UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Making Space in a Militarized Global City: The Racial and Gendered Politics of Producing Space for Black Queer Women in San Diego

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

in

Ethnic Studies

by

Christina Carney

Committee in charge:

Professor Yến Lê Espiritu, Chair
Professor Fatima El-Tayeb, Co-Chair
Professor Boatema Boateng
Professor Dayo Gore
Professor Roshanak Kheshti

2016

The Dissertation of Christina Carney is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Co-Chair

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2016

DEDICATION

For

Granville ‘Bubba’ Hughes

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply thankful to my dissertation committee for their tremendous support throughout this process. I thank Yến Lê Espiritu for keeping me focused by consistently checking-in with me throughout the process. She always made time to read multiple drafts and help me articulate my ideas more thoroughly. I am always amazed at her generosity in relation to time, patience and compassion. I am also thankful to Fatima El-Tayeb, my intellectual compass. I cannot imagine doing this project without her direction and guidance. I am thankful to her for training me in queer of color critique. She has always supported everything I have done, personal and political. I thank her for serving as such a great role model, as a scholar, mentor and person, in my life. I am also grateful to Roshanak Kheshti for introducing me to the work Dwight Conquergood and Critical Ethnography. These approaches have not only helped me approach fieldwork in a critical and self-reflexive way, but also have framed how I foster and maintain relationships in my personal life. She has also given me great advice on professionalism and navigating academia and for this I will always be grateful. I am also grateful to Boatema Boateng for her unwavering support, and for having faith in me throughout my graduate school journey. Her inspirational words and thought-provoking questions, as well as theoretically and empirically grounded statements, whether in her writings, or during our meetings, have greatly shaped my scholarship and work ethic. I am also thankful to Dayo Gore for graciously agreeing to join my committee, and extending her time and energy on my work. Her expertise in historical methods and archival research, specifically about black women, has been invaluable. Every time I would hit a brick wall in relation to

framing a chapter or section, she always had a great citation for me that totally changed the direction of my thoughts. Thank you for always being so engaging.

The support of the greater UCSD community has been imperative to my intellectual development. I would like to thank Ross Frank, Natalia Molina, Kirstie Dorr, Sara Kaplan, Curtis F. Marez, Shelley Streeby, Elana Zilberg, Denise Ferreira da Silva and K. Wayne Yang, for their amazing seminars that taught us how to think as critical Ethnic Studies scholars. I would also like to thank Jillian Hernandez and Kalindi Vora for their support as a co-author and reviewer. I am grateful to Alanna Aiko Moore, the Ethnic Studies librarian at the UCSD library, for her assistance with research tools and databases. I am also thankful to the current and past Ethnic Studies and Critical Gender Studies staff including, Christa Ludeking, Daisy Rodriguez, Theresa Aitchison, Yolanda Escamilla, Damarys Alicea-Santan, and Joje Marie Reyes-Alonzo. I am also grateful to the staff of the Center for Humanities at UCSD, especially Giulia Hoffmann, for their assistance with resources for academic writing and professionalization. I am also thankful to Leep Smith, my instructor for the UCSD Extension course, 'Developing Effective Writing Skills,' which dramatically changed the way I think and approach writing.

My colleagues at UCSD have been instrumental to me finishing this project by fostering a supportive intellectual environment. I would like to thank Mohamed Abumaye, Yessica Garcia, Alborz Ghandehari, Christina Green, LeKeisha Hughes, Malathi Iyengar, Lea Johnson, Mellissa Linton-Villafanco, Linh Nguyễn, Jason Magabo Perez, Leslie Quintanilla, Amrah J. Salomon, Vineeta Singh, Kai Small, R. Zach Williams, Joo Ok Kim, Lisa Ho, Josen Diaz, Sara Mameni, Salvador Zarate and Lauren Heintz for always listening and encouraging me during various stages of my graduate

career. I am so lucky to have the greatest cohort anyone could imagine – Marilisa Navarro, Lila Sharif and Kyung Hee Ha. Marilisa has kept me accountable with our bi-weekly Skype meeting. Kyung Hee also kept my accountable by meeting up with me every weekend to write at local San Diego cafes. Lila Sharif has been instrumental in talking me out of beating myself up about my writing and reminding me of my black girl magic in all its forms.

The stories of my interlocutors and others within San Diego have been my strength throughout the writing process. I would like to thank Granville 'Bubba' Hughes, Fofie Bashir, Vertez Burks, Rashad LaShawn Walcott, Ginelle D. Johnson, and Claudette Clark for offering their testimonies. My labor as a promoter in San Diego has allowed me to meet and learn from so many amazing people. The archivists at the Lambda Archives and the San Diego History Center have been extremely helpful, especially during the last stages of my project. The unique history of San Diego and the larger Southwest has so much rich history and I am happy I got to represent just a fragment of its vast stories.

In addition to my graduate school family, my immediate family members have given me unconditional support and love. My wife, Candice 'Motown' Anderson, has witnessed the lows and highs of my graduate academic career. She has supported me financially and emotionally along this journey. I am grateful that I have a partner who believes in me, even when I do not believe in myself. I am forever grateful. I would also like to thank my mother, Adrienne Anita Carney, for always being proud of my work and me. I am happy that I 'exceeded all of [her] expectations.' Love always.

VITA

2007	Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign
2011	Master of Arts in Ethnic Studies, University of California, San Diego
2016	Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnic Studies, University of California, San Diego

FIELDS OF STUDY

Comparative Race and Ethnicity; Black/Queer Sexuality Studies; Queer of Color Critique; Critical Ethnography; Critical Gender Studies; Urban Studies; African-American/Black Studies

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Making Space in a Militarized Global City: The Racial and Gendered Politics of Producing Space for Black Queer Women in San Diego

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnic Studies

University of California, San Diego, 2016

Professor Yến Lê Espiritu, Chair
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This dissertation, *Making Space in a Militarized Global City: The Racial and Gendered Politics of Producing Space for Black Queer Women in San Diego*, examines histories of black queer women during different historical moments that defy a politics of respectability in relation to sexuality, class and gender performance. I re-read archives and conduct interviews with a different focus that not only explains why histories of certain black queer women are invisible, but also what these stories can reveal about black life in general. The dissertation is organized into three chapters. In the first chapter, "Racializing and Gendering Sin in Early 20th Century San Diego," I use Maya Angelou's

autobiographical text, *Gather Together in my Name* (1974), to discuss how her entrepreneurship efforts within San Diego's sex tourism industry in the 1940s – in which many of her clients were white U.S. service men – defied normative black respectability. Chapter 2, "Alternative Safe Spaces," uses the oral history of Granville "Bubba" Hughes, a black trans woman who migrated to San Diego in 1965 from Arizona, to understand how gay neighborhoods are not always safe for black queer women. Through her narrative I examine how mixed-race, working-class neighborhoods figure as alternatives to gay enclaves in the mid-20th century. In Chapter 3, "Properly Political," I show how black lesbian and gay activists, beginning in the 1980s, challenged racism within the San Diego gay neighborhood, which later inspired the Mackey-Cua Project – a multi-generational LGBT group. This project explains how and why certain narratives are absent from the historical and social imaginary. I show how black queer women make alternatives forms of space that diverge from masculinist revisionist histories, gay enclaves as safe spaces, and consumerism catering to the national body politic.

Introduction

> I had a vague worry—that a sudden large bank account would put the vice squad on my trail. I wasn't afraid of the police, since I wasn't turning tricks myself, but I was terrified of how a police investigation would influence Mother Cleo. She'd toss me and my baby out of the house with much damning me to the depths of hell. There were other places to go of course, and with the money piling up in secret places I could afford anyone to tend my child, but the fact was that I cared for the Jenkinses and what they thought of me was important. Their home and their ways reminded me of the grandmother who raised me and who I idolized. I wouldn't have them offended. When my illicit business reached its peak, I joined their church, and stood in the choir singing the old songs with great feeling.[1]

Why are black women's experiences almost invisible in historical accounts of black/African American communities? Scholars who attempt to include black women's contributions to African American history have raised that question.[2] In spite of these scholars' efforts, some discussions about *certain* black women still remain off limits. Specifically, the histories of black women whose queer sexuality—in the form of commercialized sex work and other diversions from normative domesticity that often place them at odds with the state and black heteronormativity—are often left out of archives. That leads me to the following question: what normally constitutes valuable or noteworthy information in relation to black/African American histories? Due to a politics of respectability, which elides discussions of sexuality and performances that deviate from standards of proper behavior, the respective production of canonical and alternative archives by mainstream and excluded communities often creates normative histories

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[1] Maya Angelou, *Gather Together in My Name* (New York: Random House, 1974), 62.
[2] E. Frances White, *Dark Continent of Our Bodies: Black Feminism and the Politics of Respectability* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001); Johnnetta Betsch Cole & Beverly Guy-Sheftall, *Gender Talk: The Struggle for Women's Equality in African American Communities* (New York: One World/Ballentine Books, 2003); Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African American, Gender, and the New Racism* (New York: Routledge, 2005)

excluding some black queer women's experiences.[3] Thus, I read archives with a different focus that not only explains why histories of certain black queer women are invisible, but also what these stories can reveal about black life in general.

My focus will be on San Diego. The production of San Diego as *America's Finest City*, by residents and urban planners, is drawn along the lines of racialized and gendered fears, often couched in universalized safety concerns that frame racial profiling of black and brown bodies as a matter of national security. The production of San Diego's identity as an urban center within the Southwest is dependent upon its proximity to Tijuana, Mexico and the militarization of that particular border location. A project about blackness, sexuality, and women in the U.S.–Mexico border region illuminates not only how the border economy and military facilitate black migration, but also how the gendering of public space and commercialization of gay identity produces tensions for the intersectional experiences of black queer women. This emphasis on security concerns and people of color as potential criminals affects intergroup relations within the city. I draw on local histories, archival documents, and structured interviews to show how anti-black racism and class distinctions have always been an ongoing dynamic in the San Diego LGBT community. Furthermore, gay histories not only limit geographies of queer social life to select major cities, such as Chicago, New York, and San Francisco, but also

[3] E. Frances White, "Africa on My Mind: Gender, Counter Discourse, and African American Nationalism," *Journal of Women's Studies* 2, no. 1, (1990): 76. "European and Euro-American nationalists turned to the ideology of respectability to help them impose the bourgeois manners and morals that attempted to control sexual behavior and gender relations. This ideology helped the bourgeoisie create a 'private sphere' that included family life, sexual relations, and leisure time. Respectability set standards of proper behavior at the same time that it constructed the very notion of private life. Nationalism and respectability intertwined as the middle class used the nation state to impose its notions of the private sphere's proper order on the upper and lower classes."

normalize queer social life as white and male. Existing literature on black queer life in other geographic areas in the U.S. reflects how race, gender, and location all impact the organization of space-making practices.[4] Though zoning ordinances have historically limited women's access to public space, whiteness and anti-black racism engendered more representational and economic power for white women. Thus, it is important to analyze black queer women's practices rather than applying white/male or white/female models to these experiences. This project is a gesture of recovery in that it explains how and why certain narratives are absent from the historical and social imaginary. I show how black queer women make alternatives forms of space that diverge from masculinist revisionist histories, gay enclaves as safe spaces, and consumerism catering to the national body politic.

This project builds on the work of scholars within the fields of African American/Black Studies and Gender and Women Studies that specifically research on histories of working class black women. Although most canonical archives reproduce discourses of black women as embodiments of social deviance, some scholars read these texts differently. For instance, historian Cheryl D. Hicks, in *Talk With You Like A Woman* (2010), utilizes archives from social workers in women's prisons in the 19th and early 20th century to complicate respectability politics embodied by working class black women, which differed from ideas about respectability imagined by middle class and college educated black women during this historical moment. *Talk With You Like A Woman* utilized these archives to illuminate not only class difference between women in the black community, but also illuminates how a politics by working class black women could

[4] Anne Enke, *Finding the Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

engender new political possibilities. Similar to Hicks, I also use archives that were originally used to justify black women as pathologies, such as newspaper articles and even scholarly sources, but instead I read them to understand the ideologies and discourse in which black were represented.

Additionally, this project is heavily influenced by Christina Hanhardt's *Safe Space: History and the Politics of Violence* (2014) in which *gay militants* (her term) actively disciplined members within the LGBT community who departed from mainstream LGBT politics – including youth, trans men and women, the homeless, people of color and the elderly. While Handardt's use of the term *gay militancy* is metaphorical, my usage is very literal. I use feminist and indigenous scholarship on sexuality in militarized zones throughout the pacific to address the military's increasing permeability with civilian life and the militarization of women's sexuality. The role of the military has been to discipline and normalize people of color (including blacks, Filipinos, and other migrating and native populations) by offering military as a cure for black matriarchy and sexual/gender nonconformity for example, but also offered mobility and community such as citizenship. My work on militarism in San Diego shows how local law enforcement to regulate sexual relations through racial segregation and criminalization.[5]

The initial stage of this project was framed by an ethnographic refusal of two potential interlocutors. During 2011, my partner and I created our event planning

[5] Cynthia Enloe. "How do they Militarize a Can of Soup?" in *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Lives*. University of California Press, 2000. 1-34; Cynthia Enloe. "On the Beach: Sexism and Tourism," in *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (University of California Press, 2000), 19-41.

company, Passage Playground Productions. We sought to create space for queer women of color in the city of San Diego. While this was very exciting for both us and our supporters, we were seen as a threat to other black women who were also creating for-profit spaces for queer women of color or solely for-profit within the city. Prior to our announcement of our promotion company, I had informally interviewed a popular event planning company founded by two black lesbians. I asked them if they would be willing to be interviewed for my dissertation about creating spaces for black queer women in San Diego. Ultimately, they allowed me to use information gathered from the preliminary meeting, but they refused to participate in the dissertation project. They stated that it would be a conflict of interest due to the fact that we are now competitors in the nighttime marketplace and that we worked with fellow promoters who they did not like.

As my partner, Candice, and I began to promote events, we gradually began to understand their opposition to participating in the dissertation project. San Diego's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) nighttime market place was indeed segregated along the lines of class, gender and race. As new business owners, we often had to compete with fellow black promoters for the 'black crowd.' Club owners would ask us to target the black crowd for nights where they had a hard time bringing in a crowd. In many cases, we had to team up with other black promoters in order to draw a bigger crowd to reach our minimum capacity so we would not breach our contract. In initial conversations with them, they told me how people would call their parties 'ghetto.' In a subsequent email, they stated how their club events were not necessarily all black, but that people racialized it as such because their flyers showed picture of black women and not white women. They argued how other events are marked as race-less simply

because they used white women on their fliers. In other words, they found it problematic that the presence of a black person on marketing infers black exclusivity, while a white person's image signals inclusivity. Although Candice and I tried to make our flyers without a black person on the flier, when non-black patrons discovered that the owners were black we would rarely see them again.

[6]

Figure 1.1 Casino Night

[7]

Figure 1.2 Rolling Rainbow

Additionally, by making our fliers racially ambiguous we created enemies with white lesbian promoters who felt that we acted out of our place by promoting to a non-black audience.

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[6] Christina Carney. "Flirty Thursday." 2013
[7] Christina Carney. "Rolling Rainbow." 2014

As promoters we were able to maintain economic autonomy by distancing ourselves from big clubs. By doing this we were not confined to minimum occupancy policies or racial politics by club owners. Our first event was at a banquet hall we rented for one night on El Cajon Boulevard in City Heights, instead of negotiating with club owners in the gay district.

[8]

Figure 1.3 Club Passage

The majority of the patrons during our inaugural event were mostly black women. Even though we knew that we would not attract the mainstream LGBT crowd, since we were outside the gay neighborhood of Hillcrest, we were not necessarily invested in attracting a mainstream crowd.

Although the context of the initial project could be seen as a failure, I instead saw it as a productive moment that made me interested in the complexity of space making practices by black queer women. I decided to use case studies from different historical moments to discuss different place-making strategies by black women, instead of an ethnographic project exclusively about contemporary groups and individuals. I met Granville "Bubba" Hughes at our first event; my wife invited her. It was during that

[8] Christina Carney. "Thanksgiving Night." 2012

event, where Hughes and I talked extensively about black queer club nights. Hughes stated how our events were similar to the one during the 1960s in her hometown of Phoenix. Hughes described her favorite club in Phoenix as a "hole in the wall," but liked it nonetheless. I slowly began to see how my investment in profit occluded how place making was imagined and implemented. According to Hughes, the events she liked most were parties at private residences and other informal spaces. While investigating local archives for the possible experiences of black queer women in 20th century San Diego, my advisor, Fatima El-Tayeb, sent me an article about Maya Angelou's experiences in San Diego sex tourism industry. Through Angelou's narrative, I was able to expand my definition of space/place-making beyond commercialized spaces, while also explaining how these experiences are left out of the archive. While promoting events, I met members of the Cua-Mackey project – an multiracial and multigenerational LGBT activists group. Their work on the thinking beyond inclusion into the military and institution of marriage assisted me in examining the racial and class politics of Prop 8 and the subsequent 2011 redistricting process in San Diego. My place as spacemaker in San Diego has allowed me to create a narrative about certain black queer women's experiences that are often devalued within the archive.[9]

Chapter 1,"Racializing and Gendering Sin in Early 20th Century San Diego," begins by discussing the city's desire to make San Diego a more family friendly place in order to combat the popularity of the city's infamous downtown red light district. Specifically, I highlight how women suffrage activists, most of them middle, class, were

[9] Granville "Bubba" Hughes (San Diego Resident) interviewed by Christina Carney, March 2014.

integral to the displacement of working-class communities in the red-light district. During the early 20th century, downtown San Diego became a dumping ground for the city's undesirables – the undocumented, cheap labor, people of color and the homeless. At the same time, it was also a popular place for leisure for military personnel due to the centralization of bars, entertainment, prostitution and affordable rooming houses in the area. However, the desire to push out undesirables and shift tourism was heightened by the city's upcoming international trade convention, the Panama-California Exposition – also a military endeavor – in 1915. Thus, city boosters initiated a campaign, under the guise of health code enforcements, to cite many buildings for demolition. It was thought that demolishing rooming houses, that many poor people relied on for housing, would rid the city of undesirable individuals in time for the World's Fair. Non-segregated rooming houses were especially targeted as places that needed to be demolished, which consequently displaced many of poor people of color. However, this displacement was also gendered. City boosters solicited the assistance of Purity and Temperance movements. Is this where the women suffragists come in? These movements condemned prostitution and alcohol consumption because it supposedly eroded family values and Christian morality. Together, these groups portrayed rooming houses as places where immorality flourished and corrupted women's modesty. Purity and Temperance movement members sought to rescue women from the supposed corruption of downtown San Diego establishments. Although most of the women who engaged in prostitution were white, black women overwhelmingly accounted for the majority of those arrested for prostitution related offenses. Most black female sex workers were often arrested with white men, since most of the men who solicited women for sex labor where white

military personnel. This created a crisis for morality campaigners and city boosters. Thus, the policing and disciplining of interracial sex became the focal point of criminal and journalistic interests during this period instead of an overall policing of prostitution.

In the second half of the chapter, I use Maya Angelou's book, *Gather Together In My Name*, to further discuss the surveillance of black women alongside how black women challenged this violence. *Gather Together In My Name* is based on Angelou's brief stay in San Diego where she worked as a madam for two black lesbians. What is interesting about the text is how Angelou negotiates the racial politics of sex work, especially among black women and white men. Since the workers' presence with white men would automatically be assumed as not only immoral, but also criminal, Angelou solicited the help of other white men to camouflage her business. Most importantly, this business engendered economic autonomy for Angelou – instead of marriage and domesticity. I show how the racial and gender politics of urban renewal that had begun in the early 20th century continued during the 1940s, during Maya Angelou's illicit business.

Chapter 2, "Alternative Safe Space," discusses how the creation of Hillcrest, San Diego's official gay space, was dependent on and linked to urban renewal in downtown San Diego during the mid to late 20th century. The creation of Hillcrest as a gay enclave was a momentous event that was spearheaded by prominent gay institutions like the Metropolitan Community Church of San Diego, the Imperial Court of San Diego and individual gay activists. The creation of the Gay Center for Social Services in 1972 was the initial institution that solidified Hillcrest as a place where gay and lesbians could congregate freely without criminalization. Soon after, other gay-owned businesses followed by centralizing their businesses in the area. Before the emergence of Hillcrest,

queer bars were located in neighborhoods that were often neglected by federal and local governments, usually poor and/or communities of color. Police would routinely raid bars that were known for the congregation of gay and lesbians. Many patrons were unjustly arrested and falsely charged with offenses such as vagrancy, jaywalking, among other things. Many gay activists used their experience working in the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s as a framework for envisioning a gay rights politics. Many gay activists courageously protested the criminalization of gay and lesbians in downtown bars, which began with petitions and later gained strength with the support of bar owners. While gay spaces created a safe space for some, gay white men, it also went hand-in-hand with the policing and displacement of disadvantaged populations, including people of color, trans men and women, the homeless, and the elderly. In order to gain support by city politicians, gay rights activists argued that gays and lesbians were an at-risk demographic that needed protection from the state. Specifically, gays rights activists said that downtown, a historically queer place, was unsafe for *white* gays and lesbians. Many gays and lesbians had congregated and voiced solidarity with sex workers, hustlers, the homeless and other supposed undesirables in downtown queer establishments of leisure. However, gay rights activists represented these groups as liabilities that would only curtail their specific political efforts. A key feature of gay politics, during this moment, was representing gays and lesbians as normative people. Many gay activists cited how most gays believed in family values and were patriotic. The policing of undesirables in downtown San Diego continued during and well after the development of Hillcrest as a gay enclave. While gay rights activists created a new center for gay collectivity in Hillcrest, many gays and lesbians of color still preferred downtown San Diego.

