

The Creation of the King/Drew Medical Complex and the Politics of Public Memory

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Abstract

In the aftermath of the 1965 Watts Uprising, Martin Luther King Jr., General Hospital and the Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science in Willowbrook, California were created to address the medical concerns of the impoverished black community of South Los Angeles. This dissertation describes the creation process of the medical complex which was defined by empowerment, engagement, and ideological contest. It utilizes the memories of participants to tell the larger story of the hospital's creation multi-dimensionally, while simultaneously conveying the personal understandings of identity affected by the process. In studying the individuals and the endeavor, this dissertation speaks to the structural aspects of racism, power, and politics in 1960s America and beyond.

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Chapter One: King/Drew in History

“Of all the forms of inequality, injustice in healthcare is the most shocking and inhumane.” —Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 1966¹

“If America is to survive, this history must not be repeated. No one can be proud of the infamous dealings with human illness and misery in our history. Racism in medicine, rooted in slavery, continued by tradition and always illogical, casts an ominous shadow on our future. No one can justify the bigotry, the ignorance, the hate and the waste of human lives in this “land of the free, and home of the brave.”

—John LS Hollomon, Jr., President of the National Medical Association, 1966²

Introduction

Despite its infamous public perception as the “Killer King,” this dissertation argues that the creation of Martin Luther King, Jr. General Hospital and the Charles R. Drew School of Medicine and Science (King/Drew) located in Willowbrook, California, was a victory in the struggle for civil rights equality in Los Angeles in the 1960s.³ Built as a political response to the 1965 Watts Riots, King/Drew was created by a movement that aimed to challenge the chronic medical effects of de facto segregation and ghettoization of the majority black and poor population of South Central Los Angeles.

¹ Dan Munro, “America’s Forgotten Civil Right - Healthcare,” Forbes Online Edition, August 28, 2013. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/danmunro/2013/08/28/americas-forgotten-civil-right-healthcare/>
The quote originates from a speech King made before the Second National Convention of the Medical Committee for Human Rights in Chicago, Illinois on March 25, 1966.

² Herbert Montfort Morias. *The History of the Negro in Medicine* (New York: Publishers Company, under the auspices of The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1968), XIV.

³ Throughout this dissertation, the names of institutions are shortened or abbreviated. Both the hospital and the medical school have undergone name changes over the years. In this era, the Charles R. Drew School of Medicine and Science was called the Charles R. Drew Postgraduate Medical School, or the Drew School. It appears abbreviated as CRDPMS. Similarly, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Multi-Service Ambulatory Care Center was called the Martin Luther King, Jr. General Hospital; initially, it was called the Los Angeles County Southeast General Hospital, but it was renamed in King’s honor soon after he was assassinated. It is referred to simply as King Hospital. The medical complex is referred to as King/Drew, as the two institutions were symbiotically joined during this time period; after opening, the campus was repeatedly augmented with facilities designed to cater to the specific needs of the community, for example, a school for handicapped children. The Charles R. Drew Medical Society appears abbreviated as CRDMS. The Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California is referred to as USC Medical School; The David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA is referred to as UCLA Medical School.

King/Drew was also envisioned as a point of access from which the community would gain the tools to transform itself with education, employment and training. Answering the call for “maximum feasible participation,” King/Drew’s creation process was an inclusive cultural negotiation between community insiders and outside forces of reform, a dynamic community action complicated by competing agendas and evolving ideological approaches. In exploring the process, this dissertation argues that King/Drew’s creation was a localized contest for self-sufficiency reflective of a long-running national struggle for enfranchisement and racial equality in medicine intrinsically connected with the civil rights movement that began amid Reconstruction and found partial fruition in the 1960s. This story is a nexus of race, power and politics.

Historical Summary

Beginning in the early 1950s, community activists and local physicians in South Los Angeles began pursuing the construction of a private community hospital where members of the isolated and ghettoized black community would be treated by black physicians, a westward expansion of the black hospital movement. In the early 1960s, Dr. Sol White, Jr. continued in this regard as a representative of the Charles R. Drew Medical Society, the Los Angeles affiliate of the National Medical Association.⁴ In 1964, Dr. White attempted to create a private black hospital; his failed efforts paved the way for the later success of Supervisor Kenneth Hahn. The Los Angeles Riots of August 1965 generated immense attention for the previously ignored inequality of the black

⁴ Hill, Julius W. "The Golden State Medical Association: The California Chapter of the National Medical Association." *California Medicine* 111, no. 1 (1969): 46. Founded in 1895, the NMA fought for racial equality in medicine against segregated organizations like the American Medical Association; while integrated today, the AMA barred most black physicians from being members in the 1960s.

urban landscape. With favorable winds at his back, Hahn and his newly empowered constituency harnessed the requisite political capital for action. But via the transformative powers of politics and compromise, the ideal of a private black hospital morphed into a Los Angeles County hospital symbiotically linked with a medical school in the tradition of Howard University School of Medicine in Washington, DC, and Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee. Construction began in earnest in 1966 and King/Drew opened its doors on March 27, 1972. While largely absent from the public consciousness, the creation of King/Drew was as fiercely contentious and meaningful as other more well-known battles of the civil rights era.

Theoretical Underpinnings

As the pages that follow will attest, the creation of King/Drew via political compromise led to a largely unresolvable paradox of perception. Voices of integration and separation vied for supremacy amid an evolving discourse of individual and community empowerment and independence. Issues of authority and autonomy marked the project as something far more important than the construction of a medical center, as it might have been in other circumstances where race was not a factor. Conflicting perspectives on the medical center's core identity and utility can be readily, if reductively, understood here through a limited recitation of questions asked and answered at length throughout the interviews that follow. Why was the hospital built and who/what was it built for? How would the community control what many believed was their new "community" hospital? Who would be in charge, and did they understand the needs and desires of the community, and was this understanding contingent upon color

and local knowledge? As a Los Angeles County institution—in which racial preference in institution organization was prohibited—was King/Drew specifically a black or multi-cultural institution?

Beneath these questions are more implicit structural questions stemming from differing perceptions of the history of racism in medicine, and more broadly, racism in America that affect both black physicians and black patients. After centuries of inequality, why would/should the black community trust white outsiders despite their supposedly good intentions? Amid black empowerment, why should the black community of South Los Angeles not control its destiny? After years of white hegemony, would white authority limit the degree of black agency or would the Age of Aquarius bring white and black together to the bargaining table as equal partners? With such immense change prophesied, could the medical complex ever live up to the lofty and varied expectations of everyone—or anyone—involved? For some community members, the creation of a hospital in their midst—after years of neglect and isolation—was a step towards the normalcy often taken for granted by white Americans. For others, it was far more: it was proof that black empowerment could produce a lasting institutional presence which would produce dividends of change that could fundamentally challenge black poverty. This dissertation asserts that an analysis exploring radically divergent answers to these questions provides a unique point of entry to an often paradoxical and multi-dimensional discourse that, while playing out locally, reflected the national discourse.

Historical Grounding

Martin Luther King Jr. General Hospital and the Charles Drew School of Medicine and Science were products of the turbulent 1960s and 1970s, a period of uncommon civic engagement and ideological flux. However, this story of institution creation is both inextricably linked and thematically framed by historical movements and actions that predated it. The following literature review is divided by subject matter that forms the historical grounding of this dissertation.

The first section entitled, “Black Medicine: Separate But Never Equal,” briefly explores the history and scholarship of racial segregation in American medicine tracing its origins from slavery to the 1960s when King/Drew was created. This dissertation argues that while it was largely outshined by issues like education and transportation, King/Drew was a product of interconnected civil rights advocacy, as the uplift of black America was contingent upon racial equality in medicine. The nation’s heritage of historic racial inequality produced a bifurcated society in which both black physicians and black patients were stalled in their journey of progress by unequal access to healthcare, education and employment. Despite the limitations, black medicine thrived, first by the sheer persistence of individual black physicians, who challenged white supremacy by their very existence, and later, by organizational endeavors which produced black hospitals and medical schools that trained generations of physicians and nurses that cared for black America amid exclusion. This dissertation contributes to this body of scholarship by connecting the creation of King/Drew to the larger struggle against historic white hegemony—in and beyond American medicine—that affects both patients and physicians.

The second section entitled, “Welcome to Black LA,” briefly explores the history and scholarship on the black community of South Los Angeles as it relates to the creation of King/Drew. This dissertation asserts that King/Drew’s importance as a victory in the struggle for equality must be understood within the context of the community that built it and perceived it as their own place of solace. While Los Angeles has had a black population since its colonial origins, that population swelled with successive waves of the Great Migration, much of which was contained in South Central Los Angeles as a result of de facto segregation. Separate but never equal, blacks in Los Angeles faced barriers to progress and equality. Nonetheless, resistance to hegemony—in the form of community activism—produced palpable results including the creation of King/Drew in the 1960s. This dissertation contributes to this body of scholarship by connecting the creation of King/Drew to the history of Los Angeles. Through this dissertation, the reader will understand why King/Drew held and continues to hold meanings far greater than the assemblage of concrete, glass and steel.

Black Medicine: Separate But Never Equal

In *Making a Place for Ourselves: The Black Hospital Movement, 1920-1945*, physician and historian Vanessa Northington Gamble writes that it is difficult for many people to reconcile their views of medicine as a value-free profession with the fact that issues of race and racism have played a significant role in the development of American medicine.⁵ While the history of racial inequality in American medicine remains obscure in the American cultural psyche, King/Drew was born from a cultural movement that

⁵ Vanessa Northington Gamble. *Making a Place for Ourselves* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), XIII.

viscerally understood and reacted to America's history of racial injustice. This dissertation argues that the importance of King/Drew's creation has been historically obscured by a long-running horror show of reinforcing prophetic projections of black incompetence and lethality in medicine that has affected both patient and practitioner. For generation upon generation, a grand *guignol* has played out again and again supporting a subtle yet deadly binary of black inferiority and white superiority—an often overlooked manifestation of slavery. And yet, there has always been resistance to this construct of hegemony.

Throughout his vast study, *The History of the Negro in Medicine*, historian Herbert Montfort Morias demonstrates that the choice to become a black physician was implicitly an act of overt and covert resistance to white supremacy.⁶ Amid slavery, black healers sustained the human chattel of slave owners while simultaneously challenging notions of black inferiority by entering the intellectual arena of medicine. Although American medicine was a profession dominated by white males, radical abolitionists challenged this via their support for education and employment of black physicians. Small in numbers throughout the slavery era, most black physicians were self-taught, some were apprentice-trained, and some received college instruction; Morais asserts that these groupings also applied to the training of white physicians. All black physicians were severely limited in the capacity to learn and practice medicine due to their race; if the number of black male physicians was few, fewer still were the number of black female physicians. The token few who gained access to higher education—most females were barred from admittance to American medical schools—studied in medical

⁶ Montfort. *The History of the Negro in Medicine*, 23.

schools throughout Europe, which continued to be the global center of academic studies.

With the end of slavery during Reconstruction, most black physicians continued to be stifled in their efforts to gain entrance to the institutions of American medicine. In the North, most medical schools continued to bar most black medical students from gaining admittance, while in the South, the idea of admitting a black student was viewed as dangerous to the *status quo*. The Freedman's Bureau earnestly challenged institutional hegemony with the transformation of the Freedman's Hospital—built in 1862 to treat the growing black community of Washington DC—into Howard University Hospital.⁷ The federally controlled institution served as the training grounds of Howard University's newly created Department of Medicine, the chief mission of which was the education of black medical students. The school held its first class on November 9, 1868 with a class of seven black students and one white student; of the original five faculty members, only one was black: Dr. Alexander Thomas Augusta.⁸ In 1876, the Medical Department of Central Tennessee College, located in Nashville, Tennessee, became the first southern school to train black medical students. Though the school's first class contained only one student, that changed along with its name. The school steadily grew into the nation's largest black medical college after it was renamed Meharry Medical College and became an independent entity in 1915.⁹ Progressive action during the Reconstruction era led to some relief for both black physicians and

⁷ Cobb, W. Montague. "A Short History of Freedmen's Hospital." *Journal of the National Medical Association* 54, no. 3 (1962): 271.

⁸ "Howard University College of Medicine: A Short History." By Sterling M. Lloyd, Jr., Associate Dean for Administration and Planning, Howard University College of Medicine. Accessed December 9, 2013. <http://healthsciences.howard.edu/education/schools-and-academics/medicine/about/mission/short-history>

⁹ Charles Johnson. *The Spirit of a Place Called Meharry* (Franklin, Tennessee: Hillsboro Press, 2000), 5.

black patients with the construction of black hospitals and medical schools, but those gains were offset by continuing inequality and racial prejudice. While the creation of Howard Medical School was a victory in itself, it did not signal a widespread cultural change in the world of medicine. However, the creation of black medical schools paid longterm dividends both economically and socially, as the movement gave rise to generations of well-trained physicians and nurses who invested their earnings and lives for the uplift of black America. While limited, the gains of the 1860s made way for the gains of the 1960s—though they were certainly challenged by Jim Crow.

As progressive action abated, dreams of equality in medicine were nearly smothered by Jim Crow. Yet black physicians continued to work toward both inclusion and empowerment within the continuing hegemony of the white-dominated American medical establishment. In 1869, three respected black physicians and Civil War veterans affiliated with Howard Medical School—Alexander T. Augusta, Charles B. Purvis, and Alpheus W. Tucker—were barred from membership in the Medical Society of the District of Columbia, an affiliate of the American Medical Association (AMA) founded in 1847. The AMA never explicitly barred black physicians from becoming members, but AMA membership was contingent upon membership with a state or local affiliate; without affiliation, black physicians were often barred from obtaining hospital privileges. This form of hegemony deeply constrained black medicine and perpetuated white dominance.¹⁰ At the time, the AMA contained a wing of northern civil rights activists who believed in integration, as some northern affiliates had previously accepted black

¹⁰ Montfort. *The History of the Negro in Medicine*, 59-88.

members.¹¹ But at the convention of 1869, and at subsequent annual meetings, the minority voices of integration were drowned out by the majority voices of segregation. Fearing that the same fate would befall future generations of black physicians, the three physicians continued to apply for membership in the AMA via both the MSDC and other affiliates, but they never achieved their mutual goal of membership with an AMA affiliate.¹² The humiliation of three of the nation's most respected black physicians reflected the experiences of many black physicians. Continuing professional exclusion amid Jim Crow led to the formation of several black medical associations as black physicians responded to continuing segregation and prejudice by educating and organizing themselves. In 1884, Augusta became one of the founding members of the first black and biracial American medical society, the Medical Chirurgical Society.¹³ Other black medical societies were subsequently created across the nation; the Lone Star State Medical, Dental, and Pharmaceutical Association of Texas in 1886; the Old North State Medical Society of North Carolina in 1887; and the North Jersey National Medical Association in 1895. But as these interracial medical societies could not send

¹¹ Robert B. Baker and Harriet A. Washington, Ololade Olakanmi, Todd L. Savitt, Elizabeth A. Jacobs, Eddie Hoover, and Matthew K. Wynia. "African American physicians and organized medicine, 1846-1968." *JAMA: the Journal of the American Medical Association* 300, no. 3 (2008): 306-313.

¹² Charles B. Purvis. Accessed Jan 17, 2014. <http://www.nndb.com/people/864/000172348/> Given his rather remarkable career, Purvis seems a worthy subject of study of which little has been written. In 1881, Purvis administered treatment to President James Garfield after he was shot by Charles Guiteau making him the first black physician to care for a US president (until a white physician could be found). Dismayed yet undefeated in his fight for equality, Purvis invested in the future of black medicine as a professor and trustee at Howard Medical School until 1926.

¹³ Butts, Heather M. "Alexander Thomas Augusta--physician, teacher and human rights activist." *Journal of the National Medical Association* 97, no. 1 (2005): 106. Augusta was the first black professor at Howard where he served for a decade until returning to private practice. Cobb, William Montague. *The First Negro Medical Society: A History of the Medico-Chirurgical Society of the District of Columbia, 1884-1939*. Associated Publishers, 1939.

delegates to attend AMA conventions, a common belief arose that black physicians required a national organization of their own.¹⁴

While Booker T. Washington unveiled his compromise at the 1895 Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta, a group of black physicians in attendance organized the National Negro Medical Association of Physicians, Surgeons, Dentists and Pharmacists, which would eventually be renamed the National Medical Association (NMA).¹⁵ Historically, Washington's speech overshadows the creation of the NMA, but the two events are historically bound as pragmatic solutions by black leadership to ameliorate the recession of Radical Reconstruction amid continuing white hegemony in the South. Subsequent annual meetings of the NMA likely mirrored the proceedings found at the AMA, though civil rights activism was implicitly part of the NMA's agenda.

In his 1933 essay on the history of the NMA, Dr. John A. Kenney quotes the recollection of Dr. T.A. Walker of the 1901 NMA annual meeting in St. Louis, Missouri:

"The papers read, scientific discussions indulged in and knowledge of surgical manipulation and technique displayed, made a very favorable impression upon our medical confreres clothed in white, and another link was welded into the chain which we hope will ere long be completed by uniting the more progressive Negro physicians of the North, South, East and West into one common brotherhood working for the mutual good of themselves and physical good of their people."¹⁶

The creation of the NMA was a reaction to denigrative exclusion, yet it also was an affirmation of survival and progressive empowerment, as it created a sense of inclusion and camaraderie amongst its membership, and a national goal of black uplift

¹⁴ Baker and Washington, Savitt, Jacobs, Hoover, Wynia. "African American physicians and organized medicine, 1846-1968." 309.

¹⁵ Kenney, John A. "Some Notes on the History of the National Medical Association." *Journal of the National Medical Association* 25, no. 3 (1933): 97.

¹⁶ Kenney, "Some notes on the history of the National Medical Association." 98.

for both physicians and patient. The organization grew in response to an ever-increasing membership. In 1904, the association had fewer than 50 members. In 1907, the association had 173 official members and 24 unofficial members. Growth in membership spurred the creation of a new constitution in 1906 that called for the conferences to be divided into sections; chairmen-organized sections were differentiated by broad specialties such as medical, surgical, dental and pharmaceutical. In 1904, the NMA began developing the *Journal of the National Medical Association*, the first black medical society journal in the world.¹⁷ The first issue was distributed in 1909; the first Editor-in-Chief was Dr. Charles Victor Roman.¹⁸¹⁹ Dr. John A. Kenney became Editor-in-Chief in 1918. Kenney waxes poetically about the creation of the NMA: “In 1895, a little oak scion was planted in Atlanta. Since that time we have been engaged in nurturing it till it has grown to a good husky sturdy tree. This sacred trust was for our posterity and to their care and keeping we commend the future of this National Medical Association.”²⁰

Throughout its history, the NMA worked for the betterment of black medicine, both for the physician and nurse, but also for the black and minority populations that were deeply affected by the inequalities in American healthcare. They worked both independently and in collaboration with civil rights organizations like the National Negro

¹⁷ The *Journal of the National Medical Association* contains scholarly articles concerning medicine and science and, beginning in 1950, articles that chronicle the history of black medicine in America. Invaluable, these journal articles connect to form a largely unrecognized narrative of racism in American medicine, and, most importantly, connect the origins and actions of the CRDMS with the historic national medical activism of the NMA.

¹⁸ William Montague Cobb. "The Black American in Medicine," *Journal of the National Medical Association* 73, no. (1981): 1185.

¹⁹ Cobb, "The Black American in Medicine," 1185.

²⁰ John A. Kenney, "Some notes on the history of the National Medical Association," *Journal of the National Medical Association* 25, no. 3 (1933): 104.

Health Movement, the National Urban League, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); the improvement of black healthcare was a political cause that unified often disparate organizations and personalities.

Vanessa Northington Gamble and Deborah Stone assert that W.E.B Du Bois turned medical statistics into political ammunition in his quest to illustrate inequalities that kept black Americans from progress.²¹ In *The Health and Physique of the Negro American* (1906), Du Bois argued that medical disparities between black and white Americans stemmed from social conditions and not from inherent racial traits, and that with social progress, disparities would diminish over time.²² In arguing that historic structural inequality had created disparities, Du Bois countered the claims of race-obsessed scientific bigots who sold theories of black biological inferiority—ala Social Darwinism—to a general public eager to accept convenient explanations that supported continuing racial and economic inequality. Crossing the ideological spectrum to illustrate that healthcare was a universal activist issue, Gamble and Stone employ the historically divided interplay between Du Bois and Booker T. Washington, who was quoted as saying that “without health ... it will be impossible for us to have permanent success in business, in property getting, [and] in acquiring education ... Without health and long life all else fails.”²³ In Washington’s analysis, black economic progress was dependent upon black medical progress, yet the segregation of medical institutions led to a shortage of

²¹ Vanessa Northington Gamble and Deborah Stone, "US Policy on Health Inequities: the Interplay of Politics and Research," *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* 31, no. 1 (2006): 93-126.

²² William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, ed. "The Health and Physique of the Negro American: Report of a Social Study Made Under the Direction of Atlanta University; Together with the Proceedings of the Eleventh Conference for the Study of the Negro Problems, Held at Atlanta University May 29th 1906." Library of Congress Photo duplication Service, 1974.

²³ Gamble and Stone, "US Policy on Health Inequities: the Interplay of Politics and Research," 93-126.

physicians and nurses to care for a growing black population. Mirroring the need for the creation of the NMA, black medical institutions were created to combat the inherent racial inequality in medicine, as the training of black physicians and nurses was paramount for the survival and progress of black America.

Overcoming immense obstacles, Dr. H. Harley describes that at least 14 black medical schools were established to meet demand, but as each school functioned independently, the quality of training provided by these institutions varied markedly; this was also the case in many white medical schools. Howard and Meharry were joined by many schools that were short-lived: Lincoln University, 1870-1874 in Oxford, Pennsylvania; Straight University Medical Department, 1873-1874 in New Orleans, Louisiana; Leonard Medical School Shaw University, 1882-1918, in Raleigh, North Carolina; New Orleans University Medical College (Flint Medical College), 1889-1911 in New Orleans, Louisiana; Louisville National Medical College, 1888-1912 in Louisville, Kentucky; Hannibal Medical College, 1889-1896 in Memphis, Tennessee; Knoxville College Medical Department, 1895-1900 and Knoxville Medical College, 1900-1910 in Knoxville Tennessee; State University Medical Department, 1899-1903 in Louisville, Kentucky; Chattanooga National Medical College, 1899-1904 in Chattanooga, Tennessee; University of West Tennessee College of Physicians and Surgeons, 1900-1923 in Jackson and in Memphis, Tennessee; Medico-Chirurgical and Theological College of Christ's Institution, 1900-1908 in Baltimore, Maryland.²⁴ Many of these schools collapsed due to insufficient resources, while some folded because they were created for profit and ineffectual. Harley wrote: "That some proprietary schools were

²⁴ Earl H. Harley, "The Forgotten History of Defunct Black Medical Schools in the 19th and 20th Centuries and the Impact of the Flexner Report," *Journal of the National Medical Association* 98, no. 9 (2006): 1426.

pure commercial endeavors and little more than diploma mills further complicated the medical education of African Americans.”²⁵

Fourteen black medical schools functioned between 1868 and 1910; by 1910 that number had decreased to seven. At the behest of the AMA, pedagogical researcher Abraham Flexner studied the nation’s medical schools and his findings were published by the Carnegie Foundation in 1910. Flexner’s recommendations reflected a long-simmering belief that the American medical establishment required immense reforms. Flexner asserted that Johns Hopkins School of Medicine was the model that all other American medical schools should emulate as the school had a growing endowment, university affiliation, well-equipped laboratories and its own hospital. Flexner advocated for higher admission and graduation standards, pedagogical adherence to modern scientific practices, and a smaller, more readily regulated pool of medical schools.²⁶ The adoption of many of Flexner’s recommendations led to the closure of many black and white medical schools across the nation. However, as there were far fewer black medical schools, the closures disproportionately affected black educational institutions and black medical students.²⁷

“Of the seven medical schools for negroes in the United States,” Flexner observed, “five are at this moment in no position to make any contribution of value ...

²⁵ Harley, “The Forgotten History of Defunct Black Medical Schools in the 19th and 20th Centuries and the Impact of the Flexner Report,” 1427.

²⁶ Kenneth M. Ludmerer, “Commentary: Understanding the Flexner report.” *Academic Medicine* 85, no. 2 (2010): 193-196.

²⁷ Thomas P. Duffy, “The Flexner Report—100 Years Later,” *The Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine* 84, no. 3 (2011): 269.

The negro needs good schools rather [than] many schools.”²⁸ While seemingly devoid of overt racism, Flexner’s recommendations seriously retarded the progress of black medicine in America both in the short and long term. Five of the seven remaining black medical schools closed, as they couldn’t afford to modernize in the fashion laid out in the report, which became the standard for accreditation by the Association of American Medical Colleges. In the decades after the report’s release, some northern medical schools admitted a chosen few black students, while the doors of southern medical schools remained shut. Howard and Meharry continued to operate and expanded their facilities in an attempt to meet the demand, but they couldn’t compensate for the void created by the closures of the other schools.²⁹³⁰

The findings of Howard University professor and statistician Dr. Paul B. Cornely illustrate the damage done to black medicine by the adoption of Flexner’s recommendations, and the continuing exclusion of many black students from the majority of the nation’s medical schools. During the school year from 1935 to 1936 there was a total of 369 black medical students enrolled throughout the United States. Of these, 346 were registered at Howard and Meharry Medical Colleges, and the remaining 53 were enrolled in 23 Northern schools.³¹ Despite the integration of previously closed institutions like the Universities of Oklahoma and Missouri, Cornely

²⁸ Abraham Flexner. *Medical Education in the United States and Canada: A Report to the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching*. New York City: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1910.

²⁹ Harley, “The Forgotten History of Defunct Black Medical Schools in the 19th and 20th Centuries and the Impact of the Flexner Report,” 1425.

³⁰ Howard and Meharry were later joined by the Charles R. Drew School of Medicine in 1966 in Los Angeles, California, and Morehouse School of Medicine in 1975 in Atlanta, Georgia.

³¹ Paul B. Cornely, “Segregation and Discrimination in Medical Care in the United States,” *American Journal of Public Health and the Nations Health* 46, no. 9 (1946): 1074-1081.

observed that the situation had changed minimally a decade later; by 1946, the color bar still prevented most prospective black students from attending 77 of the accredited medical schools in America.³² In the class of 1949-50, only 653 blacks were enrolled in medical schools across the nation, approximately 500 of them at Howard and Meharry.³³ The civil rights victory of *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* in 1954 challenged this disturbing trend, if subtly. Cornely's survey of American medical schools in 1955 and 1956 shows that integration in Northern schools remained constant, if small, while integration in Southern schools grew. Eight Southern schools collectively admitted 43 black medical students. The ratios of black medical students admitted in the North and the South converged, yet as overall admittance of black students to American medical schools besides Howard and Meharry remained low, the growth did not signal a sea change.³⁴ Civil rights-minded judicial action had produced new opportunities, as southern and northern ratios converged, but Cornely advised against jubilation, as the changes of 1955 and 1956 did not yet signal a massive shift. By 1965, the percentage of black students enrolled in American medical schools had doubled.

The training and practice of black physicians often overshadows the importance of the training and practice of black nurses; this phenomenon may be understood as an impact of class and gender divisions in both black and white communities. In 1881, Spelman College in Atlanta established a program to train black nurses, and the movement led to the establishment of similar programs at black medical schools and

³² Paul B. Cornely, "Notes," *Physicians Forum Bulletin*. Jan.-Feb. (1956).

³³ George A. Johnston Jr, "The Flexner Report and Black Medical Schools," *Journal of the National Medical Association* 76, no. 3 (1984): 223.

³⁴ Cornely, "Segregation and Discrimination in Medical Care in the United States," 1077.

hospitals like Lincoln in New York City, Provident Hospital in Chicago, Illinois; at Dixie Hospital Training School at the Hampton Institute in Virginia; the Tuskegee Institute Hospital and Nurses' Training School in Alabama. Like the majority of black physicians, black nurses faced racial discrimination which limited their employment options and virtual exclusion from Nurses' Associated Alumnae of the United States and Canada. While the organization eventually integrated, discrimination led to the formation of the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses (NACGN) in 1908.³⁵ Beyond implicitly battling racial prejudice, Estelle G. Massey, RN, described the organization's goals thusly: "to bring together from time to time, the graduate nurses from over the country for the purpose of creating a more sympathetic understanding; to develop leadership; to promote higher standards along administrative and educational lines; to secure cooperation, and more contact with nursing leaders of the world. The prerequisite for membership was graduation from a recognized nursing school."³⁶ Mirroring the efforts of the NMA, the NACGN worked in collaboration with other civil rights organizations. However, the ambitions of the NACGN were realized much sooner. Mabel K. Staupers, RN, wrote: "Until World War II, out of a total of 1,200 schools of nursing in the United States, only 42 admitted qualified Negro applicants; of this number, 28 schools admitted Negroes only." By 1951, 330 nursing schools admitted all qualified students regardless of race.³⁷ No single organization can be credited with such an educational and cultural sea

³⁵ Darlene Clark Hine, *Black women in white: Racial conflict and cooperation in the nursing profession, 1890-1950* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 76.

³⁶ Estelle Massey G., "The National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses." *The American Journal of Nursing* 33, no. 6 (1933): 534-536.

³⁷ Mabel K. Staupers, "Story of the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses." *The American Journal of Nursing* 51, no. 4 (1951): 222-223.

change, however it seems that the contributions of the NACGN were vital to the transformation of the American medical establishment.

Cornely's mid-1950s survey reveals a dramatic rise in the integration of medical societies both at the state and the county level in the South (Cornely surveyed 16 states, the District of Columbia, and 27 counties). By the middle of the decade, most southern state and county medical associations contained a black membership with the exception of the state of Louisiana and counties in North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia. Predictably, black membership in previously segregated medical associations was relatively small; of over 200 black physicians in the District of Columbia, only 61 black physicians were members.³⁸ Understandably, while the doors of some AMA affiliates opened, many black physicians recalled the historic exclusion of physicians like Augusta, Purvis and Tucker, and so they were reluctant to join an association that had historically marginalized black physicians.

In *Black and Blue: The Origins and Consequences of Medical Racism*, historian John Hoberman writes, "The political conservatism of the medical establishment was evident even during the civil rights movement, as the national leadership of the American Medical Association (AMA) deferred to the racist exclusionary policies of state medical societies and refused to intervene on behalf of black physicians who sought membership in the AMA and the professional status they had long been denied."³⁹ In 1950, the Charles R. Drew Medical Society was founded as a local affiliate of the NMA in Los Angeles as the AMA continued to discriminate against most black physicians and

³⁸ Cornely, "Segregation and discrimination in medical care in the United States," 1077.

³⁹ John Hoberman, *Black and Blue: The Origins and Consequences of Medical Racism*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 108.

only stopped in 1968.⁴⁰ The formation and continued service of the NMA should be read as a long-standing act of agency by black physicians against the AMA, which pandered to its segregationist membership, only apologizing in 2008 for its discriminatory practices. Far from the promised land of equality, black physicians continued on a course of black empowerment that had begun decades earlier with inter-organizational collaboration in terms of political activism and institution building.

The NMA and its membership were at the center of civil rights activism in medicine from the organization's inception. However, the NMA collaborated with other civil rights organizations that had intersecting agendas of black uplift. For example, in 1915, the Virginia affiliate of Booker T. Washington's National Negro Business League collaborated with Howard University, the National Medical Association, and the National Insurance Association to create National Negro Health Week. It reflected Washington's belief that good healthcare was vital for the success of black businesses and that individuals could help themselves through awareness and education. As the publicity surrounding the yearly event mounted, it brought about the participation of other national organizations like the American Social Hygiene Association, the American Red Cross, and the Rockefeller Foundation.⁴¹

As Thomas Ward demonstrates in *Black Physicians in the Jim Crow South*, organizational collaboration produced limited civil rights gains in American medicine amid continuing segregation. By 1919, there were 118 segregated and black-controlled hospitals, and 75% were located in the South. The black hospital movement—a

⁴⁰ Julius W. Hill, "The Golden State Medical Association. The California Chapter of the National Medical Association," *California Medicine* 111, no. 1 (1969): 46.

⁴¹ Sandra Crouse Quinn and Stephen B. Thomas, "The National Negro Health Week, 1915 to 1951: a Descriptive Account," *Minority Health Today* 2, no. 3 (2001): 44-49.

collaboration of local and national civil rights groups including churches and the National Hospital Association, which began in the 1920s—worked on a separatist path of black medicine in response to segregation in medicine. By 1923, there were 200 black hospitals, though only six provided internships and none had residency programs.⁴² Black medical institutions were overburdened and understaffed with too many patients and too few hospital beds, leading to overcrowding and lower quality of care. Plainly, governmental engagement was required; this process began in earnest via the persistent collaborative lobbying efforts of organizations like the NAACP, NMA, and the Tuskegee Institute. For example, in 1921, the Harding Administration and the Tuskegee Institute announced plans for the construction of a black veterans hospital with an integrated staff. Protests by local members of the Ku Klux Klan led to the capitulation of the Veterans Bureau, which issued a statement that the hospital would open “with a full staff of white doctors and white nurses with colored nursemaids for each nurse, to save them from contact with colored patients.”⁴³ Outraged, Tuskegee President and NMA member, Robert Russa Moton appealed to the Harding Administration. Through the pages of *The Crisis*, which was edited at the time by Walter White, the NAACP attacked segregationist opposition as both absurd and hypocritical because Jim Crow had forced the need for a separate hospital in the first place. The combined pressure of the Tuskegee Institute, the NAACP and the NMA led first to the integration of the hospital in early 1923, and later, to a complete takeover of the hospital by black physicians, nurses and administration by late 1924. Amid the Great Migration, medical segregation in the

⁴² Susan Altman, “On the Brink of Extinction, The Black Hospital,” In *The Encyclopedia of African-American Heritage*, (New York City: New York, Facts on File, 1997).

⁴³ Thomas J. Ward, *Black Physicians in the Jim Crow South*, (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2003), 168-170, 249-250.

North played out in a similar fashion as the NMA and NAACP fought for equal resources, inclusion, and integration (for example, in the struggle surrounding Harlem Hospital in New York City from the late 1920s to the late 1940s).⁴⁴

Collaborative activist action had successfully engaged the US government to act on behalf of integration, and the healthcare of black Americans, though that engagement was slow and limited. In 1930, the United States Public Health Service assumed the operation of the National Negro Health Week with the blessing of the National Negro Business League, and in 1932, it established the Office of Negro Health Work. Gamble and Stone expound upon the significance of the act, “The creation of this office represented the first time since the end of the Civil War that black health care issues were institutionalized within a federal bureaucracy.”⁴⁵ Government engagement was a welcomed change. However, throughout the Great Depression and World War II, it continued on a segregationist path. Amid the post-war era, organizational collaboration challenged the government’s approach via a battle against the “negro medical ghetto,” with civil rights victories in the courts over the next two decades, and reforms in the American medical establishment. The cause of integration in medicine, Gamble asserts, won out over a continued separatist path, as the “black hospital movement” that began in the 1920s had been crucial for the survival of black medicine, but by the post war period it was considered by many to be regressive.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Morais, *The History of the Negro in Medicine*, 115-121.

⁴⁵ Gamble and Stone, “US Policy on Health Inequities: the Interplay of Politics and Research,” 93-126. The ONHW shut down in 1950 as the federal government continued on a path away from segregationist policies. The activities of the ONHW included coordinating health week, developing educational materials, and publishing National Negro Health News, a quarterly journal on black health issues.

⁴⁶ Gamble, *Making a place for ourselves*, 182-185.

In *Public Policy and the Black Hospital: From Slavery to Segregation to Integration*, Mitchell F. Rice asserts that the passage and implementation of the Hill-Burton Act of 1946, officially known as the Hospital Survey and Construction Act, signaled a sea change as the federal government intervened on behalf of black and minority medicine. The act provided federal matching funds for the construction of new hospitals and the modernization of existing facilities across the nation, specifically for groups and areas that had been neglected. Hill-Burton legislation prescribed the following ratios of beds to population: for general hospitals, 4.5 beds per 1000; for mental hospitals, 5 per 1000; for chronic hospitals, 2 per 1000; ratios for rural areas conformed to an inter-hospital coordination scheme, and rural hospitals and clinics that conformed to Hill-Burton standards were eligible. Hill-Burton funding was contingent upon a nonracial admittance and employment policy. However, the act contained a “separate but equal” provision that allowed Southern states to maintain medical segregation; some segregated hospitals received funding, as long as the state created parity via equal distribution of resources. Hill-Burton was unprecedented, Rice asserts, but in implementation, it was far less effective in leveling the playing field. Hill-Burton did not force the integration of staffs in many hospitals and, without federal oversight, it left implementation and regulation to individual state hospital organizations—abuse seemed intrinsically acceptable. Both the AMA and the NMA criticized Hill-Burton funding. The AMA opposed Hill-Burton legislation because the organization was against what it perceived to be social engineering on the part of the federal government. As racial inequity was allowed to continue under a different guise, many members of the NMA (and other organizations) were skeptical of Hill-Burton’s long-term effectiveness. It

wasn't long after passage, Rice describes, that the uneven effects of Hill-Burton were observed in 1958, as "in Birmingham, Alabama, where blacks were 40 percent of the population, only 574 of 1,762 hospital beds were allocated to blacks."⁴⁷

In *Deluxe Jim Crow: Civil Rights and American Health Policy, 1935-1954*, historian Karen Thomas Kruse asserts that while Hill-Burton did not directly challenge segregation and allowed for continuing inequality, the legislation needs to be understood as an incremental yet vital step in a long journey of civil rights.⁴⁸ The transformative process of Hill-Burton challenged the ideological landscape which resulted in a change of discourse from separatist to integrationist in the long term.⁴⁹ However, in the short term, as the phases of Hill-Burton rolled out and inequities were observed, civil rights advocates went to court to challenge Hill-Burton's separate-but-unequal provision.

In *Simkins v. Moses H. Cone Memorial* (1962), attorneys from the NAACP filed suit against Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital and Wesley Long Community Hospital on behalf a group of black physicians and patients in Greensboro, North Carolina. The suit charged that both the racial policies of the hospitals, and the Hill-Burton "separate but equal" provision, were in violation of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments of the Constitution.⁵⁰ In 1962, The U.S. District Court found for the defense arguing that the courts did not have jurisdiction over civil rights activities as they related to hospitals.

⁴⁷ Mitchell F. Rice, *Public Policy and the Black Hospital: From Slavery to Segregation to Integration*, (California: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1994), 150-151.

⁴⁸ Karen Kruse Thomas, *Deluxe Jim Crow: Civil Rights and American Health Policy, 1935-1954*, (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 179-185.

⁴⁹ Karen Kruse Thomas, "The Hill-Burton Act and Civil Rights: Expanding Hospital Care for Black Southerners, 1939-1960." *The Journal of Southern History* 72, no. 4 (2006): 823-870.

⁵⁰ Rice, *Public Policy and the Black Hospital: From Slavery to Segregation to Integration*, 140.

In 1963, the Fourth Circuit Court reversed that decision and found for the plaintiffs upon appeal, arguing that the use of “millions of dollars of public monies” via state/federal coordination of Hill-Burton constituted governmental engagement. In 1964, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the Fourth Circuit Court’s ruling against Hill-Burton’s separate-but-equal provision, and as a result, hospitals that were receiving Hill-Burton funds—and those in the planning stages—were forced to integrate if they wanted federal funding.⁵¹ This was a tremendous victory for civil rights activism leading to integration in medicine. However, a small number of black hospitals secured and utilized Hill-Burton funding for modernization and expansion. Most were in the South like Martin DePorres Hospital in Mobile, Alabama. However, Harlem Hospital in New York, New York, also received funding, and about 4,400 new beds were added to black hospitals nationally. Nonetheless, between 1947 and 1972, black hospitals only received about \$33 million, or one percent of total Hill-Burton funds. Out of a total construction cost of \$27,394,909, Martin Luther King Jr. General Hospital in Los Angeles, California, received \$4,212,042 (in 1967).⁵² Hill-Burton funding was essential for the construction of King Hospital—this will be discussed in later chapters—though the larger picture is one of continuing inequity for black medicine.

In the early 1960s, many of the black physicians who treated the poor black population of South Los Angeles were members of the Charles R. Drew Medical Society, named in honor of Howard’s most celebrated professor of surgery. Many members of the CRDMS were trained at either Howard or Meharry, where students

⁵¹ P. Preston Reynolds, "Hospitals and Civil Rights, 1945-1963: the Case of Simkins v Moses H. Cone Memorial Hospital." *Annals of internal medicine* 126, no. 11 (1997): Pg 903.

⁵² Rice, *Public Policy and the Black Hospital : from Slavery to Segregation to Integration*, 76-78.

were continually reminded that to be a black physician was inherently a form of civil rights advocacy, as it defeated notions of black inferiority. While some medical schools like the University of Minnesota contained a small but growing black demographic, this was not the case in Los Angeles at either University of Southern California (USC) or University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in the 1960s. As a result, in 1963 Dr. Sol White Jr., president of the CRDMS, began advocating for the creation of a private black hospital and medical school. This represented the CRDMS membership's conviction that a black medical and educational complex in Los Angeles would create a rich academic environment that would produce more black physicians as well as academic research to benefit the black community and beyond.

Welcome to Black Los Angeles

In *L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present*, historian Josh Sides writes: "Race is not simply a category of analyses that can be applied or removed from a map of the 'real' urban landscape like a thematic overlay. Rather, it is a concept has been integral to the way American cities have developed and the way urbanites of all backgrounds have made decisions."⁵³ As the lenses of Hollywood create a dangerous distortion field, Los Angeles is best observed and understood through a car's windshield. From Little India to Korea-town, a ride across the city reveals an ever-evolving racial and ethnic geography dictated by power and politics. Like other areas in the greater megalopolis, the geographic borders of South Central Los Angeles or "black Los Angeles," have changed over time with a fluidity that reflects progressive change in demography. And yet, the modern construct

⁵³ Josh Sides, *LA City Limits*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 8.

of black Los Angeles resists the bounds of physical geography, and exists in a racial space born from racial tensions, a post-ghetto far more dynamic than the prosaic nightmares of the collective consciousness. But beyond all of this is a simple reality often willfully ignored: despite changes, black Los Angeles remains home for many black Los Angelenos.

Contrary to popular understanding, Los Angeles has contained a black population since its colonial founding in 1781, when 26 of the original 44 *pobladores*, or settlers, of *Pueblo de Nuestra Señora la Reina de Los Angeles de Porciuncula* (Los Angeles) had African heritage and existed at the bottom of colonial Spain's racial hierarchy. However, black *pobladores* in Los Angeles found greater agency in the northwest frontier than elsewhere in the Spanish empire. With Mexican Independence, black mobility continued largely unchanged. The last governor of Alta-California was Pio de Jesus Pico, commonly referred to as Pio Pico, of Los Angeles; while it is still contested by researchers, many believe that Pico was black or mixed race. If Pico was black, he is the only black governor in California history.⁵⁴ Although California joined the Union in 1850 as a free state, leading to increased black migration and greater mobility for blacks than in the South, with statehood California's racial scheme became a more rigid reflection of American practices.

In *Seeking El Dorado: African Americans in California*, Lawrence De Graaf and Quintard Taylor assert that with each government came a specific understanding of race that affected its black population, and strict racial coding was much looser under Spain

⁵⁴ Rick Moss, "Not Quite Paradise: the Development of the African American Community in Los Angeles through 1950." *California History* 75, no. 3 (1996): 222-235.

and Mexico than it later was under America.⁵⁵ The black population in Los Angeles was smaller and more diffuse than in San Francisco until a statewide housing boom and bust cycle (1887-1888) resulted in high unemployment rates that hit rural blacks particularly hard, causing many to relocate to Los Angeles. At this point, black Angelenos were not geographically segregated, nor did they self-segregate. However, there were black areas near downtown Los Angeles in close proximity to places of employment. That would soon change.⁵⁶⁵⁷

Between 1910 and 1920, the black population of Los Angeles grew rapidly, though not at the pace of northern cities that were demographically affected by the first wave of the Great Migration.⁵⁸ With the exception of black pockets like Watts surrounded by white neighborhoods, black life increasingly became centered around the economically attractive Central Avenue, which was established around the turn of the century as a neighborhood of houses and small businesses, including a theatre. White withdrawal or relocation—not yet white flight—made room for black settlement, and Central Avenue became a center of black businesses and black churches that drew

⁵⁵ Lawrence De Graaf and Kevin Mulroy and Quintard Taylor, eds. *Seeking El Dorado: African Americans in California*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 5.

⁵⁶ Moss, "Not Quite Paradise: the Development of the African American Community in Los Angeles Through 1950," 222–235.

⁵⁷ Paul Robinson, "Race, Space, and the Evolution of Black Los Angeles." In *Black Los Angeles: American Dreams and Racial Realities*, edited by Darnell Hunt and Ana-Christina Ramón, (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 21-59.

⁵⁸ Lawrence De Graaf, "The City of Black Angels: Emergence of the Los Angeles Ghetto, 1890-1930," *Pacific Historical Review* 39, no. 3 (1970): 323-352.

Scholarly debate on the specificity of the Great Migration continues, for example, as to whether or not there was a first and second wave or just one long migration pattern that ebbed and flowed over 60 years; while De Graaf's stance is unclear, Los Angeles's black population doubled between 1910 and 1920, from 7,599 to 15,579 according to the *Fourteenth Census of U.S: Vol. II*, 294.

black Angelenos who had previously lived across the city; the area continued to be interracial in nature, as it was also populated by Italians, Jews and Mexicans.⁵⁹

Drawn by the allure of affordable home ownership and opportunity, the black population more than doubled between 1910 and 1920. Real estate development in Los Angeles expanded exponentially to meet demand as a mix of migrants arrived, but the use of racially restrictive housing covenants increasingly forced blacks to settle in the black areas of South Central Los Angeles. Seventy-five percent of black population became concentrated around a corridor which centered on Central Avenue.

By 1920, Lawrence De Graaf argues, most black Angelenos “were living in a few restricted areas which amounted to a spatial ghetto and which had some of the social, economic, and psychological characteristics of a ghetto stretching approximately thirty blocks down Central Avenue and several blocks east to the railroad tracks, or in a few detached islands, especially on West Jefferson, Temple Street, and just south of the city of Watts.”⁶⁰ Ghettoization, De Graaf contends, was the result of increasing white hostility toward black migrants that manifested via “widespread residential exclusion, employment discrimination, social segregation, and growing congestion and structural deterioration of housing.”⁶¹

Black social activism resisted increasing inequality and hostility, but the fight was often uneven. The socially conservative and often racist ideology of the *Los Angeles Times* was challenged by Charlotta Bass in her role as publisher of the *California Eagle*. Bass was integral to the state’s black population’s realignment from the Republican

⁵⁹ De Graaf, "The City of Black Angels: Emergence of the Los Angeles Ghetto, 1890-1930," 323-352.

⁶⁰ De Graaf, "The City of Black Angels: Emergence of the Los Angeles Ghetto, 1890-1930," 335.

⁶¹ De Graaf, "The City of Black Angels: Emergence of the Los Angeles Ghetto, 1890-1930," 350.

Party to the Democratic Party as result of Roosevelt's New Deal programs. Though not targeted specifically at the black population, New Deal programs alleviated some aspects of poverty leading to the political re-alignment and the slogan "Lincoln freed us, but Roosevelt feeds us."⁶²⁶³

In *L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present*, Josh Sides describes the first and second wave of the Great Migration, when the black population swelled with migrants seeking defense industry employment associated with World War II.⁶⁴ Curtailed by opaque *de facto* segregation, black life in Los Angeles was restricted to the areas south of down town Los Angeles; while the borders have shifted over time, the area is commonly referred to as South Central Los Angeles or South Los Angeles.⁶⁵ While a diverse and rich center of culture and black life emerged in South Los Angeles, the area was disproportionately affected by the systematic ills of poverty and ghettoization: overpopulation, isolation, disenfranchisement and political neglect.⁶⁶⁶⁷

Michael J. Klarman's *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights: The Supreme Court and the Struggle for Racial Equality* explores the history of the Supreme Court cases in dealing

⁶² Regina Freer, "LA Race Woman: Charlotta Bass and the Complexities of Black Political Development in Los Angeles," *American Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (2004): 607-632.

⁶³ Douglas Flamming, "African Americans and the Politics of Race in Progressive-Era Los Angeles," *California Progressivism Revisited* (1994): 203-228.

⁶⁴ Sides, *LA City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003).

⁶⁵ Reginald Chapple, "From Central Avenue to Leimert Park: The Shifting Center of Black Los Angeles". In *Black Los Angeles: American Dreams and Racial Realities*, edited by Darnell Hunt and Ana-Christina Ramón, 60-80. (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

⁶⁶ Moss, "Not Quite Paradise: the Development of the African American Community in Los Angeles Through 1950," *California History*, 75.3 (1996): 222-235.

⁶⁷ Robinson, "Race, Space and the Evolution of Black Los Angeles," 21-59.

with issues connected with race. Of specific interest are the legal conversations in cases surrounding the use of racially restrictive housing covenants that directly affected black Angelenos; *Buchanan v. Warley* (1917), *Corrigan v. Buckley* (1926), and *Shelley v. Kraemer* (1948).⁶⁸ The changing nature of *de facto* segregation between 1926 and 1948 led to a challenging of the racial boundaries in Los Angeles. Restrictive covenants were used to fight integration, and the fight against them led to numerous and varied legal challenges. For example, in 1943, the West Adams Improvement Association, composed of eight white families, tried to remove about thirty black homeowners from the Sugar Hill area of Los Angeles including actresses Hattie McDaniel, Louise Beavers, and Ethel Waters. (Blacks started to move into Sugar Hill in the early 1930s when many of the rich industrialists and bankers who had lost their fortunes in the depression lost their homes in what was once called West Adams Heights.) The case was argued in 1945 by Loren Miller, who in collaboration with future Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, successfully argued against racially restrictive covenants in *Shelley v. Kraemer* in 1948. After 1948, racially restrictive covenants were unenforceable, and so the use of extra-legal white power became the recourse for anti-integrationists; extra-legal white power took the form of police harassment.⁶⁹ Beginning in the mid-fifties, the lucrative practice of blockbusting and resulting white flight changed the boundaries of black Los Angeles, as middle-class minded black families left the ghetto and settled in once-exclusively white neighborhoods in cities like Compton and Carson.

⁶⁸ Michael J. Klarman, *From Jim Crow to civil rights: The Supreme Court and the struggle for racial equality*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁶⁹ Robinson, "Race, Space and the Evolution of Black Los Angeles," 21-59.

In response to continuing inequity in the post-World War II era, community leaders like Ted Watkins of the United Auto Workers formed interracial political partnerships backed by labor unions with a common civil rights agenda; early coalitions fought for minority inclusion and employment rights, and they slowly amassed political capital that would later pay dividends.⁷⁰ Interracial coalitions between liberal black, Jewish and white voters transformed the political landscape. For example, in 1963, three black politicians won seats on the Los Angeles City Council: Tom Bradley, Gilbert Lindsay and Billy G. Mills. An interracial coalition on the westside supported the successful mayoral campaign of Tom Bradley (1973-1993).⁷¹ But these political gains, coming in conjunction with the victories of national civil rights movements, did not produce immediate and palpable change in black Los Angeles.

After an altercation between a Los Angeles County Sheriff's unit and a group of black citizens escalated violently, the Watts Rebellion began on August 11 and ended on August 17, 1965. Six days of burnings, looting, and violent confrontations between members of the black community, local law enforcement and the California National Guard that enforced martial law left 34 dead and over \$40 million in property damages.⁷² Nearly fifty years later, the event remains as contentious as when it

⁷⁰ Kevin Allen Leonard, "In the Interest of All Races": African Americans and Interracial Cooperation in Los Angeles during and after World War II." In *Seeking El Dorado: African Americans in California*, by Lawrence De Graaf and Kevin Mulroy and Quintard Taylor, eds. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 309-40.

⁷¹Raphael J. Sonenshein, "Coalition Building in Los Angeles: The Bradley Years and Beyond" In *Seeking El Dorado: African Americans in California*. Edited by De Graaf, Lawrence Brooks, Kevin Mulroy, and Quintard Taylor, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 450-475.

⁷² Watts Rebellion (Los Angeles, 1965) King Encyclopedia. Stanford University. Retrieved November 23, 2011. http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/encyclopedia/enc_watts_rebellion_los_angeles_1965/

occurred. Varying personal recollections and interpretations of the event and its aftermath illustrate significant perceptual differences on American life.⁷³

Was it a riot or a revolt? Answers to that deceptively simple question expose the ideological divide that was and continues in the American consciousness. The use of the the term “riot” connotes a lawless and chaotic disruption of the *status quo*, a plague set loose upon the innocent and civilized. (Ironically, before 1965 race riots in America were the practice of white terrorists who attacked black communities.) As the nation’s media cast its gaze upon Watts, multiple meanings were relayed and accepted; for segregationists, it was proof that integration was dangerous and containment of the black population was necessary; for the general viewing public, it was proof of distinct cultural difference. While the media sensation may have produced a form of sympathy, it did not create a form of empathy which would have required a historical recitation of inequities of caste and class stemming from Jim Crow.⁷⁴ The use of the term revolt connotes a concentrated effort by individuals within a group to strategically attack what they believe are either concrete or symbolic examples of exploitation and violence within their community. Black revolutionaries involved in the Watts revolts found empowerment and international attention through violence and looting. Many black residents within the curfew zone who didn’t participate actively nonetheless understood and affirmed the primacy of the revolutionary actions. White and black radicals across

⁷³ The Watts Uprising and King/Drew are inextricably linked in history and so each chapter in this thesis engages the violence, and in doing so, it complicates simple causalities via the integration of multiple perspectives.

⁷⁴ Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America, 1945-1990*, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), 82.

the nation saw the revolution as the result of a nation riddled with inequity and too slow or simply unwilling to engage.⁷⁵

For a brief moment, the nation was wide awake and its eyes moved to the plight of urban black America as never before—nor since. The sensationalism surrounding the 1965 Watts Riots produced a hunger of curiosity which was partially satiated by popular books and articles that attempted to put the events into context, while espousing a wide range of ideological positions on American history and culture. In *Burn, Baby, Burn!: The Los Angeles Race Riot, August 1965*, Jerry Cohen and William S. Murphy, reporting for the *Los Angeles Times*, offer a story congruent with the *Times*' longstanding negative depiction of South Los Angeles. Watts burned because it was and continues to be a sick community. The authors are disinterested in historical causality, and they end their tome with their hands open to the heavens.⁷⁶ In *Rivers of Blood, Years of Darkness*, Robert Conot challenges the previous analysis, arguing that both the revolutionaries and the government were equally culpable for the burning of Watts.⁷⁷ In *A Prelude to a Riot*, Paul Jacobs address the structural issues of race and poverty that led to the insurrection of poor urban blacks against a system that failed to address their concerns: police brutality, ghettoization, white ignorance, economic exploitation and general disregard for the black ghetto in Los Angeles and across the nation amid a period of economic prosperity. Jacobs concludes that unless America addresses these issues,

⁷⁵ Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Race, Space, and Riots in Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁷⁶ Jerry Cohen and William Sarsfield Murphy. *Burn, Baby, Burn!: The Los Angeles Race Riot, August, 1965*, (New York: Dutton Press, 1966).

⁷⁷ Robert E. Conot, *Rivers of Blood, Years of Darkness*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1967).

more revolutions against the government and society will occur.⁷⁸ *Watts: The Aftermath by the People of Watts*, edited by Paul Bullock, is a collection of oral histories that explain the psychology of revolt, indifference to poverty, and the use of violence amid a period of historic change brought about by nonviolent action.⁷⁹ *Fire this Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s*, by Gerald Horne, is a sociological day-to-day account of the uprising which places them in the context of the sixties. Horne argues that black male insurrectionists were guided by a nationalist ideology, a black power movement ahead of the rest of the country.⁸⁰ In *Journey into the Mind of Watts*, a young Thomas Pynchon goes to the streets and illuminates what seemed to mystify so much of the country at the time. Systematic ghettoization, poverty, and police harassment led a minority of the population of Watts to revolt against anything they could. (Leave it to a surrealist fiction writer to be a rare clarion voice in the midst of so much pain and confusion.⁸¹) General interest in the subject of inner city revolutions then waned and, I argue, most of America suspended an inner dialogue about certain structural truths that were momentarily set ablaze in the nation's consciousness in 1965—until 1992 when the world watched footage of the Rodney King beating and witnessed a subsequent but connected revolution.

Nationalized media coverage of the uprising generated intense public interest and political engagement. California Governor Edmund “Pat” Brown swiftly assembled

⁷⁸ Paul Jacobs, *Prelude to Riot: A View of Urban America from the Bottom*, (New York: Random House, 1968).

⁷⁹ Paul Bullock, *Watts: The Aftermath. An Inside View of the Ghetto by the People of Watts*, (New York: Grove Press, 1969).

⁸⁰ Gerald Horne, *Fire this time: The Watts uprising and the 1960s*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1995).

⁸¹ Thomas Pynchon. *A Journey into the Mind of Watts*, (New York: Mouldwarp, 1983).

an investigative commission led by former CIA director John A. McCone and Warren Christopher. The commission was mostly composed of prominent white Angelenos, and was augmented by a staff of attorneys who organized and documented the testimony given by a large variety of local voices including Yvonne Brathwaite Burke who went on to become a Los Angeles County Supervisor.

To paraphrase one of my sources, a retired government employee with a deep knowledge of the McCone Commission, governmental commissions are political in design and, by nature, investigate with the intention of finding what they already know. To paraphrase another of my sources, ghettoized black Angelenos didn't care that it was McCone—one of California's wealthiest sons—who was sent; the fact that the government sent anyone at all was itself amazing.

On December 2, 1965, the McCone Commission released its report entitled, *Violence in the City--An End or a Beginning? A Report by the Governor's Commission on the Los Angeles Riots, 1965*. The McCone Commission identified the root causes of the uprising as high rates of unemployment, poor primary and secondary education, overcrowded living conditions: systematic poverty conditions. The Commission recommended expansions in education, job training, low-income housing, transportation, and access to comprehensive healthcare. Some transformative prescriptions were followed, like the expansion of public transportation in South Los Angeles, while others, like a long term community policing strategy, were never implemented.⁸²

⁸² Darrell Dawsey, "25 Years After the Watts Riots : McCone Commission's Recommendations Have Gone Unheeded" *Los Angeles Times*, July 8, 1990.

In “The Watts Manifesto and the McCone Report,” Bayard Rustin argues that while the Commission and report begin with a sympathetic tone, mirroring the Moynihan Report,⁸³ the document at its core denies historic culpability, and “it is ambivalent about the basic reforms that are needed to solve these problems and therefore shies away from spelling them out too explicitly.” Rustin argues repeatedly throughout his text that the report creates only a superficial level of engagement with many issues: education, ghettoization, transportation, employment, healthcare, welfare, police brutality, economic exploitation. Both the Moynihan Report and the McCone Report, Rustin argues, are written as if the changes of the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act have already arrived and so the riots weren’t a response to the effects of *de facto* segregation. In accepting the prejudiced and unmovable views of Mayor Sam Yorty and Police Chief William Parker, the report blames the victim and powerfully obscures the victimizer, treating poverty as a disease rather than a symptom of something far larger and ominous. Rustin concludes: “Like the liberal consensus which it embodies and reflects, the commission's imagination and political intelligence appear paralyzed by the hard facts of Negro deprivation it has unearthed, and it lacks the political will to demand that the vast resources of contemporary America be used to build a genuinely great society that will finally put an end to these deprivations.”⁸⁴ In “White on Blacks: A Critique of the McCone Commission Report on the Los Angeles Riots,” Robert M. Fogelson picks up the critical argument three years after Rustin, when urban uprisings

⁸³Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Lee Rainwater, and William L. Yancey. *The Negro family: The Case for National Action*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1967). Popularly known as The Moynihan Report was written by Assistant Secretary of Labor Daniel Patrick Moynihan in 1965. The controversial report argued that black poverty was a result of fractured black families led by single mothers and not rooted in the disproportionate rate of unemployment in inner city black communities.

⁸⁴ Bayard Rustin, “WATTS MANIFESTO and the MCCONE REPORT,” *Commentary* 41, no. 3 (1966): 29-35.

were almost predictable. Fogelson concludes that while society embraced the messages of the McCone Commission, America was still largely ignorant of structural truths underlying riots.⁸⁵

In *Flak-Catchers: One Hundred Years of Riot Commission Politics in America*, Lindsey Lupo chronicles and dissects the way riot commissions have treated the subject of race and violence. Lupo asserts that the McCone Commission was disinterested in social science evaluations and focused on “hard facts,” and this definition of scope led the commissioners to come to preconceived notions of race and poverty. The commission functioned for just over three months and barely managed to assemble the report that was severely limited in depth and, Lupo argues, reflected the lack of serious engagement of the commission. The commission served its political purpose by superficially engaging to bolster status quo ideology and policy. In her conclusion, Lupo expounds on the top-down conservative nature of the report and its creators: “The commission quickly became John McCone’s commission and ended up reflecting his right of center views: spending was a low priority and the black population should be held responsible for their own acts. In fact, blame is duly placed on many places outside the government’s reach—on black residents, criminals, black leadership, migration trends, welfare policies. The LAPD was largely exonerated and Chief Parker, ubiquitously despised in the minority community for his harsh police policies and alleged prejudices, was supported and even praised. The recommendations of the McCone Commission are therefor at the lower end of what was needed to deal with the

⁸⁵ Robert M. Fogelson, “White on Black: A Critique of the McCone Commission Report on the Los Angeles Riots.” *Political Science Quarterly* (1967): 337-367.

problems. The status quo was protected at the expense of essential reform, as is the case with all riot commissions.”⁸⁶

The McCone Commission may be remembered as a flawed governmental enterprise reflecting a continuing national ignorance and arrogance. However, in a section entitled *Health Problems*, the commission’s findings focused on a specific and recognizable problem, and called for a fundamental shift in healthcare in South Los Angeles:

“Statistics indicate that health conditions of the residents of south central Los Angeles are relatively poor and facilities to provide medical care are insufficient. Infant mortality, for example, is about one and one-half times greater than the city-wide average. Life expectancies are considerably shorter. A far lower percentage of the children are immunized against diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, smallpox, and poliomyelitis than in the rest of the county.

As established by the comprehensive reports of consultants to the Commission, the number of doctors in the southeastern part of Los Angeles is grossly inadequate as compared with other parts of the city. It is reported that there are 106 physicians for some 252,000 people, whereas the county ratio is three times higher. The hospitals readily accessible to the citizens in southeastern Los Angeles are also grossly inadequate in quality and in numbers of beds. Of the eight proprietary hospitals, which have a total capacity of 454 beds, only two meet minimum standards of professional quality. The two large public hospitals, County General and Harbor General, are both distant and difficult to reach. The Commission recognizes that the motivation of patients to take advantage of the available medical facilities is an important factor in health conditions but it appears that the facilities in the area are not even sufficient to care for those who now seek medical attention.

In light of the information presented to it, the Commission believes that immediate and favorable consideration should be given to a new, comprehensively-equipped hospital in this area, which is now under study by various public agencies. To that end we strongly urge that a broadly based committee (including citizens of the area and representatives of the

⁸⁶ Lindsey Lupo, *Flak-Catchers: One Hundred Years of Riot Commission Politics in America*, (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011),117.

Los Angeles County Department of Charities, Los Angeles County Medical Association, the California Medical Association, the State Department of Health, and medical and public health schools) be appointed to study where such a hospital should be located and to make recommendations upon various technical and administrative matters in connection with the hospital.

We also believe that the Los Angeles County Health Department should increase the number and services of public health and preventive medical facilities in the area and that similar program improvement should be undertaken by the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, the Visiting Nurse Association of Los Angeles, and other voluntary health agencies.”⁸⁷

Beginning in the early fifties, community activists and local physicians like heavy weight boxing champion Joe Louis and Dr. Wells Ford began pursuing the construction of a private community hospital. Geographically isolated from comprehensive healthcare, the poor of South Los Angeles had higher rates of untreated disease and mortality than any other population in Los Angeles County.⁸⁸ Ford and a group comprised of community activists and physicians applied for State Hill-Burton funds, but were turned down because they unable to raise matching funds from private sources. In the early 1960s, community members led by Dr. Sol White Jr. began advocating for the creation of a black hospital that would offer education, training, and a base for medical research. Community members dreamt of a place of self-sufficiency and opportunity, part of a larger vision that challenged continuing poverty and despair in their midst; community activists like Lillian Mobley, Mary Henry, Caffie Green, Johnnie Taylor and

⁸⁷ *Violence in the City--an End or a Beginning? A Report by the Governor's Commission on the Los Angeles Riots.* By John A. McCone, Chairman. Los Angeles, C.A. : The Los Angeles Commission, 1965. Health Problems. <http://web.archive.org/web/20070226225400/http://www.usc.edu/libraries/archives/cityinstress/mccone/part9.html>

⁸⁸ In conversation with former Los Angeles City Councilmen, Robert C. Farrell. 10/09/2013. According to Farrell, Dr. Moses Alfred Haynes medical study of the black community in South Los Angeles predated later efforts by experts directed by the McCone Commission, however, the findings were the same as Haynes.

