The Fire This Time: The Genesis of the Los Angeles Rebellion of 1992

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Almost twenty-five years after the release of the Kerner Commission Report,1 which assessed the conditions that sparked the civil disorders of the 1960s, the worst civil unrest of this century occurred in Los Angeles in the spring of 1992. Following the acquittal of four white police officers accused of the videotaped beating of black2 motorist Rodney King, three days of burning, looting, and violence erupted that resulted in fifty-eight deaths, 2500 injuries, 16,000 arrests, and nearly one billion dollars of property damage and loss. Quelling the civil unrest and re-establishing a sense of calm in the city required the deployment of the full forces of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department, as well as significant numbers of California Highway Patrol officers and military troops.3

This Essay addresses the underlying causes of this civil disturbance. It begins with a critical evaluation of the Bush Administration’s account of the seeds of the uprising and then offers an alternative, more realistic, explanation anchored in the realities of life in the Los Angeles communities where the burning, looting, and violence were disproportionately concentrated.

The Essay contends that the touchstones of the Los Angeles violence mirrored those that the 1968 Kerner Commission concluded had sparked the violent civil disorders of the 1960s,4 and that the 1988 Com-

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2. Editor’s Note: The contributors to this symposium have used the terms “African American,” “black,” and “black American,” often interchangeably, in their articles. The North Carolina Law Review has elected to defer to its contributors’ choices in the absence of any universally accepted racial or ethnic designation.
mission on the Cities found still existed as "quiet riots" in central-city ghetto communities twenty years later. These factors included hopelessness and despair as a consequence of worsening economic deprivation, accelerating neighborhood decline and deterioration, and increasing spatial and social isolation from mainstream economic and educational opportunities—conditions aggravated by persistent incidences of police brutality and discriminatory treatment by the criminal justice system in general.

In addition to these "traditional" sparks, this Essay notes further that there was a unique trigger in this civil disturbance that was not a factor inspiring the civil disorders of the 1960s: the presence of other nonwhite ethnic minority groups (i.e., Asians and Hispanics) with whom blacks have found themselves in direct competition and conflict for jobs, housing, and other scarce resources. Ethnic antagonisms among these minority groups figured heavily in the pattern of burning, looting, and violence.

Finally, the Essay concludes with an assessment of selected strategies that have been proposed or implemented to revitalize south central Los Angeles and other poor urban communities and to improve the life chances of their residents, and thereby to prevent recurrences of similar civil disturbances.

I. THE CONSERVATIVE EXPLANATION

In the immediate aftermath of the recent Los Angeles civil unrest, the Bush Administration accused south central Los Angeles gangs of inciting and orchestrating the uprising. The gangs were characterized as "opportunistic thugs" who used the verdict in the police brutality trial as an excuse to wreak havoc in the city. The Bush Administration also blamed the civil unrest on Democratic President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty programs of the 1960s.

5. QUIET RIOTS: RACE AND POVERTY IN THE UNITED STATES xiii (Fred R. Harris & Roger W. Wilkins eds., 1988).
8. Id.
A careful analysis of the situation, however, reveals that neither of these contentions was true. South central Los Angeles gang members constituted a slim minority of the participants, and there is no evidence to suggest that they were the leaders of the uprising, despite the arrest records of the involved gang members. Moreover, the area affected by the civil unrest was far too extensive geographically for south-central Los Angeles area gangs to have orchestrated the violence. There were hot spots of rebellious activity throughout the Los Angeles metropolitan area. The civil unrest extended well beyond the boundaries of the Watts rebellion of 1965.

Nor was the civil unrest related, in any significant way, to the War on Poverty programs of the 1960s. The Republicans were in control of the White House for all but four of the past twenty-five years. During this period, and especially during the Reagan Administration, the Republicans waged a massive assault on War on Poverty programs, dismantling some and substantially reducing support for others. As data from a recently released census report reveals, the national poverty rate is higher today than it was twenty-five years ago, not because of the War on Poverty programs, but rather as a consequence of Republican cuts in the social welfare arena. The recent civil unrest never would have occurred, in all probability, if President Johnson's War on Poverty had been allowed to run its course as initially envisioned.

