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Topographies and Counter-topographies of

Social Reproduction at People's Park

By Sarah Weaver

Submitted to Dr. Wendy Cheng

**A Senior Undergraduate Thesis Submitted for the partial fulfillment of a bachelor of arts
for Scripps College**

April 26th, 2023

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ABSTRACT

Created at a key moment in New Left political rebellion and organizing in 1969, the mythic People's Park still stands today between Dwight and Haste St. in Berkeley as open multi-use green space made of and for community development on lawful University of California Regent property. Despite repeated attempts by UC to take back the land, the insurgent space continues to pull defense from various parts of the local community, students and not, have accessed forms of self-determined social reproduction and created material critiques of UC as a vehicle for capital. For 54 years, the park was maintained significance as a central place of local multi-issue material spatial justice struggle. This paper focuses on episodes¹ in the park's transforming significance as political-economic terrain of capitalist-determined and alternative forms of community social reproduction work. The COVID-19 pandemic has compounded real and manufactured crisis of resource distribution, from housing to healthcare. The present-day defense of People's Park, rooted in mutual aid and solidarity organizing, illustrates the profound and irreconcilable contradictions of private market-oriented public and private paradigms of urban planning and resource access. The current Defend People's Park movement is centered around mutual aid and solidarity work, modeling community resource access outside of current structures of market-based development, that time and time again rear cruel results. This paper explores instances of when the park struggle as a counter-topography of social reproduction, opening up resistance and contradiction within liberal spatial logics of urban development.

¹ I was introduced to the concept of episodic writing from Dr. Wendy Cheng, a method she utilizes in her book, *The Changs Next Door to the Díazes*. Here, I do not claim to follow this method gracefully or at all consistently, but it was a helpful method to attempt.

Introduction



Figure 1: An aerial view of People's Park, 2019.

Cycling through the past in early January of 2021, UC Berkeley contracted out facilities worked and law enforcement to advance on the historic People's Park, a community-developed and maintained politically-oriented green space located on a 2.8 tract of UC regent-owned land between Dwight and Haste Street in South Berkeley.³ The team forcibly fenced in a large portion of the park with a chain-link fence. The chain-link fence marked the first physical enclosure attempted by the university since park was listed in the UC's 2018 housing development plan as the housing stock fit for a housing complex for students, a portion of which were planned to house 'indigent'⁴-- referring to unhoused people connected to People's Park. Self-determined resource access has been an explicit topographical quality of the park since the late 1970s. The administrative decision in the name of increased further displaced already displaced residents at the park who actively depended on the space to attain everyday resources like rest, shelter, water and food. Ten days passed, but the fence, nor the community-maintained land, was forgotten as UC admin long hoped it would be, in the context of the five decades of spatial justice struggle.

² People's Park, photo, 2019, pp.org.

³Sluth, Kelly. "Protestors tear down fences in People's Park".

⁴ "Housing Master Plan Task Force Final Draft", Jan 2017, p. 4



Figure 2: After UC Chancellor Christ ordered People’s Park to be enclosed by fence in 2021 to extract environmental data on the cite, community members quickly put up a banner reading “Save People’s Park”.

While oscillating in political visibility since its inception in 1969, the People’s Park remains a central object in local debate over public space, land and resource access. The community-developed park is part of an ongoing struggle for the right to the land as property or collective resource between the university and the south Berkeley community. Since 2018, the UC had framed the development as a service to save and rehabilitate struggling people in search of housing while providing much-needed educational services to a perpetually housing insecure student body. Pushing back throughout the COVID-19 lockdown era, community activists and residents reframed the UC’s foreclosure and demolition, a means to the end of housing, was not a project of community enfranchisement but rearranging the risk of real estate markets. Given the university’s real estate boosting in the midst of the devastating local health and socioeconomic effects of the lockdown period, and the long-gentrified southside⁶ area, the fence was a cruel affront to many.

While the University had claimed that the fence was a necessity to complete environmental impact testing⁷, park advocates joined forces in framing the enclosure of land as a

⁵ Leismer, Joe, photo, 2021.

⁶ The East Bay is one of the priciest areas cost of living wise, even down to just rent, in the state and whole country.

⁷ Sluth.

threat to the lived environment, the roots of radical historical memory and already housing-insecure community members reliant on the space. During the pandemic lockdown, the state institution muffled the southside community's calls for direct intersecting resources like housing, healthcare, and food, for the sake of strategic efficiency in acquiring more capital revenue. People from all walks of city life strategized how to boost the critical nature of immediate public solidarity with other encampments, and mutual aid resources for the park within a multi-pronged strategy of defense. On the 29th of January, around 150 parks residents, students, city residents, and community activists attracted to the fight from a variety of socioeconomic and environmental justice contexts took to the street.⁸

Protest started with a rally at downtown Berkeley civic center park, a central political gathering place in my hometown. In an open forum, groups of people identifying as veteran park lawyers, activists and residents of the park, students, and other city residents publicly affirmed commitments to holding the line against the university housing plan's do-good political veneer. With urgency, elder park activists, park residents and other Berkeley community members shared memories of hanging out and gardening at the park with friends and family, noting the limited availability of accessible green space in the up-developed campus area. The student organizers of the event urged solidarity across the issue of tenants' rights and other false notions of resource scarcity perpetuated by development interests inside and outside the university.

The beginnings of People's Park were both spontaneous and planned, depending on who you ask. To different participants, it was either or both an affirmation of collective decision-making, the importance of green space, or a radical material critique of the UC's

⁸ Sluth.

disproportionate local and global resource power. In early April of 1969⁹, university-affiliated and southside political organizers, small businesses and residents pooled resources together to build a community park on a lot of former student and non-student housing raised by the university. Student and non-student organizers came up with an alternative, a radically decentralized form of planning that might truly serve the diffuse interests of the community pushed out of narrow administrative decision-making constituencies. On April 20th, the process started on the lot¹⁰, and the seeds planted by all who came. Intentional or not, organizers planted the seeds for new political paradigm of collective resource access, from open green space to concerts to childcare, outside state planning powers that belied citizen input in shaping topography of city public parks in the rapidly developing campus region. The battle for People's Park did not become canonical as mythical political rebellion until May 15th, 1969, or "Bloody Thursday"¹¹. Switching up his word of three weeks for a compromise, Chancellor Heyns staunched the unabated community use of the land, ordering for a fence go up with a flank of protective regional law enforcement¹². However, Conservative Governor Ronald Reagan pushed the sentiment to a more spectacular extreme by securitizing the park as the Regents property by any means necessary.

Parading the military power of the post war U.S. cash-rich Keynesian state¹³, Reagan first called in the State Troopers, followed by the national guard to bolster the occupation. Teargas cloaked the city, and the Alameda Sheriff Dept. police killed a young participant, James

⁹ Compost, Terri. *People's Park: Still Blooming*. p.4.

¹⁰ Compost. p. 2

¹¹ Compost. P. 19

¹² Compost. P. 19

¹³ In the essay "Globalization and U.S. Prison Growth", Gilmore attends to the post war growth of U.S. domestic and global military and carceral might through the metaphors of the "welfare" and "warfare" states, linked to each other in socioeconomic ideology and policy.

Rector.¹⁴ Protests broke out on Telegraph Avenue when a group of UC-affiliated southside organizers mobilized students and broader south Berkeley residents to physically defend the fenced-in park against the “blue meanies” or “pigs”¹⁵, as termed by park organizers and advocates in local radical press. State and media narratives framed the events as a crisis of moral and lawful social order, and threatening the stability of prosperity rooted in the market underwriting California liberal society, especially vocal, public middle-class college kids desires for changing their relation to resources from their rightful, sovereign property to collective resource. The utilization of decolonial rhetoric by settler students is undoubtedly ripe for analysis of settler environmentalism, given that the park was an action of re-occupation of indigenous land by non-indigenous, mainly white activists. To state here, this paper does not have the capacity to analyze that thread justly, but it is needed. All in all, three weeks of riot and rebellion grounded the park’s radical retroactive image, for better or worse, as a symbol of bloody counter-institutional leftist idealism. It also persisted as the center of larger-than-life debate over political freedom of speech and assembly, public space, the autonomy of unhoused people and also, the public-private power of UC as a state corporation.

¹⁴Winling, LaDale C. *Building the Ivory Tower*, p. 146.

¹⁵ *The Berkeley Barb*. P.1.



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Figure 3: January 28th, 2021. After law enforcement and facilities workers put up a chain-linked fence around the land, Berkeley students, park residents, and other community members from the East Bay communally tore them down.

Moving up Telegraph Ave like more than fifty years before, the crowd approached the fence around the park and gathered together for another period of rallying. Michael Delacour, original & ongoing park advocate and long-time local social justice and spatial justice activist, was now in his late 70s participating as a community elder to the People's Park and South Berkeley.¹⁷ At some point, the crowd turned focus to what materially grounded the action, the fences. This time, the fence went down faster than in the past, as the California State Highway Patrol did not block the land, at least not yet. Delacour drew on his decades of intimate knowledge with past cycles of the land's enclosure and its grassroots defense, encouraging collective decision making: “What are we trying to do, take down this fence?” Delacour asked, met with cheers. “Looking at the fence, we have the numbers here. You guys can decide what to do.”¹⁸ In a relatively spontaneous consensus, the crowd ripped down the metal fence in groups with anger, sorrow, and celebratory catharsis.

¹⁶ Prado, Yesika, photo at Jan 2021 protest, sourced from “The Ever-Expanding University of California”, p. 1

¹⁷ Sluth, Kelly. ” Protestors tear down fences in People's Park”.

¹⁸ Sluth.



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Figure 6: UCB's chain-link fences were brought from the park two blocks down Telegraph Ave to the steps of Sproul Hall and left there, along with signs in support of People's Park.

Like past periods in fifty so years of the park's history, the current day Defend People's Park movement included the fencing and de-fencing of the land, a political-economic cycle of land enclosure and community defiance of propertied destiny. By sabotaging the good-willed trust in university protocol and challenging the physical border as inevitable, local residents whose fates were interconnected with UCB's long term local development plans took a stand against the university's ubiquitous real estate interests, specifically its contracts with private interests. Participants asserted that UC Berkeley was not a savior to and did not speak for its student constituency or broader southside community.²⁰ With a sense of urgency, people shared fond memories of hanging out at the park with friends and family, noting the limited availability of accessible green space in the up-developed campus area.²¹ Veterans of the defense shared emotionally-charged memories of defending the park in 1969 onwards against decades of university capital strategy.

¹⁹ " People's Park Slated for Destruction-2021"

²⁰ Sluth.

²¹Sluth.

UC Berkeley students and students from other local colleges showed up in solidarity with the park community. Doctoral student Coleman Rainey, who participated in providing food at the action, asserted that “People’s Park is the site of incredible state violence, and it has a legacy of police repression. Many students have been injured by police action over the 50-year struggle to maintain the park..it’s a symbol of anti-imperial, decolonial and anti-capitalist organizing.”²² In the heat of the current moment, Rainey’s statement effectively converged the past and present, local racialized and classed history of local state enclosure and repression rooted at the park and in the university history itself as a larger machine of settler colonialism and racial capitalism.²³

Over three weeks in April and May of 1969, day by day construction of the 2.8-acre park sowed the seeds for a multi-issue spatial justice fight that continues over 50 years later. People’s Park was not part of a long-term, organized rank-and-file campaign intent on forcing a revolution in the state’s intersecting land, education or housing ownership systems; it simply represented this threat to the university and state governance. Like the organization of the park in 1969, the inciting protest in 2021 took hold of public space in a relatively spontaneous fashion, yet spatially denaturalized the UC’s legacy of resource extraction and financialization as political common sense. People, activists and not, linked UC Berkeley’s development planning to its role in local and international racial capitalist and colonial resource dispossession. Southside residents--students and not—re-framed UC’s forceful housing venture as incompatible with the long-term material needs and desires of the local community. The 21st century story of the park

²²Sluth.

²³ Over the past year, UC graduate student workers have organizers unprecedented labor power across the system. Over the past year of witnessing and participating in park actions, and in an interview with an organizer, it has become clear to be that the current moment of labor justice across the U.S., particularly in California, is a visible issue of actionable solidarity for People’s Park-adjacent activists. In this paper, I do not cover the past and recent histories of intersecting spatial and labor justice movements in the East Bay and throughout the UC, but this is a critical point of further personal study.

developed on transformed terms of a decades-long tension between selective and collective resource power.

UC Berkeley, a public state university by name, relies on the legal power of resource enclosure for capital development. Title IX of the California State Constitution grants the university's Board of Regents the powers of a state land grant corporation;

The Regents of the University of California shall be vested with the legal title and the management and disposition of the property of the university and of property held for its benefit and shall have the power to take and hold..all real and personal property for the benefit of the university or incidentally to its conduct; provided, however, that sales of university real property shall be subject to such competitive bidding procedures as may be provided by statute.²⁴

Many critical scholars of higher education clarify the intersecting nature of state-structured educational divestment and broader cycles of resource divestment under the U.S. project of liberalism. A rosy image of civil society posits egalitarian educational access as a lost, but not impossible ideal possible through the liberal market doctrine of prosperity underwriting the state and land grant university of California.

In the article "What So New About the Neoliberal University" Elizabeth Shermer argues that the overall pervasiveness of neoliberal ideologies, namely, "personal responsibility and the application of market principles to the nonprofit sector" underwrite the ongoing private and "...public defunding of higher education"²⁵ as well as public resources across the board. Reductions in social wage resources like housing locally in Berkeley by neoliberal boosters is in turn continuously legitimized through ideals of "personal responsibility" and the interlocked

²⁴"UC Legal - Office of the General Counsel."

²⁵ Shermer, Elizabeth. "What's Really New about the Neoliberal University?", pg. 74.

pervasiveness of “market principles” with roots in the early days of California as a settler colonial and racial capitalist state.

Through focusing on the park, I hope to contribute to challenging reductionist historiography of delineated fights for increasingly privatized public space and the neoliberal failures of education, by reverse reading the present as co-constitutive with past histories of state enclosure and community decision making as political revolt. In *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, Radical Geographer and Economist David Harvey explores how the gradual, but shocking political-economic privatized restructuring of the 1970s and 80s did not burst into relevance in a vacuum:

“The uneven geographical development of neoliberalism, its frequently partial and lopsided application from one state and social formation to another, testifies to the tentativeness of neoliberal solutions and the complex ways in which political forces, historical traditions, and existing institutional arrangements all shaped why and how the process of neoliberalization actually occurred.”²⁶

Harvey denaturalizes the privatization of everything as an amorphous, ahistorical evil, speaking to the “tentative”, short-term and non-inevitable dynamics of policy, technologies, and relations of centralization and devolution, that shape UC Berkeley land acquisition and management. In this thesis, I attempt to explore the “creative tensions” represented by ongoing People’s Park defense as a multi-issue spatial justice struggle against the university’s historical, but not inevitable re-articulation resource domination.

Turning to decolonial scholar la paperson who writes from the UC context, we can understand that practices and technologies of colonization and decolonization are demonstrably ever-present together in the history of university-owned but unenclosed land like the park:

²⁶ Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, p. 13.

“The politics of land-grant institutions directs us to think about the work of school beyond curriculum and pedagogy, beyond knowledge production. Universities are land-grabbing, land-transmogrifying, land-capitalizing machines. Universities are giant machines attached to other machines: war machines, media machines, governmental and nongovernmental policy machines.. the terms of the struggle in the university are also over this machinery—deactivating its colonizing operations and activating its contingent decolonizing possibilities.”²⁷

Both the terms of land’s capitalist trajectory and open-ended speculative decolonial lives are opened up through smashing and remaking land into a collective technology. In thinking about university land as an un-inevitable technology of settler colonial racial capitalism, the ongoing defense of People’s Park bring up possibilities for an alternative local collective resource access paradigm rooted in Ohlone Indigenous sovereignty. UC Berkeley standing as a land grant institution, and its treatment of People’s Park, create a dynamic between both dimensions of colonialism. I would be remiss to say that I bring a robust decolonial analysis to the table here. However, it important to foreground the park land as retroactively unseeded Indigenous Ohlone land, a legacy of legal plunder²⁸ that the park struggle both touches on and remains unreconcilable with, given the twin nature of settler colonialism and racial capitalism in legacies of state-backed technologies of housing.

Growing up in Berkeley in the early 2000s, a place defined through an idealized image of liberal progress and its radical past of hippie counter-culture, I observed a steady increase in lawn signs with optimistic phrases like “Housing Ends homelessness” and “Housing Is a Human Right”, along with “All are welcome here”²⁹. These optimistic signs popped up in front of houses all over my hometown, particularly in the affluent upper North, Elmwood, and Hills areas, where

²⁷ paperson, la. “Land. And the University is Colonial.” p. 1.

²⁸See Mattei, Ugo and Laura Nader. *Plunder: When the Rule of Law is Illegal*.

²⁹ personal anecdote

the covert opulence of new tech wealth is not displayed through lawns, but eco-friendly native plant gardens. Yet, as of recently, 75% of Berkeley's low-income neighborhoods are already experiencing or at risk of being gentrified³⁰. The UC development long-term development priorities targeted at the south side and other high-rental, lower-income areas of the city geographically overlap with this reality.

Analyzing the community costs of up-development, *The East Bay Anti-Eviction Mapping Project* found that "West Berkeley and South Berkeley residents are the most vulnerable to displacement by zoning changes; North Berkeley and Southeast Berkeley residents have minimal or low risk."³¹ Furthermore, "74% Black residents are renter households, but Black residents make up only about 8% of Berkeley's total population. Sixty-nine percent of Latinx households are renters, but they make up 12.3% of the total population. Non-Latinx-White populations had the lowest proportion of renters, at 50.1%, yet make up the majority of the city's population at 53%."³² Renters are more vulnerable to real estate predation³³, and a majority of black residents are renters, demonstrating the continued impact of exclusionary zoning and development in contouring local geographies of uneven real estate development and access. Unregulated financial interests like Blackrock, one global real estate company that exacerbated the uneven consequences of the 2008 housing collapse that UC Berkeley partners with³⁴, keep rental prices and profits high. Years volatile market-rate rental turnover in the campus area have disproportionately exacerbated housing precarity and displacement for low-income residents of

³⁰Bhasin, Amrita. "Exclusionary and Racist: History of Housing, Gentrification in Berkeley."

³¹Mcelroy, Erin. "Densifying Berkeley, 2022 - Anti-Eviction Mapping Project." p. 5.

³² Mcelroy. P. 25.

³³ Mcelroy. P. 6.

³⁴ "Blackstone's Breit Gets \$4 Billion California Injection." BNN Bloomberg, 3 Jan. 2023, <https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/blackstone-s-breit-gets-4-billion-california-injection-1.1865224>.

color. While the university's prior investment in these local cycles of volatile, fast-paced profit over people, the institution has also repeatedly rearticulated its pending hybrid student-homeless housing plan as a vital, well-meaning service.

Mutual aid scholar Dean Spade asserts that under a “context of social isolation and forced dependency on hostile systems, mutual aid—where we choose to help each other out, share things, and put time and resources into caring for the most vulnerable—is a radical act.”³⁵ Grassroots strategies of mutual aid and solidarity organizing are central tenets of the political park struggle in the current day, and over the past few decades of neoliberal privatization within all intersecting arenas of local and state-wide socioeconomic resources. While Spade gives a powerful validation of organizing oftentimes devalued as an integral everyday strategy of movement building, I seek to delve into the un-inevitable, contradictory relation between the local state—including UC-- and local community connected to People's Park during times of disaster and profit-oriented political narratives of crisis that ensue. both horizons of socially reproductive possibility.

People's Park exemplifies the ever-transforming dynamics of capitalist production, versus the excessive, relatively spatially rooted paradigms of social reproduction under settler colonial and racial capitalist resource capitalism. Turning to Social Reproduction, Geography and Education scholar Cindy Katz's text “Vagabond Capitalism”, at a baseline level, social reproduction is defined as the labor of communities' “daily and long term reproduction, both of the means of production and the labor power to make them work.”³⁶ adding a political-historical lens, she asserts that “Not only are the material social practices associated with its production

³⁵ Spade, Dean. *Mutual Aid*, “Part 1: What is Mutual Aid?”

³⁶ Katz, Cindy “Vagabond Capitalism”, p. 711.

historically and geographically specific...contours and requirements are the outcome of ongoing struggle.”³⁷ Geographies of state-determined resources and community-lead social reproduction labor shift throughout time and place with different political and economic agendas of production.

Material spaces of social reproduction like People’s Park are generative case studies for the state’s shifting knowledge and governance of sustainable environments for capital reproduction, as “All modes of production produce and are enabled by particular political-ecologies.”³⁸ Spatial justice and urban studies cannot understand the political stake of social reproduction under globalization without what Katz focuses on as the realm of topography, or “both the detailed description of a particular location and the totality of the features that comprise the place itself...” the raw resources of “deliberate, purposeful, and systematic—albeit partial—information at all geographic scales to the military, the state, and business.”³⁹ Taking on the lens of topography, UC Berkeley’s hegemonic definition of People’s Park has furthered geographical knowledge as a political-economic and sociocultural technology of racialized, classed control. Katz also proposes that is important to counter-map spaces of social reproduction like the park and connections between different spaces that are atomized as single-issue fights. This is the work of counter topography, or “linking different places analytically in order to both develop the contours of common struggles and imagine a different kind of practical response to problems confronting them.”⁴⁰ The park represents an ongoing potential counter-topography map of social reproduction under neoliberal devolution. Generations of park activists’ have taken up a counter-topographic understanding of land as a domain of collective

³⁷Katz. p. 711.

³⁸ Katz. P. 714.

³⁹ Katz. P. 720.

⁴⁰ Katz. P. 722.

material struggle; UC periodically re-invests in delegitimizing the forms of social reproduction rooted in the space as a threatening un-foreclosed surplus resource.

With this in mind, I turn to Peer Illner's 2021 text *Disasters and Social Reproduction*. In the wake of the ongoing COVID-19 catastrophe, Illner takes on a more pronounced critical, material lens in relation to Spade surrounding the context and potentials of grassroots community survival campaigns. Before the dawn of financialization in the 1970s or moves towards "fictitious capital" circulated through "financial tools and instruments, sold as bets on future gains"⁴¹, states invested in public-private partnerships throughout the 20th Century. Disaster aid in the 1930s and 40s shifting risk away from wealthier, whiter areas to accumulate through resource development and abandoning politically devalued communities during disaster.⁴² His analysis influences the exploration here of People's Park, a space of mutual aid organizing, as both a strategy of survivance and generative critique of post-industrial, Neoliberal austerity, rooted in UC's pre-neoliberal investment in uneven geographies of social reproduction in the 1950s and 60s race for urban renewal projects.