I use the oral history of Granville 'Bubba' Hughes, a black trans woman who migrated to San Diego in 1965, to challenge representations of downtown as unsafe for queer bodies. Hughes highlighted how downtown was the preferred place for 'black queens' because of the hostility they faced in Hillcrest not only because they were black, but also because of their gender non-normativity. Indeed, one of the key strategies of gay rights politics was differentiating, to mainstream culture, the shift from the old gay lifestyle – drag culture in seedy bars – to a family friendlier space, include example. However, Hughes not only found pleasure is these supposed dangerous spaces, but also emphasized how predominately black establishments were often more tolerant of black people than places in Hillcrest, which were predominately white, gender normative and middle-class. While I am not romanticizing downtown as place where black queens were shielded away from violence, I am interested in how race and class shaped different interpretations of safe space by black queer women.

Chapter 3, "Properly Political," discusses the culmination of gay rights activism in San Diego by centering the city's decennial redistricting process in which people of color were blamed for the passage of Proposition 8, a 2008 California ballot proposition that made same-sex marriage unconstitutional in California. However, I show the complexity of this contestation of space by highlighting how working-class residents of the City Heights neighborhood in San Diego participated in the construction of borders. The redistricting process uses recent census data, a breakdown of the population by age, race/ethnicity, and gender, to determine a community's representation in all levels of government, including local city councils and the U.S. Congress. Redistricting, using census data, involves actual map drawing: the redrawing of electoral district boundaries

for United States congressional representatives, in addition to state and local officials. The federal redistricting process must account for the preexisting interests of communities. Therefore, redistricting attempts to protect communities of interests with prevailing issues. Redistricting has given residents tools to challenge gerrymandering, the manipulation of boundaries in order give one group or party an unfair advantage over another, usually by white politicians. Historically, gerrymandering has been used to prevent African-Americans and other marginalized community members from electing their own leaders. Adherence to the Voting Rights Acts during redistricting prevents minority voting dilution by allowing racial communities to create their own districts by electing representatives of their choice.

Although sexual orientation is not a federally protected class, gay rights activists in the Hillcrest Town Council insisted that the area's interests should be protected during the redistricting process. Specifically, they expressed how the neighborhood of City Heights should be removed out of their council district because this area did not overwhelmingly support the Proposition 8. Ultimately, the city council honored gay rights activists in Hillcrest and created a separate district for the residents of City Heights. However, many queer people of color in San Diego were outraged by the condemnation of people of color by the mostly white, middle-class gay rights activists representing Hillcrest. During pre-map city council meetings, people representing the Hillcrest Town Council used data from the San Diego Registrar to create maps that visualized Prop 8 voting trends geographically. Since the neighborhood of City Heights did not overwhelmingly vote in favor of Proposition 8, relative to other areas, the Hillcrest Town Council cited this data as evidence of the inherent homophobia of communities of color.

Though City Heights is a racially mixed area, the town council cited how the concentration of East African Muslims and Latinx in City Heights made this area not only unsafe for gays and lesbians, but also that City Heights "deserved" its own district in order to prioritize race and class issues. Interestingly, many City Heights residents, who are working-class and people of color, also agreed with the separation of City Heights and Hillcrest. In light of these racialized and class politics highlighted by the Hillcrest Town Council and others, several queer of color groups emerged that challenged these representations. In this chapter I discuss the Mackey-Cua Project (formerly known as Queer Progressive People of Color), which argued that class and racial issues should be prioritized political issues in gay and lesbian politics, unlike the Hillcrest Town Council's insistence on its separation. The Mackey-Cua Project is a relatively small, but visible presence in San Diego queer politics. Its members consist of local university faculty, college students, and youth. Even though gay marriage and openly serving in the military is now legal, the Mackey-Cua Project argues that gay rights and liberation has not been realized since many concerns that affect the LGBTQ community have not been addressed. Specifically, they cite poverty and racism as issues that affect the lives of many LGBTQ people. The group has co-sponsored events that highlight the intersectional experiences of LGBTQs of color, including an event discussing how black queer women were the founders of the Black Lives Matter political movement. Even though the Hillcrest Town Council represented gay interests as white and middle-class, organizations like Mackey-Cua are making visible interventions on behalf of queer people of color in San Diego.

This dissertation examines place making strategies that were shaped by development and displacement in San Diego. The narratives of gender non-conforming black queer women gestures towards an understanding of not only the violence experienced by black queer women in supposed safe spaces, but also how *all* spaces are constructed along the lines of race, gender, class and sexuality, which puts black queer women in a particularly precarious position. This in turn produced the need to creatively construct *safer* rather than safe spaces.

Chapter One:

Racializing and Gendering Sin in Early 20th Century San Diego

In this chapter, I want to juxtapose Angelou as a black entrepreneur and pimp as presenting a queer of color critique of black respectability discourse. Queer of color critique offers important insights on the intersectionality between race and sexuality. Queering sex does not mean privileging heterosexuality and fluidity, but instead emphasizing how some heterosexuals find themselves on the margins of heterosexual privilege.[1] For example, Angelou's labor choices are seen as deviant and immoral. Angelou and other outlaw heterosexuals—whether they are actual sex workers or not—are marked outside the bounds of sexual respectability due to assumptions about their hypersexuality. The latter was exemplified in the *San Diego Union* articles in which black women's supposed hypersexuality was criminalized, especially in relation to white or otherwise non-black women. My notion of Angelou as an entrepreneur attempts to challenge the ways that certain labor choices are represented as deviant compared to other *respectable* and often more exploitive labor fields.

Additionally, this chapter will also discuss how the surveillance and criminalization of queer black women is connected to place. Many independent wage earners, in the early 20th century, often rented rooms at rooming houses in downtown San Diego, since many often lived far away from family and friends. While these places offered affordable living arrangements and a sense of community for residents, they were frequently raid for supposedly fostering prostitution, miscegenation, and other activities deemed criminal. Many of the black women who rented rooms at these places were unjustly arrested and harassed as a result. These policing strategies were spearheaded by

[1] Cathy Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" *GLQ* 3, 1997, 437–465.

urban renewal strategies in preparation for the San Diego Panama - California Exposition in 1915, which attempted to present the city as a strategic military and international trading location.

This chapter is divided into three sections. I begin with "Archiving Blackness," which is an analysis of two archives about black life in San Diego, the *Journal of San Diego History* (JSDH) and the Gaslamp Black Historical Society (GBHS). JSDH began in 1955 as a peer-reviewed journal by the San Diego History Center and the University of San Diego, which focused on San Diego and Southwestern histories. GBHS was founded in 1995 by Karen Huff, a small business owner whose specific interest was to document the history of early 20th century downtown black communities. Huff started her project in response to downtown gentrification efforts, beginning in the 1960s, which she argued lacked a focus on preserving black history in the area. GBHS provided extensive data and analysis about black life in early 20th century downtown San Diego not included in JSDH, but more importantly it included information about alternative entrepreneurship efforts by black women, which are rare within archives. This was done in order to designate historically black-owned businesses as U.S. historical landmarks. I want to learn what constitutes valuable knowledge in these archives and to find out why certain stories about black queer women are sometimes left out and sometimes included in order to help my reader understand how a politics of respectability informs what constitutes noteworthy knowledge.

The second section, "Sex Work in San Diego," centers on the experiences of black queer women documented in early 20th century San Diego *Union* newspaper articles and Maya Angelou's *Gather Together in My Name* (1974), an autobiographical

literary text based on her experience in post-WWII California—including San Diego. The aforementioned archives illustrate how black women were often arrested and suspected of deviant sexual practices. Focusing on the first few decades of the 20th century, this section begins by discussing the efforts by middle class white women in the early 20th century to transform San Diego into a family friendly place, which required ridding the city of the infamous downtown red-light district that housed primarily working-class communities of color. During this period, downtown San Diego became perceived as a dumping ground for the city's "undesirables" — the undocumented, non-white labor, and the homeless, many of whom were people of color.[2] At the same time, it was a popular destination for leisure for military personnel due to the presence of bars, entertainment, prostitution and affordable rooming houses in the area.[3] The Panama-California Exposition in 1915 was pivotal, as it heightened the city's desire to push out the undesirables and to shift toward developing the tourism industry. Under the guise of health code enforcements, city boosters initiated a campaign to demolish rooming houses—which housed many poor people of color—in an effort to rid the city of undesirable individuals in time for the Panama-California Exposition. The displacement of the "undesirables" was also gendered, as city boosters solicited the assistance of Purity and Temperance movements. These movements condemned prostitution and alcohol consumption because they supposedly eroded family values and Christian morality. Together, these groups portrayed rooming houses as places where immorality flourished and where women's modesty degenerated. Purity and Temperance movement members

[2] Matthew Schiff, "Sin Diego: The Stingaree's Transformation from Vice to Nice," *San Diego History Center Newsletter*, Winter 2004 1, 55, 1.
[3] Jordan Ervin, "Reinventing Downtown San Diego," 191.

thus sought to rescue women from the supposed corruption of downtown San Diego establishments. Although most of the women who engaged in prostitution were white, the overwhelming majority of those arrested for prostitution-related offenses were black women. Most often, black women sex workers were arrested with white men, since most of the men who solicited women for their sex labor were white military personnel. This interracial sex represented an acute crisis for morality campaigners and city boosters. Consequently, instead of a comprehensive campaign against prostitution overall, the policing and disciplining of interracial sex became the focal point of criminal and journalistic interests during this period.

I integrate Angelou's narrative in order to incorporate the perspective of an actual black queer woman juxtaposed with the San Diego *Union's* characterizations of black women as "undesirables." I am trying to learn about black queer women's experiences in San Diego using Maya Angelou's autobiography because I want to find out how black queer women's experiences—in their own words—can illuminate subterranean histories of black life in San Diego, thereby demonstrating to readers how most archival work elides black queer women's experiences due to the representation of public space as male, so readers will not assume that they cannot find these stories. Maya Angelou's autobiography, *Gather Together in My Name*, discusses sex work, interracial sex, and the residency of black women in rooming houses. Angelou's narrative explains her own economic, gendered, and racialized experience being low income, a single mother, and unmarried, but also how she negotiated these structural conditions. Since she was denied employment within more formal fields due to racism, Angelou's entrepreneurial efforts as a pimp for two lesbians in San Diego alongside the experience of being a sex worker

in the San Joaquin Valley became a profitable alternative. Angelou's clients were often non-black men. In San Diego, Angelou employed a white cab driver who brought white men to black prostitutes, while her clients in San Joaquin were predominately Mexican/Latino farm laborers. Though *Union* articles often cited how diversions from normative domesticity were criminalized and represented as abject, *Gather Together in My Name* illustrated how an economic, gendered, and racialized society often forced black queer women into these alternative situations, which sometimes allowed greater autonomy than that of normative marriages and familial structures.

Archiving Blackness

Locating black women in the archive was difficult because U.S. racial taxonomies and gender hierarchies concealed the complexity of social relations in the Southwest, which affected black women differently than black men. Though JSDH articles provided valuable information about early black life in San Diego, the information is limited because it had scant descriptions about black women. Moreover, when black women are mentioned, they are described as racially ambiguous—as opposed to the racial homogeneity ascribed to African American men. However, this ambiguity within the archives alluded to particular kinds of racialization engendered by the U.S.–Mexico border.

Although the *Journal of San Diego History* declared that America Newton was "one of the earliest black women to arrive [in San Diego]" in 1872, they failed to acknowledge the history of how "Mexican" and "Indian" sometimes stood for black, which was specific to the Southwest. African/black persons were assumed to be

"sufficiently assimilated" and "absorbed" into Indian and Mexican populations and therefore able to "pass" as non-black persons, according to a JSDH article.[4] However, the use of racial taxonomies by the U.S. census and state records engendered dualisms between racialized individuals, which elided the complexity of social relations in the Southwest. After Mexico conceded much of the Southwest to the Republic of Texas in 1836, anti-miscegenation laws emerged and became strictly enforced. Though miscegenetic marriages prior to the concession were validated, those occurring after the concession were deemed illegal in order to protect the property interests of white/Anglo families. Blood quantum levels as well as family lineage were interrogated: one was considered white if a person had less than one-half Indian or less than one-eighth Negro ancestry and a person could marry a non-black person if they had no black or African ancestors in their families in the last three generations. Thus, it was quite common for people who were Mexican to have family members that were black and Indian.

A JSDH article, "The Mary Walker Incident: Black Prejudice in San Diego, 1866"—which is not an article about San Diego black history, but rather a detailed analysis of a particular incident—described not only anti-black racism, but also the obscuration of skin color and race. The article discussed the firing of white Mason Street School schoolteacher, Mary Walker, due to her companionship with Margaret Ogden, who was described in another article as a "lightskinned black woman."[5] There was backlash against Walker after Ogden accompanied her to the Mason classroom and a hotel for lunch. In protest, Walker commented that some of her accusers were actually

[4] Robert L. Carlton, "Blacks in San Diego County: A Social Profile, 1850–1880," *Journal of San Diego History* 21, no. 4, (1975): 11.
[5] Carlton, "Blacks in San Diego County," 11.

darker than Ogden.[6] The region had a history of American soldiers that married "Indian" women. Much of the San Diego population, including Walker's students, were descendants of "many American soldiers and some sailors [who] had come to San Diego in the early days, and married pretty señoritas," according to Walker's memoir.[7] Though an 1860 census documented only 6 blacks in San Diego, 4 were identified as "mulattoes," which was a separate racial category in the U.S. census until 1930.[8] Indeed, women with black heritage often presented themselves as mulatto and Indian to census takers. Ramona Wolf, 1 out of 2 black women married to a white man recorded on the 1880 census, was also listed as mulatto on account of her Indian heritage. Interestingly, she was said to have inspired Helen Hunt Jackson's popular novel *Ramona* (1884), although she is portrayed as "Mexican" in the novel.[9] JSDH's representation of black women's racialized difference suggested how the border shaped local racial configurations by addressing the limited fluidity between "black," "Mexican," and "Indian" as racialized categories.

Women's proximity to whiteness and racialized respectability through the performance of non-blackness was not only symbolic, but also material. Since women were restricted from owning property and other civil rights, they were not as capable of attaining wealth independently from men. Though women increasingly began to enter the workforce in the 19th century, many women still entered the institution of marriage for

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[6] Henry Schwartz, "The Mary Walker Incident: Black Prejudice in San Diego, 1866," *Journal of San Diego History* 19, no. 19, (1973): 17.
[7] Schwartz, "The Mary Walker Incident," 15.
[8] Census, 1860, San Diego. Pioneer Collection, San Diego History Center, Serra Museum and Library, San Diego.
[9] Carlton, "Black in San Diego County," 15.

economic security, which was guaranteed through men's access to higher wages. Since blacks' efforts at wealth accumulation were viciously attacked through anti-miscegenation laws, it seemed likely that black women often had to hide their proximity to blackness in order to secure and maintain access to economic mobility mostly obtained through marriage and by their proximity to men.

Thus, much of black women's experiences in the archive during 19th century San Diego are hidden due to racial taxonomies, which forced many women to adhere to whiteness. Additionally, the stakes for concealing black lineage was high for women due to their restriction in public space. However, the increase in black people's migration from southern U.S. states in the 20th century engendered not only the development of segregated neighborhoods in San Diego due to racism, but also shaped how blackness would be discussed in later historical archives.

Although alternative archives from excluded communities also reinforced black respectability, they did something that JSDH failed to do—incorporate histories about black women. Using both newspaper articles and the location of known black-owned businesses as an index, the Gaslamp Black Historical Society (GBHS) stated that by 1909, a "separate and distinguished community," known as "Darktown," had developed along Union Street between H Street (now Market Street) and J Street in downtown San Diego.[10] GBHS stated that George Ramsey, owner of the renowned Douglas Hotel and nearby club, Creole Palace, within Darktown, named the area the "Harlem of the West"

[10] Karen L. Huff, *The Lillian and Ocie Grant Properties: Supplemental Study of the Historical Assessment of the 1431–63 J Street Building* (San Diego: Black Historical Society of San Diego, 2006), 6.

and became its "unofficial mayor."[11] Though Ramsey owned the Douglas Hotel, he died shortly before it opening. His wife, Mabel Rowe, described as a mulatto in several historical accounts, took over ownership of several of his properties.[12] According to alternative archives, Rowe ran several of the properties as brothels.[13] Similarly, Lillian Grant was considered the "East Village Madam" who used her properties on 1431–1437 J Street as brothels, according to GBHS archives. Though she bought the properties with her husband, according to GBHS they were responsible for the "largest single purchase of properties in downtown by an African American," and she was overseer of their management. According to an oral history by her granddaughter recorded by GBHS, her occupation was deemed "respectable" because her properties represented a "safe harbor for loose women while [she] receive[d] a substantial cut of the profits."[14]

Additionally, GBHS highlighted working-class residential patterns that departed from normative domesticity. Though downtown communities were not racially homogenous, many laborers relied on commercialized residential hotels, which were affordable options for many low-income working people in heavily populated 20th century urban areas. Historically, women usually managed many of these institutions.[15] While palace hotels catered to wealthy white businessmen and their families, rooming

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[11] Huff, *Grant Properties*, 6.
[12] Richard L. Carrico and Stacey Jordan, "Centre City Development Corporation Downtown San Diego African-American Heritage Study" (Mooney & Associates, San Diego, 2004), II-16
[13] Huff, *Grant Properties*, 17.
[14] Huff, *Grant Properties*, 17.
[15] Paul Groth, *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 251.

and lodging houses often housed transient unskilled and lower-paid workers.[16] Rooming houses were usually built with up to eighteen rooms, including bath and laundry and other bedrooms created by dividing larger bedrooms and parlors.[17] Sometimes owners combined several houses together and established it as a single rooming house that could house up to 70 tenants.[18] These institutions often housed men and women together outside of the surveillance of familial networks, which alarmed moral reformers during the early 20th century. However, commercialized residential living continued to be an affordable option for San Diego's racialized labor force well into the mid-20th century.

GBHS highlighted significant historical realities of black life in downtown San Diego. Their data departed from black respectability in the archive by documenting black female business owners who supported working-class women's independent labor practices—in particular, sex work. Moreover, these alternative labor practices were sustained in working-class residential institutions. However, a reality that GBHS did not address were the experiences of black women who were independent wage earners, instead of owners, within residential hotels. The next section will trace the possible realities of working-class black women in downtown San Diego.

Sex Work in San Diego

It is important to examine the reality of black female independent wage earners in early 20th century San Diego because they not only had to negotiate gender discrimination, but also racism. I use *Gather Together in My Name* as an

[16] Ibid., 5.
[17] Ibid., 93–94.
[18] Ibid., 93.

autobiographical account that documented how working-class black women attempted to maintain autonomy over their lives during the 1940s in San Diego. The stories within the text are often not discussed in the canonical archive because they challenge respectability. Specifically, Angelou discusses her entrepreneurship as a pimp and a sex worker as efforts that were more profitable than those in formal labor fields and her reliance on non-familial networks for economic independence and emotional support. Her narrative about sex work uncovers the exploitation of black women within all labor fields, in addition to how the legacies of anti-miscegenation laws framed her sexual access and performance with non-black men. Additionally, being away from familial networks and close friends allowed Angelou greater autonomy and privacy, especially since she had to maintain a level of respectability due to her status as a single-mother. As such, Angelou's narrative departs from white/female perspectives in important and distinct ways.

Black Women and Labor

> "You mean you graduated from high school?"
> "Yes."
> "And you work as a waitress?"[19]

Black women's marginalization in formal labor fields often forced them into low-paying positions that white women refused to do. While white women's representational power made them ideal candidates for higher-paying sales positions and receptionist work, black women were relegated to low-paying work as domestics and cooks, which often reinforced positions historically designated for black women. With the hope of

[19] Angelou, *Gather Together*, 51–52.

escaping the confines of her mother's house and becoming independent in order to sustain both herself and her son, Angelou applied to become a telephone company receptionist. Though she passed the examination, Angelou wrote that the white female interviewer concluded that she had not passed. Though Angelou realized that her "years of white ignorance" constituted her dismissal, Angelou insisted on taking the test again. The interviewer refused, but however insisted that there was another opening she could apply to: "a bus girl in the cafeteria."[20] Though she had no experience in service labor or as a cook, unlike her qualifications to become an operator, she was hired immediately. When Angelou asked her mother's boyfriend, Papa Ford, to teach her how to cook, he insisted she not take the position: "Colored women been cooking so long, thought you'd be tired of it by now…Got all that education. How come you don't get a goddam job where you can go to work looking like something?" Though Angelou had more education than her elders or even her peers, it still did not guarantee her access to high-paying positions.

Angelou's experiences of rejection occurred to other black women, too. While working as a server in a predominately black club, Angelou met a black lesbian couple, Johnnie Mae and Beatrice, who later invited her to their apartment. Johnnie Mae was surprised to hear that Angelou was a waitress even though she a high school diploma. Similarly, Beatrice had a high school diploma and was a military veteran; however, she was only able to got a job being a housekeeper and cook "at some rich old woman's house."[21] Though World War II engendered an era wherein blacks were able to acquire

[20] Angelou, *Gather Together*, 9.
[21] Ibid., 52.

high-paying jobs, after the war many black veterans were not reinstated because they mainly served in branches with the lowest demand for technical needs and thus were disposable during times of non-crisis. Angelou, Johnnie Mae, and Beatrice had similar experiences in the labor market, which contributed to their shared business ventures.

Sex Work in San Diego

> One thing I don't hold with is women messing 'round with married mens. The other is messing 'round with white men. First one the Bible don't like, second one the law don't like.[22]

Throughout her stint as a pimp for Johnnie Mae and Beatrice, Angelou felt constant pressure to conceal her illicit business in San Diego, where there was a history of prosecuting black women for prostitution at higher rates than white women. For example, though black women were only 1.3% of the San Diego population between 1910 and 1930—compared to 98.6% of white women (Latinas were classified as "white" in the U.S. census)—they accounted for over 17% of the total arrests for prostitution, 24.8% of arrests for vagrancy, and paid more in fines per arrest compared to white women.[23] This national trend continued throughout the 20th century in major metropolitan areas.

