

Symposium Program / Draft of Monday, September 4, 2006

Re-Viewing Richmond in Time and Place: Issues of Equity and Inequity in a Regional Context

A One-Day Symposium and Bus Tour
575 McCone Hall, The Clarence Glacken Seminar Room
Department of Geography, University of California Berkeley
Saturday, October 14, 2006

Presented by
The Department of Geography, UC Berkeley
The Center for Community Innovation, UC Berkeley
The Mid-Atlantic Regional Center for the Humanities (MARCH), Rutgers-Camden, New Jersey
With support from the Ford Foundation

The image of Richmond, California, is shaped mostly by press coverage of crime, gang activities, and drug dealing and to a lesser extent by that of plans to deal with problems and create opportunities from city hall, and from local community organizations. Other important topics are barely discussed: How Richmond's residents shape their city by responding to crime, how they find ways to make a living, how they come together in churches, and how families help each other to find work, improve their dwellings, and give support to those in need. Also neglected are the ways culture is expressed in food, fashions, home décor, signs, and murals; and how the conditions inside public institutions such as John Kennedy High School reinforce the regional inequalities of American cities.

For the past three years, the Ford Foundation has supported New York photographer and MacArthur Foundation fellow, Camilo José Vergara, to create a resource for re-visualizing the post-industrial city. The project lives at www.invinciblecities.com and features Richmond, California, and Camden, New Jersey. This web site, like the photography of Lewis Watts, together with the publication of recent books such as Howard Gillette's *Camden After the Fall*, and Robert Self's *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*, offer new resources—free of the pejorative labels often applied to such areas—for seeing and assessing the ways that people are working to make a new kind of city in areas that have lost and have been unable to replace their former industrial base.

Program

- 9:00 AM **Registration and Coffee**
- 9:15-9:30 **Welcomes and Framing for the Day**
Carl Anthony, Program Officer, The Ford Foundation [tentative; won't be able to confirm until after 9/5]
Paul Groth, Professor of Geography and Architecture, UC Berkeley, co-editor of *Everyday America: Cultural Landscape Studies after J. B. Jackson*
- 9:30-11:30 **Session One: Seeing Richmond as a Permanent American Ghetto**
Questions for the session: How can photography projects like the Invincible Cities website

connect disinvested places like Richmond with the rest of the nation and the world? How are residents of these communities reinventing work and using places in new ways? How can a new generation of Americans learn about our permanent ghettos and become involved? How do photography projects help explain the history of the present? How is photography a tool for changing the perceptions and policies of residents, visitors, policy planners, and other groups? How can the Invincible Cities site be more effective?

Moderator: Paul Groth

Initial presentations:

Camilo José Vergara, writer and photographer, New York; author of *How the Other Half Worships*, *The New American Ghetto*, and *American Ruins*

Lewis Watts, photographer, Richmond, and Professor, UC Santa Cruz, author of *South to West Oakland* and *Harlem of the West: The San Francisco Fillmore Jazz Era*

Discussants:

Loic Wacquant, Professor of Sociology, UC Berkeley, author of *The Rise of Advanced Marginality*, and *Pierre Bourdieu and Democratic Politics* [not yet confirmed]

Liam Kennedy, Professor of American Studies and Director of the Clinton Institute for American Studies at University College, Dublin. Author of *Race and Urban Space in American Culture*, and co-editor of *Urban Space and Representation*.

Shirley Ann Wilson Moore, Professor of History, California State University, Sacramento, and author of *To Place Our Deeds: The African-American Community in Richmond, California, 1910-1963*

Donna Graves, Richmond, Project Director of the Rosie the Riveter Memorial and Preserving California's Japantowns; past Project Director of the Power of Place, Los Angeles

11:30 to 12:30 **Lunch**

12:30-2:15 **Session Two: Re-Placing Inequality**

Questions for the session: What are the links between documentation and policy-making, the seen and the unseen, official and unofficial ways that shape the life of a community? What are the key issues of social and political structure in places like Richmond, California, and other cities that have lost a past industrial base? How can the Richmond site generate interest in the city? Where? Among whom?

