

# “This Modern Marvel”: Bunker Hill, Chavez Ravine, and the Politics of Modernism in Los Angeles

*by Don Parson*

MUCH HAS RECENTLY BEEN WRITTEN about the emerging cityscape of “postmodern Los Angeles” as a collage of land use that is small scale and emphasizes the “creative re-use” of existing structures and buildings.<sup>1</sup> Historically and spatially this postmodern geography was preceded by a modern one, characterized by visionary and large-scale developments. Older, obsolete, or blighted urban areas were to be razed to be replaced by a rational and functional built environment.

The architectural principles of modernism—the machine-like union of form and function—had long been explored and developed in Los Angeles by a number of architects. Though intimately involved in the design of the public housing projects, their best-known works were individual residential and commercial structures that lacked the size, scope and extensive grandeur of the modern cityscape.<sup>2</sup> But in the 1950s, the idea of a large-scale, primarily commercial modernism was given the green light in Los Angeles as local Democrats realigned themselves around the modernist project.

The Democrats of the cold war period were composed of two factions. One section of the party still represented the Roosevelt coalition of unionized workers, minorities, and the elderly who had provided the electoral militancy to enact New Deal reforms such as the 1937 Wagner Act (public housing). These urban liberals saw social programs like public housing as the key to eradicating both social evils and consequent urban blight and thus to redevelop the city on a human scale. Another faction sought to distance itself

from New Deal reforms by embracing modernism and a pro-growth commercial strategy. These modernists saw public housing as an insufficient component on which to base large-scale urban redevelopment. "Public housing did a small part of the job of converting blighted areas into decent homes," stated the California State Reconstruction and Reemployment Commission in 1946. "But a small island in a sea of blight is bound to be engulfed and to revert quickly to blight."<sup>3</sup>

With the opening of the 1950s, the urban liberals of Los Angeles appeared to dominate local politics. The city had applied for, and received, a 10,000-unit public housing contract under the 1949 Housing Act which seemed to be the start of fulfilling the promise, made by the City Housing Authority at the end of World War II, to make Los Angeles "the first city in the nation free of bad housing."<sup>4</sup> Yet the urban liberals suffered a landmark defeat with the victory of Norris Poulson over Fletcher Bowron—a self-professed New Deal Republican—in the 1953 mayoral race. As an urban liberal, Bowron had been recalcitrant in his support for Los Angeles' extensive public housing program which was shamelessly red-baited by its adversaries. This support was central to his failed bid for reelection.<sup>5</sup>

Since its inception in 1937 and continuing through the 1949 Housing Act, public housing construction had been accompanied by slum clearance. Now, with the death of the public housing program in Los Angeles, large-scale urban redevelopment without a housing component came to the forefront on the political agenda.<sup>6</sup> "The realtors and financial institutions who fought against public housing," writes Marc Weiss, "began to push for urban redevelopment much more vigorously after...the threat of an expanded low-rent housing program had been squelched."<sup>7</sup>

Thus, the pro-growth strategies of modernism often dovetailed with that of the downtown commercial, business, and real estate interests and their political representatives—the Republican "old guard." The modernist Democrats, however, wished to wrest the benefits of redevelopment away from downtown and the Republicans and extend those benefits to the Democratic constituency. This was most effective with organized labor who were wooed with offers of highly-paid job patronage that could be realized only in an

expanding urban economy.

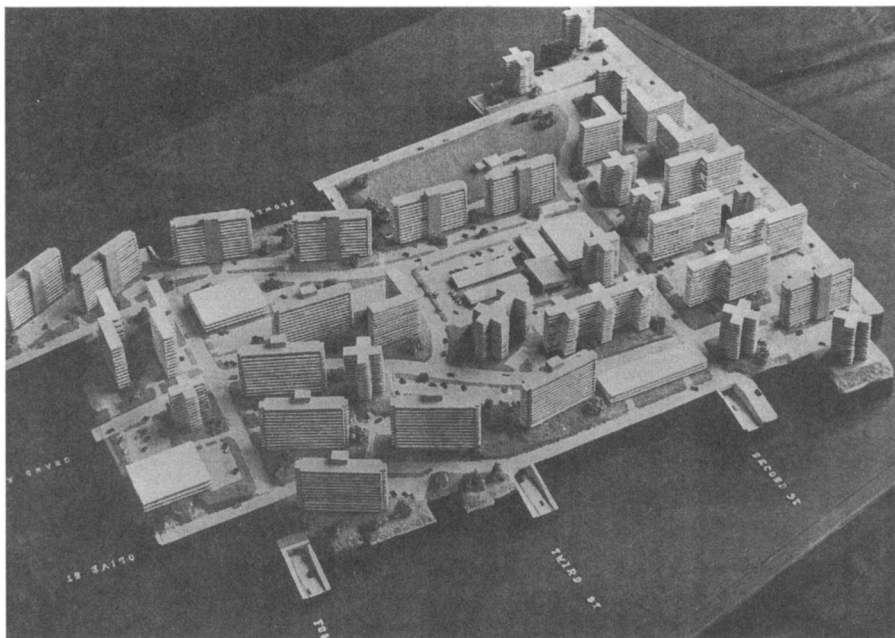
Yet there were many people that would be adversely affected by the modernist vision of Los Angeles. The poor, the elderly, and minorities who lived downtown found themselves lost in the political shuffle and confronted by a progress that was clearly detrimental—even lethal—to their communities. An examination of the correspondence regarding Bunker Hill and Chavez Ravine—the two premier redevelopment projects in Los Angeles—received by City Councilman Edward Roybal, whose district encompassed these neighborhoods, reveals much of the popular and political sentiments towards modernism.<sup>8</sup> Opponents to the modernization strategies of Bunker Hill and Chavez Ravine were seen as obstructionists to the vision of modern Los Angeles. With the demise of the urban liberalism as a way to channel popular protest into a formal political structure, direct action became the means to combat modernism.

