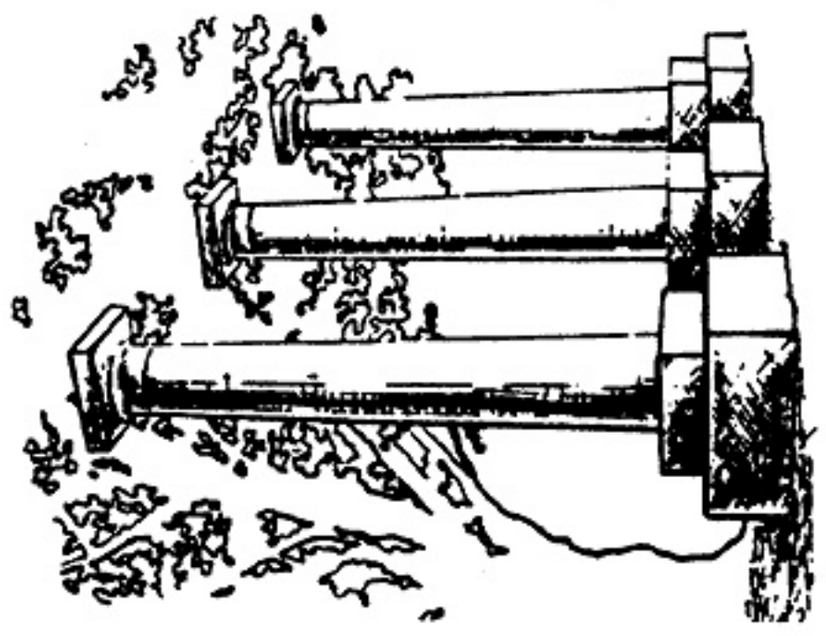

Southern Studies

An Interdisciplinary Journal of the South

New Series

Volume XXX
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Spring/Summer 2023

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THE SOUTHERN STUDIES INSTITUTE

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Introduction: "No Dogs, Negroes, and Mexicans"[1]

Will Guzmán, William T. Hoston, Malachi D. Crawford,
and Marco Robinson, Special Issue Editors

As the fourth largest city in the nation and the most racially diverse in the U.S. South, Houston defies conventional wisdom in multiple ways, including its fraught racial history. The quote above suggests this multifaceted struggle is due in part to its two largest minority groups: African- and Mexican Americans. Their shared and individual histories is one of conflict, collaboration, victories, and failures. They have been historically feared as the "Other," and their histories have been misinterpreted or excluded from traditional narratives. The differences between the groups are stark, but so are their commonalities, as many scholars, including those in this issue, reminded us.[2] One key difference is the ability of white and light-skinned Mexican and Mexican Americans to claim and assimilate into whiteness, whereas most African Americans cannot.[3]

In Texas, both groups have had a history of being the victims of lynchings and police brutality; enduring Jim and Jane Crow, poll taxes and literacy tests, inferior segregated schools and separate water fountains, violently expelled from towns and illegally dispossessed of their property; subjected to debt peonage and employer exploitation, barred from public swimming pools; and created civil rights organizations, which engaged in the politics of respectability, demanded reparations, and utilized assimilationist, reformist, confrontational, militant, and separatist tactics in combating white supremacy domination and control.[4] The impact of this history, as intellectual Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor tells us, is that "Blacks and Latino/as are disproportionately affected by the country's harsh economic order." Indeed, "political unity, including winning white workers to the centrality of racism in

shaping the lived experiences of Black and Latino/a workers," will be one of many strategies for liberation.[5]

The major objectives of this special issue are to contribute new historical insights and understandings of the contemporary intersections of Black and Brown experiences in the deep South. As racial inoculators and revisionists of history argue, this experience is better now than it was fifty years ago. However, there continues to be racial strife and structural forms of racism and discrimination, which relegates these racial and ethnic groups to a hierarchical holding pattern, as we have seen with the murder of George Floyd and the disproportionate rate of COVID-19 deaths.

The historical and contemporary culture of the South (the former Confederate States of America) is indelibly shaped by the life contributions of Black and Brown people who, in most cases, arrived to the region as slaves, indentured servants, or migrant workers. And despite their economic, social, educational, and political strides made throughout the centuries, all have come with a great human price. From slavery to the Jim Crow era to the continued disparate treatment of Black and Brown people by the criminal justice system, a complex web of institutional and systemic factors affects their life conditions.

The persistence of racial inequality and violence against people of color throughout the U.S. South led to the following questions for this special issue: What are the economic, social, cultural, and political origins of this racial strife, and in what ways do these substantive issues continue to persist in the South? How has southern politics perpetuated the exclusion and marginalization of Black and Brown people in the political process, particularly local ordinances, land-use, and zoning? What roles have Black and Brown women played in their communities and in efforts towards political mobilization in the South, particularly at Historically Black Colleges and Universities, or HBCUs? How have Black and Brown communities organized to challenge state domination in the form of structural racism, economic dislocation, and the abusive and over-policing of their neighborhoods?

The contributors to this special issue edition sought to answer these questions, and add to the existing literature on Black and Brown people's experiences in the U.S. South. A central theme among the articles is how African Americans and Latinx, both within and between each other, have participated in community engagement, uplift, protests, and collaboration.

In "Houston's Super Neighborhoods Action Plans," urban planner and historian Ronald Goodwin examines zoning ordinances, land regulation,

and private developers in their attempts to influence urban growth patterns. Too often, this was done without the input of residents in Black and Brown neighborhoods. Historically in Houston, these two groups have lived in close proximity to each other, making it easier for the white power structure to control the planning process and exclude their input. New initiatives that Goodwin reviews have attempted to address these issues and document the barriers to more community control.[6]

The importance of HBCUs and faculty community engagement with local communities is examined in "Southern Communities of Color and HBCU University Relations." Historian Marco Robinson and sociologist Farrah Gafford Cambrice also explore the career of Afro-Cuban Mary Ernestine Suarez and her impact on the student body at Prairie View A&M University (PVAMU). The connections between people of color and PVAMU illustrate the ways HBCUs assisted these communities during the Jim Crow era and the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement. As it relates to Texas, their analysis of the collaborations and relationships brings light to the complexities surrounding Black and Brown relations in addition to the significance of the university being an educational haven for both groups. This is another addition to the history of Afro-Latinx at HBCUs and in southern cities such as Houston (Afro-Dominicans), Atlanta (Garifuna), Winston-Salem (Afro-Mexicans), Washington, DC (Afro-Colombians), Kissimmee–Orlando (Afro-Puerto Ricans), and New Orleans, Ybor City, and Miami (Afro-Cubans).

Historian Jesús Esparza looks at the Houston Police Department and their mistreatment of residents in "Brown, Black, and Brutalized" and makes an important contribution to this small, but growing historiography. Also, in the subsequent article to end this special issue edition, Esparza delves in-depth on the 1977 HPD vicious beating, drowning, and murder of José "Joe" Campos Torres. In "Kill the Pigs!" Esparza documents multiracial and multicultural coalitions who protested this act of racial terror, which is memorialized annually with a silent protest and in poem and song by artists Gil Scott-Heron and Michael Ramos.[7]

The social and economic inequalities Black and Brown people face in the Greater Houston Metropolitan Area, coalition building and inter-racial collaborations with HBCUs are significant ways by which these communities survive and thrive. Analyzing their experiences at the intersections of the complex prisms of race, class, gender, and ethnicity provides a fresh view of their respective community's responses to racial discrimination and legal injustice. The contents of this special issue edition highlight the struggles and

travails of Black and Brown Texans while displaying how social change is often slow and minimal in the U.S. South. Further, the current persistence of police violence as witnessed through the brutal murder of Houston's own George Floyd and the health disparities illuminated as a result of the adverse effects of COVID-19 on communities of color confirms the existence of an unaddressed crisis that continues to ravish the neighborhoods of Blacks and Latinx in the Bayou City and surrounding areas.

Notes:

1. In Texas, members of the Dallas-based Lonestar Restaurant Association preserved racial apartheid through policies and signage designed to dehumanize Black and Brown folx, see "Jim Crow" sign, Black History Collection, Manuscript Division, U.S. Library of Congress (024.00.00).

2. Bernadette Pruitt, *The Other Great Migration: The Movement of Rural African Americans to Houston, 1900-1941* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2013), 29, 75, 82-83, 118.

3. Bonnie Angelo interviewing Toni Morrison, "The Pain of Being Black," *Time* v. 133, n.21 (22 May 1989), 120.

4. Nicholas Villanueva, Jr., *The Lynching of Mexicans in the Texas Borderlands* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2017), 169-74.

5. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2016), 214.

6. Tyina L. Steptoe, *Houston Bound: Culture and Color in a Jim Crow City* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 81-83.

7. Felix Contreras, "Gil Scott-Heron Dies: Rhymes for La Revolución," *NPR Alt.Latino*, May 28, 2011, https://www.npr.org/sections/altlatino/2011/05/29/136742644/gil-scott-heron-dies-rhymes-for-la-revoluci-n; and Dave Marsh, "The Zen of Revolution: Michael Ramos' Charanga Cakewalk," *The Austin Chronicle*, August 18, 2006, https://www.austinchronicle.com/music/2006-08-18/395778/

Special Note:

The editors of this special issue are at Prairie View A&M University. Their Mellon Center For Faculty Excellence, Grant Number 1906-06895, supported this special issue edition.

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Houston's Super Neighborhood Action Plans: Collaborative Planning or Status Quo?

Ronald E. Goodwin

The state of Texas's history of racial ostracism and violence closely resembles that found in other parts of the former Confederate States. It is easy to assume that twentieth century racist policies grew out of the unresolved racial issues of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (for example, slavery, the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the sudden emancipation of millions of enslaved Blacks). However, studies illustrate that other factors also influenced the development and maintenance of Jim Crow racism, including income disparity, exclusionary zoning, and racial steering.[1]

The first decades of the twentieth century saw the Black community escaping the forms of racism so commonly associated with the antebellum South. Blacks initially believed that northern urban centers would offer more opportunities (i.e., economic, social, education, etc.) not readily available in the south. Sadly, they were often mistaken. Instead of opportunities, they faced new threats, bigotry, and ostracism. Not only did they find themselves competing with newly arriving European immigrants for jobs and housing, but the purposeful residential restrictions.[2] While these immigrants surely faced their own obstacles and instances of bigotry, those paled in comparison to the challenges faced by Blacks. European immigrants and their children were eventually able to erase/minimize verbal accents and cultural traditions in their acclimation to a new environment. Sadly, southern Blacks found it virtually impossible to overcome the color of their skin. As a result, social acceptance and political recognition would not be forthcoming, even though they were American citizens by birth.[3]

The northern version of Jim Crow looked eerily similar to that found in Dixie. Instead of rural landowners, racism in the North was often endorsed

and enforced by the first generation of professional urban planners. For example, in 1923, city officials in Kansas City, MO, encouraged local urban planners to develop zoning ordinances to regulate land uses to restrict the housing choices of Blacks to the less desirable parts of town. The obvious goal was to maintain a separation of races, even though the Supreme Court had already declared racial zoning unenforceable.[4]

This first generation of city planners embraced Jim Crow racism and established residential segregation through such planning tools as zoning, deed restrictions, and redlining with the full blessing of elected officials.[5] More than fifty years later, by the 1970s, the Black community in many southern urban areas remained relegated to impoverished areas of town, with substandard municipal services, high crime, and low performing schools. Furthermore, the Black community found itself consistently excluded from opportunities to participate in local governance activities, particularly those involving local planning processes.[6]

Today, many urban areas remain racially segregated, less by formal laws and restrictions, and more by customs and attitudes.[7] As a result, the challenge facing public officials and professional urban planners is developing strategies that solicit consistent stakeholder participation. City leaders now recognize that stakeholder involvement and participation is not only desired but a requisite if policies are to have any long-lasting and meaningful impacts.[8] One strategy that has gained traction in recent years is collaborative planning, or planning from the "bottom-up." Such strategies actively seek the input of local stakeholders through face-to-face interactions between stakeholders and city officials and have proven effective in many urban communities.[9]

Houston, Texas, is the largest city in the United States with no formal zoning ordinances. As such, private real estate developers have exerted unusual influence in the development and regulation of land uses and the patterns of urban growth. Guided by monetary profits, such urban growth occurred without consideration of Houston's racial dynamics or historic culture.

Lee P. Brown, the first African American to be elected mayor of Houston, 1998-2004, established the Super Neighborhoods initiative as a collaborative planning strategy to encourage citizen participation in local governance at the community level. Each Super Neighborhood group was encouraged to submit a "wish list" of potential infrastructure improvements through the city's planning department for possible inclusion in the city's master plan. The objective of this paper focuses on the levels of citizen

participation from 2001-2010, particularly in racially segregated communities. Even though residential segregation remains a concern, the need to involve local stakeholders becomes imperative in an increasingly sophisticated technological society. The findings will demonstrate that the establishment of Super Neighborhoods provided an effective bridge between local stakeholders and city officials through the Houston Planning Department, and the needs of most communities involved attention to repairing and modernizing local infrastructure.

Review of Literature

The literature on citizen participation typically provides a professional planner with best-practices strategies for soliciting citizen involvement and implementing policy initiatives. Most often, these best-practices are discussed as part of strategies that have proven successful and those that have not achieved the desired results. Conversely, the literature involving race is voluminous. Arguably, it becomes an insurmountable task to review every instance of racial discrimination and the historical issues surrounding Jim Crow. Therefore, the following review of literature emphasizes the discussion of citizen participation and the historical development of residential segregation. The case study of Houston's Super Neighborhood initiatives supports that literature insomuch that planners are an integral part of stakeholder input and local policy development.

Citizen Participation

The literature indicates that a stakeholder's ability to participate in local governance should not be predicated on race or the neighborhood in which one lives.[10] By design, political power was not to be vested in a single individual or group. However, over time the redistribution of power in this country became troublesome when those seeking to participate were from what racists considered undesirable groups.[11] As a result, while the Founding Fathers believed they had the natural right to participate in their governance, they created a democracy that oftentimes limits the voice of those whose skin color did not mirror their own. Sadly, race continues to influence who can and cannot participate in public discourse.

It is certainly unfair to blame any specific group for the disastrous racist policies that led to the Black community's political exclusion in the twentieth century. The first generation of professional urban planners certainly exacerbated an already inflammatory racial environment. Their

implementation and support of Jim Crow policies restricted access to local governance for many minority groups.[12] Historically, the one group most visibly affected by the policies of early urban planners was the Black community.[13]

Therefore, it appears that there is no escape from the role race places in any effort to influence public policies. As a result, the means to influence policies vary by race. Traditionally, white communities sought the development of strategies that allowed them access to public officials and other powerbrokers. However, leaders in the Black community wanted to become powerbrokers and function as mediators to the white establishment. This often led to access to public officials being limited to a single individual or group. In the end, many Black communities failed to experience a redistribution of power because the ones selected to serve as a mediator often placed their personal need for recognition and monetary attainment over the needs of the broader Black community.[14]

In recent decades, city planners embraced the philosophy of collaborative planning or planning from the "bottom-up," minimizing the influence of race in the planning processes. This philosophy actively seeks the input of local stakeholders in local planning decisions and proved to be an effective strategy in many urban communities.[15] As a stakeholder-centered strategy, it encourages the community to identify their individual needs. Unfortunately, stakeholders in racially segregated communities are often underrepresented in the decision-making process and are not experienced in the identification and evaluation of community needs. As a result, minority stakeholders continue to be disproportionately underrepresented in the urban planning processes, which, unfortunately, continues to reinforce the stigma that Black communities are crime-ridden, poverty-stricken, and overall undesirable to those who have a choice in where they live.[16]

Any effort to solicit stakeholder involvement should be synonymous with the democratic process where the people have the opportunity to participate. The democratic considerations for urban planning practitioners include price, idealism, relativism, economics, and rationality. The theory of communicative planning processes encourages urban planners to develop the professional communication skills necessary to elicit positive comments from the collective community relative to their own stated and perceived values that can be incorporated into the planning processes.[17]

While communicative planning strategies encourage professional planners to develop skills necessary to encourage stakeholders to identify their

respective needs, the ability to work with them should never be overlooked. Case studies in the United States and Austria indicate that consensus-building activities could be damaged if the planners fail to identify their role as the link between the community and local decision-makers.[18]

Another detriment to stakeholder participation occurs when particular sub-factions of stakeholders highjack consensus-building activities to further their agenda instead of one that benefits the entire community.[19] One way to ensure the community's goals are identified is to focus all activities towards the revitalizing of a community built-environment. For example, building new parks, repairing damaged or updated public facilities, clearing debris from vacant lots, or adding traffic controls at high-traffic intersections. Even though there may be a power struggle in setting the local agenda, city officials must always depend on the planner to make the right decisions because of their education and professional experience.[20]

It is in this environment that planners play perhaps the vital role between the community and local officials. That role involves partnering with stakeholders to ensure not only successful policy formulation but also policy implementation. Advocacy on the part of the planner can only occur when the collaborative goals of the local stakeholders and the planner coincide since the planner understands the values of the community at the micro-level. To this end, planners should always consider the following to reach the maximum potential of the planner-stakeholder partnership: 1) always express the views of the stakeholders, 2) find ways to evaluate alternate plans, 3) identify inherent biases in plans that do not support the values of the community-at-large, 4) educate other groups/agencies of the historic cultural values of community, and 5) assist community leaders in identifying its values and determine the most appropriate way(s) in which to express them. Only when the professional planner acts as a community advocate will the full citizen participation process be realized.[21]

Lastly, collaborative/communicative planning processes should be the cornerstone of any activities centered on citizen involvement. When developing such processes, urban planners should consider citizen participation strategies and activities. They involve the administration of participation activities (how public participation plans are managed), predetermining objectives (deciding whether to educate citizens, seek their opinions/preferences, or simply grant them influence in the planning process), staging (deciding which stage in the planning process to invite citizen participation), targeting (which groups will be invited to participate), citizen

participation techniques (how citizen involvement takes place (i.e., public hearing, focus groups, charrettes, workshops, etc.), and lastly, information (which determines the types of information and dissemination processes/activities to be used). Most importantly, urban planners should not only clearly communicate policy objectives to the public, but they should also ensure that relevant stakeholders (i.e., environmental groups, business associations, civic groups, etc.) are allowed to participate in every stage of the process.

Residential Segregation

For generations, academics have studied and scrutinized the negative effects of Jim Crow-influenced residential segregation and its impacts on the Black community.[22] These effects (i.e., high crime, unemployment, and poverty rates) generally resulted in the formation of the stereotypical segregated Black ghetto. While describing segregated communities as "ghettos" is no longer politically correct, racially segregated communities continue to be a tangible reality in many cities throughout the country.

The development of urban Black ghettos was typically the result of the cyclical relationship involving white flight, detrimental/racist housing policies, crime, and poverty. Such relationships between 1890 and 1940 created densely concentrated areas of foreign immigrants and southern Blacks. Foreign immigrants found the paths to equality challenging, but attainable. On the other hand, the obstacles facing the Black community were based on skin color and, for many, literally impossible to overcome. White supremacists masquerading as elected officials developed racist policies to specifically restrict the physical movements, housing options, and employment opportunities of the Black community.[23]

Other studies argue that the development of segregated cities was the result of racist attitudes supported by local and federal political support. They found Black ghettos to be a disastrous byproduct of Jim Crow and practically prisons for the Black underclass. They also allowed whites to avoid social contact with Blacks while reinforcing ideas of supposed Black inferiority. Racist policies like redlining were direct attempts to separate the races, and even well-meaning federal urban renewal policies inadvertently led to residential segregation by limiting the housing opportunities/options of Blacks. Combined with the class struggles within the Black community, residential isolation was certainly a contributing factor in high crime, weak family structures, and the idolizing of the criminal element (i.e., drug dealers and

pimps) in Black communities.[24]

While race continues to be a force in social interactions, the literature discusses other factors that contribute to social and residential inequities. A simple explanation for the white middle-class abandonment of the city post-World War II was the result of the rapid development of suburbs facilitated by the federal interstate highway networks. While cities were becoming increasingly seen as places of crime and disorder, the growing white middle-class were encouraged to physically separate from the lower classes. As a result, it became easy for real estate developers to target them with campaigns offering respite from crime and other vices commonly associated with urban environments.[25]

The chaos of the 1960s further exacerbated urban dynamics. Even though President Lyndon B. Johnson tried to improve the standard of living for everyone living in urban areas, his efforts fell woefully short. The Great Society was hamstrung from the beginning by the United States's continued involvement in Vietnam. The revelation that 100 years after the cessation of the Civil War and slavery, the United States had done little to integrate the Black community into the American Dream and had instead fostered the development of two distinct societies: one white and the other Black. The urban violence during the Civil Rights movement was often the result of the continued frustration of not having the same economic opportunities as whites, social and educational inequalities, and the persistent belief that police behavior was particularly brutal in Black neighborhoods.[26]

Even though Federal policies enacted since the 1960s have tried to integrate the Black community into the broader experiences of the United States, by the end of the twentieth century, residential segregation continues to be a problem for city officials.[27] The new sociological term, "hyperghetoization," was created to describe the continued spatial concentrations of the poor and disadvantaged. The continued stigmas associated with being Black in this country supported the idea of inferiority, but being poor *and* Black added a layer of antagonism that bordered on hatred.[28]

Furthermore, the continued spatial concentration of the urban poor has led to policies supporting the inequitable distribution of public funds. As more and more urban communities are being gentrified to accommodate a new generation of the white middle-class, the spatial redistribution of those living at or below the poverty line has become a source of contention for public officials. While poverty may be seen as a class-based problem, the result

remains the same: limited economic opportunity, substandard housing, and political ostracism.[29]

Methodology

As a former Confederate state, Texas's history of Jim Crow racism is real and very painful. While many in the twenty-first century would like to ignore, or at the very least minimize, the historical influence of white supremacy in Texas's urban policies, there is no escaping the factual truth. For example, there is still much debate among Texas historians as to the influence of President Andrew Jackson and the events that led to the revolution that culminated in Texas' independence from Mexico. These events have generally been accepted as motivated by the desire of white immigrants to continue their commitment to slave labor and the desire of the United States to continue acquiring land west of the Mississippi.

Another example of white supremacy's historical influence in Texas history was the decision of Texas's political leaders to secede from the United States and cast their lots with the newly formed treasonous Confederate States of America in 1865. Like the revolution thirty years earlier, the decision to commit treason was rooted in the belief that whites had the right to own and control Black slaves. As a result of this fateful decision, Texas' dominant racist ideology mirrored those of other former Confederate states. Even though legal Jim Crow policies were eradicated in the 1960s, the custom of segregation persists into the twenty-first century.

As the fourth largest city in the nation in the 2000 U.S. Census, Houston typified the patterns of urban segregation found in other cities throughout the country, particularly southern cities. Furthermore, Houston remains the largest U.S. city that does not have local zoning requirements/restrictions. As such, residential development has been heavily influenced by the private sector and governed by such planning tools as deed restrictions.

Nonetheless, Houston's Black community has historically been found in three geographic areas (the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Wards). After racist redlining practices were slowly eradicated, Blacks began migrating into nearly every part of the city and adjacent counties by the 1970s. However, as the city experienced periods of strong economic gains, which led to the moniker "Boomtown USA," the Black community remained largely isolated and disconnected from the decision-makers and the repository of their actions. This was due in part to a southern custom that ignored the presence of Blacks

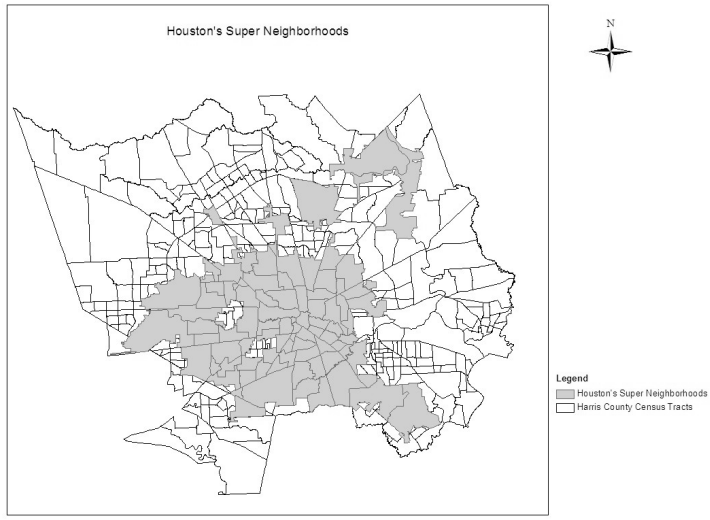

Figure 1.

in boosterism activities by restricting housing, employment, and educational choices in Houston's inner city (Bullard, 1987; Cole, 1997). Still, recent gentrification activities have changed the demographic makeup of many of Houston's inner-city communities; however, Blacks still comprise a majority in the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Wards.

Former Mayor Lee P. Brown initiated the Super Neighborhood (SN) initiative as a collaborative planning strategy to solicit stakeholder input and participation and be the centerpiece of Houston's Neighborhood Planning initiatives. SNs divided the city into 88 distinct districts providing stakeholders access to local city planners and other government officials. Through periodic meetings, the concerns of the community could be identified, prioritized, and possible solutions proposed (Figure 1).