However, though black women were indeed arrested and observed at higher rates, due to their visibility, interracial sex between black women and white men was more routinely sensationalized in local San Diego media than sex between people of the same race. In other words, it appeared that miscegenation within San Diego, not

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[22] Angelou, *Gather Together*, 65.
[23] Clare V. McKanna, "Prostitutes, Progressives and Police: The Viability of Vice in San Diego 1900–1930," *Journal of San Diego History* 35, no. 1, (1989): 61.

commercialized sex itself, engendered greater social protests. A vice raid at a "negro rooming house" in downtown San Diego resulted in the arrests of "two white men, three negroes and three negresses."[24] Though no charges were brought against the black men and women who were arrested, the white men were charged with vagrancy. During their sentencing, Judge Davin proclaimed: "There was absolutely no excuse for white men being in a place like this…although it is only natural to find colored people in a colored rooming house."[25] Thus, while it was not criminal to be in a rooming house among people of your own race, it was illegal to take part in interracial sociality. Similarly, a 1910 incident involving the alleged assault of a white man, John Osborne, by a black woman, Anna Barnett, in the Overton rooming house also reflected the disapproval of white and black sociality. The article stated how "little sympathy was shown to Osborne in the court proceedings, in view of his having frequented the society of negresses, and the admission that he had invited the women to his room."[26] In an even earlier article from 1909, "Police Arrest Man with Negro Woman," police cited "John Doe" Forrest, a white man, and Ella Harrison, "a colored woman," with vagrancy.[27] Police also cooperated with military and health authorities to criminalize supposed sex work under the guise of preventing venereal diseases. Several articles discussed black women in the presence of "sailors," who were presumably as white. A 1917 *Union* article, "Arrest: Women Found with Soldiers," described how three "negresses" were charged with

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[24] "Two Convicted After Raid by Police," *San Diego Tribune* (San Diego, CA), June 26, 1922.
[25] Ibid.
[26] "Anna Barnett Held to Superior Court: Little Sympathy Show White Man Who Admits He Was In Negress' Company," *San Diego Union* (San Diego, CA), April 3, 1910.
[27] "Police Arrest White Man with A Negro Woman: Further Captures of Like Nature are Promised," *San Diego Union* (San Diego, CA), June 1, 1909.

vagrancy, while the soldiers were "turned over to military officials."[28] Black women's presence with white men was a sign of sexual deviance because it crossed the color line.

Furthermore, though black men were also arrested for prostitution-related offenses, black women were represented as culprits of non-normative sexuality. White supremacist ideas about the hypersexuality of blacks not only affected black men and their supposed assault on white women, but also black women. The discourse of "white slavery" imagined a helpless white woman, usually from the rural U.S. or a white European country who was exploited by foreign-born men in a U.S. city. However, one of the first prosecutions of white slavery charged a black woman in New York City.[29]

NEGRESS ENGAGED IN "WHITE SLAVE" TRADE CONVICTED

Bella Moore, the negress convicted of selling Alice Milton and Bella Woods in the so-called white slave case. At the top, the two girls as they appeared in the trial.

Conviction is First Result of Campaign Started by Special Grand Jury Headed By Son of John D. Rockefeller

New York City, May 27.—Bella Moore, the negress from whom the detective retained by District Attorney Whitman bought two white girls, Alice Milton and Bella Woods, for immoral purposes, has been convicted and imprisoned.

This is the first result of the cam-[30]

Figure 2.1 White Slavery

[28] "Arrest: Women Found in Room with Soldiers," *San Diego Union* (San Diego, CA), November 3, 1917.
[29] "Negress Engaged in 'White Slave' Trade Convicted," *San Diego Tribune* (San Diego, CA), May 27, 1910.
[30] Ibid.

Similarly, a "negro and negress" were charged with forcing an "Indian girl" into white slavery in San Diego.[31] The *Union* article explained that the black couple met her in Los Angeles and influenced her to travel to San Diego where a "negress who runs a place in the Stingaree district…[was] looking for women."[32] Thus, sexual anxieties around women's autonomy was not only based on gender, but also racialized.

The policing of women's bodies, especially black women's, were informed by racist immigration policies. The immigration of Chinese nationals, racialized as promiscuous and deviant, was represented as jeopardizing white female virtue. As we know, anti-Asian immigration began with the federal government's Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, followed by the curbing of Japanese immigration in 1910 through both the Gentlemen's Agreement, and the Mann Act of 1910, which prohibited the transportation of women across U.S. state borders in order to eliminate "white slavery." In 1880 and 1882, anti-miscegenation legislation passed in California, with Representative John C. Stedman proclaiming the prohibition of "the intermarriage of white persons with Chinese, negroes, mulattoes, or persons of mixed blood descended from a Chinaman or negro." Anti-Asian immigration continued with the Tyding-McDuffie Act of 1934 that restricted Filipino immigration. Though the Mann Act was represented as a solution to a supposed increase of prostitution in urban cities, it was primarily a response to the changing racial topography and white women's shifting economic and social position within an industrializing U.S. landscape. At that time, white women's challenge to the cult of domesticity and true womanhood was met with the discourse of "white slavery." As labor

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[31] "Negress Engaged in 'White Slave' Trade Convicted," *San Diego Tribune* (San Diego, CA), May 27, 1910.
[32] Ibid.

opportunities outside of the home became more available to women during WWI and WWII, fears about white women in public spaces and miscegenation became front and center. The discourse about "white slavery" imagined a helpless white woman, usually from the rural US or a white European country, exploited by foreign-born men in the US city. Piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity were central to ideas about true womanhood. Purity campaigners, with the help of white male politicians, argued how women's place was in the home, and not in public urban spaces. While white women were expected to embody these ideals, black women were mostly excluded from this idealized image of womanhood. For purity campaigners, the discourse of white slavery grew out of their racial anxieties, which sought to discipline and regulate interracial sexual relations, most often via racial segregation.[33]

Since Johnnie Mae's and Beatrice's clients were mostly white men in the military, Angelou had to negotiate not only obtaining access to white men as clients, but more importantly concealing their interaction with black women. Angelou employed a white cab driver that drove white men from military bases to Johnnie Mae and Beatrice's apartment. Though the lesbian couple occasionally participated in sex work in order to pay their rent, this was the first time they took part in it as their primary occupation. Additionally, she employed a bouncer from the club where she was employed as a waitress to look out for police, as well as control any disputes between the clients and the women. Angelou had this to say about her interactions with white men:

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[33] Patricia O'Flinn, "The Elimination of Prostitution? Moral Purity Campaigns, Middle-Class Clubwomen, and the California Red Light Abatement Act," *Ex Post Facto*, 1996; Egal Feldman, "Prostitution, the Alien Woman and the Progressive Imagination, 1910-1915," *American Quarterly* 19, no. 2, 192–206.

> You had to be very careful in speaking to whites, and especially to white men. My mother said that when a white man sees your teeth he thinks he sees your underclothes.
>
> I had managed in a few tense years to become a snob on all levels, racial, cultural and intellectual. I was a madam and thought myself morally superior to the whores. I was a waitress and believed myself cleverer than the customers I served. I was a lonely unmarried mother and held myself to be freer than the married women I met.[34]

Angelou's entrepreneurial efforts often presented a challenge that had to be negotiated not only along the lines of race and gender, but also place.

One of the most effective ways that city officials and residents disciplined downtown residents was through the use of land use zoning ordinances. In *Living Downtown: A History of Residential Hotels in the Unites States* (1994), Paul Groth discusses the politics of downtown spaces in U.S. cities, with a focus on San Francisco. Groth's investigation of the politics of housing in U.S. cities reveals how race and gender determined and organized living spaces. In many American metropolitan cities, the location of cheap hotels was derisively labeled "skid row" and conjured images of racial and class depravity.[35] In San Francisco, Progressive leaders targeted downtown Asian communities, accusing them of causing moral and cultural breakdowns.[36] Represented as culprits of social deviancy, the makeshift types of housing in downtown areas disrupted idea(l)s of normative domesticity regarding who cooks food and where, the proximity of neighbors, appropriate activities, mixed-use land, and property ownership.[37] Hotel housing critics sought stricter zoning ordinances to stamp out these racially intermixed

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[34] Angelou, *Gather Together*, 60–61.
[35] Groth, *Living Downtown*, 151
[36] Groth, *Living Downtown,* 202-203
[37] Groth, *Living Downtown,* 2

areas in an effort to erect a new economic structure controlled by the city's elite class.[38] In order to combat what they perceived to be the plight of inner city life, city planners in the early 20th century refashioned cities around the idea of "separation and specialization," which introduced a set of laws that sought to discourage the mixing of economic classes, to create lower density areas, and to maximize privacy for "families."[39]

In San Diego, the World's Fair in Balboa Park (1915–1917) intensified the San Diego Health Department's desire to "clean up" downtown. Health inspector Walter Bellon was instrumental in the removal of low-income residents from the downtown area. After serving in the Spanish American War, Bellon was employed as the plumbing inspector for the City Health Department in 1909. In 1910, Dr. Francis H. Mead, the Department's Health Officer, assigned Bellon to identify buildings in the downtown area for destruction on account of their failure to adhere to zoning ordinances. Bellon's cleanup of downtown San Diego lasted six years (1910–1916), resulting in the removal of 120 structures in Stingaree and the condemnation of more than 500 inside rooms in the old Red Light District. As a result of Bellon's crackdown, "the waterfront had been cleaned up, the Stingaree had been wiped out, Chinatown had almost disappeared, and minimum health standards had been met. The Red Light District officially was no

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[38] Groth, *Living Downtown*, 202–203

[39] Groth, *Living Downtown*, 17, 18; John Modell and Tamara K. Hareven, "Urbanization and the Malleable Household: An Examination of Boarding and Lodging in American Families, *Journal of Marriage and Family* 35, no. 3, 467–479

more—the trade had spread all over town." The area was later made into a municipal pier.[40]

Health inspector Walter Bellon's memoirs further illustrate the spatial and racial dynamics of surveillance in downtown neighborhoods. The San Diego Historical Society archived Bellon's map of Stingaree that included the blocks bounded by First and Fifth, Market and K. However, the red-light district, as defined by the Health Department, covered about 100 city blocks, including the "restricted district," was bounded by the waterfront, F Street on the north, and 16th Street on the east. Most of the city's saloons resided in this area in addition to City Hall and many "respectable homes and businesses." The map included descriptions of rooming houses suspected of prostitution, saloons, and gambling houses. Much of the demolished places were homes of multiracial low-income residents. However, they were racialized as Chinese/Asian laborers, with Bellon cataloging buildings as "Chinese Lodging," "2 story tenement…Chinese," "Opium Den," "Chinese Lodging" and "Chinamen Masonic Temple." The following is an excerpt from Bellon's memoir about Stingaree/Chinatown:

> Early architects in San Diego seemed to favor inside rooms with an unventilated light shaft, or they just built walls leaving out the windows. Many inside rooms in Chinatown were like ratholes, without light or ventilation. The beds consisted of a few planks, with a thin layer of matting and a round wooden headrest. Mattresses were rarely used. Several carbon dioxide tests were made in rooms while an oriental was sleeping. Any normal person entering a room with such a high percentage

[40] Elizabeth MacPhail, "When the Lights Went Out in San Diego: The Little Known Story of San Diego's 'Restricted District,'" *The Journal of San Diego History* (hereafter JSDH) 20, no. 2 (1974): 1–28.

> of impure air would strangle and stagger out in a hurry. Yet these orientals lived to a ripe old age.[41]

In *Contagious Divides* (2001), historian Nayan Shah shows that the state's anxieties about maintaining white racial "purity," and ultimately white heteropatriarchal rule, manifested in the practices of defining and delimiting the "gender roles, household numbers, and spatial arrangements" of communities of color: "there was a clear limit to which persons could deploy the 'privacy' of social relations of domesticity to shield themselves from state intrusion into sexual activities and social affinities." That is to say, the policing of the "private" domestic sphere by the state had been a regular occurrence in communities of color; in fact, this state policing of the private has been *productive* of racial categories such as African American/black, Chinese, and Filipino.[42]

In addition to Bellon, the city's Vice Suppression Committee (also known as the Purity League), which consisted of male religious leaders and clubwomen, were integral in convincing the public that a cleanup of downtown was important to the city's economic development.[43] Though they were small in numbers, their social clout and their ability to obtain petitions from concerned residents made them San Diego's most vocal opponents of downtown brothels and rooming or parlor houses. On October 2nd 1912, the *San Diego Union* reported that "reform leaders" met with Chief of Police J. Keno to "slam [the] 'lid'" on Stingaree, but only if plans were made to offer alternative residency

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[41] Elizabeth MacPhail, "When the Lights Went Out in San Diego: The Little Known Story of San Diego's 'Restricted District,'" *The Journal of San Diego* 20, no. 2 (1974): 15.
[42] Nayan Shah, *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco's Chinatown*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001: 84.
[43] Elizabeth MacPhail, "When the Lights Went Out in San Diego: The Little Known Story of San Diego's 'Restricted District,'" *The Journal of San Diego* 20, no. 2 (1974)

for "outcasts"—specifically women. Among the reform leaders was Rev. R. H. Harbert, who was listed as "colored."[44] Other people on the committee included those who were "prominent in social and political and civic affairs," such as Mrs. R.C. Allen who was the wife of the director of the Panama-California exposition and Mrs. Armstrong a leader of the suffrage movement.[45] The *Union* reported how Harbert was "regarded by the heads of the police department as one of the most practical and broadminded of the reformers."[46] Harbert states this in relation to the closing of the restricted district: "The social evil will not be uprooted or killed by the closing of Stingaree. Some of the women, those who are not too hardened, may be reclaimed, and those who are past reform can be driven out, and the place cleaned up. I do not believe in licensing the social evil."[47]

Since black women comprised less than one percent of the population between 1900–1910 but accounted for the majority of the arrests for prostitution related offenses, the *Union* reported how many of the women were non-residents, also known as "floaters."[48] As an example, a 1914 article's headline announced, "Claims Disorderly Houses Suppressed: Whole Arrests of Women at Night, Particularly Colored Girls, Prompts Police Officials to State that City is Invaded by 'Floaters' and that No 'Joints' Are Being Operated." Initially, Progressives advocated for the re-housing of "fallen"

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[44] "Society to Combat Evils in Uptown District Next," *The San Diego Union* (San Diego, CA), November 12, 1912, 13
[45] "Offer Door of Hope as Refuge for Magdalenes," *The Evening Tribune* (San Diego, CA), October 2, 1912, 5
[46] "Society to Combat Evils in Uptown District Next," *The San Diego Union* (San Diego, CA), November 12, 1912, 13
[47] "Reformers Want Stingaree Closed," *The San Diego Union* (San Diego, CA), October 2, 1912, 19.
[48] "Claims Disorderly Houses Suppressed," *The Evening Tribune* (San Diego, CA), September 3, 1914

women at rehabilitation homes; however, since black women were considered to be outsiders, many were asked to leave the city. In 1915, seven months after the opening of the Panama Exposition, a newspaper article stated how "22 Negro women," who lived in downtown waterfront shacks and rooming houses, were driven out.[49] The Red Light Abatement Act, signed a year earlier, made it easier to condemn buildings and force the relocation of blacks along the waterfronts as well.[50]

Due to fears that her affairs would be revealed to the police, Angelou ultimately stopped her business. While JSDH discussed African American middle-class men who were religious and political leaders as "Black Pioneers," Angelou's business could never be imagined as such. However, her efforts at wealth accumulation defied respectability. Throughout the book, her family devalued her due to her status as a single mother. Her mother's boyfriend suggested that she get married so that she would be spared from exploitation in the formal labor field and ensure economic security for her family. However, Angelou defied this expectation in order to establish bodily and economic autonomy within a society regulated by racist and gendered discrimination. *Gather Together in My Name* illustrated that although anti-prostitution discourse was couched in normative ideas regarding the supposed protection of women, black queer women actually secured autonomy over their lives in ways that departed from this.

While early 20th century processes enforced morality codes that targeted the sexual and economic autonomy of black women who were independent wage laborers,

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[49] "22 Negro Women Driven Out of City by Police," *The San Diego Union* (San Diego, CA), December 7, 1915.
[50] "Police Enforce Abatement Law," *The Evening Tribune* (San Diego, CA), June 18, 1915

the 1960s ushered in discourses about the safety risks of black bodies to the nuclear family model being presented to urban planners in San Diego. Although fear of criminalization ultimately resulted in Angelou leaving the business that she started in San Diego, Angelou did not cast herself as a weak or vulnerable woman who needed the protection of domesticity or marriage to protect her from exploitation, which some reviewers of the book have claimed. Angelou understood that women were also exploited within the institution of marriage. Unlike the moralizing discourse espoused by Purity organizations, Angelou's narrative demonstrates agency and even pleasure in sex work as well as an internalization of racialized hierarchies and a willingness to participate and profit in a system of exploitation. My aim is not to romanticize the sex industry or critique individuals who do choose to enter the institution of marriage. Rather, I am trying to disrupt this duality between the supposed safety in marriage (often the discourse within the cult of domesticity and true womanhood) and the assumed unsafety of being unmarried and/or a sex worker. This either/or situation never applied to the reality of black, working-class women. Therefore, an important contribution of black feminism and queer of color critique is to look at the ways that entire communities (made up of not just women, but also men and children) have been produced as racial subjects precisely because of their deviance from the norms of (white) heterosexual domesticity.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have interrogated what normally constitutes valuable or noteworthy information in relation to black/African American local history. Due to a politics of respectability, which elides discussions of sexuality and performances that

deviate from standards of proper behavior, canonical and alternative archives by both mainstream and excluded communities often create normative histories that exclude some black queer women's experiences. Maya Angelou's place-making strategies illuminated how informal labor fields, specifically sex work, became more desirable for marginalized women of color than formal or respectable labor fields. Additionally, the legacies of miscegenation, especially during processes of gentrification in early 20th century San Diego, played an important role in how she negotiated her business.

Chapter Two:

Alternative Safe Spaces

According to the *Journal of San Diego History*, Hillcrest was described as a neighborhood in "decline" populated by "isolated individuals" during the mid-20th century.[1] However, it was also a place of "refuge and secure dwelling" for San Diego gays and lesbians beginning in the early 1970s, which lead to its "evolution" as "San Diego's premiere gay community." The concentration of homophile organizations in Hillcrest resulted in the proliferation of a gay and lesbian community in the area. The production of Hillcrest as a quasi-gay neighborhood by gay liberationists, and as a gay enclave in the early 1970s, was a momentous event that was spearheaded by prominent gay institutions like the Metropolitan Community Church of San Diego (a gay church that was originally founded in Los Angeles), the Imperial Court of San Diego (a fundraising organization created by drag queens), and individual gay activists. The creation of the Gay Center for Social Services in 1972 was the initial institution that solidified Hillcrest as a place where gays and lesbians could congregate freely without fear of criminalization. Soon after, gay-owned businesses followed. Before the emergence of Hillcrest, queer businesses and institutions were located in neighborhoods—usually poor and/or communities of color—that were simultaneously neglected and targeted by federal and local governments. The police would routinely raid bars that were known to draw gay and lesbian clientele, unjustly arresting and falsely charging the patrons with offenses such as vagrancy and jaywalking. Drawing on their experience working in the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, many gay activists

[1] Michael E Dillinger, "Hillcrest: From Haven to Home,"*Journal of San Diego History* 46 no. 4 (2000), Accessed March 8, 2013, http://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/2000-4/hillcrest.htm

courageously protested the criminalization of gay and lesbians in downtown bars, beginning with petitions and later expanded their movement with the support of bar owners.

While the newly-created gay establishments provided safe space for white middle-class patrons, they also went hand-in-hand with the further policing and displacement of disadvantaged populations: people of color, trans men and women, the homeless, and the elderly. In order to gain the support of city politicians, gay rights activists argued that gays and lesbians were an at-risk demographic that needed protection from the state. Specifically, gay rights activists contended that downtown San Diego, a historically queer place, was unsafe for *white* gays and lesbians. While many gays and lesbian had voiced solidarity with sex workers, hustlers, the homeless, and other supposed undesirables in downtown queer establishments of leisure, middle-class gay rights activists instead represented these non-normative groups as liabilities that would jeopardize their political efforts to gain respectability. A key feature of U.S. national gay politics during the 1970s, was representing gays and lesbians as normative people.[2] The policing of undesirables in downtown San Diego continued during and well after the development of Hillcrest as a gay enclave.

While gay rights activists created a new center for gay collectivity in Hillcrest, some gays and lesbians still preferred downtown San Diego. I use the oral history of Granville 'Bubba' Hughes, a black trans woman who migrated to San Diego in 1965, to

[2] Eskridge, William N. Jr. "Privacy Jurisprudence and the Apartheid of the Closet," (1997). *Faculty Scholarship Series*. Paper 3805. Accessed on May 23, 2016. http://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/fss_papers/3805

challenge representations of downtown as unsafe for queer bodies. According to Hughes, downtown was the preferred place for "black queens," who often faced hostility in Hillcrest because they were both black and transgender.[3] Indeed, one of the key strategies of gay rights politics at that time was to publicize the alleged shift from the old gay drag- culture-in-seedy-bars lifestyle to a family-friendly lifestyle. In contrast to these claims, Hughes reported finding both pleasure and *acceptance* in these supposedly dangerous downtown spaces, emphasizing how predominately black establishments were often more tolerant of queer black people than Hillcrest businesses, which were predominately white, gender normative, and middle class. While I am not romanticizing downtown as a place in which black queens were shielded from violence, I am interested in how race and class shaped different interpretations of safe space by black queer women.