Beginning in the 1970s, however, creative rounds of neoliberal economic restructuring placed the burdens of financing social resources onto the local and thus individual, as in his neoliberal boosterism, "Reagan worked to block grant programs as a means to delegate responsibility of financing social programs to state governments, which cannot operate at a deficit."⁴³ An integral scholar to studies of race, space, capital and carceral systems, radical Abolitionist, Economist and Human Geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore understands the post-war social welfare state--under which the UC system dramatically expanded-- as a structure of

⁴¹ Illner, Peer. *Disaster and Social Reproduction* 45.

⁴² Illner. p. 35.

⁴³ Moos, Katherine A. "Neoliberal Redistributive Policy" p. 1-1.

unprecedented racial capitalist wealth: “Part of the post-war civil rights struggle had been to extend eligibility for social welfare rights and programmes to those who had been deliberately excluded.”⁴⁴ From a social reproduction-oriented perspective, she asserts that “Keynesianism’s economic project encountered its first round of dismantling in the early 1970s, but the social project took the rap for all the anxiety and upheaval that ensued.”⁴⁵ The earthquakes of privatized restructuring marked the birth of the paradoxical “anti-state state” structure, “people and parties who gain state power by denouncing state power.”⁴⁶ UC Berkeley contributed to carceral ideologies and metrics of deviance and innocence to delineate and condemn the southside and the park as a region of threatening excess reproduction or a future place of conquest accumulation, re-managing the life persisting there as criminal risk under a devalued social wage⁴⁷.

UC admin invested in neoliberal twin ideologies of financial expansion and securitization as a logical response to a “public desire for social order”⁴⁸. The political security provided by law and order and order rhetoric siphoned public focus into delineated and racialized imaginaries of deviance and criminality rooted in populations and individuals. Tough on crime rhetoric foreclosed political grassroots material pushback against ongoing divestments from the social wage. As overaccumulation, inflation and unemployment shot up, privatized state apparatuses manufactured political crises of criminal deviance and harbored an austere wave of austere

⁴⁴ Gilmore, R.W, “Globalization and U.S. Prison Growth “, p. 177.

⁴⁵ Gilmore, p. 178

⁴⁶ Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. “In the Shadow of the Shadow State.”

⁴⁷ Harvey (2009) and others have mapped out the 1980s as the time of catastrophic state abandonment of social welfare. However, Gilmore also points out in her analysis of California prison growth, the state is a precedent for political shifts nationwide, and this means that local East Bay politicians and university administrators took to modeling market-based ideas of citizenship during the earlier creative stages of social wage divestment that intersected with the birth of the park.

⁴⁸ Gilmore, Ruth Wilson, “Global Militarism and U.S. Prison Growth”, p. 176.

criminal pathology as social policy, legitimizing anti-homeless urban revitalization projects. While global capital shaped and wreaked havoc on the local housing market, university and city narratives of criminality framed disenfranchised local residents as atomized points of deviant failure, leaving local people, university students and marginalized laborers past professors included⁴⁹, to bear the re-managed risk of private technologies of abandonment, enclosure, and accumulation. The more that anti-capitalist, decolonial international solidarity became an everyday material aspiration of US anti-racist activism, the more vehemently the warfare state responded by "individualizing disorder' into criminality, that could then be solved via arrest or state-sanctioned killings rather than fundamental social change."⁵⁰On the political-economic significance of spatial justice struggle, critical geographer and economist David Harvey writes that "The right to the city is not merely a right of access to what already exists, but a right to change it."⁵¹ In this context, we can understand how East Bay social movement work such as the retroactive People's Park struggle illustrates the possibility for a collective grasp at collective decision-making regarding resources as the material of the social wage.

Neoliberal paradigms of worthy or unworthy market-based citizenship might have definitively taken the stage in the 1970s. Yet, UC Berkeley was a structure of creative experimentation with all-out privatization and devolution in the late 1960s, and has always acted as a technology to settler colonial and racial capitalism, putting down social unrest related to its own geographical political-economic power. The 1960s saw rebellious affronts to regimented relations of social welfare access that from racial capitalist point of view, needed to be enclosed

⁴⁹ For more on integral critical university scholarship related to the on and off campus dynamic as it relates to race and labor is *The Under commons* by Moten and Harney. I wish I could have explored connections between this work and this specific project, but it was beyond the feasible scope. Hopefully, a spirit of under commons analysis of some sort runs through this paper.

⁵⁰ Gilmore, Ruth Wilson, "Global Militarism and U.S. Prison Growth", p. 176.

⁵¹ Harvey, David. "The Right to the City".

at any cost. In reality, the golden state incubated flexible financialization of every sphere in social life back in the late 1960s when the park was born. From the land grant institution's origins until now, the university has oftentimes modeled economic paradigms before they are overtly visible on a larger scale. Using episodes in the park's struggle as a case study, in this paper I attempt to touch on university resource capitalism's deeper roots in the liberal state project of social welfare capitalism that the creation of the park spatially disrupted.

I felt called to begin my research on the generatively contentious political lineage of People's Park for a combination of personal and structural reasons. The grassroots spatial justice defense of the park in the wake of COVID-19, and the local state's re-entrenched organized resource withholding and abandonment in my hometown caused me to revisit my late grandmother's connection to mutual aid work. Frances Berges connected to the park through her work with the East Bay chapter of Food Not Bombs from the late 1980s. After moving to California with my communist grandfather, my grandmother joined the East Bay chapter of the determinant non-violent organization. The anti-national anti-nuclear non-violent mutual aid-oriented food justice organization started in 1981 in Cambridge, my grandmother's college town.⁵²

Young activists were protesting against U.S. nuclear warfare, and consequently started selling food to raise funds for bail, in the midst of mass arrests by state police in protection of Massachusetts Institute of Technologies' investments in global imperialism as property.⁵³ The topography of university capital and police repression of community revolt was remarkably

⁵² Butler, Lawrence C.T. & Keith McHenry. *Food Not Bombs*, p. 76.

⁵³ Butler C.T. & McHenry. P. 82

similar to People's Park. The Cambridge action grew into an international network of anti-nuclear, anti-military mutual aid and solidarity work. In the late 1980s, East Bay residents formed a local chapter of FNB, responding to the need for mutual aid support and political critique on the south side campus area of a university majorly funding nuclear warfare and other militaristic technology as well. In the face of increasing neoliberal austerity measures as social policy since the 1980s, Katz would argue that the park represents an ongoing potential counter topography map of social reproduction under neoliberal devolution. The park's unbureaucratic spatiality has garnered material significance for local unhoused populations since the 1980s. Its topography is retroactively re-shaped by the needs and desires of community users, from garden plots for sustenance to oak trees for shade to free food distribution, as well as various free clothing boxes and a mini day-care center.

In midst of the COVID-19 pandemic as real and manufactured crisis, privatizing state interests state have continually withheld direct, long-term aid, despite compounded environmental, health and economic inequities already present before overt disaster. In the context of stymying shock, Critical Homelessness Scholar Craig Willse stresses that “capitalist modes of production depend upon the optimization of life itself”⁵⁴ at any cost, as constituencies deemed worthy of support shift by demographics, time, and space in an increasingly stark paradigm of accumulation through dispossession⁵⁵. As a state corporation, UC has always invested in expanding the business of education to corroborate statewide and global profit margins. There was no moratorium on these processes while its students and laborers suffered.

⁵⁴ Willse, Craig, *The Value of Homelessness*, p. 36.

⁵⁵ In "Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction" and *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, David Harvey has defined this phase starting in the 1970s as the onset of neoliberal privatization, government deregulation, and the localized dispossession and management of land and resources to further profit for business executives from global banks and real estate firms.

With the increased visibility of encampments in central city spaces since the start of the COVID-19, the local liberal political managerial class has stuck to the economic rationality of accumulation underlying rosy ideals of the homeownership good life. UC's 2019 hybrid student/'indigent' development model exemplifies the privatization of social resources into social service economies, as it incorporates piecemeal support services for unhoused people via private contract. Berlant would argue that UC's past few years of neoliberal homeless management, corroborated by the city, exemplify a cruelly optimistic attachment to limited single-issue housing policies that re manage dispossession as passive, individual failure. Despite the park pandemic-era exacerbations in displacement, the UC did not let up on plans to develop on the park, but rather used the real and manufactures crisis as further rational for its necessity. UC Berkeley's strong man development persona exemplifies the transforming terrain of privatization and organized abandonment, meaning the foreclosure of basic social resources like shelter and food and selective redistribution of piecemeal services to certain citizens. Media and political narrative on local displacement trends often focus on homelessness as a single-issue tragedy of developmental inefficiency, or compounded personal choices on the part of individual people. The political illusion of Berkeley's market-based good life⁵⁶ is a regimented image: city homeless services and police-lead sweeps⁵⁷ that force displaced collectives somewhere else out of public view, forcing those most intimate with the local housing monster's jaws into further invisibility and place lessness.

⁵⁶ "Why Chasing the Good Life Is Holding Us Back, with Lauren Berlant (Ep. 35)."

⁵⁷In 2022, the city orchestrated a sweep of a long-standing encampment of tents and RV residences along the intersection of Eighth and Harrison in the Flatlands neighborhood, PP organizers expressed solidarity with people at the camp. A few weeks later, a massive storm hit, a key site of mutual aid work that I will turn to in terms of the park later.

Critical Homelessness Scholar Craig Willse has clarified the contradictory neoliberal management of “the homeless” as a static, yet politically central issue of solvable financial inefficiency rather than a complex class of perpetually dispossessed people. In his words on the contemporary management of displacement,

“And so the post-social welfare state moves beyond Foucault’s formulation of a zero sum game in which those marked as ill or unproductive, like “the homeless,” would be treated only as negation or loss. Technologies of state racism in the neoliberal context enact processes of calculation and distribution as well as deprivation. Contemporary programs targeting unsheltered populations should not be mistaken for political and social rescue of abandoned populations. These programs emerge to manage the costs of social abandonment, and to transform the illness and death that result from housing deprivation into productive dimensions of postindustrial service and knowledge economies.”⁵⁸

In the increasingly gentrified the South Berkeley and North Oakland areas, displaced people who seek alternative methods of social reproduction deemed unproductive under service economies are rational political subjects with robust knowledge of finance capitalisms vicious underbelly. Yet, to the city and university, the unhoused subject represents the socially “unthinkable” dimensions of disposability and disability, and the disabled social welfare state turned welfare economy. Unhoused people represent bodies to be simultaneously managed into human capital and made invisible in the intersecting capitalist, and carceral geographies of South Campus Berkeley to which UC seeks perpetual real estate power. Homeless perspective and self-determined critique of capitalist sacrifice, and the ways that the university engaged with these practices of enclosure, cannot be brought *too much* into mainstream discourse.

UC Berkeley has always played a key economic role in defining images of Berkeley’s industrial and post-industrial capital good life ideals, and in turn defining the terms for economically-oriented educational subjecthood. Bringing in Foucault’s of the “thick transfer

⁵⁸ Willse, Craig. *The Value of Homelessness*, p. 50.

point”⁵⁹, the university is a site of competing social reproduction interests between labor and capital, where capital has historically won most concessions in devaluing resources such as free tuition, grants and unstructured free time. Since the late 1960s, UC ‘s state decision-makers optimistically maintained a less public, more hybrid public-private structure, and the actual value of active labor has gone down. Universities like UCB have acted as creative breeding ground for anti-state state ideology, structure and foreclosure of the collective social wage, and the devaluing of excess populations, local and global, deemed unworthy for a narrower and narrower, and shifting notion of proper citizenship. In the period of the park’s construction, this meant proper intellectual laborers for the professional managerial class⁶⁰, which at the dawn of the 1970s meant managers of global finance capital, military technology, and real estate development. The linked histories of California education and housing policy restructuring in the late 1960s and 1970s tie back to an increased reliance across the board on bond and debt financing, speculative capital accumulation and circulation that devalued systems of collective resource access.

Deeper material aims of East Bay decolonial, anti-capitalist social movements came up against the rise of “anti-state” state structures that legitimized resource foreclosure towards global capitalist accumulation. People’s Park was born on the brink of a retroactive state-wide fiscal crisis period that shocked the state into expanding technologies of governance that assured financial accumulation through dispossession. In the wake of COVID-19, that reality is

⁵⁹ ²⁴While still elusive to me in the theoretical nuances, the concept of “thick transfer point” comes from Foucault’s lesser-known theoretical text *The History of Sexuality*, Vol. 1. (in relation to *Discipline and Punish*) . The concept speaks to the affective excesses of capitalist social policies like university reforms throughout the 20th century given the idea of education as a terrain of ideological power rooted in national, hetero patriarchal belonging. It was also a helpful concept the emergency of different capitalist desires in the present to enclose and accumulate value through the threatening figure of the “homeless”.

⁶⁰ Ehrenreich, John and Ehrenreich, Barbara, “The Professional-Managerial Class”, *Radical America*, 1977.

increasingly visible, despite the anti-state state 's attempts to reshape devalued life into productivity. Dominant government and media narratives on People's Park routinely atomize its' mutual aid organizing as an irrational geography of deviance with no legitimate demands outside of its defense of the single-plot of the past. Diverging from this simple narrative, this work is curious about "people who inhabit forgotten places scale up their activism from intensely localized struggles to something less atomized and therefore possessed of a significant capacity for self-determination"⁶¹ (31) The park one sight of rebellion, one space of survival and resistance that links to the broader counter-topographies of social reproduction, in unthinkable networks of solidarity.

Here, I attempt to remain curious about the park defense as a rebel geography and archive of grassroots social reproduction politics that has continually pushed back against UC's expanded investment in finance capitalism, feeding into local geographies of uneven development on a local and global level.

In the current day, the state's organized abandonment, or the process of "governing populations through callous yet purposeful neglect, framing many humans and other lifeforms as surplus to the contemporary political economic order."⁶² insidiously functions to re-manage the excess social value of unhoused people into further profit. Decentralized, powerful structures of profit and abandonment shape the uneven risks of socioeconomic crises such as the 2008 recession and the 2020 Pandemic lockdown, which hit the East Bay's low-income residents of color, who are more likely to rent, in compounded ways. In the past few decades of privatization through state apparatus in every sphere of individual and collective life, increasingly deregulated financial interests like big tech and real estate, overlapping with the UC Regents, have

⁶¹ "Organized Abandonment: Cultures of Crisis and Resistance." *The Social Justice Centre*.

⁶²

exacerbated and profited from gentrification. Katz would argue that globalization and vagabond capitalism, or on-the-run-thievery, shaped late 20th to early 21st century California carceral social service geographies. In periods of resource surplus and crisis, the UC regents have reinvested the university's funds in the precursory and covert financial experiments of neoliberalism and vagabond capitalism. Understanding social reproduction as shifting rather than static metrics of possibility, value and risk clarifies how the park defense exists as both a spatial justice struggle, and within this struggle models the possibilities of seizing the collective wage rooted in resources on a local level.

In this paper, I do not claim to map histories of the university's investment in finance capital in detail, or the technicalities of these financial markets. However, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, David Harvey, Dustin Jenkins and other radical economists, geographers, historians argue that the gradual and uneven foreclosure of the social wage was an uninventable event. The material spatial justice struggles at People's Park and other local, statewide and national counter-topographies of social reproduction continue to illustrate this fact. Narratives of crisis and solution weaponize the real threat of socioeconomic disaster and the exacerbation of local need to re-entrench resource accumulation and selective access as common sense. Non-profit boosters posit that the nationalistic event of salvation from intersecting socioeconomic regions of deprivation, from housing, education, healthcare, to food under capitalism lie in the inevitable intervention of market productivity and flexibility.

In this one-track frame of administrative direction, Berkeley and UC Berkeley's overlapping housing crises as shortages, a short-term failure with a logical fix. On a local level, the insidious imperative to attach back to hierarchical access created by the private market even as it stymies collective wellbeing exemplifies what Affect Theorist Lauren Berlant terms "cruel

optimism”⁶³, or the draining attachment to an object that seems to inevitably support status quos of getting by under capitalism⁶⁴. In this work, I explore the material stakes of cruel attachments or generative divergences from the “good life” narratives of economic progress that the park as a sociocultural object has mediated, through government and university, documents, media narrative, personal story, public political action, items I find relevant to the story of the park. Berlant would argue that political narratives of selective private resource-based prosperity and scarcity, and the fetishized objects of accumulation such as homes, college degrees and even public space are domains to “assess the disciplines of normativity” and how people “renegotiate the terms of reciprocity that contour their historical situation.”⁶⁵

In times of economic surplus like the 1970s and today, political crisis-solution narratives dominate, oftentimes foreclose the possibilities to legitimize a material paradigm shift towards collective resource determination. With the past and present defense of People’s Park as a case study of the importance of multi-issue material spatial justice struggle rooted in solidarity-oriented mutual aid, I explore episodes of the university’s land management as a constantly shifting terrain of uninventable political-economic surplus, crisis and foreclosure. In this way, People’s Park exists as a dynamic rather than dead sociocultural object, which holds significance in nonlinear and often contradictory ways, in excess of the neoliberal logics that contour its contemporary fate. Theory of cruel attachment and the normalized event contextualizes how and why People’s Parks’ complicated significance is simultaneously defended or enclosed by political crisis. Viewing People’s Park as a sociocultural object makes visible how communities

⁶³ Berlant, Lauren. *Cruel Optimism*, p. 53.

⁶⁴ For analysis on politics as affective relationship, see Lauren Berlant’s text *Cruel Optimism* as well as *The Inconvenience of Other People*

⁶⁵ Berlant. p. 53.

remake everyday spaces in response to socioeconomic disinvestment, in excess of the system's logics of proper subjecthood and spatial usage. Affect theory is important to thinking about spatial justice, because individual and collective unconscious impulses are involved in experiencing, identifying and politically narrating social issues through urban spaces.

The tragedy of California's golden welfare state under capitalism's iron fist is an affective fallacy of ideal statehood lost that has run out of ideological legitimacy in the wake of COVID-19, and the expansion of private profit through anti-state state apparatuses. The cruel attachment to individual success privileges the inevitability and neutrality of market scarcity for some always underwriting the racial capitalist and settler colonial state's social reproduction resource management. Initially, the People's Park defense represented a publicized and supported a material threat to the emerging status quo of organized abandonment. The spatial justice struggle over the park land retroactively takes hold of the raw material surplus of the retractive social wage, and resulting political crisis. I am interested in the spatial justice struggle at People's Park as an ephemeral and always-partial case study for imagining new scalable paradigms of collective resource access outside of the destructive experiment of resource capitalism for which UC has acted as testing ground and junior partner. I am interested in how the local community across the city of Berkeley attempt to resist the familiar logics of inevitable crises and market-based solutions, paradigms of innocence and deviance that justify further organized abandonment.

In Chapter one, "The Land Before the Park", I explore the pre-history of UC Berkeley's urban renewal related real estate interests surrounding the park and south Berkeley land before it became a media spectacle through the park. UC Berkeley evaluated the land and community-inhabited structures there for redevelopment due to its racialized and classed positionality as a

campus borderland, or an area that the university sought to control and strategically develop into white, middle-class suburban aesthetics and market relationships. In turn, I touch on the precursory histories of radical anti-capitalist, decolonial organizing that influenced campus and off-campus culture before the park and contributed to a local lineage of grassroots pushback back against the legitimacy of UC's anti-black and anti-poor topographical ideals.

The second, "Let a Thousand Parks Bloom", covers the radical community beginnings of People's Park. Influenced by on and off-campus organizing played out on spatial, material terms in urban space in social movement building students prompted discussion of land as university capital, versus the possibilities of land as collective resource. In its relatively mundane creation, People's Park went on to problematize the capital relations that the university corporation had forced on the land in 1967 and 1968. Activists created a generative disruption to the UC's claims to land ownership and long-term foreclosure control over the possibilities of collective access that belied local community input. Organizers engaged with political strategy from an international revolutionary Marxist-socialist handbook, from local movements like the Oakland and South Berkeley-rooted Black Panther Party, the Third World Liberation Front campaigns of SF State and UC Berkeley in 1968 and 1969, as well as the height of decolonial struggle worldwide.

Chapter three, "Whose Park? Recreational Capital and Mutual Aid" touches on the episode of the 1991 volleyball conflict at People's Park as a way to denaturalize the more visible late 20th C. turn by UC Berkeley towards topographies of finance capital accumulation via dispossession. In the 1980s, Berkeley planners turned to forms of symbolic capital, like aesthetically regimented public parks to attract revenue through global finance capital

circulation, with its increased reliance on student revenue from tuition. The increasingly privatized university modeled prerogatives to differentiate and consolidate urban space for the capital's managerial class.²⁹⁶⁶ UC 's criminalization of homelessness and investment in nuclear warfare converged in its finance-capital oriented plans. Politically-oriented food provision at the park highlighted UC's ongoing funding of global warfare, and multiple levels of state violence created in withholding social resources as financial surplus. I touch on UC Berkeley's anti-homeless sentiment as intimately connected to its production of volleyball as recreational capital on the land. In my present-day chapter, "Defend People's Park: Homeless Services and Unhoused Justice" I explore how the current park defense resists the political foreclosure of another political paradigm past resource capitalism. During peak pandemic lockdown and the withholding of state-wide surplus, the reality of disaster and state austerity propelled a renewed multi-issue spatial justice struggle at the People's Park. Currently, the spatial struggle for the park intersects with broader local, state-wide and national solidarity organizing connecting spatial justice, unhoused justice, disability justice, tenant's justice, abolition justice, racial justice, and environmental justice. More than ever in the wake of multi-pronged disaster that anti-state state actors weaponize for profit, the park defense is about more than a right to survive, it counters social service hierarchies and logics innocence and deviance.

Some guiding questions of my research and paper: What can attention to land, public versus private space, as technologies of domination or liberation show about the ever-negotiated topographies and counter-topographies of social reproduction at People's Park What can we learn from the retroactive spatial justice struggle at People's Park about the un-inevitability of

⁶⁶In various works, David Harvey talks about the postmodern, neoliberal rise in speculative finance capital alongside representational public spaces that are increasingly privatized and adversarial to people dispossessed from financial capital markets.

state-backed resource capitalism, and the significance of grassroots social movement organizing's alternative models of resource distribution? What does the struggle show about the un-inevitability of political crisis narratives that siphon off the liberal surplus life and community networks of care? In an era of solution-oriented crisis management in housing, as well as education, how are local residents attempting to counteract narratives of inevitable destruction? What does the PP struggle demonstrate about the significance of cultural production and narrative surrounding public, urban space in shaping possibilities for solidarity during the mid to late 20th century social movements onwards? How can we learn from coalitional political action like that rooted in the park in order to imagine collective access through collective decision making, denaturalizing the legitimacy given to privatized solutions created in the shocking wake of crisis.