Furthermore, in every SN, local stakeholders were tasked with creating Super Neighborhood Councils (SNC) as a way to mediate between the needs of the neighborhood and the bureaucracy of Houston's Planning Department (PD) and City Council (CC). The SNCs would provide leadership to residents as they identified and prioritize issues/problems affecting their respective neighborhoods (for example, community improvement projects and establishing standards for neighborhood aesthetics). Also, the efficient delivery of existing city services often demands unified action on the part stakeholders before city officials develop relevant policies that initiate some form of action.

Once organized, the SNCs developed their by-laws and organizational structure. Their primary goal is the development of Super Neighborhood Action Programs (SNAP). The SNAPs would then identify those priority items the SNC would present to local city and elected officials for inclusion as an action item for the Capital Improvement Projects (CIP). CIP items considered short-term are those whose implementation is between 12 and 18 months. Examples of short-term SNAP projects include the following: local park improvements (picnic tables, BBQ grills, park signage, etc.), street maintenance (to include patches and overlays), and installation of traffic control devices (traffic lights and signage). Long term CIP items require a significant financial commitment from the city, and the implementation usually exceeds 18 months. Examples of these projects include public facility major renovations (i.e., fire station and police stations, a neighborhood library, etc.), major thoroughfare development and/or reconstruction, major park improvements (i.e., new basketball courts, new bleachers, concession stands, and parking facilities), public utility improvements, new local streets, new sidewalks, and the installation of street lighting.

The city of Houston's PD developed specific criteria and guidelines for accepting SNAP proposals and determining which city agency would be responsible for its final evaluation. Once a proposal is submitted, it will be classified as *Accepted*, *Accepted but Not Funded*, *Needs Further Evaluation*, *Forward for Further Evaluation*, *Ineligible*, *Reject*, *Tabled*, and *Closed*.[30] However, this research focuses solely on the numbers and percentages of *Accepted* and *Rejected* SNAP proposals and its relationship to the racial makeup of each SN. When a proposal has been submitted to the planning department, it is then assigned to a specific city department (i.e., fire, public works, neighborhood planning, solid waste, and police) for further consideration. Therefore, even if a SNAP proposal was *Rejected*, it will still indicate which department it was assigned to.

Data

What follows is an examination of those SNs whose SNCs submitted SNAP plans to Houston's PD between 2001 and 2010. During this examination period, there were 87 functioning SNs with a total population of just over 2 million, of which 44 percent were Hispanic, 24 percent were white, 24 percent were Black, and only six percent were classified as Asian (Figure 2).

While there were 87 functioning SNs, only 56 submitted SNAP plans (a total of 6,815) during this period. Fifty percent (3,413) of those SNAPs

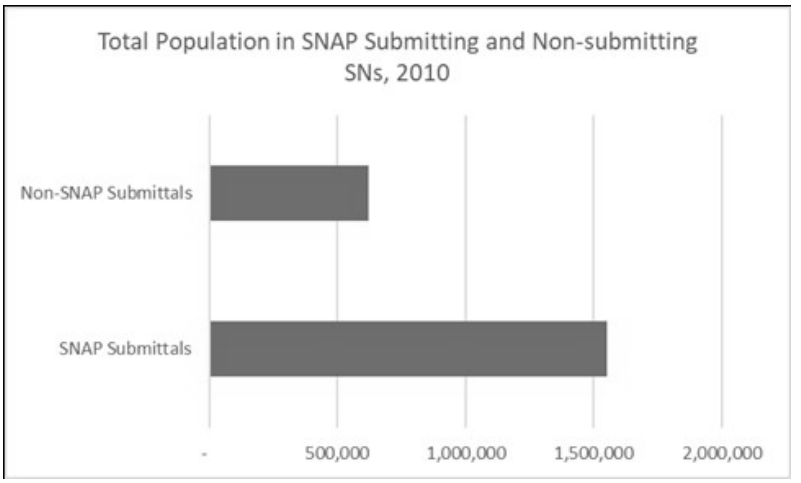

Figure 2.

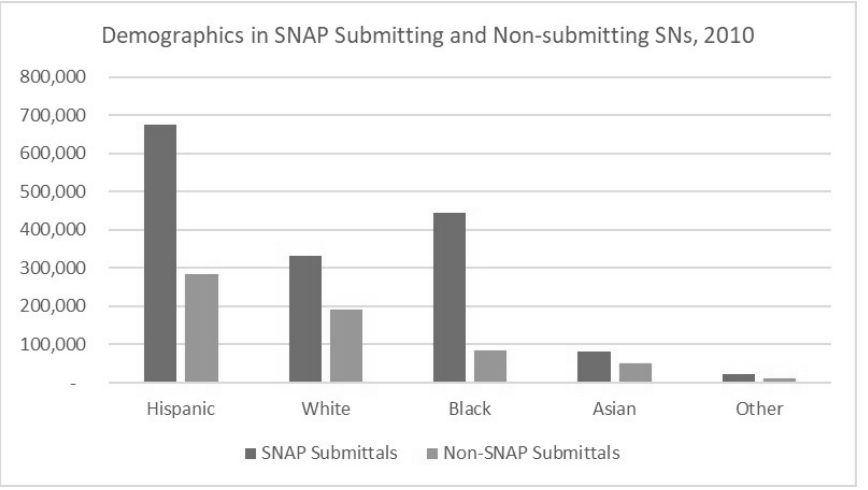

Figure 3.

submitted were eventually classified as *Accepted* by the PD.

The total population in those SN submitting SNAP plans was nearly 1.3 million, compared to just over 630,000 for non-submitting SNs (Figure 2). In terms of ethnicity, there were little differences in the percentage of Hispanics and Asians in those SN submitting SNAPs and those that did not. However, there were significant differences between Blacks and whites in SNs submitting SNAPs and those that did not. Whites made up an average of 36 percent of those SN not submitting SNAP plans compared to an average of 24 percent in SN that submitted SNAPs. Conversely, Blacks constituted averages of nearly 19 percent of the non-submittal SN and 35 percent of those that did

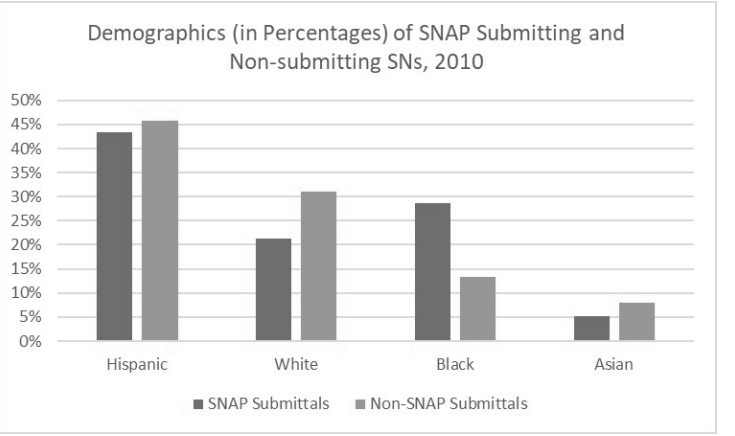

Figure 4.

submit SNAPs (Figures 3 and 4). Even though the 32 SNs not submitting SNAP plans had significantly less population, the average median household income was over four thousand dollars higher, an average of 15 percent had four-year college degrees compared to 13 percent, and the average unemployment percentage rate was two percent lower than those SN submitting SNAP plans.

There were 19 SNs where Blacks held a simple majority (50 percent or greater). In these SNs, the total population was 386,1243, and 3,179 SNAPs were submitted, and 1,909 were accepted (60 percent) for inclusion in Houston's master plan. Thirty-nine percent of the submitted SNAPs were forwarded to the Neighborhood Protection Department (NPD), and 31 percent to the Public Works and Engineering (PWE) Department. The median household income in these majority-Black SNs was slightly over $25,000 per year, and the unemployment rate was 14 percent. Lastly, only 7 percent completed an undergraduate degree.

Whites held a simple majority in nine SNs were the total population was 835,156. The total SNAPs submitted were 624, and 32 percent (202) were accepted. Overwhelmingly, the SNCs in these SNs directed 393 SNAPs to the PWE. The median household income was slightly over $47,000, 23 percent indicated the educational attainment of at least the B.A. degree, and the unemployment rate was 7 percent.

Hispanics were the majority racial/ethnic group in 17 SNs. The total population of this select group was 448,430, with a median household income of $29,713. The unemployment rate was 11 percent and 7 percent indicated completing an undergraduate degree. There were 2,254 SNAPs

submitted, and 42 percent (958) were classified as "Accepted." Almost half (1056) of the SNAPs submitted were directed to Houston's PWE Department.

Findings

The objective of any collaborative planning strategy is to provide a mechanism whereby local stakeholders can actively contribute to the development of policies and programs that affect their communities. Houston's Super Neighborhoods initiatives provides such a mechanism. As a result, sixty-four percent of the recognized Super Neighborhood Councils identified and prioritized the needs of their respective communities and developed Super Neighborhood Action Programs, where those needs would be considered for inclusion as action items in the city's budget.

Given the history of residential segregation throughout this country, it is not surprising to find similar demographic patterns in Houston, Texas. The total population in participating SN was nearly 1.3 million, or 69.6 percent of the total, compared to 607,849, or 30 percent of the total population, for non-participating SNs.

In participating SNs, Hispanics had the greatest representation of nearly 37 percent, followed by Blacks (29 percent), whites (27 percent), and Asians (.05 percent). Whites constituted 45 percent of the non-participating SNs, followed by Hispanics (35 percent), Blacks (12 percent), and Asians (7 percent). The average median household income for participating SNs was $34,066, which is $1,812 lower than the averages for all SNs. The average median household income for non-participating SNs was $39,066, which is $3,274 higher than the median household income for all SNs.

Throughout the study period (2001-2010), there were 6,815 total SNAPs submitted by 56 SNs. Of that total, 3,414 (50 percent) were accepted, and 1,464 were listed as rejected (21 percent). The remaining 1,937 SNAPs submitted were listed as either accepted not funded, evaluate, forward, ineligible, SNC referral, tabled, closed, or no response. SN 59 (Clinton Park) had the greatest number of submittals with 771, and the highest number of accepted SNAPs with 754, or 98 percent of their total submittals. However, the data indicates that of the 771 SNAPs submitted by the Clinton Park SNC, 764 were submitted in one year (2002). The remaining seven were submitted in 2003 (6) and 2005 (1). Incidentally, The Clinton Park SN was 91% Black and seven percent Hispanic.

Such a racial composition is indicative that many of Houston's communities (and SNs) are racially segregated. Of the 56 SNs that

participated in the SNAP program, 45 could be considered racially segregated. Conversely, of the 31 non-participating SNs, 21 could be considered segregated. Hispanics were a majority in 11 SN with a population of 181,566; whites were a majority in eight SN with a total population of 255,659. The remaining two SNs were a majority-Black with a population of 19,058.

Historically, city officials, including professional planners, often "gerrymandered" or "redlined" city boundaries to artificially create neighborhoods with certain racial demographics; in other words, there were strategies to keep Blacks, and other minorities considered "undesirables," out of white neighborhoods. Such planning tools became extremely popular during the Civil Rights era of 1950s-1970s as urban areas throughout the country exploded in civil unrest.

Houston was no different from many other cities as local officials purposefully maintained separate white and minority neighborhoods. The integration of previously majority-white neighborhoods proceeded at a "snail's pace" in the years following the Civil Rights era. Aided by the rapid development of suburban communities to the north and southwest, the abandonment of Houston's urban core by the white middle-class from the 1970s-1990s followed the same patterns seen throughout the country.

However, data evaluated for this analysis indicates a lack of evidence suggesting SNs were gerrymandered to have desired racial characteristics. On the contrary, SNs were created to maintain existing neighborhood boundaries and characteristics. In the 45 segregated SNs, there were 6,057 SNAPs submitted from fiscal years 2001 through 2010, and 3,069 (51 percent) were eventually classified as *Accepted*. In the 11 SNs no racial group held a majority, there were 758 SNAP plans submitted to Houston's PD, and 344 (45 percent) were *Accepted*.

The data indicates that in 2001, there were 1,074 SNAPs submitted, and the majority (60 percent) were listed as *Accepted*, and 35 percent of those were assigned to the PWE, and 32 percent assigned to the Neighborhood Protection Department (NPD). Twenty-five were listed as *Rejected*.

In 2002, there were nearly 3,000 SNAP submittals (2,959), and 63 percent were *Accepted* with 21 percent listed as *Rejected*. Forty percent of the submittals were assigned to NPD and 35 percent considered by PWE.

In 2003, there was a significant reduction in the number of SNAP submittals considered by the planning department as well as a reduction in the number of *Accepted* proposals. There were 810 plans submitted with only 30 percent *Accepted* compared to an increase in the number of *Rejected* proposals

that increased to 27 percent. More than half (54 percent) of the submittals were considered to be in the *311* category (nonemergency information), and only 18 percent assigned to the PWE, which is a significant decline from the previous years.

In 2004, there was another reduction in SNAP plans considered as only 283 were submitted. For the first time, the number of *Rejected* plans (86) exceeded the number of *Accepted* plans (58). Whereas the 311 category considered the majority of the submittals in 2003, yet in 2004 the *311*s were less than 10 percent of all SNAP plans. PWE considered more plans than any other city department with 41 percent of the totals.

In 2005, the numbers of SNAPs continued to decline as only 247 plans were submitted with the numbers of *Rejected* (40%) is again more than the numbers of *Accepted* (23 percent). For the first time, the PWE considered a majority of the plans (64 percent) with the parks department and the super neighborhood council reviewing 10 and 12 percent of the plans, respectively.

In 2006, the numbers of SNAP plans had increased from 247 to 314, a marginal increase of 67. The percentage of *Accepted*, however, remained the same at 23 percent while the numbers of *Rejected* increased by 59 to 157, which equates to 50 of the total submitted. The PWE increased the number of plans assigned to them by 78, but the percentage of the total increased to 75 percent with the parks department considering the next highest amount with 37 plans (12 percent).

In 2007, the numbers of SNAP decreased by 91 to 223 plans, but the numbers of *Accepted* increased to 38 percent of the totals while the numbers of *Rejected* fell to a total of only two plans (less than one percent). For the three years beginning in 2008, none of the SNAPs submitted were classified as *Rejected*. As seen in the following table, most of the SNAPs plans were either listed as *Accepted* or *Ineligible* (see Table 1). Between 2007 and 2010, a majority of the city departments considering SNAP plans were the PWE and the Parks Department. The following illustrates the numbers and percentages of city departments (see Table 2).

The data positively indicates that the Super Neighborhood Initiative significantly increased the opportunities for stakeholder participation as evident in the SNAP program. During the period of this evaluation (2001-2010), there were 6,815 SNAPs submitted for consideration. Of those, 3,414 (50%) were listed as *Accepted* and 1,467 (21.5 percent) listed as *Rejected*. Of the 3,414 *Accepted* SNAPs, the majority were assigned to the Neighborhood Protection Department (46 percent), Public Works Department (33 percent),

	Total Submittals	Accepted		Accepted not Funded		Evaluation		Ineligible	
2008	299	98	(0.33)	19	(0.06)	0		182	(0.61)
2009	219	118	(0.54)	21	(0.10)	0		80	(0.37)
2010	387	183	(0.47)	0	0	76	(0.20)	128	(0.33)

Table 1.

	Bldg Serv.		Police Dept.		Parks Dept.		Public Works Dept.		Fire Dept.	
2007	1	(0.004)	7	(0.03)	27	(0.12)	188	(0.84)	0	
2008	0		3	(0.01)	72	(0.24)	222	(0.74)	2	(0.007)
2009	0		0		84	(0.38)	135	(0.62)	0	
2010	0		0		187	(0.48)	200	(0.52)	0	

Table 2.

and the Parks Department (10 percent). Of the total 1,467 *Rejected* SNAPs, 74 percent (1,081) were assigned to the Public Works.

The perceived community needs were overwhelming under the auspices of the Public Works and Neighborhood Protection departments. The PWE received 41percent (2,802) of all SNAPs submitted and *Accepted* 1,123 (40 percent) and *Rejected* 1,081 (39 percent). The NPD received 23.5 percent (1,604) of all SNAPs submitted and *Accepted* 97 percent of them. The Parks Department received 714 (10.5 percent) of all SNAPs submitted, and 350 (49 percent) were *Accepted*, 168 (24 percent) were *Ineligible*, and 78 (11 percent) were *Rejected*. Combined, the PWE and NPD received 5,120 (75 percent) of the SNAPs submitted from 2001-2010.

Lastly, the levels of participation in minority segregated communities (Black and Hispanic) was significantly higher when compared to white segregated SNs. Whites constituted a majority in only nine SNs, compared to 19 for Blacks and 17 for Hispanics. The numbers of SNAPs submitted in the nine white-majority SNs were only 693 (with 32 percent *Accepted*) compared to 3,346 (with 60 percent *Accepted*) in the Black SNs and 2,387 (with 42 percent *Accepted*) in Hispanic SNs. A noteworthy finding in that it illustrates the pervasiveness of a minority-populated city. The implication is that whites no longer live in the city of Houston but in the adjacent suburban communities. Therefore, the issues affecting white communities are not the responsibilities of Houston's professional urban planners.

Figure 5 indicates the average median household income for segregated SNs. One finding indicates a significant income disparity among the races in Houston. A naturally corresponding finding is the higher levels of

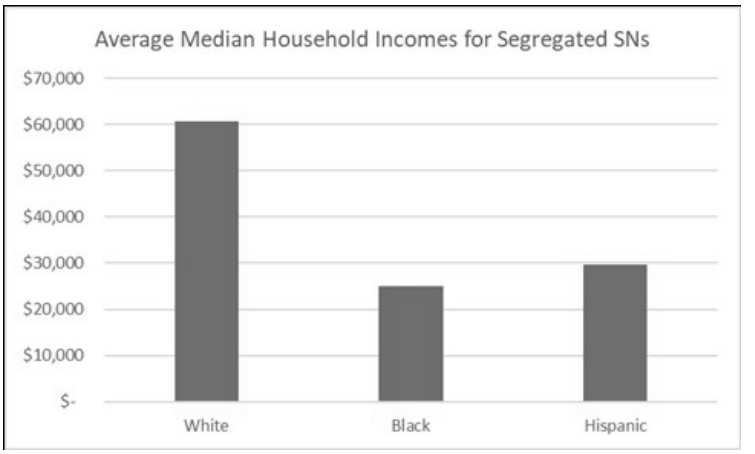

Figure 5.

education in white communities as measured by the percent of the population with a minimum of bachelor's degrees (35 percent in white communities compared to seven percent in Hispanic communities and seven percent in Black communities).

Conclusion

Past literature indicates that citizen/stakeholder participation in affluent communities has been evident since the establishment of this Republic. Therefore, with the relatively small numbers of SNAPs submitted and the low percentage rate of *Accepted* projects, the assumption was that these SNs and their SNCs had other avenues to access public officials that allowed them to not only influence the public discourse, but also influence how city resources would be allocated in their communities. As a result, the SN program was not as vital in affluent communities as it was in majority-minority communities.[31]

Even though private developers continue to influence Houston's development today as they did during the period under evaluation, the role of professional planners is evolving. The success of the SN initiative indicates the need for professional planners to stand in the gap between city leaders and stakeholders that are inexperienced in the functions of local bureaucracies. The findings of this study further illustrate the need for professional planners to use their education and training to help stakeholders not only identify those areas of need in their respective communities, but also how to petition their elected officials for a redress of those concerns. Existing literature argues that the proper role for professional planners in the twenty-first century is that of

the advocate for those who have little, or no, bureaucratic experience.[32]

The stakeholders from majority-minority SNs participated in their SNCs because they wanted their communities to get a fair share of city dollars for needs such as infrastructure improvements and environmental and beautification projects. During the period of this study, Houston's city planners assisted stakeholders in every phase of the SNAP process. As long as they continue standing in the gap between local elected officials and community stakeholders, those in minority communities will enjoy the full benefits of U.S. democracy by participating in their own governance.

Notes:

1. Arthur O'Sullivan, *Urban Economics* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2009), 214-18.

2. Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, "Segregation and the Making of the Underclass," in Jan Lin and Christopher Mele, eds., *The Urban Sociology Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 134-35.

3. Kenneth Kusmer, Gilbert Osofsky, St. Clair Drake, and Allan Spear studied the experiences of the Black community in their relocation to northern environments. They found that Blacks were just as ostracized in the North as they were in the South. Conversely, John Bodnar's *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (1985) and Thomas Kessner's *The Golden Door, Italian and Jewish Immigrant Mobility in New York City 1880-1915* (1977) looked at specific groups of European immigrants and found their paths to American citizenship were not hindered by their skin color and expedited by rapidly developed familial networks.

4. Kevin Fox Gotham, "Urban Space, Restrictive Covenant and the Origins of Racial Residential Segregation in a U.S. City, 1900-1950," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 24, no. 3 (2000): 623.

5. Roscoe H. Jones, "City Planning in Houston without Zoning" in Walter J. McCoy, ed., *McCoy on Deed Restrictions* (Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing, 2004), 4.

6. See the report, *Examining the Relationship between Housing, Education, and Persistent Segregation by The Institute on Race and Poverty* (now called The Institute on Metropolitan Opportunity), University of Minnesota Law School, 1997.

7. Loïc J. D. Wacquant and William Julius Wilson, "The Cost of Racial and Class Exclusion in the Inner City," in Jan Lin and Christopher Mele, eds., *The Urban Sociology Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 127.

8. Samuel Brody, David Godschalk and Raymond Burby, "Mandating

Citizen Participation in Plan Making: Six Strategic Planning Choices," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 69, no. 3 (2003): 245.

9. Evert A. Lindquist, "Putting Citizens First," in Evert A. Lindquist, Sam Vincent and John Wanna, eds, *Putting Citizens First Engagement in Policy and Service Delivery for the 21st Century* (Canberra, Australia: ANU E Press, 2013), 2.

10. See Mahyar Arefi, "Revisiting the Los Angeles Neighborhood Initiative (LANI): Lessons for Planners," *Journal of Planning Education & Research* 22, no. 4 (June 2003): 384-99. The author offers an extensive evaluation of consensus-building activities aimed at revitalizing several inner-city neighborhoods. The findings should serve as a guideline for planners seeking to involve local stakeholders in similar revitalizing activities who may be inexperienced in working with local government officials.

11. Sherry Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 35 (1969): 216-18.

12. Roscoe Jones, "City Planning in Houston without Zoning" in Walter J. McCoy, ed., *McCoy on Deed Restrictions*, (Boston: Pearson Custom Publishing, 2004), 2-7.

13. There is no desire to minimize the racist policies specifically directed towards the Hispanic and Asian communities. Those policies were just as damaging as the ones affecting the Black community. However, there is little question that the wealth of this Republic was built on the backs of the enslaved. Furthermore, the history of racism that stymied the development of the Black community in the past continues to influence public policies and discourse today.

14. Sherry Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 35 (1969), 216-18.

15. Neil Harris, "Collaborative Planning: From Theoretical Foundations to Practical Forms," in Philip Allmendinger and Mark Tewdwr-Jones, eds., *Planning Futures: New Directions for Planning Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 21-22.

16. Ralf Brand and Frank Gaffikin, "Collaborative Planning in an Uncollaborative World," *Planning Theory* 6, no. 3 (2007): 284.

17. See Patsy Healy, "Planning Through Debate: The Communicative Turn in Planning Theory," *Town Planning Review* 62, no. 2 (April 1992): 143-62. The author argues that professional planners need to develop elite communicative skills necessary to elicit positive comments from stakeholders to ascertain community values. The identification of such values then becomes crucial in subsequent planning processes.

18. Richard D. Margerum, "Collaborative Planning," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 21 (2002): 262.

19. Rina Ghose, "The Complexities of Citizen Participation through Collaborative Governance," *Space & Polity* 9, no. 1 (2005): 61-63.

20. Robert Chaskin, "Democracy and Bureaucracy in a Community Planning Process." *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 24 (2005): 408-09.

21. See Paul Davidoff, "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 31, no. 4 (1965): 331-38. Davidoff argues that professional planners must never allow themselves to become perceived as merely another part of the local bureaucratic machine. Instead, they must recognize that most stakeholders are unfamiliar with governmental processes and become a bridge between local officials and the community.

22. To clarify, the only "positive" effect of Jim Crow was the continued support of the white supremacist ideology and the purposeful physical separation of races in cities.

23. David Cutler, Edward L. Glaeser and Jacob L. Vigdor, "The Rise and Decline of the American Ghetto," *Journal of Political Economy* 107, no. 3 (1999): 455-56.

24. See Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993). The authors argue that the development of the underserved Black ghetto was by design and not an unintended consequence of urban development. Furthermore, they found that race continues to be a prominent contributor to current social inequalities in U.S. cities.

25. See Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); and Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York: Basic Books, 1987). Both Jackson and Fishman argued that white flight and suburban development were a byproduct of the white middle-classes' desire to separate themselves from the perceived urban corruption and increasing numbers of immigrants and minorities (Blacks). While both minimize the influence of race in suburban development, the fact that Blacks were generally excluded from the middle-class until the 1960s and 1970s provide a tacit indication that the middle-class that existed before World War II and immediately after was mostly white. This also implies that the utopia Fishman speaks of was not only one that provided respite from the corruption of urban living, but a physical separation from Blacks and other minorities.

26. President Lyndon B. Johnson established the Kerner Commission (the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders) to determine the causes of the uprising in Detroit, MI, in 1967. The rebellion in Detroit was one of many as the Black community believed revolts was the only recourse to decades of urban neglect

and racist policies. The report issued by the Commission stated the instances of urban violence were the result of limited economic opportunities and ineffective housing, education, and social-service policies. The report also acknowledged the racial inequities in cities throughout the country exacerbated by Jim Crow racism.

