

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

What Is a City?

Jessica Ceballos Campbell · Wednesday, February 17th, 2016

“A man does not uproot himself from life, and cast his self away; Unconsciously he dreams some part of him will stay...Nor from his cast-off body does he depart enough and free himself.”
– **Lucretius**

There was a hurricane today, in Los Angeles. Trees falling on freeways, stopping traffic. Winds moving the downpour of rain onto our windshields, stopping traffic. And after 20 minutes, the sun came out, we smiled, stopped traffic, and forgot about the hurricane.

But it was the story of the trees, not the traffic, that we should be so concerned. The five uprooted trees I witnessed falling onto the lanes of three different freeways was a reminder of roots, and the damage done. For many, the roots are what's left after surviving the storms of what hurricanes bring.

What happens after the breaking down of the roots, the hollowing of the trunks, the disposing of the branches, when the tree itself becomes unnecessary, and all that's left are leaves piling up onto freeways, after all of our storms.

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Welcome to Los Angeles.



My birthplace. Maybe your birthplace. Our birthplace. Los Angeles County General Hospital, 1878. Brooklyn Heights, 1887. Los Angeles California, 1977. Boyle Heights 2015.

- What is a city?
- What does *community* mean?
- How do we communicate the language of *inclusivity* and *accessibility* when we speak three, four, eight different languages?

Where and when and how and why, *but why* does art begin? *But why*.

“If you’ve finished high school, you’re more likely to report trusting the local police; you’re more likely to trust the clerks where you shop; you’re more likely to trust your coworkers; and you’re more likely to trust your neighbors.

And, once again, there is hope.

Levels of trust increase as people acclimate to a place.

Los Angeles is a city of newcomers, but living here “is apparently a positive enough experience that, after 5 years, residents voice trust in far greater proportions than they do when they are recent arrivals.” Says California Community Foundation’s Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey.

In spite of the disjointed nature of social connection in Los Angeles, there are communities and social networks that are thriving. One that bucks the trend is the region’s arts community.

Which opens our discussion of ARTS AND CULTURAL VITALITY”

–Los Angeles 2050 report *Part 1: Who We Are. How We Live. Where We’re Going.* Pg 37

This is the part of the discussion that takes place at their table. (See inclusivity or diversity panel at your local institution.)

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Property owners in Los Angeles evicted tenants from 725 units under the state Ellis Act in 2014, up from 308 the previous year. And 64,000 to 73,000 people are evicted in Los Angeles each year.



photo: John Urquiza

Which opens our discussion of ARTS AND CULTURAL VITALITY, while *trying* to live in Los Angeles.

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Welcome to Highland Park, 90042.



photo courtesy www.walkinginla.com, Figueroa Street 2002

Translation: re·vi·tal·ize

\(.)r?-'v?-te-,l?z\ **verb** refresh

synonyms:

en·live·n.

modernize. quicken. reinvigorate. rejuvenate. renovate. repair. replenish. restore. resuscitate. revive . stimulate. brace. cheer. cool. exhilarate. freshen. inspirit. jog. prod. prompt. reanimate. recreate. regain. renew. revivify. update. vivify. bring around. **breathe new life into.**



photos: Jessica Ceballos, Figueroa Street 2015



photos: Jessica Ceballos, Figueroa Street 2015

And how will they revitalize Highland Park? Coffee has been one easy way. Another is a favorite of San Francisco and many other cities throughout California.

There are 57,500 residents in the Highland Park neighborhood of Los Angeles. There are two

major streets in the neighborhood where you can find one of 28 active on-sale licenses (restaurant/bars) and/or 42 active off-sale licenses (grocery stores/liquor stores). **That's one license per 821 residents**, in a small residential neighborhood made up of 72% Latinx, and where the median income is \$45,478. Five thousand Highland Park households make less than \$20,000 and another 5,000 make between \$20,000 – \$40,000.

2011's California Alcohol Beverage Control's moratorium list states that "on January 1, 1998, Section 23817.5 of the CA ABC law was amended to permanently establish a moratorium on the issuance of off-sale and wine licenses (Type 20) in cities and counties where the ratio of Type 20 licenses exceeds one for each 2,500 inhabitants. In the city and county of San Francisco, the ratio has been established as one for each 1,250 inhabitants." And because of the moratorium in San Francisco, developers and beer-minded entrepreneurs have found a way [around the laws](#), which means they can entice more of those willing to pay a higher per square foot rate.

Cities in LA County that had moratoriums in 2011 were Artesia, Beverly Hills, Calabasas, Covina, Culver City, El Monte, Gardena, La Puente, Manhattan Beach, San Dimas, Torrance, and Whittier, to name a few. And who knows how many more bars are headed to the quickly gentrifying Figueroa Street in Highland Park.

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What happens after the breaking down of the roots, the hollowing of the trunks, the disposing of the branches, when the tree itself becomes unnecessary, and all that's left are leaves piling up onto freeways, after all of our storms. And how do we exist, if in the world of them – we're all just disappearing.

Excerpts taken from the forthcoming chapbook, *Gentre De Placing: A Response* (Writ Large Press)

And yes, there [is a fight](#), and a community building, if not for today, for tomorrow.

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