

RACE, HOUSING AND THE FIGHT FOR CIVIL RIGHTS IN LOS ANGELES

Lesson Plan



CSUN

CALIFORNIA
STATE UNIVERSITY
NORTHBRIDGE

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1. OVERVIEW

California Curriculum Content Standard, History/Social Science, 11th Grade

- 11.10.2 – Examine and analyze the key events, policies, and court cases in the evolution of civil rights, including Dred Scott v. Sandford, Plessy v. Ferguson, Brown v. Board of Education, Regents of the University of California v. Bakke, and California Proposition 209.
- 11.10.4 – Examine the roles of civil rights advocates (e.g., A. Philip Randolph, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Thurgood Marshall, James Farmer,

2. CENTRAL HISTORICAL QUESTION

Considering issues of race, housing, and the struggle for civil rights in post-World War II Los Angeles, how valid is the statement from some in the African American community looking back: “We got what we wanted, but we lost what we had”?

Lesson Topics:

- 1940s and 1950s - Segregation in housing.
- Shelley v. Kraemer, 1948 and Barrows vs. Jackson, 1953 – U.S. Supreme Court decisions abolish.
- Map activities - Internet-based research on the geographic and demographic movements of the African American community in Los Angeles.
- Locating homes of prominent African Americans.
- Shift of African Americans away from central city to middle-class communities outside of the ghetto, resulting in a poorer and more segregated central city

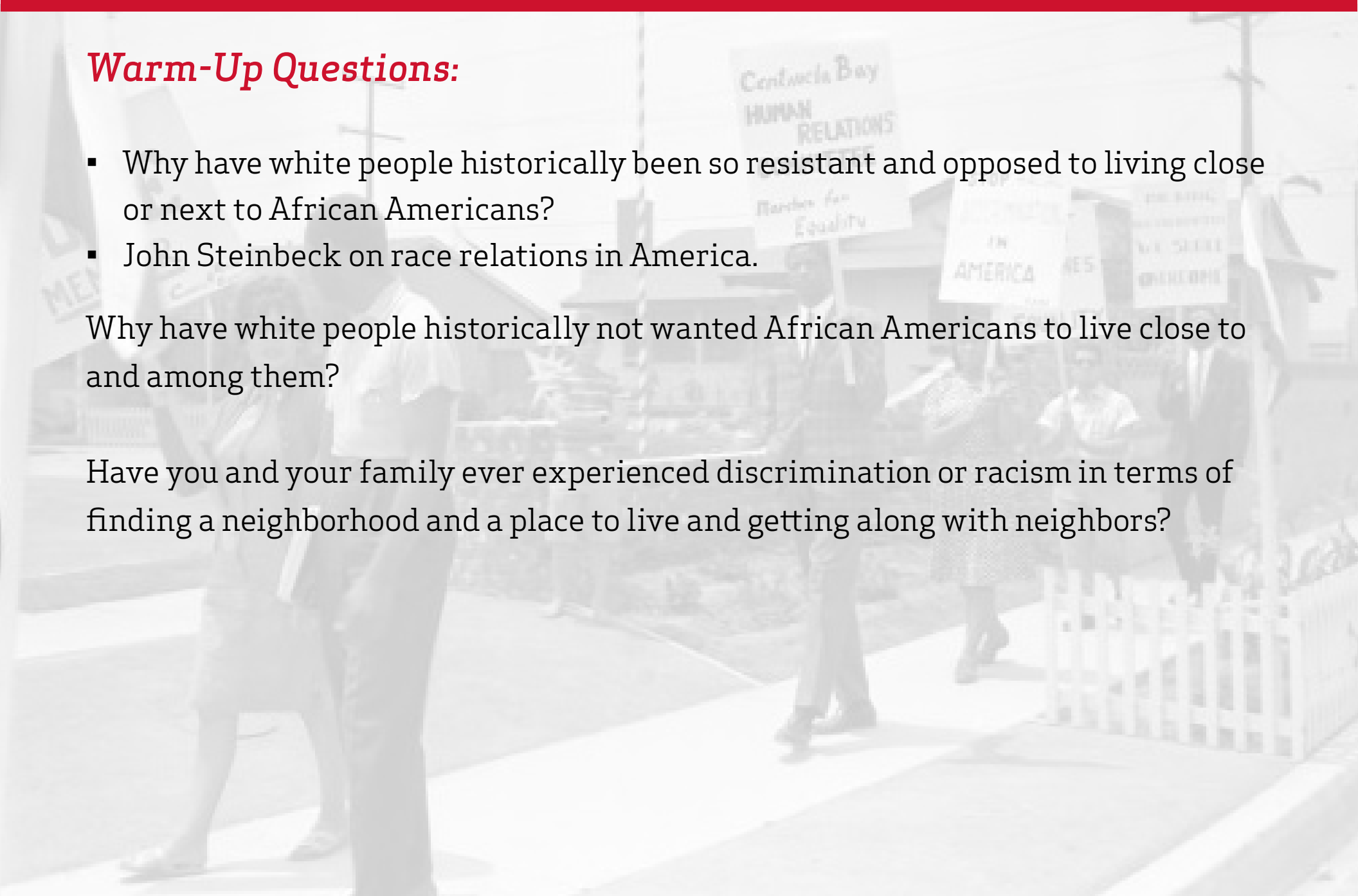
3. EXTENDED WARM-UP

Warm-Up Questions:

- Why have white people historically been so resistant and opposed to living close or next to African Americans?
- John Steinbeck on race relations in America.

Why have white people historically not wanted African Americans to live close to and among them?

