

EATING YOUR GREENS:
COMMUNITY GARDENS AND GENTRIFICATION IN OAKLAND

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A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of Humboldt State University
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Social Science: Environment and Community

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December 2017

ABSTRACT

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The issue of gentrification is paramount to the viability of poor and at risk communities in Oakland. Literature on gentrification has historically focused on larger societal and economic movements, but little has been studied about the role planned green space and gardens play in the spatial transformation of the urban environment. In this case study of two gardens in West Oakland, I explore questions of community involvement in the gardens, the role of garden aesthetics in attracting development and new residents to the neighborhood, the unique relationship between the City government and the gardens, the larger symbolic significance of green space in contemporary urban society, and the use of urban gardens as sites of resistance against gentrification. Through interviews, participant observation, analysis of City planning documents, and a social constructivist, grounded theory approach to this qualitative case study, I find that while the two gardens are organized around different concepts of citizenship, resistance, and approaches to community resilience, they have both been used by the City in advancing its development plans, demonstrating the vulnerability of radical political and cultural movements to recuperation by capital and the state. However, the gardens and adjacent green spaces still serve as places of community and belonging for some residents, and at night are transformed into sites of resistance at night for houseless residents and sex

workers. This has implications for the strategies of food justice and anti-gentrification organizations, and opens up the potential for future research into new tactics of resistance and community building as the onslaught of gentrification continues to displace marginalized residents in Oakland.

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Eating greens is established as benefiting bodily health, but the impacts of the production and consumption of green *spaces* in the city are much less understood. Urban parks and community gardens have been celebrated in recent years as places of reclamation, transforming “blighted” post-industrial urban areas into “vibrant” and “inviting” community spaces where leisure and education on local food production can occur (Turner, 2011). How the creation of these green spaces contributes to larger processes of gentrification, however, has not been thoroughly discussed. In examining the role of these spaces in a gentrifying neighborhood of Oakland, I conducted a case study of two gardens and attempted to answer the following questions: How do the surrounding communities interact with the gardens? Do the aesthetics of the gardens attract development and new residents? How do the gardens fit in the City’s development plans? What is the symbolic significance of the gardens? Can urban gardens be used as sites of resistance against gentrification?

My interest in these questions is admittedly highly personal. Having grown up and spent much of my adult life in Oakland, I experience its physical and cultural landscape as part of myself. I mention this here because it has important implications for the rest of this work. Analysis of external space is at times also psychoanalysis, and any notion of strict objectivity here should be dispelled. This also allows room for the existence of the unknown within the research - an important presence, as the intent of my writing is not only to answer questions but also to raise new ones. Finally, it recognizes

that there is no *one* Oakland; that the physical landscape is imbued with a myriad of different impressions, memories, interpretations, and desires, which constitute the subjective experience of place.

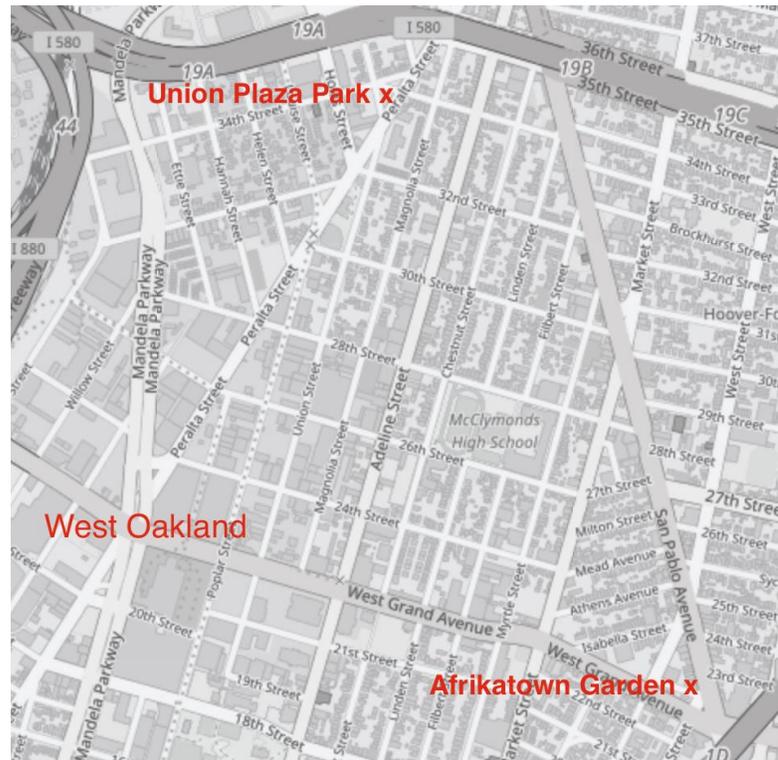


Figure 1. Location of the gardens in West Oakland (OpenStreetMap, 2017)

My research centers around two different community gardens at opposite ends of the San Pablo Avenue corridor in West Oakland, a historical stronghold of black culture and political activism against state racism and “urban renewal” projects. A mix of commercial and residential buildings constructed as Oakland first began to expand out from downtown around the turn of the century, the area was at the center of heavy industry during the first half of the century. The naval supply center, army base, port, and railway terminals that surrounded the area provided jobs, and in the Lower Bottoms, a neighborhood which was filled with jazz and blues clubs, Marcus Garvey’s Universal

Negro Improvement Association had its West Coast Headquarters.

After WWII military production slowed, jobs left, and the railways and terminal were decommissioned. Like many urban areas in the postwar era, West Oakland suffered from economic decline and disinvestment. During this period massive infrastructure projects transformed the area. Nearly 500 homes in the Bottoms were seized by eminent domain and bulldozed for the construction of a new main post office. The Acorn Redevelopment Project further razed several square blocks to construct housing projects, a loud elevated transit line was constructed above the black business district on Seventh St, and two massive freeways were erected that bisected West Oakland and isolated it from Downtown (The East Bay Solidarity Network 2014, 7). In response to protest against the post office plan, surplus WWII tanks were brought in to do most of the demolition (Ibid.). In 1966, while the new post office was still being constructed, the Black Panther Party was founded in West Oakland and began armed citizen's patrols to monitor the police and protect residents from police brutality.

During the late '60s and '70s, federal and local police conducted an extensive campaign to destroy the Black Panthers. My uncle, one of the first black men hired by the FBI, worked on the COINTELPRO program and infiltrated the Panthers for intelligence gathering (something he later regretted), and has shared stories with me about the activities of the police during that time. Ultimately the government was successful in killing and imprisoning Black Panther members, and in 1982 the party dissolved. During the '80s and '90s, devastated by the war on drugs and increased policing, West Oakland was one of the poorest and most violent urban areas in the country. In 1989, an

earthquake collapsed the double-deck Cypress structure, one of the freeway projects constructed in West Oakland during the late '50s, and three years later Oakland recorded a record 175 murders (McCarthy & Lawrence 2014, 20).

Following the general trend of capital's movement from the suburbs back into cities in the '90s, California governor Jerry Brown was elected mayor of Oakland in 1999 on a platform that promised to revitalize the downtown area by refurbishing theatres and attracting artists and those with disposable income (Elinson, 2010). Brown was successful in redeveloping the Uptown District into an arts and entertainment center, and by the end of his term in 2007 had surpassed his goal of attracting 10,000 new residents to the downtown area (Ibid.). During the 2000s neighboring San Francisco's burgeoning tech industry was also attracting thousands of new residents, and housing prices in both cities skyrocketed before the collapse of the housing bubble in 2007. From 2007-2011, at the height of the financial crisis, there were 10,508 foreclosures in Oakland, concentrated most heavily in the poorest neighborhoods of East Oakland and along the San Pablo corridor and Lower Bottoms in West Oakland (Cagle, 2016). Investors took advantage of the foreclosure crisis, buying 4,446 of those housing units during the same period (Ibid.).

The booming tech industry in San Francisco, relatively unfazed by the financial crisis, continued to attract wealthy new residents to the area, and San Francisco rents became the most expensive in the country. Many residents who could no longer afford living in San Francisco set their sights on the arts districts of Uptown and West Oakland. From 2012 to 2016 the median house price in Oakland doubled, from \$300,000 to \$622,000 (Zillow, 2016), and the median apartment rent also doubled from \$1,400 to

\$2,760, making Oakland the fourth most expensive rental market in the country (O'Brien, 2016). In response to the huge demographic shift underway, in 2014 the city drafted the West Oakland Specific Plan (WOSP), a city zoning plan that will transform West Oakland through large scale economic and housing development.

The WOSP is one of several specific zoning plans finalized by the City of Oakland in response to the concentrated influx of capital and development anticipated over the next decade. The WOSP will allow for 4.7 million square feet of new industrial and commercial space, as well as 5,000 new residential units. In addition it will allow new “green space” for farmers markets and planned community gardens (City of Oakland, 2014). The plan was finalized by the city council and became effective in July 2015, and one of the first areas for planned redevelopment includes the site of a community garden on San Pablo known as Afrikatown, one of the two gardens centered in my research. Afrikatown came into existence as community activists tore down chain link fences erected by the city around an empty lot planned for luxury apartments and created raised beds, benches, murals, and a temporary soup kitchen. Affiliated with Qilombo, a radical community social center started by black anarchists in the building next to the lot, the garden space is intentionally organized without hierarchy and is maintained by both long-term and new residents who have a stake in the neighborhood and the outcomes of development.

Union Plaza Park, the second community garden centered in my research, is located further down the San Pablo corridor, in an area of planned high intensity development near the border with Emeryville. An officially private garden that is “open

to the public,” it is owned and run by City Slicker Farms, a 501(c)(3) organization with a stated mission of “empowering West Oakland community members to meet the immediate and basic need for healthy organic food for themselves and their families by creating high-yield urban farms and backyard gardens” (City Slicker Farms, 2015). City Slicker Farms staff manage the garden space with the help of volunteers, and the vegetables produces are sold at a weekly farmstand. Together with Afrikatown, these gardens are examples of two different approaches to community gardening and exist at the intersection of intensive capitalist development, anti-gentrification activism, and a battle over the control of space.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gentrification, colonialism, and race have been topics of extensive academic interest over the past several decades, providing a nearly endless pool of compelling writing to draw from. The goal of this literature review is not to summarize these fields of study in their entirety, but rather to draw on the specific studies most relevant to my theoretical synthesis. With this in mind, I've organized the following review into four parts. The first part presents foundational writing on gentrification, and explores the ways in which gentrifying landscapes are rendered as consumable goods; the second discusses the use of new technologies in gentrification, the allure of the imagined city, and the way haunted places have resisted development; the third covers the aesthetic of gentrification and its connection to colonialism and conceptions of wilderness and citizenship; the fourth reviews writing on urban green space and its relationship to gentrification.

The interdisciplinary focus of this review allows for theoretical connections between different fields of academic literature on processes of gentrification. Much of the foundational writing on gentrification was focused on class and gender, but as Lees (2000, 399) discusses in her excellent reappraisal of the gentrification literature, race and ethnicity have been strangely absent. Smith (1996) was one of the first academics to link gentrification to colonialism and conceptions of race. Because Oakland is a historically black city, and is still ranked as the most diverse city in the United States (Bernardo, 2017), the topic of race features prominently in my review. In addition, my research studies the politics of community gardens, so I also included literature that connects race

to dominant imaginings of green space. Furthermore, the unique influence of the technology industry on gentrification in Oakland warranted a review of literature exploring conceptions of the urban in the digital age.

Finding Yourself in the Growth Machine: Theories of Gentrification in the Post-Fordist City

The term “gentrification” was first coined in the 1960s by British sociologist Ruth Glass to describe the displacement of the working class by middle and upper class landowners in central London. Ever since, the phenomenon has been the subject of theoretical and political debate. Dominant economic definitions of gentrification during the 1970s framed the process as a natural, rehabilitative response to urban decay and celebrated it as a return of the middle class from the suburbs (Ley, 1996). During the late 1970s critical theoretical work on gentrification began, which culminated in 1986 with the publication of *Gentrification of the City*, a collection of essays edited by Neil Smith and Peter Williams. Smith and Williams criticized dominant definitions of gentrification and argued that rather than being a distinct and isolated phenomenon driven by a return of a “new middle class” to the city, it was instead a visible spatial component of a much larger societal restructuring (1986, 7). This restructuring encompassed the decline of industrial manufacturing and the subsequent transformation of the working class, marked a shift towards privatization and consumption, and was advanced by specific economic, social, and political forces (1986, 5). To Smith and Williams an understanding of gentrification should not be limited to restrictive definitions; rather, gentrification should be seen as an expression of the broad range of processes playing out on the urban landscape (Ibid.).

Smith and Williams' understanding of gentrification was heavily influenced by Marxist theory and they labeled their approach *production-side*, which they contrasted to *consumption-side* literature emerging at the time which focused more on the role of individual consumptive behavior, the growth of the service economy, and the transition to a "post-industrial" city (Ibid.). While theorists in the early 1990s portrayed these approaches as polar opposites and framed the literature as belonging to either one side or the other (Hamnet, 1991), Smith and Williams note that few authors have argued for an exclusively production or consumption-based approach, and most have attempted to balance these two perspectives (1986, 5). More recent literature has similarly concluded that such dualisms are unrealistic and should be treated with skepticism (Slater, 2012). Still, this binary of theory was important in identifying the different forces driving processes of gentrification forward, and early gentrification literature is still highly relevant and influential.

One of Smith's most important concepts is that of capitalism's *uneven development*, which he took from Marx and uses to explore how "the production of space has contributed to the survival of capitalism" (Smith 1984, 66). Smith locates the division of labor in society as the historical basis for the spatial differentiation of development. Uneven geographical development then is not simply a byproduct of capitalism, but is in fact one of its essential qualities. In earlier societies labor was not alienated from the land, and space was not differentiated from force and matter (Smith 1984, 77). In the capitalist city, however, space becomes a commodity, and its production "also implies the production of the meaning, concepts, and consciousness of space which are inseparably

linked to its physical production” (Ibid.). While an apartment block may be the same height as a tree on the street, the distance between floors “can also be measured in terms of social rank and class, whereas the height of the tree cannot” (Ibid.). Thus, capitalism reshapes the world in its own image, and the dynamic space of geography becomes an expression of the image of capital (Ibid).

One of the material consequences of capital’s uneven development is the creation of rent gaps, a term for urban areas experiencing large gaps between actual and potential land values (Smith 1986, 21). Rent gaps are typically found in highly developed central city districts that were disinvested in during suburbanization in the 1940s and ‘50s. “The suburbanization process,” Smith writes, “represents a simultaneous centralization and decentralization of capital and of human activity in geographical space” (1986, 22). The driving force behind this shift in development and capital was the cheap cost of land on the periphery of cities, creating a high rate of profit in the construction of suburbs. As the suburbs developed, less and less capital was invested in the maintenance of central city areas, resulting in rents that are dramatically lower than the property’s potential value (given the central location). This devaluation of property in the center creates the opportunity for profitable redevelopment, leading to processes of gentrification (Ibid.).

The processes of gentrification that result from this shift of capital back into the inner city can be explained using the concept of the “growth machine.” The growth machine is “the idea that nested interest groups with common stakes in development use the institutional fabric, including the political and cultural apparatus, to intensify land use and make money” (Molotch 1993, 31). These interest groups, typically large property

holders, banks, and local newspapers, use city governments as tools for their own profit, transforming and incorporating local state agencies into the growth machine (Ibid.).

However, while he was focused on these groups, Molotch's approach to gentrification remained skeptical of totalizing logics and the kinds of production side critiques that reduced gentrification to a simple economic formula. To Molotch, classical Marxist critiques that focused entirely on structures were devoid of the power of human agency.

In his critique of these approaches, he asks:^[1]

How can urban political economy make sense after the onslaught of postmodern thinking? What is urban political economy when we can see the impact of new regimes of production, i.e., the capitalisms of the Far East, that defy all past theoretical models, whether from Weber, Marx, or the classical economists? What is urban political economy when the earth itself 'talks back' as an environment supersaturated with the waste of modern production? Just as urban political economy derived from general models of the world that could not predict such events, so it is that we practitioners must now grapple with a world that has gone theoretically incorrect. (1993, 30)

Central to Molotch's understanding of gentrification is the idea that growth, even more than a maximization of capital, is the driving force of gentrification. To Molotch, the abstract concept takes on religious significance to city planners and developers. Growth, which is so central to capitalist conceptions of progress, is what energizes these groups to organize and "alter [the] spatial relations and the social conditions the built environment imposes" (1993, 32). The growth machine disrupts the urban landscape and generates its own energy, becoming a focal point of further development and capital influx. There's certainly much more that can be said about the importance that concepts of growth and progress hold in gentrification, and I will return to them later, but the key idea to take

from this theoretical discussion is that capital and individual agency operate in tandem, valorized by ideas of growth, and radically transform the urban landscape in its image.

Like a religion, the growth machine evangelizes its own merits and chastises the unbelievers. Using the concept of the growth machine, Taylor and Gin (2010) analyze print media coverage of gentrification in the Bay Area over a 10-year period. They uncover dominant narratives that frame anti-gentrification protests as violent, radical fringe movements. Not only does the media profit from increased real estate ads and investments that are generated as a result of gentrification, but they also gain viewership from sensationalized coverage of law and order and neighborhood “clean ups” (2010, 76). In doing so Taylor and Ginn expose the role that the media has played in encouraging gentrification, showing that the process is the not the result of one single monolithic structure such as city government or real estate agencies, but is instead supported by many different interests and actors working together in the name of “progress” (2010, 85)

One of the causes championed by the media during the ongoing process of gentrification in Oakland has been gang injunctions, which are used by the police to control poor neighborhoods that are targeted for development. Gang injunctions, which are used to enforce curfews and restrictions and to incarcerate “problem” residents, are one way in which the state disrupts these resident’s sense of home and community, thus facilitating the transference of neighborhood ownership. Arnold (2011) studied the Oakland Police Department’s policy of gang injunctions within this context of gentrification and found that while ineffective at reducing violent crime, injunctions are

very effective at alienating residents of color and changing the sense of community in neighborhoods. He found that injunctions typically targeted the most desired real estate, were often pursued for political campaign results, were covered favorably in the media, and resulted in the most economically vulnerable residents being incarcerated or otherwise pushed out of development zones (Ibid.).

