

UNEVEN REDEVELOPMENT AND LOW-WAGE WORKER ORGANIZING IN
POST-KATRINA NEW ORLEANS

by

CAROLINE R. KEEGAN

(Under the Direction of Nikolas C. Heynen)

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how low-wage workers and worker organizers in New Orleans have responded to the labor geographies of uneven redevelopment in the decade since Hurricane Katrina. I examine how post-Katrina redevelopment reinscribes racial and economic inequalities in the landscape and how low-wage workers and worker organizers in a highly collaborative economic justice movement challenge the goals of redevelopment and the racialized conditions of life in New Orleans. This research is based on field work conducted in New Orleans with four labor and economic justice organizations: Unite Here Local 2262, Stand with Dignity, Show Me \$15, and Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC-NOLA). I engaged in service research based on a methodological approach that included feminist methodologies and scholar-activism.

INDEX WORDS: New Orleans, Uneven Development, Labor, Race, Organizing

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BA, University of Colorado Boulder, 2011

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2016

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May 2016

DEDICATION

To my dad and mom, who have inspired my commitment to social justice. And to my grandma, Joanne, who has taught me that the search for knowledge is a lifelong pursuit.

“Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.” – W. B. Yeats

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I'd like to thank my advisor, Nik Heynen, for his endless patience and tireless support. I would not have been able to do it without you. I'd like to acknowledge my committee members, Amy Trauger and Andrew Herod, for their guidance, feedback, and support throughout the project. I'd also like to thank the numerous graduate students and faculty in the department of Geography at the University of Georgia, whose outstanding work sets a standard of excellence to continually strive for, and whose friendship and encouragement have seen me through this process. I'd like to give a special thank you to everyone in my family. Lastly, I'd like to thank members and staff at Stand with Dignity, Unite Here Local 2262, Show Me \$15, and ROC, and all of the people who participated in this research – you have shown me new ways to understand the world and to understand myself.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
CHAPTER	
1 An Introduction	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Research Context	6
1.3 Overview of the Thesis	9
2 A Theoretical Framework	13
2.1 Introduction	13
2.2 Uneven Development and Redevelopment in New Orleans	14
2.3 Labor Geographies and Agency	21
2.4 Racialized Labor Geographies and Black Workers Matter	26
2.5 Conclusion	35
3 Research Methodology and Methods	36
3.1 Introduction	36
3.2 Research Methodologies	39
3.3 Case Study	47
3.4 Research Methods	50

3.5 Conclusion	62
4 Data Analysis	66
4.1 Introduction.....	66
4.2 The New New Orleans.....	68
4.3 Intersectionality and Collaborative Organizing	93
4.4 Alienation and Its Alternatives	117
5 Conclusion	132
5.1 Introduction.....	132
5.2 Significant Findings.....	134
5.3 Contributions	136
5.4 Limitations, Future Research, and Final Thoughts.....	140
REFERENCES	143
APPENDICES	
A Sample Interview Questions	155
B Institutional Review Board Consent Form	157
C Codebook	160

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 3.1: Data Table	60

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 3.1: Map of Neighborhoods in New Orleans.....	48
Figure 4.1: Mayor Mitch Landrieu speaking at a public budget meeting.....	73
Figure 4.2: Vacant, damaged house in the Lower Ninth ward	79
Figure 4.3: Iberville site.....	83
Figure 4.4: Remaining foundations of the former Calliope projects	96
Figure 4.5: Wall display featuring several organizations	107
Figure 4.6: <i>Stand with Dignity</i> rally with support from other organizations	111
Figure 4.7: Civil disobedience in support of immigration reform.....	114
Figure 4.8: “Exhibit Be:” now-closed art space in former public housing.....	121
Figure 4.9: Protest fan mocking the mayor and development	127
Figure 4.10: People with fists raised at the site where the levees breached	130

CHAPTER 1

AN INTRODUCTION

“The investment is in structures, but not the people that live here. You know it’s sad to say, they done a good job of that. ... Once those structures are up, you’re not even invited to come in. Unless, again, unless you’re working under slave wages ... Since Katrina, you see privatization, more discrimination, and mass incarceration. That’s what happened after the water dried up. That’s what we see. Mass incarceration, discrimination, you know, and gentrification.”