II. AN ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATION

In response to the Bush Administration's erroneous assertions, we argued in a recent paper that "the civil unrest was rooted in the high degree of frustration and alienation that had built up among the citizens of south central Los Angeles over the past quarter century as a conse-


quence of poor relations between the LAPD and the minority community." We argued further in another article that the unrest also reflected "a number of broader external forces that have increasingly isolated the south central Los Angeles community, geographically and economically, from the mainstream of Los Angeles society." The real touchstones of the civil unrest, in our view, included a number of quite different triggers, including those discussed in the following pages.

A. Repeated acts of what is widely perceived in the minority community to be a blatant abuse of power by the police and the criminal justice system in general

As we have argued elsewhere, "the verdict in the police brutality trial was merely the straw that 'broke the proverbial camel's back.'" The videotaped beating of Rodney King was, in fact, only the most recent case in which serious concerns were raised about the possible use of excessive force by the LAPD to subdue or arrest a black citizen. For several years, the LAPD has paid out millions of taxpayers' dollars in compensation to local citizens who were victims of abuse, illegal searches and seizures, and property damage.

Moreover, the black citizens of the city of Los Angeles have been victimized disproportionately by the LAPD's use of the bar arm control and choke holds, outlawed tactics that formerly were employed to subdue suspects perceived to be uncooperative. Between 1975 and 1982, sixteen Los Angeles citizens died as a result of LAPD officers' use of these restraint tactics: twelve of them were black.

In a similar vein, the "not guilty" verdict rendered in the Rodney King police brutality trial was only the most recent in a series of decisions widely perceived in the black community to be grossly unjust. This decision followed closely on the heels of a controversial verdict in the Latasha Harlins case. A videotape revealed that Ms. Harlins—an honor student at a local high school—was fatally shot in the back of the

17. See infra notes 18-88 and accompanying text.
20. Id.
head by a Korean shopkeeper following an altercation over a bottle of orange juice. Although the jury found the shopkeeper guilty of felony manslaughter, the judge decided to place her on five years probation and required her to perform only six months of community service.\textsuperscript{23}

**B. Recent changes in the composition of the Los Angeles population, and the failure of state and local elected officials to implement human relations policies to mitigate the ethnic antagonisms that have accompanied this population change**

Over the last thirty years, the Los Angeles population has become more ethnically diverse.\textsuperscript{24} In 1960, nearly two-thirds of the metropolitan Los Angeles population were non-Hispanic whites. By 1990, largely as a consequence of heightened immigration (both legal and illegal) and the substantial exodus of non-Hispanic whites, nonwhite ethnic minority groups (i.e., Asians, blacks, and Hispanics) numerically had become the majority population of Los Angeles County, accounting for 58% of the total. Approximately one-third of the metropolitan population was Hispanic. Blacks and Asians each accounted for about 12%.\textsuperscript{25}

Nowhere was this ethnic change more apparent than in south central Los Angeles, where the civil unrest erupted and the burning, looting, and violence were most intensely concentrated.\textsuperscript{26} Two types of ethnic transition have occurred in the formerly all black south central Los Angeles communities.\textsuperscript{27}

The first ethnic transition was a black-to-brown population succession in the residential neighborhoods, which began in the 1960s and accelerated in the 1970s and the 1980s.\textsuperscript{28} In 1970, an estimated 50,000 Hispanics were residing in south central Los Angeles neighborhoods, representing 10% of the area’s total population. That number had doubled to 100,000, or 21% of the total population, by 1980. Today roughly half of the population of south central Los Angeles is Hispanic.\textsuperscript{29}

Concomitant to this black-to-brown residential transition, an ethnic succession also was taking place in the south central Los Angeles business community.\textsuperscript{30} Prior to the Watts rebellion of 1965, most of the busi-

\textsuperscript{23} Id. at A8.
\textsuperscript{25} *Retrospective View*, supra note 16, at 359.
\textsuperscript{26} Id.
\textsuperscript{27} Johnson & Oliver, *supra* note 6, at 84-88.
\textsuperscript{28} Id. at 73.
\textsuperscript{29} Id.
\textsuperscript{30} Id. at 456-57.
nesses in the area were owned and operated by Jewish shopkeepers. In the aftermath of those disturbances, the Jewish business owners fled the area and were replaced not by black entrepreneurs, but, rather, by newly arriving Korean immigrants who opened small retail and service establishments in the area.\textsuperscript{31}