Herbert (1998), further explores the role that policing plays in establishing the sovereignty of the state and capital in neighborhoods that have historically functioned as places of political resistance. To Herbert, police patrols serve to insert state authority into every day street life, to make visible the face of state authority, and to assert claims to territory through the display of power and enforcement of law and order (1998, 221). To police officers, the street is the most important place where their authority is established, and any opposition to their control becomes in effect a threat to the identity of the patrolman. Police hegemony, however, is never completely realized; in patrolled neighborhoods police legitimacy is not only contested by “criminals,” but is also challenged through subtle displays of solidarity by other residents (Herbert 1998, 228). The police are therefore highly invested in transforming neighborhoods and implementing community policing and controls, and their omnipresence in the gentrifying city is necessary to facilitate the orderly colonization of the landscape by new, friendly residents.

In Oakland, sex workers have been a main target of this policing, and have been the focal point in city efforts to “clean up” the San Pablo corridor, an area where extensive development is planned. Intimidation, surveillance, and sexual violence is used

by the police in efforts to criminalize, evict, and relocate sex workers and other poor women of color. At the same time, these women are portrayed in dominant discourses as the helpless victims of trafficking and violence at the hands of abusive and criminal black and brown men. Bumiller (2008) analyzes the dominant cultural construction of sexual violence and critiques the feminist movement's partnership with the neoliberal carceral state. By attempting to address the threat of sexual violence through legislation and policing, the relationship between women and the state has been solidified as one of victim-protector.

To Bumiller, the "iconography of rape" dominates the rhetoric of those empowered by neoliberalism, and is central to efforts of police control over neighborhoods of color. Images of sexually violated black bodies open up a kind of morbid fascination and psycho-cultural projection of hatred that associates poor women of color with the abject – what is most fearful about human existence (2008, 22). "The abject appears a kind of ghost, coming onto the scene as a hallucination at the edge of reality, often marking the boundaries between life and death" (2008, 23). Images of ravaged dead female bodies and media coverage of prostitution busts, savage violence, and rape, convey a social understanding of women of color as dangerous and as subjects of danger. As Bumiller writes, "the sight of a dead body arouses the threat of the breaking down of borders and the possibility of a stranger who poses a potential threat to social identity and safety... symbols of a white woman's youth and innocence tragically sacrificed by the uncontrollable wildness of black and ethnic gangs" (2008, 24). Bumiller argues that feminist campaigns against rape and domestic violence, despite attempting to

unsettle social conventions and empower women, can conform to these deeply located archetypes and helps the state justify its use of violence in policing communities of color and establishing order (2008, 25).

This iconography of violence is invoked in media and police representations of poor neighborhoods as “combat zones” (Lees 1998, 231), and reflects the militarization of law enforcement, increasing economic inequality, and the segmentation of urban space by class. Belina (2007) examines how undesirable classes of people have been restricted from entering central city spaces in Germany by the state’s use of spatial policing called “area bans.” Although gentrification has developed differently in Europe than it has in the United States, there are many parallels, especially as racial tensions and segregation have risen with the recent arrival of African and Middle Eastern migrants in Northern Europe. For example, the German area bans have been enacted in part through the racist logic of the drug war; certain “problem” people – abstracted from the complex totalities of the “drug problem” – are simply banned from entering certain places. In reducing a social problem into a spatial one (Belina 2007, 330), area bans are part of a new strategy for policing that is:

markedly less concerned with responsibility, fault, moral sensibility, diagnosis, or intervention and treatment of the individual offender. Rather, it is concerned with techniques to identify, classify, and manage groupings sorted by dangerousness. The task is managerial, not transformative [...]. It seeks to *regulate* levels of deviance, not intervene or respond to individual deviants or social malformations. (Feeley and Simon 1992, 452)

This new “governing at a distance” shifts the focus from dealing with the causes of crime, such as poverty and social alienation, towards the “abstract danger” that crime poses

(Belina 2007, 330). This abstract danger isn't feared for the threat it poses to the poor communities that are most intimately affected by drug violence, but instead for the threat it poses to the "entrepreneurial city," which must at all times appear as an innovative, creative, clean, and safe place to live and consume. Policing, then, operates to cleanse the city of all those who do not live up to this image (Belina 2007, 331).

In the United States, gentrification operates through similar projects of social control and surveillance in the neoliberal city (Coleman, 2003). Neoliberalism "represents a complex, multifaceted project of socio-spatial transformation – it contains not only a utopian vision of a fully commodified form of social life, but also a concrete program of institutional modification through which the unfettered rule of capital is to be promoted" (Brenner & Theodore 2002, 363). The influence of neoliberalism on the urban landscape can be characterized as a process of creative destruction, as older models of state welfare and forms of community are razed to build free trade zones, privatized spaces for bourgeoisie consumption, and zero tolerance policing and surveillance (Coleman, 2003; Brown 2005). Like previous forms of state power, neoliberal strategies of rule have involved the application of management techniques that appear to offer development growth as a "value-free" and technical solution to urban problems claimed in the "interests of all" (Coleman 2003, 23). However, these strategies ultimately encourage authoritarian measures that bypass local community sovereignty and cleanse marketable city spaces of the people and aesthetics that serve no utility to the growth machine. After all, "neoliberalism does not simply assume that all aspects of social, cultural, and political life can be reduced to such a calculus; rather, it develops

institutional practices and rewards for enacting this vision” (Brown 2005, 40). Rather than passively influencing society, the neoliberal project actively engages in its transformation through its institutionalization and adoption in state policies (Ibid.).

These theories of gentrification ultimately rely on abstract conceptualizations of the state that at times defy definition. The idea of the state, which primarily refers to government agencies, has been blurred and infused by corporate power. Government surveillance has become increasingly reliant on private data collection and advertising, which has saturated prosaic day-to-day life. This intensification of the symbolic presence of the state and capital across society, a process that Painter (2006, 758) calls “statization,” functions to interpellate us in our daily lives as either citizen or foreigner, consumer or producer, subject or object. By focusing on the way that the state asserts its control just as much through the mundane as through spectacular displays of centralized power, the idea of the state as a unitary object falls apart. Painter describes the state as a set of practices enacted through relationships between people, places, and institutions (2006, 770). These relationships are often contradictory and vulnerable, highlighting the openness, fallibility, unevenness and creativity of state practices (Ibid.).

Painter’s statization can be seen playing out in processes of gentrification. While attention is mostly paid to the most visible, symbolic acts of gentrification – the police evictions, and new luxury apartments going up – these are often the culmination of a protracted displacement that is experienced through the cultural transformation of lived space (Stabrowski 2014, 813). Neighborhood spaces of social reproduction for old residents are “increasingly brought under the capitalist imperative of accumulation,

subordinating social use values to monetary exchange values. In the process, gentrification produces its own space – of prohibition, appropriation, and insecurity – which conflict and collide with the place-making practices of low-income and working-class tenants” (Ibid.). Thus, direct physical displacement is made possible by an everyday displacement, a prosaic spatial transformation that is as much cultural as it is material.

In Oakland, this spatial transformation has been discussed as a phenomenon of white residents displacing black residents. While this may be largely accurate, it ignores the quotidian, multifaceted nature of gentrification that involves contradictory relationships and diverse actors. In similar historically black neighborhoods in Chicago, middle-class black residents and community organizations have initiated gentrification as a defensive measure against state violence and racism (Boyd, 2008). These groups support community building and economic revitalization as “defensive development” strategies designed to protect their neighborhoods from racial displacement by white gentrifiers (Boyd 2008, 752). This political strategy ultimately facilitated the white gentrification it attempted to avoid, as it demobilized poorer residents that were most likely to experience displacement. The failure of this strategy reflects the role that class privilege plays in black neighborhoods, and contradicts the dominant narrative in gentrification literature that portrays black communities as homogenous victims of state and capitalist development (Ibid.).

This strategy may have also failed because it did not acknowledge the changing meaning of race in space over time. Race, as Back and Solomos (1996, 27) have argued, has never comprised “a fixed trans-historical category whose meaning is the same.”

While the vision of an all-black neighborhood would have repelled wealthy whites in the 1970s and early 1980s, by the 1990s diversity had become a focal point in marketing new urban development. In an analysis of ethnic diversity discourse within local urban regeneration policies in London, Mavrommatis (2010, 569) found that the celebration of “difference” and ethnic diversity was deployed in order to gentrify working class neighborhoods where race had historically been associated as a problem. Similarly, dominant discourses of the 1970s framed race as the main reason for urban deterioration and crime in New York (Smith 1996, 133), but by the 1990s the media had begun celebrating a reconstructed imagination of those neighborhoods as stabilized, safe spaces for the consumption of difference (Kaltmeier 2011, 242).

These changes in the construction of race in urban space in the United States were connected to a larger societal and economic restructuring in the post-Fordist economy. This restructuring saw the rise of a “new middle class” (Ley 1996) and the emergence of consumption as the most important marker of social position (Erbacher 2011, 246). Influenced by celebrations of individuality and diversity in the 1960s and 1970s, members of the educated middle class turned to lifestyle issues to construct their identities. The *image* of consumer products became as important as their utility, and the choice of residential location in the old, decaying, socially diverse and dense inner city offered a chance for these newcomers to distinguish and emancipate themselves from the aesthetic homogeneity of suburban middle class life (Ibid.). The urban landscape and its aesthetics were central to these processes of class constitution and definition, acting as both “a container and expression of social relations” (Jager 1986, 79). These changes

were not merely social, but were “both reflected in and reconstructed by the spatial order and the buildings, which are a part of it”(Ibid.). In other words, in their attempt to redefine their self-image, newcomers also changed the image of their new neighborhoods.

The attraction of gentrifiers to the “authentic,” “emancipatory city” (Caulfield, 1989), paradoxically alters and recreates the urban environment in the sanitized aesthetic of suburbia. While perceived authenticity constructs ethnic neighborhoods as highly valuable commodities, their more unruly and impolite aspects – graffiti, exuberant celebrations, brown men sitting on their porch drinking and socializing – are considered deviant and become the subject of policing and “clean ups” by new residents and city government (Betancur 2002; Erbacher 2011, 250). The “processes of urban renewal and revalorisation,” Jacobs (1996, 36) explains, “dismantle ‘older urban solidarities’, grounded in locality-linked production, and replace them with consumption spaces ‘shaded by new modes of cultural appropriation’.”

The transformation of space through gentrification rarely happens all at once. As Lees (2000, 398) notes, gentrification is a cyclical process that is driven largely by finance and investment flows. First and second wave gentrifiers, typically middle-class people looking for affordable housing, generally don’t renovate their apartments, open up boutiques, or organize clean up campaigns to give their new neighborhoods a face lift. Instead, it is a later, much more wealthy wave of “financifiers” who *regentrify* neighborhoods and radically transform their physical constitution in the image of a luxury enclave (Lees 2000, 402). As this final wave of gentrification spreads across the city, it

advances the aesthetics and brutal logics of corporate and state power. The unifying theme across the entire process of gentrification, however, is the imagination and consumption of an unreal city. The urban landscape is not seen and valued for what it is, but rather what it represents or what it could become.

Urban Phantasmagorias and the Digital City

The representation of cities in cinema offers insight into the cultural imagination of urban space that drives gentrification. Cinema is the first industrial art form, and has from its beginning been a medium through which visions of technology and the changing city have been imagined (Neumann 1999). In the city, “lines of power continue to be inscribed in space. Landscapes are still seen through the ideological lens of cultural codes that are firmly embedded in social power structures” (Jarvis 1998, 187). Cinema, more than any other medium, can capture the subconscious emotional currents that project meaning onto the concrete of the cityscape, a process central to the commodification of urban space. Duarte et al. (2015) use the concept of *phantasmagoria* to describe this:

This ever-present collective urban imagery, intrinsically rooted in concrete aspects of a changing reality, and supported by existent and fictional technological systems, forms what we call urban phantasmagorias. Neither a fantastic, impossible world nor a completely materialized reality, a phantasmagoria lies somewhere in between, a potential existence, a virtual realization – in the sense that the virtual is not the opposite of the real but, on the contrary, the expression of a reality to come, as a potential and plausible existence (Levy, 1995), a reality constantly in the making, but never completely satisfied as imagined, permanently haunting the present. (133)

Urban phantasmagorias in cinema offer us an image of a future city that haunts the present, an imagination that both eludes and influences our understanding. In our

subjective experience, the urban form is superimposed by symbols, memories, and visual media, which create a simulation of reality (Baudrillard, 1994). “In phantasmagorias, the real is questioned by an emerging technological world that infiltrates the known world in such a way as to blur the boundaries” (Duarte et al. 2015, 140). This concept is critical in understanding the contradictory consumptive patterns of gentrifiers, who desire a city that is simultaneously rebellious and commercial, diverse and homogenous, and emancipatory and comfortable. Contemporary gentrification can be interpreted as a process energized and driven by the desire for an imagined city that can’t actually physically exist: an artificial city that seduces the gentrifier into consumption.

The fusion of artificial reality and utopian futurity with the physical landscape is especially apparent in Oakland, where gentrification has been driven by the influx of capital into neighboring San Francisco, an epicenter of the technology, finance, and new media industry. The digital utopianism of the tech boom has created new forms of consumption and ways of relating to what Barreneche (2012) calls the “geocoded world,” an environment governed by computer algorithms and digital databases. Location tracking and tagging, which has become prominent in digital communication and media, and which is essential for the functioning of popular applications (such as Oakland based Uber, a transportation service), come to constitute a new form of governance (Barreneche 2012, 344). In the case of Uber, the locations of users are tracked not only while in transit, but for up to 5 minutes afterwards, a feature the company says enhances the “safety” of its customers (Roman, 2016). What is created by this technology is a new way of interacting with the city, as movement and intimate moments are recorded and become

the property of corporations. By geotagging social media objects, people's experiences are given permanence in place, but they are also incorporated into database indexes and information flows that generate advertising and encourage consumption (Berreneche 2012, 332).

To date, the academic literature on these emerging forms of technology and governance have not been included in the discussion on gentrification, although the two share similar critiques of consumptive behavior and spatial restructuring. Post-Fordist identity formation in the city is facilitated through the consumption and production of images. The production of images entails “a significant change and distortion of our lives and perceptions,” as “real-life events start being organized by and around the logic of how well they can be photographed, what they will look like once posted – and how we will be reflected by them” (Faber 2017, para. 10). The city landscape is no longer taken in and contemplated for what it is, but rather for what kind of photo it might provide, and what kind of reaction and association that image might gain once on social media (Ibid.). These digital associations accomplish identity formation in a similar fashion to earlier versions of consumption in gentrification.

This new relationship between physical and virtual reality leads to situation Baudrillard called *hyperreality*, the inability to distinguish what is real and unreal (1994). “America's materiality is thus dissolved into a self-referential play of ghostly images... a revised version of consensus is produced, in which all social relations, the circulation of capital and desire, all crisis and conflict, struggle, promise and hope dissipate in the white heat of a semiotic phantasmagoria” (Jarvis 1998, 41). In hyperreality, imaginary and

material geographies are intertwined and mutually constitutive, and together they give energy to the territorialisations (Jacobs 1996, 158) of postmodern capitalism. What emerges from this arrangement is a second urban landscape, a highly saturated digital mesh composed of images, reviews, advertisements, and other consumptive objects, floating in a cloud above the city, restlessly and efficiently collecting personal data and haunting our conscious and unconscious experience of space.

The ‘cloud’ does not simply collect data for monetization, but also does so in support of more traditional forms of state control and violence. The largest database providers, Google and Amazon, which have been shown to have close connections with intelligence agencies (Price 2014, 46), exist on this new digital landscape as monolithic state entities, filtering and mining data and rendering space legible for navigation and reorganization (Troshynski 2008, 491). Otherwise private or autonomous city spaces, such as squats, artist collectives, community organization and other ‘underground’ spaces, are made legible (and vulnerable to recuperation) by their inclusion in search databases and advertising and review platforms. Google captures “the collective symbolic capital of places in its databases” by increasingly improving its ability to claim user-generated content, and then uses it to create place profiles and repackaging it to the consumer (Berreneche 2012, 342), rendering city spaces subject to new forms of government (Berreneche 2012, 346).

In addition, online mapping platforms can be used to monitor and control certain populations. Parole officers have used MapQuest to track the location of sex offenders, and in California the next group that is likely to be subject to GPS tracking is gang

members (Troshnyski 2008, 491). This use of location data by law enforcement may eventually be used to create zones of control such as the earlier discussed ‘area bans’ already in place in Germany. These location-enabled socio-technical systems, and the power relations they embody, are not fixed, but are temporary stabilizations of ongoing negotiations between programmers, government agencies, venture capitalists, and end users (Berreneche 2012, 346), and constitute contemporary forms of statization.

As the power and omnipresence of the state has risen, the enemies and threats it uses to justify its existence have become increasingly fantastic. To Aretxaga (2000, 43), the contemporary state’s efforts at maintaining control transform it into something “ghostly,” as it mirrors the imagined violence of its hidden enemies and in the process becomes an “unfathomable power which shape[s] social life as a dangerous universe of surfaces and disguises.” In its relationship to the enemy, the state ultimately begins to reflect its characteristics; in its fight against terrorism, for example, state agencies mimic the violent strategies of the terrorists (Aretxaga 2000, 48). This relationship locks the state and its Other in a “phantomatic mode of production” that produces the them as “fetishes of each other, constructing reality as an endless play of mirror images” (Aretxaga 2000, 53).