- Mr. Alfred, community organizer (August 2015)

1.1 Introduction

The city of New Orleans celebrated the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina on August 29, 2015. In true New Orleans fashion, there were parades and second-lines, live music, cook-outs, and parties all weekend long. But the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina was also marked by thoughtful reflections and anger at the “recovery” that has left low-income, predominantly black workers behind, and the “resilience” demanded of communities who have endured generations of racialized oppression and trauma. At the *New Orleans Workers’ Center for Racial Justice*, about fifty people gathered for a celebration in the back yard of the Treme house in which the Center is located. Tables were lined with traditional Southern home-cooking as well as Mexican and Central American dishes. The crowd, mainly black and brown worker members, their families, and other community organizers and allies, sat in folding chairs or milled around eating and talking. Members and organizers of *Stand with Dignity*, a membership organization of un- and underemployed black workers, and the *Congress of Day Laborers* (*Congreso de Jornaleros*), an organization of reconstruction workers, predominantly un- and under-documented Latino workers, gave speeches on the back porch, translated for both Spanish and English speakers, about their experiences in the aftermath of the storm, the injustices they

faced on job sites, and how they view their ongoing commitments to organizing, not only for better jobs, but for better lives in the city of New Orleans.

In the decade since Hurricane Katrina, low-wage workers have been excluded from the wealth, prosperity, and recovery of capitalist redevelopment in New Orleans. Instead, reconstruction in the city, and the production of a “New New Orleans,” has locked workers into increasingly precarious, discriminatory, and low-paying jobs building and supporting an upscale, and tourist-focused economic infrastructure. Rather than a neutral, disjointed process, I argue that capitalist redevelopment in New Orleans necessarily has reproduced racial and economic inequalities in the landscape, while simultaneously being shaped and challenged by workers and other social actors. Focusing on redevelopment a decade after the storm, this project examines how social inequalities did not simply emerge from the crisis of Hurricane Katrina, but have been intentionally and necessarily built into the social processes and spatial form of the city (see Harvey 1973), and are continually rebuilt in emerging spatial configurations of development and redevelopment.

Low-wage workers in redeveloping New Orleans face new, and arguably revanchist, spatial configurations of inequality. From 2009 to 2013, over twenty-seven percent of New Orleans’s residents were estimated to live below the poverty line, yet redevelopment projects mainly target wealthy residents and tourists. (U.S. Census Bureau 2015; Bullard and Wright 2010). Luxury developments correspond with rising property taxes, and average housing costs have more than doubled. The loss of affordable housing, the rise of hyper-gentrification, and growing income inequality are most strongly experienced by low-wage workers in redevelopment industries. As capitalist infrastructure and tourist attractions are built up, low-wage workers struggle for stable employment and livable wages on the construction sites, and in

the restaurants, bars, casinos, hotels, and convention centers of the “New New Orleans.” While average annual income in New Orleans in 2008 was \$37,751, annual wages in the restaurant industry in New Orleans were only \$16,870, with eighty-three percent of restaurant workers making less than ten dollars an hour (U.S. Census Bureau 2010, ROC-U 2010a). Wealth disparities are, unsurprisingly, racialized, with the median income of African-Americans at \$25,102 versus \$60,553 for “non-Hispanic whites” in 2013 (U.S. Census Bureau 2015). While African-Americans comprise more than sixty percent of the city’s population, white residents occupy sixty percent of the managerial and professional positions. I investigate these labor geographies through a focus on worker organizers in local labor and economic justice organizations, activist workers affiliated with economic justice organizations, and other low-wage workers in hospitality and reconstruction industries. Together, this constellation of groups sheds light on the social and spatial processes through which workers strive for stable, living-wage jobs within the industries of redevelopment even as they are simultaneously displaced and alienated from their communities.