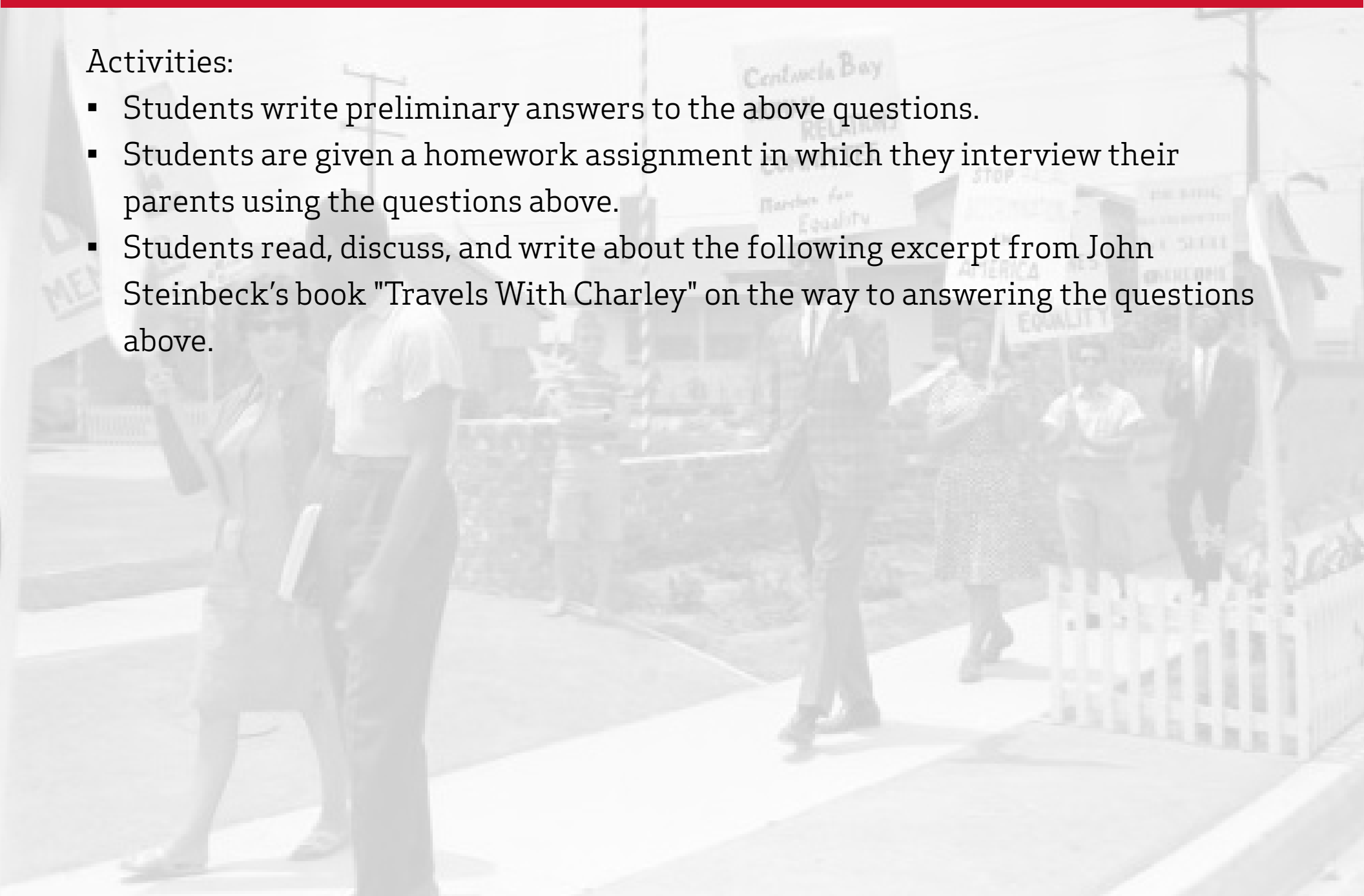
Have you and your family ever experienced discrimination or racism in terms of finding a neighborhood and a place to live and getting along with neighbors?



3. EXTENDED WARM-UP (CONT.)

Activities:

- Students write preliminary answers to the above questions.
- Students are given a homework assignment in which they interview their parents using the questions above.
- Students read, discuss, and write about the following excerpt from John Steinbeck's book "Travels With Charley" on the way to answering the questions above.



3. EXTENDED WARM-UP (CONT.):

Steinbeck, John (1962). Travels with Charley: In Search of America. The Viking Press Inc., Part Four, pp. 245-247, 263.

At sixty years old, Steinbeck, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962, took a trip across the country in a camper, named for Don Quixote's horse Rocinante, accompanied by a French poodle named Charley. Steinbeck had just passed through New Orleans, Louisiana, observing whites protesting blacks being allowed into the same schools as their children. Steinbeck met up with an elderly southern gentleman and had a conversation. We can only hint here at the beginning and end of an incredible conversation that explains the justification for slavery and its most devastating legacy.

"If by force you make a creature live and work like a beast, you must think of him as a beast, else empathy would drive you mad... And if you can teach your child from the beginning about the beast, he will not share your bewilderment."



4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the late 1860s, the railroads and their owners, and Los Angeles city boosters transformed the image of the city from a “violent, lawless, unprofitable...frontier village” into the image of a paradise of wonderful climate and plenty of space, and this proved irresistible to white and rural Americans from the Midwest seeking something different from the agriculture lifestyle.

Many of these migrants believed that white people of European descent were inherently superior to other races and ethnicities. Blue-collar whites were members of labor unions whose membership was restricted by race, and lived in working-class suburbs similarly restricted by race.

At the same time, after California was admitted as a free state to the United States in 1850, some legal freedoms were won, such as the outlawing of purposeful racial segregation in schools, and blacks were known to suffer minimal anti-black

4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (CONT.)

violence. All of this combined to attract thousands of African Americans to Los Angeles.

Another attraction was that African Americans could more easily buy and own homes in Los Angeles than in other American cities. Land was more spacious in L.A., so property prices were lower. Anti-black violence seemed lower because the city was less dense at the time, more spaced out, and the numbers of African Americans was low. There seemed to be space for everyone.

But appearances masked a harsher reality. In the late 1910s and 1920s, racially restrictive housing covenants were widespread, agreements that had been around as early as the 1890s. These covenants between white residents and organizations such as the California Real Estate Association excluded, in writing and in practice, “alien races” and “non Caucasians” such as African Americans, Japanese, Chinese, Mexicans, and Jews from living in certain neighborhoods.

4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (CONT.)

Even the U.S. Supreme Court held, in 1926, in *Corrigan vs. Buckley*, that it was legal to enforce racially restrictive housing covenants.

While in other American cities this exclusion and segregation resulted in black ghettos, or “neighborhoods where most people were black and where most black people” in a city lived, in Los Angeles something different occurred. The segregation from the white population resulted in highly integrated and multicultural neighborhoods in which African Americans co-existed, generally harmoniously but with some exceptions, with Mexicans, Japanese, Chinese, Jews, and Italians, especially in Boyle Heights, East Los Angeles, and along Central Avenue in South Central L.A.

During WWII, pulled by the economic opportunities of a country at war, the Great Migration of African Americans to Los Angeles brought 50 thousand new residents into the area centered around Central Avenue, 10 thousand into Watts, and 70 thousand into the area around what is now Little Tokyo.