Aretxaga’s phantom state connects to Baudrillard’s influential writing on capitalism, which he believes is haunted by the repression of its Other. As Andrew Robinson summarizes:

To Baudrillard, capitalism rests on an obsession with the abolition of death. Capitalism tries to abolish death through accumulation. The idea of progress, and linear time, comes from the accumulation of time, and of

stockpiles of the past. What is fatal to capitalism is reversibility. Capitalism continues to be haunted by the forces it has repressed. Separation does not destroy the remainder. Quite the opposite. The remainder continues to exist, and gains power from its repression. This turns the double or shadow into something unquiet, vampiric, and threatening. It becomes an image of the forgotten dead. (2012, para. 5)

Capital's obsession with abolishing death and its symbols relates back to the discussion on the growth machine's crusade for development and progress. In this context, the state's development and policing projects can never completely possess the urban landscape; pushed out to the periphery, the undesirables of society become even more threatening, because they bring into question the ideology that drives growth.

Gordon (2011) adds to this discussion of the way that contemporary society is haunted. To Gordon, we are haunted both by the "historic alternatives" to capitalism that never materialized (2011, 7), as well as by the spectre of social death, which "refers to the process by which a person is socially negated or made a human non-person as the terms of their incorporations into a society: living, they nonetheless appear as if they were dead" (2011, 10). Those groups that have been stripped of their citizenship and excluded from the benefits of capitalism, such as prisoners and the poor, continue to exist as a reminder of the uncertainty of the society. "The living dead haunt," Gordon explains, "because in their liminality and in their ability to cross between the worlds of the living and the dead, they carry a sharp double-edged message: it could be you" (2011, 13).

In relating the power of haunting to urban geography, Comaroff (2007) discusses an area of Singapore that has resisted the social control of the state by invoking the ghosts of its enemies. The burial sites of those who destabilized the political system, such as

unmarried female workers, have been targeted for development by the “cleaning campaign” of the state, which attempted to remove physical and cultural “pollutants” over concerns of societal hygiene (Comaroff 2007, 60). Occuring within a larger societal restructuring towards modernization and a rejection of the nations cultural past, these graveyards were dug up and paved over (Comaroff 2007, 63). Resistance and remembrance, however, persisted in the form of the Hungry Ghost festivals, where elaborate offerings to the dead appeared at nightfall in the now empty burial lots (Ibid.).

Comaroff explains:

As darkness falls, it is as if a second map, a ghostly historical topography, appears on top of the familiar one, a radical disjuncture of memory and topography that is violently, temporarily conflated within the hyper-controlled surfaces of the contemporary city. The new landscapes are thus infiltrated by the ghosts of history, by familiar entreaties for memory within the unending flood of the new. (Ibid.)

Empty public spaces within the dense network of public housing, are now commonly described as haunted, and ghost stories circulate widely (Ibid.). These spaces “seem to militate against the unfettered production of new spaces and landscapes in place of the old” (Comaroff 2007, 61). Within this context the burial sites serve as spaces of spiritual remembrance and cultural resistance (Comaroff 2007, 64). “The land remains as an uncomfortable urban wound,” a temporary “funeral landscape” that contrasts and contests the modern state (Ibid.). Singapore therefore exists as a site of biopower and intensive technological advancement, but simultaneously as the “most haunted city” on earth (Comaroff 2007, 63).

The persistence of haunting suggests that the narrative of biopower and the

politics of life have empowered death and its symbols through their exclusion of it.

Relating this back to the theory of the state Baudrillard presents, Comaroff writes:

The state attempted to banish the culture of death to hygienic and remote columbaria. But as Marx, among others, has famously observed, there is something deeply haunted about Western modernity itself. Despite a powerful focus on the politics of life, and a relegation of death to the sphere of religion, would-be secular modernity is continually subject to rumbling from the afterlife. [...]. Existing theories of state power and biopower ignore these. Foucault's narrative neglects death, as well as the fact that the state is unable to control it. It would seem, after all, that there are limits to the fixation on life. (2007, 67)

Jonker and Till (2009) connect this discussion on the power of haunted geographies to a gentrifying neighborhood in Cape Town, where the skeletal remains of 2,500 slaves and members of the colonial lower classes were unearthed during the excavation of a lot for the construction of a New York style apartment building (304). Following the discovery, construction was halted as activists claiming to have familial ties to the dead (Ibid.). Capial's vision of the gentrifying neighborhood – which had become the most expensive in the country – was interrupted by the dead and their living mourners (2009, 304).

Jonker and Till describe the city as a “palimpsest” that can never fully erase its old histories. The surfacing of the dead, then, symbolizes an irruption of the past; “on the fault lines where multiple temporalities of change are entangled with normative modes of domination, subordination, and disavowal,” the “counter-temporality” of the dead opens up new forms of resistance (Grunebaum 2007, cited in Jonker & Till 2009, 306). In cities undergoing dramatic social and physical change, these ghosts inhabit space and “constitute their social realities, particularly in places where the city and society are ‘out of joint in terms of both time and space’ (Jonker & Till 2009, 306), such as in

Comaroff's Singapore and in Oakland, where the hyper-modern visions of techno-capitalists clash with communities deeply entrenched in the memory of place. In these places, the "spectral traces" of the past disrupt the present, "linear memorial narratives are upset, habitual paths are littered with stumbling blocks, and capital no longer circulates in predictable patterns associated with rent gaps. The taken-for-grantedness of urban space shifts" (Ibid.).

This disruption of temporality by the ghosts of the past represents a powerful force that may be used in projects of resistance against gentrification. As Jonker and Till explain:

The emergence of human remains and haunted sites may work to interrupt taken-for-granted habits of thinking about citizenship and belonging, habits produced by colonial and apartheid articulations of spatiality and racial identity. The contours of memorial cartographies and the depths of haunted archaeologies thus disrupt comfortable and established zones of social belonging, while remaining sensitive to the tensions between the desires and hopes of the living, and the lingering presences and secrets of past lives. (2009, 307)

The forms of colonial citizenship and notions of progress that haunting challenges, however, are embedded in the cultural fabric of the contemporary city and are therefore not easily disrupted. Although disrupted temporalities may allow for the emergence of the state's ghosts, it can also recall memories of its triumphs. Discussion on the origins of colonial power and aesthetics, and their connection to gentrification, is therefore necessary in understanding and contextualizing the haunted city.

Purifying the urban jungle: gentrification as colonialism

This discussion on consumption, technology, and the power of haunting has strong

parallels to writing on gentrification and the city that has focused on architecture, esthetics, and colonialism. The physical constitution of the city, just as much as the ideological and abstract imagining of it, both influences and is influenced by historical and contemporary modes of production and social control. From the colonial metropole to today's megacity, the meaning of urban space has largely been constructed as a means of defense against the unknown and terrifying: the wilderness, the black bodies on the periphery, and the still darkness of the night. It is essential to examine the aesthetic of urban space and the prevailing ideologies that have shaped it in order to fully understanding the mechanisms that drive modern gentrification.

One of the most interesting blind spots in the existing literature on urban geography and gentrification is the lack of writing on the importance of night in city life (van Liempt 2015, 407). When night falls the visible landscape of the city is transformed, permitting new ways of socializing and relating to place. Dunn (2016) describes the significance of this transformation:

The city, then, is on the one hand knowable but never completely captured. It eludes confinement as it reproduces itself in the mind into multiple versions, beckoning Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*. Interpretation of the city is how we locate ourselves in relation to each other. We form maps based on cognition and memorable places, street names and other spatial cursors. During the nocturnal hours such cartography may be dramatically rescaled and retraced as daytime landmarks recede and new, often highly illuminated ones become signifiers instead. The beguiling effects of urban illumination tell a different story of the city. Indeed an alternative historiography for architecture could concern itself with the nighttime city. (14)

Darkness, and in particular darkness in the city, has been a continuous subject of contestations over power (Edensor 2015, 560). While darkness has been associated with

the inhuman and the terrifying unknown, it has also been experienced as a liberating presence promoting excitement, intimacy, and liberation (Ibid.). In Victorian England, the darkness of urban slums was seen as a sign of moral decay and depravity, and the bourgeoisie employed strategies to order and control the nocturnal city with illumination, which facilitated surveillance and increased vigilance towards the self. Lantern smashing was a common form of resistance to the spread of illumination across early modern European cities, and criminals and persecuted minorities used darkness to escape domineering masters and to organize resistance movements (Edensor 2015, 560). Today, darkness continues to “deterritorialize the rationalizing order of society... when it obscures, obstructs, or otherwise hinders the deployment of the strategies, techniques, and technologies” of regulation (Williams 2008, cited in Edensor 2015, 561). The emergence of new technologies of surveillance such as night vision, motion-detection, and thermal imaging, has weakened the potential refuge that darkness offers, and thus the nocturnal city continues to be subject to a shifting spatial politics (Edensor 2015, 561).

The nocturnal city also functions as a site of libidinal desires and transgressive sexualities (Ibid.). “A phantasmagorical night-time city features in numerous cultural representations...conjuring a nocturnal sublime, a ‘realm of fascination and fear which inhabits the edges of our existence, crowded by shadows, plagued by uncertainty, and shrouded in intrigue’”(Ibid.). The night offers city dwellers a time to be someone else, to socialize, play and do the things they’re “not supposed to do” (van Liempt 2015, 408). Highly public spaces such as city center parks, which are used by families for picnics during the day, become centers of activity for drug users and sex workers at night

(Gaissad 2005, 25), and in abandoned warehouses illegal dance parties offer the opportunity for morally transgressive activities (Martin 1999, 80). These uses of city space highlight the potential that night offers in exercising autonomy in an increasingly regulated society.

The night, however, is not without its own social orders and norms; patterns of urban development and routines implement their own moral regulations, and city nights, like days, “create institutions that determine the spatial acceptability of behaviors” (Gaissad 2005, 21). City governments have used the allure of the night to revitalize urban centers through the development of ‘night time economies’ that aim to attract wealthy new residents (van Liempt 2015, 412). The expansion of urban economic activity into the night, a process Koslovsky (2011) calls nocturnalisation, recuperates the transgressive potential of unregulated nightlife and colonizes the darkness (Edensor 2015, 559). As processes of gentrification develop, the nighttime revelers that city governments initially welcomed are increasingly portrayed as problematic in dominant discourses (van Liempt 2015, 413), and are subjected to crackdowns and policing (Hadfield et al., 2009). Similarly, urban planners in French cities have installed floodlights in urban parks and other locations dedicated to sexual desire, to displace sex workers and other unwanted groups (Gaissad 2005, 22).

The “cleansing” of public spaces through the exclusion and displacement of undesirable populations by authorities reflects the importance of public spaces in selling an idealized image of the city (Belanger 2012, 34). The revitalization of these spaces, which entails sanitization through “clean ups” and new construction, and which is guided

by bourgeoisie aesthetic values, is intended to attract investors, tourists, and workers (Ibid.). Often this development is justified in dominant discourses in terms of moral panic, which exaggerates relatively minor threats to mobilize action (Ibid.). In New York City in the 1990s, a moral panic over graffiti was used by the growth machine to increase policing and to facilitate an aesthetic transformation of gentrifying neighborhoods (Kramer 2010, 307). These projects, which are advertised as improving quality of life, are often not in the public interest at all, but rather are advanced in service of privatism (Ibid.). “Broken windows and anti-graffiti rhetoric are politically popular frameworks insofar as they offer elites a powerful device that generates widespread public support for a set of economic pursuits that do not necessarily improve the lives of that public” (Kramer 2010, 308). By encouraging disproportionate punishments and increased policing, moral panics facilitate the “disneyfication” (Sorkin, 1992) of public space as undesirable groups are disappeared and wealthy gentrifiers are attracted.

The aesthetics of cleanliness and order that inform the transformation of urban space originate in an association of public space with risk, danger, and the unknown. From a psychoanalytic perspective, the ‘purity’ of self-identity is maintained by separating it from the impure, diseased, and abject – which are associated with the ‘other’ – and cultural and physical boundaries are designed and constructed to prevent them from polluting the self (Bickford 2000, 365). The contemporary practices of city-building, Bickford argues, “materialize particular versions of ‘home’ and of ‘the public’ that work not simply to privatize formerly public spaces, but to purify both public and private space – especially to purify them of fear, discomfort, and uncertainty” (2000, 356). These

efforts are in part inspired by a “phantasmatic imaginary” of home that “leaks into the politics of its bearers, animating a longing for a more homelike, (would-be) womblike universe, unriven by difference, conflicts, or dilemmas, a well-ordered and welcoming place” (Honig 1994, cited in Bickford 2000, 364). Although the achievement of this utopian space is ultimately impossible, its pursuit enacts deep forms of segregation that seek to restrict the ‘other’ from existing in public space (Bickford 2000, 364).

This exclusion is literally built into the new urban environment, which is designed not only to be amenable to surveillance, but also to be physically imposing. New urban development combines “interdictory space” – hidden spaces “ostentatiously bristling with walls and gates” – with “prickly space” – areas designed to be uncomfortable to occupy, especially for the homeless – to discourage undesirables from occupying space (Bickford 2000, 362). New development zones are also almost always commercial zones and are “policed in part by asserting an unambiguous and singular function: consumption” (Ibid.). It is in these spaces that neoliberalism operates as a technology of governing, offering citizenship and identity only to those active in the process of consumption (Ong 2006, 15).

At an abstract level, new development can also be seen to reflect the cultural values of capital. The sanitization of urban space “creates a clinical sterility which means these places bear more resemblance to an office lobby than a thriving part of the city which is full of life” (Minton 2009, 33). As historical phenomena, cities are composed in sedimentations and traces of power relations, events, and aesthetics (Kapferer 2007, 71). City buildings are themselves monuments symbolizing the ideologies of their financiers,

and in new development “postmodern stainless steel, reinforced concrete, gleaming glass, and exterior riveting provides a telling demonstration of capitalist power”

(Kapferer 2007, 72). This architectural display of power is intentional, as Jacobs (1996) explains:

The hold of imperialist regimes of power is tied to the very uncertainty they face in their manifestations on the ground: in their encounter with the unpredictability of the Other and the inconsistency of the Self. In the face of this uncertainty imperialism must always reinscribe its frames of power and difference and this is what helps to give it its tenacity: Space is a crucial component of this anxious articulation of imperial authority. (159)

This focus on imperialism is important. While gentrification is thought of as a postmodern phenomenon, it is influenced by a politics of race and nation that cannot be understood without examining what the present has inherited from imperialism (Jacobs 1996, 158). Imperialism established very specific spatial arrangements “in which the imaginative geographies of desire hardened into material spatialities of political connection, economic dependency, architectural imposition and landscape transformation” (Jacobs 1996, 18). In postcolonial cities, these old imperial constructs give rise to “spatially segregated, racialised geographies of disadvantage” (Jacobs 1996, 32), which are advanced in the everyday, local articulation of power (Jacobs 1996, 21). In the present moment, imperialism lingers as the idea of the frontier itself, and this frontier nostalgia guides the direction of new spatial development (Jacobs 1996, 159).

Today, as in the past, racialized conceptions of self and space are what drive dominant spatial transformations. Just as gentrification is advanced in the quotidian assertion of power in space, imperialism and colonialism were also exercised in intimate

and everyday experiences (Jacobs 1996, 5). Stoler (2002, 5) argues that nineteenth century bourgeois identity emerged in response to domestic life in the colonies, where European colonial citizens were having children with their Asian servants. Haunted by fears of sexual contamination and moral breakdown in the empire, the bourgeoisie were obsessed with defending their identities (Stoler 2002, 46). Central to this obsession was the spectre of an “interior frontier,” which marked “the moral predicates by which a subject retains his or her national identity despite location outside the national frontier and despite heterogeneity within the nation-state” (Stoler 2002, 80). In the metropole, the influx of ‘mixed race’ children from the colonies blurred the established racial classifications that underpinned colonial rule and threatened the European body politic (Stoler 2002, 52).

In response to this threat, the European bourgeoisie established a regime of biopower (Foucault, 1978) to maintain its control – a regime that continues to inform the spatial restructuring of the contemporary city. In biopolitical projects racism isn’t just a response to the crisis of the Other in the body politic, it is “a manifestation of preserved possibilities, the expression of an underlying discourse of permanent social war, nurtured by the biopolitical technologies of ‘incessant purification’” (Stoler 2002, 69). Racism is internal to the biopolitical state, “woven into the weft of the social body, threaded through its fabric” (Ibid.). It is a technology of security, a “bioregulation by the state of its internal dangers” (Stoler 2002, 82). This regulation breaks up the continuum of human biology into distinct races that are placed in a hierarchy and dressed in the language of purity and contamination (Stoler 2002, 84). Thus, in the 19th century race became the

organizing logic of an imperial order that used culture to do the political work of regulating, controlling, and solidifying social hierarchies and colonial rule (Stoler 2002, 27).

Neil Smith (1996) links this discussion of the imperialism and social purification to contemporary urban space through an analysis of frontier narratives in gentrification projects. In the postwar era the imagery of wilderness and frontier have been associated with urban centers, which are viewed as habitats of disease, crime, and danger (Smith 1996, 212). In the process of gentrification “hostile landscapes are regenerated, cleansed, reinfused with middle-class sensibility...[and] in taming the urban wilderness, the cowboy gets the girl but also finds and tames his inner self for the first time” (1996, 13). The tendency of the dominant class to construct a dangerous, diseased Other in order to maintain its imagined purity can be seen in efforts to “recolonize the city”, as black residents and the homeless are criminalized and their neighborhoods patrolled, cleansed, and ‘restored’ in the nostalgic image of a nonexistent past (Smith 1996, 26).