These transitions in the residential and business communities of south central Los Angeles have not been particularly smooth. The three ethnic minority groups—Asians, blacks, and Hispanics—have found themselves in fierce competition and conflict over access to jobs, housing, and other resources, including the political levers of power in the city.\textsuperscript{32} The conflict has been most intense between blacks and Korean entrepreneurs.\textsuperscript{33} Disadvantaged blacks in south central Los Angeles view Korean merchants as "foreigners" who take advantage of them by charging high prices, refusing to hire local blacks, failing to reinvest any of their profits to otherwise aid the community, and being rude and discourteous in their treatment of black customers.\textsuperscript{34} According to Edward Chang, an expert on black-Korean relations in Los Angeles, the disrespect that Korean merchants accord black customers is rooted in Korean stereotypes of blacks "as criminals, welfare recipients, drug addicts, and/or lazy."\textsuperscript{35} Koreans acquire these stereotypes before they arrive in the United States, Chang contends, through American movies, television shows, and Armed Forces Korean Network Programs.\textsuperscript{36}

Prior to the jury's verdict in the Rodney King police brutality trial, Korean-black relations in Los Angeles had reached a state of near crisis. Blacks openly questioned how Koreans are able to generate the capital to start or take over businesses in their community when willing black entrepreneurs are unable to raise such funds. The \textit{Los Angeles Sentinel}, the city's major black weekly newspaper, consistently derided Asian shopkeepers for their lack of courteousness to black customers, reporting both the important and the trivial instances of conflict.\textsuperscript{37} It was the previously described decision in the Latasha Harlins case, however, which preceded

\textsuperscript{31} Id. at 454-55.
\textsuperscript{32} Id. at 455-58.
\textsuperscript{33} Id. at 457-58.
\textsuperscript{35} Id.
\textsuperscript{36} Id.
the verdict in the Rodney King case by only a few months, that escalated the conflict between black residents and Korean merchants in south central Los Angeles to crisis proportions.\textsuperscript{38}

Assessments of the 1992 civil unrest strongly support the contention that rapidly deteriorating relations between black residents and Korean merchants of south central Los Angeles were also touchstones of the uprising. Korean businesses were strategically targeted in the burning and the looting. Roughly half of the buildings either severely damaged or destroyed during the civil unrest were either Korean owned or operated.\textsuperscript{39}

The King verdict also brought to the fore what apparently was a brewing but previously hidden element of interethnic minority conflict in Los Angeles: antagonisms between Hispanics and Koreans in Koreatown.\textsuperscript{40} While often viewed as an ethnic enclave demarcated by Korean control of businesses, Koreatown is actually a residentially mixed community with a large proportion of Hispanic residents (principally Central American immigrants) and Koreans. It was in this area that Hispanic involvement in the civil unrest was most intense. Post-disturbance surveys and focus group research indicate that Hispanics in this community come in contact with Koreans on multiple levels and apparently experience hostility at each level. First, on a residential level, Hispanics complain of discrimination by Korean landlords who rent houses and apartments according to racial background.\textsuperscript{41} Second, Hispanic customers in Korean establishments complain of disrespectful treatment, similar to black customers.\textsuperscript{42} Third, as employees in Korean business establishments, Hispanics express concern about exploitation by their Korean employers.\textsuperscript{43} Apparently, Hispanics vented their anger and frustration over such discriminatory treatment by looting and destroying a significant number of the Korean-owned businesses in Koreatown.\textsuperscript{44}

Prior to the uprising, local elected officials were well aware that ethnic tensions were potentially explosive among nonwhite ethnic minority groups in Los Angeles. At both the city and the county levels of government, human relations commissions long have existed to deal with such

\textsuperscript{38} See supra notes 22-23 and accompanying text.

\textsuperscript{39} REPORT OF THE AD HOC COMMITTEE ON RECOVERY AND REVITALIZATION TO THE LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCIL (October 29, 1992).

\textsuperscript{40} LAWRENCE BOBO ET AL., PUBLIC OPINION BEFORE AND AFTER A SPRING OF DISCONTENT (3 CSUP Occasional Working Paper Series 1992).

\textsuperscript{41} Id.

\textsuperscript{42} Id.

\textsuperscript{43} Id.

