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Making District Del Sol: The Murals of Saint Paul's West Side

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Honors Thesis

History Department
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ABSTRACT

I explore Saint Paul's West Side community and how its organizations, businesses, and artists have defined the neighborhood's identity and history by means of community art since the 1960s. As this immigrant community has changed over the years, its identity and history has been presented differently through its art. The murals and sculptural works uniquely preserve these snapshots in the neighborhood's history through changes in style, content and benefactor. By using the West Side as a case study, I discuss larger historical trends in public art, commodification of culture, ethnic enclaves, place making and authenticity.

Note: I have permissions from all interviewees included in this thesis to make their interviews public.

My first few days at a Macalester College, I spent with the Lives of Commitment Program, visiting Twin Cities neighborhoods including Saint Paul's West Side. Immediately, the community's large number of colorful public art pieces struck me as starkly different from the neighborhoods in my hometown of Cincinnati, Ohio. Throughout my years in Saint Paul, I never forgot the West Side neighborhood and occasionally returned for Mexican food and pastries.

When it came time to write my history capstone paper, I had been thinking about the questions that arose the previous semester in the required "Study of History" historiography class. I wanted to explore questions of narrative, how stories are told, and the role that the past plays in the present. Particularly, I wanted to look at more creative and expressive forms of historical narratives that appear in visual art. Looking at how murals are used as a form of historical storytelling immediately interested me, and I began to search for muralists who incorporated historical narratives into their art. I found this to be universal trend and opted to study a place where I could speak to people firsthand about their memories of the neighborhood.

Saint Paul's West Side's numerous murals¹ appeared to tell the community's long history as a home to many immigrants. I wanted to explore how the community became a center for public art and how their history was reflected through this art. I spent a lot of time during my early research looking at trends in style and content of murals during different decades and how the history of the community is recorded. Part of what became so interesting to me is the way in which the past was intertwined with the West Side's present and how important the memories and nostalgia for the close-knit immigrant community of the early days of the West Side played into the community's self-identity.

Thus, the community's history is visually recorded through the murals. Many urban communities often remain unaware of their neighborhood's past because commercial enterprises direct physical changes of urban landscapes and wipe away the evidence of what went before. The West Side clearly differentiates itself. Walking through the colorful streets of District Del Sol in Saint Paul's West Side, any visitor knows instantly that the neighborhood radiates a sense of place and past.

In this paper, I explore how West Side organizations, businesses, and artists have defined the neighborhood's identity and history through community art since the 1960s. Over the years, the self-identity and history of the community has been presented differently through its art. Ultimately, what I have found in my research about these multiple identities are not concrete answers but rather more questions that are increasingly complex and nuanced. Such questions include: Who defines the West Side and how do these groups gain power, representation and the ability to create the neighborhood's identity? How can art be used to both remember and reconstruct the past? Who creates the West Side's community art and for what purpose? And ultimately, what does authenticity mean for the West Side amidst the economic drive to market the neighborhood to tourists, potential businesses and residents?

In order to tackle these questions, I have divided my paper into sections that deal with different periods of mural style and content. In these sections, I also explore theoretical concepts relevant to the periods and mural styles. At first glance, all of the West Side's murals and public art pieces seem to tell similar stories of indigenous history, immigration and a new life in Minnesota, but the imagery ranges from ancient Aztec icons, to the faces of current West Side residents, to their heroes. While these

works have remained a distinct part of the West Side's cultural landscape since the 1970s, the style and content has evolved alongside community developments, changing demographics and alterations in self-perception and projected identity.ⁱⁱ

I show how the murals add important insight to the West Side's history despite the inherent open-endedness of using imagery in historical analysis. Historian Peter Burke notes that what images ultimately “record is not social reality as much as social illusions, not ordinary life but special performances. For this very reason, they offer priceless evidence to anyone interested in changing, hopes, values or mentalities.”ⁱⁱⁱ I look at factors including, mural iconography, style, intended message, artist, and funding to better understand the community's historical development and “changing hopes, values and mentalities.” I argue that although the murals utilize iconography from a distant past and project hopes for the future, ultimately the works reflect larger historical changes in the community during the time of their creation, preserving these snapshots in the neighborhood's history. Thus, the vibrant immigrant community that first attracted my attention has been complicated because of mixed influences including, civic engagement, community activism and the increasing commodification of culture.

To show how the art reflects changes the community and how the West Side's identity has been presented, first, I briefly outline the history of the West Side beginning in the 1800s and ending with the creation of the District Del Sol business corridor, putting my paper into historical context. Second, I will look at the West Side's Chicano murals created in the 60s and 70s, which reflect the flowering of the Chicano movement and the discovery of a Mexican identity. Third, I explore murals that begin to deviate from Chicano subject matter beginning in the 80s and continuing through the 90s and

instead depict cultural diversity. I will explore how these murals use images of a racially tolerant and harmonious community, reflecting nostalgia for simpler days of the past. And finally, I look at the beautification, restoration and gateway art projects initiated by Riverview Economic Development Association (REDA) in conjunction with their re-branding and renaming of the “District Del Sol”^{iv} business corridor in the late 90s. I analyze how these works create a distinct identity and physical space for the neighborhood in order to attract tourists and potential businesses.

I hope to raise questions for readers involved in the disciplines of history, art, urban studies and community development. In the field of history, this paper raises questions of historiography and more specifically the ways in which artists through their works create stories about the past and how different generations and artists tell these stories differently. In terms of art, this paper looks at the contradictions of creative expression and the way these works are put on the market and “sold” to an audience. Community and public art complicates this because of the complex relationship between community, artist, and benefactor. I explore the ways in which cities and public art develop amidst changes in economic prosperity, demographics, urbanization, and immigration.

The West Side’s History

Today, mention of Saint Paul’s West Side conjures images of District Del Sol’s colorful streets that make visitors feel as if they have left Minnesota and entered a different country. Overflowing with dozens of colorful murals and iconic landmarks such as El Burrito Mercado, the Neighborhood House and The Boca Chica Restaurant, the neighborhood radiates personality and flavor. Although today many consider District

Del Sol^v to be the West Side's center, the commercial district was created only recently. The history of Saint Paul's West Side extends beyond the Chicano influenced District Del Sol to the Mississippi's flood plains, a neighborhood once known as the West Side Flats. The Flats provided cheap housing and a close-knit community to many immigrant groups. The memory of the Flats has played a crucial role in the West Side's present identity and nostalgia for days of neighborhood camaraderie and the peaceful co-existence of cultures. Particularly in District Del Sol, the public art reflects these sentiments.

The West Side is geographically disconnected from downtown Saint Paul by the Mississippi River and remained politically separate from Saint Paul until incorporated into the area in 1878. The physical feature has played a large role in the community's development. The Dakota people first inhabited the land, but soon the area became home to immigrants from many countries, including Germany, Lithuania, Russia, Ireland and Mexico. Although the people and the languages spoken have changed a great deal over the years, the memory of an immigrant melting pot remained. Harry Boyte, in *Community is Possible: Repairing America's Roots*, summarizes this phenomenon, explaining that, "the immigrant flavor of the population is also notable. The first settlers were often French fur traders, retiring from a diminishing trade. A scattering of Sioux people remained as well ...German, Irish, Scandinavians, and the first few Jewish families followed."^{vi} Eastern European immigrants set up the foundations of the Flats community by building temples and businesses. In 1897, Jewish women from Mt. Zion Temple founded the Neighborhood House, which would become the Flats' most influential organization. In 1903, the Neighborhood House "reorganized on a

nonsectarian basis and issued a stirring mission statement, pledging ‘to serve the residents of the flats through helping the individual, through fostering family and neighborly friendliness, and through cultivating human relationships across the lines of race and language, party and creed.’^{vii} The Neighborhood House was so vital to residents that it became known as “‘the center of the community,’ or simply the ‘meeting ground.’”^{viii}

Despite the poor living conditions and overlap of many differing cultures, the West Side Flats was described as a tight community. Boyle explains:

From something like 1890 to 1940—a ‘commonwealth’ of sorts existed in the West Side Flats area, weaving together different groups in ways that were remarkable, allowing people to discover what values they shared across all the differences of culture and history. The isolation of the Flats contributed to the sense of commonality. Bounded on three sides by a river and to the south by the West Side Hills, a mainly working-class community with which there was more or less peaceful coexistence, the definitions of the Flats were clear and unmistakable. But they were also more than geographic. The rest of Saint Paul ‘looked down’ from loftier heights—in both physical and social terms--- at the low-lying area across the river.^{ix}

Although the at the turn of the 20th century many residents were Eastern European Jews, by the 1930s many of these residents improved their economic situations and moved to the more affluent bluffs/Concord Terrace area. Starting in the 1930s and continuing through the 60s, Mexicans replaced the Eastern Europeans and comprised the majority of the Flats’ population.^x

During the difficulties of the depression, Mexicans flocked from US cities and parts of Mexico to Saint Paul “to live among friends and relatives who, if short on material assistance, could generally be relied upon for emotional support.”^{xi} Despite the often horrid, cramped and filthy living conditions, which “was among the worst available

in urban settings,”^{xii} many residents look back to the Flats with fond memories of a vibrant, close knit community.^{xiii} During this time, the neighborhood experienced very little crime.^{xiv} Residents felt tied to this mostly Mexican community; one resident explained “the kids hung together even when we worked sugar beets during the Depression.”^{xv}

Neighborhood House in particular attracted recent immigrants by providing a variety of services, including assimilation and hobby classes, a physical space for events, and a source of information regarding jobs and ESL classes. The organization grew from providing only a few services to becoming the center of the Flats’ activity. Studies show that “in 1933 only about half of the Mexicans in Saint Paul were reached by Neighborhood House, but by 1938 seven-eighths were participating in its programs.”^{xvi} The Neighborhood House represented one of many organizations that bound the community together. For example, another influential organization in the West Side Flats was Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, founded by the Chicano community, which similarly became a community meeting point.

When the City of Saint Paul decided to demolish the homes and businesses in the Flats in the early 60s, the city’s Mexican-American community was torn at the seams. At this time, well over half of the Twin Cities’ Mexican population lived on West Side Flats.^{xvii} The area “had long been subject to floods” and the city intended for it to be “cleared and diked for industrial improvement.”^{xviii} A 1960 *Pioneer Press* article described the city’s decision as an effort “eliminating old, worthless structures and making the land available for better industrial use.”^{xix} This clearing occurred around the

same time as other Saint Paul relocation processes in other working class neighborhoods such as Little Italy and the largely African American Rondo community.

Although flooding had caused much damage to the Flats over the years due to its precarious location on the river's flood plain, "most residents of the old barrio would have preferred not to leave their former homes. One resident stated, "'if you have ever lived on the West Side, you'd never want to live in any other part of the Saint Paul. This is home.'"^{xx} The city uprooted residents without adequate compensation and support. Despite promises, the government failed to provide the support and compensation necessary to resettle the two thousand Flats residents.^{xxi} Dissatisfied with the city's proposal, the Flats' residents wanted not only new homes but also a place to recreate the tight community that had known on the Flats.

The West Side's Mexican-American community had few resources with which to organize alternatives. Following the clearance, "approximately half of [Flats' residents] resettled elsewhere on the West Side."^{xxii} The Chicanos who moved from the Flats to the West Side's Concord Terrace area¹ attempted to recreate the Flats' sense of community, bringing many businesses with them. The Flats' two most influential community organizations, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church and the Neighborhood House, also relocated to the Concord Terrace neighborhood and played an important role in the transition. Initiatives were made to recreate the feeling of the old Flats with some success, but one historian noted that "memory erodes as individuals leave behind their communities. And it is regained only as people rebuild them. Indeed, shared memories are central to community, defining its language, symbols, textures and occasions."^{xxiii} Organizing on behalf of former residents' rights began an activist culture within the Saint

¹ Concord Terrace area is what is now considered District Del Sol.

Paul Mexican community that continued well past relocation. Residents felt slighted and without a voice or control of their own lives and homes. Politicians and officials paid lip service to the needs of the Mexican community but rarely followed through.

Soon commercial activity re-centered around Concord Street, which would later be renamed Caesar Chavez Street. Some of the West Side's European-American residents feared and spoke out vocally against Mexican-Americans relocating into the Concord Terrace neighborhood. These residents expressed fear of decreased property values and increased crime and voiced contempt for the Mexican community. Many of these European Americans had lived or were children of immigrants who had lived in the lower West Side Flats; however, "they shared a fear that Mexicans from the flats would ruin their neighborhood."^{xxiv} Despite initial conflicts, the Mexican-American community found a home in the West Side's Concord Terrace area, and the neighborhood is now known as a Latino community.

Since the clearance of the Flats, the West Side has diversified a great deal and became home to immigrants from Latin America, Africa and Asia, but the area still maintains a Mexican feel.^{xxv} In the late 1990s, Riverview Economic Development Association (REDA) coined the name "District Del Sol" for the commercial center around Concord Street (now Caesar Chavez Street). The name and the area plays upon the community's Mexican heritage and "brands" the area as a Latino neighborhood.