For this research I worked mainly with four economic justice and labor organizations: *Stand with Dignity*, *Show Me \$15*, *Unite Here Local 2262*, and *Restaurant Opportunities Center New Orleans (ROC-NOLA)*. I also observed or interacted with members of other interrelated organizations including *The Congress of Day Laborers (Congreso de Jornaleros)* and *Black Youth Project 100 (BYP 100)*. *Stand with Dignity* is a membership organization of un- and underemployed black workers in the city of New Orleans, focused on access to reconstruction jobs, as well as housing, and anti-poverty organizing. *Show Me \$15* is the New Orleans chapter of the national *Fight for \$15* movement, which demands a \$15 wage and a fair unionization process for fast food workers. *Unite Here Local 2262* is the New Orleans local of an

international hospitality union that mainly organizes hotel, casino, cafeteria, convention center, and coliseum workers. *ROC-NOLA* is the local chapter of a national organization struggling for better wages and working conditions in the restaurant industry.

I base my theoretical foundations for this project within Smith's ([1984] 2008) articulation of uneven development to examine the selective investment and disinvestment in places and people during post-Katrina redevelopment. With an eye toward an "agentic" approach, I build off the literatures of *labor geographies* (Herod 1998, 2001; Mitchell 1996; McDowell 2009) to examine how low-wage workers and worker organizers challenge and shape the socio-spatial processes and labor relations of redevelopment in New Orleans. Finally, given the central, and pervasive, roles of race and racism in the socio-spatial production and reproduction of New Orleans's landscape, I work toward a concept of racialized labor geographies of uneven development in New Orleans.

Using qualitative methods, I conducted fieldwork in New Orleans in Summer 2015. During this time, I participated in meetings, actions, protests, and events with economic justice organizations, including, but not limited to, those mentioned above. I conducted nineteen semi-structured interviews of low-wage workers and worker organizers affiliated with labor and economic justice organizations in New Orleans. I also collected archival materials, including flyers, pamphlets, newsletters, publications, and protest signage distributed by economic justice organizations, as well as local newspaper articles and media accounts of redevelopment and worker organizing in New Orleans. I approached these research methods within a feminist epistemology of "situated solidarities" (Nagar 2014; Nagar and Geiger 2007) and "scholar-activism" (Pulido 2008; Derickson and Routledge 2015; Routledge and Derickson 2015). Thus, I

engaged in “service research” (Trauger and Fluri 2012), actively supporting economic justice organizing in New Orleans within the framework of the research project.

Through my analysis of qualitative data, I argue that uneven redevelopment in post-Katrina New Orleans is uniquely experienced by low-wage workers in industries building and supporting the “New New Orleans.” Building from Smith’s ([1984] 2008) theory of uneven development, I argue that uneven redevelopment in New Orleans has focused on major capitalist infrastructure projects, luxury developments, and strengthening tourism industries. Furthermore, I situate the last decade of redevelopment within ongoing processes of reframing the city as an all-new and glamorous beacon of culture and progress. This “progress” comes at the expense of the predominantly black workers living in poverty who find themselves unwelcome in the New New Orleans, even as they are necessary to its constant renewal.

As capitalist investment expands into areas of previous disinvestment, areas unattractive to capital have yet to find “recovery.” Issues of low-wage and precarious employment converge with the loss of public housing, high incarceration rates, police violence, failed schools, and ongoing gentrification in the city. I argue that low-wage workers and worker organizers confront intersectional issues that go beyond the struggle for stable, livable-wage jobs, to challenge the broader conditions of *blackness* in New Orleans. The economic justice movement that responds to pervasive poverty, discrimination, spatial segregation, and alienation in the workplace and in the city itself is uniquely collaborative and broadly focused. Various labor and economic justice organizations work together to actively challenge uneven redevelopment in the city. These organizations present an alternative vision of redevelopment in New Orleans centered on the call of “Black Workers Matter.” This vision of a racially and economically equitable society

challenges centuries of racial and economic domination and segregation built and rebuilt into the landscape.

1.2 Research Context

The city of New Orleans was founded on a particularly brutal system of enslavement, control, and surveillance of its African and migrant populations central to the early development and design of the city (Woods 2009, Johnson 1992). In the 18th and 19th centuries, regulatory racial codes were central to the control of the African population, which was twice the size of European population. However, New Orleans also has a long history of resistance against racialized inequalities. In what would become the Lower Ninth Ward, now infamous for its destruction and poverty, escaped slaves utilized the inhospitable swamps to form “maroon communities” (Horowitz 2014: 905). As Woods argues, “these same communities have been at the center of national conflicts over freedom and justice for the last two hundred years” (2009: 428).