\textsuperscript{44} Id.
problems. These agencies traditionally have been poorly funded, however, and they have been delegated little or no decision-making power or authority to develop policies to resolve the array of intergroup conflicts that are a part of life in the diverse communities of Los Angeles.

As a consequence, both the city and the county human relations commissions have limited their actions to convening hearings on racially, ethnically, and religiously motivated violence and to implementing educational programs that seek to change the stereotypical ways in which the diverse ethnic groups of Los Angeles view one another. For example, prior to the civil unrest, the City of Los Angeles Human Relations Commission was instrumental in bringing black leaders and Korean entrepreneurs in south central Los Angeles together for "prayer breakfasts."45 These sessions were supposed to offer an opportunity for the two groups to iron out their differences and promote mutual understanding. Unfortunately, neither this nor any of the other efforts sponsored by the human relations commissions have been very successful. In fact, realizing that little progress had been made in reducing the tensions between the two groups, black and Korean leaders recently agreed to stop holding such meetings.46

C. The creation of a laissez-faire business climate that has drastically altered the structure of economic opportunity in south central Los Angeles and other inner-city communities

Over the past two decades, the federal government has attempted to create a deregulated business environment to increase the competitiveness of U.S. firms in the global marketplace. Changes in antitrust laws and their enforcement have resulted in a growing concentration of large, vertically and horizontally integrated firms in key sectors of the economy. Due to their economic power and control of markets, these large conglomerates have been able to move capital quickly and efficiently to select national and international locations to take advantage of cheap labor.47 There is growing evidence that the federal government, especially during the Bush Administration, may in fact have used taxpayers' dollars to provide incentives for United States firms to relocate abroad, espe-

cially to Central American countries.\textsuperscript{48}

Furthermore, to facilitate the competitiveness of firms remaining in the United States, the federal government, especially during the Reagan Administration, relaxed environmental regulations and substantially cut both the budgets and the staffs of governmental agencies charged with the enforcement of laws governing workplace health, safety, and compensation, as well as hiring, retention, and promotion practices.\textsuperscript{49}

This shift toward a laissez-faire business climate is partially responsible for the wholesale exodus of manufacturing employment from urban communities. It also precipitated the emergence of new industrial spaces in the suburbs, exurbs, and nonmetropolitan areas in this country, as well as the movement of manufacturing activities to Third World countries.\textsuperscript{50} The new industrial spaces emerging on the U.S. landscape are, in fact, usually situated in places where there are few blacks in the local labor market and few blacks within reasonable commuting distance.\textsuperscript{51}

Nowhere have the effects of these policies been more apparent than in south central Los Angeles. Between 1978 and 1989, approximately 200,000 "good paying" manufacturing jobs disappeared from the Los Angeles economy.\textsuperscript{52} South central Los Angeles—the traditional industrial core of the city—bore the brunt of this deindustrialization.\textsuperscript{53} For example, while well-paying and stable jobs were disappearing from south central Los Angeles, local employers were seeking alternative sites for their manufacturing activities. These seemingly routine decisions stimulated the emergence of new employment growth nodes or "technopoles" in the San Fernando Valley, in the San Gabriel Valley, in El Segundo near the airport in Los Angeles County, and in nearby Orange County.\textsuperscript{54} These communities have very small or nonexistent black populations and are geographically inaccessible to a majority of the residents of south central Los Angeles.


\textsuperscript{49} See THE REAGAN RECORD: AN ASSESSMENT OF AMERICA'S CHANGING PRIORITIES 303-12 (John L. Palmer & Isabel V. Sawhill eds., 1984).

\textsuperscript{50} Reassessment, supra note 47, at 117-18, 142-43.


\textsuperscript{53} Retrospective View, supra note 16, at 359-61.

At the same time, a number of Los Angeles-based employers also established production facilities in the Mexican border towns of Tijuana, Ensenada, and Tecate. Between 1978 and 1989, at least 215 Los Angeles-based firms participated in this deconcentration process, including Hughes Aircraft, Northrop, Rockwell, and many smaller firms. Such capital flight, in conjunction with Los Angeles plant closings, essentially has denied the residents of south central Los Angeles access to formerly well-paying, unionized jobs.

New employment opportunities have emerged within or near the traditional industrial core in south central Los Angeles. Unlike the manufacturing jobs that disappeared from this area, however, the new jobs are in the competitive sector of the economy, including the hospitality services industry (i.e., hotels, motels, restaurants, and entertainment) and such craft specialty industries as clothing, jewelry, and furniture manufacturing.