Memory for the close-knit, immigrant community of the West Side Flats still plays a large role in the way the West Side understands its identity today. West Side artist Craig David further explains that nostalgia plays a role on the community's present identity because "it is in the collective consciousness of the community to some degree,

especially [for the] oldtimers. New immigrants and new transplants whether their families have been in the States for a hundred years or two hundred years, when they come there, they hear about it and they like coming here.”^{xxvi} Further, a large part of the public art and identity created in the West Side today stems from this memory. Boyte concludes his chapter on the West Side explaining that, “in communities like the West Side, recovery of a connection to the past has become inextricably linked to the effort to deal with the future.” He quotes a West Side resident who explains that “the final test may well be whether the stories of communities, and of broader geographic areas, are told ‘warts and all’ or whether they are romanticized and nostalgic. In turn such authenticity depends in large measure on who participates in the telling and what values inform the narrative.”^{xxvii}

Beyond nostalgia, Joe Spencer, the former director of West Side Citizens Organization (WESCO) and the arts and culture employee for Saint Paul’s mayor Chris Coleman, explains that “the bruises, scars and wounds that came from eliminating the West Side Flats is something that is still very present in the neighborhood today. If anything, I may think that the demolition of that neighborhood is something that had to be overcome in order for citizens to feel empowered.”^{xxviii} Thus, throughout the West Side’s history memory for the Flats continues creating both nostalgia and resentment.

In this paper, I explore the history of the West Side through the lens of the narratives of the community’s art. In the next section, I look at factors including, mural iconography, style, intended message, artists, and funding to better understand the community’s historical development. While the images are complex and at times romanticize a history that may or may not be accurate, by analyzing them, we can begin

to better understand the West Side and communities undergoing similar phenomena throughout the country.

Chicano Murals: Relocation and the Claiming of Space in the West Side

The first wave of West Side murals was painted in the 1970s and early 1980s by Chicano artists. After the Flats' clearance, many former residents moved to the nearby Concord Terrace area. Partially as an effort to make this area home, Chicano artists began to physically claim the walls and buildings of the area through traditional Mexican art and the utilization of traditional Mexican mythology and iconography. The celebration of Mexican culture came hand in hand with the flourishing of the West Side's Chicano movement. Particularly after dislocation, West Side Chicanos felt the need to organize and establish themselves ethnically in the Concord Terrace area in the face of discrimination and the loss of a their tight-knit Mexican community. West Side Chicanos "actively work to be seen and treated as they were: Americans and West Siders."^{xxix}

In the 1970s and 80s, Saint Paul's West Side underwent a number of changes. Compared to the relatively safe Flats, the West Side began experiencing higher poverty and crime levels and substandard education and services. For example, "the juvenile delinquency and welfare rates in the Concord Terrace-Roosevelt School area were high... These findings represented a considerable change from earlier decades when the Mexican-American colony [(the Flats)] had relative low crime and relief rates."^{xxx} Despite changes such as students reporting "three times as much discrimination as their parents," the West Side maintained some positive aspects from the Flats and "successfully retained 'its identity and cohesiveness as due in part to the strong

influences of Neighborhood House and Our Lady of Guadalupe Church.”^{xxxix} These organizations linked the dislocated community back to the Flats.

The Flats’ former Chicano residents claimed the new Concord Terrace neighborhood as their own through mural making. Soon after the last family left the Flats in 1967, almost half the residents moved up the hill to the Concord Terrace area. In 1970 Chicano artists began physically claiming the new space through their murals. West Side Anglo artist Craig David explained that these “artists became very interested in their own heritage and Mexico and the fact that mural painting was a big thing down there. It had political implications. It probably did become a way to lay claim to a community.”^{xxxix} The West Side’s Chicano muralists set the framework for community art, a tradition which continues to this day. David explained: “those murals inspired me... [They] gave me an idea as to how art can be plugged into a community.”^{xxxix} Today, community art remains an important part of the West Side community.

Chicano artists used imagery and symbols, which would be appreciated and understood by their fellow Chicanos. Articulating a self-conscious identity inspired West Side Chicanos^{xxxiv} to celebrate their Mexican heritage and organize a Chicano movement, which would create support to help find affordable housing and attempt to recreate the community.

Celebrating a Mexican Heritage

West Side Chicanos found camaraderie in a shared Mexican heritage, utilizing its myths, traditions and visual imagery. The 1970s saw a “growing interest in the preservation of Mexican heritage—an apparent reversal of earlier trends toward

acculturation.”^{xxxv} At this time, interest increased in the first generation immigrants and the old ways of the Flats. Even those who were born in the United States began to reclaim a Mexican ancestry.

Although many Chicano activists and artists had lived in the United States for their entire lives, in the 60s and 70s, the Chicano movement greatly encouraged the exploration of Mexican roots and particularly the Mexican Indian. During this time, Chicano cultural events erupted throughout the Midwest, which commemorated artistic achievement in film, dance, art, etc.^{xxxvi} Interest in Mexican culture began in part with an increased interest in speaking Spanish and “during the 1970s, use of Spanish increased in Saint Paul [and] the *West Side Voice*, a neighborhood Saint Paul newspaper, published occasional articles in both English and Spanish.”^{xxxvii} In places all over the Midwest during this time, “Spanish language use among Mexicans increased, in part because of the presence of more native Spanish-speaking people, but also because of the cultural awakening associated with the Chicano Movement.”^{xxxviii}

The sudden interest in speaking Spanish led Chicanos to explore other aspects of their Mexican heritage. Members of the Chicano movement criticized the fact that Chicanos had been “deprived of a chance to learn about the best of the Mexican heritage.”^{xxxix} For example, many spoke with disdain about the Mexican American community’s slow loss of culture because of assimilation and intermarrying with the “Anglo” by noting that “an unfortunate aspect of this process is that extremely valuable Mexican traits are being lost, such as the tendency toward mutual aid, the Spanish language, artistic and musical traditions, folk dances, and fine cooking.”^{xl}

Despite such sentiments, a clear divide existed between those who were discovering their heritage and those who had been born in Mexico and were more interested in their new American lives. For example, a man interviewed in 1975 for *The Mexican American Oral History Project* at the Minnesota Historical Society explained, “we talk about things like bi-lingual, bi-cultural education. To me, I can’t stand it because we’re in this country. We are American, and we ought to first teach our children good English.”^{xli}

The newfound interest in Mexico can clearly be seen in the West Side’s Chicano art. One of the first murals, painted in 1969 by Gabriel Romo and Jose Estrada, two of the West Side’s first Chicano artists, depicted Aztec deities, using simple geometric forms. Other similarly themed murals utilizing Mexican iconography appeared on garage doors, buildings and walls. West Side Chicano artist John Acosta explains that “in the early 70s there was a big mural movement here that spread throughout the United States.”^{xlii}

Murals offered a visible and inexpensive expressive medium and connected Chicanos with Mexico. Chicano muralists followed in the footsteps of the three Mexican muralist giants, Diego Rivera, Jose Clemente Orozco and David Alfaro Siqueiros. The art became another way to celebrate a Mexican past. Mural expert Alan Barnett notes what many Chicano mural artists found:

Roots in the art of pre-Cortez *indios*, for Mexicans have always sought to communicate with each other, the gods or God by filling their walls with imagery. *Pulqueria* art was brought across the border and survived in restaurants and shops wherever barrios were settled in this country. These murals recalled an ancient heritage and personal memories of the homeland because they relied on reworked imagery. They communicated a view of human relations and customary activities that the Anglo melting

plot threatened to dissolve. As later Chicano muralists would say of the their paintings, *pulqueria* art perpetuated ethnic identity.^{xliii}

Thus the *pulqueria* art became an essential way for Chicanos to claim new communities while remaining true to their Mexican heritage. Mural making became much more than an expressive medium for a single artists, but it instead reflected the ethnic identity of an entire community. Valdes explains that, “mural paintings, as had occurred during the heyday of the Chicano Movement throughout the Midwest... [and] continued as local artists adapted Chicano, Mexican and Latin American themes to local settings.”^{xliv}

Chicano artists John Acosta and Carlos Menchaca, West Side residents and activists, chose subject matter based upon its importance to the Mexicano for their 1979 work, “Virgin of Guadalupe.” Acosta explained, “we thought, let’s do something about our Lady Guadalupe. A lot of [it is] when you are creating art like that, you are creating it for the community.”^{xlv} The city commissioned this work to cover a controversial mural, which had been graffitied. Acosta explained that, “we thought we’d do something religious.” The artists chose Mexican subject matter that they knew would unify the West Side’s Chicanos.^{xlvi} While the muralists did choose the subject matter, the local government had to eventually approve the subject matter. A lot of these early works were commissioned by city government often to keep graffiti from covering the neighborhood buildings. An “unspoken allegiance” between Chicano artists and the city assured more neutral subject matter.

The artist received tremendous support, but an expectation existed to paint imagery that would not make prevailing tensions worse. This image represented the local Our Lady of Guadalupe Church and connected Chicanos to a well-known Mexican symbol. The “Virgin of Guadalupe,” more than a Catholic reference, instead became

“part of a popular visual tradition that is essentially transported into US cities by working class Mexican migrants. These emblems of class and nationality ‘mark’ public space in a profound way.”^{xlvii} The Virgin of Guadalupe appeared in many Chicano murals throughout the country and was adopted by Mexican working class movements during that time. More than the traditional Virgin Mary, Barnett explains what the Virgin of Guadalupe represented,

The emanation of a converted *indios*. She was the dark Madonna, who was both Christian and Aztec mother of gods, Tonanztin. Legend has it that she appeared shortly after the Spanish conquest to the very poor *indio* Juan Diego, asking for a sanctuary to be built for her, and that he tried to persuade his arch bishop, who was convinced only when he saw the Madonna’s image on Juan Diego’s carrying net. The Virgin of Guadalupe became the patroness of Mexico and particularly of the impoverished and dark-skinned. It was under her banner during the War for Independence in 1810. Thus she became a symbol of people’s struggles that was carried by farm workers in the valley of California.^{xlviii}

Acosta and Menchaca chose the “Virgin of Guadalupe” because of the familiar story and unifying image, which resonated with many Chicanos.

The image of Aztec warrior Cuauhtémoc also appeared repeatedly in Chicano murals both nationally and in the West Side. Pablo Basques, one of the West Side’s original artists and Chicano activists painted “Cuauhtemoc” in 1978, which was later repainted by John Acosta in 1994. Cuauhtémoc, known as the “last Aztec emperor... was slain by the conquistadors because he defied them.”^{xlix} Cuauhtémoc became one of the most important Aztec leaders because he defied the Spanish. The Eagle behind him “with its wings spread was an amalgam of the Indian thunderbird and the symbol on the Mexican flag, which commemorates the fulfilling of the oracle that the Aztecs were to complete their long migration.”¹ The eagle appears in many Chicano murals because of

its duality as a symbol of both Mexico and the United States. The image also conveys migration as fulfilling the oracle. In the West Side, this image reflected immigration North to Minnesota.

The Mexican icons of the Virgin of Guadalupe and Aztec Warrior Cuauhtémoc aroused feelings of cohesiveness and Chicano pride during the first years of relocation. Referencing images of Mexican heritage asserted a distinct, powerful and inner connected Chicano identity in the Concord Terrace neighborhood. This solidarity in the face of adversity eventually connected West Side Chicanos to the larger Chicano movement, as they could identify with similar conflicts and discrimination in other cities.

Using Mexican imagery was a both a statement of pride in a Mexican heritage as well as a way to communicate Chicano hopes and values. Because Chicanos had been denied formal education in their own history, Barnett explains that the movement helped to establish that

These struggles were not only to secure civil rights and social justice, for which art was against culture itself... [the Anglo] had eroded the self-esteem of ethnic people and the resistance to exploitation. People of color had been increasingly cut off from their own language and customs and the knowledge of the achievements of their heritage.^{li}

In the 1970s to mid 1980s, the mural arts helped to claim a new home and reclaim a heritage in the West Side. Alternatively, in other cities, the celebration of Mexican culture later turned into “anger of the barrio, [which] provided new substance to its art. Some of the forms were to remain, but there would be a new vehemence and social content.”^{lii} Unlike many other Chicano communities, the West Side never experienced these heated, highly politicized murals. This phenomenon is explained both by the personal beliefs of West Side residents and artists and how the murals were funded.

Creating a Chicano Movement

Celebrating a Mexican heritage created solidarity in the fragmented Chicano community and allowed inhabitants to organize a Chicano movement after the Flat's clearance. The movement created support to find alternatives for housing through collective action.^{liii} Valdes notes that, "the reconstruction of the barrio on the West Side of Saint Paul began shortly before the Chicano Movement burst onto the national scene, and it was intimately linked to the movement."^{liv} Eventually, when representatives came to Minnesota from Chicano organizations like the United Farm Workers (UFW), "they struck a responsive chord among local Chicanos already involved in the battles of their own. West Side residents heeded advice from Chavez and other movement leaders, who explained that they 'were responsible for making the world a better place and that such efforts should begin in their own community.'^{lv} The national movement empowered West Side Chicanos, motivating them to believe that they could somewhat influence the future of the neighborhood.

