Counternarratives of Community-Based Advocacy as Sources of
Knowledge for Urban Planning

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Abstract

Informed by the deliberate work of advocates to address the positioning of community voices as subaltern, the last three decades have seen a growing push for alternative approaches to urban planning. In order to foster the culturally competent use and development of public space in the United States, urban planning education must include a focus on the centrality and persistence of racist ideologies and the current fueling of anti-immigrant sentiments that challenge the idea of who "belongs" in communities. Even planners informed by critical theories of participatory practice face challenges working within systems based on positivist and Western-dominant epistemologies. In this article, the authors present three examples of how typically invisibilized voices in communities can be centered in urban planning and design processes, with the goal of informing and expanding preparatory curricula in more culturally sustaining ways. Specifically, the authors employ the concept of counternarratives from critical race theory to present perspectives that challenge dominant practices and understandings. The counterstories presented here document ways that activists of color have involved community members in documenting their experiences in public spaces and used these insights to promote change. The authors apply an asset-oriented perspective that aims to incorporate overlooked sources of knowledge and expertise in communities in order to imagine new possibilities and futures in shared urban spaces by changing planning processes.

Keywords: community advocacy, counternarratives, urban planning

Cultural competence requires practitioners to attend to local uniqueness and individual needs and identities, while also meeting the goals of public affairs work to impact the lives of large groups of people. Traditional approaches to urban planning that consider physical design-oriented activities as separate from policy-oriented socioeconomic development have limited the profession's ability to influence public consciousness (Gleye, 2014). Planners today must be aware of the ways that increasingly globally connected networks impact local infrastructure (Graham & Marvin, 2001; Sandercock, 2003), while also building their capacities to recognize and engage with multiple stakeholders. As Neill (2004) maintained, urban planning in multicultural cities must "balance acknowledgment of cultural difference with a civic sense of what is held in common and what unites" (p. 2); Dzur (2017) defined democracy as "sharing power to shape a common public life with others who are not the same as us" (p. 1) and related pessimism and distrust to non-participatory management of public spaces by professionals who do not listen to communities. As multiculturalism increasingly defines the character of contemporary democracy, applying culturally competent practices to work that is inherently public, like urban planning, requires practitioners to address who is included in decision-making processes.

In this article, we present three examples of ways that typically invisibilized community voices can be centered in urban planning and design processes, with the goal of informing and expanding preparatory curricula in more culturally sustaining ways. Specifically, we employ the concept of counternarratives from critical race theory (CRT) to present perspectives that challenge dominant practices and understandings. Following a review of relevant research literature in urban planning, we introduce ways that CRT has been applied to the field of education and then present counternarratives from three Latinx transit-mobility justice advocates in Los Angeles to demonstrate how CRT might be applied to urban planning education in particular. We conclude with a discussion of how urban planning curricula can use counternarratives as sources of knowledge to prepare new professionals in the field to engage with communities in more culturally responsive and radically democratic ways.

Literature Review: **Critical Shifts in Urban Planning**

Late 19th- and early 20th-century approaches to city design were based on assumptions of progress and modernity developed in the context of the European industrial revolution. Adopting these ideals in urban planning practice, Western powers then spread versions of the ideal of the standardized infrastructure network (Graham & Marvin, 2001) across parts of the world they had colonized and exploited. These roots, along with a focus on technology and large-scale structures rather than on individual users and navigators of space, led to a narrow framing of community in urban planning curricula (Sandercock, 2004). The framing of

planning challenges as "wicked problems" (Rittel & Webber, 1984) has also had enduring influence on the field; the focus on recognizing complexity still often results in a narrow set of proposed solutions. The last three decades, however, have seen a growing push for alternative approaches to planning, informed by the deliberate work of advocates to counter the positioning of community voices as subaltern.

