quickly that, according to Connor, “secession required [them] to decide that their interests would be best served by leaving Los Angeles and joining a city politically dominated by people who, by most lights, feared and

⁷² Patrick McGreevy, “NAACP Valley Chapter Leader Backs Secession,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 18, 2002.

resented their presence.”⁷³ In 1998, just after the secession study petition closed, Xavier Flores an organizer with the social services agency Pueblo y Salud as well as the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA) encapsulated this dilemma: “We have never opposed secession . . . We are just leery about seceding when we see who is leading the march.”⁷⁴ If those at the front of the march better attuned their arguments the calculus of racial politics, which often reached beyond the geographical and imagined Valley boundaries, perhaps secession could have become a robust, multiethnic movement.

Early on, social services agencies, other non-profits, and civil rights organizations closely monitored the arguments secessionists presented, particularly the potential for funding from a smaller and more streamlined government. In the spring of 1998, the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials, Pueblo Y Salud, and MAPA sponsored a forum in Pacoima on Latina/o community politics.⁷⁵ Although the program, entitled “Nuestra Comunidad [Our Community]- A Campaign for Civic Action,” featured panels on voter registration, the campaign for the local State Senate seat (eventually won by Alarcón), bilingual education, and other topics, the secession discussion was certainly one of the most lively. The meeting took place as Valley VOTE began to circulate petitions to push LAFCO to execute a secession impact study, and its representatives came out swinging. Valley VOTE representative Jeff Brain attempted to strike a populist tone at the Pacoima meeting as he suggested that the northeast Valley was ripe for secession. “And I know why,” he told the gathering, “because I have been in

⁷³ Connor, ““These Communities Have the Most to Gain from Valley Cityhood,”” 56.

⁷⁴ Miguel Bustillo, “Latino Activists Planning Summit on Secession,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 3, 1998.

⁷⁵ “Nuestra Comunidad- A Campaign for Civil Action” program, April 18, 1998, in Valley VOTE Collection Administrative File Folders, Box VOTE 8, Folder “National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials NALEO.”

these neighborhoods and [you all] don't get bus service and you don't get streets cleaned and you don't have street lights fixed. You have the most to gain."⁷⁶ Valley VOTE promotional literature, that was translated into Spanish, reiterated that point as well.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, the Latina/o audience members likely did not need Brain to tell them about the state of their infrastructure, let alone observations based on his visits. Flores pushed Brain to explain why Latinas/os should entrust their future to a movement whose last *raison d'être* was breaking up the Los Angeles Unified School District. That move was widely perceived as a step in creating two, racially and economically segregated districts. Brain brushed aside the criticism and refused to address Valley VOTE's racial past. Rather, he emphasized that the numerical strength of Latinas/os in the Valley meant that racism was not a factor in the secession movement. His claim ignored history and how power was unequally distributed across racial and class lines. With questions about Latinas/os in the future Valley city unanswered, community members convened another forum once the petition triggered a secession study

In December 1998, Latina/o organizations including the Latin American Civic Association, the MAPA, Pueblo Y Salud, along with a local various units at CSUN sponsored an invitation-only forum at San Fernando High School to discuss the implications of secession on their communities.⁷⁸ At this early stage these Latina/o organizations, joined together as the San

⁷⁶ Quoted in Megan Garvey, "Issue of Racial Motivation Raised in Secession Forum," *Los Angeles Times*, April 19, 1998.

⁷⁷ Valley VOTE, "Frecuente Preguntas Sobre El Valle 'Cityhood,'" information handout, n.d., in Valley VOTE Collection Administrative File Folders, Box VOTE 9, Folder "Valley VOTE Spanish Language." This "frequently asked questions" document contained two questions related to race: "Will an independent Valley city be ethnically diverse?" and "How will Valley cityhood benefit disadvantaged communities." Valley VOTE assured voters that the new city would remain numerically diverse and that a smaller government would serve "disadvantaged communities [who] are the first to lose their voice and influence" when "a city grows larger." As in public discussions, Valley VOTE leaders did not put forth specific policies nor did they acknowledge that numerical diversity did not equate to equitable political distribution.

⁷⁸ Xavier Flores Letter, November 5, 1998 in Valley VOTE Collection Administrative File Folders, Box VOTE 8, Folder "National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials." CSUN sponsors included the

Fernando Valley Consortium on Valley Secession, remained neutral on secession but did want answers to gnawing questions about the motivations and projected outcomes of Valley independence. Co-organizer Irene Tovar, a longtime community organizer with deep roots in the east Valley, stated before the meeting “This is uncomfortable for some people to address, but there are racial implications to secession.” She addressed the proverbial elephant in the room as she bluntly asked “Will this benefit one group over another?”⁷⁹ The other co-organizer, the skeptical Manuel Flores, from Pueblo y Salud, pointed to some secessionists’ desire to carve the Valley away from the troubled Los Angeles Unified School District and questioned the timing of these movements “right after Latinos had some political success” with recent gains on the Los Angeles City Council and California Legislature.⁸⁰

For their part, Valley VOTE, which did not receive an invitation to participate in the forum, did little to garner favor among the summit’s participants when Jeff Brain claimed the organizers “don’t speak for the people on this” and “get their money from people on the other side of the hill,” thus playing to ongoing complaints that downtown unfairly controlled politics in the Valley.⁸¹ The day his remarks appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, Ellen Michiel, who headed the West Valley Community Development Corporation, faxed Brain a scathing letter. Michiel, whose organization served the low-income residents of Canoga Park and elsewhere, represented the social services sector that tired of government bureaucracy and expressed initial interest in secession. However, she chided Brain for his comments and reminded him that

College of Social and Behavior Sciences, the College of Humanities, the Chicana/o Studies Department and the Center for Southern California Studies.

⁷⁹ Miguel Bustillo, “Latino Activists Planning Summit on Secession,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 3, 1998.

⁸⁰ Quoted in Bustillo, “Latino Activists.”

⁸¹ Miguel Bustillo, “Secession’s Impact on Latinos Probed,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 3, 1998.

Flores, Tovar, and the other speakers “are the most respected leader of the Latino community in the San Fernando Valley.” Moreover, she emphasized that “you cannot control who talks about [secession] or in what forums. What this should make clear is the absolute necessity for outreach and inclusion of the Valley’s minority communities and leadership as this movement goes forward.”⁸²

Michiel’s letter compelled Brain to take a more conciliatory tone. The following day he contacted Xavier Flores and lamented the “regrettable” situation wherein “some segments of the media are determined to portray divisions between us.” He suggested that Valley VOTE and Latina/o organizations hold “a joint press conference or letter in which we support each others [*sic*] right to explore [secession] and [explain] there is not division among us” He reassured Flores that Valley VOTE “religiously welcomed you, Irene and others to participate in the discussions” on secession and that his organization “is a diverse coalition of community groups including many from the North East Valley.” Without presenting any specific details, he again emphasized that “the North East Valley and its residents would benefit the most from local empowerment that might result if Cityhood occurred.”⁸³ While Brain was correct that some people of color did support his efforts, his outreach to Flores still neglected the asymmetrical distribution of power among recent supporters of secession and its longtime backers whose advocacy was seen as exclusionary and xenophobic.