Smith’s symbolic cowboy connects the earlier discussion on colonialism and gentrification to the new American frontier, where neoliberal citizenship is not defined in opposition to *metis* on the periphery of empire, but against the perceived degradation, disease, and danger of racialized urban space, the new “Indian country” (Smith 1996, 8). Gentrification establishes a “revanchist city” through the vengeful reclamation of urban space. Smith explains:

The revanchist antiurbanism represents a reaction against the supposed ‘theft’ of the city, a desperate defense of a challenged phalanx of privileges, cloaked in the populist language of civic morality, family

values, and neighborhood security. More than anything the revanchist city expresses a race/class/gender terror felt by middle- and ruling-class whites who are suddenly stuck in place by a ravaged property market, the threat and reality of unemployment, the decimation of social services, and the emergence of minority and immigrant groups, as well as women, as powerful urban actors. (1996, 211)

This revanchist project, energized by a new manifest destiny, reclaims the urban landscape for white, neoliberal consumptive enjoyment through the mechanisms of spatial control discussed earlier: patrol, surveillance, and displacement. Revanchism is a reaction to an urban that is fantasized as a site of degradation, brutality, and uncontrolled passion. Ironically, through its displacement and policing of undesirables, revanchism reasserts many of the same oppressions that created the conditions of infrastructural decay and poverty that it seeks to address (Smith 1996, 212). In the process of cleaning and emptying urban space, minorities and the poorest of the working class are “herded to reservations on the urban edge” (Smith 1996, 26) in a reenactment of the nineteenth century frontier.

Smith’s comparison of gentrification with the American frontier doesn’t mention the significance of wilderness in the construction of race and in justifications for colonial expansion. In the United States, wilderness has historically functioned as a place of healing, where white bodies are reinfused with meaning and identity (Kosek 2006, 158).

As Kosek explains:

Throughout the mid- to late eighteenth century, notions of whiteness and superiority relied deeply on formations of nature. From the natural ‘destiny’ of whites to ‘manifest’ their ‘innate’ tendencies towards western expansion, to the basis of racial difference in the eugenics movement, nature has been central to concepts of racial purity in the United States. It is no coincidence that in this context – once filled with obsession over the

purity of bloodlines and the nation's body politic – the wilderness movement was born. (2006, 154)

At the same time that immigrants “flooded” into cities and fears of racial contamination grew, environmentalists such as John Muir began campaigning to protect the natural environment from the “pollution” and “degradation” of modernity (Ibid.). Wilderness, then, came to serve as a “purification machine, a place where people became white. [...]”. The journey *into* nature (for purification) was just as much a journey *away* from something else, and that something else was race” (Braun cited in Kosek 2006, 157). The landscapes that would later become national parks were imagined as places untouched by human influence, but in reality the U.S. Cavalry had only recently cleared them of their long-time inhabitants, the “hostile Indians” (Kosek 2006, 158).

The desire to manage the natural environment through the formation of national parks was influenced in part by eugenics. “Those who claimed some knowledge of or control over nature,” Kosek writes, “demonstrated, by their own logic, their superiority over those who did not. Thus, while the ‘lesser races’ were subject to nature’s whims, the ‘higher races’ were able to bend nature and its subjects to their will, for their own good” (2006, 160). This conception of wilderness and the imagined superiority of those who controlled it can be related back to Smith’s (1996) concept of the revanchist city, a place where whites have violently taken back control of the “polluted” urban “wilderness” to restore it to its previous, pure state. Community gardens and “urban reforestation” seek to transform the urban with what are imagined as the regenerative qualities of nature. “In affirming the connection with nature,” Smith writes, “the new urban frontier erases the

social histories, struggles and geographies that made it” (1996, 16). This transformation of space is not accomplished passively, however, but rather is enforced through policing and the exclusion of “dangerous” and “hostile” groups.

Vigilant Citizenship and Urban Green Space

The historical role of nature as a “purification machine” can be seen playing out in the contemporary governing of urban green spaces. As discussed earlier, the neoliberal transformation of urban space constructs new forms of citizenship rooted in the biopolitics of colonialism and imperialism. Newman (2013) adds to this discussion by locating emerging forms of citizenship in the micropolitics of urban green space in Paris. Through the construction and maintenance of a community park, a neighborhood association exercises “vigilant citizenship” in order to “pacify an urban commons whose unruly nature is frequently attributed to the presence of Maghrebi and West African youth in streets and public spaces” (Newman 2013, 948). By promoting local autonomy through grassroots activism, vigilant citizenship transfers the managerial responsibility of maintaining order in space from the state to individual residents, which is primarily accomplished through surveillance (Ibid.).

Public parks in particular are key sites in which the neoliberal transformation of citizenship can be traced. While they are experienced in everyday life as non-political areas, these spaces actually “naturalize republicanism by producing a space that defines and encompasses a particular relationship between—and among—individual citizens and the state. The design and intended use of public gardens symbolically intermingles the

agency of the state and nature; parks cultivate citizens” (Newman 2013, 949). For example, by entering the “carefully demarcated territory of the public garden,” visitors are interpellated as ‘user’ citizens, gaining rights of access to green space in exchange for observing rules that enforce strict definitions of how the space can be used (Ibid.).

Traditionally the power to produce and control these spaces has belonged to the state, but as neoliberalism has transformed the urban, this role has shifted to the privileged vigilant citizen, who carries out the ideological projects of the state and capital by deciding who can and cannot enter public park space. At its core the vigilant citizen is fueled by racist anxieties, and ultimately this phenomenon “captures the uncertainty of grassroots politics in the neoliberal era” (Newman 2013, 960).

Aristotle, who was one of the first to theorize and discuss the idea of citizenship, used the concept to mark the boundary between humans and animals, citizens from foreigners, and men from women (Johnson, 1984). This idea – that only those rational enough to control their passions can claim citizenship – gained even greater prominence with the rise of Christianity and later with the Enlightenment. Abstracted from the body, the free and rational citizen subject can look down on the world as an object (Gabrielson & Parady 2010, 375). With the recent emergence of citizenship studies, green political theorists have turned to the concept for its promise in promoting sustainability. Green citizenship, they imagine, broadens citizen obligations to environmental problems, promoting sustainable practices and problematizing the public/private divide as it applies to civic duty (Ibid.). In practice, however, this citizenship leads to the application of social control similar to Newman’s vigilant citizenship. Gabrielson & Parady argue that

most articulations of green citizenship “empower those positioned to know or imagine a particular conception of what a green ‘good life’ would entail,” and excludes those not so positioned, often along lines of class, race, and gender (Ibid.). Analyses of structural inequalities are dismissed as being outside the appropriate domain of environmental citizenship, and the work on green citizenship thus tends to reproduce the epistemological privilege of traditional Western understanding of citizenship by “foregrounding an ecological dimension that comes to trump most other social and political concerns” (Gabrielson & Parady 2010, 376).

Urban community gardens have also been discussed as sites that reproduce the logics of neoliberalism. As state welfare programs including food stamps are cut, community gardens and other volunteer spaces are expected to replace them, but only for those who participate in them (Perkins 2009), reflecting the evaluation of human life in neoliberalism in terms of market rationalities (Brown 2005, 40). In community gardens, this “obscures and reproduces race and racism as organizing principles of society through discourses about individual responsibility and the supposed color-blindness of market-based systems” (Ghose & Pettygrove 2014; Roberts & Mahtini 2010). While community gardens theoretically provide a site where black residents can develop alternative citizen subjectivities, access is only granted to those with the material resources required for participation (Ghose & Pettygrove 2014, 1108). Furthermore, as the property of city governments, public community gardens are ultimately regulated according to municipal codes, and citizenship is therefore contingent on the production of space that conforms to these strict specifications (Ghose & Pettygrove 2014, 1109).

In addition to being influenced by vigilant citizenship and race, the political significance and history of food production also influences garden spaces. Romanticizing an agrarian past is much easier for white people than it is for black people, whose enslaved ancestors subsidized U.S. agricultural development with their bodies (Guthman 2008, 394). For this reason community gardens and alternative food institutions such as farmers markets “tend to hail white subjects,” and “whites continue to define the rhetoric, spaces, and broader projects of agro-food transformation” (Guthman 2008, 395). Anti-GMO sentiments, which abound in these gardens, often use the language of eugenics by referring to genetically modified crops as genetically contaminated, “mutant,” “foreign” and “impure” (Guterson 2005, 120). While these historically charged associations dictate the way garden space is managed, to the colorblind green citizen they are apolitical, and the spectre of race in the garden is left unexamined (Guthman 2008, 391).

Without a political consciousness of race and space, urban garden projects are easily coopted by the growth machine. Checker (2011, 212) calls this “environmental gentrification,” a process which, “operating under the seemingly a-political rubric of sustainability,” appropriates the discursive successes of the urban environmental justice movement, and uses them “to serve high-end redevelopment that displaces low income residents.” As part of a larger neoliberal strategy of subsidizing the financial sector and attracting global capital, the ‘post-political’ governance of environmental gentrification disassociates urban green space from justice and in the process disables meaningful resistance (Ibid.). By inviting community activists to participate in the planning of new green space in a Harlem neighborhood, city officials were successful in coopting

resistance efforts, resulting in the influx of capital and the displacement of long-term residents (Checker 2011, 224). In a similar case of ‘displacement through participation,’ tenants who entered into formal discussion with the city of Amsterdam regarding planned redevelopment of their building, provided a platform through which the city imposed and legitimized its agenda of displacement (Huisman 2014).

In North Oakland’s “NOBE” neighborhood (the city’s new name for an amalgamation of existing communities) city planners and real estate firms used a garden created by environmental justice activists as a central point in advertisements for new residents (Markham 2014). Similarly, in New York’s Lower East Side, mayor Bloomberg has celebrated community gardens that have long existed in resistance to the city’s policies (Martinez 2010, 37). Bloomberg’s plans to transform New York into a “sustainable city” have ignored issues of race, class, and the impacts of gentrification, which has “left the impression that the mayor’s administration has been most concerned with greening and sustainability as part of the luxury branding of the city as a global elite destination” (Ibid.).

The dynamic of new parks leading to displacement is not new, as major projects, including Central Park, were specifically designed to increase the land values of adjacent properties and open up new development opportunities (Wolch et al. 2014, 239.). In another case, efforts to improve the ecology of riparian zones in Seattle were also used to justify the removal of houseless people who lived in the area (Wolch et al. 2014, 240). The creation of these new green spaces “literally ‘naturalize’ the disappearance of working-class communities, as such improved neighborhoods become targets for new

and more upscale development” (Wolch et al. 2014, 241).

In discussing these cases, Wolch et al. (2014) ask how to make cities “just green enough” that quality of life for residents is improved, but not so green that it invites gentrification (239). This “just green enough” strategy relies on a close collaboration between planners and local residents to design spaces that reflect the community’s actual needs rather than an ideological “restoration” approach (Wolch et al. 2014, 241). In an example of this strategy in practice, residents collaborated to “demand environmental cleanup strategies that allowed for continued industrial uses and preservation of blue-collar work, and explicitly avoided what they term the ‘parks, cafes, and a riverwalk’ model of a green city” (Ibid.).

Summary

In summary, gentrification is accomplished both by the collaboration of interest groups and city governments in projects of capitalist development and growth, and by the consumptive patterns of a new middle class. Gentrifiers, who are drawn to the imagined authenticity of ethnic neighborhoods, experience the urban landscape as a consumable good, and transform it with the sanitized aesthetics of the suburbs. Digital technology has further facilitated this consumption of urban space, and has rendered the landscape as legible to a new corporate state. Emerging forms of neoliberal citizenship and biopolitics dominate this new city, which is redesigned in the image of corporate power. Nostalgic for the colonial past, gentrifiers invoke the rhetoric of the frontier in their “reclamation” of the racialized city. In this context urban gardens serve as colonies, transforming the

aesthetics of urban space and encouraging an influx of capital and new residents.

However, by associating undeveloped lots with the haunting of the dead, activists have resisted these processes of gentrification, which reflects the power of death in opposing the hegemony of capitalism.

METHODOLOGY

This research seeks to interpret the cultural significance of community garden spaces in Oakland within the larger context of ongoing gentrification. Beginning with a social constructivist perspective, I used grounded theory to conduct a case study of two different garden spaces: Union Plaza and Afrikatown. Data was collected during the summers of 2015 and 2016 using semi-structured and informal interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. What emerged from this research was a picture of these gardens as multivalent spaces, where divergent ideologies, fantasies, and expectations are worked out on the land. In this chapter I will discuss my methodology and its significance in shaping the research.

Epistemology

This thesis began as an indistinct atmosphere of feelings that thickened over “my” Oakland as I watched it being gentrified in 2012 and 2013. Having grown up in Oakland, my understanding of reality is highly influenced by its people and places; to me, the city landscape is a repository of memories and intimate associations that shape what I value and what I expect from the future. Each Oakland I’ve known is layered on top of the last, a chronological sedimentation that imbues every street corner with my subjectivity. As these old places are excavated and built over in gentrification, their memory, without a structural reference, is left to hover over the landscape as a ghost. As the pace of change increased, I too found myself detached from the new city, and it was this detached feeling that inspired me to research gentrification in Oakland. From this starting point objectivity

is impossible. The only way to approach a topic of analysis as *personal* as this is to acknowledge the rich subjectivity that inspired it.

The importance of subjective experience in forming reality is acknowledged by social constructivism. Social constructivism is an epistemological perspective that views truth as being socially produced, as opposed to empirically discovered (Glaserfeld, 1995). Holding that our knowledge of reality is subjectively constructed within a framework of shared cultural meanings (Creswell 2003, 8), constructivism views social reality as a narrative or text that is constantly undergoing changes (Penguin reference 353). Because meaning is varied and fluid, social constructivist research focuses on the complexity of subjective experiences rather than on a narrow and fixed pursuit of empirical objectivity (Creswell 2003, 8). My research, which attempts to interpret the politics of urban gardens and the perspectives of those who use them, is fundamentally constructivist. In my research conceptions of objectivity have no value; the geography of Oakland, both physical and imagined, is as contested and varied as the understandings of those who live there.

A constructivist approach also acknowledges the problematic history of academic research in communities of color. Positivist academic research is “inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism,” and has been used in the destructive collection of indigenous knowledge and artifacts by universities (Smith 1999, 1). In addition, black communities in the United States have historically been dehumanized by positivist studies, which were used in eugenics projects to justify segregation and racist criminal law (Ferguson 2012, 144). The communities in Oakland where my research is centered

continue to be defined by positivist, biological conceptions of race, and are exploited by the “natural” laws of neoliberal capitalism. As a white academic this history shadows my research, and with this in mind I personally felt obligated to reject positivism. This necessitated working with a constructivist approach that honors the lived realities of those marginalized groups most immediately affected by gentrification in Oakland.

The choice to situate this thesis in a social constructivist epistemology was significant in shaping my research. As intended, it allowed for a complex reading of the way that space and place are experienced and codified by individuals and their larger communities. This perspective also allowed me to acknowledge my own thoughts and biases, and their influence on the research. As a result, my findings value the diverse perspectives I encountered in my research, and I was able to situate them within an interdisciplinary discussion on gentrification, race, and environmental justice.

Methodology

In order to facilitate the inclusion of multiple perspectives in my research, I chose a qualitative case study approach. A multiple case study design covering two garden spaces was chosen to highlight the richness and complexity of the politics of space in Oakland, and to understand the phenomena of interest shared between the two cases (Stake, 2000; Laukner et al. 2012, 5). This study also has the characteristics of an instrumental case study (Stake, 2000) that explores and contextualizes the research findings beyond the site of the gardens (Laukner et al. 2012, 5). The phenomena I examined in this case study were the construction of citizenship and particular forms of governance in garden spaces,

and the impacts of community gardens on larger processes of gentrification; this required an analytic case study design to develop a framework that included the key aspects of these phenomena (Ibid.). Rather than simply describing each case's events, an analytic case study is "used to develop conceptual categories or to illustrate, support, or challenge theoretical assumptions held prior to data gathering" (Merriam 1998, cited in Laukner et al. 2012, 6). What emerges is a picture of two very different garden spaces that are connected through analysis of the phenomena observed and their significance to a broader theoretical discussion.

Following Laukner et al.'s lead, I felt this case study design would benefit from a grounded theory approach. As they note, "Strauss (1987) supports the integration of case studies and grounded theory when the focus of the researcher is on the development of analytic generalizations to contribute to theory building" (2012, 5). The intention of grounded theory is to move beyond description to generate a theory, an "abstract analytical schema of a process" (Creswell 2007, 63). A key idea of this theory development is that it is generated on the ground, in data from participants who have experienced the process being studied (Ibid.). When utilized in social justice-minded research, grounded theory can locate subjective and collective experiences in larger social structures, helping to understand how these structures work (Charmaz 2005, 508). Because I was simultaneously engaged in theory building as well as real world processes, grounded theory-based research provided "integrated theoretical statements about the conditions under which injustice or justice develops, changes, or continues" (Ibid.), and made visible "hierarchies of power, communication, and opportunity" (Creswell 2007,

65). Following from my epistemology, I chose to use a constructivist grounded theory that acknowledges the subjectivity of researchers who “construct our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives and the research practices” (Charmaz 2006, 10).

