

“I’m an Artist and I’m Sensitive About My City”: Black Women Artists Confronting Resegregation in Sacramento

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Sac girl, Black girl
You rock, girl
And when you make it to the top
Don’t stop girl
Takarra “Kari Jay” Johnson

Every Wednesday, Queen Sheba, a Black women-owned and -operated Ethiopian restaurant, hosts the Mahogany Urban Poetry Series in collaboration with local Black artists and organizers. Centrally located less than a mile away from the historically Black neighborhood, Oak Park, and easily accessible to the gentrifying Midtown and Downtown Sacramento neighborhoods, the restaurant has become a hot spot among the influx of new residents. For Black Sacramentans, however, the restaurant is a resilient staple that survived the 2008 financial crash as well as the rapid post-Recession redevelopment that is displacing many of the city’s Black residents and businesses to make room for former San Francisco Bay Area residents and the vulturous industries trailing them.¹ While economic refugees from the Bay Area can no longer afford the coastal rents that have spiked over the past ten years in response to the tech/start-up boom, rent in Sacramento is relatively affordable with their slightly higher incomes. Therefore, to Black Sacramentans fighting to stay in the city, Queen Sheba, while best known for its food, is also highly regarded as a key holding space for an embattled and disappearing community.

In May of 2016, I attended my first Mahogany Open Mic Night where Takarra “Kari Jay” Johnson—Sacramento native, student, former Sacramento Area Youth Speaks (SAYS) poet-mentor educator, and activist—was the featured artist of the night. I arrived a few hours early for dinner, and as the event drew near, I watched the space transform. Chairs were lined up near a makeshift stage. One of the organizers stood near the door and began collecting a five-dollar cover charge from attendees, and nearly all of the non-Black diners began leaving after they finished their meals. Queen Sheba shifted from a restaurant where patrons could “get down and ‘indigenous’ with their food,” as described recently by a Yelp reviewer, to a community space that nurtured and showcased the work of local Black artists. About an hour into the event, Johnson took the stage and began performing the aforementioned poem, “Sac Girl, Black Girl. . . .” She kept the crowd engaged with her cadence, style, and words that evoked memories of a seemingly distant Black Sacramento. Throughout the night, several Black women took the mic using the space for therapy, to bring attention to local inequities and injustices, and to joyously remember the narratives and spaces of “Black Sac.”²

Sitting in Queen Sheba, it is hard to believe that Sacramento—a city that has long stood in the shadow of the San Francisco Bay Area—made the news for being the city with the fastest rising rents in the nation.³ Over the past five years, the city has seen a surge in redevelopment as investors and developers look for the next real estate gold rush. In response, Sacramento residents have taken to the streets and city council meetings to voice their frustrations, organizing a tenants’ union, transit riders’ union, a community land trust and launching grassroots campaigns to help elect populist public officials.⁴ Similar to other rapidly gentrifying cities like Oakland, Detroit, and Nashville, long-standing community members are not leaving without a fight. And beyond traditional forms of organizing, local Black activists are using art as a means to draw attention to this crisis—*artivism*. Black women activists in Sacramento have been using art and culture as a means to educate residents about the history of Black Sacramento; to solidify the history and memory of Black Sacramento through murals, public art exhibits, and other art-based community events; to promote community organizing and activism; and to insert Black Sacramento into the larger historical narrative of Blacks in the West.

This article first examines the history of resegregation in Sacramento and its impact on the city’s Black citizenry.⁵ Second, it highlights how Black women visual and performance activists and Black women business owners are entangled in this iteration of resegregation, commonly referred to as gentrification. Third, it delves into how these women are negotiating art and resegregation by examining how artists can be both entangled in gentrification and serve as its staunchest critics. And finally, this work offers a critical Black feminist analysis of Black women at the forefront of activism and cultural production in the city, women who are reimagining new futures for marginalized residents and who are also cementing the historical memory of Black Sacramento.

Arriving at Black Sac

Despite the rich development of scholarship on Blacks in the West, including this special issue of *American Studies*, Sacramento remains underresearched. Although scholars in and of the Black West, most prominently Quintard Taylor, Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, and Albert Broussard, all make mention of Sacramento when charting the early history of Blacks in California, few have taken up the challenge of fully inserting Sacramento into the field.

Prior to 1850, Blacks migrating to California included mixed-race merchants, enslaved Blacks brought by their enslavers to California for mining and domestic servitude, and free Blacks looking for freedom from racial and economic restrictions. By 1852, San Francisco and Sacramento were rapidly growing into early metropolitan centers with Black populations of 464 and 338, respectively.⁶ The de facto and de jure conditions many free Blacks sought to escape, however, followed them West. Most early Black Sacramentans settled along the Sacramento River, where their homes lay in floodplains. They were granted minimal access to primary education and were limited to domestic and service work.⁷ Unlike Los Angeles, Oakland, and San Francisco, whose Black populations skyrocketed through the World War II (WWII) era, the Black population in Sacramento grew slowly. In 1910, the city was home to just 486 Blacks and, by the 1930s, 1,100.⁸

During WWII, Blacks migrated to Sacramento for work in wartime industries and purchased the vacant homes and businesses of the city’s interned Japanese citizenry.⁹ Several housing projects were constructed, including New Helvetia and River Oaks in what was then being called “the West End.” As

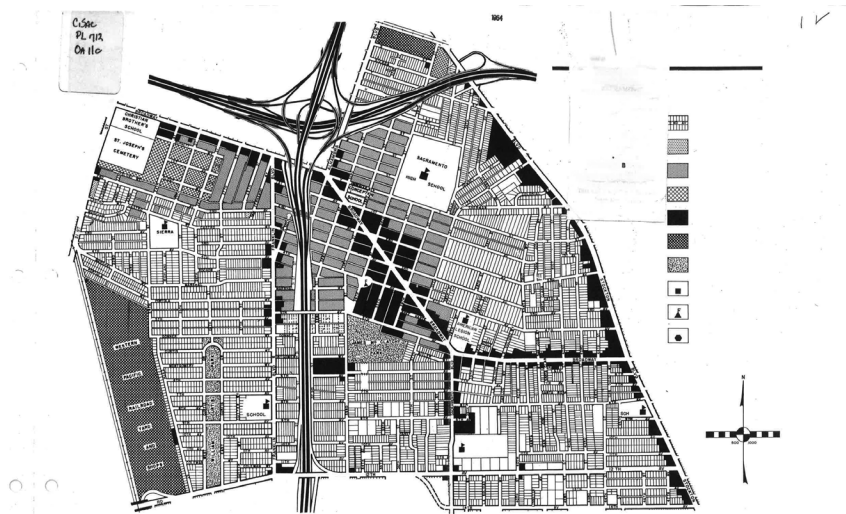


Figure 1: Map of Oak Park from “The Redevelopment Community Plan,” 1964. Courtesy of The Sacramento Public Library.

more Blacks began settling in Sacramento, they were redlined and confined to the West End, while Whites migrated to surrounding smaller suburbs, Oak Park being one. During the post-WWII and Civil Rights eras, there was an increased investment in housing development and commercial economies in whiter suburbs, while the West End was stripped of its resources and neglected. City officials and local media decried the state of the West End, deeming it “blighted.” However, local historian William Burg argues that many of the early photographs and even first-hand accounts speak to the contrary. He posits that city developers looking to expand the central business district and the Capitol Mall revenue “unfairly slandered and destroyed a vital and growing neighborhood” by leveraging local and state media and racist dog-whistle politics.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the city brought forth another expansive redevelopment plan that resulted in the creation of highways, a more robust Capitol Mall, and other infrastructure developments for the region—but at the cost of mass residential and small business displacement.¹¹ Blacks from the West End were pushed to nearby suburbs north and south of the city, one of them being Oak Park.¹² During the 1950s, the relocation of Shiloh Baptist Church from the West End to Oak Park and the founding of various social organizations and businesses in the area securely anchored the Black community in Oak Park.

