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Union de Vecinos:

Challenging the Largest Displacement in 20th Century Boyle Heights

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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The displacement of Latinos and African Americans in the United States is widely discussed through programs of urban renewal in the 20th century. One of the most well-known to take place in Boyle Heights, a neighborhood in Los Angeles, CA, is the construction of five freeways that cut through it between 1944 and 1972 leading to mass displacement. Less discussed however is the demolition of Pico-Aliso, a public housing project in Boyle Heights that once housed 1,262 families. In 1996, the department of Housing and Urban Development demolished the community as part of then President Bill Clinton's HOPE VI program intended to significantly diminish the country's public housing stock and transfer tenants into the privatized Section 8 Program. As a result, the 1,262 units of Pico-Aliso were demolished and 703 were never rebuilt. This thesis describes the community that existed in Pico-Aliso, the conditions residents experienced on the private market, and their action to resist the demolition and found *Union de Vecinos*, a community organization that has continued to fight against displacement in Boyle Heights and Los Angeles County.

The dissertation of Leonardo Vilchis-Zarate is approved.

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Introduction

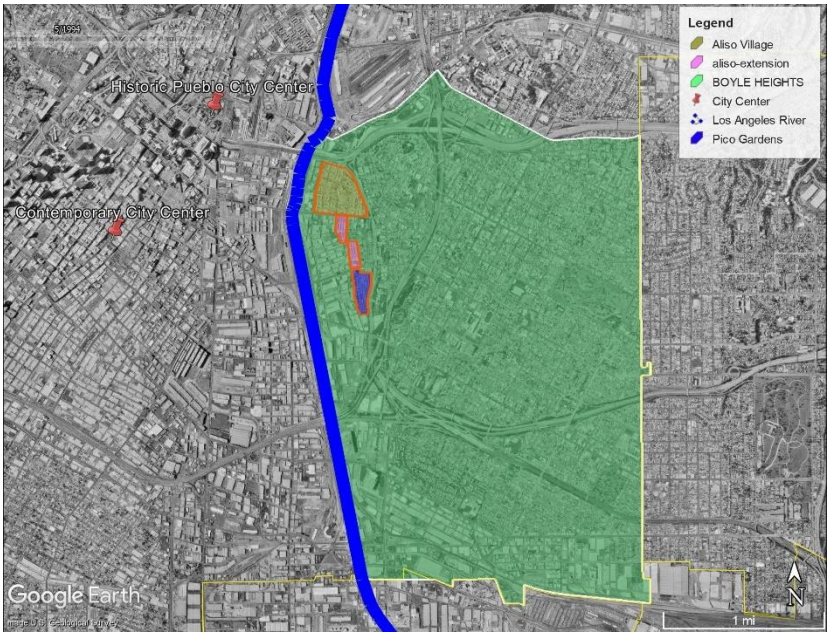
Development in Boyle Heights and the consequential displacement of its residents has frequently been prescribed by government and private capital throughout the history of this neighborhood. Prior to 1781, Yaanga, what became the city of Los Angeles, was inhabited by the Tongva people who were displaced from the city center by 44 Spanish settlers of European, African, and Indigenous descent across the river to *Pardeon Blanco* or the bluffs that would become Boyle Heights (Acuna 1984, 4-7; W. Estrada 2009, 56). From there, the Tongva were displaced by Mexican Rancheros and then again by the Anglo-American City Council who sold off land held in common by the Mexican government, known as *Ejidos*, after the United States took over the city and the Mexican Northwest in 1848 (Acuna 1984, 4-7; W. Estrada 2009, 56). In 1876, William Henry Workman, a large landowner in the San Gabriel Valley who inherited the land that became Boyle Heights from his father-in-law, Andrew Boyle, officially founded the neighborhood (Faragher 2016, 72-73; Acuña 1984, 6; Sanchez 2021, 29-37). As the neighborhood's Common Council Member and then the city's Mayor, he ordered the construction of water, electricity, and gas lines; bridges; streetcar lines; paved roads; and parks to shape the area into a neighborhood suitable for wealthy settlers with newfound access to Los Angeles due to the city's new connection to the transcontinental railroad (Torres-Rouff 2013 220-221). This was a common practice between 1870 and 1890, to speculate on and develop areas of the city into profitable neighborhoods for real estate capital while neglecting existing Mexican and Chinese neighborhoods such as Sonoratown and Chinatown along Calle de los Negros (Torres-Rouff 2013 226-230). Workman speculated that Boyle Heights could become a community for wealthy Anglo ranchers and businessmen who did not want to live in downtown.

As a result of his coordination of these investments, land values in Boyle Heights rose from $5-10 per acre in 1867 to $200 per acre by 1880 (Sanchez 2021, 27).

Workman's racial speculation, however, did not materialize. The implementation of racially restrictive covenants and the development of Anglo suburbs in cities to the west and the northeast (e.g., Venice and Pasadena), aggressively shaped the housing preferences of white settlers (Davis 1990, 110-114; Spalding 1992, 107). As a result, much of the city's eastside became home to various negatively racialized immigrant groups over the following century. A boom in construction jobs and the advances of the Santa Fe and Southern Pacific Rail roads attracted Mexican workers and craftsmen to Boyle Heights at the end of the 19th century (Acuna 1984, 7-8). These workers began by living in box cars along rail lines as they worked on them (Sanchez 2021, 35). Anxious landowners who had believed in Workman's speculation, saw their plans undermined and began renting to Mexicans and other ethnic and racial groups seen as undesirable during the period. (Sanchez 2021, 35-37).

The abandonment of the Anglo Boyle Heights project resulted in the creation of a multiethnic industrial Boyle Heights in the early twentieth century. Alongside Mexicans, Jewish and to a lesser degree other negatively racialized European immigrants, African Americans fleeing the south, and Japanese people leaving San Francisco after the earthquake of 1906 were excluded from westside developments and made Boyle Heights home. In 1918, the neighborhood was then zoned as part of the Eastside Industrial District by the Los Angeles City Council and the Regional Planning Commission who were urged by the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, Harrison Gray Otis' Merchants and Manufacturing Association (M&M), and the Los Angeles Realty Board (Sanchez 2021, 51). This prompted an increase in the industrial activity taking

place in Boyle Heights such as the canning of fruits and vegetables, manufacture of garments, and loading and unloading of merchandise from rails (Sanchez 2021, 33-35).



Map 1. US Geological Survey. Boyle Heights. 1994. National Map, Historic Topographic Map Collection. http://earth.google.com

While working class immigrants built Boyle Heights' dynamic social, cultural and political life, the city, state and federal governments, in collaboration with private capital, displaced them throughout the 20th century (Table 1). In the mid twentieth century, a majority of these displacements were part of New Deal government programs. An early example of this process occurred in 1934 when Russian Molokan, Mexican, rural Oklahoman and African American residents who lived alongside the Los Angeles River were evicted from their neighborhood by the federal government to create the Aliso Village public housing projects. What scholars described as a "pleasant" and "respectful" neighborhood, local public health department charged as a blighted slum (Romo 1983, 66; Spalding 1992, 11; Briante 2010, 127-132; Molina 2006, 158-178). Just eight years later, in 1942, a majority of Boyle Heights' Japanese residents were displaced and interned by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt during

World War II (Sanchez 2021, 97-129). Two years later, the California State Highway Commission began a process that lasted from 1944 to 1972 to build five highways that cut through and now surround Boyle Heights. At least 680 homes were demolished and as many residents and families were displaced (Avila 2006, 208-213; Acuña 1984, 40, 67, 94; G. Estrada 2005, 290).

Project:	**Units Demolished:**	**Units Replaced**	**Total # of Occupied Units in Boyle Heights (US census)**
1934 Flats "Slum" Clearance	417	417	21,072 (1940)
1961 Santa Ana 5 Freeway (through Boyle Heights)	200	0	20,981 (1960)
San Bernardino Freeway (through Boyle Heights)	480	0	21,303 (1970)
1997 Pico Gardens and Aliso Extension (Pico-Aliso)	577	252	21,825 (2000)
1998 Aliso Village	685	307	21,825 (2000)
2005 MTA Gold Line	250	0	22,763 (2010)
2005 LAPD Hollenbeck Police Station Redevelopment	56	0	22,763 (2010)
Total housing units demolished 1934-2005:	2,287		

Table 1: Major Redevelopments in Boyle Heights 1934-2005 (Romo 1983, 66; Spalding 1992, 11; Briante 2010, 127-132; Molina 2006, 158-178; Avila 2006, 208-213; Acuña 1984, 40, 67, 94; G. Estrada 2005, 290; Briante 2010, 133; Sanchez 2021, 236-239; Gordon 1993; Perez 1995; Ramos 1996; Chavez 1996; Chuang 1997; Tobar 1997; Editorial Board 1997; 1998; Becerra 1998; Becerra 1998a; 1998b; 1998c; Ramos 1999; Wu 2012, 34; Hernandez 2005)

In the late 20th and early 21st century, a second wave of displacement took place in Boyle Heights. Between 1996 and 2005, the Federal Housing and Urban Development Agency, Los Angeles Metro Transportation Authority and the Los Angeles Police Department conducted sequential demolitions of 1,568 housing units. They demolished public housing and replaced it with a mixed income housing community, built a light-rail line through the neighborhood, and a

constructed a new state of the art police station (Briante 2010, 133; Sanchez 2021, 236-239; Gordon 1993; Perez 1995; Ramos 1996; Chavez 1996; Chuang 1997; Tobar 1997; Editorial Board 1997; 1998; Becerra 1998; Becerra 1998a; 1998b; 1998c; Ramos 1999; Wu 2012, 34; Hernandez 2005). Combined, these demolitions over just nine years account for 73% of the demolitions since slum clearance in the flats of Boyle Heights in 1934. The largest demolition during this period was of 1,262 units of the Pico Gardens, Aliso Village, and Aliso Extension public housing projects collectively known as Pico-Aliso.

The demolition of Pico-Aliso is significant as the largest demolition by number of housing units in Boyle Heights in the twentieth century. Though 559 of the units were replaced, the overwhelming majority, 703 or nearly two thirds were not rebuilt. Additionally, the number of public housing units replaced, those meant for the poorest, was even less. This redevelopment marked a significant turn in urban housing policy as it shifted away from New Deal practices in which government plays a strong role in providing services to the poor towards a neoliberal one where the welfare state is withered away and the elimination of poverty is purportedly secured through lack of government involvement and the free market (Harvey 2005, 63-65). Nonetheless, the displacement this project caused, the economic changes it signified in the community, and resistance to them are not widely discussed.

One organization, *Union de Vecinos* or Union of Neighbors, resisted the demolition of Pico-Aliso and has continued to struggle against displacement from 1996 to the present. The organization gained wide notoriety and press coverage when they formed a coalition known as Defend Boyle Heights in 2015 that militantly challenged gentrification in the neighborhood. However, no academic study has been solely dedicated to this organization. The purpose of this thesis is to begin filling these academic gaps by using oral histories, archival research, and

periodicals to detail how Union de Vecinos was founded in 1996 in response to the demolition of the Pico-Aliso housing projects and as a continuation of the work against gang violence in that neighborhood. Understanding how this twenty-seven-year-old organization was founded will illuminate how displacement in Boyle Heights is neither new nor old and how it is the result of a historic process of neglect, speculation, and displacement that continues. In discussing gentrification, scholars have identified its beginning in Los Angeles in the 1990s and its promoters as private businesses who move local government in support (Soja, Morales, and Wolff 1983, 198-211; Reese, Deverteuil, and Thach 2010, 310-312; Kahne 2018, 310; Sims 2015, 10; Beauregard 1991, 92; Lin 2008, 113; Park and Kim 2008, 131). None however have discussed how the local and federal government have sponsored gentrification through the demolition of public housing and the removal of its residents nor how this process is tied to a neoliberal housing and urban development order. This thesis will seek to uncover this overlooked process.

This thesis will begin with a review of the literature on twentieth century development by public and private groups in Boyle Heights and the response by mostly Mexican American and Chicano political, cultural, and religious organizations to these different projects. The literature on gentrification in Los Angeles will then be discussed to situate the public and private actors who have promoted this process more recently. This structure will provide historic context for the demolition of Pico-Aliso and response by Union de Vecinos which will be the subject of the final section. This final section will begin by describing the work of the *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base* (CEBs) or Christian Base Communities of Dolores Mission Catholic Church before the demolition, to describe the method and history of community organizing that *Union de Vecinos* goes on to employ. Further, this section will highlight that gentrification not only demolishes

neighborhoods and displaces communities, but it also disregards the hyper local forms of development that are taking place. The demolition process, resistance against it, and the founding of Union de Vecinos will then be discussed.

Housing Activism in Boyle Heights

During the Great Depression, the struggle of Boyle Heights residents to remain in their homes was central in overcoming economic devastation that was felt significantly due to negative racialization that residents experienced. Workers who lived in Boyle Heights faced significant economic obstacles. For instance, one in five Boyle Heights laborers had no work. Discrimination created barriers to stable work as bosses preferred to keep white laborers employed when they were forced to make cuts. Similarly, Mexicans were discriminated and even expelled from the country for receiving government support (Fox 2012, 19, 75). Local organizations, business associations, and churches therefore supported residents, provided the services, and conducted charity to make up for the government (Acuna 1984, 6-11; Akers Chacon 2018, 182-184). With respect to housing, Jewish socialist and communist organizations alongside the Communist Party of Los Angeles (CPLA) conducted eviction defenses and restored utilities (Luce 2013, 163). Scholars particularly note that these Jewish organizations facilitated intercultural and interethnic collaboration to carry out the support of all Boyle Heights residents (Luce 2013, 203; Sanchez 2021, 131-155). Housing was therefore central among many other issues of survival that residents faced. The immense loss of jobs that consequentially led to the loss of wages and thereupon, one's home or the cutting of services that made home life possible created precarity and instability to which organizations responded through organized resistance.

In 1947, Edward Roybal, who eventually became the first Mexican American Councilman since the Mexican American War, unsuccessfully ran for City Councilman of District 9, which Boyle Heights belonged to (Acuna 1984, 27). Roybal and his strongest supporters then undertook an extensive grassroots effort and formed the Community Political Organization (CPO), which later became the Community Service Organization (CSO). CSO leaders, including Fred Ross who Roybal had met through community organizer Saul Alinsky, embarked on a campaign to enlist experienced volunteers and get to know the community's needs (Chavez 2002, 13; Acuna 1984, 56). One central concern they identified was public housing accessibility as it had been reserved solely for white servicemen and their families and therefore excluded the majority Mexican descendant residents of Boyle Heights. Other concerns were paving the dirt roads that ran through Boyle Heights, police brutality, and gerrymandered school boundaries. The CSO organized these concerns into housing, health, and civil rights committees and began to take action (Chavez 2002, 13; Acuna 1984, 29). The housing committee specifically, met with the Federal Housing Authority's Los Angeles office to discuss widespread discrimination in public housing and to challenge the office's denial of rental privileges to non-citizen residents despite Congress's elimination of the exclusion in 1956 (Acuna 1984, 53).