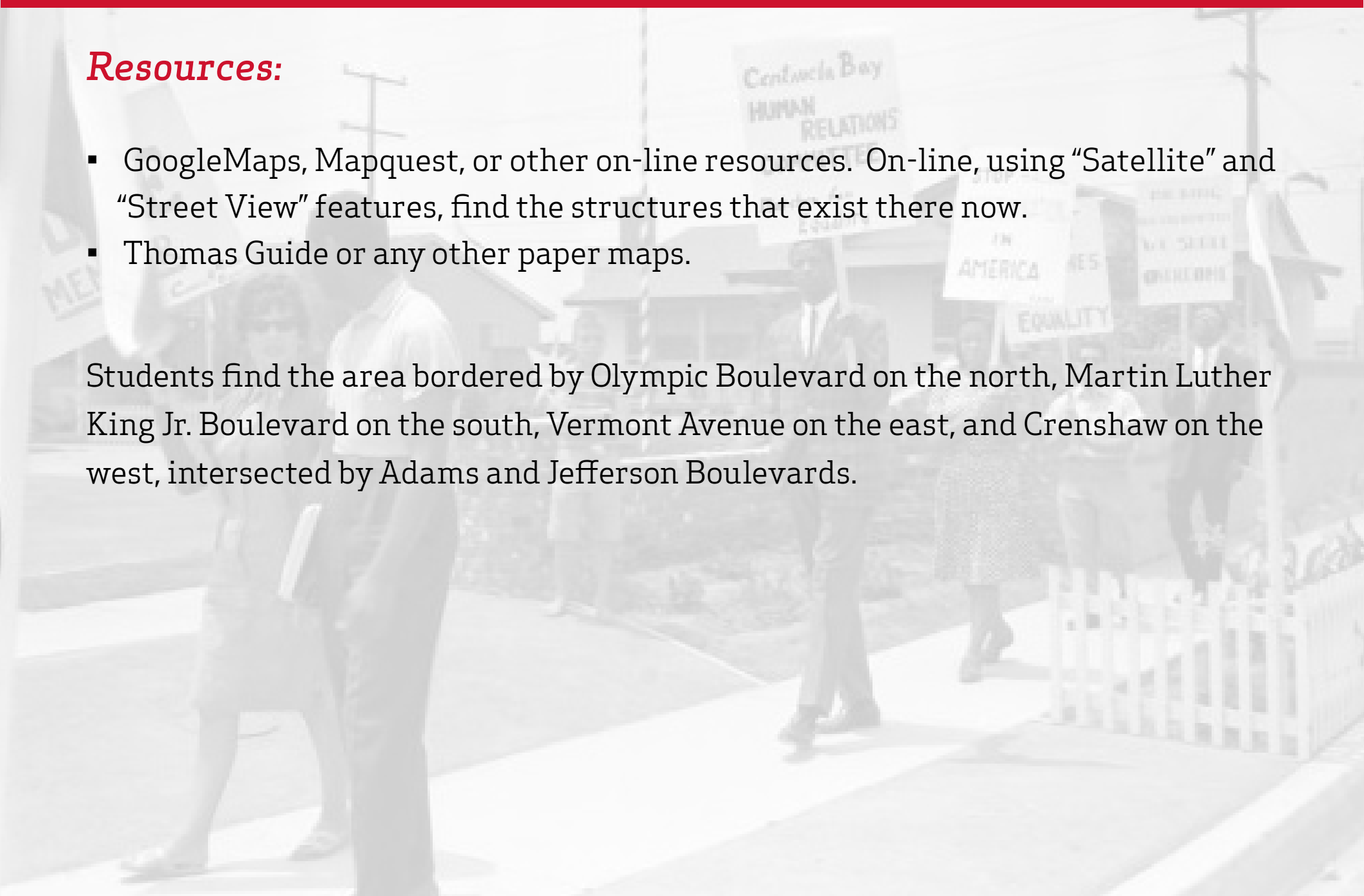


5. MAP ACTIVITY

Resources:

- GoogleMaps, Mapquest, or other on-line resources. On-line, using “Satellite” and “Street View” features, find the structures that exist there now.
- Thomas Guide or any other paper maps.

Students find the area bordered by Olympic Boulevard on the north, Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard on the south, Vermont Avenue on the east, and Crenshaw on the west, intersected by Adams and Jefferson Boulevards.



5. MAP ACTIVITY (CONT.)

Landmarks:

- 10 Santa Monica Freeway
- Rosedale Cemetery
- Exposition Park
- Los Angeles Colliseum.

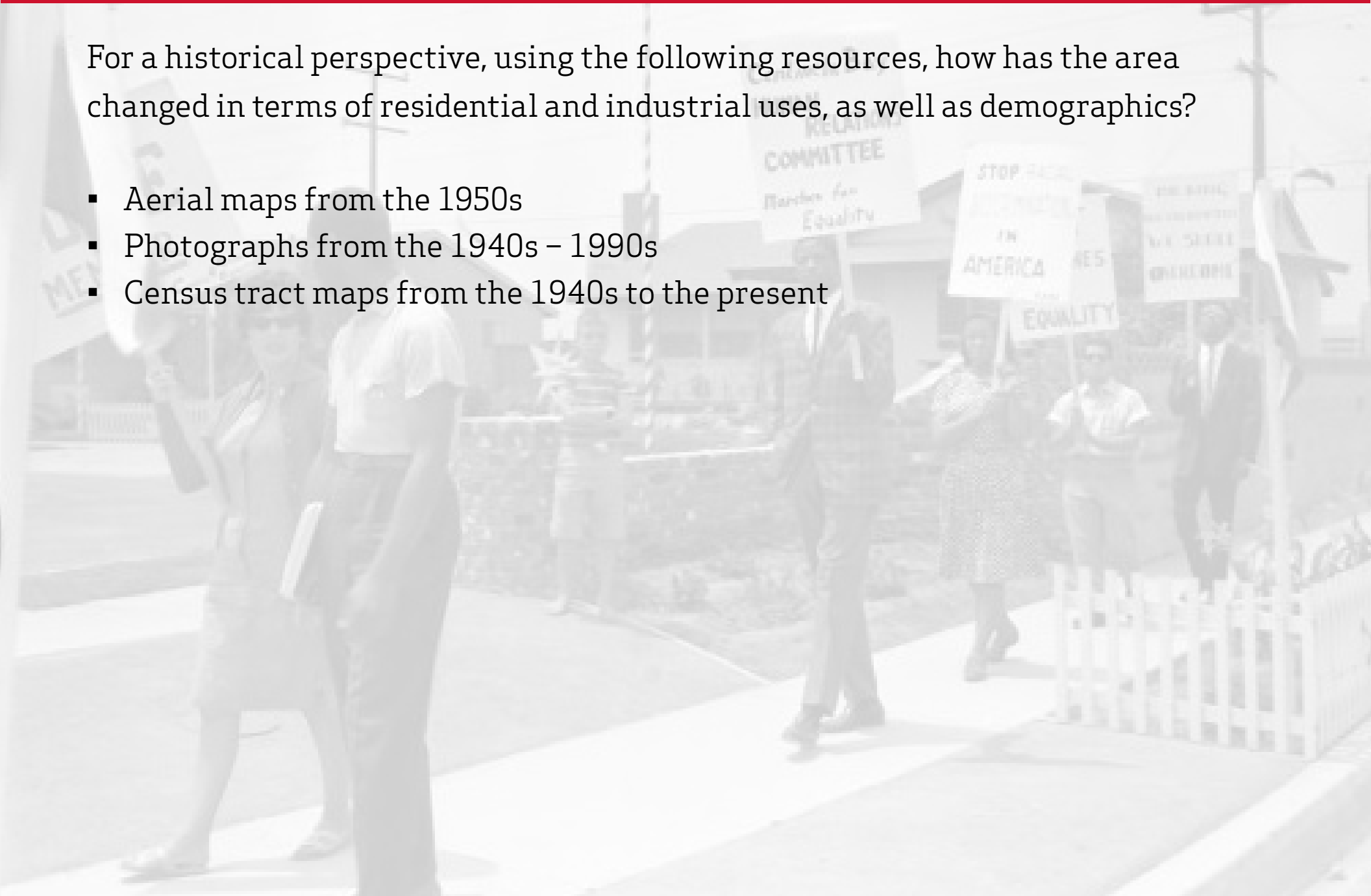
In the pages below are the names and addresses of African Americans who lived in Sugar Hill, West Adams, Country Club Park and other neighborhoods of the area.