Nola Carter pursued the issue.⁸⁹ The McCone Report lent political legitimacy to the concerns of community physicians and activists who had long understood the situation, however the process of politicization changed the dream from private and separate, to public and integrated.⁹⁰

The misunderstanding of King/Drew's historical importance lies in a general historical amnesia that negates the historical experience of blacks in Los Angeles, inaccurately casts it as a recent addition to the landscape, and diminishes their identities and contributions via hegemonic nightmares of gang violence, death and collective despair. By utilizing the voices and identities from the creation of King/Drew, my research adds a dynamic representation which challenges flat or polarized perceptions. While I acknowledge that challenges continue to confront the citizens of South Los Angeles—the creation of King/Drew alone could not solve every problem—my scholarship joins with others that seek to challenge ahistorical and reductive renderings that are both unjust and dangerous to greater society.⁹¹

Methodology

Martin Luther King Jr. General Hospital and the Charles R. Drew School of Medicine and Science were created to challenge the medical manifestations of poverty in the isolated black community of South Los Angeles, a *de facto* ghetto with higher rates of death and disease than anywhere else in Los Angeles County. This thesis

⁸⁹The Lillian Harkless Mobley Presidential Endowed Scholarship Fund. <http://www.cdrewu.edu/assets/pdfs/Mrs%20%20Mobley%20Scholarship%20Fund.pdf>

⁹⁰ Humphrey M. Moss. "Martin Luther King, Jr., General Hospital and, Community Involvement." *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association* 61, no. 3 (1973): 324.

⁹¹ Sides, Josh, ed. *Post-Ghetto: Reimagining South Los Angeles*, (Los Angeles: Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West, 2012).

explores the creation of the medical complex as a localization of the cultural flux of the 1960s and early 1970s. A narrative constructed from oral history and biography as well as traditional archival sources, this thesis describes the actions of both groups and individuals. This thesis utilized government documents found in the Kenneth Hahn Archive at the Huntington Library in Pasadena, California, and the Martin Luther King Jr. Multi-Service Ambulatory Care Center and the Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science in Willowbrook, California, including *The Watts Hospital: A Health Facility is Planned for a Metropolitan Slum Area*.⁹² Other government reports and notes such as *Violence in the City—an End or a Beginning? A Report by the Governor’s Commission on the Los Angeles Riots* were located online.⁹³ This thesis utilized newspaper and magazine articles found in the Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research in Los Angeles, California, and accessed through the Los Angeles County Library Online Database, and the Los Angeles City Library Online Database; national black newspapers and magazines included *The Crisis and Jet*; local black newspapers included *The California Eagle and The Los Angeles Sentinel*; other local newspapers included *The Los Angeles Times and The Daily Breeze*. Other research materials were located in the archive of *Random Lengths News* in San Pedro, California. Additionally, this thesis utilized articles from multiple journals accessed online, most importantly, the *Journal of the National Medical Association*.

The hospital’s story frames the stories of people who were engaged in the process. In remembering, they reveal their past ideas of self and their present

⁹² Arthur Jack Visel tear and Arnold I. Kisch and Milton Irwin Roemer, “The Watts Hospital: A Health Facility is Planned for a Metropolitan Slum Area,” (Washington DC: Division of Medical Care Administration, 1967).

⁹³ John A. McCone, “Violence in the city: An end or a beginning.” *Governor’s Comm. on the Los Angeles Riots* (1965).

understandings of how their past actions defined their lives. Through memory, multiple truths are presented and tensions are explored, resulting in a deeper understanding of the action, the period in question, and its impact upon the lives that too often are either ignored or neglected.

The study of memory is nothing new. Nor are the tensions between the scholarly camps that advocate for the study of memory vs traditional historiography. However, Jeffery K. Olick locates the origins of the modern battle amid the intellectual explosion of the late 18th Century. From Proust to Freud, from philosophy to science, a myriad of scholars studied memory and the use of memory to find deeper more dynamic meanings, to answer questions that traditional historiography had long ignored. Whether drawn from the oral histories of former slaves or Holocaust survivors, the study of memory holds the key to bringing subordinated narratives to light which may illuminate the past, reframe the present, and possibly change the future.⁹⁴ While unwittingly unaware of Memory Studies as a field at the beginning of my academic quest, my research nonetheless is a part of it, as Memory Studies and American Studies are natural allies with their mutual aim of adding new dimensions to the discourse of modern life.

Like Henri Bergson and Emile Durkheim before him, sociologist Maurice Halbwachs argues that the vagaries of traditional history impose limitations upon humanity's ability to understand it's past. The study of memory offers liberation both for the scholar and the witness, and access to a well of meaning beyond the pale. In *On Collective Memory*, Halbwachs presents a three-prong approach to understanding the

⁹⁴ Jeffrey K. Olick, and Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi and Daniel Levy, eds. *The Collective Memory Reader*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

past via a study of memory; autobiographical memory is constituted of personally experienced events; collective memory is constituted of experiences passed to the individual by members of his or her group that are vital in the formation of identity; historical memory is constituted by various interest levels of scholars and writers that focus upon specific aspects of the past.⁹⁵ Each type of memory is a construction that is formulated both independently and dependently of each other. Interpreting the interdependence, a noble pursuit in itself, understandably leads to the formulation of contradictions and areas of extreme tension (otherwise known as fascinating research that is at once sublime and frustrating). As Halbwachs didn't create a hierarchy of memory, I see no reason not to follow suit here, though my orientation reorders his formative analysis. This meta-narrative is one of institution building, and the institution building history is a memory frame which allows for the arrangement or structuring of both collective memories and personal memories. Both Akira Kurosawa's *Rashomon* (1950) and David Simon's *The Wire* (2002-2008) employ a unique episodic story telling structure in which multiple perspectives, rife with contradiction, enrich the overall tightly bound meta-narrative; both fictions explore the human condition, and both end leaving the viewer staring into the infinite abyss.⁹⁶ This dissertation was inspired by the structure of both fictions, but compelled to conform to some of the conventions of academic writing. As a result, the final product is a hybrid that successfully conveys a multiplicity of memory and meaning.

⁹⁵ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, (Chicago:University of Chicago Press, 1992).

⁹⁶ *Rashomon*. DVD. Directed by Akira Kurosawa, (1950; Tokyo, Japan. 2008; Burbank, California: Criterion Collection).
The Wire. DVD. Directed by David Simon. (2002-2008; Burbank, CA: HBO).

Was it a riot or a rebellion? Does one understanding need to eclipse or dominate the other, or is the possibility of endorsing multiplicity too powerful of a threat, a sign of weakness or submission, the result of moral relativism? The violence that sparked off in Watts on August 11, 1965, can be understood as both a riot and a rebellion, the later continued long after smoldering embers turned to ashes. If actual participation in burning and looting was limited to a small percentage of the community, tacit agreement stemmed from a communal rejection of subordination, a violent purging of black self-hatred and inequality which began with slavery.⁹⁷ If it is possible to endorse a multiplicity of understandings in the present, it was arguably less so in the past, as one's perspective was informed by one's place in America's uneven society. In my travels through memory, I have found that even with the distance that time provides, the discourse reflects a continuing rebellion against continuing white hegemony, a war of empowerment waged across the greatest of battlefield, the human mind.

"I can't believe I'm arguing my history with a white man," exclaimed journalist Betty Pleasant with absolute disdain after we engaged in a short conversation about the creation of Martin Luther King Jr. General Hospital which started out cordial, but quickly became heated when I described the importance of Supervisor Kenneth Hahn's role in the process. Pleasant is in her 80s, and I sense that her conversation-ending response was likely the result of fatigue— it likely wasn't aimed at me personally, but at what I represented. While anecdotal, I believe this exchange speaks to larger issues of historical representation and ownership of memory. If the creation and proliferation of history is an industry dominated too often by white hegemony, then Pleasant must assert the primacy of memory as part of a continuing empowerment and rebellion even

⁹⁷ Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America, 1945-1990*, 63-4.

as her memory fades. Both constructions of history and memory are the result of both the conscious and unconscious effects of politics and power.

While Michael Foucault wrote little specifically about the power of memory, he spent much of his life grappling with how power functions within a society. Power is diffuse and fluid, Foucault asserted repeatedly, not concentrated and static; absolutist visions of hierarchical control are self-serving and simplistic, as while sometimes subtle, expressions of power come from all aspects of a society and arrive in a variety of forms, from destruction to creation.⁹⁸

In describing the creation of King/Drew, my work connects with a diverse web of interdisciplinary scholarship that has steadily advanced the importance and vitality of meanings drawn from the study of memory including psychology, sociology, anthropology and oral history.⁹⁹ Like American Studies, Memory Studies is constantly expanding, often for the same reasons, as the demand grows for new understandings only possible via the integration of seemingly disparate disciplines. Told through an inter-connected collection of memory, the creation of Martin Luther King Jr. General Hospital speaks for a generation quickly disappearing. In the process of researching the following chapters, I spoke with dozens of individuals; any product that would be all-inclusive would fill volumes, and so my selections were made in an attempt to dynamically explain varying meanings. From the outset, I was interested in not just a specific history recorded by memory, but how an individual sees themselves within the larger history. And so, this thesis is neither a jeremiad, nor is it a celebration. It is a

⁹⁸ Michel Foucault, *Madness and civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, (New York: Random House LLC, 1988).

⁹⁹ The field of memory studies is exceedingly diverse. A good sampling can be found in the following text: Olick, Jeffrey K., Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy, eds. *The collective memory reader*. Oxford University Press on Demand, 2011.

historically grounded transmission of the memories of individuals who generously shared their time and meaningful perspectives.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter Two speaks to community acts of resistance to ghetto conditions in South Los Angeles utilizing the memories of Dr. Sol White Jr., a member and president (1964) of the Charles R. Drew Medical Society. In the early sixties, White and the CRDMS waged a campaign to build a private black hospital in Watts. The effort harnessed exceptional political capital and laid the groundwork for the eventually successful quest made by Supervisor Kenneth Hahn. White's story explores the shifting nature of racial and political identity during the hospital's creation period, but it also speaks to how a man burned by the flame of political involvement found rebirth and a measure of peace at the end of his life. More often than not a reluctant witness to his own past, White's story speaks to the transformation of an individual via engagement in the political struggle for the uplift of a ghettoized community.

The voices found in Chapter Three speak to the life and legacy of Supervisor Kenneth Hahn. A staunch and loyal advocate for his beleaguered constituents, Hahn shepherded the creation of King/Drew throughout its construction and beyond. Long after Hahn's passing, his son and daughter, former Mayor James Hahn and Congresswoman Janice Hahn, continue his legacy of public service. They speak to their father's deep involvement in the process and his political and ideological legacy that shaped their lives in public service.

Chapter Four utilizes the memories of two members of Drew's executive board of directors to explore the turbulent creation process of King/Drew: Dr. Sherman H. Mellinkoff and Dr. Mitchell Spellman. Dean of UCLA's School of Medicine (retired) and one of the original conceptual architects of King/Drew, Mellinkoff's memory speaks to the politicization of medicine which shaped the institution's identity and governance. In recalling his life and role in the creation process, Spellman's memory speaks to the difficulties inherent in institution building while at the center of a storm of controversy. Additionally, Spellman's memory furthers the discussion of black medicine in the post-World War II era, when black physicians continued on a separate and unequal path towards self-sufficiency and black empowerment in medicine.

Chapter Five utilizes the memories of Mervyn M. Dymally, one of a wave of black politicians that ascended California's political scene in the early 1960s. Dymally's voice illuminates the creation of King/Drew as a physical manifestation of black empowerment and inclusion amid continuing racial hostility when King/Drew was successfully pursued as part of a liberal multi-racial agenda. A long-time supporter of King/Drew from its inception, Dymally's voice frames the institution's creation as a local manifestation of the Civil Rights Movement; his personal philosophy and political agenda mirrored that of the institution; poverty conditions can be ameliorated, if not directly challenged, by empowering the poor with access to education, employment and comprehensive healthcare. No one voice can speak for an entire community, even though Dymally was elected to do just that during an era in which authority and civic representation worked to keep pace with the beliefs and desires of newly empowered constituents. Through memory and biography, Dymally is explored not as a saint, but as a perfectly imperfect

man and leader who righteously pursued the agenda of the Civil Rights Movement as a permanent revolution against white hegemony.

Chapter Six utilizes the memories and perspectives of two members of the black community of South Los Angeles that rose to prominence by engaging in the local democratic participatory process and the national Civil Rights Movement; it led to the creation of King/Drew, and the empowerment of an entire community. During King/Drew's creation era, Robert C. Farrell was a civil rights activist and journalist before becoming a political insider. In focusing his analysis on the meanings of the medical complex, Farrell's voice challenges ideas of truth and mythology and places the hospital within a greater political, historical and ideological context. Alma Reaves Woods has been a constant voice in the participatory discourse that shaped King/Drew since its founding. Through her memories and perspectives, the reader gets a sense of what it means to be in the whirlwind of activism for more than half a century, seeing how a struggle that shaped a single life continues to shape the lives of countless others. Through their memories, the reader sees a journey west for a generation of black migrants who left the South behind for a new life in Los Angeles where they found both ghettoization and new opportunity. For the generation that witnessed it, King/Drew's creation represented the fruition of part of a greater dream of self-sufficiency, self-determination and civic inclusion amid a turbulent and dynamic process of black empowerment.

Chapter Two: The Charles R. Drew Medical Society and Dr. Sol White Jr.

Introduction

“Excellence of performance will transcend artificial barriers created by man.” Dr. Charles R. Drew often stated this belief to students like Dr. LaSalle D. Leffall Jr., who rose to become the Charles R. Drew Professor of Surgery at Howard University College of Medicine in 1992.¹⁰⁰ Leffall recalls that when pressed for explanation, Drew explained that by artificial barriers, he meant racial segregation and discrimination. Born into poverty, Drew rose on his academic and athletic abilities. After graduating from Amherst College in Massachusetts in 1926, he attended medical school at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, and received an MD and a Master of Surgery degree in 1933. Later, Drew completed graduate work at Columbia University in New York, New York, and he became the first black American to receive a doctoral degree in medical science. Drew was integral in the research of storing and transfusing blood and in 1941, he was appointed the first Director of the American Red Cross Blood Bank in the midst of World War II. He inspired and trained generations of black physicians at Howard University College of Medicine before dying after a car accident in 1950.¹⁰¹

In the post-World War II era, *de facto* segregation in Los Angeles—an opaque brand of Jim Crow—affected most black physicians and black patients. “Los Angeles in the 1940s was a land of hypocrisy,” says Dr. C. Freeman. “America had just won World War II with the contribution of blacks, but back at home, blacks were neither respected,

¹⁰⁰ Dr. LaSalle D. Leffall, Jr., as quoted from the film, “Charles R. Drew” uploaded by the Charles Drew University Library. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMs3mL4SiH0&feature=player_embedded#at=66.

¹⁰¹ “The Charles R. Drew Papers” *Profiles in Science*, National Library of Medicine. <http://profiles.nlm.nih.gov/ps/retrieve/Collection/CID/BG>

nor treated equally. The disparity of resources left most blacks below the poverty line.” Like their counterparts across the nation, black physicians and nurses encountered resistance in gaining employment in many Los Angeles hospitals. The majority of black Angelenos lived in the poverty-stricken ghetto of South Los Angeles—far from the public medical services they depended upon across the city in Boyle Heights or in Carson. With overburdened wards, Los Angeles County General Hospital (now known as Los Angeles County + USC Medical Center) and Harbor-UCLA Hospital bore the responsibility of providing comprehensive care to all of the city’s poor residents.

Poverty in the black community deeply affected the lives and careers of black physicians in South Los Angeles. On August 5, 1950, a diverse group of black physicians that practiced in South Los Angeles founded the Charles R. Drew Medical Society (CRDMS), named in honor of the famed surgeon, primarily for the purposes of socializing and sharing new research in medicine. Importantly, however, the CRDMS served as a unifying force for local black physicians that reflected the civil rights agenda of the National Medical Association. “Our predecessors were not trying to create a legacy,” says Freeman. “They were merely trying to create a support system for minority physicians who chose to practice medicine in Los Angeles at a time of racial hostilities and unequal opportunities.”¹⁰²

“It was the first time out here that you had black doctors doing stuff, dentists together, and pharmacists together. It was just one big thing,” recalls Charlene Johnson, the wife of CRDMS co-founder Dr. Jerome Johnson. The first and many subsequent meetings of the CRDMS took place at the city’s first black medical group clinic. “We

¹⁰² 2008 CRDMS President C. Freeman, as quoted from the film, “Charles R. Drew Medical Society: Legacies in the Making.” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fcgdbZOjXM&feature=player_embedded#at=11. Accessed 02/18/14.

decided that Vernon and Broadway was a good place to go because that was kinda our heart of the city after World War II.”¹⁰³ The first generation of CRDMS members were men that agreed that the medical society would be exclusively male; a few female interview subjects recall the strong stink of chauvinism that was present in the early days of the CRDMS. This spurred the creation of the Auxiliary to the Charles R. Drew Medical Society, an organization run by members’ wives like Charlene Johnson.

Mirroring the Auxiliary to the National Medical Association (NMA) founded in 1936,¹⁰⁴ the Auxiliary to the Charles R. Drew Medical Society was founded “to create a greater interest in the Charles R. Drew Medical Society, to encourage the medical profession in its effort to educate and serve the public in matters of health, and to develop and promote a National Auxiliary Program on health, education and legislation.”¹⁰⁵

Doctors tended to treat patients in their homes due to racial discrimination and isolation. The unity created by the CRDMS and the Auxiliary naturally fostered a strong belief in the need for the construction of a healthcare facility to combat unequal access to healthcare in the isolated community. One of the first reported actions by the CRDMS was the creation of a phone system so that the public could find medical care around the clock. Before an assembly of the Auxiliary, Henry McPherson asserted that a form of

¹⁰³ Charlene Johnson as quoted from the film, “Charles R. Drew Medical Society: Legacies in the Making.” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fcgdbZO0jXM&feature=player_embedded#at=11. Accessed 02/18/14.

¹⁰⁴ “History of the Auxiliary to the National Medical Association.” http://www.anmanet.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9&Itemid=3 Accessed 02/18/14.

¹⁰⁵ “Auxiliary to the Charles R. Drew Medical Society: Our History.” <http://www.auxiliarycrdrewmedicalsociety.com> Accessed 02/18/14.

prepaid medical care was “rapidly becoming the answer to socialized medicine.”¹⁰⁶

Throughout its history, CRDMS and the Auxiliary pursued an agenda that includes community outreach and education, often in collaboration with other local and national organizations. In 1954, CRDMS co-sponsored a refresher course for physicians on cancer detection planned in conjunction with the educational program of the American Cancer Society of Los Angeles County.¹⁰⁷

Community endeavors to cope with inequality in Los Angeles healthcare via private enterprise can, at the minimum, be traced back to 1924 when Dr. Richard S. Whitaker opened the 20-bed Dunbar Hospital, which operated until 1938. In 1945, a group of black physicians, like Dr. Shelby Robinson and Dr. John Robinson Jr. pledged \$1000 each to build West View Hospital, touted as the first “interracial, non-sectarian, non-profit hospital, open to every race, creed and color in the finest tradition of American democracy.” The group selected famed Los Angeles architect Paul Williams to design the new facility, but had difficulty with fundraising. The enterprise attracted the attention and support of actor Harpo Marx who used his celebrity to fundraise via “star-studded events including concerts by Lena Horne, Dinah Shore, and Benny Goodman.”¹⁰⁸ However by 1950, the group had only collected \$200,000 of the \$1.2 million required to secure matching Hill-Burton funding. Large-scale civic support of the campaign, *Let’s Finish It*, included a fundraising drive by Archbishop J. Francis

¹⁰⁶ “Charles Drew Club Meets,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 31, 1951. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/562276608?accountid=35804>

¹⁰⁷ “Refresher on Cancer Offered Local Doctors,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, Mar 18, 1954. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/562410518?accountid=35804>

¹⁰⁸ Mallory Furnier, “An Unexpected, But Pivotal, Path: The Negro’s Who’s Who in California and West View Hospital,” *The Autry Blog*, August 12, 2011. <http://blog.theautry.org/an-unexpected-but-pivotal-path-the-negros-whos-who-in-california-and-west-view-hospital/>

McIntyre, but the campaign failed to meet its objectives.¹⁰⁹ In late December 1951, CRDMS membership joined with members of the Southern California Medical, Dental and Pharmaceutical Association and the West View Hospital Board in backing the completion of a scaled-back 100-bed private hospital, St. Augustine-West View, to be located at 53rd and Main St., at an expected cost of \$1,300,000.¹¹⁰ Despite large-scale support, the hospital was never constructed. However, the process undoubtedly inspired later attempts at building a hospital for the poor and black of South Los Angeles; attempts by heavy weight boxing champion Joe Louis and Dr. Wells Ford also failed due to a lack of financial resources.¹¹¹

In 1961, CRDMS members, including Dr. Julius W. Hill,¹¹² formed the Golden State Medical Association (GSMA) to qualify for membership with the NMA. In 1965, the John Hale Medical Society was formed in San Francisco, California, and, like CRDMS, it joined the NMA via its affiliation with the GSMA.¹¹³ Members of the Auxiliary to the Charles R. Drew Medical Society were also members of the Auxiliary to the National Medical Association; both the physicians and their wives attended separate annual meetings located in cities across the nation. In 1961, Auxiliary members Mrs. Essie Tucker and Mrs. Dickerson Hawkins attended the national convention in Pittsburgh,

¹⁰⁹ "West View Hospital, Los Angeles, CA." Paul Revere Williams, *American Architect: A Man and His Work*. <http://www.paulwilliamsproject.org/gallery/west-view-hospital-los-angeles-ca/>

¹¹⁰ "St. Augustine-Westview Report Cites Gains, Objectives for 1952," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, December 27, 1951. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/562220840?accountid=35804>

¹¹¹ Moss, "Martin Luther King, Jr., General Hospital and, Community Involvement," 324.

¹¹² "In Memoriam: Julius Wanser Hill, MD 1917-1983." Hill was the first president of the Golden State Medical Association, "and was named President Emeritus in perpetuity." <http://pubmedcentralcanada.ca/picrender.cgi?accid=PMC2561673&blobtype=pdf>

¹¹³ Hill, "The Golden State Medical Association. The California Chapter of the National Medical Association," 46.

Pennsylvania;¹¹⁴ through their participation and membership in the NMA, the CRDMS and the Auxiliary cultivated both a national and international presence. During a state-sponsored visit to the U.S in 1963, Dr. K. O. Mbadiwe, Nigeria's Minister of State, met with CRDMS membership to discuss a proposed Mayo Medical Clinic in Nigeria.¹¹⁵

Later that year, CRDMS hosted the annual meetings of the NMA and the Auxiliary at the Statler-Hilton Hotel.¹¹⁶ On July 8, 1964, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. attended a reception at the International Hotel hosted by the CRDMS, the Los Angeles Dental Study Club, and the Medical, Dental and Pharmaceutical Association. King was in Los Angeles to confer with clergy on plans for testing compliance with the Civil Rights Act, including Reverend G. Mansfield Collins, executive director of the Western Christian Leadership Conference.¹¹⁷ While the subject is largely invisible in popular history, equality in medicine was an implicit part of the agenda of the national Civil Rights Movement, and the CRDMS membership was a forefront of medical activism in Los Angeles.

This chapter utilizes the memories of Dr. Sol White Jr., a member and President (1964) of the Charles R. Drew Medical Society. In the early 1960s, Dr. Sol White Jr. and the CRDMS waged a campaign to build a private black hospital in Watts. White's effort harnessed exceptional political capital and laid the groundwork for the ultimately successful quest made by Supervisor Kenneth Hahn. White's story explores the shifting nature of racial and political identity during the hospital's creation period, but it also

¹¹⁴ "Mrs. James Swan Sounds Gavel for Drew Auxiliary," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 15, 1960. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564565573?accountid=35804>

¹¹⁵ "Nigerian Minister of State Visits Medics," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, July 4, 1963. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564661194?accountid=35804>

¹¹⁶ "Medics Await Meeting," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 8, 1963. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564651999?accountid=35804>

¹¹⁷ "Dr. King to Aid in Rights Test," *Los Angeles Times*, July 8, 1963. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.lapl.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/154967017?accountid=6749>

speaks to how a man burned by the flame of political involvement found rebirth and a measure of peace at the end of his life. More often than not a reluctant witness to his own past, White's story speaks to the transformation of an individual via engagement in the political struggle for the uplift of a ghettoized community.

Dr. Sol White Jr.

"You're swamping," says Dr. Sol White Jr. and he smiles knowingly. We sit alone at a table in the conference room on the seventh floor of El Dorado Church of God Home.¹¹⁸

"I'm what?" I ask. Between his thick Southern accent and his loose dentures, I'm clueless.

"You're swamping," repeats White and laughs when he sees I'm not getting it. White informs me that "swamping is when you take in parts of your environment, the mindset, and identify with that environment." Later, I find a second meaning for swamping: the process of delving into the depths of history and culture unwritten.

I tell him I understand, and he says, "Thank you!" emphatically and laughs appreciatively, if suspiciously. This "thank you" is one of his often-used catch phrases. Just as we're about to dive in, a small Asian woman in a zombie-like trance enters, walks around the perimeter, and exits the room; this occurs several times during our conversation. White barely acknowledges the curiosity.

White: "I can be tech and I can be just plain."

Simon: "Let's try to be plain 'cause we don't have too much time."

¹¹⁸ The following section draws from the primary interview I conducted with White as well as two follow up calls. The section that follows this one draws from my final meeting with White.

White: “I’m a Christian so it ain’t about me in my whole life. It’s really not about me. It’s about Jesus. I was baptized into Christ. That’s important.”

In the process of describing his life, White constantly references his faith in Jesus Christ, the knowledge found in the Bible and the wisdom of Solomon, though sometimes his story is more reminiscent of Job. The witnessing comes off equal parts comic and earnest. White’s warmth and sarcasm make for easy conversation, though I sense his humor is a defense mechanism. While I’ve met “zen tricksters” before, White is my first “Christian trickster.”

White: “I want to make it clear that my concerns have changed from a secular standpoint to a spiritual. Equal opportunity and equal time. Since 1974, that’s quite a number of years.”

White is light skinned and his choice of temporal bifurcation parallels choices he made concerning the color of his skin and how people perceived its significance. “They haven’t determined how much blood makes you black,” says White in addressing America’s obsession with determining racial identification, “They had trouble identifying me, but that’s their problem, not mine.” Indeed, he claims to find amusement in observing while people try to make racial sense of him so as to categorize him within the American racial structure.

“All kinda things on my birth certificate,” says White inviting me. Creole, French maybe, Irish, Native American? White lets his top dentures slide down—he’s amused by the confusion of identity politics. White describes his accent and style of speech as being typical of Louisiana: “ever heard of Red Bone Cajun?”

White: My dad never knew his mother, and we think he was adopted by a guy who had a ranch. 'Cause he looks Spanish. My mother was from a traditional English family, Pendleton out of Marshall Texas. So on both sides of my family, we got a lot of history.

As only a drop of black blood determines race in the South, White was born to a middle class black family on January 3, 1931, in Marshall, Texas, to Sol and Marie White, a pharmacist and a teacher. Asthma limited his choice of pursuits. He began playing music early in his childhood; he studied piano for three years, later played trumpet in the marching band, and eventually became serious about the violin. He was mostly raised in Beaumont, Texas, "an oil town of thirty thousand folk."

Simon: "What were people like in your neighborhood?"

White: On my block where I grew up, it was all black. When I say black I mean ... they had many different colors ... different aspects ... You're familiar with the word mulatto? Octoroon? Oh, yeah all them terms. Yella, they called me yella."

Simon: "Or high yella?"

White: "Oh, you done picked up on that term?"

Simon: "Yes." (Both of us laughing)

White's family traveled to Los Angeles often to alleviate Marie's arthritis during the cold winter months. He attended one year of high school in Los Angeles. The experience left him with a good impression of the city. This early positive experience influenced his decision to move west for his medical residency.

Simon: "How do you recall the Los Angeles you first encountered?"

White: "LA was integrated. I lived at Third Avenue and Jefferson. West LA. The dividing line was Western in the forties, Crenshaw was the second dividing line in the fifties."

Echoing earlier comparative sentiments of seminal voices in the larger black community like W.E.B. Du Bois, White recalls that “Los Angeles wasn’t segregated.” But this statement must be understood in a comparative context between the way segregation was experienced between Los Angeles and the South. White was raised in a rigidly segregated southern city, and his father’s pharmacy was located within a segregated black business district; White worked at the pharmacy as a teenager.

After graduating from Charlton-Poller High School in Beaumont, White attended Fisk University before attending Meharry Medical School. White’s recollection of Meharry matches many accounts of black physicians of his generation that attended Howard or Meharry. At the largely black institutions, they were instructed by professors who pushed their students to be better than their white contemporaries and taught not to submit to the racial prejudice found in the American medical establishment. While White claims that he was not pushed into the political realm until later, it seems certain that White’s time at Meharry at least readied him for his later fight.

Although his goal was to become an obstetrician, White was gently pressured to become a pediatrician by his advisors. After he completed his studies at Meharry, White moved to Los Angeles and completed a one-year internship and a two-year residence in pediatrics at Big County Hospital. He was paid \$98 a month—not nearly enough to support his wife and five daughters—so White’s wife Patricia worked for the telephone company.

After finishing his residency, White’s father staked him with enough cash to open a modest westside practice near Crenshaw and Venice. As part of a wave of middle class blacks moving west and south of Central Avenue, White bought a home in the

middle class neighborhood of View Park. But after he finished decorating his office, White recalls that he became bored with his practice. Throughout his life, White studied violin and he found a connection with the musicians and other people he encountered in the jazz clubs on Central Avenue. While still vibrant, White's attraction to the Central Avenue scene took place during a period of slow decline because of the out-migration of the black middle class.¹¹⁹

White describes his activities in Watts as “swamping.” He took in the amalgamating force of ghettoization in which different southern cultures came together. Having grown up in a middle class family, it's possible that he was aware of—yet shielded from—aspects of lower-class southern black life, and most likely the bohemian lifestyle found in the Central Avenue clubs. It's also possible White found the scene as exotic as it was found by white visitors who frequented the clubs. When a classmate from Meharry, Dr. Phillip Smith, suggested they work together at a private clinic in Watts previously started by a colleague, White abandoned his west side practice and, it seems, any chance at a “normal” doctor's life.

Simon: “What drew you to practicing medicine in Watts?”

White: “I was in my element. And they needed a doctor.”

At the time, according to White's memory, there were only 25 doctors for the 200,000 residents of Watts and the surrounding areas. According to data supplied to the McCone Commission by Dr. Roemer of USC, the southeast district contained 41 physicians per 100,000 people—in comparison to the county average of 127 physicians

¹¹⁹ Karin L. Stanford, *Images of America: African Americans in Los Angeles* (Charleston: Arcadia, 2010), 8.

per 100,000 patients.¹²⁰White remembers that he was the sole pediatrician to set up shop in the area, and he was instantly inundated by children who needed his care. A journalist later claimed that White had 10,000 patients, but due to insufficient medical records the veracity of this claim cannot be verified.¹²¹ Whatever the true number, White's patient load was overwhelming and overwhelmingly poor and black.

White: "Most of the people out there were county [patients] 'cause when I went out there it was all MediCal insurance. I was used to dealing with them [patients] from Big County."

The clinic was located at Central and Imperial which, according to White, placed it near the heart of Watts. White recalls that many black doctors "were trying to get up and out" but that he found satisfaction in his work despite the lower wages. The son of a pharmacist from a family that contained several physicians, White was familiar with the respected role that offered him position and status. This is similar to almost any physician that serves an isolated community. Serving a largely isolated group of citizens in Watts, White, in effect, was practicing rural medicine from the late 50s through the mid-sixties, and this foreshadowed events later in his life. The convergence of culture, high rates of unemployment, de facto segregation, government assistance—it all created a tight knit community that White "swamped."

Simon: "Can you describe how it felt in the community?"

White: "What some people don't realize is there's a certain amount of self-imposition in that people love to be there. You wouldn't expect it, but they love it. It's an attitude."

¹²⁰ Dr. Roemer's report, "Health Services in the Los Angeles Riot Area," otherwise known as the Roemer Report appears in Vol. XVIII of the Governor's Commission on the Los Angeles Riots.

¹²¹ Simeon Booker, "Watts Report: Doctor With 10,000 Patients: Called 'Odd Ball,' Medic in Watts," *Jet Magazine*, April 14, 1966, 16-21.

Being able to communicate with one another. And you learn that communication if you're close by it, you can observe. It's a style. It's a lifestyle."

During the period of White's involvement, a fight raged nationally between the NMA and the American Medical Association (AMA) over the issue of race and how it affected both patients and physicians in terms of access and accreditation. Like many others, White was a member of the CRDMS, the GSMA, and the National Medical Society. White still has negative feelings toward the GSMA. "They were a bunch of Uncle Toms," says White, though he doesn't elaborate. It's possible that the GSMA represented the views of more affluent black physicians—and so were less inclined to support the goals of White as champion of a poor constituency. But it seems more likely that White, an iconoclast by nature, made political enemies within the black medical community. Locally, an aspect of the battle for access played out between local black physicians and the local, Catholic-run St. Francis Hospital.

White doesn't recall the process by which he obtained staff privileges at St. Francis Hospital, but he believes that it did have something to do with his light hue. However, St. Francis barred other black physicians. White used his position to gain admittance for a few black physicians who had been barred from access due to race. One of the doctors White helped was his clinic partner, Dr. Phillip Smith, who later became the Hospital Director when King Hospital opened to the public.¹²² White's black patients and colleagues needed access to comprehensive care facilities, and he pushed for that, but like many voices in the community he served, White was a proponent of the positive aspects of segregation; he believed that the black community needed to be

¹²² Dr. Phillip Smith was unavailable for a complete interview due to illness, however, his second wife Blanche Ross, the first Nurse Administrator at King Hospital, assisted me with background information.

self-sufficient. White was successful in getting access for some black physicians, but the larger situation required a solution: a private black hospital run by CRDMS members and other black physicians from the area.

Simon: “Do you remember what you originally had in mind?”

White: “We wanted to go private, ’cause the doctors wanted to control the hospital.”

It’s hard to understand the ebb and flow of memory. It’s hard to know what specific age-related condition might cause lapses in White’s memory. However, it seems ironic that White’s historic role in the hospital’s creation is largely lost in his memory. Thankfully, it is spelled out, if broadly, in a document prepared by USC faculty for the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.¹²³ Beginning in 1963, White actively pursued the creation of a hospital in Watts. He gathered support from local businesses, physicians and local politicians. He drafted a proposal that called for a 150-bed nonprofit private hospital to be located in the southern part of Watts; the plan called for later expansion to 225 beds. As a director of the Enterprise Savings and Loan Association, White had strong ties to the local business community to which he appealed for financial backing for his plan.¹²⁴

In June of 1964, White, as the newly appointed president of the Charles R. Drew Medical Society, presented his hospital plan before the California State Advisory Hospital Council at a meeting in San Francisco. White’s goal was to secure Hill-Burton funding and to make the area a priority for hospital construction—despite its need, Watts was low on the priority list. The council rejected the proposal. According the

¹²³ Arthur J Viseltear, Arnold I Kisch and Milton Roemer. “The Watts Hospital: A Health Facility is Planned for a Metropolitan Slum Area,” (Arlington: Division of Medical Care Administration, 1967), 20.

¹²⁴ “Enterprise Savings Stockholders Meet,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, Jan 30, 1964 Pg. B2.

council's statewide plan, Watts was considered part of the Lynwood Hospital Service Area, which already had enough hospital beds, and was thus a low priority for Hill-Burton-funded attention.

White's defeat before the State Advisory Hospital Council led to a change in tactics. Previous to their presentation before the council, White and his group had considered applying for a change to the hospital service area plan to create a new service area but had not included it in their proposal due to the expected one-year review period and because they believed the thinking behind the service plan to be anachronistic.

In the meantime, White returned to his practice and his role within the community. For a brief period of time, White served at the Watts Clinic which was created by USC's Dr. Robert Tranquada. White was dismissed after it was found that he had steered funding to a business he in part owned. White doesn't recall anything about the incident or his dismissal.¹²⁵

Nationally, the Civil Rights Movement was gaining ground and the Johnson Administration was pushing forward the Great Society, but White didn't see much positive change coming to the ghetto and was understandably suspicious of programs that often hurt as they attempted to help.

Simon: "The legislation passed by the Great Society was supposed to ameliorate poverty conditions..."

White: "You know there's always one positive thing or another. I'm trying to think of the terms. Urban Renewal ...When you start tearing down structures in the black

¹²⁵ I have seen copies of the paper trail that backs this story, however it was shown to me on the condition that I wouldn't reveal the source of the information and not produce copies of the paper work.

community, you're tearing down family life. It's effective. Urban Renewal. Negro Removal! Eschewing most national political battles, White focused on the intersection of medicine and local politics."

Simon: "When did you get into politics? How?"

White: "Just being there. In the community, you're automatically in politics, whether you want to be or not. You're automatically in it. In that district, it was a really interesting place, before the riots."

On September 1, 1964, White became part of the political system he was trying to reform from the outside.¹²⁶ He was appointed to the newly created five-member County Public Health Advisory Commission. He was nominated to the position by Los Angeles County Supervisor Kenneth Hahn.

Simon: "Why did Hahn pick you to represent the area?"

White: "I was practicing medicine in the black community. It was a piece of cake. That's politics... I had all of the qualifications and I was standing out, a shining light. So it was a piece of cake."

Simon: "Did you want the job?"

White: "At that time...maybe it paid something like fifty dollars a meeting, but it wasn't much. I was the president of the Charles R. Drew Medical Society. It was just an accolade... Politics is politics... That was a piece of cake for Hahn."¹²⁷

As the county public health advisor, White was drawn more and more into local politics. He worked with the crop of young black politicians who were on the rise like

¹²⁶ "Dr. White Named to Health Board." *Los Angeles Times*, September 2, 1964.

¹²⁷ Hahn's story comes later in this thesis, but suffice it to say that he was a politically savvy white leader that harnessed the support his largely black constituency for four decades.

Assemblyman Mervyn Dymally and the Reverend Douglas F. Ferrall. Black politicians gained power in the sixties as never before in Los Angeles. White recalls that he pursued the issue of pay disparity that followed along racial geography. MediCal payments to doctors practicing in affluent areas were higher than those paid to doctors serving in poorer areas.

White: “For the same procedure—private insurance or government insurance—you were getting less for the same procedure than if you were working in Beverly Hills. It’s the economics of the area, discriminatory practices in the economics. That was the main thing.”

During this era, Mervyn Dymally served as the assemblyman for the area adjoining Watts. Dymally spoke with me near the end of his long tenure in the administration of Drew. Though they haven’t seen each other in decades—Dymally was actually shocked that White was still alive—Dymally and White worked together politically and knew each other socially during White’s service in Watts. Just a few days before the Watts Uprising began, White attended a community meeting that was overflowing with anger. He left the meeting with the impression that trouble was imminent. In retrospect, White claims that he foresaw the uprisings, but Dymally rejects the idea that anyone in the community knew violent rebellion was imminent. Premonition or not, White’s role in the community allowed him a good vantage point to see trouble on the horizon.

Simon: “How would you describe your sense of the community before the violence?”

White: "I was in the milieu. I had that feeling. Kinda a frustration deal. Swamping, when you become part of your environment, when you take on aspects of your environment. You feel the tension before anything actually happens."

On August 11, 1965, White was visiting with his family in Beaumont, Texas on the way back from having attended a National Medical Association conference in Cincinnati, Ohio. White watched Watts burn on television. White recalled his experience a year later in a profile in *Jet Magazine* (understandably, White's recall in 1966 is more descriptive, though the essence of his recollection is consistent with what he said to me).

"Suddenly, I heard the announcer mention that mobs were setting fire to a medical clinic...Then I recognized it was my place. I had no feeling of anger. I understood how these people thought. I thought that way myself. Fortunately, Dick Gregory and Mervyn Dymally convinced the crowd to put out the fire in my offices and the building was saved."¹²⁸

Dymally didn't recall saving White's office which is understandable considering he spent the next five days trying to restore peace in the area. The article goes on to say that White returned to Los Angeles and tended to the wounded both in his office and at local hospitals. The writer quotes an anonymous parent of one of White's patients, "Doc gives, baby. He's our man." A strange correlation exists between the lapse in White's memory and the absence of him in available records. As the rare physician on the scene and with local knowledge, it seems bizarre that *Jet Magazine* was the only organization to profile him in depth. I speculate that White's unabashed

¹²⁸ Booker, "Watts Report: Doctor With 10,000 Patients: Called 'Odd Ball,' Medic in Watts," 16-21.

militancy combined with his professional role made him an unwanted commodity by news outlets looking for ghetto sensationalism.

In the wake of the violence, Governor Edmund Brown assembled a blue ribbon commission to investigate the causes of the violence led by former CIA Director John McCone. The commission heard testimony from a vast array of community members, academic specialists and governmental personal.¹²⁹ White was never asked to testify or serve as a consultant by the McCone Commission in their analysis of what they called “riots.” It’s easy to imagine that White would have said much that the commission wouldn’t have wanted to hear. The McCone Report, officially known as *Violence in the City—an End or a Beginning? A Report by the Governor’s Commission on the Los Angeles Riots*, was released on December 2, 1965.¹³⁰

The national publicity surrounding the Watt’s Uprising and the McCone Commission created a previously unfathomable spotlight on inequality in Watts. While the Uprising wasn’t directly caused by a lack of access to comprehensive healthcare, White and his CRDMS colleagues understood its political capital, as did Hahn and several other community groups. White recalls that in the wake of the Uprising, events unfolded at a quick pace. With assistance from of the Hospital Planning Association of Southern California,¹³¹ White and his associates assembled a new proposal that called

¹²⁹ Robert M. Fogelson, "White on Black: A Critique of the McCone Commission Report on the Los Angeles Riots," *Political Science Quarterly* (1967): 337-367.

¹³⁰ *Violence in the City--an End or a Beginning? A Report by the Governor’s Commission on the Los Angeles Riots*. By John A. McCone, Chairman. Los Angeles, C.A. : The Los Angeles Commission, 1965. Health Problems. <http://web.archive.org/web/20070226225400/http://www.usc.edu/libraries/archives/cityinstress/mccone/part9.html>

¹³¹ Though unavailable for a comprehensive interview, Grant Cattaneo explained aspects the following events on January 6, 2012. At the time, he was the Executive Director of the Hospital Planning Association of Southern California. Cattaneo stressed that the area also included a lot of poor whites and that the issue of class was of equal importance as race.

for additional bed construction and a change to the boundaries of the Hospital Service Area. On December 2, 1965, the McCone Commission published its findings, and among other things, advocated for the creation of a new hospital within the riot area. Armed with a new proposal and the findings of the McCone Commission, White travelled to San Francisco. On December 15, White once again addressed the State Advisory Hospital Council.

According to various sources, the December 15 meeting attended by several community members and respected advocates—including Dr. Julius Hill, president of the GSMA, and Reverend James Hargett of the Church of Christian Fellowship—was filled with passionate testimony by black physicians, business owners, and civic leaders.

“Dr. White’s revised plan was presented. It called for a 300-bed facility to be located on a 20-acre plot of land in Central Watts. The Watts Community Hospital, as Dr. White called the project, would cost \$10,190,392, of which an anticipated \$8,270,272, could be provided by Hill- Burton and state-matched funds. More long-range aspects of White’s plan called for the establishment of a complete center, with mental health services, a nurses’ residence, a school for unwed mothers, and affiliation with a local medical school.”¹³²

White argued that a corridor existed between the established Inglewood and Lynwood Hospital Service Area which contained almost 300,000 people, 75% of whom were black. The council had previously relied on data from the established Hospital Service Areas which argued that there was already an adequate number of beds; many people involved argued that the bed scheme was anachronistic and misleading. White presented a map that depicted a new hospital service area carved out of the larger

¹³² Arthur J Visel tear and Arnold I Kisch and Milton Roemer. “The Watts Hospital: A Health Facility is Planned for a Metropolitan Slum Area,” (Arlington: Division of Medical Care Administration, 1967), 21.

Lynwood Service Area.¹³³ As White's plan included both private and public revenue sources, the council questioned whether the citizens of Watts could afford to support a private hospital. This preventative challenge faced four other private/community hospital plans that were presented at the December 15 meeting, including one by Adam Burton, a deputy to Supervisor Kenneth Hahn.¹³⁴ The council also raised questions of quality control in terms of medical care that the community would receive as the proposed service area didn't contain enough certified doctors to staff a community hospital.¹³⁵ The council rejected White's proposal.

Dismayed but not defeated, White continued lobbying for the creation of a new Hospital Service Area. On February 10 and 11, he presented his material before another meeting of the State Advisory Hospital Council in Los Angeles. With Supervisor Hahn's support, White officially submitted a resolution to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors in hopes of securing their support for the creation of the Watts Hospital Service Area.¹³⁶

The State Advisory Hospital Council rejected White's proposal as well as the other four hospital plans that were presented. But understanding the general consensus for action, the council requested that the Hospital Planning Association of Southern California create an investigatory committee to create a hospital plan that took into consideration the needs of the community as spelled out by White and the other

¹³³ Viseltear, Kisch and Roemer. "The Watts Hospital: A Health Facility is Planned for a Metropolitan Slum Area," 21.

¹³⁴ For the sake of continuity, Hahn's Hospital plan will be addressed later in this thesis.

¹³⁵ The complex and divisive issue of quality control in terms of medical care is explored in a latter chapter, but according to numerous sources, it lies at the heart of the AMA vs. NMA fight over accreditation.

¹³⁶ Dr. Sol White Jr. Resolution sent to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. February 23, 1965. Kenneth Hahn Collection, Box 213, folder 9. The Huntington Library, California.

interested parties. In May of 1966, the Watts Health Advisory Committee changed the minds of the State Advisory Hospital Council; the Watts Hospital Service Area was ratified, paving the way for the creation of a new hospital.

White's direct role in the story of the hospital ends at this point. If his personal mission ended in failure, his tenacious work certainly paved the way for the later success. A new Hospital Service Area was created, and this facilitated the creation of the hospital. Whether cast as a defeat or a victory, White has a sense of shame that he had little to do with the next part of the process.

Simon: "So after all the activity, what happened to you?"

White: "It was the Peter Principal. Promotion to a level of incompetence...In other words, they gave me a job in a trailer, and I wanted to be involved like Smitty(Dr. Phillip Smith)...He was still hanging in there [with the community]. They gave me a job with nothing to do in a trailer and no involvement at all in any of the politics or physical [development of the hospital]..."

Simon: "Why?"

White: "Politicians use people...The system does this, the system, I'm trying to tell you that it's not one person, it's the system. You're promoted to a level of incompetence that some people enjoy. \$50,000 a year, this was during the time that I walked away from everything. With nothing to do. Just show up."

While White doesn't recall the exact dates, he remembers taking an administrative position with the LA County Department of Health working in a trailer at Slauson and Main. White recalls being part of the development of the Watts Clinic

though the streets don't match his memory. Away from his busy practice and the swirl of politics, White was isolated.

White: I had nothing to do. And that's a hard pill to swallow when you're involved. Totally swamped! I couldn't handle that, mentally. It was a mental thing.

White's alienated professional life mirrored his personal life. He recalls that his marriage to his wife, Patricia, ended because the two were too busy pursuing their own agendas. White remembers falling into a deep depression that led him to check himself into an asylum for a few days.

White: "I quit everything when they gave me that job. I walked away from my wife and kids and everything."

"He's a creature of habit. He's most likely down on the pier," says a woman with scarlet red hair at the reception desk at the El Dorado Church of God Home in Oceanside. Almost a year has passed since my first face-to-face conversation with White, and almost six months since our last phone chat. White's old number was disconnected, and I began to fear the worst until a mutual friend gave me his new number.

We arranged to meet a few days later at the retirement home and go fishing on the Oceanside Pier. In keeping with his character, White left to go fishing without me. I'll go down there and try to find him, I tell the receptionist, and I leave the air conditioned lobby.

Oceanside seems like an unlikely place to find a man like White. It's eight-thirty, the temperature is climbing through the low 90s with no breezy relief from the sea. As I

sluggishly amble down Seagaze Drive toward the sea, I pass several small churches and religiously affiliated halfway houses. I begin to understand what White made emphatically clear from the start and why Oceanside suits his needs.

White: "I want to make it clear that my concerns have changed from a secular standpoint to a spiritual. Equal opportunity and equal time. Since 1974, that's quite a number of years."

And so I begin to understand. Oceanside actually seems like a likely place to find a man like White. Religious conversion led to a reconstitution of identity: Watts was ideal for White as a young black radical, and Oceanside is ideal for White as an old Christian fisherman.

I find White at the very end of the pier fishing in the shade of Ruby's Diner. When he sees me, he laughs and tells me he knew I'd figure it out.

"Ain't nothing biting. It's a good time to speak." says White, "The shark scared away everything." A few minutes later, a mute fisherman comes around the corner and gestures audibly. He's excited because he's just pulled up a seven-foot thresher shark from the waters beneath the pier. We walk to see the shark and join an enthusiastic crowd. White gestures to the mute man and says, "I've known that man for twenty-two years."

After leaving his family in Viewpark and his political and medical career in Watts, White spent twenty years restlessly moving about the country. With his conversion to evangelical Christianity, White effectively traded black militancy for religious militancy. Given his light hue, he passed as white in a religious community in which color was less significant. His memory of his "sojourn" is mushy in parts, and he's frustrated by his

inability to remember his own chronology, “I was on the move all the time.” After leaving his practice and his family, White opened a general practice in Glendale for a year. “I turned extreme right, storm trooper, militant,” he jokes, but there’s a kernel of truth in every joke he makes. I push him on it and he relates that in Glendale, he was anonymous and self-isolated. Inspired by Jack LaLanne, White became a fitness fanatic.

Referred by the AMA, White worked at a U.S. Department of Public Health Center in Crook County, Wyoming. The area’s doctor moved away to manage the clinic and visit the small hospital without finding a replacement. White recalls that the population was small—approximately 1,200—peopled mostly by poor whites and a few rich cattlemen that could afford private care. Located just northwest of the Black Hills National Forest, White quickly found that he was unprepared for the harsh and remote environment. Most of the town people had four-wheel drive trucks and/or snow mobiles. “I had a Fiat,” White smiles. “They laughed at me.”

“It’s both feet on the ground.” White says in describing the difference between Los Angeles and Crook County. “No Hollywood. Reality. Real folks. Homespun...all that.”

White found the often-romanticized warmth of country culture. Maybe because he was the only doctor, and so his utility was valued, but it’s just as easy to believe it was due to his inviting nature. After a few months, his assignment ended with the arrival of three doctors, so he moved on. However brief his stay, White believes that people in Wyoming still remember him.

“You ever hear of a one-doctor town?” jokes White, “that was a one-doctor county.” White can’t remember the details, but he recalls working as a doctor on a reservation near Sundance, Wyoming, for three years. Again, he had a life there then left after a time to wander on. He periodically returned to Los Angeles. He spent time with his family in Beaumont, Texas—one visit lasting long enough for White to open an office at the Baptist Medical Center. He lived for a while at his family’s house near Lake Elsinore, but the dry heat drove him to find the cool breeze of the sea. He began fishing in Oceanside and eventually decided to move there permanently.

Around 1988, White moved into the El Dorado Church of God Home, a retirement home listed by HUD as low income housing. “I only have two bills,” White says. “Rent and a phone bill.” White’s phone was disconnected after a convoluted disagreement with AT&T; he now has a disposable phone. His rent is \$173 a month, about a hundred dollars more than it was when he first arrived. Though he is listed locally as a pediatrician, his social security check is his only source of income. But it’s enough for a simple life that mostly consists of going to Bible study and fishing on the pier every day.

I show White a few pages from *The Watts Hospital* that briefly spell out his connection to the hospital’s history. He hastily reads the words and says, “That seems about right.” But, he suspects the authors may have mistakenly credited him for work done previously by Dr. Wells Ford. White doesn’t say how or why the document is inaccurate, and he seems not to care much. His memory is fading. A year ago, a month ago maybe, White would’ve jumped on the chance to expound on such an inaccuracy, but no longer. He gives voice to some aching regrets. He never practiced medicine at

the hospital alongside many of the doctors who were his peers including Dr. Phillip Smith; if White wasn't offered a job at the new hospital, for whatever reason, it seems unlikely that he could've had Smith's job as Medical Director. He speaks of taking the county job with remorse; though he's never said it before, he voices a sense of shame in the financial disparity that existed between himself and his patients. The fishing being poor and the temperature rising, White is winding down. I feel awkward when I again question him as to why he left his life in Los Angeles.

Simon: "Why did you leave Los Angeles?"

White: "I don't know..."

The lack of an answer is disturbingly human. The inverse of his explanation, that he was promoted beyond relevancy, is that he accepted the promotion and so took himself away from the war. Ascension? Desertion? And once the boredom set in and he understood his new role as a county man, how long did it take for the decision to set in? Was there any road back to where he was before? Does such a road exist at all? But there is no more time for questions and White seems out of answers.

We decide to cut the day short. As we slowly amble down the pier away from the ocean, the heat of the day is truly revealed. Though I tell him to leave me behind and ride home, White pushes his bike and fishing gear over the pier's uneven wooden beams. Along the way, a few men seated with coffee wave hello and we stop to chat with them. A bearded elderly white man with a pronounced gut growls to White, "That fat SOB is back, I called the Park Service." White nods. We walk on and see the man in question who is purportedly fishing with multiple hooks too close to the shore. Just after

we pass him, a female park ranger appears. A few yards on, we turn back and see her questioning the man. It's unclear to either of us if he's in the wrong.

Inexplicably, the American flag is flying at half mast. Neither of us understands its meaning. White wonders if it's perhaps tied to the shooting in Colorado or the shooting at the Sikh temple. But as if to briefly return to our conversation about belonging to something while simultaneously being apart from it, White makes a joke.

"I'm qualified to be in this military town because I fought in the War on Poverty."

We both laugh, though it's true. I pause to write down the line and White sighs and states, "I gotta watch what I say around you."

White steers his bike and fishing gear toward pockets of shade. We don't speak for a while. The conversation begins again and we talk about my research. He says that I know him now, and gives me the okay to make up what I don't know. That's not how this works I tell him, and we laugh a bit. He agrees. It's too hot to argue about the politics of remembering. He asks what I do for fun. I ask him if he ever became romantically involved again after leaving his wife and kids. He recalls being with a Czech stewardess for a period, but that was in another life. I'm surprised when he tells me that he stays in touch with his five daughters. "They're all teachers," White beams.

Alluding to the poem by Langston Hughes, my father suggested that I call my project, "A Dream Deferred." And that might be accurate if I were telling the entire tale, itself far from over. For the people involved, it was a dream for certain, but it was also much more. It was a need, a desire, a hope that became real. But in his current phase of life, White is simply a fisherman who has found the mercy of forgetting and so is largely beyond the struggle. Back at the retirement home, I shake his hand and his face

takes on a serious, almost paternal look. “You ok?” he asks. I tell him that I’m grateful for his time and that I sincerely wish him nothing but good luck. My instinct tells me that it’s likely that I’ll never see his face again.

“You take care,” says White.

The transformative effects of active engagement defined White’s life, even if his community activism only lasted a few short years. White’s identity was that of a pediatrician inexorably drawn into the politics of public healthcare, which itself was emblematic of larger structural discourses on the nature of poverty and social connection. He simultaneously lived the lives of suburban father, and an urban community advocate, and when the weight of holding everything together became too great, White left both identities and found a new identity via rebirth through a Christianity, a perspective that allowed him to find peace beyond his militancy and politics. Fueled by the knowledge of inequity, White found dynamic expression via empowerment. But the price of energetic engagement was high. White’s experiences speak to a generation of citizens who battled for the uplift of the soul of their community by engaging with various forms of government which had for so long failed to alleviate ghetto conditions.

The Charles R. Drew Medical Society and the Auxiliary continued to be part of the process during and long after White left the struggle behind. CRDMS members, as well as many other community members, supported the efforts of Supervisor Kenneth Hahn, who, in August of 1966, announced the creation of the Charles R. Drew Postgraduate Medical School—the new hospital’s symbiotic twin—organized and

staffed by members of the Charles R. Drew Medical Society.¹³⁷ Inclusion was certain, but as the dream morphed into a reality far from the ideal—politics is about compromise—the CRDMS membership struggled to control the mission and identity of King/Drew amid a highly politically polarized climate of black empowerment and black radicalism.

¹³⁷ “New Watts Hospital Will Train Medical School Post-Grads,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 18, 1966. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564802001?accountid=35804>

Chapter Three: The Hahn Legacy and the Creation of King/Drew

Introduction

Supervisor Kenneth Hahn represented the 2nd District on the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors from 1952 to 1992. He played an integral role in the creation of Martin Luther King Jr. General Hospital and the Charles R. Drew Postgraduate School of Medicine.

King Hospital and Drew Medical School were the products of an era in which a beleaguered constituency and its democratic representatives worked in tandem toward the common goal of creating a community nexus point of healthcare. The nature of Los Angeles politics and representation for black Angelenos changed in 1963, when African Americans Tom Bradley, Billy G. Mills, and Gilbert Lindsay were elected to the Los Angeles City Council (LACC).¹³⁸ However, it can be argued that South Los Angeles already had strong representation on the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. The fact that Hahn was a white man who spent his entire political career advocating for his constituency—the majority of whom were black—complicates any easy narrative of black empowerment.¹³⁹

Hahn fought a dramatic political battle to secure funding and shepherd the King/Drew project to completion and beyond. As the longest serving supervisor in the history of Los Angeles County, Hahn devoted himself to serving his largely poor black/minority constituency by delivering infrastructure upgrades, like storm drains and newly paved streets, to the area long neglected and excluded from civic equality. Hahn is commonly

¹³⁸ Raphael J. Sonenshein, *Politics in Black and White: Race and Power in Los Angeles*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993).

¹³⁹ Josh Sides. *LA City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the present*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003).

remembered as a politician that genuinely cared about the dreams and needs of his constituents.

This chapter explores Hahn's role in the creation of King/Drew and his person through the memories of his children, Superior Court Justice James Hahn and Congresswoman Janice Hahn, the representative of California's 44th congressional district. Kenneth Hahn was an integral part of the Democratic Party Politics in Los Angeles. His brother Gordon represented the 66th District of the California State Assembly from 1947 to 1953, before serving on the LACC from 1953 to 1963. Kenneth's two children both followed his path to a career in public service. James Hahn served in virtually every important position in city government before serving a term as mayor from 2001 to 2005. Janice Hahn served as a member of the LACC from 2001 to 2011; she left the LACC after winning a special election for the congressional seat vacated by Jane Harmon in 2011.¹⁴⁰ The Hahn family has been part of the Los Angeles political landscape for more than half a century, and the Hahn legacy continues to wield tremendous political capital.¹⁴¹

Hahn and the Media

In an editorial following a dinner honoring Kenneth Hahn in 1960, *The Los Angeles Sentinel* publisher Leon H. Washington painted Hahn in effusive terms: "During

¹⁴⁰ At the time of her interview, Congresswoman Janice Hahn was campaigning for the newly created 44th district, a corridor that runs north from San Pedro to Downey. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California's_44th_congressional_district#mediaviewer/File:California_US_Congressional_District_44_\(since_2013\).tif](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/California's_44th_congressional_district#mediaviewer/File:California_US_Congressional_District_44_(since_2013).tif)

¹⁴¹ This chapter utilizes documents found in the Collection of Kenneth Hahn at the Huntington Library located in Pasadena, California, and local newspaper coverage found in the *Los Angeles Sentinel* and the *Los Angeles Times*, accessed through the online databases of the Los Angeles Public Library and the County of Los Angeles County Public Library.

his brilliant career, Hahn has always maintained the quality of humility coupled with that of a fighting heart. He has yet, to my knowledge, to refuse to lend a helping hand or to back away from controversy.”¹⁴² That statement of endorsement, and many others, exemplifies the tight professional and personal relationship shared by Hahn and Washington, and by extension, Hahn and the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, a black newspaper.

The cousin of famed civil rights attorney and publisher Loren Miller, Washington began his time in Los Angeles journalism as an ad salesman working for Charlotta Bass at *The California Eagle*, a black newspaper. Three years later, Washington left and founded *The Eastside Shopper* which he eventually renamed *The Los Angeles Sentinel*.¹⁴³ Former LACC member Robert C. Farrell worked alongside Washington at the *Sentinel* during the 1960s. After an accident left Washington disabled, Farrell recalls that Washington’s columns were written by either his wife, Ruth Brumell, or whomever served as the managing editor at the time of publication. Farrell recalls that Washington mounted a paper certificate on the wall of his office which showed his status as a “Kentucky Colonel” to demonstrate his appointment—an honorary rank bestowed upon him by Kentucky Governor Bert. T. Combs(a bit of irony given Comb’s racism). In Farrell’s memory, both Hahn and Washington were FDR Democrats that supported black empowerment through integration and enfranchisement rather than through the

¹⁴² Leon H. Washington Jr., “Wash’s Wash,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, March 17, 1960, pg. A6.

¹⁴³ “Washington Jr., Leon H. (1907-1974)” <http://www.blackpast.org/?q=aaw/washington-jr-leon-h-1907-1974>

racial separation and resulting black independence that was promoted by black power ideologies.¹⁴⁴

“God was about the only person who could beat Kenny Hahn,” says Brad Pye Jr., who served as Hahn’s last chief deputy. Like Farrell, Pye was a journalist at *The Los Angeles Sentinel* before moving into professional politics. He describes Washington and Hahn as being “like brothers.” He explains that anonymous articles describing Hahn’s activities were the result of press releases from the supervisor’s office. According to both Farrell and Pye, *The Sentinel’s* anonymously written articles about Hahn and the hospital’s progress were the result of Hahn’s office releasing weekly status reports to the press. While *The Los Angeles Times* refused to be Hahn’s loud speaker in the black community, *The Los Angeles Sentinel* served in this capacity, as it was the most widely-read black paper in that era. Pye asserts that Bill Robertson wrote Washington’s editorials during much of the period in question.

“Kenny had so many IOUs that Billy didn’t have a chance,” says Pye of the 1968 election between Hahn and Los Angeles City Councilmen Billy G.Mills. Pye doesn’t recall that the election was close because of Hahn’s popularity in the community. Anyone who wanted to represent the area, according to Pye, had to have Washington’s and Hahn’s endorsement. Pye recalls Hahn’s religiosity and his use of the church, “Hahn was probably in more pulpits than most black preachers. Every Sunday, and he

¹⁴⁴ In conversation with former Los Angeles City Council member, Robert C. Farrell. Non-recorded phone conversation and text messaging, Feb 11, 2013. Farrell worked at the *Sentinel* during the 1960s, and claims that Washington was severely injured by the husband of a woman with whom Washington “was caught *in flagrante delicto*”. Farrell likened the social and political relationship of Washington and Hahn as similar to the one Hahn enjoyed with Governor Edmund “Pat” Brown.

would go to any banquet...he was there. He would say, 'I will come, but I have to have supper with my family.'¹⁴⁵

Hahn received fair treatment in connection to the hospital by the *Los Angeles Times* from 1963 to 1972. Later stories about the hospital may have been unkind, and certainly some of them targeted him explicitly, but for the creation period, they produced fairly well-balanced coverage of the supervisor and his quest. The *Times* had a generally hostile relationship with the black community of South Los Angeles, and by extension, the hospital.¹⁴⁶ More often than not during the time period in question, and certainly afterwards, the *Times* practiced an unbalanced approach to covering the black community, the brown community, the poor—often ignoring these communities or only reporting negative stories that further perpetuated uncontested narratives of black and brown violence. I believe that the *Times's* treatment of Hahn in connection with the hospital was evenhanded because he was a powerful white male politician, unlike most

¹⁴⁵ Phone conversation with Brad Pye Jr. Monday, Feb 11, 2013.

¹⁴⁶ Hunt, Darnell, and Ana-Christina Ramón, eds. *Black Los Angeles: American Dreams and Racial Realities*, (New York: NYU Press, 2010). In "Killing Killer King: *The Los Angeles Times* and a "Troubled" Hospital in the 'Hood," Hunt and Ramon assert that *Times* coverage of King/Drew was overwhelmingly negative. Pg. 283-323.

of his constituents.¹⁴⁷ Hahn's relationship with both the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Los Angeles Sentinel* continued over the course of his career; to stay in power for four decades, Hahn understood the need to cultivate a message and get it out via media press releases; this seems especially to be the case amid the creation of King/Drew.¹⁴⁸

Justice James Hahn

"Judge Hahn is presiding right now," a female clerk whispered into the phone. She took a message—one of many over the next few weeks. Eventually, Judge Hahn returned my call and invited me to interview him in his chambers. Informed by little actual experience with the justice system, I envisioned the former mayor perched behind a gilded bench six feet off the ground, surrounded by sparkling brass and veiny marble, housed within a grand white tomb designed to inspire humility and dignity in the presence of justice. But despite its tony locale, the Santa Monica Court House is a

¹⁴⁷ George Ramos. "Ray Zeman; Former Times Bureau Chief" *Los Angeles Times* (1923-Current File); March 30, 1997, Pg. A24.