In January 1999, the San Fernando Valley NAACP held a forum of its own to tackle secession. As Connor points out, the interactions there were emblematic of Valley VOTE’s race

⁸² Ellen Michiel letter to Jeff Brain, December 3, 1998 in Valley VOTE Collection Administrative File Folders, Box VOTE 8, Folder “National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials NALEO.”

⁸³ Jeff Brain letter to Xavier Flores, December 4, 1998 in Valley VOTE Collection Administrative File Folders, Box VOTE 8, Folder “National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials NALEO,” CSUN Urban Archives.

problems. At the meeting, then-USC doctoral student Tom Hogen-Esch “emphasized the historical likelihood that affluent homeowners in the southern and eastern Valley would use increased control over land use to exclude ‘undesirables’ by, for example, limiting apartments or restricting low-cost housing.”⁸⁴ However, Jeff Brain returned to a bellicose posture as he decried critiques of secession as “inflammatory” and claimed that he was unjustly target as a racist.⁸⁵ Connor suggests that after this series of debacles Valley VOTE pivoted toward “aggressively emphasiz[ing] local control, small government, and community empowerment as means by which all Valley residents might demand and receive greater recognition and service from local government in a new city.”⁸⁶ This change in strategy that focused on governance and everyday deliverables, however, did little to allay the concerns of stakeholders who worried about how Valley independence might disrupt existing laws, structures, and other power dynamics that supported communities of color as residents of the larger Los Angeles fabric.

One reason that secession failed to gain traction with communities of color rested in the assumption that the San Fernando Valley was distinctly different from the rest of Los Angeles. Secessionist narratives admitted that the Valley and Los Angeles were deeply interconnected: namely, through Valley taxes that funded programs for the Los Angeles basin or lined the pockets of downtown politicians. However, the linkages generally ended there. Because of that aloof city hall, Valley VOTE and the San Fernando Valley Independence Committee claimed that a city council responsible only to the San Fernando Valley and with control over funding for public services, a clean excision from Los Angeles would benefit Valley residents irrespective of race or economic circumstance.

⁸⁴ Connor, ““These Communities Have the Most to Gain from Valley Cityhood,”” 57.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

Although this may have been the gospel for White homeowners since the 1960s who saw the Valley as a world apart from the rest of Los Angeles, this argument failed to grasp the degree to which communities of color in the San Fernando Valley situated their interests and exercised ties with co-ethnics throughout city. Community organizers “from below” and elected political leaders “from above” expressed deep reservations over the fates of their communities if they were separated from the rest of Los Angeles. One of the pastors of Pacoima’s New Christ Memorial Church, gospel singer Andrae Crouch, captured this sentiment. When it came to Los Angeles, “We’ve invested a lot It’s too late for us to change direction,” he suggested. Despite all of the problems with Los Angeles, Rev. Crouch rhetorically wondered “Why go from a mansion to a hut?”⁸⁷

Once the secession vote, Measure F, was ensured a place on the November 2002 ballot, Los Angeles-based civil rights and ethnic political organizations that also catered to constituents in the Valley came out in full force for a united city. They cautioned against the detrimental effects on both ethnic communities in the San Fernando Valley and as a whole in Los Angeles. Opposition to secession reflected the differential racialization of each group. For African American and Latina/o leaders, secession posed a threat to the electoral power that their communities developed since the 1960s. Meanwhile, because the Latina/o and Asian American leaders worried that secession would harm the protections and services in place that catered to their large immigrant populations. Overall, class concerns that reflected also informed how different ethnic organizations developed their critiques of secession.

Despite support from leaders such as Rev. Zedar Broadous, African American civic organizations remained far more cautious about secession. Their opposition stemmed from the concerns about the entire wellbeing of the Black community in Los Angeles if the Valley should

⁸⁷ Quoted in Susan Anderson, “Sound of Silence Among Blacks,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 25, 2002.

separate. The New Frontier Democratic Club, California's oldest African American political club, advocated against secession beginning in 2002. This organization, which derived its membership from historically Black enclaves such as South Los Angeles, Inglewood, and Compton recognized that separation of the Valley from Los Angeles would harm the Black community at large. Bobbie Jean Anderson, the club's president, noted that "Los Angeles is going to be losing 30% of its tax base, and services are going to have to come from somewhere, so we will have to make up the difference."⁸⁸ Furthermore, although Rev. Broadous was the president of the San Fernando Valley NAACP, the chapter itself did not support Measure F.⁸⁹ The Los Angeles NAACP also opposed secession. Meanwhile, the Urban League of Los Angeles urged a "no" vote on Measure F. One month before the election, the organization's president, John W. Mack, cautioned "Valley secession is a divisive measure that promotes polarization rather than cooperation and collaboration during a time when it is critical that all racial, ethnic, economic and geographic segments of our entire city work together to address crucial issues confronting all of Los Angeles, including African Americans and other minorities."⁹⁰

In the summer of 2002, one of the largest Mexican American civil rights organizations, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) formally stated its opposition to secession. Attorney Hector Villagra cited fears over the abolition of Los Angeles City rent control and wage laws, diminishment of immigrant rights, and a decrease in Latina/o

⁸⁸ Quoted in Patrick McGreevy, "NAACP Valley Chapter Leader Backs Secession," *Los Angeles Times*, September 18, 2002.

⁸⁹ Kevin Herrera, "Valley Secession Movement Gets Late Nod From Influential Blacks," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 26, 2002, A4; McGreevy, "NAACP Valley Chapter Leader Backs Secession."

⁹⁰ Quoted in "Vote 'No' To Valley Secession, 'Support Measure K' at the Ballot November 5," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 24, 2002.

electoral power. Despite claims that the new Valley government would redress years of neglect, Villagra stated, “The uncertain political atmosphere would be unlikely to improve the quality of life for the Latino community.”⁹¹

Asian American civil rights organizations voiced concerns that reflected their community’s diversity. Like Latinas/os, the Asian American community was bifurcated with a large working-class, immigrant component as well as an upwardly mobile, middle-class population. The Los Angeles-based Asian Pacific American Legal Center, the nation’s largest Asian American legal assistance organization, feared that secession would harm recent immigrants and low-income members of the community. Secession threatened to imperil language and translation services for Asian Americans in the San Fernando Valley who would become divorced from Los Angeles’s larger Asian American community, with pockets in Chinatown and Koreatown. Furthermore, while Asian Americans were dispersed throughout the San Fernando Valley, the separation of that community from the larger Asian American population would weaken political influence in general.