Urban planning curricula have often integrated community-based outreach into fieldwork or practicum courses, emphasizing the applied nature of these practices (Kotval, 2003). Yet, planners must first consider their own philosophical underpinnings and worldviews in order to shift their perspectives toward more equitable practice (Gleye, 2014; Umemoto, 2005). In order to address the social contexts that make planning problems wicked (Rittel & Webber, 1984), it is necessary to address unequal distributions of power and influence in decision-making processes. Frameworks that provide structured ways to engage in power analysis, such as Gaventa's (2006) model, have been taken up in many areas of development work, including planning. Power analyses have been used to inform participatory processes in many parts of the world, emphasizing the connections among individual, social, and global power (Pantazidou, 2012). Any critical approach to planning must focus on the complex ways that power is distributed or concentrated; critical planning theory views planning as "a problem-solving activity that transcends rationality and necessarily manages social relationships" (Mäntysalo, 2005, p. 322). This focus on the dialectic relationship between individual and group identities, and how they are shaped by broader sociopolitical forces, is reflected, for instance, in Pine's (2010) examination of the complexities of defining "community" and insider/outsider status in Philadelphia neighborhoods.

Even well-meaning, justice-oriented work, however, can fall into the trap of developing ways to change the behavior of non-dominant groups, rather than suggesting fundamental redistributions of power. For example, Wolch, Wilson, and Fehrenbach (2005) engaged in a rigorous equity-mapping analysis of park and open-space distribution in Los Angeles and suggested offering increased technical assistance to marginalized communities as a local policy solution to address these residents' lack of participation in planning processes. Alternatively, Pearsall and Pierce (2010) emphasized that "the status quo is not apolitical" (p. 578) and called for planners to intervene and shift the direction of general political discourses. A perspective informed by critical theory would suggest that entire granting processes be revised to consider how current funding allocation strategies maintain, rather than disrupt, inequitable histories of space and resource distribution.

Even planners informed by critical theories of participatory practice face resistance working within systems based on positivist and Western-dominant

epistemologies. Processes aimed at challenging these approaches must do so deliberately—and often slowly. Based on the documentation of a five-month engagement with members of the native Hawaiian Papakōlea homestead community that resulted in the development of a vision statement for the future, Umemoto (2005) presented a vision of "culture-based planning" that included historical knowledge and followed the community's worldview, rather than imposing a process from outside. Wekerle (2004) connected the local organizing efforts of food-justice activists in Toronto to larger movements resisting the impacts of economic globalization and suggested that enacting policy change without the input of those the policies are designed to serve violates inclusive understandings of citizenship. Many planning scholars have looked to these examples as spaces of resistance, where identities can be (re)defined and where oppression and discrimination can be confronted (Neill, 2004).

Of particular value to urban planning are critical studies of life in cities that explore the links between capitalism and political systems resulting in commodification of human life and access (Brenner, Marcuse, & Mayers, 2012). In settler colonial societies like the United States, the disenfranchisement of people of color has always been linked to unequal distributions of economic capital and to the attachment of differential values to individual human lives. Western cities in the 21st century are demographically multicultural (Sandercock, 2003), and rising income inequality shapes the lives of their residents. To counter these dehumanizing effects and refocus cities on people rather than profit (Brenner et al., 2012), reframing planning issues as explorations of loving attachment to people and places should be encouraged (Porter, Sandercock, & Umemoto, 2012).

The Importance of Narratives in Critical Urban Planning Practices

The role of story has always had an important impact on planning, in both practice and pedagogy (Sandercock, 2005). The significance of documenting how narratives are fundamental to public policy and urban planning processes is a small but growing area of research (Honeck, 2018). Some scholars using this approach have included counternarratives in their analyses, typically using this term to mean oppositional or non-dominant perspectives. In a comparison of temporary-use policies in two German cities, Honeck (2018) employed the term *counternarrative* to indicate a shift in institutionalized support for such policies as Berlin's urban space became more commodified in the real estate market. In the introduction to a special issue of the journal *Planning Theory* meant to complicate oversimplified understandings of global and local connections, Shatkin (2011) noted the existence of "a variety of appropriations of space and social behavior that contravene master planning" (pp. 79-80); the documentation of such appropriations serves as one form of counternarrative. These examples offer evidence of growing attention in the

field to previously overlooked perspectives that can contribute to more complete understandings of planning processes.