Nationwide calls for desegregation and new antidiscrimination laws followed on the heels of the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court case. However, the works of Robert Self, Jeff Chang, and Thomas Schelling illuminate the reality, which was clearly marked by white flight, racialized lending practices, redlining, and the systemic suppression of Black communities, all part of an effort to reestablish a new iteration of segregation.¹³ And this phenomenon quickly unfolded in Sacramento.

As more Blacks flooded into Oak Park, the community hit a sharp economic downturn brought about by white flight and the construction of highways 50 and 99. These new elevated “superhighways,” both completed in 1961, created a wall of containment around Oak Park, isolating the suburb from Curtis Park and East Sacramento—the more affluent neighborhoods.¹⁴ Many White-owned businesses relocated back to the new Capitol Mall corridor and West End, and the California State Fair left Oak Park in 1968.¹⁵ These actions completely drained the neighborhood’s business district, and once again, Black Sacramentans inherited a space that was being stripped of revenue and resources.

Despite targeted divestment, Black Sacramentans in Oak Park cultivated a neighborhood grounded in art, activism, economic independence, and self-determination. Groups like the Negro Women’s Civic and Improvement Club (now the Women’s Civic Improvement Club) and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., purchased property in the community, rented rooms, and provided services to women, children, and the most marginalized.¹⁶ And as the Black Power movement began to take shape, Black Sacramentans became increasingly vocal about state-sanctioned violence, police terror, and various forms of discrimination they were experiencing in Oak Park and across the city.

In 1968, Charles Brunson (Esutosin Omawale Osunkoya) founded the Sacramento branch of the Black Panther Party (BPP). Located in Oak Park at Thirty-Fifth and Broadway, the local BPP chapter began adopting many of the organization’s survival programs, including the free breakfast program.¹⁷ Furthermore, they were quickly met with police antagonism. On Father’s Day in 1969, the chapter was involved in a shoot-out and raided by local law enforcement. Margo “Queen Margo” Rose-Brunson, then a teenaged Sacramento City College student and Communications Secretary for the chapter stated, “There were families with kids who fled the park and came to our office. And we didn’t have any guns in the office. I said, ‘Damn, they’re trying to kill us.’”¹⁸

The Oak Park BPP chapter would become most notorious for their alleged involvement in the 1970 killing of police officer Bernard Bennett in the neighborhood, which resulted in the arrest of seven Black men. The community quickly rallied around the accused men, even starting a community bail fund. Charges were dropped for three of the accused, resulting in the “Oak Park 4.” All of the men denied the charges, claiming they were being singled out because of their affiliation with the Sacramento City College Black Student Union and the local BPP chapter. Due to lack of criminal evidence, inadmissible evidence, as well as charges of coercion, the Oak Park 4 were acquitted in 1971. This case shook the Oak Park community and only deepened tensions between Black residents and the city.

When *The Sacramento Observer*, one of the first Black Sacramento publications, began reporting on a new policing plan put forth in 1971, law enforcement and the city were met with resistance from a Black community with very little trust in their public servants. The proposed policing plan called for the establishment of a precinct in Oak Park, which the then-police chief, William Kinney, claimed would build rapport with the community. The plan also created a community coordinating committee comprising representatives from various local organizations. However, *The Sacramento Observer* argued that the organizations being considered were not reflective of the people of Oak Park nor would the committee have the power to eliminate the hyperprofiling, brutality, and surveillance that was happening regularly to Oak Park’s Black citizenry.¹⁹ Due in part to community organizing and resistance, the precinct was never established.

As the Black Power era faded, so did the quality of life for Black Sacramentans. Inequitable living conditions were worsened by the War on Drugs policies promoted by President Richard Nixon and then Governor of California (later President) Ronald Reagan. By the 1980s, Blacks made up 13.3% of the population in Sacramento.²⁰ But with depressed property values and a major loss of working-class jobs, Oak Park was in an economic depression that lasted well into the early 2000s. While culturally vibrant, the neighborhood received notoriety for its high homicide rate, drug use, and gang violence. The neighborhood had been pushed to its brink, with the fall of property values by

nearly half in the five years from 2003 to 2008, when the financial crash added to their woes.²¹

Coinciding with the election of the first Black president, Barack Obama in 2008, the election of Oak Park native and former NBA player Kevin Johnson as the city's first Black mayor offered residents what they embraced as a symbol of hope.²² Johnson had a plan to revitalize Oak Park—to provide the long-ignored community with better schools, housing, medical care, and bookstores. While Johnson achieved a few of these goals during his two terms as mayor, they were unfortunately accomplished at the expense of Black Oak Park residents: the community witnessed mass displacement due to rising rents and housing prices. Johnson's redevelopment plan to make Sacramento "cool" opened the door for developers and foreign investors to run rampant.²³ When Johnson's tenure as mayor ended in 2016, he attempted to silence criticisms lobbed at his administration for wreaking havoc on his own childhood neighborhood, instead calling what was happening a "renaissance" and stating, "we now need to be very intentional to make sure gentrification isn't realized. . . ."²⁴ But gentrification was already there and effectively resegregating the city.

Yet today, while some believe that the battle for Oak Park is a lost cause, there are many Black organizers, activists, and community members who are trying to hold on to the space and its memories and to preserve and enhance its rich artistic and cultural wealth.

Art and Resegregation

"Resegregation" and "gentrification" thus far have been used almost interchangeably in this article. Gentrification, however, in discourse has proved itself too limiting to adequately describe the current redevelopment of urban cities. Chang rejects the use of gentrification because it "offers a peculiarly small frame for understanding the paradigmatic shifts. . . . Gentrification is key to understanding what happened to our cities at the turn of the millennium. But it is only half of the story."²⁵ Moreover, gentrification frequently fails to account for the narratives of the displaced and the history that led to the massive divestiture of people and resources from the very spaces being redeveloped and rendered "cool."²⁶

Gentrification in Sacramento, for example, did not happen in a vacuum—the aforementioned history of the West End, the racist and classist decisions that shaped the construction of highways, Blacks relocating in and being confined to Oak Park, the massive divestment during the 1960s, the 2008 financial crash, a legacy of white supremacy and predatory capitalism, and a generation with more degrees and student loan debt paved the way for gentrification. But gentrification is no more than a *moment* in what has been an ongoing *cycle* of segregation dating back to the antebellum period.

