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**Expressions of Membership and Belonging: Chicana/o Cultural Politics
in Barrio Logan**

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**Expressions of Membership and Belonging: Chicana/o Cultural Politics
in Barrio Logan**

by

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the loving memory of *mi abuelita* Tana.

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Estamos en la Lucha, Que Viva El Parque Chicano!

Abstract

Expressions of Membership and Belonging: Chicana/o Cultural Politics in Barrio Logan

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This thesis explores the spatial and cultural politics of Barrio Logan in the City of San Diego, California. Barrio Logan is a global seaport neighborhood located north of the Thirty-Second-Street U.S. Naval base and is the first residential neighborhood south of Downtown San Diego. Since its inception this neighborhood has experienced radical transformations in its built environment. In this thesis, I argue that the reconfiguration of urban space and land use in Barrio Logan by powerful State and private actors has not gone uncontested. Cultural and political resistance to urban marginalization processes is discussed in relation to the political activism of community members as they transform their social environment. Chicana/o community artists and activists have strategically employed Chicana/o cultural identity markers as forms of social and environmental justice activism.

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Introduction

This thesis explores the spatial and cultural politics of Barrio Logan in the City of San Diego, California. Barrio Logan is a global seaport neighborhood located north of the Thirty-Second Street U.S. naval base and is the first residential neighborhood south of Downtown San Diego. Since its inception this neighborhood has experienced radical transformations in its built environment. Here built environment refers to the human made elements, such as roads, buildings, parks, and other urban infrastructure that are constructed on the landscape. The contentious history of Barrio Logan helped craft the area into an enclave of Mexican-American and Chicana/o cultural life. Such a contentious history includes: racial segregation, environmental injustices, and industrial maritime redevelopment under the auspices of San Diego City planners, The California Department of Transportation, and The U.S. Navy.

Neighborhood transformations are unavoidable, not only in terms of demographics but also in the economic, political, and cultural actions that shape built environments. Barrio Logan has experienced a series of events perpetuated by State sanctioned policies that transformed this area into an enclave of Mexican, Mexican-American, and Chicana/o cultural life. I focus on cultural place-making strategies and the political avenues available to artists, community activists, and residents of Barrio Logan. I do this to explore their political activism through the medium of visual representations, where they struggle to improve the social and environmental conditions of Barrio Logan. This thesis, therefore, attempts to articulate the overlapping and intersecting political, cultural, and

racial urban marginalization processes, as well as community resistance to such processes, as they are experienced in Barrio Logan throughout its history, presence, and social movements.

One of the principle objectives of this thesis is to explore the significance the planning, construction, and presence of both the Interstate-Five Freeway (I-5 Freeway, hereafter) and the Coronado Bay Bridge had and continues to have on this Mexican-American and Chicana/o community. I focus on the aforementioned infrastructural projects because their construction was preceded by a series of succinct ordinances, policies, and measures that partly disbanded this Mexican-American neighborhood in the mid 1950's to make room for potentially profitable economic prospects, such as the freeway and industrial shipyards. Conversely, these projects led to the environmental deterioration of the quality of life in Barrio Logan.

The community of Barrio Logan has resisted the intrusion of the maritime industry, the freeway, and the Coronado Bay Bridge in their neighborhood. This resistance has been expressed in the reimagined cultural role the community placed on the freeway and the Coronado Bay Bridge. By establishing Chicano Park under the Coronado Bay Bridge's highway overpasses to the I-5 Freeway, in 1970, and the initial painting of the Chicano Park murals, in 1973, community activists and artists positioned Barrio Logan in a unique Chicana/o spatial-cultural logic of resistance (Diaz, 2007). In turn, this spatial-cultural logic of resistance has perpetuated current social and environmental justice movements in San Diego. At the forefront of these movements is an emphasis on the

cultural memory of the activist movement that established Chicano Park on April 22, 1970.

Emmanuelle Le Texier's (2007) chapter "The Struggle against Gentrification in Barrio Logan" in the edited volume *Chicano San Diego: Cultural Space and the Struggle for Justice* provides an analysis on the accumulation of social and political capital by a women led grassroots political organization named *Desarrollando Unidad a Través de Residentes Organizados* (DURO, hereafter). The women participated in political mobilization efforts against the gentrification of Barrio Logan. Le Texier recognizes the important role the memory and the oral rendition of the activist movement that founded Chicano Park had on empowering the DURO members. Particularly, how this memory generated solidarity and cohesiveness between U.S. citizen, non-U.S. citizen, and undocumented women of Mexican decent. While her study provides an in-depth analysis on the social capital generated through political participation for Barrio Logan women, it falls short on providing further analysis on the embodiment of the cultural memory of the activist movement that founded Chicano Park. This void in Le Texier's analysis motivated me to investigate acts of political mobility and cultural visibility in Barrio Logan.

In order to establish a clear understanding of the political and cultural capital of this neighborhood, this thesis explores how Barrio Logan's residents, artists, and activists negotiate spatial transformations and conflicts over land use. I pay particular attention to how their negotiations are articulated in oral narratives and visual artistic Chicana/o representations of the barrio built environment. My theoretical frameworks draw from

methodological approaches in anthropology, sociology, and urban studies to develop the hypothesis that will articulate the complex role Chicana/o cultural workers and activists played, and continue to play in developing grassroots environmental and social justice movements in San Diego, California. I argue that the cultural-political memory of Chicano Park, from its establishment, has created and shaped symbolic capital for the Chicana/o and Mexican-American community of Barrio Logan. Community activists, artists, and residents are attempting to convert this cultural capital into social forms of belonging and political inclusion in San Diego, California.

The heated contestation of the production and consumption of space in Barrio Logan continues to this day. This is exemplified in the events leading up to the June 3, 2014 referendum when leaders of San Diego's maritime industry challenged the 2013 Barrio Logan Community Plan. In October 2013, the San Diego City Council passed the 2013 Barrio Logan Community Plan, which included guidelines for future land use developments for the area. It was the first effort backed by the city government to update and ultimately replace the outdated and hazardous mixed-use Barrio Logan Community Plan of 1978. The June 3, 2014 referendum challenged this plan under the aegis of representatives of San Diego's maritime industry.

The 2013 Barrio Logan Community Plan was accomplished through community stakeholder meetings, spearheaded by the San Diego non-profit organization, Environmental Health Coalition. The community plan was approved by the City Council in October 2013, though later challenged via a referendum imposed by representatives of the maritime industry. This referendum aimed to confront and ultimately replace the

zoning ordinances in the 2013 plan. Representatives and supporters of San Diego’s maritime industry did not favor the proposed zoning implements of the 2013 Barrio Logan Community Plan, as it included zoning ordinances that prevented them from encroaching onto areas strictly designated as light residential commercial zones. The 2013 Barrio Logan Community Plan called for a five-block area that would be zoned as “light residential commercial” between heavy industrial areas and Barrio Logan residential centers—in other words it was a buffer zone. The aim of the buffer zone was to prevent industry and residential developments to encroach on each other. Under the 1978 Barrio Logan plan, it is possible to have heavy industry adjacent to residential homes. Therefore, representatives of San Diego’s maritime industry contracted the lobbying company Southwest Strategies to collect 100,000 signatures, so they could place a referendum on the 2013 Barrio Logan Plan. Subsequently, through adjudication the greater metropolitan populations of the City of San Diego procured the right to revise the 2013 Barrio Logan Community Plan and reject it if necessary. Representatives and associates of San Diego’s maritime industry supported those who challenged the 2013 plan and spearheaded a successful referendum, which overturned the 2013 Barrio Logan Plan. The San Diego City Council endorsed the referendum, politically disenfranchising the community of Barrio Logan.

In developing my analysis of the debates over Barrio Logan’s future development, I return to Le Texier’s aforementioned study. Le Texier reveals information on how DURO challenged notions of “cultural poverty” in Barrio Logan, as well as the negative stereotypes portrayed in the *San Diego Union Tribune*, stereotypes which were used to

help gain endorsement for the 2014 referendum. Le Texier's study includes a review of *San Diego Union Tribune* reports and articles, published within 2000 to 2003. Her findings reveal 230 references to Barrio Logan. She categorized her findings by differentiating short reports from lengthy articles; of those references 65% were short reports and the remaining 35% were long articles. Both the reports and the articles reference the social insecurities of Barrio Logan, often stereotyping the neighborhood as a crime-ridden area in San Diego. The short reports, included reports on the "violence, crimes, and gang-and-drug related activities" and the long articles surveyed typically reflected Barrio Logan in a negative light, as they addressed such topics as: "environmental hazards, homelessness, declining educational achievement, and health problems"(Le Texier, 2007: 205).

While it is true that some of the above topics—particularly those relating to environmental hazards, homelessness, and health problems—continue to be among the perils associated with life in Barrio Logan, Le Texier's findings demonstrate that little or no attention was given by the *San Diego Union Tribune* to the cultural and political achievements of Barrio Logan organizations, such as DURO. In fact, when an article reported a positive aspect of life in Barrio Logan it was, often, overshadowed with negative undertones and references to the ills of barrio life (ibid). Le Texier (2007: 206) asserts that the neglect of the media in portraying Barrio Logan's political and cultural organizations created the notion that "barrio residents are not politically involved." Therefore, she found it necessary to broaden the definition of political participation, Le Textier concurs with the definition that Burns, Schlozman, and Verba (2001), provided in

their book *Private Roots of Public Action*, who define political participation as any “activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action—either directly, by affecting the making or implementation of public policy, or indirectly, by influencing the selection of people who make those policies” (quoted in Le Texier, 2007: 207). I too invoke this definition of political participation, because broadening the definition provides room for analysis with “a focus on a diversity in unorthodox forms of participation” (ibid: 207), which allows novel measurement of political outcomes. Such measurements provide crucial frameworks to analyze key components in community organizers narratives at the time they challenged the 2014 referendum.

The Politics of Membership and Belonging

When the referendum was approved and placed on the June 3, 2014 primary ballot powerful State and private actors disenfranchised the community of Barrio Logan. The residents of this predominantly Mexican-American community lost their ability to be “free agents” (Menchaca, 2011) in determining the zoning destiny of their community. I turn to social and cultural theories that emphasize the intersections of place and community belonging because I find the theories useful in attempting to understand political and cultural mobility, inclusion, and citizenship in Barrio Logan. The following articles explore ethnographic theories and methods on the struggles for place, mobility, citizenship, and inclusion. “In the Breach: Citizenship and its Approximations” by Susan Bibler Coutin (2013) and “Stuck inside of Mobile: Ethnography in Non-Places” by Simon Gottschalk and Marko Salvaggio (2015).

The concept of non-places as theorized by the French Anthropologist Marc Augé and interpreted by Gottschalk and Salvaggio (2015) via their ethnographic account of the Las Vegas Strip conceptually grasps the role the freeway and the Coronado Bay Bridge play in Barrio Logan. Gottschalk and Salvaggio (2015) demonstrate that non-places, such as freeways, isolate and make people invisible because a person in such spaces does not have a name or an identity other than as a road navigator. Michel Foucault's (1984) rendering of Heterotopias, also wrestled with the idea of non-places; that is, the places that are outside of all places that tend to mirror non-places, such as utopias. The examples Gottschalk and Salvaggio (2015) provide of non-places mirror what Foucault (1984) termed crisis heterotopias, which include places such as motels, casinos, airports, and other locations, such as freeways, that cater to "transience, impermanence, and movement" (Gottschalk and Salvaggio, 2015: 11). Gottschalk and Salvaggio identify non-places as sites that lack history, identity, and tradition. I argue that motels, airports, and casinos have histories, identities, and traditions, just as the interstate freeway system; moreover, places of transience, impermanence, and movement tend to have management systems that can delineate ethnographic and archival information about the "non-place" in study.

In this thesis, I will highlight elements of Barrio Logan's cultural landscape that can be understood as a heterotopia, where a multitude of subjectivities simultaneously use and occupy the cultural landscape and its infrastructure without being in, or even aware of, all its dimensions and the people in those dimensions. Late-modern colonial scholar and architect, Eyal Weizman (2012) theorizes this phenomenon as the "politics of

verticality.” The objective of this late-modern colonial practice is expressed in the Israeli construction of roads in the Palestinian territories, as roads serve the purpose of multi dimensional boundaries and borders (Weizman, 2012). Therefore, the politics of verticality are a process that requires intentional planning to isolate and separate groups via the built environment. In this context, what happens when a conceptual “non-place” is constructed and planned above a real place, such as a neighborhood like Barrio Logan? In this thesis, I will provide examples that posit the I-5 Freeway, the Coronado Bay Bridge, Chicano Park, the shipyards, and the residential urban core of Barrio Logan as elements of the same landscape, but constitute different and overlapping cultural, political, and economic human geographies.

Susan Bibler Coutin (2013) focuses on legal renderings that limit political mobility and inclusion. Coutin denotes narratives of people with cultural and political “approximations” to citizenship, which are people who do not entirely possess, the legally defined status of “U.S. citizenship,” but through societal achievements are often extended cultural rights. Coutin’s (2013) concept of “approximate citizenship” is useful in understanding the contradictions associated with legally recognized and culturally recognized citizenship. Her theoretical approach helps guide research models that aim to study the physical, legal, and personal dimensions of immigration, particularly, in the realm of the institutional categorization of “morality” and “legitimacy” as terms and conditions dictating a persons qualification to obtain U.S. citizenship, political membership, and cultural citizenship.

Hector Amaya's (2013) concept of "citizenship excess" addresses forms of political and cultural belonging, that are unattainable by people of color who are citizens by birth or naturalization. Amaya builds his concept on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the habitus arguing that only people of the dominant culture have the power to fulfill all aspects of citizenship, as well as write the laws that all citizens and non-citizens must abide by. While Amaya stresses issues of the habitus and power, he does offer a complementary analysis as Coutin. According to Amaya those who are not elites do not have conduits to fully exercise their political rights. This is similar to Coutin's approximation thesis, as those who do not possess "citizenship excess" but are citizens, through naturalization or birth, have approximate forms of national belonging, but still lack the power to influence heteronormative forms of cultural and political belonging. In other words, ethnic minorities and non-white immigrants, regardless of their citizenship status, do not possess the same rights and privileges as their U.S. born Anglo counterparts.

Place, mobility and citizenship are difficult theoretical terms to fully analyze without real-lived-on-the-ground examples on the contentious manifestations to claim space, citizenry, and the right for political inclusion. Susan Bibler Coutin's (2013) article provides ethnographic accounts on ambiguous or approximate forms and categories of citizenship. Simon Gottschalk and Marko Salvaggio's (2015) article sketches a methodological and conceptual approach towards conducting ethnography in a "non-place," such as the Las Vegas, Nevada "Strip." By doing so they have advanced theoretical ideas about place and non-places. What is central to the aforementioned works is the theme of citizenship and belonging. When the idea of a "non-place" is juxtaposed

to Susan Bibler Coutin's (2013) theory of approximate citizenship, we start seeing how "non-places" marginalize and separate migrant and ethnic populations, such as those living in Barrio Logan.