Other work that addresses unequal power dynamics in sociocultural contexts has explicitly adopted counternarratives as part of a critical approach. From a postmodern perspective, counternarratives can challenge Eurocentric sociopolitical structures through a critique of stories that "manipulate public consciousness" by legitimizing assumptions that a set of common cultural ideals exists in a nation (Peters & Lankshear, 1996, p. 2). This approach aligns with geographer Soja's (1999) concept of "thirdspace," which has been highly influential in the development of critical urban planning philosophies. More generally, counternarratives challenge what are assumed to be normative experiences, and they challenge the internalization of hegemonic "master narratives" that reinforce hierarchies (Andrews, 2004). Counternarratives represent one way to challenge "overarching status quo assumptions, ideologies, and concepts about people, place, worth, and deservingness" (Blessett, Gaynor, Witt, & Alkadry, 2016, p. 281). The use of counternarratives in public administration curricula helps students learn how to engage with communities marginalized by past policy decisions and typically excluded from ongoing policy conversations.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology: Critical Race Theory in Education

The normative influence of racial stereotyping and segregation continues to shape urban planning practice and reinforces assumptions embedded in preparatory curricula that emphasize technological solutions over sociocultural knowledge. In describing how infrastructure and social behaviors reinforce anti-Blackness in urban spaces, Haymes (1995) noted that "in the context of American cities the category of 'race' is used metaphorically as a way to juxtapose the different 'social spaces' that make up the urban landscape, describing some as 'normal' and 'ordered' and others as not" (p. 4). Critical race theory (CRT) is rooted in a political stance that "does not pretend to be neutral, objective or apolitical" and instead "embraces the realization that knowledge comes from thinking and feeling bodies, from bodies that are raced, gendered, and sexualized among other subjectivities, from bodies that are located in hierarchical relations and places of difference" (Baszile, 2015, p. 239). Four elements of Black feminist perspectives contribute to a CRT-informed pedagogical approach: (1) concrete experiences as a criterion of meaning; (2) the use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims; (3) the ethic of caring; and (4) the ethic of personal accountability (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 471). These tenets relate to a new planning imagination—one that expands political horizons by challenging assumptions of objectivity, that breaks rules in the name of social justice, that expands planners' creativity and encourages vision, and that takes a healing approach to urban conflicts (Sandercock, 2004). Counternarratives

center the voices of people of color as experiential knowledge, and in so doing they can offer spaces for empowerment and healing (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). These applied frameworks are aligned with a focus on storytelling as a way for people of color to find power in naming their own realities and to (re)write narratives of what it means to live in their communities (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

As a movement, critical race theory is "a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism, and power" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 2). As a theoretical framework, CRT draws from legal studies and radical feminism and specifically links social constructions of race to capitalism by highlighting the enslavement of Black people and the seizure of Native American land as central to contemporary U.S. race relations (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Voice is a primary concern of CRT, in that personal and community experiences of people of color are acknowledged and centered as sources of knowledge (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). Even in educational spaces seemingly attentive to multiculturalism and plurality, historic and institutionalized racism reinforce Whiteness as the dominant status quo (Jay, 2003); therefore, CRT in education refocuses the lenses of analysis and practice on those not well served by existing racist systems.

In order to incorporate these concepts into pedagogical practices that emphasize cultural competence, educators must be committed to developing students' sociopolitical consciousness, defined by Ladson-Billings (2014) as "the ability to take learning beyond the confines of the classroom using school knowledge and skills to identify, analyze, and solve real-world problems" (p. 75). Additionally, the dynamic and shifting nature of cultural practices requires educators to intentionally center the development of students' ability to resist political forces that encourage cultural assimilation, in addition to recognizing and affirming their own cultures of origin (Paris, 2012). One example of the counterstorytelling methodology associated with CRT in education includes Bonilla's (2014) work interpreting and documenting the relational organizing practices of Latina leaders in a school community. These leaders' counternarratives explained how they challenged dominant racial narratives by validating community epistemologies, creating visions and aligning actions, and reflecting upon and negotiating their individual identities with larger institutions (Bonilla, 2014). We propose that urban planning coursework can benefit from explicit efforts to explore how planners' own lives—and those of community members—are situated in historical contexts marked by unequal power distribution through deliberate adoption of pedagogies inspired by CRT.