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Immediately to the west of Los Angeles' central business district lay the steep inclines of what some boosters regarded as the "136-acre eyesore" of Bunker Hill. In the 1890s the hill had been one of the city's fashionable residential neighborhoods, but by the 1950s the rugged terrain had combined with maginalized residents to create a natural and social impediment to the spatial expansion of the downtown commercial interests. In the 1942 novel *The High Window*, Raymond Chandler described Bunker Hill and its residents:

Bunker Hill is old town, lost town, shabby town, crook town. Once, very long ago, it was the choice residential district of the city, and there are still standing a few of the jigsaw Gothic mansions with wide porches and walls covered with round-end shingles and full cornered bay windows with spindle turrets...In the tall rooms haggard landladies bicker with shifty tenants. On the wide cool front porches, reaching their cracked shoes into the sun, sit the old men with faces like lost battles....Out of the apartment houses come...people who look like nothing in particular and know it...<sup>9</sup>

Crowded into subdivided Victorian mansions, rooming houses, and cheap apartments lived 9,485 people—a multi-ethnic con-



The scale model for the 1951 CRA proposal for the redevelopment of Bunker Hill as a mixture of residential and commercial land use. Source: "Feasibility of Redeveloping the Bunker Hill Area," report by Henry Babcock to the CRA, City of Los Angeles, 1951.

tingent of low-income residents, which included many immigrants and elderly people, as well as non-union and unemployed workers. Pat Adler speaks of the Hill's inhabitants as pensioners, transients, derelicts, and immigrants that were "by one pathway or another, shunted from the mainstream."<sup>10</sup>

The initial proposals to redevelop Bunker Hill by the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) in 1948 called for a landuse that was "predominantly residential."<sup>11</sup> Under the auspices of the 1949 Housing Act, the plans called for 6,913 residential units as well as 43,000 square feet of office space and four underground garages.<sup>12</sup> Robert Alexander (co-architect of the Chavez Ravine public housing project) and Drayton Bryant (a public housing project manager) proposed "the construction principally of limited-height, elevator apartment buildings so spaced and oriented as to take full advantage of views, sun and breeze."<sup>13</sup>

The interests of the city government in Bunker Hill seemed to follow a classic cold-war logic. Under the heading of "Added Features...Bomb Shelters," the City Planning Commission saw civil defense as a central benefit in the Hill's redevelopment:

During the uncertain years ahead it is important that bomb shelters be available in the Civic Center area with convenient access for governmental employees and the many thousands of other citizens who transact business with public agencies in the Civic Center. At present, there is insufficient space in the basements of the various buildings to provide haven for all these people in case of a bomb attack. The suggested underground garages would serve the added purpose of furnishing adequate shelter during times of emergency.<sup>14</sup>

In 1954, the year following the defeat of public housing and election of Mayor Poulson, the City Council approved a new CRA plan for Bunker Hill, which called for the purchase, clearance, and improvement of the site using public taxes, and the subsequent resale of lots to private investors at less than market value. Indeed, the financing of the redevelopment plan was remarkably similar to the failed public housing program of the previous year. "This is the Public Housing Authority story all over again," wrote one of the aides of Edward Roybal, "except under public housing the tenants get the subsidy—under redevelopment the subsidy goes to the landlord."<sup>15</sup> The redevelopment of Bunker Hill was championed by the downtown commercial and real estate interests. The Downtown Businessmen's Association repeatedly wrote to Roybal that the Bunker Hill plan would be "an economically sound opportunity for our City" for which "the Downtown Businessmen's Association again declares its unqualified endorsement."<sup>16</sup> Especially supportive were the same newspapers that had made the red-baiting of the 'headline-happy public housing war' so effective.<sup>17</sup> As one journalist ironically noted:

Curiously enough against this background, approval of the Bunker Hill project was not a signal for heads to roll. No billboards blossomed with propaganda legends; no property owners groups were organized to march on the City Hall; no voters were urged to refuse to pay another man's rent. No editorials alerted the city to "creeping Socialism," and not a single Congressional investigator was called in.<sup>18</sup>

# **RESIST THE RAPE of our DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY**

On Wednesday, November 10th, at 2:00 P.M., the Planning Committee of the Los Angeles City Council will meet for the purpose of "activating" the proposed Bunker Hill-Figueroa Redevelopment Plan.

This Plan calls for demolishing every building between  $\frac{1}{2}$  block west of Hill Street to Fremont Street, from First to  $\frac{1}{2}$  block north of Fifth Street, to make way for a Monopolistic, high-rent Apartment House project, and for a privately-owned auditorium and sports-arena. It is to be accomplished with the aid of a multi-million dollar City and Federal subsidy.