This methodology also allows for an acknowledgement of my positionality as a researcher. This is especially important when “writing about cultures or experiences of ethnic groups different from one's own becomes most political when the issue is who will be regarded as the ‘authoritative’ voice” (hooks 2015, 44). Although my analysis was highly personal and subjective, it was also important for me to highlight the experiences of marginalized groups in their own words. This was done with care, because I was aware that the state has used the knowledge shared publicly by activists to strengthen its control over them. Investigating the subaltern histories of dissidents, and thereby understanding the cause of their revolt, is one of the ways that the state has prevented a recurrence of similar disorders (Guha 1987, 74). Knowledge, after all, “is not a neutral entity, but a set of practices that produce relationships of power” (Fernandes 2003, 79). West Oakland, the birthplace of the Black Panthers and a current hotbed of radical activism, has been surveilled by government agencies in the past. In employing a grounded theory approach to case studies, I was careful to withhold what I intuited to be sensitive information that may have had a detrimental affect to the activists I interviewed if it had been published.

Methods

Interviews

I conducted interviews with 15 participants in order to collect a diverse sampling of data

for analysis and theorization. These interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format of predetermined as well as emergent questions. The interviews took place over two summers (6 months of total fieldwork), which meant there was plenty of time for the “zigzag” process of grounded theory: taking the interview data home and sitting with it, and then heading back out into the field with a new perspective on the research (Creswell 2007, 64). This gave each subsequent interview deeply layered significance and meaning, as the key themes and sentiments expressed were reflected against earlier interviews and contextualized within an ongoing literature review.

Because I sought to include a diverse array of perspectives, each interview and participant was quite different from the others. I interviewed houseless people and wealthy yuppies, white conservatives and black radicals. I approached each interview with this reality in mind, and although I asked many of the same predetermined questions, my expression of these questions shifted as I mirrored the participant to build rapport. I saw the interviews as more than just information-gathering devices, but as reflective of the performative aspects of life (Berg 2004, 1), as well as the power-laden. Relationships of social power within interviews have a tendency to produce *regimes of truth* that alter the behaviors and beliefs of the interviewed, and create binary subject positions (Toll & Crumpler 2004, 85). In order to mitigate this as much as possible, I spent time getting to know the participants and making my positionality clear before conducting the interviews. In the case of interviews with houseless people, the simple act of sharing a drink and exchanging stories of growing up in Oakland helped build rapport and understanding before the interview. In analyzing these interviews later, I did not

discount our differences and their influence, but instead considered them an important and interesting aspect of the research.

The groups that I interviewed were garden volunteers, garden staff, neighborhood residents, and activists. I volunteered my time in both gardens, and attended events hosted by the garden organizers. Contact was established in person and transitioned naturally from my volunteer work and participatory observation in the gardens. In the case of neighborhood residents not engaged with the gardens, I made contact and initiated interviews by either knocking on their doors or approaching their encampments. My extensive experience as a door-to-door canvasser for Greenpeace helped me overcome any anxiety I felt about this, and made conversation much more comfortable and natural. Because I only needed a few interviews with each group, I was selective about which residents I asked for an interview with. If a resident answered the door and seemed hurried or otherwise uninterested, I didn't pursue the interview. On both occasions that I interviewed residents in their homes, I was invited in, offered tea, and got into long conversations about the history of the neighborhood and its changes. These interviews felt like conversations with good friends or relatives, and not like a structured, sterile collection of data.

Participant observation

Participant observation was needed to supplement and contextualize the interviews, to assemble complex and saturated case studies. Most of my time in the field was not spent in interviews, but rather working in the gardens, walking the streets, attending events and meetings, and simply taking in the scene. This immersion in the day-to-day life of the

neighborhoods and garden spaces of my study provided insight into the quotidian processes of gentrification as they play out on the landscape. It also highlighted the relationship of garden spaces to particular groups; while interviews provided clear explanations, observation elicited the hidden, murky, and sometimes contradictory subtext of the spaces. Furthermore, the research benefited from an observation of the landscape itself and its changes. Stretched out over two years, I was able to observe the buildings, yards, and sidewalks around the gardens as they changed ownership and were transformed with new aesthetics.

An important consideration with this method was acknowledging the influence of the gaze, which is “not the act of looking itself, but the viewing relationship characteristic of a particular set of social circumstances” (Sturken & Cartwright 2001, 76). As an academic observer, my gaze may act as a symbol of surveillance, and may encourage self-regulation among the subjects of observation (Sturken & Cartwright 2001, 98). For this reason it was important that I actively participate in garden activities rather than standing off to the side and watching. By immersing myself in the normal activities of the spaces I observed, I mitigated the extent to which my gaze would influence others. Still, my positionality played a significant role in the research, and I considered my influence on the spaces of study in my findings.

Document analysis

I analyzed city government documents such as the West Oakland Specific Plan, as well as organization documents relating to the garden spaces, using a Foucauldian discourse analysis. This approach, which analyzed power relationships expressed in the texts,

sought to uncover discourses about urban green space that may be influenced by sources of power. This approach complimented my social constructionist epistemology, as it attempted to understand the way that language produces meaning and reflects existing power relationships (Given 2008, 249). In practice this entailed analyzing online texts of City Slicker Farms and Qilombo, as well as the city of Oakland, and identifying certain codes and language that were then related back to the academic literature and to my interviews. This analysis helped reveal otherwise hidden assumptions about the meaning of gardens in processes of gentrification.

UNION PLAZA PARK: A CASE STUDY

Union Plaza Park is a triangular plot of land between Peralta, 34th, and Haven streets in West Oakland, California. Since 2009 the park has been used as a community garden by City Slicker Farms, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The garden space consists of 9 rows of raised beds that are intersected by four walkways, forming a grid of 31 beds that are filled with kale, chard, collards, and other vegetables. In the southwest corner of the park there is a chicken coop and a small structure that houses pots, garden utensils, soil, compost, and other miscellaneous materials. The garden is fenced in on all sides with a gate at the corner of 34th and Peralta, outside of which is a park bench, a trash and recycling bin, a sign with the park's name, and a tall post with an Office of Parks and Recreation (OPR) notice displaying the park rules. Across 34th street from Union Plaza is Fitzgerald Park, another triangular lot that is undeveloped save for a bench and a low wooden platform.

The neighborhood in which the garden exists is officially called Clawson, but has been renamed Dogtown in recent years. The area is a mix of residential and industrial space, and has historically been a predominately black working class enclave. Highway 580 wraps around the northwest side of the neighborhood, and beyond it is the Emeryville border and a multi-block shopping center. To the south and west large warehouses and the Mandela Parkway, a broad thoroughfare on the site of the old Cypress Freeway, cut off the neighborhood from the rest of West Oakland. Four blocks to the east of the park is San Pablo Avenue and an area where extensive residential and commercial development is planned. One of the principle routes from the shopping center

in Emeryville to 580 and San Pablo Ave is 34th street, and this means that although the neighborhood is geographically isolated, a steady stream of shoppers passes the garden during the day. In addition, the proximity of the garden to San Pablo Ave attracts a sizeable population of houseless residents, many of whom sleep under the Mandela Street 580 overpass and in temporary shelters along Haven Street on the west side of the garden.

It is important to mention this geographic situation because it's what makes Union Plaza Park such an interesting case study. The area has seen extensive development and gentrification in the past ten years, but is still home to many older residents and a significant houseless population. The park is owned by the City, which, along with the new Dogtown Neighborhood Association, has a vested interest in maintaining a certain aesthetic and order to the area. City Slicker Farms, an organization created to promote food justice and education, operates the park with the mission of improving the lives of the most marginalized neighborhood residents, but it also attracts wealthy outsiders and is promoted by real estate agents. In this case study I will explore the complex and contradictory relationships between these actors and they play out in relationship to the garden.

City Slicker Farms

City Slicker Farms was founded in 2001 with the mission of “empowering West Oakland community members to meet the immediate and basic need for healthy organic food for themselves and their families by creating high-yield urban farms and backyard gardens” (City Slicker Farms, 2015). In 2006, Oakland city councilmember Nancy Nadel asked

City Slicker Farms to convert Union Plaza Park into a community garden, and the organization was awarded a matching grant of \$100,000 through the West Oakland Project Area Committee (WOPAC) to develop the plot (Ibid.). City Slicker Farms was able to match the grant with support from the Pacific and Forest Watershed Lands Stewardship Council, Community Development Block Grants, and Nancy Nadel (Ibid.). In 2009 the city council signed a resolution authorizing the transformation of the park into a Community Market Farm, and transferred the WOPAC funds to OPR for development (Ibid.). City Slicker Farms convened a Community Advisory Committee of park neighbors and other residents to review the park design, and in late 2009 construction of raised beds began. Construction was completed in 2010, and since then City Slicker Farms has been working with the OPR funds to maintain to the garden (Ibid.).

Since 2015, much of City Slicker Farms' efforts have gone towards the construction of a much larger garden and farmstand called the West Oakland Farm Park, which is located three blocks down Peralta Street from Union Plaza. That space was constructed on the organization's private land using 4 million dollars in grant funds from Proposition 84, a bill that set aside taxpayer money to develop open spaces in poor communities with the condition that some of the space had to include a public park (Steinberger, 2015). The park opened in 2016 and is run in a similar manner as Union Plaza, with a weekly farmstand and nutrition and gardening demos (City Slicker Farms 2016). As City Slicker Farms notes on their website, participation in the farmstand "requires an application to ensure that we are primarily serving high-need members of the

community” (Ibid.).

City Slicker’s development of Union Plaza Park and the new West Oakland Farm Park coincided with larger city development plans in Oakland. The gardens fall within the West Oakland Redevelopment Project Area, which was established by the city in 2003 with the plan to “improve the quality of housing, increase opportunities for home ownership, mitigate and reduce conflicts between residential and industrial uses, provide streetscape improvements, improve public safety and promote economic development” (City of Oakland, 2012). The project area was dissolved in 2012 and replaced by the West Oakland Specific Plan (WOSP), which as earlier mentioned will allow 4.7 million square feet of new industrial and commercial space, 5,000 new residential units, and the creation of “green space” for farmers markets and planned community gardens (City of Oakland, 2014).

The WOSP plans include a reforestation plan designed by the West Oakland Green Initiative (WOGI), a community-based organization formed in 2002 and sponsored by OPR. WOGI has worked closely with the City to plant trees and other vegetation in West Oakland, and as the City’s website notes:

WOGI envisions a sustainable, thriving and attractive urban forest, composed of a wide spectrum of trees, shrubs, ground cover, and other vegetation that serve to enhance environmental quality and community health and opportunity. WOGI encompasses the entire eco-system by striving to use local talent, resources and labor *thereby promotes commerce and industry* along with the well-being of the community. (City of Oakland 2016, para. 4; emphasis added)

WOGI’s website included the following testimonial:

I’m a newer resident to the West Oakland community from Los Angeles.

[...]. I can already sense a change in the mentality of the neighborhood [...]. I am optimistic to believe that the tree planting event will be a stepping stone in bringing the community together, to eventually combat other issues, such as crime, loitering, and general nuisance. (West Oakland Green Initiative, 2011)

Urban Releaf, an urban forest non-profit established in 1998 to “address the needs of communities that have little to no greenery or tree canopy” in Oakland (Urban Releaf, 2016), charged WOGI with “advancing an agenda which reeks not only of gentrification, but colonialism” (Urban Releaf, 2012). According to Releaf, WOGI is a group of all white environmentalists who have teamed up with developers to help raise property values in the neighborhood (Ibid.). The president of WOGI’s Board of Directors is also the founder and principle of BBI construction, which has been hired for large construction jobs in Oakland (Ibid.). When WOGI convened an all white panel for a neighborhood discussion, black community members voiced concerns about the project and asked if it planned to address economic inequality in West Oakland, to which the answer was “no” (Ibid.).

City Slicker Farms’ parks are mentioned in the WOSP as well as the “Streetscape Master Plan” for Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd & Peralta Street. This document plans the implementation of streetscape improvements to “stimulate new development and redevelopment along the street corridor”, and recommends using City Slicker Farms to improve intersections and “create a green ambiance” (City of Oakland 2012, 6; City of Oakland 2012, Appendix C). When I asked Joseph, the black Farm Manager of Union Plaza Park, about his thoughts on gentrification, he responded that there were “two aspects” of it. He said that gentrification could be positive if “it cleans up the

neighborhood” and “makes it nicer to live in.” However, he said that this benefit was outweighed by “rich people coming in” who “like the gritty look” of the neighborhood, but “don’t want to interact with the people who live here, don’t want them hanging around in the streets, and want to get rid of them.”

When I asked Joseph about a possible connection between the garden and neighborhood development plans, he responded that the space was intended to help those residents most marginalized by gentrification. On the other hand, he noted that real estate agents had used photos of the garden on more than one occasion to help sell nearby properties. When asked how City Slicker Farms might resist this gentrification, Joseph said that it might not be possible. “Our new location is between two properties that will become condos for rich people,” he said. Joseph mentioned that if the organization had more money, they might be able to employ or otherwise support houseless people nearby. Although Joseph could not speak for the City Slickers Board of Directors (I was unable to establish contact with them), it would seem that the larger organization agrees with his thoughts; City Slicker Farms’ official Facebook page shared a post in September of 2016 promoting an anti-gentrification event hosted by the housing justice organization Causa Justa with the caption “What can you do to challenge gentrification and fight displacement? Find out tonight at this awesome training” (City Slicker Farms Facebook, 2016).

Contested Spaces

Regardless of City Slicker Farms’ official position, Union Plaza Park was vandalized in

2014 in what some speculate was an anti-gentrification action. As the East Bay Times reported, vandals uprooted most of the vegetables, broke through the chicken coops, and knocked over beanpoles (East Bay Times, 2016). Although the vandalism didn't bear any overt anti-gentrification messaging, a nearby high-end coffee shop had its windows smashed weeks earlier after a WOSP meeting (Ibid.), and local news coverage speculated that the vandalism was related (Ayers, 2014). In comments left online, one user of an Oakland community forum said that they worked in a North Oakland community garden and could see why people connected gardens to gentrification, explaining that they were approached multiple times by new residents complimenting the garden, and that the garden had been used by real estate agents as a selling point for houses in the neighborhood (Kimchiburrito, 2014). In 2016, a community garden in nearby Bay Point, a historically black working class neighborhood in San Francisco where new commercial development is planned, was similarly vandalized (Geha, 2016).

When I asked Joseph the Farm Manager about the vandalism at Union Plaza, he didn't speculate on its cause. Rather than assigning it any political significance, he associated the vandalism with what he considered to be a larger problem of neighborhood "blight." In our conversations he was most animated when talking about the accumulation of trash, graffiti, and belongings left behind by houseless people around the park, and in particular on Haven Street. There, he said, RVs set up long term residence and often dumped their refuse on the street before leaving. In addition, he said that houseless people who set up camp on Haven Street discarded needles and sometimes threw broken bottles into the garden at night. "You should have seen it before," he said,

“the garden helped clean up this park, but there’s still a lot we need to do. The blight some of these people contribute to is one of my biggest pet peeves.” During my time volunteering at the garden, Joseph seemed to be in a constant battle to maintain order. Whether inspecting kale leaves for aphids, or picking up trash that drifted against the fences, I got the feeling that much of the energy expended in the garden was in defense against forces of decay. “This neighborhood has really changed, and a lot for the better,” he said. He motioned to a burnt out building with glass and plastic strewn across the front yard: “Last month that house across the street burned down. There’s always something going on around here.”

On one slow summer afternoon I asked a regular garden volunteer what they thought of the neighborhood. That volunteer (who didn’t want me to share their name) was working at the garden on weekends to fulfill court mandated community service hours. They lived twenty minutes away in Berkeley, but chose the garden because “it’s peaceful, and I wanted to learn how to grow stuff,” and because their girlfriend lived nearby. “This garden definitely helps out the neighborhood,” they told me, “especially because of all the produce we give away.” When I asked how many neighborhood residents they’d met and talked with about the garden, they told me there were a few regulars, but mostly they got people stopping by after shopping in Emeryville. “It’s cool to see people stop here. It gives them a better idea of Oakland, you know, its not what they hear on the news.” During farmstand hours on the weekends I observed people parking on 34th and picking up produce for sale, but nearly all of them were white and appeared relatively wealthy. For the most part they looked out of place in the

neighborhood, and on one occasion I asked what their connection was to the garden. “I just stopped on the way to the freeway. I used to blow past this intersection, but since this garden has been here I stop sometimes. Best kale around, way better than Whole Foods!” They had been shopping at a commercial district in Emeryville and were heading home to Piedmont, a wealthy town in the Oakland Hills.

The visible wealth of these passersby was strongly contrasted by the nearly constant congregation of houseless folks across 34th street at Fitzgerald Park. Since at least 2004, I can remember seeing groups in the park and pushing grocery carts down Peralta towards Mandela Parkway. Across Peralta Street from Fitzgerald is the Alliance Recycling Center, where a steady stream of houseless and other residents exchange their bottles and cans for cash. Two blocks away under the 580 overpass, tents and other makeshift shelters slowly build up over weeks to become an encampment, before they are cleared out by the police. I witnessed 3 of these cycles during the summers of 2015 and 2016, and in my interviews with local residents it sounded as though it had been happening for many years. When I asked one houseless resident named Ron about sources of shelter in the area, he told me that the police had been cracking down recently, “ever since all those new buildings went up and they kicked us out of the hotel”

The hotel Ron referred to is the California Hotel – an iconic building that was once a jazz venue and a safe haven for black travelers who experienced discrimination (Seipel, 2016). Located on San Pablo Ave three blocks from Union and Fitzgerald Park, the building had fallen into disrepair in the 1970s and according to Ron it was used up until 2012 as a space where sex workers and houseless people could find temporary

shelter. In 2012 the East Bay Asian Local Development purchased the property, evicted most of the residents, and renovated the building into 137 units of low-income housing. The East Bay Times noted in their story on the renovation that “supporters hope the rehabilitated residence and the ground-floor storefronts bring new life to the block-sized building on San Pablo Avenue” (Ibid.), and the hotel is also a major component of the WOSP’s new vision of the “San Pablo Corridor” (City of Oakland 2014, 335).