Gentrification of Downtown San Diego

My project is influenced by Christina Hanhardt's book *Safe Space: History and the Politics of Violence* (2013), which recounts how "gay militants" (her own term) actively disciplined members within the LGBT community—youth, trans men and women, the homeless, people of color, and the elderly—who departed from mainstream LGBT politics. According to Hanhardt, the "construction of violence" was key in these processes, as gay activists maligned "undesirable" populations as risks to public safety.[4] For many white gay and lesbians, black and brown men and youth epitomized the main

[3] Granville 'Bubba' Hughes (San Diego Resident) interviewed by Christina Carney, March 2014.
[4] Hanhardt, *Safe Spaces*, 4.

homophobic threat. Additionally, homophile organizations invoked the "culture of poverty" discourse by claiming that gay neighborhoods had to be protected from surrounding urban communities, which comprised primarily men of color. Specifically, they referenced conclusions from sociological studies and (mis)representations from popular culture to pathologize impoverished communities. In short, in an effort to carve out space for white gays and lesbians, homophile organizations participated in the pathologization of poverty—the very same strategy used by urban planners to justify gentrification of downtown U.S. areas.

Urban renewal policies, often couched in city booster rhetoric, have removed low-income individuals and people of color from areas targeted for gentrification in San Diego. Urban planners and historians have cited how legibility within cities is produced within coherent patterns that satisfy middle-class desires for a risk-free experience.[5] The deployment of public health and morality claims continues to be successfully used to displace people who are considered undesirable. While representing San Diego as a modern city during the Panama Exposition in 1915 served as the impetus for gentrification in the early 20th century, efforts to combat suburban sprawl and increase profit within the city center drove urban renewal efforts in the mid- to late 20th century. Both historical moments benefitted San Diego's economic interests, public and private. downtown San Diego had historically been a queer area because it did not face the same type of surveillance as middle and upper-class communities. Drawing on data from newspapers and historical archives, I discuss how the gentrification of downtown San

[5] Lynch, *The Image of the City*, 2–3; Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 16–17, 129; Findlay, *Magic Lands* 51, 285.

Diego was premised on treating the area as a war zone. As discussed in Chapter One, during the gentrification process in the early 20th century, first-wave feminists, city boosters, and eventually the military formed an alliance to displace Chinese, Filipino, and black laborers who lived in downtown. While the campaign did not push out all undesirable populations, the area went through another development phase during the mid-20th century. However, in this latter period, white lesbians and gays joined city boosters in condemning downtown as a safety risk.

In the early decades of the 20th century, a national trend of redeveloping cities emerged that fortified links between the private and public sectors.[6] Though urban renewal programs commenced in the 1950s, the height of gentrification was reached in the 1970s, as downtown businesses began to relocate to the suburbs.[7] Suburbanization was the product of the WWII industry boom and increased local defense spending, and the advent of automobiles that enabled middle-class whites to live away from downtown.[8] In addition to the production of suburbs, the Public Housing Acts of 1949, 1954, and 1965 reinforced urban renewal by demolishing dilapidated housing and replacing them with high-rise housing that consequently ghettoized many low-income individuals and people of color.[9]

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[6] Jordan Ervin, "Reinventing Downtown San Diego: A Spatial and Cultural Analysis of the Gaslamp Quarter," *Journal of San Diego History* 52, no. 4 (2007): 191

[7] Reiner M. Hoff, "San Diegans, Inc.: The Formative Years,1958–63, The Redevelopment of Downtown San Diego," *The Journal of San Diego History* 36, no. 1 (1990):48–64. Accessed on May 23, 2016 http://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/1990/january/sdinc/

[8] Iris Engstrand, *San Diego: California's Cornerstone* (San Diego: Sunbelt Publications, 2005), 178, 188, 194.

[9] Ervin, "Reinventing Downtown San Diego," 192.

To stem the perceived deterioration of U.S. urban centers, scholars such as Jane Jacobs emphasized that a "street fabric" between buildings and people needed to be created with the use of historical buildings, mixed-use zoning, density in housing, and shortened city blocks.[10] Likewise, urban planner Kevin Lynch contended that cities needed to create a democratic urban center that "speak[s] of the individuals and their complex society, of their aspirations and their historical tradition, of the natural setting, and of the complicated functions and movements of the city world."[11] In 1972, San Diego adopted these new urban landscape ideas, beginning with the Horton Plaza Redevelopment Plan, which would bring a major retail village to the downtown area.[12] Horton Plaza's redevelopment in 1985 was the inception of further projects within the area.[13] Along with accepting a private donation, in 1974 the San Diego City Council hired urban planners Kevin Lynch and Donald Appleyard to make a report on the downtown area. Though Lynch and Appleyard said the area should feature a diversity of activities and representations of downtown life, they also warned the council of how the overuse of private interests would be damaging:

> [the] center of the city [is a] place that people identify with, sharing reflected glory or shame, depending on their quality. People are proud of cities whose unique centers present a clear image to themselves and to visitors…It will be unfortunate if the renewal program banishes the liveliness and substitutes for it an empty space ringed by bank fronts…thus the city becomes a collection of private islands, which ignore each other and ignore the general public"[14]

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[10] Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 16–17, 129.
[11] Lynch, *The Image of the City,* 119
[12] Pamela Hamilton, "The Metamorphosis of Downtown San Diego," Urban Land Institute, (April 1994).
[13] Ervin, "Reinventing Downtown San Diego," 189
[14] Lynch and Appleyard, "Temporary Paradise," 22, 44–45

The ethical concerns voiced by Lynch and Appleyard foreshadowed the urban development process in San Diego that eventually displaced long-term residents of the downtown area.

As an example, the downtown's Gaslamp Quarter project had been an intermix of racial and economic cleanup and discourse. The following is an excerpt from a Centre City Development Corporation (CCDC) report on the redevelopment of Horton Plaza:

> In 1982, the Gaslamp Quarter's 16 blocks were established as a redevelopment project, enabling the City and the merchants/tenants association to rid the area of its missions and take-out liquor stores. Today, much of the Gaslamp Quarter bustles with shoppers, theater-goers, tourists and downtown office workers who enjoy lunching in the area's many little restaurants and cafes at noon or dining in the evening.[15]

In this context, the city's homeless and working-class communities symbolized the undesirables. Though the missions in downtown provided alternative housing for San Diego's displaced homeless, new zoning ordinances prohibited the use of space for these services. As the excerpt indicates, the city attempted to rid city streets of take-out liquor stores, the supposed eyesores that promoted "hanging out" instead of being productive citizens.[16] Furthermore, historical groups, such as the Gaslamp Quarter Project Area Committee, were adamant about restoring a European, or specifically "Victorian"-themed cultural memory that would attract mainstream tourists and residents:

> The scheduled improvements replicate the character of the era from the late 1880s to the turn-of-the-century. Sidewalks will be widened and paved in natural brick with trees, shrubs, and flowering plants to help define and accent the architectural features. Automobile traffic will be discouraged. It is hoped that trolley service can be restored to serve the

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[15] Trimble, "Making Better Use of Urban Space," 17.

[16] Rickey A. Hodges, "L.A. 20 Years Later: Negative Effects of Liquor Stores," *Electroinc Journal of Negoiation, Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding,* Issue 5: July 2014, http://www.ejournalncrp.org/l-a-20-years-later-negative-effects-of-liquor-stores/

> Gaslamp Quarter and adjacent area. Courtyards and parks will be located in spaces between buildings and in areas where the street has been narrowed. Signing would duplicate that used during the Victorian period while lighting will consist of period light standards. New buildings, but more importantly new uses for old buildings are encouraged…San Diego, as compared to other Western cities, has few buildings, commercial or residential of the Victorian Period. The effort to hold on to these last few with a program that is comprehensive in scope has commanded attention and support from the citizens of San Diego.[17]

The editors of the *San Diego Union* and the *Los Angeles Times* agreed with the Gaslamp Project promoters by citing how the Victorian themes would give citizens "a sense of history," in stark contrast to the "cheap hotels, X-rated movie houses and porno parlors" that were in proliferation in the current "red-light" downtown area.[18] This romanticism of European aesthetics erases local histories of indigenous groups, such as those considered the deviant and marginalized.

By 1977, Broadway Street served as an unofficial dividing line between a central business core that emerged during a 1960 urban renewal phase, and the city's vice area that had approximately twenty-two adult bookstores, thirteen card rooms, a dozen pawnshops, and thirty taverns and liquor stores.[19] Architecturally, the downtown buildings, built mostly between 1880 and 1910, resemble the Victorian style, while other sections are commercial and social service centers and single-room occupancies (SROs).[20] Since no new hotels had been built in the area, land values before the height

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[17] Gaslamp Quarter Project Area Committee Report to City Council, September 1980: 3

[18] San Diego Union, 29 March 1980, B-10; Los Angeles Times, 27 April 1980: pt.6, p.9

[19] City of San Diego Planning Department, "Gaslamp Quarter Preliminary Redevelopment Plan," March 1975, San Diego Historical Society (SDHS) Public Records Collection, City Plans R1.33, 2:33; "Little of City's Tawdry Past Left in Rehabilitated Gaslamp" *San Diego Union-Tribune*, August 24, 1992.

[20] Gaslamp Quarter Association and City of San Diego, "Gaslamp Quarter Planned District," February 1975, SDHS Public Records Collection, City Plans R1.33, 2:30; City

of the late 20th century redevelopment were three times lower than other parts of the city.[21] According to the 1970 census tract data, the area's residents were predominately older men, with fifty-percent of its residents over the age of 65; it was also the third lowest socioeconomic tract in San Diego county, with a quarter of its residents falling below the poverty line.[22] The majority of its low-income residents were tenants in single-room occupancies (SROs).[23] A property owner explained how the area, during the 1960s and 1970s, was considered a skid row area populated by undesirable populations: "a cauldron of hippy freaks, perverts, drug addicts, and a conglomeration of bedraggled, seedy individuals."[24] Many low-income residents relied on SROs because that was their only alternative to living on the street. As one resident told a *San Diego Reader* reporter:

> If they tore down my hotel, I don't know what I'd do…You just can't put elderly people on the street. There's a lot of good people in these here hotels…I like downtown. I have been a bachelor all my life…I'd be setting up there all by myself [if relocated to the suburbs]. I can find all kinds of people to talk with and different people I can have fellowship with…all those different kinds of people [even the winos] can be very amusing, very interesting, well-to-do people as well as poor people. You

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of San Diego Planning Department, "Gaslamp Quarter Preliminary Redevelopment," March 1975, SDHS Public Records Collection, City Plans R1.33, 2:33; City of San Diego, "Memorandum Designation of the Gaslamp Quarter Planned District as a Historical District," July 9, 1976, SDHS Public Records Collection, City Plans R1.33, 3:15. City of San Diego, "Centre City San Diego Community Plan," 1976, Microform at San Diego State University Library (CV Docs SD-C400-P71-C395/5); Eckert, The Unseen Elderly, 32).

[21] City of San Diego Planning Department, "Gaslamp Quarter Preliminary Redevelopment Plan," March 1975, SDHS Public Records Collection, City Plans R1.33, 2:33; Eckert, The Unseen Elderly, 34–35, 40–41, 62–63; Carmel Ann Repp, "Urban Renaissance in San Diego" (master's thesis, San Diego State University, 1976), 44–45)

[22] Eckert, The Unseen Elderly, 35–36; Adelyse Marie D'Arcy, "Elderly Hotel Residents and Their Social Networks in Downtown San Diego" (master's thesis, San Diego State University, 1976), 17.

[23] Eckert, *The Unseen Elderly*, 35–36, 46

[24] Richard Amero, "Horton Plaza Park: Where People Meet and Opposites Collide," (unpublished manuscript, San Diego Public Library, 1990)

> can have a lot of relationships with a lot of people here and fellowship with a lot of people here and you won't ever be lonely.[25]

The closing of residential hotels, in order to build accommodations that would attract younger residents with higher incomes, displaced the elderly residents. Eckert's study classifies "inexpensive" SROs as ranging from $12–$14 per night or $120–$249 per month.[26]

The *San Diego Tribune* characterized the cleanup of downtown San Diego as an act of war to produce safe zones:

> Putting the Gaslamp Quarter on the map, says one very interested party, is not so much a civic improvement program as it is like the war in Vietnam. But that war took place in the steaming jungles and rice paddies of a far-off continent, the shock troops of the Gaslamp for their fighting in the mean streets of Broadway, right in their own back yard. Here the enemy is not the Viet Cong but the decades of official neglect and inhabitants' abuse that have left what was once San Diego's heart an open sore of decay…
> 'We're building "*safe zones*" the same way they did in Vietnam,' says tax lawyer and booster Jim Schneider, who owns the Keating Building at the corner of Fifth Avenue and F Street. 'The Gaslamp is something like Vietnam—though I've never been there—and we have to secure areas so it is safe for the people to walk in them and shop in them. If you were in the jungles in Vietnam you'd have had to look behind you all the time in case somebody was creeping up on you. It's kind of that way still in some areas of the Gaslamp. But with every new project that's going up, we are creating more safe areas.[27]

The above quote suggests that there are people who are in need of protection and others who are the perpetrators of violence. The link between war zones and communities of

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[25] Richard Reed, "If You Lived Here You'd Be Home Now," San Diego Reader 6, June 23–29, 1977, 1, 29

[26] Eckert, The Unseen Elderly, 36; "1980 and 1990 Census Comparisons: Major Statistical Areas, Sub regional Areas, Jurisdictions" (April 1991) by Source Point; Paul Krueger, "The Inside Story," San Diego Reader 14, October 10, 1985, 8).

[27] Bernard Hunt, "Gaslamp Quarter's Flame Burns Higher," The Tribune, 5 February 1980, B-1

color is not a coincidence, but represents an ongoing tension between characterizing the border town of San Diego as a patriotic city in an attempt to distance itself from the always-already lawless place of Tijuana, Mexico. The Gaslamp Quarter Association, whose members would become a "select group of pioneers," solicited potential business members by hosting fundraisers and circulating advertisements.[28] In order to ensure that properties conformed to the Victorian-themed cultural identity, the historic board restricted the size of the buildings along with regulating the colors, fonts and lighting of signs.[29] Suburban mothers and women were targeted, in particular, for Gaslamp tourism:

> Tired of suburban shopping, crowded stores, impersonal service, and the confusing maze of department store merchandise?? COME TO GASLAMP…
> Mothers at home can give themselves a pampering present by hiring a sitter and spending the day in Gaslamp on an adventuresome spree...rather than traveling all over the city you can also sightsee while you shop"[30]

Gaslamp organizations distributed flyers instructing pedestrians to not give food to the homeless: "Don't give food to transients. It doesn't really help them—and it does hurt the neighborhood."[31] The design of "transient-proof" garbage cans and the removal of city benches further solidified the cityscape as a space for middle/upper-middle-class residents and tourists.[32] Additionally, public parks were closed at night in order to

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[28] Invitation for dinner party with Mayor Wilson; Gaslamp Quarter Promotional Folder, SDHS

[29] Gaslamp Quarter Association and City of San Diego, "Gaslamp Quarter Planned District," February 1975, SDHS Public Records Collection R1.33, 2:30

[30] Terri Schneider, "Welcome (Back) to Gaslamp," Gaslamp Gazette 1 (October-November 1978), SDHS

[31] Gaslamp Quarterly Newsletter (Spring 1984), SDHS.

[32] Neal Matthews, "Big Can Man," San Diego Reader 14, September 5, 1985, 4; Paul Krueger, "Bench Press," San Diego Reader 10, November 12, 1981, 2)

prevent the homeless from sleeping there.[33] As public transportation between the city and suburban areas was established, bus stops and benches within the Gaslamp area were removed.[34] Furthermore, in order for police presence to not be considered a form of "heavy-handedness," police officers patrolled the area by horse and foot, sometimes blending into shopping crowds or on rooftops.[35] In addition to San Diego Police presence, businesses would also contract private security.[36] Police vice squads would often raid long-established businesses and threaten customers and business owners suspected of violating zoning ordinances.[37] The renovation also limited the type of businesses allowed in the area. Specifically, zoning ordinances disallowed businesses such as adult entertainment, charitable organizations that provided food and lodging for the homeless and low-income individuals, which allowed then mayor, Pete Wilson, to continue his "war on smut."[38]

In 1975, the city approved the creation of a public non-profit organization to work with the private sector for downtown redevelopment: the Centre City Development

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[33] Paul Krueger, "Inside the Park," San Diego Reader 18, June 22, 1989, 4.
[34] Randy Opincar, "There's Nothing Like a Swig of Thunderbird After a Brisk Walk," San Diego Reader 13, January 19, 1984, 2; Neal Matthews, "The Bus Stops Where?" San Diego Reader 14, April 4, 1985, 4)
[35] Bernard Hunt, "Gaslamp Quarter's Flame Burns Higher," The San Diego Union-Tribune, February 5, 1980, B1; Thomas Arnold, "Now, Sweep Up the Citations," San Diego Reader 14, December 28, 1985, 5; Matthews, "At the Intersections," 5, 38–39; Sharon Spivak, "Gaslamp Quarter Getting Police Station," The San Diego Union-Tribune, July 18, 1986, B-3)
[36] Spivak, "Gaslamps' Unorthodox Private Cop Draws Ire," A-1.
[37] Jeannete DeWyze and Neal Matthews, "Pinball Machine Arrested for Flipping Off Vice Cop," San Diego Reader 8, January 25, 1979, 3.
[38] Gaslamp Quarter Association and City of San Diego, "Gaslamp Quarter Planned District," February 1975, SDHS Public Records Collection R1.33, 2:30; Thomas Arnold, "Behind the Nice New Coat of Green Door," San Diego Reader 14, June 6, 1985, 5.

Corporation (CCDC).[39] The CCDC's "Centre City Plan of 1975" called for the downtown central area to be "the image of regional San Diego" by creating sub-districts that would have their own location, name, land use, and cultural identity.[40] The job was to "implement property acquisition, relocation, clearance, public improvements, public facilities, public financing, and design review of all private improvements in the downtown's redevelopment area."[41] According to the CCDC, the downtown San Diego's "blight" occurred because the "tax base was deteriorated, its adult entertainment uses proliferated, most of it residents occupied single rooms in old hotels, its street people abounded, and its overall appearance south of Broadway was one of acute physical decline."[42] According to CCDS, the only solution for this "major problem" would be to work with the private sector to promote "major retail, restaurants, festival retail, residential, office, convention facilities, hotels, and cultural and recreational uses."[43] The four major redevelopment areas were the Columbia District for the financial center, Horton Plaza for the retail mall, the Maria for private residences, and the Gaslamp Quarter for cultural/historical commercial. CCDC and city developers had the right to condemn buildings if owners refused or were unable to renovate their building according to the developers' requirements.[44] Though many business owners tried to appease developers by attempting to conform their businesses and outside appearance to the preferred Victorian theme, many long time businesses were shunned

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[39] Hamilton, "The Metamorphosis of Downtown San Diego."
[40] City of San Diego Planning Department, "Centre City Development Plan: Summary 1975," San Diego, 1976.
[41] Trimble, "Making Better Use of Urban Space," 9
[42] Trimble "Making Better Use of Urban Space," 4
[43] Trimble "Making Better Use of Urban Space," 5
[44] The Tribune 5 Oct 1985: C-2

within the process because city boosters viewed their businesses as illicit.[45] In order to speed up redevelopment, the CCDC offered specific development firms construction contracts in exchange for their assistance with the condemnation of buildings.[46]

Both Bellon's early 20th century and CCDC's late 20th century condemnation of downtown buildings were based on moralizing rhetoric that castigated racialized and classed people as culprits of pathology instead of targets of institutional neglect. In addition to research done by private investors, local academic researchers have contributed to the gentrification project by receiving government funding to mark certain spaces as worthy for historical preservation and others as incapable of being included in the downtown landscape.[47] In the next chapter, I continue with the theme of private and public partnerships to discuss gentrification processes in other parts of the city, specifically the creation of San Diego gay neighborhood, Hillcrest. I will show how Hillcrest's designation as a LGBT-friendly safe zone is connected to the representation of downtown as "unsafe."

Gay Militants and False Consciousness

Gay militants' desires for a stake in city politics resulted in positioning gentrification as a positive process. Bernie Michels, co-founder for the Gay Center for Social Services, insisted that San Diego's gay bars, located in "skid row" areas, were unsafe for white gays and lesbians in a 1988 interview.[48] Being *safe* for white queers thus meant not being forced to congregate in *unsafe* areas, i.e. poor, non-white

[45] The Tribune 5 Feb 1980: B-1
[46] "44 Million Gaslamp Proposal Unveiled" San Diego Tribune 3 Aug 1988: B-4
[47] Trimble, "Making Better Use of Urban Space," 24.
[48] Bernie Michels, telephone interview by Michael Dillinger, 16 November, 1998.

neighborhoods in downtown San Diego. However, they paid little attention to the danger or at least hostility black (and poor) people faced in supposedly *safe* white neighborhoods. While representing downtown as unsafe by co-founders of the Gay Center for Social Services, they proposed that the neighborhood of Hillcrest could instead be made into a gay friendly oasis—a family friendly alternative to the "war zone" of downtown San Diego.

During the 1920s and 1930s, Hillcrest was considered a "thriving" area with a "diverse population," which consisted of reasonably priced housing for families and single-persons near the downtown area.[49] By the 1960s, Hillcrest was predominately populated by seniors and was becoming a densely populated area. However, the development of the Mission Valley shopping center impacted the area's prior prosperous commercial businesses. During the 1970s, Hillcrest suffered economically, which effected quality in housing and political representation. Hillcrest was known as an area of "elderly and low-income residents living in run-down housing," however the high percentage of seniors indicated that the area was about to "undergo a major demographic change," according to JSDH. In this section, I examine how a key strategy by gay liberationists was disrupting the powerful and long-standing relationship between drag performers and bar owners. Drag queens often hosted fundraisers, for various causes, which benefitted San Diego bar owners, usually located downtown, by bringing gay patrons to their establishments. I will show how mainstreaming gay and lesbians in the

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[49] Michael E. Dillinger, "Hillcrest: From Haven To Home," *Journal of San Diego History* 46, no. 4 (2000). Accessed March 8, 2013. http://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/2000-4/hillcrest.htm

public eye involved gay militants representing themselves as the legitimate spokespersons for gay rights and drag culture as lacking social-consciousness.

