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**Abolition Ecologies and the Making of Freedom as a Place
in Bayview-Hunters Point**

**Spencer O'Hara
University of San Francisco
Spring 2023
Master of Arts in International Studies**

**ABOLITION ECOLOGIES AND THE MAKING OF
FREEDOM AS A PLACE IN BAYVIEW-HUNTERS POINT**

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS
in
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

by **SPENCER O'HARA**

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this thesis project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

APPROVED:



April 19, 2023

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Abstract

In this paper, I critically explore the subjectivities of Hunters Point Naval Shipyard (HPNS), part of the largest redevelopment project in San Francisco since 1906. Applying an abolition ecologies¹ framework, I ask what explains the duplicity of the Shipyard as a site of radioactive contamination and capital accumulation, and in the same time-space one that creates the conditions for radical place-making. Hunters Point Naval Shipyard is a former commercial and military shipyard located on a peninsula in southeastern San Francisco. Motivated by its desire for a major shipbuilding and repair facility to project maritime power in the Pacific, the Navy purchased the private dry dock in 1940 and recruited thousands of Black Southerners to participate in the warmaking economy.²

The Naval Radiological Defense Laboratory also operated at HPNS, conducting applied research on irradiated vessels as part of the “creative destruction”³ that precipitated the Golden Age of Capitalism.⁴ Structures of New Deal programs in Hunters Point, such as the Federal Housing Authority (FHA)⁵ and Home Owners’ Loan Corporation,⁶ though, unevenly redistributed the consequences of “welfare-warfare,”⁷ “reinforcing Jim Crow without speaking his name.”⁸ Moreover, a disproportionate number of Black workers lost their jobs with the Shipyard closure of 1974.⁹ The EPA later declared HPNS a Superfund site, and the Navy closed it permanently in the 1990s, reaching an agreement with the Redevelopment Agency to transform the Shipyard into a residential and commercial utopia.¹⁰

¹ Heynen, N., & Ybarra, M. (2021). Abolition Ecologies and the Making of Freedom as a Place. *Antipode*, 53(1), p. 21-35.

² Office of Community Investment and Infrastructure (OCII). (1996). *Hunters Point Shipyard: A Community History*. San Francisco, CA: City and County of San Francisco.

³ Schumpeter, J. (1942). *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*. New York, NY: Harper & Brothers.

⁴ Gilmore, R.W. (2007). “The California Political Economy.” In *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, p. 52, citing, Glyn, A., Hughes, A., Lipietz, A., & Singh, A.. (1990). “The Rise and Fall of the Golden Age.” In *The Golden Age of Capitalism: Reinterpreting the Post-War Experience*, ed. Marglin, S.J., & Schor, J.B., p. 39–125. WIDER Studies in Economic Development. Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press.

⁵ Brahinsky, R. (2012). “Race, Space, and Making the City: Waves of People, Waves of (Re)development.” In *The Making and Unmaking of Southeast San Francisco* (dissertation). University of California, Berkeley, CA, p. 40, citing, Jackson, K. T. (1985). *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press; Baranski, J. (2019). *Housing the City by the Bay: Tenant Activism, Civil Rights, and Class Politics in San Francisco*. Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press.

⁶ Brahinsky, R. (2012). “Southeast San Francisco: A Place Apart?,” p. 73; AEMP. (n.d.). “Timeline of the Bayview-Hunters Point - Divestment and Development.” Berkeley, CA: University of California, *American Cultures Engaged Scholarship (ACES) Program*. Accessed Online: <https://antievictionmap.com/bayview-hunters-point>. October, 21, 2022.

⁷ Gilmore, R.W. (2007), p. 37, citing, O’Connor, J. [1973] (2000). *The Fiscal Crisis of the State*. London, UK: Transaction Publishers, and Cook, F.J. (1962). *The Warfare State*. New York, NY: Macmillan.

⁸ Gilmore, R.W., (2007), p. 79, citing, Mink, G. (1995). *The Wages of Motherhood: Inequality in the Welfare State, 1917–1942*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, and Gilmore, R.W. (2002b). Race and Globalization. In *Geographies of Global Change*, ed. Johnstone, R. J. Taylor, P. J. & Watts, M., p. 261–74. 2nd ed. Oxford UK: Basil Blackwell.

⁹ KPPIX-TV. (1973a). *Hunters Point Shipyard Closure Protest*. San Francisco, CA.

¹⁰ OCII. (n.d.). *Hunters Point Shipyard and Candlestick Point*. City and County of San Francisco.

Thirty years into remediation, radioactive compounds loom among residents living near the Shipyard. Distrustful of agencies and officials responsible for remediation and redevelopment, longtime homeowners challenge the nexus of gentrification and pollution by carving out their “right to the city.”¹¹ This capstone paper, to summarize, advances abolition ecologies as an analytical approach that explains how subjectivities inform the production of urban space, with a focus on the collective making of land, air, and water-based environments.¹² I critically examine how the politics of race, space, and nature¹³ influence the redevelopment of toxic Superfund sites while underscoring how their deconstruction as relational and dynamic processes¹⁴ shapes material and experiential notions of “freedom as a place.”¹⁵

Key Terms:

Abolition geography, political ecology, race, space, nature, freedom as a place

¹¹ Lefebvre, H. (1968). *Le Droit à la ville* [The Right to the City]. Paris: Anthropos.

¹² Heynen, N., & Ybarra, M. (2021).

¹³ Brahinsky, R., Sasser, J., & Minkoff-Zern, L. A. (2014). Race, Space, And Nature: An Introduction And Critique. *Antipode*, 46(5), p. 1135–1152.

¹⁴ Omi, M., & Winant, H. (1994). *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. New York, NY: Routledge.

¹⁵ Gilmore, R.W. (2022). “Abolition Geography and the Problem of Innocence.” In *Abolition Geography: Essays Towards Liberation*. New York, NY: Verso, p. 471-495.

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This capstone project is the culmination of more than two years of learning about a place called Bayview-Hunters Point alongside residents, activists, classmates, professors, friends, and family. First, I thank the people of Bayview-Hunters Point that took the time and effort to speak with me about the remediation and redevelopment of the Shipyard. I am unconditionally grateful for their kindness and assistance. Though informants are listed in the Appendix, I personally thank Arieann Harrison and Tonia Randell for sharing their insights and experiences about living near the Shipyard, in addition to Greenaction Director, Bradley Angel, for the art and activist stories, and a Lennar representative for a tour of the model home units.

Next, I thank my classmates and the faculty and staff at the University of San Francisco for their feedback and support, from my early proposal stages to this capstone thesis paper. This includes the Master of Arts in International Studies (MAIS) and Urban and Public Affairs (UPA) programs. My adviser, Dr. Rachel Brahinsky, challenged and solidified my ideas. Dr. Lucia Cantero and her *Infrastructure as Ethics* course catalyzed my ethnographic approaches to critical geographic thought. Ruth Wilson Gilmore's books, *Golden Gulag* and *Abolition Geography*, gave me words for what I know to be true.

I relied upon archives from the Gleeson Library at the University of San Francisco, the Digital Information Virtual Archive (DIVA) at San Francisco State University, the Anti Eviction Mapping Project (AEMP), the Urban Displacement Project, *The Bay View National Black Newspaper*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, KPIX/CBS Bay Area, the City and County of San Francisco, Lennar Corporation, the U.S. Navy, and the Office of Community Investment and Infrastructure. Dr. Reza Shirazi also gave me access to his documentary film *Never Surrender*. While not all of this archival knowledge is necessarily referenced in the text, it undoubtedly informed my production of this capstone thesis project.

I dedicate the completion of this capstone thesis paper to loved ones whose wisdom lives on in my heart and memories, including my aunt, Lisa Hofer, and grandmothers, Marjorie Hofer and Margaret O'Hara. I know they see me and are proud of me.

Introduction

Geographies of (Freedom) Dreams

Jason Webster's *The Butterfly Girl* is a twelve-foot-tall metallic sculpture that sits in the center of a park only steps away. A placard on a concrete slab describes an image that, "...captures the innocence of a young girl jumping rope, seemingly without any worries, as her braids fly freely in the wind."¹⁶ His work is part of a collection of paintings, sculptures, and architectures that dot the dozens of 'pocket parks' at the SF Shipyard.

Eric Powell's *Flotilla* is a concrete slab etched into a nearby hillside, replete with binoculars and benches that immerse residents and visitors in the nautical nostalgia of the gantry crane, dry docks, and dilapidated warehouses with holes in the windows that sit below the hill. The San Francisco Shipyard is a geography of dreams. Perched on the precipice of a grassy hill, the Shipyard offers a panorama of the geographies of the San Francisco Bay Area.

Today is a breezy spring day, punctuated by a clear blue sky. Condominiums and townhouses cast a shadow over an orange sea of poppies that sway in the grasses of the knoll, known as Coleman Bluff, painting a stark contrast to the bright, ethereal aesthetic of this 360-degree vignette. Bedroom, balcony, and backyard views of the Oakland Hills across the Bay, though, are what attract prospective homebuyers to the SF Shipyard.

Walking along a trail on Coleman Bluff leads to a thirty-foot-tall Rococo bronze frame. Mildred Howard's *Frame* is a motion picture capturing a four-and-a-half-mile bridge that connects the concrete towers of the San Francisco skyline to Yerba Buena Island as cars spill in and out of its tunnel.¹⁷

¹⁶ Webster, J. (2015). *The Butterfly Girl*. San Francisco, CA: Pocket Park 16, The SF Shipyard. Observed and Quoted by Author.

¹⁷ Howard, M. (2015). *Frame*. San Francisco, CA: The SF Shipyard. Observed by Author.

Visible through the frame are three-dimensional copper spires of Walter Hood's *Refrain*, forming *Frame-Refrain*, two pieces that expand notions of limits to an infinite "...multiplicity of valued spaces and views..." and, "provide a point of contact between the worlds of public and private, bridging the brawny, industrial world of steel and concrete with fragile treasures of art and antiques."¹⁸

Marion Coleman's tile art, *Visions of the Past/Visions for the Future*, sits at Pocket Park 15 and overlooks Navy barracks-style homes, separated only by tall amber brush. Replicated from fiber collages, her panels depict, "...the life, work, and play of the African American community living in Bayview Hunters Point and Shipyard communities."¹⁹ One of the panels, *For the Sake of a Child* illustrates a Black child in a red-and-white striped shirt and blue jeans, tilling dirt with a hoe as two men watch from a housing complex.²⁰

Spatial temporalities of the San Francisco Shipyard infrastructure elicit aesthetics that fuse blackness and nautical nostalgia into a retro millennial paradise. Lennar, the project's lead developer, capitalizes upon the sensorial presence of blue-collar black aesthetics while displacing working-class Black people from Hunters Point, extracting value from blackness as profit.

From the *Bayview Horn* sculpture of a jazz musician blowing into his instrument to the Gravitron-like semicircular *Nautical Swing*, Lennar and the City and County of San Francisco emplace blackness into the built environment, extracting value and displacing the same Black residents their imagery aestheticizes.

¹⁸ Hood Design Studio. (n.d.). "Frame/Refrain." Oakland, CA: *Hood Design Studio*. Accessed Online: <https://www.hooddesignstudio.com/framerefrain>, October 18, 2022; Hood, W. (2015). *Refrain*. San Francisco, CA: The San Francisco Shipyard. Observed by Author.

¹⁹ Coleman, M. (n.d.). *Visions of the Past/Visions for the Future*. San Francisco, CA: Pocket Park 15, The SF Shipyard. Observed and Quoted by Author.

²⁰ Ibid.

black aesthetics emplacement, what Dr. Brandi Summers calls “BAE,” is, “...a mode of representing blackness in urban capitalist simulacra, which exposes how blackness accrues a value that is not necessarily extended to Black bodies.”²¹ black aesthetics emplacement accounts for the, “...active dissociation of blackness from Black embodiment, and its re-presentation in the form of words, objects, images, and performances.”

Lennar, the Office of Community Investment and Infrastructure (OCII), and SF Shipyard residents appropriate the aesthetics of blackness, absolving themselves from their roles in the displacement of Black people by disarticulating, reproducing, and appreciating images that explicitly “conjure but do not confirm”²² the culture and histories of Black people in Hunters Point.

In her dissection of the *Chocolate City Beer* logo and critical analyses of the H-Street corridor in Northeast Washington, D.C., Dr. Summers emphasizes BAE is “...both an illustration and symptom of...gentrification,”²³ extracting value from urban space by masking, “...processes and practices of excess policing, predatory lending, evictions, and increased tax burdens that accompany gentrification.”²⁴

The SF Shipyard fashions liberal notions of diversity and representation through spatial projections of black aesthetics to ‘revitalize’ landscapes conceptualized as fallow. Narratives of diversity, in other words, attach themselves to globalized processes of urban change and recapitulate space by disguising social and cultural relations of production.²⁵

²¹ Summers, B. (2019). “Introduction: Black Space Matters.” In *Black in Place: The Spatial Aesthetics of Race in a Post-Chocolate City*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, p. 3.

²² Ibid.

²³ Summers, B. (2019), p. 4.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

Exiting the SF Shipyard park involves a short journey eastward along Innes Avenue, which eventually meets up with Donahue Street — a demarcation formed from the pressing of capital's latest *investment* in the SF Shipyard against its history of *divestment* from the places and people surrounding it in Bayview-Hunters Point. The infamously rebranded SF Shipyard is a cacophony of extraordinary contradictions, part of the largest redevelopment project in city history since the 1906 earthquake, atop one of the most radioactive contaminated sites in the United States.

Lennar's San Francisco Shipyard is a geography of dreams, contrasted by the freedom dreams²⁶ of Bayview-Hunters Point. To speak of the Bayview is to speak of "...the San Francisco that America pretends does not exist," as James Baldwin stated during his visit in the film *Take This Hammer*.²⁷ Bayview-Hunters Point is a multi-racial, working-class neighborhood in southeastern San Francisco, California.

A trip down Third Street sixty years after Baldwin's visit is a trip through the spatial, temporal tensions of a historically Black neighborhood in the twenty-first century. What Summers refers to as a post-Chocolate city, Bayview-Hunters Point is a place made and unmade by processes of racial segregation, (de)industrialization, disinvestment, reinvestment, and redevelopment that reproduce the displacing and dispossessing impacts of gentrification and toxic contamination.

Third Street conveys immutable feelings of a place in transition. Completed in the early 2000s to connect the Bayview with Downtown, the T Third Street line screeches past street light poles painted in red, black, and green-striped flags, stretching blocks in multiple directions. Metal bars cover the windows and door fronts of restaurants, offices, and retail businesses.

²⁶ Kelley, R. (2002). *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

²⁷ Library of Congress. (1964). *Take This Hammer*. Boston, MA & Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, American Archive of Public Broadcasting (GBH and the Library of Congress).

Unmistakable “riot architecture” reflects the Bayview’s reputation as a place of turmoil and unrest, crafted in the 1966 Hunters Point riots that precipitated the Black Power movement in Oakland. Hunters Point Naval Shipyard highlights San Francisco's spatial temporalities through the recollection of overlooked stories that shape the Bay Area and the world.

From gentrification to radioactive contamination, remediation and redevelopment of Hunters Point Naval Shipyard are predominant but not exclusive struggles in Bayview-Hunters Point. The Navy has spent thirty years and \$1 billion²⁸ to clean up the Shipyard’s toxic, radioactive waste concentrated in its soils and perimeter shorelines. In 2018, a whistleblower revealed that Navy contractor, Tetra Tech, falsified up to ninety percent of its parcel soil samples.²⁹

Neighbors express their outrage, from rallies on the steps of San Francisco City Hall to public comments in the Legislative Chamber to a multi-billion-dollar lawsuit against Tetra Tech and Lennar filed by civil rights and environment attorney, Charles Bonner, on behalf of dozens of homeowners. Litigation and settlements are ongoing across a web of cases and while residents celebrate recent financial awards, the companies still do not admit to their responsibility.

Longtime residents like Marie Harrison worried about toxic waste and displacement decades before the scandal, a microcosm of how the politics of race-class³⁰ and gender influence urban environmental processes. She spoke these words at a rally and press conference in front of City Hall after news of the scandal became apparent:

“Something is wrong here. Something is not right. Something stinks in our air, and I don’t mean just the smell. Something has happened to so many of my community’s people. And we were being told, “Oh, no, you’re safe. It’s ok for the children to play outside. I’m a living witness, thus far, we were not safe.

²⁸ Brahinsky, R., & Tarr, A. (2020). “Hunters Point Shipyard,” p. 152-153.

²⁹ *United States ex rel. Jahr v. Tetra Tech EC, Inc.*, 13-cv-03835-JD, Northern District of California, (2022).

³⁰ Brahinsky, R. (2014a). Race and the Making of Southeast San Francisco: Towards a Theory of Race-Class. *Antipode*, 46(5), p. 1258-1276.

We. Were. Not. Safe. We are suffering, and you know it. This city has long since sat back and watched us slowly but surely die. We've been fighting this battle for not five years, not for ten years, not for sixty years, only to watch our people get evicted and moved out, be made sick. I've watched Greenaction suffer, watching other folks come in and tell us we got the answer when we had the answer from the beginning. You need to stop and do the right thing."³¹

Dr. Ahimsa Porter Sumchai laid bare the toxic legacies of Hunters Point for an audience of reporters and residents, from the Shipyard to sewage and gas power plants to warehouses to Highway 101 and Interstate 280: "What we do know is that Bayview-Hunters Point has an enormous excessive burden in cardiopulmonary diseases, adult asthma is unique in Bayview-Hunters Point, doubles the rate that's seen in the rest of the city..."³²

A demonstrator at the same rally later spoke about how he believes that the redevelopment plan is the only reason attention is on the toxicity of the Shipyard. Remarks from the pro-growth technocrat, the late-Mayor Ed Lee, reiterate these suspicions of lifting economic tides reconfiguring what Katherine McKittrick describes as a "Black sense of place."³³ At a press conference, Lee emphatically stated, "We mean what we say about fulfilling these promises. We want our African American community to thrive in San Francisco. We want to make sure we turn around that corner away from the outmigration."³⁴

Indeed, Lennar's aggressive marketing campaign of the SF Shipyard follows logics of revitalization through job creation, stemming from the construction of ten-thousand townhouses and condominiums, secluded parks, gantry-themed playgrounds, retail centers, a sustainable 'green' technology campus, and artistic homages of black maritime aesthetics.

³¹ Shirazi, M.R. (2020). Never Surrender [documentary]. Ed. Roosblad, S., United States and United Kingdom, 0:00-0:06, citing, Harrison, M. (2018). "Public Comment at San Francisco City Hall Press Conference." San Francisco, CA: San Francisco City Hall.

³² Shirazi, R. (2020), citing, Porter Sumchai, A. (2018). "Public Comment at San Francisco City Hall Press Conference." San Francisco, CA: San Francisco City Hall.

³³ McKittrick, K. (2011). "On Plantations, Prisons, and a Black Sense of Place." *Social & Cultural Geography*, 12(8), p. 947-63.

³⁴ Shirazi, R. (2020), citing, Lee, E. (2012). "Mayor's Press Conference." San Francisco, CA: San Francisco City Hall.

With stock photos of homes on a hillside, the real estate developer advertises on billboards peppered throughout landscapes of city neighborhoods, promising, “New Homes. Great value. Condos & Townhouses 1-2 bedrooms / From the \$700,000s.”³⁵ How does a redevelopment plan with the lowest-cost homes in the city come into existence on a Superfund site, why does it drive such rifts between longtime residents and regulators, city officials, and developers, and what do their responses highlight about the right to urban space?

Proponents of sustainable development and environmental justice urge harmonization of human relationships with environments, and in the same breath, treat race, class, and gender as fixed, natural, and empirical categories of difference, rather than relational and dynamic political-economic, social, and cultural processes.³⁶ In doing so, theorists presuppose and repurpose normative ideologies that reconfigure and perpetuate the uneven movement of capital by naturalizing, externalizing, and universalizing its racialized and gendered relations of production.

Waste formations³⁷ do not exist apart from the people and places of Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, but rather, convey their abolition ecologies by cultivating ways of knowing and being “in nature.” In their conceptualizations of nature-society relations, the abolition ecologies of Bayview-Hunters Point imagine, create, and celebrate freedoms as the collective making of places.

³⁵ Lennar. (n.d.). “New Homes. Great Value,” Billboard. San Francisco, CA: Observed and Quoted by Author.

³⁶ Omi, M., Winant, H. (1994).

³⁷ Dillon, L. (2013). Race, Waste, and Space: Brownfield Redevelopment and Environmental Justice at the Hunters Point Shipyard. *Antipode*, 46(5), p. 1205-1221.

Structure of Capstone Thesis Paper

Asking what explains the differences in how San Franciscans perceive the Shipyard remediation and redevelopment and what they reveal about the future of the city's shifting landscape, this capstone paper examines the abolition ecologies of Hunters Point Naval Shipyard. I highlight how intersections of race, waste, and space influence notions of freedom in relation to land, air, and water-based environments.

This paper builds on my capstone adviser Dr. Rachel Brahinsky's counter-stories to hegemonic narratives surrounding gentrification as natural or inevitable. In particular, I critically focus on how race, space, and nature intersect to shape the politics of urban redevelopment,³⁸ yet with the explicit intervention of abolition ecologies.

Abolition ecology is an analytical framework that calls on political ecology to engage how white supremacy shapes land relations through processes of racial capitalism and settler colonialism.³⁹ Interweaving theories of political ecology, abolition geography, and abolition democracy, abolition ecology shapes the making of "freedom as a place" in the collective place-making of land, air, and water-based environments.⁴⁰

Linking oral and written histories of residents with (de)constructions of race, space, and gender, this paper demonstrates abolition ecologies as a lens that traces the Shipyard's emergence and offers possibilities beyond the absence of oppression in favor of the presence of liberation.

This ethnography is an ongoing project based upon two years of participant observation of Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, the SF Shipyard redevelopment project, and

³⁸ Brahinsky, R. (2020). The Story of Property: Meditations on Gentrification, Renaming, and Possibility. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 52(5), 837–855; Brahinsky, R., Sasser, J., & Minkoff-Zern, L. A. (2014), p. 1135–1152.

³⁹ Heynen, N., & Ybarra, M. (2021), p. 21.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

people living nearby on Hunters Point Hill, known as “the Hill.” The scope of my inquiry concerns Phase 1 of the Bayview Hunters Point Redevelopment Plan, also known as Parcel A or “the San Francisco Shipyard” or “SF Shipyard” by its developer, Lennar Corp.⁴¹

My research includes but is not limited to: conducting formal and informal interviews, in some instances, multiple interviews; gathering collections and critically analyzing primary sources, such as newspapers, and government reports; and attending hours of committee hearings and organization meetings, observing, participating, and taking notes.

I connect stories of longtime Shipyard residents with critical theories of race, space, and nature, demonstrating how the abolition ecologies of Bayview-Hunters point inform freedom as a place. By relating the narratives and words of stories with ideas about how race-class and gender politics (de)construct urban change, I reveal their power in challenging articulations of race, class, gender, and gentrification as natural categories of difference.

I, therefore, employ a framework for a form of scholar-activism⁴² that rather than reduces residents to the violence they experience,⁴³ imagines and creates collective possibilities for the full cleanup and removal of all radioactive materials from parcels that threaten the ecological health of Hunters Point, including the lives of its past, present, and future residents.