This Plan's approval will mean everyone living in our neighborhood will be evicted from their homes. Thousand of the poor and aged will be forcibly dispossessed to provide mansions and gaming rooms for the rich.

As of today, it looks as if this Plan is going through, just as has the Fourth Street open-cut, which threw hundreds of our neighbors out of their homes. Certain very powerful interests who control the newspapers and politicians are behind it. These Interests stand to make a fortune from our misery through (1) securing an exclusive "slant drilling" permit to work the oil fields located under our area, and (2) by getting a "grave train" Title I Redevelopment subsidy for the building of their luxury Apartment House deal.

This Bunker Hill-Figueroa Redevelopment scheme is another Tea Pot Dome scandal. It is another Owens Valley Rape. It must be stopped!

Resist the Destruction of our Neighborhood! Protect our Homes and Community! Stop this Land Grab and nefarious Waste of Taxpayers' Dollars aimed at Hurting so many Poor!

## **WRITE TODAY**

to Charles Bennett, Director, City Planning  
Commission, City Hall, Los Angeles, California  
(Please send the Downtown Community Association a copy)

## **ATTEND**

the Meeting of the City Council Planning Committee  
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 1954, 2:00 P.M.  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL

PROTEST!

RESIST!

INSIST!

## **Downtown Community Association**

317 SOUTH FLOWER STREET LOS ANGELES 17, CALIF.  
TELEPHONE MADISON 6-8008

A 1954 handbill produced by the DCA. Courtesy, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.

Not surprisingly, opponents to the Bunker Hill project included, according to the memoirs of Mayor Poulson, "the majority of occupants [who] wanted to be downtown."<sup>19</sup> People in the surrounding communities saw the proposed redevelopment of Bunker Hill as a threat to their own homes. One such person, Maria Gallegos de Hillary, wrote to Roybal to thank him for his stand against the Bunker Hill project: "If it should go through none of us in the old neighborhoods of the town would feel safe.... One would think that this were Russia where a community of individuals can be liquidated at the whim of a planner.... *Yo no soy en su distrito [sic], pero soy de su raza.*"<sup>20</sup>

Coalescing into the Downtown Community Association (DCA), Bunker Hill residents and their sympathizers organized a formal political campaign of letter writing, lawsuits, trying to influence elected officials, etc. Flyers called on people to "Resist the Rape of our Downtown Community." "Thousands of the poor and aged will be forcibly dispossessed to provide mansions and gaming rooms for the rich."<sup>21</sup> "Why must we lose our homes? Why must our business people be forced to the wall? Don't we have a right to live?... *You* are a local candidate, asking people to vote for *you*. We, in return, are asking '*Where do you stand for us?*'," the DCA demanded of Roybal, suggesting an alternative plan for the hill which would use urban renewal money to rehabilitate existing housing, construct new dwellings, and provide social amenities.<sup>22</sup> Lawsuits, filed on behalf of the DCA and individual property owners by Charles McClurg, revolved around questions of financing, the use of eminent domain, and the provision of replacement housing by the CRA.<sup>23</sup>

Such a strategy, which had no doubt been very effective when the electoral militancy of the Roosevelt coalition was a political force to be reckoned with, had little weight following the 1953 defeat of urban liberalism. A survey of nine local public officials by the DCA garnered three opponents to the Bunker Hill project (all Democrats), three proponents (two Democrats and one Republican), and three 'don't cares' (all Republicans).<sup>24</sup> The intense, albeit local, support for the DCA dwindled as residents moved away or died. CRA acquisition of property on the hill began in 1961. Though a final challenge was given with the lawsuit *CRA vs. Henry Goldman*, the California Supreme Court refused to intervene in what

was regarded as a local matter to be handled within the jurisdiction of Los Angeles. Using tax-increment financing, land on Bunker Hill was assembled, cleared, improved, and then resold to private investors. As Gene Marine wrote in 1959: "And the titans of downtown Los Angeles, watching their land values go up without investment on their part, will bask smiling in the warm glow of civic pride."<sup>25</sup> In the 1970s and 1980s, corporate headquarters, luxury condominiums, culture complexes, fashionable shops, and prestigious office space would appear on the hill.