The Land Before the Park

In between 1940 and 1950, the city of Berkeley's population rose by 33%³⁰In the early 1960s, the demographics of the East Bay were shaken up, as communities of black ex-sharecroppers from the domestic south and South East Asian refugees of Western imperialist violence came in search of new means to construct livelihoods under the welfare state. In

between 1940 and 1950, the city of Berkeley's population rose by 33%⁶⁷ In *Living for the City*, Black Panther historian Donna Murch maps the how the East Bay area's Keynesian industrial economy, and unprecedented social benefit models that emerged for housing, education, and labor protection influenced the migration of black working-class communities to the region during racial capitalism's mid-century restructure out of southern agricultural systems. Looking for housing, migrants of color were pushed out by real estate agents and mortgagers to West and North Oakland neighborhoods, while some strained to acquire houses or rentals status in South Berkeley's limited mixed-unit apartments available to non-white renters. Consequently, into the 1960s as" Unemployment soared and many found themselves trapped in the familiar cycles of debt and subsistence..."⁶⁸ migrants experiences of structural divestment shaped the emergence of radical East Bay social movement organizing.

In 1949, at 13, Richie Smith and her family traveled from Oklahoma to South Berkeley, and in 2018, in the mist of increased gentrifying pushout, she reflected on the former significantly Black community existing there in the post-war period.

"People from all around would come to walk up and down the Adeline Street Corridor, the street that runs through the center of South Berkeley, Smith said. She remembers all the Black businesses — beauty shops, dry cleaners, real estate offices, a jewelry store and a theater — that held the community together."⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Murch, Donna Jean. *Living for the City Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California*. pg. 24.

⁶⁸ Murch, Donna Jean. *Living for the City Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California*. University of North Carolina Press, 2010, pg. 17.

In the post-war era, communist rank and file organizing influenced the East Bay, as black migrants brought theory and tactics from the 1930s and 40s era of Black communist mobilizing in the south. Historian Robin G. Kelley's book *Hammer and Hoe* is a chalk-filled resource for the largely-hidden history of southern communist rank-and-file organizing that coalesced with tenants of the radical black tradition. The mounting grassroots legitimacy of socialist and communist ideals threatened the Keynesian social welfare status quo, in that it could unveil that the capitalist class retained more surplus that was redistributed.

⁶⁹ Ramaiyer, Malini. "Echoes down the Corridor." *The Daily Californian*.

The patchwork of working-class Black families, small businesses, and also financial agents of real estate capital, creates a telling picture of the developmental and demographic shifts that came in the coming decades. Black, Japanese and Chinese migrant communities from domestic and international contexts⁷⁰ seeking to build lives, live, go to school and work in the area, symbolized an inevitable decline in competitive property value, and an aesthetic threat to UCB's strategic on and strategic off campus creation of a white, middle-class professional managerial class⁷¹ "character". Taking cues from the city government 's transformation into urban redevelopment agency³⁴, to curve the racial anxieties of real estate speculation that framed South Berkeley in risk of "blight", UC's planning powers sought lawful means to pursue urban renewal too.

UC's campus planning strategies of the 1950s and 1960s, like other prominent public and private universities located in urban centers, were rooted in past and future land acquisition strategies that mirrored broader racial capitalist frameworks of value and risk. Flexing its expanded planning powers, the university governed south Berkeley as a borderland, or "a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary.in a constant state of transition...The only 'legitimate' inhabitants are those in power, whites and those that align themselves with whites."⁷²Elite administrators and university boosters donned racialized topographies of sociocultural innocence and deviance to cement urban renewal investment, and further state reliance on bond and debt economies as the rational rule of the day. Urban renewal

⁷⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, Berkeley Enumeration Districts, Population Schedules, 1950, <https://1950census.archives.gov/>

⁷¹ Ehrenreich, John and Ehrenreich, Barbara, "The Professional-Manual Class", 1977.

⁷² Ramírez, M. M. "City as borderland: Gentrification and the policing of Black and Latinx geographies in Oakland." See also Gilmore, R. W. "

was valuable to the UC, particularly its Regent shareholders, in retaining aesthetic and financial campus and campus-adjacent geographies of whiteness as as sociocultural and political-economic capital. In 1967, the university began the process of foreclosure on the mixed-use housing along the Dwight and Haste block, on which both student and non-student tenants wanted to remain. Pushback was futile, however, given the university 's forceful prerogative to retain the land. State-lead enclosure and demolition of prior topographies of community life paved the way for white, middle-class nuclear housing topographies rooted in the market-based “good life”⁷³ fantasy.

UC planners anticipated the “long-forewarned”³⁸ post-war demand for state higher education from an expanded population. State decision makers re-shaped the state project of education into a “multiversity “. The multiversity idea articulated precursory neoliberal ideals of education as a realm of entrepreneurial activity and flexible markets, a hierarchical and provisional service rather than a unilateral right for people of the state. UC's opaque power to condemn land to enclose and for future development is a significant part of the story of the park; the plot of land "bounded" by Dwight Way and Haste Street was only one sliver of the real estate pie. During the late 1950s and 1960s, UC Berkeley set its sights on acquiring whole swaths of South Berkeley land fit for economic “rehabilitation”. University officials framed the mixed-use and income housing on the block of Haste Street and Dwight Way as an ongoing waste of space that was deviant, outside of, the university’s post-war capital expansion strategy.

During the same period, radical Third-World and New Left student organizers experimented with seizing the periods’ expanded social wage, to transform education and labor

⁷³ “Why Chasing the Good Life Is Holding Us Back, with Lauren Berlant (Ep. 35).”

conditions for themselves and their communities. Material demands, strikes and spatial occupation inhabited and worked between the contradictions of the political-economic borderlands relationship. Material demands, strikes and spatial occupation linked on and off campus spaces as places to organize between. Before People's Park, grassroots student movements connected UC's local resource powers to the broader economic geographies of state colonial and capitalist power in which it was complicit. Before the birth of the park, UCB's geographical expansion involved regulating racialized and classed spatial boundaries of sociocultural connection between the campus, the South Berkeley area.

1959 updates to the 1949 U.S. Federal Housing Act allocated loans to public university campuses such as UC Berkeley and University of Chicago⁷⁴ located in metropolitan, urban areas, for the explicit purpose "slum clearance and urban renewal"⁷⁵. At a local level, university administrators formulated ways to capitalize off short-term loan structure to expand its capital development throughout the south side of Berkeley, in order to further institutional revenue. University corroborated but also sought to meld the political priorities of the city's urban renewal vision in order to expand forms of socioeconomically homogeneous community life that was valued. All in all, the university orchestrated a long-term plan for managing the future of the South Berkeley area as an in between zone of socioeconomic threat and possibility. Memorandums regarding urban renewal and long-term campus planning privileged the university 's lawful role in shaping the aesthetic characteristics of the campus and adjacent southside neighborhood against the threat of mixed-use tenant housing inhabited by Black and Asian communities, students, university workers and regional laborers seeking homes in the

⁷⁴ Bradley, James. "The University of Chicago, Urban Renewal, and the Black Community."

⁷⁵ Housing Act of 1959, U.S. Congress, 1959. <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/COMPS-10835>

area.

Working-class, non-white, non-nuclear kinship structures south of campus were rationalized as “blighted”, inevitably fit for foreclosure and dispossession, in the name of civic good and integration into the city’s overall aesthetic “rehabilitation”⁷⁶. In this way, mapped out post-war topographies of “good life” through the same racialized spatial logics used to construct the Federal HOLC maps a decade before, which geographically Southside area for devaluation, dispossession and selective accumulation. The description of an enumeration map along the South campus, North Oakland border articulated a borderlands logic:

“Several blocks in the south-central part of the area, around Browning, Bovar and Bancroft, are free of infiltration due to deed restriction. The surrounding blocks are all scattered with Orientals and colored. Therefore, this entire area must be classed as hazardous. Good loans are possible in this area if hazards are taken into consideration.”⁷⁷

UC planning elites undoubtedly looked back and saw the value in previous condemnation of “scattering” of “heterogeneous” influences in the campus area, two streets down from Dwight and Haste where UC would demolish a block of houses in 1968. For the interests of real estate, this meant extracting excess, improper social reproductive resources and networks of sociality in older units, mixed units throughout South Campus, and accumulating more profit through units imaged for nuclear, single-family homes. “Mixed (heterogeneous) type of buildings (old homes prevail) rooming houses, fraternity and sorority houses, etc. Infiltration of wealthy Orientals and Oriental store keepers.”⁷⁸ Defying egalitarian myths of local upwards mobility, “wealthy” people labeled as Asian through priory established federal census data were labeled as sociocultural

⁷⁶ Bancroft Library

⁷⁷ Berkeley Federal Enumeration Maps, “Mapping Inequality”.

⁷⁸ Berkeley Federal Enumeration Maps, “Mapping Inequality”.

threat. Preserving the “unique” character of Berkeley meant fostering land use and economic relations to the community that attracted more speculative capital, or real estate development. The technocratic logics of urban planning that UC Berkeley adopted to staunch the presence of black and Asian South Berkeley residents linked back to previous Federal housing topographies prioritizing middle-class, white prosperity. UC planners and state-wide boosters anxiously delineated white, middle class access to housing in the south campus area, one example being the priority of married student housing⁷⁹ that resulted in UC demolishing another articulating the area as a threatening but also imminently valuable racial borderlands.

In his book *Bonds of Inequality*, Dustin Jenkins shifts focus regarding racialized housing discrimination from the topographies of discriminatory lending to broader political-economic reliance on bond and debt speculation underpinning 20th century racial capitalist geographies of uneven development. During the postwar period in California, intersecting bond, debt and real estate markets expanded at a state-wide and municipal level⁸⁰, creating new, compounded geographies of differential access and dispossession along the lines of race and class. Anti-black and anti-poor municipal bond and debt spatial logics of the post-war era rooted back to the Federal HOLC Enumeration maps of the pre-war era. Universities situated as major economic development machines within urban cities hopped on the train for increased revenue rooted in anti-blackness. Not yet the real estate and research behemoth it became throughout the late twentieth century, UC Berkeley worked to solidify its economic standing in relation to local and global military Keynesianism management. The university ‘s investment in urban renewal

⁷⁹ Bancroft Library.

⁸⁰ See Dustin Jenkin’s robust text *Bonds of Inequality*, particularly introductory section, for analysis of how racial capitalism relied and relies on bond and debt relationships throughout California history, and the direct ties between these economic markets and continued anti-black gentrification in the East Bay.

strategies mirrored the logic of the mid-century real estate market that ran on discriminatory bond and debt speculation, as well as mortgage lending practices.

Administrators controlled the borders of what defined proper sociality in the campus area, attempting to avoid the bad press of overtly acting as a "slum lord"⁸¹ while holding the flexible power to integrate land as future development stop on for as cheap as possible. University planners and architects and financiers exerted racialized anxieties towards the presence of Black and Asian migrant people finding economic sustenance and communities in the southside area. Wielding the logic of "whiteness as capital"⁸², UCB speculated that non-white communities, and the interconnected political-economic threat of socialist and communist ideology represented by working-class social movements of the East Bay, mobilizations which intersected with campus and the city borderlands area. The presence of black, Japanese and Chinese community members symbolized inevitable decline in competitive property values, an aesthetic threat to the strategic on and strategic off campus "character" shaped by university planning. We can think of the post-war university's heavy focus on urban renewal, as well public and private universities across the U.S., as a strategy of "territoriality", or "delimitating and asserting control over a certain geographical area."⁸³, logic which "reifies"⁸⁴ and makes power visible as well as legitimate.

In 1958, Clark Kerr became the 12th President of the statewide UC system, playing an integral role in the creation three new state university campus vision of the project-based

⁸¹ The Bancroft Library

⁸² Jenkins, Dustin. P. 92.

⁸³ Mitchell, Don, "Iconography and Locational Conflict from the Underside." p. 2.

⁸⁴ Mitchell.

“multiversity”⁸⁵ model through the 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education in California. Kerr’s competitive, market-based vision of higher education valued the pursuit of knowledge as a “rationalized” and “streamlined”⁸⁶ business that maintained structural reliance on resources for capital accumulation, and that also regimented UC as an elite institution against the state university system in a hierarchy of resource access⁸⁷. UC Berkeley administrators worked to adapt to the multiversity model, focusing on university building that at the end of the day provided a hierarchical and provisional service rather than a unilateral right. Furthermore, the UC administration got in line with adapting to an “increasingly metropolitan, postindustrial”⁸⁸ city lead to the university’s connection in bond and debt economies via local urban redevelopment priorities. Bond and debt markets prioritized financial flexibility and short-term profit return⁸⁹. In turn, UC Berkeley administrative planners focused on mapping out a strategically insular campus topographical grid that delineated “on campus culture” from the “off campus” borderland areas of Southside Berkeley and Northwest Oakland. The institution’s technocratic power to plan the city’s future geography to the regents’ financial favor propelled an era of land grabs and optimistic real estate plans. UC Berkeley planners prioritized topographical characteristics that they imagined would retain valuable forms of middle-class, white community and economic life in the city. UC Berkeley adopted plans to make campus and South Berkeley more streamlined towards the its own revenue needs, not in support of the community ‘s

⁸⁵ Shermer, Elizabeth. “What’s Really New about the Neoliberal University?” p. 73.

⁸⁶

⁸⁷ “History of Admissions at UC Berkeley | Secrets of the SAT | Frontline.” *PBS*.

⁸⁸ Shermer. p. 74

⁸⁹ See Jenkins, Dustin Bonds of Inequality for a survey of 20th century SF Municipal Bond and Debt financing and discriminatory development.

collective wellbeing.

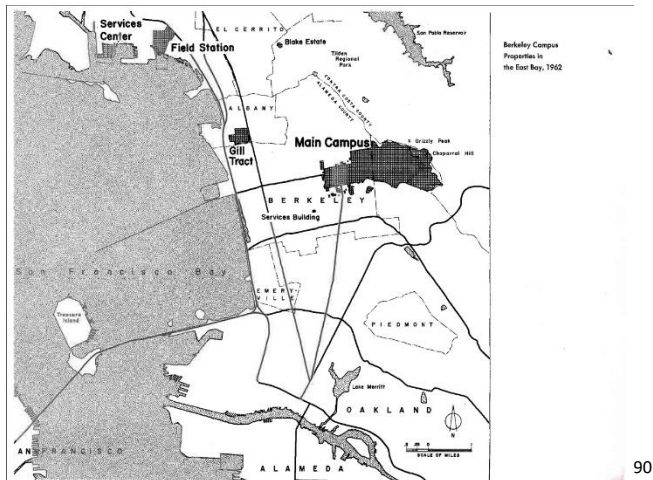


Figure 7: Map of University of California Berkeley properties in the East Bay, as of 1962.

Seeking an economically efficient way to approach the “long-forewarned”⁹¹ post-war demand for higher education, in 1962, the UC Berkeley Campus Planning Committee updated the ongoing Long Range Development Plan. The introduction section stressed that “The history of planning for the Berkeley campus is actually older than the University of California Berkeley itself” Here, I return to paperson, who states that “Land is not just an early feature in the establishment of universities. Land is a motor in the financing of universities, enabling many of them to grow despite economic crises.”⁹² Ahistorically framing the land grant institution’s origins of resource accumulation as a far away past, the LRDP architects asserted a sense of neutral sovereignty over the city land for the civic good of its expanding post-war constituency.

⁹⁰ Long Range Development Plan, p.

⁹¹ Long Range Development Plan, p. 8.

⁹² paperson, Ia. “Land. And the University is Colonial. ”, p. 1.

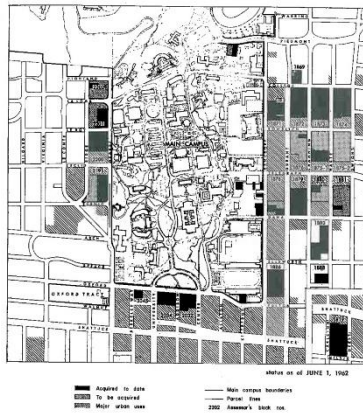
The plan for campus expansion worked to shape the south campus area into a complementary region within the city's model city project, always based on settler colonial metrics of environmental domination:

“During the preparation of this plan many neglected aspects of campus landscape maintenance were taken care of: areas that had become overgrown and jungle-like were made transparent again; lost vistas were recaptured; forgotten or undeveloped areas of great natural beauty were opened up..Projects ‘off campus’ as well, have succeeded in introducing the traditional qualities of campus landscape into adjoining urban areas of Berkeley.”⁹³

The UC campus planning team already used a striking imaginative present tense to de-facto legitimise imminent goals to develop out south Berkeley. The notion of valuable space was determined through which areas of the city were projected to be aesthetically marketable and safe, from the view of middle and upper-class residents, visitors, and future real estate investors. Furthermore, the “taming” of wild areas euphemistically masked the dispossession of all black and asian community post-war economic strata from utopic vision of Berkeley as a model city. Through a racial capitalist imaginary of the environment, but the south berkeley area in particular, as a never-completely tamed borderlands frontier, university planners prioritized retaining and dispersing white, middle class “aesthetic”⁹⁴ spaces and sociality throughout the area.

⁹³Campus Planning Committee, UC Berkeley. *Long Range Development Plan*, p. 16.

⁹⁴ Long Range Development Plan, p.



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Figure 8: UC Property acquisition map, both completed and planned, 1962.

The LRDP architects advertised concern for retaining the “unique character” of the city in an arts and commerce sense, while holding little concern for “preserving the character” of the working-class community of students and laborers that existed along the campuses formal borders.⁵⁰ In a 1964 report to the Chancellor, John R. Lipscomb from the Population Trends and Urban Change Committee emphasized that while “..The negro population has found this town..as an ideal place to live, with more opportunity..”⁹⁶ the intersections of race and class needed to be policed; incoming working-class racialized migrants seeking resources were “not educated and are not of the economic level that is desirable for our community.”⁹⁷ The euphemistic words “educated” and “economic level” signified an individual, market-based liberal image of desirable citizenship for the post-war model city. Administrators framed diversification of its borderlands as a sign of financial downturn. Structures of organized abandonment targetted at both students and non-students were valuable to the UC administration in maintaining a competitive real estate market in the campus area that white, middle class married students were imagined to inevitably

⁹⁵Campus Planning Committee, UC Berkeley. *Long Range Development Plan*, p. .

⁹⁶ Lipscomb, John R., “Memorandum To Chancellor on Urban Renewal”

⁹⁷ Lipscomb.

claim.

The ambitious updates UC made to the 1962 Long Range Development Plan grew out of administrative elites' racial capitalist conquest desires to invest in urban renewal to solve the post-war “urban problem”⁹⁸, meaning Asian and Black communities seeking work and residency in the East Bay. Prioritizing future economic interconnectedness between campus and San Francisco as the region's metropolitan center, UC planners also maintained spatial control valves against the “infiltration” crisis posed by the working-class, black neighborhoods of Oakland and Asian and Black migrants seeking to construct livelihoods in the campus area. UC model of urban renewal centered whiteness and white nuclear kinship as conduits of educational economic value.

Planners prioritized “economically self-sufficient”⁹⁹ residents--middle and upper-class white students and faculty—as key constituents, potential market actors who would did not symbolize the need for social welfare support. UC's historical power to condemn land for future development is a significant part of park story; the plot of land “bounded” by Dwight Way and Haste Street was only one sliver of a broader real estate pie. Coming to administrative power as Chancellor to the University of California in 1965,¹⁰⁰ Kerr applied the project-based multiversity mindset to the university's borderlands, pushing for land acquisition that included the 2.8 Block 1875-2 between Dwight and Haste street. In 1967, UC Berkeley obtained the land through the borrowed funding of bonds¹⁰¹ as startup capital to pursue a long in the making urban renewal

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⁹⁹ “ “ UC Berkeley Bancroft Library

¹⁰⁰ “People's Park.” *Awecosocial*, <https://www.awecosocial.com/peoplespark>.

¹⁰¹ Baker, Claudia et al. “A Case Study of Urban Ecology and Open Space: People's Park,” p. 1

plan in the south campus area.

In 1967, the university acquired the block of mixed-use housing, in which both student and non-student tenants wanted to remain. Pushback was futile, however, given the university's forceful prerogative to retain the land. The land grant university used its status as a state corporation to overtake some of the buildings through eminent domain, the "...power of the government to take private land for public use."¹⁰² State-lead enclosure and demolition of prior topographies of community life paved the way for white, middle-class nuclear housing topographies rooted in the market-based good life fantasy.

Across the country, state, local governments and public as well as private universities weaponized this legal force during the post-war period of urban renewal push out. At the same time, working-class communities, predominantly communities of color, living in tenant-based systems throughout the campus area were targeted by urban-renewal oriented development, and struggled to not leave their life and connections to South Berkeley. After a few months warning and community pushback, the UC regent board formally took the 2.8 acre land tract as its rightful property. Still marked by demolishment one year later, the lot had transformed into makeshift parking lot for the neighborhood's cars, and facilitated space for a dump, abandoned in the wake of the administration's volatile developmental optimism. For many residents of the southside, the demolishment and steady vacancy land as a mark of future capital did not symbolize prosperity. Instead, the space represented a legacy of community foreclosure and abandonment, not expanded social services that they as state citizens were supposedly benefitting from.

¹⁰² Teka, Maddy, "The Taking of Property for Public Use."

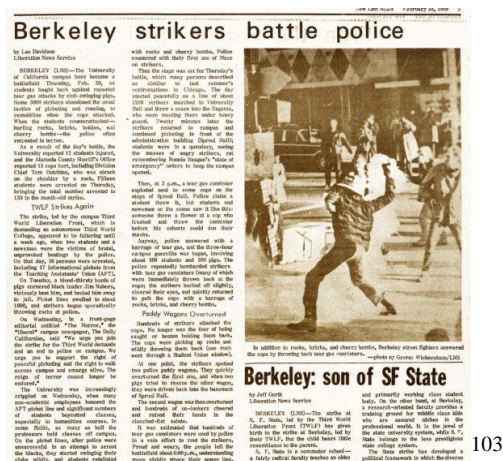


Figure 9: Liberation News Service, February 1969 article on the Third World Liberation Movement at UC Berkeley, in connection to previous ongoing rank-and-file organizing by radical students of color at San Francisco State across the bay.