In the following section, we invite readers to learn from the stories of three Latinx community advocates in Los Angeles and to consider what these counternarratives suggest for other cities in terms of transit justice and urban

development. Rather than adjusting these narratives to align with themes typically emphasized in planning literature, we suggest that readers consider the following three guiding questions, informed by CRT, as they read these counternarratives: (1) How do racialized stereotypes impact the lives of the authors? (2) What sources of institutional power are identified in these excerpts? (3) How do community members' perspectives differ from those expressed by those in power? More broadly, we posit that informing any project from its inception with the perspectives of those who might not always be recognized as local experts is a way to foster of a more community-focused approached to the development of new urban planning professionals.

Insights from Activists: Counternarratives of Urban Space

We begin this section with a brief introduction to the origins of this article as a way to contextualize the presentation of three counternarratives. The fourth author is an educator whose own learning has been shaped by the theoretical tenets of CRT and stories of people from backgrounds different from her own. As a professor working in an applied field and concerned with preparing students for professional careers, she relates to the challenges faced by planning faculty. As a White person working at a minority-serving institution, she is cognizant of the need to consciously and intentionally de-center her own experiences when selecting and presenting content and designing course materials. As a member of an urban community, she shares the goals of both critical planners and community activists to apply interdisciplinary knowledge in shaping public spaces. She met each of the other three authors through efforts to embed community-based knowledge and opportunities for action in her teaching and research, and through this article seeks to have their stories contribute to the learning of other faculty.

The counterstories presented here document three ways that activists of color have involved community members in documenting their experiences in public spaces and used these insights to promote change. First, Omar Vargas describes his involvement in an effort to engage urban youth in examining street design and use. Next, Adonia Lugo provides insight into the ongoing invisibilization of people of color in transit advocacy and documents an effort to collectively organize with others to "untoken" their voices, perspectives, and bodies in these spaces. Finally, Monique Lopez explains how their experiences as a political organizer and environmental justice advocate have informed the development of a new grassroots-based urban planning firm with explicit social justice goals. Rather than serve as commentaries presented on behalf of overly generalized communities, these narratives present individual first-person perspectives that reflect each activist's voice.

Omar Vargas: Documenting Youth Perspectives on Urban Infrastructure Use and Development

Since moving back from Ohio, I've been on a quest to learn as much as possible about the topic of urbanism. Having lived in the Midwest and moved back to East Los Angeles, my perspectives on transportation equity and urbanism have changed significantly. Seeing what is happening outside of Los Angeles, I imagined what would happen if particular strategies and initiatives were to occur in different areas around my neighborhood. I now see East LA as a place where embracing alternative transportation can become a possibility.

In 2017, I joined the Walk & Bike Youth Leaders Program, a co-initiative of the California Center for Civic Participation, California Walks, and the California Bicycle Coalition that brings together individuals between the ages of 16 and 23 in Sacramento to learn how to advocate for state policies that promote safer streets and walking and biking safety. Throughout the program, the participants and the program administrators discussed different topics leading up to the California Bicycle Summit, held in Sacramento in October 2017.

From June to August, we discussed identifying advocacy strategies, conducting a walk/bike assessment, understanding infrastructure design, and developing effective communication skills for presenting. All of our interactions were conducted by webcam and phone. In addition, we created photovoice projects that focused on a street of our choice in our neighborhoods that presents a problem for people who bike or walk. Each project was to be presented at the California Bicycle Summit, giving young people a voice in bettering their neighborhoods and cities, a voice that often gets ignored. My project focused on South Atlantic Boulevard in East Los Angeles. A video clip available here (https://tinyurl.com/SAtlBlvdLA) provides an overview of my documentation.