In the mid-20th century, explicit “Black Codes” gave way to restrictive housing covenants and housing discrimination (Horowitz 2014). In the wake of major civil rights victories with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, Hurricane Betsy made landfall, exposing the pervasive racialized and economic inequalities built into New Orleans’s landscape (Horowitz 2014). Formerly a middle-class community of “upwardly mobile” black homeowners, the Lower Ninth Ward was literally sacrificed when local government officials decided to close the floodgates, protecting the rest of the city and causing the twelve feet of water in the Lower Ninth Ward to rise even higher (Horowitz 2014). Similar to stories from Hurricane Katrina, black victims of Hurricane Betsy were abandoned for days

without relief and later packed into temporary shelters with few provisions (Horowitz 2014). The destruction of Hurricane Betsy left a legacy of trauma in the Lower Ninth Ward doomed to repeat itself forty years later. As Horowitz argues, “[v]ulnerable people do not tend to gather in risky places because of cosmic bad luck, even if the structures of power that push them there often are so insidious that such arrangements can come to seem like the natural order” (2014: 897).

I argue that racialized inequalities built into the design and development of the city over centuries have created and recreated a landscape marked by poverty and trauma. Rather than a series of unfortunate “natural disasters,” the repeated devastation of predominantly black neighborhoods, and the pervasive poverty and unemployment among New Orleans’s black workers, stem from longstanding socio-spatial relations of racial and economic subjugation (Smith 2006). The official causes of the failure of the levees and the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, (“natural disaster,” engineering, and judgment errors in design, construction, and maintenance of the levee system, and governmental shortcomings in the funding and maintenance of the system (Seed et al. 2005)) cannot explain the racialized impacts of the storm. Instead, one must account for the overwhelming concentration of low-income black residents near faulty levees, the racialized responses of government aid groups, first abandonment then militarized policing, that contributed to the high counts of death, violence, and long-term displacement of low-income black residents in the aftermath of the storm. As Smith (2006) argues, “There’s no such thing as a natural disaster.” Hurricane Katrina, which made landfall in New Orleans on August 29, 2005, resulted in the deaths of over 1,500 people, the displacement of 450,000 people, and up to \$200 billion in estimated damages in the city of New Orleans (Seed et al. 2005).

Rebuilding over the last decade has focused on economic recovery, driven by capitalist infrastructure projects and tourism industries, rather than the lives and livelihoods of low-income black residents. Though the government's abandonment of low-income, predominantly black residents in the aftermath of the storm has been well documented, significantly less attention has been paid to the ways in which economic and racial inequalities are reinscribed in the landscape in the decade of redevelopment post-Katrina. I echo the argument of Neil Smith (2006) that Hurricane Katrina has allowed for selective processes of relief and recovery resulting in "[w]holesale gentrification at a scale as yet unseen in the United States." Redevelopment in post-Katrina New Orleans has focused on the creation of a "New New Orleans," reviving the tourist industry, and expanding luxury developments. Low-income, predominantly black residents are physically and psychologically displaced from their communities as massive luxury development projects, the expansion of tourist attractions, and mixed-income planned communities and Section 8 vouchers replace nearly all public housing. As the city redevelops into an upscale "New New Orleans," racial and economic inequalities are reproduced in labor relations. Largely invisible in the literature of post-Katrina New Orleans, the restaurant, casino, hotel, and construction workers that drive the ongoing development of a "New New Orleans" experience and challenge the reproduction of spatial and socioeconomic inequalities. With this in mind, I ask: **How do low-wage workers experience processes of redevelopment and the reproduction of racial and economic inequalities in post-Katrina New Orleans?** Within this broader question I ask: **How do low-wage workers and worker organizers challenge and contest processes of rebuilding to resist or reproduce the goals of redevelopment?** These questions allow me to investigate uneven redevelopment in post-Katrina New Orleans as it is experienced, shaped, and contested by low-wage workers and worker organizers in the city.