The university continued to expand an institutional image of public selectiveness in hopes of attracting and appealing a predominantly middle- and upper-class white city constituency and funding pool. However, radical student organizing across the East Bay area and on the UCB campus continually tipped over the balancing acts this entailed. The 1964 Free Speech Movement demanded free political assembly and political association on campus radicalized students, influencing their involvement into the People's Park struggle. Many historians of New Left campus social movements and People's Park assert the right to free assembly as a major spark for the park. At the same time, other radical campaigns created critical foregrounding context for the park, including the Vietnam Day Committee, UC Berkeley Third World Liberation Front campaign, UC Berkeley Afro-American Association organizing, and the presence of Black Panther Party in Oakland and South Berkeley. Various networks of anti-racist, anti-capitalist and anti-colonial ideology influenced on and off-campus community activist influence in creating the park.

The Vietnam Day Committee of 1965 expanded spatial strategies beyond the explicit

¹⁰³ *Liberation News Service*

campus borders. At the height of the Vietnam war, an ongoing imperial political spectacle, the campaign implicated UC Berkeley as a political-economic technology and benefactor of the ongoing military occupation:

“Awash in federal research and development dollars, U.C. Berkeley and Stanford provided the intellectual superstructure..raw martial power and university expertise converged.¹⁷ Through regular demonstrations, Berkeley antiwar activists called attention to the military-industrial complex in their midst. Starting in October 1965, the Vietnam Day Committee sponsored marches from the Berkeley campus to the Oakland Induction Center to publicize its essential role in the Vietnam War..”¹⁰⁴

Student activists involved in the Vietnam day parade, combined their knowledge of the university’s regime of spatial hierarchy and financial priorities, as well as influence from the spatial strategies coming out of international rank-and-file decolonial movements. This action led participants explicitly off campus, down telegraph, and into Downtown Oakland, a powerful moment of students and non-students demystifying the material stakes of the university’s political-economic powers as a state corporation.

In the March 1968 issue of The UCB’s *Daily Californian*, the UCB Afro-American Student Union laid out demands for a “‘program of ‘BLACK STUDIES,’ a program that will be of and for black people. We demand to be educated realistically and that no form of education which attempts to lie to us, or..mis-educate us will be accepted.’”¹⁰⁵ The AASU politicized state higher education as a hegemonic business structured to value and produce more professional white middle-class economic subject hoods: “universities are wholesale producers of a mentality conducive to the continuation of America’s present national life..” one that the organizers had intimately and structurally “..witnessed to be in complete..contradiction to the wholesome

¹⁰⁴Murch, Donna. *Living for the City*, p. 112.

¹⁰⁵ AASU. “Proposal for Establishing a Black Studies Program”, pp. 1.

development of our people.”¹⁰⁶ In response, Chancellor Heyns promised the implementation of a program by the end of 1969 in the college of Letters and Sciences, attempting to integrate the disruptive political connotations of the material demands into the palatable participation frameworks of UCB bureaucracy.

By creating the possibility of a class that would be decided through the academic committee, the administration ignored the Black student’s overarching critique of university life for marginalized students, seeking to integrate rather than empower the newly-emerging marginalized student populations on campus. Student and community organizers took to constructing a class called “*Social Analysis 139X: Dehumanization and Regeneration of the American Social Order*,”⁵⁷ for that same fall. A consortium of faculty, students and community organizers planned to bring in the Black Panther Party’s Minister of Cultural Affairs Eldridge Cleaver as a focal guest lecturer. The class was provisionally allowed by administration; however, the Chancellor and President’s office covertly monitored the class participants, faculty supervisors, and syllabus¹⁰⁷. Administrators framed the possible on-campus social and political outcomes of the class as risk to be surveilled and managed, against the university’s own ideals of a homogenous, apolitical social identification.

The self-determined, free movement and profession by a Black Power organizer like Cleaver on campus symbolized a profound threat to the institution’s ability to uphold a particular socio-cultural insularity on campus and in its borderlands. From there the class was a potential risk of racialized, classed, and sexualized invasion by communist influences. Ultimately, the

¹⁰⁶AASU. pp. 1.

¹⁰⁷ Payne, Roz. “Eldridge Cleaver Controversy at UC-Berkeley, 1968-1969.”

administration ruled to bar Cleaver from teaching. In response, on October 28, 1969, a multi-racial coalition of students occupied Moses hall in protest, with banners reading “solidarity forever”, “end the regents' control” and “if not to learn?”¹⁰⁸ By occupying the building named after a U.S. slave-owner¹⁰⁹, students implicated the land as a domain of political-economic power. The display of unabashed ambivalence to university tradition and rules rooted in white supremacy and colonialism clarified these legacies in a spatial way by disrupting the flows of academic business as usual. I frame the story of the park’s creation with this occupational context to illustrate how the park protests were preceded by and linked to a broader grassroots tradition of student and non-student lead insurgent spatial occupation.

Administrators, with help of increased coordination between Berkeley and UC Police¹¹⁰, used racialized metrics of value and risk, deviance and innocence to govern appropriate and inappropriate knowledge production and spatiality on and off campus. In 1968, the Alameda County jail system held Black Panther leader Huey Newton as a result of regional surveillance and political repression targeted at black power organizers. Writing from jail, Newton recounted that “It was the Oakland police, the Berkeley police, the Highway Patrol, the Sheriff’s department and the national guard was standing by, so we see that they’re all part of one organization.”¹¹¹ The organizer mapped the reality of powerful, inconspicuous relationships between regional security apparatuses that defied municipal boundaries, following the shared goal of controlling non-white, non-middle class deviant life that defied municipal boundaries. From Newtons material experience, the different law enforcement apparatuses shared a capitalist

¹⁰⁸ Joseph, William Rorabaugh. *Berkeley at War: The 1960s*. p. 100.

¹⁰⁹ “Re: Proposal to Remove the Name from Moses Hall”, p. 1.

¹¹⁰ UC Bancroft Archives

¹¹¹ “Huey Speaks From Jail”. pg. 8.

and colonial stake of enclosing and oppressing black people's self-determination to resources, down to public space. While physically enclosed under the prerogatives of local racial capitalism to enclose and devalue black life, he also affirmed the difference between the rooted material struggle of black people that the BPP organized towards and the relatively "symbolic" revolutionary aspirations of white, middle-class sect within the East Bay New Left.

Cleaver's 1968 position on East Bay revolutionary politics touched on the complex contradictions that arose within multiracial possibilities of solidarity. The geographical proximity of the BPP to white New Left organizers—Savio in the Free Speech Movement, park organizers such as Frank Bardakee as well as Michael Delacour with People's Park—lead to shared strains of material solidarity, but coalition was also limited by white organizer's limited understanding of the specific plight of local black socioeconomically oppressed communities. At the same time, Huey's dialogue did not foreclose the necessity of cross-racial alliances in a long-term vision of overthrowing state racism as a product of colonialism and capitalism in which elite universities invested. Speaking to the Black Panther's and Third World Liberation Front's internal and external colonial analysis of the East Bay political-economic structures, the UC framed their borderlands enclosures as a positive "rehabilitation" saving the city populace as a whole.

The history of the land of South Berkeley and Dwight-Haste before the park grounds the contradictory university constituencies that the business of higher education represents as a "thick transfer point", where competing frameworks of social reproduction are legitimized or foreclosed. In the late 1960s, a temporary terrain of unprecedented social wage granted increased access to financial support for college, and unstructured free time off campus. At the core of the park's origin story are questions of social reproduction—resources and labor that sustains

productivity under capitalism. When California's industrial capitalist class no longer benefitted from investing in the social wage and pushed for welfare's devolution, subsequent local political-economic crisis shocks did not settle into a political legitimation for increased law and order without grassroots community pushback from student and community activists. These political fights were often waged in spatial terms. In turn, an emergent spatial justice tradition influenced the construction of People's Park which challenged the political-economic priorities of the UC through disrupting the boundaries of university property. In this context, University officials framed the mixed-use and income housing on the block of Haste Street and Dwight Way as an ongoing waste of space that was deviant, outside of, the university's post-war capital expansion strategy.

At a state-wide level, tuition revenue was framed as the logical way out of, or around, the dwindling state budget for the system, albeit always a short-term solution. In 1968, an experimental phase of neoliberalism, California Governor Ronald Reagan pushed for the unprecedented requirement of state university tuition as a way to make educational funding more financially efficient¹¹². This meant that development capital needed to match students as human capital. At a local level, stuck in a developmental holding period regarding the proposed construction on the 2.3-acre lot of formerly community land, "bounded" by Dwight Way and Haste Street, the university was short on the necessary precursory capital. Above, the Board of Regents maintained focus on pushing the development forward by any means necessary. While the land could be repeatedly legally framed as the university's property, it quickly did not fit the fantastic vision of servicing an expanded student body that the university had advertised for years. The tract, now makeshift parking lot, presented a crisis of political legitimacy that an

¹¹² Drummond, Michel. "The History of UC tuition since 1986", *The Daily Cal*.

increase in bureaucratic campus planning after the war meant welfare benefits for the civic body.

Let a Thousand Parks Bloom

The year was 1969: previous years of on and off-campus New Left, and radical Third-World, and Black Power organized rebellion to political-economic inequity, oppression and repression on and off UC Berkeley's expanded campus geography had shaken up the relatively suburban college town's liberal white middle class topography. Along the margins of the campus borderlands, overlapping groups of student and community organizers engaged in political critiques of the university as a state corporation, grasping at local, collective power through representational and material political demands. This meant self-determination over knowledge production as a right and material resource, not a selective service only meant a certain populace of people to manage the laboring class¹¹³.

Earlier 1960s notions of innocent and deviant action paved the way for the university's more overt intersections of state resource accumulation and grassroots movement repression in in the 1970s. A Feb 18th 1969 article for the *The Daily Cal* titled "The University Environment Present and Future"¹¹⁴, highlighted UC Berkeley's increase in private contracts to bolster student service building capacity. Decision-makers at a state-wide level placed increasing optimism in pay-as-you-go structures of "capital outlay"¹¹⁵ funding and revenue cycles versus the shrinking possibilities of federal grants. Long-term UC development trajectories were compared with a changing university "environment". Speculative capital was a top function and goal for UC's educational development, leading to profound shake-ups to resource distribution on and off-campus. Consequently, the South Berkeley neighborhood was home to current and former undergraduate and graduate students with new left political orientations that converged

¹¹³ See Ehrenreich, John and Ehrenreich, Barbara. "The Professional-Managerial Class".

¹¹⁴ "The University Environment Present and Future". P. 1.

¹¹⁵ "The University Environment Present and Future"

from a variety of regional and international contexts.

At the end of the decade, university and city power structures continually prioritized surveying and collecting data about the area and its risky sociocultural character. The university sought to adopt to the global demands of neoliberalism's experimental stages, shifts towards paradigms of increased productivity and flexibility, financialization, and police state securitization. However, radical social movement organizing along the North and West Oakland and South Berkeley borders continued, influencing the emergence of radical social mobilizing and organizing on and off campus, which posed a political threat to the institution's geographical political-economic power. A patchwork of movement building temporally and geographically coincided with the decentralized construction and fight for People's Park, which brought spatial justice to the forefront of student and community social movement strategy and national attention.

In early April of 1969, a patchwork group of South Berkeley community members, church and small business interests converged to create a plan of action in the face of the university's inaction on the now-destroyed 2.8-acre block of land between Dwight and Haste Streets, caddy corner to Telegraph Ave. The meeting place was the Red Square¹¹⁶ a small dress shop located just East of the park at 2507 Dwight Way that was owned by leftist, Free Speech Movement activists Michael Delacour and Lian Chu, who lived nearby and remained in the political southside community after leaving the UC. The meeting was a public forum of sorts, on how to generate the debris left from UCB's privately-contracted demolition into a space that affirmed the community's presence. Delacour proposed development of a community park without a permit. The idea of taking land by force and transforming it for the needs of the people

¹¹⁶ Dalzell, Tom. "Red Square Dress Shop."

reflected revolutionary sentiments from Communist Chairman Mao's *Little Red Book* that centered on the ideals of serving the people with state-controlled resources, and the Oakland-based Black Panther Party's 1967 *Ten Point Plan* demanding collective self-determined access to life-affirming resources that local political-economic elites denied working-class black communities. Student groups and campaigns mapped the university as an incubator of broader capitalist political-economic hierarchies that decolonial movements were working to dismantle worldwide. In the footsteps of the 1968 Third World College Strike at SF State demanding collective self-determination for marginalized students and local communities of color over educational curriculum and resources¹¹⁷, UCB students related issues of labor, class, gender and race to the institution's everyday enforcement of a local model of white, middle class status quo.

A patchwork network of student activists and south side residents signed on to transform the desolated lot that represented state austerity, infusing it with presence. Reportedly, the action started with only with a few hundred dollars, and utilized the Red Square as a center for sourcing of raw materials, and planning¹¹⁸. After attending the planning meeting, student activist Stew Albert took up publicity, writing a piece for the local radical publication *The Berkeley Barb*, calling for community action on April 20th. About a week after the initial creation of the park in April of 1969, UCB Chancellor Heyns addressed members of the university administration, faculty, and student body. His began with the proclamation; "We have a park that nobody asked for."¹¹⁹ Given the entrenched UC governance of the south Berkeley borderlands area as an aberrational region of tenuous and non-constituency, in the eyes of the university leader,

¹¹⁷ "STRIKE!... Concerning the 1968-69 Strike at San Francisco State College", *Foundsf*.

¹¹⁸ Dalzell.

¹¹⁹ Heyns, Roger.

“nobody” legitimately integrated into local white middle-class civil society had asked for the park. Yet, it stood, creating a shock that reverberated through all parts of a state in transition to modeling the economic doctrine of supply and demand as social policy. Heyn’s rational assertion to the university public shows the contradiction between the late 1960s UC model of education as domain of rational market-based actors and services, and the park community advocates’ desires to transform the land through a collective material assertion of the social wage. The park was demanded in a way unintelligible to the university’s selective logics of participatory campus planning, given that the land’s status as pending property was de-legitimized through the construction as part of the linear long-term expanded plan of student services. Which created a shock reverberating through all parts of a state modeling the economic doctrine of supply and demand. The root of the affront was that a diffuse group of people stretching across campus borders had gathered a sense of political autonomy significant enough to disrupt the conditions of urban planning forced on them, given the entrenched identification of south Berkeley area as an aberrational non-constituency.

Like housing policy during this period, the state university system was increasingly reliant on bond and debt economies that the golden rule of law and order legitimized, rather than a material expansion of long-term social resources that many in society expected and demanded. The park struggle held the potential to become a political struggle over the raw resource powers of the university, exposing the role of land as a university technology of capitalism which could be collectively transformed. The origin of People’s Park was an action of un-bounding property, which destabilized local distinctions between public and private land, public and private use. The community’s collective occupation and transformation of the land into a park challenged the university’s power to enclose and develop land into capital, and shook up the legitimacy of UC

Berkeley's spatial status quo. Ongoing actions surrounding the park destabilized the common sense of the institution's developmental imagination as beneficial and progressive to the whole city community.

After attending the initial planning meeting, Stew Albert took up publicity, writing a piece for the local radical publication *The Berkeley Barb* calling for community action on April 20th.

“A park will be built this Sunday between Dwight and Haste. The land is owned by the University which tore down a lot of beautiful houses in order to build a swamp. The land is now used as a free parking space. In a year the University will build build a cement type expensive parking lot which will fiercely compete with the other lots for the allegiance of Berkeley's Buicks.”¹²⁰

Promotion of the plan here and in community-dispersed pamphlets framed it as a form of utopic aspiration, and a space of community care and catharsis in the face of alienation caused by the university's complacency in racist and classist urban renewal demolition. While the demolition had transformed the land into a static, destructed space, community members believed in another destiny of a constructive, utopian space used by all. The satirical language of “fierce competition” between parking lots exemplifies that park activists and advocates conceptualized the university's development priorities in ways that mirrored local managerial signs of white, middle class suburban status like Buicks.

¹²⁰Albert, Stew. “The Call to Make the Park.”



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Figure 10 : Photo of community members participating in ongoing park construction.

On April 20th, 1969, a crowd of people, students, parents and children, and small business owners took up the call and came to help build: “Hundreds of people cleared the ground, planted trees, grass, flowers, and set up playground equipment. Free food is distributed.”¹²²The multifaceted resources provided at the park’s outset hints at the foundational influence of the international revolutionary framework of socialist aspiration through mutual aid and counter-productive socio-economic practices that organizers sought to model at the park, an aspirational idea and material practice. The raw materials, like wood, grass and soil, had been sourced through essentially all community mutual aid networks of at-will donation, from community members and local businesses as well as support from the Berkeley Free Church, a radical leftist congregation. At the outset of the park, the intentional practice of mutual aid created the grounds for people to participate in various different scales and consistencies, and also created potential for community connection and socioeconomic mutuality between small businesses, churches and activists. Notably, Mario Savio, public student figure of the free speech movement, came back from the U.K. where he lived after college to attend one of the daily park actions. He asserted to a crowd: “The great hope implicit in the People’s Park is that in our leisure time, so to speak, we

¹²¹ “The Battle for People's Park, Berkeley 1969: When Vietnam Came Home.” *The Guardian*.

¹²² “Chronology of People's Park - The Old Days*.”

will make the social revolution.”¹²³

Let a Thousand Parks Bloom, a film about the weeks of creating People’s Park, is filled with iconic imagery of flower crowns, children playing, and people dancing to music fits smoothly into a nostalgic, rosy picture of the 1960s hippie era in the East Bay. People smiling and shirtless, dancing and laying out on the newly-planted blocks of wood from hand to hand in the collective process of building a structure, possibly the infamous free stage.¹²⁴ A group of people can be seen collectively cramming onto a makeshift see-saw, and young children climbing on a newly-constructed playground. This footage illustrates how the park actions were retroactively understood by many in the local community and broader media as solely a community celebration and appreciation of open green space.

At the same time, grassroots sourced free food, green space, childcare and other resources exemplified practices of mutual aid, a long political genealogy in socialist-communist movements worldwide during the 20thC. Dominant images of the insular campus academic and socioeconomic life were once again put under threat through the People’s Park actions, in a more spatially and demographically diffuse way than the previous campus strikes and riots. Student organizers and non-student southside residents pictured transforming the debris of demolition into a communal space of creation. The image of People’s Park was not a meticulously planned out political campaign, which was in some ways the point. Decentralized, scaffolded action gave room for different student and non-student residents critiques of the university and city as interlocking structures of resource accumulation and dispossession.

¹²³ Winling, LaDale C. *Building the Ivory Tower*, p. 145.

¹²⁴ Lipton, Leonard. *Let a Thousand Parks Bloom*.



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Figure 11: Anonymous poster from 1969 park organizing titled “Who Owns the Park?”

Throughout the 1960s onwards, East Bay radical social movement organizing used cultural production to translate political orientation and strategy. Posters and statements created in support of People’s Park from 1969 onwards overtly framed UC’s dominion over land as a lineage of settler colonial resource extraction, a forced political-economic and cultural relation. The poster above, titled “Who Owns The Park?” framed the state university as what la papers on terms a political-economic technology of settler colonialism¹²⁶. The use of counter-history is significant here; the small plot of land was linked to a geographically local history of the state’s violent enclosure and retainment of Ohlone Indigenous communities ‘land and resources for property. Unthinkable in UC’s vision of settler sovereignty, a new terrain of possible symbolic and material solidarity through analyzing land as capital meant UCB's state legacy of resource capitalization held the potential to be deemed unobjective and uninventable.

¹²⁵ “Who Owns The Park?”, Posters from People’s Park 1969-Present.

¹²⁶ See paperson, la. ”Land. And the University is Colonial”

The decolonial, anti-capitalist rhetoric clarifies the longer history of the land students stood, its legacy as a site of oscillating dispossession and financialization shaped by federal and state policy; “The government gave the settlers a piece of paper called a land title in exchange for some money.” Echoing Marxist and Maoist political philosophy, this statement underscores the theoretical fragility of government property relationships to the land; other relation to the Bay Area’s land have existed prior and are imminently possible. In turn, given that student park advocates were supposed to dissonance their education from this legacy to join the prosperous middle class, subjects of linear educational success, the implication of students rejecting the states ahistorical vision of conquest allowed them to ideologically link the past to the current dispossession experienced throughout South Berkeley and the region.

Moving to the background, the indigenous person pictured serves as a representation of local Indigenous struggles of the Ohlone people, here referred to through the Spanish colonialist term “Costanoan”¹²⁷, a symbolic image that bolstered a local radical call to sustained action. However, the visual framing and the text’s linear rhetoric politically asterisks¹²⁸ the ongoing struggle and survival of local Indigenous Ohlone people, or the marginalization and erasure of Indigenous communities’ retroactive struggles to retain stewardship relations with the land. Bearing with the contradictory effects of white leftist’s symbolic, potentially un-material articulations of solidarity with indigenous autonomy and sovereignty, the poster maintains a de-naturalized state de-facto claims to land as future property, calling on its audience to picture the diffuse campus as a product of violence and force. The title ‘s questioning tone brings attention

¹²⁷ The Ohlone people who continue to steward land known as the Bay Area were long defined as and referred to by California public imaginaries as the “Costanoan people”.

¹²⁸ Tuck and Wang define “asterisking” as the various political, economic and sociocultural processes that structurally obscures the retroactive, entrenched harm done to Indigenous communities throughout the history of the settler colonial project. For more, see Tuck & Yang, 2012.

to the desolation of the block's former university and non-university affiliated community that lived in mixed-unit housing, many of whom held, in the eyes of state and university actors, threatening and extinguishable political identities. The land of the park is framed as one falsely-bordered section of capital, which might have fueled a collective vision of the material power in demanding that members of the higher educational system engage with the land in a less neutral, passive manner. Ongoing popularity of this questioning poster in the historicization of the park illustrates the significance of counter-hegemonial politicized community building through solidarity and mutual aid as mundane revolutionary acts, practices that could potentially aid in disrupting patterns of enclosure.