Have students select 2-3 individuals and their homes, do research in the books listed in the Resources section, or on-line, to find out who these individuals were and what they did, and locate historical photographs of their homes.

5. MAP ACTIVITY (CONT.)

For a historical perspective, using the following resources, how has the area changed in terms of residential and industrial uses, as well as demographics?

- Aerial maps from the 1950s
- Photographs from the 1940s – 1990s
- Census tract maps from the 1940s to the present





6. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Restrictive Housing Covenants in Sugar Hill and Surroundings

In the late 1930s, before WWII, “elite” African Americans began to buy homes in the West Adams district, now directly south of the 10 Santa Monica Freeway around West Adams Blvd., between USC and Crenshaw Blvd.

At the time, there was no 10 Freeway. The area had come to be known as Sugar Hill, or the Heights, in the northeast corner of the district, which had long been an area of affluent white residents.

The area boasted Victorian-era mansions of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as well as Craftsman and Spanish-revival-style homes built in the 1920s. The bankers and oil tycoons were required to sign restrictive covenants to build these homes, agreements that specifically did not allow people of color to live in the homes and neighborhoods.

6. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (CONT.)

Norman O. Houston broke the color line in Sugar Hill. He was one of the original founders of the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company and led the effort to move the company to the West Adams district. The Houstons became the first African American family to purchase a house in Sugar Hill in 1938, at 2211 South Hobart Boulevard, in the West Adams neighborhood.

The local white homeowners association, the West Adams Heights Improvement Association, voiced strong opposition to this. However, eventually, African-American entertainers including Hattie McDaniel, Ethel Waters, Louise Beavers, and Pearl Bailey also moved into the area. "By the end of World War II, the area was still predominantly white, but the richest and most famous African Americans in the city also lived there." (Sides, pp. 98-99)

6. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (CONT.)

Prominent African Americans also began to move into Country Club Park, north of Sugar Hill, also drawing the opposition of white homeowners there. African American newspapers including **The California Eagle** and **Los Angeles Sentinel** covered the legal battles much more than **Los Angeles Times**.

In 1946, members of the Improvement Association sued white Sugar Hill homeowners who had sold to blacks, charging them with violating the restrictive covenants. This was just one year after the end of World War II, a war that had been fought partly against the German Nazi philosophies of a superior Caucasian master race. When a California Superior Court judge ruled the covenants were unenforceable, the association appealed to the California Supreme Court.

NAACP attorney Loren Miller represented the defendants, destroying the claims of a “pure white race” as rationale for keeping African Americans out of neighborhoods. The state Supreme Court agreed, with Judge Stanley Mosk of the state Supreme Court writing:

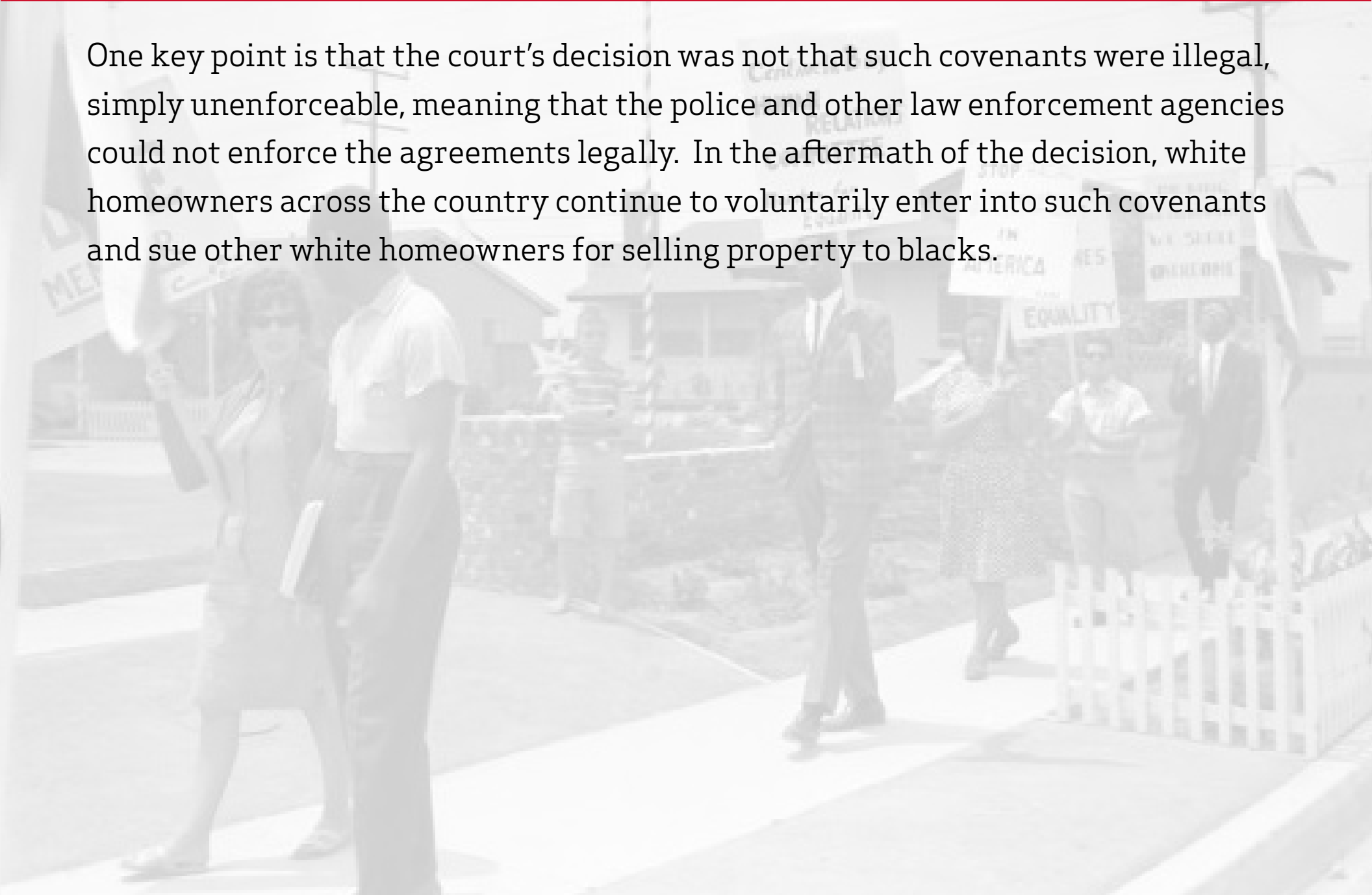
6. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (CONT.)