Yet as abolition ecologies demonstrate, objects and subjects of study do not think and do. They are enlivened by people who think and do – both from *above* and from

⁴¹ Office of Community Investment and Infrastructure (n.d.). *Hunters Point Shipyard and Candlestick Point*. San Francisco, CA: City and County of San Francisco.

⁴² Gilmore, R.W. (2022). “Scholar-Activists in the Mix.” In *Abolition Geography: Essays Towards Liberation*, p. 92-103.

⁴³ Tuck, E. (2009). Suspending Damage: A Letter To Communities. *Harvard Educational Review*, 79(3), p. 409–428.

below.⁴⁴ To historicize the political-economic, social, and cultural life of the SF Shipyard is to know the history of words, concepts, and meanings that influence its (re)production. Intersections of race, waste, and space imbue conceptualizations of Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, reflecting the spatial temporalities of urban change.

Given that “the past is never dead..it’s not even past,”⁴⁵ coupled with the wisdom of Ida B. Wells that “the best way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them,” examining the power of the history of words and their meanings and uses within stories can reveal how *future* can be made *present*. The following section outlines the main concerns, concepts, and chronicles of this capstone thesis project.

In *Stories of a Shipyard*, I begin by historicizing Hunters Point and highlighting its implications, given what the Shipyard demonstrates about how the politics of race-class and gender shape the nexus of urban redevelopment and toxic waste remediation while also catalyzing movements to influence their outcomes and decision-making processes. It is here where I start to unveil the story of property⁴⁶ at Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, particularly how it embodies changes in relation to *Race, Space, and Nature*.

I then put this literature in conversation while refuting constructions of race as natural, before moving into how these naturalizations of race are integral to formulations of gentrification and contamination of *space* as natural or inevitable, which are further analyzed at the intersections of *race* and *gender*, emphasizing how marginality operates as a space of resistance to systems of oppression.

Next, I explicitly address the question *Why Abolition Ecologies?*, first by demonstrating why existing political ecologies do not suffice as an explanation for the

⁴⁴ Gilmore, R.W. (2018b). Making Abolition Geography in California’s Central Valley. *Space & Activism*, (21).

⁴⁵ Faulkner, W. (1951). *Requiem for a Nun*. New York, NY: Random House, 1(3): 73.

⁴⁶ Brahinsky, R. (2020a).

production of urban space.

Subsequently, I explain why an abolition ecology analysis of the Shipyard is a necessary intervention that compels researchers to articulate and challenge the shaping power of white supremacy in land, labor, and capital relations by critically engaging (de)constructions of racial capitalist, settler-colonial logics and how they reformulate material, experiential realities of urban change.

It is here I breathe reasons into how and why an abolition ecologies framework informs freedom as places in Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, underscoring how race-class and gender politics reproduce material and experiential notions of place through calls for the abolition of and reparations for toxic, radioactive wastes and processes of wasting.

Finally, in *The Abolition Ecologies of Hunters Point Naval Shipyard*, I offer a conceptualization of abolition that broadens and sharpens its purpose beyond the *absence* of toxic, radioactive wastes toward the *presence* of clean and healthy land, air, and water-based environments. From an environmental justice task force meeting to a civil grand jury hearing to a neighborhood rally for a full Shipyard cleanup, I share three stories of how residents interpret their relationships to these environments and make freedom provisionally through what Antonio Gramsci calls, “renovating and making critical the already-existing activities of daily life.”⁴⁷

Last, I interpret what questions these just, sustainable relationships demand for notions of radical place-making in global cities, identifying and analyzing residents’ perspectives on what *Abolition and Reparations* may look like in the context of the Shipyard. But first, I begin by asking why Hunters Point Naval Shipyard?

⁴⁷ Gilmore, R.W. (2007). *Golden Gulag*, p. 78, 126, citing, Gramsci, A., Hoare, Q., & Nowell-Smith, G. (1972). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. International Publishers, p. 330-331.

How was it produced, and how do such questions influence the social, political, economic, and cultural processes that inform notions of freedom? Pondering these complex issues will necessitate a historicization of Hunters Point, which is where I will now turn my attention in *Stories of a Shipyard*.

Stories of a Shipyard

Welfare-Warfare and *The Warmth of Other Suns*

“WE TELL OURSELVES STORIES in order to live.”⁴⁸ Stories of Hunters Point Naval Shipyard typically follow the arch of a single narrative: the largest dry dock on the West Coast following its completion in the late nineteenth century, Hunters Point emerged as a shipbuilding hub that attracted industrial labor and capital investment to southeastern San Francisco.⁴⁹

The establishment of a local Butcher's Reservation also meant infrastructure improvements that brought more workers, and later single-family homes in the first half of the twentieth century.⁵⁰ On the eve of the first Black migration to San Francisco, a 1937 Home Owners' Loan Corporation redlining map shows two Hunters Point districts received the lowest grades, making home purchases extremely difficult because of loans considered too risky.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Didion, J. (1979). “The White Album.” In *The White Album*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, p. 11.

⁴⁹ Brahinsky, R. (2012). “Southeast San Francisco: A Place Apart?.” In *The Making and Unmaking of Southeast San Francisco (dissertation)*, p. 50.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Brahinsky, R. (2012), p. 73; AEMP. (n.d.). “Timeline of the Bayview-Hunters Point - Divestment and Development.” Berkeley, CA: University of California, *American Cultures Engaged Scholarship (ACES) Program*. Accessed Online: <https://antievictionmap.com/bayview-hunters-point>. October, 21, 2022.

A Black industrial labor force undergirded military Keynesianism,⁵² led by California, propelling the U.S. economy out of the Great Depression and thrusting the country into the position of a global hegemonic power.⁵³ The U.S. Navy later purchased the Shipyard, expanded its dry docks, and recruited Black Southerners from Louisiana, Texas, and Arkansas to port cities of San Francisco, Oakland, Los Angeles, and San Diego for wartime production.⁵⁴ By 1943, the War Manpower Commission recruited sixteen-thousand Black workers to shipyards throughout the San Francisco Bay Area.⁵⁵

Employment encompassed a variety of positions, including, "...craftsmen, manual laborers, and apprentice blacksmiths, joiners, painters, coppersmiths, electricians, machinists, pipefitters, shipfitters, boilermakers, welders, and sheet metal workers."⁵⁶ While Marie Harrison worked at the Shipyard as a typist,⁵⁷ gendered and racialized particularities of the labor force meant that Black men, even more so Black women, were still the last hired and first fired.⁵⁸

Wartime labor in the Bay Area context included not only Hunters Point but also ship-building facilities in Oakland, Richmond, and Mare Island.⁵⁹ Though wages were

⁵² Gilmore, R.W. (2007), p. 37, citing, Turgeon, L. (1996). *Bastard Keynesianism: The Evolution of Economic Thinking and Policymaking since World War II*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, and, Davis, M. (1986). *Prisoners of the American Dream*. New York, NY: Verso.

⁵³ Gilmore, R.W. (2007), p. 35-37.

⁵⁴ Brahinsky, R. (2012), p. 74, citing, Broussard, A.S. (1993). *Black San Francisco: the Struggle for Racial Equality in the West, 1900-1954*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, p. 133-135, and Johnson, M.S. (1993). *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press; Lotchin, R. W. (2003). *The Bad City in the Good War: San Francisco, Los Angeles, Oakland, and San Diego*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

⁵⁵ OCII. (1996). p. 6.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Eskenazi, J. (2019). Marie Harrison, Tireless Fighter for Environmental Justice, Dies at 71. *Mission Local*.

⁵⁸ Brahinsky, R. (2012), p. 73, citing: Honey, M. (1984). *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda During World War II*. Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press; Johnson, M.S. (1993). *The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press; Moore, S.A.W. (2000). *To Place Our Deeds: The African American Community in Richmond, California 1910-1963*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press; Wollenberg, C. (1990). *Marinship at War: Shipbuilding and Social Change in Wartime Sausalito*. Berkeley, CA: Western Heritage Press.

⁵⁹ Brahinsky, R. (2012), p. 72.

indexed to race and gender, Black workers “made more income than any dreamed possible” and, as homeowners, raised families in San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, and Richmond.⁶⁰

Reasons were numerous but centered around escaping the terrorism of the Jim Crow South and seeking economic opportunities beyond subsistence sharecropping in which many Black farmers became trapped in cycles of exploitation by white landowners.⁶¹ Hunters Point Naval Shipyard employed more than 18,000 workers, more than half of whom Black at its peak during World War II.⁶²

While a few thousand resided in temporary barracks housing at the Shipyard, approximately 12,000 Black workers lived in the Fillmore because of discriminatory covenants in other San Francisco neighborhoods, in addition to vacancies of homes by Japanese Americans as a result of the government-led mass criminalization and incarceration campaign known as internment.⁶³

Harlem of the West

Black-owned shops, restaurants, churches, and clubs made the Fillmore the political, economic, social, and cultural center of Black San Francisco. The Fillmore became “the Harlem of the West” for its iconic jazz culture. Performances included Billie Holiday, Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, Eartha Kitt, John Coltrane, and Lionel Hampton. Musicians and residents frequented several venues, such as the Champagne Supper Club, Jimbo’s Bop City, the Texas Playhouse, the Blue Mirror, Club Flamingo, and the Primalon Ballroom.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Gilmore, R.W. (2007), p. 35.

⁶¹ Wilkerson, I. (2010). *The Warmth of Other Suns*. New York, NY: Random House.

⁶² Higgins, D. (2004). Bay View Hunters Point - San Francisco's Last Black Neighborhood? [Video]. YouTube: andanteTV.

⁶³ Brahinsky, R. (2012), p. 14.

⁶⁴ Pepin Silva, E., & Watts, L. (2020). *Harlem of the West: The San Francisco Fillmore Jazz Era*. Berkeley, CA: Heyday Books.

Yet in the post-World War II era, San Francisco added itself to a list of U.S. cities fixated on increasing declining land values in their downtown corridors. Between the 1950s and 1970s, planners justified urban renewal by siting multiracial, working-class neighborhoods as blighted.⁶⁵ Approximately 20,000 Fillmore residents, mostly African Americans and Japanese Americans, were evicted.⁶⁶

Some residents never returned to their homes, but persistence resulted in historical landmarks, notably Jimbo's Bop City, even though city officials relocated the building's physical infrastructure. The Fillmore's jazz culture remains alive, while longtime Black residents debate the extent to which it marks a renaissance.⁶⁷

Displacement and dispossession, though, are not final stories. Evicted Black and Japanese Fillmore residents did not leave San Francisco entirely, but relocated to Oceanview-Merced Heights-Ingleside (OMI), Visitacion Valley, Potrero Hill, Bayview-Hunters Point, and East Bay cities such as Oakland, buying homes, raising children, and working at the Shipyard and nearby industrial warehouses and plants where many still live and work generations later.

The story of Black homeownership in Hunters Point, therefore, is intricately linked to the dispossession and displacement of thousands of Japanese and African Americans from the Fillmore.⁶⁸ Yet with the Shipyard closure of 1973, the military-industrial complex's dependence upon an abundant Black labor supply spelled mass unemployment in the form of thousands of job cuts.

⁶⁵ Brahinsky, R. (2012), "Mayors, "Blight," and Affordable Housing," p. 13-16.

⁶⁶ Brahinsky, R. (2012), p. 3, 92, citing, Seigel, S. (2000). "Nihonmachi and Urban Renewal." *Nikkei Heritage*, XII/XIII, 4/1, p. 6-24.

⁶⁷ Takruri, L. (2020). "They Can't Take That Away: The Legacy of the Fillmore." *Bay Area Video Coalition* [YouTube]. Accessed Online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8xm97rgpPs&t=929s>, October 8, 2022.

⁶⁸ Brahinsky, R. (2012), p. 76, 88-89.

City officials recognized the economic importance of the Shipyard, with Mayor Alioto leading city negotiations with the Navy about its future.⁶⁹ Protests emerged on Innes Court with people holding makeshift signs, one of them reading, “GIVE BLACK PEOPLE JOBS,”⁷⁰ but city agencies and officials did not answer incessant calls for better jobs, schools, homes, supermarkets, and health care for Black people on the Hill.

Temporary naval barracks that formed affordable housing units were segregated and deteriorated from years of FHA disinvestment.⁷¹ Black unemployment and poverty made Hunters Point synonymous with drugs and violence in racist media depictions of young Black men as criminals and fugitives. One Bay Area nightly news headline from the 1980s reads, “Crack and Blacks,” followed by a picture of young children on a playground and a map of gang territories near the Shipyard.⁷²

While the Shipyard temporarily resumed operations in the 1980s, the size of the labor force nowhere near approached the previous thousands of workers during World War II and the height of the Cold War. The Shipyard became a Superfund site pursuant to the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) in 1989, identified for Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) in 1991, and closed permanently in 1994.⁷³

Mayor Willie Brown and his ideological successors, Gavin Newsom and Ed Lee, all promised the injection of capital as the panacea to the landscape of the Shipyard and its economic and social institutions by creating demand for thousands of jobs and the conditions for a thriving civil society.

⁶⁹ KPIX-TV.(1973b). *Alternatives to Closing Hunters Point Shipyard*. San Francisco, CA; KPIX-TV. (1973c). *Mayor Alioto on Shipyard Negotiations*. San Francisco, CA; and KPIX-TV. (1973d). *Mayor Alioto On Keeping Hunters Point Shipyard Open*. San Francisco, CA.

⁷⁰ KPIX-TV. (1973a). *Hunters Point Shipyard Closure Protest*. San Francisco, CA: KPIX-TV.

⁷¹ Baranski, J. (2019).

⁷² Reelblack. (2019). *Crack & Blacks (1989): Gang Violence in Hunter's Point*. Archive.org.

⁷³ NAVSEA. (2004). *Hunters Point Shipyard Final Historical Radiological Assessment: History of the Use of General Radioactive Materials, 1939 – 2003*. U.S. Navy, p. 1-3.

Many stories of Hunters Point end here, with the tale of an industrial fringe at the nexus of gentrification and radioactive contamination. Often understood by San Franciscans as a place “over there,” a place to avoid,⁷⁴ isolated from the grandeur of political, economic, social, and cultural institutions that make San Francisco, “the Paris of the Pacific,”⁷⁵ demarcated by its built environment, from Islais Creek to the topography of its hills to Interstate 280 whose bowl-like shape divides Bayview from Bernal Heights and the Mission District with surgical precision. Seldom included are stories of how the strategic isolation of Bayview-Hunters Point facilitated the development of the San Francisco Bay Area as the quintessential global model of a progressive capitalist democracy.⁷⁶

The Bayview demonstrates San Francisco as a precipice, a cornerstone, *and* an anomaly of modernity’s virtues and their uneven diffusions across time and space. From the pastures of the Bayview that nurtured clergy at Mission Dolores⁷⁷ to the Black industrial labor whose hands built the ships that catapulted the U.S. into a maritime power, part of San Francisco’s ascension stems from its extraction of Bayview-Hunters Point.

Ultimately, the goal of this capstone paper is to share how stories of Hunters Point residents challenge the reproduction of racialized and gendered processes of (de)industrialization, globalization, contamination, and gentrification as natural, fixed, or inevitable in favor of their conceptualization as dynamic and contested power relations.

⁷⁴ Brahinsky, R., (2012), p. 50-51.

⁷⁵ Brechin, G. (1999). *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

⁷⁶ Brahinsky, R., (2012), p. 50-51.

⁷⁷ Brahinsky, R., (2012), p. 59, citing: Olmsted, R., and Olmsted, N. (1982). *San Francisco Bayside Historical Cultural Resource Survey: Northern Bayside, Crosstown, Sunnyale/Yosemite and Hunters Point*. San Francisco Clean Water Management Program. San Francisco, CA.

“The Circle of Death”

Established in 1945, the Naval Radiological Defense Laboratory (NRDL) studied the impacts of and countermeasures to warships bombed by nuclear weapons, developing blue paint-based ship shields, disposing of radioactive waste into the seas, and scattering radioactive particulate matter across the Shipyard from the sandblasting of irradiated ships.⁷⁸ I chatted with longtime resident, Tonia Randell, about her thoughts on the Shipyard outside the Legislative Chamber of San Francisco City Hall.

Tonia has been a homeowner on the Hill for close to three decades. We met after a series of Board of Supervisors Committee Hearings on a civil grand jury report, titled, *Buried Problems and a Buried Process: The Hunters Point Naval Shipyard in a Time of Climate Change*.⁷⁹ She nudged me and chuckled atop the grand staircase, “Did you like my invite?!”⁸⁰ a reference to her invitation during public comment, as Bob Barker fashioned, “Come on down!”⁸¹ and experience the radioactive remnants near her home.

She said Hunters Point is part of what residents call, “the Circle of Death,”⁸² describing industrial pollutants that form the perimeter of the built environment, with Interstate 280 along the eastern border, warehouses, and factories depositing pollutants into Islais Creek on the northernmost edge, radioactive contamination of the southeast at the Shipyard, and a concentration of air polluting industries such as cement-crushing recycling companies like Recology.

⁷⁸ U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission. (2021). “Hunter’s Point Naval Shipyard.” Accessed Online: <https://www.nrc.gov/info-finder/decommissioning/complex/hunters-point-naval-shipyard.html>

⁷⁹ Civil Grand Jury Report. (2022). *Buried Problems and a Buried Process: The Hunters Point Naval Shipyard in a Time of Climate Change*. City and County of San Francisco.

⁸⁰ Randell, T. (2022), Interview by Author. San Francisco, CA: San Francisco City Hall.

⁸¹ Randell, T. (2022). “Public Comment at GAO Committee Hearing.” San Francisco, CA: San Francisco City Hall.

⁸² Randell, T. (2022), Interview by Author.

The Circle of Death makes Bayview-Hunters Point one of the most polluted places in America, reducing life expectancy by 14 years compared to San Franciscans in Russian Hill due to its highest rates of heart attacks, strokes, and cardiopulmonary diseases.⁸³ Tonia stated that she lost \$200,000 and 15 years of her life as a homeowner on Hunters Point Hill.⁸⁴

While Tonia's story exemplifies Gilmore's definition of racism, "the state-sanctioned and/or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerabilities to premature death,"⁸⁵ my analysis will focus on how race-class and gender politics shape notions of freedom in contaminated land, air, and water environments, rather than the consequences of various harms inflicted on residents. But before addressing how it makes freedom as a place, I must first clarify how the Shipyard, as a reproduction of race, space, and nature, is operationalized.

Race, Space, and Nature:

Race

"It's Hunters Point"

I stood on a balcony with a representative from Lennar during my tour of the model homes, overlooking the Shipyard and Oakland across the Bay. I asked a question that puzzled me as a San Franciscan and academic: Why are newly built townhouses and condos selling for \$700,000-\$1.2 million while single-family Victorian homes only blocks away are selling for more than double that price? "It's Hunters Point," they said.⁸⁶

Bayview-Hunters Point, a place where employment at the Shipyard and displacement from other neighborhoods made Black homeownership possible, is now undergoing a

⁸³ Anti-Eviction Mapping Project [AEMP]. (2021). "Bayview Hunters Point Geographies of Toxicity and Narratives of Resistance." In *Counterpoints: A San Francisco Bay Area Atlas of Displacement & Resistance*, Oakland, CA: PM Press, p. 122, citing, Lacey, A., Crane, R.B., & Zhu, J. (eds.) Hall, A.R. (2021). "Interview with Dr. Raymond Tompkins."

⁸⁴ Randell, T. (2022). "Public Comment at GAO Committee Hearing." San Francisco, CA.

⁸⁵ Gilmore, R.W. (2022). "Race and Globalization." In *Abolition Geography*, p. 107.

⁸⁶ Lennar Rep. (2022). "Comment on SF Shipyard Tour of Palisades, Monarch, and Landing Model Units." San Francisco, CA: Interview by Author.

transformation into San Francisco's final frontier of "affordable" housing. These changes, moreover, are due to rearticulations of those same exclusionary politics designed to ameliorate the economic, social, and cultural 'costs' of redevelopment through racialized processes of displacement.

This section highlights how urban racial politics and their inextricable relationship with capital reproduce space in Bayview-Hunters Point, a place where racial capitalism and settler colonialism predominated ideas of redevelopment long before its designation as a "Black neighborhood." Hunters Point is one of the many examples of how California cities like San Francisco exist outside of Black-white binary analyses of urban space, such as stories about the race-class politics of Atlanta,⁸⁷ Detroit,⁸⁸ and Chicago.⁸⁹

I first conceptualize race as a dynamic political-economic, social, and cultural process, known as racialization, against race as a natural, fixed biology. Then, I move into how racialization shapes space, based on how its construction reproduces the Shipyard redevelopment. Through a critical analysis of race, I subsequently illustrate how the Shipyard redevelopment epitomizes the racialization of space based on the reproduction of white supremacist racial hierarchies as disciplining logics that move and keep people in place.

Further, I engage in a deconstruction of whiteness to convey how discourses about Hunters Point Naval Shipyard relate notions of *race* as natural to the *racialization of property* as natural. Next, I reflect on how the politics of the Shipyard demonstrate racialization as a relational process that both reorders and challenges how space is produced, notably through

⁸⁷ Stone, C. N. (1989). *Regime Politics Governing Atlanta, 1946-1988*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas.

⁸⁸ Strangleman, T., Rhodes, J., & Linkon, S. (2013). Introduction to Crumbling Cultures: Deindustrialization, Class, and Memory. *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 84, p. 7-22, citing, Sugrue, T.J. (1996). *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

⁸⁹ Park, R.E. (1950). *Race and Culture*. New York, NY: The Free Press, Park, R. E., & Burgess, E.W. (1967). *The City*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, and Cayton, H.R. (2015). *Black Metropolis A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

race-class relations. Now, I critically examine the construction of race and, in particular, the racialization of space as natural.

Racialization

The construction of race as a natural, fixed biology, or the idea that phenotype determines racialization is endemic but by no means exclusive to the early development of modern geographic thought.⁹⁰ In this regard, environmental determinists often propagated differences between environments of the colonizer and colonized to justify racial hierarchies as natural as climates and landscapes. Based on the notion that culture will never remedy them, these logics reinforce the idea that these inequalities must be exploited, from American to South African apartheid.⁹¹

A later quantitative revolution gave geographers the veil of objectivity, or as Gilmore calls it, areal differentiation, "...to map distributions of difference across landscapes," relegating race as a fixed empirical feature rather than dynamic political and socioeconomic processes forged through encounter.⁹² McKittrick begins *Demonic Grounds* with how geography is not a passive observer of difference but plays an active role in its reproduction through how "...cartographic rules unjustly organize human hierarchies *in place* and reify uneven geographies in familiar, seemingly natural ways...."⁹³

Race as a dynamic, relational process influences critical geographic thought by refusing to naturalize race while acknowledging the ideological weight of its constructions rooted in

⁹⁰ Gilmore, R.W. (2022). "Race and Globalization," p. 107-110.

⁹¹ Gilmore, R.W., (2022), "Race and Globalization," p. 110-111; Wilson, B. (2000). *America's Johannesburg: Industrialization and Racial Transformation in Birmingham*. Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press.

⁹² Gilmore, R.W., (2022), p. 111.