I use Coutin's (2013) and Amaya's theoretical contributions to citizenship in conjunction to explain how the political economy of the San Diego maritime industry has structured the legal apparatus of political inclusion for Barrio Logan residents. The memory Chicano Park's establishment problematizes the structured conditions of political inclusion set by the maritime industry, as it produces approximate forms of citizenship in Barrio Logan. Due to Chicano Park, there is a resiliency in the legacies of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement, which provides cultural and social capital to Chicana/os that can be converted into political capital. Thus, Chicana/o identity politics challenge the ideologies of racial, class, and ethnic supremacy associated with the "citizenship excess."

Methodology

In her study of El Barrio in East Harlem, Arlene Dávila (2004: 3) outlines contrasting issues associated with "development initiatives" and the dreams and aspirations of El Barrio residents. Dávila (2004:3) states that barrio residents are welcoming of development, as the "cleansing and disassociation of the area from its marginal past" has perpetuated current development initiatives in "El Barrio." Conversely in Barrio Logan, Hector Villegas, a local artist and community leader, welcomes new housing and entertainment developments in Barrio Logan. Villegas explained to me, "we want nice things too, for too long the barrio has been neglected." Barrio Logan, similar to East

Harlem, has a marginal past associated with gang violence and urban blight that dissuaded developers—and visitors—from entering the neighborhood. Villegas told me, “gentrification should of happened ten years ago” in Barrio Logan but “no one wanted to open any business here due to its reputation.” Yet, a central question arises, why are developers or investors now interested in opening and expanding businesses in Barrio Logan—not only commercial but industrial business and enterprises? What has caused a shift in the imagined urban condition of Barrio Logan? Who is opening businesses in Barrio Logan, but more importantly what caused the rapid interest in developing the area?

Chicano Park in Barrio Logan positions the neighborhood as a cultural site of Chicana/o political liberation and cultural expression within the landscape of capitalism. Therefore, the spatial ideology of Barrio Logan provides the opportunity to approach the above questions through multidisciplinary research methodologies. My leading questions are guided by the contested nature on the production, transformation, and consumption of space in Barrio Logan. In a highly economic and culturally contentious neighborhood, such as Barrio Logan, how do community activists negotiate spatial-economic transformations in the built environment? As a Mexican-American, Mexican, and Chicana/o neighborhood with a long-standing tradition of holding strong cultural and political capital, what activists and creative sectors are activated to challenge industrial capital driven transformations of the barrio built environment? Moreover, how are these transformations and conflicts articulated in oral narratives and visual artistic representations?

In order to establish a clear understanding on the reoccurring conflicts over land use in Barrio Logan, I conducted library research and ethnographic interviews and observations from May 15 to August 15, 2014. I consulted the archives on Mexican-American residents located in the Chicano Reading Room at San Diego State University. Of particular use was the Pamphlet Collection, which is in desperate need of curation. It was here that I was able to gather protest fliers, Barrio Logan political organization pamphlets, and other ephemeral archives. In this collection, I found newspaper articles from the 1980's relating to the establishment of the Cesar Chavez Park in Barrio Logan. It is through these journalistic accounts that I am able to reconstruct the rhetoric used by maritime industry representatives in San Diego over public land use in Barrio Logan.

In addition to the library research, I conducted a total of thirteen interviews, both formal and informal. The interviews were conducted at Chicano Park, offices of community activists, the home and studios of the artists, and at local businesses. I participated in a variety of community meetings and political and cultural events. This included attending the Chicano Park Steering Committee meetings, a Brown Berets de Aztlán protest, and the Barrio Arts District monthly Art Crawls.

In addition to my summer field research, I conducted a literature review of Latina/o urban studies and did social media research. I consulted the social media site, Facebook to understand the forms of pro-environmental activism in Barrio Logan. It was through Facebook that I was able to establish contacts and build rapport with Barrio Logan artists, residents, and community activists. Facebook proved a valuable resource, as I was able to

coordinate interviews and stay up-to-date on the day-to-day interactions of daily life in Barrio Logan.

I term this pairing of urban fieldwork and social media research, mobile ethnography. This is a research method based on Gottschalk and Salvaggio's (2015) field methodology that has the potential to examine the political, economic, and cultural forms of mobility, migration, and the built environment of places. Yet, a mobile ethnography is a privileged research method that requires the researcher to have access to certain prevailing conditions, such as the ability to be mobile by having the necessary capital (either political, economic, social, and/or cultural) to travel and the ability to physically be able to move. I will further emphasize this point in chapter one, as I provide an example of my limitations in attempting to *dérive* in Barrio Logan.

My own subjectivity led me to study the sociocultural conditions of Barrio Logan. I am not far removed from the people and issues I study. I too have encountered environmental racism; depended on informal social and economic networks; and struggled in asserting my right to exist within the constraints of U.S. racial discriminatory immigration laws. Therefore, every qualitative question I asked, in my interviews, came with a dose of personal reflection. Little did I know that my own "subjectivity" would serve as a medium to generate ethnographic, archival, and built environment data on the effects of political capital, cultural representations, and the aesthetics of community belonging. I explore these themes because I am interested how they foster sentiments of citizenry within a marginalized community in "America's finest city."

Overview of Chapters

Chapter one focuses on Mexican Migration to San Diego, California during the post-Mexican Revolution years (1918-1920), and situates the economic and political conditions at play that enacted Barrio Logan as a Mexican-American neighborhood. This chapter describes structural historical cases associated with early 20th century migrant neighborhoods, such as the establishment of Neighborhood Houses that aimed to assimilate immigrants into American society. I describe the initial transformations in the built environment to contextualize the transition of the East End into Logan Heights and ultimately Barrio Logan. I reconsider the development and construction of the I-5 Freeway and the Coronado Bay Bridge to highlight what historian Erick Avila (2014) conceptualizes as the “folklore of the freeway.”

In chapter two, I describe two key issues that emphasize the negotiation of public open recreational space in Barrio Logan. First, I examine the debate over establishing a war veterans’ memorial in Chicano Park. I outline how the placement and design of the war veterans’ monument challenged the cultural aesthetics of Chicano Park. My aim here is to explore the residential politics of Barrio Logan to determine who has access to Chicano Park. I focus on the development of the Cesar Chavez Park, as it is seen by the Chicano Park Steering Committee and community activists as the fulfillment of the former Chicano Park Steering Committee slogan, “All the Way to the Bay,” which has now been replaced with the slogan, “We are on the Bay” this is an event that took place in 1987. I pay close attention to the establishment of the multi-use Cesar Chavez Park in Barrio Logan to introduce a historical case on the declamation on exclusionary discourse

by leaders of the San Diego maritime industry towards the use and development of public recreational space in Barrio Logan. My aim here is to illustrate how representatives of the maritime industry have had a long-term interest in Barrio Logan and have disregarded local concerns.

Chapter three takes a critical look at Propositions B and C of the 2014 primary election. I argue that these propositions symbolized the San Diego's City Council's partnership with the maritime business sector. I demonstrate the short-lived San Diego City Council's support of the 2013 Barrio Logan Plan and how it was disrupted by private economic interest. My aim in this section is to exemplify the San Diego City Council's turn to support what George Lipsitz's (2011) theorizes as the "white spatial imaginary." This final chapter juxtaposes the resiliency of the community to challenge the environmental degradation of Barrio Logan by using the legacy of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement and its political and cultural philosophical strengths. My aim is to demonstrate the process in which Chicana/o cultural identity performance becomes pro-environmental health activism.

Chapter One: Contextualizing Barrio Logan's Built Environment

This chapter will address the structural conditions that transformed Barrio Logan into an enclave of Mexican-American and Chicana/o social, economic, and cultural life. I will explore Mexican migration to San Diego, California between the years 1910-1920 and the passage of the 1956 National Freeway Act to contextualize the conflicts that shaped the cultural landscape of Barrio Logan.

William David Estrada's (2006) study of the Los Angeles Plaza provides detailed historical accounts on the many conflicts and transformations that occurred between European, Mexican, African-American, and Indigenous groups at the Los Angeles Plaza. He demonstrated that all ethnic and racial groups that inhabited in or near the plaza, at different and overlapping times, played a significant role in determining the function and the ascribed meaning of the space that the plaza occupies. Similarly, Barrio Logan and Chicano Park are contested spaces where various ethnic and racial groups have, and continue to, redefine the meaning of place in this seaport U.S.-Mexico borderlands neighborhood.

It is proper to begin this discussion with an introduction to Barrio Logan's current physical location within the City of San Diego. Barrio Logan is the first neighborhood both south of downtown San Diego and east of the San Diego Bay. South of Barrio Logan is the Thirty-Second-Street U.S. Naval Military Base, and east of Barrio Logan is Logan Heights. Barrio Logan was once, and still is to a certain degree, a section of the community of Logan Heights. Southeast of Barrio Logan is the neighborhood of

Shelltown that shares the 92113 zip code with Barrio Logan and Logan Heights. All three aforementioned neighborhoods are numerically Latino dominant with a 68.8% of the population being of Mexican decent (U.S. Census, 2010).

Cultural landscape scholar Dolores Hayden (1997: 11) reminds us that “[r]estoring significant shared meanings for many neglected urban places first involves clamming the entire urban cultural landscape as an important part of American History.” Therefore, I include the infamous I-5 Freeway, which its construction bisected Logan Heights in the early 1950s, and the Coronado Bay Bridge, which its construction in 1967 further divided the neighborhood, as important elements of Barrio Logan’s cultural landscape.

The Coronado Bay Bridge and the I-5 Freeway constitute the infrastructure of Barrio Logan’s most important urban public space, Chicano Park. The creation of a public park that bears the title Chicano, as its name, is not an innocent occurrence rather is the result of years of community resistance to State sanctioned marginalization processes. Chicano Park is a 7.5-acre urban community park that was established through an activist movement in 1970 during the height of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement (Rosen and Fisher, 2001). Chicano Park is under the freeway overpasses that connect the Coronado Bay Bridge to the I-5 Freeway. The freeway overpasses create a concrete canopy that provides the park with shade. The massive concrete pillars are perfect cement slates for mural art work. Since 1973, Chicana/o artists have painted social justice and Chicana/o cultural themed murals on the pillars that structurally support the freeway overpasses. The central focus of the park is a *kiosko* that resembles a Pre-Colombian Mesoamerican temple. The sides of the *kiosko* are adorned with Mesoamerican stylized

geometric shapes and patterns. The I-5 Freeway serves as the eastern border, and the park continues across Logan Avenue, and stretches west to National Avenue (ibid). On the northwest side of the park, National Avenue intersects a section known as *La Placita*, which extends west towards the California Department of Transportation's (Caltrans, hereafter) supply-yard and the Northgate Gonzalez grocery store. This section is adjacent to the *Estrella* Apartments, which are part of the multi-use Mercado del Barrio development project. The on-ramp from Logan Avenue to the Coronado Bay Bridge creates the northern boundary of the park; the southern boundary is created by the Coronado Bay Bridge's off-ramp to National Avenue.

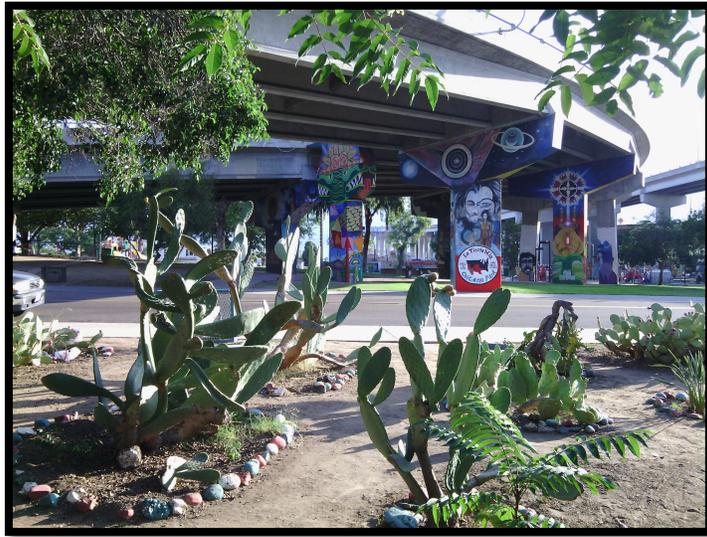


Figure 1: Chicano Park Murals and Cactus Garden

To better understand the social history that transformed Logan Heights into Barrio Logan, I employed a built environment analysis. I did this by attempting to *dérive* in

Barrio Logan. The *dérive* is Situationist urban research method that requires wandering and the purposeful disorientation of the researcher in an urban setting. The aim of a *dérive* is to understand the cultural landscape (the built environment) and its relation to the on-the-ground human urban condition. My attempt at this Situationist urban research method approach was short lived. As Walking became a challenge in Barrio Logan, as the I-5 Freeway and the Coronado Bay Bridge have reduced physical access between Barrio Logan and Logan Heights.

My limitation, however, was not solely due to the physical barriers of the built environment, but rather the implications of my own subjectivity—as a Chicano graduate student and a “part-time” Barrio Logan community activist. Did or do I have the right to *dérive* in this working-class Mexican-American and Chicana/o neighborhood? Elihu Rubin (2012: 188) views the “*dérive* as an act of citizenship,” and he is correct, because *dériving* is a privileged research method, which requires the power of mobility and disorienting oneself in an urban landscape—a privilege many Chicana/os do not entirely possess.

Three points in Barrio Logan allow for pedestrian mobility across the freeway: they include the freeway underpass on Cesar Chavez Parkway and Logan Avenue; a freeway overpass on Sampson Street and Logan Avenue; and a pedestrian freeway overpass bridge from Kearney Avenue to Logan Avenue at Chicano Park. The pedestrian overpass bridge is perhaps the most dangerous, given that it ends directly on to the southbound I-5 Freeway on-ramp at Logan Avenue, which bisects the park. Similar to the neighborhood in which Chicano Park is located in, the park is bisected by urban transportation

infrastructure, as Logan Avenue and National Avenue further divide Chicano Park into four separate park sections.