During this time there was also an increased interest in the history of the West Side Flats. West Side Citizen's Organization (WESCO) began sponsoring annual West Side History Days as some residents explained: " 'If we are going to gain control over the forces which shape our lives,' he concluded, 'we have to gain a sense of who we are in a communal sense.' Through many media, West Siders that weekend were building such a sense of historical identity."^{lvi} Although the Concord Terrace was a geographical change for former Flats residents, the old history greatly influenced the new neighborhood's new identity.

Joe Spencer, former WESCO director and present arts representative for Mayor Coleman notes that the demolition of the Flats has caused West Side citizens to realize the importance of community organizing. He explains that, “over the years...this neighborhood has always had a critical mass of people who understand power and can organize power and can almost have a moral conviction for being involved in their neighborhood, not in a passive or casual way, but if there is a problem it is up to nobody but themselves to solve it.^{lvii} The demolition of the Flats has also created points of apathy and hopelessness about the power of the individual and community to act against forces of business and government. On the other hand, what Spencer has deemed “ethos of civic engagement” has allowed community organizations in the neighborhood to work together and hold a significant amount of power within the city government.^{lviii}

Acosta explained that, “the movement was really strong [then].”^{lix} The West Side’s Chicano art coincided with the larger Chicano movement. The West Side even held the annual, regional Chicano festival called “Midwest Canto Al Pueblo”:

[The event] was a successful effort to bring artists, poets, musicians, and cultural workers together in a setting conducive to a free and easy interchange of ideas and directions in order to reaffirm, share and celebrate the identity of La Raza with El Pueblo. The activities during the 10-day festival included poetry readings, theater groups, Chicano music marathons, art exhibits, slide presentations, workshops and mural paintings.^{lx}

Many of the earliest murals in the West Side were painted for display in this festival.^{lxi}

Murals accompanied Chicano movements throughout the country, connecting residents to their Mexican heritage and the national movement. West Side Chicano murals shared stylistic similarities with other Chicano murals throughout the country but never became as vehemently political or anti-European as in other cities. West Side

Chicano muralists asserted their Mexican heritage but took a different approach, and instead, of displaying anti-European messages and focusing solely on the Indigenous Mexican imagery, West Side murals' subject matter focused on the dual heritage of both the Indian and the Spaniard. For example, John Acosta, Carlos Menchaca, and Frank Sanchez's 1980 "Aztec City"^{lxii} (Fig. 1 & 2) painted on Morgan's Lebanese and Mexican Grocery, depicts a compromise between the Spanish and Indigenous parts of the Chicano identity. "Aztec City" depicts warriors dressed in ceremonial clothing standing amongst their temples, showing the greatness of the Mexican cultural past. Scholars note that their half-clothed bodies symbolize the imagery of "*indios* and conquistadores, and the display of the human body's grace and force, rendered in an updated sixteenth-century way. This style would be employed by local artists to invoke the achievements of the past to suggest what could be accomplished in the future."^{lxiii} The connection between past and present often surfaced in the murals' content and Chicano muralists used their art to invoke strength and pride in the Chicano movement and Mexican culture.

Unlike many Chicano murals, which portray the Europeans' white hand as a destructive force, "Aztec City" shows a more peaceful scene, portraying both the Aztec Indian and the Spanish Conquistador. On the left-hand corner, a Spanish soldier stands with his back facing the viewer and the Aztec leader Montezuma II, who ruled at the time of conquest, stretches out his hand (Fig. 2). Acosta explains that personal interest in the Mestizo and dissatisfaction with anti-Spanish rhetoric within the Chicano movement prompted this imagery. In another of his murals, "Evolution of the Mestizo," Acosta painted a poem on a tree reading: "the Mestizo was the mix, which comes from the proud Indians and proud Spaniards. For one to deny either part of their culture is to deny

one's self...^{lxiv} "Aztec City," uncharacteristic of other Chicano murals that dissociate European roots from the Mexican identity, refuses to depict Europeans as completely exploitative. Instead, the artists explained that they wanted to create "something that would show the culture and pre-history of the Aztec people and the heritage of the Spaniards and the Hispanic people."^{lxv}

West Side Chicanos organized a movement that became primarily interested in their Mexican roots, drawing upon these images in community art. The anger and fervor in the images was not as strong or as political as in other cities. One explanation is that the West Side had always been a melting pot of immigrants. Painted on an outside wall of "Morgan's Mexican and Lebanese Grocery," the mural's location itself displays the overlap of many immigrant groups who have co-existed in the West Side, echoing the spirit of the Flats. Overall, Chicano resentment against Anglos and other ethnicities is less visible than in other cities like Los Angeles and Chicago, where Chicanos had been more directly ostracized from "mainstream" society.

The West Side Chicano murals differ in large part due to Saint Paul's large financial support of the murals. Unlike the more spontaneous works in the marginalized Chicano neighborhoods that were not commissioned, many West Side Chicano artists received both recognition and funding for their community work. The first murals, painted by West Side Chicano artists and activists, included works by Pablo Basques and Armando Estrella, who helped fuel funding and interest. Estrella organized a mural program supported by Saint Paul's Community Programs in the Arts and Sciences (COMPAS),^{lxvi} "a city funded organization which has been involved with the arts and the murals for a long time. They were the first ones to start them out."^{lxvii} COMPAS

strongly supported the muralists which allowed a number of artists to start their careers. After moving from California, West Side Chicano artist John Acosta explained that compared to his previous experiences “the one thing about Minnesota is that they really support the Arts.”^{lxviii}

Unlike many cities, Saint Paul’s Chicano artists received substantial funding, dramatically differentiating the works from spontaneous, more oppositional pieces in other Chicano communities. Funding and support also explains why early West Side murals evoke less aggressively political messages than in other cities. COMPAS sponsored Chicano artists to cover graffiti in the neighborhood and thus somewhat controlled the content, keeping the murals less actively anti-European and political, and instead focused on the apolitical celebration of the Mexican tradition. Even after the first funded projects, “the COMPAS mural program encouraged artists in the area to seek other mural commissions with the result of that the West Side Still displays a large, continuing gallery of outdoor mural art.”^{lxix}

Style, content, funding and intended message of the West Side murals have changed a great deal since the Chicano murals of the 70s and 80s; however, these first works established the use of murals to connect the community with its past and articulate hopes for the future. Overall, Mexican images such as the Virgin of Guadalupe, Aztec warriors and Cuauhtémoc appeared on murals because they unified and established the new West Side Chicano community and asserted a distinctly Mexican identity, following the disruption and discrimination of the community’s displacement. The first murals of the 70s and early 80s marked the West Side with impressions of those decades and laid the foundations for the West Side’s Chicano movement. As David explains, today,

“non-profit organizations and businesses sponsor these [art] works because since there are some here [already], they are more open to it.” These murals set a precedent of public art, encouraging projects, which have continued into the present.

From Mexico to Minnesota

The Chicano works of the 70s and 80s set a precedent for community art in the West Side, which continued into the 80s and 90s; however, the next generation of murals no longer portrayed exclusively Chicano subject matter and instead highlighted the community’s diversity. The changes in style and content echoed larger changes, which took place in the West Side and the country during that time in reaction to the ethnic movements of the 60s and 70s. A focus on celebrating diversity came to replace a focus on ethnic pride. Thus the media, the arts, advertisers etcetera began portraying races equally and as living and interacting harmoniously.

In this section, I will explore the demographic and urbanization changes that occurred in the West Side, the murals that were produced and how the images of diversity began a process of commodification that has continued to affect the West Side’s art.

Changes in the West Side

The West Side had always been a cultural *mélange*, but the demographics changed dramatically through the 80s and into the 90s when the overall population increased by 6%, which was larger than the overall growth of Saint Paul.^{lxx} The community diversified, becoming home to large numbers of immigrants from countries all over Latin America, Africa, Europe and Asia. The area remained an immigrant neighborhood into 2000, when “19% of neighborhood residents were born outside the

United States and 12% of neighborhood residents came to the United States in the 1990s.”^{lxxi} Latinos still comprised the largest minority group in the West Side and from 1990 to 2000 “increased from 21% to 33%” while the other ethnicities and races remained relatively stagnant.

The large number of Latinos included people from a wide-range of Latin American countries besides Mexico; however, in 1990 “Mexicans were more than ten times the number of Puerto Ricans, the second largest Latino group, and twenty-five times the number of Cubans, who were third.”^{lxxii} Ethnicities other than Latinos comprised approximately 30% of the population as Caucasians decreased in the West Side from 66% to 49%.^{lxxiii}

The 80s marked a stark change from feelings of community solidarity from Flats days. The atmosphere in the 80s and 90s clearly changed, as the West Side became a more urban environment. A former Flats resident noted,

‘all the old timers were poor, but they helped each other more than they do now... This generation is proud. They don’t get together, because everybody thinks they have more than the rest as Mexicans of a younger generation assimilated to the hedonism and individualism of dominant popular culture.’^{lxxiv}

Local artist and former resident John Acosta also noted, “the feeling that I get is not the same as the old West Side. There is a sense of community and togetherness but there are a lot of new people that do not know about the old West Side. They don’t know what [former residents] went through to keep jobs and their homes and the whole thing.”^{lxxv}

Nostalgia for the Flats days pervaded sentiments as such demographic and urbanization changes increasingly worried residents about the future of their neighborhood. While the Flats were known as a safe, tolerant, harmonious and ethnically

diverse neighborhood, these relationships were forged over decades. The adjustment to a new kind of neighborhood caused many residents to remember a somewhat romanticized portrait of the Flats. Even today, some people who continue to see the neighborhood as degenerating. For example, the arts and culture policy associate for Mayor Coleman notes that, “you hear on the one hand, that it is totally getting gentrified. And you hear from others that it is going down the tubes.”^{lxxvi} Scholars are often skeptical of memory and the way it is often used to critique the present. Thus, the memory of the Flats played a large role in the neighborhood’s hope for a future community and the anxieties residents felt by changes in the West Side.

The murals of the 80s and 90s began to reflect the demographic changes and isolation of a more fragmented community. In many ways, these changes are not unique to the West Side. Artist and resident Craig David mentions, “I think it would be very similar to any community in America. In the old days, when I was a kid there was a little community grocery store on every two or three blocks. I could take you around this community and show where all those little stores used to be.”^{lxxvii} With the increased use of cars and the development of the suburbs, the West Side not only lost what is remembered as a small, close-knit, neighborhood feel, but it also experienced an economic stagnation in the 80s. In the “Public Art Saint Paul Board Member Profile,” Caroline Otis notes that “In the 1980s, hit hard by shifting demographic patterns and the rise of suburban shopping malls, the small businesses on Saint Paul’s West Side fell into a steep decline.”^{lxxviii} In order to curb the decline, city planners and community organizations looked to the arts, focusing “on marketing the commercial district to both business owners and consumers in order to fill vacancies and restore the deteriorating

older buildings...[they] concluded that physical revitalization was necessary in the public spaces of the neighborhood as in the commercial buildings.”^{lxxxix} Thus, many of the murals created in the 90s resulted from this initiative to physically make the neighborhood more vibrant although the neighborhood started with a “limited resources and budgets, they started small.”^{lxxx} Projects included both artist commissions and beautification projects, such as decorated trashcans and benches.

The West Side’s notion of community and neighborhood began to disintegrate as chain stores and highways replaced the intimacy of small-scale retail and the ability to walk to places in the neighborhood. Instead, neighborhood art began to provide images of community, diversity and amity, which reflected the nostalgia for the “simpler days” of the West Side Flats.

Images of a Diverse and Racially Harmonious West Side

Works which depicted the neighborhood’s diversity of residents living together harmoniously became particularly popular in the mid 80s through the 90s. First with “Hunger Has No Color” and with “The Heroes” mural following, West Side art began to depict multi-racial solidarity and highlight the community’s strength in diversity.

Chicano murals influenced the diversity projects stylistically by referencing histories and places before immigration to Minnesota; however, in contrast, those painted in the 90s showed a wide range of ethnicities brought together by the West Side community.

Acosta notes that subject matter shifted, “because the artists have changed. They have come from different backgrounds.”^{lxxxix} Unlike the small Chicano artist enclave of the 70s and 80s, in the 90s West Side muralists were diverse in background and style.

The first mural painted in the West Side that did not portray exclusively images of Mexico was “Hunger Has No Color” (Fig. 3) in 1985. Commissioned by the West Side Food Bank and painted by the ethnically mixed artists, John Acosta, Richard Schletty and Armando Gutierrez the mural became one of the first non-Chicano styled murals that actively presented strength in diversity. These artists painted a scene that depicted, “people from different backgrounds working together to eliminate hunger and poverty.”^{lxxxii} Although originally intending to paint the worldwide struggle against poverty, using emaciated figures with bloated stomachs, eventually the artists decided to portray a local conflict.^{lxxxiii}

The black and white mural starkly differentiates itself from the earlier scenes of colorful Aztec warriors and Mexican mythology because it portrays 27 actual West Side residents, coming together through a commitment to feeding the community. In contrast with the Chicano murals of the previous decade, which celebrated a long ago history in a faraway country, “Hunger Has No Color” changes West Side’s artistic focus from an earlier one of ethnic pride to images of a diverse but unified community. The realism and lack of color adds to the weight of the mural’s message. Now one of the most recognized West Side artworks because of its style, the mural stands out as “stark but not grim. The piece has a gritty, photographic feel that is uncommon to the more florid murals of West Saint Paul.”^{lxxxiv} The artists, who were trained in realism painted in that style which was popularized in the 60s and 70s. Scholars note that New Realism “at the very least and often at the most these were displays of craftsmanship. But they might be turned to social commentary... The effect was bold and had the high visibility desirable for murals. The strong contrasts intensified the three-dimensional patterns.”^{lxxxv}

Acosta explained his shift in subject matter as a response to some viewers who “saw the Aztec painting and said I don’t relate to that... You know when you are doing murals you want to create something [the community] can feel good about and get connected to.”^{lxxxvi} The artists’ use of West Side faces made the mural and its message specific to the West Side community and their concerns.^{lxxxvii} “Hunger Has No Color” allowed muralists and residents to look at their community and begin to address issues that directly affected their neighborhood.