Questions of ownership and community power shaped the dialogue of many park organizers and supporters, reflecting the emergence of a new paradigm of relating to land as a domain of political power. In deciding how to fashion administrative response, Chancellor Heyns drew into a buffer or stalemate. His response can be understood as an effort to delegitimize the potential for retroactive multi-issue material rebellion against the institutions restructured economic priorities. Heyns held a liberal middle-of-the-road line in the ongoing political discussion, relating to the park similarly to how he had previously approached the Afro-American Association and the TWLF struggles, when he had affirmed the regimented benefits of a multicultural, multidisciplinary university with appropriate services versus free-association with material politics. Holding the line to counter antagonization of the broader community watching his actions, Heyns delineated well-meaning public calls for green space, while upholding the prosperous civic benefits of property rights and state security. However, conservative Governor Ronald Reagan had more accelerated, forceful political plans in store for the college town. In his neoliberal view of education as a service, not a right, the quasi suburban

quasi urban liberal college was too unordered and rowdy before the park, a symbol of potential political- economic revolt.

On May 15th, 1969, the infamous “Bloody Thursday” conflict began when the Governor ordered State Troopers, followed a day later by the National Guard, into the city, in order to instill law and order in the city’s South Side borderlands area. In the eyes of state administrators like Reagan with the long-term imperative to obliterate the social welfare state of yore for a market of individuals¹²⁹, urban multi-cultural areas like Oakland linked to south campus through the already famous hippie stretch of Telegraph Avenue, was an always a risky borderland to control with further racial capital accumulation. Wielding the iron stick of law and order, local government and the university, aided by Governor Reagan first called in the State Troopers first.

Protests broke out along Telegraph avenue when a group of UC affiliated southside organizers and students walked up telegraphy avenue to take part in physically defending the park; they found a battalion of the “blue meanies” or “pigs”¹³⁰, as termed by park organizers and advocates in local radical press, and subsequently, more than 2,000 to 3,000 people engaged in weeks of rioting against the police¹³¹. Reagan made the incisive all for the national guard to occupy the city. Government and media narratives framed the park as a crisis of moral and lawful order, symbolizing a threat to the stability of prosperity rooted in the market that underwrote rational liberal society. Reagan’s fixation on quelling Berkeley coincided with state-

¹²⁹ Per David Harvey’s text on the birth of Neoliberalism, we can understand that this period of time was the creative stages of Neoliberalism, and Reagan came to national political power later at the same time that Thatcher did in England. The anti-welfare “iron lady” famously stated, “There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first.”
<https://newlearningonline.com/new-learning/chapter-4/neoliberalism-more-recent-times/margaret-thatcher-theres-no-such-thing-as-society>

¹³⁰Office of the Chancellor. “People’s Park Resume”.

¹³¹ Office of the Chancellor.

wide the repression of further potential urban rebellions against interlinked police and property powers exemplified in the 1965 riots and rebellion in the South-Central LA fiscally-abandoned, highly policed black neighborhood of Watts¹³². Notably, the radical Berkeley Free Church Minister Richard York responded to a week of rioting on May 25th with the proclamation: “The South campus is a white ghetto—it is oppressed like Watts is oppressed. And both are little Vietnam.”¹³³ In the context of York’s position as a white leftist, the instinct to parallel police occupation in Watts and South Berkeley here flattened the distinct political-economic structures underwriting anti-black police violence. At the same time, York’s comment illustrates the mirroring analysis asserted by park protest participants between the technical power of racist military violence domestically and abroad to protect the property of the state.

For suburban-raised, white middle-class young people who witnessed the shock of military force for the first time the weeks of the protests and police occupation, it might have bolstered the legitimacy to student leftist’s analysis of the liberal, rational university structure as woven together with the domestic and international military state. The long-term rights of racial capitalists who gained from not letting go property rights were to be enforced no matter what the administration professed. In thinking about the effects of Bloody Thursday as a media object of political crisis, I return to Ruth Wilson Gilmore’s words on the social warfare state: “Ruth Wilson Gilmore point out that in the late 1960s era, social policies were offloaded onto carceral

¹³² “Analysis: Watts Riots Shifted State to the Right, but New Demographics Pushed It Left.” *Los Angeles Times*.

In his campaign speech, Reagan “demanded heightened police powers, and said that California’s urban streets had become ‘jungle paths after dark.’”

One part of this paper that I wanted to explore more is the relationship between spatial and racial justice during the mid-twentieth century, particularly the political and geographical similarities between liberal and conservative treatment of the Watts rebellions and the use of similar pathologizing language of deviance in the ongoing repression of rebellions throughout the east bay.

¹³³ “Address by Richard York, Sunday May 25, 1969”, Graduate Theological Union.

geographies of accumulating surplus. The images of “disorder that became ‘crime’ had particular urban and racial qualities and the collective characteristics of activists (whose relative visibility as enemies was an inverse function of their structural lack of power) defined the face of the individual criminal.” In this context, it is pertinent that the sympathy given to the park actors was in racial capitalist’s eyes, a dangerous precedent for sympathy towards urban rebellion across the golden state that resisted individual logics of social deviance.

An article published in the *SF Chronicle* on May 25th, 1969 reiterated the tensions that the construction of People’s Park set forward for the UC administration; the ‘sudden liberation’ of the land through the park created a challenge to the administration’s power to enclose and subsequently abandon land while claiming it as property:

“The People’s Park land unquestionably belongs to the U.C...optioned as early as 1956 but there had never been enough money to acquire and develop it. In June, 1967, U.C. finally paid 1.3 million for the land with the announced intention of either making it a soccer field plus volleyball and basketball courts or building student apartments and dormitories. The sudden ‘liberation’ of the park area left Chancellor Roger Heyns and Administrative Vice Chancellor Earl Cheit in a bind.”¹³⁴

The affective image of the elite administrators passively caught in a “bind” illuminates the crisis that the park represented as a fugitive occupation of surplus resources that were supposed to “unquestionably” belong to the Regents, not the broader university. State government’s ambivalence over the park gave way to political fracture points in the transitional period between the previous tentative welfare state model of conditional rights and services, to the deindustrialized warfare state model that took root in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The technology of law and order was used as a tool to de-legitimize and foreclose the political possibilities of deviance against the state-wide market of land accumulation which underwrote

¹³⁴ *SF Chronicle*, May 25th, 1969.

the UC as a state corporation. The direct military force displayed on “Bloody Thursday”, and the illusion that the UC had “no choice” but to uphold the law, privileged the financial right of the university as a state corporation to foreclose the material demands made through activists’ Marxist-socialist analysis of the land.

Conservative Berkeley Mayor Wallace Johnson had long campaigned against the presence of political ‘rebels’ imagined as infiltrating the peace and prosperity of the city. After the media spectacle of started on May 15th, SF Chronicle covered the city leader’s reaction and response. In the accompanying photo to the article and the text, Johnson is framed focusing in initial the *Berkeley Barb* article from April 18th in promotion of the construction, specifically the desire for “the park to be a cultural, political freak out and rap center”¹³⁵ for the south Berkeley community. The mayor framed the advertisement as an intention towards deviance; he delineated the “good-willed” desires of silent, well-ordered residents for green space and a park from dangerous calls for material transformation of land through collective action, a racialized fear pinpointed in the focus on the image of a” rap center”. The conservative also firmly aligned himself with Governor Reagan, who had initially framed the radical leftist publication as a public enemy in inciting “the latest Berkeley uprising.”¹³⁶ The city’s top official followed the lead of state officials, blaming the UC for not properly laying claim to their property in time. The mayor framed the park and its grassroots planning¹³⁷ an inherently unsafe and volatile that had to be staunch by any means possible, given its possibility to spread across the city: “Johnson said that he believed that switching from buildings to a piece of ground was an activist tactic that

¹³⁵ Albert, Stewart, *The Berkeley Barb*.

¹³⁶Weed, Jim, “Mayor Analyzes Battle of Berkeley “, p. 3.

¹³⁷Ruth Wilson Gilmore’s text” Forgotten Places and the Seeds of Grassroots Planning”

would appeal to persons with a sincere interest in trees and grass.”¹³⁸ The park was more than a threat to 2.8 tracts of state property, it was a threat to the legitimacy of the settler colonial state narrative of objective, property relation between citizen and land as well as resources overall.

Upholding the right to property over collective access, the mayor claimed that the park was antithetical to Berkeley ideals of “..responsible individualism”¹³⁹. Framing the park as a violent aberration from the city’s normative sociocultural topography of property underlying all common spaces of urban life; “They number maybe a few hundred who take the view that they are the people. We are going to have to make some changes in our system if we are to assume that physical proximity to property justifies taking over property.”¹⁴⁰ For the neoliberal city leader in the precursory stages of golden state Neoliberalism, the fight for the campus land was not about campus services, it was about municipal property, and the future value it held. Johnson also connected the disruption to property as part of a broader recent trend of public space and land occupation by people that local real estate and society had pushed out, as he asserted that “..the current Berkeley campaign is a repeat of last summer when street people attempted to take over the 2400 block of Telegraph.”¹⁴¹ Here, the mayor pinpoints a central group of political actors within the conflict as “street people”, a descriptor for displaced and unhoused people on the south side, or people engaging in any form of behavior deemed deviancy by the state in public space.

The *Chronicle* and other media outlets continued to sensationalize the unfolding accounts of administrative and state legislature response to the park action, and law enforcement’s

¹³⁸Weed.

¹³⁹ Weed.

¹⁴⁰Weed.

¹⁴¹Weed

violence against protestors. The exceptional nature of the use of bayonet and tear gas against what was assumed to be a predominantly white crowd informed the media's focus. Significantly, it was effectively unthinkable that middle-class and upper-class white kids, "the many students." that were reported to have aided "the street people" describing people living unhoused in Berkeley—to create the park could be subjected to the "rule of the gun and the stick". The government's imposition of law and order across southside and central parts of the city's affluent, white suburbia created fractions within the liberal topographical imaginations of state higher education as a pacified, apolitical common good.

In the 1960s and 70s, the government and media imaginary "Street people" was a conspicuous but also mundane talking point to describe both people who students who inhabited the south campus urban public space daily, and people who resided there. In crisis loaded *Chronicle* description, the university is framed simultaneously as a powerful institution, and placed in a "bind" of static inaction, a crisis of dominating objectivity. While the media touted the "unquestionable" nature of the university's right to the property as a part of a broader precursory land grab in the southside area. However, the articles passive tone underscores a sense of the administration's bound relationship to capital. The public illusion of administrative powerlessness and the inevitability military force had always shaped the institution's regimented frontier logics of acquiring and developing indigenous resources into property for the good of a hegemonic civic body, overall for the good of private profit. However, recent urban student rebellions, and the recent politicization of the park land created the possibility for this tension to be more visible to the public eye.

The park's main public figureheads, Michael Delacour and Mario Savio, were young white radicals originally from suburbia, and outwardly defied the university's governance of its

white, middle class constituency as an objective public service. In this context, Bloody Thursday created thick grounds for media spectacle, threatening UC administration, politicians, business elite's maintenance of educational hierarchies. From one angle, the media attention paid to the initial construction of the park, and the quick fencing by the administration, as well as the state's response to community organizing was a way for the organizer's revolutionary ideals to gain traction. However, the possibilities for a nuanced set of material goals and demands that creating a park represented to different facets of the community was lost in the mainstream media translation of the spectacularized events.

With political anxiety at the thought of more borderland rebellions like that of the previous five years, Chancellor Roger Heyns tenuously responded to the out of control crisis presented by the park through a public radio forum with student senate and park organizers, as well as city manager and mayor. University and city administrators touted the optimistic possibilities of institutionalizing the political project as a university-planned participatory park or recreational space. contracted out by the university or the city.¹⁴² Heyns worked to present a narrative of open green space as the single-issue debate regarding the park, noting the possibility for "Football and softball fields, play areas for children, volleyball and basketball courts.." as "one possibility"¹⁴³, desires that had already manifested at the park. In a call for unity rooted in euphemistic, egalitarian notions regarding the university's constituency, Kerr asserted that "Everyone seems to agree regardless of political persuasion." that sports should be involved. With a tone of technocratic inevitability, the administrator affirmed that "The development that has already taken place..." to model a possible university-owned, participatory green space,

¹⁴² Heyns, Roger. W. "People's Park Interviews " 1:30.

¹⁴³ Heyns. 1:45.

stressing the necessity for controlled discussion of “the nature of” planning by administrative technocrats. He stressed the importance of planning and coordination, while eliminating the “important ingredient...” of representing ideals of spontaneous development. The administrator’s emphatic need to control and regiment threatening versus valuable political integration of community and campus documents that university saw itself as not “unresponsive” to wishes of the university community, student body, and elsewhere with respect to “facility” use.

Countering the narrative of participatory campus governance, Associated Student Body President Palmer projected that at the time of discussion, “..there [was] overwhelming student..and..faculty support” for “the concept of a park as put forth by the people of that area..over 15,000 students voted in favor”¹⁴⁴ Student government support of the park, along with the general student and faculty body, illustrates the growing on-campus tensions between the unity of politicized consensus between outer and inner university enclaves, and the insular university ethos that UC admin continually wished to legitimize. In response to Mayor Johnson’s assertion at the benefits of visible, participatory local city planning, Frank Bardakee, a park advocate representing the cause, quoted local Black Panther Party organizer Eldridge Cleaver who “ ..believed that the only way we were going to get serious about revolution was when we had something in the soil to defend.”¹⁴⁵ For a young white, middle-class individual like Bardakee to proudly emulate the local socialist frameworks of collective resource access on public radio demonstrates the ideological and geographical influence of rank and file Black Power strategies on park organizing. Heyns euphemistically laid down the rational legitimacy of the

¹⁴⁴ Heyns, Roger W. et. Al. “People’s Park Interviews”.

¹⁴⁵ Heyns.

administration's recent law and order strategies as a method of upholding city-wide public safety:

“...many of the people who became sympathetic with the notion of the park, who had been sympathetic to previous causes past summer and fall, were relatively innocent, motivated by some sincere concern, as in the case of People's Park, for grass, open space...But that basic volatile mix is there, and I think that's the thing that needs to be understood... last July, we had the eruption over Telegraph Ave, and essentially the same presume was being asserted...we had to declare states of emergency, there was serious violence in the city..both times the basic premise being asserted that this was..the tuft..this was their turf, where the riff of the city didn't run, and where all pigs should stay out. There were various causes set up to carry out this premise, the first cause was sympathy with students in France, the second was they wanted to express sympathy with the demonstrators at the Chicago Convention...I think we need to recognize that a tremendous amount of violence occurred...”¹⁴⁶

The administrator temporally and geographically connected the ongoing park crisis into a narrative of local political dissent threatening citizen's welfare from all sides, without a rational grounding character with the “sincere” members of society. Furthermore, Heyns' statement demonstrates the long-term and co-constitutive nature of the city and university's technologies of political surveillance and pacification, both aligned in defense against the ‘opposition’ represented by the Southside area. The park was a visible media and political spectacle, which facilitated a heightened political awareness on the small block of city land, the same land that the university had utilized eminent domain to intentionally govern the area as a risk and valuable borderlands space. Notably, Kerr's underlying rhetorical use of “relatively innocent” to place white, middle class college kids and city residents demonstrates the university illustrates the racialized anxiety produced by disruption to borderland property control. In the months follow the initial inception of the park, political discussions over the possibility for a community-controlled fate of state land were siphoned into single-issue liberal frameworks of individualized, representational democracy. The Chancellor framed the park as “not a student issue”¹⁴⁷.

¹⁴⁶ Heyns.

¹⁴⁷ Heyns.

Nevertheless, UC's investment in domestic and international spatial logics of colonial-capitalist violence and accumulation reflected onto perceptions of the spatial justice conflict. On a poster titled "Join The Struggle"¹⁴⁸, park organizers asserted that "The black movement, the student movement, the anti-war movement have begun to resurrect the great American tradition of fighting back. Our fight is spreading and we will continue it." The language of "spread" creates a sense of Furthermore, news coverage of the state occupation connected the domestic space of conflict to the ongoing U.S. military agenda abroad in Vietnam, a war that many had already preemptively bookmarked in historical past. An article from the May 24th issue stated in awe, "Berkeley is fast becoming Reagan's Vietnam...parallels are striking..police action ten days ago has escalated into a full-scale military operation, with three battalions of infantry occupying the city."¹⁴⁹ Coverage of the park developments in May and June of 1969 held frequent juxtapositions between the U.S. Military occupation of Vietnam and National Guard and California state trooper presence in Berkeley, a supposedly free, liberal city turned upside down in a week. U.S. media outlets transposed the residual threat to U.S. federal policy posed by Vietnams' self-determination onto the multi-racial, working-class organizing space of People's Park. Through its transformation into media spectacle, the scale and disorder of state response to the park challenged the U.S. imperial media's perpetuation of rhetoric identifying a clear external or internal threat to national socioeconomic order.

During the same time, The Black Panther Party took up the politicization of urban space and mutual aid towards revolutionary aims through their Survival Programs¹⁵⁰, that provided free groceries, breakfast, and medical tests to black residents of North, West Oakland and South as

¹⁴⁸ "Join the Struggle"

¹⁴⁹"Berkeley now Reagan's Vietnam", *Guardian*.

¹⁵⁰ "Black Panther Party Community Survival Programs"

well as Flatland Berkeley¹⁵¹. Furthermore, the party understood the power of cultural production, exemplified their newspaper, *The Black Panther*, which produced media counteracting dominant political narratives of law and order framing social movement organizers as irrational idealists or violent criminals. The party's media team utilized collage to denaturalize liberal and conservative narratives of rational and irrational political action, reframing state municipalities, including the university, as domains of power to decide who lives and dies.



Figure 12: The Black Panther “Fascism in America” Issue

In the May 1969 on state political repression, the media team dedicated a section to the ongoing park struggle and law enforcement occupation. The top photograph on page nine shows a cloud of tear gas, dispersed from a national guard helicopter, settling over the UCB campus. Below, a line of actively armed state troopers are a corresponding object of focus. Here, the

¹⁵¹ Murch, Donna. P.

¹⁵² “Fascism in America”, *The Black Panther*. P. 5.

apolitical line that chancellor UC administrators and state officials drew around the campus is delegitimized through the dialectical quality of the collage. In demonstrating collaboration from the university in a repressive politics of force and misinformation, the collage implicated the UC, city, county and state law enforcement within a diffuse but interconnected “fascist power structure”¹⁵³. Focusing on the aspirational socialist goals of the park struggle, the party publicized tentative solidarity with the people on the streets of Berkeley.

The collage de-obscured the student and community’s forceful desire to claim the collective social wage, as Black Panther Party was motivated by an end to capitalist and colonialist accumulation that the university’s demolition and the ongoing state repression reflected. The people’s occupation of community land was undoubtedly a symbolical struggle for many of the middle-class suburban college kid participants than for the black low-income people served by the party. Nevertheless, the BPP framed the park protests as a source of collective power that belied territories set out by the state and state university. UC Berkeley as well as the cities of Berkeley and Oakland security teams surveilled the revolutionary party’s members autonomous movement throughout the South Berkeley borderlands. In this context, we might understand the use of media production in support of the park as attempts to display a sense of material solidarity rooted the local and state-wide power of force over truth.

In the midst of unprecedented police occupation of the city, Committee on Grounds and Buildings invited Berkeley Police Chief Beall to its June 7th meeting¹⁵⁴. He started with what he framed as a “clear point” --the danger and destruction posed by People’s Park’s mere existence-- even as a symbol; “The misbelief that there is..a legitimacy to the Park cause simply because

¹⁵³ *TBP*

¹⁵⁴ Committee on Grounds and Buildings Meeting Transcript, 7. Jun. 1969. The Bancroft Library, CU-149.

there is a community of people who say that they need a park there and now. It should be obvious that the land belongs to the university..” The threat was not only the “illegitimate” claim to “public property” but the “violent” nature of the event; “a large group of people either took possession of the land—or tried to by force.” Adhering to Reagan’s rhetoric of the racialized threat of mob rule, the chief stated that what was at stake was greater threat than atomized property losses, but fundamentally “the desire to change the form and structure of our society”. The park represented a challenge to the core state functions of enclosure and financialization throughout the history of California’s settler colonial and racial capitalist expansion. People’s Park set a precedent for local organizers to challenge the university’s opaque processes of land management and profit, creating new terrains of political struggle that defied campus borders.

The spontaneous and communal nature of People’s Park was a rebellion outwards from the confines of the University’s contained, individualistic vision of productive socioeconomic management. While the university enclosed the park via fence until the early 1970s, it remained an ongoing point of political-economic anxiety for administrators, and the community did not forget about the struggle as an idealized, irrational past. Organizer’s socialist rhetoric of community leisure as a revolutionary practice symbolized a disruption to the administration’s streamlined goals to re-accumulate land as capital. People’s Park represented an anti-capitalist collectivist counter-topography of mutual construction and benefit that disrupted state governmental and university political visions of strategic insularity on campus, which at the end of the day could be closed off as Regents property, not a campus open for all. State and city legislatures, the university, and city government responded to the People’s Park as a threat to the social status quo, and the state’s power to enclose land for private revenue. Ruth Wilson Gilmore might argue that early neoliberal boosters like Reagan took the spectacle and ran with it, taking

ideals of liberal objective knowledge production and taking it to its Fascist property-protecting extremes. Tellingly, in a report from the Senate Committee for Government Operations in July of 1969 on People's Park¹⁵⁵ to the Governor, the writers asserted that the problem "necessarily goes beyond Berkeley¹⁵⁶"; the report included a summary on previous years of East Bay radical student labor, anti-war and decolonial organizing, with a whole page on the BPP and TWLF's "inroads" with local high schools. One plot of liberated land could set a precedent for the disillusion of proper suburban, white, nuclear life symbolized by the sanctity of schools. The report continued to stress the critical nature of property loss as a core functionality of collective political action, illustrating the significance of education as a domain of capital strategy and accumulation, and the threat of collective demands to the paradigm of land and all resources as property.

In November of 1969, the Alameda County District Attorney published a report on the Grand Jury's findings on the People's Park conflict. the introduction disclaims that the totality of causes for such an upheaval were "insurmountable...." given the "...many diverse and intricate social and political forces that have contributed to the current atmosphere wherein violence is used to obtain objectives."¹⁵⁷ Yet, the report outlined the proceedings and "probable causes" of the "violence" through the power of pathology-oriented frameworks of understanding and controlling criminality: "The actions of militant leaders and publications" were imagined to have forced innocent, "apathetic" city residents into deviance. Furthermore, the report concluded that what was needed was more knowledge on criminal deviance, demanding that "all law enforcement agencies improve their riot control training with. Emphasis on the psychology and

¹⁵⁵ "Testimony", Committee on Government Operations.