27. Sylvia Martinez, "The Housing Act of 1949: Its Place in the Realization of the American Dream of Homeownership," *Housing Policy Debate* 11, no. 2 (2000): 469; and Richard Green and Stephen Malpezzi, *A Primer on U.S. Housing Markets and Housing Policy* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute Press, 2003).

28. Loïc Wacquant, "Urban Outcasts," in Jan Lin and Christopher Mele, ed., *The Urban Sociological Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 146.

29. See John A. Powell, "Race and Space: What Really Drives Metropolitan Growth." *Brookings Review* 16, no. 4 (1998): 20-22; William Julius Wilson, "The political and economic forces shaping concentrated poverty," *Political Science Quarterly* 123 no. 4 (Winter 2008-2009): 555-71; and Thomas J. Sugrue, *Origins of the Urban Crises* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996). In his analysis of New Orleans's black community in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Wilson found concentrated poverty as a primary reason so many found themselves stranded and unable to evacuate the city. This was consistent with existing literature stating the lack of automobility is a byproduct of concentrated poverty which Sugrue argues was the result of the relocation of service-related jobs to the suburbs. However, Powell argues the continued existence of concentrated urban poverty continues to be exacerbated by the decades-long process of white-flight. Not only has this process led to economic crises in the form of crime and unemployment, white-flight also led to political isolation. Stakeholders view short-term survival as more important than the development and implementation of policies in 3-5 years.

30. In 2005 and 2006, there were a total of 40 SNAP proposals that were not classified, and their dispensation is unknown.

31. Nicholas Awortwi. "The riddle of community development: factors influencing participation and management in twenty-nine African and Latin American communities," *Community Development Journal* 48, no. 1 (2013): 94.

32. See Paul Davidoff, "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning" *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 31, no. 4 (1965): 331-38; and Norman Krumholz, "A Retrospective View of Equity Planning: Cleveland, 1969-1979," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 48, no. 2 (1982): 163-74. Davidoff advises new professional planners to be willing to be any and everything necessary to assist stakeholders in navigating a process they are unfamiliar with. Krumholz likewise adamantly supports professional planners acting as advocates for stakeholders in all political processes. As such, planners can increase stakeholder participation while

minimizing the negative effects of continued residential segregation and political isolation.

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Southern Communities of Color and HBCU University Relations: An Examination of the History of Community Relations and Recent Faculty Engagement

Marco Robinson and Farrah Gafford Cambrice

Black and Latinx communities share the common historical experiences of segregation, political disenfranchisement, and exclusion from economic opportunities in the United States.[1] Despite the challenges, these communities developed, supported, and depended on their own institutions to sustain them. During and after the Reconstruction Era, emancipated Blacks with the aid of religious and philanthropic organizations engaged in community building efforts, which culminated in the establishment of over two-hundred schools, colleges, and universities. The genesis of these Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) signified the beginnings of relationships within the local communities from which these institutions were born. Historian James Anderson argues, "Former slaves were the first among native southerners to depart from the planters' ideology of education and society and to campaign for universal, state-supported public education." Thus, the establishment of HBCUs in the segregated South, and subsequent relationships within the communities in which they are located, are important chapters in the southern historical narrative.[2]

The key chapters of this history include narratives of Black schools established in Texas during and after Reconstruction. One of the central stories involves the establishment of Prairie View A&M University (PVAMU). Historian George R. Woolfolk stressed, "The School Fight" between political factions vying for control over the direction of funding allocations, set the stage for early PVAMU administrators to encourage the Black community to rally around the call for education.[3] Accordingly, PVAMU played a pivotal role in providing educational opportunities to Black and Brown Texans, served as the administrative base for Black public schools in Texas, and provided best

practices training to minority farmers through agricultural extension workers during the Jim Crow Era. In serving these capacities, PVAMU had, and continues to have a profound impact on members of Texas's Black and Latinx communities.

This article explores the significance of community engagement at HBCUs, the tradition of community engagement at PVAMU with Black and Brown communities, and explores social science faculty's current community engagement efforts. PVAMU has a long-held tradition of community engagement with Black and Brown communities in Texas, which profoundly shaped the educational opportunities and economic destinies of these groups. This relationship, positive and negative at times, illustrates the complex dynamics of community relations and engagement at a HBCU. In addition, the recent community engagement efforts led by Dr. Farrah Cambrice are further explored to bring light to this active tradition at Texas's oldest state supported HBCU, PVAMU.

A History of Community Engagement at HBCUs and PVAMU

Historically Black Colleges and Universities emerged out of a unique historical context and are an important example of the Black struggle for education in the United States.[4] Since their creation, these colleges and universities formed for emancipated Blacks in the South served as institutions central to addressing the needs of their immediate communities. During Reconstruction, many HBCUs served as principal community institutions where freed people organized politically, received an education, and industrial training. The instruction offered and use of the facilities at HBCUs was essential to forwarding Black progress. In many instances, HBCUs, supported by Christian denominations such as the Methodist Episcopal and American Missionary Society, provided an education to freed men and women while giving them a safe space in which they could engage in community-building activities. After emancipation, communities of African American men, women and children, wanted to define the meaning of freedom on their own terms and in the process to construct communities.[5]

Historically Black Colleges and Universities have long made ardent attempts to improve the lives of underserved Black communities. Black land grant institutions, like PVAMU, were created to fulfill a post-Civil War effort by the government to offer agricultural educational training and services to Blacks. However, these institutions also played a pivotal role in addressing the needs of rural Black farmers in the late nineteenth century. In 1892, Tuskegee

University hosted the *Tuskegee Negro Conference*, where local citizens discussed problems ranging from crop-lien burdens to moral and religious needs. Historian Leedell Neyland , who has written extensively on the history of Black land grants across the south, argues that by the end of the century residents from all over the south attended the conferences at Tuskegee and that the conference was often replicated at other Black land grant universities across the South. Additionally, Black land grant universities provided *courses for* local farmers on livestock, agriculture, and health-related issues such as nutrition, tuberculosis, and syphilis.[6]

In many instances, HBCUs were integral to the success, growth, and racial progress of Black communities across the American South during the Jim Crow Era. As it relates to HBCUs established during this era, Historian Robert Norrell explained, "Notwithstanding its failure to combat the evils of cotton tenantry, Tuskegee Institute lived up to Washington's goal of establishing a model of Black progress."[7] Indeed, even in instances where HBCUs fell short due to the social constraints of operating in the segregated South, their combined efforts with local Black communities still was essential to uplifting the race. For instance, the educational focus at many HBCUs operating on the industrial model during the late 1800 and early 1900s prepared students for jobs in a working-class agricultural environment, but did not encourage pupils to go into professional occupations such as becoming a lawyer or doctor. Following the model set forth by Booker T. Washington, students were urged to focus on personal economic viability and stay clear of the political arena. However, during the mid-1900s, HBCU's educational focus shifted to Black empowerment and racial equity at the height of protest during the Civil Rights Era. Nonetheless, this relationship proved vital to Black communal efforts toward racial equality during the Civil Rights Movement.

Historically, the symbiotic relationships between HBCUs and the local community informed community members' civil rights activism, economic engagement, and their efforts in formulating joint projects for community improvement. Historian Jelani Favors asserts, "[HBCUs] successfully produced generations of activists and was essential in advancing the freedom dreams of countless Black Americans."[8] Many civil rights leaders such as Rosa Parks, John Lewis, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. were educated and trained at HBCUs. There are voluminous works illustrating HBCUs as community epicenters for protest that led to concessions towards social and racial equality for Blacks during the mid-1900s.[9] This work brings light to

PVAMU's community engagement efforts and centers the institution in the discussion of HBCUs who had a profound impact on education and the economic livelihoods of communities of color in the South. Additionally, HBCUs continue to be the economic incubators and centers of the Black community in various localities across the South, especially in rural areas.

Kassie Freeman and Robert Cohen contend, "The role that HBCUs have served in economic development with the African American community can be characterized in two broad categories: the labor market experiences of their graduates and the linkages with their neighboring communities."[10] One of the ways that HBCUs remain relevant to the greater Black community is by emphasizing the importance of service and community building in the context of the Black community. The "enter to learn and depart to serve" mantra proved significant in impacting the lives of HBCU students who became active in the Civil Rights Movement and educational leaders in their communities. Furthermore, the characteristics described are a traditional feature of the relationship shared between PVAMU and the Black community in Texas.

Prairie View A&M University's relationship and community engagement activities with communities of color in Texas during the late 1800 to mid-1900s were instrumental in shielding minority communities from the pressures of living in the Jim Crow South. When Mexican sharecroppers settled in the central Texas farm communities, they were subject to segregation in schools, neighborhoods, churches, and public facilities the same way as Blacks.[11] The educational opportunities, resources, and agricultural training offered at PVAMU gave Black and Brown residents of Texas access to services they otherwise would not receive due to the existing discriminatory practices. Prairie View A&M University, Texas's first state-supported HBCU, led the way in addressing the issues and fulfilling the needs of minority communities. To fully understand the genesis of this relationship, one must examine the circumstances around the erection of the institution.

During the early days of Reconstruction in Texas, newly elected African American lawmakers approached freedom with optimism and focused their legislative efforts on securing a state-supported institution to educate Blacks. Freed people in Texas understood their having an education enabled them to better understand how to navigate around the social, economic, and political inequalities they experienced living in a world dominated by whites. The act of organizing freedom was arduous work, which entailed an individual initiative as well as a collective endeavor, but for all of its challenges, Reconstruction presented novel opportunities for Black mobilization.[12] From

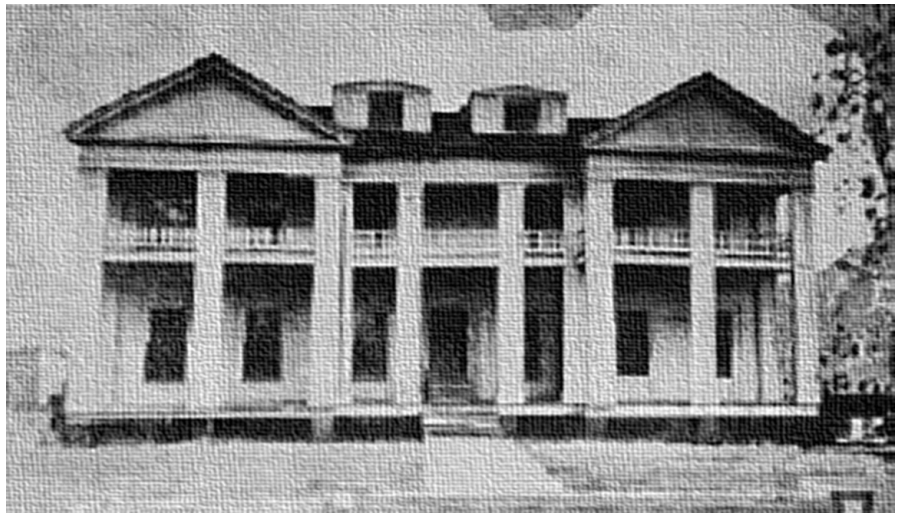

Figure 1. Kirby Hall, the first building on campus, formerly the main house on the Alta Vista Plantation. Courtesy of PVAMU's Department of Special Collections and Archives.

1866 to 1876, against the wishes of the state's minority Black population, white Texans, created a dual system of public education predicated on the separation of a white race from an African American race.[13] Nevertheless, in 1876, African American State Representative William H. Holland from Hempstead (Waller County) sponsored legislation to create a state-supported college for colored youth, and he would become known as the Father of Prairie View.[14] The finalized agreement included the creation of A&M College (now Texas A&M University-TAMU) for whites and a satellite school for Blacks. The Texas State Legislature formally approved a measure to open a publicly supported school for emancipated Blacks on August 14, 1876.[15]

From PVAMU's humble beginnings as Alta Vista College for Colored Youth, addressing the plight of the Black community was a permanent fixture of the school's mission. Arguably, the founders settled on using education as a vehicle for Black social and economic mobility. However, the institution did not initially accept female students. Both A&M College and Alta Vista College only accepted boys. In 1879, Alta Vista became the first public supported university in Texas to accept women. The admission of women stabilized the enrollment because young men often had to return home to help their families with the seasonal harvest. White state officials pointed to this act as Blacks' disinterest in education. Conversely, students returned home in order to make money to pay tuition. In addition, to limit the

power of the head administrator over the newly formed school for Blacks, the first administrators held the title of principal and not the president. In spite of the enrollment challenges and limited administrative power dynamics, the local community and Texas's Black political leadership gave unrelenting support to the fledgling institution.[16]

During the Post-Reconstruction Era, Michelle Mitchell contends, "People of African descent acted upon assumptions that the race was unified, that institution building was possible, and that progress was imminent."[17] However, Black Texans' optimism regarding progress did not exclude them from white resistance to their efforts to educate the emancipated Black community. George Woolfolk wrote, "The A&M Board considered the establishment of a University for Negroes as sheer folly and waste."[18] As white southerners regained control over local and state governments, this resentment intensified as witnessed with the increase in lynchings and violence against communities of color. During the late 1800s to early 1900s, Texas ranked third among the southern states for documented occurrences of lynchings.[19] Prairie View A&M University administrators and the local community united in the face of white resentment to the operation of the school. As a result, the university adopted Booker T. Washington's industrial model and focused on developing strong community outreach through agricultural extension work, industrial training, promoting the practice of domestic science, and educating teachers.

Under the leadership of Isiah Milligan (I.M.) Terrell, Prairie View established the Colored Cooperative Extension Service (CCES) to serve Black farmers throughout the state of Texas. The CCES provided local farmers with training on agricultural techniques, instruction in recent technological farming advances, and demonstration agents were assigned to Black communities by counties across Texas.[20] However, in PVAMU's efforts to support Black and Brown farmers, the school did face many challenges. The Texas Department of Agriculture, the Agricultural and Mechanical College (now Texas A&M University) provided information only to select groups. White Texans kept a firm grasp on knowledge by prohibiting Black involvement in research and refusing to employ Blacks as purveyors of information.[21] The aforementioned state agency policies elucidated the need for the CCES and the services that PVAMU's Black extension workers provided minority farmers.

The agricultural outreach PVAMU provided through the extension program was essential in supporting the advancement of local rural minority communities' agricultural economies, community wellness, and providing

Figure 2. Black Extension workers meeting on PVAMU's campus in 1940. Courtesy of PVAMU's Department of Special Collections and Archives.

farmers with the most recent technological information so they could implement the best farming practices. For instance, the demonstrations offered in crop rotation gave farmers insight into improving their yields and conserving the fertility of their farmland. The application of these techniques proved lucrative for many local farmers, namely for Hilliard Muse. Muse, a local farmer and Waller County resident, was the proprietor of a 275-acre farming operation where he initially attempted to grow cotton, but the crop was unsuccessful. Prairie View A&M University extension agent C.H. Poole encouraged Muse to grow melons and showed his family the proper soil fertility methods. Muse took advantage of Poole's advice and shifted the focus of his operation to watermelons.[22] As a result, by the 1950s, Muse shipped thirty train carloads of watermelons, which is annually worth more than twelve-thousand dollars. Muse's story illustrates the positive impact that PVAMU's community outreach through farm extension work had on one local farmer, but more importantly, the local community.

Additionally, many female agents promoted community health through clean up campaigns, invited physicians to communities to provide examinations, and promoted balanced nutrition through proper meal preparation.[23] The agricultural extension outreach is a mainstay of Prairie View's ongoing contribution to Texas's minority communities. Several of Prairie View's early principals and presidents, such as Edward Blackshear and E.B. Evans, served as directors over the extension program.[24] Blackshear and Evans used their influence to gain resources for the extension program and to

Figure 3. African American women participating in a domestic science class, circa early 1900s. Courtesy of PVAMU's Department of Special Collections and Archives.

alleviate the plight of minority farmers across Texas. Prairie View A&M University's agricultural extension efforts progressed in tandem with the school's efforts to supply minority communities with capable teachers.

During the Jim Crow era, PVAMU was the administrative home base for Black public schools in Texas. Serving as the administrative home for Texas's Black public schools, PVAMU hosted a yearly conference that brought together members of the philanthropic community and white state educational officials with Black teachers, staff, and administrators to discuss issues affecting their schools. The first gathering occurred Friday April 11, 1930, on the campus of Prairie View, in which there were a hundred and sixty-five attendees. According to the conference records, the focus of the gathering was to "acquaint educators with the phases and the present status of Negro Education." The pre-selected individuals, both "men and women familiar with certain phases of the problem," presented papers on a myriad of issues affecting Black schools, communities, and children, including funding and infrastructure. The knowledge shared at these conferences was important, because it gave attendees insight on the status of Black education across Texas, provided networking opportunities, and attendees had an opportunity to suggest solutions to the problems affecting Black school districts statewide. Moreover, there were local community think-tanks created by area groups, which facilitated the implementation of ideas presented at the conference. However, top white state educational officials made a concerted effort to manage Black

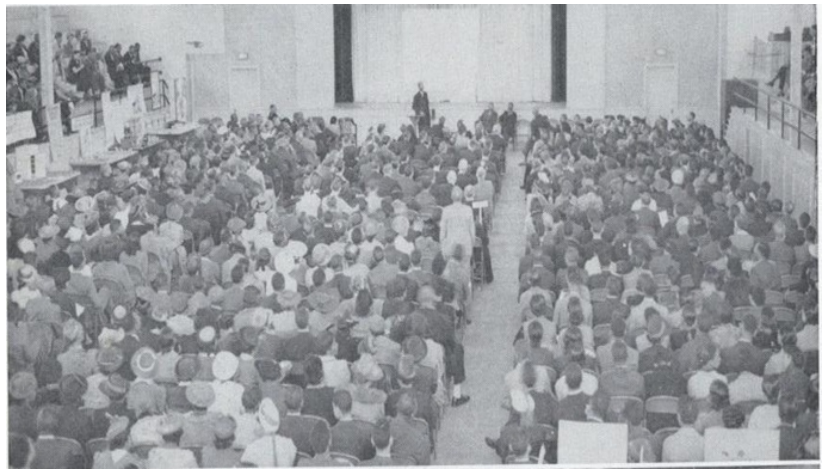

Figure 4. Attendees at the State Conference on Negro Education, circa 1940s. Courtesy of PVAMU's Department of Special Collections and Archives.

attendees' aspirations and their ideas formulated in reference to racial equality and problems.[25]

W. O. Walton, President of A&M College, presided over the first conference. Walton's presence at the event was for more than just contributing to the discussions and recording issues. Arguably, he was there to observe the participants' reflections and contributions to the discussions to ensure the candor and tone of the discussions did not move to forward any progressive racial agenda and upset the current standing of the white-dominated social hierarchy in Texas. Nonetheless, according to the conference proceedings, presenters and attendees still pointed out issues negatively influencing their communities, such as racial prejudice, insufficient funding from the state, and "a tendency to forget that the Negro schools constitute a portion of our state system of schools" as key issues.[26] Ultimately, PVAMU was instrumental in providing this platform and facilitating the very first dialogues with white officials, regarding issues impacting communities of color in Texas during the early 1900s.

The State Conference on Negro Education explored a wide range of valuable issues such as curriculum reform, health conditions, the economic status of Blacks, and social change. The conference continued for thirty-six years, from 1930 to 1966, and the subsequent activities of its attendees illuminate the influence and impact PVAMU had on Texas communities during the Jim Crow Era. The university's promotion of positive community relations and engagement with communities of color was also essential to make

connections with potential staff and students of Latinx descent at the institution.

PVAMU's Connections and Relations with the Latinx Community

From the beginning of the Republic of Texas, Native Americans and free Blacks were denied the constitutional protections accorded to whites, while Mexicans occupied a nebulous, intermediate status between (nonwhite) Indian and (marginally white) Spanish.[27] Identity politics and society's racial hierarchy created social and economic hurdles for Latinx. However, Brown people, as Blacks did, valued an education and sought opportunities for social advancement. Prairie View's connections with Brown communities ran deep and extended beyond agricultural extension outreach. The staff and students of Hispanic heritage have contributed to PVAMU's vibrant campus life and operation since the early 1900s. One of the most notable Hispanic staff members who contributed to the success of the university was Ernestine Suarez.

Mary Ernestine Suarez was born on June 26, 1878, in New Haven, Connecticut, to parents of Afro-Cuban descent. There is limited information on the early life of Suarez and her parents.[28] The university archival records indicate during World War I, Suarez served as a social worker for the Y.M.C.A. in France. She attended Hampton Institute, worked as a schoolteacher, librarian, and Dean of Women at Tuskegee University prior to coming to Prairie View in the fall of 1928. Suarez served at PVAMU as the Dean of Women for twenty years. The university officials commented, "Her life was a symbol of the exemplary graces of fine womanhood, and the young women who came in direct contact with her were immeasurably stimulated and elevated by her fine spirit." While at Prairie View, Suarez was instrumental in raising funds for making improvements to the girl's dormitory parlor and securing funds to buy a piano for the area. Suarez was an exemplary woman of color who earned the utmost respect of the students and her colleagues through her daily actions.[29]

In a tribute to Suarez titled, "Queen with a Silver Crown," Historian Henry Allen Bullock lamented, "As much as any person I have ever known, Dean Suarez is truly a symbol of culture and refinement." Bullock's reference to "culture and refinement" is embodied through Suarez's efforts to expose students to classical art and music as extra-curricular activities. In 1948, Suarez left the main campus to be Dean of Girls over the student-nurses training in Houston, Texas, at Jefferson Davis Hospital. Suarez's contributions

Figure 5. Ernestine Suarez, circa 1940s. Courtesy of PVAMU's Department of Special Collections and Archives.

to the university were recognized and PVAMU's administration unanimously approved the girl's dormitory to be named after her in 1950. Her presence and honorable activities at PVAMU show the contributions made by people of Latinx descent at the university. The stellar Latinx students who have called Prairie View home only rival Suarez's example.[30]

Although HBCUs were created to provide an educational opportunity for Blacks, these institutions have never prohibited students, faculty, and staff from other racial and ethnic backgrounds from matriculating into and working there.[31] Similarly, Latinx student's presence at Prairie View dates back to the early 1900s. Nationwide, from 2000 to 2015, HBCUs increased their enrollment of Latino/a by ninety-percent. Currently, PVAMU's largest group of non-Black student population – the Latinx students – make up seven percent of the population and continue to vastly excel at Prairie View.[32]

In 2000, the student-body elected Ceasar Barajas as their first Latinx Mr. Prairie View A&M University. Barajas was very active on campus as a committed nursing major, member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, a member of the baseball team, and the University Dance Ensemble. Ceasar exclaimed, "I would like to make everyone aware of the cultural diversity that exists not only on campus but throughout the world…and prove that Prairie View does produce productive people."[33] Barajas's experiences at PVAMU illuminates the school's extensive relationship with the Latinx community and that the

Figure 6. Ceasar Barajas and Shiressa Pittman (Mr. and Mrs. Prairie View, 2000). Courtesy of PVAMU's Department of Special Collections and Archives.

institution is a space where students of Latin American descent will flourish. It is key to remember carrying on the tradition of nurturing students is the investment of current faculty who are engaged in developing positive community relations and involved in community work.

Current Faculty in the Social Sciences and their Community Engagement Projects

On May 16, 1973, President Alvin Thomas wrote in the campus announcement, "We are delighted to announce that the Trustees of the Minnie Stevens Piper Foundation have selected Dr. George Woolfolk, Head of the History Department, to receive a 1973 Piper Professor Award." The announcement was no surprise to the campus community. Woolfolk was an outstanding representative for the
university, active with the local boy scouts, wrote extensively on the experiences of the local community, and led several off-campus community organizations. Woolfolk's community work and activities is an example of the faculty in the social sciences tradition to be involved in and develop projects that directly involve the community. The tradition is still growing strong within the new Division of Social Work, Behavioral, and Political Sciences at PVAMU.[34]

Within the last four years, Sociologist Dr. Farrah Cambrice has participated in several community engagement efforts with Prairie View City (PVC). Her activities included participating in city tours and community-sponsored events, and facilitating community-wide focus group sessions (see Figures 6 and 7).

During Dr. Cambrice's community-based engagement efforts, PVC had a population of approximately 5,576 residents. Despite being the home to a thriving university that employs nearly 1,200 employees, Dr. Cambrice noted the city's remote nature, lack of economic development, and aging infrastructure, have adversely affected residents' quality of life. Forty-four percent of the residents in PVC lived below the poverty line, and the city's estimated median household income was $28,929. Additionally, PVC had not been successful in attracting and retaining many businesses/services. Dr. Cambrice also noted that there were no grocery stores, varied retail developments, nor recreational activities for its transient college student population and long-term residents alike. Public services in Prairie View are also anemic. The closest hospitals or clinics were nearly 40 miles away.

Dr. Cambrice, along with several student researchers, facilitated five community-wide public forums to understand how residents perceived the quality of life in Prairie View. The purpose of the community meetings were two-fold: (1) the meetings served as an opportunity for Prairie View residents to learn about the collaborative research or partnership, and (2) the meetings also gave residents an opportunity to speak freely and honestly about the first-hand quality of life issues in Prairie View (e.g., crime, flooding, infrastructure, etc.).