And by no means is Sacramento an anomaly. Many major cities and urban centers are currently experiencing resegregation. However, key factors should

be considered when exploring how and why areas in the West often succumb to aggressive resegregation so swiftly. Major metropolitan areas and smaller urban cities along the East Coast, and arguably in parts of the Midwest, were home to significantly larger Black populations both during and after emancipation. Thus, Black communities in the West have not had as much time to establish themselves—to build generational and community wealth or to build political and economic power and autonomy. Moreover, with a large population, a scarcity of living-wage jobs, vast income inequality, and plenty of land for sprawl, California cities, like Sacramento, experience significant demographic changes as large numbers of people move in and move out.²⁷ Still, resegregation in urban cities in the West and the rest of the nation cannot be blamed entirely on real estate; art is also at the center of these developments.

Richard Florida captures this “harbinger of gentrification” phenomenon in his theorizing of the “creative class.”²⁸ Florida argues that we are currently witnessing the development of a new class of workers—the creative class—who are interested in engineering more advanced technology (for companies like Google, Facebook, Apple, and Amazon) and reimagining capitalist economies (i.e., the shared economic revolution as witnessed with the rise of Airbnb, Uber, and Lyft).²⁹ This class of workers is drawn to more “artsy” cities and spaces that value the illusion of “diversity,” with rich social and cultural histories.³⁰ These “culture vultures” (as they have poetically been called) are drawn to the aesthetics of cities—the murals, street art, and ethnic food. Florida’s description also illustrates the contradictions of the creative class in that they too are drawn to the ills of capital and are arguably no more than a relatively socially conscious leisure class.

Since its publication, Florida’s thesis on the creative class has been widely critiqued, with many scholars contending that the concept centered on the experiences of “urban elites and young high-earning professionals” and arguably lacked a more substantive critical race analysis at the onset.³¹ While artists are included in Florida’s theorizing of the creative class, I see them as a distinct, yet interconnected, formation within the creative class. Artists meet the demands of Florida’s more professionalized creative class. They produce the murals and the paintings for new coffee shops and are at the center of “First Fridays” and other community events. Moreover, artists are often dependent on Florida’s professionalized creative class as they help generate a creative economy. Subsequently, those artists help create and curate the aesthetics of gentrification.

But artists are currently both scathed by and entangled in gentrification. For Oak Park, many of its artists have overwhelmingly been women, primarily Black and Latinx. And while there are certainly men and gender nonconforming artists in the city, it is women who are often in the forefront serving as artists, owners and curators of art spaces, organizers for events, and art-educators working to keep communities together in periods of peril. Over the past few years, several mainstream media outlets have published articles on the relationship between

artists—primarily visual artists—and gentrification.³² Sharon Zukin, Richard Lloyd, and Antonia Casellas have all examined this relationship in the Lower East Side of New York City, Chicago, and even Barcelona, coming to a similar consensus: these cities have large “blighted” or underdeveloped areas with accessible and affordable buildings; artists who transform the city with their art move into these places; but eventually they in turn are pushed out by higher income earners and developers, while their art and impact on the space remains.³³

Afrofuturism and Reimagining Black Sac through Visual Art

Artists and their work are often leveraged by developers to transform and rebrand communities. As an Oakland native, I’ll never forget returning home after being away for two years for graduate school. What, I asked, was “Uptown Oakland”? And why was there all this new signage and public art displaying unfamiliar names in what used to be familiar places? These pushes to rename and rebrand a neighborhood by new residents of the creative class and developers is a common theme in the resegregation of cities, notably seen in the mobilization around the renaming of the South Central neighborhood in Los Angeles to “South Los Angeles” adding the catchy nickname “SOLA.”³⁴ While on the surface a cool new name and fancy street pole banners may be appealing, for long-standing residents these changes are often seen as an early indicator of historical erasure and displacement and as a disconnect between the values of two competing groups of residents.

Caitlin Cahill, author and urban geography scholar, has written “‘At Risk’? The Fed Up Honeys Re-Present the Gentrification of the Lower East Side,” in which she argues that many of the women of color documented in this New York City study watched their community transform and noticed that newcomers began “questioning the valuation of the economic over the personal, of dollar bills over [their] connections to place, of profit-making over communitarian ideals. . . .”³⁵ Cahill’s interviewees illustrate one of the most insidious aspects of neoliberal capitalism, redevelopment and resegregation—profit over people. But while some artists are complicit in the neoliberal transformation and resegregation of these communities, some resist that trend and are using art and Afrofuturism to reimagine their communities.

During a community back-to-school and Black August event in 2016 hosted by Umi’s Table, a small grassroots organization based out of Sacramento, the group plastered on a large chalkboard, “What is a Black Future in Sacramento?,” borrowing from the Black Lives Matter network’s reinterpretation of Black History Month—Black Future’s Month.³⁶ The display was interactive—children and adults wrote what they felt was necessary for a Black future in the city. Some responses were “no more guns,” “black-owned businesses,” “end police brutality,” “housing I can afford,” and “clean water.”³⁷ This same question exists in the minds of several Black women artists in Sacramento, including Delgreta



Figure 2: Artist Delgreta Brown pictured with two of her paintings. Courtesy of artist, date unknown.

Brown, an artist who was featured at that Black August event. Brown, who is a painter, poet, and native Sacramentan, serves as an artist in residence at the Warehouse Artist Lofts, a mixed-use, mixed-income community in Downtown Sacramento. She is one of three Black artists who were able to secure a space in the building. Brown has been showing her work around Sacramento for the past eight years and considers her style to be influenced by Afrofuturism. She described her introduction to art and Afrofuturism:

I didn’t really tune into art until senior year. And that could’ve been when the Afro futurist seed was planted. My very first job as an artist was for the Sacramento County Children’s and Family Commission. Me and Italo [Brown’s brother] were working as community artists and our job was to go to ask people what they wanted their future, their community to look like . . . and our job was to draw whatever these people said.³⁸

Afrofuturism is “an epistemology that both examines the current problems faced by Blacks and people of color more generally and critiques interpretations of the past and future. . . . Afrofuturism insists that Blacks fundamentally are the future and that Afrodiasporic cultural practices are vital to imagining the continuance of human society.”³⁹ Afrofuturism is a step toward the liberation of Black thought, imagination, and possibilities. Since Brown was in high school she has been reimagining those possibilities for Black Sacramento and helping to breathe life into those visions through her artistic work. The drawings she



Figure 3: “Moon Child” painting by Aliyah Sidqe. Courtesy of artist, 2017.

and her brother completed almost a decade ago were used to lobby for greater infrastructure development in South Sacramento. Brown prides herself on her ability to paint an array of images that convey to her audience the complexities of Blackness and the African diaspora across space and time. Her studio is filled with images of regal African queens, Black women with gold grills, African descendants in India performing mudras, surrealist depictions of Black boys, silhouette-like figures entangled in space, and more. For Brown, Afrofuturism provides the space to share with her community and audience that “this is another reality, this is another way you can exist.”