As we know, although the term "LGBT" assumes that the constituent groups (i.e. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) have a shared history, it is fraught with contestations. In order to challenge this presumed shared experience, we must examine how the medical field had differentiated biological sex from gender and sexual performance and how assimilationist lesbian and gay theorists incorporated this differentiation into their political strategies. It was not until the late 20th century that mainstream gay and lesbian organizations decided to incorporate the "T" in LGB, due in part to social and political pressure. However, the incorporation of "T" in LGB contradicted the central tenet of mainstream gay discourse, which privileges sexual identity over gender performance.[50]

Though the premier gay institutions in San Diego—the Metropolitan Community Church (MCCSD) and the Gay and Lesbian Center for Social Services (now called The Center)—were funded largely by contributions from gay bars, they routinely criticized the relationship between the drag culture and gay bars. Gay militants shifted to using "gay" as a "term of pride," but some people at the bars were not comfortable with that term. Jess Jessop, another co-founder of the Center, also found himself at odds with patrons of gay bars. According to Jessop, the bars were a false "cocoon of safety" for many gay people who felt that gay liberationists would "bring the wrath of society down

[50] Zein Murib, "LGBT," 118–119

on [them].”[51] Indeed, gay bars were one of the few places where gay and lesbians could socialize with each other without strict surveillance. As a consequence, many patrons of gay bars considered Jessop, and other homophile and gay liberationists organizers, as a threat because they brought “attention on the bars.” Very early on, Jessop and other gay militants encountered resistance from gay social circles within the bars.

A key feature of a gay liberationists agenda was fighting for the decriminalization of gay sex, but not necessarily the decriminalization of gender performance. Homophile activists opted for respectability by separating themselves from bar-based queer culture and instead allying themselves with social and scientific experts who expressed tolerance for homosexuals, but not transsexuals.[52] Jessop explained that a key feature of gay liberation was illustrating the difference between homosexuality and “transvestism, transexuality.” Emphasizing visibility and mainstreaming, gay militants positioned drag as a threat to these goals, overlooking the performative aspect of gender. When it came to politics, Jessop admitted that “you simply cannot have everything you want.” This mainstreaming meant regulating dress and performance. According to Jessop, some people had an image of GLF as “dirty hair hippies” and that some people were “embarrassed by people like [him] because of [his] granny glasses, long blonde hair, and funky mustache.” Jessop transitioned into “respectab[ility]” by cutting off his hair and wearing suits. For many even within the gay community, Jessop emphasized how mainstream society did not need to be afraid of the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) or homophile groups: “we are not militant…radical people…they don’t need to be afraid of

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[51] Robert “Jess” Jessop, interview by Frank Nobiletti, *Lambda Archives of San Diego*, February 2, 1990, September 2, 1990. https://archive.org/details/casdla_000029
[52] Sweet, “Political and Social Action,” 61–65, 90–92, 223.

us…[your] children were not going to be recruited." For gay liberationists in the 1970s, being accepted into the minority mandated a normative appearance and performance.[53]

Gay liberationists used culture and popular ideas within Marxism to classify trans women as perverse and abject. According to Bernie Michels, drag "represented false consciousness" and "went with the old…traditional lifestyle…in the bars."[54] Using a Marxist approach, minority nationalists argued about how culture could be used to measure the negative impact capitalism has had on society.[55] While minority nationalists argued over how the lack of patriarchal and heteronormative control over black women engendered black poverty, gay liberationists argued how departure from normative gender performance—instead of normative sexual object—provoked disdain for the gay community by mainstream society. Though an extensive exploration is not necessary in order to get at the essence of false consciousness used by gay militants, it is still important to frame the political and historical context and usage of the term. The popularity and reemergence of the term "false consciousness" coincided when socialist and minority nationalist circles became intertwined during the mid-1960s. Though Marx never used the term himself, Marxists have adopted the term from Friedrich Engels' conceptualization of it. In sum, it refers to how the masses do not recognize their own oppression. This classical theory of ideology represents the proletariat, the poor,cp

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[53] Robert "Jess" Jessop, interview by Frank Nobiletti, *Lambda Archives of San Diego*, February 2, 1990, September 2, 1990. https://archive.org/details/casdla_000029
[54] Bernie Michels, interview by Frank Nobiletti, *Lambda Archives of San Diego*, July 6, 1992. https://archive.org/details/casdla_000037
[55] Hong, Grace, Roderick A. Ferguson. "Introduction," 6–9.

and/or working-class people, as passive tools of dominant ideology.[56] The characterization of trans men as embodiments of "false consciousness" was typical of mainstream homophile and gay liberationists during this historical moment. This contestation was connected to how drag culture was an embarrassment to gay militants because it symbolized the supposed extreme side of gay culture. Furthermore, feminists and women activists also positioned transsexual, trans people, drag, and other gender non-normative effeminate performances as a ridicule and hatred of women.[57]

Despite the representation of drag as false consciousness by Michels, efforts at creating a formal organization for trans women began in 1965. While gay militants advocated for a gay rights politics and the establishment of an official space during the 1970s, local drag performers were also establishing their own formal organization as well: The Imperial Court system, whose members consisted mostly of drag queens. José Julio Sarria, a Latino drag performer, WWII veteran and the first openly gay candidate to run for public office in North America, founded the Court system in 1965 in San Francisco. Sarria's efforts focused on street level organizing in which many of its supporters were centralized in bars. In 1973, Nicole Murray Ramirez founded the San Diego chapter of the Imperial Court. Each chapter is a separate non-profit organization that raises funds for charitable organizations. Additionally, each chapter hosts an annual Gala Coronation Ball, where a new "monarchs" are crowned in a tradition based upon

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[56] Cloward, Jeremy. "The State, Class and False Consciousness within The American Working Class," *Project Censored*, April 12, 2012. http://projectcensored.org/the-state-class-and-false-consciousness-within-the-american-working-class/

[57] Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 86.

European nobility.[58] Their first event, the Imperial Coronation Ball, attracted over 1,000 people. Don "Tawny Tann" Edmundson, an African American drag queen, won the coveted "Empress I" title. The Court often worked with the bars to fundraise for various causes. Despite the widespread popularity of the Court, Jessop stated that many gays thought that the Court's leader was a "ludicrous figure," even though the group assisted Jessop and Michels' fundraising efforts for the Gay Center for Social Services.[59]

Despite the Court's efforts to formalize their own organization, many gay militants still ridiculed the Imperial Court and drag performers. Charles David, editor of *Prodigal*, a publication by the MCCSD, ridiculed the Royal Court as a group without "social consciousness." In a July 15, 1973 article, David wrote this in relation to the Coronation Ball hosted by the Imperial Court of San Diego:

> A small yellow folder has appeared around town advertising the First Annual Emperor and Empress Coronation Ball to be held sometime in August. I personally have no objection to such events, as long as I don't have to take part. Many others in the community feel the same way. Yet something about that folder has rubbed a lot of concerned people the wrong way. For example: What's coveted about the title? They're ego trips for weak identities. They're a focus for a make-believe world out of which gay people must graduate if they are to justify their existence as a thinkable minority. They're a device for raking in dollars which, while legal, is of questionable morality in view of the end to which those dollars will be put. Now if the dollars were destined for MCC or for the Gay Center... or for the Lesbian Feminists…?!! That brings up another thing: There is absolutely no mention of gay women. As far as the yellow folder is concerned the gay community consists only of men! Is it any wonder that gay women are suspicious of gay men?...or find it difficult to work with them? Indeed, is it any wonder that the first task for many a gay woman is to free herself of the feeling of male dominance? Then more phoniness: The Sandie Awards, unsolicited by any responsible member of the gay community and given for what services, what

[58] "History," *The International Court System,* http://www.impcourt.org/
[59] Robert "Jess" Jessop, interview by Frank Nobiletti, *Lambda Archives of San Diego*, February 2, 1990, September 2, 1990. https://archive.org/details/casdla_000029

> achievements? Who's judging? Who's qualified? Who really cares except those setting up a money-making focus? And hasn't somebody told them that a 'Sharp Chick' is a razor edged bird with down...not a woman? I am sure that there are a lot of valid reasons and possible good results from such an event as the Coronation Ball. If there are, the yellow folder does not make it apparent. Perhaps its writers need to develop a social consciousness! Yuk![60]

David criticized Imperial Court and their use of drag for playing into the fantasy of being women and thus excluding gay women. However, Imperial Court's supposed exclusion of feminist lesbians ignored how drag perfomers of the Ball might also have considered themselves women or feminists, respectively. Gay militants conceptualized the category of *woman* in the simplest and reductive terms. Cisgender individuals also play into the fantasy and fiction of gender norms. Many second-wave feminists have been hostile to transgender theory because feminist discourse sees gender as being fundamentally linked to chromosomes and biological sex.[61] Judith Butler intervened within this debate, which also engendered queer feminism, by explaining how not only gender, but sex is socially constructed. Butler argued that although drag is used to re-idealize heterosexual gender norms in drag ball performances, it simultaneously is used to denaturalize these very same oppressive logics.[62] In other words, drag becomes a failed performance of femininity in which cisgender women are placed at the center of male homosexuality. However, Butler argues that gender is an ambivalent process with a set of goals that are not always realizable and set of power relations (often racialized) that precede these particular identifications.[63]

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[60] Charles David, "Sexploitation," *The Prodigal,* Vol. 5, no. 77, July 15, 1973.
[61] Sally Hines, "Feminism," 84–86.
[62] Butler, *Bodies That Matter,* 85.
[63] Butler, *Bodies That Matter,* 86.

Theorists in the field of queer of color critique critiqued minority nationalism and mainstream feminisms for their investments in liberal ideology, which reproduced an idealized identity. Though minority nationalism challenged Western epistemology, which categorized everything non-white/Western as deviant and other, they still upheld the idea of racial categories as discrete and comparable objects. Interestingly, on the one hand, many gay liberationists were influenced by minority nationalisms, openly claiming solidarity with the Black Panther Party while critiquing homophobia, racism and capitalism. On the other hand, gay liberationists similarly policed group boundaries by excluding trans men and women and communities of color.[64]

Though gay militants critiqued the bars, for many trans women they were a place of strategic empowerment for trans women. The bars in downtown San Diego were not only a place to be seen, but it was also a place to work. Many trans women served as entertainers and hostesses in these spaces, jobs that were often denied them in heteronormative establishments. Sir Lady Java, a black transgender activist who frequently came to San Diego to perform, was one of the first activists to openly challenge the criminalization of trans women workers. In 1967, Java filed a civil lawsuit against the LA Board of Police Commissioners, with assistance from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Sir Lady Java had been a performer and waitress at the Redd Foxx Club until the club was cited under Rule Number 9, an LA city ordinance that prohibited performers from "impersonat[ing] by means of costume or dress a person of the opposite sex." This ordinance forced business owners to deny employment to transgender people or face criminal charges. Java claimed that the ordinance was

[64] Hong, Grace, Roderick A. Ferguson. "Introduction," 6–9.

unconstitutional and discriminated against trans women. However, in order to challenge this law, a private business owner, not an individual, had to file an official complaint. Neither Redd Foxx nor any other business owner brought suit. Though Java's lawsuit did not reverse Rule Number 9 in Los Angeles, her protest evidenced how transgender women actively challenged discrimination before the emergence of and without assistance from homophile organizations.[65]

San Diego had a similar statute under which many trans women were also prosecuted for gender nonconformity. San Diego municipal code, Sec. 56.19, criminalized "cross-dressing," which targeted not only trans women, but also sex workers. According to my interlocutor, Hughes, similar protests in regards to gender non-conformity were also launched in San Diego. On May 1972 Prodigal newsletter, published by the Metropolitan Community Church of San Diego, it displayed a drawing of a drag queen with the title "Drag, the legal viewpoint." The article was a feature on a recurring column by Alan Smith, Esq., called the "Philadelphia Lawyer," that addressed legal issues regarding the LGBT community.[66] Smith discussed the validity of Section 56.19 of the San Diego Municipal Code, which made the "appearance in apparel customarily worn by the opposite sex" a crime. Smith explained: "...only when you cross-dressing to commit another crime does transvestism in and of itself become unlawful." However, he did acknowledge that cross-dressing could lead to unfair profiling: "...the fact that you are in drag may subject you to harassment by prejudiced

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[65] "Sir Lady Java (1943–) performer, activist," *A Gender Variance Who's Who*, February 15, 2013, http://zagria.blogspot.com/2013/02/sir-lady-java-1943-performer-activist.html#.V0O6bdf4Ys8

[66] Alan Smith, "Drag, the legal viewpoint," *The Prodigal*, May 28, 1972, 23.

and unscrupulous members of the police force." The article discussed his experience in the San Diego Municipal Court where a "provocative black female" (transwoman) was arraigned on this ordinance. Although the judge suspended the sentence, he told the woman to "find an honest way to make a living."

Although this specific ordinance was removed from the San Diego municipal code in 1998, trans women—especially sex workers—continued to be criminalized under similar laws. Referring to Assembly Bill 489 that supposedly "liberalize[d] sex laws" in 1975, California Municipal Court Judge George G. Crawford critiqued the move because it did not cover sex workers. Though the bill cleared the way for homosexual and heterosexual sex, sex workers still would not have equal protection. "While some individuals spend money 'wining and dining' to engage in sexual acts, he said, others are prohibited from making an 'honest exchange' of money for a sex act."[67] So, for many queer black women, the threat of surveillance and discipline still loomed in public and private places.

In the next section, I will discuss how phenomenology, as method, is integral to understanding not only the quotidian in relation to gender, but also the intersection of race. Phenomenology highlights the labor of subjects trying to articulate themselves within gender and racial categories, instead of invalidating the categories through which subjects make sense of their own categories. Like most cisgender people, trans women and men often essentialize and ahistoricize their identities. However, phenomenology stresses the importance of embodied location alongside the importance of understanding

[67] "Judge Questions Equality of Liberalized Sex Law," *The San Diego Union* (San Diego, CA), July 9, 1975.

how certain individuals contest gendered and racialized discourses that violently construct many people.

Challenging Gay Mainstreaming

This section uses the narrative of Granville "Bubba" Hughes, a black trans women who migrated to San Diego from Phoenix in 1965, as a case study to examine how queer black women challenged gay and lesbian mainstreaming. Specifically, I will be using theories within phenomenology to demonstrate these non-normative performances. Although phenomenology did not originate out of a uniform set of theories, it did emerge as a challenge to the grand scale theorizing of most philosophical theories, emphasizing instead how objects come into consciousness in ways that are sometimes hidden within the mundaneness of everyday life. The importance of embodied experiences is useful to trans studies because it offers a more wide-ranging understanding of the body, in which sex and gender is understood through a felt sense, instead of restricted to the external form of the body. "Phenomenology as Method in Trans Studies" (1998) by Henry S. Rubin, was the first text to examine how this method was especially applicable to the transgender experience because it privileged their unique experiences, instead of positivist and objective accounts of trans lives.

Sartre, in his existential sociology, argues that the body is the medium in which the world comes into existence to us; our proximity to certain objects, in the material world, determines our relationship to the world. He argued that "the body" is, at its core, affected by diverse and contested ontological scales. The first level of this ontology of the body is known through the absolute point of the view of the person's experience;

you are the only possessor of this knowledge because it is *lived*, and not *known* like other actual objects - such as a chair or desk. While this absolute point of view is affected by unavoidable and unforeseen circumstances, it is also affected by certain particularities such as your race, birth, class, physiological composition, etc. The second scale of this bodily ontology is the body, as a corporeal reality, for the manipulation of others. The third scale is the "alienated body" in which the body is constrained by the opinion of others.[68]

Merleau-Ponty takes up Sarte's theory about the alienated body in relation to its discussion of phantom limbs and "anasognosia." Anasognosia refers to a medical condition in which an amputee subjectively experiences a missing limb's presence. Merleau-Ponty argues that physiologists pathologizes anasognosia, instead of acknowledging the subjects embodied reality.* Merleau-Ponty develops a phenomenological theory, *body image*, as a way of diverging from Sartre. Body image is not merely a corporeal reality, but also a *psychical image* of the body as conceived by the subject. The concept of body image gives agency to subjects who challenge the body's restrictions by living in a world with a body image that might appear different from the corporeal body.[69]

Phenomenology, in particular Merleau's body imagine, is useful as a framework for the importance of (black queer women's experiences). Since phenomenology is concerned with the necessity of being a body for the world to exist, this concept is attentive to how both the material world and bodily consciousness allows us the

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[68] Rubin, "Phenomenology as Method in Trans Studies," 268–270.
[69] Ibid.

opportunity to understand the *essences*, state of being, for black queens and transsexuals. For Hughes (my interlocutor), her body image is in conflict with her physical body, an alienated body according to Sartre. However, Merleau-Ponty's body image would acknowledge that transexuals are *not* psychotic (pathological), but embody a knowledge that challenges dualism and positivism, such as real/fake or absence/presence. I will begin this section with a complex discussion of Hughes' identity. Hughes does not identify herself as being queer or trans, but instead as a woman who is simply "trapped" in the wrong body. While queer and trans feminists critique this articulation of a trans experience, since it linked the pathologization of gender non-confirming to people by the medical industry, I complicate it by highlighting how Hughes's narrative challenges positivism assertions about the body and gendered experiences.

I will also use phenomenology to discuss not only Hughes's unique gendered experiences, but also her racialized ones as well. Franz Fanon's use of phenomenology is useful in examining Hughes' understanding of safe space, which differs from that of gay militants in San Diego. Fanon, in *White Skin/Black Masks* (1952), argues how blacks in the French Caribbean and France must wear a separate mask while living in a white and colonial French society, which is similar to W.E.B. Du Bois' argument about blacks and "double consciousness" in the U.S. Fanon's analysis investigated how the self experiences trauma due to being classified as inferior because of an imposed racial identity. However, he also explains how the self can recover a sense of identity that is separate from a racist project. Fanon proposes how language (subversive), in particular, could assist in decolonization efforts. Fanon explained how the adoption of the French language by colonial subjects enabled revolutionaries to conceal their politics and

communicate with other colonial subject, while simultaneously living in a white/colonist society. While some feminist scholars critique Fanon on his gender politics, in relation to his discussion about black women's desires to be with white men as being misogynistic, I am convinced that Fanon's analysis adds another layer of complexity to emerging scholarship on phenomenology and trans studies. Hughes's narrative gestures towards an understanding of the experiences of black queers, which departs from gender normative white gays and lesbians. Hughes's preference to socialize in spaces that we represented as unsafe for white gay and lesbians demonstrates how safeness is conceptualized differently by black queers and queens. Although Hughes uses universalizing language in relation to gender and the homogeneity of the gay community in San Diego, she still explains it within racial terms.

> I'm gay, but I don't put myself into that category. To me, I'm a woman trapped inside a man's body. That's all I can say. And that's how I feel. If I had the money, and I wouldn't be broke, I would have surgery—at my age I still would. But since I don't, it's never really been a problem with me doing what I need to do. So, I don't really dwell on that.[70]

The idea of a wrong body highlights not only an understanding of the body as gendered, but also how that body is wrongly gendered according to a self-identified gender identity. The idea of a wrong-body is heavily critiqued because it is often dictated by the medical industry (i.e. DSM), which attempts to assign a normative gender identity to people with "gender dysphoria." Feminists, gender, and queer scholars all critique how the wrong-body understanding reinforces essentialism by still desiring to place people within the bigender structure, instead of destabilizing the naturalness of gender/sex,

[70] Granville 'Bubba' Hughes (San Diego Resident) interviewed by Christina Carney, March 2014.

acknowledging gender-variant experiences and fluidity, and the body as a static with separable entities. Furthermore, the wrong body reinforces the idea how the body (materiality) and self (subjectivity) are intrinsically linked and inherently inseparable. Phenomenology becomes useful to understanding wrong-body experiences through the concept of "the lived body," which challenges a normative understanding of experience, but at the same time acknowledges how materiality and discursivity are co-dependent in the meaning-making process. The wrong body, as a trans body experience, highlights how the subjective and cultural are not always uniform, and thus gender variance—instead of gender binary—offers a better understanding of gender.[71]

The aforementioned quote, by Hughes, disrupted positivists' assertions in relation to gender. While Hughes essentialized her identity—saying, "I'm a woman trapped inside a man's body"— she resisted being labeled at the same time. My use of terms such as transgender, queer, and gay was a source of contestation during initial encounters between Hughes and me. She expressed how she was offended that I referred to her as trans and queer. For Hughes, these identity categories signaled her existence as pathological. Although these terms serve as a sense of empowerment and/or a direct challenge to the status quo for many gender non-normative individuals, Hughes desired an identification that validated her existence as a woman, regardless of whether or not it was in conflict with her physical body. Furthermore, Hughes' class status, an unemployed senior who relies on social services, prevented access to medical services that would not only make her appear as a woman, but would also officially change her

[71] Ulrica Engdahl, "Wrong Body," *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 1–2 (2014): 267–269.

gender status. However, this restriction does not create a crisis for Hughes, but instead gestures towards a reality fraught with contradictions and political possibilities.