⁹³ McKittrick, K. (2006), p. x.

co-productions of whiteness and masculinity, showcasing how race, space, and gender interact as co-constitutive expressions of power.⁹⁴

Foregrounding her conceptualization of waste formations in Omi and Winant's racial formations, "...the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed,"⁹⁵ Dillon's conceptualization of waste formations links race, waste, and space in Hunters Point, underscoring geographies by which people and places become wasted⁹⁶ in the attritional, slow violence⁹⁷ of racism as the exposure to premature death.⁹⁸

*Race, Nature, and the Politics of Difference*⁹⁹ elaborates on how race shapes the production of space by underscoring the biopolitical origins of the constructions of race as natural, arguing their articulations as terrains of power are spatially and temporally contingent, uniting around a rejection of biological deterministic and essentialist notions of race as natural, fixed, and universally true hierarchical categories of difference, organized by white supremacy.¹⁰⁰

The Birth of a Nation, "...a tale that made the wages of whiteness not only desirable but in many senses obligatory,"¹⁰¹ demonstrates whiteness and white supremacy as foundational structures of modern political-economy, culture, and society, interpreting "race" as synonymous with "non-white" because white people are not a race, but the natural obligation by which we

⁹⁴ Gilmore, R.W., (2022), p. 111-112; Brahinsky, R., (2012), p. 27-28, citing, Omi, M., & Winant, H. (1994). p. 55.

⁹⁵ Dillon, L. (2013), p. 1209, citing, Omi, M., & Winant, H. (1994). p. 55.

⁹⁶ Dillon, L. (2013), p. 1207, citing, Bauman, Z. (2004). *Wasted Lives: Modernity and its Outcasts*. Cambridge, MA: Polity.

⁹⁷ Dillon, L. (2013), p. 1209, citing, Berlant, L. (2007). *Slow Death (Sovereignty, Obesity, Lateral Agency)*. *Critical Inquiry*, 33, p. 754–780, and, Nixon, R. (2011). *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press .

⁹⁸ Dillon, L. (2013), p. 1209, citing Gilmore, R.W. (2007).

⁹⁹ Moore, D.S., Kosek, J., & Pandian, A. (2003). *Race, Nature, and the Politics of Difference*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

¹⁰⁰ Moore et al., p. 117.

¹⁰¹ Gilmore, R.W. (2022), *Abolition Geography*, p. 519.

construct and categorize difference, underpinned by logics and materialities of white supremacist capitalist hierarchies.¹⁰² Racial capitalism naturalizes and obligates “whiteness as property.”¹⁰³

Racialization of property in Hunters Point underscores not the contradiction, but the harmonization of San Francisco as wealthy *and* progressive,¹⁰⁴ reflecting on its political-economic and cultural seeds that sow the foundations and downfall of Western capitalist societies.¹⁰⁵

Discourses around race as natural therefore shape the racialization of property as natural by abstracting a lack of accessible, affordable housing as an externality, a “reality” of life in global cities, justifying the racialized displacement of people from Hunters Point, seen as already on their way out, if there are any left. Racialization of the SF Shipyard, personified by the comment, “It’s Hunter’s Point,” underscores race-class as relational processes of power that shape urban change.

Relations

Conceptualizations of power do acknowledge that “Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere...”¹⁰⁶ and yet the notion that power is everywhere is often misunderstood in that it is, “...conceived of as a thing, a crowbar that would pry open formerly locked doors, rather than a new set of local relationships”.¹⁰⁷ The power of race-class and gender relations is how I foreground my analysis of race and space.

¹⁰² Brahinsky, R. (2012), p. 29, citing, Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. The Crossing Press Feminist Series. Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press.

¹⁰³ Harris, C. I. (1993). Whiteness as Property. *Harvard Law Review*, 106(8), p. 1707–1791.

¹⁰⁴ Brahinsky, R. (2012), p. 17.

¹⁰⁵ DeLeon, R. E. (1992). “Protecting Community from Capital: The Urban Antiregime.” In *Left Coast City: Progressive Politics in San Francisco, 1975-1991*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, p. 98-106.

¹⁰⁶ Foucault, M. (1976). *The History of Sexuality*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books, p. 93.

¹⁰⁷ Gilmore, R.W. (2007). “Crime, Croplands, and Capitalism.” In *Golden Gulag*, p. 170.

Brahinsky cites Laura Barraclough, who tells us that, “Race is an inherently relational and ongoing social construction, in that racial identity category only has meaning through constant articulation of what is not; that, ‘the other,’ which varies with time and place.”

Barraclough cites Doreen Massey, who argues, “‘Identities are forged in and through relations (which include non- relations, absences, and hiatuses). They are not rooted or static, but mutable ongoing productions.’”¹⁰⁸

Hunters Point gained its reputation as an exclusively Black neighborhood after the flight of white homeowners to Bay Area suburbs in the mid-twentieth century, lured by New Deal federal mortgage programs by the Federal Housing Administration that explicitly underscored race as a qualifying factor,¹⁰⁹ combined with how white Hunters Point families feared their Black neighbors.¹¹⁰ The racialization of property thus allowed poor white families in Hunters Point to distance themselves from Black people by gaining social and economic mobility at their expense in response to the fear of direct competition over housing and employment, demonstrating *race* as a principle of *class*.

Race-Class

As Stuart Hall says, “Race is [thus, also] the modality in which class is “lived, the medium through which class relations are experienced, the form in which it is appropriated and “fought through,”¹¹¹ which is where I begin to build my argument of race-class and gender as

¹⁰⁸ Brahinsky, R., (2012), “Race, Space, and Making the City: Relationality and Triangulation.” In *Making and Unmaking of Southeast San Francisco*, p. 28-29, citing: [Barraclough, L.R. (2009). “South Central Farmers and Shadow Hills Homeowners: Land Use Policy and Relational Racialization in Los Angeles.” *The Professional Geographer*, 61(2), p. 169, citing Massey, D. (1994). *Space, Place, and Gender*. Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, p. 5; Jacobson, M.F. (1998). *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; Pulido, L. (2000). “Rethinking Environmental Racism: White Privilege and Urban Development in Southern California.” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 90(1), p. 12].

¹⁰⁹ Brahinsky, R., (2012), p. 40, citing, Jackson, K. T. (1985).

¹¹⁰ Brahinsky, R. (2012), p. 41.

¹¹¹ Hall, S., Gilroy, P., & Gilmore, R.W. (2021). *Selected Writings on Race and Difference*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

processes shaped in and through space, and vice versa. The construction of race is a dynamic political-economic, social, and cultural process rather than a fixed biological “truth.” A process that facilitates class relations, made possible by the incessant movement of racial capital by reorganizing the relations of production necessary to “make money make more of itself,”¹¹² “to touch differently and not for too long.”¹¹³

Yet race as the modality of class is a dialectical process — a struggle and a negotiation, not exclusively an imposition upon subjects. Brahinsky’s development of race-class argues how stories of affordable housing activism in Hunters Point deconstruct race as natural by underscoring the “top-down”, “bottom-up” economic processes of racial formations.¹¹⁴

Race-class, she continues, operates as a co-production of power that exploits *and* invigorates labor, chronicling the life of mother and activist Elouise Westbrook as part of the Big Five of Bayview. Brahinsky, therefore, underscores their embeddedness related to the reproduction of urban landscapes across and through spatialities and temporalities, citing Marshall Berman’s argument about the urbaneness of the human condition that necessitates repeated, reconfigured pathways of communication in which “...racial characteristics function typically as signifiers or symbols of economic relationships...”¹¹⁵

Brahinsky builds a compelling case that, “...amid social boundaries that keep people apart...the historical tendency of migration to cities nevertheless foists people of many apparent “types” into one agglomeration where they may have to deal with each other on a regular basis.”¹¹⁶ The COVID-19 pandemic is demonstrative of this statement. While its

¹¹² Gilmore, R.W., (2022). “Globalization and US Prison Growth: From Military Keynesianism to Post-Keynesian Militarism.” In *Abolition Geography*, p. 210.

¹¹³ Gilmore, R.W. (2022). “Abolition Geography and the Problem of Innocence.” In *Abolition Geography*, p. 471.

¹¹⁴ Brahinsky, R., (2014a), p. 1-19.

¹¹⁵ Brahinsky, R. (2012), p. 30, citing, Berman, M. (1988). *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*. New York, NY: Viking Penguin.

¹¹⁶ Brahinsky, R. (2012), p. 31; Summers, B. (2022), p. 191-198.

consequences may appear to reinvent “new” ways of communication across social spatial barriers, they also reinforce and reveal structural race-class and gender relations across and through time-space.

Highlighting class as predominantly but not exclusively a byproduct of economic relations based on the extraction of surplus value from labor known as “profit,” Brahinsky cites Pierre Bourdieu’s assertion of class as, “connected to the quality of one’s bearing, one’s knowledge, in addition to one’s connection to the production of economic capital...The nature of class includes appearances...not simply a matter of underlying economic relations.”¹¹⁷

While class is undoubtedly experienced across and through gendered and racialized spatialities and temporalities, it is sometimes propagated as separate from capital as mere reactions.¹¹⁸ Shaped by capital, race-class and gender relations also reconfigure capital in order to reproduce the normative conditions of social reproduction necessary for its continued value, whose accumulation is made possible *only* through the continued movement of capital. Furthermore, race, class, and gender have material consequences through the construction and reproduction of norms as natural and universal “truths,” such as the gentrification of urban space as “natural” or inevitable in economic and cultural depictions.

Capitalism always and everywhere means *racial* capitalism. Ruth Wilson Gilmore foregrounds her interpretation in Hall’s analysis, echoed in her succinct yet also frequently

¹¹⁷ Brahinsky, R. (2012)., p. 31, citing, Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Marx, K. (1976). *Capital (Vol. 1)*. London, UK: Penguin Books.

¹¹⁸ Brahinsky, R. (2012). “The Politics of Development.” In *Making and Making of Southeast San Francisco*, p. 17.

cited quote, "...capitalism requires inequality and racism enshrines it."¹¹⁹ Gilmore and Gilroy's focused, expansive analysis of race, space, and capital is rooted in Cedric

Robinson's notion of racial capitalism, refuting the material Marxist belief that capitalism emerged as a negation of feudalism, arguing capitalism emerged within feudalism and proliferated in and through existing European racial hierarchies. The development of racial capitalism is not a fundamental shift but a coevolution from existing racialized structures of feudalism to produce modern civilization dependent upon slavery, imperialism, and genocide.¹²⁰

Racialization, a vehicle of group construction, differentiation, subordination, and domination, is essential to the uneven development of capitalist societies, signifying its slippery reproductions that elude materialities.¹²¹ Implied in his statement is the racialization of all people, "...including in rural England..."¹²² among Europeans who later *became white*.¹²³

Hall concurs, "This has consequences for the whole class, not specifically for its "racially defined" segment... Racism is, thus, not only a problem for blacks who are obliged to suffer it. Nor is it a problem only for those sections of the white working class..."¹²⁴ Thus, why non-Black people of all races, places, classes, genders, and ages

¹¹⁹ Gilmore, R.W., (2022), p. 482.

¹²⁰ Kelley, R.D.G. (2017). "What Did Cedric Robinson Mean by Racial Capitalism?". *Boston Review*, Accessed Online at: <https://bostonreview.net/articles/robin-d-g-kelley-introduction-race-capitalism-justice/>, October, 10, 2022; Robinson, C. (2000). *Black Marxism: the Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, p. 2.

¹²¹ Brahinsky, R. (2012), p. 32.; Gilmore, R.W., Gilroy, P., & Hall, S. (2021).

¹²² Gilmore, R. W.(2021), p. 508.

¹²³ Roediger, D.R. (2005); Ignatiev, N. (1995).

¹²⁴ Hall, S., Gilroy, P., & Gilmore, R.W., (2021), p. 441-442.

engage in political action and discourse with Black Bayview residents, evidenced by, in some cases, intermittent, attendance of local meetings, rallies, and civil hearings.

Hunters Point further exemplifies how racialization's enshrinement of capitalism takes on particularities in its arrangement of racial hierarchies. Naturalized logics of racial difference transform the relations of reproduction for the extraction of surplus value known as profit, reflected in Blackness as a "category of self-identity," and, "one that is imposed and resisted."¹²⁵ Underscoring the salience of blackness "across different time periods and geographies,"¹²⁶

Summers remarks that the evolution of blackness as profit is "one of the most remarkable transformations of the modern era,"¹²⁷ based on the movement from anti-black caricatures¹²⁸ to blackness as "cool," a mode of "...racial representation, consumption, and commercial growth, which conceal the violence and dispossession and highlight the illusion of inclusion within the culture of modern capital,"¹²⁹ found in globalization's shift away from industrial capital toward racial neoliberalism in the middle-twentieth century.

The San Francisco Shipyard as a Black sense of place is intimately interwoven with the evolution of racial neoliberal urban governance strategies and practices, reflecting that racialization of space is "...the process by which racialized groups are identified, given stereotypical characteristics, and coerced into specific living conditions."

¹²⁵ Summers, B. (2019). "Black Space Matters." In *Black In Place*, p. 3, citing, Hall, S., & du Gay, P. (1996). "Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'?" In *Questions of Cultural Identity*, London, UK, SAGE, p. 1-17.

¹²⁶ Summers, B. (2019), p. 3., citing, DuBois, W.E.B. (1903). *Souls of Black Folk*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press; Gilroy, P. (1993). *Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. New York, NY: Verso; Hall, S. (1992). "What Is This 'Black' in Black Popular Culture?" In *Black Popular Culture*, (ed.) Dent, G., Seattle, WA: Bay Press, p. 21-33; Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*. London, UK: SAGE; McKittrick, K., (2006); McKittrick, K., & Woods, C. (2007). *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

¹²⁷ Summers, B. (2019), p. 3.

¹²⁸ Summers, B. (2019), p. 3, citing, Fanon, F. (1967). *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York, NY: Grove.

¹²⁹ Summers, B. (2019), p. 3.

In the same time-space that representations of difference and diversity are hallmarks of neoliberal redevelopment strategies and decisions that displace Black people, they also inscribe knowledge and meaning of space and place through relationships between bodies and landscapes.¹³⁰

Racialization of space, in other words, is “the organizing principle” and not a consequence of uneven development¹³¹ in which racialized neoliberal narratives about the people and places of the Shipyard as contaminated wasteland laid fallow inspires its privatization as revitalization, concealing displacement through the emplacement of Black maritime aesthetics. The malleability of blackness as a disciplining logic to both move and keep Black people in place.¹³²

Black geographies scholarship challenges normative epistemologies and ontologies of race and space, providing a lens into stories of Black desire and struggle for space. Summers continues that a Black sense of place is, “...the process of materially and imaginatively *situating* historical and contemporary struggles against practices of domination *and* the difficult entanglements of racial encounter,”¹³³ concluding that racism does not define a Black sense of place, but rather highlights the condition of being Black. A Black sense of place thus recognizes the contestation of space across and through racialized processes of urban and rural environments, such as gentrification.¹³⁴

Stories of a Black Exodus from San Francisco permeate popular discourses but do not undermine the notion of a multicultural city, given the failure of politics and popular culture to account for the structural conditions that reproduce displacement of Black San Franciscans, not

¹³⁰ Summers, B. (2019), p. 13.

¹³¹ Summers, B. (2019), p. 13.

¹³² Summers, B. (2019), p. 14.

¹³³ Summers, B. (2019), p. 14, citing, McKittrick, K. (2011), p. 949.

¹³⁴ Summers, B. (2019), p. 14-15.

as a recent phenomena of the twenty-first century as academics, media, and journalists prescribe, but an intrinsically racialized process of displacement and dispossession decades-in-the-making.

A host of reasons are identifiable, according to Hunters Point residents, such as a chronic lack of quality education, quality jobs, and quality affordable housing which are each interrelated and mutually reinforcing.¹³⁵ A demonstrative but by no means exclusive example of race's inextricable relationship to the quality of jobs, housing, and schools is the stain of Proposition 13, more specifically its one percent cap on property taxes that has effectively hamstrung state education funding since its implementation.

Proposition 13, a product of the 1970s Jarvis-Gann tax revolt catalyzed by white homeowners' fears of their diminution, continues to starve state education coffers,¹³⁶ limiting funding streams that provide improvements to the quality and quantity of public schools and teachers for Black students, resulting in insufficient skills to be part of a competitive labor force.¹³⁷ Gilmore remarks that "...Proposition 13 was labor's round of disinvestment in the state."¹³⁸

Any dream of owning or renting a home in San Francisco, of course, is conditioned upon high wages and access to the most expensive housing markets. Illustrated by the stories of men on Hunters Point Hill featured in the documentary *Straight Outta Hunters Point*,¹³⁹ despair often reflects the idea that young people, particularly young Black men, are educated for seemingly nothing.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ Brahinsky, R., (2012), p. 126-128.

¹³⁶ Gilmore, R. W., (2007), p. 42-43; Brahinsky, R., (2012), p. 126

¹³⁷ Gilmore, (2007), p. 260; Brahinsky, R. (2012), p. 126-128.

¹³⁸ Gilmore, (2007), p. 260.

¹³⁹ Epps, K. (2003). *Straight Outta Hunters Point*. Mastamind.

¹⁴⁰ Gilmore, (2007), p. 161.

Premature death compounds a lack of quality education, employment, healthcare, and housing with the highest pollution burden of any San Francisco neighborhood,¹⁴¹ presenting the “double whammy” of gentrification and pollution, according to activists, “in a most serious life and death way on Bayview. But the struggle lives on.”¹⁴² Debates about the impacts of redevelopment on residents, though, undoubtedly mark the resurgence of what Brahinsky calls, “The Fillmore Ghost.”¹⁴³

Born in the middle twentieth century out of the Redevelopment Agency’s mass evictions of Black and Japanese residents of the Western Addition/Fillmore, fears of the Fillmore Ghost returned in the 1990s among critics of the city’s proposed plan to transform Hunters Point Naval Shipyard into a commercial and residential oasis. Pressure to leave San Francisco is therefore a concern for Black residents on the Hill, forged in decades of what James Baldwin calls “Negro removal”¹⁴⁴ from the Fillmore¹⁴⁵ and underscored by the twentieth-anniversary celebration of the film, *Straight Outta Hunters Point*.

The film by lifelong resident and director Kevin Epps is a seventy-five minutes documentation of stories of poverty, funerals, a “war zone” in the “94124”. Dressed in their finest, residents gathered at the Bayview Opera House on Juneteenth to watch a screening and remind San Francisco: “We’re still here”.¹⁴⁶ Films like *Straight Outta Hunters Point*, thus,

¹⁴¹ Anti-Eviction Mapping Project [AEMP]. (2021). “Bayview Hunters Point Geographies of Toxicity and Narratives of Resistance.” In *Counterpoints: A San Francisco Bay Area Atlas of Displacement & Resistance*, Oakland, CA: PM Press, p. 120, citing, CalEnviroScreen3.0, Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), & California Department Protection Agency. (2018). “Bay Area Pollution Burden” [map].

¹⁴² Lacey, A., Crane, R.B., & Zhu, J. (eds.) Hall, A.R. (2021). “Interview with Bradley Angel, Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice.” In “Bayview Hunters Point Geographies of Toxicity and Resistance,” *Counterpoints*, p. 125.

¹⁴³ Brahinsky, R. (2012). “Chapter 4: The Fillmore Ghost: San Francisco in the Age of Urban Renewal.” In *The Making and Unmaking of Southeast San Francisco*, p. 83-103.

¹⁴⁴ WGBH Educational Foundation. (1963). “A Conversation With James Baldwin.” Boston, MA: American Archive of Public Broadcasting, a collaboration between the Library of Congress and GBH. Accessed Online: https://americanarchive.org/catalog/cpb-aacip_15-0v89g5gf5r, October 9, 2022.

¹⁴⁵ Brahinsky, R. (2012), p. 14.

¹⁴⁶ Molanphy, T. (2022). “‘We’re still Here’: Kevin Epps Celebrates 20 years of ‘Straight Outta Hunters

formulate the duality of attitudes about gentrification, showcasing both despair and defiance amid its displacing consequences. Twenty years later, Epps's documentary, though, is not the only film about the relationship between blackness, memory, and property in San Francisco with a focus on the inextricable relationship between the Fillmore and Hunters Point.

The award-winning Sundance film, *The Last Black Man in San Francisco*¹⁴⁷ also contains various Black stories of property in San Francisco, from the Fillmore to Hunters Point, reflecting themes from Epps's film more than a decade prior. It's an emotionally charged picture, one that paints an incredibly vivid vignette of capital's physical and psychological disorientation of Black life in Bayview-Hunters Point and in the same time-space compression, Black memories and hopes, dreams, and realities of reclamation.

Fiction and nonfiction or any permutation, the film underscores that stories of property are not only inseparable from racialization, but within these racialized stories of property are tales of memory, hope, freedom, belonging, and place-making. This paper chronicles these stories of property in Hunters Point, showcasing how resistances to gentrification as universal and natural are rooted in deconstructions of race as natural, which I now clarify, followed by an examination of how naturalizations of race-class *and* gender reproduce urban space.

Space

“This is the Future of San Francisco”

The end of Innes Court, overlooking Hunters Point Naval Shipyard is a glimpse into urban change in San Francisco and the political-economic, social, and cultural struggles that engender them. As I stared out the windows of a master bedroom to see the Oakland Hills across the Bay during a walking tour of the Monarch condominiums, a

Point”. *San Francisco Bay View National Black Newspaper*. Published Originally in *48 Hills*.

¹⁴⁷ Talbot, J. (Director) (2019). *The Last Black Man in San Francisco* [Film]. Beverly Hills, CA: Plan B Entertainment.

Lennar representative uttered a phrase that, regardless if they intended the irony, resonated with me: “*This* is the future of San Francisco.”¹⁴⁸ The Lennar guide thus presented me with a puzzling question: how do we define urban change, and what do subjectivities around this definition reveal about the realities of urban space?

This section thus begins by discussing the racialized politics of brownfield redevelopment in which urban planners employ revitalization’ as a capital accumulation strategy. In the case of Hunters Point, this is executed through the privatization of decision-making processes designed to bolster civic and economic development, evidenced by the ideological succession of mayors spanning from Willie Brown to London Breed that attract and build alliances with capital firms such as Lennar as the policy prescription to both displacement and redevelopment while actively limiting public participation.

The privatized financing and decision-making politics of contemporary urban redevelopment, particularly in Hunters Point, therefore illuminate space as a political-economic, social, and cultural production — one that is imposed and contested. However, few understandings of space conceptualize its inextricable relationship with the construction of race.

I then move into what Hunters Point illustrates about how changes in urban space, known as gentrification, rely on time-space compression as foundational to the movement and accumulation of capital as a predominant global strategy for urban growth that dispossesses and displaces longtime residents.

Yet these intrinsically racialized processes are contingent, as struggles between residents, developers, and government agencies demonstrate. The conclusion of this section

¹⁴⁸ Lennar Rep. (2022). “Comment on SF Shipyard Tour of Palisades, Monarch, and Landing Model Units.” San Francisco, CA: Interview/Tour by Author.

focuses on how residents conceptualize and challenge the everyday material vestiges of gentrification in task force meetings about pieces of furniture left behind, which leads me to a refutation of changes in racialization and urban space as fixed, natural categories of empirical difference toward their conceptualization as dynamic, co-constitutive processes. But now, I begin by outlining how space is conceptualized in the Hunters Point context.