Figure 2: Pedestrian Freeway Overpass at Chicano Park

The lack of crosswalks at Chicano Park adds to the inaccessibility of important and highly used areas of the park. On the Logan Avenue side of the Kearney Avenue and Logan Avenue pedestrian freeway overpass ramp, there is no crosswalk to facilitate pedestrians to cross Logan Avenue. This area includes the means of egress to the pedestrian overpass bridge's access ramp. It is also here, below the pedestrian ramp, that the red granite Logan Heights Veterans Memorial monument is located. The recreational sports—basketball and handball—courts and the Chicano Park events marquee are located in this area. A retaining concrete wall separates and, by doing so, elevates the freeway above the park and sports courts. Finally, this is the location of the southbound I-

5 Freeway on-ramp; south of the on-ramp is the Chicano Park Cactus Garden, which includes an impromptu miniature golf course and the Chicano Park community sweat lodge and kiva. To add to the complexity of Chicano Park's entanglement with urban infrastructure, there are bus stops for the San Diego Metropolitan Transit Service's (MTS, hereafter). MTS Route 11 bus stops are located on both the northbound and southbound sides of Logan Avenue. Indicating that, indeed, there is a need for a pedestrian crosswalk across Logan Avenue. Yet, there are no indicators on Logan Avenue, such as street signals that warn drivers of potential street crossers—people crossing Logan Avenue, to access the pedestrian overpass bridge, the recreational sports courts, the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial, and the cactus garden must be vigilant as they evade vehicles entering the freeway.

The sounds of Barrio Logan are similar to those heard in other urban Mexican-American neighborhoods in California—in terms of sounds generated via musical, social, and cultural gatherings. However, the sounds that are unique to Barrio Logan are the air-horns from cargo and Navy ships in the San Diego Bay; the lifting and setting—and occasional dropping—of construction material from the local shipyards; and the horns, vibrations, and brakes of the San Diego MTS Blue Line trolley, which has a station in Barrio Logan on East Harbor Drive and Cesar E. Chavez Parkway. The hawking of seagulls and collective flapping of pigeon wings also contribute to the barrio “soundscape” causing a multitude of competing and overlapping sounds that seek to find a permanent place in Barrio Logan.

The material impediment of the I-5 Freeway and the Coronado Bay Bridge have

reduced the visibility and public access to most of the San Diego Bay, along with the shipbuilding industry they, also, contribute to the sound and air pollution at Barrio Logan. Community activist and city planner James Rojas (2003: 283) describes sound as a prop that “temporary controls and defines space.” At Barrio Logan, James Rojas’ observation accurately describes the sounds heard on any given weekend or weekday afternoon. Laughter and music—ranging from a multitude of musical genres and artists, including, The Delfonics, One Way, Los Tucanes de Tijuana, and Vicente Fernandez— explode from car speakers, bar-juke boxes, and front-yard social gatherings; temporarily adverting the buzzing, screeching, roaring, and violent vibrations caused by motor vehicles on the I-5 Freeway and the overpasses to the Coronado Bay Bridge. Space in Barrio Logan is not just contentious on the ground, but also in audible form. As Black Studies Professor, Gaye Theresa Johnson (2013:1) asserts, “[s]ound travels even when people cannot.”

Since Chicano Park is the heart of Barrio Logan then, in this metaphorical body, Logan Avenue would be the main artery of the barrio. It is on Logan Avenue that the visible layers of the now uneven sidewalks, non-existing crosswalks, and chipped paint on Victorian homes remind us that this neighborhood was once an Anglo suburb of San Diego known as the East End.

From the East End to Barrio Logan: The U.S. Navy and Mexican Migration

The East End was a suburb of San Diego that was annexed by the city of San Diego in 1880 (Rosen and Fisher, 2001; Smith and Associates, 2009). By 1905, the first street configurations and residential improvements began to unfold in the East End; this was also the year its name was changed to Logan Heights, named after the Illinois State

Senator John A. Logan (Rosen and Fisher, 2001; Smith and Associates, 2009). The San Diego Electric Railway built a rail car line from Downtown to the East End via Logan Avenue in 1892 (Norris, 1983).

Today, the only remnant of the street rail car is the El Nuevo Carrito Restaurant, a streetcar that has been converted into a Mexican food restaurant. Victor Ochoa is a Tijuana and San Diego artist and founder of El Centro Cultural de La Raza, he recommend that I eat at El Carrito Restaurant because of their special dishes, such as *caldos* and *albondigas*. He told me that he goes to El Carrito Restaurant, for the *chilaquiles con nopales*, and that El Carrito, “is an actual trolley that used to run during the 1930’s, 40’s, and 50’s through Logan Avenue to National City.” He explained to me that he and other artists “had little shows in there” were they would exhibit their artwork. Having been an electric rail cart and now a restaurant, El Nuevo Carrito Restaurant, or as it is known colloquially as El Carrito, is a testament of what Latino Urbanism theorist David R. Diaz and Rodolfo D. Torres (2012) refer to as adaptive reuse by barrio residents of materials for personal use. El Nuevo Carrito Restaurant was produced by transformations in the social condition of Barrio Logan. Today it is a functional place that serves as a gathering space for local residents.

At the turn of the century, Logan Heights was considered a high-status suburb. The suburb had access to the San Diego Bay by means of a community pier, a small beach, and the East School that was later renamed Logan School (Delgado, 1998; Norris, 1983). The East End was the home of San Diego’s first baseball park, the Bay View Park. The baseball park was located north of the current Beardsley Avenue and National Avenue

intersection (Norris, 1983). Being the first neighborhood south of downtown San Diego, Logan Heights would soon be devastated by macro-historical and social-economic factors first, the U.S. Navy established a permanent presence south of Logan Heights; second, by industrial tuna fishing in entering the neighborhood in 1918; and third, by the National Freeway Act of 1956 and the construction of the Coronado Bay Bridge in 1967.



Figure 3: El Nuevo Carrito Restaurant

The U.S. Navy first arrived in San Diego, Alta California, Mexico on July 29th, 1846 during the formative period of the Mexican American War; their purpose was to seize the Mexican city and establish American rule (Linder, 2007). As a natural harbor located on the Pacific Ocean, the San Diego Bay was a strategic point that allowed the U.S. Navy to launch blockades and seizures of western Mexican ports, such as Mazatlan and all of Baja California's ports during the Mexican American War of 1848-1846 (ibid).

During World War I a small concrete ship-construction site was built south of Logan Heights. In 1919 a naval contract provided 98.2 acres of bay front to the Navy (Norris, 1983). The acquisition of the naval contract permitted the construction of permanent Navy installations along the San Diego coastline. Historians, Larry Ford and Ernst Griffin (1981:43) assert that the Logan Heights “neighborhood began to lose prestige after World War I as industry from the downtown waterfront encroached.” The initial Navy contract led to the permanent establishment of the Thirty-Second Naval Station (ibid). This could be seen as a major accomplishment for the City of San Diego, but to the community of Logan Heights this was the first, in a string of many, national public works infrastructural projects that would transform the barrio’s built environment into a toxic wasteland—or haven, depending on whom is asked—of the military and maritime industrial complex.

The specific characteristics of industry that settled in Logan Heights during the second decade of the 1900’s shaped the areas demographic future. By 1918 the tuna, abalone, and sardine fishing industry grew in San Diego, and by the early 1920’s advancements in canning technology allowed for large-scale tuna canneries to start operating along the San Diego Bay (Smith and Associates, 2009). The canneries were primarily located in Logan Heights and they provided employment for local residents. Mexican-American women—like many other women during the pre-war and wartime period—took-on new cultural and economic roles in order to keep their families together and make economic ends meet. For many of the Barrio Logan women this was the first time they had worked for a wage. Mexican-American cultural traditions dictated that women should be mothers and housewives, but the instability of the depression, the labor

demands of the tuna industry, and the creation of the wartime industries allowed for many barrio women to experience a sense of economic and cultural independence that they had previously not had (Jacobó and Griswold Del Castillo, 2009). The labor demands of the tuna canning industry, which provided economic opportunities not available in Mexico at the time, account as a pull factor of Mexican migration to San Diego.

Logan Heights' proximity to the San Ysidro and Tijuana border region, also, contributed to the demographic shift of the area. The tuna boom in San Diego led to the establishment of the canning industry. This time frame parallels the conclusion of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), where the poor economic conditions and social unrest of Mexico, during and after the revolution, resulted in the exodus of hundreds-of-thousands of Mexican nationals into the United States (Vigil, 2002). Mexican immigrants may have settled in Logan Heights due to its proximity to the San Ysidro land port of entry—approximately seventeen miles south of Logan Heights. Historian George Sanchez (1993: 65) asserts that Mexican migrants “first arrived in the United States via the land ports of Calexico and San Ysidro, or the Sea Ports of San Diego and San Francisco.” Underscoring this argument, historian Griswold del Castillo (2007:75), indicates that some Mexican immigrants came by boat to San Diego, “since travellers by rail were in constant danger of being attack by Mexican revolutionist.”

Mexican settlement into Logan Heights resulted in the establishment of the Neighborhood House of San Diego in 1923 (Griswold del Castillo, 2007). This was an immigrant settlement house established and funded by philanthropic motives with the

ultimate aim to “Americanize” new immigrants. According to Griswold del Castillo (2007: 90), the Logan Heights settlement house offered a wide range of social and educational activities, including “classes in drama, English, and Math; summer school for children; and lectures, dances, and community sings for the entire family.” The migration of Mexican nationals into Logan Heights resulted in the ethnic transformation of the neighborhood into a numerically dominant Mexican-American community. As Historian, Kevin Delgado (1998: 49) notes that “[b]y 1940 Logan Heights had grown into one of the largest Mexican American communities in the West Coast.”

In the 1970s the social services and name of the Neighborhood House of San Diego shifted variants due to Chicana/os taking over the facility and transforming it into the Chicano Free Clinic. Today, the Chicano Free Clinic has been demolished and in its place stands the Logan Heights Family Health Center, a private non-profit multi-health service clinic that provides healthcare services to low-income, uninsured, and medically underserved people. Patients from the neighboring communities and Barrio Logan visit the clinic, which often provides the only means of healthcare for people of the area.

Currently, in Barrio Logan there is a heavy influx of people on Beardsley Avenue. On any given weekday between the hours of 7:00 am and 4:00 pm men, women, and children are going for treatment at the Logan Heights Family Health Center. Mothers walk their children to Perkins Elementary School in the mornings and in the afternoons. The clinics patients and the mothers have structured the conditions of the hours of operation for the few formal and many informal food service businesses on Beardsley Avenue. Nuevo Mexico Café is a Barrio Logan Mexican food establishment that depends

on the patronage of the clinics patients and the mothers who walk their children to school. The restaurant has daily rotating food specials that can be purchased either inside the restaurant or through a walk-up window on Beardsley Avenue. They open at 6:30am and are closed by 3:00pm. *Paleteros* (mobile ice cream vendors) stand on the street corners and sidewalks hoping to make a sell; they too know the peak-hours of pedestrian mobility on Beardsley Avenue. Cuatro Milpas is a restaurant in Barrio Logan. This restaurant is located a block east of the Logan Heights Family Health Center. There is always a line at Cuatro Milpas made-up of downtown office employees and tourist. Barrio Logan residents rarely eat at Cuatro Milpas, simply the long line deters them away. Its hours of operation are not determined by street traffic, rather the limited supply to a high demand of greasy tasty food determines the restaurants hours of operation. The menu is simple; fried pork or chicken tacos, chorizo and eggs, or pork tamales. The restaurant opens at 8:30 am and closes when the food runs out—usually around 2:00pm.

Today, industrial corporations, such as NASSCO, General Dynamics, Arco, and BAE Systems, are a few of the hazardous businesses adjacent to Barrio Logan's residential areas. These corporations depend on the freeway, the San Diego Bay, and the U.S. military installations in order to conduct their day-to-day operations. The canning industry that once served as the livelihood for the barrio women has been replaced with maritime industrial shipbuilders that have persisted along the bay long after the war had been abated.

Urban Restructuring and the Political Economy of Space

In the 1950's, the growth of military installations along the bay generated social unrest for the barrio community as Barrio Logan soon faced discriminatory urban planning practices, which marginalized the community via rezoning ordinances that transformed the neighborhood from a residential zone to a mixed-use zone. In Barrio Logan the interplay of conquest and modernization, according to historian Erick Avila (2014: 5), are "two sides of the same unlucky coin." Between the years of 1940-1970 the population of Barrio Logan had dropped from a once 20,000 high to 5,000 low (Rosen and Fisher, 2001).

A series of rezoning ordinances in 1957 imposed on Barrio Logan resulted in an influx of heavy industrial manufactures and junkyards to enter into Barrio Logan. In her Master's Thesis, Peggy Smith (2001: 17) notes that "[p]eople's lives were disrupted and family and friends torn apart," when the construction of the I-5 Freeway forced thousands of barrio families to be dislocated from their homes. The community no longer has easy access to the bay, the beach, or the community pier that previous residents enjoyed.

The accumulated value of the homes in Barrio Logan that were removed, to make room for the freeway, were of less value than the potential speculated capital gains that a freeway would provide. The social, cultural, and community capital of the families and individuals that were displaced was not a significant factor that prevented the construction of the I-5 Freeway and the Coronado Bay Bridge. Simply the political capital of Mexican-Americans in San Diego, at the time of the I-5 Freeway construction, was not acknowledged nor was it significant in preventing its development. Since

powerful State actors caused the devastating removal of families from the areas that are now the I-5 Freeway and Chicano Park, it is difficult to disassociate racial discrimination as a leading factor that contributed in the construction of both the Freeway and the Coronado Bay Bridge through Logan Heights. What was the logic used by both the State of California and the San Diego City Council to put into effect ideas of American modernity that materialized as public works infrastructure projects? Did racial, class, or cultural supremacy, indeed, inspire this logic? In order to answer these questions I turn to theories of modernization that are situated in a spatial commodification framework, which provide a partial understanding, but not a full explanation, of the logic used by powerful State actors, such as Caltrans and the city government of San Diego.

Acknowledging that the interstate freeways facilitate the exchange and transportation of commodities that ultimately lead to increase capital accumulation helps us understand “space” as a commodity. Urban spatial restructuring is a process of the political economy of urban space that pays little or no consideration to the needs of the population it will displace, it is entangled with the politics of eminent domain and capital accumulation (Rodriguez, 2013). According to Sociologist Nestor Rodriguez (2013), the political economy of space is the reshaping of urban centers to make room for more profitable enterprises. Moreover, Rodriguez (2012: 94) explains that the goal of urban renewal “is not to redevelop the residential base of neighborhood populations but to reconfigure urban space into a more profitable environment for capital.” Thus, the logic of urban renewal requires a worldview that is in tune with the benefits of modernization, including the idea that development will have equal economic prospects for all.

The unforeseen or unaccounted consequences of urban “modernization” and the 1956 National Freeway Act account for the current sound and air pollution in Barrio Logan—these are just a few of the many perils that resulted from American urban modernity. The political actions—the rezoning ordinances—implemented by the local city government facilitated the State and the Federal government’s decision to build the freeway through Barrio Logan. This act clearly affirmed that the culture, the livelihood, and the future of residents of Barrio Logan were disposable. Indeed, the rationale of the I-5 Freeway planners viewed San Diego’s Mexican-American community as expandable. This “public” works infrastructure project reflects race based power relations and the production of wealth for Anglo Americans via the disenfranchisement of Mexican-Americans in San Diego. Since the rezoning ordinances in 1957 and the completion of the I-5 Freeway in 1963 (Delgado, 1998), Barrio Logan has experienced an infrastructural intrusion that re-shaped the day-to-day community interactions of this Mexican-American neighborhood.