One way in which the murals helped the community become more self-reflective is through the numerous youth collaboration projects, which took place in the 90s. As crime and juvenile delinquency continued, community organizations and businesses supplied money for public art projects where artists worked with local children. These projects intended to add to neighborhood murals but also allowed youth to take responsibility for their community and “among other benefits, this usually results in a sense of ownership of the space that extends outward from the image. Mural project participants are integrated to the community public space at the same time that they are able to appropriate that space through their work.”^{lxxxviii} Furthermore, collaborating with youth groups allowed the neighborhood’s youngest residents to articulate the space as their own, but also the sheer process of creating the murals allowed ethnically diverse youth to break down cultural boundaries, working together to revitalize the West Side. Community collaboration also provided a way for muralists to actively involve residents, who had previously been separated from the public art process.

Collaboration mural projects appeared not only in the West Side but also throughout the country as a way to build and strengthen communities. Judy Baca, a

famous Chicana muralist, worked with community youth in the 1970s to create “The Great Wall” in Los Angeles, one of the largest murals in the world. Artist and youth together, they created a mural depicting the city’s many races and their history in the city. Her work changed the mural movement by calling for art that incorporated the surrounding neighborhood and stressed that the mural making process as, if not more, important than the mural itself. She explains:

Inherent in utilizing such youth to re-visualize California’s history was to reckon with the cultural modes of alienation and racism among the youths themselves. ‘The black, Asian and Chicano communities are miles apart,’ she noted. ‘There’s terrific geographical and cultural isolation; the people just can’t read each other at all. Such separatism contributed to the ignorance and stereotyping—the main components of racism.’^{lxxxix}

Mural making became more than just an artist claiming space on behalf of the community. Instead, muralists actively connected residents through youth projects. Particularly after Baca’s mural in the 70s, the mural movement incorporated youth collaboration as a method for social change and a way to procure funding.

In 1995, lifelong West Side resident, artist and sculptor Craig David^{xc} worked with community youth from Teens Networking Together (TNT) to paint “The Heroes of Freedom, Justice and Peace” (Fig. 4) on one of the West Side’s central locations: El Burrito Mercado. David has dedicated much of his career to working with the community to create public works. In his personal mission statement, David explains his desire “to create art with meaning, beyond pure aesthetics and technical ideas, [which] compels him to work with and respond to communities and individuals, making these works truly collaborative in nature.”^{xcii} Community artists like Craig David continually note their interest in connecting community to their art and inspiration that is greater than aesthetics alone. David elaborates saying, “one of my other passions besides art is

community activism...I am a kind of person that likes to make a contribution that likes to help people somehow.”^{xcii}

Deemed “a kind of progressive Mount Rushmore,”^{xciii} the mural depicts a string of well-known, minority leaders, including, Martin Luther King Junior, Aung San Suu Kyi, Sister Giovanni, Rigoberta Menchu, Dennis Banks, and Caesar Chavez. Hispanic cultural figures such as Mexican muralist Diego Rivera and baseball player Roberto Clemente flank the mural’s outer edge. David and the youth group “chose the people on the mural. [They] wanted to embrace different ethnicities and people youth could look up to if they knew what they did.”^{xciv} Below, youth painted themselves exemplifying the above social justice celebrities’ espoused values of “forgiveness, teaching others, family, non-violence and people helping people.”^{xcv} While the mural attempts to celebrate diversity and symbolically deter racism, David explained that the mural was defaced multiple times before completion. The police determined it was one man who continued to throw white paint on Clemente’s head, explaining that he did not like Puerto Ricans.^{xcvi} Collaborative projects intended to deter these types of acts and foster ethnic tolerance in the neighborhood’s youth.

Similarly, Craig David’s 1996 “Viaduct Murals,” (Fig. 5), illustrates the neighborhood’s demographics, using colorful scenes with indigenous imagery from the many countries, showing the diversity of ancestors of West Side residents. Each of the concrete panels on the bridge’s walkway depicts a different West Side immigrant group. The panel titles include “The Celts, The Eastern Mediterranean, The African, The Saami, The Hmong, The Native, Madre, and The Mayan and the Spaniard.” These pieces meld images of the past, similarly to how Chicano artists used Mexican symbols and imagery.

Contrastingly, these images imply commonality in an immigrant past rather than celebrating a single ethnic group, but the murals did not always correlate with reality. David mentions that while he painted the mural, people would yell out car windows, saying, “we don’t want any more immigrants here. Why are you painting that here?”^{xcvii} Throughout his early career, David also received criticism because he was “a white guy painting murals.”^{xcviii} After years of gaining clout and experience, David explained, “they all backed off...Many have now given me a pat on the back and said you know, what you have done for this community is great and I really appreciate it.”^{xcix} Despite the difficulty of predicting public response, David continues to follow his personal goal to of making art “a genesis for change,”^c explaining that he has always been “interested in the story of how the community developed and the immigration story, the struggle of your average blue collar worker.”^{ci} David continues to explore similar themes as evident through numerous works on the West Side, including “Journey of the River and Sun” (1997) and his largest commission “The History of the Neighborhood House” (2006-2007) mosaic mural on the side of the new Paul and Shelia Wellstone building.

Acosta and Menchaca’s mid 90s “Ethnic Dancers” (Fig. 6) also connect West Side’s ethnicities by suggesting cross-cultural commonality in music and dance. Acosta explains, “we took the different cultures that are a part of the community. There are German, Lebanese, and Puerto Rican dancers [on the bridge]. It was meant to celebrate the music because the music is universal.”^{cii} The bridge represents 26 ethnicities that have lived in the West Side. Acosta, who moved to Minnesota from California in his early twenties, notes the West Side’s unique cultural mix. He explains that, “it was really part of a melting pot which was very different from where I grew up in the barrio, which was

all Mexican.”^{ciii} Like David’s “Viaduct Murals,” “Dancers” utilizes indigenous symbols and traditional costume linking the current West Side with many heritages.

During the 80s and 90s muralists began to echo the community’s increased diversity while sending message of cultural inclusively. Murals such as “Hunger Has No Color” made both an artistic and social statement. This mural addressed issues of both race and class that would later become simplified into images of racial harmony and diversity. Despite the intentions of artists to create murals that will prompt dialogue, many of the diversity murals depict race somewhat simplistically. The question becomes: what role should public art play in addressing social issues? While public pieces may intend to create dialogue, how can discussion be instigated instead of merely becoming works that people pass on a daily basis without looking critically at the images? And finally, can community art both celebrate a neighborhood and question larger power and social dynamics?

Commodification of Race

Communities that receive funding and support for public arts are given a gift to celebrate their heritage, their residents and their place. As Ricardo Levins Morales, artist, activist and writer from the Northland Poster Collective, notes, “there being funds available from the public trough to pay artists is great. It is something that people have fought for. Public space is worth spending on if it can be a reflection of the community in positive ways.”^{civ} The difficulty arises in trying to understand who the community is, what their values are and how to present these abstractions through art. It can be difficult to make art understood and appreciated by most audiences, Morales notes that “on the

one hand, it is making accessible and reflecting [history] back to the community in a way it would not have otherwise.”^{cv} Overlooking community reception, the fact that the “artist doesn’t necessarily have a clearer idea of the history than anybody else” complicates the issues even further.^{cvi} Community artists in particular take on the role of storyteller, forced into a position of historian and presenter of information.

While it is clear that “a picture is worth a thousand words,” the difficulty and nuances of artistic imagery pervade all aspects of community art particularly, because of the complex relationships between artist, commissioner and the community. West Side artist Richard Schletty explains that, “there is a complex dynamic that ought to be at work when creating a piece of public art—a dynamic that involves the originator of the concept, the artists and apprentices, the sponsor.”^{cvii} Morales emphasizes that, when making art, especially pieces with strong messages, “the compromises are constant...If I want to reach many people, then that limits the depth of the analysis. If I want to reach any people with the most profound analysis it limits the people I can reach.”^{cviii} Thus, artists whose work is meant to present a message to the community are often forced to simplify their subject matter in order to present their message. Schletty further explains this dilemma, as he says “it is important that I communicate effectively to a broad spectrum of society. I do not want to use stereotypical images. Nor do I want to offend the very class of citizens whose story of injustice I want to tell.”^{cix}

The roles that artists play: storyteller, political activist, and defender of social justice, oftentimes puts them in the difficult position of telling the stories of groups from which they are not a part. Morales explains that, “there is also a way in which you cannot simply be a teller of your own stories in any pure sense because you know if you come

down to it, you are the only people you are.”^{cx} Further, Morales looks at the flip side, making an empowering statement: “Every time I tell a story other than my own personal story, I am crossing some boundaries and making some assumptions and a certain amount of projecting. How do I dare to tell stories that are not my own and also how do I dare to refuse to.”^{cx} Because artists play a part in the system of commodities that we are all a part of, artists too are forced to “sell” their art on the market, both to make a living and to spread their message, whatever it may be. This process of commodification alters community works, making them more attractive and geared towards the desires of the sponsor. While this is an inevitable part of the community art process, it raises larger questions about community art and artistic statements.

In the diversity murals of the 80s and 90s, subject matter clearly changes from the images of ethnic pride of the 70s. This phenomenon of multiculturalism is not unique to the West Side and pervades material culture throughout the country. While multicultural images promote inclusively, scholars and activist critique such iconography as a consent to existing power dynamics.^{cxii} For example, in *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*, Ella Shohat and Robert Stam ask: “How does emancipatory cultural production traverse what Wahneema Lubiano calls the ‘slippery ground between reaching people and commodification?’” and “How can scholarly, curatorial, artistic, and pedagogical work ‘deal’ with multiculturalism without defining it simplistically, a space where only Latinos would speak about Latinos, African-Americans about African-Americans and so forth.”^{cxiii} The West Side’s diversity murals celebrate the rich history of the neighborhood and attempt to raise larger questions about commonality in an immigrant past and similarities of traditions, but one might ask: is

there space for this dialogue? Does the intended audience receive this message? For

Shohat and Stam:

Multiculturalism means seeing world history and contemporary social life from the perspective of the radical equality of peoples in status, potential and rights. Multiculturalism decolonizes representation not only in terms of cultural artifacts—literary canons, museum exhibits, film series, but also in terms of power relation between communities.^{cxiv}

While all ethnicities are presented equally within the murals, further questions of power dynamics and inequality are left unexplored.

The artist's intended social and artistic message may differ greatly from its reception because of the inherent layers of complexity or artistic expression. Combing both aesthetic and social messages that are approved by benefactors and still retain potency and applicability proves difficult. Particularly because the relationship between ethnicities, races and groups of people in a community is defined by decades of co-existence, a difficult task to define visually. Shohat and Stam call for the decimation of any neutral messages in diversity imagery and instead explain that, “any substantive multiculturalism has to recognize the existential realities of pain, anger, and resentment, since the multiple cultures invoked by the term ‘multiculturalism’ have not historically coexisted in relations of equality.”^{cxv} Instead of trying to represent all races equally, many have critiqued the rhetoric of multiculturalism and called people to “worry less about incorrectness... and assume instead imperfection and contradiction.”^{cxvi}

Despite attempts to portray acceptance of and solidarity of diversity in the murals of the 80s and 90s, this imagery did not always translate into changed societal views about immigrants. In terms of jobs, “upward mobility in the corporate world was even more bleak. A 1994 Minnesota study concluded that although the term ‘diversity’ had

become a corporate ‘buzzword’ since the 1980s, none of the state’s largest industries had made more than microscopic gains in the number of minority employees hired.”^{cxvii}

Artists like David explain their hopes for creating murals that will “create dialogue [because] then it begins a genesis for change.”^{cxviii} Multiculturalism proved to be a colorful and inclusive subject matter, which clearly defined the community in light of its history stemming from the Flats. However, murals alone could not create dialogue without further support.

In the case of District Del Sol, a large part of its identity as projected through the murals, has relied on a language and imagery of multiculturalism; however, this immigrant community is not alone in using such a theme to create an identity. In some ways, race has become the easiest way to delve into complicated issues of class, power and the effects of capitalism. In the 90s, race and the language of diversity has become a visible way for different groups to acknowledge issues of power. Scholars and activists alike have begun to acknowledge this language as detrimental and a simplification of inequality.