Moderator: Howard Gillette, Professor of History, Rutgers University-Camden, New Jersey, author of *Camden after the Fall: Decline and Renewal in a Post-Industrial City*

Initial presentation:

Manuel Pastor, Professor of Latin American and Latino Studies, and Director of the Center for Justice Tolerance and Community, UC Santa Cruz, co-author of *Up Against the Sprawl: Public Policy and the Making of Southern California*, and *Searching for the Uncommon Common Ground: New Dimensions on Race in America*

Discussants:

Robert O. Self, Associate Professor of History, Brown University, and author of *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*

Karen Chapple, Assistant Professor of City and Regional Planning, UC Berkeley, and author of *Building Institutions from the Ground Up: Regional Workforce Development Collaboratives in California*

Carla Perez, Northern California Program Director, Communities for a Better Environment

- 2:15-2:30 **Summing Up: Howard Gillette**
- 2:30-3:00 **Coffee Break**
- 3:00-5:30 **Session Three: Visiting Richmond—A Bus Tour**
\$10 fee from participants, plus the cost of dinner in Richmond
- 5:30-7:00 **Dinner at Portumex Restaurant, 721 - 23rd Street, Richmond**
Phone: 510-237-7513 Near the intersection of 23rd Street and Burbeck Avenue
- 7:00-7:30 **Bus returns to UC Berkeley campus drop-off point**

Visiting Richmond—A Bus Tour

This draft: Monday, September 4, 2006

Unless indicated otherwise, sites are "drive-bys" with any narration done on bus.

"Site talks" indicate place where bus is parked, people get out, 5 min talk.

Note: bus needs good, working mike system and if possible, a toilet in back.

Some themes and comparisons:

- juxtapositions of new and old; surviving uses and new experiments
- contrasts between, on the one hand, emptiness and entropy at the former city core and in public spaces; and on the other hand, dense activity and individual small-scale incremental investments in housing and commercial areas
- striking urban disconnections; physical isolation of various parts of Richmond; complications of city and county fragmentation of the urban area
- comparisons of phases of public housing
- comparing the water edge and agricultural land edges of the area
- comparisons of street and street planting design: Whose streets? Whose Richmond?

Routes and Sites:

1. Campus to I-80 to I-580, drive to exit at Canal Boulevard
2. At end of Canal Boulevard, past Korean car off-loading port storage, to surviving WWII Kaiser slips, buildings, and Liberty Ships area (Rosie the Riveter National Park Service sites)
3. Backtrack, loop around Santa Fe Channel, past New Richmond City Hall
4. Foot of Harbor Way: site talk re: NPS Park by Donna Graves
5. Drive past Marina Green, Rosie sculpture,
6. Urban disconnection, as shown by the complex route needed to travel from the waterfront to the former "Main Street" of Macdonald Avenue: Marina Bay Parkway, to Cutting Boulevard, to 37th Street, and finally to Macdonald

7. Eastern Macdonald: former shopping center site, and truck driving school; site talk, Camilo? [This stop will depend on what's there on Oct 13th, but the empty shopping center and the blacked-out bank sign (for freeway traffic overhead) are probably worth a stop]
8. Central Macdonald Avenue—largely social service agencies and churches survive
9. The brave new city future of the 1940s: the monumental civic center complex with its high-style modernist design
10. Western Region Social Security Center: an attempt at introducing new employment
11. BART station and New Urbanist housing (Richmond Village Apartments/condos?): site talk?
12. Western Macdonald Avenue 1: the shell of the 1910s down town; 1st to 3rd streets, Bay Area Rescue Mission Sites, what Vergara calls the “people repair industry”
13. Western Macdonald Avenue 2: Atchison Village and Liberty Village, WWII housing
14. Drive on Garrard Boulevard, behind the sound wall (and barrier to western industrial lands) to Gertrude Avenue
15. West Gertrude Avenue: site of large flea markets (one of the new centers and public spaces of Richmond)
16. Then north along new median park and housing renewals along Third Street. [Note: this is technically over the border, not in Richmond; seems to be unincorporated Contra Costa county district; part of “edges” theme]
17. Large tracts of flower greenhouses and open flower tracts, juxtaposed with large regional garbage site (transfer station?) and recycling site. Site talk? By whom? [Pittsburg Avenue, off Central Street, up to Brookstone Drive.] Floriculture uses date back to Japanese-American farming in the area; at NE edge of area, includes Top Hat Orchids and other orchid raisers.
18. County homeless shelter(s) and other county housing
19. Take Brookside east to 23rd Street, which runs north and south (at this point we're temporarily in the city San Pablo)
20. Richmond? High School, north of Maricopa Street
21. Twenty-third Street as lively spine of largely Latino businesses
22. **No-host dinner at Portumex Restaurant, 721 – 23rd Street, near corner of 23rd Street and Burbeck Avenue**
23. Return to campus via Barrett Avenue and I-80.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION NOTES FROM PLANNING MEETINGS AND SUBSEQUENT CORRESPONDENCE