> I was the first gay person, to my knowledge, that came out. We had the gay people there, but they were in the suit and tie…more or less undercover somewhat…I wasn't. When I hit the streets I had my hair did, my makeup on, my sissy clothes – that's what it was back then. They named me the 'Mother of Phoenix' because I was the first black gay person in that area that was out in the public – dressed, you know, makeup, lipstick, hair, but I was always accepted. I never had a problem being accepted.[72]

A cross-dresser is imagined, within Western institutions, as a heterosexual man who finds pleasure in wearing women's clothing. However, the term "cross-dresser" is dependent on a bi-gender system that assigns standards for gender appearance. While the term "cross-dresser" normally includes both men who do live most of the time as cross-dressers and those who do not, some have agreed that "cross-gender" is a more appropriate term since living everyday as a woman engenders completely different quotidian experiences. Though cisfemale women also participate in forms of cross-dressing, men who cross-dress are disciplined more by our patriarchal society, since it is assumed that they are *giving up* power—unlike women who attempt to *obtain* power by cross-dressing. The societal objection of people desiring to cross-dress highlights how taboos are engendered when someone is drawn to an action that society attempts to control and contain. Although laws have been enacted to protect transsexuals, this legislation does not protect cross-dressers since they can transgress gender norms at any time; even more interestingly, though many transsexuals started their journey as cross-dressers, they delegitimize cross-dressers as a "real" identity. Even though the "out

[72] Granville "Bubba" Hughes (San Diego Resident) interviewed by Christina Carney, March 2014.

cross-dresser" is positioned as the legitimate gender bender, cross-dressers more often demonstrate the constructedness of gender by highlighting its performativity and flexibility.[73]

Terminology related to gender non-normativity has changed dramatically since the 20th century. While gay militants' use of the term "gay" was imagined as symbolizing a more modern gender-normative gay and lesbian, gayness—as described by Hughes—gestured towards a more complex use of term that was previously applied to gender non-normativity. Coming-out to Bubba was not only proclaiming your attraction to people of the same sex, but also staking a claim about gender fluidity. The "undercover[ness]" of gay men in "suit[s] and ties[s]" did not signal to people that gay men existed in public space. However, Hughes' gender performance in her "sissy" clothes signaled her difference from many gender normative gay men and women.

> I came out her [San Diego] to visit and it blowed my mind to see how the gay life compared here to Arizona…and I loved it. I went back home, the next week I moved to San Diego and I been here ever since.
>
> To me, when I came to San Diego, it was so friendly. Friendly town. I never met a stranger. I came here in 65. That's what made me like it. So far in the gay life, it was just so wide open. The gay life was kinda crackin when I left Arizona, but you couldn't…These folks [in San Diego] were walking hand-in-hand and kissing and going on. I said, 'This is where I need to be [San Diego].'[74]

Hughes' narrative is representative of many gay migration stories in which gays and lesbians move away from supposedly less tolerant places, usually located in rural areas, to urban areas. Although San Diego is not as urban as Los Angeles, it was more

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[73] Miqqi Alicia Gilbert, "Cross-Dresser," *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 1–2 (2014): 65–67

[74] Granville 'Bubba' Hughes (San Diego Resident) interviewed by Christina Carney, March 2014.

urban than Phoenix due to the city's booming military economy. Specifically, downtown became the place where queer behavior was most visible, according to Bubba. However, downtown was not only exclusively gay/queer. It was a site of the city's displacement of non-normative individuals and communities. Before the emergence of Hillcrest as the supposed gay utopia, the city's homeless, queer and low-income shared a place that the city and federal government neglected. Although popular discourse represented this place as undesirable, an ongoing legacy of early 20th century urban politics, for many it was a liberatory space that sometimes shield them from certain forms of surveillance.

However, Hillcrest was not a welcoming space for black queens, unlike downtown San Diego. While downtown San Diego offered Hughes a place to celebrate her gender non-conformity amongst a majority of gender normative individuals, gay militants' condemnation of drag sometimes meant that black queens would be excluded from certain gay social circles.

> It's [Hillcrest] is like a label…Gays is in Hillcrest. If I had to live in Hillcrest, I would live there, but I never ventured to be really active in Hillcrest. I've been to some of the clubs every once in a while…me and my friends we would go to the club. At the time when I went to the club, the gay clubs, they had their own little cliques. If you don't know them it's no coming 'my name is so and so…' They don't do that…at that time, I don't know how they do now. If you didn't know nobody in that club, you'd just be sitting there. And sometimes I would do it just to see how open they would be to another gay person. If they didn't know you, you didn't know somebody in that clique, you'd be sitting at the bar by yourself or the table by yourself.
>
> I wore drag for years, that was my life. The straight clubs I had more attention really. The atmosphere was much different. People would openly talk to you and stuff. It wasn't like cause you gay in a straight club you gone be sitting there and people were going to be looking at you funny – it wasn't none of that. They were very friendly. Matter of fact, back in the 60s and early 70s a lot of the blacks hung right down in the heart of San Diego, downtown, that was our area. It wasn't a gay area – it

> was just downtown. Everybody hung downtown. Some of the people would come – we were like a fashion show to them. We was out there! And they would park on the side of the street just to see what we were wearing – what do we have on, what our hair looks like. And we knew a lot the people [who] sat in their cars and party right there in their cars with us.[75]

Although gay militants argued how gender non-normativity, drag in particular, was a form of "sexploitation," black queens often deployed this power dynamic to their own advantage. For example, Hughes found pleasure in others' perceived spectacle of her gender performance. Drag, as a form of performance art, originated out of vaudeville and minstrel shows beginning during 19th century in the U.S and lasted in popularity throughout the first half of the 20th century. In addition to the mimicry of women by male actors, white actors also performed in black face in which people of African descent were stereotypically represented. Hughes' preference for downtown San Diego disrupted the assumed homogeneity of gay life. Although gay militants described downtown as a skid row area unsafe for white lesbians and gays, Hughes expressed that the supposed gay-friendly area of Hillcrest was unwelcoming.

Although Hughes acknowledges that Hillcrest is considered the quintessential gay place, and even expressed desire to be part of that community, the way gay militants treated *her* foreclosed any possible integration. Black queens were simultaneously criminalized and vulnerable to violence by local law enforcement and the larger general public.

> When I moved to San Diego there were problems with the Police Department. We would go downtown on 5th/Market, it used to be a club there called Clay's. They had more clubs, but that was mostly where a lot

[75] Granville "Bubba" Hughes (San Diego Resident) interviewed by Christina Carney, March 2014.

> of the gays hung out at. It was an open club, it wasn't strictly a gay club. That's where we hung out at. But the police would harass us a whole lot. They would come through – take our hair off, take our water titties out. They did all that. Take us to jail, when we went to court we had to go court with just makeup on lookin' like a hot mess. They would parade us down to street, because they would chain us together. We would walk from the jail down to the courthouse. And they would parade us down the street like that. We walked right down Horton Plaza looking like a fool.[76]

Although Hughes' preference was downtown San Diego, I am not trying to romanticize any place as exclusively safe. She explained that homophile organizations decreased the occurrence of these related arrests, but also explained how her non-biological family in San Diego would defend her against homophobic harassment:

> I didn't have a whole lot of problems. [People] that knew me and that I click with, not sex based, but being a real tight friend- if one of their homeboys said some negative stuff concerning me they would stop them real quick and put them in their place. They weren't [my real family], but they looked at me like that and they weren't going to let anyone step out of line and stay something.[77]

Black heterosexual men that she considered "family" came to her defense regarding her non-normative gender identity, which made her feel safe and protected. Bubba's characterization of San Diego's gay life as "wide-open" influenced her move to the city. However, the city's racial and class politics limited her movement within the city, as in the case of Hillcrest.

Hughes's oral history highlights how black working class communities in downtown and Southeast San Diego fostered queer collectivity. Her experience departed from normative ideas about LGBT histories, due to her insistence that heterosexual and

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[76] Granville "Bubba" Hughes (San Diego Resident) interviewed by Christina Carney, March 2014.
[77] Ibid.

homosexual blacks often socialized together due to racism within the city. Her narrative demonstrated how spaces were segregated according to race and class:

> Most of the blacks who didn't think they were all uppity was downtown on 5th/Market…back then Hillcrest was, how I can I put this - we just didn't mingle. We were just Negro queens. And we had the white society and they thought they were above us. They didn't frequent our side of the track. You got ghetto and then you got some that ain't ghetto. I'm ghetto. So, we had the ghetto bunch downtown and the ones that weren't were in Hillcrest.[78]

For Bubba, the term "ghetto" is socio-economic and performative. Her designation of Hillcrest patrons and residents as "uppity" indicates class and racial distinctions, as well as the abjection of people and spaces based on their class, behaviors and/or associations. According to Bubba, all she saw in downtown were "black folks," but she also hung around "Mexican queens" as well.

Beginning in the 1970s, Hughes joined a black drag performance group called The Plutons, under the stage name "Ms. Tina." According to Hughes, they were one of the first groups of female impersonators doing shows around San Diego at different clubs—not gay clubs, but straight black clubs. The Elks Club, Sportsman, Monte Carlo, Golden Hall, and Douglas Hotel were some of the downtown establishments where the Plutons performed instead of strictly gay establishments. Though gentrification pushed out blacks and low-income people during the later 1970s and onwards, Southeast San Diego emerged as space where black establishments became concentrated. Hughes described the shift:

> The downtown area kinda faded away…like the Douglas. They tore everything down and build it all the way up new. What they did to the black owners – they raised the rent so high that they had no other choice,

[78] Ibid.

> but to move out. Clay's – it killed him when they did him like that – he had been down there so many years. He was a monument downtown; everybody knows where Silver Sands was, if no other club.[79]

Instead the Sportsman Club, Turtle Inn, Shoe Shine Stand, 2–5 (afterhours place), Chat and Chew, Black and Tan, and Twilight were places that became the home of Hughes' new social scene in Southeast San Diego. Hughes's social scene was reflective of gentrification processes in San Diego that displaced many low-income people in the city. Bubba admitted that the cleanup of downtown eventually resulted in the closing of several of the bars and clubs she socialized at, in addition to "pushing a lot of black people out." Still, Bubba refused to frequent in Hillcrest. Instead, other clubs emerged in Southeast San Diego that she began to frequent, which is where black people relocated due to urban renewal processes in downtown.

Conclusion

Based on local archival data, gay militants in San Diego did not imagine black or trans communities as allies within their political movement. Though black LGBT communities were visible within San Diego, gay militants represented them as separatists and thus not imagined as a substantial part of organizing efforts. Bernie Michels, co-founder of the Gay Center for Social Services (now called The Center, San Diego's largest LGBT community center), insisted that San Diego gay bars were located in "skid row" areas, which were unsafe for white gays and lesbians. Following theorists such as Roderick Ferguson and Cathy Cohen, I argue that this is equally relevant in the current political situation: legal and social gains for LGBT communities; economic

[79] Ibid.

losses for black communities; high rates of violence against black transwomen and men; challenges to poor women's reproductive rights; and the fact that black queer women still face multiple exclusions and still need to create safer spaces. It is important to recognize this need in the present, but it is equally important to acknowledge that this is nothing new. As I have illustrated here, my research connects past and present by showing black queer women's strategies of resistance throughout the last century.

Chapter Three:

Properly Political

While Chapter 2 centered subterranean experiences of black queer women in San Diego, this chapter centers the efforts of black queer women who attempt to make space within the LGBT community in San Diego. I expand upon the second chapter by conducting an intersectional analysis of class and race politics within LGBT communities through the city's decennial redistricting process. I read a moment in 2011 in which people of color were largely blamed by the white mainstream LGBT community for the passage of Proposition 8 – a 2008 ballot proposal that made same-sex marriage unconstitutional in California. I show the complexity of this redistricting fight by highlighting how working-class residents of City Heights, along with LGBT activists, participated in the construction of electoral district boundaries. City Heights, like most areas in San Diego, is a multiethnic community. However, what makes City Heights distinct is that close to 40 percent of its approximately 70,000 residents are immigrants from South America, Asia and East Africa.[1] Many of the residents live below standard income level and are affected by deteriorating infrastructures. While the neighborhood of City Heights was ultimately collapsed into a single city council so that class/economic interests could be prioritized, the redistricting consequently engendered more political power for City Height's more wealthier and white residents. Thus, while redistricting was designed to empower vulnerable populations, in this case, it created more obstacles for the working poor and immigrant communities.

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[1] James Bliesner and Mirle Rabinowitz Bussell, "The Informal Economy in City Heights," *City Heights Community Development Corporation*, August 2013: 5. http://www.cityheightscdc.org/wp-content/uploads/The-Informal-Economy-in-City-Heights_Final-Version_August-26-2013.pdf

Redistricting

The redistricting process uses the most recent census data, including statistics on age, race/ethnicity, and gender, to determine new congressional and state legislative district boundaries. Redistricting has given residents tools to challenge gerrymandering– the manipulation of district boundaries by politicians in order to establish an unfair political advantage for one particular group or party. Historically, whites have practiced gerrymandering in order to prevent African-Americans and other marginalized communities from electing their own leaders. Therefore, measures like the Voting Rights Acts help to protect minority representation by allowing racialized communities to create their own districts and elect representatives of their choice. Although sexual orientation is not a federally protected classification, gay right activists in the Hillcrest Town Council insisted that the area's interests should be protected during the 2011 redistricting process. Specifically, they insisted that City Heights be removed from their council district, alleging that City Heights did not overwhelmingly support Proposition 8. Ultimately, the San Diego city council honored gay rights activists in Hillcrest and created a separate district for the residents of City Heights.[2]

Many queer people of color in San Diego considered the petition to be akin to a condemnation of people of color by the mostly white, middle-class gay rights activists representing Hillcrest. During the preliminary city council meetings, representatives of the Hillcrest Town Council used data from the San Diego Registrar to map Proposition 8 voting trends. They found that Hillcrest residents overwhelmingly voted against

[2] *The Impact of Redistricting in YOUR Community*, NAACP Legal Defense Fund, Inc., Asian American Justice Center, Mexican American Defense and Educational Fund

Proposition 8, while residents in adjacent areas voted largely in favor of the proposition. As a result, the Hillcrest Town Council intimated that these neighboring communities, which were primarily constituents of color, were homophobic. Since City Heights is a racially mixed area, the Town Council cited how the concentration of East African Muslims and Latinxs in City Heights, made this area unsafe for gays and lesbians. They also insisted that City Heights "deserved" its own district so that it could prioritize race and class issues. Interestingly, many residents of City Heights, who are primarily working-class and people of color, also agreed with the separation of City Heights and Hillcrest. In light of these racialized and class politics highlighted by the Hillcrest Town Council and others, several queer of color groups emerged to challenge these misrepresentations.

In this chapter, I discuss the Mackey-Cua Project (formerly known as Queer Progressive People of Color), to argue that class and race issues are inseparable from queer concerns. The Mackey-Cua Project is a relatively small but visible presence in the San Diego queer political scene, with. members from local university faculty, college students, and youth. Even though gay marriage and openly serving in the military is now legal, the Mackey-Cua Project shows that gay rights and liberation has not been realized because many concerns that affect the LGBTQ community have not been addressed. Specifically, this project cites poverty and racism as issues that affect the lives of many LGBTQ. The group has co-sponsored events that highlight the intersectional experiences of LGBTQ of color, including an event that underscores how black queer women were the founders of the Black Lives Matter political movements. Even though the Hillcrest Town Council represented gay interests as white and middle-class, organizations like

Mackey-Cua are making critical interventions on behalf of queer people of color in San Diego. In this chapter, I draw from archival material and interviews from middle-class black women who are either U.S. veterans and/or white-collar professionals. As I will show, class ideology shapes the place-making strategies of these black women in Hillcrest.

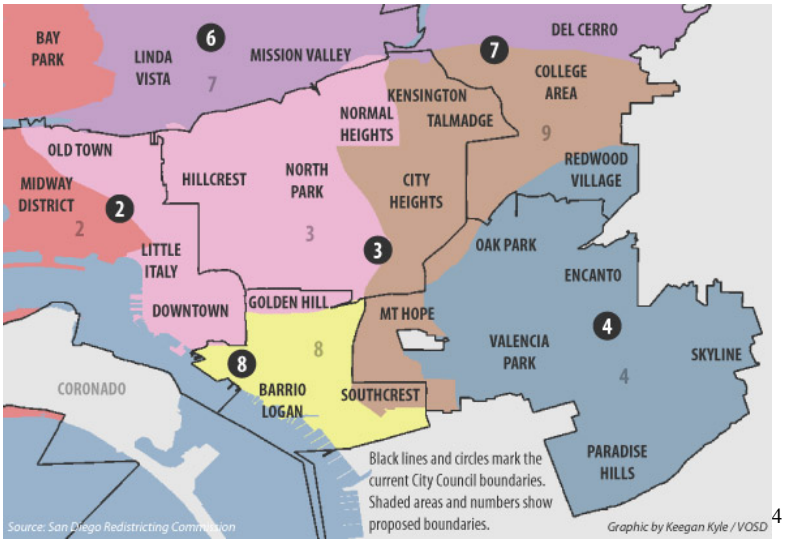
Redistricting in San Diego

Though the Voting Rights Act was intended to protect the political interests of communities of color in the U.S., it has often been used instead to further marginalize already vulnerable communities. In this section, I examine San Diego's 2010-2011 redistricting to illustrate how privileged members within the city's LGBT community manipulated electoral district boundaries and discourses in order to excise City Heights, a poorer neighborhood, from their city district. Though the LGBT community is imagined as a (sexual) minority, it used its class and racial (whiteness) privilege to actively reinforce discourses of poverty onto poor communities of color. Furthermore, I show how mainstream LGBT politics fails to envision a more expansive politics that would include the interests of the majority of LGBT members who primarily are poor and/people of color. Gay rights advocacy for marriage equality and access to military service are, in fact, class-specific political interests, which further marginalize poor/queer people of color. As such, I read the structure of marriage as a racialized and gendered structure that diminishes poor/low-income peoples' access to social services and governmental aid (unlike welfare or Medicare, for example). By examining the discourses within San

Diego's recent districting process, I illustrate how LGBT politics reinforce the violence of poverty and further marginalize vulnerable communities.

Prior to the 2011 redistricting process in San Diego, the city was split into eight council districts. The creation of a new, ninth district was initially sparked by protests from the Hillcrest Town Council. These protesters insisted that the neighborhood of Hillcrest, which belonged to District 3, needed its own district so that the interests of the city's gay community could be prioritized. Specifically, the Council was concerned that the neighborhood of City Heights, which was originally part of three council districts, including District 3 would hamper the Council's political interests within their district. Although the Voting Rights Act does not specify protection for sexual orientation, members of the Hillcrest Town Council argued that gays and lesbians were a "special interest" group that needed protection. The Council further argued that City Heights needed its own district in order to further working class and immigrants based politics for Latino and East African residents and advance LGBT political interests. Ultimately, the San Diego Redistricting Commission created a new ninth district for City Heights; and Hillcrest remained in District 3.[3]

[3] Mark Gabrish Conlan, "San Diego Queers Split Over City Redistricting," *Zenger's Newsmagazine*, May 17, 2011. http://zengersmag.blogspot.com/2011/05/san-diego-queers-split-over-city.html



[4]

Figure 3.1 Redistricting Map

While there was outrage by some LGBT people of color of San Diego about the problematic racial politics practiced by the Hillcrest Town Council, there was also support of the new districting efforts from non-profit organizations that advocated for minority residents in City Heights. Refugee organizations, in particular, were supportive of the creation of a ninth district. Though non-citizens are counted when congressional districts redraw electoral boundaries, they cannot participate in the election of community representatives. Many non-citizens, including immigrants and refugees, are in the U.S. for work/labor; they pay taxes and contribute to the economy. Unfortunately, anti-immigration legislation, initiated by some state and local governments, discourage many non-citizens from voicing their political interests and critiques. A 2011 KPBS article illustrated the concern of refugee residents and activists in City Heights: "While refugees

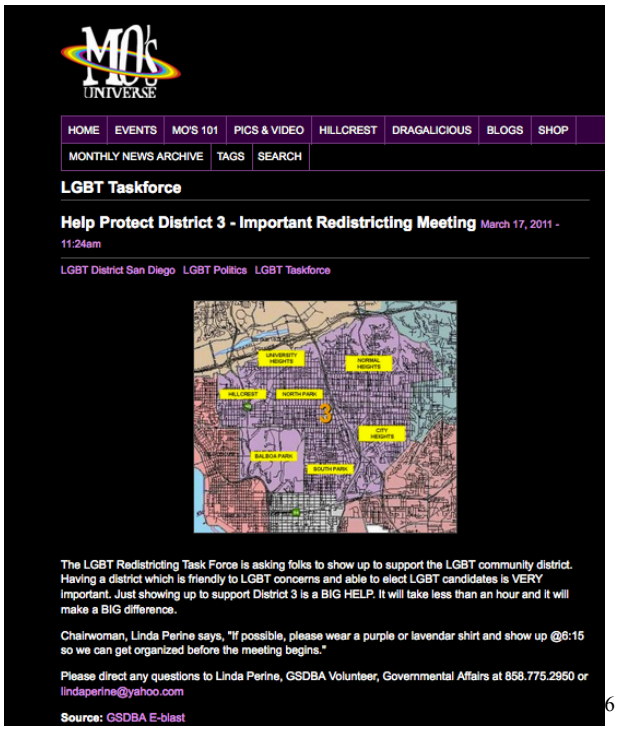
[4] Burks, Megan, "Field Guide: Redistricting," *City Heights Speaks*, August 9, 2011, http://www.speakcityheights.org/2011/08/city-heights-field-guide-redistricting/; Adrian Florido, "What SD's New Political Lines Would Look Like," *Voice of San Diego*, July 25, 2011, http://www.voiceofsandiego.org/2011/07/25/what-sds-new-political-lines-would-look-like/

find a niche in the local economy and pay taxes, many still feel uncomfortable participating in politics" as reported by PBS San Diego.[5] Though non-citizens have a right to participate in the redistricting process, they often fear retaliation and surveillance by fellow residents and the state; therefore, non-citizens represent a vulnerable demographic with urgent political needs. Empower San Diego, Refugee Forum and Horn of Africa were the principal organizations that supported the creation of a new ninth district that would prioritize the interests of East African refugees in City Heights.

In the next section, I will discuss the strategies used by non-governmental and non-profit organizations representing minoritized groups during the 2010-2011 redistricting process in San Diego. In particular, these organizations played a key role in helping disadvantaged populations in both Hillcrest and City Heights At the same time that the Hillcrest Town Council's worked to remove City Heights residents from District 3, thus reinforcing the idea that race, class, and immigration are not central LGBT political goals, organizations representing immigrants and low-income communities bolstered the view that sexuality and gender issues are not essential in race and class-based political demands.