In some ways, images of diversity accept existing power dynamics. For example, Virginia R. Dominguez’s article “A Taste for the ‘the Other’: Intellectual Complicity in Racializing Practices” seeks to look at this idea from a different perspective. She explains that “too much emphasis is being placed on the advantages of an emphasis on ‘diversity’ over an emphasis on Eurocentricity, assimilationism, and standardization.”^{cxix} While Dominguez discusses the privileged role minority professors are given within academia, she raises larger issues about the “privileged commodity of otherness.” She explains that in, “an analysis of the commodification of racialized Otherness might,

therefore, focus on the socioeconomic circumstances enabling, indeed generating, this “taste for the Other.”^{cxx} Further, in academia, race and culture are oftentimes viewed as one and the same because “despite its framing in terms of ‘cultural diversity,’ both faculty members and students typically use the language of race just as much as the language of culture in talking about the courses and their contents.”^{cxxi}

While this phenomenon occurs in immigrant neighborhoods and academia, it also has occurred in media images, particularly in the last two decades. Thus, even capitalism itself capitalizes on the very alienation and inequality it has caused. For example, in the article “Consuming Change: United Colors of Benetton,” Henry Giroux notes that

mass advertisers have seized upon the postmodern condition with its celebration of images, its proliferation of differences, and its fragmented notion of the subject to create pedagogical practices that offer a sense of unity amid a world increasingly devoid of any substantive discourse of community and solidarity. Through these concerted and often pernicious efforts to rearticulate the relationship among difference, human agency, and community, mass advertising increasingly succeeds in its promotional mission: to disguise the political nature of everyday life and appropriate the vulnerable new terrain of insurgent differences in the interest of a crass consumerism.^{cxxii}

Similarly, in the West Side, as the feeling of community solidarity declined, mural images of a harmonious and racially inclusive society increased.

The linking of multiculturalism to commodities has long been a practice of multinational corporations, such as Coca-Cola, in addition to retail. Thus, these commodities are fetishized to create large apolitical statements about the world that associate clothes with unity and community despite any relevant association between the two. For example,

linking the colors of Benetton clothes to the diverse ‘colors’ of their customers from all over the world, Toscani attempted to use the themes of racial harmony and world peace to register such differences within a wider unifying articulation... Benetton’s shift in the advertising strategy between 1984 and 1991 needs to be considered as part of a wider politics and pedagogy of representation.^{cxxiii}

The United Colors of Benetton uses such imagery for clear economic gains. While the murals of the West Side never reach the sort of clearly projected and constructed values of the United Colors of Benetton, similar imagery appears in the community. The murals commissioned in the West Side were constructed on a low-budget and grassroots level and with intentions of strengthening the community and increasing prosperity for the good of the neighborhood, residents and businesses. That said, the pervasiveness of using the imagery of racial harmony to construct identity and community is clear. This depoliticizes issues of race that are inherently political. Companies like United Colors of Benetton adopt similar multicultural imagery by using issues that concern people, tapping emotional responses in its customers without raising difficult questions. As Stuart Hall explains, the strategy is the “targeting of consumers by lifestyle, taste, and culture rather than by the categories of social class.”^{cxxiv} This allows Benetton and other similar corporations or in this case, to address “a wide range of issues that incorporate popular culture while simultaneously depoliticizing it...blurring the lines between popular culture of resistance and the culture of commerce and commercialization.”^{cxxv} Similarly, images that celebrate diversity depoliticize these complex issues as seen in the West Side.

Although not an equal comparison, the example of United Colors of Benetton shows the ways in which multicultural imagery has been used to simplify difficult power dynamics and Images of a diverse, harmonious society depoliticize the deeper issues of class and power but create a distinct neighborhood identity. West Side muralists are limited in the messages they are able to portray because of the expectations of benefactors. Few businesses, community

organizations or city-funded grants want to support highly charged political pieces. Furthermore, Mural making requires time, funds and physical space and therefore difficult to accomplish without financial backing. West Side muralists are forced to present their message artistically but with limitations in content. While the artists may intend to raise larger and deeper questions, their ability to instigate dialogue occurs only visually and requires pursuit by other community organizations. That said, the mere fact that this community celebrates its residents and their diversity is a radical change from the increasingly homogenous suburban areas.

Capitalism constantly must find new commodities to put on the market. Art, culture and lifestyle have increasingly crept into advertising and are used in order to sell objects that represent more than their use value and instead are presented as a way to define one's identity. Similarly, images of multiculturalism project an identity of tolerance and equality. In the next section I will look at the increasing commodification of the West Side's culture and identity through Riverview Economic Development Association's creation of the commercial corridor District Del Sol. As Giroux concludes, "culture is increasingly constituted by commerce, and the penetration of commodity culture into every facet of daily life has become the major axis of relations of exchange."^{xxxvi} Furthermore, I will also look at the ways in which the West Side and other communities yearn for an "authentic" culture amidst this increasing commodification.

Creating District Del Sol: Finding Authenticity in the West Side

In conjunction with the previously discussed murals, which depict a diverse and harmonious community, beginning in the 90s and continuing to the present, community organizations and local business began to sponsor "place-making" art besides murals. These works defined the neighborhood's physical space and articulated a distinct identity. Such projects were created particularly in the late 90s when Riverview Economic Development

Association (REDA) created “District Del Sol,” the business corridor that surrounds the intersection of Cesar Chavez and Robert Streets. The district has become the West Side’s commercial center and the focus of a large number of REDA sponsored gateway and beautification projects, which use art to literally brand the neighborhood as a Latino/International commercial district.

In this section, I will look at businesses’ and organizations’ rejuvenation projects in the West Side, following the economic slump of the 80s. I will also look at how community art has served as a place-maker by reviving the neighborhood’s physical appearance, defining its boundaries and creating a distinct identity. Furthermore, I will analyze the increasing commodification of Saint Paul’s West Side, which is attempting to increase the flow of capital and tourists^{cxxvii} to the area. In particular, I will show how the branding of an authentic District Del Sol identity has played a large role in the commercialization of the neighborhood’s identity.

Changes to the West Side: REDA and the Making of District Del Sol

West Side business owners, organizations, and city developers realized that major changes needed to occur in order to restore the once prosperous neighborhood after the economic stagnation. REDA began in the 80s as an informal organization of local business owners, who “met in an effort to address the declining condition of Concord Street (now Cesar Chavez Street), which was once a thriving and dynamic neighborhood commercial area... [they] made a commitment to develop short and long-term strategies.”^{cxxviii} In the early 1990s, the organization became a registered non-profit and acquired the name Riverview Economic Development Association, functioning as a business association that provided guidance and support for West Side businesses. Today, member businesses, of which about half are local, pay a fee for support

and loans from the association.^{cxxix} Despite their roles as a business association, REDA functions as a community organization and “encompasses the greater good of not only local businesses, but the entire West Side community.”^{cxxx} Furthermore, the “updated mission of REDA is to enhance the quality of life on Saint Paul’s West Side by cultivating a sustainable and vibrant business community.”^{cxxxi} In order to improve the quality of life for West Side residents, REDA has not only helped to stimulate business and economic growth but also has developed numerous arts and cultural projects in the neighborhood.

In the late 90s, REDA began the renaming and re-branding of the “District Del Sol” in order to spur growth in this business corridor. This project has become a focus for the organization. REDA highlighted the community’s immigrant tradition to give District Del Sol a Latino feel. In her article, “Putting Art to Work for Business on Saint Paul’s West Side,” Caroline Otis notes that, “many of the small businesses in the area are Hispanic-owned. When their businesses fell off, the owners figured that the rich cultural traditions of the local population could become a big part of the solution.”^{cxxxii} Thus, by using these Hispanic cultural traditions, REDA articulated a clear identity for District Del Sol.

One way in which REDA used the community’s cultural traditions to draw tourists to the neighborhood is the annual Cinco De Mayo Fiesta, which REDA has hosted since 1983. Previously, the festival had been a more spontaneous event put on by community members.^{cxxxiii} Romano explains that REDA funded Cinco De Mayo, “in an effort to bring people into the West Side community and celebrate the West Side... Today the festival is primarily funded through corporate sponsorship.”^{cxxxiv}

While Cinco De Mayo brings money and tourists to the neighborhood, it lacks the cultural components that it had before REDA’s influence. West Side resident and artist Craig

David further explains that it “is not really a community thing anymore. It is more of a business proposition.”^{xxxv} The celebration had not always been this way, but “changed when the Concord Street Business Association and the Chicano Student Cultural Center of the University of Minnesota decided to include a parade,” but “in its quest for profit, sold space to any group with the money to participate in the parade or sell goods... by the 1990s it retained only modest Mexican cultural content.”^{xxxvi} Today the festival attracts over “10,000 visitors each year...[it is] the largest Hispanic/ Latino event in the state of Minnesota, and one of the ten largest Cinco De Mayo celebrations in the United States.”^{xxxvii} While a substantial Mexican-American population exists in the West Side, the festival has become almost entirely commercial.

Defining of Space and Identity: Restoration, Gateway and Beautification Projects

In conjunction with the creation of District Del Sol and the Cinco De Mayo Festival, REDA brought “extensive marketing and branding campaign for the district. A large part of this was the public art component.”^{xxxviii} REDA has funded and helped acquire grants for many of the most recent community arts projects in the West Side. Although she no longer works with REDA, Anne Briseno led and initiated many of the first sponsored works. While early projects included the painting and restoration of murals, the scope has widened and now includes community gardens, sculptures, gateway and beautification projects. REDA’s director, Chris Romano explained that “art and culture has been an important part of the re-branding of District Del Sol, and has helped create an identity for our commercial corridor.”^{xxxix} Thus, the art became an important way for community organizations like REDA to assert a distinct identity for the neighborhood and reflected the neighborhood’s rejuvenation efforts to improve the neighborhood’s businesses and quality of life. The art also created a well-defined space and personality for the District Del Sol, attractive to residents, visitors and potential businesses.

REDA began sponsoring beautification projects, which included small improvements such as awnings, signs and the revitalization of building facades. REDA has also worked on decorative elements of the neighborhood, including bus shelters, trashcans and street signs which echo the District Del Sol's Latino themed identity.^{cxl} Former WESCO director and current arts and culture representative for the city, Joe Spencer explains that "I think here is a really strong connection between the [residents and the art] but it is not the kind of connection that people are conscious of."^{cxli} He continues to explain that the park off of Cesar Chavez Street attracted crime and alcohol consumption and overall was "not an inviting place." However, after a REDA initiative to bring public art,

In the way of music and movies and doing some creative plantings, [it] has really transformed that place into a space that people are really comfortable being in. Now, if you ask those people, what made this park a place you wanted to go? People probably wouldn't attribute it to the art pieces there, but I believe that is a large part of why it is a more comfortable place to be."^{cxlii}

A large number of REDA's beautification pieces did not have overt or political social messages but instead improved it aesthetically, making it a place where people felt welcome.

Furthermore, REDA also focused on the restoration of former murals by pairing local youth with an artist to repaint the murals. By restoring the murals, REDA celebrated the community's past and the tradition of community art. For example, Pablo Basques' original 1979 mural, which advertised the Chicano cultural festival "Canto Al Pueblo" was redone into "Canto Al Pueblo Dos" (Fig. 7) in 1998 by Gustavo Lira and youth from the local youth activism organization, Teens Networking Together (TNT). They changed the subject matter from a rose to an eagle, but its Chicano style remained. Acosta explained that,

They gave us students to work with. [For them it was] a chance to work with established artists. [The were] a group of kids from TNT who were trying to do positive things on the West Side... They saw the gangs and they saw of that stuff

and wanted to show that not all teens were that bad and were trying to be more active towards helping the community.^{cxliii}

The restoration initiative was a two-way project where artists and students alike could add their mark to the West Side. These projects also showed REDA's desire to keep up the murals of the neighborhood and retain their Mexican influence as the murals began to deteriorate in the 90s "because none of these murals had any maintenance budget, even the ones that were exciting, without any funds to maintain them, they almost became representative of the lack of investment in the neighborhood."^{cxliiv} Reinvesting in the former Chicano murals reemphasized the Latino identity and put money back in to parts of the neighborhood that had begun to deteriorate and employed youth in a low-employment demographic.

West Side businesses also supported numerous community youth art projects. "Rivers and Bridges" (Fig. 8), painted in 1999 by Mike Klein and children from Jane Adams School for Democracy, covers the exterior wall of the Cozy Cantina Mexican Restaurant across from El Burrito Mercado. The restaurant's owner had little prior interest in art but commented in another article that "it's better than graffiti, that's for sure... They came in and said they have something that will keep in touch with the rest of the community. I'm not a real art admirer. You won't catch me in any museums. But I know what's important. And something like this adds flavor to the neighborhood."^{cxlv} While REDA led the public art initiative in the West Side, local businesses, artists and organizations greatly supported the effort.