"This court feels there is no more reprehensible and un-American activity than to attempt to deprive persons of their own homes on a 'master race' theory. Our nation just fought the Nazi race superiority doctrines. One of these defendants [Frank Drye] was in that war and is a Purple Heart veteran. This court would indeed be callous to his constitutional rights if it were now to permit him to be ousted from his home using 'race' as a measure of his worth as a citizen and a neighbor."

The United States Supreme Court then responded to a nationwide campaign to review the 1926 **Corrigan vs. Buckley** decision upholding racially-restrictive housing covenants. The cases of individual black homeowners in Michigan, Washington, D.C., and Missouri were combined into the case of **Shelley v. Kraemer**. Thurgood Marshall, who would later become a justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, Loren Miller, and other attorneys argued against the covenants. In May 1948, SCOTUS (Supreme Court of the United States) ruled that the covenants were unenforceable.

6. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (CONT.)

One key point is that the court's decision was not that such covenants were illegal, simply unenforceable, meaning that the police and other law enforcement agencies could not enforce the agreements legally. In the aftermath of the decision, white homeowners across the country continue to voluntarily enter into such covenants and sue other white homeowners for selling property to blacks.



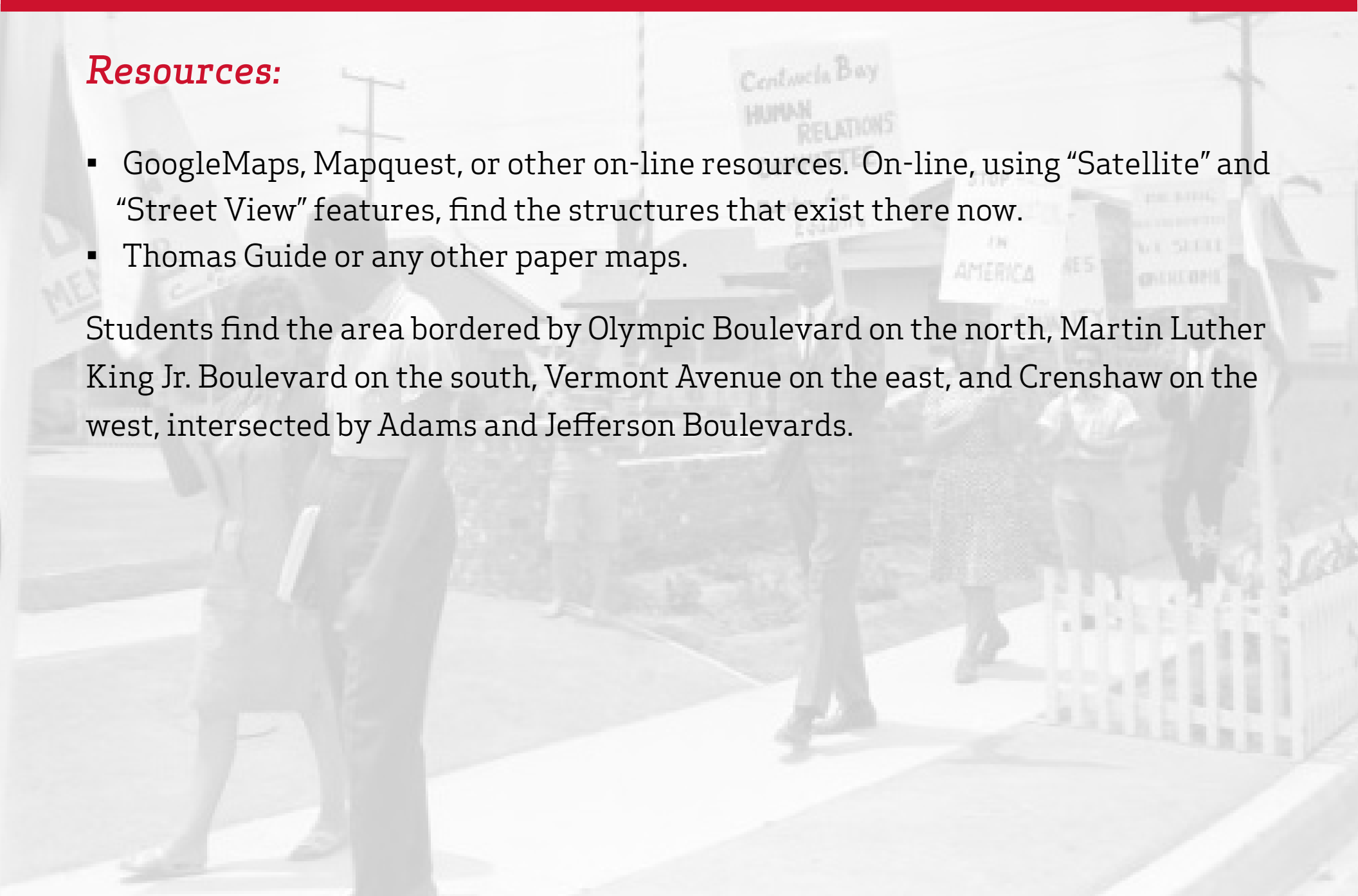


7. MAP ACTIVITY

Resources:

- GoogleMaps, Mapquest, or other on-line resources. On-line, using “Satellite” and “Street View” features, find the structures that exist there now.
- Thomas Guide or any other paper maps.