For urban planners, change reflects the contradictory objectives of ensuring accessible use of space and increasing its profitability, evidenced by how the undeniable power of the \$217 trillion real estate industry often determines their agendas.¹⁴⁹ To speak of real estate capital is to speak of Lennar Corp., claiming the lofty position as the largest homebuilder in the United States after the acquisition of another real estate giant, CalAtlantic, gaining direct control over 240,000 building plots in 20 states with annual market values and revenues approaching \$20 billion, respectively. The SF Shipyard project is among the company's largest in its history.¹⁵⁰

Parcel A of the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard is situated in a broader theoretical debate about brownfields as investment opportunities to transform desecrated wastelands into sites ripe for capital accumulation, facilitated both by dispossession and the extraction of surplus value ("profit"). Critical engagement of brownfields by scholars grew as their redevelopment began to play a central role in the market-based urban growth strategies of the 1990s, reflected in the Board of Supervisors and Mayor Brown's roles in the approval of the Hunters Point Redevelopment Plan in the 1990s with Lennar as the project's lead developer.

¹⁴⁹ Stein, S. (2019). *Capital Cities: Gentrification and the Real Estate State*. New York, NY: Verso, p. 12.

¹⁵⁰ Garfield, L. (2017). "Lennar Is About To Become America's Largest Homebuilder — Here Are Some Of Its Latest Projects". *Business Insider*.

The Navy and the S.F. Redevelopment Agency reached an agreement in 1994 to transform the Shipyard into thousands of luxury housing units, gaining approval from the Board of Supervisors in 1997 and Lennar was awarded sole developer status in 1999.¹⁵¹ Five years later, the City and the Navy signed a Conveyance Agreement as an official plan for transferring each parcel to the Redevelopment Agency only after the Navy completes its remediation responsibilities and gains federal confirmation, noting that the City is not required to accept *any* parcel from the Navy, via its contractor, Tetra Tech. Phase 1 of the redevelopment subsequently began the same year with the transfer of Parcel A, with Lennar immediately beginning construction and homeowners moving into the S.F. Shipyard units on the hilltop in 2015.

Contradictions litter Mayor Willie Brown's legacy. He appointed people of color to municipal service positions at previously unseen rates and moved state-sponsored housing development forward, in part, because and not in spite of the budding influence of reforms fought for by non-profits that showcased their increasing ability to dictate the urban planning agenda through market-based housing approaches to affordable housing redevelopment.¹⁵²

Brown's attraction of capital, that is convincing investors of a strategy to transform decades of abandonment into investment, is indispensable to the remaking of Hunters Point, reflected in his consistent push for both the Shipyard redevelopment project to revitalize Hunters Point and the Muni T line to connect the Bayview's Third Street corridor with Downtown San Francisco.

¹⁵¹ San Francisco Redevelopment Agency. (1999). "Resolution No. 68-99 Authorizing An Exclusive Negotiations Agreement With Lennar/Bvhp, Llc, a California Limited Liability Company, for The Hunters Point Shipyard; Hunters Point Shipyard Redevelopment Project Area." *City and County of San Francisco*.

¹⁵² Brahinsky, R. (2012), p. 15-16.

Mayor Newsom continued the Brown tradition of the Shipyard transformation, but introduced different capital projects and lobbied for them in different ways than Brown. His call for redevelopment as a tool to stomp out violence is far more explicit, referencing a bullet-riddled backboard of a basketball hoop, “We're going to replace these...And if they get shot up 32 days in a row, we'll be back on the 33rd.”¹⁵³

He also successfully lobbied for a Phase II of the project that includes Candlestick Point,¹⁵⁴ but could not muster enough support to replace the demolished stadium and keep the 49ers. In addition to his proposal of the U.N. Center,¹⁵⁵ he enthusiastically supported Proposition G to build a new 49ers stadium and non-stadium alternative in Hunters Point Naval Shipyard but notably opposed Proposition F to designate half of new housing construction as affordable.¹⁵⁶

The dot-com boom was critical to this financing in the Bay Area context, which also meant the displacement of thousands of Black proud working-class San Franciscans from rising rents and disappearing jobs.¹⁵⁷ The legacy of mixed mayoral tenures on housing redevelopment is therefore a window into how politics shapes and is shaped by urban space

¹⁵³ Matier, P., & Ross, A. (2004). “Newsom Takes City Officials On Tour Of Hunters Point Project.” San Francisco, CA: *SFGate*. Accessed Online: <https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/matier-ross/article/Newsom-takes-city-officials-on-tour-of-Hunters-3325271.php>, October, 21, 2022.

¹⁵⁴ Newsom, G. (2010). Mayor Newsom Signs Hunters Points Shipyard -- Candlestick Point Redevelopment Project Legislation [video]. Accessed Online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkgghSnYHS4>, October, 21, 2022.

¹⁵⁵ San Francisco Business Times. (2009). “S.F. Mayor proposes UN Center at Hunters Point.” San Francisco, CA: *BizJournal*, Accessed Online: <https://www.bizjournals.com/sanfrancisco/stories/2009/07/27/daily70.html>, October, 21, 2022.

¹⁵⁶ League of Women Voters. (2008). “Proposition F: Affordable Housing Requirement for the Candlestick Point and Hunters Point Shipyard Mixed-Use Development Project, City of San Francisco.” San Francisco, CA: League of Women Voters of California Education Fund. Accessed Online: <http://www.smartvoter.org/2008/06/03/ca/sf/meas/F/>, October, 21, 2022, & League of Women Voters. (2008). Proposition G: Mixed-Use Development Project for Candlestick Point and Hunters Point Shipyard, City of San Francisco.” San Francisco, CA: League of Women Voters of California Education Fund. Accessed Online: <http://www.smartvoter.org/2008/06/03/ca/sf/meas/G/>, October, 21, 2022.

¹⁵⁷ Brahinsky, R. (2012), p. 16.

rather than analysis from a strictly economic perspective.¹⁵⁸ Geography is fundamentally a political-economic, social, and cultural project.

Remaining residents to fight for what French critic Henri Lefebvre calls *The Right to the City*, meaning both the right to stay in urban space and the agency to transform it.¹⁵⁹ Space is contingent because space is produced, *The Production of Space* as a conceived, perceived, and lived trialectic, reproduced in reorganizations of capital and labor relations of production, the spatial “subject,” in addition to imaginaries and practices. Space as a “social morphology,” against Cartesian ontologies and epistemologies of space as abstract or “abstract space.”¹⁶⁰ But how does this relate to urban space, particularly our ability as humans to transform it? Lefebvre describes the city as a contradiction, a site of class struggle for power and its concealment.¹⁶¹

Cities, in this regard, are indispensable, foundational to subjective race-class and gender formations of both what we see and believe. And yet, only a handful of urban studies scholarship focuses on intersections of race and space, often as disparate, distinct, fixed categories of difference, mere empirics, rather than co-constitutive processes that influence spatial power relations.¹⁶²

Still, race imbues the very nature of “urban,” reflected in the notion of urban as race itself, from urban music, urban gangs, and urban youth as dog whistles for Black and Latino,

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Brahinsky, R. (2012), p. 16, citing, Lefebvre, H. (1968). *Le Droit à la ville [The Right to the City]*. Paris, France: Anthropos.

¹⁶⁰ Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The Production of Space*. Oxford, UK, and Cambridge, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

¹⁶¹ Lefebvre, H. (1991), p. 386.

¹⁶² Brahinsky, R., (2012), p. 32-33, citing: Avila, E. (2006). *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear And Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press; Freund, D. M. P. (2007). *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics In Suburban America*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press; Rhomberg, C. (2004). *No There There: Race, Class, and Political Community in Oakland*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press; Self, R. O. (2003). *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

synonymous with masculinized violence.¹⁶³ Ariann Harrison rejects these reductions of Hunters Point as an exclusively Black place. At least, these are the remarks that she made to reporters as she stood next to Tonia and me inside City Hall. Ariann said that there are multiple races of working-class people,¹⁶⁴ reflecting a particular class continuity amid the construction of difference.

Gentrification

A stroll along its freshly paved streets exemplifies the SF Shipyard redevelopment project as capital's annihilation of space by time.¹⁶⁵ The demarcation line formed out of capital's time-space compression is most evident standing at the intersection of Donahue Street and Innes Avenue, a place where mini-vans parked in front of single-family homes of the Bayview converge with the sight of Teslas, BMWs, Black Lives Matter signs and several manicured parks of the SF Shipyard. The Donahue with Innes intersection showcases two seemingly disparate worlds, connected by capital's latest investment, pressed up against its history of what Gilmore calls the "organized abandonment"¹⁶⁶ of people and places close enough to hear and see.

SF Shipyard advertisements bombard San Franciscans. From North Beach to the Richmond, strategic marketing of the Shipyard as the last affordable frontier in the San Francisco housing market traverses the city, forming an omnipresent shadow over the picturesque landscape. Throughout the SF Shipyard are a litany of artistic homages to black cultural legacies

¹⁶³ Brahinsky, R. (2012), p. 35, citing: Lee, J.K.J. (2004). *Urban Triage: Race And The Fictions Of Multiculturalism*. Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press; Macek, S. (2006). *Urban Nightmares: The Media, the Right, and the Moral Panic Over the City*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press.

¹⁶⁴ Harrison, A. (2022). Interview by Reporters, Observation by Author. San Francisco, CA: San Francisco City Hall; Brahinsky, R. (2012). "Continuity on the Coast," p. 51-55.

¹⁶⁵ Harvey, D. (1989). "Time-Space Compression and the Rise of Modernism as a Cultural Force." In *The Condition of Modernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, Oxford, UK: Blackwell, p. 270-273; Harvey, D. (1990). Between Space and Time: Reflections on the Geographical Imagination. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 80(3), p. 418-434.

¹⁶⁶ Gilmore, R.W. (2022). *Abolition Geography: Essays Towards Liberation*. In "Race and Globalization," p. 107-131. New York, NY: Verso.

of Hunters Point, with the dilapidated structures of the old Naval Shipyard visibly looming as their backdrop.

Gentrification is the most material and experiential example of how capital moves in and out of spaces in the urban landscape.¹⁶⁷ But how do we define urban change? How and why did real estate and finance capital's latest investment converge to produce the SF Shipyard, pressed up against the vestiges of industrial capital's abandonment?

Time-space compression is foundational to the accumulation of capital,¹⁶⁸ in this regard, which necessitates movement as the basis of its value.¹⁶⁹ Accumulation based on the movement of racial capital shapes urban landscapes in determination of who, where, why, and how ought to benefit from the absorption of its surplus crises defined by overaccumulation,¹⁷⁰ reflective of Lefebvre's production of space as trialectics.

Brahinsky clearly illustrates how Harvey's emphasis on capital movement in order for capital to generate value and thus be considered capital becomes operationalized in Hunters Point. She stresses the movement of capital (re)produces experiential, material consequences known as gentrification, which requires specification. Brahinsky and Smith both cite sociologist Ruth Glass's definition of gentrification from the 1960s as a socioeconomic process of urban transformation by displacement:

“One by one, many of the working-class quarters of London have been invaded by the middle classes—upper and lower. Shabby, modest mews and cottages—two rooms up and two down—have been taken over, when their leases have expired, and have become elegant, expensive residences. Larger Victorian houses, downgraded in an earlier or recent period—which were used as lodging houses or were otherwise in multiple

¹⁶⁷ Brahinsky, R. (2020), p. 5, citing, Brahinsky, R. (2014b) *The Death of the City? Reports of San Francisco's Demise have been Greatly Exaggerated. Boom: A Journal of California*, 4(2), p. 43–54.

¹⁶⁸ Harvey, D. (1990), p. 418-434; Luxemburg, R. (1913). *The Accumulation of Capital: A Contribution to an Economic Explanation of Imperialism*. London: Routledge.

¹⁶⁹ Harvey, D. (2018). “The Visualization of Capital as Value in Motion”. In *Marx, Capital, and the Madness of Economic Reason*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, p. 1-24.

¹⁷⁰ Gilmore, R.W. (2007). *Golden Gulag*, p. 54-57.

occupation—have been upgraded once again ... Once this process of “gentrification” starts in a district it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working-class occupiers are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed.”¹⁷¹

While discussing gentrification’s cycles of transformation, Brahinsky reflects on the decades of subsequent debates emerge from Glass’s views that argue about false choices of whether gentrification is culturally or economically determined. Catalyzed by the advent of millennials into cities, gentrification discourses also proliferate from U.S. media and journalism that saturate and obfuscate its meanings rather than provide clarification.¹⁷²

Less sympathetic to Glass’s perspectives about urban change than Brahinsky, Smith characterizes Glass’s notion of gentrification as an anachronism, a “...marginal oddity...,” a “...discrete process...” in which “...a new urban “gentry” of “...middle- and upper-middle-class immigrants...unafraid to rub shoulders with the unwashed masses,” therefore, “...transformed working-class quarters.”¹⁷³

He asserts that “the process of gentrification has evolved rapidly” in “...scale and diversity...” since Glass’s writing, “...to the point where the narrowly residential rehabilitation projects that were so paradigmatic of the process in the 1960s and 1970s now seem quaint, not just in the urban landscape but in the urban-theory literature.”¹⁷⁴ Smith consequently provides an alternative definition, he argues, more reflective of contemporary urban change that emphasizes a renaissance, a revitalization of urban space:

“The Urban Task Force will identify causes of urban decline ... and practical solutions to bring people back into our cities, towns, and urban neighborhoods. It will establish a new vision for urban regeneration ... [Over the next twenty-five years] 60% of new dwellings should be built on previously developed land ... [W]e have lost control of our towns and cities, allowing them to become spoilt by poor design, economic dispersal, and social

¹⁷¹ Brahinsky, R. (2020a), p. 4., and Smith, N. (2002), p. 438, citing, Glass, (1964) *London: Aspects of Change*. London, UK: MacGibbon & Kee.

¹⁷² Brahinsky, R. (2020a), p. 4.

¹⁷³ Smith, N. (2002), p. 438-439.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

polarisation. The beginning of the 21st century is a moment of change [offering] the opportunity for an urban renaissance.”

Smith's divergence from Glass is a distinction without a difference, as relations between both cultural and economic institutions reproduce processes of gentrification in contemporary small-scale and mega redevelopment projects, both of which are marketed and sold as rebirths of fallow, underused, unoptimized space that he so distinguishes from Glass. Cultural and economic reproductions are not mutually exclusive, but rather co-constitutive.

Smith somewhat retreats from conceptualizing a nature of gentrification as universal, following up that experiences of gentrification express acute variation and uneven distribution across “...assorted local economies and cultural ensembles...”¹⁷⁵ Smith also does not articulate how gentrification as the movement of capital is racialized and gendered, including displacement and responses to displacement, usurping dynamic aspects of agency that not only rework capital but also possibilities for anything other than the perpetuation of gentrification as a global urban strategy of the racialized movement of capital.

Hunter Point residents are not mere witnesses to cartographies of “advanced exclusion,”¹⁷⁶ nor are they spectators to the myriad of asthmas, cancers, and lung diseases produced by the toxic legacies of radioactive waste and wasting at the Naval Radiological Defense Laboratory. Counter-stories of resistances to the nexus of gentrification and toxic waste in Hunters Point Naval Shipyard are reflective of the contradictions inherent in this inevitability narrative of urban transformations that ultimately produces a changing same.¹⁷⁷ Similarly, Braun expresses this dialectical relationship between nature as *universal* and nature as *external*, the

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Brahinsky, R. (2020a), p. 3, citing, Zuk, M., & Chapple, K. (2015). *Urban Displacement Project*. Available Online at: www.Urbandisplacement.org.

¹⁷⁷ Brahinsky, R. (2020), p. 2-3.

latter of which, "...posits scarcity as arising in nature, while "universal" nature naturalizes the very social relations that *produce* scarcity in the first place."¹⁷⁸

Capital's movement enabled by its progressive ability to adapt, evolve, and thus reproduce the social relations of production necessary to generate profit through the extraction of surplus value fosters intense resentments among these transformations, expressed in the race-class politics of labor and social movements that act upon and shape the reproduction of capital and thus, the contours of the urban landscape. Hence, the rise of the real estate state that transforms the spatial redevelopment and configuration of cities, facilitated by gentrification as its global urban strategy.¹⁷⁹

Gentrification is the movement of capital in the urban landscape¹⁸⁰ accumulated by the dispossession¹⁸¹ and displacement of hundreds of thousands of longtime San Franciscans since the growth-obsessed craze of the 1980s to "unleash the power of the free market." Kamillah Ealom showed me how gentrification as the movement of capital¹⁸² reproduces material, experiential consequences such as displacement and accumulation by dispossession of property in Bayview-Hunters Point.

A resident of the Alice B. Griffith public housing development on Hunters Point Hill, Kamillah is Bayview born-and-raised, and a lifelong asthmatic with toxic radioactive waste from the Shipyard buried behind her apartment complex.¹⁸³ She is also Greenaction's Bayview

¹⁷⁸ Braun, B. (2002), p. 12.

¹⁷⁹ New Globalism, New Urbanism: Gentrification as Global Urban Strategy. *Antipode*, 34, p. 27-450.

¹⁸⁰ Brahinsky, R. (2020a).

¹⁸¹ Harvey, D. (2004). The 'New' Imperialism: Accumulation by Dispossession. *Socialist Register*, 40: p. 63-87; Luxemburg, R. (1913). *The Accumulation of Capital: A Contribution to an Economic Explanation of Imperialism*. London: Routledge.

¹⁸² Brahinsky, R. (2020), p. 5, citing Brahinsky, R. (2014b) The Death of the City? Reports of San Francisco's Demise have been Greatly Exaggerated. *Boom: A Journal of California*, 4(2), p. 43-54; Harvey, D. (1982).

¹⁸³ Ealom, K. (2022). Greenaction Environmental Task Force Meeting, Observation by Author.

Hunters Point Community Organizer and Program Coordinator, a role in which she informs and mobilizes her neighbors about all industrial pollution in what residents describe as the “Circle of Death.” As the BVHP Environmental Justice Response Task Force Coordinator, Kamillah brings neighbors into conversation with additional environmental justice organizations and all levels of government environmental protection agencies.

This Zoom meeting began with concerns over the illegal dumping of trash and furniture on streets throughout Hunters Point, or what Kamillah blamed gentrification as the reason for people losing or leaving things they cannot take with them, sharing pictures of couches and wooden drawers on an abandoned street.

Wondering who has jurisdiction, the Department of Public Works or the Board of Supervisors, Kamillah found out the DPW is responsible for handling dumping, looking through stuff, and penalizing people if their discarded items reveal their identity. She then encouraged people to call the Department of Public Health if found on private property and public housing, the latter of which also includes the Housing Authority.¹⁸⁴

Kamillah’s discussion, therefore, conveys how residents respond to the discarded material vestiges of displacement, produced by gentrification. Her comments highlight the conversion of brownfields into pristine, sanitized luxury townhouses and condos as an inherently racialized development and growth strategy. Brahinsky, in this regard, reminds us:

“Ultimately gentrification is tied to the economic machinery of our existence. As I have suggested elsewhere, it is essentially “capitalism playing out in the landscape,” the urban form of our political economy (Brahinsky, 2014b). If capitalism requires the revitalization of fallow spaces to support new growth, and if that new growth is the essential ingredient in economic expansion, then the remaking of “under-producing” urban space is a fundamental dynamic of capitalist urbanism, compressing space with time (Harvey, 1982).”¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Brahinsky, (2020), p 5., citing Harvey (1982) and Brahinsky (2014b).

While tied to the economic machinery of our existence, gentrification as the uneven movement of racial capital across and through landscapes reflects gentrification not as fixed or natural, but rather as an undetermined and dynamic process, spatially and temporally contingent upon the imposition and contestation of uneven power relations. Sam Stein notes that, “gentrification is brutal, but rarely total,”¹⁸⁶ echoing Rebecca Solnit’s remarks on the wave of change in San Francisco brought on by the onslaught of the first tech boom twenty years prior to Stein’s book. Solnit, in this regard, reminds us, “the amputation did not take the whole limb. The city limps on.”¹⁸⁷

As the stories of Hunters Point residents throughout this paper illuminate, movements to influence redevelopment and remediation of the Shipyard also shape the production of space, demonstrating the denaturalization of patterns and cycles within processes of gentrification. In other words, how residents fight for their right to the city can and does influence the contours of space against totalizing discourses of urban change as predetermining outcomes.

In the latter analysis of this paper, I ask to what end people in Hunters Point make freedom provisionally in land, air, and water-based environments to challenge the inevitability arch of how urban change is lived, experienced, and fought through. Moreover, as waste formations demonstrate, notions of gentrification as natural based on the racialization of space as natural are firmly embedded in ideas about the racialization of nature, which now requires further examination.

¹⁸⁶ Stein, S. (2019), p. 12.

¹⁸⁷ Solnit, R. & Schwartzburg, S. (2002). *Hollow City: The Siege of San Francisco and the Crisis of American Urbanism*. New York, NY: Verso, p. 14-15.

Nature

The Intemperate Forest

This section of my capstone interrogates the co-productions of race, space, and nature as natural, universal, and external. Central to this argument is the notion that race, space, and nature are dynamic, relational processes and rearticulations of power and difference, rather than fixed empirical categories.

First, I develop a critique of urban natures based on Bruce Braun's *The Intemperate Forest*, related to how the racialization of waste at Hunters Point Naval Shipyard complicates formulations of nature as natural and external, and reflect the inextricable nexus of race, waste, space and nature as intrinsic political-economic, social, and cultural productions.

In doing so, I further reflect on how ideas of nature as a natural, "fixed" state, external to modern civilization, relates to racialization as natural, reflected in the politics of remediation in which material objects such as tarps form a cover to racialized legacies of toxic waste. In deconstructing race, space, and nature, I convey in subsequent stories how residents make freedom in relation to land, air, and water-based environments based on the denaturalization of these categories as fixed, universal, and disparate logics. As I now illustrate, the intersectional politics of race, waste, and space are not external but rather integral to the lives of Hunters Point residents.

Toxicities that engulf Hunters Point Naval Shipyard are not outside of but are rather fundamental to the race-class gender politics that shape the transformation of urban spaces. Radioactive contamination, concentrated along a perimeter section of the Shipyard's shoreline, does not exist in a vacuum, limited to the confines of each parcel, outside the minds and bodies of past and present residents.

Longtime, lifetime residents of Hunters Point do not believe that radioactive soil, now carried into and spread around San Francisco Bay by rising sea levels,¹⁸⁸ is limited somehow, to being “over there.” Waste formations, as a means of conceptualizing the nexus of race, space, and waste at Hunters Point Shipyard,¹⁸⁹ for instance, stretch any sort of technical, scientific, or legalistic boundaries of time-space that create an interface, a veil of difference between people and their construction of “the environment.”

Bruce Braun's *The Intemperate Forest*¹⁹⁰ builds upon Neil Smith's critique of this modern idea of nature as external and universal¹⁹¹ by historicizing the political-economic life of “the forest” as a site of indoctrination, dispossession, accumulation, and imagination. Examining the discursive cultural politics behind colonizers' and First Nations' territorial dispute claims to the Clayoquot Sound, Braun refutes binary ‘human destruction v. pristine nature’ logics that underpin colonial ideas about environments as justifications for a variety of normative political interventions, such as management and protection.