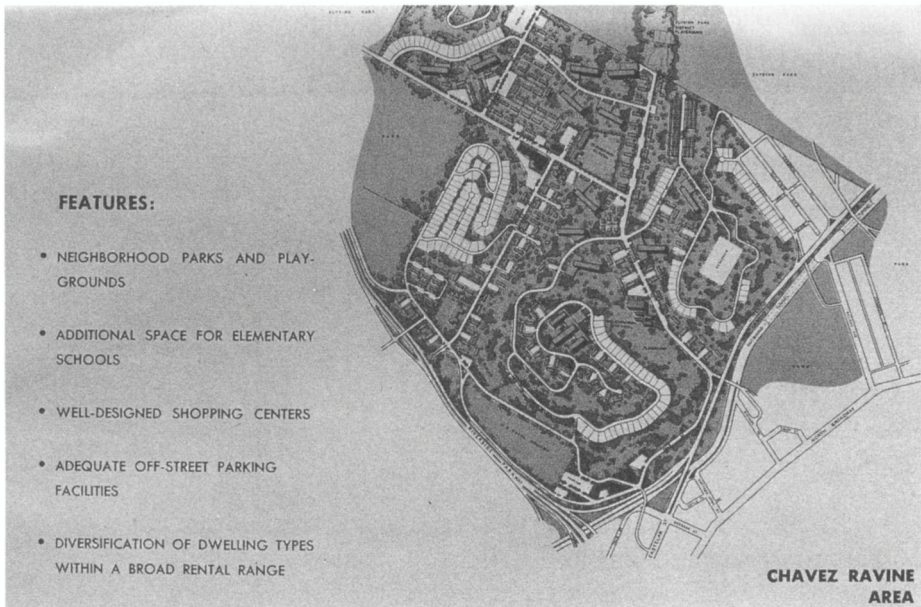
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To the north of downtown lies Chavez Ravine. In the 1950s, according to Mayor Poulson, it was an area "inhabited by squatters and a handful of small home owners whose goats, cows and chickens roamed about."<sup>26</sup> A stable but impoverished Mexican-American community, Chavez Ravine had been a study area of the CRA in 1948 and then the proposed site of the largest project (3,360 units) of the city's erstwhile public housing program.<sup>27</sup> Following Poulson's election, the City Housing Authority scrapped the Chavez Ravine public housing project and sold the site to the City of Los Angeles with the provision that the land be put to "public use."

When Dodger-owner Walter O'Malley was denied what he considered an adequate site on which to construct a new stadium in New York,<sup>28</sup> Poulson as well as local Democrats such as Roz Wyman, Kenneth Hahn, and Jimmy Roosevelt saw a major league franchise as both a major economic stimulus and as a necessary status symbol for the nation's then third largest city.<sup>29</sup> "O'Malley needed us much less than we needed him..." Poulson later recalled.<sup>30</sup> The City Council offered the 315-acre Chavez ravine site to O'Malley in exchange for the nine-acre Wrigley Field (the Dodger-owned stadium where the Angels played), in addition to paying \$2 million for site grading and \$2.7 million from the state gas fund to build access roads. Though not a CRA project, Dodger Stadium was using the same mechanisms of eminent domain and subsidized land improvement as Bunker Hill. Such mechanisms were essential, editorialized the *Los Angeles Times*, or else "freeways could not be built... One property owner's refusal to sell could block a Bunker Hill development... And of course a baseball stadium... would be precluded in Chavez Ravine."<sup>31</sup>



## *"This Modern Marvel"*



The 1948 CRA plan for the development of Chavez Ravine before both the Dodger Stadium and the proposed Elysian Park Heights public housing project. Source: "Supporting Documents: Request for Preliminary Advance for Slum Clearance and Redevelopment," CRA, City of Los Angeles, 1948.

Under the slogan of "Save Chavez Ravine For the People,"<sup>32</sup> the opponents of the stadium initiated a campaign similar to that of the DCA on Bunker Hill, that is, lawsuits, letter-writing, and pressure on elected officials. Alternatives were proposed: an expansion of the existing stadium at Wrigley Field, a cultural center, a zoo—almost anything that could be considered a public use and not a Dodger give-away. A concerned voter, Edna Williams, wrote to Roybal: "Sacrificing Chavez Ravine to a baseball stadium will put us back culturally for at least 50 years."<sup>33</sup> Roybal insisted on a city-wide voter referendum to approve the Dodger contract in the summer of 1958. The project was narrowly upheld by 351,683 votes to 325,898, carrying only nine of the fifteen districts.<sup>34</sup> After losing their lawsuit on appeal to the California Supreme Court, the residents of Chavez Ravine were, on March 9, 1959, given notices to vacate within thirty days.

At this point there was a sharp divergence in tactics. A group of

Chavez Ravine residents, centered around the Arechiga family, refused to move. On May 8, 1959, city bulldozers arrived to level the remaining occupied homes. In a much publicized media event and “[a]mid shouting and cursing, the deputies arrived and carried one of the women out of the door. The others went but not quietly.”<sup>35</sup> Aurora Vargas, a daughter of the Arechigas and a war widow, was carried kicking and screaming from the family home, while another daughter, Mrs. Glen Walters, was later sentenced to thirty days in jail and fined \$500 for resisting arrest. It was “the hottest battle in California since the war with Mexico,” Poulson wrote later.<sup>36</sup>

Three days after the battle, the Save Chavez Ravine for the People Committee wrote an open letter to Mayor Poulson: “You take from the poor and give to the rich. Los Angeles is getting to be a hated city.”<sup>37</sup> Subsequent revelations that the Archigas were not financially destitute but the owners of a number of rental properties did not alter, as Roybal pointed out, the brutal nature of the evictions. Twenty-seven years later, in a 1986 interview, Roybal recalled that “the episode has left a residue of bad feeling among his constituents in the Hispanic community of Los Angeles.”<sup>38</sup>