The community of Barrio Logan reimagined the infrastructural role of the Freeway by restructuring it as a cultural landscape (an urban park) and a place for cultural production. Avila (2014) writes extensively on the passage of the 1956 National Freeway Act in his book, “The Folklore of the Freeway: Race and Revolt in the Modernist City.” His analysis, however, is focused on the alternative or “the other” histories that resulted from community creative expressions of resistance towards the modern American Interstate Freeway Transportation System. Avila, examines how marginalized people and communities have reinvented the freeway and its meaning. In a former publication, Avila

(1998: 16) introduced the Folklore of the Freeway as a cultural response that reflects “the very different ways in which people experienced the freeway and its construction.” The I-5 Freeway caused the fragmentation of Logan Heights, but this federal sanctioned project, guided by economic objectives, caused an unexpected cultural revolution that resulted in the formation of Barrio Logan and Chicano Park. Avila’s (2014: 5) concept of the Folklore of the Freeway is indeed an alternative response to modernity, or as he eloquently notes a “cultural response to modernity.” Indeed, the community of Barrio Logan is resilient in maintaining cultural and social capital within the confines of heavy industry and the freeway—the landscape of capitalism.

Cultural Resistance: Chicano Park and the Chicano Park Murals

The Coronado Bay Bridge and the on-and-off ramps to the Interstate-Five Freeway were completed in 1969. It was also in 1969 that San Diego poet Alurista introduced the concept of Aztlán at the Denver, Chicano National Youth Liberation Conference (Sanchez, 2007). This concept is interwoven in both Mexican-American history and *Mexica* (Aztec) mythology; together they create a spiritual, political, and geographical homeland for Chicana/os in the American Southwest, and it served as the philosophy that fueled the Chicano Movement of the 1970’s (Bebout, 2011; Price, 2000).

In an attempt to better their social condition, Barrio Logan residents and community activists were working towards obtaining a community park in neighborhood. Yet, as Latino urbanism scholar, David Diaz (2005: 146) explains that during the 1960’s minority access to public parks was no different “than the other social battles of the time.” Therefore, Barrio Logan residents along with community activists addressed the

city on the spatial disparities that existed in Barrio Logan. They wanted a place where children could play and where adults could temporarily escape the reality of living within highway overpasses and unfavorable businesses (Smith, 2001). They were demanding access to a public open recreational space, and because of their persistence, the city promised Barrio Logan residents a 1.8-acre park (Cockcroft, 1983; Smith, 2001; Rosen and Fisher, 2001). Albeit, it was a location under the freeway overpasses to the Coronado Bay Bridge. This was an empty promise, as the city, along with the State of California, proposed that the potential “park site” would best serve as a California Highway Patrol station (Delgado, 1998).

Barrio Logan residents believed that the city was breaking ground on the construction of the community park on April 20, 1970 when a construction crew arrived at the proposed park site. Yet, San Diego City College student Mario Solis found-out that the construction crew was there to build a highway patrol station and not a public park. Therefore, he quickly spread the news to Barrio Logan residents and local colleges (Cockcroft, 1984). A highway patrol station in Barrio Logan would have increased police surveillance in an already highly militarized area. On April 21, 1970, San Diego City College, San Diego State University Chicana/o student, along with Barrio Logan community activists organized a protest (Cockcroft, 1984). However, the protest was poorly attended. The following day (April 22nd, 1970) when community members alongside local middle school and high school students got involved in the political action they were able to form human chains around the construction site (Delgado, 1998; Cockcroft, 1984). The students and the community activists were successful at not

allowing the construction of the highway patrol station to persist (Delgado, 1998; Cockcroft, 1984). When the construction crew withdrew from the premises, the Chicana/o community of Barrio Logan declared the empty lot underneath the Coronado Bay Bridge, “Chicano Park” (Cockcroft, 1983). Soon, Barrio Logan residents and the students started planting, what Mesoamerican scholar David Carrasco (2008) refers to as, “scared plants”—*magueys* and *nopales* (Maguey and Cactus). These are plants that serve as nourishment and have spiritual significance to the ancient *Mexica* (ibid). By planting these *magueys* and *nopales*, the community claimed the land under the bridge for Chicana/os in “Aztlán.”

During the twelve-day takeover, the Chicano Park Steering Committee was formed to serve as liaison between the barrio residents and the city officials (Cockcroft, 1984; Delgado, 1998). Students from Santa Barbara and Los Angeles joined in the protest to express solidarity (Delgado, 1998). On the twelfth-day of the occupation, City Manager, Meno Williams agreed to start the negotiating procedures under the condition that the protestors vacate the site. On June 31st, 1970, the city commissioned a \$21,814.96 contract to start the development of the lot into a community park (ibid: 53). The acquisition of a contract to build a community park symbolized the initial step to “formalize” Barrio Logan. Economic capital is vital to the creation of public parks, space alone is not sufficient, yet acquiring the funds from the city—the same bureaucratic institution that created the need for a community park in the first place— created a web of bureaucratic stakeholders in the park, which now imposes restrictions on the autonomous disposition the Chicano Park Steering Committee attempts to assert.

At Barrio Logan, Chicano Park became San Diego's Freeway Folklore (Avila, 2014). The gray massive structures of the modern American transportation system—particularly the monolithic cement pillars that hold the Coronado Bay Bridge—serve as cement canvases where the histories of Mexican-Americans are painted-on. The first murals at Chicano Park were painted in 1973; the idea of painting the bridge's pillars originally came from Salvador "*Queso*" Torres, a barrio resident and Alumnus from California College of the Arts and Crafts in Oakland (Delgado, 1998). Upon returning home from college he saw that his childhood neighborhood had been destroyed by the construction of the bridge (Delgado, 1998; Cockcroft, 1984; Rosen and Fisher, 2001). As a way of venting over the loss of his neighborhood, *Queso* inspired the first wave of murals that were painted at Chicano Park.

Many of the early murals at Chicano Park display themes of Latin American revolutionary heroes and artists, such as Che Guevara, Emiliano Zapata, and Jose Clemente Orozco. Zamudio-Taylor (2001: 348), explains that the foundational period of Chicana/o muralism was "dynamically interrelated with the movement for civil and labor rights and social justice." Victor Ochoa explained to me, "Chicana/o muralists had the responsibility to appropriately portray Chicana/o history in their art work" due to the important pedagogical role early Chicana/o murals played in barrio communities; "often they were the only mechanism that expressed Chicana/o history and identity."

Conclusion

It is important to recognize that the urban landscape of Barrio Logan includes military facilities, shipyards, the I-5 Freeway, the Coronado Bay Bridge, and a downtown

civic center that surround Barrio Logan in all its trajectories, including its horizontal, vertical, and audible dimensions. By contextualizing historical sociocultural, political, and economic cases that have shaped Logan Height's built environment, I provided an examination of the daily-lived on-the-ground consequences caused by "public" works infrastructure development projects in this Mexican-American neighborhood. The freeway infrastructure, not the freeway, was, indeed, built for—and later (re)imagined by—the San Diego Mexican-American community. Yet, communities affected by the freeways have fought back against the freeway and its infrastructure via cultural works, which have altered the meaning and significance of the freeway (Avila, 2014). Today, the infrastructure of the I-5 Freeway is culturally significant to the Chicana/o community of San Diego. At Chicano Park the "Y" and "T" shaped pillars that hold-up the Coronado Bay Bridge have been (re)appropriated from structural support pillars to Chicana/o cultural monuments of resistance.

The park is centered amongst urbanized industrial commerce and highway overpasses. Therefore, Chicano Park spatially reshaped the political and cultural capital of Barrio Logan. Cultural Geographer Don Mitchell (2004: 81) explains that "[s]pace, place, and location are not just the stage upon which rights are contested, but are actively produced by—and in turn serve to structure—struggles over rights." Thus, the creation of Chicano Park served as an ecological, cultural, and political victory for Barrio Logan residents and Chicana/os in the U.S. The park would serve as an open recreational, cultural, and political space that has perpetuated contemporary social and environmental justice movements in San Diego, California.

Chapter Two: Claims to Belonging

At Barrio Logan, Chicano Park's entanglement with freeway infrastructure illustrates the materialist response of the political activists who redefined the goals and resiliency of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement. In this chapter, I examine the actions taken during the years of 2008-2012 by the City of San Diego's Parks and Recreation Department, the Chicano Park Steering Committee, and the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial Committee as they reached an agreement on the design and location of the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial.

The case of the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial demonstrates the entanglement of power dynamics and the tensions over claims of cultural belonging at Chicano Park. For forty-five years, social justice activists groups have gathered at Chicano Park to protest against national and local policies that favor police surveillance, financial cuts to the educational system, and the deportation of immigrants. Given the proximity of Chicano Park to Downtown San Diego civic centers, political actions, such as marches and rallies, often start or end at the park. Chicano Park, also, serves as San Diego's largest outdoor public art museum and cultural center. Giant murals adorn the Coronado Bay Bridge's pillars and dance and music groups often practice at Chicano Park.

The discussion of placing a Veterans Memorial at Chicano Park was problematized by the dynamics of place and cultural citizenship. The Logan Heights Veterans Memorial Committee is composed of Mexican-American veterans from the Don Diego Veterans of Foreign (VFW) Wars Post 7420. They formed the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial

Committee in 2008. Their aim was to establish a war veteran's memorial that would honor U.S. Military service men and women from Barrio Logan and Logan Heights. The veteran's memorial at Chicano Park became a polemical issue of U.S. patriotic representations in a predominantly Mexican-American neighborhood that has experienced political marginalization under the auspice of leaders from San Diego's maritime industry, which cater to the U.S. Navy. The case of placing a veterans memorial at Chicano Park reflects in instance of what Renato Rosaldo and William Flores (1997:57) define as, "the right to be different with respect to norms of dominant national community, without compromising one's right to belong." The Logan Heights Veterans Memorial Committee had to negotiate their U.S. patriotism and ethnic cultural identity through the aesthetics and design of their proposed veterans memorial, as their claim for belonging was backlashed by cultural and political views entrenched in Barrio Logan's social history.

The placement of the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial at Chicano Park reflects power struggles in the planning and design process of producing monuments and cultural landscapes in San Diego. Dolores Hayden (1995: 33) reminds us to analyze all aspects of the built environment's social history; this includes examining "the builder, and also the owner or developer, the zoning and building code writers." Moreover, Hayden (1995: 11) reminds us that we reconsider the "strategies for the preservation of women's history and ethnic history in public spaces." Therefore, I examine the residential politics of Barrio Logan to determine who has access to the conduits to the decision-making apparatus at Chicano Park. In order to establish a clear understanding of the conflict over placing the

Logan Heights Veterans Memorial at Chicano Park, I will be drawing on archival and ethnographic data. I reviewed Chicano Park Steering Committee Meeting Agenda Minutes from 2010 through 2012¹. My interest in this subject stems from having been a Chicano Park Steering Committee member at the time that the Veterans Memorial negotiations were taking place. I have personal notes on Chicano Park Steering Committee meetings. I will corroborate the agenda items with my notes and journalistic accounts that reference the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial.

The Chicano Park Steering Committee Meeting Agenda Minutes provide detailed information on the discussions over establishing the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial at Chicano Park. These agenda items delineate public stances taken collectively by the Chicano Park Steering Committee. I also refer to ethnographic accounts, interviews, and observations taken during the months of May to August 2014 in Barrio Logan and Chicano Park. The ethnographic interviews, particularly, the interview with community activist Pablo Gonzalez will help me understand the elements that constitute a Chicana/o cultural and political aesthetic in San Diego, California.

Public Parks and Cultural Values

Mexican-American World War II veterans found that even though they had fought bravely against racial injustices caused by the Holocaust, alongside Anglo Americans, at home they still faced segregation, discrimination, and racism (Jacobo and Griswold Del Castillo, 2007). Oscar Romero, a Logan Heights Mexican-American Veteran, was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1942, and he was one of the founders of the Don Diego

¹ The Chicano Park Steering Committee Meeting Agendas are my personal copies.

Veterans of Foreign Wars Post (VFW). He helped in the founding of the VFW post, in 1955, because he was not allowed to be a member of any other VFW posts in San Diego due to his Mexican racial background (ibid). Today, the Don Diego VFW Post has over 550 active members, and it is located on Logan Avenue, a block south of Chicano Park. The Don Diego VFW Post is a physical marker of Barrio Logan's cultural landscape that affirms the contributions of Mexican-Americans to the U.S. war efforts. It is also a reminder of the racial discrimination Barrio Logan and Logan Heights' veterans faced in the 1950's.

As previously mentioned, the Chicano Park Steering Committee was established in 1970 to serve as community liaison during the twelve-day takeover of the State owned property that would ultimately be converted into Chicano Park. The Chicano Park Steering Committee meets once a month at Chicano Park's "*Kiosko*" to discuss current issues associated with the park. They review and approve mural proposals, schedule park activities, and supervise park improvement projects. As a grassroots community organization they attempt to oversee all activities at Chicano Park and in Barrio Logan. They are the backbone of Barrio Logan's cultural politics, as they curate San Diego's most widely visible cultural landscape of Chicana/o artistic political expression, Chicano Park.

The City of San Diego's Parks and Recreation Board oversees over 26 miles of shoreline, 56 recreational centers, and 340 parks, including Chicano Park. Prior to breaking-ground on the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial project, on Veterans Day 2008, the Logan Heights Veterans Committee was advised by the Parks and Recreation

Board to meet with the Chicano Park Steering Committee, as their support would be a good starting point of initiation for the project. This request, however, affirms the Chicano Park Steering Committee's ambiguous political power in San Diego.

San Diego City officials often relegate the Chicano Park Steering Committee as the cultural stewards of Chicano Park. Stacey Lo Medico, the former Director of the Parks and Recreation Board, viewed the Chicano Parks Steering Committee as partners of the Parks and Recreation Board. Yet, at the time of the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial debates, the Parks and Recreation Board did not officially recognize the Chicano Park Steering Committee as official representatives of the park. A letter sent to the Chicano Park Steering Committee's Chairwoman, Tommie Camarillo by Lo Medico on August 27, 2011 indicates that the Chicano Park Steering Committee is not an officially recognized advisory committee to the Parks and Recreation Board. The letter states that "as guardians of Chicano Park, the CPSC and members are valued partners with the Department in ensuring we are good stewards of this public park." The Letter goes on to mention "unless the organization is recognized via the process as an official park advisory committee, the overall park advisory role is with the Dolores Magdaleno Memorial Recreation Council." Indicating that the Parks and Recreation Board recognized the Chicano Park Steering Committee as "good partners" of the board, yet they remain subordinate subjects without a vote or a voice on the Parks and Recreation Board.