Stan Steenbock, "Tom Goff," *Los Angeles Times*, June 24, 1985, Pg.1.

Two *Times* writers that covered city and county politics and did a fine job of it were Tom Goff and Ray Zeman. Tom Goff covered much of the governmental side of the hospital's story when he worked for the *Los Angeles Times* beginning in 1964. Goff died on June 17, 1985 at the age of 63 after an award-winning career in which he was bureau chief of both the Sacramento and San Diego offices. Fellow political writer Stan Steenbock eulogized Goff, "Tom detested bureaucratic or political sleight of hand, as far as I know, was never persuaded by those who tried to use it on him. He had a reputation of being a bit of a curmudgeon but was highly respected for the fairness and accuracy of his reporting...Our professional roles were adversarial and neither of us forgot who paid our checks. But we did share a warm friendship and I shall always remember Tom Goff as a first-rate newsman who was also a thoroughly decent and compassionate human being." Ray Zeman worked on the *Times* Metro desk for two decades before becoming editor in charge of stories that covered LA county government. Writer George Ramos writes of Zeman, "he quickly earned notice from then-Supervisor Kenneth Hahn, whose quest for publicity was legendary and who occasionally slammed reporters for not covering what he thought was big news." Zeman went on to be Sacramento bureau chief, where he covered the governorships of Pat Brown and Ronald Reagan, and the state senate and assembly. He returned to covering LA County politics as bureau chief in 1968 before retiring in 1976. He died March 29, 1997 at the age of 86.

¹⁴⁸ The following history draws from coverage from both the *Times* and the *Sentinel* to create a chronology of Hahn's involvement with the creation of King/Drew. *The Sentinel* was printed every Thursday, while the *Times* continues to publish daily.

humble place, an example of late 1960s California civic architecture that exudes an anachronistic sense of modesty and piety.

Upon entering the courtroom, I see that the clerk's desk is only three feet from the slightly elevated judge's bench which explains why she whispered during phone conversations. The courtroom's tired white walls are like the thin skin of a camel lost in the desert. The gallery is empty. An annoyed looking plaintiff and hysterical defendant argue about overdue rent before a glassy-eyed judge that had likely presided over six similar cases earlier in the day. The whispering clerk silently motions for me to come through the bar, around the bench, and through a door into the judge's chambers which contains two desks covered in files. On the phone, Judge Hahn motions me to take a seat.

"Everyone lies," said the fictional TV character Dr. Greg House, a modern incarnation of Sherlock Holmes, who uses science and reason to break through the machinations of human frailty. Everyone lies in some way in remembering their past, consciously or subconsciously, to protect our fragile egos or those of someone dear to us. But successful politicians seem a breed apart, as they specialize in narrative construction which requires the long term maintenance of their political legacy. With a second generation of politicians who have built their careers on the first generation's accomplishments, I wonder if the manufacturing of identity happens on a subconscious level. Finished with his call, Hahn turns his attention to me, and I ask him to describe his father's origins.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Superior Court Justice, James Hahn, 8/16/12. Santa Monica, California.

Kenneth Hahn was born August 19, 1920, in Los Angeles, California.¹⁵⁰

Hahn: “I don’t know much about it. My dad was the only one of seven brothers to be actually born here. His mother, Hattie, was pregnant when they moved down here from Canada. His father, John Hahn, had been a successful businessman in Saskatchewan. He had a lumber company, a smart thing to do in a place without trees... He did very well there. In 1913, imagine this, he already owned his own plane. He would fly around to his customers. He became the mayor of this little town Kindersley, Saskatchewan. He was 40 years old when he moved his family down to Southern California. He was going to retire. A few months after he gets down here, he has a heart attack and dies, just a few months before my dad was born. So here’s this widow lady with seven boys. I don’t think she knew how much money he had, but she was pretty comfortable. I guess his brother, Uncle Fred, made some poor investments and all the money was lost.”

Simon: “So your dad grew up poor?”

Hahn: “Well, it was a widow with seven boys. She had to figure out how to put food on the table. They all went to work. My dad started working probably when he was five or seven selling newspapers. So he worked very hard all his life...They were on relief, which was the welfare of those days. He used to tell stories about having to go with his mother and the boys, they would go around to churches and people would take up a special collection for the Hahn family. They’d get a basket of food or something like that. They were used to getting charity, struggling through the twenties and thirties here in California...He and his brother Henry had a gas station at Gage and Main. That obviously became the campaign headquarters for the campaigns of both Kenny and

¹⁵⁰ Biography of Kenneth Hahn, City of Los Angeles. Los Angeles Public Library.
<http://dbase1.lapl.org/webpics/calindex/documents/05/1427.pdf>

Gordon...The Hahn Brother's Service Station and Pepperdine was the political center of everything."

Hahn moves out broadly to connect his father's origin narrative with the milieu of the community he represented.

Hahn: "The middle class was pretty attainable because of manufacturing. We had tire companies, auto companies...A lot of manufacturing. One by one, they've all closed. The Camaro/Firebird plant closure was the end of an era. A lot of those jobs were held by people who worked and lived in my dad's district. The 2nd District was an interesting one because they divided the County into five districts based on population. His was always the one in the middle, it was the smallest in geographical area so it was easy for him to visit every corner of his district. It was only a fifteen or twenty minute drive from one end to the other."

It's hard to gauge the political power the Hahn family has accumulated and wielded over the years, however, Judge Hahn asserts that the family was guided by his father's sense of modesty and deep belief in the importance of public service.

Hahn: "My dad's philosophy. He grew up very poor...He used to say "I've got Florsheim shoes, I've got Arrow shirts, I'm wearing a Hart Shafter Marx Suit: No millionaire could do any better than me." To him that was the pinnacle, like "what else could I want?"

After graduating from Fremont High School in 1938, Kenneth Hahn studied political science at Pepperdine University. While maintaining a high GPA, he took part in campus politics and had a close-knit group of friends. After graduating in 1942, Hahn joined the US Navy and served nearly four years, finishing the war as a lieutenant. After completing his service, Hahn returned to Pepperdine as a professor of political science

and American history. According to Hahn's close friend and political associate, Harry Marlowe, Hahn considered a life in academia, but was drawn away by the allure of politics.¹⁵¹

Simon: "Why do you think your dad went into politics?"

Hahn: "He always liked politics is what he said. He started a political club at Pepperdine called the Decameron Society. I don't even know what that means.¹⁵² They would invite elected officials to Pepperdine. Kenny just loved politics from a very early age, just thought it was great. He remembered as a little kid seeing the Mayor of LA, Frank Shaw, who lived not too far from him. He would drive down Figueroa down to City Hall with a siren on a low growl the whole way. Kenny was really impressed by that."

With the support of his Pepperdine cohort and family, Hahn attempted and failed in his bid to represent the 66th District in the California State Assembly in 1946.¹⁵³ In 1947, Hahn won his campaign for 8th District seat on the LACC; at age 26, Hahn was the youngest person ever elected to the LACC. In 1952, Hahn won his campaign for the 2nd District seat on the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (LACBOS); at age 32, Hahn was the youngest person ever elected to the LACBOS. In 1992, Hahn retired at the age of 72 as the longest serving LACBOS member in history.¹⁵⁴ Hahn lived and

¹⁵¹ In conversation with Harry Marlowe. 11/05/2010, 11/12/2010. Harry Marlowe praised Hahn as an honorable and intelligent man. Unfortunately, Marlowe suffers from a degenerative mental condition, possibly Alzheimer's, and so was unable to sit for prolonged interviews about his work with Hahn.

¹⁵² According to Wikipedia, *The Decameron* is a collection of [novellas](#) by the 14th-century Italian author [Giovanni Boccaccio](#) (1313–1375). The book is structured as a [frame story](#) containing 100 tales told by a group of seven young women and three young men sheltering in a secluded villa just outside [Florence](#) to escape the [Black Death](#), which was afflicting the city. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decameron>

¹⁵³ "State Legislature Group Fares Well." *Los Angeles Times*, June 6, 1946, p. 2

¹⁵⁴ Eric Wahlgren, "Kenneth Hahn, Longtime Power in L.A., Dies at 77," *The Daily News*, November 11, 1997. [http://www.thefreelibrary.com/KENNETH+HAHN%2c+LONGTIME+POWER+IN+L.A.%2c+DIES+AT+77.\(News\)\(Obituary\)-a083888067](http://www.thefreelibrary.com/KENNETH+HAHN%2c+LONGTIME+POWER+IN+L.A.%2c+DIES+AT+77.(News)(Obituary)-a083888067)

raised his family in close proximity to his majority black and poor constituents who were extremely loyal as a result of both large projects (like the creation of King/Drew) and small efforts (like fixing problems in basic infrastructure that had previously been ignored because of racism and civic exclusion).

Judge Hahn was raised in a middle-class, multi-cultural area and doesn't specifically recall how his father explained racial prejudice.

Hahn: I don't remember us talking about it very much. He used to talk about the street he grew up on, 59th and Flower. He always used to be proud of the fact that they had an African-American family, the Garretts, and there were eastern Europeans and there were Japanese and Mexican families. He liked the fact that the neighborhood he grew up in was pretty diverse and he always believed that people are the same. They all want the same things. They want to have good health, they want to have a good job, and they want their family to be taken care of. It's not that complicated.

Simon: "So you don't have explicit memories of a conversation about race. Did you have black friends that came to the house?"

Hahn: "Well, we lived around...First at 89th and Figueroa and then we moved to what they called "the westside" at the time, which was at Florence and Crenshaw, not the westside that people talk about today.¹⁵⁵ So we always lived in those kinds of [integrated] neighborhoods, so...People were people. I think I remember the first time things started to change for me was when I went to junior high school. I felt like I was being picked on because white kids were in the minority, but up until that time, race really wasn't something that we knew about. I think that the time that race came into our

¹⁵⁵ The demographic geography of Los Angeles is constantly changing. The area Hahn is referring to changed with white flight and black migration beginning in the mid 1950s.

household was on the television, where we watched what was going on with civil rights in the South, and we saw these images of the dogs and the firehouses being used on blacks in the South. I think we had discussions then about what's all this about, what's going on."

Simon: "Do you remember how he tried to help you understand because you would've been pretty young?"

Hahn: "Probably 13 or 14, seeing these things on TV. I guess they explained segregation. I think my mom helped us understand segregation because she grew up in the South. She'd talk about drinking fountains that would say "whites only" or "colored only" and things like that. But it seemed so strange to us because we couldn't imagine anything like that."

In comparative terms, Los Angeles's version of Jim Crow was far less rigid than its southern counterpart, yet it's opaque and uneven nature was maddening for many blacks, as the lines were unclear. Writer Chester Himes lived in Los Angeles in the 1940s and described his experience with West Coast Jim Crow in *If He Holler's Let Him Go*. The novel's lead character, Robert "Bob" Jones, moves to Los Angeles for a better life, but instead finds his mobility and independence are constrained by racial inequality. Overcome by anxiety and frustration, Jones' life is in ruins by novel's end.¹⁵⁶

The West Coast version of Jim Crow had loosened its grip two decades later when Hahn was coming of age. Racial segregation, Hahn asserts, progressively gave way to racial separation, and this was evident in the churches of Los Angeles. The Hahn family attended services at the Church of Christ, which Hahn remembers as having an

¹⁵⁶ Chester B. Himes. *If He Hollers Let Him Go: A novel*, (New York: Da Capo Press, 2002).

all-white congregation. Hahn's mother Ramona was born in Japan, the daughter of a missionary who instilled a strong religiosity that shaped the Hahn household.

Hahn: "We went to church Sunday morning, Bible school. Sunday afternoon we might be going to another church for Bible quiz (laughing). Sunday evening, we went to church again and then Wednesday night prayer meeting. So you can say I went to church a lot."

Hahn recalls that once or twice a month, his father would leave the Church of Christ after the morning service to visit other churches in his district including black churches. While it could be read as the politicization of faith, Hahn asserts that his father's visits to churches were part of his relationship with his constituency.

Hahn: "What's interesting is that there's a flip to that too. The religious tradition in the Church of Christ was, politics is not something that Christians should be doing (Hahn laughs). I remember Kenny having to give lessons about Christians in politics and things like that to people cause they kinda thought that was not what a Christian should be involved in, [they should] stay out of politics."

Hahn recalls that his father was aware of the perceived contradictions of politicizing religion, but that it was unavoidable given his role in the community.

Hahn: "He came from a different religious tradition than my mom. Kenny would go with his mom to see Aimee Semple McPherson, and he liked the showmanship of how she expressed her faith. So when he went to Pepperdine and met people from the Church of Christ, he felt sorry for them because they couldn't even afford a piano. There's no stained glass windows...It was pretty plain. But he loved my mom, and he naturally joined the Church of Christ. He was a devout Christian, but he had a broader

perspective of what that included, and so he loved going to black churches. It wasn't so much a political thing, but it was a lot more theatre, as you pointed out (there's more lively engagement). There was a lot more going on in a black church. Frankly, white churches were not comfortable with a politician coming in and expecting to be introduced, where it was really part of the tradition in the black churches. They expected politicians to come by, to drop by, and not just drop by, but stay for the entire service."

Hahn accompanied his father to services at black churches on more than one occasion. He recalls that his father had a folkiness and sincerity that earned him acceptance and appreciation in many black churches in his district.

Hahn: "He liked to tell personal stories. He loved to laugh. He was a very folksy storyteller...A collection of stories is what a Kenny Hahn speech would be, centering on him. But that was kinda how he spoke. It was storytelling. He didn't put on a different voice or anything...He was always who he was. He was just this folksy, gregarious guy wherever he was. The thing I think he did in government which helped him out in the churches was that...I guess you have to go back to who helped him get started when he was teaching at Pepperdine. One of his students knew that Kenny wanted to run for office, and he said, 'you need to meet my uncle, Gilbert Lindsay. He's the head janitor at the Department of Water and Power.' A very important guy in politics. And that's how Kenny met Gil Lindsay, and then Gil and his wife, Theresa, put together the Women's Sunday Morning Breakfast Club basically to get my dad elected to the Board of Supervisors. But Gil would take him around to the churches and introduce him, so he started meeting the ministers very early on. They got to know him, and they worked on his campaign. What he began to realize was that a lot of county employees, he would

see them at church, they'd be a deacon, they'd be an elder. Maybe all they did was clean toilets at the County hall, but that was a good paying job, maybe they worked in the mechanical department fixing cars, whatever their jobs were, but when they were at church they were the elite power structure in those churches. So he would make those connections at work, and they'd be reinforced at the churches. He knew all the county employees, seemed like by name, no matter how many thousands there were, he would greet them and know what church they were from. One of the things I know he worked on was working to open up county government to make sure more minorities got to work in County jobs through all kinds of departments.”

In Hahn's remembering of his father, he rarely says “dad” or “my father.” He calls his father Kenny because everyone did, but unintentionally, this has the effect of distancing him from his father and his memory. The Hahn children learned from their parents a firm belief in public service, and politics and policy were discussed at home—Ramona Hahn never discussed politics outside the family home—but Hahn didn't mold his children with the tools of debate and rhetoric. Instead, the Hahn children learned about their father's business because the household was regularly interrupted, at all hours, by the visits and phone calls of his constituents.

Hahn: “That was what we thought was normal...Not too often two o'clock morning phone calls, ‘my son is in jail.’ People would drop by the house and knock on the door, ‘Is your dad home? I need to see him.’”

Hahn describes a father who wanted his children to be free to grow up without the limitations he experienced. James Hahn had a paper route with the *Herald* for a couple of weeks when he was young until his father found out and instructed him to quit.

Hahn remembers his father's explanation: 'You don't have to work. I had to work, you should be a kid.' James Hahn obeyed, but he doesn't agree with his father's perspective and believes that teenagers should have jobs so that they can learn responsibility.

James Hahn, born July 3, 1950, was a young boy as the civil rights movement began. He remembers that his father, an FDR New Deal Democrat, was a firm supporter of racial equality.

Hahn: I think the story I remember was Pepperdine was having some kind of a dinner, might of been his Decameron Society or something down at the Pacific Coast Club in Long Beach. One of the members of the Society was black, and they said that he couldn't come into the club, and Kenny said 'then none of us are.' He was like that in college. I think the armed services were a great integrator of the country too. A lot of people were feeling that way, like 'hey, this guy can fight for our country but he can't walk in and use the bathroom? What's wrong with that?' When I saw what was going on in the South on TV, he would explain what was going on there, and how wrong it was to discriminate against blacks in the South. He made a big deal about telling us how he met Martin Luther King, Jr. when he came to LA. He had him come to his office, and that they spoke for a long time there. So he was very honored to have met King right from the beginning, before King was a big deal. Kenny said how great it was to have met this guy. I was kinda mad that he didn't pull us out of school to meet him."

Hahn recalls that his father drove himself around most of the time in a blue Chrysler that lacked the bullet proof armor that protected the cars of other supervisors. Hahn was never afraid for his safety in the community in which he served, even during

the days of the Watts Uprising. The Hahn family had a direct view of the events, as they lived in the district.

Hahn: "We were here... There used to be this newscaster named George Putnam on TV. He was the highest paid newscaster in America at the time, even more than Cronkite and maybe Brinkley. So anyways, I'd stay up and watch him at night. The folks had already gone to bed, and I'm in the living room watching TV and suddenly, he says "There seems to be a number of people out throwing bricks in the Willowbrook area of Los Angeles at 120th Street." So I go in and wake up my dad. He calls up his press deputy, a white guy named Phil Pennington, and says to Phil, "We should go down and see what's going on." And I think he had a loaner car that day, they had somebody else's Cadillac which was weird for him to be driving... So they drove down to see what was going on and suddenly this crowd came out from some apartment buildings and started throwing bricks. A brick came through the windshield and hits my dad in the head and cuts his neck. So he gets out of there and drives down the street and pulls over. A woman comes out and says, 'Oh, Mr. Hahn. This is terrible!' She takes him into her house and cleans him up. He can't drive the Cadillac anymore because the windshield is smashed and he can't see out of it. So he flags down a Sheriff's car in the neighborhood 'cause he wants to get out of there. Kenny is in the back seat, Phil Pennington is in the front seat, the sheriff is driving and the same thing happens! A brick comes through and hits the sheriff in the head and knocks him out. So my dad told Phil to put his foot on the gas, my dad reached over from the back seat to the steering wheel and they drive out of there. So he comes home at four or five in the morning. He'd been gone all night and we didn't know what was going on... He's shaking glass out of his

clothes. We were very much there when it all happened. After that, we were in the curfew area which went all the way to Florence and Crenshaw. We had a sheriff's car that was watching our house. It was a scary time... Suddenly this calm, safe, peaceful Los Angeles that we were living in was now in turmoil."

Simon: "Did you get a sense from him what the issue was that was driving this?"

Hahn: "Well, we figured it was about mistreatment by police, I think that's all I understood about it at the time. There was stuff that was simmering that I wasn't aware of. Lack of opportunity, no jobs, discrimination all over Los Angeles. That stuff, I wasn't clued into just yet...I think we started to figure it out, started to know what was going on, that there was a whole other world there than the one we were seeing."

After the Uprising, Governor Pat Brown, a close political ally of Hahn, assembled what is commonly referred to as the McCone Commission. Hahn was not asked to participate (which seems extraordinarily odd given his relationship and role within the community). On December 2, 1965, the McCone Commission released its report entitled, *Violence in the City—An End or a Beginning? A Report by the Governor's Commission on the Los Angeles Riots, 1965*,¹⁵⁷ which called for the creation of a hospital in South Los Angeles. On December 7, 1965, the board of supervisors and the LACC moved to carry out recommendations made by the McCone Commission. While Hahn endorsed the recommendations, local and national black leadership criticized their limited scope. Civil rights activist Bayard Rustin called the recommendations a stopgap measure, and he argued that South Los Angeles required an immense amount of

¹⁵⁷ *Violence in the City--an End or a Beginning? A Report by the Governor's Commission on the Los Angeles Riots*. By John A. McCone, Chairman. Los Angeles, C.A. : The Los Angeles Commission, 1965. Health Problems. <http://web.archive.org/web/20070226225400/http://www.usc.edu/libraries/archives/cityinstress/mccone/part9.html>

investment of resources on a New Deal scale which would create long term economic stability; employment would help boost the local economy with the effect of uplifting the community.¹⁵⁸ Los Angeles Councilman Billy G. Mills stated that “notwithstanding validity and merit- [these] are the same proposals that some of us who live in the affected community and who understand its needs and its frustrations have made time and time again.” Los Angeles Councilman Gilbert Lindsay asked the council to recommend a study to the LACBOS on the feasibility of building an all-purpose hospital in South Los Angeles; this motion was passed. Hahn said it was unfortunate that it took a riot and the commission to bring to light things that society needed to do, “but often it takes this kind of publicity to move our citizens to correct certain evils in our society.”¹⁵⁹

Prior to the Watts Uprising, Hahn and Deputy Adam Burton¹⁶⁰ worked on strategies to build a hospital, and they met with local doctors like Dr. Sol White Jr., but the political capital wasn't available until the nation was forced to confront ghetto conditions via televised reports.¹⁶¹ Along with White and others, Hahn appeared before the State Hospital Advisory Council meeting in San Francisco on December 15, 1965, where he stated: “The time is critical for added health facilities,” and “in the event no community or religious group such as the Seventh Day Adventists, can succeed in this

¹⁵⁸ Bayard Rustin, "WATTS MANIFESTO AND MCCONE REPORT." *Commentary* 41, no. 3 (1966): 29-35.

¹⁵⁹ Jack Jones, “City, County Move to Aid Watts Area: RIOT AREA AID,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 8, 1965, Pg.1.

¹⁶⁰ Adam Burton was a longterm assistant to Kenneth Hahn. Unfortunately, Burton currently suffers from a degenerative condition that affects cognition so he was unavailable for interviews.

¹⁶¹ As described in Chapter 2, Dr. White's formulated a plan and gathered support and watered the seed planted by Dr. Wells Ford and others. In making it an LA County matter, Hahn usurped and supplanted local efforts, while simultaneously serving them as only someone in his position could. If White and his group had raised money for a private black hospital in Watts, Hahn likely wouldn't have pushed for a county facility.

endeavor, then I will recommend to the supervisors that that it establish a branch county general hospital within this same hospital service area.”¹⁶²

Hahn remembers that his father was obsessed with building the hospital because it was an ameliorating economic action that local government could accomplish on behalf of its citizens. Through his son’s descriptions, Hahn appears both a dreamer and an economic pragmatist; beginning in the mid- 1950s, Hahn’s agenda included a clean air campaign to reduce the city’s smog, and the creation of Dodger Stadium, which opened in 1962.

Hahn: Local government has really very little in its tool box, and I’m speaking as somebody who’s been the Mayor, to do anything about the economy. Very little in a local government’s tool box. People always say, ‘you should be pro-business, you should do this, you should create jobs.’ Local government doesn’t have a lot in its box to do that. We can’t create jobs. We can’t create industries. We can’t do those kinds of things. So here was something on this list that local government could do. We could build a hospital. So I think that’s why Kenny was very excited about it. He really couldn’t do a lot about bringing back the manufacturing plants that had left, that’s not really something a County supervisor has a lot of control over.

While the LACBOS approved a motion to build a hospital in South Los Angeles, local and state politicians and administrators disagreed on how it would be funded. County Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) L.S. Hollinger and Superintendent of Charities William Barr released a report that called for a 700-bed, \$20 million

¹⁶² “Hahn Urges Priority for Hospital In Watts-Willbrook Area,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, December 16, 1965, Pg. A2.

hospital.¹⁶³ On January 6, the State Hospital Advisory Council rejected plans for joint private-state-federal funding because it believed that local investment was unlikely to materialize. Afterwards, Hahn appealed to the Ford Foundation for financing, but his plea was rejected in a letter from the organization's president, Henry T. Heald, who said it went against the organization's policies: "We are aware of the special needs of the Watts area, but we are unable to consider assistance in hospital construction as you propose."¹⁶⁴

At a LACBOS meeting on March 3, 1966, Hahn faced opposition to progress in planning—he had already appointed an architect to prepare plans—as other LACBOS members called for a week's delay in anticipation of a report from County CAO L.S. Hollinger.¹⁶⁵ The following week, Supervisors Warren Dorn and Burton Chace opposed funding the hospital via a bond measure. Citing a lack of community-wide support for the creation, Dorn argued that the vote could doom the hospital: "Nothing could be more tragic or more disastrous than to take this to the people and have it voted down." Chace pointed out that the approval of 66.6% of the voters was needed and said he doubted

¹⁶³ "Supervisors Vote for Hospital in L.A. Riot Area," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, February 17, 1966, Pg. A1.

¹⁶⁴ "Ford Foundation Rejects Watts Hospital Plea," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, January 6, 1966, Pg. A8.

¹⁶⁵ "Hahn Doubts Support of Watts Hospital Plan," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, March 3, 1966, Pg. B6. This is one of many instances in which Hahn used the media to call out his colleagues for not following his lead on the project.

that county voters could be sold on the idea by June.¹⁶⁶ However, owing to Hahn's persistence, the LACBOS unanimously voted to proceed with plans and to put a bond issue on the June 7 primary ballot.¹⁶⁷ Hahn began a media campaign on March 24, when he spoke before a room of nearly 50 newspaper publishers and representatives to try and win their support for the bond measure on the June 7 primary ballot. Hahn stated that the county's share would amount to \$12.3 million, matched by federal/state Hill-Harris funds of \$9.1 million. Hahn argued for a sense of reciprocity in financial-burden sharing among all county citizens; Hahn had massive community support, including that of Ted Watkins, a leader of Local 923, UAW and co-chairman of the Watts Labor Action Committee, and John Annand, president of the Joint Council 42 of the Teamsters Union.¹⁶⁸ At a LACBOS meeting a few days later, Hahn stated that the new hospital would create 2,000 jobs in South Los Angeles, and hundreds of construction jobs would be temporarily created in the area. "This is less than the cost of two packs of cigarettes," said Hahn of an individual's liability in voting "yes" on Proposition A bonds that would cover the County's \$12.3 million via 20-year bonds. A resolution in support of

¹⁶⁶ "New Approach to Watts Hospital," *Los Angeles Times*, March 15, 1966, Pg. A4. An anonymously written *Times* article argued that while the hospital was indeed needed, the LACBOS should reconsider its approach to financing the hospital via a June 7 bond vote. The article stated the following reasons for opposition; "more than \$1 billion worth of other bond issues already occupy the June ballot, making competition for the Watts hospital exceedingly tough; placing a one-area item on the ballot sets a precedent which might well be seized upon in the future by other county areas that want special treatment. It also tends to divide the vote--when 66 2/3% is required for approval; The board's own Hospital Advisory Commission, which had asked for more time to study the Watts proposal in the light of total community needs, indicates that it will not endorse the bond issue." "Under such circumstances, *The Times* strongly urges the supervisors to reconsider their action, so as not to jeopardize a vital facility in the Watts area," "This need not delay the hospital itself. To insure that a full-fledged plan will be available on schedule, the board could appropriate funds for engineering studies...During the planning interim, an alternative means could be evolved to finance the hospital, or a bond issue embracing a wider array of county needs developed for the November ballot," and "The *Times*, the supervisors, and the McCone Commission agree that a hospital is urgent. But let's do it the right way, so that hopes aren't dashed in June."

¹⁶⁷ Tom Goff, "Watts Area County Hospital Approved: Supervisors OK Bond Issue on June 7 Ballot," *Los Angeles Times*, March 9, 1966, Pg.3.

¹⁶⁸ "Backing Urged for Watts Hosp. Bond," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, March 24, 1966, Pg. A1.

the “Watts Hospital Bond” was passed by the LACC; it was introduced by Councilman Gilbert Lindsay and seconded by Councilman John Gibson, in whose districts the hospital would be constructed. The LACBOS declared their intention to buy the Palm Lane Housing Project as the site of the Watts-Willowbrook General Hospital.¹⁶⁹

On May 5, Hahn commented on the impending vote scheduled for June 7: “Our government is spending millions of dollars in foreign aid to improve the health and living conditions of unfortunate persons around the world. Surely, we should take care of [our] own fellow citizens who live, work and raise their children—not thousands of miles across the ocean—but in our own Los Angeles County.” Hahn also announced that a new post-graduate school would be incorporated into the operation of the new hospital.¹⁷⁰

The organization of supporters behind Proposition A waged a savvy media war that included pamphlets, road signs and TV spots. But as Supervisors Chace and Dorn had forewarned, the proposition required a full two-thirds to pass. Hahn received many letters from outraged white voters who felt that blacks were being rewarded for burning down Los Angeles.¹⁷¹ On June 7, 1966, Proposition A narrowly failed at the polls as it failed to garner 66.6% of the vote (62.5%), however it garnered enough support for Hahn to call it a “a great moral victory.”

¹⁶⁹ Bill Robertson. “Watts Hospital Provides Work,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, March 24, 1966, Pg. A2. Hahn’s district, he stated that Palm Lane was a slum that needed to be torn down.

¹⁷⁰ “All-Out Support for Proposition A Needed,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 5, 1966, Pg. A6. “McCone Agrees to Head Drive for Hospital Fund,” *Los Angeles Sentinel* (1934-2005); May 5, 1966, Pg. D3. ProQuest Historical Newspapers. John McCone agreed to serve as the chairman of the Citizen’s Committee for Proposition A. Francis Eric Bloy, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles, and Rabbi Edgar F. Magnin, of the Wilshire Boulevard Temple all supported the proposition.

¹⁷¹ A few of these letters are available for viewing at the Huntington Library.

“This might be a breakthrough in racial tensions,” said Hahn. “It shows that a majority of people really cared; we’ll find another way to build that hospital.” The LACBOS directed County Chief Administrative Officer Lindon S. Hollinger to submit an alternative financing plan. Hahn explained the loss as being a result of renewed violence in Watts, tensions created by the inquest of the police shooting of Leonard Deadwyler, and the recent labor dispute and strike at County General Hospital.¹⁷² “We’re going to build it,” Hahn asserted, “We’ll find a way.”¹⁷³

Hahn: Yeah, that’s that two-thirds requirement...He got a good vote. Any other election and that’s a win by a landslide, you win by 20 points, but not if you need the two thirds. He was disappointed in that, but then his knowledge of government because he’d been a professor...He understood all the things that were possible.

The day after Proposition A failed at the polls, the LACBOS debated alternative financing plans for the hospital. Hahn suggested a three-year program of direct financing from general county funds. “The architectural drawings will take approximately 11 months to complete. It will take approximately 18 months to construct the building. If this method is adopted, the hospital would be built just as quickly as if the bond issue had passed,” *Times* writer Tom Goff wrote, “On the basis of current assessed value estimates, Hahn’s proposal would add about 3 cents to the county tax rate each year. This would mean about \$1.50 more on the tax bill of the owner of a \$20,000 home assessed at one-fourth of market value.” Supervisor Frank G. Bonelli argued against the idea, suggested trying another bond vote in November, and requested that Governor

¹⁷² “New Plan Sought for Watts Hospital,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, June 9, 1966, Pg. A1.

¹⁷³ Tom Goff, “Watts Hospital Bonds Rejected; Other Issues Win,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 9, 1966, Pg. 1.

Brown ask the legislature to reduce the electoral requirement from 66.6% to 60% for approval of hospital bonds. He also suggested that the county appropriate funds for planning from the 1966-67 budget so that planning could begin. Bonelli said that his plan “will eliminate the necessity of imposing an added property tax burden on the already overburdened taxpayers. Hahn opposed this idea saying that, “an overwhelming majority of citizens (62.5% of those voting) has already approved of this hospital. The McCone Commission along with medical authorities, established the need for the hospital.”¹⁷⁴

At a meeting in late June 1966, the LACBOS agreed to include \$1,039,008 to finance architectural plans despite having not agreed on a source for full funding of the hospital. The vote was four to one with Chairman Burton W. Chace opposed to the design appropriations because he believed the issue warranted further study.¹⁷⁵ Citing the financial soundness of the county, Hahn met with representatives from several New York financial institutions to discuss the possibility of using nonprofit corporate bonds to build the hospital. He reported: “Major financial houses have offered to handle the bonds at a guaranteed interest rate only a fraction higher than general obligation bonds.” This plan would have required the LACBOS to establish a nonprofit corporation whose bonds would be sold to financial houses. Hahn stated that this financing method “could well provide a lower interest rate on certain projects than the County Retirement Board,” which “has built several County buildings and leased them back to the County

¹⁷⁴ Tom Goff, “County Still Seeks Hospital in Watts: Supervisors Given New Plans to Bypass Bond Issue Defeat,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 10, 1966, Pg.3.

¹⁷⁵ “Watts Hospital Plans Fund Budgeted,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, June 23, 1966, Pg. A1.

to be paid back over a period of years.”¹⁷⁶ Despite a continuing lack of consensus over the means of funding, the LACBOS appointed four architectural firms to begin drafting plans in the middle of July: Adrian Wilson and Associates; Nielson, Moffat and Wolverton; Carey K. Jenkins; and M.A. Nishikian and Co. The LACBOS’s move forward coincided with the University of Southern California’s (USC) plan for a health clinic to be built at 103rd and Grape St. with a \$2.4 million grant from the Federal Office of Economic Opportunity to be run by Dr. Robert Tranquada.¹⁷⁷

Dissension on the LACBOS shadowed the development of King/Drew throughout its creation era; it reflected ideological differences and played out personally and professionally. On Aug 17, while Hahn and Bonelli were on vacation, Supervisors Burnton W. Chace, Ernest E. Debs and Warren M. Dorn suspended work on the hospital’s construction until its financing, an estimated \$21.4 million, could be secured. The LACBOS asked the architects to pause their work. County Chief Administrative Officer, L.S. Hollinger stated that any extensive delay could jeopardize the project, as the county must be able to prove it has a sound financing plan within 120 days. Supervisor Debs stated, “I don’t care if we have a signed contract or not. We can stop it.”¹⁷⁸ Hahn returned early from his family’s vacation in Hawaii and stated that the LACBOS had “broken faith with the 62% of the voters who favored the Watts hospital...This is the first order of county responsibility. President Johnson, the

¹⁷⁶ “Watts Hospital Plans Fund Budgeted,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, 23, 1966, Pg. D2.
“Consultants Called for Watts Hospital Planning,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, July 14, 1966, Pg. A1.

¹⁷⁷ Interview with Dr. Robert Tranquada. Personal recorded interview, January 19, 2012. Sylmar, California. Co-creator of the Watts Health Clinic, Dr. Robert Tranquada of USC’s school of medicine later served on Drew’s board of directors.

¹⁷⁸ Tom Goff, “Supervisors Hold Up Planning Funds for Watts Hospital: Han, On Hawaii Vacation, Outraged By Action,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 17, 1966, Pg.A.

Congress and the entire nation are watching the progress we make on the Watts hospital. We must go ahead.”¹⁷⁹

A large crowd of community members attended the LACBOS meeting in late August 1966. Community leaders like A.C. Rubble, chairman on the County Efficiency and Economy Committee, and Mevis Wilson were stopped from speaking on the hospital as the LACBOS tried to rein in the strong outcry, but a letter signed by four NAACP leaders was read. It warned that “any supervisor who is so inhumane as to vote against building a hospital in the Watts community must take the blame for having raised the hopes of a deprived people and then have them experience another disappointment.” Supervisor Debs reversed his vote and the LACBOS voted 3 to 2 to resume work on the hospital.¹⁸⁰

On August 26, with Debs and Bonelli on vacation, the LACBOS purchased Palm Lane Housing Project from the County Housing Authority for \$100,000. Hahn stated that it was “an excellent buy.”¹⁸¹ The land for the prospective medical complex was purchased, but the LACBOS still hadn’t agreed on a solution for funding construction.

The national ideological split between conservatives and liberals in the Democratic Party played out locally in the manifestly different persons of Hahn and LA Mayor Sam Yorty (1961-1973). Yorty was virulently anticommunist and anti-civil rights; his infamous chief of police, William H. Parker, was openly bigoted and often

¹⁷⁹ “Supervisors’ Row Looms Over Watts Hospital Issue: Delay Vote on Facility Irks Hahn,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 18, 1966, Pg. A1. Embittered by the LACBOS action, Hahn said, “A man should be entitled to a legitimate vacation. This is a sneaky way to do business when a man’s back is turned.”

¹⁸⁰ “Supervisors Reverse Early Stand; Work Resumed on Watts Hospital,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 25, 1966, Pg. 3.

¹⁸¹ “County Buys 30-Acre Site for New Hospital in Watts: \$100,000 Paid for Wilmington, 120th. Area,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 26, 1966, Pg.3. Though 60 tenants remained at Palm Lane, demolition was scheduled for the following week; demolition didn’t proceed the following week, a foreshadowing of what became a standard lag in development that would haunt the LACBOS for the next several years.

antagonized the black community of South Los Angeles.¹⁸² However, after the failure of Proposition A, Hahn and Parker worked together to find a solution to funding large scale projects in Los Angeles. James Hahn says that despite political differences, his father didn't have enemies, only adversaries. At the September 13 meeting, the LACBOS voted four-to-one to give preliminary approval for financing projects via a joint powers agreement between two or more public agencies and would bypass the need for voter approval of general obligation bond issues.¹⁸³ Hahn performs both roles in describing the often-cited conversation between his father and Yorty that led to the hospital being financed via a joint powers agreement.

Hahn: So he [Hahn] latched onto the idea forming a Joint Powers Authority. So he goes over to see [Mayor] Sam Yorty. Their offices are basically across the street. He walks in to see the Mayor and says 'Sam.' 'What is it Kenny?' 'I wanna build a hospital down in Watts. You know the McCone Commission says we should do that.' Sam says 'Well, I see the voters didn't support that.' [Hahn says] 'I got an idea. If you'll agree to form a Joint Powers Authority with the county, we'll handle everything, the city won't have to do anything, but it will allow us to issue the bonds to get the hospital built.' [Yorty says] 'Joint Powers Authority? I'd really like to get a convention center here in Los Angeles. Would the county agree to form a Joint Powers Authority with the city? We'll run everything, we'll take care of everything and build a convention center?' [Hahn says] 'Sure, why not?' He said the whole meeting took place in fifteen minutes. That's how the hospital and convention center got built...Nobody can do anything anymore! Have you

¹⁸² Robert Bauman. *Race and the war on poverty: From Watts to East LA*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 11-12.

¹⁸³ "Supervisors Favor Bypassing Voters on Building Bonds," *Los Angeles Times*, September 14, 1966, Pg.3.

noticed how paralyzed government is now. Nobody can do anything. Compromise is an evil word. Nobody wants to do business with the other side.¹⁸⁴

With the joint powers agreement approved, Hahn and his deputies—including Adam Burton and Nate Holden¹⁸⁵—continued with planning and the evacuation of the Palm Lane Housing Project, the future site of King/Drew.

Hahn: I remember that the big problem was a politically sensitive issue, which was they were going to tear down a public housing project to do it. Palm Lane...And there were some private homes that had to be taken as well. What Kenny wanted to do was move very quietly; he wanted to make sure he had places for people to move, he didn't want people [put] out on the street. He wanted it to go smoothly trying to sell it to the people, "I know we're losing this, but we're going to get something much better." It worked pretty well, except for one guy named Plato Smart who owned a house there. Plato didn't want to move. They were going to have to use eminent domain to take his home, and I remember my dad spent months going by and talking to Plato Smart, seeing if he could get him to move. I don't remember the end of that story. I just remember that name. Plato Smart is a name you can't forget...Except for him, I think it went fairly smoothly.

The evacuation of the Palm Lane Housing Project was completed on Monday October 10th. Hahn stated that no family was evicted, and that all left the Project voluntarily, "many bought their own homes and others were transferred to new and better housing provided by the City of Los Angeles Housing Authority six blocks away

¹⁸⁴ Having heard different versions of the conversation, I've taken to calling the joint powers agreement, the Big Swappity-Do, as the whimsy inferred speaks to a bipartisanship that seems so remote in modern politics as to render the possibility ridiculous. James Hahn laughed in agreement.

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Los Angeles City Councilman, Nate Holden. Recorded personal interview, 12/13/10. Marina Del Ray. Holden was unwilling to sit for extended interviews. As a Hahn deputy, he worked on the evacuation of the Palm Lane Housing Project in Willowbrook, California.

on Imperial Highway.”¹⁸⁶ In late December, the LACBOS announced that a joint powers agreement between the county and the city was set for approval by the LACC. Hahn said “the agreement assures virtually the same low rate of interest on financing as a bond issue.”¹⁸⁷ In the first days of 1967, the State Hospital Advisory Board in San Francisco awarded a grant of \$8,424,000 in Hill-Harris funds for the proposed Watts-Willowbrook Hospital or Los Angeles County Southeast General Hospital. “I am hopeful we will be breaking ground within 12 months, in January, 1968,” Hahn said and directed the project’s architects to accelerate their work.¹⁸⁸

In late June 1967, State Senator Mervyn Dymally (D-Los Angeles) and State Assemblyman Bill Greene (D-Los Angeles) protected the hospital project against the attacks of State Senator Stephen P. Teale (D-West Point); Teale had tried to pass legislation that would withhold \$4,212,040 million in Hill-Harris funds approved by the State Hospital Advisory Council. Teale believed that state funds should be used to build 40 smaller hospitals that local communities could afford to match. “The language the Senate put in its version of the budget would be very crippling,” said Jesse M. Unruh (D-Inglewood). “I have agreed to give any support I can for the hospital—both before the conference committee and in any ensuing fight on the floor.” Senator Ralph C. Dills (D-San Pedro) asked for calm: “I hope we have no more such demonstrations and emotions whipped up by one supervisor (Hahn). We don’t need excitement or any kind of heat in this matter. If everybody can cool it, as the guys say, we will be better off.”

¹⁸⁶ “Watts Hospital Site Evacuated,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 20, 1966, Pg. A2.

¹⁸⁷ “Watts Hospital Moves Step Closer,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, December 29, 1966, Pg. A2.

¹⁸⁸ “Millions Allocated to Build Watts-Willowbrook,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, January 26, 1967, Pg.B6.

Hahn responded by calling for supporters to mobilize, bringing over 200 demonstrators to Central Avenue on June 22, 1967.¹⁸⁹

Dymally observed that Hahn would publicly honor political adversaries to strategically neutralize them.¹⁹⁰ James Hahn laughs and says that he wasn't certain if his father employed that technique, but it wouldn't surprise him. In early July 1967, the LACBOS and the LACC appointed 15 individuals to the board of directors for the Los Angeles County Southeast (Watts) General Hospital General Hospital Authority; Bullock was appointed president and Watkins was appointed vice president.¹⁹¹ The board of directors oversaw the development of King/Drew in collaboration with the Watts Health Coordinating Committee.¹⁹²

In the late sixties, California politics experienced extreme pendulum shifts that later generated political earthquakes across the nation. The successive governorships of Pat Brown, Ronald Reagan, and Jerry Brown spoke to a state wide schizophrenia over civil rights and the role of government in shaping American society. Backed by a newly rebranded conservative party, Reagan shored up white conservative support in

¹⁸⁹ "Legislators Hopeful State Will Help to Build Watts Hospital," *Los Angeles Times*, June 23, 1967, Pg.3.

¹⁹⁰ Interview with Meryvn M. Dymally, 3/21/11. Willowbrook, California. Former Lt. Governor of California (1975-1979), Dymally praised Hahn as a politician's politician after years of competition and collaboration.

¹⁹¹ "County Hospital In Watts Assured," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, July 6, 1967, Pg. A1. The fifteen members were Stephen Billheimer, past president of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce; Ben Peery, past president of the Watts Coordinating Council; Mrs. Ruby Daniels, president of the Willowbrook Plaza Improvement Association; Lewis T. Bullock, past president of the Los Angeles Medical Association, and Ted Watkins, president of the Watts Labor Action Committee, John McCone, chairman, Governor's Commission on the Los Angeles Riots; Sigmund Arywitz, executive secretary, Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO; Alejandro Banuelos, secretary - treasurer, Ramona's Mexican Food Products Inc.; Harry Blackman founder, White Front Stores; E.J. Franklin, international representative, United Auto Workers; Dickerson A. Hawkins M.D.; Bruce Kaji, president, West Bay Financial Corporation; Eugene Klein, president, National General Corporation; John A. Mitchell, M.D., president, Charles Drew Medical Society; and entertainer Danny Thomas.

¹⁹² Chapter 4 describes the activities of the WHCC during this era. These committees worked together to plan and implement the administrative and educational apparatuses of King/Drew.

Los Angeles County by attacking the hospital as rewarding black people for burning down Los Angeles.¹⁹³ In mid-July of 1967, the LACBOS pledged full cooperation with Governor Ronald Reagan's plan to train Watts residents to staff the new hospital. The LACBOS agreed to send state officials specifications for professional and non-professional jobs that would be generated in the new hospital. The state would join with the county to train local residents to fill jobs. Hahn praised Reagan for his efforts on behalf of the hospital, including keeping \$8 million in the state budget: "It would have been easy for him to turn his back on an area that overwhelmingly was for Governor Brown."¹⁹⁴

James Hahn asserts that his father had a good working relation with Reagan despite their different approaches to government; Hahn enjoyed good relationships with all three governors of that era.

Hahn: "Kenny didn't see things in terms of I can't deal with this person because of who supports them or what positions that they're taking. If he could figure out a way that they could work together on something, that's what he was interested in."

Following the April 4, 1968 assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the LACBOS unanimously moved to rename the Los Angeles County Southeast General Hospital in honor of King. The LACBOS recommended to the Southeast Hospital Authority Commission that it accept contractor Robert E. McKee's low bid of \$23.5 million: \$22.5 million revenue bond issue for construction, \$1.8 million for equipment, \$270,000 for county engineering inspection and \$1.2 million in plans and for

¹⁹³ Rick Perlstein, *Before the storm: Barry Goldwater and the unmaking of the American consensus*, (Washington DC: Nation Books, 2009), X-XIII.

¹⁹⁴ "Watts Workers to Staff New Hospital," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, July 20, 1967, Pg. B10.

contingencies and possible expansion.¹⁹⁵ Amid the drawn out construction of the hospital, Hahn campaigned for reelection in 1968 against Los Angeles City Councilman Billy G. Mills, a black opponent that argued both that Hahn was untrustworthy and that the supervisor of the area should be black, reflecting aspects of the community's subscription to black power ideologies.

Hahn: "I remember him doing these groundbreaking in 1968, when he was running for reelection. His opponent, a very popular black city councilmen named Billy Mills was running around saying, 'Kenny Hahn is lying to you. There's never going to be a hospital. It won't happen. Don't believe it. It's not gonna happen.' So that was going on, and Kenny was determined to get this place built...We may have had more than one groundbreaking out there. Maybe several. That was always an excuse to bring in the local choir and the high school band. He wanted people to know that this was going on, so he had several groundbreakings. It was originally supposed to be called the South East Hospital, and then after King was assassinated, my dad thought about it for a while and said, 'Maybe we should name this after Martin Luther King,' and he phoned Coretta and asked her if that would be alright. He said that she told him, 'I remember you. You were that nice white man who was nice to my Martin.' So I guess he must have spoken about Kenny when he got back there."

Many community members were suspicious that the new County-financed hospital would be built without black labor. The rotating system that employed unemployed workers had to be at least partially suspended. Preference was given to minority workers, and some white workers declined jobs because they didn't want to

¹⁹⁵ Ray Zeman, "Approval of Hospital in L.A. Sought," *Los Angeles Times*, April 13, 1968, Pg. A16.
"New Watts Hospital Named in Honor of Dr. M.L.King, Jr.," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, April 18, 1968, Pg. A1.

work in Watts, according to Al Horn, head of Carpenters Local 1437. As the existing supply of black and Latino labor was focused on the hospital construction, other jobs had fewer minority workers. Ted Watkins of the Watts Labor Community Action Committee said, “We’re satisfied because the experiment shows that Negroes are available for construction work, and they can do the job when given a chance.” “The Watts Labor Community Action Committee, sponsored by unions, was a prime factor in getting approval for constructing the hospital, and men like Watkins had warned there might be trouble if virtually all white construction crews were hired.” Daily worksheets were forwarded to Hahn to make sure certain promises were kept. As of the publication date surveys showed that the prime contractor, McKee had a workforce of “53.7% Negroes, 36.5% whites, and 9.8% Mexican-Americans.” Subcontractors also showed high percentages of minorities except for G.F. Casey Co., a concrete drill firm, and Guardian Fence Co., which had no blacks or Mexican-Americans on their part of the job.¹⁹⁶ A substantial integrated workforce was assembled, but as often the case, reality and ideology parted ways in terms of workforce composition. Many white union workers turned down jobs on the construction site because they didn’t want to work in Watts—neither with blacks nor in an integrated environment. Hahn made sure that unions integrated on the site, though it’s unclear whether minority workers were given the requisite training to ascend the ranks of the unions or if their employment on the site earned them work in the future. Hahn recalls that his father had to pressure many local union representatives—many of whom balked at the idea of giving preference to black

¹⁹⁶ Harry Bernstein, “Minorities in Majority on Watts Hospital Job: Negroes and Latins are Main Workers on Building Project,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 6, 1968, Pg. A4.

or nonunion workers. For Hahn, it was both a matter of principle and a pragmatic approach to job creation in his area that echoed previous efforts.

Hahn: “Another big thing for my dad was that if this was going to be a jobs program, everybody was going to work on it. And so he went and met with the head of the county AFL-CIO and said, “Listen, every union that’s working on this hospital is going to be integrated.” In those days, not every union was integrated. So there was a lot of pushback on that. Kenny says, “That’s the deal. I want to see everybody working on this project. Never have an American Indian before? You’re going to have one. Never had an African American? You’re going to have one.” I remember him saying that the last holdout was the Millwright’s Union, who had never had a black member. He said, “Well, if they’re working on this hospital, then they’re gonna.” And so they did, they had their first black Millwright apprentices as a result of that hospital. He was proud of that.”

In mid-February 1969, Hahn conducted a press tour of his district that ended with a visit to the construction site. Leon Washington, publishing editor of the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, wrote that “the hospital is moving along at a fast pace. Workers are of all colors, there is integration.”¹⁹⁷ The following week, the LACBOS asked architect Carey K. Jenkins to prepare plans and specifications for a 50-bed psychiatric unit for the hospital. Jenkins was also asked to develop an overall master plan for future development of the hospital.¹⁹⁸ As construction times varied far more than anticipated, Hahn hosted multiple open houses to keep the public engaged in the process. Hahn called for understanding from the public, saying: “A hospital is a most complex building to construct. Like a battleship or aircraft carrier, every detail must be thoroughly checked

¹⁹⁷ Leon H. Washington Jr., “Wash’s Wash,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, February 20, 1969, pg.B6.

¹⁹⁸ “Architect Appointed to New MLK Hospital,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, February 27, 1969, Pg. A3.

and proven before it can go into service. We want the best possible medical care.”¹⁹⁹ As one county hospital was finally taking shape, another was completely destroyed. On Feb 9, 1971, an earthquake registering 6.5 on the Richter scale decimated the newly completed Olive View Hospital.²⁰⁰

On October 9, the hospital hosted a cornerstone laying ceremony. Twelve thousand people attended the event including Hahn, Dr. H.H. Brookins, Councilman Lindsay and Col. Leon Washington, Jr.²⁰¹ In his column a week later, Washington wrote, “As I sat on the platform looking at the large crowd, mainly from our community (I am told more than 12,000 attended), who turned out for this important event—I thought of how beautiful it was to see so much happiness and togetherness expressed in the faces of so many of our youths and adults.”²⁰²

On January 10, 1972, the LACBOS ordered an investigation into construction delays on county projects. Hahn stated that although Robert E. McKee, head contractor on the hospital project, had been paid 95%, the hospital was not 95% completed and “now, it is dragging on.” Delays were caused by order changes and expansions. “In providing services to the people as well as paying interest on bonds or using the taxpayers’ direct funds, Hahn declared the delays in construction were costly and wasteful.” Hahn asked the County Citizen’s Economy and Efficiency Committee to

¹⁹⁹ “Hahn Wants Hospital to Be Completed in 1971,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, December 30, 1970, Pg. A5.

²⁰⁰ Interview with Blanche Ross Smith. Recorded personal interview, 2/27/2011. Ladera Heights, California. King Hospital’s first head nurse, Smith was working onsite in a trailer when Olive View Hospital was destroyed. She recalls that over the course of the next months, the county salvaged brand new equipment from Olive View and brought it to Watts.

²⁰¹ “Photo Standalone 2--No Title,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 14, 1971, Pg. A1.

²⁰² Col Leon Washington, Jr. “Wash’s Wash: Togetherness, Happiness at Hospital Rite,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 14, 1971, Pg. A6. Hospital Authority Commission member Ben Peery died on October 6 at 79 years old.

investigate what percentage of payments should be withheld and what sort of penalties should be used in the future due to curb delay.²⁰³ At the January 25 meeting, Hahn and Debs, still awaiting the report from the CCEEC, also blasted the County Department of Engineers for “sloppy management” of private contractor firms on several projects that were late, including the hospital which was 183 days behind schedule.²⁰⁴ Almost obsessively, Hahn was involved in the hospital’s construction far beyond securing funding for it (this helps to explain why he protected it for the rest of his career).

Hahn: He did micro-manage the building of the hospital, it was like his giant roads project, so he was there all the time, seeing how everything was going. Supervisors selected the architect - that’s how Carry Jenkins got involved - he was very much involved in the building of it. And of course when it opened, that was a huge deal, huge ceremony celebrating the hospital when it opened. But then, it was his baby from then on. He would always make it part of his routine to go by the hospital. He’d walk into the emergency room and ask someone how long they’d been waiting. If they’d say too long, he would find out who was in charge and what was going on. They used to try and figure out which way my dad was coming into the hospital so that they could warn people he was coming, ‘cause he never wanted to announce that he was going there.

On Feb 10, 1972, 6,000 people attended dedication ceremonies for the hospital. On hand were Senator Alan Cranston, Congressman Augustus Hawkins, District Attorney Joseph Busch, Dr. Julius Hill, Dr. H. Claude Hudson and Col. Leon H. Washington, Jr. Ted Watkins of WCLAC was MC, and US Secretary of the Treasury

²⁰³ Ray Zeman, “Board Orders Probe of County Building Delays: Citizens Committee Instructed to Make Study, Give Report,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 12, 1972, Pg. C1.

²⁰⁴ Ray Zeman, “Long Delays in County Construction Disclosed: Sluggish Work by Contractors, Cost of Changes Scored,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 26, 1972, Pg. B1.

Romana Acosta Banuelos represented the Nixon Administration. Hahn was praised throughout the event. Dr. H. Hartford Brookins, minister of the First AME Church delivered the major address.²⁰⁵ In his column the following week, Washington wrote, “Many hospitals are built across the nation, but the Martin Luther King Jr. County General Hospital will always be a symbol of the men, women, boys and girls in our community, of how goodness and hope for those in despair and misery can be enhanced when the hearts and minds of dedicated men and women work together for a common goal.” Washington ended his column by stating, “The community progress campaign continues.”²⁰⁶

On March 27, 1972, the *Times* reported that the Martin Luther King Jr. General Hospital opened its doors to the public with “a staff of 1,250 has been recruited with the emphasis on blacks, including doctors.” Delayed openings of some divisions, including cardiac and specialized intensive care departments, were attributed to delays in the delivery of equipment and a shortage of nurses. “King Hospital will offer open staff privileges to community physicians, meaning that local doctors will be able to hospitalize their private patients in the new facility,” stated an unnamed administrator. “In addition to private patients, the hospital will accept those eligible for public-supported medical care.”²⁰⁷ A brief ceremony was held at 9:30 a.m. to officially admit the first patient,

²⁰⁵ Bill Robertson, “King Hospital Dedication A Success: 6,000 Persons attend King Hospital Dedication Program,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, February 10, 1972, Pg. A6.

²⁰⁶ Col Leon Washington, Jr. “Wash’s Wash: King Hospital Monument to Greatness,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, February 10, 1972, Pg. A6.

²⁰⁷ “King Hospital to Open Doors Today,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 27, 1972, Pg. A3.
“Dream Fulfilled: Martin Luther King Hospital Registers Its First Patients,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 27, 1972, Pg. 3.

Robert L. Jamerson, who walked four blocks from his home for assistance with a heart condition.²⁰⁸

From the beginning, King/Drew was the site of a tremendous ideological battle spurred by the evolving discourse of black empowerment. It's hard to know if Hahn foresaw the complications of identity politics that would define its existence.

Hahn: "Well, there [were] tensions in that. The community very much felt it was their hospital 'cause Kenny told them it was, so they felt they had a lot of ownership interests in it. Doctors, of course, figured, "We're the doctors. We should be running the hospital." Then there is the administrative officer, not a doctor, answerable to the health department who is answerable to the board of supervisors. Then Drew (Medical School) came in not too long after[King opened], so Charles Drew University became part of it. It became, sometimes, a power struggle inside the hospital. I don't think my dad was ever able to figure out how to solve all that, but he just always had one overriding concern, "I want this to be the best hospital it can be. Tell me what you need to make it that. I'll get it for you, but it's gotta be your hospital, and you've got to run it. But I'm gonna be here to do quality control." There were a lot of tensions there and the thing that didn't help was the *LA Times*, especially Claire Spiegel and her ilk. Anything that went wrong at King, the *Times* was always about winning a Pulitzer Prize about King Hospital from the moment it opened...There's stuff that goes on at Cedars, there's stuff that goes on at UCLA. How come I don't [read about it]...But if a baby dies at King, its gonna be a front page story?"

²⁰⁸ "Photo Standalone 26-- No Title," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, March 30, 1972, Pg. C15. The standalone photo shows Hahn with Dr. Phillip Smith, medical director, and Vannoy Thompson, member of the Hospital Authority Commission, talking with William Thompson, the second patient to be admitted to the hospital.

In 2005, *Los Angeles Times* reporters Charles Ornstein and Tracy Weber and photographer Robert Gauthier won the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service for their investigation of systemic organizational mismanagement and medical misconduct at King Hospital. Hahn doesn't recall his father's explanation for why the *Times* focused on problems at King while similar problems took place at other county hospitals, and he can't explain it beyond supposition.

Hahn: "I don't want to ascribe a racist motive when I can't prove it, but, "wait a minute, you're gonna have a black hospital where black doctors are going to be in charge?" You know, I'm just saying, I'm putting it out there...I think he always resented the criticism of King. Then it got the unfortunate name that was attributed to it (Killer King), but on the other hand, you had a level of violence in the '70s and '80s in the South Central Community which brought a lot of gunshot victims to the closest hospital. They used to go all the way to County General for that where the other traumas were sent. The military actually sent their surgeons there to learn how to treat bullet wounds. So somebody dies at King because they were shot...They probably were going to die anywhere. And then when the *Times* was finally successful in killing King, I'm sure they were toasting...popping their champagne corks. Great. Now what did you accomplish? You've now closed the only comprehensive medical center in that part of the county with nothing to replace it. You wanna pop a champagne cork over that? I'm kinda glad I didn't go into journalism cause I don't get that...Take something away from people and feel great about it. And it did have problems, and they needed to be fixed, but it seems to me you work on trying to fix them is what you ought to try and do."

Simon: “Do you think your dad regretted encouraging a sense of ownership of King/Drew in the black community?”

Hahn: “No. And I just wish that other people in county government had cared about that hospital as much as he did. I think that was one of the reasons that King did start to have more problems was that there wasn’t the Kenny Hahn around to care, and you need that sometimes. The whole hospital system of Los Angeles County, the trauma centers, were stretched beyond the breaking point...You do need someone who really cares about something to make sure the quality is maintained.”

James Hahn has a full schedule to complete and signals that our time is up. After I turn off my recorder, we briefly speak about the turning point in James Hahn’s political career. Elected Mayor of Los Angeles in 2001, James Hahn lost his bid for reelection four years later, due in large part, he admits, to ignoring the advice of his staff on a racially sensitive issue. During his term, Hahn replaced LAPD Chief Bernard C. Parks, a black man, with William Bratton, a white man; Parks currently sits on the LACC and is immensely popular in the black community. Hahn replaced Parks without taking into account the effect that it would have with black voters in South Los Angeles. In axing Parks, Hahn lost black support and effectively handed over the election to mayor, Antonio Ramón Villaraigosa. After the election, Hahn was surprised at how the parts of his black base abandoned him politically, and how individual relationships with long term friends dissolved over the issue of Parks.

Congresswoman Janis Hahn

Congresswoman Janice Hahn's campaign headquarters is located in the heart of downtown San Pedro, California, a harbor city on the southwestern edge of Los Angeles County. The quiet office is staffed by a few-fresh faced volunteers and a veteran politico who explains that Hahn is running late (which is understandable given the Congresswoman's hectic schedule of campaign events and congressional responsibilities). On the coffee table rests a stack of the recent edition of the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, which contains an article about Supervisor Mark Ridley Thomas, the current representative of the 2nd District on the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors. After Kenneth Hahn's 40-year reign, Yvonne Brathwaite Burke served for 16 years, followed by Thomas. Though the black population in San Pedro is small, I suspect that Hahn's office displays the *Sentinel* because the paper endorsed her candidacy, but also as a gesture, a silent nod to the past when her father and Washington enjoyed a deep and mutually beneficial relationship.

This part of San Pedro contains several half-way houses. A gaunt older white man wanders in and takes a seat by the door. His leathery and pockmarked skin suggests that speed was his drug of choice, but its hard to say for sure, but he's fidgety. When he pulls what appears to be a cigarette from his camouflage army vest, the veteran politico approaches and confronts him.

"Lyle, you know you can't smoke in here," she says.

"I know...I know...It's an electric cigarette anyhow," Lyle replies, holding it up for inspection.

"You know you shouldn't smoke."

“I know...That’s why I got this thing, so I can quit...Is she...”

“She’s coming in soon, but she’s really busy.”

“I bet,” he says, “I just wanna say hi.”

The Congresswoman arrives a half hour late.²⁰⁹ She chats with fidgety Lyle with a comfort most politicians can’t be taught to fake, a folksiness and warmth often ascribed to her father. As Lyle shows off his electric cigarette, Hahn actually listens. After a brief introduction, the Congresswoman invites me into her office. She digs around in a big custard yellow purse, which likely contains everything a roving politician needs. Oceanscapes line two walls and are likely gifts of support from a local artist collective. A portrait of her father hangs on the wall facing her desk. That’s not a small thing, I think to myself, as it’s a reminder of her lineage to all that visit. But more powerfully, it’s a reminder of the high bar that she’s expected to reach. The newly created 44th district Hahn is campaigning for is an empowerment zone, as the majority of its population is made up of minority groups. I ask the Congresswomen how her father explained the subjects of race and prejudice.²¹⁰

Hahn: “For us, living in Los Angeles, which was fairly international and interracial city, the stories that my dad would reference, he would always say things like, “it wasn’t that long ago that in Los Angeles, African Americans, or Negroes, were arrested for swimming

²⁰⁹ After I finish reading the *Sentinel* and the front page of the *Los Angeles Times*, I flip through the pages the recent edition of *Random Lengths News*. Poet/icon of the barfly scene, Charles Bukowski, once wrote that, “*Random Lengths* kicks the hell out of lies.” With a critical left leaning stance, *Random Lengths* has faithfully covered local and national political and social stories since it was founded in 1979 by Publishing Editor, James Allen, who used his personal relationship with Congresswoman Hahn to arrange my interview. Allen and Hahn have known each other for decades - they text frequently - though its doubtful that their relationship runs as deep as the one enjoyed by her father and Leon Washington, the Publishing Editor of the *Los Angeles Sentinel*. Still, *Random Lengths* holds political coinage in the area that the Congresswoman represents and while more radical, the paper and the Congresswoman share a common political agenda.

²¹⁰ Interview with Congresswoman Janice Hahn, 10/3/12. San Pedro, California.

at the beach.” He would always tell the story of H. Claude Hudson, the great civil rights leader, who was arrested at Redondo Beach in 1940. So this was like in the sixties that he’d be telling us these stories. He was basically saying that it wasn’t that long ago, and that maybe we’ve come a ways in this country, but it wasn’t that long ago, if you were a Negro, you weren’t allowed to swim at Redondo Beach. I really feel like my father was colorblind. He never referred in any way to another race any differently. He just tried to teach us that there was a time when people weren’t treated equally. The story that gave me courage, and I tell people where my political strength comes from is, when he was invited to greet Dr. King when he came to LAX in the early sixties and no other white politician at that time wanted to go to LAX and greet Dr. King, who was preaching at church that night. The mayor had a scheduling conflict, the city council members were out of town, the state senators, love to do it, but can’t fit it in. My dad was honored to meet Dr. King. I don’t think that growing up, I quite understood the tense racial conflict in the South happening at that time. This was a time when they were sicing dogs on young African American kids, the fire department was spraying the hoses on folks, and it was the white elected officials, the mayors, the police chiefs, that were ordering those kinds of attacks on peaceful marchers. It was only recently, when I went on a civil rights pilgrimage in Alabama that I understood the real courage of a white politician in the sixties going and greeting Dr. King, escorting him, that I kinda understood really how my dad was completely colorblind and not afraid to be a white official associated with a very controversial African American in this country.”