Though ultimately unsuccessful in preventing the destruction of their community, the battle of Chavez Ravine is significant in two respects. First, the militancy of the Chavez Ravine residents and their willingness to take a stand against the proverbial city hall has been passed down through urban history and folklore to provide inspiration and motivation for subsequent activists, particularly in the Chicano movement. Second, the residents of Chavez Ravine, finding they had little or no influence on formal politics after a decline of the urban liberals, discarded due process in favor of direct action. This was a characteristic of the movement politics that would develop in the 1960s. Seeming to presage the violence of the following decade, Elvin Poe wrote to Roybal of the Chavez Ravine evictions: “Fortunately, no deputy Sheriff had his head blown off by a shotgun—this time.”<sup>39</sup>

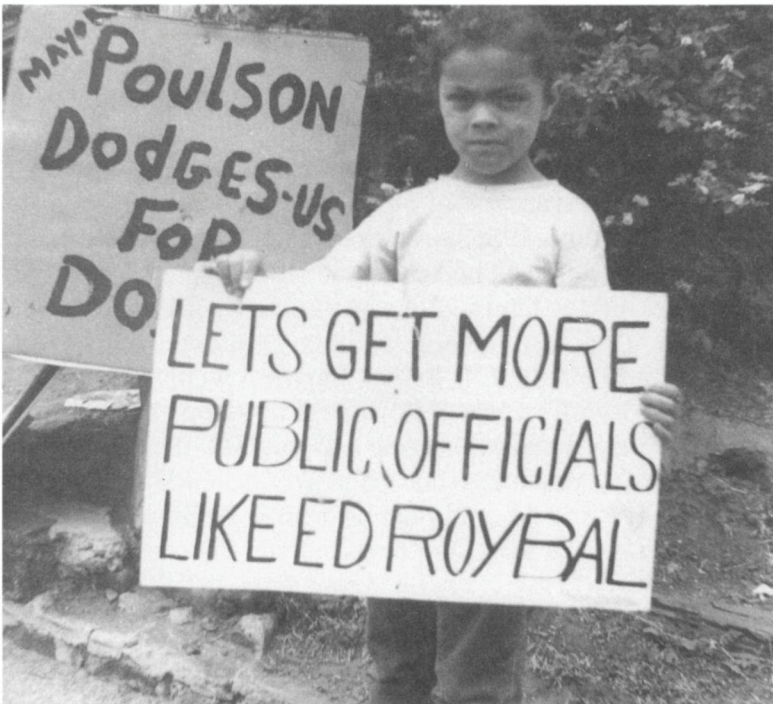
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The redevelopment of Bunker Hill and of Chavez Ravine had highlighted the schism in the Democratic party between the urban liberals and the pro-growth modernists. In the wake of the Chavez

*"This Modern Marvel"*



Aftermath of the Chavez Ravine evictions. *Courtesy, Department of Special Collections, University Library, UCLA.*



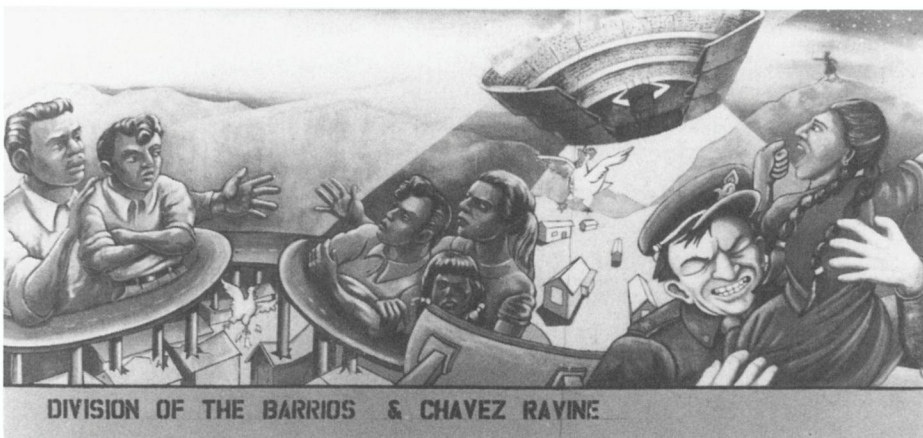
Ravine evictions, many Democratic voters were trying to determine who their party represented. Wilma Merrill wrote to (pro-Dodger) Democratic County Supervisor Kenneth Hahn: "You have now crawled on the wrong 'band wagon' with big Business rather than representing the people who elected you and who have put their trust and faith in you."<sup>40</sup> Two months later she wrote to Roybal: "I am a Demo. and a good one who votes. I made a couple of mistakes and voted for K. Hahn and [Councilman Leonard] Timberlake for which I am ashamed but will not vote for them next time. I was a Dodger fan, but [Dodger-owner] O'Malley...left [a] bad taste in my mouth and we don't want to give them one acre now."<sup>41</sup> Democrat Joseph Babando eloquently described the motivations of the modernists with the consequences for party politics: "They are the people who do not know the meaning of tradition, or respect for human association. A city to them is merely an arena for exploitation.... They have driven the best men out of public office and created an atmosphere in which nothing but predatory mediocrity can survive."<sup>42</sup>