Two blocks down San Pablo from the hotel, and six short blocks from Union Plaza, another triangle of land called Saint Andrews Plaza has been providing a space for houseless people and sex workers. In 2014 the Oakland police descended on the plaza to clear it of its residents and to fence it off for a renovation (Pink Edge, 2014). The “clean up” of the park was carried out as part of WOSP plans to bridge Downtown Oakland with the retail spaces and luxury condos of Emeryville, but these initial efforts were ultimately unsuccessful and within days users of the plaza had torn down the fences and resumed occupation of the space (Ibid.). In 2016 the city of Oakland received a \$456,000 grant to renovate the plaza, and police and construction crews once again erected a fence and quickly began demolition of the existing concrete structures (Baldassari, 2016). The plaza, which users considered a “refuge,” is adjacent to buildings identified by the WOSP as “opportunity sites” for development (Ibid.).

In Fitzgerald Park, City Slicker Farms attempted to address the crisis that houseless people are facing in the neighborhood by building a small “classroom.” According to Joseph, the organization built the open, wooden pavilion in 2013 to serve as a space where volunteers could teach local residents about gardening and healthy eating.

Joseph told me that they held a few classes with the specific goal of teaching houseless residents in the area how to eat the greens they grew without cooking them. He conceded that unfortunately the classes didn't go well, as many of the houseless folks were missing teeth, and "breaking up kale with your hands isn't the most appetizing way of eating it." Shortly after the classroom was constructed, houseless residents began sleeping under it, and after a few months the new Dogtown Neighborhood Association pressured OPR to close off the space. The OPR ordered City Slicker Farms to board up the classroom with plywood, and by January of 2014 the building was covered in graffiti and no longer in use.

According to Joseph, after further complaints from Dogtown residents to the city about the new "eyesore" on the park, the OPR ordered complete dismantlement of the structure. Before it was torn down, a note posted on the building reading "whoever oppresses a poor man insults his maker" was crossed out and changed to "whoever oppresses a crackhead insults his [undesipherable]. Defend the hood" (Google, 2014). Today only the square wooden base of the structure remains, providing a space for residents to sit and talk. When I asked Milton – another houseless resident who was evicted from his North Oakland apartment in 2013 – about the building, he told me that although him and his friends would sleep under the shelter on rainy nights, overall they were happy it was torn down. "We don't want them to take this park away too," he said, gesturing across the street to Union Plaza.

The relationship between the houseless population and the garden at Union Plaza is complex, and the individuals I interviewed all had a different take on it. Joseph, who

came up with the idea for the Fitzgerald Park classroom, was empathetic of the plight of the poorest neighborhood residents. “As an Oakland native I’ve seen how bad these folks have had it out here. One of our goals is to help them in any way we can. Our farmstand is always open to them,” he explained. On the other hand, Joseph viewed the houseless community as a source of litter and blight around the garden, and told me he worried some people wouldn’t stop by the garden if it looked “trashy” or “intimidating.” He told me he hoped the city would help construct more portable ‘tiny houses’ for them, and that it would also step up its response to illegal dumping and graffiti.

The garden volunteer that I interviewed had a less compassionate take on the situation, and blamed houseless residents and “junkies” for breaking in to his girlfriends house and stealing her laptop. While he felt the vegetables grown in the garden could help the most marginalized in the community, he told me “none of the homeless people ever want any.” Ron, the houseless man who spent many afternoons in Fitzgerald park drinking and chatting with his friend, said he didn’t really care much about the garden or the people who stopped there. “They don’t give a fuck about us, and we don’t care about them. Simple.” When I asked if he ever entered the garden, he said he sometimes sat at the bench in front of the park, but that he didn’t feel like entering, and that he hadn’t accepted vegetables when Joseph offered them. “Why should I? I don’t need spinach, look at my arms!”

Milton, on the other hand, associated the garden with the police. “After they built [the Fitzgerald classroom], the police would come mess with us more. I don’t need that.” When I asked if he thought the garden attracted new residents to the neighborhood, he

nodded and added: “They trying to do the same thing on San Pablo. Why everything have to be a garden?” Shortly after this exchange a police car slowed down to crawl and a white officer in sunglasses peered out at us before speeding off down Peralta. “See?” Milton snickered. “They can’t give us no peace.”

Dogtown

The neighborhood around Union Plaza was given the unofficial name Dogtown by Oakland Police officers in the 1980s due to an unusually high population of stray dogs. Today the name is celebrated by real estate agencies like Caldecott Properties, who in a 2010 post on their website titled “Discover Dogtown” described the neighborhood to potential buyers:

A mix of artist studios, modern loft houses, and revived Victorian homes has since replaced the guard dogs and the junkyards. [...]. Dogtown presents an excellent opportunity to live and work in an exciting and developing community situated in the heart of the Bay Area. [...]. **City Slicker Farms** has started construction on what will be a beautiful urban organic farm. [...]. When completed, the park will have produce fruits and vegetables that will be sold on location on Saturdays. The park will have a community space in the front and be surrounded by a beautiful fence made from reclaimed wood and lined with espalier fruit trees. The Dogtown Neighborhood Association (DNA) has recently applied for a City of Oakland grant for \$75,000 to add street trees, motion activated lights, a new modern fence and to paint the façade of the building on the corner of 34th and Hollis St. The façade improvement will make the corner of 34th & Hollis one of the most bright and colorful in the East Bay! (Caldecott Properties 2010, para. 5; emphasis added)

Expensive new housing such as Borderland, a three-home development that won an award from the American Institute of Architects, has capitalized on the “ugly” industrial aesthetic of Dogtown to sell itself (Brettkelly, 2013). New condos on the block between

Mandela Parkway and Eddie Street and have patinaed steel security gates to keep undesirables out, and further down the street new luxury lofts make extensive use of corrugated metal in their decoration.

This aesthetic is a tame and controlled reflection of the older, decaying industrial landscape of the neighborhood. In combining the aesthetics of green space with rustic urban retreat, The Ranch at Dogtown – a collection of nine buildings that share a large communal garden – has used murals to transform their formerly “gritty blend of industrial and residential” spaces into a colorful, clean space. Here they describe their mural project on a local business:

[...] although their store remained behind metal security doors and wire screened windows, it was pink wire and turquoise steel. And, the graffiti stopped. We were never vandalized, never a spray can target. [...]. Help us overcome graffiti with graphic design and color! (The Ranch At Dogtown, 2017)

This sanitization of space through the use of cheerful aesthetics reflects the collective’s more general vigilance against undesirable elements in the neighborhood. They write:

While The Ranch is a convenient and hospitable “city within a city” it is located in an area which suffers all the ills of modern American city life. Crime and drugs exist right outside our front gate. Our only substantial insulation from the ravages of violent crime and drugs is our good will. We participate in civic activities, smile and acknowledge the street people, allow the “urban miners” access to our used beer bottles, resist the temptation to purchase obviously stolen tools when offered, and maintain a clean, well lighted face on the street. (The Ranch at Dogtown 2017)

City Slicker Farms has taken a more diplomatic approach to the issue of gardens and gentrification. Rodney Spencer, the executive director of City Slicker Farms, shared his thoughts in a 2016 interview:

We work with homeless people and drug addicts, and people associate us with bringing in that problem that they work hard to push out. At the same time, most of our volunteers are white, so we get blamed for perpetuating the gentrification in the neighborhood. You can't win for losing (Roosblad, 2016)

My interviews with residents in Dogtown reflected the community's mixed feelings about green space. Grace, an aging hippy who moved into the neighborhood in the 1970s, has seen dramatic changes in the neighborhood that started with the introduction of a nearby park. Her home, a narrow Victorian with peeling paint, is nestled between a rusting warehouse and a fenced lot full of old trucks, shipping containers, and loose metal rods. The new high end Ettie Street Lofts are just down the street, and a block passed the is the recently redesigned Mandela Parkway green space as well as the West Oakland Farm Park. In describing the changes to her neighborhood, she said:

It's like a different place now. There used to be blackouts all the time, and you'd be afraid to leave the house. You heard gunshots regularly – the house across the street was a crack den. But you know, everyone knew us and if there was a problem you could go talk to them. When the Cypress [an elevated freeway] collapsed we were all out there helping. [...]. I miss the sense of community.

Grace told me that the neighborhood really began to change in the late 2000s when the city renovated the stretch of Mandela Parkway to include a wide median with walkways and vegetation. Around the same time new, gated apartments and condos started going up, and many of her friends in the neighborhood lost their homes to foreclosure. When I asked her what she thought of the new community gardens and efforts to green the neighborhood, she thought for a moment and said:

There have been community gardens in the neighborhood for years – they're great. I'm not sure about the city planned ones, because we saw

what happened with the Mandela Parkway. They used it to drive up rents and kick people out. I never see anyone using the park, but there's a bunch of new businesses opening up over there.

When I asked if she had benefited from the rising value of her house, she laughed and told me that although it was worth six times as much as when she bought it, it didn't matter because she wasn't leaving until she died.

Across Dogtown on Haven Street one block away from Union Plaza, I spoke with a new resident to the neighborhood named Vicky. She moved from San Francisco into her newly constructed loft in 2012 and told me that the Plaza garden was one of the reasons she fell in love with the property. "It doesn't have a yard," she explained, "but I can just walk across the street and get some veggies whenever I want." When I asked if she felt safe in the neighborhood, she said that "it's getting better, but there's still a lot of sketchy stuff that goes on." She told me that burglaries and car break-ins were her biggest concern, but that she was also worried about "criminals and addicts" around the parks. "I lived in San Francisco, so I'm used to a few crazies. I just wish the city could do something about all the syringes and broken glass they leave around," she explained. She told me that she sometimes picks up trash when she walks her dog, and that she uses an app on her phone to report trash and graffiti directly to the city. She told me that she used the app to report graffiti on City Slicker Farm's Fitzgerald Park structure, and that she was happy to see it torn down because "it was an eyesore that attracted problems" to the area.



Figure 2. New apartments planned adjacent to the garden (Madison Park, 2017)

In the fall of 2016, after I concluded my interviews in the neighborhood, the entire city block between Hollis, Peralta, and Haven Streets, directly next to Union Plaza Park, was demolished to make room for a 4-story mixed-use structure that will include nearly 3,000 square feet of retail space (Madison Park, 2017). The developer, Madison Park, describes the property, which is expected to be completed in 2018:

All housing units will enjoy access to outdoor space through balconies and terraces as well as beautifully landscaped common courtyards. Inherent in the plan designs is an effort to create an ecologically conscious project for the individual resident as well as for the larger environment of the neighborhood and city through the use of rooftop solar panels, sustainable renewable and recycled building materials, and low-e glass coatings. Madison Park’s vision is to create a uniquely interactive, artful, ecologically friendly project that builds on the energy and diversity of the local community and becomes a vital component of the neighborhood. (2017)

Madison Park’s use of “green” aesthetics and diversity to advertise units in the property verifies Joseph’s concerns about real estate agents using the garden to sell adjacent

property. Although it's likely the block would have been developed eventually regardless of the garden, its existence seems to have played a role in the specific form that development and its advertisement has taken. While Union Plaza may offer benefits to the local houseless population, it also seems to have worked directly to their disadvantage, as their community on Haven Street is cleared to make way for construction. Gentrification might be, as Joseph said, inevitable in the neighborhood, but it would seem that the political and aesthetic significance of the garden has played a role in welcoming it.

AFRIKATOWN: A CASE STUDY

Afrikatown is a community garden at the intersection of San Pablo Avenue, Brush Street and 23rd Street in West Oakland, not far from downtown. Qilombo, a “radical community social center” (Qilombo, 2017) created the garden over several months in 2014 to prevent real estate development on the empty lot adjacent to their building. Sullivan Real Estate officially owns the lot, which had been empty and fenced off for decades, and has attempted to bulldoze the garden with the help of the Oakland Police Department and sell the land to luxury condominium developers (Tsai, 2015). As a result, the garden became a focal point of the debate over gentrification in Oakland, and continues to serve as a rallying point for anti-gentrification activists.

The immediate neighborhood around Afrikatown has a history of radical activism. San Pablo Avenue was the site of anti-war and civil rights marches and protests in the 1960s, and the neighborhood was the home of the Black Panthers. In the decades since many of the buildings along this stretch of San Pablo Avenue burned down or were abandoned and boarded up. The area became home to a sizeable population of houseless folks, many of whom took up residence in the abandoned buildings and hotels that lined the old commercial district of the street. In addition, the area has a history of sex work, and has been referred to as “The Stroll” by locals.

In recent times, however, San Pablo Ave has been changing. As the main artery of the planned development in the WOSP, city efforts to ‘clean up’ the neighborhood have been extensive. Across Brush Street from Afrikatown is a small triangular park where

houseless people have been sleeping in tents and under tarps since early 2016, when police displaced them from other nearby areas now undergoing renovations and development. In December of 2016, city inspectors evicted Qilombo from their building as part of a larger crackdown on unpermitted spaces in the wake of the tragic Ghost Ship fire. With the future of the space in question, activists are asking for donations and have applied for a \$25,000 garden grant, and have said that they will attempt to buy the Afrikatown lot, which is now valued at \$995,000 (Qilombo, 2017). In this case study I will discuss the politics of Afrikatown and the difficulties it has faced in resisting gentrification.

Qilombo

Afrikatown came into existence spontaneously in the fall of 2014, when activists from the adjacent Qilombo community center began clearing the lot of debris and building raised beds (Tsai, 2015). On March 7, 2015 activists from the Qilombo Community Center entered the lot, set up a soup kitchen, and painted a colorful mural inspired by the black liberation movement on the wall overlooking the park (Shabazz, 2015). Local media reported at the time that “the colorful mural not only attracted the approving eye of residents, activists say, but also the attention of developers” (Shabazz 2015, para. 5). On March 26 the owner of the property arrived with a bulldozer and several Oakland Police officers, and attempted to clear the lot, but activists stood between the bulldozer and the fence to prevent its movement (Shabazz, 2015). The owner ultimately agreed to give the activists until April 3 to vacate the lot, but on that date over 300 activists attended a rally

at the garden to prevent encroachment on the space. After receiving call from Oakland City Councilwoman Lynette McElhaney, the owner and his realtor agreed to work with the activists, but maintained that the property was still for sale (Ibid.).

In contrast to other community gardens in West Oakland, Afrikatown is completely open to the public. There's no gate, and during events a volunteer run soup kitchen helps feed houseless residents in the area (Tsai, 2015). Afrikatown supporters have stated that their goal is to raise money to purchase the property, which is valued at nearly one million dollars, in order to prevent development and halt gentrification (Qilombo, 2017). Unlike other community gardens that have received city grants for their development, Afrikatown has depended on community donations and volunteer work. The ultimate goal of Afrikatown, according to volunteers, is to transform the area into a haven for marginalized residents, and to act as a model for other communities facing gentrification (Tsai, 2015).

The unique aspects of the Afrikatown community garden reflect Qilombo's broader political vision, which is not limited to urban agriculture. Qilombo explains:

Our neighbors are largely low income and/or houseless Black & Brown people; specifically we want to acknowledge our neighbors who reside in West Oakland's "tent-city" where houseless peoples pitch tents and community members who live in the motels or low-come housing projects close to the community garden. [...]. We are a land-based movement that reconceptualizes community control: we are the frontline community, Black and Brown, who gather and learn together as we face ecological and social crises. (Qilombo, 2017)

Qilombo has partnered with other justice oriented community organizations to help establish their movement. One of these organizations is Hip-Hop for Change, which has

an office in the Qilombo Community Center and works alongside Qilombo in organizing benefit concerts. I briefly worked as a canvasser for Hip-Hop for Change in 2014 and got to know the Founder and Executive Director Khafre Jay. His organization employs and promotes local artists, advocates for non-commercial hip-hop that has empowering political messages, and hosts fundraising concerts in the community. Khafre's black nationalist politics mirror Qilombo's; the Afrikatown mural prominently depicts the Black Panthers and Kwama Nkrumah, a Pan-Africanist who led Ghana's independence movement. Qilombo writes:

Afrikatown [...] is an attempt to reclaim and hold space for Afrikan people, to celebrate Afrikan culture, heritage and legacies of resistance. By turning our block into Afrikatown we are responding to our community's need for transformation that is not centered around the desires of rich white colonizers, and that resists the city's plans for displacing Black and Brown people. (Afrikatown Community Garden, 2016)

Qilombo's vision of Afrikatown, however, doesn't reflect its current reality. The events that I participated in were attended mostly by white people, and on other days I visited white volunteers seemed to outnumber people of color in the garden. During an event in the spring of 2016, Qilombo activists stood on the edge of the space near the soup kitchen and looked on, visibly unhappy, as white participants took photos and socialized in the garden. The tension between Qilombo and local white radicals boiled over at the 2014 Bay Area Anarchist Bookfair, when activists claiming affiliation with the community center were involved in an altercation with a white anarchist who insisted that "all churches need to be burned down, even the black ones" (Social Insurrection, 2014). Following the event, some local anarchists have derided Qilombo activists as Maoists,

and in turn an anonymous Qilombo supporter has called the local anarchist scene a “subcultural playpen” and an “all-white fantasy world” (Dragonowl, 2015).

While these disagreements haven’t had an effect on the resilience of the garden thus far, they highlight a question Qilombo will face as the neighborhood continues to gentrify: How can the garden remain as an autonomous space for black and brown people while simultaneously generating support from the larger activist community? During an Afrikatown event I asked Dea, a white food justice activist tending some kale, what she thought of the garden politics. She told me she was there acting as an ally, helping in whatever way she was asked to, and that she was careful not to dictate how the garden space was used. “It’s important to bring an intersectional perspective here,” she told me, “and part of that is being a good listener and being aware of my privilege in this space.” Dea said that being aware of her privilege as a white woman entailed using that privilege to the advantage of people of color, and that she would be the first in line protecting the garden if the police arrived. “They’re way less likely to shoot *me* over nothing,” she explained.