In 1949, Roybal ran a multiethnic campaign for City Council member with support from the CSO and Jewish, Mexican, and African American communities to defeat incumbent Parley Parker Christensen (Sanchez 2021, 164; Chavez 2002, 13). He came to power however amidst a conservative backlash of staunchly anti-communist council members positioned against New Deal public programs, like public housing, and civil rights initiatives (Sanchez, 167-172; Parson 2005).

With respect to housing during this period, Roybal took important positions that were unpopular with the rest of the city council. Many times, he voted alone. He advocated in favor of tenants, for public housing construction, for equal housing access, and against displacement. In 1950, he voted to stop the council from removing war time rent control and lost amidst its conservatism (Sanchez 2021, 173; Acuna 1984, 32). Roybal was a strong supporter of public housing and frequently stood against urban renewal and public investment that displaced working class people for the benefit of private developers. In 1949, he voted in favor of 10,000 public housing units, as well as against land grabs by private developers at Chavez Ravine and Bunker Hill (Sanchez 2021, 167-177; Chavez 2002, 20). In 1951, amidst an intense media campaign against public housing carried out by the *Los Angeles Times* that swayed opinion on the issue, he voted against rescinding the city's contract with the Federal Housing Authority for public housing (Parson 2005, 88). In 1952, he championed the construction of public housing in Chavez Ravine, rather than selling it off to Walter O'Malley, owner of the Brooklyn Dodgers (Parson 2005, 181).

Roybal and Boyle Heights residents also were involved in an entrenched battle against the California State Highway Commission. The result was an intrusion of five freeways on fifteen percent of the community's land to the benefit of suburb developers who profited from the construction of new communities outside the city that middle class white Americans could live in and accrue equity while still working in downtown (Avila 2006, 208-213; G. Estrada 2005, 290). In 1953, after the State Commission notified the Los Angeles City Council that they would be placing a large portion of the Golden State Freeway through the 9th district, Boyle Heights residents, formed the Boyle-Hollenbeck Anti-Golden-State-Freeway Committee. The project would create a barrier through Boyle Heights that ran north to south, would cost $32

million, destroy 14,000 homes, and cut through Hollenbeck Park and the Soto Street School (Estrada 2005, 296-303; Avila 2006, 212). Protests and rallies were able to secure the Committee a hearing on the route that was attended by 350 concerned residents (Sanchez 2021, 180). The State Highway Commission nonetheless proceeded with the initial route in 1954. Two years later, the Pomona Freeway posed a similar threat, but defeat on the previous campaign resulted in little opposition and the project proceeded (Acuna 1984, 94-96; Chavez 2002, 25-26).

Roybal and the CSO's institutional politics gave way to a following generation of community organizations that embraced more radical tactics of direct action as part of a more radical ideology that called for liberation from rather than incorporation into the racist political economic system. In 1968, Mexican American high school students across Los Angeles formed the Young Citizens for Community Action who later became the Young Chicanos for Community Action (YCCA) as their militancy and radicalism increased. They embraced a newfound identity as Chicanos inspired by Black uprisings across the country, the emergence of militant groups like the Black Panthers, and the university student movement. Of particular importance, these student activists went on to walkout of dozens of high schools in Los Angeles in protest of the tracking of Chicanos into vocational programs and out of college and university programs (Muñoz 1989, 22-25; Garcia and Castro 2011, 11, 164). The Brown Berets, a militaristic organization of non-student youth to challenge police brutality founded in 1968 by David Sanchez provided security at these walkouts (Muñoz 1989, 103).

The YCCA and Brown Berets in Boyle Heights challenged established forms of political participation and used direct action to combat, among many issues, neglect by school boards and local governments and state repression by the police and military. However, their platform was all encompassing and reflected the experiences of Chicanos in Boyle Heights. Projects like the

expansion of hospitals in Boyle Heights and a land grab of Hazard Park attempted by a westside city council member forced the Brown Berets to seriously address housing issues (Acuña 1984, 101, 124, 134). The Brown Berets specifically included within their ten-point program a call to end urban renewal programs that replaced the barrio with high rent homes for middle class people (Chavez 2002, 46-49). While Roybal, the Boyle-Hollenbeck Anti-Golden-State-Freeway Committee, and others fought against urban renewal on the grounds that it would remove long time community members and neighborhood institutions, the Brown Beret's point on urban renewal notes the replacement of low-income people with high income people. This distinction is important as it is one of the first references in the literature to a process akin to gentrification that is used by an organization resisting displacement in Boyle Heights.

During the same time, in 1968, Burt Corona and Chole Alatorre of the *Hermandad General de Trabajadores* (HGT), or General Brotherhood of Workers, established the first *Centro de Accion Social Autonomo* (CASA), or Autonomous Center for Social Action, in Los Angeles (Mena 2018, 105; Garcia 1994, 291; Chavez 2002, 106). The HGT was established in San Diego in 1951 to organize undocumented immigrant workers to fight for better wages and workplace conditions by forming them into unions when the larger unions did not believe immigrants were organizable (Pulido 2006, 117; Garcia 1994, 296). They also organized against discriminatory policies that made hiring undocumented immigrants illegal and Immigration and National Service (INS) deportations raids and sweeps on workplaces (Mena 2018, 123; Felker-Kantor 2018, 64-85; Sanchez, 223).

The CASAs were service centers where immigrants were organized around most aspects of their life including labor and housing with the goal of achieving a stable social life in the United States free from persecution and criminalization (Garcia 1994, 294-295). In Los Angeles,

they founded the first CASA in Los Angeles on Whittier Boulevard. From here, they fought evictions and poor housing conditions. When landlords didn't repair leaking roofs and toilets, broken windows and pest problems, CASA organized tenants to withhold rent until those conditions were repaired (Garcia 1994, 294-296). CASA eventually declined after merging in 1973 with a Marxist-Leninist members of The *Comite to Free Los Tres*, or Committee to Free the Three, a coalition of organizations seeking the freedom of three organizers in the Pico Gardens housing projects of Boyle Heights who were entrapped by the U.S. Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (Garcia 1994, 308-310; Chavez 2002, 99-108; Acuna, 216) Despite CASA's decline, their actions are the first documented instance of tenant activism in Boyle Heights since eviction defenses during the Great Depression. Further, their action against poor housing conditions is a resurgence of housing action that is not solely about urban renewal but about the relationship between landlords and tenants that specifically mentions the unequal relationship between the two, and how an organization sought to create a more level grounding between them.

In 1985, a group of Boyle Heights Mexican, Mexican American, and Chicana women formed The Mothers of East Los Angeles (MELA) in response to the proposed construction of a state prison, just outside of their neighborhood. (Pardo 1998, 28-35). MELA was not fighting explicitly for housing against their displacement. However, their fight demonstrates the ways in which the government has sought to implement developments without considering existing residents and how these developments are greenlit as a result of the neighborhood's history of neglect. Further, a different form of community organizing is exposed by MELA that goes beyond the home and interrogates how it is connected to the community.

California Governor George Deukmejian and the Department of Corrections had proposed a prison that they believed would pass easily because they understood the 56th district to be politically powerless due to its number of Mexican immigrants (Pardo 1998, 106). After six years however, MELA successfully defeated the project. They were able to do this by carrying out a large outreach campaign that incorporated documented and undocumented Boyle Heights residents (Pardo 1998, 111). Once included, MELA encouraged residents to change their negative perspective of their community and convinced them that it was possible to defeat the prison development (Pardo 1998, 65-74). MELA is significant for their work to transform residents' negative perspective of their neighborhood and challenging characterizations resulting from historic neglect that ultimately justify redevelopment. Additionally, their mobilization challenges assumptions of housing activism as being solely relegated to the functions of shelter. Lastly, similar to CASA they demonstrated the growing importance of immigrants in community activism in Los Angeles.

The history of housing activism in Boyle Heights in the twentieth century therefore demonstrates that housing activism is the result of three processes: devastating economic events, large scale state redevelopment projects, and poor housing conditions perpetuated by private landlords. Firstly, in response to the Great Depression Jewish and communist groups organized eviction defenses and restored utilities for economically impacted residents of various nationalities and ethnicities. During the largest period between 1940 and 1990 Edward Roybal, the CSO, the Anti-Golden State Freeway Committee, Brown Berets, and MELA lobbied the government and carried out direct actions to attempt to stop large scale government development projects planned for their largely Mexican, Mexican American, and Chicano community. Lastly,

in the early 1970s, CASA organized rent strikes by undocumented immigrants in response to poor housing conditions.

These examples of historic housing activism in Boyle Heights contextualize *Union de Vecinos*' activism against the demolition of Pico-Aliso between 1996 and 2002. This activism fits within the framework of tenants responding to large scale developments. However, it also represents a battle against Neoliberalism and a larger political backlash against New Deal programs. While historically New Deal developments in Boyle Heights were catalysts for protest due to the demolition and displacement of residents, as a result of the Second World War's end and efforts by Edward Roybal, the CSO, and War on Poverty groups that promoted integration, Pico-Aliso became largely inhabited by African Americans and ethnic Mexicans. As a result, these projects became associated with these negatively racialized groups, defunded, and the communities became impoverished. Forty years later, the federal government guided by ideas of neoliberalism, which sought to limit the government's role in providing services to the poor, demolished Pico-Aliso as part of a new neoliberal urban plan that prioritized private development through gentrification which will be discussed in the following section.

Neoliberalism and Gentrification in Los Angeles

Neoliberalism in the United States is discussed as a departure by the state away from the post war, federally managed, and centralized capitalist economy that balanced well paid industrial labor and consumption and provided a welfare state to promote and maintain the wellbeing of its residents (Brenner and Theodore 2002, 357-359; Soja 2010, 115-117). This political economic system came into crisis in the 1960s as it could not achieve the same gains as it stabilized over time (Brenner and Theodore 2002, 350). Since then, the state has embarked on a process of what has been called creative destruction" whereby the old economy is withered

away and replaced by a new one (Brenner and Theodore 2202, 351; Soja 2010, 116). Though through a wide range of processes across the globe, neoliberalism is characterized by the foregrounding of market fundamentalism through deregulation, privatization, complete commodification, and reduction of corporate taxes; the elimination of forms of collectivity by weakening organized labor; and the elimination or shrinking of New Deal welfare infrastructure and criminalization of the poor (Brenner and Theodore 2002, 350; Soja 2010, 120).

In Los Angeles, Soja (2010) details that Los Angeles' history has given rise to a comprehensive project of deindustrialization of what in 1970 was the industrial metropolis of the country. Los Angeles had the highest number of manufacturing employees in the country that mass produced automobiles, tires, glass, steel, and aircraft machinery. This deindustrialization took place according to Soja in two phases, the first of which was the elimination of as many as 100,000 manufacturing jobs employed in assembling cars between 1978 and 1982. The second phase took place during a national recession between the late 1980s and early 1990s whereby the Los Angeles aerospace industry left the city and took 300,000 jobs with it. The elimination of these well-paying jobs located nearby wealthy white suburbs led to a subsequent spatial shift, the largest occurrence of white flight from mid ring suburbs further out of the city whereby Latinos largely became the largest population (Soja 2010, 124-126).

As a result of the loss of these well-paying unionized jobs and the elimination of massive amounts of labor as a base for capital extraction, neoliberalism spurred, on a new scale, the extraction of capital from the uneven development of land. Uneven development is the geographic disparity of development whereby some regions at different scales are prioritized over others for production and thereby developed with industry, infrastructure, and housing among other resources. Meanwhile, other regions are deprioritized, underdeveloped, and ripe for

development and thereupon extraction of capital through rents. Developing the deprioritized regions has been discussed as a "spatial fix" and serves as capital's solution to continue accumulating capital in the face of deindustrialization (Brenner and Theodore 2002, 355; Smith 1990, 132). Brenner and Theodore detail that this has taken place generally in the United States through the destruction and restructuring of urban housing markets by demolishing public housing, low rent housing, and subsequently eliminating working class neighborhoods. Brenner and Theodore argue that this is done to construct housing at market rates and place the poor in smaller areas through public voucher programs that subsidize the private market (Brenner and Theodore 2002, 371). This is carried out not by one monolithic force, however. In the absence of a strong centralized government that previously managed uneven development, diverse actors including local governments, real estate speculators, and industrial developers compete within a hegemonic neoliberal vision of redevelopment (Brenner and Theodore 2002, 356). Ideologically they are guided by the neoliberal construction of the industrial working-class city as disorderly, dangerous, and depressed to justify what they see as redevelopment and rejuvenation for capital accumulation (Brenner and Theodore 372). The following section will demonstrate how this took place in Boyle Heights to further gentrification.

Early studies of gentrification debate its causes as cultural or economic (Smith 1979, 538; Ley 1980, 521; Rose 1984, 47; Zukin 1987, 129; Hamnett 1991, 173). Scholars who emphasize economics highlight the process whereby developers invest in the central city where land values have depressed as a result of suburbanization (Smith 1979, 538; Zukin 1987, 129). Scholars who focus on the cultural causes of gentrification describe how young professionals move into the central city because of a desire for the amenities associated with it such as coffee shops, bars, galleries, and museums (Ley 1980, 521; Rose 1984, 47). The result of gentrification however is

displacement, segregation, and polarization of poor people of color who are replaced by middle- and upper-income white people (Clerval 2021, 1054). Based on the literature then, gentrification is a process whereby speculators invest in neighborhoods with depressed land values, typically inhabited by poor people of color, develop the amenities that are attractive to young professionals, and affect the housing market leading to eviction, displacement, and segregation.

Scholars studying Los Angeles initially had trouble reconciling gentrification with the patterns of land development that took place in the city. In Los Angeles, decentralization had been the dominant form of land development taking place since the 1920s. People, industry, labor, and political power had moved into newly developed suburbs, and cities incorporated throughout the county (Soja, Morales, and Wolff 1983, 198-211; Avila 2006, 36-49). This led to a polycentric pattern of development that avoided the establishment of a central business district (CBD) that could function as the political, economic, and entertainment center of Los Angeles. While cities such as New York, Chicago, and San Francisco gentrified, scholars contend that the lack of a CBD in Los Angeles delayed gentrification because the amenities that one would find there were spread throughout different centers of the region (Reese, Deverteuil, and Thach 2010, 310-312; Kahne 2018, 310). However, in the late-1980s Downtown Los Angeles began developing into a financial, corporate, and entertainment center as part of a postindustrial turn in the city and a restructuring of transnational capital (Sims 2015, 10; Reese, Deverteuil, and Thach 2010; Beauregard 1991, 92; Soja, Morales, and Wolff 1983, 198-211; Lin 2008, 113; Park and Kim 2008, 131).