He challenges the idea of natures as disparate entities untouched by colonial epistemologies and ontologies, foregrounding his understanding in Foucault's genealogical approach to biopolitics, *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*. Social nature, he argues, is an alternative

¹⁸⁸ City and County of San Francisco Civil Grand Jury Report. (2022). *Buried Problems and a Buried Process: The Hunters Point Naval Shipyard in a Time of Climate Change*. Hunters Point, SLR Report, Final Corrected. Accessed: https://civilgrandjury.sfgov.org/2021_2022/2022%20CGJ%20Report_Buried%20Problems%20and%20a%20Buried%20Process%20-%20The%20Hunters%20Point%20Naval%20Shipyard%20in%20a%20Time%20of%20Climate%20Change.pdf, October 1, 2022.

¹⁸⁹ Dillon, L. (2013). Race, Waste, and Space: Brownfield Redevelopment and Environmental Justice at the Hunters Point Shipyard. *Antipode*, 46(5), p. 1205-1221.

¹⁹⁰ Braun, B. (2002). *The Intemperate Rainforest: Nature, Culture, and Power on Canada's West Coast*. Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press.

¹⁹¹ Smith, N. 1990. *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, cited in Braun, (2002), p. 11.

conceptualization of natures as, "...objects made, materially and semiotically, by multiple actors (not all of them human)..."¹⁹² across time and space.

The social production of nature is a function of constructed norms around what is "natural," making and unmaking both ecological and social relations¹⁹³ and compelling critical geographic inquiries that "...identify the specific historical forms that nature's production takes, and to locate the specific generative processes that shape how this occurs."¹⁹⁴

Nature as socially constructed unites ecology and social justice by compelling an interrogation of *how* humans remake nature, under *which* conditions, for *whose* benefit, and with *what* consequences. Economic geography informs knowledge of how capitalism (re)organizes land and labor relations that shape environments in order to (re)produce natures.¹⁹⁵

Resistant to essentialize nature and social relations, Braun does not offer a vision for future natures, dismissing the necessity for, "... a template for developing normative statements about nature and its transformation..." instead arguing that the same "historical force[s]" and "political struggles" will determine responses to these questions, speculatively, to not box himself by essentializing humans and nature on either end of a constructed spectrum he does not believe is reducible, citing Haraway's view that nature as a construct, "...is not reducible to capitalization or commodification" it involves heterogeneous processes that are joined and separated in multiple "reaction sites." Nature, rather, to Braun, is a "...refusal to see the economic and the cultural as distinct ontological domains."¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² Braun, B. (2002), p. 3.

¹⁹³ Braun, B. (2002), p. 11, citing, Smith, N., (1990).

¹⁹⁴ Braun, B. (2002), p. 11, citing, Harvey, D. (1996). *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

¹⁹⁵ Braun, B. (2002), p. 11, citing, Castree, N. (1995). . The Nature of Produced Nature: Materiality and Knowledge Construction in Marxism. *Antipode*, 27, p. 12–28.

¹⁹⁶ Braun, B. (2002), p. 18, citing, Haraway, D. (1997). *Modest Witness @ Second Millennium. Female Man[®] Meets OncoMouse[™]*. New York, NY: Routledge, p. 141.

Missing, though, in Braun's reflections on race, space, and nature is an analysis that accounts for the (de)construction of race, apart from binary racial politics between, mostly but not all "white" colonizers and Indigenous people, which does not suffice for a complete analysis of how (de)constructions of race, class, and gender *produce* environments, given his claims of a social nature.

Binary analyses of race are not exclusive to Braun but, as Brahinsky demonstrates, a fundamental principle of the Chicago School that dominates geographical, anthropological, and sociological discussions of urban space, from Robert Park and Louis Wirth's theory of 'urban ecology', the cycle of race relations,¹⁹⁷ to St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton's *Black Metropolis*.¹⁹⁸

The Navy constructs itself as a pillar of environmental stewardship based on its remediation commitments, succinctly illustrated by Parcel E-2 of the Shipyard, the most contaminated section to the extent that it is dangerous to dig up enough soil to perform tests and remove the contamination.¹⁹⁹

Rather, the Navy's solution is to cap the contaminated soil with a layer of plastic in order to build a wetland habitat around it, boasting of its progress with slides of brownfields changed into a serene shoreline and the return of animals such as coyotes and geese. Dillon thus situates the Navy's construction of the wetland habitat at the Shipyard in Braun's binary conceptualization of 'pristine nature' as a "hybrid form of post-industrial nature emerging in and through the ruins of an industrial past."²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ Park, R.E. (1950). *Race and Culture*. New York, NY: The Free Press.

¹⁹⁸ Brahinsky, R., (2012), p. 37, citing, Park, R. E. (1967), and Drake, S.C., & Cayton, H.R. (2015).

¹⁹⁹ Dillon, L. (2013), p. 1216.

²⁰⁰Ibid, citing: Braun, B., & Castree, N. (1998). *Remaking Reality: Nature at the Millenium*. London, UK: Routledge.

Apolitical, ahistorical accounts of nature as external wilderness contradict their “objectivity” proclamations,²⁰¹ reflected in the Navy’s construction of Parcel E-2 as a once contaminated brownfield, now wetland habitat. A burial of the legacies of Hunters Point, the burial of radioactive waste beneath the plastic tarp provides a canopy cover to the racialization of waste as natural by constructing nature as external.

Constructions of nature as natural and external also reproduce the erasure of Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies of relationships with environments, thereby justifying displacement²⁰² based on the pretense of Indigenous cultures and societies as extinct,²⁰³ giving reason to why Braun complicates the idea of nature as universal.

His logic follows that nature as universal implies the naturalization of social relations because absent differences between humans and animals, human relations become seen as static and futile to attempt changing, for instance, the gentrification of urban space. Discourses around gentrification consequently reflect an inevitable, “natural” process of the free market, consistent with ecological urban change theories of the Chicago School.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ Middleton, E.R. (2015) Jahat Jattotodom: Toward an Indigenous Political Ecology. In R L Bryant (ed) *International Handbook of Political Ecology*, Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, p. 561, citing, Carroll, C. (2015) *Roots of Our Renewal: Ethnobotany and Cherokee Environmental Governance*. Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press.

²⁰²Braun, B. (2002), p. 12, citing, Cronon, W. 1995. The trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting back to the Wrong Nature. In William Cronon (Ed.), *Uncommon Ground: Toward Re- inventing Nature*. New York, NY: Norton, p. 69–90 .

²⁰³ Leventhal, A., Field, L., Alvarez, H., & Cambra, R. (1994). “The Ohlone: Back from Extinction,” in *The Ohlone Past and Present: Native Americans of the San Francisco Bay Region*. Santa Barbara, CA: Ballena Press; Kroeber, A. L. (1925). Handbook of the Indians of California. Washington, D.C: *Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin*; Kroeber, A. L. (1934). Native American Population. *American Anthropologist*, 36(1), 1–25; Kroeber, A. L. (1963). *Anthropology: Culture Patterns & Processes*. New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & World.

²⁰⁴ Brahinsky, R. (2020a), p. 4-5, citing, Park, R.E., and Burgess, E.W. (1921) *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press; Vigdor, J.L., Massey, D. S., & Rivlin, A. M. (2002). Does Gentrification Harm the Poor? [with comments]. *Brookings-Wharton Papers on Urban Affairs*, p. 133–182; Freeman, L. (2005). Displacement or Succession? Residential Mobility in Gentrifying Neighborhoods, *Urban Affairs Review*, 40(4): p. 463–491.

A bus ride down Third Street, passing by industrial warehouses and white millennials on e-scooters, is a trip through the changing socioeconomic realities of Bayview-Hunters Point,²⁰⁵ a place known for its fringe legacies now a final affordable frontier of the San Francisco housing market.²⁰⁶

Gender

“When She Sees Me, She Talks to Me”

I met Tonia Randell and Ariann Harrison on the front steps outside City Hall. Tonia told me about the fear she felt inside her house on Hunters Point Hill, not only from radioactive waste and the COVID-19 pandemic but also from the orange skies as she looked out her kitchen window.²⁰⁷ September 9th, 2020: Not only San Francisco, but the entire Bay Area was engulfed in an orange haze.

COVID-19 as an X-ray upon “smart,” “resilient” cities underscored how processes and practices of “racial capitalism, gentrification, and neoliberal urbanism” shape space, reflected in racialized and gendered labor relations.²⁰⁸ The politics of waste, COVID-19, and orange wildfire smoke, entangled with the displacing consequences of gentrification, therefore illuminate how the racialization and feminization of space are lived as the right to breathe clean, healthy air.

Air quality concerns over radioactivity, COVID-19, and the persistence of wildfires prompted the state’s first “Clean Air Center” inside the Linda Brooks-Burton Branch Library on 3rd and Revere. Ariann told reporters about her mother: “She fought to her last day to make sure that some of these things could be resolved. She seen our kids getting sick on that Hill and nobody cared.”²⁰⁹ Marie Harrison moved to the Bayview in 1966 with her mother and siblings,

²⁰⁵ Brahinsky, R., & Tarr, A. (2020). *A People's Guide to the San Francisco Bay Area*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, p. 152.

²⁰⁶ Brahinsky, (2012), p. 3.

²⁰⁷ Randell, T. (2022). Interview by Author. San Francisco, CA: San Francisco City Hall.

²⁰⁸ Summers, B. (2022). Urban Phantasmagorias. *City*, 26(2-3), p. 191-198.

²⁰⁹ CBS News Bay Area. (2022). *Clean Air Center opens in Bayview Hunters Point Neighborhood* [Video].

lived in the neighborhood for decades, and at 18-years-old worked at the Shipyard for two years.²¹⁰

Later in life, she developed an inoperable lung disease severe enough to require an evergreen tank at her side that delivered air through nasal cannulas. Marie never smoked and knew this was *not* by chance. She also knew, from her shipyard job as a typist, that the five-copy requirement for every document meant the Navy had information about the toxic, radioactive contamination of the Shipyard they refused to share with her or any concerned residents.²¹¹

Wife, mother, shipyard worker, activist, organizer, and crusader — there are ample hats that Marie wore all at once. She forged her legacy as a champion for health and environmental justice during her displacement from the Geneva Towers project in Visitacion Valley (“Viz Valley”),²¹² then moving in with her daughter, Arieann, into their home at 730 Innes Avenue, near the north entry gate of Hunters Point Naval Shipyard and the smokestacks of the PG&E power plant.²¹³

Mary Ratcliff, who publishes *The San Francisco Bay View National Black Newspaper* with her husband, Dr. Willie Ratcliff, remembers: “She would come in in the mornings and tell me how she had to sit up all night with her grandson because his nose wouldn’t stop bleeding...She kept watching the smoke pouring out of that chimney and heading right at them.”²¹⁴

When corporate developers and industrial polluters in the neighborhood thought they could buy the silence of Bayview residents, Marie and her neighbors always

²¹⁰ Eskenazi, J. (2019). Marie Harrison, Tireless Fighter for Environmental Justice, Dies at 71. *Mission Local*.

²¹¹ *Ibid*.

²¹² *Ibid*.

²¹³ Porter Sumchai, A. (n.d.). *Biomonitoring Report: Arieann Harrison*. Hunters Point Community Biomonitoring Program. Accessed Online at: <https://www.canwelve.org/environmental-justice>.

²¹⁴ Eskenazi, J. (2019), citing Ratcliff, M. (2019). “Statement about Marie Harrison and the PG&E Plant.” San Francisco, CA. Interview by Eskenazi, J.

refused.²¹⁵ Marie's unwavering, uncompromising attitude embodied in her organizing prowess alongside the Director of Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice, Bradley Angel, led to the closure of the PG&E power plant in 2006.²¹⁶

At 71 years old, she spent her final days fighting to expose the legacies of toxic industrial pollution that ultimately cost Marie her life on May 5th, 2019. According to a report from Dr. Ahimsa Porter Sumchai's Biomonitoring Program listed on the website of Ariann's nonprofit, canwelve.org, Marie died from, "...cardiopulmonary arrest due to fibrotic lung disease caused by exposure to air pollution."²¹⁷

A local environmental justice meeting at Radio Africa Kitchen on 3rd and Oakdale, thus, became my introduction to the stories of past and present Bayview residents. I sat at a long table next to the window, surrounded by a racially and generationally diverse circle of Greenaction leaders, organizers, and members, most of whom Bayview residents, honoring the life and legacy of Marie Harrison. My first Greenaction Task Force meeting began with skepticism toward the Air Quality Management District, a city-run monitoring agency, particularly its reports on the neighborhood, followed by a PowerPoint presentation memorial for Marie, given her death only a few days prior.

Ariann is the first person to tell you that she is unafraid to approach rank-and-file city officials, including the one at the highest level of city government, Mayor London Breed. "When she sees me, she talks to me," Ariann tells me in the City Hall lobby near the elevators.²¹⁸ I asked Ariann what happens when formal statements and public

²¹⁵ Rubenstein, S. (2019). Marie Harrison, Hunters Point Environmental Activist, Dies. *The San Francisco Chronicle*.

²¹⁶ Lacey, A., Crane, R.B., & Zhu, J. (eds.) Hall, A.R. (2021). "Interview with Bradley Angel, Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice." In "Bayview Hunters Point Geographies of Toxicity and Narratives of Resistance," *Counterpoints*, p. 125-126.

²¹⁷ Porter Sumchai, A. (n.d.).

²¹⁸ Harrison, A. (2022). Interview by Author. San Francisco, CA: San Francisco City Hall.

engagements do not suffice as platitudes and she says something that Mayor Breed does not expect, replying that she, Mayor Breed, directs Ariann to her Office staff.²¹⁹

While Mayor Breed and Ariann engage in political dialogue, their ideological approaches to political organizing vary considerably based on how differences in narratives about their lives evolve and converge in space and time. The politics of Hunters Point Naval Shipyard inform differences in how stories of the two women's lives are told and the conditions in which they are propelled into interaction.

Mayor Breed's grandmother raised her in public housing at Plaza East, recalling that they lived on \$900 a month and drank out of recycled mayonnaise jars.²²⁰ Breed began her political career as an intern for the architect of the remaking of Hunters Point, then-Mayor Willie Brown in his Office of Housing and Neighborhood Services.²²¹ Mayor Brown conceived the Hunters Point redevelopment plan, but Breed gave it an official stamp before she held elected office.

She was appointed a seat on the Redevelopment Commission in 2004, the same year of the Conveyance Agreement between the Navy and the City, and served for six years,²²² playing a pivotal role in the expedition and approval of the Shipyard redevelopment in the early stages of parcel transfers and housing construction.²²³ Though Breed's particular knowledge of the SF Shipyard from her time in the Mayor's Office remains unknown, she enthusiastically supported the project before her election to the

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Loudenback, T. (2017). "The New Mayor Of San Francisco, Home Of The Most Expensive Real Estate In America, Is A 'life-Long Renter'." New York, NY: *Business Insider*.

²²¹ Knight, H. (2018). "London Breed Cites her Experience as Path to Transforming San Francisco." San Francisco, CA: *The San Francisco Chronicle*.

²²² Roberts, C. (2018). "How The SF Mayoral Candidates Might Address The Hunters Point Shipyard Fraud Scandal." San Francisco, CA: *Curbed*.

²²³ Ibid.

Board of Supervisors in 2013. She voted for it while a District 5 Supervisor, “...because I did my homework...”²²⁴

Tight-lipped is the best phrase to describe Breed’s approach to the Shipyard ever since the Tetra Tech scandal broke during her candidacy for mayor in 2018. In Mayor Breed’s absence, lawyers make statements at City Hall hearings and press secretaries issue carefully crafted statements on her behalf to residents and reporters. The political-economic, social, and cultural transformation of the San Francisco landscape, catalyzed by two tech booms from the 1990s into the early 2000s, did not begin with London Breed.

The global convergence of technology and finance capital upon the Bay Area remains a project decades in the making,²²⁵ though Mayor Breed is an architect of its development, maintenance, and expansion. “We love our mayor, we wish she would love us back,” is a line Arieann repeats about the City’s complicit role in enabling the Navy to act with impunity, she tells me, evidenced by OCII’s transfer of Parcel A to Lennar and the Navy’s refusal to retest and remove all radioactive particulate matter from the Shipyard.²²⁶

Intersectionality

Given these different perspectives of Mayor Breed and Arieann on the Shipyard remediation and redevelopment, how should scholarship conceptualize them? Popularized and misunderstood, ‘intersectionality’ addresses a fundamental concern of feminist

²²⁴ Lagos, M. (2012). “London Breed’s Emphasis: Kids’ Lives.” San Francisco, CA: *SFGate*.

²²⁵ Walker, R. (1990). “The Playground of US Capitalism? The Political Economy of the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1980s”. In Davis, M., Hiatt, S., Kennedy, M., Ruddick, S., & Sprinkler, M. eds. *Fire in the Hearth: The Radical Politics of Place in America*. London, UK and New York, NY: Verso, p. 3-82; Walker, R. (1996). Another Round of Globalization in San Francisco. *Urban Geography*, 17(1), p. 60–94; Walker, R. (2006). *Boom and Bombshell: New Economy Bubble and the Bay Area*. The Changing Economic Geography of Globalization, p. 121-147; Walker, R. (2018). *Pictures of a Gone City: Tech and the Dark Side of Prosperity in the San Francisco Bay Area*. Oakland, CA: PM Press.

²²⁶ Harrison, A. (2022). Interview by Author. San Francisco, CA.

scholarship — differences among women.²²⁷ Race, class, and gender are often regarded as empirical vestiges, categories of difference and domination. But for Crenshaw, who coined the term, it is not that identity politics fail to transcend difference, but rather conflate or ignore intragroup differences.²²⁸

Crenshaw developed intersectionality, “...to describe or frame various relationships between race and gender...,” “...articulate the interaction of racism and patriarchy generally...,” and, “...describe the overlapping systems of subordination and at the margins of feminism and antiracism,” as an explanation to violence against women of color, particularly Black women, that slips through the cracks of feminist and antiracist discourses.²²⁹

Whether treated as a theory, a heuristic, or a reading strategy, the ambiguity of intersectionality as a term is precisely what makes intersectionality successful because of its ability to attract an array of audiences, not *necessarily* because of its truth and coherence. Debates over how intersectionality ought to be conceptualized as a crossroad, axis of difference, or dynamic process do not complicate, but rather expand the various meanings of intersectionality.²³⁰

Though giving language to overlapping systems of subordination, intersectionality did not invent but emerged from centuries of Black women’s critiques of mainstream white liberalized feminisms that exclude, marginalize, and incite violence against Black people.²³¹

²²⁷ Davis, K. (2008). Intersectionality as Buzzword: A Sociology Of Science Perspective On What Makes A Feminist Theory Successful. *Feminist Theory*. 9(1), p. 70.

²²⁸ Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), p. 1241-1299.

²²⁹ Crenshaw, K. (1991), p. 1266.

²³⁰ Davis, K., (2008).

²³¹ Wells-Barnett, I.B. (1997). *Southern Horrors And Other Writings: The Anti-Lynching Campaign Of Ida B. Wells, 1892-1900*. Boston, MA: Bedford Books; McKissack, P. (1992). *Sojourner Truth: Ain't I a Woman?*. New York, NY: Scholastic; Combahee River Collective. (2015). *The Combahee River Collective Statement*. United States. Library of

Intersectionality frames the relationship between Ariann and Mayor Breed in racialized and gendered class politics of place and difference. Mayor Breed and Ariann contradict white feminist logics of universalism which presuppose the idea that all women will one day exit the labor force and become stay-at-home mothers or, if reluctant to abdicate their careers, perform the “second shift.”²³² Like Ariann and her mother, the labor power of Mayor Breed’s grandmother never became unnecessary to their households or conditioned on the assumption that they will exit the labor force.²³³

Indexing of wages to race and gender is a fundamental principle of the racialized and gendered organization of Black motherhood in the American labor force, meaning, as Gilmore writes, “motherhood functioned through, and as an attribute of, the woman-as-laborer, enacted as collective, or social, rather than individualized practice.”²³⁴ Gilmore connects motherhood with political organizing in order to prepare their children for an unsteady, racialized labor market in a racialized world, “shaped by a constantly ‘changing same’ of negative contingencies...”²³⁵

Congress, Accessed Online: <https://www.loc.gov/item/lcwaN0028151/>, October 13, 2022; hooks, b. (1981). *Ain't I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism*. Boston, MA: South End Press; Davis, A.Y. (1981). *Women, Race, & Class*. New York, NY: Random House; Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press.

²³² Hochschild, A.R. (1989). *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home*. New York, NY: Viking/Penguin.

²³³ Gilmore, R.W. (2007). “Mothers Reclaiming our Children.” In *Golden Gulag*, p. 188-189, citing: Davis, A.Y. (1981), White, D.G. (1985). *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South*. New York, NY: Norton, Sterling, D. (1984). *We Are Your Sisters: Black Women in the Nineteenth Century*. New York, NY: Norton, Gilmore, G.E. (1996). *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896–1920*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, and Ginzburg, R. [1962]. (1988). *100 Years of Lynchings*. Baltimore, MD: Black Classic Press.

²³⁴ Gilmore, R.W., (2007), p. 189, citing, Collins, P.H. (1990). *Black Feminist Thought*. Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman, White, D.G. (1985), Kaplan, T. (1982). Female Consciousness and Collective Action: The Case of Barcelona, 1910-1918. *Signs*, 7(31), p. 545-566.

²³⁵ Gilmore, R.W., (2007), p. 189, citing, Jones, L. (1967). The Changing Same (R&B and New Black Music). In id., *Black Music*, p. 180–211. New York, NY: William Morrow.

Market instabilities also mean mothers educate their children about what change without progress looks like, expanding the ability of Black women to exploit their unique access to political audiences because of regular entrances into public spaces to protest state and state-endorsed terrorism.²³⁶

Mayor Breed leveraged her political position to ask Governor Brown for clemency for her brother's murder conviction. "I guarantee we can secure him access to a job, to a good home, to the counseling and services he and every other addict need for the rest of their lives. His freedom is what's best for both Napoleon and society overall."²³⁷

Intersectionality does not presuppose that Mayor Breed and Arieann are the same, but rather how their ideological differences and positionalities explain their different approaches to political organizing, in addition to their relationship. Mayor Breed and Arieann both yield power in their experiential institutional knowledge, but whereas Breed broadly frames her statements to manage a diverse base of voters, Arieann takes race-class differences as a principle of political organization, rather than an emphasis on unifying principles of diversity, inclusion, and tolerance.

This explains Mayor Breed's actions and Arieann's responses to their interactions because Breed loses nothing but gains all the political capital from engaging Arieann but is unwilling to spend it by making an explicit promise or course of action that might contradict her prior political role in the expedition of the Shipyard remediation and redevelopment as an economic good for Black people. So, Mayor Breed makes an effort to

²³⁶ Gilmore, R.W., (2007), p. 189, citing, Carby, H.V. (1987). *Reconstructing Womanhood: The Emergence of the Afro-American Woman Novelist*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, and Ware, V. (1992). *Beyond the Pale: White Women, Racism, and History*. New York, NY: Verso.

²³⁷ Van Derbeken, J. (2018). "San Francisco Mayor London Breed Requests Brother's Early Release." San Francisco, CA: NBC Bay Area. Accessed Online: <https://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/local/san-francisco-mayor-london-breed-requests-brothers-early-release/200124/October 21, 2022>.

engage Arieann in dialogue but stops short of making promises, instead issuing generalizations of universal transparency and accountability.