¹⁵⁶ "Testimony". P.1.

¹⁵⁷ "Summary on People's Park Findings" Alameda County District Attorney, p. 2.

tactics of crowd and riot control, and that adequate funding be provided.”¹⁵⁸ The objective was to protect society from further disorder, meaning further questions to the relationships of foreclosure, extraction and displacement that foregrounded the re-entrenchment of socioeconomic inequity within the Bay Area’s postindustrial society.

Ronald Reagan was one figurehead within California government’s creative experimentation phase with neoliberalism during the late 1960s and 1970s pushing the prior welfare state apparatus into the state warfare role and capitals junior partner. At the same time, conservatives like the Governor still valorized the institution of higher education as a vehicle for business, and the creation of proper rational and independent citizens who symbolized a lack of need for state support. The governor publicly rejected the growing sentiments in support of dismantling property relationships, and politicizing UC’s local land management as a cyclical and volatile process of accumulation and dispossession. One year later in 1970 while speaking to the Commonwealth Club of California, the anti-state statesman proudly claimed that

“For more than 100 years the campus in America has represented society’s highest devotion to objectivity, a place where reason ruled over emotion, where the cultural values of our civilization were passed on..pushing forward the frontiers of knowledge..Too often, in the past 7/12 years, we have forgotten that primary goal. But now the volume of revolutionary rhetoric has been lowered. There few street confrontations and fewer buildings being captured.”¹⁵⁹

And yet, despite the narrative that the destruction to national order had been killed at the root, People’s Park remained an affront to the University of California’s legal right to the land as” capital for constructing universities for the principal goal of growing industry.”¹⁶⁰ As part of an anti-Vietnam war protest in 1972¹⁶¹, the park was de-fenced. In turn, community activists turned towards the framework of user-control to retain autonomy over the land’s future outside

¹⁵⁸ “Summary on People’s Park Findings” p. 2.

¹⁵⁹ “Excerpts of Remarks by Governor Ronald Reagan Commonwealth Club of California”.

¹⁶⁰ paperson, la. Land. And the University is Settler Colonial

¹⁶¹ “People’s Park Chronology-Modern History of People’s Park”

of development; the People's Park Council emerged as a mediating force of advocacy for the preserving the space, and also mediated the austere relationship between city, university administrators and inhabitants of the park. Local activists took to the fight of asserting autonomous decision-making over the space for community gatherings, concerts and political assembly. However, against increasing state-wide welfare retraction and local off-loading, individualized, single-issue political questions of property ownership, leasing, and responsibility ruled the day in discussions regarding the park's visible counter topography of social reproduction.

In 1978, CA Proposition 13 passed, cementing a legacy of anti-state state privatized deregulation through a 1% cap property taxes, a key revenue source for social services. Ongoing budget cuts from the state legislature in the name of increased efficiency coincided with state regent's orientation towards short-term bond financing in order to retain revenue for basic services. In turn, the dawn of the park as a distinctly "user-controlled" public area in the 1970s delineated the demand for a park into a representational right to the space. Yet, the park and its community continued to threateningly create further fracture points in UC Berkeley's smooth, unquestioned spatial control over local geography of property accumulation, and the kinds of sociality that were allowed to take place and flourish within and along the campus boundaries.

In this austere context, on December of 1979, UC Berkeley Dir. of Community Affairs George Scotland responded to a concerned letter to Chancellor Bowker from Richard Letts who lived at 2524 Dwight Way, caddy-corner to the park¹⁶². The letter was a negative one regarding the encampment of displaced people that found refuge and community at the People's Park. The

¹⁶² Scotlan, George. "Letter to Dr. Richard Letts"

job of Community Affairs for the UC mirrors HR (Human Resources) in the corporate world. As an official spokesperson for the UC's public image, specifically legitimizing its borderlands relationship of property manager to south Berkeley, Scotland filled an integral role, given the proceeding decades of student political actions. In the general administrative response, he assured that action had been taken. Scotland utilized decontextualized metrics of criminality, assuring the south side resident that something was being done about the park "problem" population:

"..the university is working to resolve the problems..detailed in your letter to the Chancellor. The People's Park Council felt they could deal with the problem and asked the university for the opportunity to resolve the situation. The council soon discovered and publicly admitted that they had no control over the present overnight campers. They also concur that it is time that the university take some corrective measures." ¹⁶³

At a time when stretched-thin local municipalities increasingly off-shored the devalued brunt of social reproduction labor onto local communities, the UC Chancellors office was principally concerned with keeping the narrative of the park in line with images of individual responsibility and deviance. Foreclosing responsibility placed on the university's socioeconomic crisis to the street person in view, "overnight campers", off-loading of responsibility over the land it sought to enclose shows that developing land only mattered to the university when it could spike short term revenue, to be invested in shares for further equity. The concerned tone of the administrative statement does not include any mention of the widespread unemployment and inflation in basic cost of living that contextualized people forced into the public sphere to survive.

¹⁶³ "Letter to Dr. Richard Letts"

In a manipulation of the periods' capitalist surplus accumulation as a political crisis of sociocultural deviance, Scotlan affirmed with a veneer of public benefactor-ship that UC recognized “..growing support for action that has been expressed by community groups, concerned citizens and others and its responsibility to enforce the regulations.”¹⁶⁴ Ten years out its birth as a collective park, UC austere HR statements bely structural connection to or responsibility for the land that its regents at the same time always had its eyes on privatized desires to enclose as future speculative capital. If a resource was not profitable, it was not to be invested in by more than the baseline enforcement of laws that would keep a veneer to peace for wealthy. In this profoundly austere terrain of social reproduction, the 1980s and 90s gave way to the increasing importance of political mutual aid networks at the park.

¹⁶⁴ Scotlan.

Recreational Capital and Survival Networks At Peoples Park

City of Berkeley

LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION
1180 MILVIA STREET
BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA 94704

NOTICE OF DECISION
FOR MEETING OF: November 19, 1984

PROPERTY ADDRESS: Dwight Way, Bowditch & Haste Street

Also Known As: People's Park

OWNER OF PROPERTY: University of California
(First Name) (Last Name)
608 University Hall, Berkeley, CA 94720
(Mailing Address) (City) (State) (Zip Code)

APPLICANT: Landmarks Preservation Commission
(First Name) (Last Name)
1180 Milvia Street Berkeley, CA 94704
(Mailing Address) (City) (State) (Zip Code)

WHEREAS, a public hearing has been duly and regularly held upon the above property, and the Landmarks Preservation Commission, being fully advised, has voted to (APPROVE/DENY) the application to Declare the site commonly known as People's Park a landmark for its historic and cultural importance to the City of Berkeley.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE it Resolved by the Landmarks Preservation Commission of the City of Berkeley that the decision is deemed final unless it is reversed, upon appeal, by the Council of the City of Berkeley.

VOTE: Ayes: Nanning, Stefe, Youngmeister, Kasin Sparks
Nays: Quane, Hawthorne Abstains: Ehrenberger Absent: None

DATE NOTICE MAILED: 12/14/84 THE APPEAL PERIOD EXPIRES AT 5 PM 12/23/84
File Appeal with City Clerk By This Date.

cc: City Clerk
residents of Property
Property owner
Public Works
Codes/Inspections
Department of Planning

ATTEST: Wile Tolbert
SECRETARY

79165

Figure 13: City of Berkeley, 1984. Notice of Decision solidifying landmark status for People’s Park.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the rise of global finance capital and its uneven geographies of risk and accumulation restructured the historic Telegraph Avenue, and broader South Campus area. A growing population of community members were displaced by the private housing market, which the university increasingly invested in as a state landlord¹⁶⁶. People’s Park advocates—residents and not—might have a somber feeling that the space’s recent politicized past

¹⁶⁵“CITY OF BERKELEY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION NOTICE OF DECISION, PEOPLE’S PARK AS LANDMARK” Peoplespark.org.

¹⁶⁶

had been forgotten in the minds of many residents including students. In the meanwhile, those in power in the city and university had taken on a tactical strategy of austere forgetfulness, turning to a regime of anti-homeless policing and planning. Nevertheless, there was still a significant scaffolding of community interests advocating for the park, legally represented to the university, city and state through the People's Park Defense Council¹⁶⁷, which was formed for the purpose of legal advocacy that could maintain the user-controlled format and presence of the park. In 1984, as a result of community activism from this group, the City of Berkeley donned the park with landmark status.¹⁶⁸

At the same time, in late 1980s and 1990s, racialized and classed anxieties surrounding criminal deviance linked back to “Broken window theory”, the belief that “seemingly minor instances of social and physical disorder in urban spaces can contribute to an atmosphere of lawlessness that encourages more serious crimes.”¹⁶⁹ reshaped local police departments across the country, as a result of Rudi Giuliani's anti-homeless Mayor ship of New York City. A stark period of postindustrial urban restructuring contextualized the 1991 UC volleyball construction, and park defense struggle, what Neil Smith calls shifts towards “the revanchist city”¹⁶⁹, profit-driven development and government as well as medias' de-facto ambivalence and austerity regime towards people displaced by processes of financial accumulation¹⁷⁰. Networks of land defense, mutual aid and solidarity organizing at the park during this time exemplified the active

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¹⁶⁸ City of Berkeley. Notice of Decision solidifying landmark status for People's Park.

¹⁶⁹ Smith, Neil. “The New Urban Frontier”, p.3.

¹⁷⁰ Smith, Neil. P. 220.

creation and inhabitation of counter-topographical¹⁷¹ spaces that Don Mitchell terms geographies of survival¹⁷².

While the struggle the city enclosure of Tompkins Square Park in same year became a central location homeless justice on the Lower East Side¹⁷³, People's Park's significance as undeveloped land along the central Dwight Way and Telegraph Ave transformed as unhoused people and activists asserted the right to social reproduction, taking refuge from the overlapping city and campus police surveillance and harassment topographies. In both parks, unhoused people connected to the normatively public parks were direct targets of policing for mundane tasks like resting, listening to music, eating, talking to friends, sleeping and as Eric Gold Fischer has noted, performing alternative forms of sustainable relationship to the built environment¹⁷⁴. In Berkeley, BPD and UC police converged in a regimented policing of People's Park, further displacing people as individual statistics of deviance, not parts of the community worthy of social services. In the meanwhile, grassroot mutual aid politics like that modeled at the park filled in the devalued labor of social reproduction. The stark material significance of the park's mutual aid work in light of state retraction became a central facet of the park's significance as a spatial justice struggle at the turn of the century, a struggle that came up against increasingly privatized and symbolic notions of the right to the city.

Anti-homeless surveillance, privatization, displacement and criminality shaped how UC Berkeley framed and managed People's Park as an "outlaw" space and community, a geography

¹⁷¹Katz, Cindy. "Vagabond Capitalism"

¹⁷² Mitchell, Don. *Mean Streets*, p. .

¹⁷³ Smith, Neil. *The New Urban Frontier*, p. .

of survival marginalized by the same circuits of globalized capital that the institution courted. UC Berkeley's 1991 sand volleyball court plan exemplifies anti-homeless green development, defined through the racialized and classed ideology that "...homelessness is tied to crime rate, homelessness is tied to drugs.." ¹⁷⁵ Berkeley wielded race and class-based notions of spatiality in framing the park as a criminal space empty of sociocultural and economic value, and thus essentially fit to be emptied. In framing People's Park through notions of devalued sociality outside of proper public spaces of symbolic capital, the university perpetuated a form of gentrification rooted in the foreclosure of social reproduction outside the progress narrative of public-private finance markets. The 1990s ushered in an amplified tough-on-crime political ideology with the twin economic doctrine of privatization and prioritizing the mobility of capital accumulation. BPD, and the police force, and state police forces enacted these ideologies as common sense. Media stigmatization of the relatively autonomous self-determined access to public space and resources at the park as abetting a peripheral threat of criminality helped justify the university's enclosure of the public commons from collective use.

All in all, a profoundly austere social service context sets the scene for People's Park actions in 1991. Though the park still represented an aberration in relation to the liberal image of green space access, it took on less utopic origins, even for its supporters. It was a center of local conversations on who got to shape the possibilities of public space, and who decided the fate of local resources in the light of growing rates of displacement through gentrification. Early that year, a group of activists and advocates connected to People's Park organized a rally celebrating the 20th anniversary of People's Park on the evening of May 20th. ⁸⁰ A growing population of

¹⁷⁵ Goldfischer , Eric. "The Difference That Seeing Makes: Homelessness and Visuality in Urban Ecology." pp. 142.

community members were displaced by the private housing market, which the university increasingly invested in as a state landlord. In many ways, the user-controlled park model established in 1979 through city and university contract with the non-profit People's Park Council still symbolized its revolutionary counter-establishment past, but also exemplified how more radical possibilities for collective resource control shifted into more small-scale claims to representational, rather than representations of, public space¹⁷⁶. Given its user-controlled nature, the space transformed into a focal center of much-needed mutual aid work that filled the gaps created by "anti-state state"¹⁷⁷ retraction. People displaced by the local competitive real estate market were also losing jobs, and urgently needed basic resources like shelter, food, and clothing. Social reproduction networks overlapped with broader grassroots political education and action against the university as a state corporation that modeled state-wide trends in social resource devolution and privatization. While the People's Park Defense Council retained representation for the park as a historical landmark, the space took on more immediate material significance for people abandoned by the state taking on its role as "junior partner" to finance capital.

Park residents and activists experienced first-hand how local wealth selectively functioned through retroactive dispossession of the most structurally-invisible enclaves of the city. Unhoused people, some of the most politically marginalized residents of Berkeley and the broader U.S., took up space as a political act by creating intentional networks of survival, with the solidarity work of spatial justice and homeless activists, against the neoliberal urban center of wealth that functioned through retroactive dispossession.

During the late twentieth century, state educational budgets were slashed across the board,

¹⁷⁶ Harvey, David. "The Right to the City"

¹⁷⁷ Gilmore, Ruth.

while the university amplified the value of amenity services. In the context of neoliberal state retraction in the name of efficient market freedom, UC Berkeley treated university services like housing and recreational facilities as a commodity that could accrue future value through revenue from the students as consumers that would inhabit them. These broader political and economic trends towards privatization shaped the transformed sociocultural significance of People's Park, as the dominant discourses and struggles that implicated the park at the turn of the decade onwards were primarily focused on issues of homelessness and gentrification. In avoidance of not surpassing its' debt ceiling, the university saw the use-value of already existing land holdings through a malleable profit-motivated lends speculative capital. The university's administrative network of financial decision makers turned towards the park land with a framework of developmental conquest.

The volleyball court plan fit into a more overt neoliberal ideology that embraced the potential for real estate development, and thus speculative capital, as the mark of local socioeconomic progress. The development curtailed the proliferation of mutual aid for unhoused people. The immediate defense of the right to survive foreclosed any theoretical space to interrogate why the UC was interested in building amenities, while its own budget for basic educational services was strapped thin. Sociological and educational scholar Beth Mintz has analyzed how under neoliberalism, public and private universities are increasing spending on amenities instead of educational services, following a trend towards treating students as passive "consumers" of university life as a network of products.¹⁷⁸ Through proposing a volleyball court, not a student housing complex but still an aestheticized amenity, UCB modeled itself as a private equity and property developer firm in the surrounding urban space that held the power to

¹⁷⁸ Mintz, B. Neoliberalism and the Crisis in Higher Education: The Cost of Ideology.

circumvent “improper” use of the space. Along with land, the proposal also reads as a move to manage the university’s student populace that would use the courts as “..the passive objects of [global] economic forces.”¹⁷⁹ Receiving less funding from the state at this time than ever before, UCB needed more potential high-income students to hail from around the globe who could pay full tuition, and who would embrace entrepreneurial spirit of “student as consumer”¹⁸⁰ and individual market subjects.

In turn, the early 1990s ushered in an amplified tough-on-crime politics that the Berkeley police department, and the UC police force, heralded as common sense. In this context, local media stigmatized the free public space and resources at the park as abetting a legitimate threat of criminality helped justify the university’s enclosure of the public commons from collective use. UC Berkeley’s development on People’s Park in the early 1990s focused on legitimizing the circumvention of park space available to unhoused people and the free-moving topographies of social resource provision there. One example being the plan for lights¹⁸¹ at night in the park, to curb the sense of criminality associated with it through a surveil able and navigable space for law enforcement, as well as students on the courts. In public statements on park conditions, the university’s publicized stance of “concern” for unhoused people’s use of public space in Berkeley obscured the larger context of dispossession that made access to the park so significant and urgent. Meanwhile, organizers attempted to focus attention back on this reality in defense. Grassroot mobilizations in support of the park community during this period illustrate the significance that the space held in facilitating material support for unhoused communities during

¹⁷⁹ Mintz, B.

¹⁸⁰ Mintz, B.

¹⁸¹ Mitchell, Don. “The End of Public Space?”

a time of deep state retraction from providing resources.

UC Berkeley restructured its operations and began to overtly treat as a commodity with the slashing of student services and raised tuition. Consequently, “revenue-generating areas like athletics, and housing and dining”¹⁸² that supposedly paid for themselves held a renewed value for the private-public university. Administrators pushed development in order to privatize the already piecemeal access to public space, for the sovereign benefit of individual students as consumers. The university modeled spatial logics rooted in the promise of private equity and property development that could asterisk visible displacement and impoverishment as inevitable, natural elements in the surrounding urban space. As with land, it also sought to manage its student populace as passive, circulating forms of revenue generation, as UCB relies more and more on high-income students who could pay full tuition. Along with the necropolitical power relegated to urban planning, the early 1990s ushered in an amplified tough-on-crime politics that the Berkeley police department, and the UC police force, heralded as common sense. In this context, local media’s stigmatization of the free public space and resources at the park as abetting a legitimate threat of criminality helped justify the university’s enclosure of the public commons from collective use.

In 1990, *SF Chronicle* published an article titled “UC Frets Over People's Park - Regents to consider building a dorm if site isn't cleaned up”⁸⁹, that covered a resolution passed by the UC board of regents in favor of development on the land. The piece seems to frame the regents as a redeemable public benefactor, even without its public funding was a romantic liberal ideal of the

¹⁸² Veltman, Chloe. “We're Fragile': UC Berkeley Officials Battle Budget Woes.” *KQED*.

past. The regents were acting because they were “concerned about the increase in crime in People's Park over "the past several years,".." and “..worried about the "health, safety and personal security of the homeless people" who use People's Park.”⁷ While rhetoric of health, safety and personal security framed the development as bolstering general public health, the regents statement sidestepped the reality that meeting the material “health” and “safety” needs of unhoused people was unthinkable within the stretched-thin and retracted state of local welfare municipalities. While the regents were supposedly concerned about the fate of the park residents, the park’s free services were nevertheless framed as a public safety risk to be curtailed by local police. Simultaneously, mutual aid work was being facilitated at the park during the same period, grassroot networks grasped at the narrow political terms available to problematize the university’s role in the retracted state welfare system, and in local patterns of criminalizing and displacing unhoused people.

The same 1990 SF Chronicle article specifically painted the community park as a “..a haven for drug dealers and the homeless.”⁸⁹⁰ Years of crime tactics by law enforcement and reporting in the local media and governmental tough on homeless preceded the decision to develop were exacerbated by UCPD and UC spokes persons. In a statement, Chancellor Heyman framed the development as the UCB making progress in “cleaning up” the park and telegraph area as a whole, to rid it of disorderly social life and not taking responsibility to curtailing public access to the park with its role as a public benefactor still in tow. The university wielded its autonomous police force, UCPD, and was corroborated by the Berkeley Police efforts to covertly shape public perceptions of the park through racialized and classed visions of security.

Administrators school planned to build a student sand volleyball court on approximately half of the land. Transforming its decades-long focus on redeveloping South Berkeley's neighborhood, UCB sought to build a model of speculative capital in order to attract more circuits of global capital. In a symbolic and material sense, the Universities plan can be understood as a move to organize the space for a favored student's utility, one that would be more likely to interact with the classed symbol of volleyball. The volleyball court plan fit into a more overt neoliberal ideology that embraced the potential for real estate development, and thus speculative capital, as the mark of local socioeconomic progress. The development curtailed the proliferation of mutual aid for unhoused people. The immediate defense of the right to survive foreclosed any theoretical space to interrogate why the UC was interested in building amenities, while its own budget for basic educational services was strapped thin.

UCB's development worked to reconfigure the land to attract certain kinds of students defined through capitalist frameworks of risk and value. Construction started one early morning in July of 1991, with minimal warning given to the park community. Riots ensued. Before, during, and after the volleyball courts were built, vital networks of mutual aid were being built up through the park. The East Bay Food Not Bombs, an anti-nuclear and food justice group, started serving food regularly at the park from February 1991 onwards, five months before UC started construction of the volleyball courts on the land. Like the MIT police force used against anti-nuclear protestors years before, the protection of volleyball courts as leisurely private property fit for white, middle-class subjects, open not public space, propelled activists to engage in a long-term network of mutual aid in the shadow of another nuclear giant.¹⁸³ Organizers

¹⁸³ "About." *East Bay Food Not Bombs*.

responded to the embeddedness of anti-homeless sentiments in the plan. To them, the development held implications of the UCB sand volleyball court being an elitist and historically white sport, as a purposely move to sterilize the space. One unhoused person connected to the park said that development was “..about homelessness, and joblessness, and fighting oppression”⁹³ ¹⁸⁴The financialized framework adopted by the university during the 80s and early 90s was consequently being responded to in the articulations of Berkeley community in support of the community-lead space of mutual aid.