These changes in the CBD had significant and measurable effects on neighborhoods surrounding downtown where scholars narrate several different changes. These include white, white collar workers seeking housing in undervalued areas near their workplaces, associations of

business owners forming Business Improvement Districts (BID) to redevelop an area for increased business and profits, and the development of arts districts. As land values and potential for profit by landlords increased, these projects resulted in the eviction and marginalization of Latino tenants in Hollywood, Koreatown, Silver Lake and Boyle Heights and of a largely African American population of unhoused people in Skid Row (Park and Kim 2008; Reese, Deverteuil, and Thach 2010; Lin 2008; Sims 2016; Scott 2008).

The works of Sims (2016) and Scott (2019) are significant as they are some of the only quantitative studies conducted to quantify the scale of gentrification. Scott (2019) details how changes in the labor market led to gentrification in fourteen zip codes proximal to Downtown Los Angeles from Hollywood to Koreatown along Wilshire Boulevard between 2000 and 2015. In these zip codes he enumerates that white collar workers rose by 14%, median incomes rose by 5%, and the price per square foot of property rose by 145.3% in constant dollars between 2000 and 2015, much higher than the 6.2% decrease in median income and the 49.6% land value increase across the county (Scott 2019, 520-521). Concurrently, the percentage change of Latino residents in these zip codes decreased by 12.2% while the county itself saw an increase of 15.2% in Latinos (Scott 2019, 522). Additionally, the percentage of non-Hispanic whites in these areas rose by 19.1 percent while it declined 10.2 across the county (Scott 2019, 522). Scott therefore quantifies the effects of gentrification throughout various Los Angeles neighborhoods surrounding the CBD. Further, he provides evidence that it caused an influx of white professional workers, an increase in property values, and a decrease in Latino residents that had a reverse correlation with county wide trends.

Sims (2016) links a large-scale redevelopment project in Hollywood to evictions by landlords to draw attention to their role within gentrification and displacement of Latino

residents. He uses eviction data to argue that a $922-million redevelopment in 1986 by the Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles (CRALA) and Hollywood Business Improvement District (BID), an association of Hollywood business and property owners led to 2,378 evictions of Latino residents between 1990 and 2000 (Sims 2016, 14-17). Sims demonstrates therefore that gentrification was made possible through eviction specifically in areas where significant public and private development took place and it primarily impacted Latino residents.

Similarly, in Skid Row, Koreatown, and Chinatown, BIDs played a significant role in promoting gentrification alongside the local government that they elicited support from (Reese, Deverteuil, and Thach 2010; 323; Park and Kim 2008, 130-137). In these neighborhoods, scholars have used qualitative methods to study how BIDs operated and pushed African American, Latino, and Chinese residents out of the neighborhood. In Skid Row, for example, African American unhoused, transitioning, and poor longtime residents of Skid Row were displaced by the Central City East and Central City business associations to expand the CBD into Skid Row. They persuaded the nonprofit homeless shelters as well as city and county governments to adopt a regional homeless plan enforced by the LAPD. This displaced the unhoused out of the CBD and criminalized them with increased LAPD presence and citations for minor infractions such as jaywalking (Reese, Deverteuil, and Thach 2010; 323). In Koreatown, following the 1992 Los Angeles Uprising, as a result of South Korean economic deregulation and economic agreements with the United States, South Korean banks and financial groups grew their real estate holdings to more than 3.5 million square feet along Wilshire Boulevard. These groups moved the government to officially designate Koreatown where Koreans only made up 6% of the population. They then developed corridors of upscale bars, clubs, massage parlors, and

restaurants (Park and Kim 2008, 130-137). Park and Kim argue that these corridors catered to outside affluent consumers, created nuisances, and depended on precarious immigrant labor that was displaced through the process (Park and Kim 2008, 145). They also note rent increases as high as 200% as well as a concentration of evictions surrounding the corridors between 1994 and 1999. Lastly, in Chinatown, in the early 2000s, the Chinatown BID, the city of Los Angeles, and the CRALA lured the Metro Transit Authority (MTA) Gold Line and the development of mixed-use residential condominium projects that consequentially contributed to rising rents, eviction, and displacement (Lin 2008, 111-1118).

In Chinatown a parallel process, the formation of an arts scene, took place that benefited from and contributed to the BID's gentrification efforts (Lin 2008, 113). Lin argues that art developments in ethnic neighborhoods appropriate and exploit the neighborhood's culture and synthesize it with new hipper aesthetic businesses leading to rising commercial and residential property values and rents that lead to the displacement of businesses and the evictions of renters. (Lin 2008, 111-1118). Similarly in Boyle Heights, between 2014 and 2017, twelve art galleries opened up on the western edge of the neighborhood in an industrial area between the Los Angeles River and the Pico-Aliso housing projects. During the same time, an upscale coffee shop named Weird Wave opened up, a realtor organized young white professionals on a promotional bike ride inviting them to buy homes in Boyle Heights rather than rent elsewhere, and a pop-up opera began to stage performances in Hollenbeck Park (Huante 2019; Huante and Miranda 2019).

Huante (2019) argues that these developments are made to seem race neutral by gentrifiers despite their contribution to gentrification that he states lead to eviction and displacement of Latino residents. He narrates how gentrifiers in Boyle Heights obfuscated their

racial impact by removing themselves from existing racial inequality, neglecting to discuss contemporary racial impacts of gentrification, the racial history of redlining and segregation that make gentrification possible, and the ways in which they benefit from this process (Huante 2019, 7-9). Additionally, Huante (2019) illuminates an unexpected and previously unexplored promoter of gentrification, entrepreneurial, educated, and upwardly mobile Latino residents. He analyzes their promotion of a purportedly softer form of Latino sponsored "Gente-fication." Gente-fication's promoters purport that it intends to uplift racial minorities gradually and without displacement (Huante 2019, 9-11). Critics however detail that gentrification as a structural process cannot be used to benefit working class Latinos. They argue instead that those who seek to negotiate are complicit in gentrification (Huante 2019, 11-13).

In Los Angeles the literature shows that gentrification has been a process taking place since at least the early 1990s and at least until 2017 in various neighborhoods surrounding Downtown. Gentrification has been the result of business and property owners, associations of these two, and local government seeking to redevelop neighborhoods in order to profit from rising rents and increased business. The impact of this process has been eviction, rising rents, displacement, police repression, and cultural and aesthetic changes that target and affect Latino and African American residents. As such, the processes in Los Angeles align closely with larger studies of gentrification that define it as a process whereby speculators invest in neighborhoods with depressed land values, typically inhabited by poor people of color, develop new housing and amenities, and affect the housing market leading to eviction, displacement, segregation, and a replacement of the existing residents with whiter and/or more affluent residents (Smith 1979, 538; Zukin 1987, 129; Ley 1980, 521; Rose 1984, 47; Clerval 2021, 1054).

In Boyle Heights, gentrification is discussed as having begun in 2014. This thesis, however, will demonstrate that the demolition of the Pico-Aliso Public Housing Projects initiated the process in this neighborhood. It will demonstrate that the demolition a large-scale redevelopment project guided by increasing real estate values and profit that led to the eviction and displacement of Latino and African American residents to be replaced by wealthier residents. Additionally, it will uncover a new actor, the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA), and a new process, state sponsored gentrification. This will contribute to literature on gentrification in Los Angeles and fit into the theory of its initiation in the 1990s. Additionally, discussing gentrification in Boyle Heights contributes to understandings of the long history of displacement and resistance against it that was discussed above.

The following section will employ the oral histories of Pico-Aliso residents and former staff of Dolores Mission Catholic Church and its nonprofit organization, Proyecto Pastoral to narrate how residents responded to state sponsored gentrification and the accompanying displacement by founding Union de Vecinos. These oral histories allow residents and organizers to describe the conditions of Pico-Aliso from their own experience living and working there every day. These descriptions challenge those of HACLA employees who received widespread press space but were distanced from the neighborhood and whose social, political, and economic standing was unaffected by the demolition.

The first set of oral histories exposed are those of Ana Hernandez and Laura Zelaya, residents of Pico Gardens for more than thirty years. Their description of Pico Gardens contextualizes the housing market that they navigated through and the community they came to live in at Pico Gardens from their own point of view. This is important as it lays the foundation for their desire to fight to remain in Pico Gardens and contrasts descriptions of the Pico-Aliso

that the housing authority promoted as a justification for the demolition. The second group of oral histories exposed are those of Father Greg Boyle, Leonardo Vilchis, and Elizabeth Blaney as organizers of the Christian Base Communities of Dolores Mission. An attempt is made to balance these organizers' narration of success by describing some of the challenges they faced as well. Additionally, an attempt is made to provide supporting or contrasting documentation to the excerpts from Leonardo Vilchis' oral history due to his relationship to the author. Continued work on this project will seek to gather more interviews from Pico-Aliso residents in order to rely even more on the experience of residents of this community.

Public Housing Security and Private Market Precarity

For longtime residents like Laura Zelaya and Ana Hernandez, Pico Gardens was a lifeline that saved them and their families from significantly worse housing conditions they experienced on the private market. When I interviewed them, Ana had lived in the community for thirty-two years and Laura for twenty-eight. As immigrants from Mexico and Honduras, finding stable housing in Los Angeles was difficult and finding housing that fit their needs as families presented even greater obstacles. They faced issues such as the inability to find a long-term residence, unhealthy living conditions, and overcrowding. These conditions were unacceptable to them and when they found Pico Gardens, they both applied due to their desire to provide something better for their growing family.

In 1988, before moving to Pico Gardens, Ana was an expecting mother living in a studio apartment in downtown Los Angeles with her two sons Carlos and Jeffrey, her husband, and her brother-in-law's family of five. For two years, Ana lived overcrowded in an apartment that she believed was unsuitable for her family. There, she and her family shared one bathroom and one kitchen with dozens of other residents. They couldn't open the window because neighbors threw

trash out of their windows rather than walk down a long hallway to the trash chute. She explained that the garbage accumulated, smelled terribly, and attracted rats. Her kids also could not play because they lived on a higher floor and she felt there was a lack of security and many unknown men walked through the building (Ana Hernandez, unpublished interview with author, 2021).

Arriving at the age of 14 from Honduras, it took Laura nine years living in six different apartments for short terms throughout the county of Los Angeles before she could find Pico Gardens. On average, she never spent more than a year and a half in the same place. Similar to Hernandez, she usually lived in overcrowded apartments. The last apartment she lived in before Pico Gardens was a studio apartment she shared with her daughter, aunt, and seven other people.

Ana and Laura both mention overcrowding as burdens that they did not want for their children. They were motivated to find places for their children where they could sleep comfortably and play. When Laura's cousin insisted she apply to live in Pico Gardens in 1994, she recalls that she did so to live in "*un lugar donde estar más cómodo y que mi hija tenga un espacio para dormir mejor"* [a place that's more comfortable and where my daughter can have a place to sleep better] (Laura Zelaya, unpublished interview with author with author, 2021). In contrast to where she was previously living, Ana recalls moving into Pico Gardens in 1990 positively as she found an apartment that could accommodate her family. She narrates that she and her children now had more open space to breathe and play in Pico Gardens.

> *"Cuando llegamos aquí a la comunidad, pues fue una respiración profunda y fresca, porque sí me gustó... Porque en el lugar donde estaba viviendo no veía ni árboles ni flores…Entonces llego aquí. Pues aquí hay más. Entonces lo que hacíamos es que, durante la noche, cuando llegaba mi esposo, pues nos íbamos a caminar con los niños al rededor, nos íbamos... a caminar hasta donde veíamos que aguantaban los niños y luego dábamos la vuelta... Y ya después ya nos veníamos por toda la calle primera."* (Ana Hernandez, unpublished interview with author, 2021).

> [When we arrived here in the community, well, it was a deep and fresh breath because I did like it…Because in the place where we were living, I didn't see trees or flowers…So, then I get here and well here there are. So, what we did is that during the night, when my husband arrived, we would go for a walk around with the children… from here to Mathews Street… We would walk as long as we saw that the children could bear it and then we would turn from there and… come back along all of First Street]

As immigrants, Ana and Laura found refuge from an impacted housing market that made their long-term tenure in a home that could accommodate their families incredibly difficult. They both faced overcrowding and instability while Ana also mentioned that she experienced unsanitary housing conditions. They found in Pico Gardens apartments where they could live with just their own family, enough rooms for their children to sleep in, and ample space where their children could play outside and enjoy themselves with their neighbors. As Hernandez describes, families in Pico Gardens had a place where they could breathe, play, and live together comfortably.

Public Housing Agency: Against Violence and Deportation

The cancellation of the Los Angeles City Council contract with the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development in 1951 resulted in neglect and defunding of the existing ten, public housing projects and thousands of units of housing (Sanchez 2021, 86, 187; Parson and Starr 2005). This decline in quality housing resulted in an overall decline in the housing stock and decay in services leading to poverty and, with respect to youth, contributed to the rise of gangs in Boyle Heights over the following four decades (Sanchez 2021, 178).

By 1986, thirty-five years after the cancellation of the public housing contract, there were eight gangs, seven Latino and one African American, just in the vicinity of the Pico-Aliso public housing projects in Boyle Heights (Fremon 2008, 8). Zelaya recalls,

> *"En la noche y en el día era muy difícil, había mucho pandillerismo allí y pasaban los pandilleros, se establecían en ciertos lugares, no se movían de allí. No les*

> *importaba a ellos las balaceras. Es de pelear y tirarse con los otros de las otras pandillas. Ellos no tenían ese respeto hacia uno, ni porque había niños ni nada de eso*" (Zelaya, unpublished interview with author, 2021).
>
> [At night and during the day it was very difficult, there was a lot of gang activity there and the gang members passed by, they established themselves in certain places, they didn't move from there. They didn't mind the shootings. It was about fighting and throwing themselves with the other gangs. They did not have respect towards one, not even if there were children or anything like that.]

Compared to an average of twenty-four homicides a year between 1978 and 2012 in the Hollenbeck precinct of the LAPD, which includes Pico Gardens, there were forty-four gang related murders per year between 1988 and 1995, peaking in 1992 with fifty-nine (Valasik et al. 2017, 294). In 1986, Father Gregory Boyle became pastor of Dolores Mission Catholic Church, whose parishioners were majority residents of Pico-Aliso. He remembers gang violence being "horrific" from 1988 to 1998. According to Fr. Boyle, in 1992 alone there were "1,000 gang-related homicides" in Los Angeles (Boyle, unpublished interview with author with author, 2021).