To this date, the Parks and Recreation Board do not recognize the Chicano Park Steering Committee as an official advisory committee. Subsequently, this lack of political

recognition has placed the Chicano Park Steering Committee outside the process of the “formal” administrative apparatus for San Diego’s parks. This prevents the Chicano Park Steering Committee from participating in decision-making initiatives. Despite the lack of formal political recognition from the city, the Chicano Park Steering Committee has, often, successfully challenged local and State policies that exclude Barrio Logan residents from obtaining adequate public recreational facilities. This is exemplified in their efforts to expand Chicano Park to the San Diego Bay. While Chicano Park did not expand all the way to the bay, the Chicano Park Steering Committee’s efforts resulted in the establishment of the multi-use Cesar Chavez Park on the San Diego Bay-front in 1987.

I bring the example of the establishment of Cesar Chavez Park forward to demonstrate how the U.S. Navy and the San Diego maritime industry have disregarded local (Barrio Logan and Logan Heights) concerns, and how their disregard for local concerns generated tensions with Barrio Logan community representatives, such as the Chicano Park Steering Committee. Because the committee has traditionally not been formally recognized as an advisory and voting institution, its only outlet to represent the Barrio Logan community has been through political pressure. The Chicano Park Steering Committee has been against the disregard of the community by the businesses that cater to the U.S. Navy. The case of establishing Cesar Chavez Park demonstrates how tensions in political ideology between the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial Committee and the Chicano Park Steering Committee have long established roots that are grounded in the

contentious and problematic role the U.S. Navy and the maritime industry have played in shaping Barrio Logan's built environment.

The establishment of the Cesar Chavez Park in Barrio Logan is important to recognize, as its foundation symbolizes a case where leaders of the San Diego maritime industry were adamantly opposed towards the use of bay front property for the development of a recreational public space in Barrio Logan. The Chicano Park Steering Committee, along with former California State Assemblyman Peter Chacon challenged San Diego's maritime industry in 1987, and by doing so acquired a 4-acre public park with access to the San Diego Bay. Subsequently, the acquisition of the Cesar Chavez Park resulted in changing the Chicano Park Steering Committee's slogan from "All the Way to the Bay" to "We are on the Bay." At the time Barrio Logan community representatives were demanding public bay access, Don L. Nay was the San Diego Port Director. Nay was opposed to using bay front land for public use, as he viewed the land on the San Diego Bay as beneficial to the accumulation of capital (DaRosa, June 19, 1981). In his view the land was more profitable in the hands of private industry than it would be in the public realm. He maintained that San Diego's maritime industry would collapse if land along San Diego's bay-front were be used for the production of public recreational space (ibid).

The shipyards in Barrio Logan cater to the U.S. Navy. Therefore the establishment of Cesar Chavez Park in San Diego is a case that demonstrates the complexity of Barrio Logan's spatial politics and social history. The U.S. Navy's connection to San Diego's maritime industry complicated the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial Committee's claim

for community (Barrio Logan) support for their veteran memorial monument, as the committee constituted a human element of the U.S. Navy's autocratic management style of the industrial political economy in Barrio Logan. As I demonstrated in the first chapter of this thesis, San Diego's maritime industry has been encroaching onto the Barrio Logan residential community since World War I and through the use of their political power they have established zoning laws that have prevented residential and public establishments to gain a permanent foothold on the San Diego Bay front.

After having examined the case of Cesar Chavez Park, I return to the negotiation process of the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial at Chicano Park. Ken Martinez, the Community Relations Coordinator for the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial Committee, first proposed the plans for the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial to the Chicano Park Steering Committee on Sunday, September 26, 2010. Members of the Chicano Park Steering Committee critiqued the proposed design due to it not complementing the artwork and cultural spirit of the park. The Logan Heights Veterans Committee proposed a black granite slate Veterans Memorial with no Chicana/o cultural emblems or markers that would contribute to Chicano Park's cultural aesthetics. The October 31, 2010 Chicano Park Steering Committee Meeting Agenda states under Old Business, Item 1 that "some people did not like the design and felt that it did not compliment the park at all, instead it looked like an ugly tombstone." Referring to the veteran's memorial as an ugly tombstone is statement of aesthetics, as it expresses the cultural value the Chicano Park Steering Committee imposes on the public artwork at Chicano Park.

At the meeting, Tommie Camarillo, asked Martinez for a digital copy of the proposal, particularly of the memorial's proposed design, so she could send it to absent members. This would allow other Chicano Park Steering Committee members to provide input and suggestions during the next scheduled meeting, scheduled for October 31, 2010. Martinez and a gentleman that was accompanying him were outraged at the critiques and the request that their proposal be tabled for the following month; Martinez stated, "It probably ends here." Martinez was correct as neither Martinez nor any other representative of the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial Committee attended the October 31, 2010 Chicano Park Steering Committee meeting, nor did they follow-up with Chairwomen Camarillo's request for a digital copy of the proposal.

The negotiations of the design and placement of the Veterans Memorial between the Chicano Park Steering Committee and the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial Committee came to a halt for nearly a year. During this time, the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial Committee sought the support from the Dolores Magdeleno Memorial Recreational Council, which was an advisory committee formally recognized by the San Diego Parks and Recreation Board. The Memorial Recreational Council is a community association that administrators the Dolores Magdeleno Memorial Recreation Center in Logan Heights. On June 14, 2011, the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial Committee's proposal gained the necessary endorsement from the Dolores Magdeleno Memorial Recreation Council, which now allowed it to move forward. On September 15, 2011, the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial Committee presented their proposal to the Parks and Recreation Board. They requested that the veterans memorial be install at Chicano Park,

a location they had been seeking to install the monument since 2008. This act symbolized the disenfranchisement of the Chicano Park Steering Committee's opinion over the design and placement of the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial.

The exclusion and neglect of the Chicano Park Steering Committee was primarily motivated by Ken Martinez's refusal to negotiate with the Chicano Park Steering Committee. Taking the matter to the Dolores Magdeleno Memorial Council reflected a new strategy for achieving the goal of erecting the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial at Chicano Park. The Chicano Park Steering Committee did not want to prevent the construction of the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial; instead they wanted a design that would be more inclusive of the cultural and political spirit of Chicano Park. Although the Chicano Park Steering Committee was angered with their displacement from the talks over the veteran's memorial, they lobbied the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial Committee and the Don Diego VFW Post to reconsider the aesthetic quality of the monument.

Opposing social historical developments and cultural experiences by Chicano Park Steering Committee and Logan Heights Veterans Committee members can be understood as a cohort generation debate. Sociologist Karl Mannheim (1923) argues that different generational groups share similar social locations, but have different experiences to social structures that conditioned their social history. Therefore, each cohort of generations are predisposed to hold a certain characteristic and attitude based on their experience in a particular social historical environment. In the case of the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial, most members of the Chicano Park Steering Committee are original founders

of the park. The era and the event that established Chicano Park in Barrio Logan was significant enough to the members of the Chicano Park Steering Committee that it continues to influence their political and cultural agenda.

On May 18, 2013, the Don Diego Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) post held a ceremony at Chicano Park to unveil the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial Monument. The final design did favor the Chicano Park Steering Committee's request. The Logan Heights Veterans Memorial is constructed of red india granite; its design resembles a Mesoamerican Maya stela. It has engravings of all the military branch logos, and the sides of the memorial are decorated with the pattern of the Chicano Park "*kiosko*," inspired by a Mesoamerican geometric pattern. All inscriptions on the memorial are writing in Old English lettering. This font style is associated with Chicana/o art and tattoos (Price, 2000). The top inscription reads, "Logan Heights Veterans Memorial." Below it are the engraved military branches emblems. At the base of the monument are two phrases. The first is in Spanish and reads, "Que Dios Bendiga Nuestros Veteranos." The second is the English slogan associated with most Veterans Memorials, "Honor Them By Remembering."

The Spanish phrase and English slogan reflect a social value that is embedded in notions of performing U.S. patriotism and Latina/o cultural values. Unlike the U.S. Army's recruitment campaign, "*Yo Soy EL Army*," which was aimed at being a bilingual tactic to recruit Latina/o youth (Pérez, 2012), the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial's slogans are not in Spanglish, nor do they appear to be a single quote. The Spanish phrase, *Que Dios Bendiga Nuestros Veteranos* (*May God Bless our Veterans*), does not only

indicate a religious claim for the protection of war veterans, but, it also, is a claim to Spanish-speaking forms of community belonging, forms that are imbedded in the Coloniality of Power. Anibal Quijano's concept of the Coloniality of Power is the continuity of racial, class, and ethnic hierarchical categories that persist in Latin America long after the wars of independence. The Spanish language in Latin America is a linguistic condition resulting from Spanish colonialism. Due to Latin American migration to the U.S., the Spanish language now structures the linguistic hierarchical conditions of Latinidad. Therefore, the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial is a bid for Latina/o service men and women to national political inclusion and local recognition for their contributions to the U.S. war efforts.

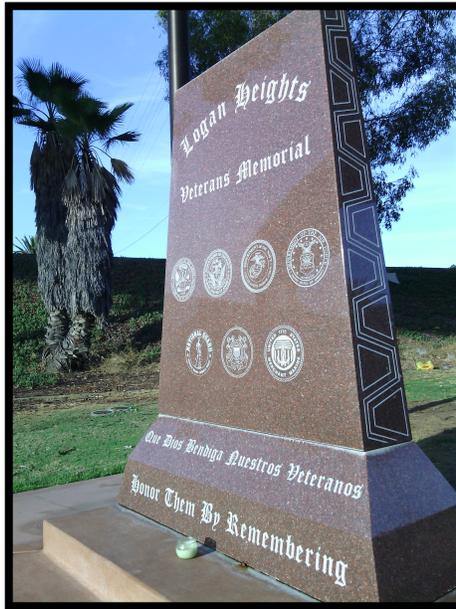


Figure 4: Logan Heights Veterans Memorial

The U.S. Flag and Perspectives on Chicana/o Aztlán

At the crux of the Veterans Memorial debate was the inclusion of a flagpole to the memorial's design. The inclusion of a flagpole to the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial became a polemic infrastructural and aesthetic issue. The September 15, 2011, Park and Recreation Board Agenda meeting indicates that the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) found it necessary to eliminate the flagpole from the design, as it would violate right-of-way land parcel regulations. Members of the Chicano Park Steering Committee had also been concerned with the incorporation of the flagpole because it would ultimately fly the U.S. Flag.

Concerning the Chicano Park Steering Committee, this issue was previously raised in a meeting on October 31, 2010. Certain members did not find the U.S. Flag to be a complementary element to the park's aesthetics. The political and cultural aesthetics of Chicano Park include a logic that is rooted in opposition to U.S. imperialism, militarism, and colonialism. The inclusion of a veteran's memorial along with the U.S. Flag at Chicano Park challenged the political and cultural ideology that is expressed in the themes of the park's murals. Paintings of Che Guevara, Emiliano Zapata, Dolores Huerta, along with the ancient Mexica deity Quetzalcoatl are few of the Latina/o socio-cultural dignitaries that embellish the Coronado Bay Bridge Pillars. Chairwoman Tommie Camarillo explained in regards to the U.S. Flag that,

it represents oppression of our people by the government here in the United States. It also represents prejudice against our people from racist groups such as the KKK, Minutemen, neo-Nazi's, etc., who use the flag to justify their groups. Even though many of us are American citizens, we feel that the flag doesn't truly represent us.

Tommie Camarillo's statement affirms that as a U.S. citizen, she does not feel politically represented or culturally included in the United States. Prior to the establishment of the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial the only flag to have flown at the park was the Chicano Park Flag.

The Chicano Park Flag includes the Chicano Park Steering Committee's logo, which includes a map of the U.S. with the land acquired from Mexico after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. The Southwest portion of the U.S. is colored in red, and a hand reaches-out-in-a-fist over San Diego. The words Aztlán are spelled over Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. Above the map is, one of the two Chicano Park slogans, "La Tierra Mia." Below the map is the other slogan, "We are on the Bay," which is a reference to the founding of Cesar Chavez Park on the San Diego Bay-front in 1987. Below the, "We are on the Bay" slogan are the words Chicano Park. The date April 22, 1970 is to the left of the U.S. map and words San Diego are to the right of the map. The U.S. Flag was also of concern to other Chicano organizations. Union del Barrio also criticizes the plans to fly the U.S. Flag at Chicano Park.

Similar, to the Chicano Park Steering Committee logo and the themes of the Chicano Park murals, Union del Barrio's logo is associated with cultural and political connection to ancient Mesoamerica. Union del Barrio is an organization devoted to protecting and preventing police brutality, border patrol harassment, and gentrification in Mexican and Chicana/o barrios. Pablo Gonzalez is a prolific member of the San Diego Chapter of Union del Barrio. I interviewed him at Chicano Park, in July 2014, after an eight-mile political action march in San Diego organized by Union del Barrio and the San

Diego chapter of the Brown Berets of Aztlán. The goal of the march was to raise awareness of police and border patrol brutality in the Mexican-American communities of National City, Logan Heights, and Barrio Logan. The profile of the ancient Mexica ruler, Cuatémoc is Union de Barrio's logo.

Pablo told me it is "El Caballero Aguila," and that Union del Barrio chose El Caballero Aguila as their logo due to the message of empowerment it invokes. He told me that the logo is in "black and red because they are the colors of huelga" (strike). Pablo explained that Cuatémoc gave Chicanos the legacy of resistance and defiance. He said that Cuatémoc was "the person that gave us that 500 year legacy of saying: you know what, if I am going to go to heaven to be with the Spaniards, then I rather go to hell, go ahead and do what you are going to do with me!"

Pablo continued to speak about resistance and defiance as a strategy for political mobilization in Barrio Logan. He stated that Chicanos, "reserve the right to be defiant and that is why you saw a smaller march today," Pablo was indicating that few people attended the march due to his organization's political ideologies of defiance against the State. Indeed, the march was not well attended, as it was not "formally" organized with the cities permission, rather, it was an ad hoc march; participants met at Kimball Park in National City and marched on the sidewalks until they reached Chicano Park. We carried Mexican Flags and signs that read; "Raza Si Migra No," "Chicano Power," and "No Racist Police." Pablo carried a large red flag with Union del Barrio's Logo (Cuatémoc). He told me, "we don't have large American Flags, what we did have was our stuff, because we are speaking to our people," Pablo was referring to the use of the U.S. Flag

by pro-immigration activists during the nationwide massive marches of 2006, and by doing so he was disassociating himself and Union del Barrio from pandering for permission to be included into the U.S. Anglo hegemonic State. Union del Barrio's belief is that Chicana/os do not need permission to belong in the U.S. He explained that "maybe resistance and defiance are not the greatest things if they are disjointed and don't have a purpose, but an organized collective defiance and resistance is very important." He went on to explain; "It is about rebelling against this," Pablo pointed up to the freeway overpasses, and "that," he pointed to towards the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial. Without the resistance of Chicana/o activists and their act of defiance against the State in 1970, Chicano Park would have not been established in Barrio Logan. Instead of a public park there would be a Highway Patrol Station. The Chicano Civil Rights Movement's resiliency in San Diego maintains a strong foothold because the I-5 Freeway, the Coronado Bay Bridge, and San Diego's shipyards are daily reminders of spatial racialized oppression Chicana/os face in San Diego.