Despite his understanding that King represented a disturbing challenge to white hegemony, Hahn at once signaled that he was both supportive of the national civil rights

movement, and that he was aware of King's profound importance to his constituency, a dangerous (if politically savvy) move that the congresswoman believes was ultimately spurred by her father's deep belief in King's mission.

Hahn: "He was a political scientist. There was a science to his politics. And maybe, but I think when I look back, I think it was a really brave thing for him to do. But you're right, I think that the people he represented wanted him to do that. It's like when he endorsed Jesse Jackson for President, my brother was reminding me of that yesterday, "Remember when dad endorsed Jesse Jackson for President?" He did it clearly because the people he represented would have wanted him to, and that's kinda why they loved him so much because he was their representative, and he represented them in all of those kind of interesting opportunities. Maybe."

Is a politician's job to represent their constituents or to represent the will of their constituents? This question has been posed and answered differently throughout American history, but here it seems especially relevant, as the experience and judgment of a father passes to his daughter, engaging a process that predates both.

Hahn: "Is there a difference? I don't see the difference. I think it's our job to represent our constituents for who they are, what their hopes and dreams are. My dad would always say, "I try to be the supervisor you would be, if it was you. If you, Mrs. Smith, were sitting in my seat, I would try to make the decision that you would make." He was really good at representing their hopes, their dreams, their aspirations. He was the one making the decisions, but they had their hopes and dreams in him. So I don't know if there is much of a difference."

Like her brother, Janice Hahn learned the importance of public service through the actions of her father, if not through explicit conversations. It seems Hahn often transmitted his ideas to his children not through conversation, but through example. Hahn: "I cannot tell you how many Saturday mornings, at our home in South Central LA, there'd be a knock on the door. One of us would open the door and it'd be a constituent. Everybody knew where we lived. He would invite them in, and [call to kitchen] put another pot of coffee on, bring them into our living room. Sometimes, he would have his pajamas on. My dad liked pajamas, and as a teenager, I would be horrified. He'd say [to the constituent] 'what's your problem?' 'Well, I have this tree that I can't get the county to cut down,' or 'my son wants to get into school,' or 'I have a problem with my social security,' or 'my veteran's benefits....' Whatever it was, my dad would [say] 'ok, ok, ok. It's Saturday. Monday when I go into my office, I'll take care of it,' and he did. Or 'I need a stop sign,' or 'my church needs...' 'Ok, I'll take care of it.' Well, I watched this man perform what I came to understand as public service, and of course, my dad's known for the big things, right? Bringing the Dodgers to LA, the call boxes, the hospital, starting [expanding] the paramedic program. My dad was really quite the visionary and I think he was ahead of his time. In my mind, public service was...Or we'd be at church, and my dad always carried a little black notebook in his front pocket, [we'd be] at church, 'Mr. Hahn, I got this problem,' and he would take it [black notebook], and [say] 'I'll get to it tomorrow morning, or Monday morning.' I just saw his public service as being, people don't know where else to turn for help."

Simon: "If he were in this room, what would he say were his responsibilities, what are the county's responsibilities to these people?"

Hahn: “My dad always said—which I have replicated in my job with the city and the federal government—my dad always said, ‘My job is to make county government work for you. My job is to bend this huge bureaucracy of county government so that it works for you. And I tried to do that in the city government and the federal government. I tried to get to the people’s level. How do I get this government, of the people, for the people, by the people, to work for you?’ That’s how he saw himself as a county supervisor. Whatever it was, he thought it should work for you. It’s like, you can’t fight city hall, right? He didn’t want people to fight city hall. He wanted to make it work for them, whatever it was in their life that they needed from the county. Healthcare, streets, sewers, buildings; he just tried to figure out what his people needed. Parks, swimming pools. People come up to me today and talk to me about the swimming pool that Kenny Hahn built at their park in their part of Watts. I’ll never forget. My dad was in a wheelchair during the last part of his life; a big strapping African American came up to him, ‘Mr. Hahn, I want you to know that I was that little kid that you let jump into the pool on the first day it was open. I didn’t even know how to swim, but when you said one two three jump, I jumped. I had a career in the county as a life guard, I want you to know that that was a career that I was able to raise my family on, it was a great salary, and I’ve always wanted to shake your hand and thank you.’ [I was] in Carson, at this Baptist church on Sunday morning, African American church, pastor 87 years old, and he let me get up and say a few words. He said, ‘I’m gonna tell this story because Janis Hahn is here today and I’m not sure my own daughter has heard this story. When I first came to Carson 40 years ago, I knew I wanted to start a church, but there was no building, we didn’t have money—I’d never heard this story—I walked into Kenny Hahn’s field office in

Carson, a county facility, and I said to the receptionist, 'Would you ask the supervisor if it would be alright if our church met in his field office Sunday morning?' The receptionist is like 'well, this is like separation of church and state, you know...' 'Just ask the supervisor if we could meet here Sunday morning.' [The receptionist] said, 'Well, I don't know, I wouldn't expect it.' Then he said, 'the next Sunday, our little church met for the very first time in Kenny Hahn's supervisorial field office.' (Both of us laughing) I think he would say, 'Whatever my people needed to fulfill their dreams, I was gonna figure out how to do it, how to help them.'"

In collective memory, Hahn's political quest that led to the creation of King/Drew is inexorably tied to the destruction of the Watts Uprising. Invariably, Janice Hahn is reminded of her father's involvement while seeking political support from his constituents.

Hahn: "I have so many great stories...and I'm hearing them now, people are finding me, it was the Watts Riots, and I just met this young African American who is studying culinary at Harbor College. He came up to me when I was at Harbor College speaking this week and he had a framed letter from my father to his great grandparents. The night of the start of the riots, my father went down there at like two in the morning...The brick came through his window, right? And he had glass in his suit. He and his deputy got out and walked up to somebody's house, a little black family's house, knocked on the door. They came to their door, probably in their robes. They couldn't believe it was supervisor Hahn, who said, 'Can I come in and use your phone?' Obviously before cell phones or mobile phones. She cleaned the glass out and...They had that letter that my dad wrote them the next day, 'Mr. and Mrs. Smith, I just want to thank you for allowing

me to disturb you the other night and use your phone for help after my car had been [attacked].’ I’m like weeping as this grandson is showing me the letter. Every day, these kinds of incredible stories, and no one has ever said, that son of a bitch...”

Kenneth Hahn clearly believed in a grander vision for the city of Los Angeles. The creation of Dodger Stadium speaks to a sense that government and private industry could work in partnership that would ultimately benefit everyone. And yet, the Watts Uprising spoke to a deeply frustrated sense that systematic inequality was ignored for too long, even by local leaders like Hahn who championed a progressive agenda of change and enfranchisement.

Hahn: “I was thirteen, I was young. It was very tough for my father because it’s like—I think Jim and I both spent our life in public service, we work really hard to improve people’s lot in life and bring services and jobs and everything—and he had lived his life serving this community and trying to improve it. So I think it was devastating for my father that it wasn’t all as great as he thought it was or there was still some deep seated feelings and anger and [a sense that] “we’re not getting our fair share.” ’Cause he lived his life trying to give them their fair share. Parks and swimming pools and county health clinics...So I think that it was very hard for him.”

Like her brother, Janice Hahn locates her father’s actions as not being based in a particular ideology, but rooted in a sympathy that was a result of his upbringing.

Hahn: “You’ve heard the story, right? Hattie Hahn and the seven boys. Without a husband, as a widow, a foreigner, penniless living at 54th and Flower...You know my dad never lived more than two miles from where he was born. He had his first suit of clothes when he was in the Navy. He had his first steak, apparently, when he joined the

Navy. He was poor, poor, poor. My mother was poor, poor, poor. So I think that's why they loved him 'cause he did empathize, but I think he really tried through the county to give them what every kid deserves, a park and a swimming pool and after-school programs. So I think the Watts Riots was tough on him cause maybe it wasn't as good as he hoped it had been... 'My people are unhappy.' I think it was hard on my dad. He didn't quite understand it."

Simon: "Did he ever?"

Hahn: "My dad was not big on violence, burning... That kind of stuff was foreign to my dad. It was like, we weren't allowed to protest. (She laughs). My dad was kind of old school, 'If you have a problem, knock on my door on Saturday morning. Why didn't you just come see me and tell me what you wanted?' He didn't have a lot of sympathy for violence and killings and burning. I don't know if Jim told you, but the glow, Watts burned for days and I remember driving down the Harbor freeway with my dad, and there was this red glow all over Watts. And, I don't know if my brother told you this story, there was this thing that was almost like the Passover. The black leaders came and visited my dad one night in our home and said, 'It's still out of control. Now they're gonna target certain people and homes, and you're supposed to put a white card over your threshold—very Passover like—to say that you're cool, you're like one of us, we won't hit your home.' And again, he doesn't want to believe that, but he's preparing for the worst. He actually told my mom and my brother and I, and we went down and spent the night with my aunt, but my dad stayed."

Before the Uprising, the idea of building a private black hospital in Watts found little political support. After the Uprising, a repackaged hospital concept emerged as part

of the recommendations of the McCone Commission, a welcome, if suspicious form of governmental engagement that echoed the local sentiments previously argued for by activists like Dr. Wells Ford and Dr. Sol White Jr., and later by Supervisor Kenneth Hahn.²¹¹

Hahn: “Well, I think it was the McCone Commission, that’s what gave him the validation. It was the McCone Commission that published the report on the root causes of the Watts Riots, and one of the number one causes was the lack of access to healthcare. His case was always that the people of this community were not necessarily dying of their injuries or their illnesses. They were dying of the distance they had to travel to get healthcare at County General. And the stories that he would hear of senior citizens who would go to County General for an appointment with a doctor, and wait in the halls all day long, and then be told to come back the next day. It was five o’clock and they’d have to take the bus back to Watts. So that plus the McCone Commission gave him the validation that what this community needs is a hospital.”

An assistant appears at the door to remind the Congresswomen that her next appointment is in ten minutes. I gulp, audibly, as surely our time couldn’t be up. Hahn instructs the aid to push the appointment back. Relieved, I thank her. She smiles, I think, because talking about her dad’s life is a welcome break from her hectic schedule. (Something I’ve noticed in doing extended interviews is that recalling memories is like playing a familiar record that evokes interconnected emotions. Whether the memories are painful or joy-filled, memory takes on a more ameliorating and manageable weight

²¹¹ Arthur Jack Viseltar and Arnold. I. Kisch, and Milton Irwin Roemer, "The Watts Hospital: A Health Facility is Planned for a Metropolitan Slum Area," (Arlington: Division of Medical Care Administration, 1967), 24-30.

by the emotional distance that only time can create.) We return to her memories of the Watts Uprising.

Hahn: “I don’t think my dad put the white card over the door. Almost like my dad was the captain of the ship like, ‘I’m gonna stay here. I don’t really believe this is happening, but just in case, I want my family to be safe.’ Isn’t that weird? So there’s that. My dad was like, ‘they’re not gonna come, I’m their friend, I’m Kenny, I’ve been their supervisor, they’re not gonna harm me, but just in case, you guys go someplace else.’ There were some scary times there, scary times (no harm came to the Hahn home).”

Hahn was shocked by the violence of the uprisings, but still felt that he was safe because of his standing within the community. In 1968, Hahn believed that he would lose his seat to Los Angeles Councilman Billy Mills—a reflection of the community’s ideological change and, possibly, a sense that he had lost the faith of the community. Mills accused Hahn of playing “plantation politics” in trading patronage for votes in South Los Angeles. Hahn recalls that her father was depressed because he believed he would lose to Mills until the very end.

Hahn: “Yeah, he came into the living room. My brother and I were in the living room and my dad came out and said, ‘Well, kids, tomorrow I may not have a job.’ Of course, I was like, ‘are you kidding me, really?’ (Laughing) Because he was like, ‘it’s probably time that the African American community wants to represent themselves. It’s probably time.’ And of course that was the night that Bobby Kennedy was shot. So I remember my brother going into my dad’s bedroom and said, ‘Dad, I think you should know that Bobby Kennedy was just shot at the Ambassador Hotel.’”

On June 4, Hahn stated that he believed the odds were eight-to-five against him and he was “scared to death.” City Hall gave Mills a 45% chance of winning. Hall of Administration veterans rated Hahn a 60-40 favorite. Of a total of about 225,000 votes, scattered tabulations of about 50,000 votes pointed toward Hahn at 60% at 1:30 a.m. It climbed throughout the night to 69% by 9:10 a.m. *Los Angeles Times* writer Ray Zeman, described Hahn’s victory as partly the result of Hahn’s “201 personal appearances at night throughout his 2nd District, some at large meetings, mostly inside homes of the Negroes, the poor, the indigent, the jobless.” Zeman asserts that before he contracted hepatitis, Hahn had made “400 night visits along with breakfasts, luncheons, ground-breaking and flag raisings.” Before working toward securing the hospital, Hahn delivered the \$30 million, 18-mile Dominguez Channel, “the country’s largest flood control project.” Zeman wrote of Hahn, “he gets attention because most often he is an outsider demanding help for an individual or group with whom he is not directly affiliated. His appeal is totally different from that of a Negro, Jew, Mexican, Catholic, Legionnaire, educator, policeman or businessman clamoring for assistance for one of his own minority or clique. Hahn refused to debate Mills and never raised the issue of race.”²¹²

Paradoxically before many others, Hahn saw and supported the rise of black politicians representing black constituencies. Hahn advised his brother Gordon not to run for the eighth seat of the LACC so that Gilbert Lindsay could ascend. And yet, Hahn did not step aside and bow to the winds of change he observed and supported.

Hahn: “Yeah, you know, I think it was there, but again, my dad was like, “it’s probably time that they would like to represent themselves, and they have the right to be in power.” But I think the irony was always, and that vote showed it, they would rather

²¹² Ray Zeman, “Supervisors Analyze Wins,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 17, 1968, Pg. A4.

have Kenny Hahn. And to me that said more about the African American community than it did my dad. They were like, “It’s not about color for us. We want the person who will represent us, will build us hospitals; we can knock on his door. This guy represents us. This guy is possibly the best supervisor we can have.” It really endeared me to the African American community because you know what, they were not about color.”

In Hahn’s recollection of her father’s experience with race, both in the community and on the supervisor are cast as pragmatically colorblind. However, Hahn relates an occasion that suggests that her father’s colorblind status was more complicated and possibly limited to an older generation, and not the one that was transformed by the sixties ideological flux.

Hahn: “Well, my favorite story of course along that line was my dad was the graduation speaker of, I wanna say Crenshaw High or Jordan High or one of those high schools. Before graduation, he went back to meet the student body class president and shake hands with the principal. He got to the senior class president, a young African American kid, and the kid was like, “You’re Kenny Hahn? Oh my gosh, when I grew up with my grandmother, my mother, my pastor, singing the praises of Kenny Hahn. I always thought you were black.” (Laughing)

Simon: “Do you think if he were alive, he’d say that the issue of meritocracy that defined race with his politics—he earned the respect and loyalty of his constituents and he kept it because he continued to help them—if you’re saying it wasn’t based on race, it was based on the idea of bringing home the bacon. Does that still stand? If he were alive today, would he look at national politics a little askance?”

Hahn: “Well, like you said, he was very savvy, he was a fox. He was very shrewd. He was a political scientist, but he was also like Tip O’Neil, all politics is local. And for my dad, there was nothing like building a road, or building a building, or opening a park, or letting kids jump into a new swimming pool, while you negotiated the bigger issues that face county government. By the way, he’s been gone from political office for 20 years, he’s been gone from the earth 15 years. I don’t know if Jim did it, but every time I run for office, my polling firm will poll Kenny Hahn. Let’s see how Kenny’s doing.”

Simon: “And how is he doing?”

Hahn: “85% approval rating, today...And in this district that I’m running in, this new Congressional district, it’s a voting rights district, it’s a minority district. It means that if a minority wants to be elected, the white population can’t prohibit it. There’s 16% white in this new congressional district I’m running in, 28% African American, 48% Latino. I’m winning mainly because they still remember Kenny and for them, the name Hahn means all of the stuff that I’ve been talking about.

Simon: That’s a hell of a burden for you. I mean it’s a political advantage, but the other side of it is you’re walking a very dangerous line in your long term if you don’t deliver the way that your father did.”

We both look at Hahn’s portrait. Wrapped in his mantle, Hahn must live up to feelings associated with her father for the sake of her career, and for his legacy. So much more seems at risk than for a politician who enters the arena fresh and with lower expectations. The Hahn legacy comes with power and with vast expectations and pressure.

Hahn: “Yeah, you [have to] deliver the goods.”

Simon: “But it’s not that. It’s much deeper.”

Hahn: “It is much deeper than that.”

Simon: “That’s the pressure that comes to you.”

Hahn: “It’s true. And without earmarks in Congress, I don’t know how to do this! (She laughs). Just kidding. It’s interesting. I’ve just been in Congress a year, right, so my workers who worked for Jane Harmon before me—these women have been working for the federal government for twenty years—they said when I was elected, that the number of people that started calling just like jumped, because it was like, “we’re calling because we knew Kenny, and Kenny helped us, and we know that his daughter is now in Congress, and she’s gonna help us too.” So it is a brand. It’s a brand.”

Kenneth Hahn was famous for posting signs throughout his district that credited him with upgrades in public works. James Hahn stated that his father understood the need to inform and remind his constituents that he was always working for their betterment. Over time and inter-generationally, Hahn created a family brand name that his children inherited.

Hahn: “But he was strategic in how he branded himself. It’s one thing to do something, and the rest of politics is making sure people knew that you did it. That’s where the signs [came in]. Nobody had signs. Now you see the signs on the side of the road, “this project was brought to you by...” That was Kenny Hahn. Kenny Hahn put a sign on every road that was paved. Paved! Not built. Every sewer that was built, every park that was built, every golf course, every swimming pool, every anything, there was a sign that read, “this project brought to you by [Kenny Hahn].” When I was in elementary school, people would be like, “what does your dad do? Because I’ve seen his name at the

swimming pool, the golf course, on the side of the road.” Everyone was like, “is he a swimming teacher?” He branded himself, he branded himself (claps her hands). This is the road you’re driving on every day, you get pissed when there’s potholes, when it’s smooth, you’re gonna look to the right and there’s gonna be a sign that says, “Kenny brought you this smooth road.”

Simon: “Are you doing that too?”

Hahn: “Well, I did when I was on the City Council. It’s harder at the federal government level, but it’s now morphed into it’s your Facebook, it’s your tweets, it’s your...”

Simon: “Are you active that way or do you have somebody doing it?”

Hahn: “I have somebody help me do it. It’s a constant, here’s what I’m doing for you, in case you haven’t seen this, I’ve brought this to you.”

Simon: “Do you think people connect with it the same way your dad would do branding?”

Hahn: “I don’t feel that sense. Probably for every one person that comes up to me and knows something I’ve done, there are twenty people, still twenty years later, in the same week that will give me a story as my dad. It’s really phenomenal. For the longest time, I was keeping a journal. I’ve not done it as much as I’ve wanted to. Like everyday, someone comes up to me [with a story about her dad]. It’ll be five o’clock in the afternoon and I’ll say, “Okay, no one is gonna come up to me today,” and then some random person in Albertsons will go, “Did I ever tell you that your dad...” It’s a phenomenon.”

After King’s assassination, the LACBOS renamed the hospital in his honor with the approval of Coretta Scott King.

Hahn: “That’s a story I tell... “Mrs. King, I know you don’t remember who I am, but if it’s okay with you I’d like to name the hospital after your husband.” “Oh, no, I know who you are, when my Martin came home, he couldn’t stop talking about this white official that was so kind to him.”

In late October 1969, Hahn drove to Los Angeles International Airport and picked up Martin Luther King, Sr.; almost a decade prior, Hahn had picked up his son when almost no other politician in Los Angeles would meet with the leader of the SCLC. King was pleased with the progress of the integrated construction site. Afterwards at a lunch hosted by local SCLC chapter members, King said, “The SCLC will live on. We haven’t reached the promised land yet.”²¹³

When her assistant reappears at the door, I know that my time to up. She walks me to the door and wishes me good luck. A few months later, Janice Hahn won her contest against a black congresswoman named Laura Richardson for the newly redrawn 44th district.²¹⁴

Throughout the interviews James and Janice Hahn depict a family life from the ether of the late 1950s á la Norman Rockwell. Kenneth Hahn’s work intruded upon the family’s privacy, but not as much as one might suppose. Late night phone calls were frequent, constituents visited the house regularly, and Hahn often brought home office

²¹³ Bill Robertson, “King’s Dad Views MLK Hospital,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 23, 1969, Pg. A1. Coretta Scott King made the first of many visits on December 4th, 1969.

²¹⁴ After I turn off the recorder, we briefly talk about *Random Lengths*, and about its publisher, our mutual friend. And then instead of leaving, she turns the tables and asks about my evident skepticism of modern politics. Though I forget the exact wording, I tell her that, instinctually, I don’t trust politicians. Lost in the moment, I don’t realize that I’ve just leveled a serious insult at a career politician. Democracy is so fragile, I explain, and people are too. Then I quote the old adage, that people get the representation they deserve. This isn’t what the Congresswoman wants to hear and her face goes cold and hard for a moment then it relaxes.

work, but yet, the Hahn family still managed a degree of normalcy. After he learned about classical music while attending Pepperdine, Kenneth Hahn regularly tuned into KUSC or listened to recordings he owned. An avid fan of biographies, their father would read while the family sat in front of the television. It's easy to imagine Ramona Hahn knitting a sweater to fill out this image of early fifties domesticity.

In the end, Kenneth Hahn seems to have been the right man at the right time. In the creation and long term maintenance of King/Drew, he proved a dedicated and empathic servant to his constituency, a reminder that despite jaundiced notions, there are politicians that can and do honorably serve the public trust.²¹⁵ However, Hahn's politicization of the hospital had lasting negative consequences despite his good intentions. Amid the struggle to build King/Drew, he imbued his constituency with a sense of ownership. The long excluded and ignored community of South Los Angeles and the physicians that served them saw vast opportunities, in part, because Hahn promised immense change and raised expectations and encouraged his constituents to directly engage in bettering their lives and community.

²¹⁵ In the course of interviewing so many people that knew Kenneth Hahn personally, I never hear a whiff of scandal. No charges of corruption, no charges of indecency, no story of a secret other black family living up in Baldwin Hills. There's a mystery about the Kenneth Hahn State Park as it sits on rich oil lands, but my sense is that if a nefarious deal was struck, Hahn and his associates were careful to hide their tracks. I never set out to sully a seemingly spotless record, and yet as I a product of modern journalism that often sets sensationalism above all else, I was at least a bit disappointed.

Chapter Four: Executive Memory

Introduction

The prospect of King/Drew spoke to the fulfillment of decades of local dreams connected to a century of national struggle for black independence and equality in medicine.²¹⁶ Local black physicians and community members saw a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to improve life in South Los Angeles via employment, education and access to first-rate comprehensive medicine. The quest that formally began with 1964 CRDMS president, Dr. Sol White Jr.'s failed attempt to build a private black hospital in Watts led to Hahn's successful funding of an LA County Hospital, but it was an unsatisfying hybrid that took years longer to complete than anyone anticipated.²¹⁷ Amid the creation period, tensions arose over the ownership and identity of the new medical complex. Uncertainty fueled suspicions among many local black physicians who desired inclusion and authority after years of exclusion from hospitals in Los Angeles; while some inclusion seemed probable, it was uncertain who would and would not have a place at King/Drew and for what reasons. Community members were wary of the power wielded by outsiders; they questioned the outsiders' commitment and their understanding of health

²¹⁶ Reminder: Throughout this dissertation, the names of institutions are shortened or abbreviated. Both the hospital and the medical school have undergone name changes over the years. In this era, the Charles R. Drew School of Medicine and Science was called the Charles R. Drew Postgraduate Medical School, or the Drew School. It appears abbreviated as CRDPMS. Similarly, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Multi-Service Ambulatory Care Center was called the Martin Luther King, Jr. General Hospital; initially, it was called the Los Angeles County Southeast General Hospital, but it was renamed in King's honor soon after he was assassinated. It is referred to simply as King Hospital. The medical complex is referred to as King/Drew, as the two institutions were symbiotically joined during this time period; after opening, the campus was repeatedly augmented with facilities designed to cater to the specific needs of the community, for example, a school for handicapped children. The Charles R. Drew Medical Society appears abbreviated as CRDMS. The Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California is referred to as USC Medical School; The David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA is referred to as UCLA Medical School.

²¹⁷ Arthur Jack Viseltar and Arnold. I. Kisch and Milton Irwin Roemer. "The Watts Hospital: A Health Facility is Planned for a Metropolitan Slum Area." (Arlington: Division of Medical Care Administration, 1967): 24-27.

problems faced by the community—many the result of racial inequality and de facto segregation. Establishment figures and County administrators believed in limited community participation, as long as it didn't get in the way of creating a first rate medical institution. As traditional authority engaged an empowered agency, suspicions fomented hostilities that inevitably led to disruptive power struggles overtly and covertly about race, class and identity; a localization of the ongoing national struggle between the liberal status quo and the evolving revolution of black power.

Chapter Four utilizes the memories of two members of Drew's executive board of directors to explore the turbulent creation process of King/Drew. Dean of UCLA's School of Medicine (retired) Dr. Sherman H. Mellinkoff was a member of the McCone Commission, and the Watts Health Advisory Committee in which he served as one of the original conceptual architects of King/Drew.²¹⁸ Mellinkoff was an original member of Drew's board of directors—CRDMS member Dr. Henry Williams was the first chairman of Drew's board of directors, serving from 1966-1972—and he was part of the search committee that selected Drew's first dean, Dr. Mitchell W. Spellman.²¹⁹ A respected physician and administrator, Mellinkoff's memory speaks to the politicization of medicine which shaped the institution's identity and governance; Mellinkoff was the face of the white medical establishment that came to Watts. Additionally, Mellinkoff's memory

²¹⁸ Interviews with Dr. Sherman Mellinkoff. Recorded personal interviews, 5/14/12, 6/15/12. Westwood, California. Subsequently, I conducted unrecorded phone interviews with Mellinkoff on 9/1/12, 11/2/13.

²¹⁹ Interview with Dr. Arthur W. Fleming, unrecorded personal interview, September 15, 2012. Palos Verdes, California. Fleming gave me a photocopy a chapter he wrote for the following text, entitled "Martin Luther King, Jr. General Hospital and the Charles R. Drew Postgraduate School," which appears in: Organ, Claude H., and Margaret M. Kosiba. *A Century of Black surgeons: the USA experience*. Vol. 2. Transcript Press, 1987. Pg. 377-425. Fleming's chapter exclusively focuses on King/Drew's surgical department and program over several decades.

speaks to the chaotic nature of power-sharing within an institution with multiple mandates, ideologies, and orientations all vying for dominance.

Dr. Mitchell W. Spellman (retired) served as the dean of the Drew school during the institution's first decade.²²⁰ A widely-known and respected surgeon in Washington DC, Spellman uprooted his family and moved to Los Angeles in the late 1960s to be an integral part of the King/Drew mission, reflecting his optimistic belief in bringing comprehensive healthcare to the impoverished area. In recalling his life and role in the King/Drew process, Spellman's memory speaks to the difficulties of institution building at the center of a storm of controversy. Additionally, Spellman's memory furthers the discussion of black medicine in the post-World War II era, when black physicians continued on a separate and unequal path towards self-sufficiency and black empowerment in medicine.

While their professional relationship ended decades ago, Mellinkoff and Spellman remain close friends and see each other often; understandably since they collaborated together during Drew's first decade, their memories are now interwoven. Both men reside close to UCLA, and they speak to the roles played by UCLA and USC medical schools, institutions viewed by many in South Los Angeles as racist, blind and elitist: an enemy of black empowerment.

²²⁰ Interviews with Dr. Mitchell Spellman. Recorded personal interviews, 5/14/12, 6/15/12. Brentwood, California. Subsequently, I conducted unrecorded phone interviews with Spellman on 9/5/12, 11/5/12.

Dr. Sherman M. Mellinkoff

Despite being only 20 miles northwest of the King/Drew campus in Willowbrook, Westwood is another world. Freshly waxed Volvo station wagons line the drive. Precision-trimmed hedges are guarded by freshly painted lawn jockeys. Drawn by the scent of wealth, butterflies buzz about the well tended gardens of UCLA faculty and the business elite of nearby Wilshire Boulevard.

“Please don’t go over the appointment time, because he’s not well,” says Mellinkoff’s nurse as she ushers me into the wood paneled living room which smells of Pledge and isopropyl. Mellinkoff is upstairs at the bedside of his dying wife, June. Together, they raised a family and lived in this house for more than 60 years (June Mellinkoff passed away a few weeks after my first visit). When he appears, Mellinkoff is dressed in a dark blue terry cloth robe with dark brown leather slippers. After delivering a firm handshake, he slowly moves across the room, settles into a recliner, and snakes an oxygen tube up his nose. The longest serving Dean of UCLA’s David Geffen School of Medicine is 96 years old, and while his body might be failing, his memory and dry wit seem forged of hardened steel.

Sherman Mussoff Mellinkoff was born in McKeesport, Pennsylvania on March 23, 1920, though his parents migrated to Los Angeles when he was an infant. Mellinkoff describes the city of his youth as wide open and spacious. Communities existed in isolation from each other in the days before the freeway system. The rare politically progressive family in Beverly Hills, Mellinkoff remembers his father drawing community scorn for wearing an FDR button on his lapel. Mellinkoff attended religious services at a Jewish temple that was often too conservative for his family. He attended Beverly Hills

High School before following in his brother's footsteps and attending Stanford University because the UCLA School of Medicine didn't yet exist; Stanford became a family tradition. He earned a BA in 1941 and an MD in 1944, before completing a nine-month rapid internship and residency at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, Maryland. From 1945 to 1947, Mellinkoff served in the US Army Medical Corps, leaving the service with the rank of captain. After the war, he studied for his specialty in gastroenterology at the University of Pennsylvania before returning to New York.²²¹ "In fact, I was the first full-time gastroenterologist at Johns Hopkins," says Mellinkoff, "which gives you an idea of how much medicine has proliferated in different ways." In 1953, he returned to Los Angeles as an assistant professor of gastroenterology—the only full time gastroenterologist on staff—at the invitation of Dr. John Lawrence, the first professor of medicine at UCLA. "Of course in those days, the whole faculty, the medical school," Mellinkoff jokes, "...it was a hole in the ground."

Before the UCLA School of Medicine officially opened its doors in 1955, Mellinkoff and other faculty taught a small group of students in makeshift classrooms. The lounge of the old religious studies building housed anatomy classes, and biochemistry was taught in quonset huts. The residents worked at Wadsworth Veteran's Hospital and at Harbor Hospital in Carson. Later, the residents would study at Los Angeles County Hospital, but that change was preceded by an argument within the Los Angeles medical community over the logistics of UCLA's future medical training program.

Mellinkoff: "I got a lot of [pushback] from Don Crane, who is dead now. He won a Nobel Prize in Organic Chemistry many years after that. He was on a committee of

²²¹ "Sherman M. Mellinkoff." http://faculty.biolchem.ucla.edu/institution/personnel?personnel_id=45786

three...There were a lot of people who wanted the medical school to be off the campus. They thought it would be a pain in the ass for the school to be on the campus.”

Mellinkoff worked a seven day week around-the-clock schedule which included administrative work at UCLA, laboratory work and management at a facility on Wilshire Boulevard, and overseeing rounds with students at Harbor Hospital in Carson; this began before the completion of the Harbor 110 freeway, making Mellinkoff’s commuting time much longer than it would be today, though in the 1960s there was much less traffic. Mellinkoff recalls that he found a sense of balance between his roles as administrator and educator; Mellinkoff continued teaching at Harbor Hospital for decades. While it’s hard to imagine keeping such an intense schedule, harder still to imagine how Mellinkoff found time to spend with June and his three children, Mellinkoff describes being satisfied by his life. As UCLA grew, so did Mellinkoff’s responsibilities, though he seems to have no regrets about the immense workload. Mellinkoff served as professor at UCLA for the next nine years, after which he was appointed the Dean of Medicine in 1962. When the Watts Uprising began in mid-August of 1965, Mellinkoff was on a rare family vacation in San Diego.

Mellinkoff: “The riots broke out when I was down there. I wasn’t here, and I was feeling guilty about enjoying myself, not doing anything to help with this calamity.”

Mellinkoff was contacted by Warren Christopher, who served as a special counsel to Governor Pat Brown. Mellinkoff and Christopher had met years earlier at Stanford where they knew each other socially, but were not close friends. Their relationship would soon change.

Mellinkoff: “I don’t recall how he got my number, but he got me down there and said that he was going to be [assembling a committee]. Governor Brown was away in Greece. Incidentally, I don’t want you to think that I didn’t have anything to do with community medicine because Harbor [Hospital] (in Wilmington, California) was community medicine, and that was a very important part of my work...I think if I hadn’t been on vacation, had I been working hard, I would’ve told Warren no, but here I was. ‘Cause I would’ve been able to say truthfully, ‘Warren I’m too busy,’”

Mellinkoff recalls that at the time, he perceived the events as rioting, but over time he came to understand how and why a riot could also be understood as a revolution. Decades later, he thinks of them as riots.

Mellinkoff: “I can understand why some people call them a revolution, but there was barbarism loose. Now, I understand the reasons for it, but there were people out murdering people, murdering firemen that came to put out fires. Now, is that revolution or is that rioting?”

While he was initially surprised, Mellinkoff recalls that it took visits to the curfew area for him to understand that the violence was a result of endemic poverty, police brutality and de facto segregation.²²² When the violence ended, Governor Brown enlisted John McCone, former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, to lead an investigatory commission to ascertain the underlying causes of the violence and to make recommendations as how further violence could be avoided. The McCone Commission, comprised of local and national dignitaries including Warren Christopher

²²² Interview with Dr. Robert Tranquada. Personal recorded interview, January 19, 2012. Sylmar, California. Co-creator of the Watts Health Clinic, Dr. Robert Tranquada of USC’s school of medicine recalled a similar memory, as before he worked on the clinic, he was unaware of the social conditions in Watts; Mellinkoff and Tranquada worked together for years in inter-collegic collaboration; Tranquada served on Drew’s board of directors.

and Mellinkoff, heard testimony from a wide array of community members and social scientists.²²³

Mellinkoff: “That was a very difficult 100 days...We had hearings five days a week in the morning. We also had other things, this was an opportunity for people to come and testify. We asked some and some asked to be heard. So that was a big job, to find out what happened and what was the background for this. And why it was that white people were hated all over that area. Police brutality. Education, which was very poor—that was an enormous deficiency. Anyway, it was decided that we would also have individuals [from] public health [from] the area. I used to go over there at night, by myself, and people would come in and talk. The air was filled with hatred and suspicions. Anyways, it was a big job.”

Ostensibly, the McCone Commission was assembled to investigate and find a truth, however, Mellinkoff acknowledges that some commission members sought to confirm preexisting notions that reflected their ideology and politics.

Mellinkoff: “I would say that there were two or three people on the commission, and Mr. McCone was one who pretty well had made up his mind, but there were others that hadn’t. So there were some tense times then...[McCone] felt that this was a police matter. He worked for the CIA and Atomic Energy Commission, and he thought this was a police matter. He was Chairman. Warren Christopher didn’t feel that way, and neither did Father Charles Cassasa, who became a good friend of mine. There were a lot of tensions and arguments about where we were going and what we should do.”

²²³ Lindsey Lupo, *Flak-catchers: one hundred years of Riot Commission politics in America*, (New York: Lexington Books, 2010), 96-117.

On December 2, 1965, the McCone Commission released a 101 page report entitled, *Violence in the City: An End or a Beginning*.²²⁴ The commission focused its attention on the violence, avoiding a sociological analysis of the underlying causes of discontent that potentially could have raised expectations or incited further violence. The report acknowledged that black angelenos faced difficulties, but dismissed any underlying political motivation—rioting as protest—and laid the blame at the feet of the community. As it admonished, the report offered vague yet ameliorating suggestions that the community could take to avoid more violence; adult education, mobility, disciplinary and law enforcement problems, black leadership. However, while it all but exonerated law enforcement, the document made recommendations to avert further violence by addressing specific and manageable aspects of *de facto* ghettoization including the expansion of public transportation and the creation of a community hospital in South Los Angeles. Both recommendations were eventually realized, however, while other recommendations were not.²²⁵

Mellinkoff: "In my opinion, first of all, of all the recommendations in there, the only one that something was really done about was the hospital. One of the most important recommendations, which was never implemented and was very carefully done, was about the education of the children. We hired a fellow who was an education expert, I think he was at Los Angeles City College. He was very bright, and he found that by taking samples, that in places like Watts or inner cities, not only in Los Angeles but in all over the US, the education of children was terrible. Abysmal. The question was what to

²²⁴ John A. McCone, "Violence in the city: An end or a beginning." *Governor's Comm. on the Los Angeles Riots* (1965). <http://www.usc.edu/libraries/archives/cityinstress/mccone/contents.html> In the section entitled Welfare and Health, the McCone Commission recommended the creation of community hospital in South Los Angeles.

²²⁵ Lupo, *Flak-catchers: One Hundred Years of Riot Commission Politics in America*, 96-117.

do about it. And the biggest hint, he found was a place in NY which was run by the Julius Rosenwald Foundation. The Commission recommended a transformation of inner city schools with much smaller classroom sizes....”

Mellinkoff speaks at length about the different educational strategies that were discussed by members of the McCone Commission. Expert testimony on both theoretical and realized approaches informed the discussion and led to the recommendation that a complete overhaul of the city’s public education system was warranted, especially as it affected inner-city youth. The emphasis Mellinkoff places on education within his recollection of this period of his life seems rooted in his politics and his larger professional experience as a respected educator, administrator and physician. Throughout his recollection, Mellinkoff returns to the issue of education repeatedly, and the issue can be understood as a crystalizing constant in the way he understands his role in the process which continued long after the McCone Commission was adjourned and the report was released.

Mellinkoff: “After the report was made public, I got a call from John Affeldt, Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Medicine. John was a nice person and he read the report, and he knew what was going on too. He was going to convene a little meeting with the Dean of UCLA [Medical School] (Mellinkoff), the Dean of USC [Medical School] (Egeberg), and the president of the Charles Drew Medical Society...Jack something...Boy, that was a loaded place. We had a meeting down at the county...”

The McCone Commission called for the assemblage of a inclusive committee comprised of specialists, professionals and community members to discuss the creation of a hospital. On the recommendation of Grant Cattaneo, the Executive Director of the

Hospital Planning Association of Southern California, the California State Hospital Advisory Council (CSHAC) appointed the 12-member Watts Heath Advisory Committee (WHAC) to investigate and report a strategy to build a new Los Angeles County hospital in South Central Los Angeles in early January 1966. Chaired by Dan Grindell, WHAC's membership was diverse and included local labor leaders, entrepreneurs, physicians, nurses, politicians, and health consumers, many of whom had been advocating for a hospital for years; membership also included representatives from the CRDMS, USC and UCLA medical schools.²²⁶

Mellinkoff: "Anyway, we had long discussions and arguments.²²⁷ Bob Tranquada, who had been one of our internists and who was an A+ person by the way [was in attendance]. He and Roger [Egeberg] (Dean of USC Medical School) had started a clinic in Watts which they were trying to make healthcare available to the community and they did to some extent. But it wasn't enough. And at that time, if somebody in Watts was sick and needed care, Harbor was not the nearest place, it was Big County. It would take two bus transfers to get there. Well, if you were sick, that was not helping very much. The little group, out of that came a corporation which is signed by Roger Egeberg, the president of Charles Drew Medical Society, and me establishing the Martin Luther King Hospital idea. The main features of it were that it would be a shared responsibility by USC and UCLA and the community, but it would involve building a hospital and...then getting a faculty."

²²⁶ Interview with Grant Cattaneo, unrecorded phone interview, 1/5/12. The California State Hospital Advisory Council (CSHAC) appointment of Watts Health Advisory Committee (WHAC) membership in 1966 followed the recommendations of Cattaneo, Executive Director of the Hospital Planning Association of Southern California; Cattaneo made selections following the McCone Commission's call for community participation in planning King/Drew.

²²⁷ As there were many WHAC meetings, Mellinkoff understandably merges them together.

WHAC meetings led to incorporation and a commonly agreed upon set of three objectives in building a first rate hospital. Mellinkoff was appointed chairman of a subcommittee to draft specific criteria for the hospital and outlined the agreed upon objectives: (1) "It should provide excellent medical care for the people in the community," (2) "[it should] provide a beacon for the underprivileged people in all of Los Angeles," (3) "[it should] provide and promote interracial harmony in a comprehensive medical center through patient care, teaching, education, and research."²²⁸

In February 1966, WHAC reported its findings to the CSHAC, the most lasting of which was the recommendation that the new hospital should be directed by local physicians from the CRDMS at the recently incorporated Charles R. Drew Postgraduate Medical School via a contract between LA County and CRDPMS to provide medical and teaching services at King Hospital; a similar relationship already existed between USC's school of medicine and Los Angeles County Medical Center located in Boyle Heights, California; university affiliation assured quality control and a consistent source of financing.²²⁹ In late February, the CSHAC accepted the plan which allowed WHAC to move forward with organizing grant proposals, while Los Angeles County officials focused on budgetary concerns.²³⁰ WHAC collaborated with other community groups that shared the common cause of hospital building as a form of healthcare advocacy in South Los Angeles. The project involved politically active professionals and common

²²⁸ Viseltear, Kisch, and Roemer, "The Watts Hospital: A Health Facility is Planned for a Metropolitan Slum Area," 24-25.

²²⁹ Charles E. Windsor, "A Summary of the History and Plan for the Development of the Los Angeles County Martin Luther King, Jr. General Hospital," Hospital Administrator document, (Los Angeles: Martin Luther King Jr. General Hospital, 1972).

²³⁰ H. Nelson, "Panel Calls for Watts Hospital Directed by Negro Doctors." *Los Angeles Times*, February 25, 1966. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.lapl.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/155404068?accountid=6749>

citizens that were often simultaneously involved with several local organizations and took on different developmental roles over time. Unsurprisingly, when King/Drew later opened, many of those involved from the beginning continued as employees, concerned community activists and members of various boards of the medical complex.

“Hospitals are an important symbol to the Jewish community, for the Jewish community, and by the Jewish community,” said Dr. J. Alfred Cannon in March of 1966, underscoring the hospital’s common role as an essential aspect of improvement and independence for minority communities like South Los Angeles. Cannon served as assistant professor of psychiatry and associate director of social psychiatry at the UCLA School of Medicine, and was the chairman of People In Community Action (PICA), a political group that evolved from the multicultural efforts of 75 organizations in Los Angeles to foster greater political representation and resources on behalf of the poor of Los Angeles.²³¹ PICA worked with the CRDMS and WHAC on the development of King/Drew through political and social engagement within the community, and Cannon is just one of many founders and community activists who had multiple roles and responsibilities at King/Drew.²³²

Two events in May slowed momentum in the hospital process. On May 7, police shot and killed Leonard Deadwyler in Watts as he was taking his wife, who was in labor,

²³¹ “Dr. Cannon Appointed Drew School Chairman,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 6, 1970. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564934376?accountid=35804>

Cannon was a long time advocate for health issues in Los Angeles; he founded the Central City Community Mental Health Center; he founded and chaired the Fredrick Douglas Child Development Center, etc. At the time of his appointment, Cannon served as chairman of the black psychiatrists committee of the American Psychiatric Association and Black Psychiatrists of America. A founder of Drew, Cannon was previously a member of the school’s board of directors previous to accepting the appointment. In early August 1970, Cannon was appointed chairman of psychiatry at Drew, and concurrently chief of the psychiatry service at King; Cannon continued as a UCLA professor like other King/Drew physicians who had concurrent appointments with either USC or UCLA.

²³² “County Hospital Construction in Watts: Group’s Objective,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, March 3, 1966. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564787592?accountid=35804>

to Los Angeles County Medical Center. On May 20, more than 1,000 black residents from the community attended the coroner's inquest where the police were exonerated. Potentially, this event could have ignited a second riot, but community leaders were able to calm tensions. While a second riot never broke out, later violence was attributed to the shooting.²³³ In late May, a dispute between Los Angeles County workers and administration over wages and collective union bargaining rights led to a strike by over 800 county employees, many of whom were black. Los Angeles County Employees Union members returned to work after three days, but social workers and county welfare clerks, who were members of separate unions, remained on strike for 17 days. Planning of the medical complex resumed soon after, and the labor dispute was later resolved to the satisfaction of union leadership.²³⁴ Proponents of hospital construction feared that media coverage of the two events would harden the resolve of racist whites who felt that Watts shouldn't be rewarded after the violence and soften the support of whites who may have previously empathized. A bond measure initiative to fund hospital construction, Proposition A, lost at the July 1966 polls, and planning slowed as Supervisor Hahn explored alternate options. The defeat was seen as a rebuke of black empowerment and reflected racial hostility in LA County. Eventually, an alternate funding scheme was successfully employed.²³⁵

²³³ Interview with Dr. Ernie Smith, Ph.D. Personal Interviews, 10/3/11, 11/15/11. Watts, California. Smith spoke at the coroner's inquest on behalf of outraged community members. While critical of the police, Smith recalls that his speech calmed community tensions and possibly averted a second riot.

²³⁴ Viseltear, Kisch, and Roemer, "The Watts Hospital: A Health Facility is Planned for a Metropolitan Slum Area," 37-39.

²³⁵ Interview with Mervyn M. Dymally. Recorded Personal Interview, 3/21/11. Willowbrook, California. While he took part in the County strike, Dymally feared that the events would affect the passage of Proposition "A" at the polls.

In July 1968, the California Committee on Regional Medical Programs awarded WHAC an operational grant of \$259,875 as part of a \$2,232,864 operational grant awarded to RMP from the Division of Regional Medical Programs of the National Institutes of Health; RMP funding targeted the treatment of illnesses related to heart disease, cancer and stroke.²³⁶ A month later, Dan Grindell, chairman of the Watts-Willowbrook District Advisory Committee on Regional Programs (and the original chairman of WHAC), appointed former CRDMS president Dr. John A. Mitchell, a local surgeon, as acting associate coordinator of CRDPMS.²³⁷ Utilizing RMP funds, Mitchell began the task of organizing the new medical school from the ground up,²³⁸ while members of Drew's board of directors proceeded with a national search for a dean. Mellinkoff: "It came down to two people, one of whom...One of them was a demagogic thief. He would've been a terrible dean. The other was Dr. Spellman. We had long arguments. We met at UCLA many nights. It came down to a three-two vote for Mitchell Spellman, and then somebody suggested that we just make it unanimous. And that's how we got Mitchell Spellman. That was the best thing we ever did because he started a system of search committees. We got Bob Greenberg, we got Dave Palmer and Jack Campbell was an absolutely A-plus man in radiology. The idea was to get good people and then start getting people of different ethnic groups who were also good, but with the

²³⁶ H. Nelson, "Watts Gets \$259,875 for Medical School," *Los Angeles Times*, July 4, 1968. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.lapl.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/155975604?accountid=6749>

²³⁷ "Watts Surgeon to Direct Drew Medical School," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 15, 1968. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564881099?accountid=35804> Previously, Mitchell served on the Los Angeles County Southeast General Hospital Authority Commission. A surgeon who practiced in South Los Angeles for three years prior to his appointment, Mitchell also served as a clinical assistant professor in surgery, community medicine and public health at USC.

²³⁸ "Dr. Mitchell Heads Local Medical Unit," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 25, 1969. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564870679?accountid=35804> Mitchell was also first chief of surgery at the South Central Multi-purpose Health Center in Watts, which was developed by his USC colleagues, Dr. Robert Tranquada and Dr. Roger O. Egeberg.

[same] standard. Al Haynes was the first black chairman picked by Spellman. And he was very good for a department of community medicine. That was a good system, but it was also one that was doomed to failure because of the agonizing resentments and cliques...There were too many Jews, some people said, and things like that.”

Mellinkoff unintentionally betrays an ingrained prejudice: he sought “good people” first, then “people of different ethnic groups who were also good, but with the [same] standard.” Good people tacitly means good white Jewish physicians who are inherently the standard by which minorities would be judged; Mellinkoff wouldn’t consider this assumption as racist, just a reality he understood to be a byproduct of slavery which created a biracial medical system in the first place. Hahn and many community members/physicians saw the hospital as being explicitly, if not officially, for the black community of South Los Angeles, a westward expansion of the black hospital movement, which would care for the area and produce new black physicians.²³⁹ Mellinkoff and some members of the board of directors envisioned it as a multicultural hospital, i.e., not only a black hospital, an institution run by the finest physicians that could be assembled after national searches; meritocracy and multiculturalism, as defined by unquestionable white hegemony. As opposed to the community, the board, far from unanimity, prioritized medical expertise over race and didn’t prioritize potential candidates based on geography, so local black physicians weren’t favored simply because they worked in the area. In an interview, Dr. Mitchell Spellman recalled that early on, Mellinkoff often stated that the hospital should promote “racial amity,”²⁴⁰ and among the three objectives agreed upon by WHAC was the belief that the new hospital

²³⁹ For information on the black hospital movement refer to Chapter 1.

²⁴⁰ Interview with Dr. Mitchell Spellman. Recorded personal interview, 5/14/12.

should “promote interracial harmony.”²⁴¹ A fractious paradox was present from the beginning, and clearly, Mellinkoff believed in a multicultural vision for the new medical complex even though that idea was antithetical to the wishes of many in the community who wanted a black institution.

Mellinkoff: “It would’ve been and it started to be with Dr. Spellman...The view in mind was first of all, make very good medical care accessible to people in the area, and secondly, to foster brotherly love...The main reason for it was so that kids growing up would see black people and white people working together in a common cause and be inspired to join in that spirit, instead of fostering their hatred and animus that so many, an overwhelming number of people there had.”

Many American Jews from northern states empathized with blacks and supported the early efforts of the civil rights movement because the Jewish community had also faced discrimination and racial intolerance. Jews were barred from attending many institutions of higher learning, so they created their own, including Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts. As Jews found financial security and upward mobility, they found greater acceptance in white America, becoming part of the dominant white society that continued to exclude blacks. This ascension challenged the previous, if limited, interracial unity.²⁴² Liberal Jews were alienated by the rhetoric of black power leadership who called for black separation and control of the once multicultural civil rights movement, as when the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) voted to

²⁴¹ Viseltear, Kisch, and Roemer. “The Watts Hospital: A Health Facility is Planned for a Metropolitan Slum Area,” 24-25.

²⁴² Interview with Robert Lee Johnson. Unrecorded personal interview. 9/17/13. Long Beach, California. Johnson is a LA historian and former president of the Los Angeles Chapter of the Black Panthers. Johnson recalled that Some blacks believed that Jews were guilty of exploitative business practices in South LA; some stores owned by Jewish merchants in Watts were burned amid the Watts Uprising.

exclude whites and Jews from leadership in 1966.²⁴³ A few of the original department chairmen were Jewish, like Dr. Robert Greenberg, the head of the department of pediatrics. Greenberg believes that his liberalism and Judaism led him to work at the hospital because it was an opportunity to see his progressive belief in working for positive change materialize through action.²⁴⁴ One of Greenberg's first appointments to pediatrics was Dr. Betty Joe Warren, and the two physicians shared similar beliefs about the potential affirming change inherent in the project; besides being a black physician based in Los Angeles, Warren asserts that she was appointed because she shared Greenberg's passion and enthusiasm.²⁴⁵ The presence of Jews on the staff created community tension, but Mellinkoff asserts that they were appointed because they were great physicians that were capable of leading new departments, and not because he actively sought out Jewish doctors.

Mellinkoff: "The man recruiting those people was Mitchell Spellman, and what he did was appoint good search committees. Those search committees were asked to find outstanding doctors, professors, who would be interested in this new enterprise. And it just happened that a lot of them were Jews...I think Sigmund Freud was asked, did he resent being Jewish because he was discriminated against? No, he said, I'm thankful for it because it made me a doubter. That's the way I felt, and my whole family did. In

²⁴³ Clayborne Carson, "Blacks and Jews in the Civil Rights movement: The case of SNCC." *Jews in Black Perspectives. A dialogue* (1984), 113-131.

²⁴⁴ Interview with Dr. Robert Greenberg. Unrecorded personal interview. 12/10/12.

²⁴⁵ Interview with Dr. Betty Joe Warren. Recorded personal interview. 4/11/11. Palos Verdes, California. A black physician who practiced medicine in Los Angeles for 50 years, Warren currently suffers from a degenerative disease that impairs memory, so unfortunately, she could not sit for a complete set of interviews. However, Warren provided me many useful insights into the creation period of King/Drew where she was one of the first hired after the destruction of LA County's Olive View Hospital in the Sylmar earthquake that occurred in February, 1971. After the earthquake, much of the salvaged medical equipment was sent to King/Drew.

Beverly Hills, there was a lot of anti-Semitism in that little town...[Judaism] gave me a sense of independence, dedication to overcoming things of that kind.”

While it is difficult to gauge the importance of anti-Semitism in discussing the resentments of the community and local black physicians, what is clear is that their desire for black inclusion and black agency created tensions which grew as the department chairs were assembled and King/Drew materialized. “Our main bugaboo, boiling it right down, is the lack of opportunity of black physicians to get in on the ground floor,” said Dr. Julius Hill, a local black physician and president of the National Medical Association in 1970. “In the past, hospitals were built and staffed in white communities, then they would bring in a few blacks. We want to do the same—go as far as we can by ourselves, then we’ll invite some white doctors in.” Another spokesmen for local black physicians at the time, Dr. Leroy Weeks stated that he believed that Dr. M. Alfred Haynes, the newly appointed chairman of King Hospital’s Department of Community Medicine, would be a bridge between local doctors and the academicians because of his focus on community medicine and degrees in public health. Dr. Haynes stated that he would always consider himself black first and “black doctors could never take any position against service to people because we are all too close to the poverty line.”²⁴⁶ While Haynes may have served as a bridge to the community and the local black physicians, most of the chairs were white and not from Los Angeles, and the resulting acrimony fueled hostility that played out on the board of directors and in the community. In addressing this point, Mellinkoff returns to his experiences on the McCone Commission where he observed instances that spoke to poor healthcare conditions in

²⁴⁶ C. BAIREUTHER, “Doctors, Patients Both Benefit at MLK hospital,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, March 5, 1970. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564972729?accountid=35804>

the area. By way of tautology, Mellinkoff proceeds to recount an anecdote—the details of which I have omitted because it could be considered slanderous—in which he repeatedly observed how the medical ineptitude of some local black physicians resulted in poor, and sometimes lethal, treatment of patients too poor to go to better-trained physicians. Furthermore, Mellinkoff asserts, patients that could afford medical care regularly sought out treatment at respected private clinics and hospitals inside and outside South Los Angeles. He recalls that there were some fine specialists practicing in South Los Angeles, like obstetrician Leroy Weeks, but the overall caliber of local physicians and the services they provided was uneven. This was why he supported USC’s creation and supervision of the Watts Health Clinic, “but a clinic is just a clinic,” and it could not provide the comprehensive healthcare found at a hospital. A few black physicians like Dr. Sol White Jr. and Dr. Phillip Smith had staff privileges at the local Catholic charity hospital, St. Francis, but Mellinkoff asserts that didn’t necessarily make them competent physicians, as that hospital didn’t measure up to Los Angeles County or university standards.²⁴⁷

Mellinkoff: “That was not a first rate hospital...We (the McCone Commission) looked systematically at the place. I don’t know if you heard about it. There was a time when Mr. Hill, senator from Alabama...He was gung-ho for getting federal grants for building hospitals in underserved areas. But the health districts had been gerrymandered in such a way that it seemed that Watts had too many hospitals. We had to get that changed.

²⁴⁷ Interviews with Dr. Sol White Jr. Recorded personal interview, 6/14/2011, 8/15/2012. Oceanside, California. I also conducted several unrecorded interviews with White, 9/?/12, 2/?/13. White recalled that St. Francis was far from a first rate hospital, but he utilized it because it was close to his patients in South Los Angeles. For more information, see Chapter 2.

Lester [Breslow] was a very helpful and key person in doing that.²⁴⁸ St. Francis was probably counted as one of the hospitals, but it was not a very good hospital. Anyway, that was one of many barriers we had to getting a hospital built there. Another was the animus in Watts amongst the doctors, not Leroy Weeks, but most of the doctors [felt like], 'what they ought to do is give us a hospital and let us practice and charge money.' Now, there was another element and that is the sense of possessiveness between USC and UCLA. Not between (dean) Roger Egeberg and me, but there were members of our faculty that said, 'Well, if USC is part of this, they're going to have different standards than ours. How can we join up with that.' And I'm sure there were some at USC that said, 'Why do we want UCLA in this?'"

As Mellinkoff describes the intercollegiate turf wars, it seems evident that feuding was fueled by more than differing standards of excellence. UCLA is state funded, while USC is privately funded, and the two schools have long enjoyed a crosstown rivalry based on class and ideological outlook. But the plan called for the participation of both schools, Mellinkoff asserts. That arrangement worked well for King/Drew's early existence; USC later bowed out of the arrangement.

Mellinkoff: "So what we worked out was that each department would be affiliated with one or the other, but not both. The only one that would have academic affiliation at both would be the dean, and this would be very important because he would be a major influence in the selection of department chairmen, and that's how you get a school. [For example] Medicine was UCLA, surgery was USC, and so on...Part of the arrangement

²⁴⁸ Interview with Devra Breslow. Unrecorded personal interview Devra and Dr. Lester Breslow. 6/15/12. Westwood, California. Devra worked for Mitchell Spellman as an organizer at Drew. In 1966, Dr. Lester Breslow was Director of the California State Department of Public Health. He helped create a new Hospital Area which led to the approval of Hill-Burton funding for King/Drew. At the time of this interview, Dr. Breslow was incapacitated having previously suffered a massive stroke. Devra Breslow spoke on behalf of her husband.

that was worked out, and this wasn't explicitly in the corporation, was procedures. There was an executive committee of what then was the called the Charles Drew [Medical Society]...I don't remember what it was called, but that's an interesting point, because I, and at least some others, were very leery about the movement to get [Drew] as a separate medical school, a black medical school, because it would not be [up to] USC or UCLA standards. [Dr.] Leroy Weeks would have a very tough time, as he did in private practice, avoiding giving this guy ... a prominent position. And I had it mind that it would be a postgraduate medical school."

Understandably, this divisive point arises often in discussions about the original orientation of King Hospital and Drew Medical School. In recalling it and revisiting it, Mellinkoff is amazingly engaged as if he still served on Drew's board of directors. In his opinion, a postgraduate medical school would share resources with UCLA and USC and not require the startup funds necessary to build a new medical school from the ground up. Mellinkoff recalls that he drew his inspiration from a postgraduate medical school connected to a city hospital in Philadelphia which had a fairly large full-time faculty. Mellinkoff: "They took in [black/minority students] for education interns, residents, fellows. They were very good at it, but they didn't have a department of anatomy, or biological chemistry, or any of the basic medical parts of a full medical school. That's why it was called a postgraduate medical school."

In the late 1960s, UCLA and USC didn't have a culturally diverse body of medical students. A common belief held by CRDMS members was that a black or multicultural hospital should have black or multicultural students trained by a similarly diverse faculty. As UCLA had graduated only one black physician and USC had only

graduated a few by the mid 1960s, a fully equipped black medical school like Howard or Meharry would challenge this inequality and insure future minority/ black medical representation in Los Angeles.

Mellinkoff: “Well, that was the argument, but it was a ridiculous argument because who was going to start a department of anatomy, biological chemistry, micro-biology, immunology, and pathology? Who was going to do that? And how would it be done? When it was started at UCLA, it was part of the University of California, and there were people who had standards about selection and so on and there was a group to do this, not to mention the money. Money. You don’t have those things just by saying, “BAM! We have a department of anatomy.” The first chairman of the department of anatomy at UCLA was Dr. Horace Magoon, one of the great people in neurophysiology and neuroanatomy of his time. He didn’t just fall off a log!”

Momentarily exasperated, Mellinkoff mistakes my echoing of the perspective as if it were my own, an obvious risk in playing devil’s advocate. However, the resulting tension drives the discussion to a necessary, if uncomfortable, point of contention. As the head of UCLA Medical School, Mellinkoff was publicly criticized for the lack of minority students; his involvement on Drew’s board of directors, in part, fueled the suspicions held by some local black physicians that black exclusion from American medicine would continue at the new medical complex that many considered to be specifically for blacks. UCLA is a world away from South Los Angeles. Understandably, many community members feared that racial discrimination would continue amidst an endeavor designed to uplift the black community.

Mellinkoff: "There were a lot more (minority students) then there were at some places, and that's another story that would take us some time to get into. The Association of American Medical Colleges were really under the aegis of a professor at Haverford, a Quaker school...They began giving prizes to the best minority [medical] students in the country. I think out of the first five or six, all but one or two came from UCLA. Again, that's not just falling off a log. That was very tough."

But if racial amity was the goal, the orientation of the original chairs, of which few were black, didn't invite a widespread faith, or a genuine belief, that it was an authentic goal of the board of directors.

Mellinkoff: "Why was that? I've told you. It's because we first had a dean who had good training and high standards, who would try and get the best people in each field who were willing to come. And I can remember several candidates who were black and were on the faculty at Howard and Meharry...I remember, I had the flu at the time, the man they had who was the leading candidate for chairman of surgery, I forget his name, but he was out here looking. He came here to the house to visit me. I was very sick in bed. He turned us down. He didn't want to do this. Why? Because he was making a fortune. And he said to himself, that it was nice that they went over his curriculum vitae, and Dr. Spellman knew him, of course, as they had been in the same societies together. [He said,] "It's nice that they recognize that I'm very good, but I don't need them. They haven't even got it started, and I'm not going to come out and subject myself to all kinds of trials." And, incidentally, agree to a great monetary loss. That was one reason that there weren't more black physicians. Another one, is what you mentioned before, and that is Bob Greenberg. It was unusual to find somebody like him who had the idealism

and motivation to do something about this. Or Jack Campbell. There was a very good black radiologist here... Henry... Who I'm thinking of was in private practice. He was the Leroy Weeks of radiology. And Henry, he's dead now, he was a friend of mine. Henry got started in the regular army. He joined the army and they sent him away to get more training, and he's very smart, he became a good radiologist. But Henry, he didn't want to be chief of radiology. Why? Because he was making a lot of money. That was part of it, and [another] part of it was that Henry had this belief that UCLA or USC standards were not necessary to get quality people.”

It seems evident that Mellinkoff spent years, if not decades, in heated discussions pertaining to this point of contention. While evidently an empathic man, his position seems rooted in a form of meritocracy that diminishes the historic racial inequality in American medicine, one aspect of an interwoven web of racial discrimination in education. AMA standards derived from Flexner Report of 1910 severely constrained medical education in America, as several schools folded beneath the weight of nationally accepted standards of accreditation. The closures diminished the prospects of both black and white students, though they dramatically affected the black community far worse. Several of the black medical schools that arose at the turn of the century closed leaving prospective black medical students with far fewer options than their white counterparts. The reduction of the number of black medical schools in turn reduced the number of black physicians, as discrimination by non-black medical schools continued unchecked for decades.²⁴⁹ The majority of black physicians trained

²⁴⁹ Abraham Flexner, *Medical Education in the United States and Canada: A Report to the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching*, (New York City: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1910). Accessed December 9, 2013. <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/publications/medical-education-united-states-and-canada-bulletin-number-four-flexner-report-0>

between 1910 and 1970 were trained at either Howard or MeHarry Medical Schools. White supremacy informed the public's view of black physicians, who were often seen and treated as being inferior to white physicians. The same perception painted black medical schools and the training they provided.²⁵⁰

Black physicians trained at non-black institutions often fared better. While white supremacy still informed American medicine, a few model minority physicians found a level of acceptance because of their academic pedigree. This played out in other professions and continues to the present day.²⁵¹ Mellinkoff invokes the mantle of Spellman, who trained first at Howard, and later completed a postgraduate medical degree from the University of Minnesota. Mellinkoff was suspicious of the quality of the training program at Meharry. Later, the institution consulted with Mellinkoff when it lost its accreditation and he was wary of the uneven quality of physicians who trained at Howard. Mellinkoff asserts that most of the black physicians who practiced in Los Angeles in the 1960s were “bad doctors” trained at those schools.²⁵² The veracity of this statement is impossible to gauge and a moot point. However, it demonstrates an unchallenged academic elitism informed by white entitlement that dispassionately patronizes black medicine and diminishes its vital utility as a bulwark against continuing

²⁵⁰ Herbert Montfort Morais, *The History of the Afro-American in Medicine*, (New York: Publishers Agency, 1976). The many interconnected effects of white supremacy on black medicine are discussed throughout this text.