Asian American professionals also saw secession as a dangerous gamble that would harm the community by diluting its numerical strength. At the end of the day, “Secession is not a good thing for the Asian-Pacific American community,” according to Public Works Commissioner Ron Low, a member of the Southern California Chinese Lawyers Association. Furthermore, although secession attracted the support of ethnic chambers of commerce in the San Fernando Valley, Low elaborated that “No one can guarantee the new cities would adopt programs that provide outreach to minority and women businesses so they can compete at the public trough.” Even the Asian Business League of Southern California warned that secession could lead to tax

⁹¹ Harrison Sheppard, “Latino groups oppose secession,” *Daily News*, c. July 24, 2002.

and fee increases, which would cause financial hardship to Asian American small business owners.⁹²

Organized labor, which witnessed resurgence in membership and political capital in Los Angeles since the 1990s, dedicated impressive effort in the campaign against Measure F. After years of aggressively anti-union, open shop politics in Los Angeles, labor unions tapped into the vast and growing pool of immigrants who came to the city following the economic restructuring of the 1970s and 1980s. As Ruth Milkman writes, labor succeeded in organizing the “unorganizable” and became a significant power broker in the region.⁹³ The possibility of a new Valley City, politically dominated by conservatives, posed a threat to the stature and stability that organized labor had accrued. Therefore, the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor wielded their power when it encouraged its membership, which swelled with Latinas/os and other people of color, and represented the demographics secessionists needed to win a majority, to vote against Measure F.⁹⁴ Although individual union members, such as Valley VOTE board member and bus driver union organizer Benny Bernal, may have individually supported secession, overall organized labor presented a united front in their opposition to Measure F.

Rank-and-file union members also joined in the campaign to persuade the individuals they interacted with to stand for a united city. The Service Employees International Union, Local 347, for example distributed door hangers with “AN URGENT PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM

⁹² Patrick McGreevy, “Group Says Asian Americans’ Jobs Could Be Jeopardized by Secession,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 14, 2002.

⁹³ See Ruth Milkman, *L.A. Story: Immigrant Workers and the Future of the U.S. Labor Movement* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2006).

⁹⁴ Sonenshein, *The City at Stake*, 230. However, there were internal disagreements over the possibility of endorsing pro-labor candidates for Valley city elected office.

YOUR TRASH MAN.”⁹⁵ That message, “We want to keep serving you! . . . Let’s stay together” tapped into anti-secessionist arguments that a united Los Angeles would best serve residents. The “personal” appeal from the trash collector to “stay together” also implicitly referenced concerns that a new Valley City might have to raise taxes to fund public services.⁹⁶ Furthermore, the door hanger included the message “Stronger Together: Vote No on F and H” in English and no less than twelve other languages including Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Armenian, Korean, Arabic, and Russian among others. For immigrant voters that message, brief as it may have been, was a way to bring further attention to the stakes involved in secession. Whether or not these individual outreach efforts changed opinions is unknown. But, the overall influence of organized labor greatly shaped anti-secession activism.

Public employee union members also saw several pitfalls with the prospect of a new Valley City. Early in the secession campaign, Valley VOTE advisor Shirley Svorny penned an article in the *Los Angeles Times* that suggested a new Valley city could break the power of city public unions. Well known in libertarian circles, Svorny’s piece spoke directly to suburban homeowners and taxpayers who felt that their taxes did not come back to them through services, but lined the pockets of public employees. The marriage between city hall and its union members represented nothing less than the “blackmail” of the taxpayer, according to an irate contributor to the *Daily News*, whose article circulated among Valley VOTE supporters.

⁹⁵ “An Urgent Personal Message From Your Trash Man,” SEIU Local 347 door hanger, n.d. in Valley VOTE Collection Ephemera, Box VOTE 24, Folder “An Urgent Personal Message From Your Trash Man, n.d.”

⁹⁶ “Valley Secession – The More You Know About It, The LESS You Like It!” One LA information sheet, n.d., in Valley VOTE Collection Administrative File Folders, Box VOTE 9, Folder “One LA.”

Svorny's prognostication may have delighted the secession movement's base, yet it clearly raised red flags for city workers.⁹⁷

Although Svorny did not mention race in her argument against the power of public unions, people of color were central actors in that sector of the labor movement. During the Bradley era, the racial makeup of the city government, from janitors to clerks to high-ranking administrators, diversified dramatically in a trend that continued into the twenty-first century.⁹⁸ By 2002, 61 percent of the city workforce was made up of people of color. African Americans and Asian Americans were particularly concentrated in city employment. Although African Americans were only 11 percent of Los Angeles's total population, they comprised 21 percent of city employees. Likewise, Asian Americans were only 10.2 percent of the overall population but made up 14 percent of the municipal workforce. Black and Latina/o men overwhelmingly compromised the city's maintenance staff. LAFCO's proposal for the new Valley city and its public employees would dangerously jeopardize these positions. Essentially, the new plan would place Valley city employees in a state of limbo for one transitional year wherein they would remain employed by the City of Los Angeles. After that period, the new Valley city government would redo contracts and pass a budget that may or may not have funding for previously existing positions. Even if Valley city employees remained employed after the transitional period they would lose their previous agreements, retiree benefits, and even union recognition.⁹⁹ The Los

⁹⁷ Shirley Svorny, "Power Shifts When Cities Downsize," *Los Angeles Times*, August 22, 1999; "Corrupt Troika," *Daily News*, January 17, 2000, archived in Valley VOTE E-mail digests in Braithwaite-Burke Papers, Collection 218, Box S195, Folder "Valley VOTE."

⁹⁸ Sonenshein, *The City at Stake*, 151-155.

⁹⁹ "Left Behind: The Impact of Secession on Low-Income Residents and Workers in the San Fernando Valley and Hollywood," Policy Report (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy and the UCLA Center for Labor Research and Education, 2002), 31, available online at <http://www.labor.ucla.edu/publications/reports/left-behind.html>.

Angeles Alliance for a New Economy and the UCLA Labor Center found that city employees, including administrative and maintenance workers could be “in danger of slipping into poverty if their jobs [would be] cut or salaries diminished” under a new Valley city.¹⁰⁰ In addition to these doubts about employment in a new Valley city, working people also had to think seriously about their housing options.

The Coalition for Economic Survival (CES), a multiethnic Los Angeles-based organization “dedicated to organizing low and moderate income people to win economic and social justice” also saw grave implications for working-class people if secession became reality.¹⁰¹ Like the labor movement, CES emphasized the threats to workers’ rights and jobs in a new Valley city. But it also expanded its critique of cityhood to address tenants’ rights.