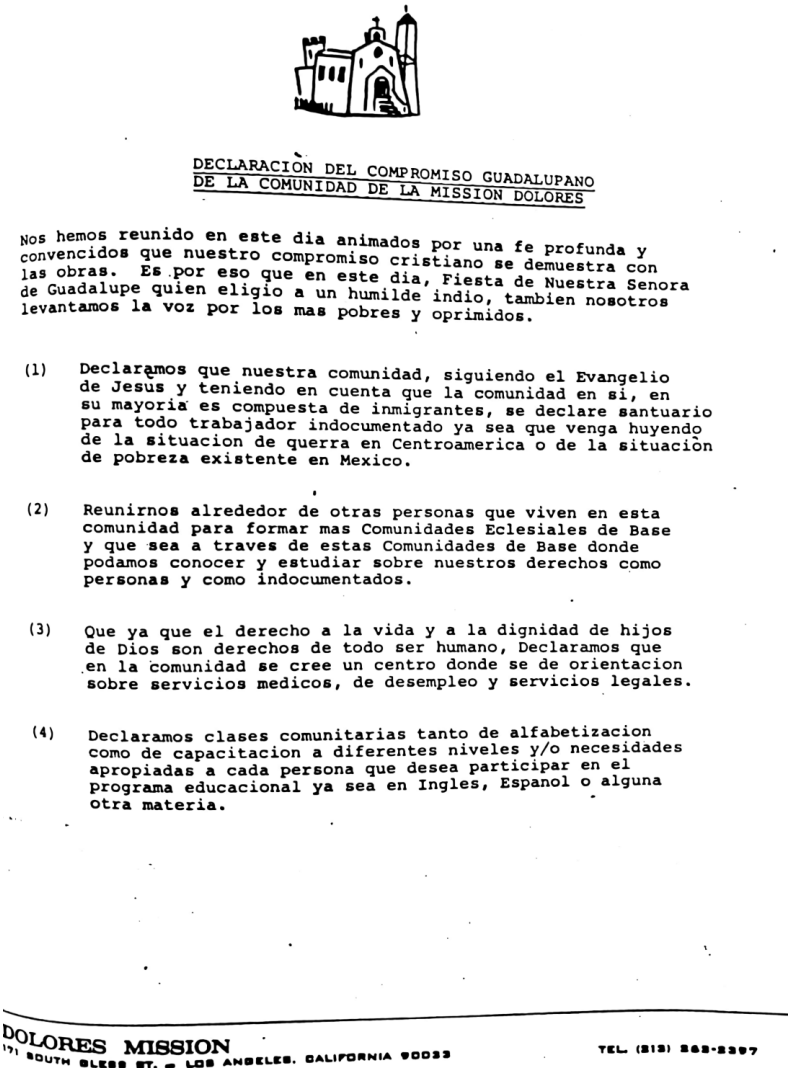
Dolores Mission parishioners who were residents of Pico-Aliso would go on to challenge this issue through a religious pedagogical process known as the *Comunidades Eclesiales de Base*, or Christian Base Communities (CEBs). Fr. Boyle and church staff accompanied what began as nine groups of parishioners organized as CEBs through a process of seeing their reality, analyzing it through what they read in the bible, and acting to change it (Boyle, unpublished interview with author, 2021).

The CEBs first action was a response to the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) in 1986. IRCA was a federal law intended to deter immigration by militarizing the border and outlawing the hiring of undocumented workers while also providing a concessionary legalization for three million immigrants already in the United States (Zepeda Millan 2017, 27). In response to the passage of this law, the CEBs declared Dolores Mission a sanctuary church in 1988 and joined the larger Sanctuary Movement being carried out by

churches across the country (Vilchis, unpublished interview with author, 2021; Boyle, unpublished interview with author, 2021; Sanchez 2020, 234-235;). The Sanctuary Movement was an interfaith civil rights movement that engaged in civil disobedience by providing shelter to refugees fleeing Cold War proxy battles in Central America. The United States and President Ronald Regan however did not consider Central Americans fleeing war refugees due to their involvement sponsoring military dictatorships and death squads (Golden and McConnell 1986, 17; Garcia 2018, 307; Zepeda Millan 2017, 33-35).

In a fashion that highlights the CEB's autonomy and ownership over their decisions and actions, they expanded their sanctuary to encompass not only the more politically acceptable Central American Refugees but Mexican immigrants as well. This was the result of a four-week process titled "The Dignity of Bering Human" where CEB members analyzed the United Nation's Declaration of Human Rights, considered violations they or people they knew experienced, outlined actions they could take, and agreed on a declaration of sanctuary (Howard 1988, 102-106). On December 14, 1987, the Sunday on which the parish celebrated the Catholic feast day for the Virgin of Guadalupe, the CEBs held a press conference making public their declaration of their commitment to making Dolores Mission a sanctuary for "all undocumented workers whether they are fleeing the situation of war in Central America or the situation of poverty that exists in Mexico" (Figure 1). Thus, they were included in the sanctuary movement in Los Angeles that had been initiated at La Placita two years earlier by Father Luis Olivares (Garcia 2018, 320). Illustrating the autonomy of the CEBs, Fr. Boyle reflects on the response he faced when he was invited to a national conference for sanctuary churches. He recalls that members were angered that Dolores Mission had diluted the message of sanctuary for Central Americans by expanding it to undocumented Mexicans. Fr. Boyle recalls responding, "I'm

nobody, I'm the janitor, the people decided to do that because they didn't want to do it otherwise, so it wasn't my decision to declare sanctuary anyway, it was ours" (Boyle, unpublished interview with author, 2021).



DECLARACION DEL COMPROMISO GUADALUPANO
DE LA COMUNIDAD DE LA MISSION DOLORES

Nos hemos reunido en este dia animados por una fe profunda y convencidos que nuestro compromiso cristiano se demuestra con las obras. Es por eso que en este dia, Fiesta de Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe quien eligio a un humilde indio, tambien nosotros levantamos la voz por los mas pobres y oprimidos.

(1) Declaramos que nuestra comunidad, siguiendo el Evangelio de Jesus y teniendo en cuenta que la comunidad en si, en su mayoria es compuesta de inmigrantes, se declare santuario para todo trabajador indocumentado ya sea que venga huyendo de la situacion de querra en Centroamerica o de la situacion de pobreza existente en Mexico.

(2) Reunirnos alrededor de otras personas que viven en esta comunidad para formar mas Comunidades Eclesiales de Base y que sea a traves de estas Comunidades de Base donde podamos conocer y estudiar sobre nuestros derechos como personas y como indocumentados.

(3) Que ya que el derecho a la vida y a la dignidad de hijos de Dios son derechos de todo ser humano, Declaramos que en la comunidad se cree un centro donde se de orientacion sobre servicios medicos, de desempleo y servicios legales.

(4) Declaramos clases comunitarias tanto de alfabetizacion como de capacitacion a diferentes niveles y/o necesidades apropiadas a cada persona que desea participar en el programa educacional ya sea en Ingles, Espanol o alguna otra materia.

DOLORES MISSION
171 SOUTH BLEES ST. - LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90033 TEL. (213) 268-2397

Figure 1: Declaration of Guadalupean Commitment of the Dolores Mission Community (Dolores Mission. 1988. "Declaration of Guadalupean Commitment of the Dolores Mission Community." Archives of Union de Vecinos.)

The decision-making process described by Fr. Boyle highlights the agency of Dolores Mission parishioners and Pico-Aliso to improve their social standing and conditions. Along with this community declaration, parishioners engaged in action including, hunger strikes and vigils outside the home of Harold Ezell, the regional director of INS, to urge him to extend amnesty to spouses. They also established a women's cooperative that hired undocumented women in deference to the federal government, two homeless shelters, one for homeless immigrant men and Casa Miguel Pro, for homeless women, children, and intact families (Vilchis, unpublished interview with author, 2021; Boyle, unpublished interview with author, 2021).

These actions that departed from parishioners' reality and contested authority made it possible in 1988 for the community to embark on a process to intervene in the aforementioned issue of gangs in their neighborhood. Fr. Boyle described the unprecedented levels of gang violence and drug dealing that had evolved from small cliques and breakdancing groups. He remembered that there were, "shootings morning, noon, and night" (Boyle, unpublished interview with author, 2021). As a result, in 1988, the parish established an alternative middle school for children who were kicked out of school because of violence or drug dealing. They followed that with a program titled "Jobs for a Future," that employed gang members to carry out tasks from graffiti removal and child-care to landscaping and building maintenance. These programs sought to create an alternative to gang life for gang members. (Boyle, unpublished interview with author, 2021; Vilchis, unpublished interview with author, 2021; Sanchez, 232-233).

This created tension within the church between those who sought to support the gang members and those who, according to Boyle, "Felt like somehow the church was being overrun by gang members" (Boyle, unpublished interview with author, 2021). CEB member, Eloisa

Mendez recalled that initially she was afraid and remained uninvolved when she saw gang members hanging out on stairwells in Pico Gardens hanging out or doing drugs. Other times, however, she would hose down the stairs so they would not sit there or so they would leave. As a result of the CEB process however she reflected that if he were present, Jesus would have "talked to [gang members] and [gotten] to know them." She ultimately concluded that her actions were dividing the community because she and gang members would go their separate ways and things remained the same. Another CEB member, Juanita Lopez, narrated that many mothers preferred to stay home, go to church and pray to end the problem. However, she argued, "its ok to pray, but prayer alone won't solve anything… A little prayer and a little action" were needed (History Walls Project of Proyecto Pastoral & Comite Pro Paz en el Barrio 1993).

As such, the CEBs decided to get to know the gang members as people in order to change the situation. CEB member, Rosa Campos highlights that this was not an endorsement of the actions of gang members. Rather, they wanted to make gang members aware that they "appreciated them as people, wanted the best for them, and wanted peace in our neighborhood." The CEBs formed a committee of CEBs and other neighborhood residents known as *Comite Pro Paz en el Barrio*, or Committee for Peace in the 'Hood. The Committee began a series of meetings with gangs to introduce themselves, hear them, and to give them their message. In one meeting, a gang member reported, "We don't harm anyone who doesn't harm us first…but many people don't see us this way. They see us as the worst thing on earth because they hear this and that on the news but it's never true." CEB members, Paula Hernandez and Teresa Soto concluded that they could change this by both groups working together and respecting, trusting, and supporting each other (History Walls Project of Proyecto Pastoral & Comite Pro Paz en el Barrio 1993).

The work of the CEBs was then to transform socially the community's relationship to gang activity. Rather than ignore or antagonize each other in ways that Eloisa Mendez reflected maintained or worsened the problem, they would initiate social relationships based on cooperation, trust, respect and support. This transformation was fostered over the following six years through actions that departed from antagonistic relationships and sought to develop these social relationships.

Fr. Boyle recounts how women from the CEBs in neighborhoods where East LA Dukes, TMC, and Cuatro Flats gang members were active, began inviting them to outdoor *carne asadas*, or barbecues. At first, the gang members did not join them. The women took food to them, and the gang members then ran away and ate somewhere else. According to Fr. Boyle, reflection on this interaction and dynamic allowed the women to reflect on and transcend the fear they head. The CEB members realized when they ran away that the gang members were as scared or shy as the women were. They concluded that that they were not their enemies, they were their kids, "whether [they] brought them into the world or not" (Boyle, unpublished interview with author, 2021). This allowed them to create a new relationship with the gang members that prioritized the authority of the women as mothers over children who were gang members and thereupon build a stronger social relationship based on mutual respect. The response of the CEBs then was not to demonize, persecute, and criminalize the gang members, but to elevate this new relation of respect over the community and over the kids who were in gangs (Figure 2). As such, the CEB members transformed the issue from something they were victims of, as previously described by Zelaya (2021), to something that they could intervene in and that could be transformed.

The CEBs then employed this new relationship at a community wide level to win a battle over the use of public space. As Zelaya recalled, widespread shootings and drug dealing were a

large threat to the safety of community members and one that also cemented the power gangs had over public space. In response, the CEBs began what they called “Peace Walks” where they would pray, sing, and walk through the neighborhood to avert or even stop ongoing shootings. Fr. Boyle recalled that, “If the shooting started, the women would just get on the horn, ‘let's go,’ and then they’d walk and pray and it kind of did a calming thing. Because they had respect for the women, they wouldn't shoot over their heads,” and the gang members would go home (Boyle, unpublished interview with author, 2021).

Figure 2: CEB members enjoying a meal with gang members (Unknown Author. 1990. Untitled from We Live Here Photo Series. Photograph. Archives of Union de Vecinos.)

Similarly, the ease with which the purchasing and sale of drugs took place in the neighborhood was a battle over public space that the CEBs chose to take on. Leonardo Vilchis, who came to work as a lay person at Dolores Mission with the CEBs in 1986, recalls that "as you drove into the projects down Gless Street, there were several spots where people would hang out to sell drugs. The women, when it was [night], would close the doors and just get inside their homes." Consequently, "the community at night belonged to the gang members" (Vilchis, unpublished interview with author, 2021). In response one CEB who named themselves the *Union de Viejas Aguanderas* (UVA), or "the union of nosy, busy body ladies," chose to go after drug purchasers instead of the drug sellers. As Boyle described, "In the summer, they would have big signs. They would have the base community meeting outside because it was warm and whenever a car would come in, they'd hold up a sign that said, "If you're here to buy drugs, go home" (Boyle, unpublished interview with author, 2021). This created an uncomfortable situation for the buyers and sellers as well. In another example, Vilchis details that instead of locking themselves in their homes at night and ceding the neighborhood to the gangs, "the women started doing this kind of stepping outside wherever there were gang members… Some people would go out and sit at the steps with their children just to talk amongst themselves, neighbor to neighbor. And then what would happen is that the gang members would move away from them. So that day in that night when the community would get together just to talk, there was no drug dealing in that spot" (Vilchis 2021).

The tactic that the CEBs used was explicitly territorial over public space. Their signs and presence challenged its use as a place of drug buying and shootings in favor of its use as a peaceful place for the community. Additionally, the CEBs did not resort to the criminalization of the gang members that targeted individuals but instead sought to transform the social processes

that permitted gangs to continue. The relationships that CEB members fostered through *carne asadas* with the gang members, gave them the authority based on respect that allowed them to neutralize drug dealing and potential shootings between gangs. Gang members saw the women who fed them, who took the time to get to know them, who wanted to advocate for them when they were about to start shooting each other and likely recalled their desire for peace and respect and instead calmed down and went home. This allowed the women to win a battle over public space and assert their desire for peace over the desires of gang members. The actions of the CEB's alongside public calls by high level gang members calling for truces and an end to drive by shootings, contributed to a decrease in the years following 1992 of gang violence (Boyle, unpublished interview with author, 2021; Valasik et al. 2017, 294; Lopez and Katz 1993a; 1993b)

Gang members, however, did not always peacefully acquiesce to the social transformation underway. Boyle describes that in response to the challenge on drug purchasing, "this pissed off the Crips in particular, so they firebombed Esperanza Salmon's house [with] a Molotov Cocktail." Nevertheless, he highlights the strength of the women who were challenging concentrated violence and persisted in their effort, altering their methods and strategies to succeed. Ultimately, Boyle asserts that "absolutely," the number of places where drugs were sold declined (Boyle, unpublished interview with author 2021).