When I first learned about the Walk & Bike Youth Leaders Program, I thought it was a unique opportunity to explore my interest in bikes and transportation and learn more about solutions for making walking and biking in Los Angeles feasible. The program would allow me to not only learn, but also apply my creativity to familiar platforms on issues that interest me as a neighborhood resident and cyclist. Despite being one of the oldest participants in the program, I was placed in a unique position to learn from others younger than myself while continuing to learn from experienced professionals. This put me in a humbling position where I could learn from others and share my ideas while remaining grounded.

What made the program unique was how everyone shared personal experiences in connection to what we were learning. I was amazed by how much everyone knew about what needed to be changed and how it shaped their understanding of the world around them. I was ecstatic to see what my other cohort members created and shared. I think what made this program special is that, despite our different experiences, we shared a common idea: People should be able to take advantage of their streets without having to think about being in a car crash or

getting hurt. More importantly, access to safer people-friendly streets should be available to everyone regardless of socioeconomic status.

Adonia Lugo: **Untokening the Voices of Black, Indigenous, People of Color in Transit Advocacy**

What does racial inclusion mean in places like Los Angeles, where Black, indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) individuals make up the majority population? There are people of color working for the city, for planning firms, for advocacy organizations. We are the ones riding bicycles, riding buses, walking in the dense urban neighborhoods that belie Los Angeles' reputation as a "non-city." Yet tokenism often stands in the way of meaningful BIPOC participation in mobility planning.

Tokenism occurs when an individual feels that their invitation into some process or meeting comes with an expectation that they do not rock the boat, or that they are being paraded as evidence of diversity while the "real" work is happening elsewhere. I have seen and experienced a lot of tokenism in my 10 years as a woman of color anthropologist in/of sustainable transportation movements, and I am not alone. In 2016, a group of collaborators around the United States began organizing around the concept of "untokening" transportation planning, policy, and advocacy. As described on the group's website (http://www.untokening.org/),

> the Untokening is a multiracial collective that centers the lived experiences of marginalized communities to address mobility justice and equity. For too long, dominant narratives in mobility advocacy have drawn from the experiences of the most privileged. In advocacy spaces, questions of equity are often treated as an afterthought or sidebar. Advocates "from diverse backgrounds" are often invited to the table to speak on behalf of an "underserved" population. While our own personal experiences or those of the people we represent are generally welcomed as anecdotal insight or emotional touchstones, that input is often set aside if it challenges the mainstream agenda.

As the product of a racially segregated society, urban planning is a technical space centered within White, middle-class cultural norms that privilege certain ways of dividing everyday life. The Untokening counternarrative responds to this by humanizing BIPOC people who know both community-rooted life and professional engagement with governance processes. From my perspective as an anthropologist, untokening and mobility justice are methods for bringing the depth of ethnography into urban planning practice, where the ethnographic richness of street life is not well understood. Controlling flows of people is a different project than understanding why they move the way they do.

When the Untokening collective was formed, we did not have a codified understanding of mobility justice, only that it would be an intersectional "space" where the complexities of real life and real struggles could live. Our first convening took place in Atlanta in November 2016, and after a year of processing the material that was gathered at that event, we held a second event, Untokening California, in Los Angeles. At the same time, we released "Untokening 1.0: Principles of Mobility Justice" (http://www.untokening.org/updates/2017/11/11/untokening-10-principles-of-mobility-justice). We hope that this document, along with a narrative format version of the same material ("Untokening Mobility: Beyond Pavement, Paint, and Place" [http://www.untokening.org/updates/2018/1/27/untokening-mobility-beyond-pavement-paint-and-place]), offer guidance to local BIPOC individuals and groups who are struggling with White-centered planning culture. There are many "transportation equity" efforts happening around the country, but these tend to operate within the limits of political opportunity rather than focusing on what has been left out of the picture.