1.3 Overview of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into five chapters. In Chapter 2, I outline the theoretical and conceptual framework that guides this research. I utilize the concept of uneven development (Smith [1984] 2008) to understand capitalist investment and disinvestment in post-Katrina New Orleans's redevelopment. Within a broad framework of uneven development, I utilize the literature on labor geography (Massey 1995; Mitchell 1996; Herod 1998, 2001) to investigate the processes by which workers, and not simply disembodied capital, act on the landscape to shape, challenge, or reproduce the goals of capitalist development. The field of labor geography provide an agentic framework for examining how low-wage workers and worker organizers confront uneven redevelopment in post-Katrina New Orleans. Finally, I focus on the central importance of race and processes of racialization in order to understand the particularly racialized labor geographies of New Orleans, in which low-wage black workers are relegated to the most precarious, lowest-paying, and least visible positions in the workplace.

In Chapter 3, I detail the methods and methodology that inform this research. I describe a methodological approach rooted in qualitative research and feminist theories of emancipatory and co-constructed knowledge production. Within this methodological framework I focus on the concept of "situated solidarities" (Nagar 2014; Nagar and Geiger 2007) within "scholar-activism" (Pulido 2008; Derickson and Routledge 2015; Routledge and Derickson 2015). I acknowledge the possibility for mutually empowering research encounters based upon shared commitments, relationship building, and an honest commitment to accountability and reciprocity. This framework informs the qualitative methods I used. Though not an actual ethnography, I am guided by ethnographic methods in which I worked to become embedded in the research community and build relationships with participants. I extend this approach beyond

simply observing research activities, focusing rather on a “service research” model in which research “engages with activism to create social change” (Trauger and Fluri 2012: 3). For this research I utilized participant observation for the two-month period in which I conducted fieldwork. During this time, I conducted nineteen semi-structured interviews of low-wage workers and worker organizers in New Orleans. I also compiled a collection of relevant archival materials, including newspaper articles and media accounts related to redevelopment, hospitality industries, and worker organizing in the city. Within a feminist methodology, I analyzed field notes and interviews using narrative analysis (Wiles et al. 2005; Riessman 1993, 2000), in which I focus on the ways in which people tell their stories, articulate their experiences, their emphases and silences, and the contexts in which their stories are rooted. I also focus on the iterative processes through which understanding is generated within and through ongoing dialogues with participants. This allowed me to investigate how redevelopment is experienced and understood by individual workers and organizers. I analyze these embodied perspectives alongside the textured and nuanced signage and messaging of economic justice organizations and public narratives of redevelopment to understand how the economic justice movement intervenes in the uneven redevelopment of post-Katrina New Orleans to propose alternative development models.

In Chapter 4, I present an analysis of my data in order to demonstrate processes of uneven redevelopment in post-Katrina New Orleans with regard to the racial and economic inequalities built and rebuilt into the landscape. I present evidence in the form of personal observations and participant narratives to support the argument that uneven redevelopment in the city focuses upon capitalist infrastructure and tourism industries, to the detriment of low-wage workers in the city. I juxtapose personal observations, participant narratives, and public and political narratives to highlight how the construction of a “New New Orleans,” reframes the city

as a brand-new, high-end, tourist destination, while intentionally alienating and subjugating low-income and black workers in the city. In addition, I present evidence to support the argument that the economic justice movement in New Orleans is highly collaborative and focuses on a range of intersectional issues in employment, as well as in the city more broadly. Based upon observations, interviews, and archival materials, I argue that activist workers and organizers approach economic injustice as part of a larger reality of the conditions of *blackness* in the city. Finally, I argue that framings of the city as a New New Orleans are contested by workers who challenge their displacement and alienation. I argue that the work of the economic justice movement is, in part, to reimagine and create a New New Orleans in which “Black Workers Matter.”

In Chapter 5, I summarize my key findings. I address my research questions to consider how low-wage workers experience uneven redevelopment in post-Katrina New Orleans and the reproduction of racial and economic inequalities in the landscape, and how low-wage workers and organizers contest processes of rebuilding to resist or reproduce the goals of redevelopment. I reflect on how my research contributes to the literatures of uneven development and labor geographies, as well as the potential contributions to the organizations with which I worked. I also address the limitations of this research. I consider the ways in which this research was incomplete, and at times, perhaps stifled. From this perspective, I suggest possible areas for further study.

Throughout this thesis I attempt to recognize the pervasive socio-spatial processes of racial and economic domination in New Orleans. I focus on redevelopment in the decade since Hurricane Katrina to examine how the significantly racialized nature of abandonment, violence and death in the wake of the storm become normalized, reinscribed in the landscape and in the

labor relations of low-wage work in the city. Though much has been written about Hurricane Katrina, this thesis intervenes to consider the challenges and the agency of black workers ten years later, with the intention of illuminating alternative imaginaries and realities.