While the voters quoted above were wondering what had happened to the urban liberals, others were seeing a new role for the Democrats—one defined by modernism and progress, and not to be clouded by the remnants of New Deal populism. Mrs. L. Brown scrawled a postcard to Roybal asking "How much *money* did those *Red Mexicans* give you [for your support in Chavez Ravine]?... If you ever attend a base ball game—I hope that you are hit in the head with a bat."<sup>43</sup> A resident of Boyle Heights wrote to Roybal concerning his advocacy of the Arechigas: "What a Jerk you turned out to be, defending people who like to make a sucker out of you... This will teach you not to stand in the way of progress, and seek cheap publicity which will lose you nothing but votes. Hope you get out of public office and stay out."<sup>44</sup> Ernest Evans, a Democrat from the San Fernando Valley, criticized Roybal for his opposition to the stadium in Chavez Ravine: "How you, a Democrat, can line up with these people is beyond me.... The great overall benefit to Los Angeles cannot be estimated, and anyone who is against the Dodger agreement belongs to some hick town and not this modern marvel, Los Angeles."<sup>45</sup>

Though the leading proponent of public housing until its 1953

defeat, organized labor subsequently supported urban redevelopment from its FHA- and VA-financed suburban homes and embraced the modernist wing of the Democrats.<sup>46</sup> In 1957, the *Times* congratulated "union labor groups" for assisting Mayor Poulson in creating "a working urban renewal program"<sup>47</sup> The Chavez Ravine project revealed a split in the ranks of organized labor roughly parallel to that of the general Democratic constituency. Some union locals, particularly Local 123 of the Furniture Workers, Upholsterers and Wood Workers Union led by Trinidad Flores, condemned the evictions at Chavez Ravine.<sup>48</sup> More typical, however, was the assessment of the Los Angeles Building and Construction Trades Council. Describing Chavez Ravine as a "waste land," the Building Trades chastised the city for being "very slow in taking steps for needed improvements" and urged the City Council to build Dodger Stadium, "bringing this type of entertainment [baseball], which is clean and wholesome."<sup>49</sup>

To the benefit of the Democrats—both modernists and urban liberals—the Chavez Ravine events served to catalyze a great deal of political militancy that was directed against Poulson and the downtown interests that controlled urban redevelopment in Los Angeles. E.M. Cecer wrote to Roybal that he (Cecer), like the Arechigas, had been a "victim of the L.A. bulldozers.... This affair



Panel from the mural, "The Great Wall of Los Angeles," art coordinator, Judith Baca. The scene depicts the removal of Mrs. Aurora Vargas from her home in Chavez Ravine. *Courtesy, the author.*

has damaged every body in [the] U.S.A....real anti-American propaganda deluxe & sadly true.”<sup>50</sup> Alex Bradford, living in Goleta, wrote to his (ex-?) friend Leslie Claypool who was at that time doing public relations for Poulson: “But Poulson is just too contemptible for words. On my books he is the sorriest, slimiest apology for a human being that ever swindled the public....He is even worse than his boss, Chandler [publisher of the *Times*]....I am planning to move back home to Los Angeles, and when I do I aim to fight Poulson with everything I’ve got. All I’ve got to think about is Chavez Ravine and I get mad enough to fight the way I did overseas in *all* theaters of war...”<sup>51</sup>

Poulson saw his opponents that had been mobilizing around the events of Chavez Ravine and of Bunker Hill as “professional obstructionists”—a group that “would always want to place itself in opposition to every progressive step a community makes.”<sup>52</sup> He responded to his critics: “If you are not prepared to be part of this greatness, if you want Los Angeles to revert to pueblo status...then my best advice to you is to prepare to settle elsewhere.”<sup>53</sup> Poulson’s advocacy of these urban redevelopment projects, however, was seen as congruent with the downtown commercial and real estate interests and was thus a focus of opposition from the modernist Democrats as well as urban liberals and the remnants of the Roosevelt coalition.

This was the foundation of the successful mayoral campaign of Sam Yorty against Poulson in 1961. Yorty vigorously assailed the urban redevelopment projects of the “downtown machine.” Indeed, this “machine” was solidly lined up behind Poulson who had “acted on business needs and goals: Bunker Hill was undergoing redevelopment and the Dodgers baseball team had come to Chavez Ravine. The downtown businessmen, content with their mayor, were determined to hold on to their power.”<sup>54</sup> Poulson later attributed his defeat to the Chavez Ravine project: “My opponent, Samuel Yorty, picked up a good-sized following in my baseball enemies...When the city went to the polls, the vote was even closer than the baseball referendum.”<sup>55</sup>

A Democrat in a non-partisan race, Yorty came to power with just 51.5% of the vote. In so doing, he was able to garnish the support of both the modernist Democrats, who were wary of a down-



town-controlled redevelopment program, and the urban liberals, who were dissatisfied with the direction of city redevelopment policy. In coalescing these diverse interests, Yorty appeared as a political entrepreneur (or political opportunist) *extraordinaire*—one of his first moves was to offer *Times* publisher Norman Chandler the chairmanship of the CRA! "Within a matter of months, the champion of the little guy had made his peace with downtown."<sup>56</sup> Unified by a vision of Modern Los Angeles, a working partnership between downtown and the Democrats would exist until the Watts riots of 1965. With the integration of the modernists and of the urban liberals as a junior partner within the pro-growth Democratic Party, the people and places of Raymond Chandler's Bunker Hill, or of Chavez Ravine, were excluded from the formal politics of Modern Los Angeles. Ostracized from participation in such a political structure, new political forms and tactics—as could be seen in Chavez Ravine—would be developed by those not a part of "this modern marvel."