Marginality as a Site of Resistance

Whereas Breed makes agreeable talking points to a targeted constituency, Arieann and Tonia both combine humor and bluntness in their approaches to organizing, evidenced by Arieann's insistence upon her ability to approach people of all races and classes.²³⁸ Her passion comes from decades of abandonment by public officials over the "Circle of Death" and lack of enforcement of environmental regulations that compound the harm to low-income racially diverse places.²³⁹

Motherhood, for Arieann, functions as a space of radical openness,²⁴⁰ as it does for generations of Bayview mothers, warning, "I'm sick. My kids are sick," talking about what has changed is the addition of biomonitoring programs that connect residents with knowledge of exposure to toxic radioactive chemicals.²⁴¹ Its mobilization amid rising sea levels and redevelopment at the Shipyard mobilizes Arieann to "renovate and make critical already existing activity."²⁴² Marginalities are sites of resistance and radical openness *because, not in spite of* positionalities.

"At 730 Innes, the shipyard was my backyard. My son, Giovanni, had recurring nosebleeds. My urinalysis tox screen shows above reference range copper, manganese, rubidium, thallium, vanadium and radiation.

The nation's highest rate of respiratory disease and cancer is concentrated right here on the hill. I cannot sit idly by seeing pictures of the preposterous development plans for Hunters Point.

²³⁸ Harrison, A. (2022), and Randell, T. (2022). Interview(s) and Observation(s) by Author.

²³⁹ Harrison, A. (2022). Interview by Author.

²⁴⁰ hooks, b. (1989). Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness. *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, 36, p. 16-19.

²⁴¹ Harvey, C. (2022). "Expert Panel Inextricably Links Treasure Island and Hunters Point." San Francisco, CA: *The Bay View National Black Newspaper*. Accessed Online, October, 18, 2022.

²⁴² Gilmore, R.W. (2007). *Golden Gulag*, p. 78, 126, citing, Gramsci, A.

Wouldn't it make sense to clean up the radioactive waste? Property values would rise, peoples' health improve and you wouldn't be putting something pretty over something that can kill."²⁴³

bell hooks echoes Brahinsky's emphasis on counter-narratives of gentrification in Hunters Point by reminding us that marginality as a space of resistance occurs *within and because of* location. hooks begins her argument with the assertion that "the politics of location necessarily call those of us who would participate in the formation of counter-cultural practice to identify the spaces where we begin the process of revision."²⁴⁴

A re-imagination of space and location, therefore, means that material productions of resistance to hegemonic discourses through alternative epistemologies and discourses are essential ingredients to the survival of the souls of Black lives.²⁴⁵

The liberative power of Black life then is precisely *because of*, not in spite of, blackness. It is precisely marginality, for hooks, that produces "radical openness,"²⁴⁶ which resembles stories of radical openness of Bayview women, from Elouise Westbrook and the Big Five's affordable housing advocacy to Marie and Ariann Harrison's environmental justice campaigns to Dr. Ahimsa Porter Sumchai's clinics and maps that connect residents with knowledge.

And it is precisely because of their positionality that places them at the center of the intersection of race-class and gender roads that normatively are viewed as distinct. Intersectionality recognizes the particularities of violence against *particular* people who have been racialized and gendered, understanding that racism, classism, and sexism, for instance, are interlocking and therefore co-producing multiple dimensions of injustices.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ hooks, b. (1989). Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness. *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media*, 36, p. 16.

²⁴⁵ hooks, b. (1989), p. 19.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

While the performative nature of gender is also propagated as a biological fact, recapitulating binary constructs rooted in colonialism in order to maintain power based upon the construction of group differentiation.²⁴⁷ Gender non-conformity is also the origin of liberation, marking both material and experiential forms of resistance to binary violence as colonial constructions of gender norms.²⁴⁸

Policing is the reproduction of binary norms around race *and* gender always and everywhere together.²⁴⁹ Abolition means more than the prison industrial complex, but binary norms around race and gender in order to move *beyond* logics underpinning racial capitalisms and settler colonialisms,²⁵⁰ situated at the intersection of the labor power particular to women whose stories²⁵¹ articulate freedom as the *presence* of liberated life ways.²⁵² Analyzing the critical role of women in abolition geography²⁵³ provides a more expansive interpretation of both abolition and feminism:

“By centering attention on those most vulnerable to the fatal couplings of power and difference signified by racism, we will develop richer analyses of how it is that radical activism might most productively exploit crisis for liberatory ends.”²⁵⁴

Moreover, Heynen & Ybarra argue that there are particularities to the ways in which Black women played the central role in the movement to abolish chattel slavery.²⁵⁵ They note Aptheker makes known that the abolitionist movement was, “...first great social movement in US history in which women fully participated in every capacity: as

²⁴⁷ Butler, J. (1988). *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory. Theatre Journal*, 40(4), p. 519–531.

²⁴⁸ Reid-Pharr, R. F. (2001). *Black Gay Man: Essays*. New York, NY: NYU Press, p. 103.

²⁴⁹ Crenshaw, K. (1991); Davis, A. (1981).

²⁵⁰ Gilmore, R.W. (2022)

²⁵¹ McKittrick, K. (2006).

²⁵² Gilmore, R.W. (2022). “Abolition Geography and the Problem of innocence.” In *Abolition Geography: Essays Towards Liberation*, New York, NY: Verso, p. 475.

²⁵³ Davis et al. (2022); Gilmore, R.W. (2007), & (2022).

²⁵⁴ Gilmore, R.W. (2022). “Fatal Couplings on Power and Difference: Notes on Racism and Geography.” In *Abolition Geography*, p 152.

²⁵⁵ Heynen, N., & Ybarra, M. (2021), p. 24.

organizers, propagandists, petitioners, lecturers, authors, editors, executives, and especially rank- and-filers.”²⁵⁶ Nevertheless, Heynen & Ybarra note that Indigenous feminisms predate the heteropatriarchal institutions of American settler colonialisms that Aptheker does not acknowledge, given his use of the word ‘first’ to describe the shaping role of Black women in abolition.²⁵⁷

Why Abolition Ecologies?

Political Ecology

Abolition ecology is based on political ecological understandings, not describing any one particular academic ‘discipline’ but rather a way of *undisciplining* conventional attitudes of human relationships with ecosystems. The subject of a litany of internal and external debates,²⁵⁸ political ecology refers to, “...the social and political conditions surrounding the causes, experiences, and management of environmental problems.”²⁵⁹ Political ecology is the notion that conceptualizations of environment and politics cannot and should not be decoupled because such decoupling reproduces knowledge that exacerbates uneven power relations, typically between land, labor, and capital.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁶ Heynen, N., & Ybarra, M. (2021), p. 24, citing, Aptheker, H. (1989). *Abolitionism: A Revolutionary Movement*. Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, p. 77.

²⁵⁷ Heynen, N., & Ybarra, M. (2021), p. 24, citing, Goeman, M.R., & Denetdale, J.N. (2009). “Native Feminisms: Legacies, Interventions, and Indigenous Sovereignties”. *Wicazo Sa Review*, 24(2), p. 9–13, Arvin, M., Tuck, E., & Morrill, A. (2013). “Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy”. *Feminist Formations*, 25(1), p. 8–34.

²⁵⁸ Blaikie, P. (1985) *The Political Economy of Soil Erosion in Developing Countries*. New York, NY: Wiley; Blaikie, P., & Brookfield, H. C. (1987). *Land Degradation and Society*. London, UK: Methuen Publishing; Greenberg, J. and Park, T. (1994) “Political Ecology”. *Journal of Political Ecology*, 1: p. 1-12; Bryant, R. L. (1992). “Political Ecology: An Emerging Research Agenda in Third-World Studies”. *Political Geography*, 11(1), p. 12-36; Zimmerer, K. (2000) “The Reworking of Conservation Geographies: Nonequilibrium Landscape and Nature-Society Hybrids”. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 90(2), p. 356–369.

²⁵⁹ Forsyth, T. (2003). *Critical Political Ecology: the Politics of Environmental Science*. New York, NY: Routledge, p. 3.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

Though divergent in disciplines, epistemologies, and practices, political ecologists acknowledge that neo-Malthusian and neoliberal analyses of environmental change across multiple academic disciplines attempt to decouple the political and environmental through positivist logics, attributing environmental change to human factors that are based on our cognitions like overpopulation and character-based explanations for why poor and working-class people are to blame for the disproportionate environmental harm they experience.

Logics of responsabilization impact discourses across and through policy-making decisions made at every level of urban governance, from municipal transit to housing infrastructure. The San Francisco Department of Public Health, for instance, lists 'overcrowded' households and residential housing 'violations' under its Climate and Health Program,²⁶¹ which, is a more simplified explanation than the uneven movement of (real estate and finance) capital²⁶² that comprises the San Francisco rental and housing markets, and has for multiple consecutive decades.²⁶³

Capitalists and politicians alike absolve their constructions of environmental "crises"²⁶⁴ by shifting blame, which is precisely what facilitates the reproduction of uneven power

²⁶¹ San Francisco Department of Public Health. (2017). *San Francisco's Climate and Health Adaptation Framework*. San Francisco, CA: City and County of San Francisco.

²⁶² Harvey, D. (1982). *The Limits to Capital*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell; Harvey, D. (1985). *The Urbanization of Capital*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press; Harvey, D. (2003). *Paris, The Capital of Modernity*. London, UK: Routledge.

²⁶³ Walker, R. (1990). "The Playground of US Capitalism? The Political Economy of the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1980s". In Davis, M., Hiatt, S., Kennedy, M., Ruddick, S., & Sprinkler, M. eds. *Fire in the Hearth: The Radical Politics of Place in America*. London, UK and New York, NY: Verso, p. 3-82; Walker, R. (1996). Another Round of Globalization in San Francisco. *Urban Geography*, 17(1), p. 60-94; Walker, R. (2006). *Boom and Bombshell: New Economy Bubble and the Bay Area*. The Changing Economic Geography of Globalization, p. 121-147; Walker, R. (2018). *Pictures of a Gone City: Tech and the Dark Side of Prosperity in the San Francisco Bay Area*. Oakland, CA: PM Press.

²⁶⁴ Smith, N. (2006). "There's No Such Thing as a Natural Disaster". *Social Science Research Council*. Accessed Online at: <https://items.ssrc.org/understanding-katrina/theres-no-such-thing-as-a-natural-disaster/>

relationships through the movement of global real estate and finance capital in urban environments,²⁶⁵ such as Bayview-Hunters Point.²⁶⁶

Regulators and developers, insistent the Shipyard is safe for Lennar's commercial and residential development, further deflect their responsibility by gaslighting residents' concerns over radioactive toxic waste and gentrification in the face of a fraudulent cleanup scandal, coupled with rising sea levels that mobilize radioactive soil across land, air, and water-based environments of Hunters Point and the San Francisco Bay.

Naturalities about race-class and gender constructs undoubtedly reproduce material and experiential notions of space unbounded to territory, yet political ecologists often regard these as empirical data points rather than processes that influence the reproduction of temporalities and spatialities. Abolition ecologies consequently emerges as a demand for political ecology scholarship to grapple with processes of racialization that influence epistemological and ontological human relationships with environments.

Abolition Ecology

Political ecology's critical attention toward property relations comes at the expense of respect for the shaping power of whiteness and white supremacy.²⁶⁷ A body of political ecological work critically considers gendered and racialized stories of land, but there are far more particularized stories of nature in relation to racial capitalism and settler colonialism than ethnographic, geographic, and sociological literatures engage.²⁶⁸ Subsequent work builds a case for how abolition ecologies demand a dismantling of racialized toxicities beyond white supremacist logics in order to make freedom as a place.

²⁶⁵ Stein, S. (2019). *Capital Cities: Gentrification and the Real Estate State*. New York, NY: Verso.

²⁶⁶ Brahinsky, (2012), (2014a), & (2020).

²⁶⁷ Heynen, N., & Ybarra, M. (2021), p. 21.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

Asking why one of the largest immigrant detention centers in the U.S. is built upon industrial wastelands, Ybarra theorizes the spatialization of white supremacy in the expansion of the Northwest Detention Center (NWDC) in Tacoma, Washington tar pits with the economic growth of Seattle. She argues that racial capitalism and settler colonialism dispossess “people of color” and reproduce abolition activism beyond the confines of white supremacy through story-telling, linking stories of devalued people and land through liberatory practices not reliant on state recognition and white supremacist logics.

Abolition ecologies compel political ecology to engage the shaping role of race in stories of property based on how, “race is not integrated into wide-ranging understandings of spatial power and geographers commitment to social justice.”²⁶⁹ McKittrick elucidates, “...no aspect of the discipline, and no spatiality, has escaped racialization’ yet racist practices, discourses, colonialist heritages, and whiteness “permeate the epistemological foundations of geography and institutional structures and practices that shape [its] work environment,”²⁷⁰ effectively demonstrating race as as an empirical factor rather than shaping and being shaped by environmental factors.

Geography thus prioritizes space and place as its “natural” epistemological center and separates itself from race as external to the production of space.²⁷¹ The prioritization of space as geography’s “natural” concern, rather than its objective of creating distance between race and space (e.g., “colorblindness”), only further underscores their inextricable relationship, particularly in reproducing notions of place.

²⁶⁹ Heynen, N., & Ybarra, M. (2021), p. 22, citing, McKittrick, K. (2006), p. 10.

²⁷⁰ McKittrick, K. (2006), p. 10, citing, Blomley, N. (2003). Law, Property, and the Geography of Violence: The Frontier, the Survey, and the Grid. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 93(1), p. 121–141.

²⁷¹ McKittrick, K., (2006), p. 11.

Prioritization of space as a “natural” concern thus “enact[s]” racism as “...a death-dealing displacement of difference into hierarchies that organize relations within and between the planet’s sovereign political territories.”²⁷² “Violence of abstraction,” as Gilmore says, “produces all kinds of fetishes “states, races, normative views of how people fit into and make places in the world.”²⁷³ Social justice, then, is an intrinsically geographical project because, “...if justice is embodied, it is then therefore always spatial...”²⁷⁴ Further, Brahinsky et al.²⁷⁵ underscores the inextricable nexus of race and space, asserting, “intersections with space and nature offer important lessons about the (de)construction of race.”

In a marrying of DuBois’s abolition democracy with Gilmore’s abolition geography, abolition ecologies reveal how, “...radical consciousness in action resolves into liberated life-ways,” through radical notions of the collective making of freedom as a place.²⁷⁶ Revolution is how DuBois characterizes reconstruction, a tremendously hopeful time for Black people in America who walked off the plantation and won the Civil War.

Enslaved African laborers in Confederate states, in other words, engaged in a general strike to cease performing labor and ‘cross enemy lines’ to fight on the side of the Union, marking the turning point of the Civil War due to the economic crises it generated in the Confederacy from the shortage of (un)free labor they supplied to the Union.²⁷⁷ Thus, the *first* attempt at democracy in America.²⁷⁸

²⁷² McKittrick, K. (2006), p. 11, citing, Gilmore, R.W. (2002). “Fatal Couplings of Power and Difference.” *The Professional Geographer*, 54(1), p.16.

²⁷³ Gilmore, R.W. (2022). “Fatal Couplings of Power and Difference: Notes on Racism and Geography.” In *Abolition Geography: Essays Towards Liberation*, p. 153.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Heynen, N., & Ybarra, M. (2021), p. 22, citing, Brahinsky, R. et al. (2014), p. 1135.

²⁷⁶ Heynen, N., & Ybarra, M. (2021), p. 22, citing, Gilmore, R. W. (2017), p. 227-228.

²⁷⁷ DuBois, W.E.B. (1935), p. 55-83.

²⁷⁸ DuBois, W.E.B. (1935), p. 540.

Yet white America of the North and South needed to reconcile their embarrassment that they needed enslaved Africans to win it for them, thus mustering up Dunning School notions of reconstruction as a dreadful, traumatic period in history. Effectively demonstrated in the dissolution of the Freedmen's Bureau which universally provided land, food, housing, medical care, clothing, and education to free Black people after the Civil War.²⁷⁹

Black freedom thus contradicts any idea of American democracy, for DuBois. There can be no democracy without abolishing all foundational institutions of racial capitalism and settler colonialism. Abolition democracy, thus, precipitates the making of freedom. "As with the twentieth, the problem of the twenty-first century is freedom; and racialized lines continue powerfully, although non-exclusively, to define freedom's contours and limits."²⁸⁰ But what is meant by freedom, and how do we understand the relationship between freedom and blackness, given how racialization shapes freedom, as Gilmore notes?

Rinaldo Walcott refers to *The Long Emancipation* as the incessant, violent interdiction of desires and acts of Black freedom at every turn, noting that Black people exist outside linear assumptions of what it means to be human and have yet to experience freedom. Freedom exists beyond the logic of emancipation, articulating *glimpses of Black freedom* as eruptions that mark a global reorienting, a break from these modernist conceptualizations in favor of freedom as, "...an individual and a collective desire to be *in common* and *in difference* in a world that is nonhierarchical and nonviolent."²⁸¹ He argues that "...Black people do experience moments of freedom that are unscripted, imaginative, and beyond our current modes of intelligibility..." narrating their lives, "...*from within and against...*" white supremacy.²⁸²

²⁷⁹ DuBois, W.E.B. (1935), p. 55-83.

²⁸⁰ Gilmore, R.W. (2022). "Race and Globalization" In *Abolition Geography: Essays Toward Liberation*. New York, NY: Verso, p. 160.

²⁸¹ Walcott, R. (2021). "Moving Toward Black Freedom." *The Long Emancipation: Moving Toward Black Freedom*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press, p. 1-9.

²⁸² Ibid.

Jovan Lewis elucidates, “Black life, like Black freedom, is capacious,”²⁸³ reflective of Gilmore’s remarks on how abolition geography, the making of freedom as a place, is *capacious*, not, “....only by, for, or about Black people...”, and *specific*, as “...a guide to action for both understanding and rethinking how we combine our labor with each other and the earth.”²⁸⁴ Freedom as a place is quotidian, about what is done during the long emancipation, not single events or actions but what Antonio Gramsci calls, renovating and making critical already existing activity.²⁸⁵

Abolition geography is to what end people make freedom provisionally. Liberation, then, is the dynamic, active struggle for freedom.²⁸⁶ From Tonia and Ariann’s assistance of displaced veterans to Dr. Sumchai’s spatialization of toxicities to Greenaction’s mobilization of residents’ concerns and interests, abolition ecologies of Hunters Point imagine and create freedom as liberatory life-ways by articulating denaturalized ideas of race, space, and nature, expressed in their relationships with land, water, and air-based environments that do not necessarily rely upon state recognition, forming the basis of this paper’s concluding sections.

By underscoring the shaping role of white supremacy in land-labor relations, an abolition ecology of Hunters Point challenges political ecology’s focus on agrarian movements as distinct from urban orientations toward social justice.²⁸⁷ Scientists predict progressive sea level rises

²⁸³ Lewis, J.S. (2022). *Violent Utopia: Dispossession and Black Restoration in Tulsa*. Durham, NC, Duke University Press.

²⁸⁴ Gilmore, R.W. (2022). “Abolition Geography and the Problem of Innocence.” In *Abolition Geography: Essays Toward Liberation*. New York, NY: Verso, p. 581.

²⁸⁵ Gilmore, R.W. (2007), p. 126, citing, Gramsci, A., Hoare, Q., & Nowell-Smith, G. (1972). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. International Publishers, p. 330-331.

²⁸⁶ Gilmore, R.W. (2022), p. 20, citing, Davis, A.Y. (1971). *Lectures on Liberation*. New York, NY: *Committee to Free Angela Davis*, p. 4.

²⁸⁷ Heynen, N., & Ybarra, M. (2021), p. 27.

along the miles of shoreline of the San Francisco Bay Area, a nine-county region home to eight million people, across the coming decades.²⁸⁸

Maps of *Toxic Tides* also detail how rises disproportionately impact existing toxic industrial sites in multi-racial places throughout the Bay Area, such as the Shipyard.²⁸⁹ Not a matter of *if*, but *when* and *how much*, Ariann concludes, the sea level rise will wash radioactive waste throughout the San Francisco Bay and the Pacific Ocean, complicating any legalistic political urban-rural binary:

“It’s not a matter of *if*. It’s a matter of *when*. Me, being in Bayview-Hunters Point for a very long time and being what you call a “legacy child,” five generations strong, we also, I need to let you guys know that in Bayview-Hunters Point, specifically, that we get, that we receive like eighty-percent of San Franciscans’ sewage. And what’s more prevalent is the stormwater, about one hundred percent. It’s going to affect, the flooding will directly affect children, seniors, and people that already have presenting health issues, ok? We have the highest rate of respiratory disease and cancer across the nation, right there, concentrated in Bayview-Hunters Point.

...If you want to ask me why I think that one of the factors we have to say is that we have brownfield sites. Brownfield sites are industrial and abandoned contaminated sites that are filled with lead, silica, and all kinds of different chemicals that are known and prone to offer disease for people that worked in those places, so why would we not be adversely affected?

I want to also say that we have a state and a government superfund site there that is filled with contaminate and toxic chemical waste. And I think for us, as San Franciscans, we need to start addressing this issue not yesterday, but right now, today. They, I don't want to have another legacy of toxic chemical waste and with the urgency of sea level rise, do you know that those contaminants will go out into the Greater Bay Area?”²⁹⁰

Scholarly literature at the nexus of race and nature predates the emergence of abolition ecology as an analytical framework. Although the most recent 2021 *Antipode* symposium marked the first collaborative effort to conceptualize the term, ‘abolition ecology,’ considerable attention has previously been devoted to understanding the ways in

²⁸⁸ Morello-Frosch, R., & Cushing, L. (2021). *Fact Sheet – Toxic Tides: Sea Level Rise, Hazardous Sites, and Environmental Justice in California*. Los Angeles and Berkeley, CA: University of California, p. 1-2.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Harrison, A. (2022). “Bay Area Sea Level Rise | KQED Newsroom.” San Francisco, CA: *KQED News*, 2:00-3:37.

which racialization shapes and is shaped by relationships between humans and environments.²⁹¹

Given its recency, abolition ecology, however, has never been applied to a given case study — until this capstone. Abolition ecologies and the stories of people in Bayview-Hunters Point share the same nest, simply put because the stories of people in Bayview-Hunters Point *are* the epistemologies and practices known as abolition ecologies.

Abolition ecologies is informed by Indigenous understandings of the relationship between race and colonialism defined not by the *infliction of* but the stories of *resistance to* all forms of violence²⁹² that, in turn, expand scholastic incorporations of land, water, and animals into stories of property.²⁹³

Indigenous stories conceptualize *land as living*. Land has a soul, or better put, “...an animate being, a relative, a food provider, and a teacher of law and governance to whom we are accountable.”²⁹⁴

²⁹¹ Heynen, N., & Ybarra, M. (2021), p. 27, citing: Pulido, L., & De Lara, J. (2018). Reimagining “Justice” in Environmental Justice: Radical Ecologies, Decolonial Thought, and the Black Radical Tradition. *Environment and Planning E: Nature and Space*, 1(1/2) p. 76–98; Derickson, K.D. (2018); McCreary, T., & Milligan, R. (2018) The Limits of Liberal Recognition: Racial Capitalism, Settler Colonialism, and Environmental Governance in Vancouver and Atlanta. *Antipode*, 53(3), p. 724-744; Simpson, M., & Bagelman, J. (2018). Decolonizing Urban Political Ecologies: The Production Of Nature In Settler Colonial Cities. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 108(2), p. 558–568; Conroy, W. (2019). The Biopolitical Commons: A Revised Theory Of Urban Land In The Age Of Biopolitical Production. *Planning Theory*, 18(4), p. 470–491; Davies, A. (2019) Unwrapping The Oxo Cube: Josue De Castro And The Intellectual History Of Metabolism. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 109(3), p. 837–856; Goodling, E. (2019). Urban Political Ecology From Below: Producing A “Peoples’ History” Of The Portland Harbor. *Antipode*, 53(3), p. 745-769; Loftus, A. (2019). Political Ecology III: Who are “the People”?. *Progress in Human Geography*, 44(5), p. 981-990; Roy, A. (2019) The City in the Age of Trumpism: From Sanctuary to Abolition. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 37(5), p. 761–778; Wright, W. J. (2019) The Morphology of Marronage. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*, 110(4), p. 1134–1149; & Ramirez, M.M. (2020). City as Borderland: Gentrification and the Policing of Black and Latinx Geographies in Oakland. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 38(1), p. 147–166.