When I asked a member of Qilombo about white volunteers and activists in the garden, their answer was similar. “Afrikatown is open to everyone,” they said, “as long as you’re respectful of us and are down to resist white cultural hegemony. We need as much help as we can get.” They clarified that the majority of people who used the garden in everyday life were people of color, but that their events attracted a wider array of activists from different backgrounds. The diversity of actors converging at the garden during events was made especially clear during a group meditation in the Qilombo building that

I participated in. Twenty or so people from different ethnic and socioeconomic identities sat together in a circle and, after a moment of silence, shared their reasons for attending. Many in the circle said they were there solely for the meditation, while others said that they wanted to support the garden. When I shared why I was there and explained my thesis, several people told me they thought it was great, but insisted that the best way to “stop the spread of hatred” was through mindfulness and “seeking the change within.”

The Qilombo member I interviewed took a more proactive approach to the political work of Afrikatown. “The garden is here first and foremost to stop gentrification. [...]. This is our neighborhood and we want a future in it,” they told me. When I asked if they worried that the garden and mural might actually attract developers and gentrifiers to the neighborhood, they said that “realistically” there was nothing that could stop West Oakland from being gentrified, and that their goal was to “provide a safe haven” for their community in the midst of development. A National Lawyer’s Guild representative present at a Spring 2016 Afrikatown event was similarly pessimistic about the future of West Oakland. She said that while the efforts of Qilombo were “admirable” and “making an impact” on the lives of those involved with the garden space, overall “the city has been cracking down on the houseless more than ever. [...]. They’re committed to policies of displacement, and the best we can do is provide assistance to those who resist them.” The National Lawyer’s Guild set up their booth at the event that day to provide information and support “in case the police show up with bulldozers,” and to act as Legal Observers. Although no police arrived that day, the inevitability of their presence seemed to haunt the participants. As one Qilombo member remarked: “It’s only a matter of time.”

Opportunity Site #37

The political importance of the space to City officials is revealed in the WOSP, which was finalized in 2014 before the garden was established. The Afrikatown lot is identified in the WOSP as one of four “opportunity sites” in the “San Pablo Opportunity Area,” and “Opportunity Site #37” within greater West Oakland (WOSP 2014, 176). The WOSP defines opportunity sites as:

Individual parcels or groups of commercial and/or industrial parcels that are strategically located, and are vacant, underutilized, blighted, or are not developed to the intensity of land uses allowed by current zoning. Development of these sites has been historically challenging, yet their strategic location affords them the potential to assist in revitalizing the areas surrounding them. (WOSP 2014, 126)

In developing the San Pablo Opportunity Area, the WOSP intends to “transform” the corridor with new residential buildings and commercial spaces, as well as “enhanced streetscapes that activate the street, increase pedestrian activity and enliven the neighborhood” (WOSP 2014, 176). Because of the strategic location of the lot, Opportunity Site #37 features prominently in WOSP development strategies for San Pablo Ave:

Opportunities for new development exist at each of the three corners of Opportunity Site #37, with additional infill development potential in between. Encourage the integration of all of these parcels into an overall development plan, potentially vacating the small section of Brush Street parallel to West Grand. [...]. Implement substantial streetscape and landscape improvements along this site’s frontage, linking it thematically with the small pocket park at San Pablo and West Grand. (2014, 177)

Mixed-use commercial and residential development at the site is hoped to be a “strong retail-based anchor” that will become “catalyst” for further development in the

neighborhood (WOSP 2014, 176). The WOSP notes:

With new retail anchors at either end of the corridor, San Pablo Avenue can re-emerge as a thriving neighborhood-serving retail corridor and the numerous smaller vacant and underutilized sites in between will be more likely to infill with similar types of development. The two anchor development Opportunity Sites can serve as gateways with streetscape and pedestrian amenities and improved roadway sections. (2014, 177)

As a “gateway” to West Oakland, the site’s aesthetics are of importance in encouraging further development in the area; The “improved streetscape” and “pedestrian amenities” mentioned in the plan are part of the WOSP’s larger vision for changes in West Oakland. The plan notes the utility of a “creative economy” in promoting aesthetic changes in the area, and identifies “urban farms and gardens” as “one of the vibrant ‘creative economy’ business types in West Oakland” (WOSP 2014, 351). Plans for increased green space in West Oakland are discussed in terms of their economic benefits, and in its “Reforestation Plan Objectives” the WOSP notes that the “potential net economic benefit to West Oakland that could be realized by planting a mix of as many as 113,210 street trees, trees in parks and public open spaces, and trees at private businesses and residences is estimated to be as much as \$6.7 million” (2014, 373). With an increase in trees and green space, the plan hopes to attract new businesses and (wealthy) new residents (Ibid.).

Another “creative economy” that is mentioned by the WOSP is the arts, and it sets out several strategies for using it to encourage development in West Oakland (WOSP 2014, 353). The first strategy outlined in the WOSP’s “Cultural Assets” section is to “acknowledge the arts as economic development catalysts” (2014, 356). In 2016, the Oakland City Council approved the creation of a “Black Arts Movement Business

District” along 14th Street in West Oakland (Jackmon, 2016). Marvin X Jackmon, a planner in the creation of the district and a well-known community member who worked with the Black Panthers in the 1960s, advocates for a “Afrikan Women’s Market Day” and a “Black Farmers Market” to help generate money in the Black Arts Movement Business District (Jackmon, 2016). In order to secure funds for the community, Jackmon writes that black businesses will “initially need help from City, State and Federal agencies, along with generous donations from Silicon Valley firms and Globalists who have caused much of the displacement and destruction of the cultural vitality of our community. Governor Jerry Brown recently passed legislation to establish cultural districts throughout California” (2016, para. 14).

Jackmon’s invitation for help from the City of Oakland and Governor Brown may be shortsighted. As noted in the introduction, Brown used the creation of the Uptown Arts District in Oakland to attract new development and the gentrification of the neighborhood. As one Qilombo volunteer said in response to the Black Arts District plans, “How can you have a Black Arts District without Black people?” (Qilombo, 2017). Opportunity Site #37, which is only a few blocks from Uptown, is identified in the WOSP as a site where public art can be used to enhance the “community gateway” and attract new commercial and residential development (2014, 355). The WOSP mentions the importance of incorporating arts districts and public art “within the development of major new institutional, private, and non-profit developments” (2014, 356), and its strategy “Include Art-3” is to “work with community groups to install educational and interpretive signs, artwork and landscaping that highlight West Oakland’s

historic and cultural features” (Ibid.). With this strategy, the WOSP works to recuperate the radical iconography of West Oakland’s past in order to promote an aesthetic that attracts new residents and development. Seen through this lens, the Afrikatown mural, which was intended to create a sense of community and place for black residents and activists resisting development, may in fact be welcomed by the city.

The City’s promotion of the arts seems ultimately more about attracting capital than it is about the wellbeing of artists and their communities. The “Creative Assets” section of the WOSP details city plans for monetizing artist spaces through regulatory controls and business license fees:

Intent: Foster a business-friendly approach to regulations affecting local West Oakland artists, supporting the local artist economy while requiring the submission of necessary business licenses. Such an approach could further recognize the ‘creative economy’ in West Oakland. (2014, 360)

In detailing this business-friendly approach, the plan states that “zoning regulations for home occupancy permits should be relaxed throughout the residential neighborhoods in the Plan Area, offering expanded self-employment opportunities and relaxed regulations about on-site sales” (Ibid.). Relaxed city regulation and code enforcement in one such artist space, the Ghost Ship, may have allowed the unsafe conditions implicated in the fire there that killed 36 people. Records indicate that city officials received several complaints that conditions inside the building were unsafe, but failed to enforce building regulations (Willon et al., 2017).

Following the fire, which was an international news story, the city enacted sweeping building inspections and evictions of artist spaces, in a reversal of its earlier

strategy of lax code enforcement. One of these spaces, the Omni Commons, was shut down not for any concerns over the safety of the warehouse, but rather over an obscure technicality in the building's insurance map dating to the 1950s (Baldassari, 2016). The closure came as artists in Oakland voiced fears that the city would use the Ghost Ship tragedy to clear out artist spaces for new development, a strategy city councilmember Rebecca Kaplan critiqued as "Trumpian" (Ibid.).

These seemingly contradictory responses by the city to artist spaces and other unpermitted building use reflect city official's recuperative strategies. One theme that seemed to emerge in the wake of the Ghost Ship, however, was that if spaces weren't business friendly or lucrative, they'd be cleared. In December of 2016, fire inspectors shut down the Qilombo space, which has been used to organize the resistance to development on Opportunity Site #37. As Qilombo explain:

It is fueled by a systematic crackdown by the State & the city, where opportunistic landlords and property management companies are excited for their building to not be up to code. It means property managers can finally get rid of their pesky tenants who have "rights" and community support and keep the rent low. [...]. Qilombo will work with the very comrades who stepped up after Ghostship to help us through a SERIES of fire inspections and false claims of our building being on fire (a slew of harassment against us and all DIY spaces). We will aim to give people the support needed to face gentrification as it is. To debunk how the wrecklessness they call the law never favors our people and delegitimize the "evidence" needed uphold claims of foul play. (Afrikatown Community Garden, 2016)

Following the crackdown, Qilombo lost its lease on the space, but members have not yet been evicted. In January of 2017 Qilombo hosted an anti-gentrification art showcase and gallery, and in March it renewed its request for donations to help buy the Afrikatown plot

(Qilombo, 2017). In April, a post on the Afrikatown Community Garden Facebook page asked supporters to vote for the garden for a chance to win a \$20,000 Seeds of Change grant. However, the garden did not generate enough votes for inclusion in the grant contest (Seeds of Change, 2017).

These relatively recent developments reveal the precarious predicament of Afrikatown. Condemned but not evicted, Qilombo operates the garden seemingly at the mercy of the city's shifting policies and strategies. While the garden exists as a space of resistance against planned development at Opportunity Site #37, it also may help generate the new aesthetics central to the neighborhood transformation detailed in the WOSP. As a space intended for black and brown sovereignty, the political vision of the garden space may generate future conflict with white volunteers and new residents, who are rapidly changing the demographics of West Oakland. While Qilombo hopes to receive enough donations to buy the expensive lot, it seems its fate will be decided by the city.

DISCUSSION

These two case studies attempted to understand how urban green space relates to processes of gentrification in West Oakland. The gardens were selected because of their important geographic situation, as well as for their differing intentions. The findings of my research showed that these gardens serve multiple purposes for different actors. The organizers of Union Plaza Park intended the space to feed and educate marginalized residents, but the garden has also been used by developers to sell adjacent property, leading to the displacement the neighborhood's most vulnerable groups. Afrikatown, on the other hand, was created to resist new development in the neighborhood, but city planning documents show that it may nevertheless accomplish the aesthetic transformation central to gentrification.

These conflicting effects of the gardens illustrate the complexity of processes of gentrification and its impacts on residents. My research shows that it's possible for urban green space to exist both in defiance and invitation of new development, and highlights the importance of aesthetics in processes of gentrification. The findings of the Union Plaza Park case study are in agreement with earlier research that has shown urban green spaces being used by developers. In addition, the "urban reforestation" project of residents in the area connects to discussion on the cultural significance of green space in the gentrifying city. The use of Afrikatown to resist gentrification, on the other hand, represents a unique case that, as far I can tell, has not yet been discussed in the academic literature. However, neighborhood clean ups and the creation of new aesthetics can still

be seen occurring there, and from this perspective the garden can be interpreted as an example of recuperation by the growth machine. Explain just a bit more how it does

These findings raise the question of how urban gardens may be better designed to resist gentrification. In this discussion I will relate my findings back to the existing literature in an attempt to address this question, and ultimately to better understand the specific cultural and political significance of garden spaces in gentrifying black neighborhoods.

Citizenship in the Gardens

One of my research questions was whether or not the gardens accomplished their goal of addressing food insecurity, and if they did not what their purpose was. In the case of Union Plaza Park, I wanted to know if its crops actually fed marginalized residents in the neighborhood. In addition, I was interested in whether or not the garden were successful at generating support and funds for City Slicker Farms, the organization that runs it. I had similar questions for Afrikatown, although its organizers did not state that the garden was intended to feed food insecure residents.

My findings suggest that the gardens do not support food insecure residents in their neighborhoods, but that overall they serve the interests of their organizers, and in the process create forms of citizenship. From my observation and interviews at Union Plaza, it did not appear as though the garden attracted significant interest from black residents, houseless residents, and other marginalized groups. Farm Manager Joseph's efforts to help the surrounding houseless community, by teaching them how to prepare and

consume raw vegetables and by constructing a “classroom” on Fitzgerald Park, all seemed to fail. In addition, I only observed one person of color stopping by to purchase food from the farm stand, while the overwhelming majority of supporters appeared to be wealthy residents from other neighborhoods who were simply passing through.

The seeming reluctance of black neighborhood residents to engage with the garden supports Guthman’s (2008) study of Oakland farmers markets, which found that such spaces “hail white subjects” and discourage participation by people of color (395). In addition, this finding is mirrored by Ghose & Pettygrove (2014), who found that community gardens cultivate racist agendas (1094), and exclude residents who do not behave according to established rules and norms (1108). Farm Manager Joseph’s attitude of disdain for the “unsightly” “nuisance” of the houseless population, and his reluctance to “turn the garden into a soup kitchen,” might explain why that group was reluctant to engage in the organization’s “education” attempts.

On the other hand, Union Plaza is one of many “successful” community gardens that City Slicker Farms has opened. Since building Union Plaza Park, the organization has received large grants from the city to create new gardens such as the West Oakland Farm Park, which seems to have incorporated concepts from Union Plaza such as the “classroom” structure. The failure of the classroom structure at Union Plaza, along with the relative lack of community interest in City Slicker’s educational agenda and farm stand, did not prevent the organization from investing taxpayer funds to recreate them in the new park. Instead of addressing the community’s actual needs, City Slicker Farms’ use of public funds to create a private garden for education and the sale of organic

vegetables promotes a neoliberal agenda of self-improvement draped in the façade of food justice activism.

In an analysis of the food security movement in California, Guthman (2006, 1177) notes that community garden projects are increasingly viewed as “mechanisms to produce ‘empowered,’ self-sufficient subjects and encourage ‘citizenship’ more broadly, irrespective of the actual production of food.” As Brown (2005, 42) notes, in neoliberalism, “political discourse on all matters is framed in entrepreneurial terms” that only value what is profitable. The neoliberal processes driving development in West Oakland both create the conditions of economic insecurity that produce hunger, while also restricting participation by “unfit” residents in the private enterprises meant to address them. In this way, community building in the new West Oakland is only allowed for those who are capable of participating in the market.

The promotion of neoliberal citizenship in the garden also encourages vigilant citizenship by new neighborhood residents. The monitoring and policing of gentrifying neighborhoods by new residents has been discussed by Jacobs (1996), Smith (1996), and Herbert (1998), but the vigilance they noted relied on the state to enforce it. This older form of vigilance can be seen occurring at Union Plaza Park in the reporting of “blight” by residents to the OPR, which resulted in the removal of City Slicker Farm’s education structure. However, Newman’s (2013) vigilant citizenship is also at work around the garden. As Newman writes, “vigilant citizenship is a departure from previous forms of vigilance because it articulates with a trend in neoliberal urban governance that shifts previously ‘public’ responsibilities (in this case, preserving order and managing public

space) to privileged groups of residents” (2013, 949). Farm Manager Joseph exercises vigilant citizenship when he collects trash, paints over graffiti, and restricts the use of the garden by neighborhood houseless residents. Residents of “The Ranch” at Dogtown similarly pacify their “ravaged” neighborhood by participating in local political projects and installing lighting and colorful murals on the street.

This expression of vigilant citizenship is contrasted by the historical vigilance of the Black Panthers, who formed “citizens’ patrols” in West Oakland not as a replacement to the state’s policing, but as protection against it. Their Black Nationalist project imagined the community as a sovereign space granting citizenship and protection to all black residents. This black citizenship was opposed to the liberal project in the Civil Rights Movement, which emphasized individual representations of “good black citizens” and celebrated assimilation into the existing society (Hohle 2013, 12). In contrast, the Black Nationalist project attempted to create a separate state, which defined citizenship on the group scale in terms of race (Ibid.).

This understanding of citizenship informs the politics of Afrikatown, which is imagined as a space of sovereignty for black residents. Although participation in the garden is open to everyone, citizenship is granted along lines of race, with white volunteers being identified as “allies” rather than members. This works in opposition to the neoliberal and vigilant citizenships of Union Plaza, which erase the material inequalities of race and class and reward citizenship to those who embody notions of progress, cleanliness, and self-determination. The activists of Afrikatown, on the other hand, identify the systemic privileges that whites possess as a class, and their politics

therefore seek to empower black residents that would have been denied participation in Union Plaza and similar gardens. As a space constructed in defense against capitalist development, Afrikatown's rejection of neoliberal citizenship is fundamental to its larger purpose.

Symbolism and Aesthetics of the Gardens

As a sites where citizenship are produced, Union Plaza Park and Afrikatown exist both as a physical pieces of land, and as symbolic spaces of belonging. In their existence as symbolic spaces, both gardens inspire action to transform the surrounding physical landscape. In the case of Union Plaza, the idealized aesthetics of green space have led City Slicker Farms to "clean up" the area of graffiti, trash, and drug paraphernalia, and to discourage houseless residents from sleeping in and using the space. In Afrikatown, the ideal of a rejuvenated place of black sovereignty led activists to paint a colorful mural and remove debris from the once empty lot. The City of Oakland may have allowed this to happen because of its own plans for the lot, which it identifies as a symbolic "gateway" into West Oakland for future developers and residents.