Although pro-secessionists promised, “A new Valley city will continue LA’s strong laws that protect renters,” the CES pointed out that the newly elected city council could easily overturn those protections after a transition period of just around four months.¹⁰² They pointed out that renters would only comprise about a quarter of the Valley city’s voters and feared putting the future of this population in the hands of Valley VOTE’s leaders and supporters. Namely, they pointed to Richard Close, who opposed rent control legislation in the 1970s, former Assemblyman Richard Katz whose voting record sided with landlords, and Jeff Brain who earned a failing grade on a “Tenants’ Rights Report Card.”¹⁰³ The CES was not alone in its

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ “About CES,” *Coalition for Economic Survival*, c. 2014 <http://www.cesinaction.org/AboutCES.aspx>; accessed March 21, 2014.

¹⁰² “San Fernando Valley Independence: Good for the Valley, Good for Los Angeles!” Brochure

¹⁰³ Coalition for Economic Survival, “Valley and Hollywood Secession: A Threat to Tenants’ and Workers’ Rights” brochure, n.d., in Valley VOTE Collection Ephemera, Box VOTE 24, Folder “Brochure, Valley and Hollywood Secession, n.d.,” CSUN Urban Archives.

concern for renters either. Mayor Hahn’s anti-secession organization One LA reiterated these arguments and called Measure F a “dangerous gamble for Valley renters.”¹⁰⁴ Former Councilmember Bernardi, who wrote Los Angeles’s rent control ordinance, even offered a blurb to an anti-Measure F mailer that focused on the uncertainties of a new Valley city government. Put bluntly, he told voters “Renters in a new Valley city would lose the protections we fought long and hard for.”¹⁰⁵

These different civil rights, economic justice, or other ethnic organizations developed anti-secession messages that reflected their individual constituencies but also articulated similar overriding concerns. Whereas secessionists saw separation as a form of political empowerment, these organizations carefully looked at their population numbers as well as the structures that fortified their respective communities and saw uncertainty if not a total outright assault on people of color and the working-class. The anti-Measure F campaign’s discussion of race matured to elucidate how the secession movement’s damming racial past could have great implications for the Valley’s future. Although Los Angeles was far from perfect, they felt that it was better to work within a flawed system where they had a modicum of leverage rather than take a gamble in a new city that could easily undermine their progress. Black and Latina/o elected officials shared these concerns, yet their response to secession was more restrained and methodical.

Ethnic political leaders, unlike sharply critical community-based organizations or aggressively unyielding labor unions, took a more measured approach to secession. If Valley independence had passed, the region would have been split up into 14 city council districts,

¹⁰⁴ One LA, “Valley Secession: A DANGEROUS GAMBLE for Valley Renters,” in “Valley Secession – The More You Know About It, The LESS You Like It!”

¹⁰⁵ Los Angeles Taxpayers for Good Government, “Breaking up Los Angeles Isn’t the Answer! Vote NO on Proposition F,” mailer, n.d., in Valley VOTE Collection Ephemera, Box VOTE 24, Folder “Flier: Breaking up Los Angeles isn’t the answer, n.d.”

which would have ensured Latina/o representation in the new body. Thus, from an electoral standpoint, they had a clear stake in a possible new government. Furthermore, among the candidates for the new mayor of the Valley were Latinos such as David Hernandez, a local insurance adjuster, and Benny Bernal, the bus driver who sat on the Valley VOTE board as a “North East Valley Representative.”¹⁰⁶ Bernal emphasized that secession was “a quality-of-life issue” and not simply a form of latter-day White flight.¹⁰⁷

Despite the role these local personalities played in generating ethnic support for secession, more established political figures who worked within Los Angeles City Hall and across geographical boundaries, eventually came out against secession. Although Richard Alarcón left the Los Angeles City Council for the California State Senate in 1999, he remained an influential figure in Valley politics and entertained the possibility of running for mayor of the new Valley City.¹⁰⁸ Ultimately, he turned down that opportunity in July 2002 and came out against secession. His reasons ranged from concerns that the Department of Water and Power would subject the new Valley city to higher rates, to his aspirations to become the mayor of Los Angeles, to pressure from the labor movement (or so well-known rumors suggested).¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, Alarcón’s successor on the Los Angeles City Council, Pacoima-born and MIT-educated Alex Padilla represented another example of the growth of Latina/o power within Los Angeles when he became the first Mexican American elected president of the Council in 2001.

¹⁰⁶ McGreevy, “Valley Mayoral Hopefuls Differ on District Split;” See Valley VOTE letterhead c. 1999, examples in Valley VOTE Collection Administrative File Folders, Box VOTE 8, Folder “Petition Drive – LAFCO Study? Backgrnd [sic] Info, Stats.”

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Joseph Kahn, “San Fernando Valley Looks To a Life After Los Angeles,” *New York Times*, April 20, 2002.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Rick Orlov, “Secession Drive Changed San Fernando Valley, Los Angeles,” *Los Angeles Daily News*, November 3, 2012; Connor, ““These Communities Have the Most to Gain from Valley Cityhood,” 59; Sonenshein, *The City at Stake*, 231.

Padilla passionately fought against secession as he reminded his constituencies of the resources the city government, despite its problems, did provide in recent memory. One month before the secession vote, he pointed to new libraries and plans to build a children's museum at the popular Hansen Dam recreational area as "examples of optimism, or faith or what we can do together."¹¹⁰ Simply put, Padilla went on to state "the people in my district feel they are part of L.A."¹¹¹ Indeed, as Jerry Gonzalez has pointed out, due to employment, family, and cultural ties Mexican Americans in Los Angeles County crafted an ethnic geography that transcended boundaries.¹¹²

African American leaders in the Valley and the rest of Los Angeles carefully weighed the possibilities of Valley secession against the political influence they accrued since the Tom Bradley was first elected mayor. In the lead up to the November 2002 vote, African American writer and chronicler Susan Anderson noted "one oddity of the secession fight is the uncharacteristic silence of many African American leaders" who felt it necessary to "use their power to [the] best advantage, given the high stakes."¹¹³ The calculus for Black political support for or against secession took place within a tense time that began in 2001 when Mayor James Hahn alienated African American leaders. Although Hahn successfully relied upon the Black vote during his own mayoral election in 2001, that relationship severely weakened after his dismissal of Bernard C. Parks, the Chief of Police who remained popular in the African

¹¹⁰ Quoted in Susan Abrams, "Padilla Advises Voters to Reject Secession, Work for a Better L.A.," *Daily News*, September 9, 2002. The children's museum at Hansen Dam took several years to come to fruition. It eventually had to partner with the Discovery Science Center, see Mike Boehm, "Never-Used \$22-million Children's Museum Gets New Lease on Life," *Los Angeles Times*, December 12, 2012.