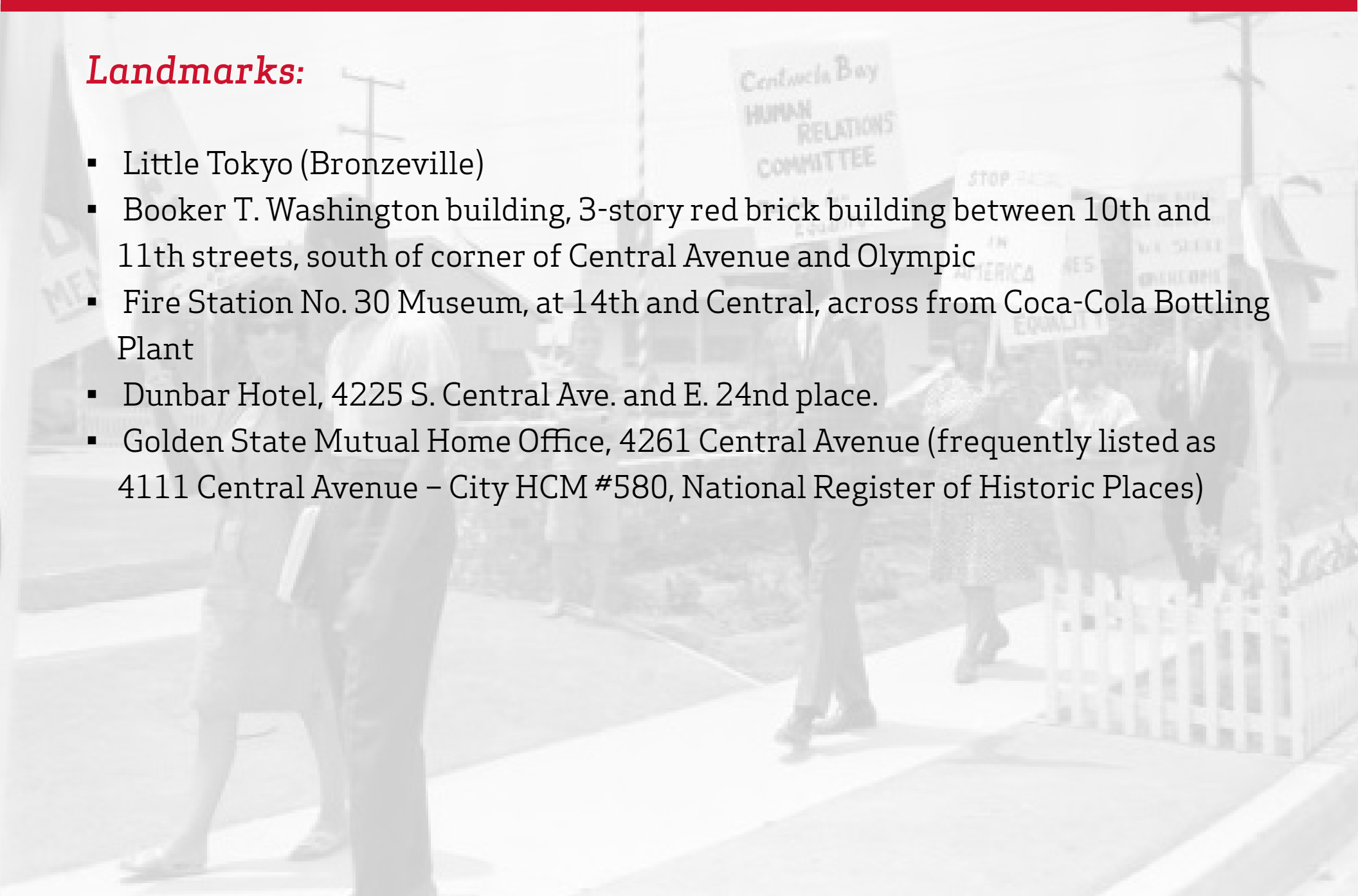
Students find the area bordered by Olympic Boulevard on the north, Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard on the south, Vermont Avenue on the east, and Crenshaw on the west, intersected by Adams and Jefferson Boulevards.



7. MAP ACTIVITY (CONT.)

Landmarks:

- Little Tokyo (Bronzeville)
- Booker T. Washington building, 3-story red brick building between 10th and 11th streets, south of corner of Central Avenue and Olympic
- Fire Station No. 30 Museum, at 14th and Central, across from Coca-Cola Bottling Plant
- Dunbar Hotel, 4225 S. Central Ave. and E. 24th place.
- Golden State Mutual Home Office, 4261 Central Avenue (frequently listed as 4111 Central Avenue – City HCM #580, National Register of Historic Places)



7. MAP ACTIVITY (CONT.)

Landmarks:

- How can the area be described in terms of residential and industrial uses?
- How can the area be described in demographic terms, including available statistics on the racial and ethnic make-up of the population?

For a historical perspective, using the following resources, how has the area changed in terms of residential and industrial uses and demographics?:

- Aerial maps from the 1950s
- Photographs from the 1940s – 1990s
- Census tract maps from the 1940s to the present

SEGREGATION
is
UN-AMERICAN

...Freedom
and Justice
for All!

Centinela Bay
Human Relations
Committee

STOP RACIAL
DISCRIMINATION
IN
AMERICA

MODE HOME



8. DISCRIMINATORY HOUSING PRACTICES AND SCHOOL SEGREGATION

Two seminal pieces of social science research – one by Gary Orfield, Susan Eaton, and colleagues with the other by Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton – show how discriminatory housing practices and decisions have created segregated neighborhoods. Additionally, the research counters the opinions of judges and others who segregated schools are the products of individual preferences and choices that government cannot control:

- Minority families may never consider housing in white communities, fearing violence and intimidation based on the experiences of relatives or acquaintances.
- Whites and white realtors never look for housing in “minority” areas, or leave if the area is being “invaded” by minorities, acting on stereotypes and real fears, but ignorant of their foundations. For example, minority families that face high housing costs with low wages must double up in crowded spaces, landlords fail to adequately maintain the property, and the resulting conditions contribute to

8. DISCRIMINATORY HOUSING PRACTICES AND SCHOOL SEGREGATION

the stereotype that the entry of minorities into any neighborhoods causes decay or blight.

- Realtors steer families away from certain neighborhoods or away from others, and often engage in unethical professional practices. “Blockbusting,” for example, involves scaring white owners into selling cheap by playing the “there goes the neighborhood” card. Housing prices can then be artificially raised and offered to minority families, desperate to escape the horrible conditions of the ghetto.
- After blocks are busted, a primarily white clientele moves to suburban middle-class communities which exclude subsidized housing, rental housing for families, and affordable housing for lower-income families. These satisfy the desires of white communities at the expense of those of minority communities. For example, few minority families express a preference for living in mostly minority areas, while whites prefer a low level of integration.ⁱ

i. Orfield, et. al., citing a *USA Today* poll, 1989, September 22, in which only 10 percent of blacks expressed a preference for a “mostly black” neighborhood, but 53 percent lived in one.

8. DISCRIMINATORY HOUSING PRACTICES AND SCHOOL SEGREGATION

- That some families lack the equity to buy a suburban house is not only an indication of relative wealth, but also that, despite fair housing laws, government agencies such as the Federal Housing Authority, the Veterans Administration, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and all manner of banks and other financial institutions have held policies that extend far less loan and mortgage capital to low-income and minority communities than to higher-income and white communities. The term redlining refers to the process of drawing, on maps, red lines around undesirable neighborhoods.
- Public and private institutions, such as government agencies and realtors, have worked together to confine minority families to overcrowded, overpriced, and deteriorating ghettos with bad schools. Zoning and urban planning laws and regulations, planned segregation of subsidized housing (e.g. placing projects in the worst areas), and the displacement of housing (e.g. by factories or buildings, freeways or train tracks) without adequate replacement, have all been characterized by discrimination against low-income and minority families.