Competitive sector employers survive only to the extent that their prices remain nationally and internationally competitive. To remain competitive, they often hire undocumented workers, offer unattractive working conditions, and pay, at best, the minimum wage. Research indicates that newly arriving illegal Hispanic immigrants who have settled in south central Los Angeles often are preferred over blacks in the competitive sector employment market because of their undocumented status.

In part as a consequence of these developments, and partly because of employers' openly negative attitudes toward black workers, when the Rodney King police brutality verdict was handed down on April 29, 1992, south central Los Angeles communities were characterized by high concentrations of two disadvantaged populations: the working poor, who are predominantly Hispanic, and the jobless poor, who are predomi-

55. Soja et al., supra note 52, at 200-02.
57. See Retrospective View, supra note 16, at 362 fig. 3.
58. Id.
nantly black.\textsuperscript{62}

Most of the individuals inhabiting these communities thus had insufficient incomes to maintain a decent standard of living. Both groups—Hispanics and blacks—were isolated geographically from mainstream employment opportunities that pay livable wages. Intergroup tensions were high as poor blacks and Hispanics competed for competitive sector jobs and other scarce resources.\textsuperscript{63}

\section*{D. Wholesale disinvestment in south central Los Angeles by the city government and other local institutions}

In addition to the adverse impacts of a laissez-faire business policy on the structure of employment opportunities in south central Los Angeles, the local government has failed to devise and implement a plan to redevelop and revitalize the community. Instead, the city has pursued avidly a policy of downtown and westside redevelopment in an effort to lure international capital to Los Angeles.\textsuperscript{64}

The "power of the pocketbook" appears to have driven this redevelopment strategy. Data compiled by Frank Clifford, Rich Connell, Stephen Braun, and Andrea Ford indicate that "[s]ince 1983, Los Angeles city officeholders and candidates have received $23 million in political contributions, mostly from the Westside, the San Fernando Valley and Downtown businesses."\textsuperscript{65} They note further that "[p]olitical experts and City Hall critics say the contributions make elected officials more attuned to corporate interests and the suburbs than to the city's poorer areas."\textsuperscript{66}

The transformation of the skylines of downtown and the so-called Wilshire corridor—the twenty mile stretch extending along Wilshire Boulevard from downtown to the Pacific Ocean—is evidence of the success of this redevelopment strategy. A symbol of Los Angeles's emerging transactional economy, this area now houses the headquarters of a number of multinational corporations and other advanced service sector employers.\textsuperscript{67}

This type of redevelopment, however, has done little to improve the

\textsuperscript{62} At that time, the black male jobless rate in some residential areas of south central Los Angeles hovered around 50\%. \textit{Retrospective View, supra} note 16, at 361.

\textsuperscript{63} Johnson \& Oliver, \textit{supra} note 6, at 79-80. \textit{See generally Ed Luttwak, The Riots: Underclass vs. Immigrants, N.Y. TIMES, May 15, 1992, at A29 (describing the loss of traditional underclass jobs to more educated workers and immigrants).}


\textsuperscript{65} Clifford et al., \textit{supra} note 64, at A1.

\textsuperscript{66} \textit{Id.}

\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Holcomb \& Beauregard, supra} note 64, at 25-36.
quality of life of the residents of south central Los Angeles. Jobs in the revitalized downtown area and along the Wilshire corridor typically require high levels of education and technical training—the ability to do "head" work as opposed to "hand" work—that most of the disadvantaged residents of south central Los Angeles do not possess. The only low-skilled employment opportunities that exist in this area are low-level service and custodial jobs, which typically are filled by newly arrived immigrants.

E. More than two decades of conservative social policy-making, at both the federal and state levels of government, which have adversely affected the quality of life of the residents of south central Los Angeles and have accelerated the decline and deterioration of their neighborhoods

Three examples of conservative social policy-making are provided here. The first involves the federal government's dismantling of the social safety net in poor communities like south central Los Angeles through massive cuts in federal aid to cities. Preston Niblack and Peter Stan noted the impact on the city of Los Angeles: "The decline in federal aid is striking: in 1977 the city received federal aid worth $370 million; by 1990 these grants had dropped to $60 million—or from almost 18 percent of the city's operating budget to less than 2 percent."