¹¹¹ Kevin Roderick, "The Big Breakup: In Their Middle Age, the San Fernando Valley and the Metropolis Over the Hill Are Starting to Look More Alike Than Ever. Is Divorce Really the Answer?" *Los Angeles Times*, July 2001.

¹¹² Jerry Gonzalez, "'A Place in the Sun': Mexican Americans, Race, and the Suburbanization of Los Angeles, 1940-1980," (Ph.D. Diss, University of Southern California, 2009).

¹¹³ Anderson, "Sound of Silence Among Blacks." 2002.

American community.¹¹⁴ In response to the sense of betrayal by Hahn, some Black leaders, such as the Reverend Frederick Murph of the influential First AME Church, began to take secession seriously and in the spring of 2002 urged his followers to do the same. Shortly thereafter, Councilman Nate Holden, who represented portions of South Los Angeles, supported secession with the assumption that a smaller Los Angeles could increase the potential for Black political power.¹¹⁵ However, members of the Black political elite would soon turn against secession. In the summer of 2002 Assembly Speaker Herb Wesson rallied a crowd at the First AME Church with cries of “We will not let you go!” and “We’re saving our city for ourselves.”¹¹⁶ A few months later, perhaps reflecting his position as a member of law enforcement, which opposed secession on fiscal and public safety grounds, Bernard Parks himself publically opposed secession.¹¹⁷

Within the San Fernando Valley itself, African American opinions were mixed. In addition to the support Rev. Broadous lent to the secession campaign, one African American candidate for Valley mayor emerged. Mel Wilson was a popular Realtor who once served as president of the San Fernando Valley Board of Realtors when announced his candidacy. With a background in business he also boasted experience with city affairs through his appointments to various commissions by Mayor Bradley.¹¹⁸ Although he acknowledged the cynicism many

¹¹⁴ Kahn, “San Fernando Valley Looks To a Life After Los Angeles;” Anderson, “Sound of Silence Among Blacks.”

¹¹⁵ Betty Pleasant, “Secession Research Underway in South LA,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, June 6, 2002, A1.

¹¹⁶ Quoted in Betty Pleasant, “Black Leaders to Battle Secession,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, July 4, 2002, A1.

¹¹⁷ “Former Chief Parks opposes Valley, Hollywood secession,” *Antelope Valley Press*, September 6, 2002; “Murph Calls on African Americans to Reconsider Support for Secession,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, April 11, 2002, A3.

¹¹⁸ Patrick McGreevy, “Valley Mayoral Hopefuls Differ on District Split,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 21, 2002; Kevin Herrera, “Clergy and Labor Unite at Crenshaw Christian Center to Discuss Secession,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 17, 2002, A15.

African Americans believed regarding secession, he appealed to the “good percentage who are open-minded [and] ready to listen.” Like other secessionists he emphasized a fair share argument as he argued, “This campaign is about money, how it is being used and how an we use it better to improve the lives of every citizen.”¹¹⁹

Concerns about the implications of secession on the entire Los Angeles Black community led County Supervisor Yvonne Braithwaite-Burke, who represented large portions of South Los Angeles, to commission a study of secession by Professor Eugene Grigsby III and his researchers at UCLA’s School of Public Policy and Social Research.¹²⁰ Released two months before the November ballot, the study found that overall secession would harm African Americans and other people of color in both the San Fernando Valley and the rest of Los Angeles. Although African Americans in the Valley did have a high rate of voter participation, the UCLA team predicted that community “will have a very difficult time being elected to any of the newly created council seats or as Mayor. The same will be true for the Asian Pacific Islanders.”¹²¹ While Latinas/os would comprise 42.5 percent of the new city, in the years following independence, Whites would continue to dominate politically due to low Latina/o voter registration.¹²² In addition to the political implications, the study predicted that separation would result in increased segregation in both cities and constraints on developing affordable housing.

The study, which was covered by the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, was

¹¹⁹ Quoted in Herrea, “Clergy and Labor Unite at Crenshaw Christian Center to Discuss Secession.”

¹²⁰ J. Eugene Grigsby, III, “Valley Secession: Some Things to Consider,” Report Prepared for Supervisor Yvonne Braithwaite-Burke (Los Angeles: UCLA Advanced Policy Institute, School of Public Policy and Social Research, 2002); “Secession Bad for Valley Blacks, Study Says,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 2, 2002; “Braithwaite-Burke Commissioned Study Says Blacks Won’t Make Political Gains if City Splits,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 8, 2002, A4.

¹²¹ Grigsby, “Valley Secession: Some Things to Consider,” iii.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 4.

widely discussed within Black leadership circles and further contributed to opposition to Measure F.¹²³

As November election date support for secession began to decline and both sides focused on race as an important factor in secession. Due to a successful and extremely well funded campaign spearheaded by Mayor Hahn, even the secession movement's base began to doubt the efficacy of their homegrown revolution. Specifically, opposition to secession by law enforcement and firefighters, who doubted the new city's capacity to deliver such services, resonated with the Valley homeowners who would otherwise support secession. At this point, the San Fernando Valley Independence committee "began to send out mailers pandering to the kinds of racial fears that [Valley] VOTE had worked to push to the margins of the debate."¹²⁴ These included documents that featured a crying White girl sitting against the backdrop of the beleaguered, graffiti-laden Belmont Learning Center (figure 6.1). The indication that White suburbia was indeed headed towards "ghettoization" was unmistakable.

¹²³ Supervisor Brathwaite-Burke went on record opposing secession after the release of the report, Kevin Herrera, "Burke Opposes Secession; Cites Study Showing Blacks Will Lose Big," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 12, 2002, A4.