Why are we doing this? (Camilo)

A theme of connection: How do you connect disinvested inner cities (ghettos) with the rest of the nation and the world? How can a new generation of Americans learn about our reservations for the poor? How are residents of these communities reinventing work and using places in new ways?

The website, the photography, to connect Richmond and Camden to the outside world; to document the city people create, past and present; to show that this is a place whose present has history; history includes 50 years or more of decline in employment after the peaks of WW II; and to show a history that goes beyond the photographs and memories that are meaningful to white folks and local boosters. So people can see that there is life in Richmond, intense and active individual investments and changes, daily and often individual investments that make a place viable—not just Redevelopment Agency plans with their brave 20-30 year horizons—the plans that often never happen.

Richmond has a special sense of design, at least in comparison with East Coast analogs—it might be paralleled visually elsewhere in the West. Also a place of deep divisions, where one of the most important facts of life—the Standard Oil (now Chevron) refinery—is off limits and impossible to photograph, let alone visit. Heather Hood: Richmond a place where public spaces are lacking, private spaces are vibrant; lots of juxtaposition of very different elements and erasure of buildings; vacant tracts of land. [some of these themes slotted into bus tour ideas]

Also rarely discussed are the conditions of public institutions such as John Kennedy High School that are maintained to such low standards that they would never be allowed to open in the suburbs. Many classrooms in Richmond are in trailers parked on school yards. [common throughout much of California, middle-class as well as poorer neighborhoods?] Camilo's guess is that the school situation he has seen at John Kennedy HS is similar in Richmond's health facilities, police precincts, and inner city parks (those having nothing to do with Rosie the Riveter or those by the waterfront).

"Declining ghetto" or "declining inner city" may not be the best ways to describe the core conditions in Richmond. Camilo sees it more as people investing and adapting ways for economic survival in the city, for avoiding further deterioration, and for expressing their cultural values. Ghetto maintenance is not static. Sadly, the investments of time and money that people make are often too small to make a difference and they often have built-in costs.

Session One

How does one see Richmond as an active, living place? Importance of the ability to observe a place as part of thinking about it and making plans for its future. Possible session titles: "After" the industrial suburb; life in the permanent American ghetto.

Session Two

Issue of polluted land is terribly important in Richmond, wherever one looks, land problems left from former uses. Health issues link to pollution, past and present. Ice cream vendors and scavengers (bottle and metal recyclers) make an important part of the labor force in Richmond. Yet these workers are often invisible to outsiders. Processes of this kind, the insider view and local economies, are part of what Manuel

Pastor sees and studies. Possible titles for this session: coping with / grappling with inequality; re-thinking inequality; the progress of inequality.

Promotion and PR

Be sure to invite:

- Patricia Leigh Brown, New York Times;
- Philippe Bourgois, anthropologist, UC San Francisco
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Press releases need to be sent to:
Richmond Paper called *The Globe*
The Express, the East Bay free paper
KQED, the local NPR radio station
KPFA, Berkeley radio station

Should we invite public school people, school teachers?

About the bus tour

Bus tour needs city-local narrators as much as possible. Perhaps Donna Graves, Betty Soskin, Lewis Watts, others? [the architecture person in addition to Camilo].