When I first saw the work of Aliyah Sidqe—a Black, self-taught artist and Sacramento native—I was amazed and immediately saw how this young artist was reimagining Black life, womanhood, spirituality, and subsequently, Black futures through her work. Like most young artists, Sidqe’s Instagram page serves as her gallery. Her paintings often center images of everyday people, places around Sacramento, 1970s Blaxploitation iconography, and a celebration of Black girlhood and womanhood. “Moon Child” is one of her most “liked” pieces. The painting features what appears to be a young Black woman with a billow of 3C curls standing in the center of outer space staring off into the distance surrounded by seven moons.⁴⁰ Sidqe’s inspiration for the piece is SZA,

St. Louis-born alternative R&B recording artist. Both artists’ work depict a form of Afrofuturism, a Black girl’s ode to existentialism. Beyond the woman in Sidqe’s “Moon Child” physical resemblance to SZA, the piece seems to build on SZA’s artistic tone and the song “Ice Moon.” Both artists present Black womanhood detached from humanity, not quite in the future, just as certainly not completely in the present, but calling on spirituality and reflection to charter a new future.⁴¹

Show me the way to your hiding place
I think I wanna go there. . .
I lay formless
Hands tied in my sheets
Star signs say I’m rare
Chosen. . .
I wonder who’s watchin
Whose wing I’m under
Sweep me up and I’ll go
No questions take me⁴²

Sidqe and SZA’s spiritual signifying—coupled with how Black womanhood is presented as “formless,” staring serenely, yet having experienced a breadth of emotions—harkens to themes of Black existentialism and highlights the necessity of reflection while imagining the promise of futurity.

In addition to painting on canvas, Sidqe recently taught herself to paint murals. In March 2017, she began painting one of her first murals and



Figure 4: Aliyah Sidqe pictured with completed mural of Mary Violet Leontyne Price on Opera Alley in Sacramento, CA. Courtesy of artist, 2017.



Figure 5: Completed mural of Japanese-American opera singer by Aliyah Sidqe. Courtesy of artist, 2017.

documented the process on Instagram. I met with Sidqe in July 2017 on Opera alley—located between Sixteenth and O—in Midtown Sacramento, where she was in the process of painting three opera-themed murals on a series of apartment complex buildings. Sidqe was commissioned by the Capitol Area Development Authority (CADA), a development company committed to “removing blight” and building neighborhoods within Midtown and Downtown Sacramento since 1978 with the support of the city, Sacramento Housing Redevelopment Agency, and local nonprofit organizations.⁴³ Through both public and private partnerships, CADA has brought hundreds of housing rentals to Sacramento, including the aforementioned artists’ lofts.

By the time I had an opportunity to watch Sidqe paint, she already finished two of the three walls. The first was a Japanese woman opera singer, a fusion of Japanese opera singers she researched, mixed with nods to the vibrant Japanese-American community that first settled near the West End during the 1890s. The second was sheet music. And the final and largest wall at the time featured a half-painted face and bust of a Black woman opera singer. Sidqe later revealed to me that she was painting Mary Violet Leontyne Price, Mississippi-born and internationally renowned opera soprano. As an artist being funded by one of Sacramento’s leading developers, Sidqe felt conflicted.

Having lived all around the greater Sacramento area, Sidqe is aware of the housing crisis, yet simultaneously recognizes that if she wants to maintain her own financial stability, then employment opportunities such as the one presented by CADA are often essential.⁴⁴ What provides Sidqe solace is her artistic freedom—having the ability to paint large images of women of color

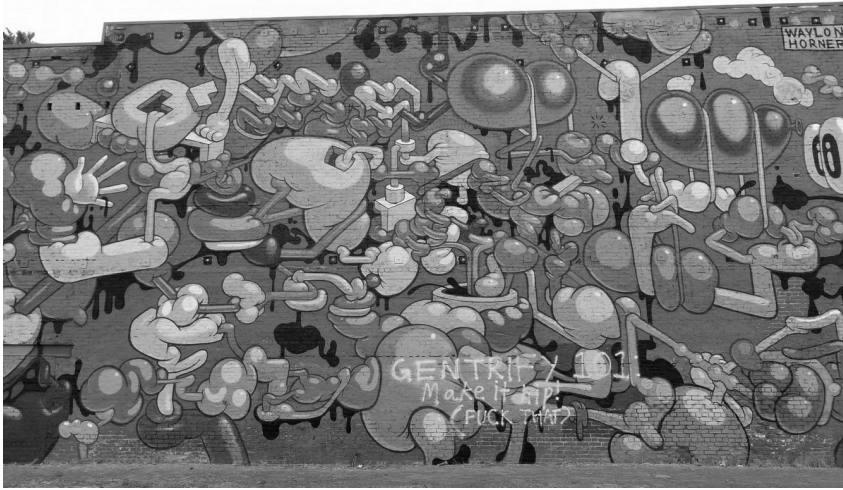


Figure 6: Tagged mural by Waylon Horner in Oak Park. Photography by Kristopher Hooks, 2017.

across buildings, leaving a physical mark of their presence, ensuring that their narratives, memories, and images live on in the face of adversity and resegregation.

Sidqe describes her entry into mural-making very nonchalantly and as rather spontaneous—a former employer allowed her to paint some walls near the business and she never stopped. However, mural-making is very much politically charged. Guisela Latorre describes the intersection of politics and mural-making in this work, *Walls of Empowerment: Chicana/o Indigenist Murals of California*. While Latorre’s primary focus is on how indigeneity is presented in Chicana/o and Mexican murals, theorizing on mural-making by artists of color, the significance of space, and the method of mural-making are salient. Latorre states:

Murals, for me, represented the inevitability of decolonizing expressions among ethnoracial minorities in the United States and elsewhere and, in many ways, stood as a model for political resistance applicable to other contexts of social inequality and repression. . . . As the turn of the millennium sees concerted efforts to overturn the accomplishments and strides made during the civil rights movement, many public works of art will continue to represent the social consciousness of marginalized and neglected communities. . . .⁴⁵

While Sidqe may be nonchalant about her own art, murals have significant

impacts on space, garner larger audiences, and convey history, culture, and resistance. In August 2017, forty new murals went up around the city as part of Sacramento's mural festival, Wide Open Walls, created in an effort to bolster the city's art scene.⁴⁶ Several of the murals in Midtown, Downtown, and Oak Park feature geometric figures, inanimate objects, and scenery. Less than a month after its reveal, one of the murals in Oak Park was tagged with—"Gentrify 101: Make it hip! (Fuck That)." This was a clear rejection of the mural and what it stood for—the redevelopment and rendering "cool" a neighborhood for the creative class, with little regard for native Sacramentans. Among a sea of new murals, Sidqe's are distinct because they ensure that at least some of the city's murals remain reflective of the history of the space and carry on the memories and narratives of earlier residents, especially those from marginalized communities—thus implicitly or explicitly becoming politically charged.

Both Sidqe's and Brown's engagement with Afrofuturism provides a new lens through which to examine new directions of Blacks in the West, both scholarly and at the grassroots. Given the precarious futures of many Blacks living across California's urban cities, Afrofuturism in this context can provide a vision and new reality for communities to rally behind and a sense of hope in the face of displacement and other adversities. Afrofuturism compels us to consider what a Black future would look like in the West and how we can construct realities that are solvent, sustainable, and liberating. Recently, Nashville's People's Alliance for Transit, Housing & Employment (PATHE), a coalition of working-class residents being pushed out of their neighborhoods, responded to the mayor's push for redevelopment with their own campaign and demands for the city. Demands included providing affordable housing, mass public transportation for all (even the displaced), and the other services that speak to their own reimagining of their community's future. What would such demands look like for Black communities in the West? Afrofuturism challenges us to reimagine the limits of Black futures and the spaces we inhabit.