#### NOTES

*Acknowledgment.* The author is grateful for the research assistance afforded by the staff of the Thousand Oaks Library.

<sup>1</sup>For example, see Don Parson, "Many Histories: Postmodern Politics in Los Angeles," *Science as Culture*, 12 (1991): 411-425; Don Parson, "The Search for a Centre: The Recomposition of Race, Class, and Space in Los Angeles," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 17 (June 1993): 232-240; Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (New York: Verso, 1989); Richard Whitehall, "Los Angeles: Toward the 21st Century," in Norman Klein and Martin Schiesl, eds., *20th Century Los Angeles: Power, Promotion and Social Conflict* (Claremont: Regina Books, 1990), pp. 227-232.

<sup>2</sup>See Thomas Hines, "Machines in the Garden: Notes Toward a History of Modern Los Angeles Architecture, 1900-1990," in David Reid, ed., *Sex, Death and God in L.A.* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), pp. 259-318.

Richard Neutra, for example, was a Democrat who was influenced by Upton Sinclair's EPIC program and had a life-long interest in the construction of low-cost housing (See Thomas Hines, "A Dream for Low-Cost Housing in Los Angeles That Went Astray," *Los Angeles Times*, June 21, 1992, p. M8.) Neutra was the co-architect of a number of public housing projects, including the ill-fated Chavez Ravine proposal. However, as noted in the text (below), these projects were seen as of an insufficient scale to create a modern urban geography.

<sup>3</sup>California State Reconstruction and Reemployment Commission, *Blighted!*, Pamphlet No. 16 (Sacramento, 1946), p. 11.

<sup>4</sup>"A Decent Home...An American Right," the 5th, 6th and 7th Consolidated Annual Report of the Housing Authority of the city of Los Angeles, 1945.

<sup>5</sup>For all the gory details, see Don Parson, "Los Angeles' Headline-Happy Public Housing

War," *Southern California Quarterly*, LXV (Fall 1983): 251-285.

<sup>6</sup>For a more detailed account of the historical relationship between urban redevelopment and public housing in Los Angeles, please see Don Parson, "The Development of Redevelopment: Public Housing and Urban Renewal in Los Angeles," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 6 (September 1982): 393-413.

<sup>7</sup>Marc Weiss, "The Origins and Legacy of Urban Renewal," in Pierre Clavel, John Forrester, and William Goldsmith, eds., *Urban and Regional Planning in an Age of Austerity*, (New York: Pergamon, 1980), p. 65.

<sup>8</sup>The Edward Roybal Papers are housed in the Special Collections Department at the University of California at Los Angeles. All citations in this paper were taken from the folders marked "Bunker Hill" or "Chavez Ravine."

<sup>9</sup>Raymond Chandler, *The High Window* (New York: Vintage, 1976), pp. 53-54.

<sup>10</sup>Pvt Adler, *The Bunker Hill Story* (Glendale: La Siesta Press, 1968), p. 29.

<sup>11</sup>"Supporting Documents: Request for Preliminary Advance for Slum Clearance and Community Redevelopment," the Community Redevelopment Agency of Los Angeles, 1948.

<sup>12</sup>Joel Friedman, "The Political Economy of Urban Renewal: Changes in Land Ownership in Bunker Hill, Los Angeles" (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of California at Los Angeles, 1978), p. 116.

<sup>13</sup>Robert Alexander and Drayton Bryant, *Rebuilding a City: A Study of Redevelopment Problems in Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Haynes Foundation, 1951), p. 41.

<sup>14</sup>"Annual Report," Planning Commission of the City of Los Angeles, 1951, p. 19.

<sup>15</sup>Memo in the Roybal Papers.

<sup>16</sup>March 17, 1959 letter from the Downtown Businessmen's Association to Roybal, Roybal Papers.

<sup>17</sup>See Don Parson, "Los Angeles' Headline-Happy Public Housing War."

<sup>18</sup>Ruth M. Harmer, "Trick Play at City Hall: 'Socialism' and the New Los Angeles Housing Plan," *Frontier*, 6 (February 1955): 11.

<sup>19</sup>"Who Would Have Ever Dreamed?," the memoirs of Norris Poulson, Special Collections, UCLA, p. 257.

<sup>20</sup>November 16, 1954 letter from Maria Gallegos de Hillary to Roybal, Roybal Papers.

<sup>21</sup>1954 flyer in the Roybal Papers.

<sup>22</sup>October 9, 1954 letter from the DCA to Roybal, in the Roybal Papers. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>23</sup>See Gene Marine, "Bunker Hill: Pep Pill for Downtown Los Angeles," *Frontier*, 10 (August 1959): 5-8+.

<sup>24</sup>"Build a Better Community," DCA Broadsheet in the Roybal Papers.

<sup>25</sup>Marine, "Bunker Hill....," p. 16.

<sup>26</sup>Poulson memoirs, p. 358.