CHAPTER 2

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

UNEVEN REDEVELOPMENT AND RACIALIZED LABOR GEOGRAPHIES

“One of the biggest things that’s necessary in decriminalizing blackness is creating an equitable economy.”

- Toya, community organizer (July 2015)

2.1 An Introduction

This chapter builds a theoretical framework for examining redevelopment, racialized labor relations, and economic justice organizing in New Orleans. Drawing on approaches from political economy within geography, I expand on the concept of “uneven development” (Smith [1984] 2008) to understand the spatial processes of investment and disinvestment by which capital depends upon and reproduces inequalities. I argue that the concept of uneven development provides a framework for analyzing post-Katrina development in New Orleans which prioritizes tourism industries, capitalist infrastructure, and luxury developments to the detriment of low-income residents and workers. Within a broad framework of uneven development, I draw from *labor geographies* to focus on the central role of workers and worker organizations in experiencing, shaping, and challenging spaces of redevelopment. I argue that a focus on low-wage workers and worker organizers is necessary to analyze how post-Katrina redevelopment is experienced and contested “on-the-ground.” Finally, I explore redevelopment and labor as racialized processes. I argue that an analysis of race, and specifically *blackness*, is necessary to examine labor relations, and economic justice organizing in New Orleans.

2.2 Uneven Development and Redevelopment in New Orleans

For this research, I draw upon political economy and, more specifically, the concept of “uneven development,” used to describe the spatial processes upon which capital depends and through which it produces inequalities (Smith [1984] 2008). I utilize the concept of uneven development to examine the major luxury developments and infrastructure projects that have emerged in the decade since Hurricane Katrina. I argue that the storm provided developers an opportunity not only to rebuild in more profitable ways, but to reframe the city as even more of a corporatized, high-end tourist destination, or what Neil Smith calls a “Disneyfied Big EasyVille” (2006). The concept of uneven development stems, in part, from Neil Smith’s work, *Uneven Development* ([1984] 2008), in which he argues that uneven development is not merely a consequence of capitalism but a necessary phenomenon by which capital produces spaces of investment and disinvestment for its own survival. This creates what Smith ([1984] 2008) describes as a see-saw mechanism of differentiation and equalization. For Smith ([1984] 2008), the see-saw mechanism relates to capital’s need for fixity and institutionalization, and its need for mobility, in order to seek out the most profitable conditions. Profitability, in this sense, requires both capitalist infrastructure and opportunities to take advantage of lower-cost production across space. In New Orleans, differentiation is evident in the pervasive income inequality across the city, disparate wages, racialized and gendered divisions of labor, and the range of economic and social capital across space, while equalization relies on the expansion of capitalist infrastructure allowing for greater reach of development – such as the construction of a new airport and the extension of the rail system into gentrifying neighborhoods.

The concept of uneven development describes the active, rather than incidental, process by which capitalist development requires and reproduces inequalities in the landscape (Smith

[1984] 2008). These inequalities, though seen as incidental and unfortunate outcomes in neoliberal economics, are understood in Marxist theory as intended and necessary processes by which capital is produced and reproduced (Harvey 1982; Smith [1984] 2008). Economic Geographers, and specifically Marxist Geographers, have contributed significantly to the foundational literature on the spatial relations of uneven development that shape geographies of labor (Harvey 1982, Peck 1996, Smith [1984] 2008). Harvey describes the “spatial fix” by which capital reshapes landscapes in order to mediate the inherent crises of capitalism (1982). Smith ([1984] 2008: 7) elaborates, arguing that uneven development is not merely a consequence of capitalism but a necessary component of a process in which capital produces space “in its own image.”

The literature of uneven development provides a critical approach to understanding geographical differences and varied spatial outcomes. The concept of uneven development has been used as a framework to understand and interpret the roles of capital, labor, society and the state in the production of space. As Smith (2011: 263) argues, “disinvestment and underdevelopment create the opportunity for their opposite and the flood of capitalist investment and (re)development.” This is an inherently spatial process as, according to Edward Said (2012: 225), capitalism produces “a particular kind of nature and space, an unequally developed landscape that integrates poverty with wealth.” Heynen, Hossler, and Herod (2011: 240) elaborate on this point, arguing that uneven development is the result of “how capital produces particular types of landscape as a central element in its own survival.”