But Sidqe and Brown's narratives also highlight how Black women artists are indeed both scathed by and entangled within gentrification. Sidqe and other muralists in the city are often compelled to work at the behest of developers that are reimagining urban cities in their own way for the creative class. During our conversations, Sidqe recognized that her artistry was being leveraged to lure newcomers. But this reality that can be difficult to reconcile for young artists, as their own livelihoods and careers are often dependent upon a creative economy that is being fueled by developers and the creative class.

Pillars in the Community— Black Matriarchs Creating Space

Old residents are losing ground on both fronts—their homes and businesses/community spaces. This upheaval has had a disproportionate impact on artists, art galleries, studios, and other art- and humanities-based programs



Figure 7: Exterior of the Brickhouse Gallery and Art Complex. Photography by author, 2017.

and services. Originally displaying her work with the Kuumba Collective, a nonprofit arts organization and collective, Delgreta Brown testifies to “actually [seeing] cultural spaces disappear from Sacramento” over the last decade.⁴⁷ When she was a budding artist, the Kuumba Collective was integral to her career and skill development. The collective helped get Brown’s work into the Crocker Art Museum, the African American Museum and Library at Oakland, and galleries around Los Angeles. In 2008, the collective was no longer able to sustain itself. A few members from the collective, including Brown, came together and were able to briefly secure a space for a brick and mortar gallery near Arden, a neighborhood in the northern part of the city, with the hope of restarting Kuumba. However, that plan eventually fell through after the building was sold. Since then the space has been converted to a marijuana dispensary. Brown described watching Kuumba Collective wither away as personally traumatic because the space had housed local artists, many of whom were unable to recover after being displaced. These are the damaging effects artists are confronted with in this moment of gentrification. While Brown was able to secure affordable housing at the Warehouse Artists’ Lofts, a CADA-funded project, she has struggled to find community or even an audience in the new space, which left her questioning her future in Sacramento. Brown’s struggle to find affordable housing also underscores how artists are once again entangled

in gentrification, so much so that a major developer like CADA can serve as Brown's landlord and Sidqe's (as well as a host of other artists') employer.

The quest to hold on to the culture and legacy of Black Sacramento is certainly an uphill battle. Currently, the Brickhouse Art Gallery, Underground Books, and Queen Sheba Ethiopian Restaurant are among the few remaining Black businesses in the Oak Park community. All owned and operated by Black women along the Broadway business corridor, these spaces are also important spaces for Black art. As mentioned, Queen Sheba is not simply a restaurant, but it also serves as a community space where open mic poetry nights are hosted. Georgia "Mother Rose" West, operator of Underground Books, regularly features the work of local Black artists (like Milton Bowens) and students on the walls of her bookstore. She also opens her doors for community celebrations, like the annual Sacramento Black Book Fair, poetry readings, and speakers series featuring both local and celebrity artists, writers, and activists. However, one of the most dynamic spaces for Black art and culture is the Brickhouse Art Gallery, one of two remaining Black art galleries in the city.

Barbara Range, affectionately referred to as "Ms. Barbara," serves as the curator and director of a former sheet metal building turned art gallery and artists' residence. At the corner of Thirty-Sixth and Broadway, the Brickhouse is hard to miss, with the building's beautiful exposed brick and intricate wire art built into the exterior. Ms. Barbara has worked tirelessly to ensure that the gallery remains a community space that centers on the work of artists from the community and is available and accessible to community-based nonprofits and activists. It's hard to meet a Black artist or organizer in Sacramento who does not know Ms. Barbara.

Blacks in the West and gender studies scholars Shirley Ann Wilson Moore and Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo have highlighted the integral role of women in establishing Black communities in California, with much of the focus on their contributions to churches and work within social movements. In "'Women Made the Community:' African American Migrant Women and the Cultural Transformation of the San Francisco Bay Area," Lemke-Santangelo posits,

[Black] women's cultural work made sustained struggle possible by knitting migrants together and transmitting the southern self-help and caring ethic to a new generation. Their labor, in the church, home, and neighborhood, contributed to the development of stable, permanent communities and institutions, provided essential social services to members. . . . While few women regarded their cultural work as a form of protest, that is exactly what it was.⁴⁸

Similarly, the Brickhouse is an essential feature of Oak Park and Black Sacramento overall, where Black communities across the city are able to converge in ways comparable to what Lemke-Santangelo describes.

Additionally, Takarra “Kari Jay” Johnson noted that the space is a safe haven for Black high school students attending Sacramento Charter High School (also known as “Sac High”), a predominantly Black school located a few blocks away. As Oak Park becomes resegregated, the local Black youth have fewer places to go after school due to so many Black businesses disappearing from the community. Johnson explains:

Like, different stuff was happening. They took away Uncle Jed’s barbershop. All of my friends got their hair cut at Uncle Jed’s from Sac High. They would leave after school to get their hair cut at Uncle Jed’s [claps], that was gone and it became the extension of Old Soul. So it’s like we knew and we felt us being pushed further and further on that campus. . . . You can just drive down Broadway and you can feel the difference. You know what I’m sayin? But the kids don’t really feel like it includes them in that. Especially for the kids that live in Oak Park. There’s nothing else there outside of the Salvation Army and College Track that actually invites Black youth, outside from our art. And that is what kinda keeps Black kids coming to Sacramento, coming to Oak Park. So you got the Brickhouse with Ms. Barbara Range. Just to be Black and be woman at the same time. She’s holding it down in Oak Park. That’s Auntie! That’s Auntie, fasho! She got it for real. And it’s just so beautiful. So like women like her that’s just holding it down. That been holding it down. Way before we even knew what was what when we was just walking past the Brickhouse after school and didn’t know. Her whole presence, her whole essence. That, that, that is Sacramento Black art.⁴⁹

The legacy of Oak Park and Black Sacramento lives on because Black matriarchs, like Ms. Barbara and Mother Rose, fight to hold space for the art and culture of Black Sacramentans.⁵⁰ New residents seeking to shift the culture of Oak Park will surely be met with not only resistance from these women and their community but also a space where they too can come to learn about and value the history and culture of Oak Park and Black Sacramento.

Spittin’ and Educatin’ with SAYS

Younger generations of Black girls, as well as adult women and those who are femme-identifying, have picked up the torch that was originally carried by Ms. Barbara and Mother Rose. Under the auspices of “Black Women United,” women came together on July 15, 2017, to host the first ever Black Women’s March—a response to the January 21, 2017, Women’s March that occurred

across the country following the 2017 presidential inauguration. After growing concerns around the politics of the initial Women's March and if women of color and trans women would be centered within the organizing, Black girls, women, and femme-identifying in Sacramento began planning a march that sought to be more intersectional, highlighting the inextricability of race, class, and gender. This same energy and fervor is manifesting among Black girl poets in the city, many of whom have explored the intersection of poetry and activism through the Sacramento Area Youth Speaks (SAYS) program.