The five community meetings took place in the early spring of 2017. In attendance were fifty-one residents and devoted members of the community to discuss some of the challenges of living and working in PVC. The meetings produced meaningful dialogue about the quality of life issues, the community's relationship with the university, and the residents' desires for city improvements.

The participants were forthcoming with listing possible solutions to the problems. However, it became abundantly clear to Dr. Cambrice that residents possessed a certain level of skepticism regarding a future partnership with PVAMU. Other members of the community expressed trepidation of collaborating with the university because of the belief that the Texas A&M system did not want what was best for the community of Prairie View. The following excerpt is from Dr. Cambrice's 2017 field notes reflection of

residents' feelings toward the university.

> What good is freeway land without no feeder [roads]. Think about it. They've got feeders [roads] in Waller don't they? They got feeders in Hempstead [a nearby town] . . .Prairie View has none. Why is that? It is that way because Prairie View doesn't allow Prairie View city to run itself. All that construction you see, that is A&M. It has nothing to do with Prairie View. They made the decision they wanted it to look this way.[35]

Another general complaint throughout all three meetings was that the university had did extraordinarily little over the years to facilitate a relationship of any kind with the local residents. The following exchange is from field notes of a focus group held in March 2017.

> I don't know what programs you [the university] have that really get the students involved with the community. If they [students] used their community service in the community. I see so many campus organizations say they are community based and if that's the case, we would have so many things going on in the community, you would be able to see it. . .But I think if you're going to look at engagement, then you have to talk to your faculty and staff on campus and your social student organizations and get them involved and have them come up with ideas on what they can do to build that relationship.[36]

A few participants also talked about the lack of Black/Hispanic interaction despite Hispanics being a noticeable part of the PVC community.

> There's not a relationship especially around the Hispanic population. It's a big barrier because most people don't speak English but that's when the campus could come into play. There are enough Hispanic students on campus to translate [for non-English speaker who want to attend meetings]. You have a large Hispanic population of students. But one of the things that we found is that some residents are fearful of coming to city meetings because of the whole citizenship thing. They're fearful of getting involved with anything. So developing relationships is important.[37]

Dr. Cambrice believed the concerns of residents are indeed valid and supported by the literature on community engagement. She notes how several scholars contend the university-community partnerships can benefit residents as long as

university partners cultivate trust and actively engage the community in every step of the research process. Yet scholars like Roni Strier contend institutions of higher education typically have more power than the community and neighborhood organizations and are thus likely to drive the agenda of partnerships.[38]

In her final report to the local citizens and the funding agency, Dr. Cambrice suggested that future university researchers looking to partner with the nearby community should establish a *Community Advisory Panel*. A community advisory panel allows the residents of Prairie View to have representation in future university-driven research activities. She believes that community research is by far more effective when research happens *with* a community as opposed to *on* a community. Thus, it would be imperative for members of the community to be included in multiple stages of the community-based research (developing research questions, collecting data and disseminating findings) and not just used as a source of data.

The Legacy Continues

The recent COVID-19 pandemic and protests against police brutality in the aftermath of the death of Houston-native George Floyd has galvanized all rungs of U.S. society. The blind-eyes that have historically been shown towards systematic racism and economic inequalities are now getting the country's full attention. Considering these events, Prairie View's current administration has made a loyal commitment to join the fight for racial equality and social justice for all. PVAMU President Ruth Simmons wrote, "For too long, we have been content to have others dictate the limits of our ability to act: individuals who call for a different course of action, those who are concerned about controversy, and those who advocate 'staying in our lane." In June, President Ruth J. Simmons announced plans to create a Center for Race and Justice on campus. The Center for Race and Justice's mission will be "to encourage teaching and research to overturn systemic biases against minorities' constitutional rights." The center will be housed under African American Studies and led by Endowed Political Science Professor Melanye Price.[39]

Undoubtedly, PVAMU's current and past community engagement and strong relations has profoundly shaped the fates and futures of Black and Brown communities across Texas for over the past one-hundred and forty years. The university has focused its resources and energy on meeting the social, economic, and political challenges of our times. President Simmons

whole-heartedly proclaimed, “Our faith and identity as a community kept us moving forward through some of the most disheartening periods in the country’s history.”[40] Indeed, working as a community, we will make it through our present trials as in the past. Prairie View A&M University’s current initiatives and community engagement activities position the university to sustain, and continue on making viable contributions towards the well-being of Texas’s communities of color.

Notes:

1. It important to note that in some cities in the U.S. South, individuals of Latinx heritage were not subject to racial segregation or political disenfranchisement as presented in the work of Julie Dowling, “Mexican Americans and the Question of Race.”

2. James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 4.

3. George Ruble Woolfolk, *Prairie View: A Study in Public Conscience, 1878-1946* (New York: Pageant, 1962), 75-81.

4. Priscille Biehlmann, “The Case for Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Understanding Race Relations in the United States through its HBCUs,” *McGill Journal of Political Studies* (Winter 2016): 63.

5. Elsa Barkley Brown, “Negotiating and Transforming the Public Sphere: African American Political Life in the Transition from Slavery to Freedom,” *Public Culture* 7 (1994): 107-46.

6. Leedell W. Neyland, *Historically Black Land-Grant Institutions and the Development of Agriculture and Home Economics, 1890-1990* (Tallahassee: Florida A&M University Foundation, 1990), 147.

7. Robert J. Norrell, *Reaping the Whirlwind: The Civil Rights Movement in Tuskegee* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 31.

8. Jelani M. Favors, *Shelter in a Time of Storm: How Black Colleges Fostered Generations of Leadership and Activism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 2.

9. The following works illuminate the long history of HBCUs and activism: Harry G. Lefever, *Undaunted By The Fight: Spelman College and The Civil Rights Movement, 1957-1967* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2005); Merline Pitre, *Born to Serve: A History of Texas Southern* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2018); Ibram X. Kendi, *The Black Campus Movement: Black Students and the Racial Reconstitution of Higher Education, 1965-1972* (New York: Springer, 2012); and

Raymond Wolters, *The New Negro on Campus: Black College Rebellions of the 1920s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

10. Kassie Freeman and Rodney Cohen, "Bridging the Gap Between Economic Development and Cultural Empowerment," *Urban Education* 36, no. 5 (November 2001): 588.

11. Neil Foley, *The White Scourge: Mexicans, Blacks, and Poor Whites in Texas Cotton Culture* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 24.

12. Michelle Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation: African Americans and the Politics of Racial Destiny after Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 7.

13. Amilcar Shabazz, *Advancing Democracy: African Americans and the Struggle for Access and Equity in Higher Education in Texas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 10.

14. Michael Nojeim and Frank Jackson, *Down that Road: A Pictorial History of Prairie View A&M University* (Virginia Beach: Donning Company Publishers, 2011), 20.

15. Agricultural & Mechanical College (now Texas A&M University) and PVAMU are the first land grant universities established through the Morrill Act in Texas.

16. Nojeim and Jackson, *Down that Road*, 21. On March 11, 1878, eight African American boys enrolled as the first students.

17. Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation*, 7.

18. Woolfolk, *Prairie View*, 75-78.

19. Bruce Glasrud and James Smallwood, *The African American Experience in Texas: An Anthology* (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 2007), 37. During the years from 1889 to 1918, there were 3,224 lynchings in the United States. Georgia led all states with 386, Mississippi with 373, and Texas with 335.

20. Marco Robinson and Phyllis Earles, "Engaging the Public with and Preserving the History of Texas's First Public Historically Black University," *Teaching Reflections*, University of Victoria Libraries (November 2018), https://kula.uvic.ca/articles/10.5334/kula.33/

21. Debra A. Reid, *Reaping a Greater Harvest: African Americans, the Extension Service, and Rural Reform in Jim Crow Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2007), 1.

22. "Prairie View Farmer Ships 30 Car Loads of Watermelons Annually," *The Prairie View Panther*, October 10, 1951.

23. Reid, *Reaping a Greater Harves*t, 64-65.

24. Presidents Blackshear and E.B. Evans served as directors over the

Negro extension agents.

25. Proceedings of the First Annual Session of the Conference on Education for Negroes in Texas, 1930, 1-5, located in Prairie View A &M University's Special Collections and Archives Department.

26. Ibid.

27. Foley, *White Scourge*, 24-30.

28. The census records indicate Suarez's father migrated to the United States from Havana, Cuba during the late 1800s. In the 1880 U.S. Census, she is classified as "mulatto." Both her mom, Julia A. Suarez, and dad, Ambrosia Suarez, are also labeled as "mulatto."

29. Ernestine Suarez File, Internal Memos from 1948 and 1975, Prairie View A &M University Special Collections and Archives Department.

30. Ernestine Suarez File, Campus Newsletter 1948; Internal Memo 1950, Prairie View A&M University Special Collections and Archives Department.

31. Robert T. Palmer, Dina C. Maramba, Taryn Ozuna Allen, Ramon B. Goings, "From Matriculation to Engagement on Campus: Delineating the Experiences of Latino/a Students at a Public Historically Black University," *New Directions for Higher Education*, Issue 170 (June 2015): 67-78.

32. Ibid.

33. 1999-2000 Prairie View A&M University Yearbook, located in the PVAMU Special Collections and Archives Department.

34. Campus Announcement from President A. I. Thomas, 1973, Woolfolk Collection, PVAMU Special Collections and Archives Department.

35. Farrah Cambrice, 2017 field notes, PVAMU/PVC Project.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Roni Strier, "The Construction of University-Community Partnerships: Entangled Perspectives," *Higher Education* 62, no. 1 (July 2011): 81-97.

39. President Ruth J. Simmons, Prairie View A&M University, "Memorandum: President Simmons' Message to the PVAMU Community Regarding the Death of George Floyd," June 1, 2020, http://www.pvamu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/06012020-News-Release-President-Simmons-Message-to-the-Community.pdf

40. Laura Isensee, "Prairie View A&M Plans New Center For Race and Justice Following George Floyd's Death," *Houston Public Media*, June 3, 2020, https://www.houstonpublicmedia.org/articles/news/education-news/2020/06/03/375061/prairie-view-am-plans-new-center-for-race-and-justice-following-george-floyds-death/

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Brown, Black, and Brutalized: A Brief History of Police Brutality Against Chicanos and African Americans in Houston

Jesús Jesse Esparza

Police brutality is among the most pressing issues of our time. According to *The Guardian*, cops in the United States shoot and kill more civilians within days than other countries do in an entire year.[1] The Prison Policy Initiative, a non-profit that researches criminal justice reform, echoes this statement when it revealed that U.S. police, in 2019, killed 1,099 persons.[2] Comparatively, the nation with the second-highest number of police killings that year was Canada, with 36 people killed.[3] In 2020, the number of people killed by police between January and August sat at 661.[4] Of those, six died at the hands of Houston police between April and May.[5] In response to these alarming numbers, there have been several efforts to stop these atrocities. Taking center stage in the fight against police brutality is the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, which has become a global phenomenon. As part of this movement and similar efforts, activists are calling into question the systemic racism ingrained within law enforcement agencies and are demanding immediate reform measures. Some are looking to defund the police and undo their militarization, which has continued apace since the 1990s. Others are calling for the abolition of police forces altogether. Indeed, the ways police departments criminalize Brown and Black bodies, legacies of anti-Mexican nativism and racism, as well as the institution of slavery and the Jim Crow policies it birthed, are problematic subtexts that undergird activists' concerns. And some have concluded that the over-policing of Chicanos and African Americans is deliberate because it creates profits for the prison industrial complex. These are just a few of the issues that activists fight for in hopes of ending police violence in the country.

While these demands are more common to present times, the issue of

police brutality, unfortunately, is historic. Since before the turn of the twentieth century, law enforcement agencies across the nation have committed some of the most heinous acts of violence against the people they promised to serve. And throughout the decades, that violence showed no signs of slowing down. Between 1915 and 1919 in South Texas, for example, police violence against Mexican and Mexican Americans was at an all-time high when the Texas Rangers, and other law enforcement groups, carried out hundreds of extra-judicial killings.[6] In 1938 in San Antonio, police viciously attacked peaceful protestors (mostly Mexican American women) who were engaged in a strike against the pecan shelling industries for refusing to pay them comparable wages in what is known today as the Pecan-Shelling Strike.[7] Between 1968 and 1972, police again used excessive force, this time against Chicano youth throughout various cities and towns in Texas, for walking out of schools in protest of their discriminatory policies. In the case of African Americans, a scan of most U.S. history textbooks will reveal that police brutality was a mainstay of white resistance to Black progress, as is evident in the Freedom Rides of 1961, Bloody Sunday of 1965, and the Watts Riots, to name a few. Regardless of where, when, and against whom police brutality occurred, the result was the same; it further polarized the people and law enforcement, leaving in its wake a diseased legacy of racial tension.

Within the context of police violence, therefore, this article provides a brief history of brutality by law enforcement against the civilian population in the nation's fourth most populated city, Houston. Heavily sourced on archival research including oral histories, this essay posits that the policies and practices of the Houston Police Department (HPD) not only permit police violence, but that its refusal to change said policies is tantamount to state-sanctioned violence. Additionally, this essay suggests that police brutality should be considered and treated as a health and human rights crisis and not as a politicized issue. Furthermore, this article intends to chronicle the activism in Houston as it relates to protesting police brutality because while several seminal works deal with the issue of police misconduct (*Forgotten Dead* by William Carrigan and Clive Webb, *Plan de San Diego* by Charles Harris and Louis Sadler; *Revolution in Texas* by Benjamin H. Johnson; *Houston Blue: The Story of the Houston Police Department* by Mitchel P. Roth and Tom Kennedy; and *Black Police in America* by W. Marvin Dulaney, to name a few), little exists regarding the activism led by the various coalitions in the Bayou City. The objective then is to reposition Houston as an essential site of protest against police brutality to offer a more balanced history of activism in

the United States. In doing so, this article helps fill the void in the historiography regarding protest movements against police brutality in a research site as large and diverse as the city of Houston.

A Brief History of Police Brutality

There has long been an uneasy relationship between working-class communities, non-white groups, and law enforcement in Houston.[8] Generally speaking, Chicanos and Blacks have been overpoliced and mass-incarcerated in disproportionate numbers. Tragically, they have also been victims of police brutality more so than any other group in Houston. This treatment dates to the turn of the twentieth century. In 1901, for example, police officers killed a Mexican named Arorigio Wardgrigos, who they suspected of committing a crime.[9] He would not be the only one. In 1917, police brutality got the attention of the entire nation as it would be responsible for one of Houston's most violent civil disturbances in history, the Camp Logan Riot. Most people understand the rebellion to be a moment in which Black troops stationed at a military installation in the city took up arms and rebelled. What they probably do not know is that their uprising was a response to police brutality. According to court testimony, a solider intervened on behalf of an African American woman under arrest. The arresting officer used excessive force, and when the soldier approached, the cop commenced with physically attacking him as well. It was this beating that triggered the rebellion, which left about fifteen persons dead, including five cops and ten white civilians.[10] John Crear, a Houston resident and long-time activist against police brutality, recalls that "around the time of World War I…one of the sergeants had been assaulted by the police and beat up bad, and a rumor spread that he was dead. Black soldiers [therefore] marched downtown [and] it was a bloody mess."[11] Several of the soldiers received a Court Marshall. Police involved in the disturbance, however, saw no punishment.

Police misconduct continued unchecked throughout the decades. It became so unbearable that Mexican Americans, under the leadership of Fernando Salas, formed an organization during the 1920s known as *La Asamblea Mexicana* (the Mexican Assembly) in response to police brutality.[12] Still, police misconduct remained common-place; that is, until the 1930s, when HPD fired thirteen cops for excessive brutality and other wrongdoing.[13] For his connection in the shooting of Mexican American Federico Valdez, the department suspended detective Angus Morrison.[14] Also in the 1930s, HPD established the Latin Squad in response to the growing Mexican and Mexican

American population.[15] Its purpose, according to the department, was to help HPD interact more effectively with a growing Spanish-speaking population. To do so, it hired Mexican Americans such as local businessman Manuel Crespo.

Crespo started as a patrolman and was quickly promoted to Special Detective for the unit. The Latin Squad would become a department mainstay well into the 1970s and was instrumental in the recruitment of Mexican Americans. Unfortunately, the presence of Latinos within HPD did not translate into a reduction of cases of police misconduct against Chicanos as many would continue to be victims of police brutality and often at the hands of the Latin Squad.[16] For example, in 1932, Latin Squad patrolmen killed Tomas Roque and James Gomez.[17] Thus, while HPD underwent a significant amount of diversification by hiring more Latinos, it was still a force without the full support of the Chicano community.

In the 1940s, police violence continued unabated. In 1943, police officers beat NAACP attorney Carter Wesley nearly unconscious. Mr. Wesley was the target of intense police surveillance and intimidation tactics, as were many African American leaders in Houston.[18] The next year, HPD murdered Elpidio Cortes, which resulted in public outcry.[19] Chicanos also took issue with Latin Squad cops such as detective William Garza canvasing Magnolia Park, a historic Mexican American neighborhood.[20] Following the Cortes murder, Detective Crespo resigned from the Latin Squad, perhaps in protest of the unchecked brutality against Mexican and Mexican Americans.[21]

During the 1950s, and as part of the effort to stamp out communist infiltrators from within the United States, HPD created the Central Intelligence Division (CID), a wing of the department designed to "gather information on alleged communists in the city."[22] This new division provided HPD with an opportunity to infiltrate, surveil, and disrupt Brown and Black civil rights organizations. It also gave HPD the power to act more forcefully against people it now considered communist agitators. So repressive was HPD that a local newspaper, *The Houstonian*, published a series entitled "Stories of Police Brutality" that chronicled cases of excessive force.[23] It was a scathing reveal of the department's misuse of force. In one instance, police beat a man in the head with a gun.[24] In a related story, they killed a seventeen-year-old teenager.[25] The series even reported on the malicious activities of the department's Vice Squad.[26] The situation became so dire that staff from *The Houstonian*, a white-controlled newspaper, asked the federal government to investigate police misconduct.[27]

Looking to increase the number of Mexican Americans on the force, apart from the dreaded Latin Squad, leaders from the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) held a meeting to address employment discrimination and the need to hire "Latin American officers" within HPD.[28] They hoped that more Mexican Americans on the force could inspire HPD to eliminate the shameful Latin Squad, which was notorious for using excessive force. Attorney and LULAC member, John J. Herrera made it clear to HPD that he vehemently opposed the department's continuance of that division, arguing that it was discriminatory against Mexican Americans.[29] They also informed the media about LULAC's stance toward the perpetuation of the Latin Squad.[30] Public pressure eventually forced HPD officials and Mayor Oscar F. Holcombe to meet with Herrera and other LULAC members to discuss the possibility of increasing the number of "Latins" within the department. But from that meeting, LULAC learned of the department's "height requirement," which HPD argued was why there were little to no "Latins" within its ranks.[31]

This blatant form of racism angered LULAC, who immediately sprang into action with protests and other negotiation tactics, showing up to the police academy with Mexican Americans that met the department's so-called height requirement.[32] "It wasn't long after that that we got [someone] in the police department," recalls Ernest Eguía.[33] Immediately after that, HPD upped its efforts to hire more Mexican Americans.[34] By March 1950, eight Latinos joined the department.[35] One week later, another three joined.[36] The increased presence of Mexican Americans, however, did not necessarily translate into reducing cases of police misconduct.

Despite modest police reforms in hiring practices, incidents of police brutality during the 1960s persisted. "I remember as a kid…in the Fifth Ward, police walked around with dogs, and they stick their dogs on a person in a minute," recalls John Crear.[37] What was different about the 1960s, however, was the mounting resistance by activists against police brutality as the Mexican American Youth Organization, Brown Berets, Peoples Party II, and other militant and radical civil rights groups emerged.[38] For younger militant activists, HPD was an arm of the establishment that oppressed them, and so they came to vocalize their frustrations with the department more loudly, frequently, and visually. In response to this growing militancy, however, HPD initiated riot control training and militarized the department.[39] It also commenced with over-policing by increasing its presence in Brown and Black neighborhoods.[40] Continuing, however, with their sustained legal attack

against police brutality, middle-class civil rights organizations were able to successfully win two court cases that ensured better protection for these communities: *Mapp v. Ohio* (1961), which "ruled regarding the suppression of illegally obtained evidence," and *Miranda v. Arizona* (1966) which "prohibited…police from using illegally obtained confessions."[41] While the court intended solely to provide safeguards for civilian populations, many in HPD felt that these lawsuits placed limitations on them and offered extra protections for "criminals."[42]

Houston Police Department tactics were so repressive during this decade that many "thought that there were [some] within the…force that were members of the John Birch Society and possibly even the Klan," remembers former Mayor Louie Welch.[43] In April of 1965, HPD officers assaulted a woman under their custody, leaving her bloodied.[44] In January 1966, police broke the arm of a Mr. Jones while attempting to arrest him.[45] Additionally, in 1966, they shot and killed an unarmed African American for the theft of bread.[46] Two years later, they publicly beat on suspects who were handcuffed and defenseless.[47] They did the same to a Mexican national named Manuel Romas, who came to the aide of his wife, also a victim of police brutality.[48]

In 1967, HPD would again make national news when they led a raid on the campus of Texas Southern University (TSU), a historically Black university with a majority Black student body, staff, and faculty. The TSU Riot, as it is more commonly known, was a violent confrontation between students and the Houston Police Department, which stormed the campus to smash a demonstration organized by students.[49] As part of the raid, nearly 500 cops took up positions in and around the school and surrounded one of the student dormitories with a detachment consisting of 30 vehicles, canine squads, rioting guns, tear gas, and police vans.[50] Before long, a shoot-out with students began.[51] By the time everything ended, HPD had fired nearly 3,000 rounds into the student dorm.[52] Following the shoot-out, police entered the dormitory and dragged students out, half-dressed, forcing them onto the ground.[53] They then searched for weapons but found nothing.[54] Books, clothing, and other personal property, however, were ripped apart and tossed on the floor, and radio and television sets lay destroyed.[55] Gunfire shattered dorm windows and riddled the walls with bullet holes.[56] They smashed doors and tore down walls and ceilings, and used excessive force towards students, many of whom were innocent bystanders.[57] HPD also arrested 488 students; five would later stand trial for murder after one of the officers, Louis Kuba, was shot and killed.[58] Eventually, investigators concluded that patrolman Kuba died from a

ricocheting bullet fired by the police.[59] Very quickly, HPD tried to redirect the nation's attention, but activists did not let that happen. They protested the department's excessive use of force and called into question HPD's claim that they moved-in on students because they were armed and shooting at the police. The people disagreed and pointed to the lack of evidence supporting that claim. "When the police moved in, they could not find any sign of a gun," Mayor Welch was quoted as saying.[60] In the weeks following the shoot-out, the city witnessed several trials and protests but no justice. For many, the conclusion was simple: the police assault on TSU was just another example of unchecked police brutality in Houston.

Houston finished the decade as violently as it started it. In 1968, for example, community activist Johnny Coward lost an eye from the beating he received at the hands of police officers.[61] So heinous was this crime that the public outcry grabbed the attention of the FBI. The officers involved, however, were acquitted.[62] Also, in 1968, John Blood received cuts and bruises on his face and torso from an HPD beating.[63] In January 1969, Carol Ashbrook witnessed the HPD beating of a suspect at a local entertainment establishment. Police misconduct would also extend into other activities. Following the acquisition of modernized equipment, for example, HPD began conducting illegal wiretaps of activists, creating files of them which they labeled "miscellaneous n[****]rs" and "swingers."[65] Most significantly, police misconduct and brutality during the 1960s served as an indication of things to come in the next decade.

"The 1970s were a very, very difficult time for Houston…when I first came here," recalls long-time activist Daniel Bustamante, "the Houston Police Department had a horrendous reputation."[66] Police violence had not waned, and the department seemed uninterested in hearing the outcry from patrolled communities. Incidences of brutality continued as usual. In 1970, HPD severely beat Larry Taylor following a minor traffic violation, prompting a weeklong hospital stay.[67] His companion, Bobby Joe Conner, did not fare as well as he would later die from the beating.[68] Connor technically died while under custody at a Galena Park police station; his killers, however, avoided the murder charge.[69] This was "such a brutal incident," recalls local activist Claude Frost. Police violence politicized and encouraged him to join groups dedicated to its eradication. In 1970, the leading organization for doing this was the People's Party II (PP-II), which resembled, but "wasn't a chapter of the [Black] Panther [Party]," but more of an affiliate.[70] In response to the continued police violence perpetrated against African Americans, two activists,

21-year-old Carl Hampton and Charles Freeman, formed PP-II.[71] Because its mission here to prevent police brutality, it had to patrol south Houston, the location of its headquarters, with weapons. Moreover, since the PP-II modeled itself after the Black Panthers, they quickly became the center of HPD surveillance.[72]

In July 1970, PP-II entered into a 10-day standoff with police after HPD officers attempted to arrest a member of the group who retreated into the headquarters facility at 2828 Dowling Street for shelter.[73] When police pursued, Hampton and his colleagues stopped them, which in turn resulted in an intense standoff.[74] Known as the Dowling Street Incident, the situation was dire, and "Carl… didn't think he was gonna get out…alive," recalls Claude Frost.[75] John Crear, another local activist, recalls seeing Republican Mayor Welch on television with the police chief promising that "all the members of People's Party II…will be dead, in jail, or will cease to be a revolutionary group."[76] Eventually, plainclothes officers opened fire towards the PP-II's headquarters from rooftops they managed to climb.[77] In the process, they were able to strike Hampton several times, who later died on the operating table.[78] Claude Frost recalls Hampton getting shot in the chest, among other places, and several people rushing him to the hospital but that it would be in vain.[79] Following Hampton's murder, HPD, anticipating uprisings on the part of the people, intensified its policing of the Black community. "The crackdown had begun, and many of us were very afraid," recalls Carlos Calbillo.[80] "They shut down the entire Third Ward, [a historically Black community], with heavy police presence," Calbillo continues. "They thought there were going to be riots; they thought it was going to be like Detroit."[81]

In the summer of 1975, Daniel Bustamante recalls witnessing Elliot Navarro, a friend of his, receive a beating by HPD. When he and others protested, they were "arrested and taken to jail." They fought the charges and "filed a federal lawsuit the following year against the Houston Police Department and the City of Houston for police brutality."[82] They went to trial in the summer of 1979 and won the case. "It was the first case…won against the Houston Police Department," recalls Bustamante.[83] Police abuse during the 1970s also affected the white community with the shooting deaths of Billie Keith Joyvies and Daniel Webster.[84] Joyvies was unarmed at the time of his death in July 1975.[85] So was 17-year old Daniel Webster, who took a bullet to the side of his head during a struggle with officers.[86] Making matters worse was the ill-conceived cover-up that followed, and the planting of false evidence against this young man as officers used what is known as "throw-down" guns

to hide the errors they committed.[87] Indeed, there was massive outrage following the Webster shooting, and ultimately other law-enforcement agencies, including the FBI and the Texas Rangers, began looking into the matter.[88] The investigation of the department, however, did not discourage HPD from using excessive force, a fact that Demas Benoit, Jr. learned after he was "arrested, handcuffed, and then beaten" for running a stoplight.[89] With the 1970s coming to an end, it seemed that the worst was behind everyone, but in May 1977, police brutality would send the city into a frenzy and forever change the people as well as the department.