²⁵¹ Interview with Dr. Edward Savage. Unrecorded personal interview, 11/30/11. Palos Verdes, California. Savage. Savage graduated from Meharry medical school, and completed residencies at St. Josephs Health Center and King County Hospital Center, where he completed certifications specializing in gynecologic oncology. When he moved to Los Angeles in the late 1960s, Savage recalls that he faced little racial discrimination in medicine because of his good reputation and academic pedigree.

²⁵² While I've omitted them, Mellinkoff provided many anecdotes to back this claim, but no substantial proof for his assertion that Meharry and Howard trained black physicians practicing in Los Angeles performed worse than their white counterparts. Mellinkoff stated that there were many poorly trained white physicians practicing in LA too, though there were far fewer bad white doctors than bad black doctors.

racial inequality. A politically savvy man, Mellinkoff presumably expressed this perspective carefully during board meetings. However, local black physicians likely understood Mellinkoff's patronizing bigotry implicitly, as they had faced it throughout their lives in various guises; the liberal white interloper with "benevolent intentions" was a common sight in South Los Angeles in the 1960s.

Mellinkoff: "There were some, Dr. Spellman is one, that were outstanding...The education of doctors is a very complicated thing. It really begins in grade school because you have to have a certain network to catch the right number of fish. But even after medical school, to get a neurosurgeon, it takes, after medical school, about seven years. Now, incidentally, after things were blowing apart over there [at King/Drew], they had some pompous little guy, I think he was from Jamaica or some place, who was professor of neurosurgery, who would have never made it to assistant professor at UCLA. Never. He was incompetent and he wouldn't even do things, he'd send them elsewhere if he could. He was making a hell of a pot of money, more than our neurosurgeons were making. Now, that sort of thing is corrupting, but that was one of the problems that we had..."

Mellinkoff's perspective—likely one commonly shared by many white physicians of his generation—additionally informs the discourse surrounding tensions in the community: "Why would the black community trust a white outsider to understand their needs if he doesn't fundamentally understand the history of inequality that shaped the community? Whether or not outsiders like Mellinkoff had good intent, and I sincerely believe his participation reflected good intent, this lack of common understanding undoubtedly dogged board activities throughout this period and beyond. And yet,

Mellinkoff's liberal progressivism is visible in his memories of the recommendations made by McCone Commission. Informed by an evident understanding that racial segregation had created inequity, Mellinkoff believed that poverty could be challenged by a large investment in education across the nation. Accordingly, massive investment would raise educational standards across the nation and create better doctors of all races, as Mellinkoff encountered many poorly trained black and white physicians in Los Angeles.

Mellinkoff: "I had contact with them at Harbor. We had to segregate at Harbor, so that the wards that were constantly under the management of one of our UCLA people...otherwise we wouldn't have students in there...It goes back to grammar school and high school. For instance, you said a minute ago that UCLA didn't have many black students (during this period). When I became dean, that was in 1962, I think we had had one or two black students (in the medical school) and they weren't very good, by the way. If I'd been on the admissions committee at that time, I wouldn't have accepted them, and they didn't turn out to be any good. But I also looked at it, and I found out how many had applied...I mean there were people rallying at the doors, "why don't you have more black students?"...I think at UCLA, we usually got, I don't know, maybe three thousand applicants. Out of that number, that year 1962, I think there were three black applicants. Now, what we did—I mentioned Leo Rigler before, he was a great teacher—what we did was go around to black schools here...We organized, and I'll abbreviate here, an invitation to UCLA once a year for students who were interested possibly in any health sciences profession. And we sent buses around to pick them up, and they had lunch with our faculty, but the main thing, and the auditorium was full, was a program.

The first one, I remember, Leo Rigler welcomed all the students and they were very attentive, and he said he wanted to show a little movie of a girl with tetralogy of fallout—he used other words to explain it so the kids [could understand]—[a girl] who couldn't breathe and she was blue. (Afterwards) then, the little girl came in and she's running around and has good color. He interviewed her a little bit. 'And now,' (Rigler said), 'I'd like to show you what went in to this result.' And it was not just the surgeon, who was there, but it was the nurses, the x-ray technicians, the technicians who did the blood analyses on the child, the pediatric doctors...Everything. And it showed what education you had to have for each of these pathways including, of course, MDs. This was to get the students who would be interested in studying something that would get them to these levels. That's what we started...That's why, as it turned out, shortly after that, we had a very large applicant pool and I think, I don't have any data to prove this, I think that it improved the education because these kids were not causing trouble in class, they were learning. I think that the most important recommendation of the McCone Commission (a massive change in education policy) nobody did anything about, and hasn't to this day."

After the board of directors selected Spellman as dean and he relocated from Washington, DC, to Los Angeles, Spellman oversaw hiring committees that conducted national searches for department chairmen in charge of hiring physicians for their departments with committee approval. As the hospital's construction proceeded, a general staff was assembled. This included a nursing staff and, eventually, a nurse training program. As with the original chairs, Mellinkoff recalls that the selection process was difficult because the issues of race and entitlement were complicated by greed and

incompetence. While not directly involved in the staffing process conducted by chairmen, Mellinkoff observes that some staff members—names omitted—with histories of incompetence were hired by department chairmen because they faced pressure from hiring committees that sought community inclusion. In the early days amid construction, the board of directors met once a week in a temporary building on the construction site, and meetings often were defined by racial and political tensions.

Mellinkoff: “Well, it wasn’t easy because it was made up of Dr. Spellman, of course, and two representatives from UCLA , one other and I [and two representatives from USC]. For a while, we had a great one, that was Joe St. John, who is dead now. He was a pediatrician...Bob Tranquada was on it²⁵³...There were also two from the Charles Drew Medical Society, who by that time, had fired this president we were talking about before and a big uprising, for one reason, because his wife was white. They almost killed him...And then there were a couple of community activists (who were board members or attended meetings). So every time, I would go down there, there would be a fight over something or other, but the board was authorized to pass [and approve] on appointments, on promotions, on residents who were taken in, and all kinds of things that have to do with a big organization like that.”

I mention to Mellinkoff that I had recently spoken with a community member named Alma Woods, who attended meetings of the board of directors in the early

²⁵³ Interview with Dr. Robert Tranquada. Personal recorded interview, 1/19,12. Sylmar, California. Tranquada didn’t recall any specifics of meetings that he attended during his time on the board of directors.

days.²⁵⁴ I relate Woods' sense that community members/ activists attended meetings of the board of directors (and many other committee meetings that were open to the public) for many reasons, but essentially because they wanted to make sure that doctors, especially white doctors who were not from South Los Angeles, really understood the problems faced by the community. Mellinkoff remembers Woods' participation, and he understood the meaning of her presence at the time—and that of other community members—and yet, while he understood her intentions, he recalls her presence as disruptive and incompetent. We do not discuss the participation of Caffey Green and Lillian Mobley (who was on the board of directors for decades). However, it's likely that he held the two outspoken activists with similar disdain; it seems very likely that at his age, Mellinkoff may have inadvertently merged the three women into one. While Mellinkoff welcomed community involvement, it seems that he had a specific idea of what constituted acceptable community involvement which was informed by his high position in society and academia; he was an expert in medicine and administration and community activists were not. While his perspective can be understood as reasonable, community activists like Woods understandably felt that it was their duty to challenge this entitlement, an aspect of white hegemony that was openly challenged in the late 1960s.

Mellinkoff: “Yes, I do agree with her intentions, but [Woods] was not very good at carrying them out. She was not competent to carry them out, and all she did was to cause trouble.”

²⁵⁴ Interviews with Alma Woods. Personal recorded interviews. 5/3/12, 5/10/12. Watts, California. Woods is known throughout South Los Angeles for her ultimately successful yet lengthy struggle to bring a city library to South Los Angeles. Woods has been a fixture at community meetings for six decades. She worked and volunteered in various capacities at King/Drew where she also regularly attended community meetings.

Simon: “But, I think her point is that she didn’t trust you.”

Mellinkoff: “I know. I do understand that...”

Many community members were suspicious of Mellinkoff, and it's easy to paint him as a villain at this point in King/Drew's creation history. However, I argue that such flat conceptions are misleading as they fail to regard the complexity and difficulty that goes along with an enterprise of this nature. To be part of the leadership that creates an Los Angeles County medical complex from scratch seems a heroic task as it requires the organization and oversight of hundreds of people in conjunction with county, state and federal bureaucracies. But to be part of the leadership that created King/Drew was even more demanding, as from the start, the enterprise was defined by tensions fueled by historic inequality, identity politics and cultural negotiation. Mellinkoff shares several anecdotes—omitted for privacy—that illustrate how the weekly board of directors meetings could be a hellish experience, an unwelcome addition to his already intense work schedule comprised of academic and administrative responsibilities at UCLA. Even when meetings were peaceful, the board engaged a wide array of oversight responsibilities of the two independent yet symbiotic institutions.

Mellinkoff: “They were really conjoined. But, there is a big problem because the school had, as you know, connections with USC and UCLA. So that there were these two institutions, with history and traditions, had a lot of appointees, faculty. So the school was, I would say unfortunately...the [affiliation] wasn't strong enough to help as much as it should have. It was at least helpful in steering a path. But the hospital was a county hospital. And so, administratively, it was supposed to be run by the school, and in fact it

was certainly influenced by that to a considerable degree, but it was controlled by the county.”

The institutional and governmental interconnectivity that defined King/Drew’s early existence created a context in which Mellinkoff interacted with other powerful executives. While the interactions were limited, Mellinkoff recalls Hahn’s personality and role in the process.

Mellinkoff: “Hahn was in there and he was an interesting fellow. He did a lot of good things. He did not have the stern integrity that you would expect, that you would hope for in a person in that position. He was a great orator. He would rouse up people and so on, but when somebody would come to him and tell him something should be done, and it was somebody with political influence, he would try and get it done...This should give you an idea of his political character. He called me up one time, we were on first name relations; we had both worked on the county ordinance (Proposition A). He was on the right side of things, but he called me up one time and said that he had a friend whose son was a Harvard undergraduate and had applied to medical school at UCLA, and he had not been admitted. And this was shocking to [Hahn]. I said, ‘Kenny, I have told you several times how students are accepted at UCLA. I don’t select them. I appoint committees that do, so all I can tell you is that if he wasn’t admitted, there was a good reason for it.’ He said, ‘Sherm, this is absolutely clearcut. For one thing, this man is Japanese, he’s *nisei* and his father has great influence in my district. He supports me.’ I said, ‘Well, that may be, but that’s not the basis for which we accept students.’ He said, ‘The boy’s father tells me that he is a honor student at Harvard. Now if you view that as I do, you’d certainly think that something here is wrong.’ I said, ‘It’s a complicated thing.

Grades are only one of the things [we take into account]. I'll tell you what, Kenny, I'll look into this and I'll let you know whether I have any reason to get into this or not.' And he said, 'That would be wonderful.' So he gave me the kid's name, and I looked it up and he was a Harvard student with a D average. (Laughing) There was more to the thing, but I got back to Kenny and I told him that the student had poor grades, that the committee did not make a mistake, and there was nothing on earth that you or I could do about it. And he railed on me for a half hour."

In relating the story and throughout the conversation, Mellinkoff consistently betrays an allegiance to a form of meritocracy that shapes a society free of the "messiness of politics," and his strong belief that only merit should have shaped the hospital's existence. Obviously, every doctor and auto-mechanic in America can and should perform according to a consistent standard so that patients can trust their physicians. However, Mellinkoff's perspective on meritocracy is built upon unquestionable authority and hierarchy. As the Dean of UCLA Medicine, Mellinkoff was at the top of this hierarchy, and so he naturally viewed dissent from below with disdain. Mellinkoff asserts that the politicization of medicine created a dangerous environment at King/Drew made worse by political appointees from the county and the Department of Health Services, many of whom he recalls as being inept owing to their poor education or training. Both Hahn and DHS exerted enormous power through appointments. Mellinkoff resented this political patronage because it placed priority on race over capability. Dr. Elmer Anderson was the first medical director and Dr. John O'Connor was the first administrator of King Hospital, two respected physicians and administrators who

were quickly replaced by black physicians because, Mellinkoff asserts, Hahn wanted to support his constituency with employment.

Mellinkoff: “Because black people went to Kenny Hahn and said, ‘we want one of our men,’ and Kenny Hahn, over the opposition of people on the board, put in somebody else. Now that guy was not really bad, but he just wasn’t an A-plus person...You asked if the board had a lot of influence. Kenny Hahn had more influence...Chuck Windsor was a nice person, I liked him personally...that was a very tough job, an enormously tough job and he wasn’t up to it. I don’t blame him. But I’m telling you how he got into the job, and that’s Mr. Hahn...So that’s [influence] as far as administration is concerned, but there’s a lot, of course, with the chairmen and the dean had aegis over...”

Dr. Spellman had power, Mellinkoff describes, but he was also vulnerable to the power wielded by CRDMS membership and the community who Hahn empowered to play a strong role in many aspects of King/Drew’s development and existence. “Nobody in his right mind would have an organization work this way,” he says in explaining how Spellman often faced enormous opposition to his appointments of chairs and staff, the result of complicated power-sharing arrangement that often limited swift progress. Additionally, Mellinkoff recalls, that a web of bureaucracy, in which cliques influenced policy, sometimes produced confusing and puzzling results. He witnessed horrendous bureaucratic snafus while working at Harbor Hospital, but he strongly asserts that nothing compared to what he witnessed at King/Drew, and many of the anecdotes he recalls—omitted for privacy—occurred before the King/Drew opened to the public. Power struggles and feuding took place inside and outside the medical complex, and factionalism was far more complex than a simple binary of Hahn and his constituents vs

anyone who didn't agree. Terrelle Ford, assistant to King Hospital Administrator, Bill Delgado, recalled that many onsite county administration were supportive of the concerns of the community and viewed "the downtown bureaucrats and technocrats as the enemy." In Ford's recounting, Hahn and the onsite administration battled against county officials and DHS for power and authority. This leads to the impression of a vast diffusion of power, and not simply a top down scheme in which Hahn tyrannically ran King/Drew from his seat on the Board of Supervisors.²⁵⁵ Mellinkoff agrees with Ford's perspective to point, but he asserts that power derived from political maneuvering played out in many ways and the resulting fallout often jeopardized King/Drew's ability to function and live up to its potential.

Mellinkoff: "In order to get the thing started, we had a little problem. You can't start a hospital without house staff. But the county wouldn't pay for house staff until the thing was started...This is where President Lyndon Johnson comes in. He had started a big national effort to fight heart disease, stroke and cancer. It did a lot of stuff that was terrible, but this was one thing that turned out well and for which I'm grateful. By this time, Dr. Spellman was here. UCLA and USC applied for one of those grants, a huge one, and it paid for all the beginning of the hospital."²⁵⁶

Born of a generation of American men who rarely express emotional pain openly, Mellinkoff seems to convey his continuing angst through the traumatic experiences of Spellman, his pick for the deanship and a long time friend. Despite the circuitous route

²⁵⁵ Interview with Terrelle Ford, Non-recorded Personal Interview, 11/9/10. Ford was one of the first people I found who were willing to speak with me. Amid King/Drew's creation period, Ford was young and eager to work at the medical complex because he believed in it's mission.

²⁵⁶ According to Mellinkoff and Spellman, an NIH grant of \$205,000 per year was used to pay Drew expenses during the year before Drew officially opened and was funded by the county.

we take through Mellinkoff's memory, it seems predetermined that we arrive at Spellman's exit from Drew near the end of the interview.²⁵⁷

Mellinkoff: "Well, you know why he left?...He was an enormously important person in making this all run, with all the troubles that I've given you little glimpses of...There was one guy down there that threatened to shoot us. I got a call one time from Mitchell. He was attending a meeting in Washington and his secretary here, who was a lovely girl, I can't remember her name, black executive secretary, excellent person, had found out that they were plotting to shoot Mitchell when he came back to Los Angeles. Mitchell called me when he found out. He had changed his schedule, his plans so that he wasn't coming in when they thought he was coming in, and he wanted to know if I would pick him up at the airport. The plane got in at night after 11 o'clock or so. Because that way, the man who was supposed to pick him up wouldn't know when he was coming in."

Simon: "How do you explain that to yourself?"

Mellinkoff: "Dan, this goes on all over the world all the time. You ever read Charles Darwin's *The Descent of Man*? It's one of his. You probably read *Origin of the Species*, I read it in college, but I had never read the *Descent of Man*. He wrote many great books, he was a great man. His thesis was criticized by many who said that they would go along with the descent from sand on up, but not man: that was something special, god given or something. Of course, he didn't believe that, and I don't know about you, but neither do I. His book was kind of a defense of that part of his thing. Anyway, in that book, mind you this was before anyone except Gregor Mendel knew what a gene was.

²⁵⁷ Interview with Dr. Mitchell Spellman. Recorded personal interview, 5/14/12. In his first interview, Spellman never described the reasons why he left Drew after only nine years; he reluctantly addressed the issue after I mentioned that it came up in my first conversation with Mellinkoff.

He felt that there was part of our brains that were attuned to the suffering and plights of other people. You know what I'm saying?"

Simon: "Empathy."

Mellinkoff: "And by the way, there is such a part. That's a recent discovery. I think that goes a long way to explaining people who try to help other people and the qualities, as Darwin pointed out, we most admire in other people. You know, 'who is a good person?' and they'll pick somebody who is very good to other people. That may not apply to his own behavior, but that was something that Darwin thought was pushing progress in humanity because the fact that that association made people admire progress. But he also acknowledged that there were other parts of the brain that focused mainly on self-preservation, but not on the preservation of other people, and maybe sometimes extending to the family, but not to cousins, and certainly to people from outside. So I think he described this very well, with superb insight. You asked how do I explain it; I think he explained it very well. I read that book for the first time about five years ago. I read it on that Kindle thing."

Mellinkoff's nurse interrupts the conversation to inform me that Mellinkoff has a medical appointment, and that they need extra time to prepare before leaving the house. As I pack up my gear, we talk about Johnson's Great Society. I argue that despite the war in Vietnam, Johnson was America's most liberal president. Mellinkoff disagrees and argues that FDR was more liberal. I counter saying that the point was debatable. Unfortunately, we didn't have time to discuss it further.

Mellinkoff: "Well, I think this is a danger with people your age...It depends upon your definition, but you have to judge people with respect to their time...You have to judge

people by the times and what can be done. Roosevelt was a great president. Well, here you'd say he didn't start the drive towards socialized medicine, for universal coverage, but he had his hands full with what he could do."

Aside from debating the relative strengths and weaknesses of pragmatism versus idealism, I think we were discussing the way Mellinkoff sees himself within what is clearly a troubling period of his past. With rare exceptions, most people who effect immense change are the products of their time, which defines not just how their actions are perceived, but how they come to see themselves. Mellinkoff's long and troubled relationship with King/Drew and the black community in South Los Angeles seems reflective of the struggles that defined the late 1960s and early 1970s. After years of exclusion and racial inequality, black empowerment openly challenged white hegemony for authority and agency amid tense cultural negotiations defined by distrust and suspicion over the fundamental power to heal an individual and a community.

Dr. Mitchell W. Spellman

Off a main artery in Brentwood, the Spellman home is shrouded behind a wall of thick green shrubbery. When I arrive, I'm greeted by the loud hiss of a compressor and the snaps of a nail gun. Renovations are underway on the large home Spellman purchased in the early seventies for his family of eight after moving west from Washington, DC, having accepted a position as dean of the newly-formed Charles R. Drew Post-Graduate School of Medicine and Science. Spellman moved east a decade later to serve as Dean for Medical Services at the Harvard Medical School. Much later, in retirement, Spellman moved west again and returned to his family home, sans the

large family (though it's easy to imagine hordes of invading grandchildren armed with snot and crayons attacking the recently remodeled home with indifference during holiday gatherings).

In the process of giving me directions over the phone, Olivia Abner, Spellman's third wife, diplomatically informs me of her husband's slow but steady recovery from a stroke he suffered the previous year; a phone conversation with Spellman left me with the impression that whatever his physical condition, he was mentally sound.

Ever the gracious host, Abner meets me at the door and leads me to a beautiful window-lit kitchen nook. A moment later, the 91-year-old Spellman appears and greets me with a smile and a firm handshake. Despite the noise, we decide to beat the heat out back in the shade of an overhang next to the pool. Spellman slowly leads the way with the aid of a walker. Once settled amid the sounds of construction, we slowly begin an excavation of his past which is defined by triumph and sorrow which he affably recalls with a dry wit.²⁵⁸

Mitchell Spellman was born December 1, 1919, in Alexandria, Louisiana. His father was a physician and his mother was a music teacher. Like his siblings, he was sent to boarding school at a young age. In 1936, he graduated from the Gilbert Academy, the high school department of New Orleans University. Like both of his parents, Spellman attended Dillard University where he graduated magna cum laude in 1936. Encouraged to play piano at a young age, Spellman regrets that he quickly grew bored and gave it up. He doesn't recall when he decided to become a physician, though he thinks it must have been when he was young.

²⁵⁸ Interviews with Dr. Mitchell Spellman M.D., Ph.D. Personal recorded interviews, 5/14/12, 6/15/12. Brentwood, California. Additionally, I conducted non-recorded phone interviews with Spellman on 9/5/12, 11/7/12.

Spellman: “My father was a prominent figure in my life. I knew that he expected me to study medicine. It seemed much more natural then to follow one’s father then it seems now. There was no rebellion in our household.”

In 1940, Spellman began studying medicine at the Howard University College of Medicine. Spellman recalls that he was impressed by the institution.

Spellman: It was impressive. My father had gone to Howard. I recall Howard had undergone a renaissance. It was uncommon in those days for the basic science faculty, the ones that taught anatomy, chemistry, pharmacology, public health, to be MDs or PhDs, but the dean of Howard had been enterprising, and got a large grant for faculty development, and trained a cadre of future academic scholars who became the faculty at the time when I went to medical school. I had excellent training from productive academicians who taught me.

At the time, America only had two large black medical schools: Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee, and Howard University College of Medicine in Washington, DC. I ask Spellman to describe the differences between black and white medical schools during his time at Howard.

Spellman: “The black schools were in a state of emerging as academic centers. They were disadvantaged by the nature of their existence, the inconsistency of their funding sources, but they were good, and in some areas, superior. They had a large patient base, poor people who had no choice about their source of care...I think they were better than they were regarded. When I came along, it was during the transition from all white faculties to mixed faculties, so the professor of orthopedic surgery was white, but

the chairman of the department of surgery was a young black scholar named Charles Drew.”

As a medical student, Spellman volunteered for the US Army, but was denied after being classified 4F because of a calcified higher lymph node, “a marker of primary tuberculosis.” In 1944, he earned an MD at Howard University and completed his internship and served as assistant resident in surgery at the Cleveland Metropolitan Hospital.

Spellman: “It had the reputation of reserving two slots for black students, so there was a rich tradition to Cleveland...The other [black student] was a classmate of mine. I think it was the first time in the history of that enterprise...when I was an intern there, it was called Cleveland Public or City Hospital. It has a phenomenal story. It was [one of the] truly [fine] public teaching hospitals and it was affiliated with Western Reserve so it was cherished appointment. I made \$25 a month (laughing).”

Spellman returned to Howard where he spent the next five years serving as an assistant resident in surgery, the chief resident in thoracic surgery, an assistant professor in the Department of Physiology, the chief resident in surgery. Spellman studied with renowned physician, Charles R. Drew, who died in 1950.

Spellman: “He was an inspirational figure and a man before his time, sainted and celebrated all at once...I was his chief resident when he was killed. He was a remarkable man...He was tough and affectionate and sentimental at the same time. He widened my horizons. I knew I didn’t want to be ordinary.”

Spellman then spent three years at the University of Minnesota where he completed a Ph.D. in clinical surgery in 1955. Unaccustomed to harsh winters,

Spellman recalls attempting to change a tire in -23° cold until a colleague rushed out to save him from getting frostbite.

Spellman: “Those were the happiest years of my life. It was an event a day. It was a remarkable time. Cardiac surgery was being invented, and I was doing it. All roads led to Minneapolis for two or three years.”

In 1955, Spellman returned to Howard where he was appointed assistant professor of surgery.

Spellman: “I was a so-called Markham Scholar. It was an interesting program [in] which the foundation invested in the academic career of a young person without commitment to a full time academic career. That was unusual...It sounds like a lot of money but it wasn't by contemporary standards: \$5,000 a year for five years...I had a good time. I was impatient and intolerant of the restrictions and constraints. I felt that the medical school should build a new hospital; they did eventually.”

Having spent so much of his life studying and practicing medicine, Spellman was often too busy to follow politics or the daily unfolding of American life.

Spellman: “I remember when Martin Luther King Jr. delivered the address on the mall, I was operating that day. So I didn't appreciate the historic significance, but I welcomed the changes that it brought about. The closest I came to the actual battle was when I was on the staff of a local Catholic hospital, and I complained about the segregation of patients. I had received a white patient, a referral from a congressman's office. When I went to see him, he told me he was going to be moved, from a site next to a black patient to another site [with another white patient]. When I protested this to the

superintendent, or director of the hospital, a nun, she told me that it was her choice and that I should not challenge her...I was not reappointed to the staff. I became a *cause celebre*. I was on the Georgetown University staff, and I expected to be kicked off of that, but I wasn't, which brought me closer to the Jesuits (aughing). Two or three years later, this must've been around 1965, I was invited back to the staff of Providence Hospital, and I can't say that I lived happily ever after but...I had faced discrimination before, for example, my father was a highly regarded general practitioner in the city from which I came, Alexandria. He became ill and I went to see him in Alexandria and considered dropping out of my residency in order to care for him. I considered this move. I went to talk to the white city fathers, whom I'd known causally as a youngster growing up, and was told that there was no time in the foreseeable future when blacks would be appointed [as staff at the local hospital]. I was already in my senior residency at Howard, so I knew the sting of racism and discrimination."

Spellman became an associate professor in 1958 and then a professor in 1964. From 1961 to 1968, he served as chief medical officer for surgery at the Howard University Division at the District of Columbia Hospital.²⁵⁹ Spellman was contacted by Dr. Sherman Mellinkoff, the chairman of the search committee seeking a dean for a new medical school under construction in Los Angeles. Spellman: "He said that this was a new institution being born, gave a brief history of the origins, and asked whether or not I was interested in being a candidate for the deanship."

²⁵⁹ "Spellman Heads New Drew Medical School," <http://pubmedcentralcanada.ca/picrender.cgi?accid=PMC2611607&blobtype=pdf>

Spellman was invited to travel to Los Angeles to meet with the search committee. He had visited the city in the mid-1950s as part of a trip to San Francisco to attend a meeting of the American College of Surgeons.

Spellman: "I came to Los Angeles as part of the pilgrimage and to see an old professor of mine who was at that time head of surgery at Cedars. And UCLA was aborning, giving birth to its medical school. The UCLA faculty were in Quonset Huts on the VA campus."

Certainly, the position of dean at a new institution was attractive, but Spellman was already an established and respected faculty member serving at the Howard University Division at the District of Columbia General Hospital, which provided comprehensive healthcare to a poverty-riddled black majority population. If he accepted the position, he was signing on to be part of a similar mission which reflected his professional ethics and personal ideology, but which only paid a modest county salary. Responsible for the needs of a large family, Spellman had to consider the bigger picture.

Spellman: "I had to decide what I wanted to do. I had eight children, which weighed heavily on my assessment. By my reckoning California was attractive because it had a vital and prestigious university system, public university system, and I thought that it would be affordable for me to anticipate for the higher education of my children...It was the golden west, it was overall attractive. And it was presented to me at Sherman's presentation that it was to be a beacon of hope, and in the early seventies and late sixties that was a banner call. I thought it was a great opportunity to be involved in institution building, to foster scholarship and research and at the same time to fulfill a

social mission which was extremely important at the time. And it was a time when medical schools were accused of being insulated and uncaring. I thought this was a grand opportunity to be [part of it] at that time.”

Spellman’s ascension earned him respect amid an era in which the white public was astonished that a black physician could rise at all. As a celebrated and respected physician among white and black doctors, Spellman plainly had career options other than uprooting his life and moving west. But did he understand his unique status when he was contemplating accepting the position?

Spellman: “Yes, but I wasn’t [that] conscious of it. I knew that I had had superior training, but I always thought that I was a bit ahead of my time. If I were a few years older, it might have been easier [to say no], but I always had a self-image. Surgeons were the clinical scientists of their era. I was descended from Drew. I was Charles Drew’s last resident...Drew was killed when I was a senior resident. Following that, I went to Minnesota and redid my residency, I was called a fellow and I became Owen Weinstein’s chief resident. I was the only black resident in the system. Can you imagine?...It seems presumptuous if not overly courageous now, but at the time it didn’t seem [so]. I was less conscious of my mortality.”

Whether or not he foresaw the difficulties that came with the position is hard to say, but Spellman believed in the idea that was pitched to him during his visit.

Spellman: “I bought the proposition that it was going to be a beacon of hope, multiethnic multiracial setting. I thought I was compatible with the geography and the tradition. I thought to myself, if it’s possible anywhere, it’s possible in California...Because California was free of the burdens of the history of slavery...”

In accepting the deanship in January of 1969, Spellman signed on to the school's mission, at least as laid out by the board of directors, which envisioned the school's identity as multicultural, as opposed to specifically black.

Spellman: "That was part of the dilemma when the institution emerged, and I'm thinking of King-Drew as a single institution. It professed to be a black medical school by some members of our faculty. There were ethnic tensions from the outset. But, no, I foresaw its future as an alliance with UCLA and USC and the emergence of a multiethnic multicultural enterprise."

From the start, Spellman recalls that he was aware of contrary opinions within the community, that many people in the community felt a sense of ownership of the new medical complex; community advocates like Dr. Sol White Jr, Caffey Green, Lillian Mobley envisioned a a black hospital.

Spellman: "Right. Yeah, they saw it as an economic tool. They saw jobs. I was flabbergasted one day when I saw in the paper that there were 13,000 applicants for a single microbiology technician position...It wasn't just the community. This captured the national imagination. It was a startling display of interest as well a commitment to the cause. I think that number is correct: 13,000."

Spellman moved to Los Angeles with his family in February 1969. With the assistance of Mellinkoff, Spellman found a home in a good school district near UCLA.

Spellman: "One of the reasons I left Washington was because private schools were taking a third of my income in tuition, and I knew that I couldn't do this much longer. So I came with the conviction that the public schools were open to me, so I wanted to live in an area in which public schools were superior. I had the first son in college; my first born

was admitted to Johns Hopkins College the year I came. And then with the help of UCLA, I found this house, and we lived here, and our kids went to the local public schools.”

The Los Angeles that Spellman found in the late 1960s seems vastly different from the racially hostile city described by many other black physicians who practiced in the city. He recalls that issues of accreditation and access to hospital privileges lingered, yet by that time, some black physicians had found a way into the evolving system.

Spellman: “By the time I came there were more or less open doors. Minority doctors had appointments to the staffs of the white hospitals, but it wasn’t easy, and the hospitals were highly selective. They limited themselves to a precious few.”

Simon: “Was it defined by a [non-declared] quota system?”

Spellman: “I think it was a quota, but hospitals are strange animals. Anyway, it was difficult to prove discrimination because they were private institutions and they had the right to limit themselves to a select few. When I came, I had an appointment at UCLA and USC, and I didn’t apply for additional hospital privileges.”

It seems that the position of dean insulated Spellman from the challenges faced by many black physicians, many of whom had also studied at Howard. In his previous role as a surgeon and professor, Spellman was too busy with personal and professional obligations to wade too deeply into politics. But in his recollection of his early activities in Los Angeles, politics defined his role as dean of Drew from the start.

Spellman: “[There was a meeting] on the border of USC. We had all of the senior figures in Los Angeles contemporary life on hand. I made the pitch that an institution of

higher learning [such as Drew] was as important to Los Angeles as its symphony, for example, a cultural as well as an economic asset. That was one of my introductions to Los Angeles society.”

One of Spellman’s first challenges was to secure funding for Drew.

Spellman: “I had an office at UCLA. The project was underwritten largely by a federal grant from the NIH for [researching] heart disease, cancer and stroke. It was not for curative diseases, but a project to build resources. The origins of King/Drew were dependent upon this acquisition of this grant [of \$207,000]... [We assembled staff within] an odd set of circumstances. The county paid the salaries of Drew, as Drew contracted with the county health department to build its man power, intelligence and resources. So, when we appointed a member of the faculty, he became a salaried employee of the County of Los Angeles. It was patterned after the contract between the county and UCLA and USC...My [\$50,000] salary came from the grant.”

Like other county physicians, Spellman was barred from having a private practice. This policy reflected the belief that private practices would distract county physicians, and split their attention and resources, which would decrease the quality of patient care. As dean, Spellman had an appointment with UCLA as a professor of thoracic surgery, but the responsibilities of the position left little time for the practice of medicine. Spellman recalls that he mostly worked at an office at UCLA as construction of the facilities proceeded in Willowbrook; with no actual facilities completed yet, it makes sense that Spellman worked offsite, and yet many people involved during this period worked in trailers situated on the periphery of the construction site. Spellman oversaw search committees who gathered candidates for department chairs. Potential

chairs were then presented for approval to the executive committee, made up of two representatives from UCLA, USC and Drew Medical Society.

Spellman: “The task was for them to approve appointments and provide a governance, which was oversight without being tyrannical. From my perspective, the task was to get away from the notion that the faculty was going to be evenly divided between USC and UCLA.”

Simon: “Why?”

Spellman: “Because I thought that UCLA was more diverse [academically], had more potential, they had a school of public health. They were trying to build a service component, community service which was vital as well as economically rewarding and academically sound...So I had to do it in a way that was not insulting to USC or contentious. So I appointed a blue ribbon committee with outstanding academicians from all over the country including the dean from Stanford Medical School, Robert Blazer...I proposed to the blue ribbon committee that the dean would have the authority to recommend appointments not on an even basis, not structured to achieve evenness, but designed to be in Drew’s best interest. For example, the first department head who was appointed was community medicine; I wanted an affiliation with UCLA’s School for Public Health which was different and challenging.²⁶⁰I had [Lester] Breslow’s support and then I proceeded to make uneven assignments and it ended up being[UCLA] five to [USC] three...It worked out all right.”

²⁶⁰ “New Chairman Named to Drew School,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 28, 1969. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564879871?accountid=35804> .Before his appointment at King/Drew in late August 1969, Dr. M. Alfred Haynes held an appointment as associate professor at John Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health. From 1968-1969, Haynes served as project director for the NMA Foundation, which had projects across the nation for health career building and health services.

In the process of assembling the department chairs, Spellman had to negotiate with members of the blue ribbon committee who brought credibility to the process, but also had their own ideas about Drew's identity.

Spellman: [Blue ribbon committees] were designed to build a sense of mission, to give the school visibility. For example, one of the members of the blue ribbon committee suggested that the school be named, the school of community medicine. And I objected on the basis that there were no schools of community medicine and it was important, first, to be as traditional as circumstances allowed us, and so we didn't. There were many (Spellman laughs) such suggestions that I had to weave through and decline.

Spellman is a charming and direct conversationalist, but it's clear that he had to delicately handle the concerns of both establishment luminaries and community advocates if he wanted their support, politically, administratively and fiscally; fund raising for Drew demanded Spellman to act as the new institution's chief diplomat.

Spellman: "I wanted it to be a superior and a distinguished medical school, and we couldn't do that without money, and I didn't want to be dependent wholly on the contract with Los Angeles County Health Department. So that was a search for being. I was trying [to be] at once a traditionalist and activist."

Spellman asserts that his design for Drew didn't follow an example from the East Coast; Mellinkoff asserts his inspiration came from a school in Philadelphia.²⁶¹ As Spellman described it, Drew was a work in progress defined by negotiation; this approach reflected his personal optimism, though it seems he had little choice other than to engage with an open mind, as a tyrannical approach surely would've failed.

²⁶¹ Interviews with Dr. Sherman Mellinkoff. Recorded personal interviews, 5/14/12, 6/15/12. Westwood, California. Subsequently, I conducted unrecorded phone interviews with Mellinkoff on 9/1/12, 11/2/13.

Spellman: “By comparison, I was a romanticist rather than a pragmatist. I had high aspirations for the institution as a beacon of scholarship and interracial amity, which was one of Sherm’s creation. [The blue ribbon committees] had several meetings and an agenda. We selected the postgraduate medical school [model], which was Sherm’s idea after a postgraduate medical school in Philadelphia, because it was going to be involved only with residency training, but I had social activists on the committee that were bent on reforming the entire system, and I had to restrain them (Spellman laughs; he doesn’t recall specific names). One was a guy who had run for the mayor of Washington. One was a sociologist at Harvard. One was a member of the Institute of Medicine who reformed social sciences in New Jersey.”

Spellman recalls that the recruitment process was ongoing. He sought the best candidates who were available and interested, and he didn’t make selections based on race or ideology.

Spellman: “I was in charge of search committees and I wrote to all of the deans of the American medical schools and asked them to nominate candidates for chairmen of departments. It was specifically stated that we had no racial boundaries, or whatever. All of the schools responded either by submitting regrets (laughing) or nominating candidates. So the chairman of medicine came from Harvard, for example, nominated by the best letter I ever got from a nominating person. It was the most extraordinary letter praising the breadth and competence of this person...Dr. David Ulmer.”

Jogging his own memory, Spellman holds a large framed picture of the original eight department heads and himself. He points to Robert Greenberg

Spellman: "He is one of the best pediatricians in the country. He came from Stanford and gave up a promising career to be chairman of pediatrics at Drew. Ezra [Davidson] was ultimately head of obstetricians and gynecology. Cannon was a psychiatrist, the founding chairman...Cannon was a controversial appointment."²⁶²

Simon: "Why?"

Spellman: "Because I didn't like him, because a group of black psychiatrists, who were powerful nationally, decided that Cannon should be the chairman, and I wanted an open search. We came to loggerheads and they won...They said that they would blackball the institution if I didn't appoint Canon. It was a vicious time...I held out as long as I could, until I became convinced that I was helpless to change it. The black psychiatrists had created a scholarly treatise on the inapplicability of Freudian psychiatry to minorities, and that Freud didn't understand black people, and so consequently, the use of psychiatry and his name were faulty. I couldn't disprove that so..."

The rejection of Freudian principles by black psychologists was a component of the era which saw minority and gender discourse's of self-empowerment and resistance to male white hegemony. A debate raged over whether psychology was a healing art or a tool of control. In *The Myth of Mental Illness: Foundations of a Theory of Personal Conduct* (1961), psychiatrist Thomas Szasz asserted that institutional psychiatry was a pseudoscience akin to alchemy and astrology, and he rejected the accepted conception

²⁶² "Dr. Cannon Appointed Drew School Chairman," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 6, 1970. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564934376?accountid=35804> In early August, 1970, Dr. J. Alfred Cannon was appointed chairman of psychiatry at Drew, and concurrently chief of psychiatry service at King (He was the fourth department chair to be appointed). Previous to accepting the position, Cannon served as assistant professor of psychiatry at the UCLA School of Medicine, and associate director of its Division of Social and Community Psychiatry. Along with his role in PICA, Cannon was a long standing advocate for health issues in Los Angeles; he founded the Central City Community Mental Health Center; he founded and chaired the Fredrick Douglas Child Development Center, etc. At the time of his appointment, Cannon served as chairman of the black psychiatrists committee of the American Psychiatric Association and Black Psychiatrists of America. A founder of Drew, Cannon was previously a member of the school's board of directors previous to accepting the appointment.

of mental disorders, as their diagnosis and treatment lacked the scientific methodology/ rigor of observable diseases like cancer. Additionally, as there was no quantifiable proof of diagnosis nor success in treatment, Szasz asserted, asylums were prisons disguised as places of scientific healing, and he compared patients and psychiatrists to prisoners and wardens; both institutions serve as mechanisms of control.²⁶³ In *The Sane Slave: An Historical Note on the Use of Medical Diagnosis as Justificatory Rhetoric* (1971), Szasz attacked psychiatry as an element of historic white hegemony dating back to Dr. Samuel A. Cartwright's diagnosis of runaway slaves as having been consumed by the madness of Drapetomania (1851). By extension, Szasz asserted that diagnoses like Drapetomania, applied to the descendants of slaves who resist and reject the authority of white hegemony. Amid the post-colonial reshuffling of the mid-20th Century, this applied to anyone who refused continuing subordination.²⁶⁴ While the iconoclastic Szasz was understandably rejected by the majority of his colleagues, his ideas were widely read by a public caught up in the cultural flux of liberation.²⁶⁵ As an insider exposing the dangers of accepting institutional psychiatry to the public, Szasz's voice joined with others that energized generations of devotees to black power like Franz Fanon and Ron Karenga.²⁶⁶

²⁶³Thomas S. Szasz, *The Myth of Mental Illness: Foundations of a Theory of Personal Conduct*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 1974).

²⁶⁴ Thomas S. Szasz, "The Sane Slave: An Historical Note on the Use of Medical Diagnosis as Justificatory Rhetoric," *American Journal of Psychotherapy* (1971).

²⁶⁵ Jeffrey Oliver, "The myth of Thomas Szasz," *The New Atlantis* 13 (2006): 68-84. Oliver describes Szasz as an iconoclast that became deeply unpopular within psychiatric circles because his ideas threatened the expanding field and delegitimized the construction of new asylums. While he had a popular affect as a critic of psychology, he has largely been dismissed as by most in the institution. However, Jeffrey eulogizes Szasz's effort because it alerted the public to the dangers of accepting psychology without understanding its limitations in healing.

²⁶⁶ John Breeding, "Thomas Szasz: Philosopher of Liberty," *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* 51, no. 1 (2011): 112-128.

Given the era of empowerment, black psychologists inspired by black power and liberation ideologies wanted the appointment of psychiatric department chair who shared their beliefs, though Spellman recalls that Cannon didn't assert himself as a nonwestern trained psychiatrist. Spellman wanted a "fair and open search process," that would produce qualified candidates, and not to be pressured to nominate a candidate by a group of physicians—whether local or national—who could scare off other qualified candidates.

Spellman: "They wanted one of their own. And there were powerful black psychiatrists at Harvard and Yale, and I tried to get either of them to be candidates, and they withdrew. [Canon] asserted himself as a knowledgeable community activist, which he was. It gave political as well as academic dimensions to his appointment. He was cooperative and respectful once he became a faculty member. Psychiatry was an important component of King Hospital because they built the psychiatric pavilion and substantially increased the number of psychiatric beds."

We move to the picture of Dr. Al Haynes, who was an extremely popular and influential figure both at UCLA's School of Public Health and in South Los Angeles.²⁶⁷

Spellman: "Well, I think we didn't always agree. He was more comfortable with the label of black medical school than I was. He succeeded me when I left. We got on. He was, to my observation, loyal and devoted to the cause. He was a good advocate."

²⁶⁷ "New Chairman Named to Drew School," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 28, 1969. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564879871?accountid=35804> In late August 1969, Dr. M. Alfred Haynes was appointed as chairman of the Department of Community Medicine and concurrently, the chief of Community Medicine Service at King Hospital. Haynes was the first chair to be recruited. Before his appointment at King/Drew, Haynes held an appointment as associate professor at John Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health. From 1968-1969, Haynes served as project director for the NMA Foundation, which has projects across the nation for health career building and health services. Unfortunately, Haynes was unavailable for interview because he suffers from a degenerative condition that affects memory recall.

Spellman recalls that all the department chairs were appointed before the hospital was completed.

Spellman: "I think Ulmer was the last to be appointed. Greenberg, Amador,²⁶⁸ Davidson, Alexander²⁶⁹ and Campbell²⁷⁰ arrived before the hospital opened...It was a tedious process. Determining a protocol...For each of these people, I had to lobby and nominate them for UCLA or USC appointments. I encountered no difficulty in that regard, so they were responsible for their salary, there was relative ease..."

The department chairs were responsible for assembling staff; Spellman oversaw the chairs, but he doesn't remember micro-managing the hiring process.

Spellman: "Well, I had final approval, but they brought forth names which I trusted and which I approved. I could've had the power to frustrate if not deny appointments, but I never did."

Amid the staffing period and long afterwards, many meetings of the board of directors took place amid protests over board decisions. Spellman was often forced to

²⁶⁸ Interview with Dr. Elias Amador. Unrecorded personal interview, 12/6/11. Palos Verdes. Amador was the first chair of the department of pathology at King/Drew. Amador harbors a deep discontent for King/Drew which is, in part, connected to his ouster in 1996; he refused to speak about the creation period on the record.

²⁶⁹ Myrna Oliver, "Obituaries: Joseph L. Alexander, 72; Pioneer Surgeon," *Los Angeles Times*, May 13, 2002. <http://articles.latimes.com/2002/may/13/local/me-joe13>
Dr. Joseph L. Alexander was King/Drew's first chairman of surgery. He was the first black student admitted to the University of Louisville Medical School.

²⁷⁰ "Drew School Gets New Division Head." (1970, Jul 30). *Los Angeles Sentinel (1934-2005)*. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564944667?accountid=35804> Appointed in late July 1970, Dr. John A. Campbell was chairman of the department of radiology at King/Drew. Previous to his appointment, Campbell spent nearly 30 years at the Indiana University of Medicine where became director of hospital radiological services in 1945, and chairman and professor of the Department of Radiology in 1956. He studied at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine.

justify his decisions and selections to hostile community activists, many of whom had always disapproved of his appointment as dean.²⁷¹

Spellman: “[Transcripts of the] minutes of the meetings would be interesting in the least. Sherm faithfully showed up every month and I likened it to wearing a hair shirt (Spellman laughs). He was a target almost as often as I was.”

Spellman recalls that one source of animosity was the belief that UCLA exerted too much control over Drew. Remote in many ways from Drew, UCLA was seen as an outside force trying to shape events. “Traditional educational institutions are apt to be too orthodox and want others to be like them, whereas change must be the hallmark of the Drew School,” said Dr. Paul B. Cornely, in an address marking the formal opening of the school offices of CRDPMS in late January, 1970. Longtime member of the NMA and the first black president of the American Public Health Association, Cornely cautioned school leaders in attendance to be wary of possible institutional domination via their affiliation with USC and UCLA, and to focus on patient care over legal or economic considerations.²⁷² Additionally, Spellman recalls that UCLA was perceived as both isolated and elitist, and that Mellinkoff became the focal point of community resentment. Spellman: “I’m telling you what he got accused of. They accused me of selling [out] Drew for the exploitation of UCLA, as though UCLA wanted the burden of [it] (laughs).”

²⁷¹ S. O. Williford, “Doctors Fear King Hospital May Become Charity-Oriented,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 2, 1970. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.lapl.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/156411581?accountid=6749>

An anonymously quoted community member wanted King/Drew’s dean to be a local black physician. Spellman respected background in medicine wasn’t the problem; his outsider status was, though certainly it seems likely that his respected position made people suspicious and envious.

²⁷² “Drew Medical School Opens Offices in Watts,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 24, 1970. Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.lapl.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/156290752?accountid=6749>

Aside from the board meetings and his responsibilities as dean, Spellman recalls that he hosted community meetings and traveled to academic conferences representing the new facility; he served on several boards and on several committees of the National Institute of Health.²⁷³ Spellman served as dean of Drew for nine years, during which time, his relationship with the black community both inside and outside the medical complex seems to have gone from bad to worse.

Spellman: “Well, I became a pariah. The black community didn’t accept me. I was... They felt a sense of betrayal. Maybe they didn’t think that I was going to do what I did. So I was concerned about my children, for example...Not so much for their safety, but that was a part of it, and part, their being embarrassed; secluded, victims of controversy.”

If members of the black community considered Spellman an Uncle Tom, Spellman asserts it because he made decisions different than they wanted. Animus created by his choices for chairs spoke to an ideological divide rooted in the multiple identities and multiple mandates of the institution; Spellman was the personification of that original and inherent paradox. Still, even if Spellman had overwhelmingly bowed to community pressure, it seems doubtful that he would have ever been accepted.

Spellman: “Well, it would’ve required me to build a black medical school, with all the chairmen being black, and I refused to do this. You must remember that King Hospital was politicized, so if I made an appointment which the hospital staff didn’t approve of, they would deny it, in the interests of the hospital. There’s an archaic law that every staff

²⁷³ “Proposed Drew School to Stress Community Service in MLK hospital,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, June 26, 1969. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564905292?accountid=35804> Spellman co-hosted a two day conference where attendees discussed the community service aspect of King/Drew’s service.

member of the county hospital system must be a member of the staff association, whatever it's called. Some of my appointees were held up an unconscionably long time before they were admitted to the staff association. King Hospital became a political instrument. If a doctor wanted to belong to the staff, and ... Supervisor [Hahn] intervened, then it was virtually impossible to forestall it.”

In a sense, Spellman's experience mirrored the evolving ideological debate that defined the civil rights movement's evolution throughout the 1960s. A believer in King's original message of integration, Spellman represented a frustratingly anachronistic mode for advocates of black power and black liberation.

Spellman: “The community of black physicians primarily thought that they were owed the burden of doubt, and they had been discriminated [against], and made sacrifices, and they thought this was an institution designed to protect them and reward them.

Remember, the Charles Drew Medical Society was one of the founders of Drew. For example, when I took Bob Greenberg to one of Drew Society's meetings, he was introduced as ‘the jew who Mitchell Spellman appointed chairman of pediatrics.’

We both got up and walked out. It was rough and tumble politics...It was the hope and the dilemma of its time. For example, when I came to Los Angeles, I discovered that it was fundamentally different from Washington, DC, where I'd lived the prior years. It wanted a black institution, they wanted a black medical school in the image of Howard and Meharry—Meharry doctors in Los Angeles were the dominant numbers. So to me, this was an anachronism. There'd never been a black medical school west of the Mississippi, and it was an anachronism because it was born post Reconstruction and I thought that [the black hospital movement] had seen its time ... And besides, I foresaw

the danger of making King Hospital ethnic when the rising tide was the Latino population. When I came, the preponderance of children born in King Hospital was African American, but now—or at least it was—80% chicano or Latino.”

Spellman spells out the underlying issues that defined the discourse of black medicine in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Spellman: “Black physicians were caught up in the maelstrom of race and privilege and duty. From the outset, they weren’t admissible to the medical society, the AMA didn’t admit black physicians until [1969].”

But Spellman’s experience was different than most of the local black physicians. With an outstanding academic pedigree, Spellman was a member of both the AMA and NMA.

Spellman: “I was an academic surgeon and I had trained in Minnesota, so my sponsors were the white doctors themselves...I wasn’t a member of the AMA as a resident, I don’t remember how I got in, but Washington changed overnight. When I left Washington in 1951, and when I came back in 1954, the city had been transformed from a sleepy town and totally desegregated. Howard was impacted. Howard always had a given number of white students, mostly Jews. When I came back to Washington, the white hospitals were accepting black doctors; Georgetown, Providence...Not en masse, but it was simple to get on.”

Whether or not Spellman experienced an easier form of integration, he recalls an uneven integration in medicine that explains how he became an adversary for black physicians who didn’t enjoy his experience. But his relationship with many local black physicians and community members didn’t reflect his benevolent intentions. As the

relationship progressively soured, Spellman was threatened with violence. Many people were threatened, Spellman recalls, it was the nature of the times. Typical of his fashion, Spellman plays off the violence nonchalantly, though he acknowledges that Mellinkoff's memory is correct.

Spellman: "He's speaking about a specific instance in which I was returning from Washington, and Sherm met my flight, and I knew something was wrong, because he wouldn't have ordinarily done that. And then he told me that there was a rumor afoot that I was a target for assassination."

Simon: "Who was targeting you?"

Spellman: "Well, it wasn't clear...I never knew specifically who was targeting me, but the story was that the driver who was going to pick me would abandon the car and I would have presumably been shot, or some such incident."

Whether or not one accepts Spellman's assertion that violence or the threat of violence was common, it seems pretty bizarre that a dean would be assassinated for making policy decisions that ran counter to the demands of specific community members. It's like he served as a rare, accessible manifestation of white hegemony or an emotional depository where the community could bank their anger and frustration. Warranted or not, threats of violent retaliation seemed a reasonable response to unpopular administrative policies. It seems rational to suppose that such irrationality took forms that Spellman was never aware of during his time at King/Drew.

Spellman: "First of all, you have to decide the legitimacy or the accuracy of the rumors. There were many rumors afoot. Drew had three constituencies. The community who felt

deep-seated expectations and ownership of the enterprise. There was the academic contingent which thought that I was an agent of UCLA and bound to surrender Drew to the aspirations of UCLA. And there was a political-medical constituency which saw Drew as a constituency through which they could appeal their unfulfilled aspirations to be academic leaders or town practitioners. The political and professional groups collaborated...”

Spellman returns to the process of staff association. It was an embarrassing challenge to Spellman’s authority as it often dragged on indefinitely and left his appointments in a state of limbo. He recalls that the staff association committee was composed of King’s medical director, presumably Dr. Phillip Smith, staff and faculty, and CRDMS members; evidently, those involved could simultaneously be one or the other or both. Spellman recalls that staff and non-faculty affiliated with CRDMS outnumbered faculty members which was often reflected in committee votes that went against Spellman’s appointees. While Spellman is curiously, if understandably, vague about the actions and the people involved, the acrimony, in general, was a reflection of his poor relationship with some CRDMS members, and specifically, in Spellman’s continuing reluctance to bow to community pressure as he insisted upon creating a racially diverse faculty.

Spellman: “I wanted the departments to be representative of the whole of America, not blacks.”

Spellman recalls many arguments over this issue that he had with Dr. Julius Hill,

president of the NMA and member of Drew's board of directors. A longtime advocate for the creation of King/Drew, Hill advocated for a black hospital with black staff to serve the black community: "We're just sick of being told white staff are necessary to have a good hospital. Meharry College puts out fine doctors and its staff is 90 per cent black. Howard University has a fine medical school and its staff is primarily black...We want to give our black talent first priority. Don't tell us black doctors are unable to get on staff."²⁷⁴ But Spellman recalls that like other tension filled professional relationships, their arguments were personal and were about much more than staffing.

Spellman: "He had a mixed agenda. He wanted power...He wanted to be recognized and I guess, in retrospect, I could've offered him an appointment, but I didn't."

I posit Mellinkoff's assertion that many local black doctors weren't up to the standards of USC and UCLA, professional standards that Spellman was supposed to use in his hiring despite a personal understanding of the uneven playing field created by historic inequity. Spellman's position came loaded with the expectations of the board, which he shared along with the concerns of local black physicians with whom he simultaneously felt disconnected with and empathized: Spellman inhabited both spaces amid the national discourse on race and medicine in America.

Spellman: "I wasn't credible in my appeal to them to be more open and supportive of my point of view. I don't think they believed me...They must have thought that I was amenable to change, otherwise they would have opposed my appointment as dean [more]. I think they thought that I was convertible or amenable..."

²⁷⁴ C. BAIREUTHER, "Doctors, Patients Both Benefit at MLK hospital," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, March 5, 1970. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564972729?accountid=35804>

The board of directors that appointed Spellman was comprised of representatives from CRDMS, UCLA and USC. As Mellinkoff recalls, the selection process was intense. Ultimately, they chose Spellman.

Spellman: “It was a smaller board then. [CRDMS reps] could’ve been outvoted...I assume they sought a compromise, or they tried to produce a reasonable procedure. I think they miscalculated. I didn’t turn out to be what they thought I was (Spellman laughs)...I assume the majority of the Drew Society didn’t think I was trustworthy, or I guess they conceded that I was academically qualified, but...”

The star student of the institution’s much vaunted namesake becomes persona non grata amid the community he was romantically trying to uplift. Spellman laughs at the irony—a modest defense mechanism—but it’s only funny in retrospect. Drew was his mentor and his role model, but by the time Spellman rose to a position of power and influence, society had changed markedly.

Spellman: “Well, if you listen to me, and you have to assume that I’m saying what I’m believing. What I regarded as priorities, they didn’t agree with me...I think USC and UCLA were trying to respect and honor the community physicians by letting them determine their own fate (laughing), along with that determination [that] rested in my own fate.”

Having momentarily exhausted Spellman’s paradoxical stance between the medical establishment and black power, I ask Spellman to describe the standards of care he encountered when he moved to Los Angeles. But in trying to follow a different thread, I find that Spellman’s memories are inseparably intertwined.

Spellman: “Well, there was some good and some bad physicians, but Los Angeles was behind Washington in its integration of physicians to important posts...I’m talking of the whole panoply of physician aspirations. UCLA was an enclave of privilege and formality and structure. For example, UCLA remains less tolerant of ambiguity and differences than Harvard Medical institutions.”

Simon: “Really?”

Spellman: “Yes. I think Sherm believes in strict conformity...Ivy league schools look the other way occasionally...I think the University of California System is by nature absolute and autocratic...It’s the greatest public university in the world! So maybe the people that got there believe that it’s necessary, and I did too. I shared their beliefs, but it wasn’t always possible to produce conformity. I think Sherm had as much difficulty, or almost as much, with Harbor General Hospital as I had with King Hospital, but Sherm was bigger than life, and he could manage it...He had a different system behind him.”

Along with appointments, committees, and fundraising, Spellman was the public face of Drew. With his prominent position, Spellman joined the exclusive ranks of Los Angeles high society.

Spellman: “I spread the gospel (he laughs). I became a community spokesman for Drew...In the larger community. I spoke at the California Club, for example. I was invited to sit on the symphony board, which I turned down. I regret it now. I thought that my high visibility would be better served if I were less a target of condemnation. I probably made mistakes, but I was I on a bank board, I was on a credit board...The first important appointment was as member of the Kaiser Board of Directors for the hospitals

and the health plan. I got a stipend for that and fortunately, I let it rest over time and didn't collect it, so called deferred compensation..."

While it seems clear that Spellman enjoyed many of the social perks that came along with the deanship, it seems equally clear that the constant hostility he experienced inside the medical complex was exhausting and depressing. And the hostility he faced seemingly on a daily basis was amplified whenever he was called before the political seat of power in South Los Angeles.

Spellman: "[Supervisor] Kenneth Hahn asked me to come to a meeting of the LA County Board of Supervisors in which the fate of Drew was being questioned, the fate of King/Drew was being debated. I got fair hearings before the board of supervisors, but the supervisors regarded their supervisorial districts as captive territory. And they didn't broker differences from that position tolerably...My encounters with Kenneth Hahn were for the most part adversarial rather than...I attended one or two meetings in which I was asked to testify to the board of supervisors, and I received a delightful memento from the board when I left (Laughing)."

At one point in our discussions, Spellman poses a few questions about my research. He's curious how I found my way to writing about the creation of King/Drew. I tell him that when I began, I was interested in the causality of its closure, but the more I dug into the project, its inception became more interesting to me, and I found that the causality of its closure was unclear.

Simon: "Because it's not so simple."

Spellman: “It’s not rightness or wrongness, and that is a difficult lesson I’ve come to learn over time.”

Spellman clearly benefitted from his position, if modestly, but from his recollection, I sense that the cost was much greater than it was worth. In his administrative position, he had little time for the actual practice of medicine aside from participating in a few surgeries which drew the ire of that department’s chairman. Though he never speaks to it directly, I believe he regrets having traded the operating room for the board room too early in his career. Spellman employs a stoicism and dry wit to great effect; at times throughout the interviews, it seems it hides the emotional toll he sustained from the listener. But just as often, it seems it hides his angst from himself.

Exhausted by the intrigue, the threats, the politics, the lack of trust, Spellman left Drew after nine years and moved east to take a position at Harvard. His memories of his years at Drew seem defined by the electrifying politics of race of that era, and Spellman served as a lightning rod with a shoddily installed ground. Strikingly, Spellman seems like he’s found some peace with his role in the process.

A few months after I interview Spellman, I receive a phone call from Ellie Carper who served as executive assistant to Spellman during his time at King/Drew. Carper had previously filled me in on her life at Drew and how often it was often intensely frustrating because of the disruptive presence of community activists.²⁷⁵ Carper called because she was disturbed by an article she found in the *Los Angeles Sentinel* that covered an event honoring the founders of Drew.²⁷⁶ Among the persons honored by

²⁷⁵ Interview with Ellie Carper. Recorded personal interview, 9/23/12. Beaumont, California.

²⁷⁶ Interview with Ellie Carper. Non-recorded phone interview, 6/15/13.

Drew President Dr. David Carlisle were many well-known and beloved community activists like the recently deceased Lillian Mobley. What irked Carper is that there was no mention of Spellman, and, by extension, Mellinkoff. We speak about the issue for some time. I argue that often history is a product of politics, and that Drew's idea of itself understandably honors the contributions of some, while ignoring the contributions of others; a power exercised by most any institution in maintaining its own narrative. Carper acknowledges my point, but prior to hanging up, she tells me that she intends to write a letter to the *Sentinel's* editor, as the paper is complicit in transforming the institution's history according to a convenient, if particular, set of political beliefs and memories.

Mitchell Spellman died on November 11, 2013, at the age of 93.²⁷⁷ A few months later, Ellie Carper called again, this time to describe her experience at a tribute in Spellman's honor which was surprisingly arranged at Drew University. When she first received the invitation, Carper recalls, she was anxious and hesitant to attend the event. As Spellman's frontline of defense for years, Carper seemingly faced difficulty every day she went to work at King/Drew. Carper is a charitable and forgiving Christian woman, so she put aside her reservations and made the two hour drive from Beaumont to South Los Angeles. And what she found surprised her. The memorial was filled with people who may have once viewed Spellman as an enemy, yet now remembered him as a dear friend as they paid tribute to his contribution to King/Drew's creation. "Time changes

²⁷⁷ "Obituary: Mitchell Wright Spellman M.D. Ph.D." *Los Angeles Times*, November 19, 2013. <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/latimes/obituary.aspx?pid=168086464>

people,” Carper says in explaining the transformation she witnessed with satisfaction, “and people change with time.”²⁷⁸

Amid the memories of Dr. Sherman Mellinkoff and Dr. Mitchell Spellman lie the smoldering embers of fires that almost consumed the hope and idealism from which King/Drew was constructed amid an evolving discourse of race, power and community engagement. Both men were drawn to the creation of King/Drew because they believed in a common progressive vision, but in assuming their roles of authority, they were understood as avatars of white hegemony by a community striving for self-determination. Driven by beliefs that often ran counter to members of the community, both men engaged in the creation of King/Drew with a idealism that so often proved inflexible and vulnerable when put into practice—a common defect in the progressive mindset amid an uncommon period of paradox and contradictions. Decades later, both men found a measure of peace, yet old unsettled scores and unresolved resentments haunted them; a testament to the power of the storm both men weathered more than four decades ago.

The era that witnessed King/Drew’s creation also saw a rise in black political representation in Los Angeles as black empowerment played out in many ways. The chapters that follow explore the ways in which black politicians of the era and community members understand the importance of King/Drew’s creation story as a symbol of progressive change and survival in relation to continuing white hegemony. King/Drew’s creation is a symbol of black empowerment in South Los Angeles, a victory

²⁷⁸ Interview with Ellie Carper. Non-recorded phone interview, 2/16/14.

that must be guarded amid a continuing revolution against exclusion both in utility and legacy for the betterment of life in South Los Angeles.

Chapter Five: Black Empowerment and Political Inclusion in Los Angeles

Introduction

The largest wave of the Great Migration came to Los Angeles amid the expansion of industrial manufacturing spurred by World War II. Many found new freedoms and economic mobility, but they also found an opaque brand of segregation that sequestered the majority of the city's black population in the neighborhoods of South Central Los Angeles.²⁷⁹ Ghettoized and ignored by the city's political leadership, members of the black community tenaciously pursued an agenda that mirrored the national efforts of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s. After more than a century of political exclusion, a generation of black politicians arose and permanently altered the political environment of Los Angeles. During this era of inclusion, the intertwined politics of race and empowerment informed the actions of black political leadership, a discourse that rapidly evolved throughout the 1960s.²⁸⁰

Combined with archival sources, Chapter Five utilizes the memories of Mervyn M. Dymally, one of a wave of ascending black politicians that arose in early 1960s California politics. Dymally's voice illuminates the creation of King/Drew as a physical manifestation of black empowerment and inclusion amid continuing racial hostility when King/Drew was successfully pursued as part of a liberal multiracial agenda. A longtime supporter of King/Drew from its inception, Dymally's voice frames the institution's

²⁷⁹ Josh Sides, *LA City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003).

²⁸⁰ Raphael J. Sonenshein, *Politics in Black and White: Race and Power in Los Angeles*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993). Sonenshein graciously consulted with me about my research. Sonenshein worked within the Los Angeles political culture and his widely respected work is invaluable in understanding how race and power played out in the city's recent past.

creation as a local manifestation of the civil rights movement. His personal philosophy and political agenda mirrored that of the institution: poverty conditions can be ameliorated, if not directly challenged, by empowering the poor with access to education, employment and comprehensive healthcare. No one voice can speak for an entire community, even though Dymally was elected to do just that during an era in which authority and civic representation worked to keep pace with the beliefs and desires of newly empowered constituents. Through memory and biography, Dymally is explored not as a saint, but as a perfectly imperfect man and leader who righteously pursued the agenda of the civil rights movement as a permanent revolution against white hegemony.