Section 2: Creating 'Safe' Districts

[5] Andres Barraza, "Refugees in San Diego Seek Representation in Redistricting," in *KPBS*. April 6, 2011. http://www.kpbs.org/news/2011/apr/06/refugees-san-diego-seek-representation-redistricti/



[6]

Figure 3.2 Redistricting Meeting at Mo's

The LGBT Redistricting Task Force, led by realtor Linda Perine, was the most vocal about removing City Heights from District 3. Perine held meetings at the LGBT Center in San Diego as well as gay community spaces in Hillcrest. During a pre-map hearing on May 2, 2011, Perine presented her data and argument in support of removing City Heights from District 3:

> In 2008 a general election was held and a proposition was placed on the ballot. The purpose of that proposition was to deny the fundamental right to marry gay and lesbian citizens. That proposition, proposition 8, passed in San Diego County with a 52 to 48 percentage vote. However, in some neighborhoods, that unprecedented assault on the Civil Rights of a group of citizens was resoundedly rejected. In percentages ranging from 60 percent to 83 percent, these neighborhoods stood strong for the Civil Rights of the LGBT community. It is our premise that these neighborhoods should form the core of the LGBT community of interests. If we look at the numbers, in the neighborhoods, [directs attention to

[6] "Help Protect District 3 – Important Redistricting Meeting," *Mo's Universe*, March 17, 2011. Accessed May 4, 2014, http://www.mosuniverse.com/news/tags/lgbt-taskforce

> powerpoint on projector] we will see the support for marriage equality by neighborhood; Hillcrest, Bowling Gain*, University Heights, South Park - this is District 3. But if you look further down, Park West, you see Little Italy, Harbor View, you see downtown, you see Mission Hills, downtown, Park West, and Old Town. It is our premise that if you are going to create the strongest pro-gay, pro-LGBT district possible it should be comprised of the neighborhoods for the strongest support for the fundamental civil rights for LGBT folks. The average support of these selected neighborhoods was 74-percent. That is 33 percent more than the city of San Diego and City Heights.[7]

As previously stated, gay activists such as Perine cited data from the San Diego Registrar regarding Proposition 8 as a rubric for determining which neighborhoods should be included in a "pro-gay, pro-LGBT" district. The Task Force singled out City Heights' voting trends on Proposition 8 reflected a larger national discussion about race. Although the primary supporters and funders of Proposition 8 were white religious leaders, LGBT activists largely blamed black communities for its passage. According to exit poll results, 70 percent of blacks voted in favor of Proposition 8. However, 53% of Latinos, 49% of Asians and almost 50% of registered white voters also voted in favor of Proposition 8.[8] They also used the location of gay businesses, domestic partnerships and membership in the Greater San Diego Business Association (GSDBA) as indicators of where the majority of LGBT communities resided in the city of San Diego. Perine proclaimed that their proposed district (which, of course, did not include City Heights) defeated Proposition 8 with 60 to 80 percent of the vote, while City Heights opposed Proposition 8

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[7] Redistricting Commission Archived Videos, City of San Diego, May 2, 2011, http://granicus.sandiego.gov/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=43

[8] Raymond Leon Roker, "Stop Blaming California's Black Voters for Prop 8," Huffington Post, December 7, 2008, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/raymond-leon-roker/stop-blaming-californias_b_142018.html

by only 49.7 percent. Since City Heights did not overwhelmingly vote against Proposition 8, Perine concluded that it was a homophobic area.

Dave McCullough, chairman of the Hillcrest Town Council, supported Perine by presenting a similar map that would ultimately leave City Heights out of District 3. Rather than citing the voting patterns for Proposition 8, as Perine did, McCullough instead argued how the neighborhoods in the proposed District 3 already "naturally flow[ed]" together:

> We would like district 3 to move further West…it would include areas such as Mission Hills, Park West, Midtown, Little Italy, Golden Hill, Cortez Hill and Old Town. These are areas with huge tie-ins to many areas of the current Western portions of today's District 3. These areas are all very historic areas that naturally flow. These are areas, places when walking from neighborhood to neighborhood are in many ways indistinguishable from each other and are the quintessential 'sign' neighborhoods- the neighborhoods with the neon signs. These also border or closely border San Diego's finest asset and one of my favorite things in San Diego- Balboa Park in district 3. And by the way let's keep Balboa Park in district 3![9]

McCullough went on to elaborate that when he "strolls" from the various neighborhoods "it is as if [he] never left the neighborhood." And because of this "natural flow," he claimed that people who share this visual/economic spatial imaginary "deserve" to have their communities intact and their interests protected. During the town hall he explained that Hillcrest and western neighborhoods naturally belonged together, but eastward neighborhoods such as City Heights, did not. In response, an online community magazine, Zenger's Newsmagazine, profiled the May 3rd pre-map hearing, in which they argued that the removal of City Heights from District 3 was racially motivated. The

[9] Redistricting Commission Archived Videos, City of San Diego, May 2, 2011, http://granicus.sandiego.gov/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=43

article, entitled "San Diego Queers Split Over City Redistricting," insisted that the map was classist and racist. When the author of the Newsmagazine asked McCullough if his map could be interpreted as classist and racist, he responded: "To me, the underlying issue is not race or ethnicity…it's fair and equal representation. But putting City Heights in its own council district, you're better representing it." Indeed, there were possible material benefits of collapsing City Heights into a single district. Rather than, expecting Hillcrest residents to address economic disparities, City Heights could represent itself and potentially become a site for the articulation of class consciousness.. However, as I will later discuss, this potential consequently became jeopardized due to the fact that white property owners in the new district would have more political leverage.[10]

The LGBT Redistricting Task Force and the Hillcrest Town Council were not the only institutions that supported the newly created district for City Heights. On May 2, 2011, the same day as the pre-map hearing in City Heights, Alberto Pulido – a Professor of Ethnic Studies at San Diego State University submitted a map on behalf of the Latino Redistricting Committee. The group was comprised of 40 members whose political interest centered on establishing a second Latino-majority district in San Diego that would consolidate City Heights into one district. In order to justify City Heights as a "community of interest," the Latino Redistricting Committee submitted demographical information, including race, language, religion, immigration status, socioeconomic categories, etc. City Heights is also considered a majority-minority district since racial/ethnic minorities comprise more than 50% of the population. As of 2011, 26%

[10] Mark Gabrish Conlan, "San Diego Queers Split Over City Redistricting," *Zenger's Newsmagazine*, May 17, 2011. http://zengersmag.blogspot.com/2011/05/san-diego-queers-split-over-city.html

Latinxs and 29% other ethnic/racial minorities are eligible to vote–thus proving that this was a community of interest that needed protection so that Latinx votes would not be diluted.[11] As mentioned earlier, City Heights was a split among three districts – the third, fourth and seventh districts. For some, this was desirable because it allowed the neighborhood to be represented by three council members. However, the members of the Latino Redistricting Committee desired to "unite" the neighborhood of City Heights. As Camarillo argued, "Latinos compose almost one third of the population in San Diego. Technically, mathematically we should have three seats…Two is possible. That is why we are proposing that new district be a Latino district."[12] The proposed District 9 would include the neighborhoods of Southcrest, Golden Hill, Rolando, Fairmont Park, Ridgeview, Mount Hope, Mountain View and Shelltown, with City Heights at its core.

The Latino Redistricting Committee (LRC) worked with leaders from other districts, specifically districts 3, 4, and 7, to consolidate support for its proposal throughout the pre-map hearings. In turn, LRC backed the demands of these other districts. For example, leaders of District 4, a historically black district, were concerned that its "black vote" would be diluted by the increase in Latino residents. In response, the LRC offered to incorporate the mostly-Latino sections of District 4 into the new district so that District 4 would remain mostly black/African-American. Given the Hillcrest Redistricting Task Force's interest in removing City Heights from their district, the

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[11] These numbers only include those eligible to vote, which excludes people without U.S. citizenship. This is important in relation to City Heights because of the relatively high amount of Latino/a and East African immigrants (documented and undocumented).

[12] Leonel Sanchez, "Group Seeks Second Latino District in SD," San Diego Red (San Diego, CA), May 5, 2011, http://www.sandiegored.com/noticias/11114/Group-seeks-second-Latino-district-in-SD/#sthash.2kNPtsnE.dpuf

LRC's proposed map allowed the Task Force to justify their proposal as an effort to assist Latinx residents.[13]

The creation of a new 9th council district was intended to "unite" City Heights along the class interests of its low-income residents; however, it ended up reinforcing the political clout of the district's wealthier white neighbors. Mateo Camarillo, chairman of the Latino Redistricting Committee, was displeased that the SDSU College Area and the neighborhood of Kensington-Talmadge, both considered white and wealthier than the neighborhood of City Heights, were incorporated into the new district. The largely white residents of these wealthier neighborhoods accounted for a big percentage of the district's voting power: 45%. As Camarillo questioned, "What do these communities have in common with the multicultural, multilingual (80 languages spoken), diverse immigrant communities of City Heights?"[14]

Despite this diversity, in 2011, when Camarillo decided to run for the council seat in 2012, he was defeated by Marti Emerald, a white homeowner in the Kensington-Talmadge neighborhood. In fact, residents of the Kensington-Talmadge neighborhood have attempted to gentrify the neighborhood by bringing mainstream commercial chains, such as Trader Joe's or Henry's, into the area. Residents expressed that this move would raise property values and gradually displace poor residents who will no longer be able to afford the higher rents. However, Catholic Charities – an organization that provides

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[13] Leonel Sanchez, "Group Seeks Second Latino District in SD," San Diego Red (San Diego, CA), May 5, 2011, http://www.sandiegored.com/noticias/11114/Group-seeks-second-Latino-district-in-SD/#sthash.2kNPtsnE.dpuf

[14] John R. Lamb, "End of Round 1: San Diego Redistricting Commission Pleases – and Peeves," *San Diego City Beat* (San Diego, CA), July 27, 2011 http://sdcitybeat.com/article-9333-san-diego-redistricting.html

social services to the neighborhood's residents – thwarted that plan by purchasing the land and financing the development of a YMCA. Catholic Charities hoped that "the facility would integrate City Heights and Kensington-Talmadge residents, who don't often interact across the boulevard."[15]

In the end, the Hillcrest Redistricting Task Force and the Latino Redistricting Committee aided in the reorganizing of District 3 and the creation of a new District 9, which resulted in displacing over 67,000 City Heights residents (about 50% of the district's original population) from of District 3. The new District 3 is now 70% white, while the new District 9 is 50% Hispanic, 23.2% white, 11.2% African-American and 13.4% Asian.[16] While the new district ushered in a possibility of Latino/Black voting strength, many of City Heights' residents are refugees and are not allowed to vote. Similarly, while the creation of a majority-minority district was represented as a victory for minoritized populations in San Diego, it reinforced the idea that poverty, race, and immigration rights were not topics relevant to LGBT political discourse. At the same time, the Latino Redistricting Committee did not advocate for LGBT issues in the new ninth district. The dichotomization between race/class and sexuality/sexual orientation is problematic because it alienates LGBT people who live in poverty and whose political interests intersect at different scales.

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[15] Adrian Florido, "A Culture Clash Where Three Neighborhoods Meet," *Voice of San Diego* (San Diego, CA), July 5, 2011, http://www.voiceofsandiego.org/all-narratives/neighborhoods/a-culture-clash-where-three-neighborhoods-meet/

[16] "Filing Statement and Final Redistricting Plan for the City of San Diego," 2011 Redistricting Commisson, City Clerk, August 25, 2011, http://www.sandiego.gov/redistricting/pdf/2011finalplan.pdf

In the next section, I will show how queer black women negotiated and advocated for these intersecting political issues. The Mackey-Cua project, founded by black lesbian Fofie Bashir, is a relatively new organization that was established soon after the 2011 redistricting. The multi-generational LGBTQI was named in honor of two queer women of color who were politically active around race and sexuality issues beginning in the mid-1980s. I argue that Bashir's organization is an example of how queer people of color organizing calls attention to the intersectional experiences of race, class, gender and sexuality in contrast to the dichotomization represented in the redistricting efforts analyzed above.

Mackey-Cua Project

In *Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space, and Feminist Activism* (2000), historian Anne Enke highlights the often contested place-making strategies of feminist movements during the 1970s in the Twin Cities (Minneapolis-Saint Paul), Chicago, and Detroit. Specifically, Enke explores the "less explicit, uncanonized, popular activism" that sparked these diverse movements.[17] The primary focus of the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s was about "intervening in established public spaces and . . . creating new kinds of spaces."[18] Enke describes the bars' discriminatory policies as an example of how women, especially lesbians, were excluded from conventional commercial social spaces:

> Poodle Club managers defensively avowed that women were always welcome there; indeed, women's patronage was critical to a business that

[17] Enke, *Finding the Movement*, 13.
[18] Enke, *Finding the Movement*, 5.

> literally capitalized on heterosexuality. At the same time, the managers openly discriminated against homosexuals, claiming that gays and lesbians disrupted the normal functioning of the bar. Though men who arrived in all-male pairs or groups were rarely denied entrance, women without male "escorts" were often turned away at the door - usually on the grounds that they were "unable to prove their age," even when they presented legal ID cards. What legal ID cards actually could not prove was a woman's heterosexuality: only a man could produce that appearance. Bouncers and bars thus turned "unescorted" women away for failing to abide by heteronormative restrictions on women's autonomy and mobility. The protest action at the Poodle Club offers a snapshot of the influence of "bar dyke" activism on emerging feminist activism, their interdependence, and their combined impact.[19]

One of Enke's important contributions is her claim that "the movement was built by more than the people who embraced the name."[20] She highlights how lesbian and straight-identified women often co-mingled and benefitted collectively from the women's movements, which disrupted the "gay-straight" divide of the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s. Besides creating opportunities for different groups of women to dialogue, these movements also engendered alternative marketplaces such as lesbian bars and coffee houses—sites of pleasure owned by, and created, for women. According to Enke, many of these female business owners believed that "the existence of feminist commercial venues would benefit women, improve their status in the public world, and even change the marketplace itself."[21] Following Enke, I highlight below the efforts of women who attempted to carve out alternative spaces within the gay and lesbian community of Hillcrest.

Racism also prevents women of color from making space for themselves. In San Diego, racial barriers engender the establishment of alternative groups such as Lesbian

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[19] Enke, *Finding the Movement*, 26.
[20] Enke, *Finding the Movement*, 5.
[21] Enke, *Finding the Movement*, 63.

and Gays of African Descent United (LAGADU) and informal meeting spaces in peoples' homes rather than participate in the Hillcrest scene. This is due, in large part, to racist tactics in Hillcrest, such as extra carding, where bouncers of clubs would require people of color to provide several documents allegedly confirming their identity to deter their participation in public spaces.. As a result, many choose instead to entertain in their homes, thus turning their "private" space into a public venue as evidenced by my archival data. In *Mapping Gay LA: The Intersection of Place and Politics* (2001), Moira Rachel Kenney argues that since Los Angeles lacked a central place for the making of local politics, seemingly private spaces often were converted into public meeting places:

> In Los Angeles, the movement started in a living room, not outside a bar in a crowded street – not simply because Angelenos are less confrontational, but also because in Los Angeles crowds are rarely spontaneous and are not easily assembled. To read this map is to understand that the living room can be a public place, and that visibility is more subtly obtained.[22]

Enke's study of "dollar parties" in Detroit likewise shows Black women collapsing the private-public divide by creating queer marketplaces in their homes, away from established gay enclaves:

> Studs, fems and sooners often connected domestic and commercial arenas to build community space: they used domestic spaces as avenues into queer commercial spaces, and they used commercial spaces as avenues into queer domestic spaces. Elaborating the long-standing and highly adaptable African American practice known as house parties, black women created dollar parties - so called because that's what women paid to get in resistance to economic marginalization. Though they were not licensed venues, dollar parties composed a queer marketplace; they were location through which women redistributed resources and built a queer-affirming world that did not wholly depend on access to commercial space. Doing so, studs, fems, and sooners developed community

[22] Kenney, *Mapping Gay L.A.*, 17

> autonomy, constituted themselves as a viable market and became a public constituency.[23]

Although Bernie Michels, co-founder of the Gay Center for Social Services, characterized black lesbians and gays as "separatists," Cynthia Lawrence-Wallace and Peggy Heathers exemplify the intersectional relationship between race, sexuality and class that Kenney and Enke signal toward when they co-founded the Gay Center for Social Services located in Hillcrest. Peggy is a white lesbian, grew up in San Diego and attended San Diego State University, and Cynthia is a black lesbian who moved to San Diego in 1960. Heather is a social worker and Cynthia was a schoolteacher who later worked as an administrator for San Diego County. Both women relayed that before the emergence of the Gay Center for Social Services, the gay scene in San Diego was limited to either the bars or people's homes. Peggy described how in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Burberry, a bar located in Mission Beach, was a popular lesbian bar where women were allowed to dance together. Although Peggy admitted that it was "fun," she also said that this pleasure was "very separate from [their] other life." She longed for more political power and a more diverse population of lesbians, outside of the bar scene. Heathers and Lawrence-Wallace made this point in an interview with Frank Nobiletti, a graduate student at San Diego State University, in 1990:

> Heathers: You go and you dance and you have a lot of fun and you go to a party after the bar, but you didn't see these people anywhere else. Then sometimes you would make friends and go to these people's houses. So, you either had the bar or someone's house. And sometimes we would have picnic, but it was always very fun…you didn't think of anything else but that. It was very separate than your other life. I went to San Diego State and it was very straight.
> Nobiletti: Was there a sense of community or any sort of togetherness?

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[23] Enke, *Finding the Movement*, 31.

> Heathers: No…
> Nobiletti: Not even among the little group?
> Heathers: None at all. You didn't have any political interests or power or inoculation or anything…You just hung out together. And sometimes you didn't like the people.
> Lawrence-Wallace: That's a good point. There's a lot of people that you saw that you didn't like and you would never see them under any other circumstance. But you just felt like you had something in common because you were living the same type of lifestyle. And you could at least be free to kiss and hold or whatever… but otherwise you would never be with these people under any other circumstance.

Since both women were closeted, the bar offered a space to show how each was a "loved person," according to Lawrence-Wallace. At the same time, she stated how "choices were narrow."[24]

Because of these limitations, Heathers took the lead to advocate for an alternative space—a center—that would serve a diverse group of women and their interests. While Jess Jessop, co-founder of the Gay Center for Social Services, supported her interests, Heathers routinely encountered pushback from the largely male-dominated clientele at the Center. Many men felt that lesbians were attempting to be separatists. Although women's groups such as Monday Night Lesbians, Tres Femme, and Radical Feminists existed before the creation of the Center, Heathers and Lawrence-Wallace helped to create spaces for these groups to meet at the Center. Heathers was "committed to having alternatives for women;" and Lawrence-Wallace recalled that the Center was primarily imagined as a space for men without a critical analysis of gender: "They were committed to having a gay center and wanted to include women. But not all the men on there were as committed… gay men seemed really good at forgetting that women existed in the

[24] Cynthia Lawrence-Wallace and Peggy Heathers, interview by Frank Nobiletti, *Lambda Archives of San Diego*, February 19, 1990, https://archive.org/details/casdla_000024

world…And it's still a problem." Though Lawrence-Wallace was hesitant about committing to the Center, upon reflection she insisted that it changed her life and her political consciousness:

> I got to be very political and now I'm ridiculous…I was definitely changed by that…changed from a point of feeling like I was the only one in the world and I had a very limited choice on who I could associate with to finding out that there was a whole world full of gay people and I happened to be one of them. And that there was a lot of things I could do and a lot of people I could meet and that I certainly didn't have to be limited. And that was something I could be very proud of and have a good time being. And that I didn't have to have this constant fear.

According to Heathers, their labor in the development of the Center was evidence of their "organizational ability" and a sense of being "proud of lesbianism" instead of "tip toeing around."[25]

Countering the charge of "separatism," which was represented as a deterrent to gay solidarity, these women organizers insisted that women-only spaces were vital to women's political socialization. As Lawrence-Wallace explained,

> …there was separatism in the women's community because women were also finding their womanist. That needed to be a separate situation. You just need some time alone and with other women and you needed to be separate in order to be strong and then go back into the community if that's your choice. Men misunderstood the purpose of that separatism as I think people do. I think people misunderstand Black Nationalism. Some of the men misunderstood that and even some women…

Heathers continued, "most of the men really wanted a lot of togetherness and they didn't understand why we had a women's night." She then pointed out that "men planned groups all the time that excluded women."