Perhaps most devastating for south central Los Angeles has been the defunding of community-based organizations (CBOs) due to this massive loss of federal assistance. Historically, CBOs were part of the collection of social resources in the urban environment that encouraged the inner-city disadvantaged, especially disadvantaged youth, to pursue mainstream avenues of social and economic mobility and to avoid dysfunctional or anti-social behavior. In academic lingo, CBOs were effective "mediating institutions" in the inner city.

In 1981, when President Reagan took office, CBOs received an estimated 41% of their funding from the federal government. As a consequence of the Reagan Administration's elimination of the revenue

68. George E. Peterson, Urban Policy and the Cyclical Behavior of Cities, in Reagan and the Cities 30 (George E. Peterson & Carol W. Lewis eds., 1986).
sharing program, Los Angeles and other cities have been forced to reduce substantially grant support for community-based programs that traditionally have benefitted the most disadvantaged in the community. In south central Los Angeles and other inner-city communities, teenagers have been hurt most by this defunding of CBO initiatives and other safety net programs.

State governments' anti-crime policy is the second area in which conservative policies have had a negative impact. Paralleling the dismantling of social programs that discouraged disadvantaged youth from engaging in dysfunctional behavior and that rehabilitated those who did, states (with the encouragement and support of the federal government) have pursued for nearly three decades a policy of resolving the problems of the inner city through the criminal justice system.

Once a leader in the rehabilitation of criminals, California epitomizes this shift in anti-crime policy. In 1977, the California Legislature enacted the Determinant Sentence Law, "which, among other things, embraced punishment (and, explicitly, not rehabilitation) as the purpose of prison, required mandatory prison sentences for many offenses formerly eligible for probation, and dramatically increased the rate at which probation and parole violators were returned to prison." As a consequence of the passage of this law, the California prison population skyrocketed from 22,000 to 106,000 between 1980 and 1992, an increase of 300%.

To accommodate this increase, California expanded the capacity of seven of its existing prisons and built thirteen new facilities to bring the current total to twenty-five; six additional correctional facilities currently are under construction or in the planning phase. Over the past five years, spending on the criminal justice system increased by 70%, approximately four times greater than total state spending. By comparison, state spending on education increased by only 10% during this same five year period.

Minorities have been affected disproportionately by California’s "get tough on crime" policies. Two-thirds of the prison population is black or

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73. Id.
74. Id. at 176.
75. Id. at 177-79.
76. Id. at 179.
77. Id. at 181.
Hispanic, with blacks constituting 35% of the total. How have the minority residents of south central Los Angeles fared under the current policy? Reliable statistics to answer this question are difficult to assemble, but the number of people arrested during the recent civil unrest who already had a criminal record is probably a fairly accurate barometer. Approximately 40% of those arrested had a prior brush with the law. What are the prospects of landing a job if you have a criminal record? "Incarceration breeds despair, and hopelessness, and in the employment arena is the 'Scarlet Letter' of unemployability."

Educational initiatives enacted at the state level during the late 1970s and the early 1980s, which were designed to address the "crisis" in American education, constitute the third affected policy domain. Social science evidence indicates that policies such as tracking by ability group, grade retention, and the increasing reliance on standardized tests as the ultimate arbiter of educational success have, in fact, negatively affected large numbers of black and brown youths. In urban school systems, they are placed disproportionately in special education classes and are more likely than their white counterparts to be subjected to extreme disciplinary sanctions.

The effects of these policies in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) are evident in the data on school-leaving behavior. In the LAUSD as a whole, 39.3% of all students in the class of 1988 dropped out at some point during their high school years. For high schools in south central Los Angeles, however, the drop-out rates were substantially higher, between 63% and 79%. It is important to note that the drop-out problem is not limited to the high school population. LAUSD data reveals that approximately 24% of the students in some south central Los Angeles junior high schools also dropped out during the 1987-88 academic year.