Beyond restoration and collaborative murals, gateway projects allowed community organizations to hire local artists to define the West Side community physically and poetically through their art. Many of the gateway pieces appeared in the area that would soon be deemed the new District Del Sol area. Scholar Campbell notes,

City officials have attempted to create public emblems for distinct portions of the urban landscape by commissioning ‘gateway’ projects.’ Because of their public space function... But usually these projects ‘domesticate’ the historical and political character of community mural traditions, in order to avoid conflict or controversy and in order to project the idea of a space that is distinct but open to all ‘users.’^{cxlvi}

For example, the 1996 “Ethnic Dancers,” was the first gateway project sponsored by REDA. Painted on the “Robert Street Walk Bridge” where it crosses South Robert north of Concord Street, “Ethnic Dancers” defines a boundary of the main District Del Sol business corridor.^{cxlvii} REDA commissioned a number of murals like this, visibly defining the neighborhood and portraying a culturally rich community. However, scholars like Campbell note that in such murals, “you see a diminished emphasis on social, class, religious identity and historical conflict, and instead a ‘safe,’ folkloric representation of what is different about local space and culture.”^{cxlviii} In many ways, the West Side presented its identity through the gateway projects as a “different” place from the usual, mundane city blocks.

Other gateway projects included District Del Sol’s “Where the Sun Meets the River” (Fig. 9) painted by Caprice Glacier, David Pitman and community youth in 1998. This piece has become a well-recognized symbol for the neighborhood and was “mounted over Concord/ South Robert Street Viaduct recently to serve as ‘welcoming gateway’ to Saint Paul’s West Side.”^{cxlix} This mural’s sun has become a well-known symbol of the District Del Sol. Joe Spencer was particularly “supportive of the kinds of projects that weren’t murals that were dimensional and were fresh and had something different to say.”^{cl} He supported the sculptural, place-making works such as Craig David’s 1997 “Journey of the River and Sun” and Sietu Jones’ 2005 “Wabasha Street Wall.”

The works initiated by REDA articulated a distinct identity and space for the District Del Sol. These projects were deliberate responses to the neighborhood’s increasing decentralization,

commercialization, urbanization and diversification. Beautification, restoration and gateway projects were part and parcel of an effort to spur economic growth, increase tourism and improve the neighborhood's degenerating atmosphere into a more vibrant and welcoming space. In the next section, I will further explore the commodification of art and culture, the need for authenticity, and how the West Side fits into this discussion.

Commodification of Place: Ethnic Enclaves and "Festival Marketplaces"

We increasingly receive culture through marketable commodities such as food, specialty stores and entertainment/festivals. The question arises whether culture can even be understood outside the realm of consumerism as Peter Jackson mentions in his article, "we might insist that all cultures are 'commodity cultures' to varying degrees."^{cli} Now we must ask, if created to be sold, does this make culture inauthentic? When one talks about authenticity, he/she refers to the intent behind an action. I look to the intentions of those who create District Del Sol's identity and for what purpose. Beyond motive, I also analyze how the consumer yearning for "authenticity" drives District Del Sol's marketing to this identity. In this section, I explore issues of urban tourism, exoticism and the authenticity of place-making.

REDA and other organizations and businesses in the West Side have given District Del Sol a very visible Mexican and multicultural identity that appears exotic and different from most Midwestern neighborhoods. This personality is rooted in the actual demographics of the District del Sol's immigrant population; however the reasons for such a clearly self-articulated identity warrant further exploration.

Questions of exoticism stimulate the larger scholarly discussion of commodifying "difference" that Thomas Frank explores in his book *The Conquest of Cool*. Frank poignantly

argues that what distinguishes the commercialization and commodification of counterculture is that it “is said to have worked a revolution through lifestyle rather than politics, a genuine subversion of the status quo through pleasure rather than power.”^{clii} REDA has consciously created an ambience that projects a certain lifestyle full of color, diversity and ethnic food for District Del Sol. While the neighborhood’s identity is based upon the legacy of the Hispanic community, its culture and commercialism have become inextricably intertwined. Frank’s nuanced analysis shows that there is by no means a clear distinction where counterculture was completely co-opted by business culture. Instead, he shows how the two have influenced each other and grown together over the years.^{cliii} A comparable phenomenon exists in District Del Sol where commodity and culture are inseparable.

Furthermore, Frank notes that “consumer capitalism has taught a ‘concept of humanity’ according to which “what is most ‘human’ about people is their quest after the new and their willingness to violate boundaries ... and their need to incorporate ‘more and more’—goods money experience, everything.”^{cliv} The Mexican businesses of District Del Sol highlight their differences using public art and advertising their slightly exotic, small-scale community. In the same way that Frank notes that Madison Avenue co-opted the language of the Sixties in order to sell products, District Del Sol has adopted the language of multiculturalism and internationalism as exotic and exciting to attract tourists and make the neighborhood more visually appealing.

Scholars often address how globalization creates homogenous cultures as the same multinational corporations line the streets of virtually every major city in the world. However, the situation has become more complex as local culture and place distinctiveness have also become commodities. For example, District Del Sol’s Burrito Mercado relies on the image of being a small, local business as a way to make their products and atmosphere unique. Their website

includes a history detailing the market's evolution from a "mom and pop store" in 1979 to the "Twin Cities Latino icon" it is today.^{clv} El Burrito's mission extends beyond providing the community with food items, stating that their "need to preserve their culture also increased."^{clvi} The store has grown exponentially from its modest beginnings in 1979 and now sells wholesale to markets in the Midwest and nationally. El Burrito proudly explains their expansion and the fact that they still emphasize "ambiance of culture, flavor and family."^{clvii} This Mexican marketplace clearly emphasizes its small town feel and cultural products that are not regularly available.

Kevin Fox Gotham details a related phenomenon in New Orleans, in his article "Tourism from Above and Below: Globalization, Localization and New Orleans's Mardi Gras." Gotham looks at the way that "globalization and localization of Mardi Gras are occurring simultaneously, the result being a mix of homogenizing and particularizing influence in New Orleans... Encouraging the 'globalization of the local.'"^{clviii} He expands the use of these terms, showing the interconnectedness of the global and local in economy and culture. A mix of the global and the local occurs in the West Side as well. The neighborhood's identity relies on its international melting pot of cultures through its local place-making through art, small businesses and events. While Mardi Gras provides an example of a local tradition, which has been exported internationally, District Del Sol capitalizes upon an opposite yet comparable phenomenon.

This issue has come to a head in New Orleans with the increasing influence of business on the Mardi Gras parade. Gotham explains that there is a "decline of neighborhood parade parties and the attempt to preserve the private and exclusive nature of parading organizations in the face of increasing corporate involvement in Mardi Gras."^{clix} Although visible sponsorship is outlawed and has been since Mardi Gras' inception, round-about sources of funding exist that

make the public event a “site for corporate entertaining that can foment or strengthen business relationships, establish networks and cultivate profit opportunities with other executives.”^{clx} The parade had previously been a source of “solidarity building” and “a cultural tradition;” however, Gotham explains that this “tradition is eroding.”^{clxi} A similar trend developed as local and national businesses co-opted the West Side’s yearly Cinco De Mayo Parade. What was once a celebration of Mexican culture has become more about business advertising.

Gotham describes Mardi Gras as being created “to produce unique products establish locally specific social ties and networks, and build and enhances place distinctiveness by using different themes, symbols and motifs.”^{clxii} Comparably, the identity of District Del Sol has been fashioned using the cultural background of community members to construct a clear, colorful personality through its murals, businesses and landmarks. These place-making tactics creating an atmosphere that is clearly different and more exotic than other neighborhoods in the Twin Cities.

Businesses and community organizations present the neighborhood as “exotic” and “authentic” partially to attract non-resident tourists to the area. Culture, food and something “different” draw urban tourists and influences how communities advertise their neighborhood. The romanticization of foreign values and cultures echoes what Donna Gabaccia discusses in her article “Inventing ‘Little Italy’: Mobile Concept. Mobile People.” She explains and furthers sociologist Jerry Kruse’s argument that “Little Italy today is an ethnic theme park. The *italianita* of Mulberry Street is commercial and aimed specifically at tourist outsiders searching for recreation and novelty; it is not the creative expression of resident Italian population.”^{clxiii} Gabaccia explains that “the term Little Italy and the phenomenon of urban tourism—specifically the search for a particular kind of ‘safe danger’ in either nearby immigrant neighborhoods or in

their fictional representations—are fraternal twins, born in a complex linguistic embrace more than a century ago.”^{clxiv}

District Del Sol in some ways mirrors the “safe danger” in Gabaccia’s article but also complicates the issue of “urban tourism.” District Del Sol projects a self-conscious identity that romanticizes foreign culture and values; however, this community differs because it is done so not strictly for tourist reasons and differs from Little Italy in a number of significant ways. District Del Sol’s stores, restaurants and recreational activities, that exemplify a constructed identity, are used by “tourists” and “locals” alike. On a Saturday afternoon, El Burrito may have a few Anglos shopping or eating in the restaurant; however, far more people are speaking Spanish than English. Residents enjoying food and atmosphere always outnumber tourists making voyeuristic journeys into this “safe danger.”

Gabaccia’s argument relates to District Del Sol in her juxtaposition of excitement and danger in immigrant neighborhoods. Gabaccia explains that “the invention, meaning and spread of Little Italy helped to popularize racialized, negative portraits of Italian immigrant criminality and urban slum life. But from the moment of its invention the term also carried with it also the far more positive excitement, novelty, and romance associated with foreign travel.”^{clxv} Overall the thrust of Gabaccia’s argument rests in the fact that “the changing meanings of Little Italy can tell us a great deal about the society that latched and then held onto the phrase even as immigration from Italy grew, peaked and then waned to almost zero.”^{clxvi} In the same way, even as Mexicans make up less of the population of District Del Sol as other immigrant groups continue to move in, the neighborhood has continued to push the Mexican ambience, and tourists still come to experience Mexican culture. Beyond what Gabaccia’s article tells us about immigrant enclaves, she explains “notions of safe danger have changed and these changes

continue to tell us much about the Americans and English-speakers of the twenty-first century who continue to seek a Little Italy even where no Italians live.”^{clxvii} Furthermore, the way District Del Sol presents itself to tourist is equally if not more an indication of the kinds of things that consumers desire.

This distinction is helpful in analyzing District Del Sol and the relationship between the ethnic communities, commodification and urban tourism. Both Little Italy and District Del Sol “offered spectacted, romantic exoticism, and a hint of danger close to home. Harlem’s Little Italy came to be represented both as one of the more colorful and exciting and as one of the less dangerous of the city’s residential clusters of immigrant Italians.”^{clxviii} Related to the way in which plays, novels, memoirs and newspaper articles romanticized and invited middle class people to go slumming in “Little Italy,” District Del Sol is portrayed in the media as a place close to home to get an “authentic Mexican experience.” The neighborhood’s restaurants, markets and retail stores are often reviewed and highlighted in mainstream newspapers and portrayed as exotic and authentic. For example the Boca Chica’s logo claims to be “The Mexican Experience” and upon entering the site the long history of the restaurant is told under the headline “Savor the tastes, sights and sounds of Mexico.”^{clxix}

Parades and cultural attractions are a point of entry for “outsiders” to travel to neighborhoods that have more exotic events than their own communities. For example, Gabaccia mentions the “lavishly illustrated article about the colorful street festivals of Italian neighborhoods...[which] provided one of the earliest graphic images of the now-famous yearly festival of the Madonna del Carmine.”^{clxx} District Del Sol’s Cinco De Mayo Festival has become one of the largest in the country and is well advertised throughout the Twin Cities and

the Midwest. Gabaccia explains that “street festivals remained a staple attraction for real life tourists while the pleasures of food and restaurants increased markedly in importance.”^{clxxi}

Part of this identity stems from the nostalgia residents feel towards the neighborhood’s early days at the Flats. Whether or not the nostalgia for a happy, ethnically tolerant Flats is well-founded, Gabaccia relevantly notes, “specialists on the history of immigration and ethnicity probably already know the important role that fiction can play in popularizing and spreading ideas far beyond the physical places of their invention.”^{clxxii} Images of the ethnically diverse, colorful, close-knit and small-scale neighborhood reflect a desire to return to this more “authentic” time.

Negotiations between immigrant communities, local business, urban tourists, city redevelopment and place distinctiveness are also occurring in Chinatowns and Asian villages across the United States and Canada and provide a particularly useful model for the District Del Sol. Harry Margulis’s article, “Asian Villages: Downtown Sanctuaries, Immigrant Asian Reception Areas and Festival Market Places” provides a number of relevant models for understanding the parallel phenomenon in the District Del Sol. Margulis adamantly argues for the positive benefits of the commercialization of immigrant enclaves attractive to tourists who bring money, redevelopment and life to what, in many cases, would be disintegrating neighborhoods.

Today, urban immigrant enclaves are recognized as important assets to cities because of their draw to tourist and thus the inflow of capital. Like the West Side’s environment of cultural diversity, Margulis notes the trend in Asian villages because not only do ethnic enclaves create a sense of uniqueness, internationalism and a romanticized exoticism, but also urban planners are beginning to realize that:

Ethnic villages have unique qualities that are well suited to leisure time and recreational activities...as cities search for ways to become economically competitive and to compete with global and regional economic transformation, East Asian villages have become the focus of attention as their ambiance and multicultural allure are rediscovered. In brief, East Asian villages are being converted into festival marketplaces.^{clxxiii}

Saint Paul's West Side could be described as a "festival marketplace" because, as defined in Margulis' article, District Del Sol is strikingly close to a downtown center and appears to be a strategic place for re-development projects and protection of surrounding neighborhoods.