Founded by Vajra Watson, Director of Research and Policy for Equity at the University of California, Davis (UCD) in 2009, SAYS is an innovative critical literacy and teacher professional development program designed to engage underperforming youth of color in Sacramento.⁵¹ With hip-hop and spoken word at its core, SAYS poet-mentor educators go into local middle and high schools to provide literacy and social support to predominantly Black, Latinx, and Southeast Asian students in Oak Park, South Sacramento, and Del Paso Heights via workshops, courses, and mentorship. They also host an annual youth conference that takes place at UCD. The overall goal of the SAYS program is to increase literacy within the region and to boost enrollment of Sacramento's Black and Latinx students at UCD.⁵²

Furthermore, SAYS has created an employment pipeline by offering jobs to former SAYS students to work in the capacity of poet-mentor educator. Students are provided with the necessary professional development training on instructional support, classroom management, and equity. Takarra "Kari Jay" Johnson, mentioned earlier, was one of the first students to receive this training. Johnson, currently a college student at UCD, has served as a poet-mentor educator at her alma mater, Sacramento Charter High School.

Denisha "CocoBlossom" Bland is another SAYS success. Bland—long-time Sacramento resident, current UCD African American Studies student, and lead poet-mentor educator and operations manager for SAYS—has been an active poet since 2006. She encountered the SAYS program at her local community college. Bland credits poetry for helping her through an abusive relationship and out of Sacramento gang culture.⁵³ She describes the work that she's been able to do with SAYS as "activism." She defines activism as,

[u]sing your art to do better for your community. Or using your art to speak about something. . . I actually learned it over the years, but just political art. So, like, using my voice and my agency to do better for my community, in some type of way. And I always have that on my mind every time I sit down to write a poem, that's like one of the first things I think about. Is this poem, is this poem for me first? Is it something I just need to write and put in my book? Or is this a poem that I need to give to the people, via in my voice work, Facebook, however? So, using my art to do good and

SAYS actually helped me learn that . . . I didn’t know poetry can take you into spaces . . . I thought it was just something that my grandmother told me to write to get my feelings out.⁵⁴

Chela Sandoval and Guisela LaTorre add to Bland’s view of activism by asserting that it is “a hybrid neologism that signified work created by individuals who see an organic relationship between art and activism.” This relationship between art and activism is at the crux of the SAYS program and its activists, who are working to create content that calls attention to issues impacting people of color in Sacramento.⁵⁵ Moreover, SAYS’s activism is not limited solely to cultural production, but extends to community empowerment and conflict resolution.

Over the past year, Bland stepped away from writing and performing and committed herself to working with youth in the classroom. During the last school year, she had an opportunity to coteach a SAYS course at Luther Burbank High School in South Sacramento along with Patrice “Mama P” Hill, SAYS Program Coordinator and Development Specialist. Hill further describes SAYS activism in this capacity:

So I would say there are several different components within the activism that we do in SAYS in Sacramento. One, first and foremost, we are first line contact for young people and their families. If somebody gets shot, if somebody gets hurt, we’re called, and we, we, are, I wouldn’t call us first responders. But somewhere in that terminology we’re there . . . How we’re doing it in schools, for instance last year at Burbank we had the first ever like SAYS stand-alone class that was funded by the city of Sacramento, like an elective course. Where young people were picked to be in the class based on the number of disciplinary actions they have had in school as well as their trajectory toward gangs and violence. So high-risk students. So when I went to the admin like, “Hey, we want to use our funding to come and serve young people at your school, what do you suggest?” And he was like, “you know, the Black women on campus is where I’m having the most problems.” He was like, “they get into the most fights, they get suspended the most, and there’s brothas here that are kinda working with the Black and Brown brothas and have support, but I don’t have anybody to support my young women of color, primarily Black women.” He was like, “could y’all do that?” Me and Coco look at each other like, “DUH! Like, that’s us!”

So, they created a class. They gave the young women credit. And we began this class at Burbank, and we had all

these big dreams. . . . Came to the school on the first day and what we didn't realize is we got 25 young women, most of them were Black. We had a couple of Chicano and Southeast Asian students. Umm, they was not fucking with each other. We really had to scaffold back and like kinda meet them where they were at. Like not only in their consciousness and their identity but how they felt about a young person, a young woman living in Sacramento, amongst gang violence, amongst drugs, amongst poverty, amongst abuse and neglect.

So Coco and I had to be like, "we got to put the curriculum to the side for a moment." We had to share who we were with them. We had to open up our lives, like, "no, no, no baby, Coco Mama live right down the street. Like, we right here with you! Like, we shop at FoodMaxx too!" Like really being vulnerable. At first they was like, "UC Davis, why UC Davis want to fuck with Burbank? We ain't going to UC Davis" . . . So once we got past the UC Davis, and we got to the SAYS, and we got to them, and to the community, then that's when we were able to start talking about violence.⁵⁶

The class was such a success that Hill and Bland were asked to return, and the young men expressed an interest in the course.

So much of SAYS's activism goes beyond teaching kids from the block how to be slam poets; it is also about building relationships, being vulnerable, offering a safe space for marginalized students, about violence prevention, and offering an opportunity for them to genuinely cultivate community devoid of violence. Bland and Hill are affectionately referred to as "Mama P" and "Auntie" by most SAYS students as these women are widely accepted as fictive kin. Furthermore, because both Bland and Hill are respected by their students and many residents throughout South Sacramento, they are able to navigate across gang territories. Their bodies in essence become this "space of truce." They are able to bring kids who might be Crips, Bloods, or Norteños together with little conflict as they all have a common love and admiration for Auntie and Mama P. The two women are working to repair communities and relationships by putting their bodies on the line.

From the classes and workshops, like those mentioned above, have come some of the city's fiercest spoken word artists. These poets have been featured in various spoken word competitions across the nation, while at the same time they remain committed to spreading activism across the greater Sacramento area. Frequently, they perform at local venues to help fundraise and participate in community-based events. After being confronted with displacement, Deborah "Debbie Dollas" Armstrong, former SAYS student, wrote a riveting piece on her experience with gentrification:

Gentrification

I Stand before you a statistic

I am a black girl

Brought up way beneath the poverty line

My parents are one of the 50 to 60 percent of married couples
who divorce in the United States

My mother has made her home in cities ranked the most
dangerous in the state of california

From richmond to stockton

I couldn’t tell you if it was sage, prayers, or soul music
seeping through stereos early Saturday mornings that
made home feel safe

But man, home felt safe.

I used to count my steps

Walking past countless abandoned apartment complexes

I’m headed to the nearest liquor store

Mom needs a stick of butter

But again we will settle for a bucket of margarine

Because A&J’s Liquor doesn’t sell ACTUAL butter

The nearest grocery store is more than 2 miles away and
mom don’t got transportation

We live in a food desert

And this liquor store is the only oasis for miles

Rich white men and their sons

Look at neighborhoods like the ones I have lived in my whole
life

With eyes full of lust

Smiling like hyenas

They have a greed centuries old

They have agreed change must be made

Using the word development to mask capitalist intentions

But we’ve seen it time and time again

In cities like Boston, Seattle, Los Angeles, and San Francisco

Just to name a few of the top cities affected by gentrification
in the 21st century