¹²⁴ Connor, "These Communities Have the Most to Gain from Valley Cityhood," 60

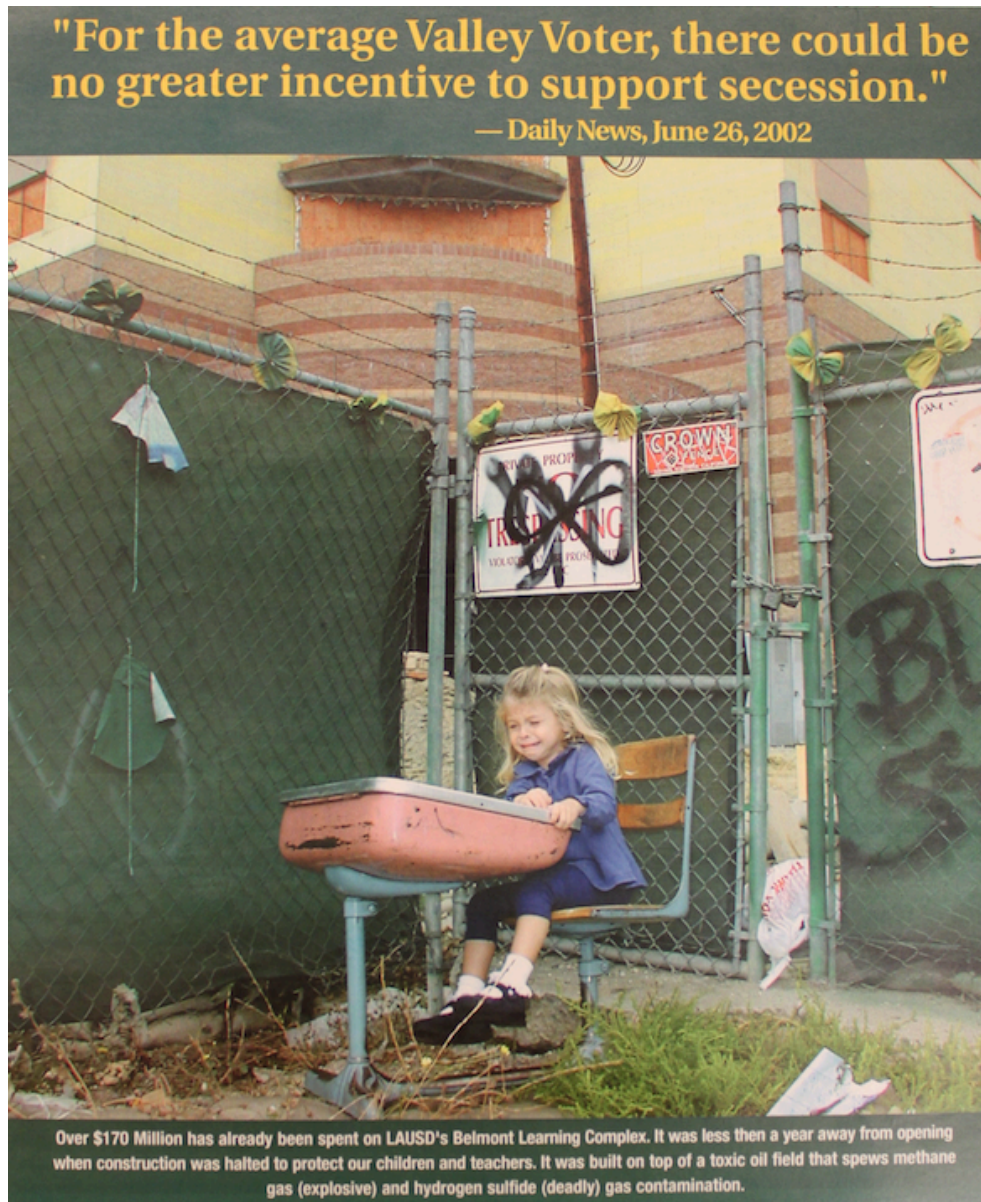


Figure 6.1 The racial future of the San Fernando Valley? 2002. At the proverbial eleventh hour, the San Fernando Valley Independence Committee resorted to ugly race baiting. This mailer brought together anxieties over the “ghettoization” of the Valley, demographic change, and the state of Los Angeles Unified School District schools. Source: San Fernando Valley Independence Committee.

The anti-secession movement among communities of color, meanwhile, redoubled their efforts. Although civil rights groups, organized labor, and elected officials had distilled a clear message with specific examples of how separation would undermine communities of color and working people, in the last days of the campaign the roots of the secession movement once again served as fodder. With just over three weeks before the Election Day, over 400 people

assembled at the Crenshaw Christian Center to hear clergy and labor leaders speak on secession. Tyone Freeman stirred the crowd as he charged, “Let’s not tip toe around the issue, secession is about race.” He reiterated the view that Measure F was tantamount to White flight as he recalled how the secession movement was entangled with the anti-busing campaign and that “Whenever we have gained any significant position in politics, those of power want to change the game.”¹²⁵ Although secessionists claimed they were the soldiers in a battle against entrenched power, Freeman’s comments spoke to the lingering view that the desire to break away from the increasingly non-White Los Angeles undergirded secessionist aspirations.

Conclusion

The voters of Los Angeles took to their polling places on November 5, 2002 and overwhelmingly voted against secession by a two-to-one majority. Angelenos outside of and even within the San Fernando Valley refused to believe that a better life was possible in Camelot. The final results of the vote demonstrate that the promise of secession never extended beyond its original base: residents of the affluent, conservative, and largely racially homogenous west Valley (table 4).¹²⁶

Table 4: Results of Measure F

Geographical Area	% Yes	% No
Total Los Angeles Precincts	33.2	66.8
San Fernando Valley	51.6	48.4
Non-San Fernando Valley	19.2	80.8

Source: Based on Sonenshein, “Vote by Groups, Valley Secession,” *The City at Stake*, 232.

¹²⁵ Herrera, “Clergy and Labor Unite at Crenshaw Christian Center to Discuss Secession.”

¹²⁶ Sonenshein, *The City at Stake*, 235.

The final vote was largely split along racial and geographical lines. With 88.9 percent of votes against Measure F, the strongest opposition to secession was found in Black precincts outside of the Valley, reflective of the successful campaign by African American civil rights groups, politicians, clergy, and labor leaders against secession. Meanwhile the strongest support (62.1 percent) came from White Republican dominant precincts in the west San Fernando Valley. Yet even with this strong base, Measure F only barely passed in the Valley itself with 51.6 percent of the vote, indicative of the mixed feelings residents felt about an independent city. This split was evident in the voting patterns of Latinas/os. Although as a whole Latina/os opposed secession, those in the Valley were comparatively more favorable to the measure (table 5). The northeast Valley reported the lowest support for Measure F in the San Fernando Valley, which suggests that voters still may not have trusted the motives of secessionists and preferred to place their future in the hands of the new class of Latino leaders – Alarcón, Padilla, and Assemblyman Tony Cardenas – who found a place within the existing system. Nevertheless, 37.5 percent of voters in Latina/o precincts supported Measure F. Sociologist Jim Fraught hypothesized that upwardly mobile Latinas/os were supportive of secession and thus could have led to this spike.¹²⁷

Table 5: The Latina/o Vote on Measure F

Geographical Area	% Yes	% No
Total Los Angeles Precincts	22.9	77.1
San Fernando Valley	37.5	62.5
Non-San Fernando Valley	16.7	83.3

Source: Based on Sonenshein, “Vote by Groups, Valley Secession,” *The City at Stake*, 232.