Twenty years ago, it was possible to drop out of high school before

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78. Id. at 178.
80. Reassessment, supra note 47, at 144.
81. See generally Gary Orfield, Exclusion of the Majority: Shrinking College Access and Public Policy in Metropolitan Los Angeles, 20 URB. REV. 147, 147 (1988) (examining "trends in white and minority student experiences in the high schools, the community colleges, and the universities of the greater Los Angeles area since the mid-1970s").
82. Id. at 160-61.
83. Reassessment, supra note 47, at 143-44.
graduation and find a good-paying job in heavy manufacturing in south central Los Angeles. Today, those types of jobs are no longer available. The result of the adverse effects of deindustrialization and the discriminatory aspects of educational reforms is a rather substantial pool of inner-city males of color who are neither at work nor in school. These individuals are, in effect, idle; previous research demonstrates that it is this population which is most likely to be involved in gang activity, drug trafficking, and a range of other criminal behaviors. Moreover, it is idle minority males who experience the most difficulty maintaining stable families. Together, these phenomena account, at least in part, for the high percentage of female-headed families with incomes below the poverty level in south central Los Angeles when the uprising began.

III. POSTSCRIPT

The Los Angeles civil unrest of 1992 differed, in several critical respects, from the civil disorders of the 1960s.

First, it required the deployment of a significantly greater number of emergency personnel, and it exacted a heavier toll on the local community than did the civil disorders of the 1960s.

Second, although blacks were the main participants in most of the earlier civil disorders, a range of ethnic groups participated in the recent conflagration in Los Angeles. Some of the incidents, for example, included white as well as Hispanic participants.

Third, whereas the geographical impact of the civil disorders of the 1960s was fairly localized, the Los Angeles civil unrest of 1992 affected a far more expansive area. Although much of the devastation was concentrated in south central Los Angeles, numerous hot spots extended well beyond the boundaries of the Watts rebellion of 1965.

Fourth, the destruction of both residential units and businesses was fairly random in past civil disorders, but the contemporary pattern suggests a more systematic process. Small, family owned and operated, ethnic businesses (mainly Korean) were the primary targets in the burning

89. Id. at 357 tbls. 1-2.
91. Seeds of Rebellion, supra note 11, at 116.
and the looting.\textsuperscript{92}

Finally, the verdict in the Los Angeles police brutality trial prompted acts of protest—violent and nonviolent—in many more cities than did the events precipitating the civil disorders of the 1960s. There was random property damage and looting in such diverse cities as Atlanta, Las Vegas, Minneapolis, New York, Omaha, Seattle, and Washington, D.C., although the incidents were not on a scale comparable to those in Los Angeles.\textsuperscript{93} In New York, the type of civil unrest that paralyzed Los Angeles did not materialize, mainly because the mayor took specific steps to reduce tensions in the city.\textsuperscript{94} There was, however, a literal "emptying out" of midtown Manhattan on early Friday afternoon (May 1st) as most businesses closed early in anticipation of civil unrest.\textsuperscript{95}

A wide array of initiatives has been proposed or launched by a range of public and private organizations to rebuild Los Angeles in the aftermath of this civil disturbance. Rebuild LA (now called RLA), headed by former baseball commissioner Peter Ueberroth, is the most visible and highly touted of these efforts.\textsuperscript{96} The Board of Directors of RLA is comprised of representatives from government, business, community organizations, and a range of special interest groups. The organization has a professional staff of lawyers, accountants, planners, and advertising and public relations experts to oversee the development of its strategies for rebuilding south central Los Angeles.\textsuperscript{97}

RLA’s overall strategy is evolving, but the central goal is to create "thousands of permanent jobs and give new hope to residents who feel economically disenfranchised."\textsuperscript{98} Ueberroth proposes to achieve this goal not by attempting to lure a few large employers to the area, but rather by encouraging a large number of companies to open small operations in south central Los Angeles.\textsuperscript{99}

A recent Los Angeles Times survey, however, revealed that a significant number of the firms on the RLA list of private sector contributors

\textsuperscript{92.} See supra note 39 and accompanying text.

\textsuperscript{93.} See B. Drummond Ayres, Jr., From Coast to Coast, Cities are Struggling to Control a Swell of Violence, N.Y. Times, May 2, 1992, § 1, at 10; Dirk Johnson, When Rumor Mixes With Racial Rage, N.Y. Times, May 10, 1992, § 1, at 23; Alison Mitchell, Fears and Rumors Roll in Nervous New York, N.Y. Times, May 2, 1992, § 1, at 1.


\textsuperscript{95.} Id.


\textsuperscript{97.} Id.