As the CEBs got to know gang members, their experiences, and their needs, they did not stop at trying to neutralize shootings and drug dealing, they also began to advocate in favor of the gang members and against their criminalization. *Comite Pro Paz en el Barrio* transitioned from advocating for peace not only from gang violence but from police brutality (History Walls Project of Proyecto Pastoral & Comite Pro Paz en el Barrio 1993). Police brutality affected all

residents, not just gang members as the Hollenbeck LAPD division treated all public housing residents as criminals. In one instance, the LAPD assaulted Esperanza Vasquez, a CEB member, for asking questions while the police arrested her son. In response, *Comite Pro Paz* held many meetings and marches to the Hollenbeck LAPD station to defend gang members from police abuse and to demand respect from LAPD for everyone in the neighborhood. In a 1992 meeting with Bob Medina, chief of LAPD's Hollenbeck Division, Lupe Loera declares, "We're not asking you to [only come when we call you], we're telling you to do this" (Boyle, unpublished interview with author, 2021). Boyle acknowledges that the LAPD responded to these demands by decreasing their presence in order to show their necessity. However, he stated that the community was already used to slow response times, and the LAPD's actions reaffirmed the CEB's power over their community.

Figure 3. Photograph of Pico Gardens before demolition (Tevere, Valerie. *Untitled Photograph of Pico Gardens Before Demolition*. 1990. Photograph.)

According to Fr. Boyle, the advocacy in favor of gang members that the women of the CEBs carried out gained them great respect from the gang members. He asserts, "they knew they were defending them in front of the police, the Hollenbeck Police Department, at the church" (Boyle, unpublished interview with author, 2021). In addition, they also marched to nearby factories and canneries that surrounded the Pico-Aliso projects to ask for jobs for gang members (Boyle, unpublished interview with author, 2021). Their demand was not initially successful as a result of discrimination towards projects residents. Nevertheless, these actions spurred the church into hiring gang members to do landscaping and maintenance work in the church, and eventually a program called the "Wind Program" in which factories such as Anderson Brewing and other industrial warehouses such as the *Daily Journal*, hired gang members while the church paid their salaries. What began then as an intervention *against* the gangs and the violence that was experienced every day, transformed into an intervention *with* the gang members against the social processes that created and maintained gangs, namely unemployment, lack of educational opportunities, the stigma of gang membership, and continued police repression.

The most significant transformation that took place, however, was the transformation of CEB members themselves in the ways they saw problems and solutions. Whereas they initially saw both as outside of them and from which they had to hide or avoid, they now saw themselves as capable of solving the problem. Vilchis asserts that this was a result of the actions they took. He recalls,

> Those things came together for them to develop more of a sense of self and self-understanding. They wanted to change the gang members but really, the women themselves started changing from being these scaredy cats, that would go inside their homes and didn't want to talk to these kids, to being the women who would go outside and feed them and talk to them, who would walk through the neighborhood and confront the gang violence in the community (Vilchis 2021).

In this way then, there were three transformations that took place in Pico-Aliso. First, between the CEB women and the gangs, where, as a result of reframing this social relationship into one that foregrounded respect for the women of the community and mutual trust and support, violence and crime decreased. Second, the relationship between the LAPD and the CEBs alongside gang members where the community demonstrated that instead of more repression, the gang members and the community needed more resources. Lastly, as a result of these actions, of the women themselves, where they no longer were passive about the violence but were now actively interceding in it to put an end to it. This transformation demonstrated to Kandell (1992) that Pico-Aliso residents could "make a difference and, indeed, hold the keys to their own futures." This new sense of agency was significant and would resurface in following years when the demolition of Pico Gardens was proposed.

Poverty Deconcentration or Poor People's Displacement?

In the early 1990s, President Bill Clinton's HUD secretary, Henry Cisneros, expanded President George Bush Sr.'s program, Home Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE VI). This program was modeled after Margaret Thatcher's privatization of Public Housing in England (Sanchez 2021, 237). HOPE VI financed the demolition of public housing projects, the dispersion of tenants, and the reconstruction of mixed income developments in an attempt to eliminate public housing (Reese et al. 2010, 310; Wyly and Hammel, 1999; Hackworth, 2003). This was a shift in policy away from public housing and other government sponsored programs that alleviated poverty primarily in inner city black and brown communities towards a neoliberal policy that presumed that the mixing of incomes would uplift impoverished communities. This section will describe how HOPE VI's income-mixing solution resulted in the displacement of

poor people and promoted gentrification in Boyle Heights, a neighborhood proximal to the ongoing CBD development in downtown Los Angeles.

In 1996, Cisneros awarded HACLA an initial $50 million to tear down 577 units of Pico-Aliso and replace them with 280 public housing units, 60 town homes for sale, and 100 apartments for senior citizens. The Recissions Act signed by Bill Clinton eliminated the necessity of rebuilding one unit for every unit demolished and made it possible for HACLA to reduce the number of public housing units by fifty-two percent. Additionally, because there was no right to return for anyone living there, HACLA ultimately displaced more than ninety percent of the tenants (Gordon 1993; Sanchez 2021, 237; Housing Authority 1996). Alternatively, rehabilitating the units would have cost $15 million less, the number of public housing units would have remained the same, and all tenants would have been able to remain. Lastly, the design of the community was drastically changed from long row modernist buildings that prioritized public spaces, high visibility, walkability, and grassy areas into townhomes in a gated community surrounding a large parking lot (Figure 3) (Marchman 1996 1-4).

The demolition received widespread support. Councilman Richard Alatorre attempted to relieve people's fears, stating, "Times have changed. What agencies of government were able to get away with before, they cannot get away with now" (Ramos 1996). He was a major proponent of an eastside redevelopment project named *Adelante* Eastside and worked to disassociate it from the 1950s eviction of Mexican American families from Chavez Ravine to build Dodgers Stadium (Alatorre and Grossman 2016, 365-378). The Los Angeles Times covered the project's trajectory over the following seven years, highlighting its progress and its necessity. It frequently described the community and its members as "gang infested," a "piling of poor people" and "coddled," (Editorial Board 1998; Gordon 1993; Perez 1995; Tobar 1997; Ramos 1999; Ramos 1996;

Becerra 1998a; Editorial Board 1997; Chuang 1997). Fr. Boyle also supported the demolition, believing the upgrade was overdue. The Jobs for a Future program he was now directing would receive forty temporary jobs for local gang members. Father Mike Kennedy, Greg Boyle's successor as pastor of Dolores Mission, went so far as to bless the demolition of Aliso Village in 1998 (Sanchez 2021, 238). Even the Resident Advisory Council President of Pico Gardens, stated that residents should be reminded that this would be a benefit for the community.

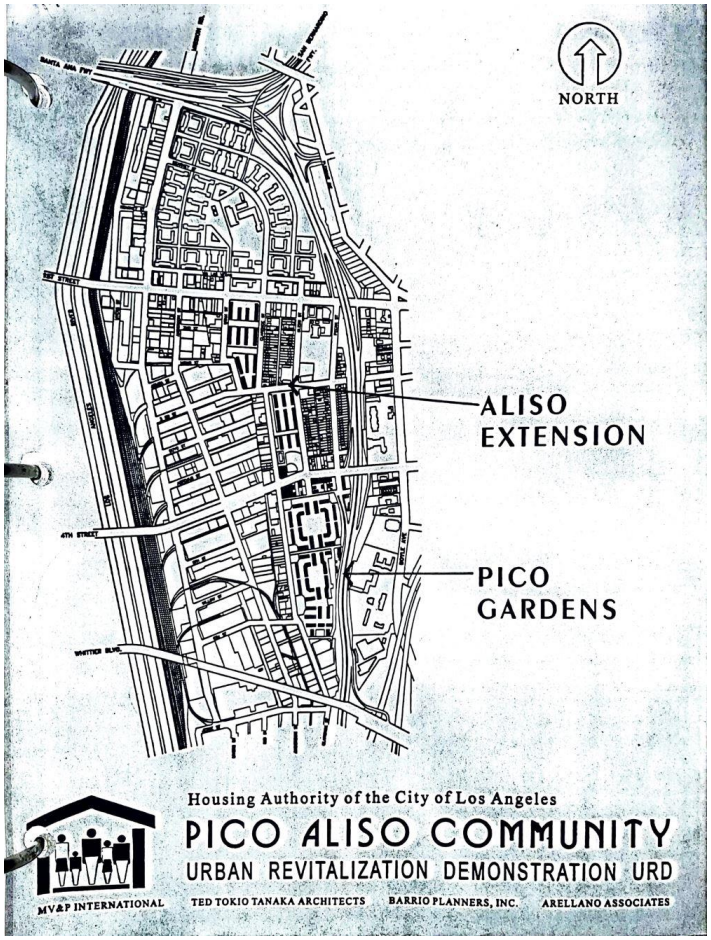


Figure 4: Pico Aliso Urban Revitalization Demonstration ("Pico Aliso Urban Revitalization Demonstration." 1995.)

Barrio Planners, a Chicano planning agency founded by Raul Escobedo, Frank Villalobos, David Angelo, and Manuel Orozco were promoters of the project as well. Originally established as a nonprofit planning agency, Barrio Planners functioned as a political advocacy group that sought to incorporate Boyle Heights residents into plans for the neighborhood.

Escobedo had worked for the Los Angeles Planning Department and was involved in the Boyle Heights Community Plan, an initiative by the city's planning director to incorporate residents' input in decision making (Huante 2022, 997). Villalobos had been displaced in the 1960s by the construction of the Pomona Freeway (Ramos 1988). Together as Barrio Planners, they advocated for the construction of a park and sound barrier that protected the Ramona Gardens public housing project from noise pollution from the San Bernardino 10 Freeway. They also designed a well-known sign over Whittier Boulevard, a famous location for cruising lowriders as part of Chicano culture (Ramos 1988). Mostly, however, they continued participating in the city's Community Planning process.

Though Barrio Planners was originally oriented towards combatting the effects of urban planning and had some impact in ameliorating its effects as exemplified by their work in Ramona Gardens, they largely served as political and cultural brokers for already approved projects and had little impact in changing planning decisions that deviated from established plans (Huante 2022, 1005). In 1975 they abandoned their non-profit status and went on to lucrative design projects including a country and racquet club in nearby Monterrey Park (Ramos 1988). With respect to the demolition of Pico Gardens in 1996, they had been advocates of rolling back the neighborhood's density in favor of more single-family zoning (Huante 2022, 1008). Their advocacy for this cause, alongside a series of defeats to change the community plan, and their transition into a for profit agency, led them to support the demolition. Their support as cultural brokers symbolically served HACLA to demonstrate a semblance of community approval for the displacement of thousands of low-income residents.

Only one Los Angeles Times article was entirely dedicated to residents' concerns with the demolition and HACLA's actions. In this article, residents Manuela Lomeli and Carmen

Mendoza, of the Aliso Extension where the demolition would begin, highlighted their love for the community and the inability of HACLA to deliver on its promise of allowing displaced tenants to return since there would be a significant decrease in the number of total units built (Tobar 1997). They demonstrated that there would be a 57% reduction in the number of *public* housing units. Out of 577 units, HACLA would only rebuild 393, a decrease of 184 units or 32%. Additionally, of the 393 new units built, eighty-one would be sold as single-family homes for which public housing tenants did not qualify, and another sixty would become housing for senior citizens. The new number of *public* housing units available to residents living in Pico Gardens was now 252 or a 56% reduction, 28 units less than the 1996 plan (Housing Authority 1996; Tobar 1997 Marchman 1996). HACLA was giving no rights to return, evicting more than half of the low-income residents, downsizing the project, and moving in higher income people to occupy the homes for sale thereby increasing the value of the land, its attractiveness, and promoting gentrification in the neighborhood.

The following section details the conflict that resulted in response to the announcement to demolish Pico-Aliso. The demolition was set to begin with the Aliso Extension of the project, followed by Pico Gardens then Aliso Village. Following the announcement of the demolition, Pico-Aliso members were conflicted and divided as Proyecto Pastoral and Dolores Mission, the church that was organizing Pico-Aliso tenants into action and empowering their decision making began promoting the demolition without considering their concerns. The group that formed against the demolition initially named themselves *Comite Paula Hernandez*, in memory of a prominent CEB member who passed away, before finally distinguishing themselves from the church and founding Union de Vecinos. Their new organization went on to include CEB members who lived in Pico-Aliso such as Yolanda Gallo, other Pico-Aliso tenants against the

demolition such as Ana Hernandez, Laura Zelaya, Manuela Lomeli, and Carmen Mendoza, and Proyecto Pastoral organizers who had left the church after its decision to support the demolition such as Leonardo Vilchis, Elizabeth Blaney, Elsa Casillas, Jose Rodriguez, and Teresa Zarate.

Their goal was to stop the demolition of their homes but as their campaign evolved, it had three different phases. The first was research and discussion on the inaccessible and limited information available to them about the HOPE VI redevelopment. Once understanding that it likely meant their eviction and displacement from Pico Gardens, they went on to challenge the demolition as well as HACLAs advances and statements. Unsuccessful in halting the demolition, they then negotiated the right to remain for organized members of Union de Vecinos so that they would not be evicted, nor have to leave Pico-Aliso at any point.