For Valley VOTE, the San Fernando Valley Independence Committee, and their supporters Measure F represented a promise for a better future. For critics, however, secession

¹²⁷ Fraught, “Breaking Up Is Hard to Do,” 390-391.

promised uncertainty at best and the reproduction of inequality at worst. Although secessionists furiously clung to the myth that communities of color should support secession because a small government would be color-blind, this fundamental dissonance grew out of decades of racial politics that were premised on exclusion. Individuals not only distrusted Valley VOTE's racial baggage or the Valley Independence Committee's race baiting, but deeply understood that their well-being was better attended to through networks and structures that involved all of Los Angeles.

To be sure the Valley in 2002 did look remarkably different from the days when White Realtors denied Dr. Emory Holmes a home, or when Valley State's BSU and MEChA marched for educational equity in 1968 and 1969 or even when Japanese Americans fought through generations of crushing silence to gain redress and reparations in 1988. Most of Valley became a patchwork of ethnicities that populated a long economic spectrum. However, the quest for Valley cityhood did not take this history into account. Its representatives presented explanations that conflated demographic diversity with economic and social equity that, while agreeable to some, could not provide the same level of protection that underserved communities fought for within and beyond the San Fernando Valley. For communities of color and working people who were critical of secession, the idea of the Valley as an independent Camelot was, in a sense, quite apt: a mythical and unattainable place where power would be concentrated in a royal court, albeit one dominated by business interests and homeowners associations. While their attachment to Los Angeles may not have yielded the best results at the end of the day, their relationship to the city and the secession movement embodied the adage that it is, at times, better to dance with the devil one knows than the devil one does not.

CONCLUSION

In the aftermath of charter reform in 1999 and the failed secession vote in 2002, the City of Los Angeles continued its efforts to decentralize municipal government. The process began with the implementation of neighborhood councils and proceeded with the opening of city hall branches. In 2011, the residents of Pacoima, who long felt neglected by city government, although in very different ways from homeowners in the west Valley, welcomed their new satellite office. Although the population of Pacoima was over 95 percent Latino at the time, the new edifice included a mural that began to capture the people of the town's multiethnic past.¹²⁸ Some of the figures in the artwork are well known: actor George Lopez, singer Ritchie Valens, and *Los Angeles Times* journalist Frank del Olmo, for example. Yet, others belong to a past of which very few people beyond Pacoima know. Significantly, many of those lesser-known individuals helped build the northeast Valley neighborhood after World War II in the face of racism found throughout the rest of the region. Edward Kussman, or "Mr. Pacoima," Rev. Hillery and Mother Rosa Broadous, Mits Usui, and Dr. Mary Sakaguchi Oda were just a few of them. The histories of resistance that those individuals and countless others made contribute to a nuanced understanding of not only the San Fernando Valley itself, but larger conceptual questions about the relationships between racial formation, the production and negotiation of space, and the contours of activism.

The San Fernando Valley has been a magnet for migrants since the 19th century. Conventional narratives of the region follow a well-worn path in the history of the American West: an indigenous population decimated by successive Spanish, Mexican, and American

¹²⁸ Alex Garcia, "Picturesque Pacoima City Hall Finally Opens," *San Fernando Valley Sun*, August 4, 2011; Patricia E. Takayama, "The Pride of Pacoima: Six Japanese Americans Depicted in City Hall Courtyard Mural," *Rafu Shimpo*, August 8, 2011

powers; the migration of American settler colonists; a boom in agricultural production afforded by the construction of railroads and battles over water; the rise of wartime industries; postwar residential suburbanization; and demographic transformation at the end of the twentieth century. However, this dissertation attempts to rewrite more boldly the central role of race in the making of the San Fernando Valley. As the many actors in the preceding pages have illustrated, African Americans, Mexican Americans, and Asian Americans worked to create spaces for themselves and break into those from which they were excluded.

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, migrants from across North America and the Pacific sowed the seeds of the patterns of racial and spatial formation in the San Fernando Valley that persisted for generations to come. Like several other agricultural areas in Southern California, the Valley rapid grew after a system of railroads connected it to major population and economic centers such as Los Angeles and San Francisco. Those railroads also brought thousands of immigrants from Latin America and Asia who built the region's agricultural industries. Exclusionary property laws, immigration restrictions, and mundane manifestations of prejudice racialized these groups as aliens or second-class citizens. Segregated into pockets of the east Valley, they nevertheless built institutions that fortified their communities from the prejudice that structured their daily lives and helped maintain connections with their original homelands.

The Great Depression and World War II transformed both the built and human landscapes of the San Fernando Valley. The different forms of racial and economic antagonism immigrant groups faced, resulted the deportations of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Los Angeles during the 1930s. A few years later, Japanese and Japanese Americans faced mass relocation to various detention sites, including two in the San Fernando Valley, and

concentration camps. However, the rapid rise of the defense industry in the region offered brand new economic opportunities the remaining Mexican Americans as well as African Americans.

After World War II, communities of color faced uncertain futures in the San Fernando Valley as it rapidly became a racially exclusive residential enclave. African Americans in particular gained a considerable amount of economic mobility and social citizenship during the war due to their participation in the defense industries and the military. Meanwhile Japanese Americans returned to the Valley where they attempted to rebuild the community they were forced to abandon at the beginning of the war. Both communities were unsure of how they would fit into the new San Fernando Valley, a region aggressively marketed by city planners and real estate agents as a vibrant destination symbolic of postwar prosperity. For many Japanese Americans, who struggled to rebuild their lives and lived in government-owned trailer camps well after the war concluded, rehabilitating any sense of normalcy was a primary objective. They dedicated the time and collective funds to the construction of community centers, language schools, and houses of worship that not only provided a sanctuary but also recognized the history of Japanese immigrants and their families in the pre-war San Fernando Valley. By the middle and end of the 1950s, scores of Japanese American professionals moved to the San Fernando Valley and, like the Black counterparts who worked in the sprawling defense industry's research and development departments, sought to break the residential color line. Moderate organizations such as the NAACP and the JACL enacted civil rights organizing through the courts, the ballot box, and the boycott. While their activism drew upon the respective circumstances of each community, they aimed to help African Americans and Japanese Americans claim the San Fernando Valley as their own.

By the 1960s, a new breed of student activists in Pacoima and San Fernando Valley State College began to question seriously those strategies that emphasized individual property ownership and social belonging. Influenced by the Black Power movements that radicalized youths across the country's urban areas, Black students critiqued the systematic oppression of African Americans both in the San Fernando Valley and throughout the United States. As they both benefited from, but ultimately rejected the integrationist and middle-class tone of the earlier wave of civil rights organizing, they formed groups such as Afro-Pac and House of Umojo to inspire self-determination. As many of Pacoima's Black residents saw the San Fernando Valley as a beacon of economic empowerment, they responded to the efforts of radical students with indifference or suspicion. Those attitudes changed after members of the Valley State Black Student Union, including many from Pacoima, occupied the campus administration building to call for increased enrollment and employment opportunities for African Americans. Black Pacoimans increasingly saw their beliefs in higher education come true. For them Valley State became not as an isolated ivory tower in the heart of the White San Fernando Valley, but an institution with the potential to serve their community. As a result they embraced the BSU and its students. However, White homeowners in the west Valley felt just as strongly about the student takeover and as a result redoubled their efforts to maintain the vision of the San Fernando Valley a region defined by racial and economic homogeneity. They accomplished this through support for law-and-order candidates such as Mayor Sam Yorty, challenges to busing, and activism to keep property taxes low.