\textsuperscript{98.} Id.

\textsuperscript{99.} Id.
denied ever pledging financial support to the rebuilding effort.\textsuperscript{100} Several of the corporate heads indicated that they had never spoken to Mr. Uebelhoer about the RLA initiative.\textsuperscript{101} The results of the 	extit{Times} survey, and other controversies surrounding RLA, cast considerable doubt on its likely effectiveness in rebuilding the economically marginal communities of south central Los Angeles.

Meanwhile, newly elected President Bill Clinton has proposed an attractive plan for rebuilding south central Los Angeles and other poor inner-city communities.\textsuperscript{102} He campaigned on a platform that emphasized urban revitalization as one of the keys to the future economic viability and competitiveness of the United States in the global marketplace. President Clinton has vowed to implement specific policies to rebuild the urban infrastructure, to spur urban economic growth and development, and to address the social ills afflicting U.S. cities.\textsuperscript{103}

In contrast to the adversarial relationship that existed between many large cities and the Bush Administration, President Clinton has proposed a formal partnership with the nation's mayors in an effort to reverse urban decline. He plans to target fiscal assistance to the most needy cities and to implement a national public works investment program to rebuild the infrastructure of all cities. The President also supports the establishment of enterprise zones in areas within cities (and poor rural areas) that have experienced massive disinvestment through plant closings and capital flight.\textsuperscript{104} He intends to offer businesses tax breaks and other incentives to locate in these newly established enterprise zones. While there is no history of success for such strategies in poor communities like south central Los Angeles,\textsuperscript{105} enterprise zones may become attractive to private businesses and result in positive outcomes for minority residents, if they are developed in conjunction with President Clinton's efforts to rebuild the urban infrastructure.

In conjunction with his efforts to lure businesses back to the central city, President Clinton also intends to encourage entrepreneurship as a second job creation strategy.\textsuperscript{106} He contends that improved access to capital is the key to small business development. He has proposed two

\textsuperscript{101} Id.
\textsuperscript{103} Id. at 2108.
\textsuperscript{104} Id.
\textsuperscript{105} See David Osborne, The Kemp Cure-All, NEW REPUBLIC, Apr. 3, 1989, at 21, 24-25.
\textsuperscript{106} The Platform, supra note 102, at 2108.
strategies for increasing the flow and availability of capital in central city communities: (1) establishing a national network of community development banks and (2) stronger enforcement of the Community Reinvestment Act of 1977, which was instituted to monitor the lending practices of private banks, savings and loans, and other financial institutions.\textsuperscript{107}

To improve the quality of life of inner-city residents (especially poor youth) and to enhance their employment prospects, President Clinton proposes to invest substantial resources in existing programs known to benefit the urban disadvantaged (e.g., Head Start and Job Corps) and in new initiatives targeting specific urban ills. To combat high rates of school failure and to improve the quality of education in the inner city, for example, the President supports a number of educational reforms, including site-based decision making and public school choice, which are designed to eliminate the inequalities that presently exist in urban public school systems.\textsuperscript{108}

In response to the youth unemployment problem, President Clinton proposes to establish a summer jobs initiative and training program as well as a national apprenticeship program to facilitate an easier school-to-work transition for non-college-bound students.\textsuperscript{109} He also supports putting more police on the streets to combat crime in inner-city communities.\textsuperscript{110} Rather than deploying extra police in the random, dragnet-type sweeps sanctioned by the Bush Administration, however, the President's proposal supports community policing programs where the officers interact with residents prior to the commission of a crime.

Finally, President Clinton proposes to increase government spending on resources—education and training, health care, and quality child care—that many women who are the heads of urban households need in order to become independent and self-sufficient and to break the cycle of long-term welfare dependency.\textsuperscript{111}

If the new President is successful in forging the necessary congressional support for these ideas, which should be possible given the sizable majorities that the Democrats have in both houses of Congress, he very well may succeed in returning U.S. cities to their former status as both economically viable and socially and culturally acceptable public spaces. Nothing short of such a comprehensive effort is likely to prevent the occurrence of a fire next time.

\begin{thebibliography}{111}
\bibitem{107} Id.
\bibitem{108} Id.
\bibitem{109} Id.
\bibitem{110} Id. at 2110-11.
\bibitem{111} Id. at 2108-09.
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