8. DISCRIMINATORY HOUSING PRACTICES AND SCHOOL SEGREGATION

- Until as recently as the 1960s, official apartheid laws and practices existed in the U.S., including restrictive covenants that required certain homes to be sold only to members of a certain race. The official laws may no longer exist, but the practices do.
- Some opinions change when folks experience reality. In 1954, at the time of the Brown decision, 81 percent of white Southerners believed the Court was wrong; forty years later, only 15 percent hold that attitude after two decades of experiencing the nation's most integrated schools.ⁱ
- In spite of attempts over the years to create fair housing legislation that would ameliorate the above conditions, Denton and Massey argue that “the fundamental dilemma of white America is that, though it truly believes that housing markets should be fair and open, it equally truly does not want to live with black people.”ⁱⁱ Thus, segregation persists.

i. Ibid., p. 299, citing a Gallup Poll in *USA Today*, 1994, May 16

ii. Denton & Massey, p. 213



9. DID THEY GET WHAT THEY WANTED, BUT LOST WHAT THEY HAD

Black homes with higher incomes – driven primarily by trained and educated women with clerical worker professional settings who added their incomes to those of their husbands' blue-collar incomes – moved to neighborhoods close to the city such as West Jefferson and West Adams, before the 10 Santa Monica Freeway was built in the late 1960s.

Others moved to white working-class areas far south of downtown Los Angeles, such as Huntington Park, South Gate, Lynwood, and Compton, seeking the ideal of a suburban lifestyle. Still others moved to white working-class areas in the San Fernando Valley, such as Canoga Park, Pacoima, North Hollywood, and Valley View Village.

But these migrations appeared to have had unfortunate results for many blacks.

9. DID THEY GET WHAT THEY WANTED, BUT LOST WHAT THEY HAD

- White families in the suburban communities remained very resistant to integrating with black families, but they were apparently more tolerant of other groups.
- Whereas many blacks had lived in multiethnic and multiracial neighborhoods alongside Mexicans, Asians, and Jews before World War II, this changed in the postwar years. The other groups became white enough to penetrate further into white neighborhoods.
- The result was that many blacks became even more racially isolated and segregated from other groups. Unable to integrate into white neighborhoods and left alone by other groups in increasingly predominantly black neighborhoods, the social and psychological benefits African Americans had gained in multiracial neighborhoods were erased.
- The out-migration of the more successful African Americans brought complaints of black flight and abandonment, from blacks who remained in South Central L.A.

9. DID THEY GET WHAT THEY WANTED, BUT LOST WHAT THEY HAD

Professor William Julius Wilson of the University of Chicago (now at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government) showed how middle-class black professionals and working-class blacks have left the inner cities and ghetto neighborhoods, leaving behind the most disadvantaged blacks.ⁱ Echoing the research of Wilson, New York University professor David Dent explained the movement of middle-class African Americans into suburban enclaves in a 1995 **Los Angeles Times** article.

Rather than feel alone in largely white communities, *"they want to find a comfortable space for their family, themselves, and their children...They're saying to themselves: 'I'm not going to set myself up in a hostile world for the sake of integration.' Black people are aggressively looking for comfortable spaces to breathe and be themselves."*ⁱⁱ

i. William Julius Wilson, *The Declining Significance of Race* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2d ed., 1980), and *The Truly Disadvantaged* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987)

ii. Sam Fulwood III, "Black Attitudes Shift Away From Goal of Inclusion," *Los Angeles Times*, October 30, 1995.



10. IMAGES



Charles Williams, Los Angeles 1963



Lincoln Place Apartments, Venice 1967



McClanay Shower, Los Angeles 1960



Protest, Los Angeles 1962



Protest, Los Angeles



Temple Beth Am, Los Angeles 1967



Vandalism, Los Angeles 1962



11. MAPS



1952 LA; Slauson Ave. (BOTTOM)
Alameda St. (RIGHT)



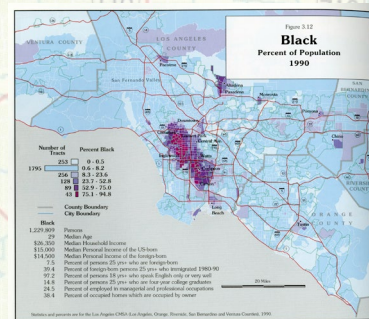
1952 LA; Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum
(UPPER LEFT) Broadway (RIGHT)



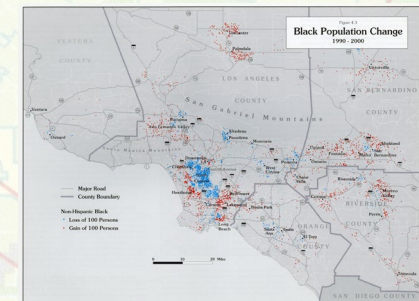
1954 LA; Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum
(BOTTOM), Rosedale Cemetery (UPPER RIGHT)



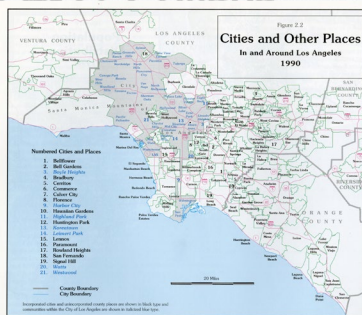
1954 LA; MLK Blvd. (RIGHT), Leimert Park (UPPER
LEFT) Manual Senior Arts High School (SOUTH-WEST OF
COLISEUM), Slauson Ave. (MIDDLE)



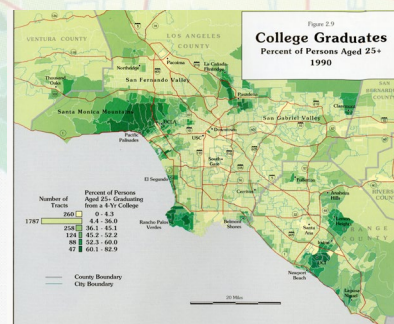
Black Percent of Population 1997



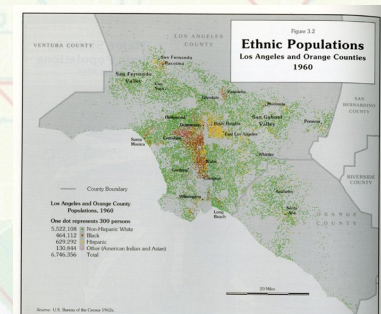
Black Population Change
2002



Cities and Other Places In and Around
Los Angeles 1997

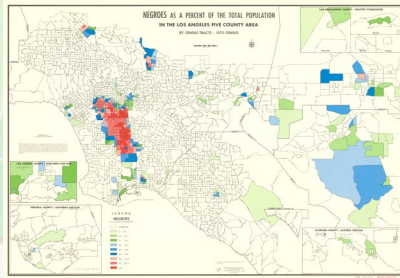


College Graduates Percent of Persons
Aged 25+ 1997

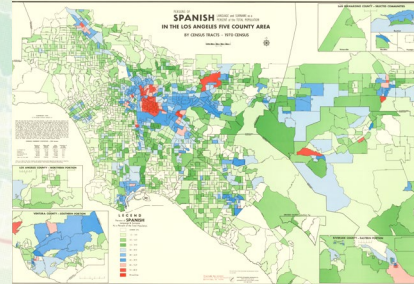


Ethnic Population Los Angeles and
Orange Counties 1997

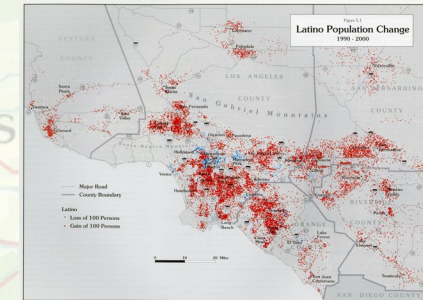
11. MAPS (CONT.)