Joe Campos Torres was home from the war in Vietnam for only a few months before his wrongful beating and murder by Houston police who responded to a call about an altercation involving Torres and another person who allegedly stolen his personal property.[90] Once arrested, police commence with taking Torres to jail, but while en route, they stop first at what was called the "hole," a secluded location where cops were known to take those they apprehended to assault them physically. At the "hole," Torres received a severe beating by several officers, including Joseph Janish, Stephen Orlando, Terry Denson, Glenn Brinkmeyer, and Louis Kinney.[91] They then proceeded to take Torres to the city jail but were told instead to take him to the hospital for medical treatment.[92] Torres never arrived at the hospital, however. Instead, they returned to the "hole," where Torres was again repeatedly assaulted.[93] The police then forced Torres into a nearby bayou where he ultimately drowned, having been too injured to swim to safety.[94] Three days later, they discovered Torres' body floating in the bayou, although initially, they were not sure it was him as the corpse was too mutilated to identify.[95] Ultimately, they identified Torres' body and classified his death as a drowning homicide.[96] The trial that followed was a farce, as the courts failed to issue a ruling that provided any justice for Torres' family.[97] The court's ruling angered activists in Houston and set the stage for various protest marches, boycotts, and riots. Taking center stage were the numerous multi-racial and multi-generational coalitions that took shape to protest police brutality. They participated mostly in acts of civil disobedience calling for sweeping reforms of HPD, but when their demands fell on deaf ears, some of those coalitions took to the streets.[98] Parts of the city, as a result, were on fire, the root cause, police brutality.

Throughout the 1980s, Texas led the nation in the number of police brutality cases, and Houston ranked second in the number of civil rights probes into police violence.[99] The incidents of police brutality were becoming more frequent throughout the city.[100] In 1982, the *Houston Chronicle* ran a story

pointing out that HPD shot and killed more persons than in the previous year.[101] While the department claimed that it was the result of hostilities and violence towards police officers, the people knew better and understood that HPD was becoming more violent towards civilians.[102] The escalation in violence prompted civil rights groups and other coalitions to demand some oversight again. The NAACP, for example, used its connections to get officials to explore the issue of police brutality but to little avail.[103] Others wanted changes in the department's policies that typically stonewalled persons from filing complaints or seeking reparations. City Councilmember Lance Lalor, for example, requested that HPD modify guidelines from the Internal Affairs Division that only allow alleged victims of police brutality to file complaints.[104] He essentially wanted to expand the scope of who can lodge complaints against the police. Some were pushing the department towards implementing the use of videotaping interactions with people in hopes that that might reduce the number of violent incidences.[105] Along the same lines, many were successfully lobbying for an order that would mandate HPD to record conversations with those they apprehend as yet another way to protect the people from police violence.[106] Additionally, Mayor Kathy Whitmire, the first woman to serve as the city's mayor, believed that perhaps recruiting more Chicanos and Blacks into HPD might offset the high number of complaints against the department. As a result, she requested HPD to update its recruiting practices.[107]

Police brutality, nevertheless, continued as usual and was even deemed as the root cause of racial tensions that blanketed the city.[108] Further enraging the people was the way police officers viewed their own behavior. Some, for example, boasted about the power they had over people while others relished the fact that they could administer their brand of justice.[109] This braggadocios and cowboy-like bravado irked the people and added to their HPD frustrations. Moreover, police brutality was not unique to male officers as women, too, found themselves accused of using excessive force.[110] While female officers lived a different experience, they were part of an institution saturated with systemic racism and sexism. They nevertheless also found themselves subscribing to the idea of using brutal force. The allegations against HPD during the 1980s were many, but the leading complaint was its wanton violence.[111] In response to the outcry, Democratic Mayor Kathryn "Kathy" J. Whitmire would bring significant change to HPD by hiring the first African American, Lee P. Brown, as the top cop within the department. The decision was a reform measure on the part of Mayor Whitmire, who hoped that

Brown's post to Chief of Police would do two things: further diversify the department and reduce police brutality cases. The first would certainly happen as the department altered the way it recruited potential cadets, and subsequently, more Blacks joined the force. The second, however, was harder to achieve, as complaints of police brutality remained constant.

The hiring of Lee Brown did bring a sense of hope since he was an outsider and perhaps more willing to cross the "blue" line when it came to punishing cops who violated the law.[112] Moreover, many felt that Brown could mold the department in significant ways and steer it clear of the horrible reputation it earned as the "meanest cops in the nation."[113] Seemingly, people welcomed the reforms Chief Brown promised. Several people were incredibly excited about his new pilot program that was to become a part of the police training manual, and that promised to prevent occurrences of brutality.[114] Others celebrated the mandatory forty hours of additional training that each police officer had to do annually. Many especially hailed Chief Brown's 'community policing' program, which called for the creation of civilian committees that could help police identify and then peacefully address any problems that might arise in a specific community. The goal, of course, was to eliminate instances of police brutality.[115] Within three years of assuming the role of Chief, Brown received praise for implementing progressive reforms that reduced the number of incidences of police violence. Some, however, were not so impressed with Chief Brown and criticized him for the lack of professionalism within the department, especially when it came to the use of excessive force against civilians.[116] Others were especially critical of Chief Brown's opposition to the use of Civilian Review Boards (CRBs), which entrusted the people with oversight powers and allowed them to weigh in on cases of police misconduct.[117] For activists, CRBs were the most effective tool for ensuring that guilty cops were punished for their wrongdoings and for also ensuring that victims of police misconduct received justice.

As the 1980s ended, newspaper accounts gave the impression that reform came to the department and that the relationship between people and police stood repaired.[118] But the decade ended as violently as it had started. In 1989, for example, there were two instances of fatal police shootings following routine traffic stops. That same year, two cops received convictions for sexual assault. As a result, the city witnessed additional demonstrations, and HPD maintained its reputation as a "violent and out of control" department that was "mistrusted by the people it was supposed to serve."[119]

During the 1990s, Texas again led the nation in investigations of

police brutality.[120] And although Houston moved from second to sixth place for reporting instances of police abuse, it remained decidedly a dangerous place for civilians.[121] Nationally, the Attorney General launched a probe into police brutality.[122] Additionally, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) pushed measures calling for reforms for curbing police misconduct. They mainly wanted police departments to modify their rhetoric of community violence.[123] "If cops go out into the streets thinking they're in a war, they will act like they're in one," recalls ACLU's Ira Glasser.[124] To help prevent police misconduct, some judges favored giving the federal government the power to sue cities that failed to curb cases of police brutality.[125] While this caused some controversy, many activists found it favorable mostly since other agencies failed to deliver on their promises regarding ending police violence. The Justice Department, for example, received a tremendous amount of criticism for its disappointing way of responding to complaints about police misconduct.[126] "I wrote the Justice Department twice," recalls Jeffery Bloom. "I asked the U.S. Attorney to pick up the file; they did nothing; they've done nothing at any step. They've never even responded to our letters or answered our phone calls," Bloom continues.[127] Criticism against the Justice Department carried on through the decade. In 1997, for example, at least two-hundred activists marched on the Justice Department, demanding that it do more to track and punish police brutality.[128]

In Houston, activists held countless marches to protest police violence both throughout the city and elsewhere, such as Los Angeles, which was reeling over the Rodney King verdict.[129] One of the most advertised marches of the decade was a peaceful demonstration conducted by the TSU Black Law Students Association, including students Jerry Christmas, James McMillan, Louis Latimer, and Kail Austin.[130] Other activists, however, opted for more aggressive approaches to stamping out police brutality. Minister Quanell X, a local activist and spiritual leader in Houston, for example, accused HPD of corruption and argued that it was running a campaign of harassment against Black people.[131] He advised those that were brutalized by HPD to use any means necessary for combating police violence. As expected, this triggered a wave of criticism and anxiety against Minster Quanell X and African Americans. The media quickly accused Minister X of declaring war on the Houston Police Department.[132] By the end of the 1990s, President Bill Clinton weighed in on the issue of police brutality and promised to provide plans for stopping it.[133] Unfortunately, as in previous moments, reforms were not significant to produce substantial changes.

Headlines going into the millennium read "Out of Control," and indeed, issues surrounding police brutality were rampant.[134] Nationally, as in Houston, police departments were facing growing criticism for their lack of transparency, unfair methods of racial profiling, excessive use of force against the people, and for their unwillingness to reprimand cops who break the law.[135] As in the previous decade, several coalitions, civil rights groups, as well as the U.S. Civil Rights Commission urged Congress to make it easier for people to take legal action against abusive police officers.[136] They also demanded that departments immediately terminate any officer guilty of violating the civil rights of civilians, but as before, their requests fell on deaf ears.[137] Technically, Chicanos and African Americans in Houston had two relationships with law enforcement. On the one hand, they were victims of harassment, racial profiling, over-policing, mass incarceration, and police violence. On the other, they had to deal with department leaders who refused to work with them or failed to implement any changes. Also, these same leaders executed reforms that did not go far enough to produce a significant transformation within the department. Therefore, the fight against police brutality was fought on multiple fronts—in the streets, courtrooms, at city hall, and in the halls of Congress as well. For over a century, Houston's Brown, Black, and white activists fought to end police brutality. While there have been small victories here and there, police violence remains and suggests that it is both institutional and systemic.

Multi-racial and Multi-generation Coalition- Building

In the forward of *Where do we go From Here: Chaos or Community?* Coretta Scott King noted that her husband "spoke out sharply for all the poor in all their hues…for he knew if color made them different, misery and oppression made them the same."[138] This statement rang true for Houston, where police brutality exposed Chicanos and Blacks to some of the most grotesque forms of misery and oppression. Police brutality, however, perhaps more so than other issues, also resulted in unified protests across racial and economic lines with higher frequency. Since the 1960s, the coalition-building in Houston occurred in several forms. For example, some coalitions took shape among militant organizations and middle-class civil rights groups who historically have engaged in separate forms of activism. Other coalitions took shape between Chicanos, Blacks, and white activists who traditionally viewed one another as adversaries rather than allies. Additionally, there were efforts to coalition-build between the people and law enforcement, but a smaller

contingent of activists did this and often faced tremendous criticism. And while the strategies for seeking justice between and among these multi-racial and multi-generation coalitions differed, they all made ending police brutality their goal.

Some of the earliest grassroots organizations to participate in coalition-building included the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) and the Brown Berets. These groups first emerged in Houston in the 1960s and operated out of the city's northside, a predominantly Chicano neighborhood, and a magnet for militant activism. The entire northside, remembers Gloria Rubac, "was a hotbed of activity."[139] "MAYO was here …we were [managing] the huelga schools (strike schools) here, [and we also had the] Brown Berets," she continues. The northside also witnessed several anti-war marches, political activities, and several rallies, all of which converged at Moody Park, where people met regularly to address issues such as police brutality.[140] Coming to the aide of the Torres family, for example, were groups from other sections of town, including Second and Third Wards' La Raza Unida Party (LRUP), Peoples Party II (PP-II), and the Congress of African People (CAP). Similar to the Northside, the Second and Third Wards have a long history of activism as they too rallied against police violence. Also, there were labor and socialist groups that included whites as part of its membership, including Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), Progressive Labor Party, Workers of the World, Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), and the RCP's Youth Brigade. All these groups would form several kinds of multi-racial coalitions to combat and end police brutality such as Barrios Unidos en Defensa, the Justice for Joe Torres Committee, the Stop Killer Cops Coalition, the People United Against Police Brutality, the Committee to Defend the Houston Rebellion, and the Moody Park Barrio Defense Coalition.

An entrenched history of unchecked police brutality coupled with the failure of the courts to punish wrongdoers also galvanized middle-class groups, which brought them together with grassroots organizations as never before. Middle-class groups to rally behind the Torres family, for example, included the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), the Political Association of Spanish-Speaking Organizations (PASO), the American G.I. Forum, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), and IMAGE of Houston who formed coalitions aimed at ending police violence with the Coalition for Responsible Law Enforcement, the Houston Metropolitan Ministries, El Concilio de la Raza, and the Southern Conference Education Fund. These groups found themselves working together

and utilizing similar strategies for combating police brutality. The cross-fertilization of disparate groups and activists were a welcomed break from Houston's past actions.

Murder at the hands of HPD, combined with the courts' failure to punish the guilty, also galvanized both Brown and Black communities, which put their differences aside to end police brutality and urged whites to join the cause. Seeing HPD as an occupying force, Brown, Black, and white activists formed alliances across race lines and organized within the courtrooms as well as the streets. In 1970, for example, all three groups joined forces during the Dowling Street Incident (an intense 10-day standoff with police) to defend the People's Party II (PP-II). Assisting the PP-II against police misconduct during that standoff was the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) as well as the John Brown Revolutionary League (JBRL), a White radical organization. And following the standoff, MAYO activists, along with Blacks from the PP-II and members of the JBRL, formed a new organization they called the Rainbow Coalition.[141] Like MAYO, the PP-II, and the JBRL, this new organization worked towards stopping police brutality.

In 1976, again Chicanos, Blacks, and whites joined forces to protest police brutality when HPD murdered Larry Milton Glover, an African American and veteran of the Vietnam War, who was killed by cops that mistook the prayer book he was carrying for a gun. According to the medical examiner, Glover was shot in the left shoulder, abdomen, in the pubic area, the right thigh, left chest, left upper arm, and right index finger.[143] He was unarmed and had no criminal record, and the cops killed him. In response to this, Brown, Black, and white activists formed the Committee for an Independent Commission of Inquiry to investigate matters of police brutality. Among the members were Isaiah Lovings, president of the DeWalt chapter of the NAACP; Herman Hughes, Secretary of Houston Typographical Union Local 87; Renee Fontenot, a leader of the Student Coalition Against Racism; and Eddie Canales, spokesperson for the Harris County Raza Unida Party. "We do not believe that justice has yet been done in this case, nor do we believe that Milton Glover's death was an isolated incident, rather we believe it to be a part of a pattern; a pattern of racism and police terror in Houston," the Committee stated.[144]

There were other issues also that rallied Chicanos, Blacks, and whites into forming multi-racial coalitions; among them were the antiwar movement against the war in Vietnam. In the summer of 1970, members from all three communities participated in one of the most massive antiwar

movements in Houston's history. A group of activists that called themselves the Chicano Moratorium Committee Against the War in Vietnam organized the protest march and ensuing rally.[145] Over 1,000 people took to the streets holding signs, banners, flags, white crosses, and a coffin representing those killed in the war.[146] It was among the most massive antiwar marches the city had ever seen.[147] Issues around education also brought Chicanos and Blacks together. In 1970, they formed the Black and Brown Coalition (BBC), an organization aimed at achieving equal integration in terms of numbers and funding. During the 1970s, problems related to attaining full integration in its school system racked Houston. In 1972, HISD had to eliminate, finally, its continued practice of racial segregation. Still, when the district bussed Chicanos, whom it legally classified as white, into Black schools and called that integration, a wave of protest swept the city. Taking charge was MAYO and the Mexican American Education Council (MAEC), which confronted Houston ISD officials during school board meetings and encouraged parents to hold a three-week-long strike against the district.[148] The BBC came out of this protest and attempted to protect HISD's largest groups affected by integration. So, while sporadic, Chicanos, Blacks, and whites in Houston had a brief history of forming several multi-racial coalitions for a variety of issues—consistently police brutality.

Additionally, there were efforts to coalition-build between people and law enforcement. Following Torres' murder, for example, Dr. Guadalupe Quintanilla, the Assistant Provost at the University of Houston, established the Hispanic Culture and Language Program within HPD.[149] The goal of this program was to educate police officers on the language and culture of the various Spanish-speaking communities in Houston.[150] The hope was that if cops had a cultural understanding of Chicanos and could communicate better with them, then there would be fewer occurrences of police brutality. "Dr. Quintanilla [was] trying to build…a bond between…officers and the people in the community [and] started teaching Spanish classes," recalls Louise Villejo.[151] But more than forming a bond, Dr. Quintanilla also hoped to change the hearts and minds of cops through these classes. "There was a lot of racism in the police department, and [it] had a very frightening reputation," recalls Quintanilla.[152] The course lasted several weeks, and students earned a certificate upon completion.[153] Those that took the class seemed to enjoy it and felt that the program was helping to "pull down barriers."[154] Graduation ceremonies took place in the cherished spaces of Mexican American neighborhoods, such as the Ripley House, which was done to expose cops to

the Chicano community.[155]

Dr. Quintanilla also initiated a movement to provide immediate security to the people with practical advice that included something simple such as giving out cards with the names and numbers of lawyers or activists that they could contact in case there was trouble with the police. "If they get stopped," Quintanilla recalls, "[we] tell them not to say anything…and [to] call me."[156] She went throughout the city, spoke with several attorneys, collected cards from them, and then proceeded to visit schools to talk to students and to teach them what to do in case the cops stopped them. "This is what you do, just say yes sir, [and] you have the right to one phone call," she continues.[157] Additionally, the formation of Citizen Review Boards (CRBs), bodies that took shape after Torres' murder and that had the power to investigate incidences of police brutality, were also coalitions since they consisted of community activists, businesspeople, and anyone from the community that could serve in that capacity. And while many cops opposed the idea of CRBs, it was another effort on the part of civilians, nevertheless, to work with law enforcement to eliminate police brutality. While this strategy often faced criticism by other radical activists who saw HPD as the enemy, coalition-building with law enforcement was nevertheless a method for ending police brutality.

As Tyina Steptoe argues in *Houston Bound*, "Black power and the Chicano Movement represented a new direction for racial activism and coalitions that involved Black and Brown youth," and the issue of police brutality was something they coalesced around.[158] Yet it should be mentioned that these coalitions were short-lived. The Rainbow Coalition, founded in 1970 by members from MAYO, PP-II, and the JBRL to stop police violence, for example, had a short life span. It struggled mostly with the inability to cater to the problems of all its members. Because this coalition was led mainly by Blacks, it primarily focused on issues that affected the Black community, which alienated Chicanos and whites who felt that their communities had not received enough attention.[159] The Black and Brown Coalition (BBC), formed by Chicanos such as Raul De Anda and several African Americans to achieve equal integration of HISD in the early 1970s, also had a short life span.[160] It would be short-lived because Black and Brown activists quarreled over best practices of the organization, and when they could not reach a compromise, they parted ways.

Complicating matters sometimes was when coalitions had a membership that was Brown, Black, and white. For many Chicanos in particular, they perceived coalitions that had whites as its members as white

organizations, which Chicanos felt were incapable of truly understanding the problems that afflicted Brown and Black people.[161] Or, they felt that whites could not truly understand the racism that Chicanos and Blacks experienced.[162] The People United to Fight Police Brutality, for example, was a coalition that often struggled with this. While under the leadership of Travis Morales, it was not a Chicano organization per se.[163] And even though Chicanos were members of the group, it was technically a committee of the Revolutionary Communist Party. So, while diverse, it was run mostly by whites not native to Houston.[164] Additionally, coalitions sometimes struggled with governance and leadership, with which community to focus on, with methodologies regarding activism, and with which issues to address as priorities among its members.[165] But the question of race specifically was something that troubled coalitions. As Max Krochmal puts it in *Blue Texas*, race mattered within coalitions, and while they aimed to "uplift all the people," they rarely did and, as a result, dissolved.[166] So, while these coalitions may have been multi-racial, they sometimes struggled with being truly representative of the people they hoped to serve.

This problem was evident in a protest rally held at Moody Park (north Houston) in January of 1979 by the People United to Fight Police Brutality.[167] While still bringing attention to the issue of police violence, the rally also took place to help free the Moody Park Three.[168] According to Morales, some 500 people were in attendance, many of them, however, from out of town.[169] Several members from the Brown Berets attended as did a few African Americans, but for the most part, it was primarily members of the People United that were representative that day. And while this organization was still seen mostly as a communist group, it was made up primarily of Chicanos. So naturally, it focused on issues that affected them and no one else. As a result, many of the Black and white activists that were committed members in the group moved on to other issues. Moreover, because of the group's affiliation with the Revolutionary Communist Party, many other Chicano and Mexican American groups kept their distance as well. Many of them had grown dissatisfied with the group's fiery rhetoric. "Down with Police Terror," and "Cops Are the Tool of the Rich Man's Rule," were a few of the banners on display at that January rally, for example.[170] Others were fearful of potential violence. Some marchers, for example, carried baseball bats, which many saw was an invitation for a violent confrontation. The *Houston Post* reporter sent to photograph the rally was also advised by his supervisor to "prepare for a possible confrontation with police."[171] So while

the People United, similar to other coalitions, hoped to end police brutality, the problems of strategy and shifting priorities, among other things, ultimately forced it to lose membership rendering it short-lived.

According to Mothers Against Police Violence, an organization founded by women in Dallas, the most effective coalitions were the ones that not only engaged in street protests but that also attempted to initiate policy development within law enforcement groups.[172] Moreover, they needed to work on legislative initiatives and build networks with the families affected by police violence.[173] While the coalitions in Houston did at least one of these things, none did all of them and, as a result, had a short life span. But while short-lived, they were also examples, nevertheless, of how Chicanos, Blacks, and whites, as well as grassroots and middle-class organizations, were able to come together at least for a moment to remedy the problems they shared.[174] Moreover, coalitions took form with greater ease and frequency than in previous decades. Unlike earlier generations that struggled with reaching across the racial line, activists of the 1960s and 1970s saw the benefits of forming multi-racial coalitions, especially around the issue of police violence.[175] Also, while cultural differences and even stereotypical attitudes likely still existed, they were not as preventative in forming coalitions during the 1960s and 1970s, as they had been in decades prior.[176] Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, however, coalition-building across racial and generation lines proved more difficult and did not occur with the same regularity as before.

Conclusion: HPD, BLM, and the Never-Ending Fight Against Police Brutality

The reputation of HPD was already well known throughout Houston, but by the late 1970s, news of the department's misconduct reached people across the country. The *New Times*, in an editorial, nominated HPD as the meanest cops in the nation. "Their city suffers…as much from… its police as from… its criminals," the editorial continued.[177] A sentiment that rang true for resident and activist John Crear who recalls that "as a kid…in Fifth Ward, [that] police walked around with dogs, and [that] they [would] sick their dogs on a person in a minute."[178] *Texas Monthly* dubbed HPD as the "new gang in town."[179] *Rolling Stone Magazine* claimed HPD was a department full of "killer cops."[180] Francis Williams agreed and concluded that African Americans were the primary targets.[181] Civil rights groups across the nation also labeled HPD as the worst law enforcement agency in the state.[182] And in March of 1979, as part of a panel sponsored by the Houston Young Lawyers

Association and the American Bar Association, Attorney Tony Canales announced to the country that HPD had a "search and kill policy" which permeated throughout the department.[183] The entire nation seemingly knew what Houstonians had always known about HPD: that it over-policed Brown and Black communities and used excessive force. And when the people responded, HPD retaliated with additional violence.