Statistics show that in these places well over 40 percent of
“Urban Housing” moved from the

bottom half of price distribution to the top half

Meaning that along with your

Organic grocery stores

Coffee shops and

New lofts

Came rent increases

Displacing people of color who created the culture whites
 market as a commodity
 I may sound black and bitter
 Like a 5 dollar cup of coffee in the middle of my neighborhood
 This pattern of redevelopment and relocation is the reason
 I've attended 5 different campuses in
 my 4 year high school career
 Gentrification has directly affected my education
 Yet here I am
 Currently residing in the city of Stockton
 Walking past countless abandoned apartment complexes
 I'm on my way to work
 Wondering how to define the line between gentrification and
 development
 Grocery stores and resources should not be accompanied by
 unaffordable rent
 Poor people will not be marginalized and confined to the
 outskirts of your "Urban Utopias"
 People of color will no longer allow their towns to be starved
 and stalked by culture vultures
 Poor people will not choose between affordable housing and
 safe, resourceful communities
 Let's face it decent housing is a human right that should be
 readily accessible to everyone
 The time for change is here
 Get ready⁵⁷

After being forced to leave Sacramento and move roughly fifty miles away to Stockton, Armstrong grapples today with the implications of redevelopment and resegregation. She reflects on the community she once knew and loved in Sacramento—a community that has now been almost completely divested of everything that made it home, that made it a community. Today, she mourns the emergence of overpriced coffee shops and bike lanes accompanied by an influx of new residents in search of "urban utopias." Armstrong is asking us, is it possible to redevelop communities without destroying the existing tightly knit communities? She urges us to "Get ready," counting on Black Sacramentans to not leave quietly.

Armstrong's poem comes to life when it is performed. The raw emotion—anger, sadness, melancholia, hope—overflows, and it allows her to connect with local audiences. Unsurprisingly, SAYS poets have developed a rapport with residents of the city. At events, audience members will request poems by name or subject area. Akin to a griot, as she moves from one venue to another, Johnson is often asked to perform pieces that mention Oak Park Black businesses that once existed. Johnson, Armstrong, and Bland engage in what has been

described by SAYS poets as “call out culture.” They “call out” iconic elements of the Black Sacramentan experience like elote (Mexican street corn that is sold on corners across Oak Park and South Sacramento and has become a favorite after-school snack for Black and Latinx youth), the San Pannell Meadowview Community Center, Sac High, Sol Collective, the Brickhouse, and even some of the main streets that run through communities of color—Florin Road, Mack Road, Stockton Boulevard, and Martin Luther King Boulevard.⁵⁸ She argues that hearing these old, yet familiar names gives the people something to testify to. In response, the performance gives spontaneous voice to the meaning of the item or location that has a warm place in the lives of the audience. Moreover, this is a concerted act to ensure that Black Sacramentans won’t forget their history. Johnson argues that remembering this history is critical now more than ever as she fears that developers will control the social and historical narrative of Oak Park and other Black neighborhoods as they now control the physical construction.⁵⁹ She states that this act of “calling out” is an act of resistance “because once they make you forget what was, they can come and tell you what it should be.”⁶⁰

Moreover, Armstrong and SAYS poets use of poetry to call out the ills of resegregation and gentrification builds on a long history of Black women using poetry as a form of activism within social movements, as examined in Cheryl Clarke’s *After Mecca: Women Poets and the Black Arts Movement*. During the Black Power era, Black women were key poets, writing and performing what they witnessed in their communities, while challenging systems of domination, oppressive notions of blackness, sexism, and patriarchy. Poetry provides artists an accessible space to be activists, engaging in cultural production and activism simultaneously on their own terms.

Conclusion

The history of Sacramento is steeped in resegregation and displacement. This history, and current reality for many, simply uses new technologies and resources to refashion old systems to produce the same outcome—housing insecurity for those unable to keep up and a new Black community that will quickly be divested of the ties that bind them to their past and to each other. Cities like Stockton, Antioch, and Pittsburg, which have witnessed increased migration of Black economic refugees now fleeing Sacramento and other formerly affordable cities, will soon be ripe for divestment. While the focus of this work has been limited to resegregation and housing, resegregation has a much larger ripple, impacting access to education, jobs that pay a livable wage, public transportation, and social advancement. The further Blacks get pushed from the city center, the more difficult it will be for many to obtain jobs in an area already fraught with employment challenges. The remaining native Black Sacramentans, especially those in Oak Park, have been cornered and left with two options: flee or pounce.

For Blacks in northern California, Sacramento has long been seen as one of the last affordable urban cities. The city has in many ways become the final frontier for many of us who are looking to remain in an urban city or simply in the state. Sacramento may indeed be one of the last battlegrounds for the future of Blacks in the state and help to determine what will be the new direction of Blacks in the West.

The Black women artists whom I had the opportunity to observe, interview, and work with are entangled in this web of resegregation. While matriarchs like Mother Rose and Ms. Barbara are certainly working to hold on to their spaces and community, younger artists like Sidqe, Brown, and Armstrong are struggling—struggling to find community, struggling to maintain a livelihood, and struggling to do “what’s right” by Black Sacramento and not be complicit in gentrification. Artists like Johnson, Mama P, and Bland are holding on to the memories of Oak Park and doing the necessary emotional and community work to help students understand what is happening and equipping them with the tools to resist.

While the city has its own plan for redevelopment, how to make it cool, and lure the creative class, it is up to Black Sacramentans, especially its creatives and artists, to reimagine the possibilities for Black Sacramento. By leveraging Afrofuturism as a creative paradigm, their work can help foretell the on-the-ground future of Blacks and other marginalized communities of color in the urban West. It is up to them to reimagine a future for Black Sacramentans that provides revitalization, but not at the expense of its people, and to organize around that vision. Only then will the cycle of resegregation be dismantled and a new possibility be imagined that is capable of embracing the future while celebrating, honoring, and including the past.

Notes

1. The Mahogany Urban Poetry Series is an underground spoken word event that was founded, and over the past fifteen years has often been hosted, by Cleo Cartel and Khiry Malik at the Queen Sheba Ethiopian restaurant in Sacramento, California.

2. Sacramento is often shortened to “Sac” by long-time Sacramentans. Throughout this work I, as well as many of the narrators interviewed, use the shortened and more colloquial form to refer to the city.

3. Ryan Lillis, “See Where Sacramento’s Skyrocketing Rents Rank Nationally,” *The Sacramento Bee*, June 8, 2017, <http://www.sacbee.com/news/local/news-columns-blogs/city-beat/article155114249.html>.

4. During 2016, grassroots organizing in the city increased as a response to both local and national politics. Russell Rawlings, student and disability rights advocate, ran for mayor on a completely grassroots campaign funded by individual community donors. While Rawlings did not win the election, his campaign certainly created a movement that helped birth current community-based programs and organizing efforts including but not limited to The Transit Riders’ Union, Tenants’ Union, Organize Sacramento, and a community land trust.

5. Throughout this work I make a concerted effort to use “resegregation” instead of gentrification; however, because so much of the narrative on what is happening is termed

“gentrification,” its use can be unavoidable at times because narrators tend to use the word to describe the city’s current housing crisis.

6. Lawrence De Graaf and Quintard Taylor, eds., *Seeking El Dorado: African Americans in California* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 11.

7. David Covin, *Black Politics After the Civil Rights Movement: Activity and Beliefs in Sacramento, 1970–2000* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2009), 16-17.

8. William Burg, *Sacramento Renaissance: Art, Music and Activism in California’s Capital City* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2013), 31.