The Chicano Park Steering Committee and Union del Barrio's logos are indicators of Chicano Park's geopolitical and cultural ties to the Chicana/o concept of Aztlán, which became the ideological concept that generated the human agency needed to fuel the Chicano Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's. As a sociopolitical construct, Aztlán introduced the discourse of Chicano nationalism, and called for Chicana/os to take control over their communities. Therefore, the concept of Aztlán further complicated the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial Committee's strategy of obtaining political and cultural recognition in Barrio Logan through a non-Chicana/o stylized Veterans

Memorial monument. Both Union del Barrio and the Chicano Park Steering Committee endorse the concept of Aztlán, which was introduced in 1969 at the Denver Youth Liberation Conference.

In March of 1969, in an effort to unify and draw together the various Chicana/o organizations, Rodolfo “Corky” Gonzales and the *Crusada para La Justicia* (Crusade for Justice) organized the Denver Youth Liberation Conference (Bebout, 2011; Sabrina and Price, 2011). Thousands of Chicano activists attended the conference in Denver, Colorado; among them was San Diegan activist and poet Alberto Urista, whose professional name is Alurista. He is distinguished as the architect of the concept of Aztlán (Ortiz, 2007). On the final day of the conference, *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* (The Spiritual Plan of Aztlán) was unveiled (Bebout, 2009; Sabrina and Price, 2011). It is in The Plan’s preamble, written by San Diego’s Alurista, that the claim of an existing lineage between the ancestral homeland of the Aztecs and Chicanos is made (Bebout, 2011).

Since the 1969 Denver Youth Liberation Conference, Chicana/os forged an Indigenous Mexica (Aztec) heritage. The concept of Aztlán is embedded in Mesoamerican archaeology, ethnohistory, and the establishment of the U.S.-Mexico border. Lee Bebout (2011:7) refers to Aztlán as a “mythohistorical homeland” for Chicanos in the present American Southwest, he explains that the mythohistorical term is “an integrated network of myths and histories” that is interwoven in both Mexican-American history and Aztec (Mexica) mythology. Post-processual archaeologist, Ian Hodder (1991) notes that people, particularly ethnic minorities, use archaeology to define

their social, political, and cultural position within the dominant culture. Similar to the ways the ancient Mexica incorporated the creation myths of other peoples into their own migration story (Matos-Moctezuma, 2003; Zamundio-Taylor, 2001), Chicana/os incorporated the Mexica's "out-of-Aztlán" pilgrimage myth and appropriated it as their own diaspora. As a concept it helped generate claims of authenticity and geopolitical belonging for the Chicano Park Steering Committee and Union del Barrio in San Diego.

Aztlán draws-upon the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo—the end result of the Mexican-American war (1846-1848), to justify claims of belonging to the American Southwest. The changing cultural and perilous environmental trends at Barrio Logan during the Chicano Civil Rights Movement encouraged the community of Barrio Logan to demand a community park in 1970. Today, the concept of Aztlán has life in San Diego, as Chairwoman Camarillo proudly asserted to me, "Chicano Park represents a piece of the land taken back as a part of Aztlán." Therefore, to include the U.S. Flag at Chicano Park and a non-Chicana/o stylized Veterans Memorial was viewed as an insulting act to Chicano Park's cultural and political dynamics, which are within a Chicana/o spatial imaginary that is based on geopolitical and cultural ties to the concept of Aztlán.

The Chicano Civil Rights Movement was successful in molding a selective collective Chicana/o identity in the 1960's under the ideology of the concept of Aztlán². As author of the article, *The Story of Chicano Park*, Eva Cockcroft (1984:81) explains,

² This collective identity, however, has also been influenced by various cultural, political, economic, racial, gender and sexuality factors that were not clearly acknowledged in the goals of

[t]his period was the apex of the movement towards ethnic awareness. Developing a Chicano consciousness, rediscovering a forgotten history, and defining a new identity that expressed their Indian/Spanish/ European/ American selves became crucial to young activists.

Cockcroft recognizes that Chicana/o identity is multifaceted because it includes Indigenous, Spanish, Mexican, and Anglo antecedents (Vigil, 2002). While Chicana/os involved with the Chicana/o Civil Rights Movement identified with a Mestizo (a mix of Spanish, Indian, and Black) heritage, they placed great emphasis on a romanticized version of their Mesoamerican, Pre-Columbian indigenous ancestry. By articulating the rhetoric of a collective Mexica past Chicana/os were able to establish a sense of human agency in the United States. By appropriating the Mexica ancestral homeland myth of Aztlán, Chicana/os forged a very selective Indigenous identity, an identity that is entangled in a Chicana/o cultural and spatial imaginary³. These two elements of entanglement are visible in the themes of the Chicano Park murals and in the cultural politics of the Chicano Park Steering Committee.

Archaeologist Francis Berdan (2005) reminds us that sixteenth century chronicles state that the Mexica (Aztecs) migrated to what is now the Valley of Mexico from a place called Aztlán (Place of the Herons). Berdan (2005: 4) explains that the

The Plan of Aztlán. Chicano nationalists of the 1960's obscured the significance of intracultural contributions to the greater Chicano Civil Rights Movement (Alacron, 1992). Women, the Lesbian Gay Transgender Bisexual Queer (LGTBQ) community, and Indigenous peoples in the Southwest and in Mexico were marginalized and their contributions were not taken into full account during the drafting of The Plan of Aztlán.

³ By focusing on the Southwest, The Plan de Aztlán did not take into full account the many Native American nations that exist in the Southwest. Nor did it acknowledge the many indigenous cultures that exist and existed in Mesoamerica: it focuses primarily on the Aztecs and Maya—the two dominant themes in the cultural expressions at Chicano Park.

exact location of Aztlán is in hot dispute: some claim it was as distant as the southwestern United States; others, as close as 60 miles northwest of the final destination of the Mexica. There is general agreement, however, that Aztlán was probably located in a northwesterly direction from the Basin of Mexico.

Amongst those that agree that Aztlán is in a northwestern location of the Basin of Mexico are the drafters of The Plan of Aztlán. Cooper-Alarcón (1992) suggests that the concept of Chicana/o Aztlán, be re-examined and looked at as a “palimpsest” that encompasses the present-day diversity of Mexico and the intracultural differences of Chicana/os in the United States. He contends that the Chicano’s of the 1960’s did not fully understand the complexity the symbol of Aztlán invoked (Cooper-Alarcon, 1992). Pérez-Torres (1997), on the other hand, contends that Aztlán is a borderland in a “hybrid world,” where Chicana/o identity is not merely based on the political, mythical, and geographical realms of Aztlán. Moreover, Pérez-Torres (1997:31), considers Aztlán a paradox, as he asserts, “it maintains cultural traditions while promoting assimilation into Anglo-American culture; it affirms indigenous ancestry while simultaneously erasing the very historical, cultural, and geographic specificity of that ancestry.” Conversely, Mesoamerican scholars that are concerned with Aztlán scholarship consider it to be embedded in myth, and that is what makes it difficult to separate the facts from the Mexica’s migration to the Basin of Mexico (Berdan, 2005).

Despite the lack of archaeological data to support theories of Aztlán as a homeland for Chicanos, the concept serves as a Chicana/o cultural marker that invokes political empowerment. Members of the Chicano Park Steering Committee recognize Aztlán as an agency marker that justifies the presence of Chicano Park and themselves in San Diego.

They do not consider themselves foreigners nor immigrants, but the offspring of the original inhabitants of the Mexica, which have returned to their ancestral homeland (Anaya, 1989; Price, 2000). Subsequently, as “modern-day Aztecs” they have had complications returning to and gaining control of their rightful ancestral lands because of the political boundary that now exists between Mexico and the United States, which was placed after the signing of Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 (Price, 2000). Therefore, Aztlán, as a cultural symbol, is significantly represented in the Chicano Park Murals.

The political and cultural impact of placing a veterans memorial at Chicano Park is underscored by Barrio Logan’s social history. The placement of the Aztlán inspired Logan Heights Veterans Memorial at Chicano Park reflects power struggles in the planning and design process of producing a public monument that affirms cultural forms of belonging and political inclusion, not only, for Mexican-American and Latina/o service men and women, but also for Chicana/os living in Barrio Logan. Both groups assert pride in their Mexican and Mestizo/Indigenous heritage, yet their perspectives to how vocal they should be against the manner in which the U.S. Government has incorporated Mexican origin people within its polity is a point of disagreement. Chicano Park Steering Committee members continue to view themselves as a colonized people, while the veterans prefer to emphasize the contributions Mexican-Americans have achieved in building the nation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined a cultural monument located in a public park with a contentious spatial social history. My aim was to provide an account on the San Diego

Chicana/o cultural and political experience as it intersects with U.S patriotism and militarism in San Diego, California. The Logan Heights Veterans Memorial is a case study that reflects instances of negotiated National (U.S.) and Local (community) forms of cultural and political belonging for racial and ethnic minority military servicemen. In the context of cultural belonging and political exclusion, this chapter aimed to illustrate how easily agents of the U.S. government can exclude Mexican Americans from important decisions at both the local and National level. However, I have illustrated that communities do fight back against their marginalization. The following chapter will provide more examples of how Barrio Logan community artists and activists continue to fight against political marginalization.

Chapter Three: Contesting Urban Space

The influx of heavy and light industrial business along the San Diego Bay and Downtown San Diego residential and entertainment areas are slowly encroaching into Barrio Logan. The growth of residential, industrial, and entertainment projects in San Diego have motivated investors to look toward Barrio Logan for potential development opportunities. Yet, the types of business prospects that have generally existed in Barrio Logan have been those that cater to the industrial maritime market. Over the years, this resulted in an increase of traffic and the use of heavy diesel trucks to enter into Barrio Logan. Subsequently, contributing to the air pollution in the area. The neighborhood's location under and adjacent to freeways exposes it to high levels of air pollution, and the mix-use 1978 Barrio Logan Community Plan further exposes the community to environmental hazards, as heavy industry can legally operate adjacent to residential homes. The community's exposure to environmental hazard has not gone unchallenged, as community organizations have actively resisted environmentally hazardous redevelopments to enter and operate in the area.

The Environmental Health Coalition has successfully tackled many environmental health ills caused by Barrio Logan's mix-use 1978 zoning ordinances. Their goal is to improve the environmental health and quality of life of minority urban neighborhoods. One of the organization's top priorities is to eliminate businesses that use hazardous chemicals and produce unnecessary pollution from operating in highly vulnerable neighborhoods, such as Barrio Logan. To achieve this goal they have been lobbying the San Diego City Council for over 30 years. In 2008 the Environmental Health Coalition

facilitated the Barrio Logan Community Plan Stakeholder meetings, and in 2014 they spearheaded a political campaign against the maritime industry's No on B and C campaign. The No on B and C campaign was against Propositions B and C, which were two propositions that would uphold the City Council's endorsement of the 2013 Barrio Logan Community Plan.

Propositions B and C were citywide proposals on the 2014 primary election ballot. In fact, they were the end result of a referendum imposed on the 2013 Barrio Logan Community Plan by representatives of San Diego's maritime industry. A vote to approve the propositions meant that the 2013 Plan would be upheld in Barrio Logan, and a vote to reject the propositions indicated that all zoning in the area would continue to be stipulated under the 1978 Barrio Logan Community Plan ordinances—in other words, there would be no change in the hazardous mix-use zoning laws. Therefore, the Environmental Health Coalition found it crucial that Propositions B and C pass and not be rejected by the voters.

In this chapter, I will examine the San Diego government's history of excluding the Mexican-American population of Barrio Logan from participating in local and national decisions making processes. I argue that Barrio Logan's residential core was perceived to be a threat to the accumulation of capital by San Diego's maritime industry. Therefore, the maritime industry pushed forward to place a referendum on the 2013 Barrio Logan Community Plan. As I have demonstrated in Chapter Two, San Diego's maritime industry has expressed long-term interest in Barrio Logan without taking into account the community's needs. This was the case during the debates over establishing the multi-use

Cesar Chavez Park along Barrio Logan's Bay-front in 1987.

In 2014, the maritime industry gained the necessary support to impose a referendum on the first community plan in Barrio Logan backed by the San Diego City Council in 35 years. This resulted in allowing the entire voting population of San Diego to cast their opinion over the future land-use policies in Barrio Logan. Voters were given the opportunity to reject or uphold the 2013 Barrio Logan Community Plan, and on June 3, 2014 city voters rejected Propositions B and C. Placing the measures on a citywide ballot did not only devalue the San Diego City Council's power, but it also prevented Barrio Logan residents to be free agents in determining the future land use of their community. The referendum activated Chicana/o creative sectors to resist the industrial urban restructuring of Barrio Logan. For that reason, this chapter will, also, examine the cultural productions of resistance that were activated to oppose the referendum on the 2013 Barrio Logan Community Plan. I do this to provide an ethnographic account on Chicana/o environmental justice activism in Barrio Logan.

Racialized Spatial Arrangements

In San Diego, spatial restructuring provisions have benefited industry and freeway construction over the residential base of Barrio Logan. In an interview with the San Diego Union Tribune on April 24, 2014, the former director of the Southwest Naval Region, Rear Admiral Len Hering stated, in reference to Barrio Logan, "I must question why people want to live here next to shipyards where they have been complaining about this for years" (Showley, 2014: April 24). Rear Admiral Hering's quote dismisses San Diego's history of restrictive racial covenants, racial zoning, and insurance redlining that

prevented Mexican-Americans to live or open businesses outside of the Logan Heights area (Norris, 1983). These provisions facilitated national and local sponsored urban restructuring programs, such as the 1956 Freeway Act and the mix-use zoning laws imposed on the community of Barrio Logan in 1978.

The cultural landscapes of Barrio Logan include urban residential space along side heavy industrial shipyards. The community of Barrio Logan fought a seventeen-year fight with city, State, and maritime industry officials that resulted in establishing Cesar Chavez Park in 1987; this is the only public access available to Barrio Logan residents to the San Diego Bay-front. The island community of Coronado is located on the opposite-end of the Coronado Bay Bridge from Barrio Logan. It is a visible indicator of the racial wealth divide in the City of San Diego. Similar to Barrio Logan, the Coronado community is adjacent to a military base, The North Island Air Station. Yet, unlike Barrio Logan, the affluent community of Coronado does have public access to San Diego's shoreline and to the San Diego Bay via the Coronado Beach and the Coronado Tidelands Park. This is in stark contrast to the urban condition of Barrio Logan, as the barrio community's bay-front is obstructed by heavy industry. To this day, the community of Barrio Logan has not had a beach, at least not since the community was the Anglo suburb of the East End (Delgado, 1998).