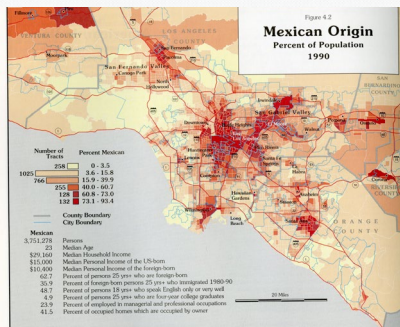
Negroes as a Percent of the Total Population 1970 Census



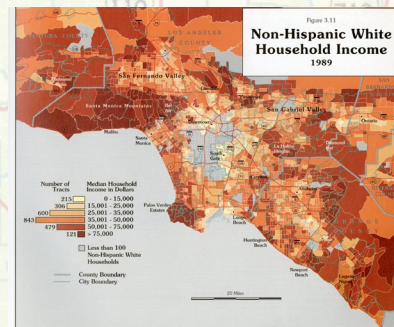
Persons of Spanish Descent in the Los Angeles Five-County Area 1970 Census



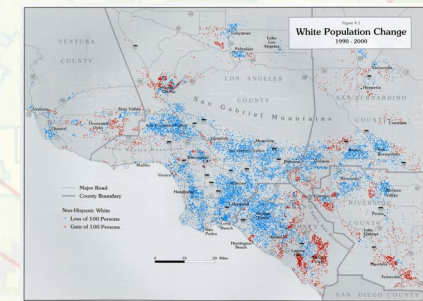
Latino Population Change 2002



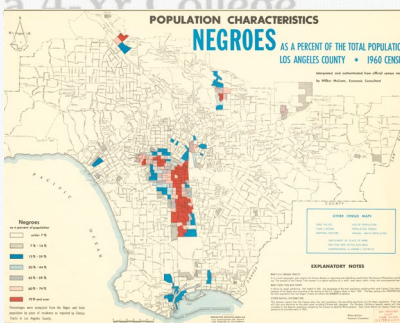
Mexican Origin Percent of Population 1997



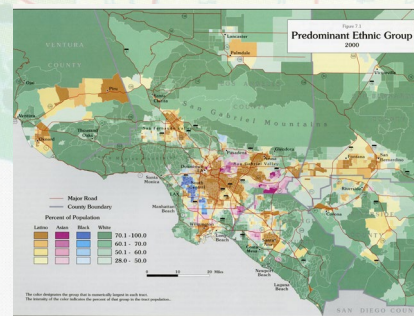
Non-Hispanic White Household Income 1997



White Population Change 2002



Population Characteristics Negroes as a Percent of the Total Population Los Angeles County 1960 Census



Predominant Ethnic Group 2002

12. CITATIONS

Allen, James, P. and Turner, Eugene (1997). The Ethnic quilt: Population diversity in Southern California. Northridge, CA: The Center for Geographical Studies.

Allen, James, P. and Turner, Eugene (2002). Changing faces, changing places: Mapping Southern Californians. Northridge, CA: The Center for Geographical Studies.

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12 .CITATIONS (CONT.)

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West Adams' Landmarks of African American History, West Adams Heritage Association, R 979.41 L8813, History and Genealogy Department, LAPL, thanks to Alicia Moguel, Director of Adult Services, LAPL

A special thanks to Chris Salvano, map curator, CSU Northridge, College of Social and Behavioral Science, Geography Department, Map Library, for the following maps and resources:

12 . CITATIONS (cont.)

Aerial photographs of Los Angeles, AXJ-20K-6, AXJ-20K-4, AXJ-7K-123, AXJ-7K-84

Oversized Maps:

Population Characteristics Negroes, 1960 Census, G4364.L8E6 1960

Persons of Spanish language and surname, 1970 Census, G4364.L8E6 1972.W41; and

Negroes as a percent of the total population, 1970 Census, G4364.L8E6 1971.W42

Thanks to Mr. Salvano and the authors for the population maps.

Allen, James, P. and Turner, Eugene (1997). The Ethnic quilt: Population diversity in Southern California. Northridge, CA: The Center for Geographical Studies.

p. 52 "Figure 3.2 Ethnic Populations / Los Angeles and Orange Counties / 1960"

p. 62 "Figure 3.12 Black / Percent of Population / 1990"

Allen, James, P. and Turner, Eugene (2002). Changing faces, changing places: Mapping Southern Californians. Northridge, CA: The Center for Geographical Studies.

12. CITATIONS (CONT.)

p. 13 “Figure 4.1 White Population Change / 1990-2000”

p. 17 “Figure 4.3 Black Population Change / 1990-2000”

p. 23 “Figure 5.1 Latino Population Change / 1990-2000”

p. 47 “Figure 7.1 Predominant Ethnic Group / 2000”

5. For advanced students: U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder, Create a Map feature

Gary Orfield, Sara Schley & Sean Reardon, *The Growth of Segregation in American Schools* (Alexandria: National School Boards Association, 1993).

Douglas S. Massey & Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, MA: The Harvard University Press, 1993).



12. CITATIONS (CONT.)

p. 23 "Figure 5.1 Latino Population Change / 1990-2000"

p. 47 "Figure 7.1 Predominant Ethnic Group / 2000"

5. For advanced students: U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder, Create a Map feature

3. Allen, James, P. and Turner, Eugene (1997). *The Ethnic quilt: Population diversity in Southern California*.

Northridge, CA: The Center for Geographical Studies.

Allen, James, P. and Turner, Eugene (2002). *Changing faces, changing places: Mapping Southern Californians*.

Northridge, CA: The Center for Geographical Studies.

Request: 6 individual maps, "Digitizin Flat Maps," @ \$10/map sheet = \$60

1997 -

p. 52 "Figure 3.2 Ethnic Populations / Los Angeles and Orange Counties / 1960"

p. 62 "Figure 3.12 Black / Percent of Population / 1990"