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[25] Cynthia Lawrence-Wallace and Peggy Heathers, interview by Frank Nobiletti, *Lambda Archives of San Diego*, February 19, 1990, https://archive.org/details/casdla_000024

Lawrence-Wallace also discussed how the Center ignored race issues. Since the participation of black women was minimal compared to that of white women, Lawrence-Wallace was often solicited by the Center to speak on race relations, which she resented. On one occasion, she "yelled at the gay center for not having a black person on the board…and [afterwards] they asked me to join the board." She continued,

> I don't think there was any attempt to notice that there were other people…it seems to me that in the black community there's much less tolerance for homosexuality. So, it's hard to identify homosexuals in the black community, it hard for us to find one another because we are hiding from everyone so, we manage to hide from each other too. So it hard to find support and give support in the black community. And I'm not sure that the gay center took that on as something to deal with.
> I think in our society people are really uninformed. We as black people are uninformed and dehumanized so, we have a hard time being proud of ourselves, but with media distortions and education distortions so is the rest of the community. They are either uninformed or they have stereotypes that are erroneous and so you get the treatment because they have those stereotypes. And because of your own dehumanization you take that on. And the people in the gay community are no different from people in the other community in that sense. And so I feel that I'm constantly being put in the position to educate the gay community. In fact, I was just asked to speak to the Democratic Club…but my response is, 'I'm tired of educating white people.' You talk about identifying racism…Do it yourself!...You don't want me to tell you anyway.[26]

Lawrence-Wallace's statement calls attention to the double burden faced by Black LGBT/queer people of having to challenge anti-black racism as well as negotiating black sexual politics. In addition to racism at the Center, Lawrence-Wallace often experienced intimate forms of racism due to her relationship with Heathers. Often times Lawrence-Wallace would get treated differently because she was black and often had to point this out to Heathers, who was sometimes oblivious to her privileged position. The following

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[26] Cynthia Lawrence-Wallace and Peggy Heathers, interview by Frank Nobiletti, *Lambda Archives of San Diego*, February 19, 1990, https://archive.org/details/casdla_000024

conversation was between Nobletti, the aforementioned graduate student and Lawrence-Wallace:

> Frank Nobletti: How is it being an interracial couple? Especially in the 70s, was there anything complex or especially wonderful…
> Heathers: It was interesting…You got a lot of prejudice…
> Lawrence-Wallace: Peggy really became aware…
> Heather: Yes, I really became aware. I was not aware. I had never experienced it before, of course. But being with Cynthia, I began to experience it and it was incredible. I mean we would go to a restaurant…we went to the [Marine Room] for my birthday and we were seated and not waited on…for a long time.
> Lawrence-Wallace: I warned her that we might not be…
> Heathers: We finally called the maître d and asked if there was a problem. And after an hours and fifteen minutes, we were very grudgingly waited on by a waitress who said not more than she had to say…this happened 10 years ago, but I'm sure you can go there now and get the same treatment.
> Heathers: That's just one example…and another time we got seated next to the kitchen…and then Cynthia very tacitly would point out to me what was happening. And I didn't even see it.
>
> Lawrence-Wallace: Well what about the gay community?
> Heather: What about when we went over to whats-a-names house…[laughter]
> Lawrence-Wallace: There were two gay men who invited Peggy and I…they invited us over for a gathering. And we got there, it was an evening gathering, we got there and found out that people had been there earlier. It started as a barbeque in the afternoon and we said something about it… 'Well, why did we come so late?' And they said 'well, we didn't want to offend out neighbors…we thought our neighbors might be offended by having blacks in the area during the daytime…and thought they wouldn't see you at night.'[27]

In both instances, Heathers was disciplined by whites who were uncomfortable by Lawrence-Wallace's blackness. Even though Heathers initially said that they, as a couple, "never [had] a problem" with race and that it was only something that had been imposed

[27] Cynthia Lawrence-Wallace and Peggy Heathers, interview by Frank Nobiletti, *Lambda Archives of San Diego*, February 19, 1990, https://archive.org/details/casdla_000024

by outsiders, Lawrence-Wallace reminded Heathers how she asked her to "straighten" her hair before she met Heathers's white mother.

> Lawrence-Wallace: "Well you told me I couldn't go over to your mothers with my hair natural"
> Peggy: Well that's true…
> Lawrence-Wallace: She was warning me…you can't talk about politics with my mother and please straighten your hair when we go. You forgot about that…I didn't forget about that. Which I didn't…I didn't straighten my hair.[28]

Despite the obvious racial, gendered and classed dynamics of Hillcrest, some black women still hoped to find community within these spaces. Vertez Burks, who I interviewed in 2013, came to San Diego from the Virgin Islands in 1986. She admitted that she didn't realize that being gay had a "subculture" element: "For me gayness was having a girlfriend and having sex. Everybody I was with [in the Virgin Islands] was married. When I came here it was a subculture – music, books… I didn't know what it felt like to walk into a group and everyone knew I was a lesbian." Though Vertez said that friends called her "crazy" because she admitted how "race wasn't necessarily a factor" in how she formed friends and community, she also admitted the obvious racial dynamics in Hillcrest: "Hillcrest was very white, [blacks] didn't feel comfortable there." Once, Vertez spotted a black person at the bar in Hillcrest and asked, "Where are all the black people?" They replied, "They're around" and jokingly added, "you and me." Vertez explained how there is an obvious "comfort zone to being around black gay

[28] Cynthia Lawrence-Wallace and Peggy Heathers, interview by Frank Nobiletti, *Lambda Archives of San Diego*, February 19, 1990, https://archive.org/details/casdla_000024

people – even straight black people. We have a similar history…and there is no need to explain anything or [unintentionally] hurt someone's feelings."[29]

Though Vertez frequently participated in social groups that centered gender and sexuality, she also found community in groups that focused on race and class. Through Vertez, I found out about the group Lesbians and Gays of African Descent United (LAGADU). Vertez and her friends discussed forming a group while at the historic Flame nightclub in Hillcrest one night; some desired to meet and date other black lesbians and others just wanted to meet people. There was a black group called Soul during that time, but it did not have enough black lesbians, according to Vertez. Vertez explained that Marti Mackey was the leader and founder of LAGADU and wrote a play about black women's experiences in San Diego. Vertez described Mackey as "really smart [and] had a lot great ideas."[30] In 1991, Mackey died from complications related to breast and bone cancer. Vertez would often visit her up until her death. Since many black women did not feel comfortable in Hillcrest and/or were not out, LAGADU members would meet at the Urban League in Southeast San Diego which Vertez describes as a "midpoint" meeting place. At the onset of its formation, LAGADU cited class as an equally important organizing principle as sexuality. The goals of the organization read as such:

> LAGADU was established January 21, 1989 primarily as a social support group for Black lesbians and gays in San Diego. Through the process of self-empowerment, we have committed ourselves to developing programs that would address the specific soci- political and economic needs of

[29] Vertez R. Burks (San Diego Resident) interviewed by Christina Carney, November 19, 2013.
[30] Vertez R. Burks (San Diego Resident) interviewed by Christina Carney, November 19, 2013.

> Black lesbians and gays. Within LAGADU, we have committees focused on Health and Social Concerns, archival gathering, a speaker's bureau, and referral and information services.[31]

The rise of the *New Right*, during the 1970s and 1980s, led to the deindustrialization of the urban core, and massive cuts in development and social services disproportionally affected blacks and other economically marginalized communities. According to Vertez, LAGADU was more political than other groups because it highlighted racial justice issues, which were often under attack during this historical period.

In 2011, I went to The LGBT Center to witness the induction of M. Corinne Mackey to the San Diego LGBT Community Wall. The Wall commemorates gays and lesbians who participated in community/activist work for the interests of San Diego's greater LGBT community. Mackey is the only black woman, so far, who has been honored for their achievements. Although Mackey was officially inducted to the Hall of Fame in 2004, it wasn't until 2011 when a plaque commemorating their service was installed in The Center's library. The Center's official profile explained how Mackey's activism was informed by "minority oppression." The description also admitted how the LGBT movement was organized mostly on behalf of "white, middle class members." Although Mackey grew up in Chicago, much of her organizing was centered on improving the sociality of black lesbians and gays in San Diego. Before her death in 1992, Mackey served on the board of the Center and the San Diego Police Department

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[31] M. Corrine Mackey, "Introduction," *LAGADU and Friends present The Gathering – A Theatre Event*, February 11, 1991.

Shooting Review Board, as a member of the Human Dignity Ordinance Task Force, and a volunteer instructor for the San Diego Police Academy.[32]

Mackey also wrote and organized a theatrical production, "The Gathering," at the Lyceum Theatre in San Diego in 1991, which reflected the racial tensions amongst gays and lesbians in San Diego and elsewhere, as well as the intersectional experiences of black lesbians and gays in late 20th U.S. The production premiered during Black History month that February, and highlighted the invisibility of black lesbians and gays during the annual celebration. In the introduction to the playbill, Mackey stated:

> We are especially honoring Black gays and lesbians who for too long have been left out of the celebration of Black survival and history. Left out if we insisted on the revelation
> of ourselves. We must learn that no single individual's or particular group's seeking of liberty and freedom can mean very much unless justice is everyone's right. Intolerance of differences and the denial of equality and freedom to some is the blight that works against us.[33]

Mackey argued how justice for black communities also depended on justice for black lesbians and gays. Specifically, Mackie stated how cultural production by blacks, from U.S. chattel slavery to the present, has been integral to place-making by blacks in the U.S.

> Part of the reason why and how we survived has been because our art and our artists who have told us again and again who we were and how we are so deserving of a life. Our artists have shown us love – in words, in pictures, in song – and have kept us going, saying this is where we've been, this is where we are, but… dream on – this is where we could be.[34]

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[32] "Ms. Corrine "Martie" Mackey," The 2004 San Diego LGBT Community Wall of Honor, 20

[33] M. Corrine Mackey, "Introduction," *LAGADU and Friends present The Gathering – A Theatre Event*, February 11, 1991.

[34] M. Corrine Mackey, "Introduction," *LAGADU and Friends present The Gathering – A Theatre Event*, February 11, 1991.

The efforts of Mackey were not restrictive to one historical moment, but an ongoing consciousness that would inspire future radical black lesbians. One of those groups was the Mackey-Cua project, which sought to create a multi-racial and multi-generational space to challenge the problematic race and class politics of mainstream LGBT politics and discourse. Fofie Bashir, the co-founder of the Mackey-Cua project (formerly known as Queer Progressive People of color), argued that a gay/queer organization must also be political. Specifically, it needs to address how queer people of color are not fighting only for marriage, but also for other basic human rights such as job security, access to education and healthcare. Bashir's experiences working alongside conservative peers in the non-profit sector compelled her to start an organization that worked to combat asymmetries as a result of race, class and sexuality. Though Bashir had experience and success organizing around queer/lesbian of color issues in other cities, she confessed that doing this in San Diego had been a difficult task. Specifically, Bashir discussed how the LGBT movement needed a more visible "multidimensional" approach, which would advocate for the needs of poor LGBT and LGBT of color.[35]

Bashir's desire to create a LGBT group was engendered by the fact that she could not find a LGBT group in the area with a political agenda. I first met Bashir in early 2011 at an event that catered to queer people of color organized by my partner. Later, Bashir contacted me about participating in a group she and others initially called Queer Progressive People of Color. Though I did not necessarily consider myself a member of the group, I went to several meetings and was put on the list serv. In the first official

[35] Fofie Bashir (San Diego Resident) interviewed by Christina Carney, November 26, 2013.

meeting, which consisted of 12 people, we introduced ourselves and talked about what would be important issues that the group would address. Initially, I hesitated to join the group, after my experience with another women of color LGBT group that insisted on *not* being a political organization. Bashir had experienced the same resistance to political organizing from queer of color/women of color in San Diego. Bashir's access to grassroots organizing and events productions is something she has done extensively in Los Angeles, New York, District of Columbia and the San Francisco/Bay area. However, Bashir found that grassroots organizing was different in San Diego due to a generational gap: The "older group seemed disinterested" and she had "to take the extra steps to explain why we even need to do [political organizing along with social events]." In contrast, in other cities that she had lived in, political organizing was a "given" and it was "easier to coalesce."[36]

Creating the Mackey-Cua organization was important to Bashir because of the "intersections" in her experience: Bashir was shaped not only by being lesbian and black, but also by her father's experience as an immigrant. Bashir's mother is African-American, while her father immigrated from Ghana in the mid-20th century. Bashir recounts how being called African was the "worst thing you can call somebody" while growing up. However, her father's experience of being a non-American black gave her a "much broader perspective" in relation to "both the lines where we need to fight in terms of racism [and] lines where we don't need to black victimhood." Though Bashir experienced the most intense forms of misogyny within the LGBT community, she was

[36] Fofie Bashir (San Diego Resident) interviewed by Christina Carney, November 26, 2013.

expected to "compartmentalize and prioritize" certain identities over others within the black community. According to Bashir, black politics is always about how "we going to stand by our black men…" When black women attempt to center their experiences within black politics, it is "seen as dogging the black men..."[37]

While centering intersectionality within black organizations is an ongoing battle, Bashir expressed that proclaiming herself as a black lesbian has not been an issue within her family or larger community. Bashir said she was "very blessed" and "didn't have a coming out story [and] just assumed that everybody was going to know". Her sister is also queer. Her grandmother had known since her late teens. Bashir grew up in Detroit, left for Los Angeles at 19, lived briefly in the Bay – then migrated to the East Coast (New York and DC) for a total of 8 years. Her time working in production in NY was her most memorable. She recalled it as an "empowering experience" and described her and her black lesbian co-workers as a group of "fierce ass black lesbians."[38]

Bashir stressed that it is important to discuss how the black community negotiates queerness. During our interview, I asked Bashir her thoughts on Prop 8, and how gay communities in San Diego used it to label the black community as inherently homophobic. She called this the "worst scapegoating" and looked forward to other critiques of this representation. She disagreed with the view that blacks live fearfully in the closet. As an example, Bashir explained that there had always been queens and flamboyant gay men in the black church and "nobody cared." Bashir expressed that

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[37] Fofie Bashir (San Diego Resident) interviewed by Christina Carney, November 26, 2013.
[38] Fofie Bashir (San Diego Resident) interviewed by Christina Carney, November 26, 2013.

narratives about black homophobia need to be reframed to bring complexity to these experiences – instead of on "other people's terms" that "look at things in these certain boxes."

Bashir explained how the Mackey-Cua project's identification as queer purposely "make[s] the assumption that we are all included." For Bashir, queer is an "understanding" without the acronyms. She further explained: "there doesn't have to be a very specific boundary or binary code of who identifies as what…" At the same time, Bashir admitted that she is still invested in spaces specifically for black queers and black women: "There are specific issues…that's not about comparing and contrasting. Anti-blackness is exported all over the world. Black women need their space to deal with that." Bashir expressed that Mackey-Cua is a space that cannot be claimed, but instead a place that is "willing to be teachful."[39]

[39] Fofie Bashir (San Diego Resident) interviewed by Christina Carney, November 26, 2013.

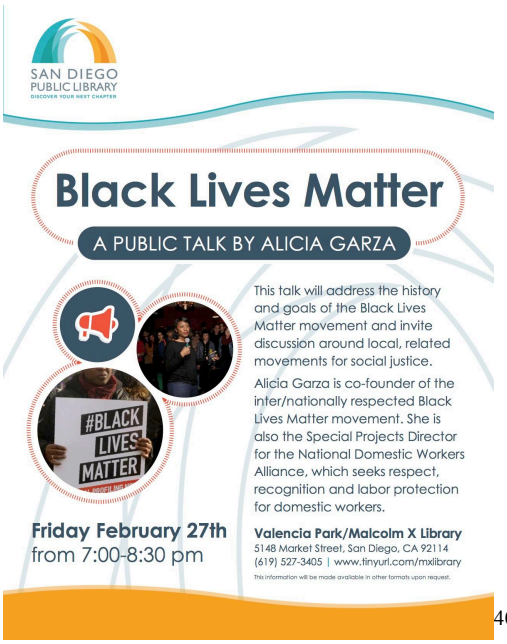

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Figure 3.3 Black Lives Matter at Malcolm X Library

An example of the intersectional work that Mackey-Cua is invested in is an event they co-sponsored relating to the Black Lives Matter political movement. The event brought Alicia Garza, a black queer woman who co-founded the movement, to San Diego. Mackey-Cua co-sponsored the event with the University of San Diego and the San Diego Public Library. Four queer black women, including Garza, a UCSD graduate, founded the Black Lives Matter movement. The movement differs from Black Nationalist and Civil Rights political organizations because of its intersectional logic. Both women of color feminism and queer of color critique highlight how racial groups have been used to normalize respectability and value over others *within* these groups; therefore women of color feminism and queer of color critique analyze racial formations as a comparative

[40] "Black Lives Matter: A Public Talk by Alicia Garza," https://www.facebook.com/events/1433751320249465/

analytic instead of an investment in identitarian categories.[41] Though minority nationalisms, queer of color critique and women of color feminisms emerged out of the same historical context, they differed in terms of comparing various minorities and their circumstances. The internal colonial model, used by minority nationalists, challenged the utopic western imaginary of racialized others and instead posited an "oppositional narrative," which retells history from the experiences of the exploited. Though the internal colonial model gave minorities an alternative history that exposed the legacies of colonialism and imperialism, it still approached the history of racialized others as discrete and comparable - similar to Western epistemology and the division of nation-states. The limited analysis of the internal colonial model ignored history, which saw gendered and sexualized members within racial groups as dispensable or certain racial groups valued over others at different historical moments. Women of color feminism emerged to highlight these contradictions. Women of color feminism and queer of color critiques can be used to describe our current historical moment in which we see new formations of power in the forms of new racial formations and the prison industrial complex, which the Black Lives Matter Movement highlights. Black Lives Matter does not hierarchize or compartmentalize identities. Instead, this movement shows how black oppression is linked to disability, immigration status, class, gender performance, sexuality and respectability simultaneously.

Conclusion

[41] Hong, Grace, Roderick A. Ferguson, "Introduction," *Strange Affinities*

Although the 2011 redistricting process was designed to protect class and racial interests, it essentialized identity, which ultimately elided issues that affect low-income and people of color who are LGBT. The Hillcrest Town Council ignored how members within their community might want to center poverty, race, class and immigration onto their political platform, while groups representing low-income communities failed to address how gender and sexuality could be incorporated into anti-poverty and anti-racist political strategies. Groups such as Lesbians and Gays of African Descent United (LAGADU) and the Mackey-Cua projected attempt to an address this void within LGBT and race and class politics. More importantly, these efforts emphasize that these tensions continue to create divisions and form asymmetries in power.

Epilogue

In this dissertation, I have interrogated what normally constitutes as valuable or noteworthy information in relation to black/African-American and LGBT histories. This dissertation has discussed how black queer women have created *safer* spaces for themselves in unconventional ways. Angelou's place making strategies illuminated how informal labor fields, specifically sex work, were more desirable than formal labor fields. Additionally, the legacies of miscegenation, especially during processes of gentrification in early 20th century San Diego, played an important role in how she negotiated her business. Hughes's preference for working-class bars in downtown San Diego diverged from gay histories that position these communities as safety risks. Her narrative also highlighted the ways that gay militants participated in gentrification efforts and claims on space. The work of black lesbian activists in late 20th century San Diego challenged the supposed realization of LGBT civil rights in the 21st century by instead highlighting the ways that mainstream LGBT politics reproduce violence against communities of color. These queer spacemaking practices gestures towards understanding of black women's practices as a way to highlight other ways of being.

Additionally, I used theories within critical geography to investigate place-making strategies by black queer women. If critical geography is the investigation of the intersection between the real (place) and the imagined (perception), then my focus necessitated that I explain how black queer women reimagine space differently, which is dependent on race, gender, sexuality, and class.[1] Another contribution of critical geography is the focus on the spatialization of social relations. I have elaborated on how

[1] McKittrick, Katherine, Linda Peake. "What Difference Does Difference Make to Geography." In *Questioning Geography: Fundamental Debates*, (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2005).

gentrification and development processes in urban spaces have coded black queer women and black communities as expendable, which in turn engendered unconventional place-making strategies by black queer women.

I have drawn important conclusions based on my research about black queer women in San Diego. The contradictory role of identity politics, in particular, had emerged a trend within each of the case studies throughout the dissertation. While feminist and gay liberation movements have been represented as radical and progressive political movements, they actively policed who could and could not be apart of their political movements. People who fail to embody ideas about respectability, including sex workers and non-white labor, are constantly used as a way to measure standards of proper behavior. The first chapter reflected on the racial dynamics of the early feminist movement in the U.S. in which white feminists allied with working class white men at the expense of people of color, including working class women. I also illustrated how in the 20th century gay liberation movement reproduced violence towards communities of color through urban renewal strategies that disrupted historically queer spaces, which was a trend that continued through the early 21st century. However, it was not only white people who represented black and Asian peoples as pathological, but actually people of color within these groups. A desire to fit into the national body politic by people of color had consequently disciplined some who failed to fit within certain bounds of respectability. This contradiction is what *queer of color critique* sought to highlight. Queer of color critique came out of the intellectual tradition of women of color feminism - whose positioning of sexuality as constitutive of race diverged from minority and bourgeois nationalisms. Both women of color feminism and queer of color critique

highlighted how racial groups have been used to normalize respectability and value over others *within* these groups; therefore women of color feminism and queer of color critique analyze racial formations as a comparative analytic - instead of an investment in identity categories. Women of color feminism and queer of color critique can be used to describe our current historical moment in which we see new formations of power in the forms of new racial formations. This new historical moment has produced different racial identities that are more economically mobile than before, but this mobility for some has been used as a tool has to devalue some members within these communities.[2]

This research is important for scholars who are researching and teaching at the intersections of women of color feminism and queer theory, labor and migration, women's and gender studies and African American/Black Studies within the US Southwest region. Though U.S. Southwest migration history is historically racialized as white, black peoples' presence in the region dates back further than some might imagine. In the Southwest and San Diego, the scarcity of black histories and the absence of black queer histories normalize black life as exclusively located in the South and select urban areas—generally Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco. However, a more detailed examination of 20th century black queer migration stories might highlight new ideas about African-American/black community formation, interracial race relations in the Southwest, and black peoples access to economic mobility engendered by emerging labor industries in the Southwest.

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[2] Hong, Grace, Roderick A. Ferguson. *Strange Affinities: The Gender and Sexual Politics of Comparative Racialization*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

It is critical to engage the absence of black history in San Diego and the larger Southwest region. While resettlement by black people during the Great Migration generally resulted in Southern to Northern migration, some blacks diverged from this pattern. New U.S. business ventures in the West after the Mexican-American War in 1848, such as defense and agricultural businesses, engendered economic opportunities for black people. Additionally, the aforementioned industries assisted in creating San Diego as an urban space within the Southwest. Though San Diego is not as urban as Los Angeles, it was more accessible to queer people stationed in the military or nearby San Diego.

My work is important because it contributes to histories of black queer life in San Diego and the larger Southwest region, as well as telling histories about black queer women. I am contributing to an understanding of black queer life in the Southwest because I want to find out how black queer women's experiences can highlight untold histories about black life in the region. This information will help readers understand how histories in the Southwest and San Diego are different than other places, so that readers will not assume that queer life is the same in all places.

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