²⁹² Heynen, N., & Ybarra, M. (2021), p. 23, citing, Million, D. (2013). *Therapeutic Nations: Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights*. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, and TallBear, K. (2014) Standing with and speaking as faith: A Feminist-Indigenous Approach to Inquiry. *Journal of Research Practice*, 10(2).

²⁹³ Heynen, N., & Ybarra, M. (2021), p. 23, citing, Coulthard, G., & Simpson, L.B. (2016). Grounded Normativity/Place-Based solidarity. *American Quarterly*, 68(2), p. 249–255, Daigle, M. (2016) Awawaneitakik: The Spatial Politics of Recognition and Relational Geographies of Indigenous Self-Determination. *The Canadian Geographer/Le Geographe Canadien*, 60(2), p. 259–269, and Simpson, L.B. (2017). *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*. Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press.

²⁹⁴ Heynen, N., & Ybarra, M., (2021), p. 23, citing, Daigle, M. (2016), p. 266.

Racialization of radioactive waste spread across the Bay also shows land as a process, inseparable from water and air. Indigenous solidarities with Black struggle are found throughout folklore, showing enslaved Africans outsmarting their white masters, known as High John tales.²⁹⁵ *Blake; or the Huts of America* by Martin Delany²⁹⁶ is about an enslaved man, Henry Blake, who makes freedom in Choctaw homelands and where a Choctaw Chief convinces him to return to the plantation in the planning of a mass uprising among enslaved people.²⁹⁷

Ralph Ellison's *Going to the Territory* elucidates spatialities of freedom found in High John tales, describing freedom as a place among the Five Great Indian Nations.²⁹⁸ In a marrying of the Blues Epistemology of Clyde Woods²⁹⁹ with fellow Indigenous people of the southeastern U.S., Jodi Byrd underscores insightful lessons insofar as what they, "...might teach us in order to transform the participatory democracy that Woods evokes into a radical reimagining of how people exist relationally within the place-worlds located in the stories we tell and the songs we sing."³⁰⁰

A spokesperson for the Confederated Villages of Lisjan/Ohlone, Corrina Gould echoes a similar internationalist framework that views *all* liberation struggles as intricately connected to the liberation of Indigenous people because what unites them is that all struggles occur on stolen yet unceded Indigenous territories.³⁰¹ Corrina describes this

²⁹⁵ Heynen, N., & Ybarra, M. (2021), p. 29.

²⁹⁶ Heynen, N., & Ybarra, M. (2021), p. 29, citing, Delany, M. R., & (ed) Miller, F.J. (1970). *Blake; or, the huts of America*. Boston, MA: Beacon Publishing, p. 1859–1862.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Heynen, N., & Ybarra, M. (2021), p. 29, citing, Ellison, R. (1995). *Going to the Territory*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

²⁹⁹ Heynen, N., & Ybarra, M., (2021), p. 29, citing, Woods, C. (2017). *Development Arrested: The Blues and Plantation Power in the Mississippi Delta*. New York, NY: Verso Books.

³⁰⁰ Heynen, N., & Ybarra, M. (2021), p. 29, citing, Byrd, J.A. (2011). *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*. Minneapolis, MN: The University of Minnesota Press, p. 122.

³⁰¹ Anti-Eviction Mapping Project [AEMP]. (2021). *Counterpoints: A San Francisco Bay Area Atlas of Displacement & Resistance*. Oakland, CA: PM Press, p. 71-75.

feeling in a lecture she gave at *Colonization and Resistance*, organized by the Catalyst

Project in Oakland, California:

“...So for me everything that happens on this territory, whether we’re fighting for the Indigenous rights of Palestinians or my brothers and sisters in Puerto Rico or for Black Lives Matter or for the LGBTQ folks that are here with us, whatever the issue is, we are related, because you are on our territory.

We share this land now, and it’s important for us to remember the sacredness of what we do and our work. When we look back at all of the great leaders, we know that there was a spiritual connection that they had, that they come from this way.”³⁰²

Abolition ecologies, by making a critical intervention in political ecology’s shortcomings in addressing white supremacy’s shaping role in relationships with environments, provides scholarship the tools to connect urban and rural environments viewed as distinct but are intricately linked and co-constitutive. Abolition did not end chattel slavery.

A cease in the transfer of Shipyard land from the Navy to the City and to Lennar will not eradicate exposure to premature death in Hunters Point beyond gentrification and toxic contaminants. Abolition ecology “...invites us to think about how to build freedom across relations of land and people.”³⁰³

The Abolition Ecologies of Bayview Hunters Point

Land:

Race has long been inseparable from the politics of land. Yet as previously mentioned, Heynen and Ybarra’s case for an abolition ecologies framework focuses largely on getting political ecologists to directly engage how racialization, and white supremacy, in particular, shapes land relations while also noting the previous body of literature on the subject. Seldom attention has been devoted by scholars to how processes of racialization shape understanding and

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Heynen, N., & Ybarra, M. (2021), p. 30.

material realities of how land, air, and water are known and experienced, as Heynen and Ybarra also note, and even less so with regard to these environments in conjunction.

In this section, I connect how racialization influences the intersection of land, air, and water-based environments in order to emphasize their inseparability not only to humans but also in their interconnectedness as environmental processes. Recounting an environmental justice task force meeting, I first describe how residents respond to the radioactivity of the Shipyard and its health effects by mapping the geographies of waste and their consequences.

In highlighting the critical work of Dr. Sumchai, I show how residents take it upon themselves to identify environmental hazards and treat a myriad of illnesses in response to organized abandonment by officials and politicians at all levels of governance. The preceding sections incorporate discussions of water and air in order to detail the inextricable relationship of land, air, and water to racialization and to each other as intertwined environmental processes.

“Cancer Clusters”

At a Greenaction task force meeting conducted via Zoom in September 2022, Dr. Porter Sumchai shows aerial video footage of the Shipyard, remarking on the ubiquity of drone surveillance and employing it so she does not have to risk her health and safety.³⁰⁴ The clip begins at the western fence line on Revere and Fitch, creating a very high propensity for exposure to radioactivity, she says, given its proximity to major transit centers and commercial and residential spaces only blocks away. Dr. Sumchai continued, saying she's proud people are doing things, not for her but because they also live near the Navy's deposits of radioactive waste and metal slag put churches and playgrounds at risk.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁴ Porter Sumchai, A. (2022). Comments at Greenaction Task Force Meeting. San Francisco, CA. Observation by Author.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

The drone moves to a tall, white industrial building with only a few windows at the center of Hunters Point Naval Shipyard. Eerie does not begin to describe this building, with its brutalist architecture, reflective of a Cold War era that continues to haunt Hunters Point. It is the former headquarters of the Naval Radiological Defense Laboratory, the Navy's largest site for applied nuclear research. Under *Operation Crossroads*, irradiated vessels at Bikini Atoll traveled across the Pacific to San Francisco Bay and docked at Hunters Point for testing, decontamination, and decommission.

Dr. Sumchai tells us this happened at drydocks six and seven and refers to the 800 and 500 buildings on the site, a place where the Atomic Energy Commission, led by scientists from the University of California, Berkeley, poured effluents into drains that lead into the San Francisco Bay and performed a variety of tests on animals. The drone's camera lens turns out to look over the largest crane in the world.³⁰⁶

At almost five-hundred tons, designed to change turrets and launch missiles from its frame, the gantry crane lives as a memory in the mind of Kamillah Ealom as she recalled hopping the fence and playing on it as a child with her friends. Kamillah said that she did not know or think about how the toxic radioactive legacies of the Shipyard would impact her life as an asthmatic and activist, given the Navy's plan to cap, not clean the radioactive soil. She continued by describing her adventures climbing on top of the gantry crane as a child, leading to a chuckle from Dr. Sumchai.³⁰⁷

We come across Parcel E, as Dr. Sumchai tells us, the most contaminated section of land at the Shipyard, moving to Parcel G and the push to get it cleaned for residential development. She shares with us her map of "cancer clusters," an anatomy and topography of the politics of

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ealom, K. (2022). Greenaction Environmental Task Force Meeting, Observation by Author; Porter Sumchai, A. (2022). Greenaction Environmental Task Force Meeting, Observation by Author.

radioactive waste. Dr. Sumchai has remediation documents from maps created by Tetra Tech from her election to the RAB in 2000, with green areas signifying radioactive impacted areas.³⁰⁸ She, therefore, created a cluster of radiological biomarkers using urine screenings of residents, revealing unprecedented levels of compounds such as uranium, in order to grasp the geographies of radioactive waste at Hunters Point Naval Shipyard and their impacts on her neighbors.³⁰⁹

While underscoring a toxic legacy of radioactivity secured by the military-industrial complex, weekly task force meetings discussing Hunters Point Naval Shipyard also reveal the ways in which longtime residents — predominantly but not exclusively women and, in particular, poor and working-class Black women — how and to what end make freedom provisionally, given Walcott's notion of the “long emancipation.”

From redevelopment to remediation of the Shipyard, the women of Bayview-Hunters Point have decades-long legacies of asserting their right to urban space, including in their agency to transform it, and the role of story-telling is indispensable not only to how space is remade but also how it is remembered. Studying the ways that (un)freedom stretch spatially and temporally through what Walcott calls quotidian “eruptions” of freedom contained in the retelling of stories, in other words, makes known the particularities and contingencies of abolition ecologies, based on how residents remember and reshare their experiences.

Dr. Sumchai's cartographies of cancer tell the story of the place where she grew up. Raised by her parents and two brothers near Hunters Point in Vistacion Valley and Portero Hill, Dr. Sumchai knew about the Shipyard as a child. A proud union member, her dad worked there as a longshoreman and shipping clerk, which gave her personal knowledge of its dangers.

³⁰⁸ Porter Sumchai, A. (2022). Comments at Greenaction Task Force Meeting. San Francisco, CA. Observation by Author.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

Sumchai's father died from pulmonary disease as a result of his exposure at the Shipyard. She recalls, "That was a big moment for me...It jettisoned me into adulthood."³¹⁰

A gymnast, she thought about a career in physical therapy, but Carlton Benjamin Goodlett, Ph.D., MD, a prominent Black leader in San Francisco, convinced her to attend medical school and become a doctor. She graduated from the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), becoming the first Black woman flight physician for a hospital-based aeromedical transport, but developed trauma from the conditions of the work:

"No one else was doing what was I doing...I could be on call for 36 to 72 hours for those helicopter runs. I finished that period with some occupational post-traumatic stress."³¹¹ Dr. Sumchai later worked for two decades as an emergency physician and specialist for the Department of Public Health, in addition to physician for the San Francisco Giants professional baseball team. The work also burned her out, but she wanted to take care of her health in a way that would educate and treat her neighbors, too.

Dr. Ahimsa Porter Sumchai, 2021 UCSF Medical Alumna of the Year, founded the Hunters Point Biomonitoring Foundation in 2010 and remains the program's Principal Investigator and Medical Director. Located in a medical clinic located on 3rd and Revere with the slogan "Protect...Detect...Prevent" listed across a small canvas banner, the biomonitoring program describes itself as the first of its kind to detect toxic exposure in up to thirty-five cancer-causing toxicants from urine samples of residents and Shipyard workers, in accordance with those State of California's Proposition 65 and EPA documentation of radioactive waste.

³¹⁰ UCSF Alumni. (2021). "Ahimsa Porter Sumchai, MD '81, Resident Alum: Community healer." *University of California, San Francisco*. Accessed Online: <https://alumni.ucsf.edu/stories/ahimsa-porter-sumchai>, October, 22, 2022.

³¹¹ Ibid.

This includes, "...in soils, landfills, groundwater, buildings and air monitoring at the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard..."³¹² The Biomonitoring program is screening every person who lives and works within a mile radius of the Shipyard, finding unprecedented levels of toxins across all ages, races, and genders, in addition to educating people and connecting them with specialized care.³¹³

Dr. Sumchai illustrates how everyday struggles produce improvisation, but not in single events and acts of heroism. Her connection of geography and medical science results in maps that give Hunters Point residents spatial knowledge of toxicities in order to identify and treat particularized illnesses and diseases of her neighbors: "Human biomonitoring is going to be incorporated into advanced screenings along with geospatial mapping, so we can bring both aggregate analysis and specificity of toxic markers to these sites," she says.

Her activism about the Shipyard precedes her work at the biomonitoring program, though. In 2000, she led the political organizing and fundraising campaign for a ballot initiative, Proposition P, detailing the Navy's obligation to meet the standard of complete remediation before any parcel of land is transferred to the Office of Community Infrastructure and Investment (OCII), and from OCII to Lennar.

Proposition P operates as an advisory and is not mandatory. Nevertheless, a 2004 Conveyance Agreement between the Navy and the S.F. Redevelopment Agency (now OCII), and the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, CERCLA (also known as "Superfund"), both legally obligate the Navy to comply with standards and protocols for complete remediation before land transfers.

³¹² Hunters Point Biomonitoring Foundation. (n.d.). Accessed Online: <https://hunters-point-community-biomonitoring-program.business.site/>, October 21, 2022.

³¹³ Ibid.

Tetra Tech contractors violated the terms of these agreements. Dr. Sumchai wants Proposition P to become a city ordinance to hold the Navy and regulators accountable but remains skeptical that the Shipyard will ever be *fully* rid of toxic chemicals and radioactive wastes. Residents like Dr. Sumchai believe the Shipyard will never be safe for redevelopment, approaching that knowledge as a catalyst for resistance to processes of gentrification.³¹⁴ When she rose for public comment, Dr. Sumchai let us know that she is the reason each person sat in their seats because she filed a claim that led to the grand jury investigation.³¹⁵

Water:

The Lakota have a phrase, Mní wičhóni, or translated to English, “Water is life.” Water is life, but as Indigenous understandings also remind us, water, too, is sacred. Given the texture its detail provides to the understanding of environments, the study of human relationships to water in its many forms has gained renewed scholarly interest yet with minimal attention to how racialization shapes these processes.³¹⁶ The following section highlights concerns over the consequences of rising waters in the San Francisco Bay as they threaten to mobilize the radioactive soil at Hunters Point Naval Shipyard – a key finding from a civil grand jury report titled, “*Buried Problems, Buried Process.*”

I begin by documenting the moments leading up to the hearing on the report, highlighting the strained relationship between local communities and national environmental justice organizations that led to the founding of Greenaction. Then, I move into how and when the threat of rising sea levels to the Bayview became evident. Finally, reflecting on the report's findings

³¹⁴ Porter Sumchai, A. (2022). Greenaction Environmental Task Force Meeting, Observation by Author. San Francisco, CA.

³¹⁵ Porter Sumchai, A. (2022). “Public Comment at GAO Committee Hearing.” Observation by Author. San Francisco, CA: San Francisco City Hall.

³¹⁶ Rothenberg, D., & Ulvaeus, M. (2002). *Writing on Water*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, and Manderson, L., & Gander, F. (2023). *Water's Edge: Writing on Water*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

and recommendations that precipitated “The Walton Pledge,” I stress the inextricable relationship between environmental processes of land, sea, and air.

“Buried Problems, Buried Process”

The Board of Supervisors Legislative Chamber is a wood-paneled room with chandeliers, gaudy yellow-green carpet, and about a dozen rows of pews in front of a U-shaped table. With its gold-trimmed dome and grand staircase, The People's Palace reflects City Beautiful's affinity for ostentatious architecture and design, even on days without film crews or wedding processions.

Two women sitting in the pew in front of me, Vivian Ellis and Shirletha Holmes-Boxx, needed help taking pictures, so I offered a hand and introduced myself afterward. A young woman interrupted, telling us she was with a non-profit involved in climate change education and advocacy, the Climate Action Network. I could see Vivian's eyebrows scrunching together, clearly displeased.

As a Bayview resident and activist for decades, she said these hearings are nothing new to her. Vivian asked the young woman, “Do you know who Espanola Jackson is?” She replied, “No,” as I nodded.³¹⁷ Dr. Espanola Jackson, often referred to as “Mama E”, was a devout Christian woman and change-maker for the people in her neighborhood. Heralded as “the Mayor of Bayview-Hunters Point”, an article in *The Bay View Newspaper* describes Espanola as “...gospel and gangsta...”³¹⁸

I never knew Espanola, so my knowledge is formed out of stories from people who knew her, particularly from Bradley Angel, and Bayview resident, Vivian Ellis. Bradley mentioned Espanola in reference to Earth Day during our hour-long conversation via

³¹⁷ Ellis, V. (2022). Interview/Conversation by Author. San Francisco, CA: San Francisco City Hall.

³¹⁸ Moore, L.B. (2016). “In Celebration Of The Charismatic Life of Sister Espanola Jackson, A Born Leader and Chosen Woman.” San Francisco, CA: *San Francisco Bay View National Black Newspaper*.

Zoom. Espanola's political notoriety stems, in part, from her list of causes for the people of Bayview Hunters Point, like lobbying for the presence of the WIC office and affordable housing, alongside the Big Five of Bayview to secure federal funds for Hunters Point Hill.³¹⁹

It was also the leadership of well-respected, influential women in the Bayview such as Espanola who first asked for Bradley's help, and one of the first things they did together, he tells me, was to create a People's Earth Day at the twentieth-anniversary celebration in San Francisco — an event in front of the Bayview Opera House on 3rd Street featuring speakers, music, vendors, and information. He also told me this was in response to a city-organized event at Chrissy Field sponsored by polluters.³²⁰

An obvious explanation is that the interaction between Vivian and the woman from the Climate Action Network illustrated the rift between residents and nonprofit organizations, particularly the latter's ignorance and misunderstanding of the history of struggles and the people that participated in and led them even as such organizations attempt to show their support.

I am reminded of this, also in my interview with Bradley, as he tells me how Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice came into existence as a departure from environmental groups such as Greenpeace whose leadership in California, as Bradley described, was actively marginalizing the voices and concerns of Indigenous populations in the 1990s, not only by centering its predominantly-white base of activists but also through sidelining Indigenous land concerns in national leadership meetings.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Angel, B. (2022). Interview by Author.

In response, Indigenous populations throughout Southern California and the Bay Area, in addition to farmworkers in rural areas of the state, joined forces in the establishment of a new organization that the *communities* themselves, not outside groups, would lead. Bradley mentions this alienation by environmental justice organizations of the communities they claim to fight for as the catalyst that led to the founding of Greenaction in 1997.

The organization later became involved in Bayview-Hunters Point environmental justice concerns during protests against AES and PG&E company power plants by groups such as Southeastern Alliance for Environmental Justice (SAEJ). Marie Harrison worked with SAEJ and joined Greenaction at Bradley's invitation.³²¹ Greenaction's first grant, he says, came from the San Francisco Department of Environment, which devoted resources to the fight against the PG&E power plant.

But perhaps less apparent, what this conversation before the grand jury hearing began also reminded me of are the small victories over and across generations that residents claim amid endless accounts of death and damage, and in particular how these stories become remembered, forgotten, and unknown. When I asked him about what successes Greenaction has had in terms of shaping the outcome of the SF Shipyard redevelopment project, Bradley replied:

“Well, I think we have been incredibly successful. Next week will be the sixth anniversary of when public pressure forced the EPA and state Department of Toxics to tell the Navy they were putting a hold due to the serious allegations of fraud, we need to investigate and all land transfers are on hold. So, I am proud that by working with others to bring the truth to the forefront and pressuring the government, who had looked the other way, to actually do something.

Their five or six-year investigation has been inadequate, but it has resulted in, at least, *more* cleanup, but not anything resembling *adequate* cleanup, and there is no trust because nobody trusts the government. And I will just say, this is part of the

³²¹ Ibid.

work that Greenaction does, and that we are proud of — we do the hell-raising, but we do our homework on the technical end, as well, including community knowledge that whistleblowers have, that longtime residents have, who *saw* stuff that went on there... The EPA had to put a halt on all transfers of land.

So, that has been a success — that backing up the whistleblowers and the community, forcing the government to put a halt on the biggest redevelopment project in San Francisco history, and working with others to highlight extreme and dangerous contamination that was there and continues to be there. And a big victory is also, the latest in terms of the Shipyard, is that about that six or seven years ago, we realized that due to climate change, the sea levels in the [San Francisco] Bay keeps rising, as we started raising concerns that government's plans to leave significant amounts of toxic wastes buried in the shoreline was a disaster and a ticking time bomb.

And, as I am sure you are familiar with, the San Francisco civil grand jury report. They talked to a lot of people, they talked to me, and I told them 'Look into this issue. Nobody else is looking into it and everybody's ignoring the sea levels rising'... The civil grand jury report has been a big victory because it has validated Greenaction's work but more importantly, has brought to the forefront this ticking timebomb in an already-vulnerable Bayview-Hunters Point."³²²

A week after my interview with Bradley, with echoes of applause from weddings outside, the GAO Committee Hearings on the civil grand jury report commenced on a clear blue-sky morning. A summary of a years-long investigation into the impacts of rising sea levels on Hunters Point Shipyard, the report detailed how shallow groundwater near the shoreline rises with the sea levels, and thus causes floods, damages infrastructure, and mobilizes radioactive materials in the soil around the Shipyard.³²³ Supervisors chairing the Government Audit & Oversight Committee, Connie Chan, Dean Preston, Raphael Mandelman, and Shammann Walton, presided over the hearing as more than a dozen Bayview residents and activists alike were in attendance.

Today, the Supervisors discussed findings from the report, *Buried Problems and a Buried Process: The Hunters Point Naval Shipyard in a Time of Climate Change*. The Navy did not attend any hearings, instead providing a two-page letter detailing unenforced

³²² Angel, B. (2022). Interviewed and Quoted by Author. San Francisco, CA.