Margulis also notes a number of other trends in these ethnic marketplaces that bring resources and services to the neighborhood. He explains that:

Foremost, they function as urban villages; centers of ethnic, civic, and religious organizations; areas of ethnic assimilation; and festival marketplaces. All nodal urban villages have specialized ethnic shopping areas that offer traditional foods and services to local residents. Ethnic family, district, tong, professional, and business associations and ethnic churches and clubs are typically found in these areas. Binding the community together is a benevolent association, a local development corporation, a neighborhood council, or an equivalent organizations.^{clxxiv}

These characteristics ring true to the District Del Sol community. Further, in line with District Del Sol's ambiance, Margulis notes that in festival marketplaces in places like Seattle and Washington D.C., "planners have incorporated special enhancements into the landscape to strengthen community identity. In both cases, the planning process has been ongoing for a considerable period of time."^{clxxv} Festival marketplaces have caused cities and organizations to focus on the revitalization efforts in these neighborhoods.

Similar to the general aesthetics of the District Del Sol created by REDA, Margulis notes that, in international marketplaces, "all commercial developments are required to provide on-site art forms."^{clxxvi} Art serves as a place-maker in immigrant enclaves throughout the country. As Margulis notes that as immigrant neighborhoods,

became blighted following the loss of their upwardly mobile population, there is a keen desire to restore their neighborhood serving functions by revitalizing business and commercial cores. Because local-serving business cannot achieve the economic thresholds necessary to reverse the economic decline, promoting tourism and marking the unique attributes of the ethnic communities are essential. To achieve this goal, the objects of development plans invariably include strengthening distinctive ethnic neighborhood characteristics, improving the visual quality of the physical environment, promoting the development of the community as a cultural center, and encouraging the preservation of historical monuments, landmarks, and buildings... It is on the streets where cultures brush against each other and contrast provides ambiance.^{clxxvii}

Thus, as with REDA in District Del Sol, the benefits goes both ways. REDA has made a more prosperous economic corridor and created an ambience that both enhances business and makes the neighborhood appear more livable, which is arguably the first step towards regeneration.

Beyond art, one way by which city planners control the preservation and enhancement of local urban Festival Marketplaces is through a combination of zoning laws and, which “on the other hand, for Asian villages to thrive depends on the more business acumen of local proprietors and the ability of neighborhood organizations to encourage economic growth. The challenge is not to restrict growth potential but rather to constructively guide it for the community’s benefit.”^{clxxviii} The difficulty is that what benefits the community is an unclear and nebulous question.

Margulis also explains that these villages are often supported by “Local Development Corporations (LDCs).” Noting that the LDCs provide “community social services and health programs, preserving and expanding low- and moderate- income affordable housing, creating jobs, and encouraging business diversification are important priorities.”^{clxxix} Saint Paul’s West Side has a number of community organizations that assist with such planning development, most notably West Side Citizen’s Organization (WESCO) Riverview Economic Development Association (REDA) and the sliding scale, low-income West Side Clinic. In addition , Margulis

largely argues the importance of communication and strategic negotiation between the “public and private” and “local and non-local” involved parties. Margulis has noticed particularly helpful trends such as the fact that “because of the changing circumstances in many cities undergoing regeneration, planners are re-evaluating the efficacy of ethnic heritage and neighborhood preservation.”^{clxxx}

The use of art and business advertising to create a place with certain qualities and character raises the issue of authenticity. The West Side’s District Del Sol advertises itself, as an “authentic” Hispanic neighborhood by highlighting its small-scale genuine Mexican restaurants, retail and the plethora of traditional murals in REDA’s visitor guide. While this image is based upon the neighborhood’s Hispanic influence, questions regarding motive arise. The West Side’s image is constructed by a complex web of local businesses, organizations, artists. Issues relating to power, representation, identity and profit surface, including: who participates in the creation of a West Side culture and why? Does this culture exist entirely within the economic sphere? How does the West Side’s art play into the neighborhood’s authenticity?

District Del Sol has become a distinct place in the Twin Cities where outsiders can eat “authentic” ethnic food and visit the neighborhood’s landmarks. Organizations like REDA and businesses themselves projected this image through advertising and place-making tactic as discussed above. Businesses such as El Burrito advertise an “ethnically charged atmosphere” and “as close to a Mexican experience as you’ll find in the far north.”^{clxxxi} In addition, El Burrito boasts “the widest variety of Hispanic food in the Twin Cities and perhaps the most authentic and original atmosphere nationally.”^{clxxxii} El Burrito Mercado’s claim to authenticity extends beyond the food, suggesting a larger authenticity of District Del Sol in general. Their website claims: “El Burrito Mercado has a rich history in the heart of the Latino community of

Saint Paul's District Del Sol. [It] is surrounded by a variety of other Hispanic owned businesses including restaurants, clothing, music and is the most recognized icon of the local Mexican community.^{clxxxiii} These statements are accurate in that the neighborhood provides one of the largest concentrations of Latino culture and food in the Twin Cities; however, its claims to authenticity indicate the way we view culture and what attracts visitors and residents to a place.

The desire to be seen as “authentic” plays a clear role in District Del Sol. Whether true authenticity even exists is beside the point; however, as culture and lifestyle are increasingly commercialized and sold on the market, the need for appearing “authentic” directs marketing campaigns. This phenomenon, described in a recent article entitled “Synthetic Authenticity” by John Cloud, appears in a larger series in *Time Magazine*. Cloud cites James Gilmore and Joseph Pine II's book *Authenticity*, explaining that “the virtualization of life...has led to a deep consumer yearning for the authentic.”^{clxxxiv} Such sentiments have caused a change of advertising and business tactics to instead start making products, which will “connect [consumers] to a cause.”^{clxxxv} In the West Side, art is used to create ambiance that adds to the place-making of District Del Sol. While the artists of gateway, beautification and restoration projects have a degree of artistic autonomy, the works are largely funded by organizations and businesses to support District Del Sol's identity and appearance. Ballenge-Morris explains the dichotomy between expectation and authenticity. She writes, “art that is marketed for tourist consumption is often judged according to a perspective to determine authenticity. When art is commodified, it adheres to marketing rules and, in the case of tourist art, the consumer's expectations figure into the artistic process.”^{clxxxvi} In the case of District Del Sol, REDA funded art for the purpose of fostering an “authentic ambience” to mirror the businesses and spirit of the community.

The authenticity of art arises in Walter Benjamin's article "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," as he stresses the importance of the aura, historical accuracy or authenticity of a work. Benjamin ultimately explains that, "the unique value of the 'authentic' work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value."^{clxxxvii} District Del Sol's murals borrow from a tradition from distant places and export to this Saint Paul neighborhood. By Benjamin's standard, District Del Sol's art probably would not be considered inauthentic because it is not based in "ritual" or the "location of its original use value." That said, the use value of the West Side's art extends beyond ritual and has become an important part of the neighborhood's landscape. Ultimately, no arbiter of authenticity exists or has the authority to determine what is authentic. Levins Morales explains his personal take, "for me, authenticity means honesty."^{clxxxviii} The larger more complex question is this: Is District Del Sol's identity presented honestly through its art, as Boyle would say "warts and all"? Space to present these flaws is few and far between as public, political criticisms are not often backed by public "non-partisan" groups. This makes the subject matter of community art increasingly complex and again highlights the intertwined web of involved parties. The appearance authenticity has become a concern for commercial businesses as a means to sell commodities and reflected through their sponsored place-making initiatives.

Gyorgy Markus explains this connection between commodification and culture in his article "Walter Benjamin or: The Commodity as Phantasmogoria." Markus explains that culture thrives on fetishism, or "the transformation of products of artistic, intellectual labor into spiritual values, the 'spiritualization' of exchange value."^{clxxxix} While Markus' article did not paint commodification as a purely negative phenomenon, it has implications about economic and social relationships that are increasingly defined by the selling and buying of commodities.

REDA and West Side businesses help advertise District Del Sol's by helping to create its ambience, connecting the place with an exotic lifestyle, in part, to sell commodities. This brings benefits such as revenue and business to the neighborhood. District Del Sol's art plays a large role in this place-making and is linked to the selling of commodities. Markus explains that an artwork as a commodity "demonstrated the 'enormous power' and 'reshaping force of the commodity form,' the determination of the very structure of the work of art by the 'viewpoint of its selling.'"^{cxv} Thus, commodification, whether an intentional part of the art work or not, plays a crucial role in the creation of community art as a means to rejuvenate its physical appearance and business.

Joe Spencer raises the question: "What art isn't commodified?"^{cxvi} Even art with very strong political and social messages can be commodified because often it is made with the intention of being sold. For example, Levins Morales explains the realities about selling their political posters and art: "commodification is in a way part of our mission. It is all tied up together and very complex... It is expensive for us to create stuff that no one is going to buy."^{cxvii} Because artists need to make a living and must market their art in order to produce more, commodification will often factor into their work. Perhaps the greater questions for District Del Sol is not about whether the piece of art is a commodity, but instead how economic factors influence its creation and reception.

The marketing of District Del Sol as an exotic and authentic experience has brought tourists, capital and rejuvenation efforts to the neighborhood. During the 90s, the West Side's community art has, in large part, created an ambience and identity for District Del Sol.

Conclusion

My research has continued exploration in the under-studied field of creatively expressed historical narratives, memory, place-making, authenticity and community development. Despite increasing interest, scholars tend to shy away from studies of creativity, memory and nostalgia because these topics are by no means easy to classify, chart and analyze. The more I spoke with residents, artists and community representatives, the questions I asked about the neighborhood were complicated rather than simply answered. The larger questions of commodification of race and culture and the search for authenticity have required exploration as to the fine and minute distinctions of this community. Parallel to my experience, Ricardo Levins Morales describes his theorizing and writing about art similarly,

If I try to summarize it in my mind, what I come up with continually is a total absence of blueprints and formulas. Just a real obsession with the need to be able to look at this real complexity on all these levels and respond to it. That is what we are really looking at. The bottom line is take responsibility for these contradictions.^{exciii}

In this project, I have illuminated shades of gray rather than coming up with black and white conclusions. In the West Side's case, the bottom line is that one cannot clearly categorize its community, art or history. While I have also explored larger historical trends relevant to other American immigrant communities, what has become increasingly apparent is "absence of blueprints and formulas" in District Del Sol.

The West Side's memory of its history is layered with complexity and contradiction. Rather than illuminating one constant West Side identity in its community art, this identity has shifted and reformed depending upon artist, financing and audience. Despite these nuances, a clear progression occurs between the murals and community pieces from the mid 60s to the present. The first murals of the 70s celebrated a Chicano identity after the recent trauma of the Flats dislocation. Beginning in the 80s and entering into the 90s, the murals began to project

messages of ethnic inclusively and harmony which reflected a romanticized nostalgia of the Flats days. Finally, as REDA began its re-branding and re-naming of “District Del Sol” in the 90s, place-making artwork appeared throughout the area. These works helped spur revitalization and economic growth initiatives in the area, and caused the neighborhood to promote urban tourism and the creation of ambience. Despite the differences, underlying each of the periods ran a memory of the West Side Flats and a nostalgia, whether well-founded or not, for better days. On the other hand, the pain and dislocation of its clearance also remained a factor in the community’s understanding of their present identity.

My research shows the interconnectedness of public art, the commodification of culture, place-making, memory and city development in ethnic enclaves. Public art must be understood in the context of its funding and purpose. Community development, too, relies upon funding and the stimulation of business through public beautification. In conjunction with the increase in business in the West Side, the artwork markets an identity to both promote business and improve the quality of life for residents. We must ask ourselves: how can a community have an authentic culture outside of the economic sphere of marketable goods, such as food, entertainment and objects? Thus, even our illusive and circumstantial concepts of lifestyle, culture, and art are both driven and directed by the exchange of commodities. Under the pressure of needing to “sell something,” it appears as if what Walter Benjamin^{cxiv} considers to be the “aura” or the natural, historical coming about of a creative piece, is lost. The question of authenticity in creative works has been a symptom of larger issues in capitalism as social relationships are increasingly defined by economic power dynamics.

In my paper I look at the way place is commodified in District Del Sol through the creation of a “unique” and colorful atmosphere attractive to both tourist and resident. While

District Del Sol does not resemble the homogeneity of communities that appear to be placeless, concrete masses of shopping malls. Commodification has become indistinguishable from the material culture of the neighborhood. These issues are filled with the nuances of balancing an authentic place specific identity, neighborhood rejuvenation efforts, and the creation of an identity for economic, social and political reasons. District Del Sol is an example of how a community projects authenticity and exoticism to tourists by actively constructing an identity.