Mervyn M. Dymally

On the second floor of the Charles Drew University of Medicine and Science,²⁸¹ I meet Claudia Wiggins, executive assistant to Mervyn M. Dymally, professor and director of the Urban Health Institute. On the phone, Wiggins' Southern charm is beguiling, yet it pales in comparison to her actual presence. As the gatekeeper of Dymally's political life for decades, Wiggins deftly employs a mix of sultry zaniness and down-home hokum to disarm visitors to one of the most successful black politicians in

²⁸¹ Currently Drew Medical school is formerly known as the Charles Drew University of Medicine and Science - inexplicably, Drew's middle initial is absent - however, in the period of focus, it was known as the Charles R. Drew Postgraduate Medical School, or CRDPMS. In this section, it appears as CDUMS in discussions of the present, and it appears as CRDPMS in the past. It is also referred to informally as the Drew School. The institution has changed its name a few times during its existence.

California history.²⁸² The first time he greets me, Dymally clutches my hand with both of his, and I'm reminded of an early scene from *Primary Colors* in which the meaning of political handshakes are described like instructions from the *Kama Sutra*.²⁸³ Seduction is an important part of political trade craft, as it woos support and cultivates faith and trust. When Dymally speaks, his lilting patter betrays his Trinidadian origins and fifty years in the public eye, a whimsical bass range music of practiced phrases and measured pauses.²⁸⁴

Mervyn Malcolm Dymally was born May 12, 1926 in Bonasse Village in Cedros, Trinidad, amid an era, as Dymally describes it, in which class and upward mobility transcended the importance of race. The child of an Muslim Indian father and Catholic African mother, Dymally was raised in a village in which interracial and interreligious marriage was commonplace. While predominantly raised a Catholic, Dymally regularly attended services at the local Islamic mosque, the Anglican church, and frequently

²⁸² Over the several months that I visited Dymally and other executive staff at Drew, Wiggins and I developed a warm and respectful rapport. Many people assert that Dymally is a masterful political tactician, which seems reflected in his employment of Wiggins. A close friend who was raised in Charleston, South Carolina, once proclaimed that, "You yankees can't handle the charms of a southern woman...She'll tie you up in bows around her fingers without you knowing what's going on...What's worse is that you'll actually thank her for it." Indeed, I was warned. I am very grateful to Wiggins, both for her kindness in representing her boss and for her patient acceptance of my persistent phone calls and visits to CRDMS.

²⁸³ *Primary Colors*. DVD. Directed by Mike Nichols, (1998; Burbank, CA: Universal Studios).

²⁸⁴ Interview with Mervyn M. Dymally. Recorded Personal Interview, 3/21/11. Willowbrook, California. This profile focuses on Dymally's life in the 1960s and early 1970s. During this period, he served as a State Assemblyman, a State Senator, and then Lieutenant Governor. Later he served as a Congressman in the House of Representatives, and still later, he returned to the State Assembly. Dymally was an extremely challenging interview subject. Our first meetings were unnerving because he was so adept at avoiding questions and changing the conversation with answers that seemed wildly off topic, if not down right evasive; the typical machinations of many successful politicians. After most early in person or phone conversations, I felt frustrated and thought that I was wasting my time. However, as the relationship progressed, I realized that I was wrong. Like a challenging zen master, Dymally was testing both my resolve and my ability to learn, respect and understand aspects of his life, the community's situation, and how King/Drew's creation reflected a titanic shift in race and politics in California. Dymally graciously made time for me, both in person and on the phone, and while friendly, we were never friends, as our roles and differences made this unlikely. However, I think of him fondly and regret that I didn't spend a lot more time with him before he passed away. He was an unlikely teacher, and he remains one of the most intriguing people I've ever known.

attended ceremonies at a Hindu temple; the importance of community unity and uplift transcended all else. Poor but not destitute, Dymally's village utilized the practice of *susu*, the informal pooling of savings between neighbors which allowed for the purchase of an important item used for generating capital, for example, a bicycle or a small fishing boat. Families took turns using the pooled savings which enriched the lives of individuals and the community via access to education and employment. Dymally asserts that the *susu* created the possibility of upward mobility, and contributed to the transformation of Trinidadian society, which is now managed in many sectors by people like him who rose from the lower class. The *susu* informed Dymally's lifelong philosophy that poverty could be challenged via access to education and employment, and it illustrates why he supported King/Drew's mission from the beginning.

To the disappointment of his family, Dymally was a poor student, and he failed the Senior Cambridge Examination. Having blown his shot at a prestigious education which would have boosted his status, Dymally worked as a clerk at *The Vanguard*, a weekly union newspaper where he was exposed to black America via the pages of *The Chicago Defender* and *The Pittsburgh Courier*, which "were among the brightest stars in the black American constellation."²⁸⁵ Through the newspapers, Dymally saw America's racial inequality. Still, he sensed that he would have more opportunities there than in Trinidad.

²⁸⁵ Mervyn M. Dymally, *From Island Immigrant to US Congress: An American Success Story*, (Carlsbad: Motivational Press, 2012), 29. During our first meeting, Dymally informed me that he was considering writing his autobiography and asked me for advice as to how to proceed. Beyond the obvious, I had little to offer. The writing of our two projects became a comedic callback between us over the next 18 months, as he seemed to work at a pace that would humble L. Ron Hubbard, while I slowly put together a jigsaw puzzle blindfolded. While limited and unconventional, Dymally's auto-biography is helpful in understanding his life and his perspectives on a vast array of subjects including the creation of King/Drew.

Dymally emigrated to the United States to obtain a college education, but he had difficulties managing the responsibilities of a working student. With his green card dependent upon university enrollment, Dymally attended a succession of schools across the country. After studying for a time at Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri, Dymally wandered across the country seeking opportunities in New York and Chicago before moving west to Los Angeles. He attended Chapman University in the city of Orange, California, where in 1949, he he joined the Upsilon Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi, a prestigious black fraternity whose national membership roll includes many significant black Americans such as Dr. Rev. Ralph Abernathy. Through the fraternity Dymally met future Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley.²⁸⁶ Eventually, Dymally earned a BA in Education at California State University at Los Angeles, after which he taught handicapped children for the Los Angeles Unified School District and worked at the Cannon Electric Plant, where he became an active member of the local UAW AFL-CIO.²⁸⁷

Having secured employment, Dymally explored political organizations that focused on black empowerment. He joined the NAACP, but felt like a stranger amid the middle class membership, even though he aspired to join it. Dymally didn't identify with

²⁸⁶ Lawrence C. Ross. *The Divine Nine: The History of African American Fraternities and Sororities*, (New York: Kensington Publishing Corp. 2001), 70. Many black politicians in Los Angeles were members including but not limited to; Tom Bradley and Robert C. Ferrall.

Jane Fritsch, "Tom Bradley, Mayor in Era of Los Angeles Growth, Dies," *Los Angeles Times*, September 30, 1998. <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/09/30/us/tom-bradley-mayor-in-era-of-los-angeles-growth-dies.html> In 1963, Bradley was one of three black politicians elected to the Los Angeles City Council; the event is often commemorated as a victory of the Civil Rights Movement.

²⁸⁷ William Yardley, "Mervyn M. Dymally, Who Broke Racial Barriers in California, Dies at 86," *New York Times*, Oct 9, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/09/us/mervyn-dymally-who-broke-racial-barriers-in-california-dies-at-86.html?_r=0 Later, Dymally completed an MA in Government from California State University at Sacramento, and a PhD from the United States International University at San Diego (now Alliant International University). He lectured at several universities including Central State University in Ohio and CDUMS.

the Urban League—despite his membership in the UAW—nor with the Congress of Race Equality (CORE), which he found too radical. Dissatisfied, Dymally visited the Democratic Party’s headquarters on Sunset Boulevard seeking guidance as to how he could form a Democratic Party club in his neighborhood of West Adams, and soon afterwards, he formed the Westside Young Democrats. Dymally ventured into local politics, unaware of the deep divisions within the state Democratic Party that played out on the streets of Los Angeles.²⁸⁸

Inspired by Adlai Stevenson’s presidential candidacy in the early 1950s, Alan Cranston and George Miller founded the California Democratic Council, a coalition of grassroots Democratic clubs that wrested control of California politics from the Republican Party in 1958 with successful campaigns including the bids of Edmund G. “Pat” Brown for the governorship (1959-1967) and Cranston’s bid for State Controller (1959-1967).²⁸⁹ The CDC were left wing reformers that supported the aims of the civil rights movement and were opposed by the California Federation of Young Democrats, traditional democrats led by Assemblymen Jesse M. Unruh, who was elected in 1958. After Unruh became Speaker of the Assembly in 1961, the “blunt-speaking virtuoso of backroom politics,” often feuded with Governor Brown over control of the party’s agenda and the boundaries of executive vs legislative power. Feuding between Brown/Cranston

²⁸⁸ Dymally, *From Island Immigrant to US Congress: An American Success Story*, 45-46.

²⁸⁹ George Skelton, “Alan Cranston, an Old-School Difference-Maker,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 4, 2001. <http://articles.latimes.com/2001/jan/04/news/mn-8189> After his terms as State Controller (1959-1967), Cranston and Unruh’s relationship soured further “when both eyed the U.S. Senate seat held by influential Republican Thomas Kuchel. Cranston gambled that Unruh, deep down, was leery of facing the moderate incumbent. So he pledged to step aside if Unruh wanted to run. Unruh really didn’t, Cranston did and Kuchel subsequently got beat by a demagogic right-winger in the GOP primary.” Subsequently, Cranston served in the US Senate (1969-93) as Senate Minority Whip and Senate Majority Whip.

and Unruh played out in Los Angeles via the factionalism of Democratic clubs aligned with either the CDC or the Young Democrats.²⁹⁰

At the time he entered local politics, Dymally lived in West Adams, a black middle-class neighborhood located in the 10th Los Angeles City Council District, an integrated area occupied by liberal and politically active Jews, whites and rising lower-class and middle-class blacks; the district's black population swelled with blockbusting and white flight. As the black middle class migrated west away from the traditional black areas around Central Avenue, class divisions amongst the black community followed geography. Class divisions had a polarizing effect, as money and education radically altered the destinies of black middle-class children from those who lived in less affluent neighborhoods across town. Class tensions found expression via an "Eastside vs Westside" discourse. This discourse was reflected in the politics and mechanics of local black political camps affiliated with either the CDC or the Young Democrats—the "reformers" or the "regulars"—though these affiliations were hardly static.²⁹¹ The split between the CDC and the Young Democrats played out over years, however, the two camps collaborated often as black political empowerment was contingent upon a sense of unity; it's hard to say how the factionalism was seen and understood by non-politicos.

While the CDC held sway over West Adams where Dymally lived, the Young Democrats nominated him for national treasurer. Dymally speculates that he was

²⁹⁰ Mark Uhlig, "Jesse Unruh, A California Political Power, Dies," *Los Angeles Times*, August 6, 1987. <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/08/06/obituaries/jesse-unruh-a-california-political-power-dies.html> "Mr. Unruh's critics accused him of exploiting his office and upgrading the Legislature as a way to build his own political machine at the expense of Edmund G. Brown Sr., who was then the Governor. The feud became public, causing a schism in the state Democratic Party. And when Ronald Reagan was elected Governor in 1966, Mr. Brown called Mr. Unruh "the architect of my defeat."

²⁹¹ Raphael J. Sonenshein, *Politics in Black and White: Race and Power in Los Angeles*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 55-56.

nominated because the liberal organization wanted a black man on the slate to establish its civil rights bona fides, but whatever the reason, Dymally ran unopposed and won. After his victory, Dymally sought out counsel from party leadership. With a smile, Dymally states that the three most important people in black politics were “Gus Hawkins, Gus Hawkins and Gus Hawkins.” Assemblyman Augustus F. Hawkins (1935-1962) was the first black man in California history be elected to Congress.²⁹²

Despite his affiliation with Unruh’s Young Democrats, Dymally also attended meetings of the local CDC in his district. If he entered Los Angeles politics serenely unaware of the dynamic political turf war in progress, Dymally learned quickly and played both sides to his advantage.²⁹³

Dymally: “I fell into the Unruh camp purely by accident because I didn’t know the difference between Unruh and Cranston...Subsequently it was a big difference. Unruh had the incumbents who had the appointments to the state’s central committee, the official arm of the Democratic party. Alan Cranston had the California Democratic Council, the clubs...Big difference. The big issue of the time was fair housing, both with Unruh and the CDC, the difference was red China. CDC came out for recognition of mainland China. Jess Unruh opposed red China. That was the difference. And so I was with Unruh purely by accident, the young Democrats I ran into were Unruh people and they controlled the young Democrats.”

²⁹² Claudia Luther and Valerie J. Nelson, “A Pioneer for Black Lawmakers in L.A.,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 13, 2007. <http://articles.latimes.com/2007/nov/13/local/me-hawkins13> Hawkins was the first black politician from California to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives (1963-1991).

²⁹³ Dymally, *From Island Immigrant to US Congress: An American Success Story*. Carlsbad: Motivational Press, 2012. Pg. 54. Dymally writes, “With his very, very fair complexion, Gus was able to straddle the lines separating the black and white worlds and operate smoothly in both. More than a few knowledgeable observers claim large numbers of whites thought Gus was white. That may be true.”

With ruffled feathers in both camps, Dymally straddled the line between the CDC and the Young Democrats and became a minor player in Los Angeles politics by May 1960. As president of the Westside Young Democrats, he organized 14 high school clubs in the Crenshaw area to support R&B singer Johnny Otis's campaign for the California Assembly.²⁹⁴ Via Hawkins and Unruh's support, Dymally was appointed as coordinator of the California Disaster Office. He moved to Sacramento and was appointed a Coordinator of Community Groups for Kennedy. Robert Kennedy once cornered Dymally because he feared that black voter apathy would crush his brother's bid for the presidency.²⁹⁵ At a Democratic Party function that Dymally attended, Governor of Michigan, G. Mennen Williams, echoed RFK's sentiments, saying "this can cause us not only to lose this election, but lose the South as well. If the South is to be defeated on this issue, we must generate a spirited campaign within our minority groups that will sweep us to victory."²⁹⁶ Nixon, a Republican nominee with entrenched support in California, won the state, but only by a narrow margin. The hard-scrabble race fought by Democratic clubs and local leadership did not go unnoticed; their efforts solidified their importance to the Democratic National Party. After Kennedy's victory, Hawkins announced his intention to run for a newly created seat in the House of Representatives. If Hawkins won, his Assembly seat would be up for grabs, a prospect that appealed to Dymally's political ambitions.

²⁹⁴ "Applications for Crossing Guard," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 12, 1960. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564572628?accountid=35804> Otis lost the race and later served as Dymally's congressional chief of staff.

²⁹⁵ Dymally, *From Island Immigrant to US Congress: An American Success Story*, 49. Many ascending black politicians made national connections while working in JFK's presidential campaign in California including Dymally and Tom Bradley.

²⁹⁶ "Gov. Williams Hits Negro Vote Apathy," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 29, 1960. (1934-2005). Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564564581?accountid=35804>

Dymally: "I go to a conference by the United Auto Workers (held in Hot Springs, Fresno County, California). Keep in mind I came out of the UAW. At the conference, Gus Hawkins came to me and said, 'I understand you drove up here, can I drive back with you to Los Angeles?' What he didn't know was that my roommate in Sacramento was Jess Unruh's guy, director of the rules committee, and he had all the inside information and he tipped me off that they had drafted a congressional district for Gus Hawkins. So I said, 'Mr. Hawkins, I understand that you're going to run for Congress. Who's going to be your successor?' He said, 'I don't have anyone.' A rather strange answer for me, a guy 28 years in the state legislature and doesn't have a successor? He was a social conservative, in terms of behavior, not in terms of politics, but very progressive, not with the far left, not with CDC. But there were two phenomenon taking place; one was blacks were moving to West Addams and Crenshaw, and the job only paid \$300 a month. [I said he] ... must be crazy to run for a job like that. And he said 'yeah.' So I go to my friend Willard Murray and I tell him I'm thinking about running for the legislature and he said, 'Listen man, Negroes in South Central would never elect an immigrant with an accent.' Very interesting. I ignored him and decided to run anyways, what do I have to lose. Nothing but my shirt. It was a period of young people. The civil rights movement ignored me, even resented me, some of them. 'Who is this guy from nowhere?' A guy from the Caribbean with an accent, has no record at all, not part of the NAACP, not part of the black bourgeois, running. Well, I had Jess Unruh's support, and I had Cranston's support because the criterion for their endorsement was the endorsement of the clubs and so I went around organizing clubs, some of them were paper tigers, but I met the minimum of twenty registered voters and I got the endorsement."

During his campaign for the 53rd Assembly seat, Dymally righteously harnessed police brutality as a unifying issue in conjunction with the NAACP. Stop Terrorizing Our People, or STOP, called for the removal of racist LAPD Chief William H. Parker, the bonding of all police officers, and the creation and implementation of a civilian review board.²⁹⁷ After being excluded from a mass meeting at the Second Baptist Church in South Los Angeles, Dymally appeared on the dais the following week and was introduced by Malcolm X. Dymally addressed the crowd, “*As-salaamu-alaikum* (Peace be upon you)”. Dymally informed the congregation that although he was a Christian, he had learned the greeting from his Muslim father, and that the issue of police brutality and harassment connected the entire black community; Dymally stated that he had experienced it himself many times on being stopped for interrogation in spite of his middle-class dress and his college degrees. The congregation expressed strong support of Dymally’s call for interfaith recognition of an issue that unified all of black Los Angeles.²⁹⁸ In response to STOP, Dymally recalls with a smile, Chief Parker threatened to deport him. If the issue propelled Dymally’s candidacy, it also set the tone for Dymally’s acrimonious relationship with Parker and the LAPD.²⁹⁹

In 1962, Governor Edmund “Pat” Brown won reelection and Gus Hawkins won his bid to represent the 21st District in the House of Representatives. Backed by a coalition that included the Teamsters Union Democratic Republican Independent Voters

²⁹⁷ “Display ad 25 -- no title,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 17, 1962. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564615193?accountid=35804>

²⁹⁸ Taylor Branch, *Pillar of Fire: American the King Years, 1963–1965*, (New York: Simon & Schuster 1998), 12-13.

²⁹⁹ <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/lapd/race/racerap.html> Parker was Chief of the LAPD from 1950-1966. Over the course of his career, Parker often expressed racial hostility; much the black community of South Los Angeles despised him as a manifestation of white supremacy.

Education Committee, Dymally succeeded Hawkins in the 53rd district and Rev. F. Douglas F.D. Ferrell, the Pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Watts, won in the 55th Assembly District.³⁰⁰ Dymally and F.D. Ferrell joined Byron Rumford of Berkeley, California's, 17th District, as the only three black legislators in the California Assembly.³⁰¹ After Dymally won, he issued a press release that listed his immediate priorities; the creation of a human rights commission as proposed by the Democratic Party, the reintroduction of Assembly Bill 801 which would eliminate discrimination in private housing, the study of police training and practices in California, the reintroduction of AB-802 which would limit oral interviews to 10 percent and make it mandatory for civil service agencies to tape record all oral interviews, and the elimination of tuition fees in adult education.³⁰² After reviewing the materials from advisory committee of the US Commission on Civil Rights, Dymally again pressed for a civilian oversight committee in Los Angeles and the bonding of all police officers.³⁰³ Dymally stated that he had "no feud either with the police or Chief Parker," but was concerned with "the manner in which police speak to people and the manner in which they make arrests and violations of private property."³⁰⁴

³⁰⁰ C. L. Washington, "Hawkins our first in Congress." *Los Angeles Sentinel*, November 8, 1962. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564617134?accountid=35804>

³⁰¹ "Rumford, 'Jackie Robinson of Black Politics,' Dies," *Los Angeles Times*, June 14, 1986. http://articles.latimes.com/1986-06-14/news/mn-10678_1_funeral-services Rumford was California's first black assemblyman and served from 1948 to 1966.

³⁰² "Dymally Objectives," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, November 29, 1962. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564610187?accountid=35804>

³⁰³ "Dymally Bill Stirs Police," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, January 24, 1963. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564667891?accountid=35804> Over the decades, the issue of civilian oversight and community policing have routinely been part of the black political agenda as reforms in the LAPD have a short shelf life and police brutality continues haunt minority communities.

³⁰⁴ "Police Issue," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, January 24, 1963. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564689732?accountid=35804>

Comparatively small in terms of numbers and power, the three black assemblymen were nonetheless potent symbols of black political empowerment that reflected the ascension of black politicians in Los Angeles.³⁰⁵ After Latino Ed Roybal won his Congressional bid in 1962, Gilbert Lindsay was appointed to fill his seat representing the 9th District of the Los Angeles City Council.³⁰⁶ In 1963, Billy G. Mills won in the 8th District, Lindsay was reelected in the 9th, and former LAPD officer Tom Bradley won in the 10th District. Mills and Lindsay were affiliated with Unruh, while Bradley was aligned with the CDC, and so the Eastside vs Westside division was reflected in the makeup of the Los Angeles City Council. In 1961, Dymally sided against Bradley in his bid for a council seat. Bradley and Dymally had a well-publicized, politically acrimonious relationship that stemmed from the factionalism in 1961,³⁰⁷ but Dymally pragmatically supported Bradley in 1963.³⁰⁸ Dymally recalls that while the media was unaware of the connection, he and Bradley enjoyed a loyal friendship that began as a result of their mutual connection to the black fraternity, Kappa Alpha Psi.³⁰⁹ While divided by factional

³⁰⁵ Josh Sides, *LA city limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 131-205. 1963 is often commemorated as the beginning of black political empowerment with the rise of Lindsay, Mills and Bradley to the Los Angeles City Council, however, I believe this commemoration is partly mistaken because black political empowerment in 1962 with the rise of Dymally and F.D. Ferrell in the California Assembly and Hawkins in the House of Representatives.

³⁰⁶ Janet Clayton and Tracy Wilkinson, "Gilbert Lindsay, 1st L.A. Black Councilman, Dies," *Los Angeles Times*, December 29, 1990. http://articles.latimes.com/1990-12-29/news/mn-6470_1_city-council-member Lindsay served as a janitor at city hall where he became extremely influential, served on the local board of the NAACP, and served as a deputy to Los Angeles County Supervisor Kenneth Hahn.

³⁰⁷ "Photo standalone 7 -- no title," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, January 24, 1963. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564678966?accountid=35804> While many politicians and historians of the period often describe a firm divide between the camps led by Unruh and Cranston, and by extension, westside vs eastside factions, Dymally was far from alone in straddling the divide. Internal party politics necessitates compromise, flexibility and inclusive coalition building; Hahn worked with Yorty to secure funding for King/Drew; later, Tom Bradley served as Mayor of Los Angeles for two decades with the support of a multi-racial and multi-factional political coalition.

³⁰⁸ Sonenshein, *Politics in black and white: Race and power in Los Angeles*, 57.

³⁰⁹ Dymally, *From Island Immigrant to US Congress: An American Success Story*, 185. Dymally supported Bradley's Mayoral campaigns and his bids for the governorship.

allegiance and disparate personalities, the new additions to the LACC and their state representatives often put aside their differences in the name of black political empowerment amid continuing racial hostility and white hegemony.

In mid March 1963, the Assembly unanimously passed Dymally's HR No. 37 which called for a study of the practices, training, and the selection of police officers in Los Angeles. The Police and Firemen's Research Association accused Dymally of conducting a witch hunt and attempting to undermine law enforcement. Citing the state's allocation of one million dollars in appropriations for law enforcement, Dymally defended his actions, "I think it most appropriate that we know where our money is going and exactly how it is being used."³¹⁰ In response, George Putnam, a socially conservative television news anchor in Los Angeles, labeled Dymally a "Black Muslim." Johnny Otis refuted Putnam's charge against Dymally and explained that while in the past, conservatives had tarred liberals as communists, in the 1960s, they changed their rhetoric and tarred liberals as either "civil righters" or Black Muslims, as the use of either was a tacit appeal to xenophobic white supremacy. Dymally was proudly pro-civil rights, Otis explained. But understandably, many adherents to Islam rejected Dymally because he was also pro-integration.³¹¹

In late June 1963, the Legislature passed AB 1240, the Rumford Fair Housing Act, which was authored by the bill's namesake along with F.D. Ferrell and Dymally, who stated that the Act was "the single most important law this year, which unquestionably

³¹⁰ "Assembly Passes Bill to Study Police Practices," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, March 21, 1963. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564635518?accountid=35804>

³¹¹ "Let's talk," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, March 28, 1963. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564686470?accountid=35804> In 1960, Dymally organized the Westside Democratic Club to support Johnny Otis' unsuccessful bid for a seat in the California State Assembly. A true renaissance man who made his fortune in music, Otis later served as chief of staff for Dymally during his time in the House of Representatives.

will prove to be a historic step in the elimination of ghettos in districts across the state.”³¹²

During the period, CORE staged a one month sit in on the Capital Rotunda where Mrs. Mari Goldman, head of LA CORE, heard murmurs of retribution against Dymally in response to the authorship and passage of AB 1240. Goldman recalled, “The word was out in the legislature: vote against anything with Dymally’s name on it.” Murmurs took solid obstructionist form and many of Dymally’s motions were blocked. Despite differing political approaches, Dymally supported CORE during its month long demonstration. “Dymally gave us the use of his home and office,” said Goldman, “He was with us every chance he could get free. He said he didn’t agree with us all the time, but we were his people, so he stood by us.”³¹³ Two months later, Dymally and F.D. Ferrell joined Mills, Bradley, Hawkins and Douglas F. Dollarhide—a black politician who joined the Compton City Council in 1963³¹⁴—at the historic civil rights march in Washington, DC.³¹⁵ While segregation and education are often commemorated, the civil rights agenda of the 1960s was a holistic one, implicitly including interrelated elements

³¹² "Dymally Cites Gains in Action by Assembly," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, July 04, 1963. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564666224?accountid=35804>.

³¹³ "CORE Leader Tells Trials of Capitol Sit-Ins," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, June 27, 1963. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564662028?accountid=35804>.

³¹⁴ Esmerelda Bermudez, "Former Mail Carrier Became First Black Mayor of Compton," *Los Angeles Times*, July 9, 2008. <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/jul/09/local/me-dollarhide9> "Dollarhide became the first elected black councilman of Compton by 75 votes in 1963. He was elected mayor in 1969."

³¹⁵ "Comptonites Marched on Capitol, Too!" *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 5, 1963. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564644209?accountid=35804>.

like ghettoization and healthcare, both of which were addressed in the Rumford Fair Housing Act.³¹⁶

The 1963 Civil Rights Act was stalled in committee when President Kennedy was assassinated, yet his attempts to pass it earned him the loyalty of many black leaders like Dymally, who attended and spoke at a CORE sponsored memorial service at the Los Angeles Federal Building. Leader of Los Angeles CORE, Mahalia Jackson emceed the event and stated, "The Negroes must feel this loss doubly, because my good friend President Kennedy was going, more than any other President, to achieve equality for the black man." Before the large crowd, Dymally said "The death of President Kennedy was a loss to the country and the entire world. It is fitting and proper that CORE conduct these services as the president was morally committed to the proposition of equal opportunity for all people. He was my personal inspiration. I hero-worshipped him."³¹⁷ Civil rights leadership lost an ally in Kennedy and were suspicious of LBJ, who had supported segregation in the South as a Senator. Without a supportive administration, the civil rights Movement and progressive progress seemed in jeopardy.³¹⁸ At the state capital a week later, Dymally stated that "any hope of civil rights gains this year died with the President. This uncivilized act sets race relations back to the Civil War. It

³¹⁶ Liberal politicians in the Assembly defended AB 1240 from conservative attacks - like the passage of Prop 13 - but, ultimately, many of the Act's ameliorating components were amended. The long raging battle surrounding AB 1240 reflected the nation's great divide over civil rights and government intervention on behalf of minorities. The scorched earth brand of politics surround AB 1240 continues and is visible in the fight over President Obama's ACA.

³¹⁷ "Memorial Rites Held at Federal Building," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, November 28, 1963. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564642805?accountid=35804>

³¹⁸ Robert Dallek, *Flawed giant: Lyndon Johnson and his times, 1961-1973*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 54-121.

completely destroys any possibility for Negroes to realize any immediate change in this nation as a result of current demonstrations and protests.”³¹⁹

In late February 1964, Dr. John A. Hannah, Chairman of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights appointed Dymally as a member of the California State Advisory Committee to the Commission.³²⁰ A month later, the Democratic Party unanimously endorsed the reelection campaigns of Hawkins, Dymally, and F.D. Ferrell.³²¹ After members of California’s Republican Party called them Fascists, Dymally and F.D. Ferrell held a joint press conference where they refuted the charge and stated, “The Negro community and leadership must be praised for preventing communists and fascist elements from having any role in the struggle for equality.” They warned that unless a sincere attempt was made to solve the racial crisis, it would be impossible to control the activities or behavior of any participant in the freedom movement. Dymally and F.D. Ferrell suggested a series of solutions: a full-time paid human rights commission with the power to appoint city and county level councils, the teaching of black/minority history in American history and government classes, the creation of information centers in areas with high unemployment, the development and implementation of mandatory human relations courses for all law enforcement training programs, and low-cost co-op housing to wipe out existing ghettos.³²²

³¹⁹ “Flashes from Sacramento,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, December 5, 1963. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564627711?accountid=35804>.

³²⁰ “Dymally New Member of Rights Group,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, February 27, 1964. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564723678?accountid=35804>.

³²¹ “Hawkins, Dymally, F.D. Ferrell Get Demo Endorsements,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, March 26, 1964. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564717090?accountid=35804>.

³²² “Assemblymen Scoff at ‘Fascist’ Charges,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, May 14, 1964. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564720732?accountid=35804>.

A growing player in the California Democratic Party, Dymally supported Johnson's attempts to fundamentally alter American society, as when Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 on July 2, 1964. But like many, Dymally was opposed to the War in Vietnam. Why should black men be expected to fight and die in a foreign land in the name of freedoms they did not enjoy back home and fight against an enemy who's self-determination was similarly curtailed by white hegemony and colonization? In 1945, Ho Chi Minh used rhetoric drawn from the US and French constitutions to illustrate the revolutionary connection between the three countries. He communicated in English to avoid misunderstanding, but his nationalist sentiment fell on the deaf ears of western leaders who subscribed to the policy of containing communism and the continuation of French colonization of Vietnam rather than allowing the country independence and self-determination. This policy was revised after the defeat of the French at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu, leading to the Geneva Accords and the partition of Vietnam along the 17th parallel.³²³ Successive American presidents supported the South Vietnamese in their fight against North Vietnam, but with the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution on August 10, 1964, Johnson escalated America's role in terms of manpower, funding and scope.³²⁴ While Ho's rhetoric had changed by 1965, his intent was the same. Yet the Johnson administration was indifferent to Ho's nationalist sentiment, and this galvanized the anti-

³²³ Eric Foner, *Voices of Freedom: A Documentary History Vol. 2*, (New York: WW Norton & Company, 2008), 212-215.

³²⁴ Fredrik Logevall, *Choosing War*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999) 193-333.

war movement.³²⁵ Johnson won reelection against his hawkish opponent, Senator Barry Goldwater, but the war in Vietnam eventually consumed his presidency and buried his liberal legacy.³²⁶ In contrast to most accounts, Dymally believes that LBJ didn't believe in the war, but proceeded anyway.

Dymally: "Deep down in his guts, he didn't think we could win. Hubert Humphrey, after he lost the election, came to Sacramento and I recall a dinner with assembly with a Caribbean speaker, Bob Maretti. I believe Willy Brown was there also. I said to him, cause I had travelled with him to Wisconsin and Florida, 'Mr. Vice President, why did you not give the Salt Lake City speech before?' He said, 'I took it to the President and he said, 'If you give this speech, you're fucked. I will have to support Nixon because the blood of the men in Vietnam would be on your shoulders. What do you do in a case like that?' he says. For those that had private conversations with LBJ, he said that in the final analysis, he didn't think he could win."

Despite his opposition to the war, Dymally supported the president who had attempted to do more for minorities since Lincoln; Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 on August 6, 1965 and promoted the War on Poverty and the Great Society. But beyond supporting Johnson's liberal agenda, Dymally is a political tactician and LBJ was the master of that era. Johnson understood power, Dymally recalls, and he knew how to use it.

³²⁵ *The Fog of War--Eleven Lessons from the Life of Robert S. McNamara*. DVD. Directed by Errol Morris. (2003; USA: Sony Pictures Classics). The Johnson Administration saw the world in the binary of communism vs democracy which clouded out conflicting ideas of nationalist independence. McNamara claims that the American government didn't understand that the Viet Cong were fighting a war of independence after a millennia of being colonized by the Chinese and the French. This is highly suspicious given all the available information and common sense; it exposes the potential for deception and self deception in memory.

³²⁶ Dallek, *Flawed giant: Lyndon Johnson and His Times, 1961-1973*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 238-623.

Dymally: “LBJ, minus the Vietnam War, would have gone down in history as one of the great presidents because he had a masterful control of the legislature, he knew [Senator Robert] Dirksen, he knew how to get things done. To his credit, he predicted to Dr. King that the Democrats would lose the South. Because he knew from personal conversation. He would twist an arm, but the arm would say to him, ‘You know, Mr. President, this thing is not the right way to go’. But [Johnson] would say, ‘I need you.’...He did a lot of good...If you wanna solve poverty, just give me a check. If you have money, you don’t worry about these other things.”³²⁷

As the 1964 election crept closer, politics in the California Assembly mirrored the growing acrimony in American society. The California Republican Committee supported Proposition 14, which would nullify the Rumford Fair Housing Act of 1963 and, alarmed by its activism and its growing militancy, they labeled the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) as an “extremist group.” At a joint press conference, Dymally, F.D. Ferrell, Mills and Lindsay stated, “SNCC workers have worked all summer in the South registering people for the vote, conducting freedom schools and running community centers. Now these people want to call the students ‘extremists’.”³²⁸ The 1964 elections revealed a continuing racial split in politics as Dymally, F.D. Ferrell and Hawkins won reelection and Prop 14 passed with 65% of the vote; it was sponsored by the California Real Estate Association and endorsed by the John Birch Society and Ronald Reagan to the outrage of California’s liberals, minority population and political

³²⁷ Appropriating the language of Milton Friedman to make a Keynesian point, Dymally often playfully deploys weaponized irony as he enjoys both its rhetorical utility and its disarming affect; its akin to Amnesty International appropriating the language of Mao Zedong to advocate for human rights.

³²⁸ "CRA Censured for 'Whack' at SNCC," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, September 10, 1964. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564713890?accountid=35804>.

representation.³²⁹

In late December, Dymally emceed a lecture given by James Baldwin at Lindy's Opera House in South Los Angeles. Baldwin argued that the murders of activists James Chaney, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman that occurred the previous summer, and the subsequent acquittals of their murderers, proved that Americans were not a civilized people. During a Q&A conducted by Dymally, Baldwin responded to a question—likely asked by a white audience member—as to why Baldwin was so bitter against white people, many of whom had supported the civil rights movement, yet now felt alienated by the militant discourse of evolving black radicalism. “I’m not bitter against the white man. You flatter yourself,” Baldwin replied, “I am troubled about a state of mind and heart that allows you to commit the crimes that you do. And I don’t want any more missionaries. I barely survived the first ones. This race issue is not my problem. It is yours. It’s not the American Negro who has to be saved here, it’s you, the American Republic, and you ain’t got much time.” Baldwin pointed out that “no one is fighting for integration. We were integrated a long time ago. What we are fighting for is desegregation. That means, let me out of jail. Maybe I’ll live next to you, maybe I won’t. As for integration. I’m pretty dark, but put me next to an African and see what happened to my grandmother.”³³⁰

³²⁹ Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2003), 168. In 1966, the California Supreme Court ruled that Prop 14 was unconstitutional, and their ruling was affirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1967 in *Reitman v. Mulkey*. However, Prop 14 exposed and enflamed racial tensions surrounding housing and ghettoization in California. The McCone Commission cited Prop 14 as one of many factors that produced the 1965 Watts Riots.

³³⁰ L. M. MERIVETHER. "Baldwin Tells L.A. Audience 'Americans Not Civilized'." *Los Angeles Sentinel*, December 24, 1964. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564690334?accountid=35804>.

In what can only be understood as a result of back-room politics informed by the Unruh camp in Los Angeles, Mills, Dymally and F.D. Ferrell endorsed the reelection campaign of Los Angeles Mayor Sam Yorty against Congressman James Roosevelt (26th District), the oldest son of F.D.R. Previously, Mills had publicly questioned Yorty's sanity, yet he joined Dymally and F.D. Ferrell in founding the Democratic Community Organizations, which opened four "Yorty for Mayor" headquarters in South and Central Los Angeles. Yorty was aligned with Speaker Unruh, who likely brokered the deal. Mills staffer, Willard Murray, served as chairman of "Volunteers for Yorty" in South Central Los Angeles. Murray stated "We feel that once the people see and read what Mayor Yorty has done, they, in their wisdom, will make the proper choice at the polls on April 6."³³¹ But the citizens of black Los Angeles already knew Yorty and his record; despite his racially integrated staff, Yorty was understood as being anti-civil rights. A Machiavellian and conservative member of the Democratic party, Mayor Sam Yorty (1961-1973) had awkwardly drawn support from the black community of South Los Angeles and the white community in the San Fernando Valley.³³² But Yorty had consistently ignored pleas from his black constituency to reform the LAPD, and continued to support LAPD Chief William H. Parker, despite his consistent antagonism of the black community. As Yorty didn't censure Parker, it seems that he tacitly agreed with Parker's rhetoric and action, and in supporting Yorty, Dymally, F.D. Ferrell and Mills

³³¹ "Sentinel's Stand," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, February 18, 1965. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564767582?accountid=35804>. In the early 1960s, Murray switched his party affiliation and pursued a pro civil rights agenda. He worked as a staffer for Billy Mills, and soon after, he worked with Dymally.

³³² Sonenshein, *Politics in Black and White: Race and Power in Los Angeles*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 67-76.

were seen as tacitly supporting Parker.³³³ Politics makes for strange bedfellows, but amid an era of civil rights activism and growing black radicalism, the black community saw this as an act of betrayal. *The Los Angeles Sentinel* reported an immense public outcry—it received hundreds of letters and phone calls. The public felt that their representatives were out of touch, or worse, had sold them out. Dymally was specifically singled out for ridicule because of his long standing public feud with Parker.³³⁴ The outcry can also be understood as an expression of political alienation, as after a century of exclusion from the political process, blacks in Los Angeles found modest inclusion via black political representation in the early 1960s. Yet by 1965—and likely a lot earlier—some members of the black community saw their black representatives as having become part of the *status quo* that they were elected to challenge.

While he was a successful politician, Dymally recalls he often felt he wasn't "black enough" for many of his constituents because of his foreign origin and accent. This can additionally be understood as a reflection of his moderate traditional Democratic agenda which was pro-civil rights, but not radical enough for reformers (who likely saw him as a political anachronism or worse). After a visit to Selma, Alabama, Dymally endorsed LBJ's proposal for a voter registration bill, stating "at stake here is not only the voting rights of several thousand Negroes in the South, but the precepts and ideals upon which this country was founded." Additionally, Dymally affirmed the

³³³ Robert Bauman, *Race and the War on Poverty: From Watts to East LA*, (University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 11-12. Bauman portrays Yorty as a ego-manical political opportunist who nipped at LBJ's ankles on several occasions. Yorty thought that he should have a say in national Democratic Party politics, but he was out of sync because of his anti-civil rights stance.

³³⁴ "DCO Opens Four Yorty for Mayor Headquarters," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, February 25, 1965. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564727973?accountid=35804>. While I've found no consensus, most people I've consulted about this strange political moment assert that Yorty must have offered the men a reward of some sort - perhaps key jobs for blacks - though its hard to know the motivation. People were angry whether or not a sweetheart deal took place, a common part of politics.

effectiveness of local demonstrations held at the Los Angeles Federal Building, saying “after the demonstrations in San Francisco’s Sheraton Hotel, I saw a Negro working in a position in which there had never been one.”³³⁵ Nonviolent demonstrations brought progressive change, though not enough or quickly enough to appease many of Dymally’s critical constituents.

In mid-June 1965, the California Legislature passed Dymally’s AB 580 which mandated the inclusion of black history in California public schools.³³⁶ Dymally recalls that the bill was inspired by his work at 79th Street Elementary School, where he taught history using a textbook in which the black experience in America was nil except for a few accounts on Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver. While seemingly minor in comparison to other groundbreaking legislation of the era, AB 580 was a victory for black empowerment motivated by Dymally’s understanding of his past and present life in politics.³³⁷ In lieu of a complete societal reordering specifically designed to achieve minority uplift—a prospect far beyond anything envisioned by LBJ—education held the most potential to effect progressive change for both individuals and communities. Education had worked for him; it is an underlying theme of his personal narrative that supports his political narrative. Education allowed a vulnerable immigrant to ascend the political ladder in a foreign land despite racial inequity, and

³³⁵ "Dymally Lauds LBJ, Favors Demonstrations," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, March 25, 1965. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564790253?accountid=35804>.

³³⁶ "Law Making Negro History Study Mandatory a 'First'," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, June 17, 1965. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564745764?accountid=35804>.

³³⁷ Dymally, *From Island Immigrant to US Congress: An American Success Story*, 23-30, 61. Dymally later amended the bill to include other minorities. In his auto-biography, Dymally recalls that AB 580 was the first piece of major legislation he authored and was passed by the Legislature, but there is ample evidence to the contrary, and he told me differently. This is one of many examples of the complexity in mixing auto-biography, biography and ethnography.

secure both middle class status and the power to challenge the status quo of minority second class citizenship in California.

Dymally's ascension took place during the most prosperous era ever experienced by most blacks living in Los Angeles; a small minority of black Angelenos had previously made comparatively high wages in Hollywood. Prior to and after his arrival in the 1950s, WWII related industrial manufacturing employment drew the largest wave of the Great Migration, and a postwar expansion of commercial manufacturing created employment until the early 1970s. Manufacturing jobs produced a financial base and a modest black middle class. After racially restrictive housing covenants were outlawed, block busting and white flight changed the racial space of Los Angeles, and many black middle-class families moved to nearby cities like Compton, which had previously barred black settlement. Black middle class children attended well-funded schools—at least for one generation—and later perpetuated the black middle class.³³⁸ Without an American version of the *susu*—the vehicle that lifted Dymally up—uplift to and sustainment of the middle class through education is improbable. For those families that remained in Watts, high unemployment and poor schools produced misery and resentment, and many young men in South Los Angeles saw a world devoid of hope.³³⁹

³³⁸ Interview with Robert Lee Johnson. Personal unrecorded interview 9/16/13. Long Beach, California. Johnson grew up in Compton before the city lost its luster due to a bad economy - in large part because it elected black politician, Douglas Dollarhide, as black mayor and subsequently, many white businesses fled - and later drug related crime. Today, many middle class black Angelenos live in westside neighborhoods like Ladera Heights and Baldwin Hills. A local historian, Johnson interviewed Dymally years before I began my research. He has graciously provided many helpful insights on the history of black Los Angeles.

³³⁹ Paul Robinson, "Race, Space and the Evolution of Black Los Angeles," In *Black Los Angeles: American Dreams and Racial Realities* edited by Darnell Hunt and Ana-Christina Ramón, (New York: NYU Press, 2010) 21-59. During one visit, Dymally and I drove around parts of the area he represented and he pointed out the vacant lots where manufacturing plants once employed many of his constituents. Boeing Company recently that it was moving its manufacturing jobs from Long Beach, California to Seattle, Washington. Boeing jobs produced and sustained much of the city's (white) middle class who will now have to learn an economic lesson long understood by the black and Latino communities of South Los Angeles.

From the black radical perspective—perhaps Dymally’s fiercest opposition—small improvements in education like AB 580 were indicative of the political impotency of black representatives that tried to effect change from within the establishment. Residing in the middle class, Dymally and other black political representatives appeared out of touch with the realities faced by many of their constituents.

While he often traveled nationally to support of Democratic Party politicians and the civil rights movement, Dymally regularly drove southwest from Sacramento to South Los Angeles to visit his constituency. When violence broke out in Los Angeles on August 11, 1965, Dymally was in Portland, Oregon with Assembly Majority Leader Jerome Wally but quickly boarded a plane with the intention of attempting to ease tensions and restore order in Watts.

Dymally: “I got a call from Robert Hall, president of CORE Los Angeles Chapter, [who said] ‘I’m coming to pick you up to go and watch.’ I said ‘Bob, I’m driving a Lincoln, there’s no way in the world we can get through.’ He said, ‘No, the sheriff will protect us.’ So we drove on the corner of Imperial and Avalon, or Imperial and Central, and as I entered into the housing project, this young man said, ‘Where you from, the westside?’ I said, ‘No, I’m one of the people.’ And he said to me that if I was one of the people, here throw it, and he gave me a brick. And Bob Hall took it away from me and threw it. I’ve been asked by people, even by *Time Magazine*, what happened to the brick, but I never did throw the brick, Bob Hall did...I was in a state of confusion, because contrary to what others have said, I never anticipated that. A doctor at Charles Drew University whom I was conversing with recently said, ‘these people on the West Coast don’t really know what a slum is.’ He said, ‘If I come from Philadelphia or Chicago or New York, that’s

where slums exist, these tall buildings [Housing Projects]. That's not the case in Watts. People keep talking about the ghetto, there is no ghetto in Watts.' So I really didn't know what the cause was, what was the anger, what happened, it happened so fast and the [inciting] incident was not unusual. Stopping blacks for traffic violations happened with such frequency and with me also—the LAPD—I was working on a defense career during the Korean conflict, I was working at a defense plant, and I [carpooled] with a German woman, and they would stop us almost every night and so I was used to that. But this exploded unexpectedly with one, if not the best law enforcement group in the country, the CHP. They had no record of brutality.”

Amid the violence, Dymally and Dick Gregory confronted a mob intent on burning down a healthcare clinic operated by Dr. Sol White Jr. The building caught fire, but the men quickly doused the flames.³⁴⁰ Long invested in the potential of the civil rights movement to effect lasting change, Dymally, Gregory and White were a generation older than many of the young men who actively participated in the violence. They championed nonviolence, but understood why the younger generation felt alienated and frustrated. However, Dymally rejects the notion that the slow march of the civil rights movement fueled the violence, as blaming the nonviolent movement for inciting violence only further obscured the concrete realities of poverty and ghettoization. Still, Dymally asserts that violent revolution against oppression is a universal human reaction. Its unpredictable and likely the inciting incident—police brutality that sparked off the violence of 1965 and 1992 in Los Angeles—is simply the final straw.

³⁴⁰ Simeon Booker, “Watts Report: Doctor With 10,000 Patients: Called ‘Odd Ball,’ Medic in Watts,” *Jet Magazine*, April 14, 1966, 16-21.

Dymally jumps through space and time and arrives in the Middle East (presently being transformed by the Arab Spring).

Dymally: “There exists among people who have been discriminated against, and there’s good evidence now in North Africa, there comes a time when it seems unconnected that you explode, and the explosion is taking place unexpectedly in countries that I’ve visited where everything seems very normal. I’ve been to Tunisia, met with the head of state. I went to Egypt, met with Mubarak. I went to Syria, everything seems calm and everyone is united against the West and, boom, everything is exploding. And so it was difficult to comprehend any movement that was taking place. During the course of the [civil rights] movement, no one ever talked about rioting, that was never part of the dialogue. It was peaceful change taking place.”

The civil rights movement he took part in during the early 1960s morphed repeatedly, a reflection of differing reactions to the speed of change within individuals and institutions. By the mid-1960s, with the rise of the anti-war movement, ideological flux seems to have sped up in a curiously short time as contradictory ideologies cropped up and vied for power. Violent revolution in Watts was contrary to the beliefs of the civil rights movement, so it caught many leaders off guard.

Dymally: “My problem is with the ‘prophets’ who claimed they knew it was coming. Some very credible people. I was there in Watts, I was in the movement, I joined the sit-ins in Torrance, for fair housing in Monterey...There was never any feeling of unrest.

After the fact, it’s easy to pretend, ‘I knew it all.’...There are some things that are inexplicable. I said to *Newsweek* that it will never happen again. Either *Newsweek* or *Time*, a black reporter came to me, and I said that it will never happen to me. And [then

in the LA Riots] of 1992, who would've thought that a riot would happen over the arrest and beating of an isolated unknown black, 'cause it happened all the time. The difference was the camera. The difference in the Middle East is the social networking. It has revolutionized, it has brought the anger out, and in this case, again it was difficult to comprehend that a beating of a black which happened with frequency would cause such devastation."

The violence in Watts can be understood as both a riot and a revolution, as it was fueled by racial/economic inequality produced by white hegemony. But the acceptance of a few token black political leaders like Dymally did not constitute true political inclusion, nor did their actions fundamentally challenge poverty and ghettoization in the short-term, as their constituents desired. During the violence and afterwards, Dymally called for calm and criticized the discordant chorus of unelected leaders that fed the hungry press. "Everyone who calls a press conference to make a statement gets identified as a leader until you have more Negro leaders than you have sand on the beach. The Negro citizens don't know whom to follow anymore," stated Dymally.³⁴¹ Amidst upheaval and the threat of continuing violence, traditional political authority vied for supremacy against non-traditional leadership that disregarded the pacifying attempts of the traditional political establishment that had long ignored the black community.

A few days later, Dymally witnessed the LAPD conduct an illegal and violent siege and raid of a local mosque. Without a search warrant, Chief Parker utilized emergency powers made available by Governor Brown's riot proclamation. After the raid, Dymally and the Reverend H.H. Brookins, Bishop of the local African Episcopal Church, once

³⁴¹ "Article 1 -- no Title," *Los Angeles Times*, August 14, 1965. <http://ezproxy.lapl.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/155262747?accountid=6749>.

again called for Mayor Yorty to fire Parker.³⁴² As chairman of the Assembly Industrial Relations Committee, Dymally called for a negotiation session with representatives from the business community, Black Muslims, and local gangs - the Slausons, Black Dragons, and the Red Devils - to discuss long-standing complaints about police brutality, employment, housing, education and social conditions. Dymally said, "Our entire approach up to now has been middle class oriented. We must begin to attack the problem where it exists...These groups have long standing complaints. Whether they are justified or not is not the question. We must take a different approach. We cannot continue to ignore these people."³⁴³ Dymally conducted hearings September 10 and 11 to investigate ways to restore economic stability to the riot area, and he met with a group of teenagers who said they saw little hope of a good education and good employment in their future. Dymally had continuously criticized the LAPD before the violence, but his affiliation with Yorty and Unruh tainted his efforts. Tom Bradley drew from his experience as a former officer to attack both the LAPD and Yorty. Subsequently, he and the CDC arose from the violence as equals to Dymally and the Young Democrats.³⁴⁴

Amid the aftermath of the violence, Governor Brown assembled an investigatory commission led by John McCone. After Dymally and F.D. Ferrell were not included in the commission, Dymally had a heated conversation with the Governor—it seemed

³⁴² "Urge Parker Ouster; Police Attack Muslims," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 19, 1965. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564707009?accountid=35804> Brookins was an influential player in both LA politics and the Civil Rights Movement. Dymally recalled that early in his career, he was advised to align himself with a black church because of its political power. He followed that advice throughout his career.

³⁴³ "Assemblyman Urges Negotiation Session," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 19, 1965. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564713074?accountid=35804>.

³⁴⁴ Sonenshein, *Politics in Black and White: Race and Power in Los Angeles*, 80.

outrageous that they would be excluded from participating in an official inquiry in the area they represented. Dymally recalls that McCone, the epitome of an outsider to South Los Angeles, was viewed with skepticism. McCone lent legitimacy to the proceedings, and the experience was ultimately transformative for the stalwart conservative.

Dymally: "If you select someone by people, McCone was not the right choice, but it turns out he was all right, because it turns out that the Watts Riots changed his conservative CIA [mind]. He began to see another world and he gave it credibility because this was not some far left committee...My view is that they made some very progressive recommendations, two of which survived the test of time, with a little bump in the highway with reference to the hospital. The whole MTS system came out of those recommendations; the Southern California Rapid Transit System."

Both before and after the violence in Watts, engaged community members like Dr. Sol White Jr. championed the idea of a private black hospital in Watts. Dymally and White enjoyed both a professional and personal friendship during the era.

Dymally: "Sol wanted to build a hospital. In those days, hospital construction was based on zoning. The authorities in Sacramento said no because there was a hospital in Dominguez Hills, there was one at 120th and Broadway, there was one in Manchester and Broadway, one in Bellflower, a couple of others. Their position was that LA was well equipped with hospitals. He was denied the opportunity to build the hospital. Where would he have gotten the funds to do this, I don't know. In those days, it wasn't quite as expensive to build a hospital. Now it costs a million dollars a room..."

Armed with the recommendations of the McCone Commission and the support of

Governor Brown, Supervisor Hahn led a campaign to fund the construction of an Los Angeles County community hospital in South Los Angeles. During Hahn's campaign, Dymally worried that Proposition A, a bond measure slated on the June ballot, would fail to pass because white voters would see the hospital as a reward for the rioting of the previous summer.³⁴⁵ Intense press coverage of the police shooting of Leonard Deadwyler and a strike by County Employees over union collective bargaining rights—Dymally picketed with many of his constituents—clouded the campaign in support of Proposition A, which failed to pass by a razor-thin margin. Hahn spun the defeat as a victory, since a majority of voters had supported the effort and called for a change in electoral mechanics. Beyond the spin, Hahn was correct, as winning 66.25% of the vote in most elections equates a firm mandate from the people to proceed. While Proposition A was ostensibly about hospital funding, it had other subtextual meanings: it was an acknowledgment of ghettoization, a refutation of historical inequality, and a vote about disputed history. The outcome hardened hearts on both sides and set the tone for future developments both inside and outside of King/Drew.

Dymally: "Whites said no to Kenny Hahn in the vote, 'we do not want reward rioters.' We said, 'yes, we deserve it because we fought for it.' So there was a lot of emotion involved in the ownership and administration of the hospital."

After the loss of Proposition A, Dymally, Leon Ralph and Bill Greene responded to a rumor that potential funding from the Office of Economic Opportunity would be used to build a 24-hour clinic instead of a hospital. Voicing the concerns of many community members who needed comprehensive healthcare, Dymally envisioned the hospital as

³⁴⁵ Jack Jones, "Dymally Praises Discretion of Police in Watts Outbreak," *Los Angeles Times*, March 17, 1966. <http://ezproxy.lapl.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/155369506?accountid=6749>

an economic and educational tool to combat poverty. Dymally stated that “our poverty funds must not be used to dilute educational and vocational training programs of the federal government which are vitally necessary to relieve unemployment and hopelessness.”³⁴⁶

Dymally campaigned and won his race for the 29th District in the California Senate in 1967, becoming the first black man elected to the Senate in California history.³⁴⁷ Bill Greene succeeded Dymally in the 53rd Assembly District. Gus Hawkins won his reelection bid in the House of Representatives. Black politicians like Dymally made political gains in the 1966 election. However, the state and national Democratic Party sustained heavy losses. After Ronald Reagan defeated incumbent Pat Brown and was elected Governor of California, Leon Washington, Publisher of *The Los Angeles Sentinel* and a friend of Brown for thirty years, wrote that the Democrats lost because they “acted on their principles instead of playing the panic political game. They moved decisively on the issues of civil liberties, peace and civil rights. That portion of the electorate which professed concern for such matters stood up loud and clear on Tuesday and throughout the nation went down in defeat regardless of political identification.” Don Bradley, Brown’s campaign manager, stated that “the white backlash vote unquestionably had a lot to do with Brown’s defeat.”³⁴⁸ Antagonized by black militant rhetoric used by the Republican opposition to whip up a frenzy, American voters

³⁴⁶ “Clinic No Substitute for Watts Hospital: Dymally,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, June 23, 1966. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564785882?accountid=35804>

³⁴⁷ “Dymally’s Wife Sues for Divorce,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, June 16, 1966. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564785429?accountid=35804>. Dymally’s campaign took place during well publicized acrimonious and bizarre divorce.

³⁴⁸ Col. Leon H. Washington, Jr., “Reflections on the General Election,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, November 10, 1966. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564808271?accountid=35804>.

went to the polls and rejected the politics of LBJ and the civil rights movement, yet many liberal politicians continued their drive towards making America a fairer nation.³⁴⁹

After the failure of Proposition A, Supervisor Hahn investigated possible sources of funding for hospital construction in South Los Angeles. Dymally recalls that Hahn encountered intense resistance from political rivals and even from supporters of the hospital project because there were so many disagreements on how to fund the project and who would be responsible for its construction and management. Everyone had suggestions, but nothing panned out. Hahn was wary of stalling the project's momentum, but he considered his options carefully. Proposition A's razor-thin loss was indicative of a divided society and a political process that seemed unfair. The proposition won 62.5% of the vote—a blowout in any other election—but failed to win the required 66.6%. He approached several private investment firms, but found no real partnership options. After the violence in Watts, many businesses would not risk investment in the community. In December 1966, Hahn found a novel approach via a partnership that most people never imagined.³⁵⁰

Dymally: “The hospital was put together by Kenny Hahn over the dead body of [Department of Health Services] (DHS). He bypassed them...Nate Holden who was deputy to Hahn said that DHS, ‘never cared for the hospital.’ Hahn was able to get his colleagues to support his effort on the joint powers agreement. After the voters turned him down, he was pondering the next move, and he was advised about the joint powers agreement, but with whom? [Mayor] Sam Yorty, his adversary. Sam wanted a

³⁴⁹ Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The rise of a president and the fracturing of America*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), 71-108.

³⁵⁰ Arthur J. Viseltar, Arnold I Kisch and Milton Roemer. *The Watts Hospital: A Health Facility is Planned for a Metropolitan Slum Area*, (Arlington: Division of Medical Care Administration, 1967), 46. While lacking detail, this report contains a basic chronology of events and names of participants.

convention center, but he did not have the votes. Hahn was just rejected. So two adversaries got together under the joint powers agreement: Yorty got his convention center and Hahn got his hospital.

The collaboration between Yorty, who aligned with Unruh, and Hahn, who was aligned with Brown, reflected their mutual political pragmatism in which self-interest outweighed ideological difference and factionalism. As before, when he was supported by black representatives from South Los Angeles, Yorty gained Hahn's temporary support, as the two men were still members of the same party that had been beaten badly by the Republicans in the 1966 midterm elections. But the flux signaled by the midterms spoke to a greater societal polarization reflected in the rise of both the conservative right wing and black militancy. Dymally and Greene attended a Black Panther Party event in Will Rogers Park where Stokely Carmichael, Chairman of SNCC, noted that when LBJ announced the 1964 Civil Rights Act, "he declared, 'We shall overcome'...And black people lauded Massa Johnson...But you will not hear him yell 'black power'...We've got to say we are black and beautiful." Dymally and Greene also gave speeches and received cool receptions from the crowd.³⁵¹ As he ascended politically, Dymally recalls that he was rejected by many black radicals; he was pro-integration and pro-multiculturalism. Despite his success, his Trinidadian origins haunted him throughout his career.

Dymally: "Someone said to me that I notice that you were listed on one of those social networks as having an eastern background. I said, 'I found that out recently.' I never played that up during my tenure. I tried to stay away from ethnicity, immigration status...

³⁵¹ "'Black Power' Rally Calm," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, December 01, 1966. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564802981?accountid=35804>.

I was always a Negro.”

And so while he supported black power, it did not always support him. From his new position in the State Senate, Dymally continued to work on behalf of his constituents who desperately needed access to the comprehensive healthcare that only a hospital could provide. Hahn and Yorty’s collaboration via a joint powers agreement cleared the way for funding, but the allotment of Hill-Burton funding was contingent upon passage through the State Legislature, a body deeply divided by ideology and party. Dymally greeted Reagan’s ascension with dread, as now the Republicans had an ally in the Governor’s office who could bolster their efforts to repeal sections of the Rumford Fair Housing Act; they also had the support of conservative Democrats in the Legislature.³⁵² In late June 1967, Senator Stephen P. Teale (D-West Point) tried to block \$4,212,020 in Hill-Burton funding previously earmarked for hospital construction in Watts. Teale believed that state funds should be used to build 40 smaller hospitals for which local communities could afford to provide matching funds, as opposed to funding via instruments like a joint powers agreement. But the funding had already passed a vote, so Teale’s attempt to pass legislation that would block it was seen as underhanded and dishonest. Outraged, Dymally, Greene and Unruh attacked Teale and his supporters in the Legislature, while Hahn mobilized in South Los Angeles bringing over 200 demonstrators to Central Avenue. In response to Hahn’s actions, Senator Ralph C. Dills (D-San Pedro) asked for calm, “I hope we have no more such demonstrations and emotions whipped up by one supervisor. We don’t need excitement or any kind of heat in this matter. If everybody can cool it, as the guys say, we will be better off.” After much

³⁵² Jessie Mae Brown, "Report from Sacramento," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, January 12, 1967. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564852000?accountid=35804>.

acrimony, Dymally and other supporters of the hospital in the Legislature were successful in protecting the funding for the project, but the incident was indicative of deepening political divisions.^{353 354}

Throughout his time in the California Legislature, Dymally consistently called for police reform and specifically for the ouster of LAPD Chief Parker.³⁵⁵ For Dymally and many others, Parker was emblematic of unchallenged white hegemony, a ghost of Los Angeles past that was perpetuated in the pages of the *Los Angeles Times*, which tarred Dymally and other black politicians as being a civil righter, a Black Muslim and a communist.

Dymally: “One writer complained about my shirts. I was wearing pink shirts. The fashion changed from dress shirts being blue and white to different colors and I was in NY and I noticed guys wearing pink shirts...He complained that I was not conforming to the dress code. That’s how prejudiced they were.”

After the violence in Watts and Parker’s death, the newspaper put more energy into investigating stories in South Los Angeles. During the new year of 1968, Dymally praised the small yet meaningful transformation.

Dymally: “The *Times* always came to the defense of the police when there were complaints about the police by civil rights groups. To the *Times*, the late Police Chief William Parker could do no wrong! But times have changed, and so has the *Los*

³⁵³ “Legislators Hopeful State Will Help to Build Watts Hospital,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 23, 1967, Pg.3. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564852041?accountid=35805>

³⁵⁴ “For Watts Hospital: A Sacramento Block,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, January 29, 1967. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564852041?accountid=35804>.

³⁵⁵ “Chief Parker’s Time is Past,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 19, 2009. <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/apr/19/opinion/ed-parker19> Park died on July 16, 1966 after 39 years of service.

Angeles Times."³⁵⁶

Pursued by tenacious black empowerment, white hegemony had loosened its grip by 1968, and Dymally, like others, saw an opening. At a press conference at the Ambassador Hotel in early February 1968, Los Angeles City Councilman Billy Mills announced his intention to run against incumbent Kenneth Hahn for a seat on the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. Mills was supported by Dymally, Leon Ralph and Bill Greene and many other leaders in the black community that thought it was time that South Los Angeles should be represented by a black man. Paradoxically, it seems that Hahn, in part, shared the sentiment, as in 1963, he asked his brother Gordon to step aside so that Gilbert Lindsay could ascend to the Los Angeles City Council. But while Hahn acknowledged the need for black political representation, he ran against Mills anyway. Like many community members, Leon Washington, Publisher of the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, was a moderate who had endorsed Hahn from the start of his career and continued to do so despite the rise of a black opponent. Throughout the race, Mills espoused black empowerment rhetoric that challenged the legitimacy of the white political establishment as personified by Hahn. The LACBOS had long accepted racial inequality and ghettoization, Mills stated, until "it was necessary for the community to practically burn down before the board realized that the area needed a hospital... Incidentally, we still don't have the hospital, just a sign saying where it will be built."³⁵⁷ From the start of his participation in the hospital's creation in 1966, Hahn successfully leveraged the issue to gain the continuing support of his constituents. This can be

³⁵⁶ Dymally, Mervyn M., "Press Paints Negative Side of Race Relations," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, January 25, 1968. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564902147?accountid=35804>.

³⁵⁷ "Councilman Mills to Challenge Hahn in Supervisor Election," *Los Angeles Times*, February 13, 1968. <http://ezproxy.lapl.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/155851264?accountid=6749>.

understood perhaps as both a reflection of white patrimony and of Hahn's astute political ability. In pouncing on the slow progress of the hospital, Mills attempted to harness the frustrations and resentments felt by the black community to overthrow white hegemony after decades of exclusion and ghettoization.