Yet, while police brutality proved somewhat effective at suppressing dissent, that method acted as a double-edged sword in that it was also responsible for galvanizing activists, and in the case of Houston, activists that forged alliances and coalitions across generations and color lines. As author Edward Escobar puts it, "rather than subduing…activism," police brutality propelled it to a new level and created a more significant problem for the police.[184] According to Dwight Watson, who wrote the definitive study on the Houston Police Department, "police misconduct and repression became a lightning rod for local…activism," which by the 1970s, consisted of multi-racial and multi-generational coalition-building.[185] For Daniel Bustamante, the murder of Joe Torres "was an affirmation of everything that [the people had] suffered, [and] "it took that incident to propel [the] community to respond," like never before.[186]

When asked about the issue of police brutality, Houston Lawyer Asberry Butler admits that "it will always be bad."[187] The recruitment of more minorities into the department, he suggests, might help alleviate some of the issues. "I believe it's good to have Blacks and Chicanos and minority police…I think it would…cut down on the antagonism that you get from the police officers," he goes on to say.[188] Frumencio Reyes agrees that the hiring of more minority police officers could help reduce instances of police brutality. For years, he worked with the department to "develop ideas on how to go about recruiting…more Hispanics."[189] Daniel Bustamante echoed similar statements regarding the consistency of police brutality. "When I see people protesting now…different issues with police, it hurts…in a big way because we have been fighting those battles all of our lives… [and]…they are still there, so there is still something wrong with the system." He does admit, however, that because of the organizing on the part of the people against police brutality that more Chicanos, Blacks, and women were able to join the force.[190] Increased integration of the police force, he argues, was among the most significant changes within the department. However, for substantive reform of law enforcement to occur, change must go beyond altering the racial demographics of police departments.

Whether that translated into a reduction of police misconduct is unclear as many persons of color, a part of the force, could have easily been just as brutal against civilians as their white counterparts. Learning if the integration of Brown and Black officers into departments mitigated police brutality is a worthwhile topic that merits further study. Also, in need of further research is how police brutality affected people in towns and cities in other parts of the state. Baytown, Texas, for example, experienced tragic instances of police misconduct when cops killed Luis Alfonso Torres by way of what a medical examiner ruled was "mechanical asphyxia with blunt impact trauma."[191] Dallas also saw its share of police violence with the police murder of Santos Rodriguez.[192] In Castroville, Texas, the police killing of Ricardo Morales shared a striking resemblance to the Torres case in Houston.[193] Certainly, coalition-building was not unique to Houston, but to what extent it took place in other Texas communities also requires further investigation. Excellent starting points on this subject include Arnoldo De Leon's *Ethnicity in the Sunbelt*, Brian Behnken's *The Struggle in Black and Brown*, and *Blue Texas* by Max Krochmal.

Also, in need of further study is the increased militarization of police forces, which began in the 1970s with the country's War on Drugs program and which also served to magnify law enforcement's use of deadly force.[194] The War on Drugs was a government-sponsored program that attempted to deal with the crisis of illegal drug use. As a result, local police departments received the authority to apprehend offenders by any means to enforce the program, resulting in at least three actions. First, cities saw an increase in police presence throughout communities labeled as breeding grounds for illicit drug use. Second, departments authorized the use of "no-knock" warrants for capturing offenders; and third, police forces underwent a tremendous amount of weaponization to enforce the prohibition of illegal drug use. The militarization of law enforcement intensified after 1981 through something known as the Military Cooperation with Law Enforcement Act, which gave police departments access to military training, equipment, and technology. What this measure also did was blur the line between cops and soldiers. In 1997, the National Defense Authorization Act allowed the Pentagon to funnel any surplus military equipment to local law enforcement, which again allowed police departments to become highly weaponized agencies. Following the attacks in New York in 2011 and the inauguration of the War on Terror, the Department of Homeland Security also provided local police departments with grants and weapons for use in the fight against terrorism. The problem,

unfortunately, was that local departments, such as HPD, used those weapons to police the citizenry.[195]

The coalition-building that existed in Houston during the 1960s and 1970s waned somewhat in the decades afterward and would not occur with the same intensity until the twenty-first century. The best-known expression of this is the diverse coalition-building that has taken place following the murder of Houston's George Floyd. A quick scan of the Black Lives Matter Movement, a crusade founded from a term coined by African American women, will reveal activists from different racial, economic, religious, gendered, occupational, and even political backgrounds. Included in this movement as well are several police officers who have either publicly condemned police brutality or expressed their support of BLM activists. Such was the case for Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo, who was among the earliest, high-ranking cops to break the "blue" code of silence.[196] For several days, Chief Acevedo and Houston caught the country's attention with his public displays of condemnation of abusive cops and even marched with protestors throughout the city.[197] Almost immediately, however, some activists began questioning Chief Acevedo's sincerity and even accused him of hypocrisy since his own department had officers under investigation for misconduct, including a series of fatal shootings (six within six weeks).[198] Publically Chief Acevedo was saying one thing, but as the top cop in Houston, he was doing what other Chiefs did; protect the police and not the people, which angered activists.[199] Further enraging them was the city's approved plan to increase HPD's budget by nearly $20 million.[200] The people were outraged; here, they were calling for the defunding of police departments, and their city leaders did the opposite.[201] As could be expected, the city witnessed further protests.

While many things have changed within HPD, a la the George Floyd Act, which banned the use of chokeholds, police brutality, however, remains persistent.[202] Indeed, the Black Lives Matter movement is a testament to this fact. Moreover, as of the writing of this essay, HPD shot and killed Nicolas Chavez as he was on his knees, reeling from the effects of a taser gun.[203] Release body camera footage shows Chavez on his knees, attempting to comply with orders while under physical duress caused by the taser gun.[204] The killing makes Chavez one of the six persons of color murdered by police in Houston within six weeks.[205] Therefore, the purpose of this essay, as can be seen, was not to open old wounds but instead to raise awareness of a history of police misconduct throughout the city in hopes that it empowers the people to

continue to resist that brutality. Because while police brutality is something to be fearful of, the real fear is that public outcry to this behavior begins to diminish or cease altogether as people become desensitized to violence.

Moreover, this is the story of resistance and the efforts launched by the people to end the practice of police brutality, which this author argues is a central tenet of civil rights activism. No institution is free from racism, and one as historic as the Houston Police Department indeed suffers from it. Racism or not, however, any law enforcement agency that operates with a tremendous amount of authority but with little accountability is a recipe for disaster, especially for the people they are supposed to serve and protect. Additionally, as other questionable practices remain intact such as the inability to prosecute corrupt cops, racial profiling, and that seemingly unbreakable code of silence, the problems of police brutality will endure. Compounding these problems is law enforcement's recent willingness to work with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), resulting in the formation of what activists dub the *polimigra*, the term used to describe police that cooperate with immigration officials for carrying out the current administration's anti-immigrant policies. Under the *polimigra* regime, the same police terror is now also committed against undocumented communities ringing true the adage that "it is never just a few bad apples," that the problem is institutional, systemic even.[206]

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"Kill the Pigs!" The Case of Joe Torres and the Fight against Police Brutality in Houston, 1977-1978

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The 1977 wrongful beating and murder of Vietnam War veteran Joe Campos Torres by officers from the Houston Police Department serves as one of the most notorious examples of police misconduct in the city's history. Torres' death ignited an intense period of protest for years thereafter. From the investigation and court cases that ensued, the guilty officers received a one-year prison sentence for felony misdemeanor and ten years for violating Torres' constitutional rights but then had those sentences suspended to just five years' probation. This decision angered the Chicano community, along with a sizable portion of Houston's African Americans, who mobilized to form several coalitions throughout the city. These organizations were police watch groups that took the lead in protesting misconduct. They were also multi-racial, as many whites joined them, and multi-generational, as middle-class groups and activists of various ages were a part of them as well.

In this article, police violence is explored through the lens of newspaper accounts as well as oral histories. It aims to provide a brief history of the multi- racial and generational coalitions that emerged in the late 1970s to combat police brutality and called for substantive reform of law enforcement. The plan is to show how these disparate activists supported each other in a city more known for broken alliances. In Houston, like in many Texas cities, young radical activists and their middle-class counterparts regularly participated in separate forms of activism. Complicating matters was the fact that Chicanos and Blacks often competed against one another for jobs, political positions, and recognition from city leaders, which created an ambivalent relationship between the groups. The issue of police misconduct, however, typically helped erase the lines that divided these communities and allowed

them to form some of the most impactful grassroots-based civil rights coalitions in Houston's history.

A History Brown-Black Disunity in Houston

Historically, the city of Houston has been a mostly tri-ethnic city with whites, Blacks, and Chicanos, making the largest of all groups. And like most cities across the state, it was saturated with racial and economic division. Typically, those lines existed between whites and non-whites, but even among African Americans and Chicanos, disunion existed. Blacks and Chicanos, while they experienced a similar form of oppression, did not necessarily see each other as allies with a shared historical past. Instead, they saw each other as different people who competed for jobs, political positions, and access to civil liberties. Other factors that contributed to the disunity among Chicanos and Blacks included racial prejudice, distrust, misperceptions, stereotypes of one another, economic standing, and strategies employed in their activism.[1] Before World War II, for instance, Chicanos and Blacks fought endlessly to destroy racial segregation. Leading that charge were the League of United Latin Americans Citizens (LULAC), the largest and oldest Latino civil rights organization in the nation, as well as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), similarly the oldest civil rights organization for African Americans. However, neither group were interested in forming coalitions across the color line.

The best-known expression of this unwillingness to merge forces is Houston's own, Felix Tijerina, a life-long LULACer, who in 1957 publicly expressed on several occasions his opposition to joining forces with the NAACP.[2] Nonetheless, the feeling would be mutual as several NAACP members mirrored similar sentiments claiming that Mexican Americans did not experience the same racial prejudice and segregation that Blacks did.[3] Moreover, to protect his economic interest, Felix Tijerina, also a well-known entrepreneur, publicly opposed the Houston Black sit-in movement. His concern was that integration and the presence of Blacks might offend his white clientele and ultimately hurt his business.[4] Indeed, this did not sit well with African Americans. These actions and ambivalent attitudes prevented both groups from forming multi-racial coalitions, setting the tone for years.

Further dividing them was a 1972 publication titled Black/Mexican-American Project Report, which found that Chicanos and Blacks held misconceived perceptions about each other on race, culture, and class.[5] In 1975, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 came up for renewal, and immediately

Mexican American civil rights groups like LULAC, the American G.I. Forum, and the Political Association of Spanish Speaking Organizations (PASO), to name a few, wanted language included in the bill that extended protection rights to them and other Chicanos as the original bill provided those safeguards to African Americans only. The NAACP, however, opposed including Mexican Americans in the renewal legislation in fear that it might erase some of the political gains made by Blacks.[6] Their refusal angered Mexican Americans and further widened the divide between both communities.[7]

This disunity did not exist everywhere. In San Antonio, Chicanos, Blacks, and liberal whites were able to successfully establish multi-racial coalitions like in 1963 when they formed the Bexar County Coalition (BCC), which was a combination of PASO, labor groups, and the NAACP.[8] In Dallas young Black activists marched in solidarity to protest police brutality following the 1972 shooting of Thomas Rodriguez and his pregnant wife.[9] Houston sometimes exhibited examples of unity, as in the case of Moses LeRoy, a labor rights activist, who was the only African American to participate in the 1966 Minimum Wage March organized by Mexican Americans.[10] LeRoy not only marched with Chicanos, but he also spoke at all the rallies and tried to recruit more Blacks to join the cause. Additionally, in April of 1968, Chicanos like Carlos Calbillo and Leonel Castillo, Comptroller for the City of Houston, marched to downtown with Black residents of Third World to protest the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.[11] Thus coalition-building in Houston was there to some extent, but it either was too difficult or not consistent. The issue of police brutality, however, would change that, and more than merely merging grassroots organizations, police violence also encouraged middle-class groups to participate in coalition-building as well.

The Case of Joe Campos Torres

On May 5, 1977, Joe Campos Torres found himself arrested, brutally assaulted, and "killed…by the Houston Police Department."[12] A native Houstonian, Torres grew up in Denver Harbor and Second Ward, where he spent time living with his grandmother.[13] With the war in Vietnam in full swing, at only nineteen years of age, Joe joined the Army, serving for three years between 1973 and 1976.[14] After his Army discharge, Torres returned home and lived his grandmother to be closer to work.[15] Joe "was a hard worker" and found employment quickly.[16] He was also well known throughout the community and adjusted back to civilian life with minimal issues. He "seemed to be the same brother that we knew," recalls Janie Torres, Joe's

second-youngest sister.[17] She remembers Joe not needing counseling or therapy of any sort and did not appear to suffer from PTSD as other soldiers.[18] After his workday, Joe frequented Second Ward's popular 21 Club, which was near his grandmother's house.[19] Bar manager Antonio Bela intervenes by calling the police when a fight ensues between Torres and another patron.[20]

There is some debate regarding the cause of the altercation. Janie Torres makes the case that her brother Joe was defending himself and his property. "People say that he was drunk there causing a disturbance but, people don't understand that Joe [had] been to that bar numerous times. It was the neighborhood bar, so they knew him…they knew who he was, they knew him by name, [and] they knew his family," so it made no sense that he would start an altercation there without a good reason, Janie asserts.[21] She is referring to statements made by people who claimed they knew Torres and noted that he was a violent alcoholic, which she goes on to say demonizes him and makes it so that others view his beating and murder as deserving.[22] Furthermore, "Joe always had to have his music… he loved music… [and] was always walking around with his boombox," she continues.[23] This explains why Joe had his boombox that night, and after coming out of the restroom, he discovered that someone had grabbed it, which triggered the altercation.[24]

As a result, a fight ensues, and the cops arrive. The first on the scene was patrolman Oropeza, who immediately tried to end the altercation.[25] Soon more police arrive, including Eugene Elliott, Jerome Skolnick, Joseph Janish, and Stephen Orlando.[26] Eventually, Torres is subdued, but still agitated and placed in a patrol car for transport to a holding cell.[27] Why Torres did not remain in the custody of Oropeza, the first officer to arrive on the scene, is a mystery and warrants further exploration. Why did Oropeza allow other officers to take Torres? Why did he not process Torres? Instead, "they took possession of Joe [and] drove around the city" before taking him to the holding cell.[28] While en route to the holding cell, one of the cops (patrolman Orlando) made a short detour and transported Torres to what was known as the "hole," the nickname given to a place where cops often took "undesirables" to beat and torture them.[29] Once at the "hole," Orlando and Elliot, who were now joined by Terry Wayne Denson, Joseph Janish, Louis Kinney, and Glenn Brinkmeyer, commenced with beating Torres.[30] "They beat him up, they beat him up real bad," recalls Janie Torres.[31]

After the beating, the cops took Torres to the city jail, but upon arriving and signing him in, they received orders to take Torres to the hospital instead.[32] A new policy regarding the mistreatment of prisoners within HPD

prevented them from booking Torres.[33] It was a matter of liability as many people died while under HPD custody, and the sergeant on duty was trying to avoid a potential lawsuit.[34] Thus, the cops depart with Torres not presumably to the hospital, but instead, they returned Torres to the "hole" and continued beating him.[35] At that point, as Janie Torres tells it, "Joe was fighting for his life."[36] Once the second beating concluded, they forced Torres into the bayou where he ultimately drowned as he was too injured to stay afloat.[37] The fall alone could have possibly killed Torres since the drop was at least seventeen feet.[38] Once back at the station, the cops covered up what they had done and told their sergeant that they had let Torres go.[39] Seemingly, that was the end; however, for HPD rookie Eugene Elliott, it was not. Despite being asked to uphold a code of silence, Elliott revealed what happened to his father, also a police officer.[40] Once he did that, "the biggest cover-up in the history of the Houston police department began."[41] Once the trial started, he testified that fear prevented him from coming forward sooner.[42]

The following day Torres' family had grown concerned. "Once he didn't [come] home, my grandmother was calling us," recalls Janie.[43] "Then, once he didn't show up for work, [they were] calling us."[44] "So, we were basically all calling each other because it wasn't like Joe...and we knew something wasn't right."[45] The family also called HPD to report Torres missing, but upon reaching the jail attendant, they learned that he was not in their custody.[46] After placing the missing person's report, several family members went "searching for him everywhere with friends…other relatives, [and] visiting places to where he [typically] goes," recalls Janie.[47] "I remember we didn't go to school," she continues.[48] Then on Mother's Day, exactly three days later, Joe Torres's body was found floating in the bayou.[49] To help keep the kids calm, they went to a local theater for some weekend entertainment. But while at the theater, they received the news that a body had been "found in the bayou."[50] Janie remembers her uncle going to look for them, "he goes in… [and] calls my dad out," then "they grab us [and we] go out…into the parking lot," and we "are told the news."[51] Immediately Dolores Perez, Joe Torres' aunt, scheduled a meeting with the city morgue to try to identify the body.[52] It would be too mutilated, however, to identify him accurately. An autopsy report showed that the body had several bruises caused by blunt force trauma but could not make a definitive identification.[53] Moreover, Torres' wallet was missing as the cops removed it from Torres and threw it into the Bayou after him.[54] It either sank or floated away. Ultimately, however, fingerprints were used to confirm his identity. Joe Torres had been

found and identified.

The family was traumatized. "Everybody [was] at my grandma's…house," Janie recalls.[55] And all they could do for the moment was sit and wait. The waiting was torture, she remembers. Everyone was glued to the television to catch a glimpse of the news to see what they were reporting. They stocked up on newspapers as best they could. "We looked at the news reports, [and learned that] a boater…found him, and that divers brought him out of the water."[56] This news compounded their trauma. "We were scared," Janie remembers, "sitting on the porch just crying, and scared."[57] Adding to the anxiety also was the inability to determine Torres' death officially. An early probe by the Attorney General's Office, for example, was unable to determine the cause of death.[58] Eventually, however, the medical examiner concluded that Torres died from asphyxia due to drowning and found that the cause of death was a drowning homicide.[59]

Because it was a homicide, the police department suspended the five cops involved with Torres' murder.[60] Chief of Police, Byron Glenn Bond, was initially considering terminating the officers involved but opted instead for suspending them.[61] The department also established a hotline for persons to use to report police misconduct.[62] The Chief also moved forward with developing an Internal Affairs Division dedicated to investigating police misconduct.[63] At first glance, it looked like Chief Bond was cooperative with the investigation. Yet, the people immediately learned he was not and often tried to foot-drag proceedings. He even objected to recommendations that there be a federal mediator to help move discussions forward after first agreeing to do so.[64] Chief Bond's stalling irked people and convinced them that he cared little for punishing those responsible for the murder of Torres. Shortly after that, Carol Vance, the District Attorney for Harris County, brought charges against the cops.[65] Orlando and Denson were charged with murder while Janish, Kinney, and Brinkmeyer received misdemeanor counts.[66] As for the rookie Elliott, since there were no criminal charges filed against him, he was able to return to duty.[67] The Department of Justice would also become involved in this case, but it was only after the people demanded it.[68] Following Torres' death, Mamie Garcia of LULAC, along with other groups, insisted that the Justice Department launch an investigation of his murder.[69] It would take some work and continued pressure, but ultimately, they would be successful in getting the Justice Department involved.[70]

Torres' murder galvanized a significant portion of the Mexican American community, both young and old, middle class, and radical groups.[71]

Indeed, young militants responded. They demanded that HPD release records of Torres' death, and when it refused, they took to the streets to participate in marches and rallies throughout the city, including city hall and the police station.[72] They also protested at the "hole," the drowning site at Buffalo Bayou.[73] As members of a group called Barrios Unidos en Defensa, several protestors held a demonstration at Moody Park, a popular green space among Chicanos from the city's north side.[74] Barrios Unidos was already playing a significant role in the campaign against police brutality, not just for Torres but for other victims as well. "Torres, Johnson Yesterday, Your Daughter or Son Tomorrow!" read a pamphlet they used to recruit activists for forming a community alert and block committee.[75] It was among the earliest multi-racial and multi-generational coalitions to emerge as its membership consisted of both middle and working-class activists like Daniel Bustamante, Charlie Doyle, and Lola Castillo, to name a few.[76] While Barrios Unidos used established channels for seeking change, it also engaged in some of the more militant forms of activism like marches, rallies, and protest lines. Frumencio Reyes, a lawyer and political activists in Houston, for example, recalls being part of a "march from the northside to the federal building," where he was joined by "Felix Salazar, a judge from Magnolia Park," and where they began "raising hell" about Torres' murder.[77]

Middle-class groups, on the other hand, while it also rallied behind this tragedy, took a different approach against police brutality.[78] They took what historian Arnoldo De Leon calls a "mainstream" approach, which included working with officials from the Houston Police Department.[79] So, too, did Latino political leaders like State Representative Ben Reyes, who pushed for the formation of a Civilian Review Board (CRB). Representative Reyes hoped that both HPD and the people would work together to resolve any problems and concerns and improve the overall quality of life of Houston's neighborhoods.[80] The intent was to help HPD learn new skills for dealing and working with civilians. The idea of a review board was something that numerous activists were eager to form. Carlos Calbillo recalls that they "wanted…an independent commission…with subpoena powers…to look into police [violence] [so they] came together to form an action group to negotiate with the Chief of Police and the Mayor.[81] Civilian Review Boards already existed in other cities across the state. In San Antonio, for example, city council officials organized a CRB following the beating of a Mr. Bobby Jo Philips, who later died from that trauma.[82] As San Antonio resident and activists, Carlos Richardson, explains it, the police accused Phillips of having

"a knife, and they literally beat him to death with their sticks."[83] In Houston, CRBs would take some time to get off the ground, but it was one strategy that Reyes and other middle-class groups took to eliminate police brutality.

In addition to LULAC, another middle-class organization to rally behind the Torres family was the Coalition for Responsible Law Enforcement.[84] Under the leadership of Hector Garcia, this was a conglomerate of different activists and organizations that merged their resources for combating police violence.[85] It was a massive coalition and comprised of activists from throughout greater Houston, including State Representative Ben Reyes, Jose Luis Rodriguez of *Chicano Times*, Fred Hannan of the Episcopal Church of the Resurrection, Mamie Garcia of LULAC, and Rev. James Navarro of St. Paul Baptist Church.[86] Also members were Ruth Palmer of the Wesley Community Center, Jose G. Garcia of Image de Tejas, Prentis Moore of the Pilgrim Congressional Church, and Daniel Bustamante of Casa de Amigos, which became a popular site for gatherings of the Coalition.[87] Bustamante would open up the facility to the group whenever it needed a space to meet, making sure also to invite others to join them. "All Organizations Invited to Protest the Murder of Joe Torres and all Police Brutality," one of their meeting fliers read.[88] Other members of the Coalition included Elene Glassman of the American Jewish Committee, Gigi Woodcock of the League of Women Voters, and Winston John and Clifton Kirkpatrick of Houston Metropolitan Ministry.[89] And while members sometimes differed on strategy, they agreed that ending police violence was the ultimate goal. So, they worked to try to become the voice of the community on all matters as it related to police brutality and attempted to establish a better relationship between law enforcement and the people.[90]

Similarly, other groups hoped to improve police-community relations as well. The Public Interest Advocacy Center, for example, offered several services in this regard. Additionally, it assisted those who felt cops abused them and worked towards resolving complaints launched by victims of police brutality.[91] Other middle-class groups to also organize against police misconduct and attempt to repair the relationship between HPD and the community included the Political Association of Spanish-Speaking Organizations (PASO), the American G.I. Forum, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), and IMAGE of Houston.[92] Not everyone agreed, however, at working in conjunction with HPD, elected officials, and governmental agencies to end police violence. The more socialist-oriented organizations, for example, would never become members of

the Coalition. For them, HPD and politicians were not to be trusted, and so they engaged in a form of activism that fell outside the parameters of middle-class groups. One, in particular, was the Progressive Labor Party, whose membership consisted of Black, Chicano, and white activists that held several meetings hoping to form a multi-racial coalition with other groups against what it identified as "racist…Gestapo attacks" by HPD.[93] Whatever their approach, countless groups and activists, it seemed, rallied behind this cause, and for Janie and her family, their presence was comforting, especially for her mother's sake. "We had a lot of activists [there and] they gave my mom…strength."[94]

As could be expected, several persons from the white community came to the aid of the police officers charged. From a survey conducted by the wives of the cops involved, there was a tremendous amount of "broad base" support for them, and according to testimonies collected, the officers on trial were outstanding citizens.[95] Officer Terry Denson, for example, was described as being a "nice guy" and a "brotherly type."[96] Initially, many cops within the department were concerned with how their colleagues behaved. Still, that sentiment typically existed at the higher levels of administration and among a smaller circle of police.[97] Most cops sided with their brothers in blue. And much of their concern had more to do with how the Torres case would tarnish the reputation of the police department. Still, there would be a significant fall out within HPD. By June of 1977, Chief Bond resigned, and taking his place was Harry Caldwell, whose first significant action was to terminate the officers involved in Torres' murder.[98] They would eventually appeal their termination but were unsuccessful and remained dismissed.[99] In an attempt to gain favor, perhaps, Chief Caldwell also initiated a program aimed at training cops in decision-making techniques while on patrol.[100] HPD also launched the Internal Affairs Division it promised the people.[101] Also, in June, the Texas Attorney General John Hill announced that he would begin investigating the murder of Joe Torres.[102]

Killer Cops on Trial

As preparations for the trials began, attorneys for the cops were able to move the location from Houston to Huntsville. They claimed that they wanted to ensure an "impartial jury."[103] Activists and others that protested police brutality, however, saw this as an attempt to get an acquittal. Moving the trial polarized the city. Many white residents felt that the hearing should be held in Huntsville so that the men could get a fair deal. Other whites

mockingly wondered if Chicanos preferred that the cops receive a trial in Mexico.[104] At the hearing, the prosecutorial team found it difficult to convict the police since they had to prove "intent to commit murder."[105] An account of how they recovered Torres' body from the bayou could not influence the jury.[106] Not even the testimony of rookie Elliot who provided details of that night, could sway them.[107] The people, on the other hand, were mortified to learn what the cops had done to Torres. "Oh, my God, they've really thrown him in," commented a spectator of the trial.[108] Shockingly enough, the discussion about police brutality by Terry Denson also fell on deaf ears among jurors.[109] The prosecution hoped that Torres' mother might impact the jury, but sadly that was not the case either.[110] Moreover, the prosecution had to convince an all-white jury that the officers in questions "were capable of murder."[111] When that proved difficult, the prosecution then offered deals to some of the defendants. Louis Kinney, for example, received immunity for his testimony, as did Glenn Brinkmeyer.[112]