We see mobility justice as an ongoing project that needs to find connection with existing movements such as disability justice and indigenous justice. The core organizers of Untokening met each other through our participation in bicycle advocacy, at a time (i.e., 2013) when "bike equity" was taking off. Through working within bicycle and pedestrian advocacy organizations, we learned that these modal perspectives imposed a fundamental limitation on organizing. The Untokening moves away from thinking of people as homogenous groups of "cyclists," "pedestrians," or "motorists," but the collective is still working to fully engage with other movements. We are also interested in the challenge of elevating youth leadership within a critical space: How do we invite young people to engage with Untokening in a way that reflects their transformative worldview?

Within transport mode user groups, there is tremendous diversity, and people do not experience streets the same way. How we move, where we move, the constraints on movement, displacement—all of these connect with the colonial projects of enslavement and dispossession. Today's harassment and deportation fit with that more than they fit with a narrow view of street safety as being only about vehicular violence.

Monique Lopez: Establishing a Community-Based Grassroots Oriented Public Planning Firm

For more than a decade, I have been dedicated to advocating for social justice as a policy advocate and planner with nonprofit organizations across Southern California and Western Oregon. But my journey to becoming a "social justice planner" began long before all that. I grew up in a small rural community in Imperial County, out by the Salton Sea. This community is plagued by numerous environmental injustices such as hazardous waste facilities, field burning, pesticide

spraying, and toxin pollution from the geothermal industry. Yet, time and time again, I witnessed elected officials and others with political influence move forward plans and policies with negative health and economic consequences, without consulting the people whom these decisions impacted most. But in my early 20s, when they tried to build a sewage sludge incinerator in my community, I finally drew the line—I got involved in a grassroots campaign to stop it, and we won. It was then that I learned the importance of community members developing their own creative solutions that meet their needs. This early experience in my hometown, at the beginning of the formation of my professional worldview, deeply influenced my approach to planning, design, and policy development.

Working in the nonprofit sector for more than a decade, I have interfaced with many different public agencies and planning firms, and I've found that many employ traditional planning methods that do not always engage residents authentically and, therefore, do not adequately address the intersectional needs of the community. It's also clear that some public agencies and planning firms want to engage residents in more meaningful processes and attempt to do so by soliciting the aid of community-based organizations (CBOs). Yet, these arrangements do not always respect the voices of community residents expressing concerns about project impacts, and sometimes they don't adequately compensate the labor of the CBOs. Additionally, the ideas expressed by community members are often selectively extracted and utilized just to further the aims of the public agency, elected officials, or planning firm, rather than the vision of the community members.

I have also found that community members who are part of CBOs and grassroots organizations have priorities and ideas for their neighborhood that they want to explore more concretely but don't have the time or resources to develop plans and designs that could help translate these dreams into reality. They often don't have the staff capacity or funds to pay a firm to navigate the process with residents and help produce plans and designs that meet their needs. This was the motivation behind the establishment of Pueblo, a participatory planning and design firm with a clear social justice ethic. Pueblo is dedicated to forming equal partnerships with CBOs that hold deep relationships with their communities, and to providing a new model of planning, design, and public policy services to government agencies, affordable housing developers, and CBOs. Our participatory approach emphasizes the importance of involving the entire community in the planning, design, or policy-making process. Through the use of art making and storytelling, residents are able to communicate their needs, designs, and visions for their community. Pueblo acts more as a facilitator than an "unbiased planning expert" that provides predetermined "planning solutions"—the traditional approach to "wicked" planning problems—because Pueblo's ethos is rooted in the principle

that residents are the true neighborhood experts, and as such they should dictate the future of their community. From this foundation, Pueblo is able to then translate what residents express into planning terms and designs, which the residents review; they are also provided with planning popular education to be able to provide further input. These resident-developed plans and designs are then delivered to the agencies in a format that facilitates their moving forward with implementing the community's vision.