Central to the concept of uneven development is Smith’s (1982) theorization of a see-saw mechanism of differentiation and equalization. In “Gentrification and Uneven Development,” Smith (1982: 142) argues, “Inherent in the structure of capitalism are two contradictory

tendencies toward, on the one hand, the *equalization of conditions and levels of development* and, on the other, *their differentiation*.” Equalization is the process by which capital “drives to overcome all spatial barriers to expansion and to measure spatial distance by transportation time” (Smith 1982: 143). In this manner, capital creates the infrastructure necessary to drive and expand a broader marketplace. Differentiation, however, results in widespread disinvestment in landscapes, as well as disparate wages, divisions of labor, social capital and “natural features” across space (Smith [1984] 2008: 135-146). This is a distinctly geographical process as opposing tendencies of capitalism continually produce and reproduce landscapes in search of greater surplus value. Smith ([1984] 2008) describes how capital produces space, both by investing in infrastructure and institutions to support increasing surplus value, but also by disinvesting, withdrawing resources from spaces less productive, with lower profit rates (See also Duncan 1989). Thus, uneven development results in built-up and well-maintained spaces of profitability as well as neglected spaces of disinvestment.

In New Orleans, the concept of uneven development provides a useful approach to examine selective rebuilding and new developments in the decade since Hurricane Katrina, as well as areas of disinvestment and neglect. Redevelopment in post-Katrina New Orleans has focused on the creation of a “New New Orleans,” reviving the tourist industry, and expanding luxury developments. While corporatized jazz clubs capitalize on the perceived exoticism and artistry of the black community (Woods 2009), fifty-two percent of black males in the city are categorized as unemployed or “not in the labor force” (which includes those incarcerated) (Sams-Abiodun and Rattler, Jr. 2013). Low-income, predominantly black residents are physically and psychologically displaced from their communities as new landscapes are produced involving expansive luxury development projects, the extension of tourist attractions,

new, mixed-income planned communities in place of demolished public housing, and major capitalist infrastructure projects. As the city redevelops as a high-end “tourist-magnet,” inequalities are built into labor relations (Smith 2006). The low-wage workers who provide labor to the industries of redevelopment, on construction sites, and in hotels, casinos, restaurants, and bars, face new social relations of poverty, precarity, and alienation. Within a framework of crisis and recovery, this low-wage workforce is utterly invisible.

In New Orleans, gentrification and uneven development go hand in hand. The physical and political dismantling of public housing and widespread gentrification in formerly low-income, predominantly black neighborhoods allow capital to create new markets and consumer bases in previously unprofitable areas. The extension of the streetcar into gentrifying neighborhoods in the Marigny and Bywater facilitates the expansion of high-end and tourist-focused restaurants and retail stores. Other former areas of disinvestment are “rediscovered,” as evidenced by the boom in luxury housing, shops, and hotels along the riverfront. Thus, a framework of equalization illuminates the investment and development of new spaces of profitability in New Orleans. Likewise, processes of differentiation occur simultaneously. With the substitution of Section 8 housing vouchers in place of guaranteed affordable housing, low-income residents have been forced into the “housing market” as consumers, which in turn has resulted in their displacement into less desirable areas, outer suburbs, and new or ongoing spaces of disinvestment.

The uneven socio-spatial reshaping of post-Katrina New Orleans is facilitated, in part, by the dominant rhetoric of resilience and recovery made possible by the framing of Hurricane Katrina as a singular and distinct crisis. I argue that framing Hurricane Katrina as a crisis ignores longstanding historical structures of economic and racial oppression in the city, depoliticizes