While the campaign was filled with fiery rhetoric, the Mills camp was pragmatic and conscious of the importance of party politics. With the 1968 Democratic Convention on the horizon, the Mills camp joined Westsiders—like rising political star Yvonne Brathwaite and publisher Leon Washington—that endorsed and supported the nomination campaign of RFK.³⁵⁸ Though RFK entered the primary race late, his campaign picked up momentum after LBJ announced his intentions not to run for reelection. Many liberal Democrats wondered if RFK could lead the nation towards a progressive future. The War in Vietnam obscured Johnson's list of accomplishments on behalf of minorities in America like the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. LBJ appointed black Americans to key positions: Thurgood Marshall on the Supreme Court and Robert C. Weaver as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. LBJ's potential successor, Vice President Hubert Humphrey, had a distinguished record and posed a definite challenge to both RFK and Senator Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota. Given their professional relationship that began during JFK's unsuccessful campaign in the California primary, Dymally endorsed and supported RFK. However, Dymally was cautious because "the challenge that Robert Kennedy now faces is a de-escalation of the war and a speed-up of the program to solve the urban crisis."³⁵⁹

³⁵⁸ "What RFK's Candidacy Means to Negroes," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, March 21, 1968. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564899204?accountid=35804>. After a long and prestigious political career, Yvonne Brathwaite Burke succeeded Hahn in the 2nd District and served from 1992-2008.

³⁵⁹ "Negro Vote 'Up for Grabs'," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, April 04, 1968. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564890278?accountid=35804>.

The liberal agenda was dependent upon de-escalation of War in Vietnam so that it could refocus on the War on Poverty at home.

With the “Poor People’s Campaign” of 1968, King and the SCLC pressured Congress to create an “Economic Bill of Rights.” A nonviolent revolution against the War in Vietnam, the PPC was an attempt to connect all races affected by poverty and exclusion. Through its universal appeal for solidarity amidst cultural flux, it can be understood as an attempt by the SCLC to refocus the Democratic Party’s liberal agenda to reflect the leadership of King and RFK.³⁶⁰ Just days after the SCLC’s “Minority Meeting” in Atlanta, Georgia, King flew to Los Angeles to attend a meeting of the California Democratic Council in Anaheim, California. Upon arriving at LAX, King was greeted by his local supporters including Dymally, who drove him to Orange County. Even though it was not their first meeting, Dymally recalls that he was so intimidated by King that he barely spoke during the drive. Before the California Democratic Council in Anaheim, Orange County, King again condemned the War in Vietnam.³⁶¹ Just two weeks later on April 4, 1968, King was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. As he mourned, Dymally reflected on King’s continuous struggle for equality against “power [that] did not yield to those demands. And the alternatives black people needed for self-determination were withheld by a nation rife with racists. Though discouraged by stiffened resistance, Dr. King did not become disillusioned. He continued in the movement. The targets changed, but the strategy remained non-violent. For this he won the Nobel Peace Prize; for this he lost his life; for this we give him our love and

³⁶⁰ Thurston Clarke, *The Last Campaign: Robert F. Kennedy and 82 days that inspired America*, (New York: Macmillan, 2008).

³⁶¹ Dymally, *From Island Immigrant to US Congress: An American Success Story*, 191.

respect.”³⁶²

With Coretta Scott King’s blessing, Hahn renamed the hospital in King’s honor. As this occurred during his race with Mills in which the hospital was a key issue, Hahn’s gesture can be read as being both a political tactic and an earnest tribute to a leader he had supported for several years. Dymally and the Mills camp continued its attacks on Hahn, and its support of RFK. On the night of the election, June 5, 1968, Kennedy was assassinated at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles after beating McCarthy in the California Presidential Primary. Amid a night of horror, black political empowerment in Los Angeles continued its ascension, as Dymally, Greene, and Ralph won their nominations for reelection, and Brathwaite won the nomination for race in the 63rd Assembly District. However, the Mills camp suffered a staggering defeat, as Hahn won the race by a two-to-one margin.³⁶³

Dymally: “We tried to topple him, and he beat the shit out of us with Billy Mills. We figured black power, that blacks are not going to have a white supervisor, and we went after him, and he taught us a lesson. He defeated us in Watts and he defeated us in Billy Mills’s precinct.”³⁶⁴

Like the evolution of the SCLC and RFK, Dymally progressively focused on a universal appeal against poverty and exclusion. He saw no contradiction between black empowerment and integration though this inspired cognitive dissonance in the minds of

³⁶² Mervyn Dymally, “Sacramento Report,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, April 11, 1968. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564888606?accountid=35804>.

³⁶³ “Election Results,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, June 09, 1968. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564902535?accountid=35804>.

³⁶⁴ After the 1968 campaign, Dymally met with Hahn to clear the air. Dymally recalls that Hahn was understanding and not vindictive. After decades of working together, Dymally is cagey about sharing his personal feelings about Hahn, but he praises Hahn’s professional abilities.

some of his constituents. Dymally travelled to Coachella Valley, California to march alongside Cesar Chavez, leader of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (AFL-CIO). After his visit, Dymally observed that the conditions in the vineyard areas were “miserable and the wages paid are a national infamy.” Dymally joined 13 legislators who urged the growers to negotiate with reps from the UFWOC.³⁶⁵ While Dymally earnestly believed in Chavez’s cause, he also was aware of the growing number of Latinos in his constituency and changes in LA politics. If the liberal agenda were to survive assassinations and electoral defeats, minorities and liberals must work together. But amid King/Drew’s creation, contradictory beliefs about its purpose and utility—black versus multicultural—created strife among its diverse founders, much of which seems still unresolved. But like 1968, 1969 offered an opportunity for both black empowerment and multicultural unity.

“I run to seek a reconciliation among men—rich and poor, young and old, black and white—where there is now often fear and mistrust,” stated Tom Bradley during his formal announcement that he would run against incumbent Sam Yorty to be Mayor of Los Angeles.³⁶⁶ From the start of his political career, Bradley was affiliated with Alan Cranston’s California Democratic Council, putting him at odds with many black politicians affiliated with Jes Unruh’s California Federation of Young Democrats. Bradley and Dymally’s early political spats reflected the division between the camps, even though Dymally often straddled the ideological fence between them. But in 1969, Dymally joined a growing multicultural coalition of liberal Jews, Latinos, and blacks that backed

³⁶⁵ Mervyn M. Dymally, “Sacramento report,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, July 4, 1968. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564895420?accountid=35804>

³⁶⁶ A.S. Young, “Mayoral Candidate,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, March 13, 1969. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564947571?accountid=35804>. A. S. Young was commonly known as Doc Young.

Bradley's mayoral ambitions. Among many others, Bradley was supported by Henry Waxman, Latino Congressmen Ed Roybal (30th District), Hawkins, Brathwaite, Green, Mills and the Reverend James E. Jones.³⁶⁷ Bradley took an early lead in the race, but Yorty soon caught up in the polls by playing to the fears of conservative white voters in the San Fernando Valley; they imagined that Bradley's election would signal the transformation of society by black radicalism: Yorty won reelection. "One might argue that in 1969, there was an ideological coalition linking Blacks and white liberals and a class coalition linking Blacks and poor Latinos," writes political scientist, Raphael Sonenshein, "But there was not yet a majority."³⁶⁸

Defeated but not dismayed, the liberal multicultural coalition grew as the 1960s gave way to the 1970s. The organization and construction of King/Drew progressed at a slow but deliberate pace, a metaphor of civil rights progress and civic inclusion in the black community in South Los Angeles. In the Senate, Dymally increasingly felt accepted by his colleagues and progressive ascended to the upper realms of political power. He chaired the Democratic Caucus, the Committee on Elections and Re-Appportionment, through which he created the first Latino Senate district for Alex Garcia.³⁶⁹ Dymally rose on his political savvy and charm—Dymally possessed these in great abundance—but Dymally made a major public relations gaff in early February 1970 when he attended the California Negro Leadership Conference with Dr. Julian Nava (an uninvited guest and the first Latino to serve on the Los Angeles Board of

³⁶⁷ "Mayor Here to Aid Tom Bradley," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, February 20, 1969. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564927362?accountid=35804> Reverend James E. Jones was a member of the McCone Commission and played a major role in the Civil Rights Movement. Waxman later served in Congress alongside Hawkins.

³⁶⁸ Sonenshein, *Politics in Black and White: Race and Power in Los Angeles*, 96.

³⁶⁹ Dymally, Mervyn M. *From Island Immigrant to US Congress: An American Success Story*, 64.

Education). Nava had recently announced his intention to run for the office of Superintendent of Public Instruction against black physician Dr. Wilson C. Riles. Following Riles's scheduled speech before an audience of approximately 200 listeners, Nava made an impromptu speech. Believing Nava's remarks to be patronizing, *Los Angeles Sentinel* writer Booker Griffin became so incensed that he rose and lambasted Dymally for bringing Nava to a black conference, and led a walkout by the majority of the audience. Dymally was scheduled to speak the following day, but upon hearing rumors of retaliatory threats, reportedly, he canceled and left the conference early.³⁷⁰ Days later, Dymally stated that he had nothing to do with Nava's uninvited appearance—their appearance together was mere coincidence—and he denied that he fled after the rumors of retaliation.³⁷¹

More often than not, Dymally wisely ignored challenges to his authority from his constituency. He successfully employed a folksy charm to great effect, but he also knew how to throw a punch through print. Responding to vague negative criticism, Dymally stated that blacks weren't swayed by militant rhetoric, and "to suggest that blacks are stupid or dumb when they make a decision in politics is, it seems to me, to underestimate their intelligence...I think blacks are tired of those who constantly want to destroy. I am very distressed by the constant downgrading of the back community by those who aspire to lead it. You can't go about ranting and raving and thinking you are

³⁷⁰ Jim Cleaver, "Griffin Leads Mass Walkout," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, February 05, 1970. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564995323?accountid=35804>.

³⁷¹ Jim Cleaver, "Dymally and Riles Tell about Leaders Confab," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, February 12, 1970. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/564977235?accountid=35804>. Reporters rarely play a leading role in the story they're covering. While I don't know much about Griffin, I believe that his strong reaction to Nava and Dymally illuminates the culture of that era.

the one with a monopoly on honesty or integrity.”³⁷² It seems likely that Dymally knew that they would never accept him because of all his differences and found validation for his beliefs amongst the supporters of the growing liberal multicultural coalition that was changing Los Angeles politics.

Like much of the South Los Angeles community, Dymally was overjoyed when King/Drew finally opened on March 27, 1972. During its creation period, Dymally recalls, King/Drew represented more than just a medical complex. It had multiple mandates and meanings, and so it was burdened with enormous and possibly debilitating expectations even before it opened to the public. Despite its existence as a multicultural institution, it was largely regarded by the community as the only black hospital and medical school west of the Mississippi. It was to be a community hub, a source of employment, and a site for education beyond medicine; it was seen as a beacon of progress and inclusion. However, Dymally recalls that the divisive politics of race and ideology surrounding King clouded that optimistic vision of empowerment. Dymally ticks off the list of players; the Supervisor, DHS, King administrators and staff, Drew administrators and staff, community activists. Politics defined the orientation and staffing of the institutions from the start and this led to some disturbing results.

Dymally: “King never really had professional administrators. It was easy to name someone close to the supervisor. So that we had a supervisor’s appointee.”

Simon: “And that was acceptable?”

Dymally: “Yeah, cause things were moving along fine then. But (later) there was a lot of mismanagement not only on the county (level), but some of the doctors came late and

³⁷² A.S Young, “Senator Mervyn Dymally: A 24-Hour Man,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, July 06, 1972. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/565034938?accountid=35804>.

left early. It is alleged that one doctor when called back to the hospital was on his way to the golf course...There was a lot of carelessness at that hospital...There were decent well-meaning people, but give me the assignment at NASA. Dymally, a member of Congress, with a PhD, he'll be able to do it. I know nothing about NASA. These were good people. But managing a hospital is a totally different subject. You take some guy from Hahn's administration and you bring him out here to the hospital—he has no experience managing a hospital—it's a totally different ballgame.”

Dymally and Hahn's relationship comes back into focus. Regardless of race, patronage is an integral part of politics, and this reality threatens the American misconception of itself as a meritocracy, a mythology perpetrated by white hegemony. It would be easy for Dymally to criticize Hahn for the failures of some of his appointees—the two men had some battles—but after decades working inside the establishment, Dymally defends his former adversary because he understands the nature of politics. Dymally: “Can you blame the supervisor, who is not the manager of the hospital? Why don't you blame him for the potholes? Why don't you blame him for the inadequate transportation, why do you single out the hospital and blame him? DHS was always a reluctant suitor. It was like a fixed marriage. They had no choice, it got fixed [like] in India. They should've gone back and found a better hospital administrator. Here's another problem. Normally, we Californians look to the East for leadership, and it's always bombed. Let me cite you some [examples]: MTA, LAPD, LAUSD...This school, Charles Drew. All these sinners eventually get fired or quit or resign. They don't last cause they don't understand California political culture.”

Dymally's office at the Drew School is a museum of memories. The walls are crowded with photographs of Dymally posed with iconic leaders like Robert Kennedy and Caesar Chavez dating back to the 1960s. In 1975, Dymally left the State Senate and became the first black Lieutenant Governor in California history (1975-79). In a photo from the era, Dymally and Governor Jerry Brown shake hands and wear practiced smiles.³⁷³ In 1978, Dymally's reelection campaign was derailed after an aid to a Republican State Senator spread a rumor that Dymally was about to be indicted on corruption charges; while the rumor was untrue, Dymally lost the race.³⁷⁴

In 1980, Dymally was elected to represent California's 31st District in the US House of Representatives.³⁷⁵ After his dramatic ascension in California politics, Dymally began another climb as part of House Speaker Tip O'Neill's majority which opposed President Ronald Reagan. Amid the cold war hostility and US embargo of Cuba, Dymally became an unofficial go-between, meeting with Fidel Castro repeatedly during visits to Cuba. Castro agreed to be interviewed by Dymally, Dr. Jeffrey Elliot, and

³⁷³ While I wanted to ask about his relationship with Governor Brown, it related to a different period of his political life then was relevant to my inquiry. Much later, I heard rumors that the two men had a solid professional relationship, but were never close. At his funeral, Brown praised Dymally, "Mervyn Dymally was an extraordinary man who spent his life breaking ground and advancing the cause of civil rights and equality. He was a thinker and a doer, bearing deep knowledge but never hesitating to take action where action was warranted." "Leaders pay tribute to legislator Mervyn Dymally on his death at 86." *The Daily Breeze* (10/07/12). <http://www.dailybreeze.com/general-news/20121008/leaders-pay-tribute-to-legislator-mervyn-dymally-on-his-death-at-86>

³⁷⁴ After he voiced opposition to the War in Vietnam, LBJ had the IRS investigate Dymally in retaliation. In the early 1970s, Dymally allegedly used his position for financial gain, but he was never charged. His career survived the rumors, and they indicate the smear tactics perpetrated by political opposition.

³⁷⁵ Dymally, *From Island Immigrant to US Congress: An American Success Story*, 95. Understandably, Dymally's museum is incomplete as it doesn't contain images that would haunt him; the era witnessed amazing gains and tragic losses. During a trip to visit his family in Trinidad, Dymally travelled to "Jonestown," Guyana to ascertain the safety of the daughter of an associate who had moved to Guyana with other members of the Peoples Temple. Dymally was greeted and given a tour of the area by Jim Jones, and he met with his associate's daughter, who was unwilling to return to the US. Amid his reelection loss, Dymally's close friend, Congressman Leo Ryan and four others were murdered by members of the Peoples Temple on the orders of Jim Jones, who subsequently convinced more than 900 of his followers to commit suicide. This is one of the rare entries in his auto-biography where Dymally seems strained, which is likely because Republicans attacked his judgement on the issue of Jones.

Dymally's Chief of Staff, Kenneth Orduna; the recordings of their nearly 26 hour conversation were later published in two books, *Nothing Can Stop the Course of History*³⁷⁶ and *Fidel by Fidel*.³⁷⁷ Its hard to know the nature of Castro and Dymally's relationship, as the two men were separated by politics and ideology. Like many moderate social liberals, Dymally admires aspects of the Cuban system, despite its authoritarian nature. Amid the poverty exacerbated by the embargo, Castro's permanent revolution provides free access to comprehensive healthcare for all Cubans. While socialized medicine is common throughout the West, American politicians like Dymally who support the concept seem a small and lonely minority. Additionally, the Cuban education system is first-rate, free, and entrance is based on merit; the Latin American Medical School in Havana trains thousands of doctors from around the globe, including medical students from America.³⁷⁸ King/Drew is relatively small in comparison to the LAMS, but their intent and utility are the same: to challenge poverty through medicine, education and employment, as well as the production of multiracial doctors to serve poverty-ridden communities.

In 1993, Dymally retired from Congress. He served on boards, worked as a consultant, and met with various heads of state around the world. Dymally says that while he enjoyed aspects of his retirement, he missed the frenetic pace of his old life. He enjoyed working long hours and being part of a game he loved. "If he doesn't out think you or out-maneuver you, he surely will out-work you," said Richard Morris,

³⁷⁶ Fidel Castro and Jeffrey M. Elliot, and Mervyn M. Dymally, *Nothing can stop the course of history*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1986).

³⁷⁷ Fidel Castro, *Fidel by Fidel: An Interview with Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz, President of the Republic of Cuba*, (New York: Wildside Press LLC, 1996).

³⁷⁸ Dymally, *From Island Immigrant to US Congress: An American Success Story*,130.

Dymally's chief administrator in the California Senate. "He never relaxes. He doesn't know what to do when he has nothing to do. He hates to see holidays come around because they slow him down."³⁷⁹ Dissatisfied by the candidates vying for his former Assembly District (53rd), Dymally, at 76 years old, campaigned and won the race for the seat in 2002. Termed out of the Assembly in 2008, Dymally fought a tough race for a State Senate seat, but lost the race to his rival, Rod Wright, who was nearly 30 years younger than Dymally. Dymally's days on the public stage came to an end, but he didn't give in to age and retire. Instead, he accepted a professorship and became the Director of the Urban Health Institute and CRDMS, where he utilized a lifetime of political connections on behalf of the school he had supported since its inception.³⁸⁰ The funding for King Hospital came together earlier than the Drew School. After Spellman and Mellinkoff secured initial startup costs via an NIH grant, money still had to be found for expansion and annual budgets. Dymally successfully arranged longterm funding for the Drew School via state legislation.

Dymally: "[I remember meeting with the] Charles Drew Medical Society of Los Angeles with a psychiatrist at UCLA, J. Alfred Canon, Leroy Weeks, a prominent Republican and surgeon. Al goes to the society and promotes the notion of a postsecondary medical school to train doctors to practice in the underserved areas. Dr. Weeks and Dr. Hank Williams went to Hahn and the coalition of USC and UCLA and LA County and the Medical society was assembled and Dr. Mitchell Spellman, assistant Dean of Howard was hired to be the dean of the post graduate school. And as most experiments, they

³⁷⁹ William Yardley, "Mervyn M. Dymally, Who Broke Racial Barriers in California, Dies at 86," *New York Times*, October 9, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/09/us/mervyn-dymally-who-broke-racial-barriers-in-california-dies-at-86.html?_r=0

³⁸⁰ Jean Merl, "Mervyn M. Dymally, Former State Lieutenant Governor, Dies at 86." *Los Angeles Times*, Oct 9, 2012.

ran out of money. They came to me under the mistaken notion that I represented the district. Actually, I stopped at Imperial, a block away. To introduce legislation to study the series of medical schools in California, the hope being that a study would prove that there was a need for a medical school. Reagan vetoed the bill because the department of finance claimed there was a surplus of doctors in California. There were in the suburbs, but not in the underserved areas...I then introduced a resolution. Again, it passed, but it had no force of law as is the case with a resolution. So I go back to Al Canon, and I ask him, 'What are you guys really looking for?' [Canon said,] 'We need some money.' I went and drafted legislation to provide state funding for the school. The legislative council said, 'Wait a minute, no so fast. Why? The state constitution of California prohibits gifts of public funds to private schools. So you can't fund Stanford, USC, or Loma Linda. So what is our option? Why don't we affiliate with the University of California, Board of Regents, with UCLA.' Out of that was born SP1026-1973.³⁸¹ Now, Reagan had a kitchen cabinet headed by a guy named Salvatore. Dr. Leroy Weeks was a Republican and I don't know if Mitchell Spellman was and so they got the Republicans to talk with Reagan to sign the bill. And it started with a modest \$3 million and that was the beginning of the relationship between the Charles Drew Medical Society and the Charles R. Drew Post Graduate Medical School."

The creation and passage of SP 1026 was an expression of faith on Dymally's part that poverty could be challenged by providing access to education; Dymally supported the institution in other ways long after SP 1026. In August 2010, the \$43 million dollar

³⁸¹ "State Awards \$1.2 Million to Drew Medical School," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 18, 1973. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/565070735?accountid=35804>.

Mervyn M. Dymally School of Nursing opened with much fanfare.³⁸² In explaining why the school was named in his honor, Dymally downplays his importance and says that he was part of the lobby that successfully persuaded Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to find money in the state budget for the expansion of the Drew School. Whatever Dymally's true feelings, he quickly moves on to the subject of Barack Obama, who is being simultaneously attacked on the right by the Birther nonsense of Donald Trump and the Tea Party, and on the left by critics like Cornell West and Tavis Smiley, who feel that the president has abandoned his black base. Dymally expounds about the importance of supporting the first black president, who after all, cannot give preferential treatment to blacks just because of his racial identity.

Mervyn Dymally passed away on October 7, 2012, at the age of 86. Before he died, Dymally completed his autobiography, which reads like a travel journal, but is much more. After a lifetime of battling with the white press and Republican opposition, Dymally's tome allows him the last word, and to define himself via a medium he found difficult and unmanageable to the end. Political legacy or personal history? Somewhere in middle is the real Dymally.³⁸³ Amid the story of King/Drew's creation, Dymally's voice illuminates the dynamics and meaning of black political and civic inclusion as a result of the civil rights movement. Like the hospital itself, Dymally's life was defined by empowerment and enfranchisement, but he was not alone in the struggle for

³⁸² Yussuf J. Simmonds, "The Mervyn Dymally School of Nursing," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, August 19, 2010. http://www.lasentinel.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3652:the-mervyn-m-dymally-school-of-nursing&catid=65&Itemid=155 Simmonds graciously consulted with me early in my research. It was only after Simmonds vouched for me that Dymally consented to meet with me at Drew.

³⁸³ After one interview session, Dymally led me into a large room at Drew that contained a large quantity of unorganized documents about King/Drew. I tenaciously tried to gain access to these archives through President David Carlisle, but ultimately, I was unsuccessful. The last time I saw Dymally, he stated that he had tried to convince Carlisle to allow me access to the documents, but was he too found it impossible.

empowerment that continues in his absence in South Los Angeles.

Chapter Six: Community Memory of the Creation of King/Drew

Echoing the populist sentiment that inspired President Lyndon Baines Johnson to enter politics, LBJ's 1964 State of the Union declared that amid an era of affluence, the nation would fight a war on poverty and racial inequality in the pursuit of a Great Society. The war would be fought on all fronts by an army that included the multiracial poor themselves, a sense of agency based in community empowerment and individual self-determination.³⁸⁴

“Very often a lack of jobs and money is not the cause of poverty, but the symptom. The cause may lie deeper in our failure to give our fellow citizens a fair chance to develop their own capacities, in a lack of education and training, in a lack of medical care and housing, in a lack of decent communities in which to live and bring up their children.”

“But whatever the cause, our joint Federal-local effort must pursue poverty, pursue it wherever it exists—in city slums and small towns, in sharecropper shacks or in migrant worker camps, on Indian Reservations, among whites as well as Negroes, among the young as well as the aged, in the boom towns and in the depressed areas.”³⁸⁵

With a rare power to influence Congress, Johnson's liberal managerial vision—a continuation of FDR's progressivism—took shape as he signed into law a plethora of interconnected legislation that sought to fundamentally restructure American society for the betterment of all its citizens. At the heart of the War on Poverty was the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 (EOA), which provided government funding and technical support to private and nonprofit agencies for community action programs developed

³⁸⁴ Robert A. Caro, *The Passage of Power: The Years of Lyndon Johnson*, (New York: Random House LLC, 2012).

³⁸⁵ President Lyndon Baines Johnson's Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union. January 8, 1964. [As delivered in person before a joint session]. <http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/speeches.hom/640108.asp>

with “maximum feasible participation” of the poor.³⁸⁶ With the passage of the EOA, the Office of Economic Opportunity led by Sargent Shriver collaborated with Community Action Agencies to plan and carry out Community Action Programs.³⁸⁷ This endeavor to reshape America was guided by task forces comprised of academics and government experts that engaged in a wide-ranging debate on the nature of poverty and how all levels of government could collaborate with communities to best challenge inequality. Johnson’s emphasis on community participation can be traced to the Committee on Juvenile Delinquency (1961). The committee relied on the findings of sociologists Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin whose “differential opportunity theory” asserted that increases in juvenile delinquency were a result of the scarcity of legitimate avenues of advancement. It could be challenged via federal investment in job training and education; each solution must be specifically tailored to meet the community’s needs; each solution should ideally engage the poor themselves in the process of defining and implementing the solution. While their work focused on juvenile delinquency, Cloward and Ohlin’s theory applied to all forms of engagement of poverty and was the underlying theory of the War on Poverty and the Great Society.³⁸⁸ The Assistant Secretary of Labor to Kennedy and Johnson, Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, commonly referred to as the Moynihan Report, posited a pathology of cyclical poverty and dependency that was exacerbated by welfare (AFDC) given to single black mothers. The Moynihan Report argued that the lack of a nuclear family led to the infantilization of boys and men and that the expansion of welfare exacerbated

³⁸⁶ Economic Opportunity Act, "Statutes at large." *Volume XLIX, Section 276* (1964).

³⁸⁷ Robert Dallek, *Flawed Giant*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

³⁸⁸ Richard A. Cloward and Lloyd E. Ohlin. *Delinquency and Opportunity: A Study of Delinquent Gangs*, (London: Routledge, 2013).

black dependency; it called for affirmative action programs that would lead to self-sufficiency.³⁸⁹ The Left charged that the Moynihan Report concentrated too much on slavery and ignored 150 years of oppression and discrimination; they regarded Moynihan an anachronistic purveyor of scientific racism who had betrayed the civil rights movement. Psychologist William Ryan lambasted the Moynihan Report for “blaming the victim,” as it shifted the focus of the discourse on poverty from structural inequality to cultural and behavioral disparity within American society.³⁹⁰ Amid a tension filled public discourse on the course of progressive liberalism, Moynihan left the Johnson Administration in July of 1965, and while he continued to support aspects of the War on Poverty, he publicly criticized the effectiveness of community action programs. “Maximum feasible participation” in the form of community action programs, Moynihan stated, created “maximum feasible misunderstanding” and failed to produce observable and affirmative results by 1966.³⁹¹

The discussion of juvenile delinquency and community engagement—if not yet direct community participation—took form in Los Angeles in 1962, when Los Angeles County and the City of Los Angeles, via a joint powers agreement, created the Youth Opportunities Board of Greater Los Angeles (YOB). YOB was comprised of representatives from city, county and state departments, and from local manufacturing, churches and civic groups; it had representatives from agencies like the Boys Club,

³⁸⁹ Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Lee Rainwater and William L. Yancey. *The Negro family: The Case for National Action*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1965). Moynihan based his reports on data he studied while at the Department of Labor during the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations.

³⁹⁰ William Ryan, *Blaming the Victim*, (New York: Random House LLC, 1971).

³⁹¹ Lawson Bowling, *Shapers of the Great Debate on the Great Society: A Biographical Dictionary*, (Santa Barbara, California: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2005). Bowling asserts that the press, aka Robert Novak, was responsible for boiling down Moynihan’s ideas to a short digestible form that mischaracterized his meaning; additionally, Bowling states that William Ryan responded to Moynihan’s Report without first having read it.

Welfare Planning Council, the Urban League, the Catholic Welfare Bureau, and the Council of Mexican-American Affairs. YOB focused on coordinating efforts throughout the city via a web of centers established by its collaborative partners (for example, the Urban League was in charge of establishing an Information and Complaint Outpost in Watts). YOB contained a Citizen Advisory Committee, but it neither had much influence nor the ability to empower the poor via community participation. Federal funding flowed through the traditional channels of government, resulting in prolonged political squabbles over control of the newly supplied federal purse that led to delays in the implementation of OEO programs and funding. Local black leaders like Councilman Tom Bradley battled Mayor Sam Yorty over control and dispersion of funds. Like many in the black community, Bradley viewed black participation via control and dispersion of funding to be essential for efficacy and true empowerment—they did not welcome another type of welfare dolled out by white politicians.³⁹² In response, Watts resident and United Auto Workers representative Ted Watkins formed the Watts Labor Community Action Committee (WLCAC) to pursue black empowerment and community participation in the War on Poverty. With anti-poverty funds, WCLAC provided jobs and social services after the violence of 1965. Watkins was one of many community members that rose to the opportunity to define how federal funding would bring change to the area. The WCLAC continues the War on Poverty in South Los Angeles, working in collaboration with programs created in the same era such as Head Start, Jobs Corps and Volunteers in Service to America (Vista).³⁹³ Community participation was a

³⁹² Robert Bauman, *Race and the War on Poverty: From Watts to East LA*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008), 19-20.

³⁹³ Gwendolyn Mink and Alice O'Connor, eds. *Poverty in the United States: An Encyclopedia of History, Politics, and Policy*. Vol. 2. (New York: Abc-Clio Inc, 2004), 780.

collaborative action that included community members, the black politicians that ascended in the early 1960s, and local black clergymen like African Methodist Church Reverend H.H. Brookins, president of United Civil Rights Council of Los Angeles. Brookins was integral in black politics in Los Angeles and marched with King in the South as part of the national civil rights movement.³⁹⁴ In collaboration with other vested groups, the WCLAC pursued the creation of King/Drew as the institution had the potential to holistically challenge the manifestations of poverty and racial inequality in South Los Angeles.³⁹⁵

Chapter Six utilizes the memories and perspectives of two members of the black community of South Los Angeles that rose to prominence by engaging in the local democratic participatory process and the national civil rights movement as it led to the creation of King/Drew and the empowerment of an entire community. In Robert C. Farrell's profile and memory, the reader sees the progressive ascent of a political strategist. During King/Drew's creation era, Farrell was an civil rights activist and journalist before becoming a political insider. In focusing his analysis on the meanings of the medical complex, Farrell's voice challenges ideas of truth and mythology and places the hospital within a greater political, historical and ideological context.

Alma Reaves Woods is most famously known as the woman who brought a new library to Watts—the result of decades of political activism within the community—yet the library is just one example of her long commitment to civic reform. Like many community members, Woods has been a constant voice in the participatory discourse

³⁹⁴ Douglas Martin, "H.H. Brookins, Influential A.M.E. Bishop, Dies at 86," *New York Times*, May 25, 2012. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/26/us/h-h-brookins-ame-bishop-and-civil-rights-mentor-dies-at-86.html>

³⁹⁵ Bauman, *Race and the war on poverty: From Watts to East LA*. Vol. 3., 76.

that shaped King/Drew since its founding. Through her memories and perspectives, the reader gets a sense of what it means to be in the whirlwind of activism for more than half a century and how that struggle shaped a single life that shaped the lives of countless others. While the community she worked for has changed, Woods's sense of mission has not. As a community elder, she continues to play a role in addressing a wide range of issues that affect the inhabitants of South Los Angeles. Through their memories, the reader sees a journey west for a generation of black migrants who left the South behind for a new life in Los Angeles where they found an opaque freedom contrasted by ghettoization and new opportunity. For the local black community, King/Drew's creation represented the fruition of part of a greater dream of self-sufficiency, self-determination, and civic inclusion amid a turbulent and dynamic process of black empowerment and inclusion.

Robert C. Farrell

Like many of his generation, Robert C. Farrell's life can be understood as a reaction to the civil rights movement and the Cold War. We were a young nation just barely three hundred years old, Farrell marvels, we came so far so fast! But Farrell's optimistic nationalism is tempered by his identity as a black man born and raised in a country still defined by its original contradiction: a revolutionary conception of liberty created by white slave-owning humanists. Under the guise of freedom and democracy of the early Cold War, America subordinated many national liberation movements around the globe, a new imperialism that reflected the nation's continuing racial hostility and segregation. Amid international criticism and the civil rights movement, America

was forced to redefine itself from a bastion of white hegemony to a multiracial nation.³⁹⁶
We are a work in progress, Farrell asserts, and there's so much more work to do.³⁹⁷

Robert C. Farrell was born on October 1, 1936, in Natchez, Mississippi. Farrell proudly points out that he hails from the same state as Gilbert Lindsay, who represented the 9th District of LACC (1962-1990), and Ted Watkins, founder of the Watts Labor Community Action Committee.³⁹⁸ Like Tom Bradley, Farrell points out that the majority of successful civil rights-era black Los Angeles politicians and activists of the 1960s came from the South. It can be argued that migrants escaping the harshness of Jim Crow grasped at the political opportunities open in Los Angeles. Whereas insiders are positioned within a given or static paradigm due to their relations within a community, outsiders often see new avenues or a more fluid sense of the possible. Farrell asserts that migrants succeeded because they weren't limited by pre-existing concepts derived from loyalty or belonging.

Farrell was raised in New Orleans until 1946 when his mother took him to live in Newark, New Jersey, where she worked in a Conmar zipper factory. Later, the company offered her a job at a new facility in Los Angeles. Spurred by the promise of better wages and the possibility of a better life, mother and son boarded a train for Los Angeles in 1952 as part of the largest wave of the Great Migration. Walking out of Union

³⁹⁶ Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011), 9-10.

³⁹⁷ Interview with Robert C. Farrell. Recorded personal interview 9/01/11, 9/21/12, San Pedro, California. Farrell graciously consulted me on many occasions via unrecorded phone calls and texts. On 5/19/14, Farrell spoke before my Modern American History class at Los Angeles Harbor College; the amazingly well received performance reiterated much of what Farrell said during our many long conversations; he is a local treasure, both for his tireless work in local politics, but also because he speaks to American history with the passion and accuracy of a professional historian.

³⁹⁸ Myrna Oliver, "Watts Activist Ted Watkins Sr. Dies at 71," *Los Angeles Times*, October 27, 1993. http://articles.latimes.com/1993-10-27/local/me-50145_1_timothy-watkins

Station in Los Angeles, Farrell recalls being awed by the bustle and hustle surrounding Los Angeles City Hall. They took a taxi to 4016 Central Avenue, the locale of the Golden West Lodge of the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks where Farrell's mother asked for assistance and advice about settling in Los Angeles. Having joined the EBPOE in Newark, Farrell's mother had a traveling card that afforded her entrance to lodges in other cities. Farrell was introduced to his future political mentor Gilbert Lindsay, "the exalted ruler" of the lodge. Many black migrants were dependent upon church connections and family ties to find a residence, and sometimes the process could be lengthy. With no family or church connections, Farrell's family was fortunate to be Black Elks. Farrell recalls that it only took a few minutes for his family to find a place to stay. They shared a large house with 10 or so other residents in a middle-class neighborhood near Westchester Place and Country Club Drive in the 10th District.

While many black kids went to Jefferson High School, Farrell was enrolled at Los Angeles County High School because of its close proximity to his neighborhood. Farrell recalls that the demographics of Los Angeles High during his years were about 10 percent black and five percent Asian, with a very small Latino population. There was an increasing presence of Jews at the school as that population was moving west from East Los Angeles. Had he attended the majority black Jefferson High School, Farrell recalls, he wouldn't have been prepared for the integrated situations that later defined his life. Having set his sights on joining the Navy, Farrell graduated from high school in 1954 and entered boot camp in San Diego just a few days later. Farrell trained and then served for a year as a quartermaster, aid to the navigator, on the USS Munsee, which was part of the fleet of tugboats stationed in Long Beach.

“Just where I wanted to be,” says Farrell of his assignment. In various roles, Farrell served in the U.S. Navy for five and a half years, six years after the US military became an integrated organization. Farrell recalls that he encountered little racial intolerance until he tried to ascend the ranks of command. Socially, Farrell experienced a mixed treatment that he had to accept within the organization. On one occasion, Farrell was drinking at an officer’s club with a few friends when a ranking officer approached his table and asked, “What’s this nigger doing here?” before kicking Farrell out of the establishment. Farrell describes experiencing a stony silence more than overt hostility. Most white enlisted men and officers avoided him. One attempt to find social connections in Corpus Christi, Texas, led to trouble.

Farrell: “So I went out and explored the African community there...I got a demerit for fraternizing, but what are you gonna do?”

Having scored highly during training and with a good service record, Farrell got good assignments, but he knew that there was a limit as to how high he could climb in the Navy. Additionally, while Farrell felt safe with his small crew, he feared that he would be far more vulnerable on a larger vessel far out at sea. He won a NROTC scholarship and enrolled at UCLA in 1956 while remaining on active duty. Farrell focused on Near East Studies and studied Arabic for five years (though he doesn’t remember much of it). He joined the Young Arab Organization at UCLA where he got his first taste of political activism. Farrell met and befriended colleagues from across the Near and Middle East and developed a global consciousness and a belief in Pan Africanism. In considering his experiences at UCLA, Farrell points out a central irony. He believes his grandchildren have a lesser possibility of befriending non-black or non-immigrant students than he had

at UCLA because modern racial ideologies encourage division; the liberal vision that guided Farrell's time at UCLA was the engagement of diversity.

Farrell: "It was at UCLA that I started to meet these people. I didn't know what a communist was, or what a socialist was! The funny thing was that when the time came for people to bear witness and join the Freedom Rides, there were more whites who at least were aware of other systems and other philosophies, other options, than there were people who were just [he gestures as if waving a flag]...So it was like CORE and the Freedom Ride experience...To me it opened up the world."

Farrell quickly became part of the vibrant UCLA activist scene where he joined the local chapters of the NAACP and CORE. The national strategy of the NAACP was based in continuous legal battles, Farrell describes, and so local chapters were reined in tight. Farrell found the NAACP strategy too restrictive, while CORE allowed and encouraged its chapters to act independently. It was a choice between local versus national strategy, and Farrell followed his instinct toward the local. Farrell began to learn the mechanics of politics in the campaign of Joe Wachs for UCLA student body president. Wachs's base was a coalition of left-leaning activists like Farrell. Many years later, Farrell served alongside Wachs on the Los Angeles City Council.

Farrell: His campaign for student body president was the first time I actually got hands-on experience, accepting responsibility, handing out flyers...Incrementally...We made lists, contacted folks...We were propagandizing. Things that we learned or had done as students.

At the time, he was motivated by pressing issues. The idea of pursuing a professional role in politics came later. Farrell asserts that he's not a true believer, a

follower of political cults that develop around individuals. Then as now, he asserts that he focuses on the issues and not the leader promising to address those issues. For Ferrall, Wachs's campaign was based in activist engagement in politics by students who had time beyond their studies to participate. Do-it-yourself philosophies were in line with the enthusiastic optimism of his cohorts and his growing belief in the possible as they dug into their studies of history, culture and politics. Deep analysis led to deeper understandings of what was possible given the opportunity. Change was possible and Farrell and his cohorts believed they could lead the way to a better country. Farrell: "I was part of this group of people that thought we could do it ourselves. Once we got out, we were going to be those people who were going to be bringing enlightenment to the American masses...But we were not yet aware of America becoming this great empire post-World War II."

As an enlisted man in the Navy, Farrell came to understand that he was a breathing contradiction to the American exceptionalism projected both at home and abroad. Farrell likens his life to that of Dan Freeman, the protagonist of Sam Greenlee's *The Spook Who Sat By The Door*, a book that captured the inherent contradictions of black men working within the US government during the era.³⁹⁹ Like Freeman, Farrell naively thought that his abilities alone would allow him to transcend the racism and prejudice within the US military. Like Freeman, Farrell found that he was wrong, and pragmatism took hold as naiveté dropped away; Farrell's character is defined by pragmatism. Farrell served during the summer months and studied at UCLA during the fall and spring terms with the support of a Navy scholarship.

³⁹⁹ Sam Greenlee, *The Spook Who Sat by the Door: A Novel*, (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1990).

Farrell: "The lights went on for me as an individual. I enjoyed the Navy, spent summers with the Navy, but when I was on campus, I was not a Negro midshipman."

The intellectual engagement and diversity eventually led Farrell to confront his conflicting roles in American society. Farrell recalls realizing that in the Navy, he was part of an organization that was too slow in evolving to acknowledge and reward the talents of its black personnel; Farrell recalls that the Navy sent only one black person per year to the Naval Academy. Black men of his generation, Farrell asserts, were taught to toe the line and wait for progress to change society for the better. In what he described as one of the hardest decisions of his life, Farrell resigned his ROTC commission in 1959.

Inspired by James Farmer, head of CORE, Farrell combatted the civilian brand of resistance to many progressive attempts toward equality while working as a CORE activist. He joined efforts to ban segregated housing on and off campus. He fought discriminatory hiring practices in Westwood Village (the neighborhood just west of UCLA). While his efforts were locally focused, Farrell was nonetheless part of a national consciousness that aimed to confront Jim Crow in the South and racial injustice across the country. Farrell graduated from UCLA in May 1961 and spent the summer studying at an archeological field school in southern Utah. If he had abandoned his civil rights activism, Farrell asserts that he might have spent his life as a cultural anthropologist working in the Near and Middle East, or serving as an analyst for an American

intelligence agency despite his obvious reservations.⁴⁰⁰ But in August, Farrell's activism led to a trip down South, and the experience permanently changed the course of his life. Farrell: "After I came off that dig, I was on the last train out! Freedom Riders!"

With the Freedom Riders, Farrell protested segregation by means of tenacious peaceful resistance. Farrell was arrested after a sit-in at the coffee shop of a Houston bus station. As he describes his "couple weeks" of incarceration in Harris County Jail; he still seems surprised that he wasn't arrested more, given the tactics of the Freedom Riders. Farrell's group was part of a larger effort to overload the prison system. Some activists weren't nearly so lucky, Farrell recalls, as a few white male activists were viciously assaulted by other white male inmates and by a mob allowed into Parchman Prison by officials. Farrell and other Freedom Riders were bailed out by residents in Mississippi, as well as by CORE. As memorialized as the Freedom Riders have become, Farrell asserts, it was just a short chapter in his civil rights activism. However, in directly challenging racial discrimination in the South, it can be argued that he prepared himself for similar challenges he would face later in Los Angeles.

After being released, Farrell returned to his activist work in Los Angeles and began writing at the *California Eagle*, a local black newspaper, for seven dollars a week. The newspaper was owned and operated by Loren Miller, a celebrated civil liberties attorney who later served as a California Superior Court Justice. While at the *Eagle*, Farrell started working toward an MA in journalism at UCLA which included a student internship at *United Press International*.

⁴⁰⁰ Over the course of one three hour interview session, Farrell laid out his understanding of current activities in the Near and Middle East in the historical context of the rise and fall of the Ottoman empire and British colonialism. Like his understanding of American politics, Farrell's knowledge of the regional history is far beyond a layman's understanding.

Farrell: “I thought I was doing okay. I thought I was making a contribution when I suggested to the folks there, as I had come out of the civil rights background, what we should begin to do at UPI was put together an index of influential Negroes in Los Angeles County, so that as news stories came up, we had a list of the contacts. At the same time, because I was still serving as a student activist, there was Students for a Democratic Society, so likewise we should [understand that and chronicle it]. The managing editor looked at me, like, ‘what kinda young person do we have here?’”

The UPI internship led Farrell to believe that doors long shut to blacks were beginning to open. As UPI was located in the *Los Angeles Times* building, Farrell went to the *Times* personnel department to investigate possible employment—despite knowing that there were no black reporters on staff. Farrell met with steely resistance although he had solid references from both UCLA professors and his editor at UPI. Farrell: “The personnel person, I’ll never forget the man. Didn’t even give me the application, didn’t even give me a paper. I just sorta said to myself, ‘okay, there’s a reason I’m at the *Eagle*,’ and this is part of it. ‘Understand what’s going, Robert.’”

Farrell left the office without an application form, but with a more skeptical attitude toward the supposed paradigm shift. As his internship was coming to a close without a job offer from UPI, Farrell saw no avenues toward employment with the mainstream press.

Farrell: “I had a conversation with a professor who said that the realities were the realities. I didn’t finish the masters because I didn’t want to work with people who were like that...What surfaced again was that feeling I got when I was in the Navy.”

Farrell moved from the *Eagle* to the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, a larger local black newspaper that at the time was owned and operated by Leon Washington, a cousin of Loren Miller; Chester Washington was the managing editor during Farrell's time. In the four years Farrell wrote for the *Sentinel*, he became familiar with scores of politicians and reporters including the late Art Seidenbaum, a columnist for the *Los Angeles Times*, who used Farrell's knowledge of black life in Los Angeles for articles and helped Farrell connect with national media outlets. Prior to the Watts Uprising, or the Watts Riots as the mass media called it, the black community of South Los Angeles was largely invisible in terms of coverage. And after the sensation surrounding the Watts Uprisings waned, the media's interest diminished. More often than not, *Times* coverage of the black community focused on criminality; this had the effect of perpetuating a negative image of blacks in Los Angeles. When *Times* city editor Bill Boyarsky hired Paul Weeks to cover events in black Los Angeles, Farrell was no longer solicited for material. This ended Farrell's connection with the *Times*.

Farrell: "No one had any expectations that negroes had anything to offer. The nation has grown, and the media community, in particular, has grown. But at the time, there was the saying, 'white man rules.'"

Working under Chester Washington, Farrell worked at the core of the *Sentinel* alongside writers Smith Wendell Green, Brad Pye, Jesse Mae Brown, photographer, Harry Adams and A.S. "Doc" Young, an experienced politician and *Sentinel* columnist. Young, Farrell relates, "contributed quite a bit to my thinking about the press and what politics could be like." Farrell also met Willard H. Murray, an aerospace engineer from the eastside, who was an integral component in the rise of black politicians like Douglas

F. Ferrell, Mervyn Dymally and Bill Green in South Los Angeles.⁴⁰¹ During the historic 1962 campaigns, Murray introduced Farrell to Billy G. Mills, who won the 8th District seat on the LACC (1963-1974) and replaced Gordon Hahn, brother of Kenneth Hahn. Farrell: “In the 8th District, Gordon Hahn, Kenneth Hahn’s brother, chose not to run for reelection. Some would say that that’s because Kenny went to Gordon [and said], ‘We don’t need to have a Hahn loss.’ There’s more to be gained in people’s affection for the supervisor than to have him put his support behind his brother to fight the winds of change that were very very obvious in the 8th district of LA.”

Farrell recalls that Kenneth Hahn’s support for his former deputy helped Lindsay win the 9th District seat. Lindsay took the vacated seat of Ed Roybal, who won a seat in the US House of Representative. Drawing support from a reform minded multiracial coalition, Bradley won in the 10th District. While Bradley’s coalition is widely asserted as being the first of its kind in Los Angeles politics, Farrell asserts Bradley’s diverse camp mirrored an earlier efforts that led to the ascendancy of Roybal. Bradley, Mills and Gilbert Lindsay took their seats on the LACC in 1963 and gained a substantial representative role in local politics for black Angelenos not seen since statehood.

After Mills was elected, he appointed Murray as his deputy. Murray successfully lobbied to expand the budget for the city council, which allowed for a second deputy position. Soon after, Mills appointed Farrell as a second deputy in 1964, and he served

⁴⁰¹ Sonenshein, *Politics in Black and White: Race and Power in Los Angeles*, 56-57. Like Dymally and Ferrall, Murray straddled camps, but was largely associated with the Unruh “regulars” like Dymally. He served on the LACC staffs of Ferrall and Mills, and in the staff of Lt. Gov. Dymally. Murray served in the California Assembly from 1988 to 1996.

at a district office.⁴⁰² While working for Mills, Farrell continued to write for the *Sentinel*, cloaking himself in the anonymity of a pseudonym, Mason Montgomery. Mirroring the rise of many black politicians who supported JFK in 1960, Farrell participated in local efforts in support of LBJ/Humphrey during the 1964 Presidential Campaign.⁴⁰³ Farrell married his first wife, Willie Reese in 1964, and in 1965, he founded *The Watts Star Review*, a black newspaper published by the Dispatch Group; the paper folded after just one year as a result of poor ad revenues. “It was unbalanced. I went for it,” says Farrell of the tradeoffs of his hectic schedule, “I achieved some and lost a lot.” Though short and strife-filled, Farrell’s first marriage produced his daughter, Mia.

Farrell recalls that Los Angeles’s version of Jim Crow did not include stringent barriers to black voting in comparison to the South. Empowerment via black political representation in 1963 predated the later national victories, but Farrell asserts that both local and national victories were essentially part of the same fight. Like Dymally and F. Douglas Ferrell before them, Bradley, Lindsay and Mills were all migrant outsiders that, according to Farrell, often seized at political opportunities that locals were slow to engage.⁴⁰⁴

Farrell: “Merv Dymally came out of nowhere. Billy Mills came out of nowhere. Bob Farrell came out of nowhere. We’re not LA guys. For whatever reasons, there was just a slower way of doing things here. That’s why when people talk about Mervyn

⁴⁰² In 1974, Farrell took Mills’s LACC seat after Governor Ronald Reagan appointed Mills to the California Superior Court.

⁴⁰³ *Councilman Robert C. Farrell: Biography*. Municipal Reference Library, Los Angeles City Hall. <http://dbase1.lapl.org/webpics/calindex/documents/05/515679.pdf>

⁴⁰⁴ Yussef J. Simmonds, “The Fathers of California Black Politicians,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, June 24, 2010. http://www.lasentinel.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3962:the-fathers-of-californiaa-s-black-politicians&catid=79&Itemid=169

Dymally...He simply did what was going on on the west side down [in South Los Angeles]. Organizing Democratic clubs, pushing voter registration, going into the churches...There were South LA churches in the 10th, 8th, and 15th District, [as opposed to westside constituencies]. Was there a big separation between the two communities? Yes, education, class...[Outsiders] were hungry.”

Farrell asserts that outsiders used whatever they could to gain a political foothold in a political climate that was conducive to new change. Los Angeles was governed by a Democratic Party torn by camps affiliated with the CDC and the Young Democrats; for the most part, Farrell was affiliated with the CDC. But for both sides, Farrell recalls, the ground game consisted of outsiders creating new bases of support.

Farrell: “Find some of these ladies who were involved in block clubs, you know that they have a civic interest. Bring them into the Democratic Party. (Imitating a woman’s voice) ‘Oh, you’re going to bring me into the Democratic Party? Really?’...What happened was that Jes and Willard and Merv; all these guys that picked up these new constituencies who no one else cared about. And low and behold, Jess Unruh got in the [state] assembly...There’s a base.”

CDC reformers sided with Supervisor Hahn, while regulars often sided with Mayor Yorty, but as both groups were part of the Democratic Party—at the time it was diverse and fractious as the Republican party is today—collaboration was a constant. Farrell: “Kenny was a nonpartisan guy. Yes, he’s a Democrat, but there’s no heritage of Kenny Hahn as a big strong Democrat! At city hall, he was nonpartisan. On the board of supervisors, he was nonpartisan. Yes, he’s a Democrat, but nominally.”

Farrell became aware of Kenneth Hahn during his years of student activist work in South Los Angeles while at UCLA. He remembers hearing about him through mutual contacts; mostly positive observations. Farrell's mother worked at the County in the Office of the Public Administrator.

Farrell: "Kenny was one of those kind of fellas who made it his business to know people who were working in the hall of administration who were his constituents. So my mother had a chance to meet him. We were part of the Elks with Gil Lindsay. The Masons...All of those social associations. He was part of the thread of being there, or Gil Lindsay being there. Later, as he was more on the policy side than Lindsay, was Adam Burton. And later Davis Lear."

Twenty years after his death, Hahn continues to be popular with his constituency. Farrell asserts that Hahn's popularity stemmed from his ecumenical approach to his constituency.

Farrell: "Because people would do things for their constituents and there would be things that they would do for the Negroes. Kenny Hahn provided the same kind of stuff that was being provided in the four other supervisorial districts to all the people of his district...Imagine the impact of that! Folks moving into these homes in South LA at Broadway, Main, Central Avenue; when the rain would come, they still flooded and Kenny Hahn started putting in the big storm drains to keep our community dry."

While storm drains might have been commonplace across the county, Hahn brought them to his beleaguered constituency for the first time. In attempting to address the concerns of all his constituents, Farrell asserts, Hahn couldn't help but outshine his predecessor Leonard J. Roach.

Farrell: “[Roach] He cared, it’s just that he treated negroes the way all the other supervisors treated negroes. You gotta remember that California was much much better than Louisiana or Texas, so the guys that were there [in power] before were not out and out racists, it’s just that you know they treated Negroes how they treated their Negroes. Same thing white folks said down South... ‘What do you want us to do? You want us to treat them like we treat our folks?’”

Farrell is emphatic about the differences between the South and Los Angeles during this period in terms of racial hostility and segregation. Los Angeles has a history of racial prejudice, Farrell argues, but it is unique from the southern logic of Jim Crow and formal segregation. However, Farrell’s upbringing in New Orleans is unique in terms of integration.

Farrell: “Racial restrictive covenants were onerous things, but it wasn’t segregation. Hell, everywhere I was raised in New Orleans had better integration than did Los Angeles. I was raised in an integrated community with people all mixed up in New Orleans in the South, but segregation was still hard segregation when it came down to it...Segregation and what was out here really were different animals...You can sit where you want in the bus. The issue was, do you have bus service in the first place. (laughing ironically) That’s what makes America such a fascinating social experiment. All these variations on a theme, the people, and making sure that you and yours stay one up. [Hahn’s approach was different] For so many thousands of people, it was the first time they were seeing government function this way, positive and constructive. Man comes around and he goes to our churches. He celebrates our heroes and heroines. You see it. Today, it seems so commonplace for somebody to get a resolution from the county or

the city. Go back 50 or 60 years ago. What Negroes do you know that got anything like that? Any acknowledgment of their civic service? Their life service? Their work or contributions to the community? So for our community, Kenny Hahn was the right person at the right time in Los Angeles County to be there to assist and help us achieve certain dreams.”

With the creation King/Drew, Hahn was compassionately attempting to ameliorate the problems of his constituency, however, the project can also be understood as a successful political tactic that afforded Hahn long term support: patronage?

Farrell: “I wouldn’t consider that patronage politics. Patronage is when there’s a *quid pro quo*. You know it going in the front. That wasn’t Kenny’s way.”

Farrell asserts that Hahn’s way wasn’t patronage politics in the traditional sense, though he understands that it may have been the perception of patronage politics that made Hahn unpopular with on the King/Drew’s board members. Hahn met with resistance of many types when he pushed for the hospital, and Farrell attributes much of it to white prejudice and ignorance of the black community and ghetto conditions. Aside from bringing needed services to Watts, Hahn encouraged his political base to be more involved in the political process. Hahn was only seriously challenged once for his seat in 1968 by Mills. Political participation existed in South Los Angeles long before Hahn, but the community was further empowered when they had a sympathetic supervisor who took their concerns and ideas into consideration.

Farrell: “You have to keep in mind that there were competing ideas about what should be done, when and how at the time that this was going on. And he was attentive to his

constituents. Fundamentally, he was for it (hospital building). Fundamentally, he supported it. So we get into the nuances of how Ted Watkins (WCLAC) could be a little bit closer than the more lettered people in getting the ear and the attention of Kenneth Hahn...Some of the other people didn't realize the political clout and power that folks like Ted Watkins had. Some of these folks had never seen this before. That's not the way they do things. And we're talking about politics, the pent-up demand for services that had been excluded..."

Farrell argues for accurate history, yet his judgment also contains a pragmatic understanding of how government functions. He's critical of continuing inequity, but there are limits to the controls and powers of governance in a metropolis like Los Angeles. The population explosion spurred by World War II led to an uneven distribution of resources and power. In recalling the period of expansion during which Los Angeles dismantled large aspects of its public transportation system, Farrell points to political decisions that were made that disproportionately affected parts of the population; poor public transportation isolated the residents of South Los Angeles. Amid the Great Society, Los Angeles experienced both political and economic reform, but change arrived at a frustratingly slow pace for many in the black community who had already waited patiently for a long time. Progress is gonna come, but...

Farrell: "Just wait. Just wait. And there was the Office of Economic Opportunity was dumping money into demonstration projects in places like Watts. All kinds of demonstration projects...[National] Welfare Rights Organization gets off the ground and changes the welfare rules. There was stuff that was happening that you could see it, you could taste it...Last year isn't now."

With a rare understanding of governmental bureaucracy, Farrell complicates commonly held beliefs that the War on Poverty failed by focusing on the individuals that benefitted from programs and then left places like Watts. Depending upon one's perspective, the War on Poverty was lost or is still raging, but Farrell is quick to point out that the faces of poverty have changed as individual battles were won.

Farrell: "You look at the individuals who were served by those programs...With few exceptions, [they are] long gone. Moved to the inland empire...To use the words of folks that choose not to engage with these things, integrated all across the city of LA, San Fernando Valley, North Los Angeles County, Santa Clarita...All this kinda stuff. As people improved their status, they left. They did just as other Americans, white Americans who had lived in South LA before, did. Their properties increased in value, they sold them and moved someplace else."

As if to point out the irony of failure mythology, Farrell wonders whether an academic study has been done to study the overall effectiveness of the programs like the OEO and Head Start. While Farrell doesn't have the numbers, he essentially believes that government projects in Watts were often victorious in radically challenging poverty conditions, but since they were individual victories and not the grand community change expected, the projects became uninteresting news stories and invisible to the public eye. In the case of the hospital, many community members were elevated by education, training, and position. Many left the community without fanfare, while police and media attention focused on radical aspects of the population like the Black Panthers or members of the US organization. Farrell is quick to make distinctions between participants of the anti-poverty programs and black radicals, though this seems

unlikely given the overlapping of activities monitored by law enforcement—mainstream media then and now often recasts the activities of anti-poverty groups. In his role as a journalist with connections throughout South Los Angeles, Farrell wrote about progress and the misunderstandings of it. But, he asserts, many members of the mainstream press continued to misinform the public at least in part because of their professional incompetence.

Farrell: “That’s people who basically don’t understand what they’re looking at. They don’t even know how to come down in South Los Angeles without having someone as a guide. So who the hell has to pay attention to what they see and what they record? They got the media. That doesn’t make it truth.”

Farrell parries back to the national view during this period.

Farrell: “Unfortunately, President Johnson is affected by the War in Vietnam and the money that should’ve been continued to be dumped into inner cities to test out some of these things to stabilize the base, to fend off revolutionary stuff and make it evolutionary stuff, such that can be involved in structured programs over time so that you can pull away from the struggle to something more constructive. No more money. Cause we’re dealing with the dominos in Southeast Asia.”

Johnson’s choice to escalate the War in Vietnam led to a deescalation in the War on Poverty, but it’s not clear that the President would have found more or commensurate funding even if he hadn’t changed his focus, as he lost his hold on Congress in 1966. Johnson faced massive complexity with the expansion of social programs as the Great Society also had to contend with the agendas of the 50 states.

Farrell: "That's a lot of balls to keep in the air. Where should the money go? How do we judge the effectiveness of programs? And this one involves 10,000 people, and they're doing positive and constructive things...And this one here, we see some Panther guys causing some trouble: shut that motherfucker down. All this kind of stuff comes up."

Farrell has the ability to coolly lay out many sides of the argument in character as if he were performing a one man play. National programs and agendas were meant to create change in black communities, but according to a design that perpetuated white hegemony. Farrell assumes the role of white hegemony.⁴⁰⁵

Farrell: "We know it. You just follow. Just be a good Negro...There are people who chaffed at the bit, just at the fact that that was being put on the table. Could that perspective be explained differently? Could have been, but perhaps many of the whites who were in on those positions of authority just couldn't articulate it that well..."

The fight for the hospital and medical school was not only a fight for access to medicine, but a fight for independence and self-sufficiency. Like any number of aspects of the civil rights movement, the fight was not uniform, as the community of South Los Angeles never spoke with one voice.

Farrell: "Understand the context of the times. If we can deal with segregation, Jim Crow, that kind of discrimination against negroes, things will work for everybody...Walls didn't just fall down, there were struggles along the way. Other people felt empowered to do things. Fine!"

⁴⁰⁵ Ferrall's love of satire and dark humor is hard to convey via print, however, its incredibly affecting and effective in conveying pain and loss.

Farrell was in a good position to observe the unique circumstances that related to the creation of the hospital. Euphemistically speaking, tensions ran high because of the arrival of a new set of dynamics.

Farrell: "I saw people coming back terribly frustrated and disappointed in meeting with the likes of that UCLA professor [Mellinkoff]. Arrogant son of a bitch using his status that was hard won for him, a real accomplishment in life. All of a sudden he has to respond to political considerations..."

Putting Farrell's uncharacteristic castigation of Dr. Mellinkoff aside, Farrell describes the empowerment and enfranchisement process as being similar to the Arab Spring, specifically in post-Mubarak Egypt; whenever a preexisting hierarchy is disturbed, it's impossible to predict the outcome, and only an existing hegemony would demand that progress conform to its expectations. Empowered voices in the community were understandably skeptical of the process and the official leadership. Officials who had previously worked privately were understandably skeptical of what they may have seen as an entitled and ill-informed public. Farrell asserts that it was uncommon territory for both the newly empowered community and the agents representing various levels of government that were slow or simply loath to challenge the *status quo*. However, the pressure of a paradigm shift forced them to the table.

Farrell: "They have to accommodate! They have to accommodate this new thing that's coming up. They'd accepted segregation and discrimination all their lives. Some of them had been subjects of discrimination themselves. And yet, they still represent an institution that was, in instances, not prepared to be giving to these new folks especially

in giving over control of institutions, budgets; the provisions of health services in the context of California plans and agendas.”

Given that his perspective is informed by a long view study of world history, Farrell sometimes employs a sharp sarcastic bitterness as if to swipe at the tide of history itself. Ideally, Farrell jokes, the establishment would've given birth to the idea of the hospital and defined it for the community, according to an accommodating time table. While the dream of the hospital originated from within the community, the creation of the hospital and medical school was the result of efforts largely external to the community. Farrell never regarded it as the partnership it was presented as to the outside world.

Farrell: “It wasn't as though the Negro physicians, who because of the segregation and inability to affiliate at the hospitals...It wasn't as though they were called equal partners when they were brought in to discuss these things. And by the way, they had the same kind of professional training and clinical experience as some of the people that they were dealing with across the table.”

Farrell describes a type of racial paternalism. Government officials communicated with the community, but ultimately, they made decisions that reflected their understanding. It can be understood both as commonplace top down governance and the actions of an establishment that distrusted the competency of black professionals within the community with the jobs of hospital creation.

Farrell: Local people represented the power for our side to get to the table. When you look at the medical professionals that we had, the Al Cannon's, the Sol White's...Were not they too doctors? Were they not too part of a negro effort that for years was trying to

put together a hospital. Black practices. Black groups. Because they were basically shut out of participating in general.

Farrell asserts that black doctors from the community were a suspect class. He focuses his reinvigorated angst on Dr. Sherman Mellinkoff, but does so only to point out a hypocrisy common in black-Jewish relations.⁴⁰⁶

Farrell: “How’d he get his slot? Once upon a time, there as much discrimination against that man. Real bitterness about people like Mellinkoff. And he fell back on the strength of his people, especially the Democrats, to make things work in the state of California, and that shit stopped!”

Black doctors wanted a black hospital in South Los Angeles because they were part of the empowerment process that challenged the political math; black politicians like Farrell were charged with the same incompetency as black physicians.

Farrell: “That raised the issue of black representation in the first place. Put forward the Eddie Atkinson for City Council in the 1950s and we have some folks that are responding as though they are the defenders of the institution, as if the institution has been perfected and now they’re being put upon by some people to do things differently. Well, in hindsight, this was just an evolution of the way that people were expecting healthcare services to be delivered in the United States. This is how it showed up in South Los Angeles.”

The local dialogue between the empowered black community and the establishment didn’t proceed nearly as well as press releases might have led outsiders to believe.

⁴⁰⁶ Dr. Sherman Mellinkoff appears in an earlier chapter in which he denies that racial prejudice informed his hiring decisions.

Farrell: “So as I recall the meetings. Were they great meetings of people who saw the need and here we are moving forward to resolve the issue? Or do we run into situations of protection of turf?”

Local black physicians wanted to be part of the process, Farrell asserts, but UCLA’s racialized paternalism excluded many of them because they didn’t measure up to the institution’s standards. Farrell recalls that UCLA’s exclusionary stance embittered the very community it claimed to be trying to serve. As if drawing from an unwritten play that captures the nature of the discourse, Farrell plays out a blunt conversation between a UCLA medical administrator and a Watt’s resident.

Watt’s resident: ‘How about affiliating our guys as we do these things down here?’

UCLA: ‘Huh?’

UCLA: ‘Oh no, wait a minute, let’s watch that. We have a different pattern in the way that we do things at UCLA.’

Watts resident: ‘Look! It’s a public institution. How come we can’t...’

UCLA: ‘Well, you see...I’m so and so, I did all these things, I’m from this kind of a background. I don’t wanna sit down with some welfare rights advocate and somebody’s mother who works down there. Those are the kind of people who ride the bus and work in our home and take care of our babies and clean up our kitchens. We’re gonna sit down with the likes of them and talk about healthcare and what people want in the community?’”