Meizhu Lui's (2006) addresses the structural causes of wealth disparities by analyzing the historical interplay between economic interest, racial prejudice, and discriminatory policies that have shaped the current racial wealth divide. Lui (2006) argues that people of color, such as Native Americans, African Americans, Latinos, and

Asian Americans, have been “barred” from “participating in government wealth building programs that benefited White Americans,” and that discriminatory laws and violence are part of the government’s role in influencing the racial wealth divide. Therefore, the local government’s interest in upholding and creating a racial divide is imbedded in what George Lipsitz (2011) theorizes as the “white spatial imaginary.” The theoretical basis of the white spatial imaginary is in U.S. society White affluent males through the manipulation of the political apparatus determine the zoning of our environmental resources, which in term dictate where jobs become available, what type of public infrastructure will be locally available, which neighborhoods will become warehouses for industries or zoned for beautification. Lipsitz argues that under the prerogative of the white spatial imaginary, space is “the locus for the generation of exchange value” (Lipsitz, 2011: 30), but he reminds us that in the United States space is a racial project that benefits Whites.

Two key elements that have historically structured Whiteness and the white spatial imaginary is the power and wealth white men have to convert government property into private property that leads to creating wealth for them. Lipsitz (2011: 35) explains that Whites are not inherently racist, but that they do favor zoning ordinances and land use initiatives, which “produce a certain kind of whiteness that offers extraordinary inducements and incentives for a system of privatization that has drastic racial consequences.” The political economy of San Diego’s maritime industry, I argue should be understood in relation to the accumulation of wealth the city gains by supporting the maritime industries private interests, rather than the Mexican-American community in

Barrio Logan. Therefore, if we understand Whiteness as a condition that favors policies that increase the privatization of land use, then the 2014 referendum on the 2013 Barrio Logan Plan is an instance where the political economy of space and the “white spatial imaginary” merge.

Anthropologist, Patricia Zavella (2010: 4) concurring with Lipsitz, argues that race is not a preexisting condition, but rather emerges “out of racial projects in which the content and salience of racial categories are constructed so as to enforce white privilege.” Underscoring this argument, Lipsitz (2011: 37) explains, “Whiteness is a structured advantage subsidized by segregation.” Therefore, whiteness is a social condition that privileges its members, and it is a privileged condition in U.S. society. It carries visible characteristics that establish social and economic conduits that allow white people to benefit from what Hector Amaya (2013) terms “citizenship excess.” As a phenotype, it is a characteristic that unfortunately dictates the livelihood, success, and health of individuals.

The white spatial imaginary builds on the theory advanced by Nestor Rodriguez on the political economy of space because it adds a racial aspect to the entanglement of space and the accumulation of capital for private enterprises in urban settings, such as Barrio Logan. As previously mentioned in Chapter One, Nestor Rodriguez (2012) reminds us that the political economy of space is the restructuring of urban space for the prosperity of capital growth. Rodriguez (2012: 96), also, reminds us that real estate patterns suggest, “that barrios located near central business districts are at risk for partial or complete displacement.” In the case of Barrio Logan, San Diego city officials adjusted

San Diego's urban condition via racialized spatial arrangements in the early and mid 20th century, and over time this discriminatory spatial alteration on the urban landscape has compelled private investors and city officials to unjustly implement and regulate urban renewal policies that have had adverse economic, environmental, and political consequences to the Mexican-American community of Barrio Logan.

The Cultural Staging of Chicana/o Environmental Justice

The Environmental Health coalition has collaborated with various San Diego Chicana/o artists to visually illustrate Barrio Logan's environmental degradation. An outcome of this partnership resulted in the creation of *Save Barrio Logan* and *Porque Nosotros* murals at Chicano Park in 1996. The Environmental Health Coalition partnered with San Diego muralist Mario Torero and Carmen Kalo Linares to collaborate on the "FUERZA" team⁴. The goal was to create a community collaborative art project that reflected how Barrio Logan residents viewed their neighborhood. Georgette Gomez was born in Barrio Logan and is the current Associate Director of the Environmental Health Coalition's Toxic Free Neighborhoods program, she explained to me "community members provided input to Mario on what they saw in Barrio Logan, he then painted the ideas on canvas." The next process was to replicate the canvas piece into a mural at Chicano Park. Mario Torero has been a long-time and important mural artist at Chicano Park; in 1978 he painted a mural at Chicano Park dedicated to *La Virgen de Guadalupe*.

⁴ The name of the murals and mural collaborators is available thanks to the Department of Ethnic Studies at the University of San Diego and the Chicano Park Steering Committee's "Chicano Park 2015 Murals Documentation Project."



Figure 5: Mario Torero's *La Virgen De Guadalupe* Mural and Rose Garden

Mario Torrero's, *La Virgen de Guadalupe* mural elegantly floats over an uncluttered and always well-groomed community rose and succulent plants garden. Parks and Recreation employees do not maintain the garden, but rather two community members have been dedicating their time to planting and caring for it. A man named Jose and a homeless gentleman known as El Tio (The Uncle) water, groom, and clean the garden on a daily basis. The garden also includes a shrine with a small *Virgen de Guadalupe* statue. "I saw a big mess," Jose told me as I helped him carry a bucket full of water. He explained that "before the garden there was just an old tree, weeds, trash, and

dirt” in the area. Today, the garden is bordered with red, white, and green rocks, that Jose painted. Jose and El Tio play a pivotal role in keeping Chicano Park clean, but their hard work and effort is seldom publicly recognized. Jose and El Tio get frustrated at the people that do not respect the garden, “they cut the roses and put them on the alter, why do they do that?” Jose exclaimed to me. Jose and El Tio have personalized Chicano Park’s landscape, and by doing so they embody the political memory of the activist movement that established Chicano Park. As mentioned in Chapter One of this thesis, on April 22, 1970, community members and activists drove-off a construction crew that was building a Highway Patrol Station in Barrio Logan. When the construction crew left the premises that would later become Chicano Park, people started to plant magueys and other plants at the location. They did not seek permission from any governmental agency to personalize the land under the bridge. Acting in the spirit of his predecessors, Jose decided to plant roses and other plants in front of Mario Torero’s mural. In the afternoons, Jose rides his bike to Chicano Park, as he rides he juggles an empty water bucket and a shovel. After Jose and El Tio clean and water the garden, Jose takes the statue of the *Virgen de Guadalupe* home with him, along with the bucket and the shovel. In the mornings he brings the statue back to Chicano Park and places it in the garden.

Murals painted at Chicano Park during the 1970’s display themes of Mesoamerican deities, Catholic religious figures, and Mexican and Latin American revolutionary heroes. After the first wave of murals that were painted at the park, the Chicano Park Steering Committee sponsored a massive mural project. The project was termed a “Muralthon,” as the Chicano Park Steering Committee aimed to paint eleven murals within 1977 and 1978

(Cockcroft, 1984). Among the murals painted during the “Muralthon,” was Mario Torrero’s 1978 famous *La Virgen de Guadalupe* mural, and Susan Yamagata’s and Michael Schnorr’s *Coatlque* mural.⁵ Both murals share the same pillar, but are on opposite sides of each other. *La Virgen de Guadalupe* is particularly appealing to those that are marginalized, and have suffered cultural, geographic, and economic displacement. To Mexicans and Mexican-Americans, *La Virgen de Guadalupe* is considered to be *La Reina de Mexico* (the queen of Mexico), the *Emperatriz de America* (the empress of America), and the sacred mother of all Chicana/os (Carrasco, 2003, 2008).

La Virgen de Guadalupe is a contradictory figure; on one hand she is a product of Mexican Independence from Spain. On the other, she served as a tool for the spiritual colonization of the Indigenous people in New Spain. As her apparition myth tells, *La Virgen de Guadalupe* first appeared on *El Cerró de Tepeyac* before the Indian Juan Diego on December 9, 1531 (Anzaldúa, 1987). Juan Diego is now a Catholic saint; his name is San Juan Diego (Urrieta, 2003). Demonstrating that *La Virgen de Guadalupe* is symbolic of the colonial transformation that turned Indians into Mestizos, or as Diego Vigil’s acclaimed book title affirms, “From Indians to Chicanos.”

Chicana/os just as the *Virgen de Guadalupe* are complex, often contradictory, political and cultural figures in American society. Luis Urrieta (2003: 149) writes about

⁵ In Aztec or Mexica myth of *Coatepec*, *Coatlque* is the mother of *Huitzilopochtli*—the patron deity of the Mexica and god of the sun and war (Carrasco and Matos Moctezuma, 2003). Yamagata and Schnorr are the first non-Chicana/os to paint a mural at Chicano Park (Cockcroft, 1984).

visiting a small Catholic Chapel, located in the Eastern band of the Cherokee's Nation, dedicated to *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, he explains,

“I was touched by the image of a Mexica goddess on stained glass, with a Cherokee Indian at her feet in the colonizer's church in a state within a neo imperialist country decorated with Dixie flags”

To his surprise, Juan Diego was not portrayed in this stain glassed image of *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, in his place stood a Cherokee Indian dressed in Cherokee traditional attire. Moreover, Urrieta (2003:150) explains that “below the image of *Tonantsi* read an inscription: Patron of all Captive People.” Urrieta's example is an affirmation that in the United States the *Virgen de Guadalupe's* image is not only found in the Latina/o barrios, such as Barrio Logan, but, also, in reservations and in locations where people are oppressed and marginalized. It is no surprise that the mural dedicated to her at Chicano Park plays a pivotal role of empowerment to Barrio Logan residents, such as El Tio and Jose.

The persistence of the cultural memory of the activism that established Chicano Park in Barrio Logan was reflected in the art pieces showcased at the May 31, 2014 “Until Our Last Breath” art exhibit at the Chicano Art Gallery on Logan Avenue. Barrio urbanism theorist, David Diaz (2005: 233) reminds us, “[c]ommunity organization and developing confidence to oppose powerful special interest is dependent on cultural identity and communal solidarity.” Therefore, local Barrio Logan artists showcased their social and environmental justice artwork at this exhibit.

I was struck by artwork that reflected the resiliency of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement's cultural legacies. In an art piece painted by Hector Villegas, the Coronado

Bay Bridge morphs into the Pre-Columbian Mesoamerican deity, Quetzalcoatl (the feather serpent). Below the hybrid Coronado Bay Bridge-Quetzalcoatl, stands an androgynous person wearing a gas mask and holding a sign that reads, “Help Me Vote Yes on B and C.” The Coronado Bay Bridge has become an important identity marker for the Chicana/o community of Barrio Logan, and elements of it have made their way into political art pieces. For example, is Villegas art piece, “Help Me Vote Yes on B and C. ” It is a remarkable piece with political and cultural thematic significance. Politically it represents the resiliency of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement in San Diego. Culturally, it demonstrates the importance of Chicana/o Aztlán to the community of Barrio Logan, as the Coronado Bay Bridge becomes entangled with Quetzalcoatl.



Figure 6: Help Me Vote Yes on B and C by Hector Villegas

The art piece is painted on a three dimensional replica of a Coronado Bay Bridge

Pillar. This three-dimensional art piece can also be considered a mobile sculpture. The miniature Coronado Bay Bridge pillar is constructed from a product known as “ecor.” Novel Environmental Technologies created and donated the miniature Coronado Bay Bridge pillar replica to Hector Villegas and the Environmental Health Coalition, for their use in press conferences concerning propositions B and C.

Novel Environmental Technologies is a business located in Barrio Logan. While the company has become engaged with the Logan community and its managers are culturally and environmentally conscious, I question the motives of the company and the consequences corporate sponsorship can have on representations of Chicano Park. Does this mark a turning point in Chicana/o environmental justice activism in Barrio Logan? This question requires further research to be answered. What is important to note, however, is that at this time the company is trying to reach out to the community, and forge a good relationship. The ecor material the company has given Chicano Park members to shape the art piece is a welcomed contribution that helps to maintain the beautiful representation of the landscape of Chicano Park. The company’s contribution also indicated that Novel Environmental Technologies supported Barrio Logan and its activism in favor of Propositions B and C.

Exercising Political Agency

A week prior to Election Day, Georgette Gomez contacted me through Facebook, she asked if I wanted to phone-bank for the Environmental Health Coalition. I had never been involved with a political campaign, so phone banking was new to me. Yet, I was hesitant to phone bank on behalf of the Environmental Health Coalition, as I feared my

subjectivity would hinder my study on the production and consumption of urban space in Barrio Logan. Yet, I understood the environmental degradation and perilous consequences caused by discriminatory, or lack of proper, zoning in Barrio Logan, so I agreed to volunteer.

Most of the campaign volunteers for the Yes on B and C campaign were students from San Diego State University, others were residents of Barrio Logan and Logan Heights—some were both students and residents of the area. We were given a form with statistical data on the environmental and human health problems that exist in Barrio Logan. By volunteering with the Environmental Health Coalition, I witnessed how a non-profit environmental justice organization pushed forward with limited funds to fight against a million dollar campaign. Through this opportunity, I met David Alvarez; he is the city council member for district 8 (Barrio Logan's district). His aides told me that people living in district 6—which in colloquial geographic terms is outside of the metropolitan area of San Diego, yet legally district 6 constitutes a section of the City of San Diego—were voting on the propositions. Therefore, people living in Rancho Bernardo an affluent mostly Anglo community that is more geographically culturally connected to and associated with North County San Diego voted on the measure. This is an example of how gerrymandering reshapes the geographical landscape to benefit those with power and capital and disenfranchise those at the economic, racial, and political margins.

I spoke with other volunteers, our conversations revolved around the issues at stake with Propositions B and C. A pressing question we all had been asking; what if the voters

did not approve Propositions B and C? What would be the consequences? First, and possibly most important was the fact that the 2013 Community Plan would not go into effect in Barrio Logan. Therefore, the mix-use zoning ordinances in Barrio Logan would remain the same—industrial and hazardous businesses would be able to open next to residential homes. Second, was the issue of the referendum, as it was a measure that denied the community of Barrio Logan the right to exercise their political agency. Therefore, it was crucial that Propositions B and C passed, as the referendum imposed on the 2013 plan was an act of discrimination to a neighborhood that has experience many acts of racial and environmental injustices throughout its history. Finally, at stake were the five-years of negotiations, community meetings, and the environmental reports that informed the 2013 community plan. This is not just an economic cost, but also an opportunity cost, as it disillusioned community members from the democratic process and tribulations associated with legal apparatus of place and space making.