Challenging Narratives of the Demolition

When the redevelopment plan for Pico-Aliso was published in 1996 (Figure 4), within Proyecto Pastoral, Dolores Mission's lay organization, supervisors prepared Vilchis to begin discussing the importance of these projects for the community in order to gain their support for them (Vilchis 2021; Blaney 2021). However, Vilchis and other organizers worried that in reality these projects were about "demolition, privatization, and displacement." They disagreed with the church for remaining quiet on the issue and Proyecto Pastoral for deviating from the CEB decision making process of seeing, analyzing, and acting, which Fr. Boyle called "the backbone of the church" (Boyle, unpublished interview with author 2021). Vilchis recalls,

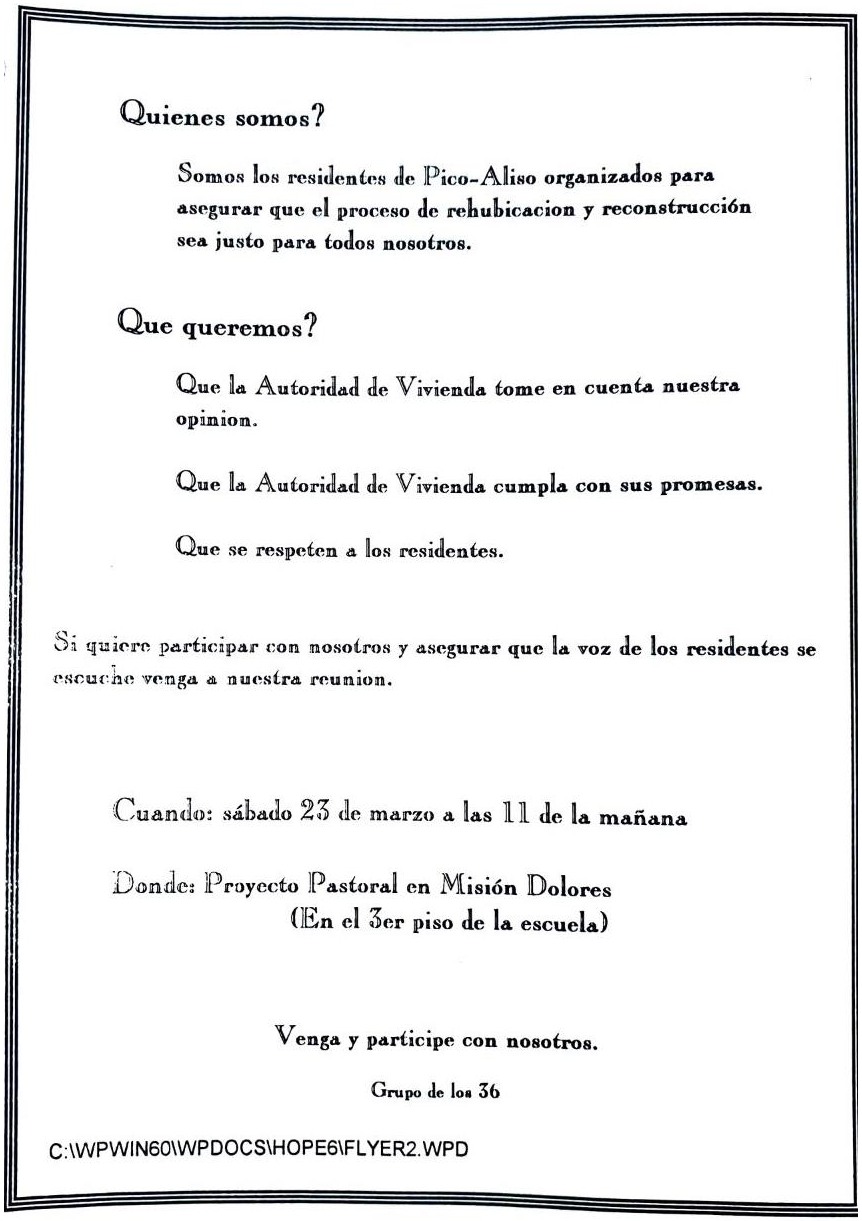
> "It was very clear that there was no commitment to really ask the community what they thought, and in the traditional way that we would ask them about supporting the gang members, about declaring sanctuary, or around that dealing with the police. There was the whole consultation process that we would do. We would call for a big meeting of all the base communities. We'd talk about all these issues and present what the issues were" (Vilchis, unpublished interview with author, 2021).

In response, organizers began visiting residents and discussing the demolition with them. They reviewed the plan and what was being said about it but wanted to know what local residents knew about it. Some of the responses they received were, “We don't know if we're going to be able to stay. We don't know what it’s going to be like.” According to Vilchis, “There was a lot of confusion and fear within the community” (Vilchis, unpublished interview with author, 2021).

Hernandez’s initial reaction was disbelief. She remembered thinking that the buildings were “*en muy buenas condiciones…si usted mira los edificios por fuera se ve en buenas condiciones, no se ven edificios que están deteriorados ni nada por el estilo”* [in very good conditions, yes honestly you would see the building from outside and you see good conditions, you don’t see buildings that are deteriorated or anything like that]. Consequently, she believed it was unlikely that Pico-Aliso would actually be demolished (Hernandez, unpublished interview with author, 2021). Zelaya was completely unaware that the demolition was going to happen. She stated, “*yo no sabía nada porque yo era una persona que vivía allí, pero no me involucraba porque era joven, pues no ponía interés”* [I did not know anything because I was a person who lived there, but I did not get involved because I was young, well I did not get interested] (Zelaya, unpublished interview with author, 2021).

In response to the confusion and lack of clarity, Vilchis, Blaney, Casillas, Rodriguez, and Zarate organized a meeting of CEB representatives where they once again reiterated their fears and doubts about the program (Figure 5). Vilchis repeats that “the overall feeling within the group was” that “this is not a good idea, or we need more information” (Vilchis, unpublished interview with author, 2021). The organizers used this conversation with the CEB leaders to argue and attempt to convince Proyecto Pastoral’s board of directors that, “The community is not

convinced of this thing, we need to have a bigger conversation" (Vilchis, unpublished interview with author, 2021). To which, according to Vilchis, Proyecto Pastoral's leadership responded, "No, that's not going to happen… We just need to go along with the plan, we are committed to do the plan" (Vilchis, unpublished interview with author, 2021).



Quienes somos?

Somos los residentes de Pico-Aliso organizados para asegurar que el proceso de rehubicacion y reconstrucción sea justo para todos nosotros.

Que queremos?

Que la Autoridad de Vivienda tome en cuenta nuestra opinion.

Que la Autoridad de Vivienda cumpla con sus promesas.

Que se respeten a los residentes.

Si quiere participar con nosotros y asegurar que la voz de los residentes se escuche venga a nuestra reunion.

Cuando: sábado 23 de marzo a las 11 de la mañana

Donde: Proyecto Pastoral en Misión Dolores
(En el 3er piso de la escuela)

Venga y participe con nosotros.

Grupo de los 36

C:\WPWIN60\WPDOCS\HOPE6\FLYER2.WPD

Figure 5: Meeting Invitation (Union de Vecinos. 1996. "Quiénes Somos? Que Queremos." Archives of Union de Vecinos.)

As a result of their disagreements, organizers were fired and forced to resign. More importantly, CEB members became conflicted and torn between trying to save their homes and following leadership of their church. Several residents resolutely decided to continue protesting the demolition, separating their actions in protection of their homes from their faith. To fight for their homes outside the church, they formed *Comite Paula Hernandez*, in remembrance of a CEB member who had recently passed away, before eventually becoming Union de Vecinos (Vilchis, unpublished interview with author, 2021; Boyle, unpublished interview with author, 2021).

In their oral histories, Vilchis (2021), Hernandez (2021), Zelaya (2021), and Blaney (2021), underscore that one of the most important aspects of the plan that needed to be highlighted and understood by residents was that the number of units constructed after the demolition were much less than those that existed. Everyone was promised the right to return, but because only 252 of the 577 public housing units would be replaced, it would be impossible to fulfill that promise.

To carry this project forward, HACLA had two outgoing messages, one going to tenants of Pico-Aliso, and another directed at the general public, which were inconsistent with each other. They appeased residents by claiming that this was an improvement for them and that they would all be able to return, and they sold themselves as benefactors to the public by arguing that the demolition was necessary to reduce the number of units and deconcentrate poverty. HACLA had two strategies to apparently resolve the incongruency of their messages: they aggressively evicted tenants without due process and forcefully sought out residents' signatures on voluntary evacuations. This way, they vacated their responsibility to return existing tenants who were now ineligible to return because of their eviction or their pressured self-eviction. Hernandez narrates

the discrepancy of units that would be built as well as the use of the aggressive eviction tactic as follows:

> "*Cuando dicen van a demoler y van a construir un bonito edificio, si, está bien, si van a volver a ocupar estas personas. Pero no es así. Ya con la experiencia que tenemos, cada edificio que emerge nuevamente un edificio nuevo ya no va a ser con estas mismas personas. Ahora las personas van a ser seleccionadas porque eso fue lo que lo que pasó. Personas que tenían problemas con sus hijos, que estaban en las pandillas, personas que estaban sospechosas vendiendo drogas... Eran muchos problemas entonces este pues no eran como dignos verdad de vivir aquí… Entonces fue así como a este fueron eliminando estas personas. Pero entonces, pues muchas personas ya no regresaron…Y entonces fueron quinientos setenta y siete [unidades] que te demolieron. Y solamente, por ejemplo, aquí en Pico Gardens solamente hay doscientos noventa y seis unidades*."
>
> (If they say they are going to demolish, and they are going to build a beautiful building, yes, that's fine, if the people are going to be able to come back and occupy it. But it is not like that. And with the experience that we have lived, each new building that emerged, they weren't the same people. Now the people will be selected because that's what happened. People who had problems with their children, who were in gangs, people who were under suspicion of selling drugs... There were many problems and so these were not allowed to live here. So that's how they went eliminating these people. So many people did not return. As you might know. So, there were five hundred seventy-seven [units] that were demolished. And just for example, here in Pico Gardens, there's only two hundred ninety-six units.]
>
> HACLA was very transparent about the intent of their pursing voluntary departures.

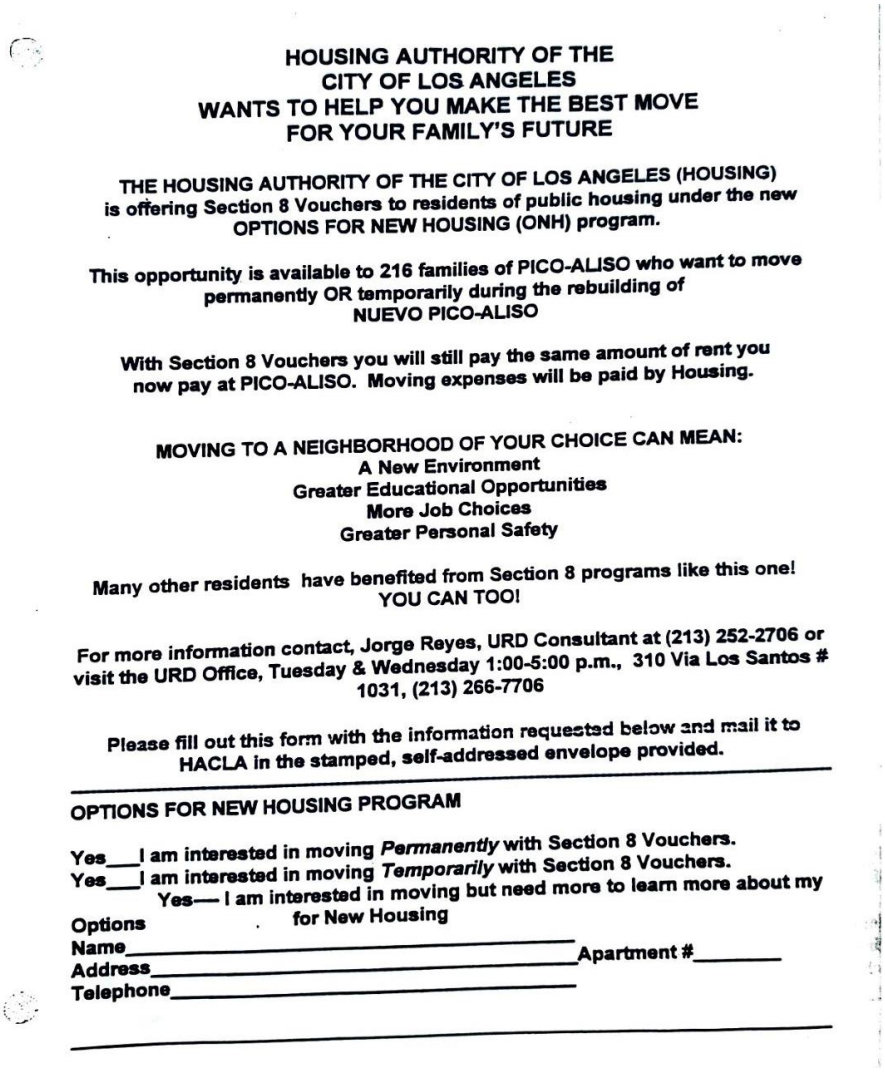
Xavier Mendoza who oversaw the demolition stated to the *Los Angeles Times* that their redevelopment strategy depended on many residents choosing to remain outside of the Pico-Aliso once they were on "temporary" relocation (Tobar 1997). Zelaya describes how she personally witnessed this phenomenon. She remembers that "*Había garantías. Mucha gente se iba con la garantía de poder regresar. Y mucha gente se fue a otros proyectos y se quedaron allá. No regresaron"* (Zelaya, unpublished interview with author, 2021). [They made guarantees. Many people left with the guarantee that they could return. And many people left to other projects and remained there. They didn't return.] HACLA acknowledged the emptiness of their guarantees to return. As Tobar (1997) noted at the time, HACLA "will give residents a

guarantee, provided they agree to be temporarily relocated. Those tenants who do sign 'transfer amendments' to their leases--authorizing the Housing Authority to temporarily move them out of Pico-Aliso--are given a 'Certificate of Guaranteed Return." However, "that guarantee may entail being placed on a long waiting list for an open apartment if, as expected, the new Pico-Aliso is filled to capacity" (Tobar 1997).

To acquire signatures on "transfer amendments" or "voluntary departures," according to Hernandez, HACLA contracted relocation workers. These relocation workers used both positive narratives of community improvement as well as intimidation and threats to convince tenants to leave so the demolition could proceed. The voluntary departure (Figure 6) itself advertised that residents could benefit from "A New Environment," "Greater Educational Opportunities," "More Job Choices," and "Greater Personal Safety" from the offers (Housing Authority 1996). Similarly, Hernandez describes how HACLA relocation workers, approached her to sign papers with verbal promises of a better community and a right to return. She explains,

> "*Nos decían que iban a mejorar a la comunidad y que las personas si querían regresar, pues podían regresar, pero que necesitábamos firmar [un desalojo voluntario]. Y entonces yo le dije, 'pero ¿cómo me van a garantizar que yo voy a regresar? Yo acabo de llegar, mi prioridad ahorita es esta vivienda."*"
>
> [They told us they were going to improve the community and that the people who wanted to return, could return, but we needed to sign [a voluntary departure]. And so, I said, "but how are you going to guarantee that I will return? I just got here; my priority right now is this housing.")

Although HACLA's representatives verbally guaranteed residents a right to return, the paperwork they were asked to sign did not supply them with a written guarantee to return. Instead, if signed, it denoted a resident's interest in being temporarily removed. However, once outside, there were no signed guarantees they could return. Without a real right to return, the "better community" that relocation workers promoted was what HACLA considered a better community, a community without the low-income tenants who already lived there.



HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES WANTS TO HELP YOU MAKE THE BEST MOVE FOR YOUR FAMILY'S FUTURE

THE HOUSING AUTHORITY OF THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES (HOUSING) is offering Section 8 Vouchers to residents of public housing under the new OPTIONS FOR NEW HOUSING (ONH) program.

This opportunity is available to 216 families of PICO-ALISO who want to move permanently OR temporarily during the rebuilding of NUEVO PICO-ALISO

With Section 8 Vouchers you will still pay the same amount of rent you now pay at PICO-ALISO. Moving expenses will be paid by Housing.

MOVING TO A NEIGHBORHOOD OF YOUR CHOICE CAN MEAN:
A New Environment
Greater Educational Opportunities
More Job Choices
Greater Personal Safety

Many other residents have benefited from Section 8 programs like this one! YOU CAN TOO!

For more information contact, Jorge Reyes, URD Consultant at (213) 252-2706 or visit the URD Office, Tuesday & Wednesday 1:00-5:00 p.m., 310 Via Los Santos # 1031, (213) 266-7706

Please fill out this form with the information requested below and mail it to HACLA in the stamped, self-addressed envelope provided.

OPTIONS FOR NEW HOUSING PROGRAM

Yes___I am interested in moving *Permanently* with Section 8 Vouchers.
Yes___I am interested in moving *Temporarily* with Section 8 Vouchers.
Yes— I am interested in moving but need more to learn more about my Options for New Housing
Name_____
Address_____Apartment #_____
Telephone_____

Figure 6. HACLA Wants to Help You Make the Best Move for Your Family's Future (Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles. 1995. "HACLA Wants to Help You Make the Best Move for Your Family's Future.")

After repeatedly denying their unwarranted offers, Hernandez narrates that they took more aggressive stances and threatened her. She discusses how voluntary departures work as well as being intimidated by relocation workers as follows,

> "*La Autoridad de la Vivienda estaba intimidando a las personas…porque nos estaban dando un desalojo voluntario. Entonces sí tu firmas ese desalojo voluntario no hay ninguna garantía que tú regreses… Ellos llegaban a las casas…conmigo llegaron dos personas y nos dijeron que si yo sabía que iban a demoler esos edificios para mejorar la comunidad…la última vez que asistieron conmigo me dijeron 'Ok, señora, pues usted está perdiendo porque todo este reporte va a ir a dar a su récord cuando usted sale algún día de esta vivienda y va a buscar otra*

> *vivienda en el mercado, usted va a tener problemas, no le van a poder rentar porque usted está teniendo problemas con el gobierno federal"* (Hernandez, unpublished interview with author, 2021).
>
> [The Housing Authority was intimidating the people…because they were giving us a voluntary departure. So, if you sign this voluntary departure, there is no guarantee that you returned… They would go to people's homes…When they came with me, two people came and they asked if I knew that they were going to demolish these buildings to improve the community… the last time they visited me they told me, "Ok ma'am well you, you are losing because this whole report will end up on your record and when you leave one day from this house and go look for another house on the market, you are going to have problems. They are not going to be able to rent to you because you are having problems with the federal government"]

Hernandez outlines how when a voluntary departure was signed, tenants were renouncing any right to return. HACLA workers therefore used aggressive methods to get residents to sign it. They would initiate by appealing to tenants' trust in HACLA and after failed attempts would threaten tenants' future housing. Zelaya specified that relocation workers would pressure tenants into singing by creating urgency that placed them in between their difficult decision to remain and the impending demolition. Zelaya narrates,

> *"Era un proceso muy difícil porque nos dijeron que si nosotros nos quedamos las construcciones iban a estar alrededor de nosotros y íbamos a soportar todos los ruidos y todo eso… Ellos se enojaron por nosotros, haber tomado la decisión de quedarnos"* (Zelaya, unpublished interview with author, 2021).
>
> [It was a very difficult process because they told us that if we stayed, the construction would be all around us and that we will have to tolerate the sound and all that. They got mad because we made the decision to stay.]

Hernandez and Zelaya point out how relocation workers used aggressive tactics as well as positive narratives to get residents out. The presumed better community outside, safety, jobs, and education that were advertised could be secured through the Section 8 program under which a tenant pays a percentage of their income in rent to their landlord while the federal government pays the rest directly to the landlord. HACLA's promise of section 8 was instrumental to the process of neoliberal poverty deconcentration (Housing Authority 1996; Zelaya, unpublished interview with author, 2021). Former Latino liaison to Tom Bradley and a board member of

Proyecto Pastoral, Yolanda Chavez promised that Section 8 was an improvement for residents when she reported to the *Los Angeles Times* that at the time, "200 families will be given Section 8 housing vouchers so that they may move out of the area and rent in private-sector-owned housing... Poor people, like everyone else, need choices, so that they can pick what is best for them" (Chavez 1996). Nonetheless, residents had many issues with Section 8. Zelaya delineates what the choice between public housing and Section 8 meant.

> "*Muchas personas se fueron a Sección 8 y tomamos más la decisión cuando nos dábamos cuenta de personas que estaban ya fuera de los proyectos y que tenían muchos problemas con los vouchers. Porque eso pasaba mucho… Tenía que andar buscando y muchos que te rentaban a la primera solo te renta un tiempo y después decidía, 'no, tenéis que buscar,' entonces uno tenía que buscar*"
>
> (Many people left to Section 8, and it made our decision stronger, when we realized there were people who were outside the projects who had many problems with the vouchers. Because that happened a lot. They had to search, and many landlords would at first rent to you for some time and later decide, "no, you have to go look," so one had to go look.)

Zelaya attests to the precarity which tenants experienced on the private market regardless of the support that HACLA proclaimed through Section 8 vouchers. Though they could rent wherever, there were few places that would rent to them, and the tenants were also very dependent on landlords' continued desire to participate in the Section 8 Program. These deconcentration efforts thereby did not improve the conditions of poverty that Pico-Aliso tenants found themselves in. Instead, it displaced the problem elsewhere and placed a significant burden of responsibility on low-income tenants so that HACLA could carry out its gentrifying project.

The eighty-one homes sold for private ownership were another positive narrative that HACLA used to garner support for the demolition. They argued that they would be beneficial to the neighborhood as they would diversify and deconcentrate poverty. HACLA was selling homes at market rate where low-income tenants once resided to higher income earners under the guise of creating a mixed income community. They maintained that tenants were partners in the

process and lured residents with the idea that these homes could be for them, but no resident qualified for them or ended up residing in them (Zelaya 2021). Zelaya mentions how it quickly became clear that these homes were not for them, yet HACLA took them through the process of applying for them. She describes,

> "E*sas casas supuestamente eran para nosotros los de los proyectos para compra. Y lo que hicieron ellos, mandaron el banco… Y nos cobraban $20 a cada inquilino. Y muchas personas aplicamos y pagamos los $20 para la aplicación. Y cuando ya íbamos nos sentamos, nos decían que nosotros no calificamos porque no estábamos al nivel del sueldo que ellos necesitaban para poder comprar ahí. ¿Y qué pasó? Nosotros que luchamos, y otra gente de afuera vino a comprar casa y viven allí. Ninguno de los proyectos, nadie pudo comprar, porque todos los que aplicamos, ninguno calificó…solo escuché gente quejándose, 'nos mintieron, nos mintieron' y…lo vivimos. Esa experiencia que todo lo que ellos decían era mentira, porque todo lo pintaron bien, que iban a ser bonitas, casas y que nosotros íbamos a ser los primeros en habitarlos y todo y no fue así. No fue así"* (Zelaya, unpublished interview with author, 2021).
>
> [Those houses were supposedly for us from the projects to be able to buy them and they brough bank representatives… and they charged us $20 each tenant. And a lot of people applied and paid the $20 for the application. And when we went, we sat down, and they told us that we don't qualify because we weren't at the level of income that they needed to buy there. And what happened? We fought, and instead other people from outside came to buy and live there. Not one person from the projects, no one could buy. In all, out of those of us who paid $20, no one qualified…I only heard people complaining, "They lied to us, they lied to us…" We lived it. That experience that everything they told us was a lie, because they painted it all nicely, that they were going to be beautiful homes and we were going to be the first to inhabit them and all, and it wasn't like that.]

Zelaya explains how HACLA used narratives of a better community for residents while in reality the plan was not organized around the needs of low-income tenants. HACLA was in the process of implementing an alternative vision for the community where low-income tenants were not living there and higher income homeowners were. In this way, HACLA was the promoter of state sponsored gentrification by replacing an existing low-income community of tenants and replacing it with a higher income one of homeowners.

From Reflection to Action: Confronting the Demolition

Given the incongruency between what HACLA was telling residents and what it was actually doing, Union de Vecinos clarified the information allowing residents to make well informed decisions about leaving or remaining as well as about working together to fight to remain. There was a lot of fear amongst those who were being compelled to sign voluntary departures as well as by organized members who refused to sign. Confronting this fear, Zelaya admits, was possible by talking in meetings about,

> *"Los derechos que nosotros como inquilinos teníamos que nosotros no sabíamos. Y si teníamos miedo, porque teníamos miedo a ser desalojados y todo eso a pesar de que nosotros habíamos tomado la decisión de no irnos…Pero ahí nos hablaban sobre los derechos, sobre la voz, que es importante estar unidos para poder lograr lo que queremos llevar a cabo"* (Zelaya, unpublished interview with author, 2021).
>
> [The rights that we as tenants had that we did not know. Yes, we were scared because we were scared to be evicted and all that despite having taken the decision to not leave…but there, we talked about our rights, about our voice, about the importance of being united to achieve what we want to complete.]

With the information dispelled, Zelaya highlights the second phase of Union de Vecinos' campaign which was being united in carrying out their right to remain. Zelaya recognizes the difficulty of her decision and the fear she and others had. However, having rights, using their voice, and being united is what she relied on to achieve what they set out to do.

In order to build unity, *Union de Vecinos* began holding public meetings outdoors between buildings, where they were visible to surrounding residents. Hernandez began to attend these regular meetings because when she saw people outside, she began to believe this was an important cause (Hernandez, unpublished interview with author, 2021). Their meetings started to grow, and they shifted from dispersed single tenants in different parts of the project to groups of tenants in the same building or on the same block. Zelaya and Hernandez alongside Manuela Lomeli and Carmen Mendoza mentioned above as well as three dozen other tenants became

known as “the 36,” referring to their status as the first thirty-six units that were slated for demolition.

These meetings then helped Hernandez and Zelaya remain steadfast in their decision and take both individual and collective action against HACLA. Zelaya and Hernandez recognized that HACLA’s escalation from nagging to intimidation was a response to their decision as Union de Vecinos members to deviate from their plan and fight to remain. Union de Vecinos members were fed up with intimidation by HACLA and overcame their fears. During one solicitation to sign a relocation contract, Hernandez asked the relocation worker,

> “*Y aunque yo tuviera derechos…todavía me van a presionar… porque ya han venido tres veces…y esto ya es una presión que forzosamente tengo que firmar este documento para …poder salir de aquí… Pero ¿qué va a pasar si yo no me salgo? Yo no creo que vaya a ser muy agradable. Si vienen los medios de comunicación y todas las demás personas que van a mirar, que me van a desalojar.’ Dijo, ‘si usted no se sale, va a venir el Sheriff, y te va a desalojar”*” (Hernandez, unpublished interview with author, 2021).
>
> [If I had rights, would you still be pressuring me…because you’ve come three times…and now this is pressure that I have to sign by force to be able to leave here…but what’s going to happen if I don’t leave? I’m just saying I don’t think it will look good if the media and everyone, all the other people, will see you evicting me. They said, ‘well yes if you don’t leave, the sheriff will come and evict you.]

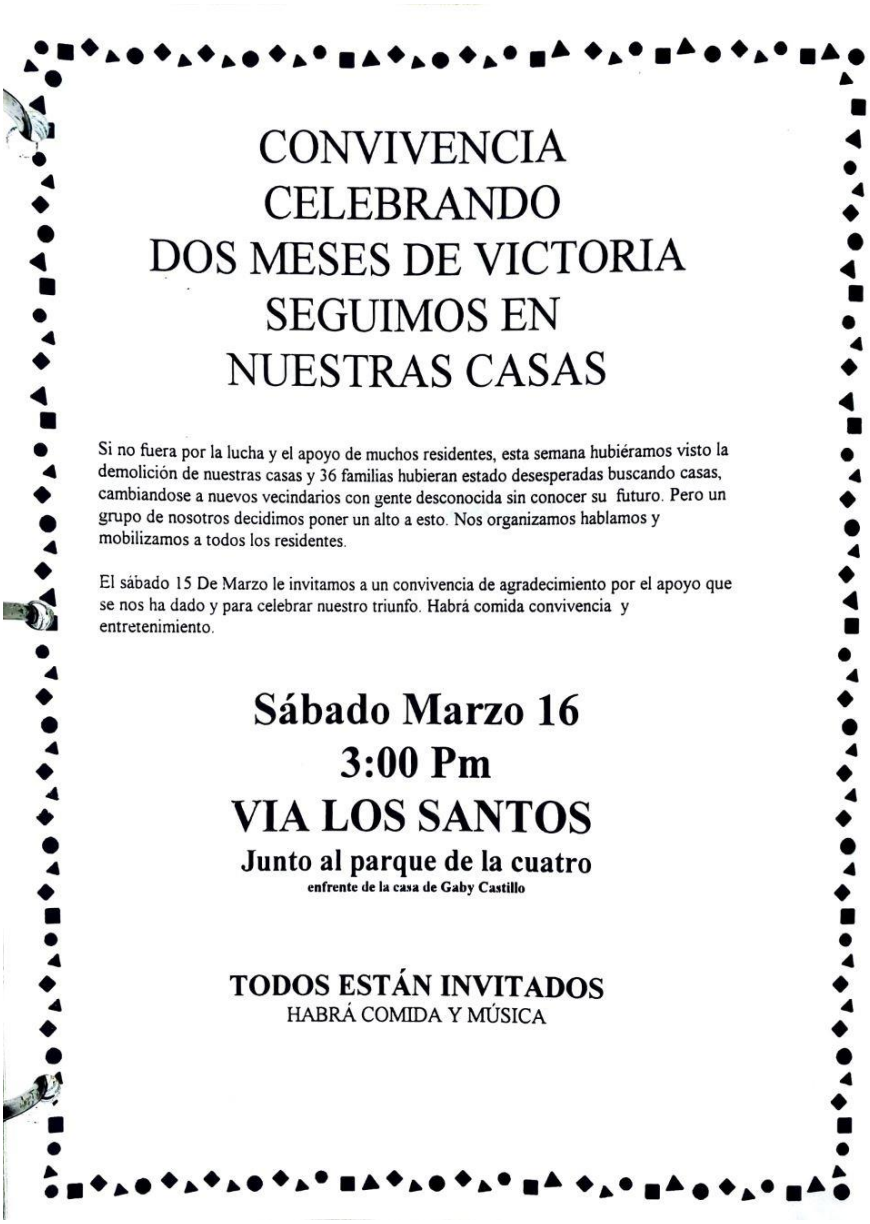
Hernandez considered HACLA’s actions to be forms of intimidation. What they described as a choice—to leave or remain in their homes—appeared to her as compulsory. With or without rights, Hernandez believed she had the power to shift public perception on the demolition through the striking visuals of an eviction on television. In response, the HACLA workers continued their intimidation and threatened her with inevitable violent police displacement that they would carry out on her.