Community meetings gave the community a sense of participation. But Farrell asserts that many county employees that were part of the process were not poverty warriors, but reluctant county bureaucrats forced to play the part. Trusted community

leaders like Ted Watkins, founder of the Watts Labor Community Action Committee, smoothed the way when turbulence occurred. Though he has no specific memory of an incidence, Farrell believes that when communication breakdown appeared imminent, Ted Watkins or Supervisor Hahn were contacted to settle things down so that matters could progress.

Farrell: “And that was part of what made such a great great relationship of Kenny Hahn with Ted Watkins. Cause in addition to just being a guy out there, Ted Watkins, was an international rep of the United Auto Workers Union. So in essence when you saw Ted Watkins, you weren’t just seeing one of those people down there...You were looking at one of Walter Reuther’s handpicked guys and he brought his ideas of social unionism and those ideas out into the streets.”

In South Los Angeles, Ted Watkins’ memory is revered by many community members of Ferrall’s generation and beyond. Today, his son Timothy Watkins runs the WCLAC. After rising through the ranks of the United Auto Workers, Watkins became an international representative for the organization, and a local agent of the organization’s leader Walter Reuther. In 1965, the UAW supported the Watts formation of the WCLAC. The organization collaborated with local affiliates of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the United Civil Rights Committee.⁴⁰⁷ Progress on King/Drew can be partially credited to the solid working relationship of Hahn and Watkins; they shared a similar progressive agenda that worked toward the betterment of the people in Watts. With Watkins’s political support, Hahn shepherded the program and made people show up to work, even if they weren’t inclined to do so.

⁴⁰⁷ Bauman, *Race and the War on Poverty: From Watts to East LA*. Vol. 3., 73-74.

In 1969, Farrell served as black communities coordinator for Tom Bradley in his first attempt to unseat Mayor Sam Yorty. Farrell recalls Mayor Sam Yorty as a racist political opportunist that equated the evils of the civil rights movement and communism, a Dixiecrat in Los Angeles. In contrast, Tom Bradley came to reflect a coalition of liberal whites and blacks both on the westside and in South Los Angeles that saw an opportunity to create change through a large block of voters. Yorty represented the city's racist past, while Bradley represented its multiracial future. Yorty won the election by harnessing fears of conservative white voters in the San Fernando Valley; he smeared Bradley as an advocate of radical black power, a hostile threat to white hegemony. Even in defeat, the close race proved that the tide was turning and Bradley's coalition was on the ascent.⁴⁰⁸

While serving as a field deputy to Mills, Farrell worked statewide in coordinating black support in Congressman John Tunney's successful U.S. Senate race in 1970. In 1971, Farrell served as Deputy Director of Minority Communities for Senator George McGovern's successful bid to capture the presidential nomination of the Democratic Party (McGovern was both a supporter of the civil rights movement and an outspoken critic of the War in Vietnam). In 1973, Farrell again worked in Bradley's coalition which successfully ousted Sam Yorty. Subsequently, Bradley's liberal multiracial coalition ruled Los Angeles for decades. In 1974, Governor Reagan appointed Billy G. Mills as a Superior Court Justice, and after a special election, Farrell represented the 8th District

⁴⁰⁸ Sonenshein, *Politics in Black and White: Race and Power in Los Angeles*, 103-113.

of the LACC until he retired in 1991 after which he unsuccessfully ran for the 48th District seat in the California Assembly.⁴⁰⁹

Like America, Farrell sees the civil rights movement as a work in progress. Early victories opened the world of politics to men like him, who love the game above all else, but also know that progressive change requires continuing engagement. He's unwilling to give up his identity in the movement and the game—in the modern era, the two have merged—and so he eschews the peace of retirement for a continuing role in local politics. At present, Ferrall is a senior member of the campaign to elect George McKenna, a widely respected and famous educator, to the Los Angeles School Board.⁴¹⁰ With a *Times* endorsement and popular support, McKenna's chances are good, but Farrell learned along time ago to take nothing for granted until the polls close. During a discussion at USC on black politics in Los Angeles, the panel—LACC members Farrell and Nate Holden (retired) and Congresswoman Diane Watson (retired)—discussed Tom Bradley's failed bid for the governorship, which Holden attributes to the Bradley camp's overestimation of his multiracial support. Holden's claim is a less than subtle stab at Farrell, who was in charge of getting out the black and brown vote in South Los Angeles. Overconfidence may have played a role, but Farrell explains that the loss needs to be understood more analytically. In 1982, the issue of gun control divided the Democrats; conflicting agendas can weaken a particular campaign's

⁴⁰⁹ *Councilman Robert C. Farrell: Biography*. Municipal Reference Library, Los Angeles City Hall. <http://dbase1.lapl.org/webpics/calindex/documents/05/515679.pdf>

Mark Gladstone, "Retirements Unleash a Scramble for Several Seats," *Los Angeles Times*, March 10, 1990. http://articles.latimes.com/1990-03-10/local/me-1817_1_52nd-assembly-district Farrell's LACC seat was filled by Mark Ridley Thomas (1991-2003) and Bernard Parks (2003-).

⁴¹⁰ "Bob Ferrall on George McKenna." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQ8_WIR57nM

strength and blur its message. The exchange between the two retired councilmen seems both political and personal, but additionally, its reflective of the long shelf life of political acrimony fueled by perceptions of blame over tactical mistakes. Whatever mistakes were made, Farrell learned caution from the experience.⁴¹¹

In the *Art of War*, Sun Tzu wrote, “If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.”⁴¹² Longterm victory comes from understanding the strengths and weaknesses of one’s opponent, but self-reflection is equally important; neither are possible without a steady head and discipline. On most mornings, Farrell rises early and does his stretches—he has a bad back—and leads his dog, Chubby, a scrawny chihuahua, through the quiet streets of San Pedro near Los Angeles Harbor. Over tea or coffee, he digs into newspaper coverage of local and national politics while he listens to right-wing AM radio because, he asserts, it allows him to understand how the opposition thinks and motivates their base of support. After contemplation and study, he engages in countless conference calls with politicians involved in the campaign. After he dons a suit and tie, Farrell leaves the harbor behind and drives the 110 north to the city. Even in retirement, Farrell works a long day that includes a continuing role in community activism in South Los Angeles. For example, Farrell is part of a group that is critical of the Drew School’s current president, David

⁴¹¹ On September 8th 2012, the California African American Museum presented the second of its three part series of panel discussions entitled, “The Vote/Why Vote? Black Politics - Past, Present, & Future.” Moderator USC Vice President Emerita Carolyn Webb Macias led a panel that featured former Los Angeles City Council members Robert C. Farrell and Nathaniel R. Holden, and former US Ambassador to Micronesia and former Congresswoman Diane Watson.

⁴¹² Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*. Translated by Lionel Giles, (El Paso, Texas: El Paso Norte Press, 2005), Chapter 3. <http://classics.mit.edu/Tzu/artwar.html>

Carlisle, because he and the executive board are too focused on a corporate approach that ignores the black power ideology and community activist approach that defined the institution's past.⁴¹³ Farrell sees King/Drew as an indispensable weapon in the fight for black empowerment that must continue to be led by the black community that fought for it after long being excluded and treated like second-class citizens. A life in politics requires an immense personal sacrifice, and he attributes his two divorces to his inability to balance the personal and the professional; his third marriage to singer Wendy Barnes seems solid—likely because they are both extremely career-driven and understand each other's need for space and independence.

Part of Farrell's continuing analytical process is reflection on his personal past and how it connects to the present moment. He's long contemplated writing a untraditional memoir in which his personal narrative would serve as a vehicle to tell the larger story of politics in Los Angeles; while incomplete, he's sketched out a chapter entitled "South of Slauson and West of Watts." But contemplation and rough sketching is one thing, and making the time to write during a busy campaign schedule is another. From his experience as a professional journalist, Farrell understands the demands of writing and, as of yet, he is unwilling to make the time and change roles from political activist to political observer.

In 2008, Farrell supported Senator Hillary Clinton over Senator Barack Obama in the Democratic Primary season because he believed that the liberal agenda would be better served by a seasoned political insider with party support. After Obama won the

⁴¹³ Jocelyn Y. Stewart, "Lillian Mobley Dies at 81; South Los Angeles Activist," *Los Angeles Times*, July 21, 2011. <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/jul/21/local/la-me-lillian-mobley-20110721> Mobley served on the executive board for decades where she represented the community and advocated for similar ideas important to the group that Farrell belongs to; in Mobley's absence, the group wishes that a similar voice represent the community on the board.

nomination, Farrell was a good Democratic Party soldier and supported Obama's first and second presidential campaigns despite his reservations. Obama has many vocal black critics like Cornell West and Tavis Smiley, who feel that he hasn't delivered on his promise of change. However, Farrell's critique of Obama is of a tactical nature. Obama's failures, Farrell asserts, stem from both his lack of experience and his lack of bench strength; his team isn't as strong as they could be because he doesn't know who to bring into to key policy discussions. While he concedes that Clinton likely would've followed a similar course and encountered similar entrenched opposition, he believes that she would've assembled a better organization that could've won more contests against the Republicans. However, Farrell's historically informed perspective is balanced by his personal understanding of the President's adversaries in the Tea Party, like Senator Rand Paul, who argue that Obama's race is inconsequential in a post-racial American landscape—a ridiculous notion that many people believe is true because its been repeated so many times in the media.

Political correctness forced the right wing to change its rhetoric, but its essence—a resentful white hegemony—hasn't changed since Farrell's early days in politics. Right-wing supporter and musician Ted Nugent called the President a "Chicago communist-raised, communist-educated, communist-nurtured subhuman mongrel...ACORN community organizer gangster."⁴¹⁴ Political correctness and likely cowardice stopped Nugent from simply calling Obama a nigger—it's explicit, even if unstated. At the same time, *birther* Donald Trump "patriotically" questions Obama's origins and legitimacy.

⁴¹⁴ Mark Barakak, "Rocker Ted Nugent Stirs Controversy in Texas Governor's Race," *Los Angeles Times*, February 18, 2014. <http://www.latimes.com/nation/politics/politicsnow/la-pn-ted-nugent-texas-politics-20140218-story.html> To his credit, I didn't think that Nugent knew that many words. A few days later, he gave an obviously insincere apology.

While moronic, Farrell believes that it is important to understand that Nugent and Trump speak for a large group of white conservative voters who resent black political empowerment, viewing it as a challenge to white supremacy. Proponents of a multiracial America, like Farrell, understand exactly who their adversaries are despite rebranding efforts. And so, the very nature of American society is at stake during a continuous war of attrition.

Alma Reaves Woods

Just a short drive north from the King/Drew campus, the Watts Senior Center and Rose Garden is an unassuming building that serves as a gathering point for senior citizens in the area. The prize-winning blooms are slumbering peacefully in the garden, a rare and serene oasis that stands in stark contrast to the frenzied activity apace inside the center. Line dancers shuffle to country music in the auditorium. Four men vigorously throw dominos hard against a wooden table. The TV blares the afternoon news in the cafeteria where seniors chat over heaping portions of rich Southern fare. After she eyes me inquisitively, I inform the cafeteria manager, "I'm here to meet Ms. Alma Woods."⁴¹⁵She smiles and tells me that Woods is running late and leads me to a table where she lays out two place settings.

Praised by many for her dedication and tenacity, Woods fought for decades to bring a public library to Watts. Named in her honor after a heated fight on the Los Angeles City Council, The Los Angeles Public Library Alma Reaves Woods Watts

⁴¹⁵ Interviews with Alma Woods. Personal Recorded Interviews, 5/3/12, 5/10/12. Watts, California. I was introduced to Alma Woods by former Los Angeles City Council Member, Robert C. Ferrall, who strongly suggested I interview Woods because of her participation in the creation of King/Drew, and her long role as an activist in the community.

Branch opened on June 29, 1996. The library is just one marker of Woods's five-plus decades of community activism in South Los Angeles.⁴¹⁶

When she arrives, Woods slowly creeps across the room clutching a crutch. Having recently injured her left leg, the 87-year-old appears especially fragile. After I help her into her chair, Woods lets out a deep breath and apologizes for her late arrival. The cafeteria manager appears with heaping plates of barbecued chicken, rice and salad, and she bends over and kindly touches Woods's shoulder. They've known each other for a decade intimately, Woods says, but have known of each other for decades.

Woods studies me in silence for a few minutes. Photographs from the late 1960s reveal that Woods employed the same ocular intensity in confronting rebellious teenagers, and it seems safe to assume that Woods employed the tactic to claim authority to great effect at community meetings immemorial. After an unnerving silence, Woods launches into a long series of questions and patiently stares at me until I answer them to her satisfaction.⁴¹⁷ King/Drew's creation involved many people in the community—like the library that bears her name—Woods asks why she has the “honor” to speak for the community. No one voice can speak for an entire community, I explain, and that she is one of many voices that I will incorporate to explore the complexity and meaning of the process; public memory is about putting the histories of people who generally escape notice into a larger historical context. She likes my answer and the conversation slowly changes from an inquisition to an interview, albeit one that Woods controls; she

⁴¹⁶ “Alma R. Woods, Non-Millionaire, Has Library Named in Her Honor,” *Los Angeles Sentinel*, July 4, 1996.

⁴¹⁷ In an intense role reversal I was unprepared for, Woods asked a lot of questions about my career and research: the University of Hawaii, teaching in Los Angeles, journalism. Like an inquisitive grandmother, she also asked about whether I would ever get married and have children. Though limited, I think this process allowed Woods to gauge my intent and whether or not she could trust me with her history and experience.

later admits that she was testing to see if I was like past white interlopers with “good intentions,” who go onto write negative depictions of life in South Los Angeles.

A woman named Jane approaches our table and greets Woods, who invites her to sit down and join in the discussion of King/Drew’s creation era.⁴¹⁸ The discussion quickly moves to violence of 1965 that they both witnessed. Jane asserts that while the violence erupted from chaos initially, it quickly evolved into systematic destruction of businesses that were perceived as being exploitative of the black community. Woods’s nose pinches in disagreement. It was anarchy, Woods argues, not organized violence or vendetta. Jane and Woods debate the issue a bit more before asking my opinion. I tell them that the event can be understood as both a riot and a revolution, and that what’s more interesting is how so many people perceive the event differently and why. The binary is fascinating because the event and its multiple meanings continue to court controversy. My answer may be a bit politically safe, but it’s true. King/Drew’s creation is similar and interconnected in memory; at the time, many white Angelenos believed the hospital’s construction rewarded violence, while many black Angelenos believed that it was a form of civic inclusion after long racial inequity and civic exclusion. I get a pass from the ladies who seem satisfied and a bit amused. The women move on and speak about attending different meetings held the previous week. The past is present here as the War on Poverty continues; the library was one victory, but other battles rage as there is still a lot to do in the community. Jane states that while she finds the discussion interesting, she has to leave. Before she departs, she tenderly shakes Woods’s hand. After Jane leaves, Woods explains that the two had previously enjoyed a tense

⁴¹⁸ The woman asked to be described anonymously, so I randomly selected the pseudonym of Jane.

relationship through their participation in countless weekly community meetings, but the trouble is behind them. Alone at last, Woods graciously allows the interview to proceed.

Alma Reaves was born August 9, 1924 in Little Rock, Arkansas, one of five children to parents who separated when she was teenager. Her father worked as a mechanic for the Missouri Pacific Railway, and later moved to Los Angeles and sent for Alma and her sister Beatrice with the promise that he would provide a place to live and money for college. The sisters boarded a train bound for Los Angeles after Alma completed junior college.

“I just knew it was the land of milk and honey,” says Woods, recollecting her dreamy anticipation of what her life would be like in Los Angeles, like many Southern black migrants who relocated there during the war boom. But her exhilaration soon waned when her father reneged on his promise of support; that wound of disappointment remained with Woods (she once harbored dreams of becoming a biologist), but it served in part as inspiration for Woods to spend her life helping people find literacy and education in South Los Angeles. For whatever reason, pain holds a stronger place in memory than pleasure. Angst, resentment, shame—these emotions seem to serve as stronger bookmarks in memory. We talk pop psychology and I ask her about transference, and she agrees that her father’s betrayal still cuts at her spirit six decades later. A bit uncomfortable, Woods changes the subject. She believes that men, especially young black men, need support and guidance, which she has consistently tried to provide, but it’s a slippery slope with a fine balance to be struck between support and interference.

The Woods sisters moved in with a family friend near Central Avenue. Woods found her first job at S.H. Cress (near Vernon and Central Avenue), where she made \$18 per week selling dime store fare. Housing covenants in Los Angeles led to a segregated black population—itsself culturally diverse—and Central Avenue served as its communal and commercial hub.⁴¹⁹ Woods found the scene both familiar with its rural inclusiveness and exotic with its cosmopolitan charm. Although underaged, Woods and her sister would dress up and slip into jazz clubs.

Woods: “We knew how to be very sophisticated...The southern kids were more mature and had class...We wore gloves out. These kids here didn’t do that. [But] we were so poor it was pitiful.”

Woods studied at USC and UCLA. She is truly an autodidact that devours books on virtually every subject, and she continues to retain much of what she’s learned over the years. Knowledge, both of the world and of oneself, is power, but memory is uneven and recall is contingent upon so many variables like desire and trust. After years of being at the center of the whirlwind of community activism, Woods is circumspect in answering direct questions, making her a reluctant witness to her own history and her role within the history of Watts. Playfully coy, Woods prefers to meander through time, space and emotion, making it easy to lure observers into surmising that her memory is fading. But as if to answer my unspoken question, she recites Paul Laurence Dunbar’s *A Negro Love Song*, a favorite poem she learned as a child.

Seen my lady home las' night,
Jump back, honey, jump back.
Hel' huh han' an' sque'z it tight,
Jump back, honey, jump back.

⁴¹⁹ Douglas Flamming, *Bound for Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 92-125.

Hyeahd huh sigh a little sigh,
Seen a light gleam f'om huh eye,
An' a smile go flittin' by —
Jump back, honey, jump back.

Hyeahd de win' blow thoo de pine,
Jump back, honey, jump back.
Mockin'-bird was singin' fine,
Jump back, honey, jump back.
An' my hea't was beatin' so,
When I reached my lady's do',
Dat I could n't ba' to go —
Jump back, honey, jump back.

Put my ahm aroun' huh wais',
Jump back, honey, jump back.
Raised huh lips an' took a tase,
Jump back, honey, jump back.
Love me, honey, love me true?
Love me well ez I love you?
An' she answe'd, "'Cose I do"—
Jump back, honey, jump back.⁴²⁰

Woods finishes and smiles. The poem connects her to the past and informs her present. Woods loves playing with words and peppers her speech with idiosyncratic phrases delivered with the remainder of a Southern accent. For instance, if she's asked about the veracity of a statement, Woods might begin her reply with, "Look into my deep purple eyes." (Her eye color changes from red to blue back to purple, depending upon her whimsy.) Or if she wants to express vexation or a sense of finality, Woods might exclaim, "Father, mother, sister, God!"

After living in Los Angeles for five or six years, Alma Reaves met and married Oliver Woods. The couple had three sons before separating, and Woods kept her married name because the couple never officially divorced. Woods supported her

⁴²⁰ Paul Laurence Dunbar, "A Negro Love Song," <http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/173462#poem>

children by working for the city in various positions. She moved into the Nickerson Gardens housing project shortly after it was built in the 1950s and only recently moved out. Part of a longstanding village, Woods left reluctantly, but relates the event with a sharp irony that serves as an example of her wit and charm.

Woods: "They put me out because I was enjoying it too much and doing too much."

Shortly after moving into Nickerson, Woods began collecting donated books and pushing them around the neighborhood in a little wooden cart. Long before programs like Head Start, she became the *de facto* literacy advocate of Nickerson Gardens, teaching children to read and encouraging teenagers to stick with education. Later, Nixon-era cuts to programs like Head Start made her presence at Nickerson Gardens even more vital. "Education is life," says Woods utilizing another of her common catch phrases.

After finishing our meal, Woods informs me that she has to leave, as she is running late for a community meeting. Understanding that we have only scratched the surface, Woods instructs me to return the following week. I help her up and we slowly make our way out of the center to the parking lot. After cautiously climbing into her sedan, she smiles and departs with another catch phrase, "Love, light and blessings."

A Taste of Community Meetings in South Los Angeles: Watts Gang Task Force

Over the phone, Woods invites me to attend a meeting of the Watts Gang Task Force, "I want you to get a sense of how these meetings work." It's more of a command appearance than an invitation.

On the second floor of the bank building at 103rd and Compton Avenue—just past Los Angeles City Councilman Joe Buscaino’s office—the meeting room is packed like a proverbial sardine can. With a five-by-ten gap in the center, approximately 60 people sit close together in rows of chairs that line the walls. Most of the faces are black, including the moderator, with the exception of a handful of Latinos, an old white priest and a white reporter. The air conditioner is off, and people shift in their seats. The priest keeps falling asleep, but periodically his head jerks up and his tired eyes come alive.⁴²¹

The moderator gives the floor to a graying man who talks about a new internet program intended to rebrand the city. It’s called trywatts.com and promotes a program called “A Bridge to Peace.” When his two minutes expire, a young man stands up and condemns the road conditions in Watts that damaged his car, leading to costly repairs. He then asks the assemblage why his cousin’s child can’t transfer to a safer school in the same school district and what can be done to remedy this. Without raising his hand, a community member answers saying that district rules don’t work that way. Whispers around the room grow too loud, and the moderator commands that those in attendance respect the rules and remain respectfully quiet. “One meeting,” says the moderator, but two men persist in arguing the point of district rules. Voices again begin to rise, and the moderator commands, “Let this man speak. If you have issues, take them outside.”

After requesting the floor, a man stands and asks why the police aren’t enforcing the parking codes. People are taking up spaces with cars for sale, he explains. Parking is at a premium in Watts, though this is true in much of Los Angeles. A woman stands

⁴²¹ I attended the Watts Gang Task Force meeting on 5/21/12. It occurred after my second meeting with Woods, though here it appears between meetings because it frames what Woods later related.

and shares her frustration with the parking. Eyes turn to the Lt. Cato, the LAPD representative present, and he takes note of the issue. Big rigs are parking where they shouldn't be, and in the process, they're tearing down electrical wires. More murmurs. "Wrap your hands around the youth cause they're feeling like they're by themselves," says a middle-aged man. People wonder what to do with the kids who get into trouble when they're not supervised during the summer break. A man stands up and talks about the need for community elders to set a good example for the kids: "Don't be a hypocrite. If you're going to tell [children] not to smoke, don't smoke!"

A woman across the room from me stands up and asks Lt. Cato about the unsolved murder that occurred the previous week. She wonders why police presence hasn't been beefed up in the area with the imminent arrival of summer vacation to prevent further bloodshed: "Don't nobody do nothing!" More murmurs. The murder haunts the room, and the moderator is again forced to command silence. There are not enough recreational facilities for the kids. The room is getting a bit stuffy. People are talking to each other, and the moderator looks annoyed. Woods rests uneasily in the second row across the room; she locks eyes with me and cocks her head sideways and smiles. The priest naps fitfully.

An administrator from the Watts Clinic stands and people shut up. She echoes the sentiments about the children and relates that a large brawl took place on the lawn just outside the clinic's front door, observing, "[They're] off the chain." A representative from a program called Safe Passage asks for community support as "the kids are out of control." A man stands and proclaims that these kids need stricter discipline. A man stands up and speaks of hope. His son just got a full ride to Humboldt State and "He

came out of the same place as you.” A woman stands and speaks about how fights spill out across neighborhoods and that sometimes parents are the real problem, as they encourage their children to stand their ground and fight. In response, a woman warns, “Don’t touch my kids. I told him to fight.” Murmurs. “The LAPD needs to manage the youth better,” someone shouts. A man stands up and relates that his daughter has been the target of cyber bullying on Facebook. He doesn’t want to remove his child from school, and he wants the LAPD to take it seriously. He’s going to call the FBI because it’s a federal crime. “They’re demons,” he says visibly unnerved. “I just call them terrorists,” states another man in agreement. Test scores sink, and street violence grows, and it affects everyone in the room. A few people speak of the need for schools to occupy the students with more after-school programs. People speak out of turn and a seated woman shouts, “The parents need to be handcuffed.”

“What should we do about this?” asks a seated man to his neighbor. The moderator asks for silence, but the murmuring intensifies. A man wearing sunglasses near the door gets the floor, but cannot speak because a man and a woman are arguing about why schools should ban cellphones from their campuses. The man tries to speak again, but no one will shut up.

“Robert’s Rules of order! It used to be used here,” barks the man. Frustrated, he grabs his backpack and leaves the room, but continues to yell in the hallway, “Robert’s Rules! Robert’s Rules! We used to...” Some people laugh, some people nod in agreement, and the moderator reminds the room to take turns and not speak over two minutes. Calm is restored.

A young man named Maurice Kelly stands and addresses the room. He is 29 and an ex-convict who studied Islam in prison. Now that he's out, he wants community support, meaning a position working with local kids. "If you wanna solve the problem," he says, "you need to get someone like me." A man from GAP, a program that helps ex-convicts make the transition from prison back to society, stands and talks about employment opportunities. A woman stands and reminds the assemblage that they need to vote in the upcoming congressional election. A man speaks about how fathers who have previously not paid alimony can clean the slate and see their children. More murmurs. At the close of the meeting, we stand and hold hands and bow our heads and pray to God for his support.

Out in the hallway, Maurice Kelly asserts that the older generation can't effect true change with kids because the two generations can't relate to each other. At his age and with his street knowledge, Kelly claims that he's in the position to help, if he's given the opportunity. Kelly's train of thought is interrupted by a young man standing a few feet away, who eyes me suspiciously and asks if I'm a reporter. "Sometimes," I respond, "but not today." "I gotta stay clear of you," he says dramatically and jets away. Kelly shrugs and hands me his card and moves off into the crowd.

The fervor of the meeting continues out in the hallway with wild egos, wounded hearts and rampant fear. Tired and a bit frustrated from the experience, I leave Kelly and duck back into the conference room where I find Woods gathering her things. She's understandably tired and a bit grumpy and wants to get out of the building as quickly as possible because she has another meeting to attend in an hour.⁴²² We make our way

⁴²² I handed her a stack of copies of the issue of *Random Lengths News* which features a profile I wrote about her. She read the article very quickly and stated that I did a good job capturing her economically.

through the crowd where people greet her and thank her for attending the meeting. Outside, she takes my arm and leans hard against her cane and we creep across the parking lot to her car, where she pauses to get my opinion. The meeting seemed like a pressure release valve, I tell her, but I'm suspicious of its further utility. It's hard to say what the officials can or will do beyond taking in the concerns of the community—there are just so many problematic issues, maybe too many. Woods nods affirmatively, squeezes my hand and thanks me for taking the time to attend the meeting. Woods is running behind schedule so our goodbye is quick.

“Love, light and blessings,” says Woods, then she drives away.

We meet again for lunch at the Rose Garden. The cafeteria is filled, and it's much louder than it was on my previous visit. Cable news blares on the TV to a largely disinterested room filled with lively conversation and laughter. Between the noise and a dying cellphone battery, I ask Woods if we can record part of the interview in her car, and she agrees.⁴²³ As we chat and wait for lunch to arrive, Woods picks up my journal and flips through a few pages. She frowns a little, and though Woods never says a word, I feel like I'm being criticized for my poor penmanship by my grandmother.

She's in a great mood, though is a bit tired, having stayed up too late the night before reading. Over southern barbecue, she reviews my notes from last week and make a few minor corrections. People pass by the table to pay their respects and to chat about impending meetings. Despite an air of fragility, Woods is still vital. After we finish lunch, we slowly amble arm in arm out to the parking lot. We pass a gray-haired

⁴²³ I used my I-phone memo recorder to record all my meetings. My phone's battery was dying, but I also wanted to speak to Woods in private, away from the eyes and ears of curious onlookers.

man around Woods age who bemusedly looks us over and says hello. “Should I have introduced myself as your grandson or your boyfriend?” I ask Woods, who giggles and says she doesn’t know which would be more absurd. We make our way to her car, a late nineties Lexus four door. After I help her into the driver’s seat, I jump into the passenger seat, plug my phone charger into the cigarette lighter receptacle, and turn on the recorder.

After the 1965 Watts Riots/Revolts, Woods joined many voices in shaping the identity of new health institutions via her participation in community meetings with politicians, county officials and representatives from USC and UCLA. These meetings defined the identities of King/Drew and the Watts Health Center: King/Drew was created by an executive board with representatives from USC and UCLA, and the Watts Health Center was built by USC and overseen by USC’s Dr. Robert Tranquada. While a part of the community discourse, Woods worked within the institutions as a volunteer.

Woods: “I was not on the payroll. [I was] on the board of directors. We were the ones that met with health personal from the government and the universities. And the university that we predominately worked with was USC. We also worked with UCLA.”

She recalls meeting repeatedly with Dr. Robert Tranquada and Dr. Elsie George of USC, the latter, Woods fondly remembers as having worked her way through medical school selling produce in Watts. Woods searches her memory for details about the two doctors; she doesn’t recall much about them aside from their good nature. Woods recalls that her involvement with the discourse was born from a sense of suspicion that outsiders, even people with good intentions, didn’t understand the needs of the isolated community that had existed without comprehensive healthcare for decades.

Woods: “Well, there was no healthcare out here. Emergency care or any other. People used to have to leave from here and go out on to State Street and go up to Big General Hospital for emergency care...So we didn’t have any [access]. [The hospital] made it much better. But I’m here in my head now. Yes, [I remember meeting] Tranquada and Elsie George, Roger Egeberg at USC...[Tranquada and George] were a dynamic duo. They worked beautifully together. Their contribution was magnificent. Number one is that you gotta remember that [dean of USC Medical School] Roger Egeberg was top dog, and then [Dr.] Tranquada and Dr. George.”

The meetings were often tense, Woods recalls, because of the sudden interest of white officials after years of neglect.

Woods: “They were rather difficult because in the first place, these white folks were coming into the black community. That’s one. And we were afraid that they didn’t understand some of the things that we’d had to go through.”

While the subject is clearly troubling for Woods, she relates the past with a whimsical irony. If outsiders needed knowledge of the community, I ask Woods how she educated the new white faces that appeared in her community.

Woods: “Well, I don’t know how the rest of them did, but I tell you what, I related to them just I am with you. I really did. I expressed my concerns and I didn’t jump all over anybody to talk.”

Simon: “Your concerns were that they were ignorant of the black community’s history?”

Woods: “Well, yes! Aren’t you?” (Laughing)

Simon: “Yes, of course.” (Laughing)

Woods: “Ok.”

It's hard to grasp as an outsider. The manifestations of ghettoization and poverty are many and varied. Inequity in access to comprehensive healthcare was only part of an overall lower standard of living in South Los Angeles than any other area in Los Angeles County; a lack of access to comprehensive healthcare led to higher rates of disease and mortality across the board.⁴²⁴ Woods and other community members needed the representatives to understand the environment they sought to change. Woods: "Yes, because many of the health concerns of the black community, they hadn't had the money to go and get medical care anyway. So they had to do the best that they could with home remedies or 'well, I think I'll try so and so...'"

Probably tired of my specific questions about a time long in the past, Woods changes the conversation to the related subject of outsider perception. Both nationally and internationally, South Los Angeles seems only known for gang violence, poverty, a failed hospital and the Watts Towers. This prejudicial perspective irks Woods, as the environment is obviously more dimensional than flat representations depict it to be.⁴²⁵ Woods: "I know, but that's the way they see it, cause thats the way they treat you in many instances. Even black people."

Vilification of black people from the area by black outsiders seems rooted in class superiority, but as Woods describes it, the effect is isolating for all black people. With dripping irony, Woods voices her anger at black self-hatred.

Woods: "In the first place, they hate the fair black, and they feel like most of the world that looks upon black people as being dumb with no ability to learn anything. (Police

⁴²⁴ Charles E. Windsor, "A Summary of the History and Plan for the Development of the Los Angeles County Martin Luther King, Jr. General Hospital," Hospital Administrator document, (Los Angeles: Martin Luther King Jr. General Hospital, 1972).

⁴²⁵ Josh Sides, ed. *Post-ghetto: Reimagining South Los Angeles*, (Los Angeles: Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West, 2012).

Sirens). This is a fact, I've experienced this, that most black people...Cock eyed, crippled, crazy and totally dumb. I know that.”

Simon: “Why?”

Woods: “Because we were slaves.”

Police sirens wail in the distance. Woods wonders what's happened and, quite naturally, the conversation returns to King/Drew. Woods recalls that beyond it being a place of healing, the medical complex was seen as a place of opportunity.

Woods: “Back then, the idea was magnificent. But you would be surprised at people who were there to be sure that their credentials were impacted, and that they would help them to get better jobs. I'm telling you like it is. You would be surprised at people who thought, 'Well this big beautiful brand new hospital, and I'm a part of it.' This is the truth.”

After all the work that went into creating a hospital, Woods is understandably saddened by its closure. We speak of the optimism of the times when the community came together to support the institution and its mission.

Woods: “People like me who lived out here in this situation, and who were going to be delighted to get first-rate care, first-rate quality we thought, medical care, without having to drive way out north on State Street...We were excited about it. There were weekly meetings where community activists spoke to university officials. Many of these meetings turned into shouting matches.”

The diversity of opinion was manifest at the meetings. Although she's cagey about saying so, it seems that Woods butted heads with other community members asserting themselves. A CDUMS web page lists Lillian Mobley, Cafey Green, Nola

Carter, Johnie Taylor and Mary Henry as community activists that successfully worked for the creation and subsequent betterment of King/Drew.⁴²⁶ Woods is not mentioned. However, I believe that with this type of memorialization akin to iconography is not necessarily indicative of a sense of exclusivity, as many voices in the community participated in the process. Woods spoke up and in doing so defined herself in the community along with many others like Green and Mobley. As Woods describes it, arguments led to rivalries, but the process benefitted all involved.

Woods: “Oh! Crisscross honest injun! Do you know I was thinking of how I could talk about that and not appear to be suffering from delusions of grandeur? Or not try to denigrate anyone. I declare, honestly. Look into my deep green eyes (Woods laughs.) Really, I wanted that to come out without it appearing like I was setting the stage for it... It was no fight because I wouldn’t let it be one. I’m telling you, I wouldn’t let it be, not me. They could do and say what they wanted to say. And they could tell and when I made some remarks, if they wanted to rebut them...Or if they said that I was prevaricating, let them have it. My behavior and the way I got out here and worked with the people, darn those God-darn meetings. Are you listening? When you get through with me you will know me for you, and I’m pretty sure...”

A few minutes tick by as Woods drifts off into memory. “Now, look at that,” she says pointing to a young black teenager with his pants sagging down low, his underwear fully exposed in the back. Woods is clearly annoyed by the youth’s appearance, but her frustration quickly gives way to compassion.

⁴²⁶ The Lillian Harkless Mobley Presidential Endowed Scholarship Fund. <http://www.cdrewu.edu/assets/pdfs/Mrs%20%20Mobley%20Scholarship%20Fund.pdf>

Woods: “No way in hell...Nobody would leave my house like that. I’m serious. But you know what? He’s hurting, and he’s saying, I can do what I darn well please. Honey, you couldn’t have paid...If mine had sneaked and even worn them extra shorts...You think I’d let somebody out of my house looking like that...It just hurts me to see these kids looking like this.”

Woods recalls the empowerment process with mixed emotions, as it led to some controversial results and often the demonization of the black community. Still, Woods found her voice during that period of political engagement.

Woods: “Number one is that they were educational. Number two is that it helped me to learn and practice what it meant to become a real conversationalist. Because to me, what it meant to become a real conversationalist is a good speaker as well as a good listener...It was hope all the way. Hope for better jobs. Hope for better healthcare. Hope, hope, hope. So it was hope all the way. Not only did you feel that you would get better healthcare and not have to go all twenty or twenty five miles out of the way to get it, but you also had hope that you wouldn’t have to go a three or four mile job, you could find a job in the community. Do you understand me?”

There’s so much emotion tied to memory, and the memories she’s dredging up are painful to recall, as is the cruelty of memory loss that comes with age; memory is everything for her, and its slipping away everyday.

Woods: “First of all, I’ve grown older so I’ve forgotten a lot too. Secondly, it happened, we did what we could, and when I say we...everyone did, to make the most out of what you did get. And I don’t want to let that impede my progress today...”

Talking with Woods is fascinating, but time is short, and she's a busy woman with appointments to keep. Not far from the Rose Garden is Woods' next stop, the Los Angeles Public Library Alma Reaves Woods Watts Branch, where she needs to inquire about the poor state of the shrubbery that lines the entrance. The library took decades of fundraising and advocacy on the part of Woods and other boosters, so she wants to make sure it's properly maintained. While Woods is proud that the library was built, she doesn't think much of it being named in her honor, even after an eight-year political fight by her supporters in the community and on the Los Angeles City Council. She takes pride in what she considers her greatest accomplishment.

Woods: "Look into my deep red eyes! I'm so grateful to almighty God that I reared three boys in Nickerson Gardens Housing Development, the largest one in this city. Never had to go to jail to get anyone out. Never had to go and get anyone back into school. That's more important to me than anything else."

Woods tells me she has a surprise for me in the trunk of her car. She pulls two picture albums from thick plastic packaging. They contain photos from her years of community work, mostly of the children she helped along the way. I chide her, as she probably could've shown me these pictures earlier, if only to spark more memories. She laughs and agrees, but this is part and parcel of Woods's whimsical persona. I help her back into her car where she delivers her customary parting phrase once more before driving away, "Love, light and blessings."

In South Los Angeles today, just like yesterday, active community participation is required to keep things moving forward for the better and to check the incursions of the

feckless. In describing the community action programs of War on Poverty, Francis Fox Piven wrote:

For a time, these programs did not so much moderate unrest as provide the vehicles through which the black ghettos mobilized to demand government services. They activated a new leadership structure in the ghettos and they also activated masses of black poor. This occurred because some funds from these programs were permitted to flow directly into the ghetto neighborhoods—a form of direct federal patronage to minority policymakers to use these funds to create organizations and to press their own interests, especially in the arena of municipal services and politics.⁴²⁷

Watt's style of activism is rooted in the community meeting because action, however small or inconsequential it may or may not seem, leads to a sense of agency, if not agency itself. Meetings are often a place defined by the expression of hope and rage and fear; unsettled arguments, hardened feelings, bad memories; the trauma of poverty and prejudice leaves a mark on everyone. If concrete change is gradual, it is accompanied by conversations that serve as emotional venting, so that community members don't lose hope and perish beneath the weight of injustice.

Conclusion: A Redevelopment Meeting at King Hospital

Guarded by willow trees that gently dance in the warm breeze, the Martin Luther King Jr. Multi-Service Ambulatory Care Center (MLK-MACC) rests at the intersection of East 120th Street and South Wilmington Avenue. North across 120th lies the Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science (CDUMS); just west of the CDUMS is King-Drew Magnet High School; just north of CDUMS is the Lincoln Elementary School.

⁴²⁷ Frances Fox Piven, *Who's Afraid of Frances Fox Piven?: The Essential Writings of the Professor Glenn Beck Loves to Hate*, (New York: The New Press, 2011).

Located a few blocks south of the 105 freeway and the Metro Green Line, the interconnected complex of buildings exists in the unincorporated area of Willowbrook which is part of Los Angeles County.

On May 9, 2007, Edith Isabel Rodriguez died of a gastrointestinal perforation in the waiting room of at the Martin Luther King Jr./Drew Medical Center in Willowbrook, California after being refused treatment by hospital staff, who misdiagnosed the severity of her condition. Video of Rodriguez's shocking death went viral and put a national face on the local problem of malpractice at the hospital exposed two years earlier by reporters from *The Los Angeles Times*.⁴²⁸ After years of intrigue and polarizing political debate, Rodriguez's death was the final straw. The hospital failed a series of inspections, and Los Angeles County Health Director Dr. Bruce Chernoff ultimately decided to close the hospital, beginning with its emergency room. A week later, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors voted to suspend inpatient services; while it would continue to house out-patient clinics and critical care facilities, King Hospital was indefinitely shuttered on August 27, 2007.⁴²⁹ Currently, the King Hospital houses approximately 70 outpatient clinics, but it lacks, among other things, a functioning emergency care facility. While the schools are open and thriving, the hospital exists in a state of limbo, and by extension, so does the community it serves.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁸ In 2005, Los Angeles Times reporters Charles Ornstein, Tracy Weber and photographer Robert Gauthier won the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service for their investigation of systemic organizational mismanagement and medical misconduct at King Hospital.

⁴²⁹ Herbert A. Sample, "New MLK Hospital Rising in LA." *California Health Report*, December 23, 2012. <http://www.healthycal.org/archives/10466>

⁴³⁰ This meeting occurred on October 26, 2011; I attended both for research and to cover the event for *Random Lengths News*.

A diverse crowd gathers at the H. Claude Hudson Auditorium which is located just off the east face of the hospital. Named in honor of Dr. Hudson, a celebrated local civil rights activist, entrepreneur and dentist, it seems a fitting place for a community meeting on the redevelopment of the entire medical and educational zone.⁴³¹ Doctors in lab coats nosh on roast beef sandwiches. Photographers snap shots of the crowd. A few elderly denizens doze in their chairs. Sitting with a quiet strength near the front row is Dr. Ernie Smith (PhD), who took over the leadership of the South Central Multipurpose Senior Citizen Center after its founder, the famed community activist Lillian Mobley, who passed away on July 21, 2011.⁴³² Collaborating with his long-time colleague Dr. Ernie Smith (MD), Dr. Ernie Smith (PhD) has been a constant vocal critic of the hospital's closure; both men have stridently worked on behalf of the community for more than 40 years.⁴³³ After being a presence at community meetings for five decades, Alma Reaves Woods is strangely absent, though it seems likely that someone in the audience will inform her of the night's activities. A couple sitting in the row in front of me discuss possible changes that Supervisor Mark Ridley Thomas might make; they wonder if he will make an appearance.

Rehabilitating the hospital that was partially shuttered in 2007 is just one part of the supervisor's larger concept. According to the plans that line the walls of the auditorium, redevelopment will profoundly change the look and feel of the entire area

⁴³¹ D. Michael Cheers, ed. "H. Claude Hudson, NAACP Pioneer Dies at Age 102," *Jet Magazine*, February 20, 1989, # 75, Pg. 18.

⁴³² Jocelyn Y. Stewart, "Lillian Mobley Dies at 81; South Los Angeles Activist," *Los Angeles Times*, July 21, 2011. <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/jul/21/local/la-me-lillian-mobley-20110721>

⁴³³ I interviewed both Smith PhD and Smith MD ; personal recorded interview with Dr. Ernie Smith PhD, 10/3/11, 11/15/11, Watts, California; personal recorded interview with Dr. Ernie Smith MD, 9/28/2011, Los Angeles, California.

which is close to a major freeway and metro stop. Redevelopment will undoubtedly bring needed employment opportunities to the area, but often progress of this type is accompanied by displacement and erasure: the threat of gentrification is real.

Noticeably absent from the assemblage is Tim Watkins, the current CEO and President of the Watts Community Labor Action Association (WCLAC) which was founded by his father, the legendary Ted Watkins, who was integral to the original construction of the hospital. When I visited the WCLAC, Watkins claimed that WCLAC owns over a million square feet of commercial space in the redevelopment area, and yet, he has not been approached by the Supervisor's office. Undoubtedly, Thomas will eventually reach out to Watkins, and a deal will be struck; it must be struck for the project to work, as the WCLAC continues to wield considerable power in the area.⁴³⁴

At previous meetings, community members were solicited for ideas about what they thought should be done with the space. Four different design schemes were drafted by architects who took the community's ideas into account. Though stylistically different, all four designs connect the area with small parks and walkways. At this meeting, when lead architect Marty Borko addresses the crowd, he seems understandably cautious because the assembled crowd contains powerful community voices—including a few of my sources that, simply put, won't stand for any nonsense. After he completes his recounting of the progress made on the project, Borko invites the assemblage to inspect the plans and share their thoughts with him and his subordinates. People gather around the building schemes and place stickers next to things they like and jot down notes on issues that need to be addressed. The area as it

⁴³⁴ Tim Watkins refused to speak on the record about his father's role in the creation of King/Drew; he also denied any access to his father's papers, though asserts that in time and with much preparation, scholars will have access to a Ted Watkins archive at the WCLAC.

exists is far from rundown, but all four plans will transform it into something that blends form and function with a warm sense of openness, as if inspired by the designs of Apple computers.

One varsity community member in attendance I'll call Buddy bitterly resents Thomas for not including CDUMS in the planning stages of the project, considering the school's historic role within the medical complex; Mervyn Dymally diplomatically conveyed a similar sense of incredulity.⁴³⁵ Buddy describes Thomas as untrustworthy, and yet, he ruefully acknowledges that Thomas holds all the cards. After a lifetime of living and working in Watts, Buddy is keenly aware that the five member Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors wields immense power, something many people are ignorant of both inside and outside of Los Angeles County. Thomas arrives late, but makes up for it with a rare charisma. He systematically moves about the room shaking hands, patting backs and laughing, stopping just long enough to deliver some goodwill. Governor Jerry Brown has this ability, but where he engages with dry stoicism, Thomas engages with a folksy openness. It's a tough room filled with expectation, yet Thomas seems absolutely unaffected. Maybe he's practiced looking cool. Or perhaps that coolness comes from his sense of his own power. It is no great surprise that Buddy is all smiles and warmth when Thomas comes over and embraces him. Like the WCLAC, CDUMS will undoubtedly be brought into redevelopment discussions, but I suspect that it's better for Thomas to put off these negotiations for as long as possible to avoid too much community participation. Taking a play out of former Supervisor Kenneth Hahn's playbook, Thomas has tied his political career to the project fueled by both public

⁴³⁵ Buddy is a pseudonym for a CRDMS member who spoke to me on the condition that I would not reveal his identity.

interest and private investment. The revitalization of the area is valuable political currency and unless he somehow blows it, Thomas's career could benefit from it much in the way that Hahn's did.⁴³⁶ But the history of professional politics is filled with unexpected landslides that can bury even the strongest climber. The meeting ends. A doctor checks his watch and makes his way to the door. A man stretches and helps his aged wife to her feet. Thomas is already gone.

People wander out into the night, many looking tired yet undefeated; the process of community engagement requires tenacity and faith. Eventually, King Hospital will reopen to the public, and likely a new collaborative deal will be struck with the Charles Drew School of Medicine and Science, however the nature of that arrangement and the relationship the medical complex will have with other institutions remains a mystery. For now, the community has no choice but to wait patiently and continue to participate in the process that began so long ago.

In conjunction with the Charles R. Drew School of Medicine, the Martin Luther King Jr. General Hospital opened its doors to the public on March 27, 1972. It took seven years, much longer than anticipated, but a minor interval in comparison to the long journey that preceded it. As this dissertation has explored in stages, King/Drew was the manifestation of a progressive march that began one hundred years earlier with the end of slavery, when black healers resisted the dominance of white hegemony by pursuing the creation of black medical schools and hospitals, and by forming and sustaining the National Medical Association to counter the racist exclusion of the American Medical Association. Separate but unequal, black medicine was constrained

⁴³⁶ Unfortunately, Thomas's people politely declined my request to interview the supervisor. However, I can understand their disinterest, as the supervisor is focused on the future of the medical complex, and not on its past.

from the start, yet progressively gained ground even as it encountered continuing racial prejudice; it spurred generations of black physicians to overcome notions of black inferiority in the pursuit of black self-sufficiency.

Black life in Los Angeles was defined by an opaque brand of segregation and *de facto* ghettoization that increased as the black population swelled during the World War II era. Hours away from the comprehensive healthcare, black mortality rates were higher than anywhere else in Los Angeles County. Beginning in the late 1950s, black Angelenos began advocating for the construction of a black hospital to be built in South Los Angeles. If the city was to continue on its exclusionary path, then the black community would take care of itself. Early attempts were unsuccessful, yet black Angelenos found greater civic inclusion, if not integration, with the rise of liberal multiracial coalition politics spurred by the gains of the national civil rights movement. This dissertation utilizes the memories of Mervyn M. Dymally and Robert C. Farrell, two black politicians that arose amid the era, to explore the intimate connection between the ascension of multiracial politics in Los Angeles and the creation of King/Drew. Like the medical complex itself, black political inclusion was spurred by black empowerment and an evolving discourse of black power and identity within American society (Chapter Five and Chapter Six).

Reflecting the desire for self-sufficiency and self-determination of the Charles R. Drew Medical Society (the Los Angeles affiliate of the National Medical Association), Dr. Sol White Jr. began advocating in the early 1960s for the creation of a black hospital and medical school run by black physicians in South Los Angeles, a westward expansion of the black hospital movement that had created and sustained Howard and

Meharry Medical Schools. White's plan failed to gain political traction, but he supported Supervisor Kenneth Hahn's campaign—any hospital is better than no hospital at all—but he became alienated by the political process in which his sense of black separatism was too inflexible for negotiation. White left the political process and his medical practice in Los Angeles for a different life and ideology; his experience reflects the experiences of many with both the evolution of black power and the civil rights movement (Chapter Two). Hahn's approach to hospital building was based on his belief that his constituency deserved the same services available to citizens across the county. He empowered his constituency to participate in the political process surrounding the project which gave the community a sense of ownership of the hospital and their destiny (Chapter Three). After long exclusion, the process of inclusion and cultural negotiation was turbulent. In gaining a sense of agency, some community members like Alma Woods found a new sense of identity in community meetings where they attempted to voice the concerns of the community to outsiders they suspected were informed by ignorance, if not white supremacy (Chapter Six).

In this unresolved paradox of perceptions of ownership and agency, Dr. Sherman Mellinkoff represented the white establishment in Los Angeles that supported a multicultural vision for the new medical complex, one that would serve the black community according to the precepts of modern medicine, a belief that relied on an unquestionable allegiance to a hierarchical structure governed by white hegemony that cloaked its racism behind a form of meritocracy and defined most black physicians as being second rate based on inferior education and training (Chapter Four). After a lengthy national search process for a dean for the Charles R. Drew School of Medicine,

Mellinkoff and the rest of the executive board selected Dr. Mitchell Spellman, a respected black surgeon from Howard Medical School and a protégée of Dr. Charles Drew. Spellman was selected both because he believed in King/Drew's mission and his sterling reputation in the national medical community. In selecting a respected black physician, they wrongly believed that Spellman's race would alone satisfy the community's desire for black leadership at the helm of the new institution. Spellman was from the upper class, did not subscribe to a black power ideology, and despite his having previously served in a hospital that cared for the poor black population of Washington, DC, he was still an outsider in Watts. Many community members strongly believed that the deanship should go to a physician who had intimate knowledge of the community. Additionally, Spellman assembled a largely white group of department heads to the frustration of many community members who wanted those positions to be filled by black physicians, preferably from Los Angeles. After a tumultuous nine years as dean, Spellman resigned the position. Like White before him, Spellman was burned by his participation and left Los Angeles (Chapter Four).

King/Drew's creation era was defined by high expectations that the institution was a cure for many ills far beyond its capacity. It could and did train black physicians, but not enough to offset the educational shortages that continued to constrain the number of black physicians across the nation. It could and did train and employ many community members, but it did not have enough jobs to fundamentally challenge the high rates of unemployment in the area. Despite being embroiled in politics, King/Drew cared for the community, realistically its main purpose, but it could not fundamentally challenge the multiplicity of poverty-related illnesses. In exploring differing memories

and perspectives on the institution's construction, the reader now understands why King/Drew's creation held meanings far greater than the assemblage of bandages and hospital beds. King/Drew was a manifestation of hope that America was becoming one society, not two, and that a community could effectively help itself in conjunction with all levels of government. King/Drew delivered much upon its promise as it went on to serve the community via access to education, employment and comprehensive medical treatment. But burdened by so many hopes and dreams, it seems that the reality of King/Drew could never live up to expectation, nor exist unscathed amid the continuing racial politics and poverty. Beginning in the early 1970s, South Los Angeles experienced a decline in the manufacturing jobs, which led to an synchronistic increase in unemployment rates and drug-related violence; King Hospital's trauma unit was inundated by so many gang related shootings that the US Army sent its trauma surgeons to the hospital for training in a war-like atmosphere.⁴³⁷ And so the victory that was King/Drew's creation morphed into part of the perception that the community itself was under siege (if not defeated) and that the civil rights movement had failed to bring about lasting change in the community. But of course, many community members rejected the "Killer King" narrative and, as they had all along, they tenaciously fought on to empower their community and for control over the fate of their hospital, a hard-won symbol of empowerment and inclusion, and a vehicle for healing and salvation. The community will not surrender its prize. The battle for King/Drew will continue as part of a never-ending revolution that rejects notions of exclusion, incompetence and black lethality; and strives for inclusion, self-determination and equality: hope.

⁴³⁷ Kenneth J. Garcia, "Army Surgeons Training for War — at King Hospital," *Los Angeles Times*, November 7, 1989. http://articles.latimes.com/1989-11-07/news/mn-884_1_army-surgeon

This dissertation is a collection of voices and memories that conflict and agree, a rendering of multiplicity centered upon the creation of a medical complex that transmits far more: the interconnected elements of the empowerment of a community within an era in which transformation seemed as possible as man walking upon the moon. No one voice can speak for one event, just as no one voice can speak for an entire community. Any attempt to render *the* truth from just one individual's memory of a community event seems insufficient, or worse, holds the potential to denigrate that group by falling back on dangerous and unsatisfying stereotypes. Yet I agree with Douglas Flamming, who praised those community members that arose and fought for a better community: "Their sheer tenacity was their most striking characteristic. For them, the quest for civil rights was not a 'movement' or a set of dramatic moments; it was a way of life."⁴³⁸ Indeed, it was a way of life that defined an identity and created a medical complex, but those individuals were also bound together as part of a national movement that had long resisted black inferiority and white hegemony. And so while inequity continued, King/Drew's creation was proof of a belief that optimistic tenacity could ultimately succeed in transforming America into a fairer nation, and that dreams could be made real when people worked together toward a better future.

⁴³⁸ Douglas Flamming, *Bound for Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 3.

Epilogue

Not far from tony Baldwins Hills is Ladera Heights, a black middle-class suburb where many King/Drew staff have resided for decades. It's about a fifteen minute drive to the medical complex. While I've frequently visited the area to interview sources, this visit is more personal than it is professional. I make my way through the quiet streets filled with ranch-style homes. A few flowering cactuses bask in the summer heat.

Blanche Ross Smith greets me at the door with a hug. She was the first source I cultivated in my research, but somewhere along the way she also became a friend. As the first head nurse at King Hospital, Smith assembled and trained the nursing crew from a cramped trailer located across the street from the construction site. Over the years, Smith has consistently avoided speaking about the politics that defined the hospital and medical school's creation era. As Smith's number two, the late Corrine Fields got the brunt of "intrusive" politics, leaving Smith free to focus on the job of running the new hospital. Like many former staff members I've met, Smith knew from the start that politics would define life at the hospital but chose to avoid it as much as possible. In 1985, Blanche married Dr. Phillip "Smitty" Smith, the first medical director to serve when King Hospital opened its doors in 1972. While she hasn't worked at the hospital in a long time, Smith continues to be part of the Charles R. Drew Auxiliary. Plainly, Smith has been in the mix for much of her professional life, and I've always suspected that she knows more than she lets on, but my inquisitiveness has been consistently met with a stony, if polite, silence.

From the entryway, I see that the living room décor has changed. Smith informs me that her son Kevin has been busy restoring the look of the house to its original mid-

century modern style. Now polished paneled wood meets navel orange and blood red. It's not a total redo though, as a frenetic painting of "Smitty" still hangs above a recessed bar. In the yet to be remodeled kitchen, we catch up a bit about the day to day. When I first met Smith, her husband was rapidly declining from Alzheimer's disease, and she remains his sole care provider. As if that wasn't enough responsibility, Smith took on the custodianship of one of her closest friends, retired US Army Colonel Monica C. Palmer, who also suffers from advanced Alzheimer's. As Smith cares for Palmer and Smitty around the clock, the house has taken on the air of an upscale retirement home. She looks much older than the last time I visited, as if the weight of responsibility has forced her to shrink a bit. Like a modest halo, a shock of grey hair cuts around her hairline. She tells me that she's coping okay, but when both Smitty and Palmer are having bad days, Smith feels herself slipping a bit, as if Alzheimer's is somehow contagious. With an odd familiarity, I've asked her over the years to get some in-home care, but it hasn't happened yet. I wonder what will happen when age or disease strikes my aged friend, and what will happen to the others when they can no longer rely upon her stalwart nature.

We briefly talk about the recent news of the hospital's revamp. The reopening has been pushed back to early 2015, and the construction costs associated with the revamp and a new wing have spiraled to \$32 million over budget because of "unforeseen site conditions."⁴³⁹ The cost of the project now stands at \$281 million, and Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas claims the construction is 92 percent complete.⁴⁴⁰ We both find this

⁴³⁹ Seema Mehta, "New South L.A. Hospital to cost \$32 million more than expected," *Los Angeles Times*, August 19, 2013. <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/aug/19/local/la-me-mlk-20130819>

⁴⁴⁰ Patrick Healy, "Delays, Costs Mount for New King Drew Hospital," *NBC Southern California*, August 21, 2013. <http://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/local/Delays-Costs-Add-Up-for-New-King-Hospital---220445701.html>

claim comedically absurd, though as this has been the way the project has gone all along, neither of one of us is much surprised. Though the effects of inflation are both evident and obvious, we are both strangely entertained that the revamp has cost more than ten times than that of the its original price tag.

I carry an immense bag of cat litter for Smith into a back office where Palmer's two Siamese cats, Mr. and Mrs. Cat doze in a chair by the window. While I have periodically popped by to check on Smith in the past, this visit is a personal introduction by design. I'm here to meet Palmer. An experienced US Army nurse, Palmer was hired to create and implement procedures associated with King Hospital's emergency room area, and her work paved the way for the hospital's successful accreditation. The two women have been close ever since. Smith instructs me to wait in the living room while she prepares Palmer to meet me. Given Palmer's condition, I don't feel great about this. In the course of interviewing sources, I've met many people afflicted with Alzheimer's, a psychically painful disease made all the worse by its uneven progression. Meeting a new person can be terrifying—or not, depending upon the minute, the hour, the day. Smith dismisses my apprehension and instructs me to greet Palmer with military formality. Standing in the living room, I hear Smith coaxing Palmer, who is understandably reluctant.

“Who is he? Why do I have to meet him? I don't want to meet him. I don't know why I should have to meet with him...” When she finally appears, Palmer hides whatever reservations she has behind a warm smile.

“Colonel Palmer, it's a pleasure to meet you,” I say.

“Thank you. Now, who are you?” she asks. I tell her that I’m a friend of her friend Blanche, who very much wanted us to meet. She beams and takes my extended arm and says that it’s not often that such a handsome man with a nice smile visits her. We laugh a bit and make our way to the couch. She seems more relaxed than I expected. She has the remainder of a British accent that I mistake for Trinidadian. She scoffs at my mistake. We used to call them “Trinies,” Palmer says dismissively. Palmer was born in Jamaica and was raised in England. She trained as a nurse and decided to work for the US Army because the working hours were far shorter than in British military. Ratcheting up her voice an octave and speaking through her nose, Palmer asks me if I’d like a spot of tea.

The three of us move to the kitchen table. Smith prepares the tea while Palmer tells me about her experiences working in a MASH unit in Vietnam. She recalls a specific incident in which a young wounded black soldier was brought in for treatment. It didn’t take Palmer long to realize that he would die soon. She held his hand, and when he asked if he was going to die, Palmer lied and told him that he would be okay. Understandably, the soldier was much relieved to hear this. He had been accepted to Howard University, and he would be the first in his family’s history to attend college, a major accomplishment and a source of pride for both him and his family. A half hour later, the young soldier died.

“I shouldn’t have lied,” says Palmer regretfully, arguing that despite its ramifications, honesty is always for the best. Not sure of my footing, I nod appreciatively, and then the conversation moves on. Sipping our tea, Smith and I discuss a bit of gossip that both of us had recently heard about the Drew School. Recently, Dr. David

Carlisle, the school's president, had come under scrutiny by a group of community members. According to a member of the group, Carlisle had taken "suspicious actions" that were detrimental to the school's future and ran counter to the school's mission as originally conceived when King/Drew medical complex was created. During Carlisle's tenure, the school's executive board was reorganized and, allegedly, it no longer contained members of the Drew Society, nor members that represented a Drew Society perspective. It's unclear if Carlisle personally orchestrated this change or if it was a result of political infighting. Carlisle lives at the president's residence, also located in Ladera Heights, where he entertains visiting dignitaries on behalf of the school. Allegedly, he receives an annual salary of \$500,000, which the group considers extravagant given Drew's financial instability. Carlisle has always been considered an outsider by many in the Watts community. It's possible that a sense of jealousy explains the animus over the perks of his position, but the latter point requires a bit of exploration. When pushed to explain Carlisle's supposed foreignness, my source, a respected community member, called Carlisle an "Oreo." Calling a black man an Oreo is synonymous with questioning the state of his blackness.

"I don't even know what that means," says Smith. Amused by what I perceive to be disingenuous naiveté, I roll my eyes and suggest that she is, indeed, familiar with the concept. She smiles furtively, and then asks me if I know what it means. We laugh a bit, and then I tell her that I think I understand it about as much as a white guy probably can. Being black enough means a commitment to a constant revolution against white hegemony, and a commitment to stand against other blacks that worked on behalf of white hegemony by not being radical enough. From my place of white privilege, I find

the concept both painful and anachronistic, as ideologies, tactics, and politics have changed markedly. In contemplating and writing about the era, I've come to believe that black empowerment was shackled by the corrosive and coercive concept of "black enough." But beyond my visceral dislike, I've come to understand that black empowerment was necessarily dualistic. While "black enough" may have created division, it also created a sense of unity. Smith nods appreciatively, though it's possible her response stems from a sense of patient maternalism. Predictably, she states that she has always avoided politics of this nature, which again, I find a bit thin. Whether one thinks of it as compartmentalizing or purposely wearing social blinders, it seems unlikely that Smith could possibly avoid the politics of race that have shaped her life, and that of the community she has worked on behalf of for more than half a century.

"I don't have a clue what you two are talking about," says Palmer. Smith asks Palmer about how racial politics played out in her time in England. Palmer says that England is different, more of a meritocracy. We drink our tea and chat about relationships. In her youth, Palmer was married for two years to "a proper English doctor," but as she desired a career and independence, she never fit the mold of a doctor's wife. And then something painfully predictable occurs. Using much of the same language as before, Palmer again tells the story of the young black soldier. Smith and I nod at each other knowingly. At the end of her story, Palmer again states that she regretted not telling the young soldier the truth. She looks at me for confirmation. I tell her what I hadn't before, that I believe she had acted honorably, mercifully, allowing the young man to die with a sense of peace. Smith nods in agreement and says that she doesn't understand why Palmer didn't see what seems so perfectly obvious to us.

Palmer says that she thinks about the soldier every night, and that her lie haunts her. I ask her why she fixates on that one incident, as surely she had seen a lot over the course of a fifty year nursing career. “I don’t know why,” Palmer says, “I just do, and it hurts.”

Colonel Palmer is not one of my interview subjects, but her story illustrates both the power and the fragility of memory in oral histories. Throughout my research, I linked memories with traditional sources whenever possible. Traditional sources revealed the basic framework for the era of the hospital's creation, chronicled some of the public debates, and helped me create lists of key players. Traditional sources, however, failed to lend substantial meaning to the events that took place at the heart of black South Los Angeles, a marginalized community rarely written about unless the stories bolster notions of ineptitude, violence or despair. The answer to this disturbing dearth of traditional source materials, to uncovering more profound meanings in the occurrences, was an arduous collecting and sifting through the memories of a generation nearing the end of its existence.

Palmer asks me what I’ve learned from my research, specifically from interviewing people about their role in King/Drew’s creation. I tell her I’ve learned that sometimes direct questions don’t necessarily need to be asked, and more often than one would expect, answers spill out casually. Both Palmer and Smith like this. I tell them that I’ve reoriented my sense of curiosity during my research from wanting the facts to wanting the meaning. But the facts are important, Palmer warns. I tell her that I agree, but that with stories like the one I’ve written, there’s much more to it than facts. She asks me for an example, and I use her incident as a hypothetical. If I got lucky enough

to find a notation that locates you and the young black soldier in the archives of the US Army, I tell Palmer, I would have very little. But from listening to you relate the experience, I continue, I get a sense of meaning of the event that is deeper and more powerful. The more one mines memory, the more meaning comes to the surface; it's certainly messy, but incredibly rich. Palmer's nose bunches a bit, but then she says that she sees my point. We finish our tea. Remarkably, three hours have passed and I inform the two ladies that I have to go before traffic gets bad. Without her saying so, I can tell Smith is happy about how the visit unfolded— somehow I have become accustomed to navigating the memories of a generation almost extinct. Smith and I embrace at the door and I head out into the megalopolis baked by the summer heat.

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