I woke-up at 5:30am on Election Day, I along with the leaders of the community of Barrio Logan had been looking forward to this day. I had been volunteering my time for the Yes on B and C campaign. I held a “Yes on B and C” sign on the corner of Cesar Chavez Avenue and Main Street in Barrio Logan. This location was the legally allowed distance from a polling station for demonstrators to stage any manifestation. The polling station was located inside of Ryan Brothers Coffee Shop. Georgette and I stood in the hot Californian sun, holding the signs and waving them to passersby. We received mixed responses to our presence. They varied from supportive to hostile. I must mention that Cesar Chavez Avenue is a highly used street, as it is a freeway exit and it provides access

to the shipyards. Therefore, our presence with the “Yes on B and C” campaign signs generated mixed emotions. On the one hand, we were in the urban core of Barrio Logan. We were a block west of Chicano Park and near the only grocery store in the area—Northgate Gonzalez Market. On the other, we were on the main road used by shipyard employees. The pedestrians we encountered would give us a thumbs-up in approval and say *Si!* or Yes! Others drove by and honked, but some would drive by and yell an angered filled No! One man, gestured with his middle finger “no,” and before proceeding to drive-away in his Ford F-150 truck he yelled; “it’s a bad plan, I need to feed my family!” His statement affirmed that he is employed or conducts business with the maritime industry. While his comment indicates that he values his family and his income over the environmental degradation in Barrio Logan caused by years of racial discriminating and bad mix-use zoning laws in the area. Simply, the concept of White privilege did not cross his mind. Lui (2006) reminds us that to working class Whites, white privilege seems surreal to them, as they seldom see how government programs benefited them, as they perceive themselves as living lives that are not driven by privilege.

After the polls closed on June 3, 2014, I walked to Chicano Park and rested on a bench in the park. As I waited for the Environmental Health Coalition’s election result party to begin, I saw boys and young men playing basketball in the courts that are adjacent to the I-5 Freeway. El Tio was making his makeshift bed under the on-ramp to the Coronado Bay Bridge from Logan Avenue. The air was cool, the sounds of cars rushing on the freeway and Coronado Bay Bridged echoed in the park. As the evening turned to night, I noticed how dimly lit Chicano Park was. It was too dark, so I deceived

to walk to Border X Brewery on Logan Avenue; this was the location where the result party would take place. As I walked on Logan Avenue, I passed by the Chicano Art Gallery and I realized that I was in the neighborhood's urban cultural core. I kept thinking about what the election results would be and about the events that led-up to the referendum. I could not grasp how it was possible that the voting population of San Diego had just casted their vote on the future land use of Barrio Logan.

There were no television sets at Border X Brewery, so news about the election results came through hearsay. Individuals consulted local news stations on their smart phones to update each other on recent election developments. Ultimately, Propositions B and C were defeated. Therefore, zoning in Barrio Logan continues to be stipulated under the mix-use 1978 plan. Not surprisingly, in Barrio Logan the community voted in favor of Propositions B and C. Demonstrating the discontent of Barrio Logan residents with the maritime industry.

In Retrospect

In San Diego, the 2014 referendum on the Barrio Logan Community Plan was the legal workings of the white spatial imaginary. The 2013 Barrio Logan Community Plan was achieved through a five-year collaborative planning process that begun in 2008 after city officials created a stakeholder coalition with Barrio Logan non-profit organizations, business owners, residents, and representatives of the maritime industry. Under Georgette Gomez's guidance the Environmental Health Coalition began to facilitate the Barrio Logan Community Plan Stakeholder meetings in 2008. I interviewed Georgette Gomez on July 17, 2014, in her office in National City, she told me that what helped push the

plan forward in the community, “was the vision that we created, we wanted them to include what they wanted to protect, what they wanted to see, and what they didn’t want in their community,” and that was the industry. She explained, “The Environmental Health Coalition’s aim was to empower the residents and get them to view the evolution of their community, as they wanted it.” I asked her to explain why the process had taken five years. “The industry people tried to stretch the timeline,” as they saw the plan was moving forward they realized that “they couldn’t stop it anymore because it had support,” she replied. The 2013 Barrio Logan Community Plan was approved by the City Council on October 29, 2013. Yet, representatives from the maritime industry lobbied and collected signatures to put a referendum that would nullify the 2013 community plan. Subsequently, this landed the 2013 community plan on the 2014 primary election ballot under Propositions B and C. Subsequently, this led to the community being barred from determining the future of their neighborhood’s land-use and zoning. Propositions B and C, are a reminder that at all levels of government the white spatial imaginary is constantly building momentum, as the spatial restructuring of urban space produces unfair economic and environmental arrangements.

Propositions B and C are an example on how government and private corporations influence land use policies. In Barrio Logan the outcomes of these policies have resulted in the Chicana/o community refusing to become economically and socially subordinate to powerful State and corporate actors. Since the entire City of San Diego procured the right to vote on the zoning and residential future of Barrio Logan, the Environmental Health Coalition, local artists, and more importantly the residents were deprived from improving

the environmental quality of life of their neighborhood. Ultimately, Propositions B and C disfranchised the Mexican-American Barrio Logan residents from achieving the benefits that result from having gone through the proper community planning process. Yet, as Georgette Gomez explained to me, “even though, certain people feel that we lost, the fact that we were able to have a fight is significant, because they didn’t want it to get to that point.” The “they” she is referring to is the maritime industry, as they view the community of Barrio Logan as subordinate racial subjects that are in the path of expanding their capital enterprises.

Propositions B and C were of concern to Mexican-American organizations and individuals in Barrio Logan who did not fully support the 2013 Barrio Logan Community Plan due to their vested interest with the maritime industry. Claire Ohartz⁶ is one of those individuals, she is, also, the Director of the youth educational and activities center, Barrio Station. I heard Barrio Logan residents and activists reference Claire Ohartz’s opposing stance towards Propositions B and C. So, I emailed Claire Ohartz after the election to ask her questions on the current state of Barrio Station. I, also, wanted to ask if she would share her thoughts on the outcome of Propositions B and C. She did not meet with me for an interview, nor did she grant me permission to visit Barrio Station. In her email, she was adamant in her stance of not granting interviews to anyone. She suggested that I could find answers to my questions on Barrio Station’s website. The following day, I received a follow-up email from Claire O’hartz, which included her biography along with a list of recognitions she received between the years of 1974-2014. She stated that

⁶ Claire O’hartz is a pseudonym.

perhaps these documents would serve me in lieu of an interview. Among the awards she had received was a Community Service Award given to her on March 10, 2005 by the San Diego Ship Repair Association. Barrio Station has, also, received funding the San Diego Ship Repair Association, an organization composed of representatives from San Diego's maritime industry. According to Southwest Strategies' website, it too has contributed funding to Barrio Station. Southwest Strategies is the public affairs group that collected the signatures that placed the referendum on the 2013 Barrio Logan Community Plan.

Barrio Station is an important center in Barrio Logan, as it serves as the only community youth center in the area. In 1980, Barrio Station moved from its Logan Avenue location to its current vicinity on the corner of Newton Avenue and Sampson Street—it is less than half a mile away from the industrial shipbuilder, BAE Systems. Barrio Station Year Books from 1971-1973, depict the many activities available to the barrio youth, such as field trips to Disneyland, team sports activities, and academic tutoring⁷. Barrio Station played an empowering role in the lives of Barrio Logan's activists, artists, and residents. Georgette Gomez remembers going to Barrio Station with her older brother, but she was not old enough to participate in the activities. She told me “at that time it was very active, there was a lot of classes, a lot of activities like karate and guitar classes.” She recalls the “thigh sense of community,” she felt growing up in Barrio Logan during the early 1980's. Over the years, Barrio Station has lost support from the

⁷ The yearbooks are located in the Chicano Pamphlet Collection at San Diego State University; they provide information regarding the importance of Barrio Station to the youth of Barrio Logan.

Chicana/o community; in part it has to do with the center's cultural politics. Barrio Station is approximately 400 feet south of Hector Villegas' home, he looks at the building everyday, and as a mural artist he cannot help to critique the lack of public community artwork on the building. "In a community like Barrio Logan, Barrio Station should be more colorful," he told me. The building is painted in light gray-brown color; it is a stark contrast to the bright and colorful Chicano Park murals.

Heavy maritime industry is not the only business entering and operating in Barrio Logan; recently there has been an influx of art galleries opening in the area. Hector Villegas likes to see new buildings in Barrio Logan. As a life long resident of Barrio Logan, he cannot remember when any thing new was constructed for the community. "We were neglected for so long, so it is nice to see new sidewalks, because we do deserve nice things," he said. He and other artists have been getting involved with new community planning meetings. Hector explained that the cultural conditions that set Barrio Logan apart from other communities is that "we are involved with the new developments." Hector Villegas provided an example of the design of the parking structure for the new Cesar Chavez Community College, which was under construction as of the writing of this thesis, in Barrio Logan. He said, "if you see the new parking lot, it has huelga eagles," these are symbols for the United Farm Workers Union and reflect a Chicana/o cultural aesthetic. He continued to explain that the phenomena of Chicana/o cultural workers taking a stance for their community is putting pressure on the City Council and community planners. Propositions, B and C did not disavow the Chicana/o communities' resiliency towards activating its creative cultural sectors to continue to

fight for spatial, environmental, and social justice, rather it strengthen their community endeavors.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I found it important to recognize that historically and contemporarily the white spatial imaginary has contributed to creating policies that exclude and segregate Mexican-Americans and other racial minorities in San Diego from benefiting from environmentally healthy neighborhoods. San Diego's maritime industry is an economic and political powerful actor in shaping Barrio Logan's landscape. They were able to establish a referendum and challenge the City Council's approval of the 2013 Barrio Logan Community Plan. This resulted in Propositions B and C, which excluded Barrio Logan residents from obtaining the right to exercise self-determination in their attempt to build and envision their community.

The neighborhoods' proximity to the San Diego Bay, the freeways, downtown San Diego, and the heavy industrial maritime enterprises has subjected the community to endure adverse urban development projects by industrial and more recently residential developers, that do not entirely have the residents best interest in mind. While racial segregation in San Diego contributed greatly to the current hazardous land-use ordinances in Barrio Logan, the cultural legacy of the Chicano Civil Rights Movement and the founding of Chicano Park serve as methods of resistance towards heavy industrial re-development in the Barrio Logan. Artists continue to paint Mexica (Aztec) symbols in their public artwork, and the Chicana/o concept of Aztlán continues to serve as a coping mechanism for the environmental racism and the political exclusion Barrio Logan

resident's face-on-a-daily basis. The 2013 referendum added a layer of urban marginalization to a string of many in Barrio Logan. Yet, the community continues to push forward to be viewed as equal members of the City of San Diego, as they demand that they be included in current development projects.

Conclusion: The Cultural importance of Chicano Park in San Diego

This thesis explored the intersection of race, wealth, and place to examine how these themes foster sentiments of membership and belonging. I focused on the political capital of grassroots Mexican-American social and environmental justice groups, such as the Environmental Health Coalition and the Chicano Park Steering Committee, to explore historical and contemporary conflicts over land-use in Barrio Logan. A principle objective of this ethnographic and archival study was to explore the significance of the impact the construction of the I-5 Freeway and the Coronado Bay Bridge have had in the lives of Barrio Logan residents. I have illustrated how altering the landscape under the Coronado Bay Bridge was the initial step taken by San Diegan Chicana/o community activists in 1970 towards taking back their neighborhood from industry and the infrastructure that the I-5 Freeway had created in their communities. Murals, sculptures, and monuments erected at Chicano Park became visual expressions of the community's cultural and political recognition and assertion that this is their park and cultural space. The murals at Chicano Park have personalized the Coronado Bay Bridge for the Chicana/o community since 1973. The Chicano Park *kiosko*, rose garden, and the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial are visible forms of a brighter future for the community of Barrio Logan, as they represent forms of cultural and political membership and belonging.

Barrio Logan is surrounded by various civic, business, and industrial areas these include U.S. military installations, San Diego's maritime industry, and the downtown

entertainment and civic centers. Since, economic and political conditions transformed the East End into Barrio Logan, Latino and Barrio urbanism theorists (e.g. David R. Diaz, Rodolfo D. Torres, Eric Avila, and Raul Homero Villa) continue to write of Barrio Logan, as a case study that exemplifies the experience of Chicana/os and immigrant populations in the U.S. and how they attempt to overcome marginalization to neoliberal local government policies via their cultural and political place-making strategies.

Chapter one describes the socioeconomic conditions that encouraged Mexican nationals to settle in the area. I examined San Diego's tuna cannery enterprises during the 1920's as an important economic activity in Logan Heights, which encouraged immigration to the area from the adjacently located San Ysidro-Tijuana border community. I also highlighted Barrio Logan's social history through a built environment analysis and critically explored how the urban marginalization process developed following the construction of the I-5 Freeway and the Coronado Bay Bridge, which drastically altered the meaning of place in this area.

Chapter two, was concerned with the negotiation of public open recreational space at Chicano Park. My aim was to explore how decisions are made at Chicano Park and who has access to making important decisions at the park. I illustrated how in the context of community inclusion and belonging, agents of the U.S. government can easily exclude Mexican-Americans from important decisions. For example, during the 2012 San Diego Parks and Recreation Board meetings, I examined why the Chicano Park Steering Committee's opinion over placing the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial at Chicano Park, was not solicited. While the Logan Heights Veterans Memorial was ultimately built

and placed at Chicano Park, its establishment is underscored by Barrio Logan's social history, which reflects power struggles in the planning and design process of producing public monuments that affirm cultural forms of membership and belonging.

Zoning and Environmental racism under the auspice of local and national governments along with private enterprises continue to transform Barrio Logan's built environment into a hazardous mix-use area. Chapter three took a critical look at Propositions B and C and the community cultural events leading up to the June 3, 2014 primary election. I argued that Propositions B and C were an example of how private business and government exclude racial and ethnic minorities from benefiting from urban restructuring programs. My aim was to demonstrate how over the years the maritime industry has denied the Mexican-American community the right to control the economic, environmental, and spatial future of their neighborhood. This final chapter, also, demonstrated the resiliency of the community to challenge the environmental degradation of Barrio Logan. By incorporating the political and cultural philosophical strengths of the Chicano Civil Rights, Barrio Logan artists, businesses, and residents participate in pro-environmental justice activism.

In this thesis, I have demonstrated that the reconfiguration of urban space and land use in Barrio Logan by powerful state and private actors has not gone uncontested. Chicana/o community artists and activists have strategically employed Chicana/o cultural identity markers as forms of social and environmental justice and health activism. Cultural and political resistances to urban marginalization processes were discussed in

relation to the political activism of community members as they transformed their social environment in relation to Chicano Park and Cesar Chavez Park.

I argued that the activist movement that founded Chicano Park exerts a cultural force on Barrio Logan community members to vocalize and demand political recognition from local and national government entities. I found it necessary to introduce Avila's (2014) concept of the "folklore of the freeway" to adequately describe the urban and cultural importance of Chicano Park in San Diego as a cultural center that continues to build political momentum to inspire current generations of artists, activists, and community members to continue to improve the social and environmental conditions of Barrio Logan.

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