³²³ Civil Grand Jury Report, (2022), p. 19-20.

protocols, which drew jeers from Bayview residents. Grand jurors who authored the report testified to the Supervisors about its main findings, which revealed that the San Francisco Department of Environment, the agency tasked with monitoring San Francisco's shorelines has no plan for rising sea levels on the shoreline of Hunters Point aside from the construction of a wall.³²⁴

According to experts cited in the report, water will rise below and above the wall, seeping into and spreading out radioactive soil that the Navy refuses to clean, only cap. Rising water will further mobilize radioactive soil and cause more residents to die. The first recommendation of the report stipulated that Mayor Breed ought to direct the Office of Resilience & Capital Planning to work with the Department of Public Health to commission and manage an independent study of "...future shallow groundwater surface flows, and...potential interactions of groundwater with hazardous materials and planned modifications to the site under multiple sea level rise scenarios."³²⁵

Next, the Supervisors ought to create a Cleanup Oversight Committee with the Public Utilities Commission and Department of Public Works, in order to "...perform due diligence on behalf of the City and County of San Francisco into the Federal Facility Agreement signatories' decision-making and to prepare an agenda of questions and requests to be communicated to the signatories by the Department of Public Health (DPH) in advance of major cleanup document releases."³²⁶

³²⁴ City and County of San Francisco Civil Grand Jury Report. (2022). *Buried Problems and a Buried Process: The Hunters Point Naval Shipyard in a Time of Climate Change*. City and County of San Francisco, p. 1-51. Accessed Online at: https://civilgrandjury.sfgov.org/2021_2022/2022%20CGJ%20Report_Buried%20Problems%20and%20a%20Buried%20Process%20-%20The%20Hunters%20Point%20Naval%20Shipyard%20in%20a%20Time%20of%20Climate%20Change.pdf.

³²⁵ City and County of San Francisco Civil Grand Jury Report, (2022), p. 37-38.

³²⁶ Ibid.

These first two, 1) an independent study of groundwater interactions with sea level rise and 2) a potential subpoena of the Navy by the City and County of San Francisco to expedite the release of concealed remediation documents based on its aforementioned agreement with the City and County, form the bulk of the grand jury's proposals, in addition, that the Cleanup Oversight Committee prepare a report on its requests to the Navy based on its findings and deliver it to the Board, the Mayor, and DPH.³²⁷

Attorneys from the Office of Mayor Breed spoke on her behalf. Ariann and Tonia tell me this is reflective of her urgency to score photo opportunities rather than attend any of the hearings.³²⁸ Attorneys rejected all seven recommendations. This has never happened, according to residents, as they express their disgust and outrage.

“The Walton Pledge”

As the Supervisors asked questions to officials from various city agencies, Supervisor Walton issued a stunning proclamation that generated an erupted applause: He declared his intention of no OCII transfer of land to the Navy until the Shipyard's radioactive waste is fully removed:

“ I also want to make it clear that the number one goal for the Shipyard has to be and should be 100%, complete cleanup.

We do have a say in determining whether any land is transferred to the City and County of San Francisco. Without a 100% cleanup, that land transfer does not take place.”³²⁹

I spoke with Bradley immediately after the first hearing, and he expressed his astonishment at Supervisor Walton's commitment to a full cleanup prior to transfer, already hearing echoes of delight reverberating throughout the City Hall rotunda. In many ways,

³²⁷ Ibid.

³²⁸ Randell, T. (2022), and Harrison, A. (2022). Interviews by Author. San Francisco, CA: San Francisco City Hall.

³²⁹ Walton, S. (2022). Quoted by Author at SF Board of Supervisors Government Audit and Oversight Committee Meeting. San Francisco City Hall, Room 250, San Francisco, CA. September 15, 2022.

this is what residents waited to hear from their representative for decades, though many residents like Dr. Sumchai also want the codification of Proposition P, a 2000 ballot initiative outlining and obligating the Navy's responsibility for remediation before parcel transfer, as an ordinance.

Previous Supervisor Sophie Maxwell, a mother who lost her child to Hodgkins Lymphoma, "...got involved in politics because of the power plant.." and "...ran for office because of the Shipyard.." to "...make the Lennar project work."³³⁰ She joined Lennar and pro-Lennar city officials to formally approve the redevelopment plan through ballot initiatives, Propositions F and G, cementing Lennar's role, which Maxwell argued would boost Hunters Point out of decades of drugs and gang violence with its package of "community benefits."³³¹

Lennar spent \$5 million on Props F and G,³³² leveraging its status as one of the wealthiest real estate corporations in the country to win over critics through multiple charitable donations.³³³ The real estate corporation gave \$15 million to community groups and \$28 million to the city's affordable housing coffers while promising of over 10,000 jobs from the Shipyard project.³³⁴

Lennar's marketing of the Bayview redevelopment plan's "community benefits" center around the construction of 10,500 luxury housing units at the Shipyard and Candlestick Point, a third designated as affordable, and the rebuilding of the Alice Griffith public housing project on Hunters Point Hill.³³⁵ This part outlined "Phase 2" will also

³³⁰ Brahinsky, R. (2012), p. 133.

³³¹ Brahinsky, R. (2012), p. 137, citing, *San Francisco Ballot Handbook*. (2008). San Francisco, CA: City and County of San Francisco Department of Elections.

³³² Brahinsky, R. (2012), p. 137.

³³³ Brahinsky, R. (2012), p. 6.

³³⁴ Brahinsky, R. (2012), p. 142.

³³⁵ OCII (n.d.).

include 3 million square feet of research and development for “green” technology as the new headquarters for the United Nations Global Compact Sustainability Center, and more than 300 acres of parks, including the aforementioned Hillpoint Park, and a renovation of the Candlestick Recreation Area.³³⁶

This phase, however, is still under construction, as opposed to Phase 1, which includes the completed 1,600 townhouses and condominiums, 27% to 40% affordable, named “the SF Shipyard” by Lennar as an effective scrub of the Shipyard’s imperial, toxic radioactive legacies undergirded by Black industrial labor power.³³⁷

I toured three of these model units, Monarch, Landing, and Palisades, with a Lennar representative on a warm, sunny day typical to Hunters Point but not the remainder of San Francisco. We met at the Welcome Center on 10 Innes Court inside the recently completed Landing condominiums, described on Lennar’s website as “...homes ideal for young professionals, couples and families...,”³³⁸ next to a children’s playground across the street.

Supervisor Walton did not codify any additional regulations for the Shipyard, nor did he issue his own plan for the Shipyard remediation, but his words expressed a sense of care and commitment as if they were legally binding. Echoes of “the Walton Pledge” filled the marble hallways on the second floor of city hall at the conclusion of the hearing.

Walton seemed to reinvigorate a sense of hope among residents that their elected representative will apply his empathy into action, but clearly, they are not waiting until the next hearing, scheduled a year from now.

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Brahinsky, R. (2020a).

³³⁸ Lennar Corp. (n.d.). “Landing, Welcome Home Center at 10 Innes Court, San Francisco, CA”. Accessed Online: 94124https://www.lennar.com/new-homes/california/san-francisco-bay-area/san-francisco/the-san-francisco-shipyard/landing, Oct. 1, 2022.

News of the Walton pledge was then conveyed to residents and activists at a local Greenaction task force meeting. Dr. Daniel Hirsch, a former professor and director of the Program on Environmental and Nuclear Policy at the University of California, Santa Cruz, emphasized the urgency of the Walton pledge during a presentation he gave after the civil grand jury hearing:

“Supervisor Walton’s recent pledge insisting on a 100% complete cleanup and no transfer of land until that is done is essential to public health and must be carried out.

The Navy, its regulators, and the agencies of the City and County of San Francisco have acted in violation of Proposition P and are attempting to leave most of the HPNS contamination not cleaned up, just covered up. It is critical that Prop P and the Walton pledge be promptly and fully executed.”³³⁹

The eruption of excitement, though, regarding Walton’s statement highlights the degree to which residents feel abandoned and alienated, expressed in decades of political platitudes from the Navy, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Environment Department, the Department of Public Health, the Air Quality District, the Office of Community Investment and Infrastructure, the Board of Supervisors, and the Mayor of San Francisco. The desire for officials and agencies to perform the responsibilities of their job descriptions thus also occurs in the same time-space that residents remain so distrustful that they feel as if they must imagine and create the world they want to live in.

³³⁹ Hirsch, D. (2022). Quoted by Author. Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice Task Force Meeting. San Francisco, CA.

Air:

Commensurate to reinvigorated scholarly concern in human relationships to water is the attention given to the politics of air, closely related to the politics of breath and breathing. With particular attention to the politics of airborne redevelopment dust in the Bayview, Dillon explains how "...urban breathing space is a political site from which activists seek to challenge and reconfigure urban geographies of racism..."³⁴⁰

Documenting and analyzing my attendance of a political rally at 3rd and Evans, this section about air illustrates the ways in which residents, in renovate and make critical already-existing activity, including as a response to the health effects of air pollution through the creation of a local air monitoring project and the continued threats to the right to breathe clean, healthy air, such as ventilation. My concluding thoughts for this section analyze the implications of what residents' relationships to land, air, and water reveal to us about deconstructions of race, space, and nature.

"Can We Live?"

Waving safety-yellow signs and drawing horns from passing cars, more than fifty people cheered on the sidewalk of 3rd and Evans. Leotis Martin galvanized and addressed the crowd on a sunny, blue-sky Saturday in February 2022. On this day, Greenaction organized one of its largest rallies to date, demanding a comprehensive Shipyard cleanup as imperative not only for the health and justice of Bayview residents but as they state in their speeches, for *all* people and places of the San Francisco Bay Area.

Leotis moved to San Francisco from Chicago at eight years old, residing in Hunters Point ever since. His brother died from an enlarged heart when they were children. He often recalls this story when he addresses audiences at rallies, public hearings, and

³⁴⁰ Dillon, L. (2018). "The Breathers of Bayview Hill: Redevelopment and Environmental Justice in Southeast San Francisco." *Hastings Environmental Law Journal*, 24(2), p. 227-236.

Greenaction meetings. Leotis's humor during each of these occasions is also a recurrent theme in his remarks, saying "That's right!" whenever a person makes an agreeable point. I talked with Leotis and another gentleman outside the hearing doors.³⁴¹

Reflective of how material changes in the arrangement of urban space influence human behavior, demonstrators rose onto and spoke from the T Third Street platform. Kids in masks held handcrafted signs that said "CLEAN THE SHIPYARD" and a long yellow banner glistening in the sun, reading, "Bayview Hunters Point Demands Health and Justice." Next, a woman from the *Bay View National Black Newspaper* spoke about how exposure to the radioactive Shipyard is genocide.

Aside from Leotis, all of the speakers that addressed the crowd are Black women and their stories about their relationships with the Shipyard varied in both the harms and hopes they expressed but coalesced around frustration with inconsistency and inaction from fellow residents, predominantly but not exclusively white people of all ages, genders, classes and education levels, precipitating passion in their emphasis on the urgency of the moment beyond spatial temporalities.

Subjectivities, thus, mobilized political action based on how each woman embodied difference, knowing and organizing around the guilt felt by their non-Black neighbors instead of rejecting them altogether, recognizing the powers of what Arieann called a 'Rainbow coalition' of audience support at the rally.³⁴²

That day she wore a purple shirt with "Can We Live?," the website of her foundation, etched on the front in white letters. Race-class and gender as the

³⁴¹ Martin, L. (2022). "Comment at Greenaction Rally at Third and Evans." San Francisco, CA: Observation by Author; Martin, L. (2022). Observation/Interview by Author, San Francisco, CA: San Francisco City Hall; Martin, L. (2022). "Public Comment at GAO Committee Hearing." San Francisco, CA: San Francisco City Hall. Observation by Author.

³⁴² Harrison, A. (2022). "Comment at Greenaction Rally at 3rd and Evans." San Francisco, CA: Observation by Author.

co-constitutive modalities in which class is lived and fought through, in other words, the work of organizing race-class and gender coalitions to exploit crises for liberatory ends.

Holding a megaphone to her mouth with one hand while making a fist in the air in the other, Arieann marched the Rainbow coalition down Third Street toward the commercial center of the Bayview. Before the march, she spoke about the necessity of reparations and abolition for Bayview families,³⁴³ forming the basis for their highly specialized healthcare needs. A discussion of how abolition and reparations are operationalized forms the basis for the concluding section of this capstone thesis paper.

On that day Kamillah Ealom described the scandal as a catalyst for renewed direct action. And she was not simply talking about direct action, but the imagination of freedom as the basis for political consciousness.³⁴⁴ Abolition ecologies transcends the complete absence of hazardous waste in favor of the *presence* of additional liberated lifeways expressed, according to Kamillah, in affordable and quality education, housing, and employment opportunities. In other words, abolition is interpreted beyond the *absence* of carceral forms of control and subjugation toward the *presence* of a right to the city that includes but is not limited to clean air as a reparation:

“The Tetra Tech scandal was a tipping point... We know stuff was there. It was a cover-up... We want a deep survey, with excavation and removal of any radioactive residue. And this time, because of the Tetra Tech scandal, we're demanding community oversight of the process to insure we have a full clean-up of all the contamination...

It ties in as a form of reparations because we are dying out here. We're begging for clean air as a reparation at this point. As well as quality living, housing, education and employment. The basic needs that people right on the other side of the City don't have to worry about.”³⁴⁵

Presence of clean land, air, and water environments that form Hunters Point does not end with Kamillah. Another woman spoke about how trash is allowed to accumulate on the streets by

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Ealom, K. (2022). “Public Comment at Greenaction Rally,” Observation by Author. San Francisco, CA.

³⁴⁵ Molanphy, T., (2022).

city sanitation services while long overdue sewer infrastructure maintenance can make shit rise from the grates. Rather than the city, she is the one out early in the morning who sweeps and makes repairs.³⁴⁶

From the pain and trauma of being made subaltern³⁴⁷ sprang songs of hope. The words *abolition* and *reparations* rang out among women after one person merely suggested them. But they were already *making* abolition not exclusively for themselves, but for clean and healthy environments that can be shared with their families and friends for generations thereafter. Abolition ecologies.

Arieann also joined a lawsuit with more than nine-thousand residents calling upon a judge to halt construction unless Lennar can prove it is monitoring and controlling the proliferation of toxic materials. According to residents and results from the Marie Harrison Bayview Hunters Point Air Monitoring Project, no regulatory agency is sufficiently ameliorating them. Following the death of Marie, Greenaction installed ten Dylos air quality monitors throughout the Bayview, including the Bayview Opera House and the intersection of Revere and Jennings, allowing people to immediately track the collection of data online.³⁴⁸

Information, of course, is contingent upon Internet access and knowledge of website navigation. What's more, at the Third and Evans rally, a gentleman mentioned how the infrastructure of the built environment, regardless of the air quality, restricts airflow due to poor ventilation in many of the affordable housing development projects.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁶ Woman #1. (2022). "Comment at Greenaction Rally at Third and Evans." San Francisco, CA: Observation by Author.

³⁴⁷ Spivak, G. C., & Morris, R. C. (2010). *Can the Subaltern Speak?: Reflections on the History of an Idea*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press; De Kock, L. (1992). Interview with h Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa. *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 23(3).

³⁴⁸ Angel, B. (2022). Interview by Author.

³⁴⁹ Man #1. (2022). "Comment at Greenaction Rally at Third and Evans." San Francisco, CA. Observation by Author.

Immutable despair is evident, but so are the calls to action emergent from despair. A Greenaction flyer lists the following demands of Hunters Point residents to the City and County of San Francisco: A comprehensive retesting of all radioactive and toxic waste at the Shipyard, including Parcel A, homes of the SF Shipyard; an independent community oversight committee; and that the Navy reinstate the Restoration Advisory Board (RAB), which it dissolved a decade ago after community dissent over remediation and redevelopment.³⁵⁰

Results:

Abolition & Reparations

I talked with Ariann, again. Asking what abolition and reparations mean to her, she told me a story about her test results. Ariann tested positive for eight of ten radioactive chemical compounds in Dr. Sumchai's Biomonitoring Program. "I was shocked," she told me. Reparations, for her, include the costs of insurance and specialized forms of care for the myriad of particularized diseases and illnesses from the Shipyard's radioactivity.

"Abolition is so important because we are a multi-racial community,"³⁵¹ she further remarked. How do we define abolition and reparations, and what do these definitions reveal? How do we define repair, and what needs to be repaired? Similarly, how do we define abolition, and what needs to be abolished? What does freedom as a place look like in Hunters Point? Given these questions navigated by residents and their implications of them, they are also of concern for scholars oriented toward justice, but how should scholarship approach the study of them?

³⁵⁰ Mariduena, D. (2019). "Contaminated Communities: Bayview-Hunters Point." San Francisco, CA: *University of San Francisco, Office of Sustainability – Student Blog*.<https://usfblogs.usfca.edu/sustainability/2019/10/02/contaminated-communities-bayview-hunters-point/>, Accessed Online, October, 21, 2022.

³⁵¹ Harrison, A. (2022). Interview by Author. San Francisco, CA: San Francisco City Hall.

Dr. Brahinsky cites Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, which argues that decolonized writing can resemble map-making: "Exploration without conquest." While the notion of exploration without conquest is a noble sentiment, as Katherine McKittrick recalls *Harriet's Daughter*, we are reminded of the inextricable relationship between exploration and conquest which lies at the heart of geography and all forms of inquiry that reflect a desire to better know and understand marginalization.

And regardless of intent, there is an intrinsic violence in the abstraction, a detachment that occurs when stories are extracted and repurposed as scholars pick and choose details. The desire to know everything about a place and to know what freedom looks like and under what conditions can not be separated and compartmentalized from conquest, as exploration is inherent — a precondition to conquest under colonialism. Nor is freedom always knowable. As McKittrick shows, "Freedom is a secret."

"Freedom is a Secret"

Harriet's Daughter is a story about a teenager, Margaret, who promises her friend, Zulma, that she will help her escape Toronto.³⁵² Frustrated about her home life, Margaret creates a game called *The Underground Railroad* in which slave owners and their dog catchers chase their slaves around the school, named Slavery, and a location at an intersection known as 'Freedom' unknown to the slave catchers and their dogs.³⁵³ Historicizing the Underground Railroad as part of Canada's legacy of racial tolerance and benevolence, McKittrick asserts that it produced claims of Black geographic ignorance, knowledge enslaved Black people had of their surroundings, and the Railroad mapped as a knowable location by white and non-white communities.³⁵⁴

³⁵² McKittrick, K. (2007). "Freedom is a Secret: The Future Usability of the Underground." In *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*, p. 97-114.

³⁵³ McKittrick, K. (2007), p. 98.

³⁵⁴ McKittrick, K. (2007), p. 99.

Connecting the Railroad to Edouard Glissant's notion of a 'fixed primordial spot,'³⁵⁵ as a refusal of a finished emancipatory location,³⁵⁶ the Railroad is inextricably linked to questions of freedom, narrated by exploration, discovery, and desire for facts in order to finally reveal liberation as a final destination, reflecting the notion that humans can map freedom and discover liberation with access to hidden knowledges.³⁵⁷ Freedom as a fixed location, bound in territory.

The act of freedom, liberation, then is a celebration of an achieved state of being that detracts focus from the ways in which racialized and gendered people inhabit and refuse being bound to a particular knowable sense of place. If such forms of geographic thought are knowable, does this mean European epistemologies and ontologies resolve past pain?³⁵⁸

McKittrick proposes that 'the underground' reframes spatial knowledges, drawing upon Ralph Ellison's story *Invisible Man*,³⁵⁹ in which the protagonist embraces a life without direction beneath the city, rethinking time and space by negotiating them in unfamiliar ways. The underground is a resistance to comfort, expressed in alternative possibilities of inhabiting place in a world that categorizes, arranges, and keeps racialized and gendered people in place. A resistance to comfort, rather, a comfort in resistance.

The loss of direction *within* white supremacy is precisely "what allows the invisible man to claim humanness. The moment he learns to live without direction is the same moment he claims his environment on his own terms."³⁶⁰ Freedom is a secret, rooted in

³⁵⁵ McKittrick, K. (2007), p. 99, citing, Glissant, E. (1989). *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays*. (Trans.) Dash, J.M., Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, p. 67.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ McKittrick, K. (2007), p. 101.

³⁵⁸ McKittrick, K. (2007), p. 102.

³⁵⁹ McKittrick, K. (2007), p. 102, citing, Ellison, R. (1952). *Invisible Man*. New York, NY: Random House, p. 8.

³⁶⁰ McKittrick, K. (2007), p. 103.

constant struggle.³⁶¹ Abolition ecologies located in freedom dreams are not fully determinable or knowable because “No One Knows the Mysteries at the Bottom of the Ocean.”³⁶²

Conclusion

“TRUTH”

Following the death of her mother who leveraged her knowledge of race-class and gender relationships that produced the PG&E plant shutdown and a fight for a full Shipyard cleanup in her final days, Arieann believes truth and humor are the only ways to continue. Disappointed that Mayor Breed, once again, did not attend any of the civil grand jury hearings, she pondered what if regulators followed protocol when her mother was alive.

Arieann thinks we need truth, love, and transparency. At least, this is what she shares with me as Tonia, Arieann, and I walk out the doors and down the steps of City Hall together, looking out across Civic Center Plaza to a mural on Market and Polk Street that reads, “TRUTH.”³⁶³ I think silently to myself that there is not one truth, but an infinite number of truths, and not all of them are knowable or discoverable. “Amen to that,” I said, as she pointed to the mural and we muttered together in unison. Amen to that.

³⁶¹ Davis, A. Y. (2016). *Freedom Is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement*. Ed., Barat, F. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books.

³⁶² Mckittrick, K., & Woods, C. (2007). “No One Knows the Mysteries at the Bottom of the Ocean.” In *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place*, p. 1-13.

³⁶³ Randell, T. (2022), and Harrison, A. (2022). Interviews by Author.

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Appendix: Research Methods & Informants

Methods

An ethnographic case study that connects formal and informal interviews with collections of records such as newspapers and government reports, this capstone thesis paper involves qualitative research methods.

My archival research included analyses of documentary films, newspaper articles, video clips, city and federal reports, class action lawsuits, and meeting minutes of local health and environmental justice organizations, such as Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice. Though I do not cite all of them in this paper, these archives undoubtedly informed my understanding of Hunters Point Naval Shipyard. Participant-observation meant regular attendance of Greenaction Response Task Force meetings over a two-year span and eight hours of Board of Supervisors committee hearings, in addition to a walking tour of Monarch, Palisades, and Landing model units at the SF Shipyard led by a Lennar representative.

Informants

Formal and informal interviews produced a rich understanding of the race-class and gender politics that shape the Hunters Point Redevelopment Plan, mostly consisting of conversations before and after grand jury hearings at City Hall, in addition to Greenaction meetings, both via Zoom and in the Bayview. I am sincerely grateful for the time and engagement of every person that spoke with me. Listed names are publicly available information according to the Office for the Protection of Human Subjects guidelines from the Internal Review Board (IRB) that approved this capstone thesis proposal. The following list, therefore, includes formal and informal interviews and observations. While some are quoted in this paper, they are not named, in respect of their personal wishes.

Arieann Harrison
 Tonia Randell
 Vivian Ellis
 Shirletha Holmes-Boxx
 Leaotis Martin
 Kamillah Ealom
 Dr. Ahimsa Porter Sumchai
 UCSF Dr.
 Bradley Angel
 Woman #1
 Man #1
 Lennar Representative
 Navy Official
 Walton Staff Member

Glossary of Terms, Abbreviations, and Acronyms

AEMP	Anti Eviction Mapping Project
AB	Assembly Bill
BoS	San Francisco Board of Supervisors
BVHP	Bayview-Hunters Point
FHA	Federal Housing Authority
SFDPH	San Francisco Department of Public Health
EPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
GAO	Government Audit & Oversight Committee
HHS	United States Department of Health and Human Services
HPNS	Hunters Point Naval Shipyard
NRDL	Naval Radiological Defense Laboratory
OCII	Office of Community Infrastructure and Investment
SFRA	San Francisco Redevelopment Agency