Just as west Valley residents contributed to that growing conservative movement, alternative forms of political activism took place in the east Valley. In the face of demographic changes that transformed the City of San Fernando Valley into a majority Mexican American

town, activists with the Raza Unida Party sought to elect a politicized Chicano into city office. Although they never achieved their goal, they sparked a new political consciousness among Mexican Americans in the Valley that showed them the need and potential to stake their claim in local politics. Whereas that movement rested upon the high concentration of Mexican Americans and other Latinos in San Fernando, Japanese Americans participated in a movement that drew from the dispersal of Nikkei throughout the San Fernando Valley. Working against a fortress of silence around the experience of Japanese Americans during the war and the complacency of many residents who had successfully integrated into the larger fabric of the Valley, activists sought to bring to light the need for justice, redress, and reparations for mass incarceration. Through their efforts they were able to likewise politicize an apolitical community and bring together newer middle-class professionals and the working-class founders of local Japanese American community institutions.

At the end of the twentieth century, White homeowners in the west Valley felt the need to reassert their voice over the fate of the San Fernando Valley. In the wake of massive demographic changes, such as those that emboldened the Raza Unida Party to organize, two urban conflagrations that rocked Los Angeles in 1965 and 1968, and a brewing movement against busing and property taxes, homeowners and business leaders sought to break the San Fernando Valley away from the city in the 1990s. Although several secession attempts had failed in the past, organizers were confident that they could craft a message of the need for a smaller, more attentive government. Although the neglected communities of Pacoima and its surroundings were indeed intrigued, ultimately that message could do little to assuage concerns over the racial genealogy of the secession movement. In other words, while communities of color in the San Fernando Valley may have been attracted to seemingly colorblind arguments

about government services, or lack thereof as a part of Los Angeles, they could not overlook how secession leaders fought mightily to preserve racial boundaries or fight against bilingual education, among other issues. Moreover, the leaders of the Valley independence campaign themselves assume they could paint the Valley's communities of color with a broad stroke. They neglected to understand the complex racial history of the region whose settlement patterns, social relations, and political movements took place for generations.

Those histories illustrate the complexities of race and metropolitan development. To many outside observers and Valley residents alike, the San Fernando Valley is a world away from Los Angeles. That was certainly the mindset that animated several secession movements. But, the idea that the region was simultaneously “the middle of nowhere and the center of the universe,” as San Fernando Valley-raised Councilman Eric Garcetti remarked during his 2013 mayoral campaign, also spoke to countless generations of communities of color who sought their slice of the proverbial good life, located north of the Santa Monica Mountains.¹²⁹ This juxtaposition is not to flatten the differences between the different communities that sought to make the San Fernando Valley their home. Rather, across different times and circumstances, communities of color enacted different cultural and political movements that situated themselves as fully engaged constituents of the San Fernando Valley, denizens of the City of Los Angeles, or members of a respective ethnoracial group. As demographic change continues to make the region resemble other “majority-minority” metropolises across California, this insight might

¹²⁹ Eric Garcetti, quoted in “Getting to Know the Personal Side of Mayoral Candidate Eric Garcetti,” *Take Two*, Southern California Public Radio (KPCC), May 8, 2013, audio file available at <http://www.scpr.org/programs/take-two/2013/05/08/31686/personal-side-mayoral-candidate-eric-garcetti-los-/>. Garcetti represented areas of Hollywood, Silver Lake, and Echo Park on the Los Angeles City Council before he was elected mayor of Los Angeles. His main opponent Wendy Greul was also raised in the San Fernando Valley and represented large swaths of the Valley, from Studio City to Sunland-Tujunga, on the Los Angeles City Council.

serve planners, policymakers, and community activists better than nostalgia for the suburbia of the 1950s as they attempt to craft an equitable San Fernando Valley.

APPENDIX

BSU 12-Point Set of Demands

1. The President will oppose Title 5 change of the November trustees meeting. Blomgren, Spencer, Masters, Oviatt, Charnofsky, Chatman, Howard, Johnson, Uwezo, Tim Collins, and A. Holloway will attend the session whether the Title 5 change is brought up or not.¹
2. The President will convene the group that hears charges against a faculty member by students and provide for the drawing up and hearing of charges against Glenn Arnett. The President will reassign Arnett until charges are heard or until he is ordered by higher authority to return Arnett to his earlier position.
3. The President will dismiss Markham as volunteer football coach and bar him from the campus.
4. The President will strongly recommend an Afro-American Studies Department and curriculum to be headed by a black man. The director and curriculum will be chosen by faculty and BSU on a 50-50 basis. The curriculum will consist of 124 units leading to a B.A. degree, with an implementation date of February, 1969. Oviatt and Chatman will be co-chairman on the committee. BSU will submit a curriculum proposal.
5. The President will get black instructors to teach courses. These are to be qualified instructors (not just the academically qualified, but also with expertise in the area).
6. The President will agree to admit a minimum of 500 black students in the spring of 1969 and every semester following. The President guarantees he will exert every effort to obtain financing, to open new channels of financing (foundation, etc.) for the program. He will work in conjunction with the BSU.
7. The President will initiate full scale investigation of employment practices on this campus. He will make every effort to see the qualified black people are placed in positions of responsibility. Committees will be formed to do this. One committeeman will be a black representative of the staff. A representative of the BSU will also be on the committee. Administratively, faculty and staff positions will be investigated.
8. The President will request prosecution of Denny Harris of Western News Service (LAPD Pass # 459) for pulling a gun on students in the Administration Building November 4, 1968. Archie Chatman will furnish names of students involved.
9. The President will attend faculty senate meetings and participate in discussion. He will lend support for no aims except in circumstances where money is involved

¹ The proposed changes would remove student oversight of funds allocated for the student body; students at San Francisco State College also protested this measure.

10. The President will take no disciplinary action against students involved in the activities of November 4, 1969. The President will not press charges.
11. The President will provide a tutorial office so that the BSU and UMAS (United Mexican-American Students) can keep in touch with and handle tutorial needs and advisory needs of EOP students
12. There will be daily meetings with BSU and administration to implement this agreement with all possible speed. If the Title 5 change is passed the President will still recognize BSU as an autonomous organization.

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