Despite a spirited effort, the prosecution fell short of their expectations since they were unable to prove intent even though Kinney testified that Denson had pushed Torres into the bayou.[113] Indeed, Denson denied doing so and testified that Torres jumped into the bayou himself, and the jury believed him.[114] The defense was also able to distract the jury by redirecting their focus on Torres' ability to swim.[115] Strangely enough, that strategy worked too. Moreover, the defense convinced the jury to see Torres as a mean alcoholic with a predisposition for violence.[116] According to them, Torres was "a drunk with a chip on the shoulder" who attacked police officers forcing them to respond in self-defense.[117] Although the judge put an end to the defense' smear campaign against Torres, they were able to successfully convince the jury that Torres had a history of violence.[118] Nothing seemed to be working in favor of the prosecution. Moving the trial to Huntsville certainly hurt them, something that LULAC and other civil organizations made clear would happen.[119] But it did move, and according to the jurors, there was no evidence that the officers in question intended to kill Torres, so they issued a lesser charge.[120]

By October of 1977, the jury prepared for deliberations.[121] For Janie and her family, "the case…dragged on…[and] on," and began to take a toll on them."[122] Luckily, they had a tremendous amount of support from their neighbors, the schools, and friends. "They were…solid…neighbors," she recalls.[123] The "schools as well, we had good support at the schools."[124] Janie would get into a lot of trouble during this period. "I had a lot of trouble after

that," she remembers.[125] "I…had a lot of anger… [and] fought a lot, [but] teachers were very supportive, very understanding."[126] After deliberations, the jury convicted Denson and Orlando of negligent homicide, and the judge sentenced them to probation with a fine of one dollar.[127] It amounted to no more than a misdemeanor.[128] The cops, it seemed, were getting away with murder, literally.[129]

Not only was this a failure of justice, but it was also an insult to the Torres family, the Mexican American community, veterans, and all those who protested against police violence. "It was horrible…everybody knew that it was so wrong," exclaimed Janie Torres.[130] Even the Chief of Police, Harry Caldwell, agreed that the sentencing was too lenient. It was "a gross miscarriage of justice," he went on to say.[131] People submitted countless letters to Attorney General Bell's office, expressing their dissatisfaction with the verdict, arguing that the court and the jury were prejudiced and that Torres did not receive a fair trial.[132] The Gay Political Caucus did as well, calling the verdict and sentencing an "insult to the concept of equal justice."[133] Congresswoman Barbara Jordan would follow with a letter from her office urging Attorney General Bell to seek support from the Justice Department.[134] Adding insult to injury was the paperwork filed by attorneys for Denson and Orlando in where they appealed the negligent homicide conviction.[135] To the relief of activists, they were unsuccessful.[136]

The People React

Once news of the decision reached the people, many felt a sense of hopelessness.[137] "I felt like we didn't have any rights, that the police could do whatever they wanted and get away with it," recalls Fred Aguilar.[138] Activists mobilized quickly. Daniel Bustamante recalls being "involved in leading protest marches and just confronting the situation."[139] "We did a lot of work trying to make sure the communities were not scared, [that we] were able to successfully organize and protest without the element of fear because there was a lot of fear in our community," he continues.[140] Others attempted to calm the community running heartfelt letters and editorials in newspapers, hoping that the people remain patient long enough for justice to prevail.[141] Many, however, were angered and demanded harsher sentencing.[142] Seeing the verdict as unjust, they immediately began to form multi-racial and multi-generational coalitions to protest police violence and the failure of the courts to prosecute.[143] Local activist Eddie Canales recalls attending several meetings at a local community center where people attempted to form different coalitions

to protest police brutality.[144] Again, they marched, rallied, and protested throughout the streets of Houston, at City Hall, and back in front of the police stations. In October of 1977, about a week after the ruling, nearly 300 people participated in a march from Moody Park to City Hall, where they listened to about 25 speeches lasting almost two hours.[145] Protestors also spoke to the media, they held more mass meetings, and they distributed literature to galvanize communities into protesting police misconduct. Their efforts were successful as Houston would see a wave of organizations rally to protest both the murder of Torres and the sentencing by the court.

Among the groups to make a presence and form some of these coalitions were the Brown Berets, a Chicano paramilitary organization designed to combat police violence. The Berets were a godsend, especially for activists needing protection from the police. "If we were going to be attacked during our…marches, we needed the Brown Berets to fight for us, to protect us from the cops," recalls activist Homer Garcia.[146] "Whenever there was violence, it was usually started by the police…[who] spray us with tear gas, set their dogs on us, curse at us, spit on us, and called us names.…and it was the Brown Berets…who jumped in the way and protected us," he continues.[147] Also making a presence were members of the Peoples Party II, a Black militant organization that participated in the ten-day standoff with police back in July of 1970. Indeed, there was the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO), another Chicano militant organization that spearheaded numerous boycotts using aggressive tactics that targeted anyone or anything, from the school districts to law enforcement, to government officials and policies. Members from La Raza Unida Party (LRUP) were also present and even helped organize some of the protest marches.[148]

Joining some of these coalitions were labor rights groups and left-leaning organizations such as the Houston chapter of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). The Houston chapter of SDS managed several initiatives like antipoverty programs and even joined Chicanos to protest the war in Vietnam.[149] Regarding the issue of police misconduct, however, SDS attended the meetings, rallies and took to the streets as well. Several labor groups rallied behind the people and joined in on the coalition-building as well, groups like the Workers of the World Union and the Progressive Labor Party.[150] Also, there was the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), which attended several of the community meetings and even initiated some themselves.[151] Their discussions centered on the history of oppression and also on best practices for moving forward with securing justice for Torres. But

because many other groups saw the RCP as outsiders and as too radical, they also held meetings dedicated to identifying allies of the cause and understanding what other civil rights groups like LULAC, LRUP, and even the Catholic Church wanted or represented.[152] Other groups wishing to participate in the coalition-building included the Justice for Joe Torres Committee, the Southern Conference Education Fund, and an organization considered among the most radical of the groups called the People United to Fight Police Brutality (People United).[153]

The spokesperson for People United was an individual named Travis Morales. And while he worked towards coalition-building to protest police brutality, Morales also had to fight with other Chicanos who accused him and the group of being outside agitators that wanted nothing more but to pick a fight with the police. Morales and the People United, of course, denied that they were advocating the use of violence, but their statements fell on deaf ears. "We're for organizing people, not violence," Morales stated in an interview with the *Houston Chronicle*.[154] He indicated that all planned marches were peaceful protests but cautioned that "there will be violence" if the police came to beat on them.[155] At a meeting at St. Joseph Church, Morales addressed a group of about 200 where he said that the people are tired of "unchecked police brutality" and that they will no longer tolerate it.[156] It was these kinds of statements that irked other protestors, especially middle-class organizations. Morales also denied that his group consisted of outsiders sent to Houston to cause trouble. But in an attempt to take a jab at his critics, he followed his statement by claiming that "the only outsider as far as I'm concerned is Ben Reyes."[157] Morales was responding to a radio interview that State Representative Ben Reyes gave where he urged the people not to attend any meetings of the People United to Fight Police Brutality.[158] Reyes was concerned with any group that advocated violence, but he named the People United, and so Morales and his colleagues felt singled out and responded accordingly.[159] In the weeks following, Reyes and his supporters would find themselves in a back and forth with Morales and his supporters over the best approach moving forward.[160] But while they differed in method, their goal was the same, justice for the Torres family and an end to police brutality for the people of Houston.

The Torres family also did their part. "My mom…spoke…at town hall meetings [and] did whatever she could," Janie Torres informs us.[161] There would be countless people at the rallies and marches, people of different backgrounds including Chicanos, African Americans, "young white people,

[and] a lot of Vietnamese," as well.[162] At a gathering at the Guadalupe Church, hundreds of people, carrying signs that read "Killer Cops" and "Racist Cops," came to hear Margaret Torres (Joe's mom) speak."[163] Also, there, however, were police officers, and for Janie, their presence always frightened her. "I remember seeing them…at the protests…I remember being scared," she admits.[164] Torres' parents (Joe and Margaret) remained active as best they could and did so despite HPD's efforts to silence them, even going as far as arresting them, claiming that they assaulted the police.[165] Almost a year would pass before they would be found not guilty.[166] The family also had to tend to funeral services, which they held at St. Joseph Church, where about 300 people attended.[167] Because Torres was a veteran, he qualified for burial services with full military honors.[168] The family also sued. Following the ruling, Joe and Margaret filed a 2.5 million dollar lawsuit against the City of Houston, HPD, and the five officers involved in their son's murder.[169] They argued that the death of Joe was "condoned and supported" by both the city as well as HPD.[170] Moreover, because HPD failed to provide adequate training to its cops, it resulted in the "abuse of the citizens of Houston in the form of street justice."[171] The behavior of the police, according to the suit, was "brutal and Gestapo-like."[172] A settlement, however, would not be reached until a decade later and for a fraction of the original amount.[173]

The Torres murder and the ensuing court case also galvanized a significant portion of middle-class civil rights groups.[174] Present from the beginning was LULAC.[175] Also, there was Centro Aztlan, a nonprofit organization, founded in 1975, aimed at improving the opportunities of Mexican and Mexican Americans in Houston.[176] While it provided a variety of services, including issues around immigration, income taxes, and job placement, it also served as an accessible space for coalitions and activists mobilizing against police brutality.[177] But following the decision of the courts, clergy members, typically associated with the more conservative elements of the Mexican American community, made themselves available. At Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, for example, hundreds of activists gathered to sign a petition urging the U.S. Department of Justice to investigate matters regarding racism within HPD.[178] Also available was a group of religious leaders collectively known as the Houston Metropolitan Ministries. They were another massive coalition of several religious entities, which included groups like Spanish Speaking Ministerial Alliance, the Gulf Coast Community Services Association, and the Catholic Council on Community Relations, and that rallied behind the Torres family.[179] It would initiate a program called the

Police-Community Relations Project designed to "work with law enforcement officials as much as possible so that problems which existed could be dealt within the context of departmental disciplinary procedures."[180] In other words, they wanted HPD to handle situations regarding police misconduct and did not condone the radical activism and protests taking place throughout the city.[181] This approach caused problems with several coalitions and activists that refused to let HPD handle cases around police brutality.

The other thing middle-class civil rights groups did was form alliances across social and political lines and put pressure on federal authorities to intervene. Leading the charge was a group called El Concilio de la Raza. El Concilio was another collective made up of three different major civil rights organizations, including IMAGE, LULAC, and the American G.I. Forum but which also had the backing of state and local civil rights groups like the Texas Association of Chicanos in Higher Education (TACHE) and the Chicana Association for Reform and Advocacy (CARA).[182] In October of 1977, El Concilio issued a press release expressing the group's dissatisfaction with the verdict of negligent homicide. We "are deeply appalled and disgusted with the flagrant disregard for equality in the administration of justice to Mexican Americans in the state of Texas," it states.[183] "The Mexican American people do not believe this is the price to pay for the life of one of their own, especially of one who spent many days of his life…defending those who killed him," it continues.[184] It was under El Concilio that Mamie Garcia from LULAC demanded federal government intervention in the matter of Joe Torres.[185] They would be successful because the U.S Civil Rights Commission eventually announced it was launching an investigation into the allegations of police misconduct in Houston.[186] Bringing a new sense of hope was the recommendation from the Attorney General on revising state laws, which allowed his office to prosecute offenders of civil rights violations.[187] By late October, Denson, Orlando, and Janish received federal indictments for violating Torres' civil rights.[188] While many were pleased with this news, including the Mayor and those in City Hall, others argued that the new charges were politically motivated, including the American Civil Liberties Union, which came to the aid of the cops claiming that the federal court was violating their rights.[189] As before, there was a sizable portion of the white community that came to the aid of the indicted cops. They formed a committee designed to raise money for them.[190] Still, the federal charges remained, but convicting them, however, would again prove a difficult challenge.[191]

The federal trial was initially set for December 1977 but found itself rescheduled for a later date. The judge claimed he did not want to sequester jurors over the holidays, but activists believed otherwise. "The real reason [was] to delay the trial until the people of Houston have forgotten about the murder of Joe Torres [which] will allow the federal government to let the cops off easier," they argued.[192] In response to this, they held a demonstration protesting the postponement of the case.[193] When the judge refused to comply, they protested again, this time at the Federal Building.[194] To their disappointment, the trial remained postponed. "The case is rapidly being pushed out of the public eye," the argued.[195] "After months of waiting for justice to be done against killer cops, we are facing another whitewash," they concluded.[196] Ultimately Denson, Orlando, and Janish would be found guilty of violating Torres' rights, but as before, the penalty did not match the crime.[197] When ordered to re-sentence the cops, Judge Ross Sterling complied by changing the one-year prison term to a one-year plus one-day term.[198] Three found guilty in the death of Joe Torres with a light sentence was the story of the day.[199] As before, the ruling left many stunned, including Governor Dolph Briscoe, who saw it as too lenient.[200] Seeing this as another failure of justice, by early April 1978, Chicanos, Blacks, liberal whites, and several other multi-racial and multi-generational coalitions took to the streets with more protests.[201]

As they did after Torres' murder and first trial, Barrios Unidos en Defensa organized another march and rally outside City Hall and the police station.[202] Several groups did so, including the more moderate middle-class organizations like IMAGE, LULAC, PASO, and the American G.I. Forum.[203] To everyone's surprise, city officials expressed their support of the rally.[204] Mayor James McConn even promised to keep police under control as many activists were fearful that HPD would be there to spy on them.[205] But some at the rally appeared to be divided. At the rally, for example, Travis Morales and the People United made it known that they were not there to ask for jobs or integration; instead, they made it known that they were there for justice for Torres. "We are not here…to get high-paying jobs," they shouted, referring to Ben Reyes', LULAC's, and PASO's demands that more Mexican Americans get access to city jobs, including judgeships, as a strategy for eliminating police violence and the miscarriage of justice.[206] Despite that, rally-goers put their differences aside as they understood that the goal was to protest police brutality and undo the systemic racism within the courts.[207]

Joining the various groups at the rally was a new organization that took form called the Stop Killer Cops Coalition. It was a subcommittee of the Congress of African People, a collective of Black activists that promoted both pan-Africanism and economic self-determination. Both the Congress of African People and the Stop Killer Cops Coalition operated out of the Shape Community Center, a nonprofit founded in 1969 in the Third Ward, a predominantly Black neighborhood in Houston. Since the beginning, African Americans rallied with Chicanos to protest police brutality and remained committed throughout. "We also were very supportive of the movement for justice, for…Torres," recalls Omowale Lithuli-Allen.[208] "We didn't lead that, but we were very supportive of the efforts," he continues.[209] To help create awareness, the Southern Conference Education Fund held a memorial in Moody Park in May for several of the victims of police brutality from Houston and elsewhere throughout the state and nation.[210] According to the organizers, at least thirteen persons, Chicano, Black, and white, were killed by law enforcement between 1977 and 1978.[211]

The Moody Park Rebellion

Moody Park has always been a popular space for Mexican Americans from the north side of town. Used regularly for weekly outings and cultural celebrations like Cinco de Mayo, the event pulled several hundred families into the park on May 7, 1978. Elsewhere, tensions were still high, and the relationship between law enforcement and the community was now more strained than ever before. And yet, the gathering at Moody Park was an opportunity for the community to distance itself from the year-long trauma it was experiencing. Nearly fifteen-hundred people, including women, children, and the elderly, visited the park.[212] Church groups, volunteer organizations, student clubs, local businesses, and entrepreneurs who were a part of the gig economy were also present. They were there to celebrate, to forget, at least for a moment, and to heal perhaps, from the tragedies that plagued them. But the celebration did not last long as the arrival and presence of law-enforcement quickly change the mood and the attitude of park goers.

Because of the increased protests, HPD instituted a plan to surveil demonstrators with higher frequency.[213] The department had a long history, in fact, of surveilling protesters and those considered "agitators."[214] It kept tabs on both individuals, groups, as well as individual members of the Torres family even though Chief Caldwell promised not to "spy" on protestors.[215] HPD also had a long history of infiltrating organizations, and so several

coalitions took extra measures to ensure that was not the case. "They wanted to…infiltrate us so that they could undermine our political movements," recalls activist Homer Garcia.[216] The other thing that HPD was doing was threatening and intimidating protestors. Carlos Calbillo remembers receiving anonymous and encrypted phone calls from persons informing them that someone was watching them. "They're watching you [and] if I were you…[I] "wouldn't go anywhere by yourself at night," he recalls.[217] Last but certainly not least, the department also responded to protest movements with amplified levels of brutality like they did when HPD advanced on the people at Moody Park on May 7, 1978, with swift and excessive force in what would come to be known as the Moody Park Riot. Responding to an alleged altercation in the park, HPD arrived at the area. But because tensions were so high between the people and law enforcement, the very presence of cops angered park-goers who did not want the police there. As the police arrived, they were booed and hissed at, and had insults shouted towards them, and very quickly, the people became infuriated by the mere presence of HPD.

Allegedly, an altercation among park-goers ensued (though there is much disagreement with this claim), and the "police come into the park, [and] grab…a…father and…manhandled him, throwing him into a police car," recalls Carlos Calbillo. "And when the community saw that, it just blew up [into] a riot," he continues.[218] Once cops arrested a few people, others began yelling, "No, you are not taking them," and "you'll kill them the way you killed…Torres!"[219] The yelling prompted more park-goers to chant, "Justice for Joe Torres!," "Viva Joe Torres!," and "A Chicano's life is worth more than a dollar!"[220] But instead of leaving to calm the situation, the police did the opposite and moved in. With riot gear, cops formed a perimeter around the section of the park where Chicanos and their families were celebrating, and mayhem commenced.[221] In fear for their families, the majority of those in the park quickly exited the area. Others, the more militant and certainly the more angered ones, stayed behind and confronted the police. They had had enough of HPD pushing them around and intimidating them. They were going to let the cops know for the last time that enough is enough. Some even began throwing bottles and rocks at the police.[222]

Very quickly, the disturbance escalated and eventually spilled onto the surrounding area as protestors took to the streets smashing whatever objects they encountered like automobiles and businesses.[223] Shouts of "kill the pigs!" could be heard echoing throughout the area.[224] According to police records, some 1,500 persons partook in the brawl, but other sources say it was

closer to 150-300 people.[225] Among the businesses destroyed were six stores and one gasoline station.[226] Frumenico Reyes recalls seeing "police cars overturned and set on fire and all…kinds of shit."[227] The people had "set fire to [a] store… then…started throwing bottles," he continues.[228] Things became extremely alarming once he heard "shots,…fired."[229] Damages would cost the city millions of dollars.[230] Police that night arrested at least 28 people.[231] Many people, it seemed, were being detained "just for being in the park," recalls Gloria Rubac.[232]

Additionally, many were left hurt, and fifteen people received medical services for severe injuries.[233] Of all those incarcerated, three faced charges of instigating the riot, including Travis Morales, Mara Youngdahl, and Thomas Hirschi.[234] Others would also receive charges, but they would not stick.[235] Known as the Houston 12, activists would launch a successful state-wide campaign to get them freed.[236] The remaining arrestees would come to be known as the Moody Park Three, and as before, the people formed a coalition called the Moody Park Three Defense Committee to assist them.[237] The committee was a collective of several radical multi-racial coalitions that had been active in the movement against police brutality. It included groups such as the Houston chapter of the Revolutionary Communist Party, the RCP's Youth Brigade, the Committee to Defend the Houston Rebellion, and the Students for a Democratic Society.[238] In December, they held a massive rally where hundreds of militant protestors attended to hear Mara Youngdahl, one of the three defendants, deliver a fiery speech.[239] The Moody Park Three Defense Committee would be persistent in its efforts and would hold countless meetings and rallies. "Capitalist Terror Can't Stop the People," read one of their flier slogans.[240]

As before, middle-class groups also formed coalitions and worked towards assisting those arrested following the Cinco de Mayo fracas. Some of those groups included PASO, LULAC, IMAGE, the American G.I. Forum, Padres of Texas, and the Chicano Human Service Workers.[241] And like had always been the case, these coalitions also differed on strategies. They met, for example, with city leaders and other essential agencies like the U.S. Civil Rights Commission for rectifying the matter.[242] They also spoke with Mayor McConn to see what his office could do.[243] Moreover, they had briefings with Police Chief Caldwell, whose office received countless letters from people demanding that they drop the charges against the Moody Park Three.[244] Also emerging was a group known as the Moody Park Barrio Defense Coalition, which consisted of the National Lawyers Guild, the AAHA Social Workers, La

Raza Unida Party, the Brown Berets, and Casa de Amigos.[245] Also, members were the Socialist Workers Party, La Raza Legal Alliance, Chicano Pro Law Students, the Texas Farmworkers Union, the Workers World Party, and Barrios Unidos en Defensa.[246] It was a coalition that implemented several strategies for seeking justice for those arrested after the May 8th disturbance. Barrios Unidos en Defensa, for example, was able to secure "lawyers for all of [the] people that were arrested," recalls Gloria Rubac.[247] But in addition to using established channels and middle-class strategies, this coalition also organized marches and rallies and made their protest against police brutality both vocal and visible.

The Moody Park Three Trial

Like earlier trials, the hearing for the Moody Park Three promised to polarize the people. Very quickly, people chose sides and became more vocal in their criticism. Some were even blurting out their frustrations in the courtroom, forcing their removal.[248] The defendants faced 140 years in prison, and the prosecutorial team was relentless.[249] It was able to remove any African Americans from the jury and used countless police and "informants on the stand to testify" against them.[250] For their part, the defendants stood their ground arguing that they (the People United to Fight Police Brutality) showed up to Moody Park only after the fighting started, which they contended was caused by the police. They even showed a little bravado arguing that "the injuries suffered by the police were an occupational hazard of being an occupying army that brutalizes and murders in the *barrios* and ghettos."[251] Eventually, Morales and the others would be set free on bond.[252] The money used to pay those bonds was generated by the coalitions, which initiated several fundraising campaigns to help offset costs.[253] In the end, none of the Moody Park Three saw prison time.[254] A technicality revolving an untested riot law made it so that the prosecution struggled to get charges to stick.[255] Morales and Youngdahl were convicted of felony riot and sentenced to five years' probation while Hirschi received a misdemeanor conviction.[256] The next day another disturbance erupted in the north side; however, nothing too violent.[257] "Police confronted rock-throwing…youth in the area," but that was mostly it.[258] Looking to clamp down on further protests, Chief Caldwell vowed to increase the presence of law enforcement, especially in the north side, but that was potentially dangerous as it could ignite the people once more.[259] He also started a recruitment drive for potential "minority" officers hoping that opening up the department to Chicano and Black recruits might

pacify those marching in the street.[260] It did not.[261]

Reaction to the events at Moody Park differed. Many saw the actions of protestors that night as necessary. First, the cops murder Torres, then the courts fail to punish them, and finally, HPD continues to surveil and provoke the people; it was only a matter of time before the people erupted. Even if they disapproved of the violence, many "fumed at seeing the courts consistently rule in favor of policemen."[262] Law enforcement, on the other hand, argued that the disturbance was the result of too much drinking on the part of park-goers.[263] Furthermore, they claimed that police were merely protecting themselves from people in the park who started to attack them when they showed up to stop an altercation.[264] City Hall stood behind HPD and provided the Mayor with additional resources to deal with civil disturbances.[265] They argued that the police were targets of resentment and persecution.[266] And several Houstonians agreed with him.[267] Many saw the response by police that night as necessary and decided that the arrests and beatings of the people were deserving.[268] "Hasty overreaction in police killing," said one Houston resident.[269] "Police shouldn't have to be a target for hoodlums," said another.[270] Some even felt that HPD did not use enough force to end the rioting.[271] Others blamed Chicanos, claiming that their neighborhoods were "festering sores that blight" the city.[272]

Interestingly, some Mexican Americans held similar attitudes regarding the disturbance as not everyone viewed the issue of police misconduct through similar lenses. Some agreed that the protestors were unruly and even unlawful and that rioters were perhaps deserving of the punishment they received. More than anything, they placed blame on rioters and not law enforcement. Specifically, they blamed Travis Morales and the People United to Fight Police Brutality. "The issue that resulted in the riots…started with Tavis Morales…the young man… [from] the Socialist Party," remembers Frumencio Reyes, who was an eyewitness to the incident and who believed that the People United group was a subcommittee of the Revolutionary Communist Party.[273] Other eyewitnesses remember that there were many "leftist groups there looking for a confrontation with the police, [that] if they could provoke it, they'd provoke it."[274] Louis Villejo concurs, "I remember him [Travis Morales] with a bullhorn just going around the crowds…egging people on… [that]…we need to fight."[275]

Middle-class civil rights organizations also condemned HPD and made it clear that the police were responsible for the violence. However, because of their uncompromising stance toward nonviolence, they also

criticized militant activists, groups, and coalitions mixed up in the disturbance. Particularly they criticized those associated with the People United to Fight Police Brutality, who middle-class groups felt consisted of socialists and outsiders looking for trouble.[276] Members of the People United technically did not deny their communist inclinations. Morales himself professed that he was indeed a communist.[277] What they objected to was the claim they were looking for trouble. According to Morales, the People United was not at the park when the confrontation started but joined in only after it started, and that when they did, they tried to calm the people.[278] It was longstanding grievances against police brutality, they argued, that was responsible for the disturbance.[279] "Look, the issue is not me, and who I am, police brutality and Moody Park are the issues," he goes on to say.[280] Still, an increasing number of conservative Mexican Americans began asking that Morales and his group stay away from the Torres issue, seeing them as a counter-effective to their more restrained approach for seeking justice.[281] There was even a group from the north side that asked HPD to increase police presence at Moody Park to ensure no more violence occur.[282] Moreover, there was a group of women, mothers, who organized a rally at Moody Park, demanding an end to the violence.[283] Thus, while there were several multi-racial and multi-generation coalitions that came together to protest police brutality, the relationships among some were turbulent at best, especially regarding whether armed resistance to police violence and unlawful arrests should be employed.