<sup>27</sup>Co-designed by Richard Neutra and Robert Alexander, the Chavez Ravine Public Housing Project—named Elysian Park Heights—was to provide a very dense residential pattern by mixing low-rise apartments and residential towers that was very uncharacteristic of vernacular housing in Los Angeles. Indeed, Robert Alexander wrote me in 1982 that "Dodger Stadium is a blessing compared to the housing project we designed, and I'm glad we lost," January 13, 1982 letter from Robert Alexander to Don Parson, in the author's possession. For an account of the architecture of public housing and its political fate in Chavez Ravine, please see Thomas Hines, "Housing, Baseball and Creeping Socialism: The Battle of Chavez Ravine, Los Angeles, 1949-1959," *Journal of Urban History*, 8 (February 1982): 123-143.

<sup>28</sup>As Neil Sullivan recounts in *The Dodgers Move West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), O'Malley wanted the City of New York to assemble land for a new stadium near the intersection of Atlantic and Flatbush in Brooklyn using Title I (urban redevelopment) provisions under the 1949 Housing Act but the powerful head of New York's Port Authority,



Robert Moses, refused to approve of this plan because "the Dodgers were a small element in his [Moses's] much grander scheme to restore New York" (p. 50). Ironically, the land at Chavez Ravine had originally been assembled under Title I of the 1949 Housing Act, "the same act that Robert Moses had declined to invoke in Brooklyn on Walter O'Malley's behalf" (p. 84).

<sup>29</sup>According to Robert Gottlieb and Irene Wolt, *Thinking Big: The Story of the Los Angeles Times, Its Publishers and Their Influence on Southern California* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1977), p. 268, the Dodger move was initiated in the winter of 1956 by Democratic Councilwoman Roz Wyman who had a "hunch" that the Dodgers would be amenable to a new home. Cary Henderson, in "Los Angeles and the Dodger War, 1957-1962," *Southern California Quarterly*, LXII (Fall 1980): 264, contends that Poulson approached O'Malley before or during the 1956 World Series. Democratic County Supervisor Kenneth Hahn also played a central role in the initial Los Angeles-Dodger negotiations. See Sullivan, *The Dodgers Move West*.

<sup>30</sup>Norris Poulson, "The Untold Story of Chavez Ravine," *Los Angeles Magazine*, 3 (April 1962): 16.

<sup>31</sup>"The Chavez Ravine Incident," *Los Angeles Times*, May 13, 1959, Part III, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup>Poulson memoirs, p. 349.

<sup>33</sup>March 11, 1958 letter from Edna Williams to Roybal, Roybal Papers.

<sup>34</sup>"Prop. B Won in 9 of 15 Districts," *Los Angeles Times*, July 2, 1958, Part III, p. 26.

<sup>35</sup>*Columbus Dispatch*, May 10, 1959, as quoted in Victor Becerra, "The Untold Story of Chavez Ravine" (Unpublished paper, UCLA, 1982), copy in author's possession.

<sup>36</sup>Poulson, "The Untold Story...", p. 14-15.

<sup>37</sup>May 12, 1959 letter from the Save Chavez Ravine for the People Committee to Mayor Norris Poulson, Roybal Papers.

<sup>38</sup>Sullivan, *The Dodgers Move West*, p. 181. In a recent Ventura County edition of the *Los Angeles Times* (July 24, 1993), there was an article about a proposed urban redevelopment project in Oxnard ("Oxnard to Consider Redevelopment Study," p. B4), in which Oxnard Mayor Manuel Lopez expressed some concerns: "A lot of minority people are afraid of redevelopment. They see projects like Chavez Ravine in Los Angeles, where a Mexican community was removed to build Dodger Stadium. Redevelopment has had a bad reputation among minorities that was well earned."

<sup>39</sup>May 12, 1959 letter from Elvin Poe to Roybal, Roybal Papers.

<sup>40</sup>October 1, 1957 letter from Wilma Merrill to County Supervisor Kenneth Hahn. Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>December 10, 1957 letter from Wilma Merrill to Roybal. Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>May 10 and May 29, 1959 letters from Joseph Babando to Roybal. Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>May 19, 1959 postcard from Mrs. L. Brown to Roybal. Ibid. (Underlining in original.)

<sup>44</sup>May 13, 1959 postcard from H.A. Garza to Roybal. Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>December 11, 1957 letter from Ernest Evans to Roybal. Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>See Richard Baisden, "Labor Unions in Los Angeles Politics" (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1958); and Don Parson, "Organized Labor and the Housing Question: Public Housing, Suburbanization and Urban Renewal," *Society and Space: Environment and Planning D*, 2 (1984), 75-86.

<sup>47</sup>"A Working Urban Renewal Program," *Los Angeles Times*, May 3, 1957, Part III, p. 4.

<sup>48</sup>There are several letters and telegrams to this effect from Trinidad Flores to Roybal, Roybal Papers.

<sup>49</sup>September 27, 1957 letter from J.J. Christian, secretary of the Los Angeles Building and Construction Trades Council, to Roybal. Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>June 5 and June 16, 1959 letters from E.M. Cecer to Roybal. Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>September 2, 1959 letter from Alex Bradford to Leslie Claypool. Ibid. (Underlining in original.)

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<sup>52</sup>October 25, 1959 radio broadcast by Poulson on KFI, text in Roybal Papers.

<sup>53</sup>As quoted in Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), p. 341.

<sup>54</sup>Poulson, "The Untold Story," p. 50.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>56</sup>Gottlieb and Wolt, *Thinking Big*, p. 365.