The aesthetics that drive these changes are influenced by notions of progress and an opposition to aesthetics associated with decay and pollution. In Union Plaza, City Slicker Farms' enforcement of an aesthetic of cleanliness can be tied to the biopolitical association of "blight" with dangerous other, and purification with order and progress (Stoler 2002, 69; Bickford 2000, 365). The maintenance of this specific aesthetic in the garden can also be attributed to the dominant imagination of green space as pristine and

protected, an idea that has its roots on the US frontier (Kosek 2006, 158). On the urban frontier, the names City Slicker Farms and “The Ranch” adopt the language of the cowboy and appeals to the frontier nostalgia identified by Smith (1996) and Jacobs (1996). Existing within a larger area of planned “reforestation” by the city, the frontier around Union Plaza is “restored” in the image of a pristine, pre-urban past (Smith 1996, 26). In this process, ideas of wilderness are associated with managed green space in the city, and the community garden at Union Plaza functions as both a colonial outpost and miniature national park, protected against the “violence” and “ills” of the racialized urban environment and encouraging an influx of new, whiter residents.

Qilombo’s transformation of the Afrikatown lot can also be attributed to an aesthetic sense that values order and progress. However, as a space intended to promote community and political resistance for black residents, the significance of this aesthetic can be differentiated from that of Union Plaza Park. Through the transformation of the lot from a fenced space full of discarded needles, into a lush garden and vibrant mural depicting black political leaders and African art, the aesthetics of Afrikatown can be seen both as a symbol of the resilience of black residents in the face of systematic oppression, and as a shining new chapter in the neighborhood’s history of black liberation politics.

This celebration of resilience and history may rely on similar associations as Union Plaza, as the garden is imagined as a space that will defend and preserve the natural state of the black community against the hostile influx of wealthy white residents. The original Africatown, which inspired Qilombo’s Afrikatown, was a black community in Alabama founded by former slaves who wanted to recreate their old homes in Africa

(Knight 2016, page). In drawing on this, Qilombo's Afrikatown may be informed by an idealized notion of "home," into which members can retreat (Bickford 2000, 364). This works to both support as well as potentially disadvantage black activists, as the "phantasmatic imaginary" of home creates a space for resistance, but also segregates its members as they attempt to restrict the "other" from polluting it (Ibid.). The more intensely the garden space is associated with black ethnicity and history, the more attractive it becomes for white gentrifiers hungry for the "authentic" experience of ethnicity and rebellion (Erbacher 2011, 250).

In this way, the colorful mural of Afrikatown, meant as a symbol of autonomy, may also function as a beacon attracting the participation of apolitical white residents who are more interested in the ethnic imaginary of the space than in its resistance against gentrification. While Dea, the white garden volunteer I interviewed, was engaged with the politics of Afrikatown, a white couple I spoke with at a garden event in the spring of 2015 told me that they normally didn't participate in politics, but that the mural and the people in the garden had attracted them as they biked past. At the same event I also observed a white woman taking a "selfie" with the mural and garden behind her.

The power of political street art to attract new, wealthy residents to a neighborhood has been documented in the academic literature on gentrification. In a similar case to Afrikatown, an iconic mural in a vacant lot in Berlin attracted guided "street art tours" and ultimately led to plans for the development of luxury apartments on the site, which would incorporate the public art into their design (Henke 2015, 292). The murals, which depicted businessmen chained by their gold watches, were

destroyed by their artists in response to the development plans, which they were opposed to (Henke 2015, 294). The importance of public art to development reflects the way that gentrifiers consume Oakland, which Jager (1986, 88) calls the “stylization of life.” Architecture and politics undergo an “estheticization of form,” in which “facadal displays, [...], cultural days, and festivals assume increasing importance in daily life” (Jager 1986, 89), transforming once dissident street art into valuable property decorations (Schacter 2015, 1).

The important differences between the aesthetics of Afrikatown and Union Plaza Park are perhaps best interpreted through the WOSP, which details plans for “artwork, and landscaping to highlight historical and cultural features” (City of Oakland 2014, 229). From this perspective, both gardens can be seen as helping city planners and real estate developers, which reflects the power of aesthetics over more traditional forms of political engagement. As sites producing an aesthetic of vibrancy that reuses cultural and historical symbols, both gardens can be seen as recreating capitalism’s logic of progress, growth, and its reclamation of the past. As noted by Kapferer (2007, 72), in the process of gentrification the geography of the city becomes an expression of the image of capital.

These findings agree with the connection that Wolch et al. (2014), Checker (2011), and Martinez (2010) noted between the introduction of new urban green space and capitalist development. As was the case in their studies of garden projects in New York, Union Plaza Park was also used by the City to clear houseless residents and promote the development of luxury apartments on an adjacent lot. Although Afrikatown was not a sanctioned project, it resembles Wolch et al.’s discussion of Seattle’s removal

of houseless residents from a riparian zone; the City of Oakland allows for the existence of Afrikatown while simultaneously clearing houseless residents from their encampments on nearby plazas. In addition, the City has stepped up its campaign to displace sex workers from San Pablo Ave. These shows of force remind us that the City could also clear Afrikatown, and that it has not suggests the garden benefits the growth machine.

The control of the city over the garden spaces and their surroundings, however, is not as constant or absolute as it may appear, but rather undulates with the sun and its illumination of the streets. Walking past Union Plaza Park one summer night in 2016, I heard men talking and laughing loudly in the middle of the garden, their identities concealed by the darkness. In Fitzgerald Park, men drinking alcohol from uncovered bottles called out something to me, and in the three blocks to San Pablo two more men and a sex worker all nodded and said hello as I passed. This level of interaction never occurred during days in the neighborhood; the darkness and its comfort seemed to embolden those whom the daylight stripped of power. The long stretch down San Pablo to Afrikatown similarly came alive at night, as sex workers strolled and stood on dark blocks that were almost always deserted during the day, and at Afrikatown the muffled bass of a nearby queer night club gave rhythm to the sounds of an old man talking to himself as he leaned against the chain link fence of the garden.

Stripped of their image by the darkness, both gardens, like the surrounding unlit blocks, became inviting voids that exemplified the subversive potential of the night discussed by Edensor (2015), van Liempt (2015), and Gaissad (2005). While police crackdowns have “cleansed” San Pablo of sex workers during the day, ironically their

power to patrol is contested in many places at night by the large, leafy trees that the city has planted in the median and which now cover the street lamps. The City, in its fight against the night (Edensor 2015, 561), has compensated by increasing its police patrols, and by promoting a moral panic (Belanger 2012, 34) about prostitution. In 2014, Mayor Quan described this increase in policing of sex workers as an initiative that will “put sunshine” on “sex trafficking” and discourage “predators” such as pimps and johns from “preying on victims” (Dakessian 2014, 1). The mayor’s invocation of the iconography of rape (Bumiller 2008, 22) relies on an imagination of the city night as being prowled by evil predators, who slip in and out of reality through cracks in the darkness, and who can only be defeated by sunlight. This cartoonish picture reflects the dominant cultural association of darkness and sexuality with the terrifying unknown of the subconscious, and reveals the potential of ghostly, haunted spaces to fundamentally resist control and recuperation by the growth machine.

Haunted Lots and Incorporated Gardens

As spaces that both resist and invite gentrification, the gardens of my study can be conceptualized in terms of haunting as well as incorporation. In its resistance against capitalist development, Qilombo invokes the ghosts of the Black Panthers and other activists to symbolize their collective resilience against the relentless violence and incorporation of space by the neoliberal growth machine. On the other hand, Afrikatown seems to have made Opportunity Site #37 legible as a colorful, welcoming gateway to the ethnic city for new residents, reflecting the growth machine’s adaptive recuperation. In the case of Union Plaza Park, the food justice activism of City Slicker Farms is co-opted

by the growth machine to promote neoliberal citizenship, and the garden's rustic aesthetics are incorporated in the City's project of restoring an idyllic urban forest. At the same time, the dense canopy of this new urban forest, and the raised beds and lush greens of Union Plaza Park, block the street lights and provide concealment for houseless residents and sex workers at night. Shrouded in darkness, these spaces become unknowable and ungovernable, and thus represent the spectres that haunt and threaten capitalism: reversibility and death (Robinson, 2012; Gordon, 2011).

This haunting can be distinguished from nostalgia in the way that it frames the past. Nostalgia is the sentimental longing for a cherished past, while haunting recalls a profane and frightening past that has been buried in attempts to forget it. Both of these relationships to the past inspire action in the present. As has been discussed, nostalgia for the colonial era by dominant groups has shaped the particular form that gentrification takes in post-colonial cities. This colonial nostalgia erases the brutality of the frontier and naturalizes the aesthetics of biopower that inspired it. On the other hand, when traces of colonial violence that could not be destroyed are unearthed, such as the corpses of its victims, they threaten its image as a benign and positive force. By bringing into question the fundamental ideology of capitalist growth and development, which frames itself as sacred and unquestionably good, haunting freezes time and allows for the ghosts of capitalism to rise into the picture.

Used as a form of resistance against capitalism, haunting has the capacity to reclaim the aesthetic forms that have been co-opted by the growth machine. For example, a mural memorializing a murder victim on the Market Street corner where he was killed,

has not been photographed and cataloged on social media, while I found that the mural of Afrikatown has been uploaded to Instagram hundreds of times. Because gentrification is driven in part by Post-Fordist identity formation, those city aesthetics that do not promote the self-image of a happy and desirable consumer are ignored, and therefore are prevented from being commodified. Perhaps the most striking and relevant example of the power of haunting in Oakland is the Ghost Ship. The Ghost Ship, which caught on fire during a party on December 2, 2016, trapping and killing thirty six people inside, stands today as a disturbing reminder of City's culpability in their deaths, and as a ghostly void in an otherwise vibrant, gentrifying Latino neighborhood. Although the gaping, blackened windows of the warehouse façade have been boarded up by the City, the charred artwork of its exterior, which depicts a screaming ghost, is still clearly visible from the busy hub of Fruitvale and MacArthur Streets. There are currently no plans for the demolition of the structure, which has become a shrine where family and friends gather to remember those they lost in the fire. If any future development is planned on the site and its adjacent empty lot, it will have to contend not only with anti-gentrification activists, but also with these mourners and with the ghosts that haunt the space.

The terrifying spectre of the Ghost Ship, on the other hand, has driven the City to clear numerous artist collectives and political spaces, including Qilombo. This reflects the growth machine's exaggerated response to its ghostly Other (Aretxaga, 2012). The problem of using haunting as a tactic of resistance in Afrikatown, then, is that it may provoke a disproportionate response by the City, threatening the very real place and community that has been formed through the creation of the garden. Just as Wolch et al.

(2014) asked how neighborhoods could be made “just green enough” that they provide benefits to residents while also not attracting gentrification, a question that emerges here is how spaces of resistance can be made “just haunted enough” that they repel commodification, but not so haunted that they provoke a defensive response by the state. Rather than speculating on what this might look like, I leave this question open for future research and discussion.

In closing this discussion, which has added to the larger academic discussion on gentrification and urban green space, I would like to avoid any final judgments the gardens. Recalling Stuart Hall’s “politics without guarantees,” this discussion cannot and should not provide any satisfying, totalizing conclusions. Although I’ve analyzed the functions the gardens have played in ongoing processes of gentrification, these processes are much larger than the gardens themselves. The gardens have multiple meanings for multiple actors, many of which could not be covered in this discussion. As such, the idea that both gardens have contributed to processes of gentrification would likely be rebuked by those who have experienced the spaces differently. In particular, Afrikatown has existed as a place of very real resistance against capitalist development, and has served as a place of belonging for residents whose community has been continually bulldozed and destroyed by the state. With these realities in mind, perhaps the garden should not be measured for its success or failure in resisting citywide gentrification, but rather for the role it has played in catalyzing radical political activism and community building. Ultimately, the question of what these spaces are is left open to the individual and group experiences of them.

CONCLUSIONS

The relationship between the politics of green space in the United States, the imagination and construction of urban community gardens, and processes of gentrification has not been well studied in the academic literature. In this case study of two community gardens in West Oakland, California, I attempted to bridge the gaps between these discussions by exploring their intersections in the physical space of the gardens. Much of the writing on gentrification has focused on larger structural changes in the economy and society, as well as on the consumptive patterns of the individual, and in turn has neglected the significance of race and the imagination of space and place in historical and contemporary American society. My research therefore gave special attention to these topics and their relationship to gentrification, in order to better understand the emergence of community gardens in Oakland.

In the process of conducting this research, I developed several questions. In asking how the surrounding communities interacted with the gardens, I wanted to gain insight into the day to day functioning and use of garden space, and to reveal whether or not participation in the garden space was segregated along lines of race and class. Another question that arose was whether or not the aesthetics of the gardens attracted development and new residents, and following from this was the related question of whether or not the gardens fit into the City's development plans. The purpose of these questions was twofold; first, I wanted to know whether or not gardens could exist as spaces of community resilience and resistance against gentrification, and in addition I wanted to better understand the underexplored relationship between city government,

capital development, and local nonprofits. Finally, I asked what the symbolic significance of the gardens was, which opened up parallels between the gardens of my case study and surrounding green space in West Oakland and the discussion in my literature review on colonialism, wilderness, haunting, and desire.

To accomplish the task of exploring these questions, I employed a social constructivist perspective and used grounded theory to develop a qualitative case study of two gardens in West Oakland: Union Plaza Park and Afrikatown Community Garden. The social constructivist approach allowed for a reading of the space and place of the gardens as they have been collectively imagined, created, and governed, and in addition it acknowledged my own biases and subjective experiences as they emerged in the research. The use of grounded theory complimented my social constructivist perspective, as it allowed my research questions and objectives to change over time as I learned more about the garden spaces from residents. My case study design, which included interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, provided space to fully explore the complexity of interactions between residents, garden members, and the physical landscape of the city, and in turn to compare the gardens to each other.

There were several clear findings of my research. First, it was evident from interviews with garden members, local residents, and from analysis of the City's development plan, that both gardens serve the purpose of attracting development and new residents. Union Plaza Park was used by real estate agencies to sell adjacent properties, and as of Fall 2017, a new "green" luxury apartment complex was being constructed on directly across the street from the garden. In addition, although intended to resist

development on its parcel of land, the space of Afrikatown was shown to function as a “community gateway” to future development along the San Pablo Corridor in City planning documents.

Another clear finding was the City’s and local nonprofit’s more general use of green space, clean ups, and “reforestation” in the larger project of transforming and gentrifying West Oakland. The West Oakland Green Initiative, a nonprofit sponsored by the Office of Parks and Recreation, used tree planting to promote business investment and community well-being in West Oakland, and major streetscape improvements and the creation of parks by the City were revealed in planning documents to be intended to attract new residents and redevelopment. City Slicker Farms, the organization that created and manages Union Plaza Park, was named in these city documents as playing a role in this project.

It was also clear from this research that both gardens created very distinct forms of citizenship and senses of place. Union Plaza Park and the related West Oakland Farm Park encouraged forms of neoliberal citizenship that promoted self-sufficiency and excluded those who did not conform to the model of an ideal garden citizen, such as houseless residents in the adjacent area. In contrast, Afrikatown Community Garden created a form of citizenship along lines of race and class, encouraging solidarity and participation among black and brown residents and the houseless, and attempting to create an oasis of home in the rapidly gentrifying neighborhood.

These two contrasting forms of citizenship were both suspected to contribute to processes of gentrification. By promoting neoliberal self-sufficiency and the logic of the

market, Union Plaza Park produced a vigilant citizenship which excluded and displaced houseless residents and encouraged cleanups and control of the neighborhood by new residents. The Black Nationalist approach of Afrikatown and its colorful mural, on the other hand, may unintentionally be inviting gentrification to the neighboring community, as gentrifiers have been shown to be driven by the consumption and occupation of ethnic spaces in processes of gentrification. In this way, the visible symbols of resistance that give the garden its identity may in fact energize those forces they are meant to oppose.

These findings, however, need to be analyzed within the larger context of gentrification. It is unlikely that either garden has had an exceptional impact on the *overall* trend of gentrification in the city. While the gardens seem to have contributed to processes of gentrification in West Oakland in their own ways, they are by no means the primary driver of those processes, nor should they be viewed as solely detrimental places within this context. After all, Afrikatown was successful in preventing development on its lot, and the greening of the areas surrounding Union Plaza and along the San Pablo Corridor were shown to provide refuge and privacy for houseless residents and sex workers at night. This case study therefore highlights the ways that the gardens exist simultaneously as spaces of citizenship, control, and consumption, as well as spaces of resistance, freedom, and belonging.

Future research would benefit from a more narrow focus on one of the many topics covered in the literature review and subsequent case study. This thesis attempted to draw together many different ideas and discourses to examine their relationship to the space of the community gardens studied, but this analysis was unfortunately limited by

the time and length constraints of the masters thesis format. Future study of gardens in Oakland could benefit from an exclusive focus on the influence of garden aesthetics, forms of garden citizenship, and city policy and development plans. In addition, the research would benefit from more extensive interviewing, not only of community garden and nonprofit members, but also of local government officials. The research would also greatly benefit from a much longer period of study; although processes of gentrification have developed rapidly in Oakland, it will be years before the impact of Afrikatown on the neighboring area can be fully and accurately analyzed. Finally, the concept and power of haunting, which emerged late in this research as a possible form of resistance against gentrification, was not fully explored. My analysis served only as an introduction to the concept in Oakland's development, but I believe an entire thesis could be written on the relationship between haunting and gentrification.

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