Additionally, when a client is a government agency, there may be times when the old top-down planning models or predetermined solutions are pushed upon the planning firm. Because Pueblo has a transparent social justice framing, agencies are aware that Pueblo may challenge them to be bold and not replicate oppressive processes whereas other planning firms that prefer more traditional client-consultant roles might not challenge the agency. This means that Pueblo risks not being considered for future projects by certain agencies; it is also sometimes seen as an advocacy organization. However, there is a hunger and a need for a different type of planning and design. I see this in the way that state-level funding for planning and design projects is shifting to focus on participatory approaches and in how some public leaders and agency staff members grapple with equity when they talk about planning. I see the need in the neighborhoods that have been destroyed by top-down planning and among residents who have not been invited to engage genuinely in planning processes.

Pueblo, like any planning firm, operates within a certain ethos (which happens to be social justice-oriented) and does not pretend to be unbiased or a-political—which the "rational planning model," in addressing "wicked" planning problems, oftentimes claims planners are. However, Pueblo is honest upfront about its social justice bias because it knows that planning is not an unbiased or a-political act and because it understands that planning has been used to manifest the political. I am part of the next generation of planners who have experienced first-hand how planning, design, and policy have historically embedded generations of structural racism in the built environment. I am also part of the next generation of planners who see great potential to provide opportunities for residents to use these planning and design tools to reshape their communities equitably, holistically, and sustainably. With the rise of inequality, climate change, and the negative impacts of decades of top-down planning, do we have any choice but to try something new?

Discussion and Implications for Practice

In order to counter the hegemonic "common sense" assumptions of traditional urban planning, community advocates such as the individuals highlighted in this article directly confront inequitable norms that structure much of public life. In describing how "racism, sexism and other forms of domination" are part of capitalist development, Baszile (2015) suggested that critical race

counterstorytelling can "contribute to the work of re-imagining 'better futures'" (p. 247). The stories recounted here by the first, second, and third authors contribute to this work by identifying ways the current system of urban design and planning constrain truly "public" participation, but also by presenting material examples of efforts to change these practices. As such, these counternarratives offer critique as well as hope for a reimagined type of city and new relations among those who live in these urban areas.

Public administrators are informed by scripts based on histories of oppression and a contemporary landscape of neoliberal rationalism but are also situated "at the forefront of policy development, implementation, evaluation, citizen engagement, and shaping the built environment" (Blesset et al., 2016). Narrative data that focus on visual experiences can be drawn on to (re)consider how "people relate to environments and to others within them" (Harrison, 2004, p. 120); the third author's photovoice project presents an example of how advocates and planners can use such documentation to focus conversations about infrastructure change on human interactions with spaces like Atlantic Boulevard. Counternarratives about urban spatialities that center the distinct—and unequal— experiences of people of color in Los Angeles can be used to develop what Haymes (1995) referred to as a "pedagogy of place." The need for such reimagined pedagogies is reinforced by Lugo's recounting of the ways that longstanding marginalization (and silencing) of the voices of people of color in transit advocacy spaces led to a deliberate effort to center these voices in the Untokening convenings. The development of Pueblo, as recounted by Lopez, presents an important example of how these perspectives can be brought into direct conversation with the everyday practice of urban planners—in effect, offering a form of everyday resistance from within the field based in a grassroots pedagogy of place. As a professional planning firm, Pueblo provides an example of how to apply ideas from stories such as those offered by Lugo and Vargas; rather than assimilate and re-form them to reflect typical planning narratives, it is the responsibility of critically conscious planners to reflect their learning from community voices in their own practice. Taken further, we encourage all community members to account for the continued erasure of indigenous experiences and perspectives in discussions of city spaces. Following McCarty and Lee (2014), culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogies in urban planning must go further than pluralistic notions of cultural competence and focus also on revitalizing cultural practices for indigenous people and recognizing sovereignty of place.

We propose that urban planning programs that adopt approaches such as those presented in the three examples highlighted in this article are more likely to prepare public professionals to enter into their work in more culturally responsive

and sustaining ways. Many urban planners are already engaged in efforts to make their work more participatory and responsive (Sandercock & Attili, 2014; Umemoto, 2005); deliberately capturing the existing perspectives of those who have struggled to be seen as experts before beginning planning processes and building ways for these local experts to be empowered throughout the process is essential.