Still, everyone agreed that the people were angry and that that was the result of police brutality compounded with the failure of the courts. As Daniel Bustamante puts it, the Torres murder "became a lightning rod for this community."[284] "We were very involved in the whole effort to not only protest what was happening but also to bring some kind of dignity to our community to ensure that we were respected."[285] Louis Villejo admits that "it didn't take much to instigate and to get everyone to feel like…this [was] a travesty…and [that] we need to do something about it."[286] For Luis Cano he remembers that the "people were angry…and [they] had every right to be."[287] "[Joe] Campos Torres…was a war hero…and then for those cops to get no punishment…we were all mad," he continues.[288] People were angered with the police and held them responsible for the disturbance. Community activist Omowale Lituli-Allen recalls that the cops were the provocateurs and that it was they who incited the riot.[289] Even attorneys in the trial of the Moody Park Three accused police of provoking people at the park.[290] Others pointed to the racism within the department as responsible for the mayhem. Luis Dias

DeLeon of La Raza Unida Party, for example, argued that racism within HPD was responsible for the riot.[291] Whatever their argument, they all agreed that police action that night represented HPD's efforts at repressing protests within the city. The department already had a long history of infiltrating organizations to "disrupt and destroy [them] from within" or "to discredit them with the public."[292] But the strategy that proved most useful was force. Like departments across the state, HPD also had a plan designed to limit dissent and silence so-called agitators by using excessive force, including harassment, intimidation, and suppression of demonstrations through violence.[293] That was what cops did at Moody Park. In the end, the disturbance at Moody Park, like the murder of Torres, brought a sense of unity, albeit short in some cases, among activists and civil rights organizations despite the disdain for each other's methods.[294] And most agreed that the rebelling stemmed from the anger the people felt over the murder of Joe Torres, then from the failure of the courts to issue real justice to the family, and finally from continued police provocation.[295]

A week after the rebellion, another protest march took place.[296] As before, it was in protest of the Torres murder, the failure of the courts, police provocation which started the riot, and now it was also to protest the arrest of the Moody Park Three.[297] Again, multi-racial and multi-generation coalitions sprang into action; their efforts were to combat yet again another example of police violence perpetrated on the people. HPD was out of control, it seemed, as now they were attacking women, children, and celebrant families. "There were seniors out there, kids," exclaimed Daniel Bustamante.[298] So they commenced with more "protesting and organizing marches" and holding more meetings.[299] They demanded again that HPD undergo drastic changes. Leaders from religious circles "were [again] pushing for change in the police department" as well.[300] Other coalitions held rallies demanding that Mexican Americans become further incorporated into federal positions, but this caused somewhat of a rift among activists as many saw the jobs rally as distracting and as a deviation from the real issues affecting the people, police brutality.[301] In November of 1978, several activists were again arrested, and as before, more rallies took place to protest their incarceration.[302] Omowale Lituli-Allen recalls participating in them and shouting slogans like "*la gente unida jamás será vencida*," (the people united will never be defeated) in both English and Spanish and how that was something special for him.[303] "We had…used [that slogan] before…, but I remember that was the first time…that I heard [it]…in English and Spanish [and] that…was a real…seminal moment," he goes on to

say.[304] The bilingualism reflected the diversification of these protest movements. In previous years, protest movements occurred on an individual community basis. "After…Torres, "they were multi-national kinds of movements," recalls Lituli-Allen, a long-time activist in his own right who co-lead student protests a decade earlier at the University of Houston.[305]

Elsewhere, middle-class coalitions and city leaders like Representative Ben Reyes did several things that would place HPD under greater scrutiny.[306] For starters, they worked to have more "minorities" elected to the city council, and the voters responded. And given the ever-changing racial composition of Houston, it would not be long before City Council looked more representative of the city.[307] Second, they created Citizen Review Boards (CRBs) that had the power to investigate any incidences of police wrongdoing.[308] The review boards consisted of community activists, entrepreneurs, and anyone that could serve in that capacity. Its task was to reduce and eliminate cases of police brutality, and while the department's rank and file vehemently opposed CRBs, it was out of their hands as this was something that came down from the Mayor's office.[309] Moreover, because CRBs consisted of a cluster of people from throughout various communities, many of them staffed by folks from different ethnic and racial backgrounds, they served as multi-racial coalitions with a single purpose, to end police violence. Additionally, Representative Reyes produced a scathing report on HPD, which revealed several problems within the department, among the most urgent was its dire need for new leadership. The report was unapologetic and brought Chief Caldwell so much pressure that by 1980, he resigned.[310]

With everything going on, it was shocking to many that the police were going about business as usual, targeting specific individuals and communities, harassing them, and whatnot. It remained so troublesome that middle-class coalitions again made public statements about the cops behaving unprofessionally.[311] They also formed police-watch groups.[312] But to ensure real protection for the people, middle-class coalitions also asked for a Commission on Civil Rights to probe police brutality in Houston.[313] "We Need a Brown and Black Independent Commission of Inquiry," read several of the posters formed throughout the community.[314] They also communicated with the Attorney General, Griffin Bell, the need to create a panel to investigate police misconduct against Mexican Americans. Bell complied and renewed his efforts at curtailing police brutality against people with Spanish surnames.[315] By August 1978, he began drafting guidelines that HPD had to

follow to ensure the protection of Latinos in Houston.[316] They even communicated that same need with President Jimmy Carter.[317] And in October of that same year, they protested against President Carter, accusing him of abandoning his commitment to prosecute police charged with police brutality.[318] In response to this, there were talks of opening in Houston, an office dedicated to investigating future cases of police misconduct.[319] Ultimately, what transpired in May of 1977 was not an isolated event but a historical pattern of police brutality in Houston and across the state. Also, a pattern, however, was the reaction by the people who formed several multi-racial and multi-generational coalitions to resist that kind of oppression.

Conclusion: No Justice But the Fight Continues

In December of 1979, when the three cops that murdered Joe Torres reported to a minimum-security Federal Prison Camp at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama, they were quartered in dormitories instead of jail cells. Additionally, they had access to educational programs, television rooms, tennis and hardball courts, weight rooms, as well as jogging trails.[320] The lax reprimand not only symbolized a chronic problem within the justice system, but it also told the people that cops, even when found guilty, receive the most favorable of punishments. Back in Houston, groups continued to hold rallies and marches protesting police brutality.[321] Others were able to convince the District Attorney for Harris County to create a Civil Rights Division to investigate charges of police brutality.[322] And others still found different ways to protest like when a local theater troupe put on a play called "The Houston Rebellion," where activists told the story of police repression in hopes that their performance would help maintain awareness regarding police brutality throughout the city.[323]

The murder of Joe Torres and his injustice at the hands of the courts continues to plague the family. At present, they do "not celebrate mother's day" because that was the day that Joe's body "was found floating in [the] bayou."[324] However, since 2015, Janie Torres has led a commemoration march in honor of her murdered brother with the hopes that it brings awareness to the issue of police brutality not just in Houston but throughout the state and nation as well.[325] It takes place every May between the 5th and 8th, the days which mark Torres' murder and the discovery of his body.[326] The march's route is worth noting as it begins at the corner where the 21 Club once stood, the bar in which the altercation commenced prompting the arrival of HPD.[327] From there, marchers proceed towards a spot in the Second Ward known as

Guadalupe Plaza, where the people can hear speeches and a few words from family and friends.[328] It then continues to the site of Joe's beating, at the former "hole," where marchers toss reefs into the bayou.[329] Several organizations and activists are always participants of the march. Groups like the Brown Berets, for example, are still there.[330] The march has also attracted a new cadre of activists and civil rights groups like Familias Inmigrantes y Estudiantes en la Lucha (FIEL), translated, Immigrant Families and Students in the Struggle, an immigrant's rights organization which operates out of Houston.[331] Anyone can attend the march. As Janie puts it, the walk is "open to the public…open to anyone…who would like to come, support, speak, or listen."[332] "This belongs to us; this is for us; this is…belongs to the people."[333] The march, however, is painful as Janie cannot help but "think about Joe being in the water," and yet it gives her strength and assists with healing. "This gives me strength…when I don't [do] anything, that's what brings me down," she recalls.[334] Others also have initiated memorial processions for Joe Torres. A group known as the Brown Berets de *Tejaztlan*, for example, is in its second year of hosting an annual bike ride where they honor the life and legacy of their beloved and martyred brother, Joe Torres. The memorial bike ride takes place in May, the month of Torres' arrest, beating, and murder, and follows the path taken by Torres while in custody on that fateful night in 1977. Along the way, participants make several stops to listen to speeches and to engage in fellowship.

Since the 1970s, and especially following the murder of Joe Torres in 1977, coupled with the inability of the courts to prosecute killer cops, Brown, Black, and white activists have come together for coalition-building across racial and generational lines like never before. In a city more known for disunity among these three groups, the issue of police violence blurred the lines that historically separated them, and instead, they built powerful coalitions. This unity also occurred across class lines as middle-class groups like LULAC or the NAACP repeatedly joined forces with grassroots organizations to protest police brutality. Unfortunately, Houston would not see that kind of coalition-building, at least not to the same extent, around the issue of police brutality until the twenty-first century following the emergence of the Black Lives Matter Movement. Indeed, the killing of George Floyd, another son of Houston, has caused a resurgence of various multi-racial and multi-generational coalitions throughout the city, state, and nation. Similar to the demands of the past, protestors today are again calling for an end to police brutality. Additionally, however, protestors of today are also calling for the

defunding of police forces, the demilitarization of law enforcement, and some are even calling for the abolition of police departments altogether.

Despite their ambivalent and, at times, turbulent histories, Chicanos, Blacks, and whites in Houston regularly formed interdependent relationships around the issue of police brutality. In the past, those coalitions had a short shelf life. At present, only time will tell. What is evident, however, is that the systemic problems within police departments, such as racism and the excessive use of violence, are historic and remain entrenched. Also historic, fortunately, are the people's unrelenting efforts to dismantle those systemic problems by engaging in various forms of protest and forming several kinds of coalitions. Hence, to combat police brutality, Houston's Brown, Black, and white communities have shown the ability to unify for a common cause, albeit briefly. In doing so, they repositioned Houston within the broader movement for social justice and redefined the city as an important site of protests.

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Book Review

Talkin' Tar Heel: How Our Voices Tell the Story of North Carolina.

Wolfram, Walt, and Jeffrey Reaser.
Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014.
352 pages.

Reviewed by
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Linguistic analysis helps tell the story of where someone is from. What vocabulary someone uses and what accent they have hints about their history: where they grew up, what community they're from, and where their family came from. In their book *Talkin' Tar Heel: How Our Voices Tell the Story of North Carolina*, professors Walt Wolfram and Jeffrey Reaser attempt to use linguistics to answer these questions and more about North Carolina's population. Wolfram and Reaser draw upon decades of research and thousands of interviews to better understand the rich history and heritage surrounding North Carolina's languages.

Talkin' Tar Heel is split into eleven total chapters. Chapters one through three explore the history of the state and the origins of its many unique linguistic traits. These chapters provide a comprehensive look at the many factors that have affected language in North Carolina, such as geography, culture, and economic boundaries. Chapters four through six delve into the diverse number of dialects across North Carolina, initially focusing broadly on country and city talk before discussing the more specific Outer Banks brogue dialect and mountain dialects. These dialects are what make the linguistic composition of North Carolina particularly distinct. Although there are commonalities across each community, Wolfram and Reaser prove that these vibrant dialects each stand on their own. Chapters seven through eleven cover the speech patterns of several major ethnic groups in North Carolina: African American, American Indian, and Latino communities are all covered.

One of the book's greatest strengths is the incredible amount of research material Wolfram and Reaser draw upon for their book. The professors dedicated over two decades to recording 3,000 interviews across North Carolina in order to obtain a thorough understanding of the rich and diverse dialects in the state. Through these interviews, the authors were able to compile information about commonly used words, phrases, and speech patterns

by region, age, and ethnicity. These provided the solid foundation on which the book is built.

Further, Wolfram and Reaser's inclusion of multiple sub-populations in North Carolina provides readers with a well-rounded picture of North Carolina's diversity. By including how North Carolina's African American, Latino, and American Indian communities influenced—and were influenced by—North Carolina's linguistics, the authors display how distinct dialects emerge. Of particular interest is how these dialects evolve; Wolfram and Reaser take time to explain how increasing sociocultural changes have altered how some populations speak. They prove this in several instances by surveying groups of North Carolinians on how they perceived the voices of young and old speakers of multiple ethnic and regional groups.

Another perk, particularly for those using the book as a teaching tool, is the interactive website created in tandem with the book. QR codes throughout the book lead to *Talkin' Tar Heel*'s website; this enhances the book's focus on linguistics by supplying dozens of maps, illustrations, interviews, and videos that complement each chapter and allow the reader to see and hear the material discussed in the book. By providing their database of research in an easily accessible site, Wolfram and Reaser have made *Talkin' Tar Heel* available to a much broader audience. Not only does this form of learning appeal to the general public, but it gives both pre-collegiate and collegiate level teachers the opportunity to teach their students about linguistics in a cost-effective manner.

Although native North Carolinians will certainly appreciate the amount of research that went into *Talkin' Tar Heel*, some—particularly those not from the coastal or Appalachian areas—may feel that Wolfram and Reaser make overgeneralizations about some regions. For example, the authors claim that pronunciations often associated with Tidewater Virginia are also typical in the counties that border Virginia (Wolfram and Reaser 62). Most residents of these counties would likely disagree with this assessment. However, Wolfram and Reaser make clear that their evaluations are not hard and fast rules; the sheer number of dialects and languages in North Carolina make it impossible to create a comprehensive account of every region.

Overall, *Talkin' Tar Heel* provides an excellent blueprint for how language and dialects can be used to tell the diverse story of a state. Scholars of southern history, linguistics, and American studies would enjoy the unique perspective *Talkin' Tar Heel* provides. Readers will also certainly appreciate the aural and visual elements provided on the corresponding website. Wolfram and Reaser's incredible level of research provide readers with a well written, thorough linguistic history that not only provides an enjoyable read for anyone interested in North Carolina, but also sets high standards for future researchers in their field.

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Book Review

Rebel Richmond: Life and Death in the Confederate Capital.

Ash, Stephen V.
Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019.
296 pages.

Reviewed by
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Rebel Richmond examines Richmonders who found themselves "caught up in momentous events and profoundly unsettling changes" (Ash 3). The late Stephen V. Ash, Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and the author of many books about the U.S. Civil War and Reconstruction, explains that this is hardly the first book to scrutinize life in the rebel capital. However, where other studies have analyzed high politics and leaders or the many military campaigns in and around Richmond, they "have left much unsaid about how ordinary Richmonders fared in the maelstrom of war" (Ash 3). To be sure, any account of Civil War Richmond will mention the Bread Riots—the famous violent outburst by the lower-class in April 1863—but the people of the city do tend to take a backseat to elite politics and military maneuvers. Thus, Ash's decision to pay careful attention to the people of Richmond is quite welcome. By focusing on the people of the city – "the humble and the middling as well as the prominent and powerful, the weak and the wicked as well as the strong and the decent" (Ash 4)—he explores everything from patriotism and dissent, to responses to housing and food crises, to efforts to curtail burgeoning crime and disorder. Ultimately, he successfully illuminates the complex and variegated patterns of life in the rebel capital.

Ash begins with Virginia's secession and how Richmond came to be the capital of the southern confederacy. Richmonders, he observes, "who rallied wholeheartedly to the Confederate banner had no doubt that their cause was just. They were taking up arms to resist tyranny, just as the Revolutionary patriots had done" (Ash 11). Furthermore, "many patriotic citizens ineligible to take up arms or excused from doing so did their part for the cause in other ways" (Ash 14). These early expressions of confidence soon faltered as Richmond confronted issues raised by the war including demographic change "so sweeping and sudden that it left many of the old residents stunned" (Ash

19). The city experienced tremendous population growth as legions of people arrived and this population growth troubled authorities for two very good reasons. First, wartime Richmond did not experience a housing boom, likely due to the army's insatiable demand for lumber and the shortage of skilled labor. Consequently, Richmonders, "had to cram into whatever housing existed at the war's outbreak" (Ash 40). Furthermore, "no matter how many lodgers landlords took in, there were always more people needing a place" (Ash 43). Unsurprisingly, friction between landlords and tenants became increasingly bitter. Second, Richmond faced a food crisis and "few matters generated more impassioned debate and desperate exertion in wartime Richmond than food" (Ash 57). Despite the explosion of violence during the Bread Riots in April 1863, "the unremitting efforts of civil and military authorities and ordinary citizens, especially in the latter half of the war, saved the city from starvation" (Ash 80). It also helped that Richmond abounded with civilian jobs and physically able people of all ages and sexes did not lack for work. Still, despite the availability of work, increasing numbers of Richmonders "began to wonder whether the stroke of good fortune they had celebrated in the spring of 1861, when their city became the new nation's capital, was in truth a curse" (Ash 36).

Ash is very careful not to portray Richmonders as one monolithic population. For one, although Richmond was the political heart of the southern confederacy, plenty of dissent existed in wartime Richmond. Fervent loyalty to rebellion competed with lukewarm support, as well as various degrees of Unionism. Thus, "no one in the city, of whatever rank or patriotic credentials, was entirely safe from suspicion" (Ash 130). Antebellum Richmond, like all cities in the antebellum United States, experienced problems of crime and lawlessness, "but these problems mushroomed in the hothouse environment of war" (Ash 139). City authorities grappled with different ideas about taming disorder, often to little avail, and increasingly relied on the military to preserve public order. Just as different ideas about loyalty and patriotism swirled through Richmond, so too did different attitudes toward crime, lawlessness, and the maintenance of order. Furthermore, in the midst of many other challenges, white Richmonders also attempted to preserve the racial order. Unsurprisingly, as historians have demonstrated for other cities and regions, the war created opportunities for free and enslaved African Americans, who seized them whenever possible. Also unsurprisingly, "almost every overt assertion of Black autonomy, even the mildest, sparked the wrath of white Richmonders and provoked a backlash" (Ash 160). In sum, Ash offers significant evidence of the erosion of white dominance and Black subservience. Richmond was also a city of class distinctions. The authorities and the upper-class constantly fretted about the impact of the discontented lower-class. In the aftermath of the Bread Riot, the authorities, likely acting with an eye to self-preservation, did their best to reform poor relief. Finally, Richmond was a "mournful sphere of longing, suffering, and death" (Ash 205) and "writhed with physical as well as emotional pain" (Ash 208).

There is a great deal to like about *Rebel Richmond*. Ash includes numerous stories of the common people – drawn from court records, newspaper accounts, letters, and other manuscript sources. He successfully portrays Richmond as a city of real people facing many different pressing problems, not just the rebel political capital or an important military objective for U.S. military forces. This book will work well in both upper-level undergraduate classes as well as graduate seminars and will appeal to anyone interested in the U.S. Civil War, urban history, and race and gender.

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Book Review

Beyond Freedom: Disrupting the History of Emancipation.

Blight, David W., and Jim Downs, eds.
Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017.
208 pages.

Reviewed by
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Emancipation has traditionally been perceived as the successful culmination of the Civil War—a distinct historical moment followed by an era marked by the newfound freedom of an enslaved people. *Beyond Freedom: Disrupting the History of Emancipation*, edited by David W. Blight and Jim Downs, troubles this liberatory and linear understanding of freedom by bringing together essays that rethink Emancipation beyond the attainment of liberty during the nineteenth century. The anthology is divided into three sections that might be loosely conceived of as the evolution of slavery into Emancipation, the tumultuous era of Reconstruction, and present-day responses to the study of freedom's difficult conception. Collectively, the essays "untidy the story of freedom" (Emberton 137) by questioning its traditional narratives and periodization.

Eric Foner's prologue opens the edited volume by proposing a "chronological redefinition" of the Reconstruction and remarks, "We now have what might be called a long Reconstruction" (xii). A long Reconstruction makes possible a study of Emancipation that works against the flattening of its history and resists eliding the difficulties endured by those who worked towards making it a lived reality. This critical reframing promotes reimagining Reconstruction as not a "bizarre aberration" in American history, but an ongoing narrative of racial politics that underlies "the long trajectory of southern and national history" (Foner xii).

In his "The Grammar of Emancipation," Richard Newman offers one such example of how the stage for Emancipation was set long before the Proclamation in 1862. Newman's inclusion of abolitionist history and the pre-war anti-abolition movement refrains from seeing Emancipation as a historically isolated moment and diminishing the efforts of antebellum abolitionists. It further allows, Newman argues, a way to incorporate the history of the antebellum era into the study of freedom's larger trajectory,

including the future of Black liberty (20). Newman explains that the ideological precursors of Emancipation existed prior to the war and would continue to impact liberty long after. He contends, "no idea assumed more power after 1865 than one that had haunted abolition since 1776: emancipation meant not only the absence of bondage but the presence of Black liberty" (Newman 20). This articulation of Civil War emancipation is indicative of not an isolated event but an ideology present since the founding of the United States. It is also a statement that makes explicit the pervasiveness of racial subjugation such that the term "freedom" was equated to the absence of bondage rather than the actualization of Black liberty.

Kate Masur's "The Problem of Equality in the Age of Emancipation" similarly prompts readers to think about "the problem of equality" that came with freeing the enslaved (78). Masur differentiates between emancipation and equality to suggest that though legal emancipation had been enacted, social equality had yet to be achieved. Unlike the public arena in which legal policy was enforced, people "came to understand some kinds of spaces—such as the market or the domestic sphere—as zones of inequality, as places that were private and characterized by free choice" (Masur 78). Masur discusses the tensions that arose when these spaces converged through an example of Black and white cadets at West Point. Though West Point was considered a public and political institution, there was also the sharing of dining and dormitory spaces that placed Black and white men "in close domestic proximity" to one another (81). The white cadets resisted this proximity by ostracizing the Black cadets outside of classes and drills. As Masur recounts, the young Black men were isolated not necessarily in official relations but in social events such as hazing and domestic quarters such as the dining hall (81-83).

"When Neighbors Turn against Neighbors" by Justin Behrend follows Masur's essay, further supporting her claims about the fraught distinction between emancipation and equality. Behrend looks to irregular warfare during Reconstruction to elaborate on the difficult practice of equality not just on the public and political front but also on the home front. In exploring irregular warfare during Reconstruction, Behrend demonstrates a weariness of a history that generalizes racial violence as a byproduct or residual effect of the war. He observes that though traditional narratives of the Civil War offer a valuable framework through which one can begin approaching the topic of racial violence during Reconstruction, "it also has the potential to obscure and flatten the very dynamics that it seeks to explain" (Behrend 91). Like Masur, Behrend counters the common myth that Black and white southerners were socially segregated and uninvolved in each other's lives aside from moments of violent interaction. He emphasizes the intimacy of the fighting that continued well into Reconstruction and proposes that post-war violence cannot be understood without taking into account the familiarity and proximity of both groups—a point Behrend reiterates by frequently referencing the personal accounts of violence directed at Black communities perpetrated by white neighbors.

Contrarily, other essays in *Beyond Freedom* upend the assumption that

northerners and Union soldiers had been unanimously supportive of Black liberty. Thavolia Glymph's essay, "Black Women and Children in the Civil War," in particular, challenges the givenness of Union soldiers' solidarity. Her archival research evinces the liminality of freedom by bringing to light the troubling violence committed against the inhabitants of the refugee camps, which ranges from neglect to murder. Rather than safe havens for people escaping slavery, "Refugee camps constituted part of this battlefield, and like all battlefield they were spaces that we can map as sites of war and the making of freedom" (Glymph 130). The essays addressing the experiences of women, children, and their families in the postbellum South provide rich illustrations of freedom's tenuousness in the lives of freed people through anecdotes of marriage traditions, sexual violence, expressions of grief, and life in wartime refugee camps.

Beyond Freedom then, is not only an exploration of Emancipation's nuances but also an exercise in the personalization of Emancipation. The essays in this anthology demonstrate "freedom as a process" that had real effects for individuals and communities on the ground beyond federal and regional politics (Blight, Downs, and Downs 4). The present is no exception, and the final section of *Beyond Freedom* demonstrates the generational effects that the difficult process of securing freedom for Black people has had for both Americans in the nineteenth century and now. While Glymph's essay best exemplifies this through a retelling of her personal engagement with archives documenting the experiences of wartime refugee camps, the edited volume as a whole underscores the ways in which the discourses surrounding Black freedom predate and persist after Emancipation. To that end, the anthology re-envisions a history of Emancipation that is at once public and intimate—a history that is carried out on the political stage as well as in the everyday lives of Americans.