Thanks to this well-defined identity, the neighborhood has also been able to increase the quality of life for citizens, starting with beautification efforts. As Joe Spencer explains that the art conveys a sense of place: “[the] statement it says about place is that people care about this place, a lot. There is a history here and there is a future here and it inspires people to behave toward their place in a way that has more respect and value... Make an attempt at artistic expression and place value in something it is respected.”^{cxv} Beyond the social message or commentary, the West Side’s art, first murals and later other works, has played a larger role than just reflecting the community’s history and hopes for the future. The art itself has made the community more livable and has stimulated an interest in further renewal efforts. Furthermore, as Joe Spencer highlights, “public art doesn’t just exist so that an artist or a commissioner can make a statement. It has a transformative effect that is purely aesthetic.”^{cxvi} In my paper, I have largely looked at the way in which the art reflects conceptions of a West Side identity and history over the decades; however, further research is needed in the areas of public art and the ways it plays a purely artistic role in the neighborhood.

Overall, my thesis highlights the complexity of the interweaving of disciplines. When exploring a single neighborhood’s history, more is at work than a single clear narrative. Similarly to the art I studied, there is not a sole explanation of the West Side’s past or the

influences in the creation of the District Del Sol identity and the art that defines it. Narratives of history too shift over the decades like the themes and types of murals I examined. The past informs the present, and the present reflects the past through a prism of contemporary understanding. Using art as a medium to remember the past continues to obscure a narrative and instead shows more about the artist, benefactor and community at the time of artistic creation. In the future, I look forward to an increased interest in and exploration of the way in which artistic narratives frame the past and define the present.

End Notes

- ⁱ In this paper, I largely discuss the murals of Saint Paul's West Side; however, in the third section I also look at sculptural and beautification pieces of community art.
- ⁱⁱ I will look at how the murals create an image of the community intended for both visitors and residents.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 28.
- ^{iv} "District Del Sol" is a business corridor in the West Side that was created by REDA in the late 90s. This area has become the center of commercial activity in the West Side and is located around the cross sections of Robert and Cesar Chavez Streets. This area is where many of the murals and art pieces discussed in this paper exist.
- ^v District Del Sol is a commercial area within Saint Paul's West Side around the intersection of Caesar Chavez (previously Concord) and Robbie Street.
- ^{vi} Harry C. Boyle, *Community is Possible: Repairing America's Roots* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1980), 43.
- ^{vii} *ibid*, 55.
- ^{viii} *ibid*.
- ^{ix} *ibid*, 54.
- ^x Susan M. Diebold, "The Mexicans." *They Chose Minnesota: A Survey of the State's Ethnic Groups*, ed. by June Drenning Homquest, (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1981), 93.
- ^{xi} *ibid*, 96.
- ^{xii} Dionicio Nodín Valdés, *Barrios Norteños: Saint Paul and Midwestern Communities in the Twentieth Century* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 135.
- ^{xiii} *ibid*.
- ^{xiv} *ibid*.
- ^{xv} Diebold, 98.
- ^{xvi} *ibid*, 96.
- ^{xvii} Valdes, 178.
- ^{xviii} Diebold, 101.
- ^{xix} Seidl.
- ^{xx} Valdes, 180.
- ^{xxi} *ibid*.
- ^{xxii} Diebold, 101.
- ^{xxiii} Boyte, 64.
- ^{xxiv} Valdes, 180
- ^{xxv} Valdes, 216.
- ^{xxvi} Craig David, interviewed by author, 12 March 2008.
- ^{xxvii} Boyte, 68.
- ^{xxviii} Joe Spencer, interviewed by author, 31 March 2008.
- ^{xxix} Macalester College Intro to Urban Studies Class Report, "The Reconstruction and Clearance of the West Side Flats" Prof. George Latimer (Fall 2006).
- ^{xxx} Diebold, 102.
- ^{xxxi} *ibid*, 101.
- ^{xxxii} Craig David, interviewed by author, 2 November 2007.
- ^{xxxiii} David, 12 March 2008.
- ^{xxxiv} *ibid*.
- ^{xxxv} Diebold, 102.
- ^{xxxvi} Valdes, 267.
- ^{xxxvii} Diebold, 103.
- ^{xxxviii} Valdes, 262.
- ^{xxxix} Sam Hernandez, "General Background of the Mexican American commissioned report," *Minnesota Historical Society* (Saint Paul: Neighborhood House public records, 1973), 4.
- ^{xl} *ibid*, 4.

- xli Mathew Castillas, Interviewed by Grant A. Moosbrugger. *The Mexican American Oral History Project*, Minnesota Historical Society. 23 June 1975, 10.
- xlii John Acosta, interviewed by author, 17 November 2007.
- xliiii Alan W. Barnett, *Community Murals: A People's Art* (New York: Art Alliance Press, 1984), 27.
- xliv Valdes, 264.
- xlv Acosta.
- xlvi *ibid.*
- xlvii Bruce Campbell, < BDCampbell@CSBSJU.ED > "West Side Murals and Historical Narratives." 23 October 2007, Personal e-mail (23 October 1998).
- xlviii Barnett, 64.
- xlix *ibid.*, 70.
- l *ibid.*, 64.
- li Barnett, 48.
- lii *ibid.*, 72.
- liii Macalester Urban Studies Report.
- liv Valdes, 185.
- lv *ibid.*
- lvi Boyte, 38.
- lvii Spencer.
- lviii *ibid.*
- lix Acosta.
- lx Antonio Jose Guernica and Pilar Saavedra. "El Midwest Canto Al Pueblo." Eric. Ed. Gov. <<http://www.eric.ed.gov:80/ERICWebPortal> > (25 October 2007).
- lxi Acosta.
- lxii Because of restoration, the mural still exists today.
- lxiii Barnett, 71.
- lxiv Acosta.
- lxv Visit Saint Paul, "West Side Public Art," <http://www.visitsaintpaul.com/DAM_public/8171.pdf> (10 October).
- lxvi Moira F Harris, *Museum of the Streets* (Minneapolis: Pogo Press, 1987), 23.
- lxvii Acosta.
- lxviii *ibid.*
- lxix Harris, Moira, 23.
- lxx Wider Research Center. Census Facts of the West Side neighborhood District 3, Saint Paul, 2000. <<http://www.communitydataworks.org/StPaul/data/stpaul/nhood/dist3/profile.pdf>> (30 November 2007).
- lxxi Wilder Research Center.
- lxxii Valdes, 224.
- lxxiii Wilder Research Center.
- lxxiv Valdes, 266.
- lxxv *Painting the Journey: John Acosta's West Side Mural*, prod. LuLippold, 26 min., City of Saint Paul Office of Cable Communications, 1997, videocassette.
- lxxvi Spencer.
- lxxvii David, 12 March 2008.
- lxxviii Caroline Hall Otis, "Putting Art to Work for Business on Saint Paul's West Side," *Public Art Saint Paul Board Member Profile*, 2.
- lxxix *ibid.*
- lxxx Bette Hammel, "Changing Skyscapes: West Side Installs New Public Art," *Skyway News*, 25 June- 1 July 1998, 3.
- lxxxi Acosta.
- lxxxii REDA, "Unofficial list of neighborhood art works," *Outdoor Artwork*, 1 November 1999.
- lxxxiii Acosta.
- lxxxiv Keith Harris, "Writing on the Wall: Divining the Future of A City One Mural at a Time," *City Pages*, 12 September 2001, cover story.
- lxxxv Barnett, 34.
- lxxxvi Acosta.

- lxxxvii *ibid.*
- lxxxviii Campbell.
- lxxxix Erika, Doss, "Raising Community Consciousness with Public Art: Contrasting Projects by Judy Baca and Andrew Leiscester," *American Art*, vol 6, no. 1 (Winter 1992), 73.
- xc David's family has now lived in the West Side for three generations. Although an Anglo, David explained in his interview to be very involved with the West Side Chicano community through his neighbors and friends.
- xc1 "Art Davidii," *Official Website of Artist Craig David*, <<http://www.artdavidii.com>> (13 November, 2007).
- xcii David, 12 March 2008.
- xciii Campbell.
- xciv West Side Public Art.
- xcv *ibid.*
- xcvi David.
- xcvii David, 12 March 2008.
- xcviii *ibid.*
- xcix *ibid.*
- c *ibid.*
- ci *ibid.*
- cii Acosta.
- ciii *ibid.*
- civ Ricardo Levins Morales, interviewed by author, 14 March 2008.
- cv *ibid.*
- cvi *ibid.*
- cvii REDA Outdoor Artwork.
- cviii Levins Morales.
- cix REDA Outdoor Artwork.
- cx Levins Morales.
- cx1 *ibid.*
- cxii Ella Shohat and Robert Stam. *Unthinking Eurocentricism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (New York: Routledge, 1994),
- cxiii *ibid.*, 340-3.
- cxiv *ibid.*, 5.
- cxv *ibid.*, 358.
- cxvi *ibid.*, 11.
- cxvii Valdes, 235.
- cxviii David, 12 March 2008.
- cxix Virginia R. Dominguez, "A Taste for 'the Other': Intellectual Complicity in Racializing Practices," *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 35, No 4. (Aug.- Oct., 1994), pp. 333-348, 334.
- cxx *ibid.*, 337.
- cxx1 *ibid.*, 335.
- cxxii Henry A. Giroux, "Consuming Social Change: The 'United Colors of Benetton,'" *Cultural Critique*, No. 26. (Winter 1993-1994), pp. 5- 32, 6.
- cxxiii *ibid.*, 9.
- cxxiv *ibid.*, 16.
- cxxv *ibid.*, 19.
- cxxvi *ibid.*, 27.
- cxxvii In this section, I will use "tourist" as a loose term, including residents in the area who might not travel to the neighborhood unless enticed by retail, food, festivals etc.
- cxxviii "Riverview Economic Development Association: Celebrating the West Side Business Community." *REDA's Annual Report*, 2006.
- cxxix Chris Romano. <cr@districtdelsol.com> "The Making of District Del Sol," 17 March 2008, personal e-mail (17 March 2008).
- cxx *ibid.*
- cxxxi REDA annual report.

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- cxxxii Otis, 2.
 cxxxiii Romano.
 cxxxiv *ibid.*
 cxxxv David, 12 March 2008.
 cxxxvi Valdes, 267.
 cxxxvii REDA annual report.
 cxxxviii Romano.
 cxxxix *ibid.*
 cxl “Riverview Economic Development’s official site,” 2008 < <http://www.districtdelsol.com/> > (12 February 2008).
 cxli Spencer.
 cxlii *ibid.*
 cxliii Acosta.
 cxliv Spencer.
 cxlv Levy.
 cxlvi Campbell.
 cxlvii Hammel, 3.
 cxlviii Campbell.
 cxlix Hammel, 3.
 cl Spencer.
 cli Jackson, 101
 clii Frank, 15.
 cliii *ibid.*, 233.
 cliv Frank, 20
 clv Beyond Pixels, “El Burrito Mercado’s Official Webpage” <<http://www.elburritomercado.com/home.htm>> (11 January 2008).
 clvi *ibid.*
 clvii *ibid.*
 clviii Kevin Fox Gotham, “Tourism from Above and Below: Globalization, Localization and New Orleans’s Mardi Gras,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, Vol. 29.2. (June 2005), pp. 309-26, 310.
 clix *ibid.*, 315.
 clx *ibid.*, 316.
 clxi *ibid.*, 318.
 clxii Gotham, 309.
 clxiii Donna R. Gabaccia, “Inventing ‘Little Italy,’” *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, Vol. 6, No. 1. (January 2007), 1.
 cxliv *ibid.* 1.
 cxlv *ibid.* 2.
 cxlvi *ibid.* 4.
 cxlvii *ibid.*
 cxlviii *ibid.* 16.
 cxlix “The Boca Chica Restaurant” <www.bocachicarestaurant.com> (1 April 2008).
 clxx Margulis, 16.
 clxxi *ibid.*
 clxxii *ibid.*
 clxxiii *ibid.* 150
 clxxiv *ibid.* 153.
 clxxv *ibid.* 154.
 clxxvi *ibid.* 158
 clxxvii *ibid.* 156.
 clxxviii *ibid.* 158
 clxxix *ibid.* 150.
 clxxx *ibid.* 150.
 clxxxi “El Burrito.”

clxxxii *ibid.*

clxxxiii *ibid.*

clxxxiv John Cloud, "10 Ideas that Are Changing the World: # 7 Synthetic Authenticity," *Time Magazine*, 24 March 2008, 53.

clxxxv *ibid.*, 54.

clxxxvi Ballenge-Morris, Christine, "Cultures for Sale: Perspectives on Colonialism and Self-Determination and the Relationship to Authenticity and Tourism," *Studies in Art Education*, Vol. 43, No. 3, (Spring, 2002), pp. 232-245, 241.

clxxxvii Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 1937
<http://web.bentley.edu/empl/c/rcrooks/toolbox/common_knowledge/general_communication/benjamin.html> (14 February 2008).

clxxxviii Levins Morales.

clxxxix Gyorgy Markus, "Walter Benjamin or: Commodity as Phantasmagoria," *New German Critique*, No 83, Special Issue on Walter Benjamin. (Spring-Summer, 2001), pp. 3-42., 20.

cxci *ibid.*, 6.

cxci Spencer.

cxcii Levins Morales.

cxci *ibid.*

cxci Reference to Walter Benjamin's famous 1937 article "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction."

cxci Spencer.

cxci *ibid.*

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