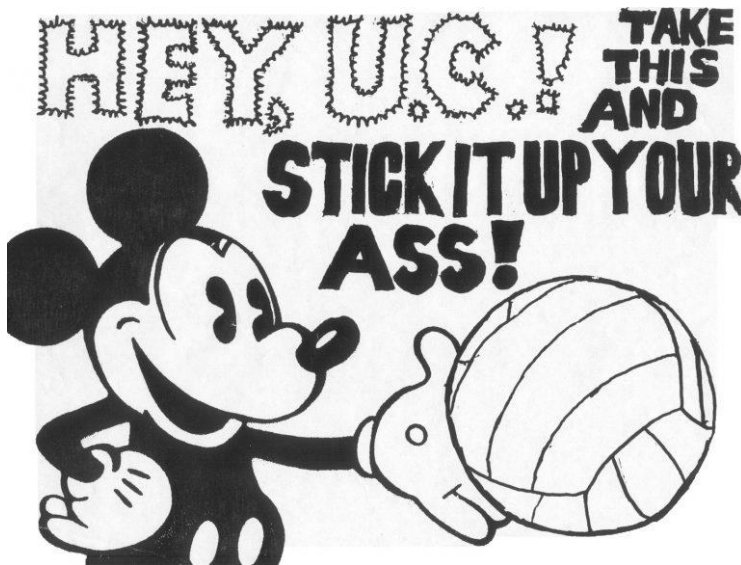


Figure 13: 1991 poster against PP volleyball courts

A 1991 poster made by park activists pictured a mickey mouse cartoon smiling and holding a volleyball; the caption reads: “*Hey UC, Take This and Stick it Up Your Ass!*”¹⁸⁵ This pamphlet frames UCB’s development plan as a move to sanitize the space into a representation of public space, rather than a place of material, political assembly. As well, the urgent and angered

¹⁸⁴ Mitchell, Don. “The End of Public Space?”

¹⁸⁵ “Hey UC, Take This..”.

language encourages defense of the land against the revanchist conquests of financial interests along the new urban frontier: recreational real estate development. The sterilization of the park's collectively determined quality—the free stage, free box, and user-maintained plants--and securitized transformation was framed as aiding and abetting local trends of gentrification and dispossession.

“to the degree that the ‘Disneyfication’ of public space advances and political movements are shut out of public space, oppositional movements lose the space where they may be represented (or may represent themselves) as legitimate parts of ‘the public.’ As the words and actions of the protagonists in Berkeley suggest, the stakes are high and the struggles over them might very well be bloody. But that is at once the promise and the danger of public space.”¹⁸⁶

Reverse-reading of state power, activists framed the development here as purposely incongruent with the park residents’--and broader student and non-student south Berkeley community’s--direct material needs at the time, in the face of rising rent, and tuition. The pamphlets’ picture and adjoining text frame the university’s local neoliberal developer role as a direct threat to the networks of mutual aid that were rooted in the park at the time. The poster translates a feeling of collective anger as cathartically political, which might have led to an increase in community mobilization against the development, and an alternate definition of the public that could include those not eligible for proper financialized subjecthood.

¹⁸⁶ Mitchell. P. 126-127



Figure 14: Campanile cartoon.

Another poster made in protest framed UCB as an elite set of actors in acting support of global capital, with a personified cartoon of the Campanile tower pictured towering down over the park, scowling at the space in a suit and tie while smoking a cigar. In the corner, a sign on the park border reads “city on vacation”⁹⁵. This poster responded to ongoing trends of state retraction at the time, perceived by park organizers as informing the universities’ prerogatives to enclose the park, but also as part of its legacy of not taking responsibility for aiding the park as a community space even while claiming ownership. The quick flick of the campanile business man’s and the disruption to the park displayed illuminates how organizers were conceptualizing UC’s investment in global, volatile circuits of financial capital that uprooted and displaced people within and outside of the UC campus and system on a local scale.

In 1997, following minimal student use and retroactive community protests against the court development, UC Berkeley brought in the same contractors that developed the courts to tear them out.⁹⁶ The City of Berkeley was given power to manage the land as open space. City

¹⁸⁷ “Campanille Cartoon”.

council continued to withhold basic social services to unhoused residents, and police the area to keep it “clean”. Significantly, governmental, including university officials, spoke to the perceived progress that the city had reached with the park. In prior years, the informal nature of resource provision at the park was framed as a threat to public safety. However, in an article from the SF Chronicle from 1996, the park “clean up”¹⁸⁸ efforts are framed as signs of universal progress for the city; the author stresses that after a “full-time landscaper at the park, community gardeners made an all- out effort to spruce the place up ...a genuine transformation took place.”¹⁸⁹ After the potentialities of mutual aid work at the park were effectively siphoned down to one area, the presence of unhoused people in the space was deemed to be a harmless quirk. As normalized socio-economic austerity might have shaped the local communities’ perceptions of what was structurally possible through local politics and administration,

In their six years of operation, the volleyball courts still allowed for some space for unregulated sociality at the park. At the same time, the topographical changes at the park set a precedent outside the law for delineating student and non-student spaces, meaning the consolidation and securitization of relatively unabatted space for unhoused park users. Many prominent media narrations of the park volleyball conflict expressed ambivalence towards city residents disenfranchised by the real estate market, using ubiquitous, moralistic notions of cleanliness and violence to describe the effects of revanchist patterns of displacement. As the official City of Berkeley liaison to the park noted, the park was full of “No riots. No big drug dealing. Just park.”⁹⁸ The volleyball courts functioned as a technology of selective exclusion, retroactively limiting local unhoused people’s self-determined access to the space. For UC

¹⁸⁸ Zamorra, Jim. “No More Volleyball in People's Park.”

¹⁸⁹ Zamorra, Jim.

Berkeley, the space could better facilitate efficient forms of public sociality in order to signify the orderly park as an appealing space of speculative capital. However, both before and retroactively after the court debacle, UC has sought to regulate the terms of mutual aid work happening in the park. While organizing material from this period touches on the university's weaponization of its retracted welfare role towards geopolitical ends on the park, the same broader structures of welfare privatization that activists do critique during this period meant that local organizing strategies didn't hold the infrastructure to target the local structural roots of dispossession for transformation. After the courts were gone, unhoused communities and mutual aid resources came back to access the land.

The mutual aid politics organized at the park before, during and after the courts targeted the unmet vital material needs of primarily the unhoused or people struggling from housing insecurity. Yet, apart from the implementation of services like temporary shelters in Berkeley and the allowance of organizations like Food Not Bombs to continue their work¹⁹⁰, broader structural demands that might be retroactively possible from the park's mutual aid politics were not fully realized within this struggle. The volleyball court conflict at People's Park of the 1990s speaks to the crucial role filled by mutual aid work that meets people's basic needs. However, facilitating resources outside the state is only one tenet of creating an equitable future within an urban geography of increased state retraction. The university's broader agenda of defining the park as a dead local space of the past as well as an ongoing public safety risk to the broader community set the scene for further devolution of local resources. UC's attempts to re-enclose the land for development in the 90s, as they are now, were guided by private interests, but put forth in the name of general public good. The political rhetoric wielded in defense of the park's

¹⁹⁰ Personal IRB Interview. Feb. 2023.

mutual aid networks at the time hinted at a new paradigm of social reproduction rooted in state action, but this was not ultimately fully actualized during the late eighties and early nineties. Yet, ongoing mutual aid politics happening at People's park today and the transformation of organizers' strategies make new paradigms of social provision possible.

Defend People's Park: Homeless Services and Unhoused Justice

Since the 1990s, the mutual aid work happening at People's Park has been a part of a broader regional political struggle to survive. This work increasingly includes both immediate resource access and also education on local and political struggles that intersect with its defense as a retroactive fight of spatial justice. In the current era of state retraction, the park's historical precedent of user control has transformed from direct resource provision. as a space of social reproduction, it sits distinctly outside of and oftentimes in opposition to local public-private social service economies. Community members that have been displaced within the local public-private housing market have remained connected to the park because it is a place where basic resources are accessible without moralistic, carceral conditions. This has been especially important as UC Berkeley has continued to emulate Clark Kerr's prophecy of the multiversity business model, targeting real estate business interests at the park in more insidious ways in previous eras of the community's defense of the park. UC Berkeley's Housing Task Force and Center For Resources and Development are enmeshed in the larger regional, national and global economies; notions of crisis and shortage are at the core of Cal's ongoing capital strategy plan. In the current era, UC Berkeley's reliance on capital for more capital models the anti-state state vision of higher education as a conditional service, not a collective right.

The UC board of Regents' connection to state-wide bond and debt financing touches regional and global real estate economies of re-managing risk. Already a decades-long funding strategy for the UC, municipal bond strategies facilitate particular forms of short-term prosperity shaped by global banking interests¹⁹¹. In 2013, UC added P3 bonds to capital strategies to

¹⁹¹ See Dustin Jenkin's *Bonds of Inequality*, particularly later sections about long and shifting local history of municipal bond reliance and geographically uneven investment.

actualize the funding for an undergraduate housing development now located off of Telegraph. In 2017, Cal renewed its reliance on public-private real estate partnerships to fulfill its new millennium capital strategy plan. The park land between Dwight and Haste street was once again targeted for a high-rise housing development plan. In January of that year, UCB's Housing Task Force Report, helmed by Chancellor Carol Christ, outlined nine plots of land for "urgently needed" housing complexes, backed by project revenue bonds¹⁹², a commonplace technology within UC's capital strategies that assures funds for individual projects, valuable to the regent board because of their self-sustained and flexible revenue functions. The park land was framed as the most sensical "housing stock"¹⁹³ to transform into "Traditional style residence halls on a portion of the site with long term Indigent Housing with services, open space, and a memorial to the People's Park history."¹⁹⁴The fine print established 1,000 new dorms for undergraduate students, and 100 beds to house the "extremely low-income", or "indigent persons" living in the park.

The amorphous label of "indigent" decontextualized the presence of unhoused park residents from their broader reasons for continually inhabiting the space. Furthermore, the report proposed that after the park was ripped up, a monument to the park would be built, and "open space" would still be available. Mirroring the 1990s Volleyball plan, the UC's contemporary framework of reworking public space into a passive open space of aesthetic enjoyment, foreclosing the excess terms of social reproduction exemplified by the park encampment. However, rather than produce value through the explicit banishment of unhoused people from the space, this plan would bolster capital revenue through the containment of unhoused people in

¹⁹² "Housing Master Plan Task Force Final Draft", p. 4

¹⁹³ "Housing Master Plan Task Force Final Draft", Jan 2017, p. 4

¹⁹⁴ Public Affairs, UC Berkeley. "An Update on the People's Park Project".

a supporting housing apparatus. Like in past cycles of the park's defense however, activists vocally rejected the commemoration of a living, ongoing space that holds broader community history, exceeding the legible events of the past.

The decentralized nature of the Defend People's Park movement means that mutual aid work, resources like shelter and food, are provided by a scaffolding of dedicated but at-will community volunteers. Some groups, like the East Bay Food Not Bombs, have continued to provide resources at the park since the 1990s round of park defense. Similar to past decades, defense of the park community's access to and use of the land is framed in contrast to the interests of UC's elite donors and regents. At the same time, people enacting mutual aid in connection to the park have not stepped into this role in a vacuum, or out of a general goodwill, ideas that support a romantic and essentialized narrative of community care. Many organizers and advocates connected to the park are currently or have been previously unhoused. They have experiences that come with local forms of knowledge on the limits of the carceral innocence paradigm of deservingness or deviance that state and non-profit shelter and housing systems perpetuate. Local activists working in solidarity with their displaced neighbors face the work of challenging apathetic understandings of homelessness as a pathological, self-inflicted, and static identity, understandings that are now being utilized by the UC to enclose more revenue through development.

Since 2020, local media and government narratives of housing and health crises have delineated the two arenas of survival, doubling down on ideas of the housing crisis and sense market "solutions" as common sense. In turn, the local development-pro "YIMBY" (yes in my backyard) front has supported a decontextualized understanding of local homelessness as an

aberration from market progress that can be solved through building more units. City council has expressed paternalistic concern over the safety of the encampments, while not mentioning the context of long-term state divestment that have made these places necessary and safer options than local shelters. In this context, UC Berkeley's rhetoric of moralistic concern for the displaced inhabitants of the park mirrors frameworks of the nonprofit economy that "...leave in place the social, economic, and political conditions that produce massive inequality and diminished life chances in the first place."¹⁹⁵ However, departing from previous decades of anti-homelessness that did not acknowledge the reality at all other than perpetuating the criminalization of local poverty, the new housing plan subtly re-articulated "homeless" as "indigent", a financially malleable category for accruing value. The development positioned the park's unhoused community as a key figure in the UC'S vision of crisis and solution regarding the park. Yet, the plan effectively asterisked the possibility for unhoused people to enact self-determination as political actors. UC Berkeley's Housing Task Force Report grouped the park's unhoused community into an amorphous "indigent" group, not political actors that participate in urban planning, even if on their own terms.

UC's persistent prioritization of financial interests over broader sociocultural and political cost emulates the broader "anti-state state" transformation of every political issue into a

¹⁹⁵ Willse, Craig. p. 46.

metric of balancing out economic value. The report delineated an image of “very low-income” people understood as meeting a certain symbol of risk that can no longer be visible in public, and must be integrated into proper technologies of housing. This vision sections off the fate of “long-term” homeless people from the unmentioned individuals who might only be experiencing temporary housing precarity at the moment, not meeting the threshold of visible crisis. Furthermore, the report stresses that “..the campus needs to evaluate financial implications for the campus against cost impacts to the occupants in deciding how to prioritize and phase a housing master plan.”¹⁹⁶ This statement contends that the university’s long-term housing plans are innately participatory, as expert planning perspectives had supposedly integrated the needs of all “occupants”. However, the administrative evaluations of what the “cost” to the institution and individual users erases the costs of displacement caused by the public-private market that the state corporation is a part of.

¹⁹⁶ “Housing Master Plan Task Force Final Draft”, p. 6.

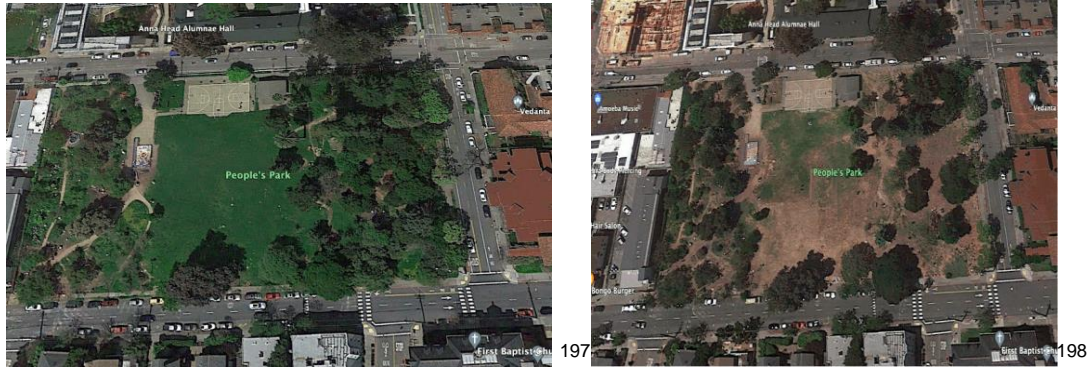


Figure 15 : Aerial photos of People’s Park, 2018 and 2019, before and after UC tree killings

The university’s 2017 housing plan announcement had set up a strong sense of the inevitability of the land’s foreclosure that was nevertheless challenged, mirroring the broader history of the park. One early morning in January of 2019, two years after outlining the space for construction, private contractors for the university took over the park and cut out a large, checkered portion of trees and other plants, destructing what was commonly referred to as a local “urban forest”¹⁰⁵. Redwood and oak trees killed off were decades-old, and had provided home to wildlife, and shade and shelter to park users and residents. Park residents and users mourned the loss of the trees and habitats that were more than scenery, labeling the event a “tree killing”, to accentuate the covert forms of localized violence the deforestation perpetuated.¹⁹⁹ Activists framed this act as ecological warfare targeted at the park’s unhoused communities and the environment. Advocates labeled the quick takeover as an attempt by the UC Regents to contour the land for re-enclosure, building on the knowledge of long-term supporters who had been through a similar cycle in 1991. UC’s physical erasure of the plants and green space in 2019

¹⁹⁷“Aerial view before UC tree killing (April 2018)”

¹⁹⁸ “Land Struggling to recover, several months after.”

¹⁹⁹ Admin. “Details on Tree Killing in People's Park – December 28, 2018.”

served to feed into sociocultural images of the park as an empty space devoid of history, culture or community, and also visibly delineating the space from normative understandings of public parks as green space.

In the same year, UC Berkeley admin sent maintenance workers to the park to remove one of many “free boxes” that have existed on the land since 1969. This was a further erasure of the systems of value created through collective ownership at the park. In a public statement, university representative Dan Mogulof asserted that “The structure in question was removed due to a long, unfortunate history with similar boxes that have been placed in the park in the past,” Mogulof said in an email. “We believe there are far better, safer and healthier ways of meeting the needs supposedly addressed by a box of this sort.”¹⁰ In the years prior to the pandemic as a combined health, environmental and economic crisis, local encampments were a commonplace practice of collective survival. The pandemic has widened disparities in socioeconomic access, disproportionately displacing low-income and disabled people of color onto the city streets of Berkeley. Tenant’s rights and unhoused rights organizing—predominantly powered by the labor of low-income women of color—have demanded collective resource access, from food to healthcare to shelter.

The number of housing complexes in the Telegraph Avenue area has increased, but not material access to shelter and other basic resources for the city’s low-income residents, students and not. City housing policies in Berkeley maintain the austere status quo of individual, public-private market empowerment which fuel these volatile cycles of displacement that local tenant

rights activists and the park defense have stressed are affecting both students and low-income people in the community. In this context, local homeless encampments like the one at the park are responses to the material limits of the local social service economy. In the pandemic, these geographies of survival²⁰⁰ have been subject to increased state violence and displacement as part of a trend of making homelessness invisible, in reality an increasingly common experience in the postindustrial cityscape. Park activists and advocates are increasingly making connections between the broader cycles of regional gentrification and UC and the city's attempts to enclose the land for revenue.



Figure 16: 2021. Sign on Echo Lake entrance stating “People’s Park LA Welcomes U”

In 2019, when the City of Berkeley government extended its 2016 Declaration of a Homeless Shelter Crisis²⁰², there were around 1,018 people self-reported as unhoused in the city.²⁰³ Oftentimes, shelter services are carceral and risky and people search for networks of

²⁰⁰ Mitchell, Don. *Mean Streets*.

²⁰¹ “People’s Park LA Welcomes u”, @peoplesparkberkeley on Instagram

²⁰² Williams-Ridley, Dee. Declaration of a Homeless Shelter Crisis. P. 1.

²⁰³ Williams-Ridley.

survival outside of these systems in unhoused-friendly areas of cities like the park, mirroring the Echo Park encampment that was a place of survivance and community for many at the peak of the pandemic, before the city swept it in 2021. Government and media narratives have maintained an image of the ‘homeless’ as the outcome of individual moral failings, salvable through market empowerment. This image makes a spectacle of value and risk out of local unhoused people, by decontextualizing them from their experiences with diffuse structures of neoliberal accumulation through dispossession that the image of homelessness as an inevitable crisis supports.

Over the past few years, both housed and unhoused activists have built up a precedent of broader solidarity with the self-determination of the local unhoused community, and displaced communities across the state. Yet, the deeply political work to survive happening across the East Bay, California and the U.S. falls short of pushing local governments and institutions into precedents of direct, long-term material aid. As a state corporation, UC Berkeley frames the growing rates of homelessness as opportunities for continued public-private partnership in the expansion of the local anti-state state structure of accumulation through dispossession. This contradiction speaks to Craig Willse’s image of the “housing monster”²⁰⁴, a diffuse but powerful network of social service economies that value displaced people as a flexible unit of postindustrial capital accumulation. These processes conditionally value some life enough to house it, to the ends of the state’s forward-marching, crisis-oriented vision of revenue deficits.

²⁰⁴For more context on this metaphor for the necropolitical expendability inherent to modern housing technologies, see the chapter titled “Surplus Life, or Race and Death in Neoliberal Times” in *The Value of Homelessness* by Craig Willse.

In February of 2021, UC moved in on the park once more, enclosing the entire space with a fence forcefully armed by state law enforcement officers. This led to an ongoing disruption to the development plan that teeters on the edge of legitimacy while tied up in the California State Supreme Court: The premise of the enclosure was to start the process of soil samples for the environmental impact report. Quickly, approximately 65 students, along with park residents, camped out in the park as protest¹¹³. In an interview with KQED, a UC Berkeley student activist Alicia Harber, questioned the prominent narrative of re-developing the community land as “common sense” solutions to homelessness. The participant asserted that while “a lot of people have considered the development of People’s Park to be an unfortunate inevitability...[however]..it is not an inevitability and that we have the ability to push back.”²⁰⁵

In the last few years of park defense, an increasing number of Cal students have expressed criticism for UC Berkeley’s narrative spatial inevitability. This is a significant sign of the Defend People’s Park movement's ideological success in some ways might in some way root back to its decentralized, coalitional nature²⁰⁶, connecting groups concerned with student equity to broader issues of displacement manifesting in the threat of park resident’s displacement. Yet, the “ability to push back” for community activists is a compounded challenge in the current era of entrenched local austerity, and their calls for defense do not completely align with the other legal strategies of defending the park. The university continues to negotiate terms of development in the obscured domains of urban planning, processes that are dominated by university and city elites. Touching on the multiple political-economic power structures are at

²⁰⁵ Frenes, Gabriella. “A Precious Area’: UC Berkeley Students, Community Unite to Defend People's Park.”

²⁰⁶ Personal IRB Interview.

play, the student advocates framed the current defense of the space to broader issues of gentrification within Berkeley's southside. "The university is claiming to help unhoused people... by building affordable housing," students declared, when they are the main driving forces of gentrification in our city."²⁰⁷

In the midst of the UC's attempts to enclose the park in 2021 and the urgent counter-occupation, one long-term park resident named Daniel noted that he sees and feels first-hand the importance of the park for relatively un-securitized and unregimented space where a counter-public, of sorts, is accessed and inhabited. Daniel noted that the park is an accessible and supportive feature in the everyday spatial flows of urban life as a resident of the city who doesn't fit into the normative, stable notions of a housed community member. He stressed that the park has no fences, no gates, and no iron bars. I've been coming and going freely for years. I wish every park was like this one."²⁰⁸ The perspective of unhoused people who utilize the park is routinely left out of anti-homeless government and media narratives that privilege the efficiency of increasingly privatized, devalued public access. Considering the archive of news coverage on the park in its decades of being utilized and imagined as an encampment, media actors are rarely curious about the perspective of displaced people. While the UC has always seen homelessness in its' borderlands as an oscillating figure of political crisis and anxieties financial surplus, we can understand that unhoused people like Daniel are not privileged with the invisibility from law enforcement provided by normative homes or apartments.

Dominant narratives of the park and other encampments in the city render unhoused resident's political self-determination illegible, while unhoused people are also central images of

²⁰⁷ Frenes , Gabriella. "A Precious Area': UC Berkeley Students, Community Unite to Defend People's Park."