9. Covin, *Black Politics*, 20-21.

10. Burg, *Sacramento Renaissance*, 40.

11. Three major highways were constructed through the West End—I-5, I-80, and I-99.

12. Besides Oak Park, Black Sacramentans during this period also settled in surrounding neighborhoods—Del Paso Heights, Glen Elder, North Highlands, and Lincoln Village.

13. See Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Jeff Chang, *We Gon’ Be Alright: Notes on Race and Resegregation* (New York: Picador, 2016), 71; Thomas Schelling, “Dynamic Models of Segregation,” *The Journal of Mathematical Sociology* 1, no. 2 (1971).

14. Burg, *Sacramento Renaissance*, 57-59.

15. “History of Oak Park,” Oak Park Neighborhood Association, accessed September 11, 2017, <http://www.oakparkna.com/history-of-oak-park/>.

16. Roberta Deering, “Report to Preservation Commission, City of Sacramento,” June 19, 2013, http://sacramento.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=30&clip_id=3289&meta_id=400138.

17. Harvey Antonio, “Local History of Black Panther Party,” *Sacramento Observer*, April 28, 2016.

18. Stephen Magagnini, “Black Panthers Founder Bobby Seale Tells Black Lives Matter to Go Beyond Protest,” *The Sacramento Bee*, October 9, 2016, http://www.sacbee.com/entertainment/living/helping_others/article107185267.html.

19. “Citizens for Justice Question Police Plan,” *The Sacramento Observer*, April 15, 1971.

20. Covin, *Black Politics*, 97-99.

21. Hudson Sangree, “Sacramento Home Prices Back at Pre-bubble Level,” *The Sacramento Bee*, April 19, 2016, <http://www.sacbee.com/news/business/real-estate-news/article72756352.html>.

22. Ryan Lillis, “No Confetti, Choirs as Kevin Johnson Leaves Sacramento Mayor’s Post,” *The Sacramento Bee*, December 04, 2016, <http://www.sacbee.com/news/local/news-columns-blogs/city-beat/article118734493.html>.

23. Ibid.

24. Erika Smith, “Sacramento’s Oak Park Is the New ‘It’ Neighborhood; Some Aren’t Happy,” *The Sacramento Bee*, March 11, 2016, <http://www.sacbee.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/erika-d-smith/article65516352.html>.

25. Chang, *We Gon’ Be Alright*, 72.

26. Ibid.

27. Following deindustrialization, the primary employers in the city are the state and local government, medical industrial complex, and education sector. As a result, jobs that are created often require some level of higher education, ruling out many working-class citizens looking for employment. Additionally, the city maintains one of the highest (5.1%) unemployment rates in comparison to other major and second-tier cities.

28. Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: and How It’s Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2012).

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., 66.

31. Cian O’Callaghan, “Let’s Audit Bohemia: A Review of Florida’s ‘Creative Class’ Thesis and Its Impact on Urban Policy,” *Geography Compass* 4, no. 11 (2010): 1610.

32. See Ronda Kaysen, "Artists and Their Muse: Gentrification," *The New York Times*, December 2, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/02/realestate/artists-and-their-muse-gentrification.html>, and Matt Bolton, "Is Art to Blame for Gentrification?," August 30, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/aug/30/art-blame-gentrification-peckham>.

33. Antonia Casellas, Esteve Dot-Jutgla, and Montserrat Pallares-Barbera, "Artists, Cultural Gentrification and Public Policy," *Urbani izziv*, special issue, 23 (2012): 106.

34. Ginia Bellafante, "SoHa in Harlem? The Misguided Madness of Neighborhood Rebranding," *The New York Times*, July 6, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/06/nyregion/soha-in-harlem-the-misguided-madness-of-neighborhood-rebranding.html>.

35. Caitlin Cahill, "'At Risk'? The Fed Up Honeys Re-Present the Gentrification of the Lower East Side," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 1/2 (Summer 2006): 334-63.

36. Shanell Matthews, "Black Futures Month," February 1, 2016, <http://blacklivesmatter.com/black-futures-month/>.

37. Jeanelle Hope, "Photo of 'What is a Black Future in Sacramento.'" *Instagram*, August 27, 2016, https://www.instagram.com/p/BJokUZYB92P/?taken-by=j_muka.

38. Delgreta Brown, artist, interviewed by author, July 2017.

39. Susana Morris, "Black Girls Are from the Future: Afrofuturist Feminism in Octavia E. Butler's *Fledgling*," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 40, no. 3&4 (Fall/Winter 2012): 146-66.

40. 3C hair is considered tightly coiled curly hair. Based on various hair texture/type scales, different textures are classified based on how curly and coily they are; 1 denotes straight hair; 2 wavy hair; 3 curly hair; and 4 kinky. The letters denote the tightness or looseness of coils. Within the natural hair community, 3C, 4A, 4B, and 4C are commonly used to discuss Black women's hair.

41. The theme of religion and spirituality was salient across both artists' work. Both reference different forms of religion and spirituality in passing. Several of Sidqe's paintings feature Hindu and Buddhist symbolism. In SZA's "Ice Moon" she makes mention of "Gods" and deities.

42. "Top Dawg," SZA, S (EP), MP3 audio, 2013.

43. "The cada story," Capitol Area Development Authority, accessed September 4, 2017, <http://www.cadanet.org/building-neighborhoods>.

44. Aliyah Sidqe, interviewed by author, July 2017.

45. Guisela Latorre, *Walls of Empowerment: Chicana/o Indigenist Murals of California* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008.), 244.

46. Matt Kawahara, "Here's Where You Can See Walls Transformed During August's Mural Festival in Sacramento," *The Sacramento Bee*, July 27, 2017, <http://www.sacbee.com/entertainment/arts-culture/article164001922.html>.

47. Delgreta Brown, interviewed by author.

48. Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, "'Women Made the Community': African American Migrant Women and the Cultural Transformation of the San Francisco East Bay Area," in *African American Women Confront the West, 1600-2000*, eds. Quintard Taylor and Shirley Ann Wilson Moore (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 270.

49. Takarra Johnson, interviewed by author, Sacramento, CA, 2017.

50. While Mother Rose is certainly a staple within Oak Park and the Black community, it should be noted that Underground Books is owned by her son, Kevin Johnson, and his development company—St. Hope Development Co. During his tenure as mayor, Oak Park changed dramatically, with many Black residents and small businesses being displaced. However, Johnson owns and operates several businesses in the neighborhood, and he also founded several charter schools in the neighborhood under the name, St. Hope Public Schools. Mother Rose's connection to Johnson further complicates her relationship to this discussion on Black art and resegregation, as Underground Books is arguably both a Black cultural site and symbol of gentrification.

51. "About SAYS," Sacramento Area Youth Speak, accessed September 12, 2017, <http://www.says.ucdavis.edu/about-says/>.

52. Vajra Watson, interviewed by author, Sacramento, CA, 2017.

53. Denisha Bland, interviewed by author, Sacramento, CA, 2017.

54. Ibid.

55. Chela Sandoval and Guisela Latorre, “Chicana/o Artivism: Judy Baca’s Digital Work with Youth of Color,” in *Youth and Digital Media*, ed. Anna Everett (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2008), 82.

56. Patrice Hill, interviewed by author, Sacramento, CA, 2017.

57. Deborah “Debbie Dollas” Armstrong, “Gentrification,” (unpublished poem, 2017), PDF file.

58. Takarra Johnson, interviewed by author.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.