As an organization, Union de Vecinos used a variety of tactics to remain in the neighborhood as long as possible and to build community to sustain their struggle. For example, they used the government’s own bureaucratic process to delay the demolition when they complained to the

federal government, organized protests, and held celebrations and fundraisers to draw new members (Ramos 1996; Home Edition 1997; Zelaya 2021). Ultimately, these tactics were successful in pressuring HACLA to negotiate an agreement with them so that they could remain in the project (Hernandez, unpublished interview with author, 2021; Zelaya, unpublished interview with author, 2021; Vilchis, unpublished interview with author, 2021; Blaney, unpublished interview with author, 2021).

On September 26, 1996, Union de Vecinos delayed the ceremonial demolition of the first three units that were symbolic for the kickstart of the larger project. The ceremony was set to be attended by HACLA president, Don Smith, project manager Xavier Mendoza, press and other public officials. Thirty minutes before it was set to begin, it was hurriedly cancelled. Union de Vecinos organized 100 residents to complain to the federal government about their failure to adequately consult Pico-Aliso residents (Ramos 1996). They charged that the cooperation that officials cited as support for the project was coercion. Elsa Casillas accused HACLA of simply dictating the terms to residents. In another instance, Union de Vecinos held a protest against the commencement of demolition of the first 36 units. Zelaya, who was a resident of one of these units, recalls how these actions made her feel.

> *"Me acuerdo que tuvimos una protesta porque ya querían demoler. Ya estaban para meter el tractor y cuando hubo la protesta no lo pudieron… Se detuvo y ahí fue donde creímos más, donde yo dije, 'Oh no, esto si es en serio. Sí, si tenemos la voz y el poder para poder hacer las cosas'"* (Zelaya, unpublished interview with author, 2021).
>
> [I remember that we had a protest because they already wanted to demolish, they were ready to put in the tractor and when there was the protest, they couldn't do it…And it stopped and that's where we believed the most. Where I said "oh no, this is serious. Yes, we do have the voice and the power to do things" do you understand?]



CONVIVENCIA
CELEBRANDO
DOS MESES DE VICTORIA
SEGUIMOS EN
NUESTRAS CASAS

Si no fuera por la lucha y el apoyo de muchos residentes, esta semana hubiéramos visto la demolición de nuestras casas y 36 familias hubieran estado desesperadas buscando casas, cambiandose a nuevos vecindarios con gente desconocida sin conocer su futuro. Pero un grupo de nosotros decidimos poner un alto a esto. Nos organizamos hablamos y mobilizamos a todos los residentes.

El sábado 15 De Marzo le invitamos a un convivencia de agradecimiento por el apoyo que se nos ha dado y para celebrar nuestro triunfo. Habrá comida convivencia y entretenimiento.

Sábado Marzo 16
3:00 Pm
VIA LOS SANTOS
Junto al parque de la cuatro
enfrente de la casa de Gaby Castillo

TODOS ESTÁN INVITADOS
HABRÁ COMIDA Y MÚSICA

Figure 7: Party Celebrating 2 Months of Victory Union de Vecinos. "Convivencia Celebrando Dos Meses de Victoria Seguimos en Nuestras Casas," March 16, 1996. Archives of Union de Vecinos.

Union de Vecinos successfully delayed the demolition twice by filing complaints and protesting. To commemorate these events, they held a party outside the home of Gaby Castillo, one of the residents of the first 36 units slated for demolition (Figure 7). In their invitation, they highlighted that had they not fought, "*Hubieran estado buscando casas, cambiándose a nuevos vecindarios con gente desconocida sin conocer su futuro*" [they would be looking for homes,

changing neighborhoods with unknown people without knowing their future] (Union de Vecinos 2022). They affirmed that in response to their uncertainty, they put a stop to the demolition, they "*organizamos, hablamos, y movilizamos a todos los residentes*" [organized, talked, and mobilized all the residents] (Union de Vecinos 2022). This event allowed residents to reflect on their victory and renew their commitment to continue fighting for their homes. It interrupted HACLAs aggression as well as the resultant feelings of uncertainty, doubt, and worry. While HACLA relentlessly pushed the demolition forward, Union de Vecinos members were able to put a stop to it by persistently fighting for their homes.

As a result of their persistence and the delays they caused, *Union de Vecinos* was able to secure a negotiation with HACLA that led to victory. They began working with David Etezadi, a housing lawyer interested in strengthening low-income communities and preserving low-income housing, in order to protect their rights and negotiate (Tobar 1997; Vilchis, unpublished interview with author, 2021; Blaney, unpublished interview with author, 2021; Zelaya, unpublished interview with author, 2021). After months of tolerating intimidations and pressure to move, resolutely deciding to fight, holding countless meetings, and staging protests, Union de Vecinos members secured a right to remain and not be displaced. Zelaya contends that they won because, "*nosotros habernos quedado, que nosotros enfrentamos el miedo, enfrentamos temor, enfrentamos tantas cosas. Tantos obstáculos, pero salimos adelante*"" (Zelaya, unpublished interview with author, 2021). [We stayed, that we faced our fear, we faced the trepidation, we faced so many things. So many obstacles but we made it through." They would be moved temporarily within Pico-Aliso to a section that was not being demolished during that time, then they would be able to select where they would live and be the first residents to live in these new units. They even convinced HACLA to pay for the moving company who would help them

relocate within Pico-Aliso (Hernandez, unpublished interview with author, 2021; Zelaya, unpublished interview with author, 2021).

HACLA had been intent on carrying out their project and feigned community participation to move it forward rapidly. As a result, they eliminated all tenant agency and relied on vague "trust" and partners that supported the demolition. Alternatively, Union de Vecinos organizers employed the methods they had inherited from working for Dolores Mission to empower tenants to analyze their reality, make decisions, and act on them as agents of their own future. Reflecting on their victory, Zelaya affirms that Pico-Aliso tenants were agents in the fight to remain. She asserts, "*Peleamos, tomamos esas decisiones. Nos ayudaron la Unión de Vecinos a tomar esas decisiones y nosotros hallamos en lo correcto"* (Zelaya, unpublished interview with author, 2021). [We fought; we made those decisions. The Union de Vecinos helped us make those decisions and we chose the correct position, but the move was always going to be in the same apartments.] She and her neighbors had taken all the risk, tolerated and challenged all the abuse, ultimately took their fate into their own hands, and were victorious in remaining. She assures that they made the right decision and that this was essential to their victory. As a result of their action, the residents who would have been the first to be evicted, never had to leave their homes.

Union de Vecinos in Pico-Aliso After the Demolition

Hernandez describes that immediately after winning their homes, Union de Vecinos had another challenge in front of them. Aliso Village, the other development in the Pico-Aliso housing projects, was slated for demolition. HACLA had gained experience from fighting Union de Vecinos in Pico Gardens and the Aliso Extension and acted swiftly and decisively to eliminate resistance to the demolition of Aliso Village. During one heated meeting, HACLA

authorities violently repressed a protest of the project and LAPD body slammed an Aliso Village resident. Ultimately, the demolition of Aliso Village took place in 1998 and by its inauguration in 2003, no negotiations with residents took place (Becerra 1998; Los Angeles Times 2003; Wuchuan 2003). HACLA reduced the number of units at Aliso Village from 685 to 377, and similarly, included higher income tenants by selling ninety-three homes sold on the private market. Additionally, HACLA privatized the community by leasing it to McCormack Baron Salazar, who describe themselves as "the nation's leading for-profit developer, manager and asset manager of economically-integrated urban neighborhoods" (McCormack Baron Salazar 2014). With Aliso Village's privatization, HACLA included another component of neoliberalization of a good that helped poor people remain housed.

Zelaya similarly continued working with Union de Vecinos and became the president of the Pico-Aliso Resident Advisory Council, where she fought successfully to bring more resources to the community as well as against the privatization of Pico-Aliso in 2008 (Zelaya 2021). She describes that this built on her experience early on with Union de Vecinos when she began to understand the power of her voice, lost all fear, and began to fight for her and her kids. She asserts that if they were able to stop a demolition, why not ask for more. As RAC president she led a participatory budgeting program and allocated resources for children's and senior citizen. She even tried to get HACLA to install a pool. She also challenged arbitrary decisions made by HACLA. For instance, the parking outside the HACLA offices had always been exclusively allocated to HACLA staff. However, with community support they were converted into parking for all residents to use. Additionally, she attested that an alley leading to the freeway was always closed making access inconvenient for residents. She was able to open the alley and make it more convenient for residents. (Zelaya, unpublished interview with author, 2021). While

seemingly simple, these achievements signify the arbitrariness of some of HACLA's decisions that maintain tenants unempowered. Achieving, for example, being able to use an alley to access the freeway, while simple, questions why it was closed in the first place and thereupon enshrines the value that the neighborhoods planning should serve the residents' needs.

Together, Hernandez and Zelaya recalled that the onslaught against them and their community did not cease after Pico-Aliso was demolished. The project of displacing public housing residents continued after with the demolition of Aliso Village two years later as well eleven years later with the efforts to privatize Pico-Aliso. Nonetheless, they continued to fight to remain and for even more resources for themselves and their families. *Union de Vecinos* grew beyond Pico-Aliso in Boyle Heights and expanded to other parts of the neighborhood. The story of the women who fought demolition of Pico-Aliso similarly went on to inspire tenants across Boyle Heights that they can and should fight for their homes. Additionally, *Union de Vecinos* went so far as to develop larger relationships with tenant organizations across the city, country, and world.

Union de Vecinos in 2021: 25 Years of Community Power

In 2021, when these oral histories were conducted, Union de Vecinos had completed 25 years working with tenants in Boyle Heights. Hernandez maintains that they continued empowering tenants to fight for their homes and for the types of improvements they want in their neighborhood. Additionally, *Union de Vecinos* formed a central part in establishing the Los Angeles Tenants Union, a citywide coalition of tenants' associations and locals fighting evictions, rent increases and harassment against tenants. Hernandez admits, "*La Unión es mucho más fuerte en la actualidad que al principio. Pues al principio nadie nos conocía*" (Hernandez,

unpublished interview with author, 2021). [The Unión is much stronger in actuality than in the beginning, well in the beginning, nobody knew us.]

On April 1, 2021, as members of the Los Angeles Tenants Union during the COVID-19 Pandemic, *Union de Vecinos* launched a rent strike and campaign that called for the public to prioritize "Food not Rent" and the health of their families while jobs were being lost and the future was uncertain (Union de Vecinos 2020). This crisis compounded housing precarity that was being experienced before the pandemic due to rising rents and weak tenant protections and exacerbated instances of tenant harassment and intimidation by landlords (L. Hernandez, unpublished interview with author, 2021; Romero, unpublished interview with author, 2021; Rivera, unpublished interview with author, 2021; Navarro, unpublished interview with author, 2021; Pu, unpublished interview with author, 2021). This moment in the history of Union de Vecinos and tenants in Los Angeles is outside of the scope of this thesis but will be explored further in future research.

Conclusion

The ultimately successful demolition of Pico-Aliso is significant as the largest demolition by number of housing units in Boyle Heights in the twentieth century. As mentioned, 703 or nearly two thirds of the public housing units were not replaced leading to the withering away of a vital housing option for the poorest residents of Los Angeles. Though unsuccessful in halting the demolition completely, the resistance waged by *Union de Vecinos* delayed the project twice and ultimately secured a contract for their members to return under the same conditions and into brand new homes. This bittersweet victory launched the organization to build across Boyle Heights and Los Angeles County in the following 27 years. Throughout this history, they have played a significant role in housing and environmental issues waging strong battles against

gentrification in Boyle Heights, water privatization in Maywood, and rent during the COVID-19 Pandemic with the Los Angeles Tenants Union.

Union de Vecinos' struggle against the demolition of Pico-Aliso falls within the twentieth century trajectory of challenging developments that displace Boyle Heights residents. As discussed, working class immigrants have built Boyle Heights' social, cultural and political life while the city, state and federal governments, in collaboration with private capital, have attempted to displace them during the period discussed. While Pico-Aliso residents were building an infrastructure of alternatives for gang members, one of the principal reasonings for the demolition was to eliminate the gang problem. As a result, *Union de Vecinos*, like many other organizations throughout the twentieth century, attempted to preserve what the community had constructed. Their work replicates under new terms the fights against freeway construction by the Anti-Golden State Freeway Committee, the Brown Beret's points against urban renewal for the construction of housing for people with higher wages, and Edward Roybal and the CSO's promotion of *more* public housing. Further, in recent years, *Union de Vecinos* work recalls eviction defenses and the restoring of utilities that Jewish and communist organizations carried out during the Great Depression as well as the rent strikes that CASA organized.

Lastly, in discussing gentrification, scholars have discussed its beginning in the 1990s and promoters as business associations who lobby local governments (Soja, Morales, and Wolff 1983, 198-211; Reese, Deverteuil, and Thach 2010, 310-312; Kahne 2018, 310; Sims 2015, 10; Beauregard 1991, 92; Lin 2008, 113; Park and Kim 2008, 131). The case of Pico-Aliso aligns with the periodization scholars have used but demonstrates a case of gentrification initiated and promoted by the federal and local government. This example can serve as a tool to more closely evaluate the role of the state in gentrification as a secondary supporter or a promoter. Further,

HACLA's neoliberal agenda to push public housing tenants onto the subsidized private Section 8 program prompts scholars to explore the connections between neoliberal economics and gentrification as an urban development strategy.

In future work, I hope to look closer at the relationship between the state and gentrification as well as the connections between neoliberal economic policy, gentrification, and the contemporary housing crises taking place in large U.S. cities. This research project would do so through the lens of *Union de Vecinos*' twenty-seven years doing work outside of Pico-Aliso in the surrounding neighborhood of Boyle Heights and in Los Angeles County as they promoted community safety, public health, and tenant power to tackle threats such as environmental justice, the allocation of resources, and gentrification.

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