²⁰⁸ Raskin, Jonah, "A Park for the People."

media and government spectacle. Willse has mapped out how contemporary liberal housing and broader resource politics rooted in re-managing surplus life affirms that “when life enters the political realm, not all of it is deemed worthy of investment.”²⁰⁹ In turn, Katz might argue that “vagabond capitalism’s”²¹⁰ propensity to restructure for more effective accumulation does not see the value strategy in active laborers, and thus the “anti-state state” cannot and will not deem them proper service recipients. People like Daniel’s search for un-securitized unfettered forms and places for free-moving wellbeing is a profoundly politically logical counter-topography of social reproduction, while never possibly so within neoliberal paradigms of individual market prosperity. Included in a major coverage of the 2021 park protests, Daniels’ statement reveals an example of the intimate, mundane nature of displaced people’s relation to the rhythms of surveillance and enclosure in Berkeley that consequently work to make the realities of local resource dispossession invisible²¹¹. In comparison with People’s Park, other public parks and public spaces in the region provide less possibilities for intentional spatial freedom. The significance of the space’s cyclical history of fencing and de-fencing has transformed in the current era, through the different forms of survival that are politicized through mutual aid and solidarity work through the park defense. Daniel’s comment on repeatedly connecting to the space reveals how the park’s collectively negotiated topography opens up different forms of material self-determination, outside local status quos of organized abandonment that the city homeless services model.

In an interview with UC Berkeley’s Dept. of Public Affairs in October of 2021, Chancellor Christ asserted that the administration had listened to “..voices of the activists and

²⁰⁹ Willse. p 27.

²¹⁰ Katz. p. 710.

²¹¹ See Goldfischer, Eric.” The Difference that Seeing Makes”.

experts, and we have changed our plans: We will not begin construction until we are able to offer housing and services to the 40 to 45 unhoused people currently sleeping in the park, as well as a daytime place to gather. Consistent with the university's longstanding commitment to, and concern for, unhoused members of our community."²¹² Despite the assertion that the plan was an efficient calculation of local unhoused people's "best interest", UC structured in further off-loading of vital resources onto the non-profit economy, emulating the "mercenary model. Which empowers nonprofits to helicopter in under the guise of service provision—often while disingenuously positioning themselves as alternatives to police and other state agencies."²¹³ The 2021 occupations of the park by unhoused and housed, student and non-student protestors, thereby successfully facilitated a rupture in the smooth legitimization of the UC's development plan, which would become to a head the following summer.

A year later in August 2022, park residents and advocates were occupying the park overnight in anticipatory protection of the space, when law enforcement agents and contracted landscape workers forcefully entered the space and began to cut down trees at all ends of the park, an echo of 2019. The pillaged trees included tall oaks whose shade stretched across the grass and flowers, and redwoods as well.²¹⁴ In turn, the UC had ground up the trees after the austere forestry stint, and returned them to the park land as woodchips, a physical reminder of the UC's power and also prerogative to enclose and destroy alternative reproductive values of the environment not conducive to shareholders most efficient capital strategy.

²¹² "5 Questions for Chancellor Carol Christ about People's Park." *Berkeley News*.

²¹³ Coleman, Jonny, et al. "How Los Angeles Created the Playbook for a Nationwide War on the Unhoused." *The Appeal*, May 26 2022, <https://theappeal.org/homeless-encampment-sweeps-los-angeles-echo-park-lake/>.

²¹⁴ Personal field note from summer research at park.

Shocked and devastated at the sudden incursion and violence to the environment, but not surprised, a decentralized network of Defend People's Park advocates planned a march to and occupation of the park land, and to mourn the violence to the environment and community. The protest and gathering to tend to the land were an affirmation of collectivity in order to make grief political, against the visible act of destruction and de-facto state devolution of life outside the UC's profit margin. A collective mourning of the trees, the event also provided a place to be angry and act. Many people showed up to this event; activists called through a loud phone speaker for people who were able to gather the debris of the trees and create barriers around the park. These makeshift fences to keep police, contractors, and homeless service agents out—were built on-top of the torn down UC fences. I had walked down from work in the upper-campus area to witness and take part in this action. Pausing and looking around on the hot and sunny but solemn August day, students and non-students, residents of the park and concerned neighbors worked in groups to pick up the lumber, clearing destruction and also building something new. I was struck by the similarities and between the 1969 and current context. Despite the differences made by five decades to the park land, its material community significance, and broader South Berkeley's topography of resource capital accumulation, the crowd fighting to maintain the park defense channeled anger and sorrow into a sustained commitment to imagine otherwise.

One young person involved in the current defense movement, specifically its ongoing mutual aid strategies, moved to Berkeley in 2019 for college not used to living in a busy city center like South Berkeley and the broader SF Bay Area, with limited open space and even more limited rental options.²¹⁵ They became connected to the space and community of People's Park

²¹⁵ Personal interview with IRB project participant.

through almost temporarily living in and then living by the space, when they found affordable and reliable housing resources. It became a space of respite in their day to day routine from the hectic life in the city's metropolitan center, and they saw the political significance of the fight for the park in the face of the pandemic, with the periods' mounting wave of gentrification and displacement. The student organizer also noted that the park is a "great place to meet people and find resources"²¹⁶ that are in theory available to anyone—whether they hold the explicit demarcation of "homeless" or not. This speaks to the broader significance of the park as a space to counter everyday alienation and overwhelming nature of capitalist productivity, opened up through unstructured forms of seemingly mundane connection in the user-controlled space.

In the current moment, the continually teeters on the edge of legitimacy while tied up in a year-long California State Supreme Court case, decided in February of 2023:

A [state appeals court sided with plaintiffs](#) Make UC a Good Neighbor and the People's Park Historic Advocacy Group, in a lawsuit against UC Berkeley on Feb. 24. The lawsuit claims the university violated the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) by not considering alternative sites for a [1,100 bed-student dorm and potential supportive housing](#) at People's Park, as well as noise impacts to the surrounding neighborhood.²¹⁷

The Governor has utilized a strategy of strategic ambivalence towards the land, breaking from the extreme state responses in past cycles of the park conflict. The governor's statement is also significant because he frames the stalling of the park construction in such a way that de-contextualized the economic issue of housing units from the broader political struggle over resources that the land represents to many people, veterans and newcomers to the park defense.

²¹⁶ Personal interview with IRB project participant.

²¹⁷ Yelimeli, Supriya. "City Council to Consider Supporting UC Berkeley Appeal against People's Park.", *Berkeleyside*.

This specific court case led by the organization *Make UC a Good Neighbor* calls on the UC to temper enrollment. The dissent is shaped by liberal ecological issues of noise and traffic pollution, as well as population density. These liberal ideals of maintaining city life have guided state environmental impact regulation since the 1970s, and make up the state's dominant rationale for the choice to delay the development plan. However, like in past years of the struggle over the park land, radical, grassroots park advocates hold a set of arguments distinct from strictly liberal ideas of environmental pollution, standard rhetoric in environmental regulations since the dawn of the park.

The underlying logic presented by the plaintiffs suggests that Cal has been an ill-mannered neighbor not the public benefactor it should be, which is an interesting personification of the university. The logic goes that the institution has dramatically over-enrolled, pushing a quiet, well-mannered city into a population and housing shortage crisis. While the ongoing state-level legal battle has temporarily stopped construction on the land on and off since 2021, the legal framework does not interrogate how the diffuse and capital-oriented nature of the campus plan is not entirely exceptional to this era. In turn, dominant government narratives on a local and state-wide level have weaponized this decontextualization to delegitimize UC's critics as all conservatives or staunch "NIMBYS", the anti-development crowd, working to block more units of housing. For example, California Governor Gavin Newsom stated on Twitter that the state's "CEQA process is clearly broken when a few wealthy Berkeley homeowners can block desperately needed student housing for years and even decades."²¹⁸ In reporting the state politician's comment, *Berkeleyside* noted that "Newsom's office has not frequently commented

²¹⁸ Yelimeli.

on People's Park, and didn't make a statement during large protests in August 2022 which ultimately blocked UC construction. Those protests were distinct from the ongoing court battles.”²¹⁹ A neoliberal bastion of state-wide market-based prosperity and progress, Newsom used a stern rhetoric to put down a supposed abuse of the legal system that reeked of class power, given the ideals of freedom to develop and rent that the statewide left agenda unilaterally engages. Under the dichotomous ideological, and profoundly emotive terms of acknowledging the park on Twitter, the golden state's figurehead asserted that the only solution to crisis pretense that market-rate housing solves homelessness.

In the university's public response to the critical ruling, UC spokesperson Dan Mogul stressed that this development would “indefinitely delay all of UC Berkeley's planned student housing. Desperately needed by our students and fully supported by the city of Berkeley's mayor and other elected representatives. This decision has the potential to prevent colleges and universities across the state of California from providing students with the housing they need and deserve.”²²⁰ Significantly, the 2022 ruling on the development centered liberal ecological issues of noise and traffic pollution, as well as population density. Liberal ideals of maintaining prosperous city life for the professional managerial classes who can afford rent and homeownership have guided state environmental impact regulation since the 1970s, making up the state's dominant rationale for the choice to delay the development plan. However, like in past years of the struggle over the park land, more radical park advocates present a set of arguments that are distinct from strictly liberal ideas of environmental pollution standard in urban planning regulations since right after the dawn of the park. Willse and Gilmore might argue that UCB, the

²¹⁹ Yelimeli.

²²⁰ Yelimeli.

governor and the city council are feeding into the priorities of finance capital, based on a distorted image of crisis itself in framing disaster as an inevitable byproduct of the overall market as benefactor. The underlying logic of market-based crisis-oriented solutions that Newsom and Mogul articulate decontextualize People's Park as a crisis of failed efficient accumulation from the structures of devolution in social reproduction that feed disparities in access, and the illusion of housing scarcity.

UC Berkeley's ongoing housing plan imagines and manages unhoused people as public safety risks that are turned into value in their inhabitation of a mapped and surveilled housing apparatus. The inclusion of "indigent" housing in the development represents a technology of visibility, entrapment and integration as methods of enclosure and accumulation. UC's current-day development framework illuminates that spatial logics of securitization as marketization are central to local paradigms of social reproduction in-accessibility. As an "anti-state state" institution, UC's inclusion of displaced community members in the plan has bolstered the development's liberal public legitimacy. From Berkeley mayor Jesse Arreguin to California Governor Gavin Newsom, leading politicians have publicly stated their support for the project, heralding it as a vital opportunity for local housing progress that must not fail.

In this broader political context, mutual aid work supporting the city's community of unhoused people through, alongside the immediate defense of the park, has been unsuccessful in forcing the university or city to budge on forms of direct, self-determined aid. To bring in the importance of People's Park's solidarity networks, broader links between the current struggle for the 2.8 tract of land and other local geographies of encampments as excess social reproduction are spatially mappable. In February, after years of presence, law enforcement officers of the state

swept the “Here There” encampment, which topographically disrupts the borderline along Shattuck between Oakland and Berkeley's southside neighborhood. Here There organizers constructed it as a political statement of collectively determined sobriety and survival, outside local catch-all policies of imprisonment in jails, enclosure that links to both city's social services and homeless service divisions. Easy Bay an autonomous sober encamp space that law enforcement recently enclosed through a sweep²²¹

Grassroots mutual aid politics holds the possibility of suspending the capacity of structurally abandoned communities to survive, but also to grow collective political solidarity and power to challenge the complacency of local politicians. The East Bay organization *Urban Habitat* asserts that encampments or “..settlements reveal just how broken the private housing market is and also represent people's efforts to avoid being displaced from their region altogether.”²²² Over the past few years, the public legibility of encampments overall with the state's de-facto clearance of visible homelessness has urgently increased the political allegiances between park organizers and broader homeless and tenants' rights grassroots interests. However, the park has been a place of survival and community for unhoused people for decades. For local displaced people, the stakes of the parks' user-developed topography stands apart in relation to city-structured public parks. Forms of surveillance and reprimand that take place in city parks through brightly lit and patrolled pathways, anti-homeless architecture such as barred benches and fences, have not been able to stick as common sense in the park. Despite the national reputation of Berkeley as a bastion of freedom, progress and prosperity, the austere realities of the UC, city council, city managers and homeless response team's framework of sweeping

²²¹ Yelimeli, “South Berkeley Here There Encampment Closed after 6 Years.”

²²² Gordon, Leslie, and Fernando Echeverria, *Rooted in Home*.

encampments under the rug during the storm and prior reflects the everyday experiences for many local displaced people. In an op-ed written for *Berkeley Side*, unhoused city resident Timothy Busby reflected on the physical immobility tied to displacement; “Typically, those of us who are homeless and living on the streets are used to being bounced all over town with no transportation just to be given a form to take to another location in one of many steps for the basic necessities.”²²³

Some critics of the park have argued that it does not function as a park at all; this narrative speaks to who is considered a part of local liberal empowerment and access, and who has necessarily been made invisible in these processes. Since 2020, the park defense has combined political critique with immediate resource provision through mutual aid. In an era of perpetual state retraction and profit through crisis, defending the right to construct public space in ways that open up collective survival is immediately necessary. Access to an unfettered stretch of public space like the park that opens up access to the “nuts to bolts”²²⁴ resources needed by unhoused people for everyday survival and wellbeing are not possibly for many people through formal social service structures. At the same time, the long-term paradigm shift in local resource access that the park defense continually aspires to is grasped at through the model itself, while not thinkable to development-happy politicians and university administrators. With increasing crises real and weaponized—extreme weather and municipal austerity—park advocates and other activists across the East Bay and state are doing work on an everyday scale to sustain networks of alternative care outside the local retracted state, a disproportionate burden to bear.

²²³ Kwok, Iris. “People's Park Activists Open Temporary Warming Center.”

²²⁴ Busby, Timothy. “Opinion: With a New Nuts-to-Bolts Drop-in Center, Dorothy Day House Is Truly Helping the Homeless.”

This past winter, the unhoused population in Berkeley experienced a distinct combination of environmental and health crises that brought a renewed sense of immediate urgency to the park's defense. During a week period of unrelenting storm in January of this year, unhoused people throughout the East Bay faced the disproportionate burden of seeking out basic, direly needed resources like shelters, warm clothes, food and first aid. In the week of increasingly extreme conditions of rain, wind, and flooding, it became clear that the city would remain willfully inactive withholding surplus resources to create emergency 24/7 access to shelter:

“..emergency warming center is activated at night, opening doors at 6:30 p.m. and closing early in the morning before libraries or indoor public spaces are open. These timing gaps have meant some unhoused residents, including seniors and disabled people, were left waiting outside in the dark, exposed to the elements.”²²⁵

A stark display of organized abandonment propelled a group within the people's park defense to take up public political space to bolster urgent solidarity action. Advocates rallied at old city hall, a commonplace political common in the city outside of city council. The space had been the focus of rallying cries for more shelter over the past few years, and city allowed its transformed into a supplemental shelter in 2018 as a result of calls from residents and advocates through the local group First They Came For The Homeless. Notably, this shelter opened up during a similarly disastrous stormy period, and the fight was led by the labor of east bay low-income black women modeling mutual aid. In the same year that UC hired out workers to cut down swaths of greenery and trees at People's Park and foreclosed the everyday significance of shelter opened up by the park, the transformation of city hall was a small victory for local homeless justice activists, and set a precedent, followed by the critical efforts of Moms4Housing

²²⁵ Kwok, Iris. “People's Park Activists Open Temporary Warming Center”, *Berkeleyside*.

in COVID-19 initial lockdown, a “collective of homeless or marginally housed mothers”²²⁶, for putting pressure on local governments to open up vacancies. Simultaneously, the mirroring actions exemplify the arduous labor involved in constructing needed social resources in ways outside the retracted state, ones that would not be swept. Nevertheless, in the current day, a local grassroots tradition of anti-gentrification organizing persists in solidarity with displaced residents.

The main structure of local governance that Defend People’s Park actions in January 2023 targeted was the local city government’s coffers and its homeless management agents, one activist noted that the UC wasn’t off the hook in this fight²²⁷ The protest implicated both city and university as technologies of resource governance, both part of a local courting of real estate business, the stability of which the institutions both prioritized by withholding robust economic surplus resources for the local social wage. Mutual aid work rooted at the park, in solidarity with multiple counter-topographies of rebellious survival and strategic visibility, illustrates the unthinkability of collective political self-determination for displaced residents under liberal structures of development solution. Unhoused people are routinely spoken for by politicians and the university in narratives of housing progress and environmental concern.

The legislative claims of environmental concern that the CEQA exemplifies have long centered the abstract topographical tenets of white urban middle-class liberalism through main issues like noise pollution, density, and the loss of the aesthetic and recreational benefits through green space and plant life. Yet, as questions of liberal environmental rights to the city do not

²²⁶ Moms4housing.org

²²⁷ Personal field notes at park, Jan 2022

include the right to the land as collective resource, or the counter topographies of resourcefulness and mutuality with the land that displaced people enact on an everyday basis. The spatial justice fight at People's Park, and other local grassroots mutual aid solidarity organizing like the ongoing Moms 4 Housing campaign and the Woods Street Commons in Oakland, highlight the potentials of another collective world of resource access that hinges on abolishing innocence and deviance ideologies and geographies. CEQA claims of environmental concern have long centered the abstract topographical tenets of white urban middle-class liberalism through main issues like noise pollution, density, and the loss of the aesthetic and recreational benefits plant life.

This past winter, the survival work rooted at People's Park was called for and spearheaded by predominantly low-income park activists, users and residents, including students who regularly coordinate supplies and actions in collaboration with park residents. Survival strategies that ensued were rooted in their local material knowledge of structuring survival outside of the state. In the face of amplified need, Defend the Park's decentralized network of activists attempted to combat the stark absence of accessible shelter centers in the city. On a cold and rainy January night, advocates came together to construct warming centers, two tents with heat lamps, flashlights, sleeping bags, cots, warm clothes and snacks for the unhoused residents of the city.¹²⁸ Speaking to this reality, one participant in the construction remarked that the crowdsourcing of "poor people's money"²²⁸, as well as labor and resources had made the structures materially possible. While friends shared laugh-filled conversations and were happy that things came together, it was an arduous process that community members completed in their

²²⁸ Anonymous, personal research field note, Jan 2023.

free time.

Community activists were working to stand strong in a politicized refusal to be displaced connected with all encampments in the city; the people knew what they needed, even if it wasn't present, and refused to be silent against the local city council, mayor and university's optimistic muffler. The illegitimacy of authority did not mean that local residents, then unhoused and not, did not wish for a scaled-up version of the collective work happening in that moment, that had been clear at the protest days earlier. Yet, this era of the conflict between the park and the university speaks to the stark terrain of decades-long organized abandonment. In the context of ongoing "anti-state state" profit from crisis through abandonment disguised as good-willed saviorism, the renewed insurgent politicization of the park defense illustrates the spatial, or as Katz would say topographical and counter topographical²²⁹ social reproduction dynamics, from education to housing.

Under the saturated profit structures of financial capital, the park's network of mutual aid and coalitional solidarity work represents a case study for how the social reproduction labor is inadvertently forced onto low-income communities. Networks of survival work during the storms were spearheaded by low income people from the community, based on their collective coalition of survival counter topographies of social reproduction sustained through grassroots mutual aid. It remains true that the park's defense movement is at continual risk of being warped into an inevitable response to socioeconomic vulnerability by neoliberal political and media narratives. The critical grassroots work supporting people displaced by financial capital on a local level is not coming from an essential love, or propensity for the disproportionately

²²⁹ Katz. p. 710.

“warehoused”²³⁰ labor of social reproduction. During the storms of January 2022, Advocates utilized the crisis response to also call out local politicians for their long-term talk and no walk towards universal valuing resource access. The current defense of the park encampment, and encampments across the city, represents a mutual aid work model of collective direct democracy. Punching out from political illusions of resource scarcity, the park defense movement models’ collective access, a political vision that remains unthinkable at a broader scale under the city-wide dependence on market-based development. The ongoing defense of People’s Park demonstrates the ongoing collective material fight for the land, and for that matter all resources, against a narrative of false scarcity, illustrating the tough reality—that those on top continue to willfully reframe--that multiple histories and dimensions of resource scarcity will be solved by the same spatial logics and technologies

People’s Park activists continue to link the struggle of the park community to the ongoing displacement of residents throughout the East Bay, with perpetual encampment sweeps managed by law enforcement. More so than in past eras’, the significance of political solidarity work directly overlaps with direct material aid work in visibly material ways. The current Defend People’s Park movement pushes back against UC shareholder’s continued spatial violence by denaturalizing investment in private housing developments and social service economies as inevitable fix-all for decades of uneven development. Political resource collectivity remains a central tenet of the People’s Park grassroots defense movement. Yet, the affective and material conditions of spatial justice struggle have shifted in various periods of political-economic crisis, from the precursory years of California neoliberal boosterism until the current pandemic-era of

²³⁰ Katz. P. 725.

dispossession. The ongoing park defense is rooted in political curiosity, local grassroots movement building that seeks another affective and material reality past political problem-solution frameworks functioning to re manage, not dismantle, geographies of uneven resource distribution.

Conclusion

The spatial justice fight at People's Park has always been about more than the fate of one land tract, and it represents more than vacant radical ideals of the past. Since the early 1970s, the park has obtained oscillating civic legitimacy as a "user-controlled" park through short-term contracts between the UC and city of Berkeley. The ongoing struggle for People's Park, and the south side community organizers and residents that perform generative ambivalence to local politicians and university administrators' oppressive optimism surrounding development as social policy. Furthermore, the current decentralized grassroots defense of the park also illustrates and pushes up against the organized political will involve in forgetting the past as it relates to the present of political-economic abandonment. The current fight for the park's immediate future, and the long-term livelihoods of those connected to it, continues a decades-old spatial justice fight between the legitimacy of propertied or collective relations to land, to issues of housing, education, and food resource access as well.

Furthermore, the ongoing history of People's Park struggle also reflects certain core tenets of liberalism that have been vamped up with neoliberalism were relevant even during the golden age of raised social wages in which the park was born. Broader political calls for political-economic redistribution and solidarity, past "education" or "housing" short-term reforms have persisted at the core organizing for the park. People's Park illuminates the significance of studying and following materially aspirational models of grassroots social movements that call for a dismantling land as property. In imagining a world beyond illusions of resource scarcity, selective flourishing, the defense of People's Park shows the possibilities and struggles within denaturalizing cruel political attachments to single-issue policy solutions regarding local crisis that function to re-manage geographies of dispossession.

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