Conclusions

Although increased attention has been paid in recent years to the need for public participation in urban planning processes (Kotval, 2003; Stiftel & Watson, 2005), in many communities these efforts do not start with a grounded understanding of the communities most marginalized by current practices. Therefore, in order to address the use and development of public space in a culturally competent manner in the United States in the 21st century, urban planning education must include a focus on the centrality of racist ideologies and current fueling of anti-immigrant sentiments that challenge the idea of who belongs in communities—in Harvey's (2008) conceptualization (following Lefebvre), who has the "right to the city." Understanding that racism exists and operates at various scales—individual, group, institutional, societal, global—is key to understanding contemporary urban development (Pulido, 2000) and aligns with a CRT-informed analysis.

The epistemological assumptions of critical race theory that reject the Western ideal of detached rationality and instead center perspectives of marginalized communities (Hylton, 2012) can help planning professionals acknowledge the inequities inherent to the sociopolitical systems in which they participate, and CRT's focus on the interconnectedness of race and capital can be used to examine the convergence of multiple areas of policy (Smith & Dovall, 2008). Crucial to professional preparation in higher education, future planners must develop explicit strategies to decenter their own experiences and engage in anti-oppressive practices. Critical race theory provides a lens that can aid in this process and is aligned with developing public professionals engaged in a radical critique of the status quo (see Dzur, 2017). Learning from counternarratives challenges planners to engage in participatory practices that go beyond democratic representation and attend to histories of colonialism, displacement, and continued marginalization of indigenous peoples and communities of color in urban spaces.

Counternarratives of urban community members document stories that are typically unheard in professional planning spaces. Incorporating such modes of storytelling in planning processes can be part of change efforts and can help shape newly imagined alternatives (Sandercock, 2005). Solving the wicked problems of the 21st century will require deliberative values-based engagement in a context that is increasingly polarized and characterized by stark inequalities (Carcasson, 2016).

Critical race theory can serve as a starting point for students in urban planning coursework to begin developing the ethical commitments necessary to ensure that their work will benefit members of all communities, in ways that deliberately address historical marginalization and harm done in the name of urban improvement and development.

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Author Biographies

Monique Lopez: For more than a decade Monique Lopez has been a social justice planner and policy advocate working on transportation justice, environmental justice, and public space access throughout Southern California. Monique works with communities using planning tools through storytelling and arts-based engagement to dismantle unjust systems and build equitable communities. Her work is rooted in a simple principle: The voices of residents should be respected as experts, and as such, should dictate the planning and design of their community.

Adonia Lugo is an urban anthropologist who lives in Los Angeles and collaborates with fellow activists around the country to envision a sustainable transportation future centered in the needs and experiences of historically marginalized communities and people of color. She recently authored *Bicycle/Race: Transportation, Culture, and Resistance,* a book describing her experiences of becoming a Chicana bicycle anthropologist. As a sustainability educator, she asks students to develop an awareness of their own perspectives, and believes that In order to further sustainability in our democracy, we must cultivate cross-cultural understanding and respect for diverse realities.

Omar Vargas is an East Los Angeles native and graduate from Denison University with a Bachelor's in Anthropology/Sociology. Since graduating, Omar has led and contributed to urban planning and cultural projects around Los Angeles. Through his natural curiosity and vigilant attention to detail, he has actively sought out to find solutions to empowering the neighborhoods he has worked in. He has shared his expertise at national and local conferences, his most recent at Open Engagement in 2017, and has been part of the California Arts & Culture Delegation and the California Mobility Justice Delegation for PolicyLink 2018. Omar is committed to making lasting, impactful changes in his city through open experimentation and being open to failure.

Allison Mattheis is an Assistant Professor at California State University Los Angeles in the Division of Applied and Advanced Studies in Education. Before completing graduate studies in Educational Policy and Leadership, she worked as a community organizer for urban water quality issues and a middle school science teacher. Her research aims to recognize and highlight the knowledge and expertise of youth and other community members. As an educator she is driven by a commitment to empowering teachers as change-agents, students as decision-makers, and educators as solidarity-builders.