capitalist responses to the “disaster,” and forecloses the possibility for alternative visions of the city. Crisis is utilized to signify a distinct temporal and societal shift from a state of “normalcy” to a “rupture,” thereby requiring a response. The way in which these narratives are framed as crises or deviations, shapes the types of responses required and creates unique opportunities for capitalist development. In *The Shock Doctrine*, Naomi Klein (2007) describes a myriad of crises that have been seized by neoliberal economists and the politicians they inform, to establish sudden, far-reaching, and permanent reforms geared toward privatization and transnational corporate supremacy. In the case of New Orleans, Klein argues (2007: 23) that the response to Hurricane Katrina, though mistaken for incompetence, represents “the monstrously violent and creative culmination of a fifty-year campaign for total corporate liberation.” The tremendous wealth generated by neoliberal responses to crisis that treat disasters as “exciting market opportunities,” Klein (2007: 6) theorizes under the term “disaster capitalism.” It is only in moments of rupture, Klein (2007: 8-9) argues, that “radical social and economic engineering” are successfully used as an “all-at-once shock treatment” for the sudden and total unleashing of free-market ideologies.

Klein challenges the framing of Hurricane Katrina as a crisis, a “moment of truth,” (Roitman 2014: 3), or a “great rupture” (Klein 2007: 25). Crisis signifies not only a position within a historical timeline, but also a singular, and discrete event. The way in which crisis implies a moment in time suggests that there is a beginning point and an end point to crisis (however unclear they may be). These singular events, thus, require specific and immediate solutions. “Post-crisis” is defined as recovery, in which the immediate “crisis” (however it is defined) is considered resolved. Recovery, however, is also guided by short-term responses rather than broader systemic changes. In the case of Hurricane Katrina, the aid that did come,

however late, was in the form of short-term relief. “Recovery” efforts to crisis have failed to account for the ongoing displacement of residents, the psychological traumas and adverse mental health effects of survivors, and the violence of redevelopment. I argue that it is necessary to challenge this concept of crisis to understand the centuries of socio-spatial relations and racialized subjugation that led up to the particular configurations of death and displacement during Hurricane Katrina. Rather than a singular, discrete event, Hurricane Katrina must be understood within longstanding processes of racial and economic oppression, and recovery must include ongoing commitments to counter the reinscription of these processes.

Rather than encourage critique of preexisting systems of oppression, crisis narratives obscure longstanding socio-spatial conditions by focusing attention only on the present moment. In *Anti-Crisis*, Janet Roitman (2014) argues that the framing of crises as deviations positions prior social and economic relations within a normative significance of “business-as-usual.” The critiques that follow, Roitman argues, provide only anti-crisis rather than alternative visions beyond the framework of crisis and response. The target of examination is only the deviation, and not the banal. Thus, the broader structures of power are not simply invisible, but signify a better, ordered, normal time. This forecloses the possibility of the causes of the crisis being always already embedded in systems functioning “precisely as they were designed to work” (Roitman 2014: 62). In New Orleans, rather than an aberration, centuries of spatial and economic racial stratification, legacies of previous storms and “disasters,” and repeated negligence in levee maintenance, laid the groundwork for a not-at-all-surprising crisis in August 2005. It is only in moving beyond the framework of crisis, however, that we are able to ask questions about the racialized processes of governmental abandonment and legacies of trauma on the landscape that provide a broader context for the storm and its aftermath.

In “There’s No Such Thing as a Natural Disaster,” Smith (2006) cites the intentional decision made to slash the budget for New Orleans Army Corps of Engineers by eighty percent, “preventing pumping and levee improvements.” Rather than incompetence, Smith argues that there were specific policies of abandonment enacted. Furthermore, Smith (2006) challenges “natural disaster” as the primary cause of the destruction and displacement of Hurricane Katrina. He points out that while acts of nature do occur, “[w]hether a natural event is a disaster or not depends ultimately, however, on its location” (2006). In a city rooted in racial segregation and oppression, location is not simply a question of where, but of whom. Those with means and access to evacuate did not suffer the same deadly consequences of those without. And while it is a common saying in New Orleans that “Katrina didn’t discriminate” (based on damage to a range of neighborhoods), the Lower Ninth ward, predominantly made up of very low-income African Americans, was hit the hardest, with nearly 100 percent reporting property damage (Seed et al. 2005).

Smith (2006) notes, “[T]he same corporate and federal abandonment that fostered such a widespread disaster can hardly be expected to perform an about-turn by empowering a disempowered population.” And yet, the framing of Hurricane Katrina as a singular crisis requiring redevelopment lends itself all too well to a disaster capitalist framework. In the days after the city flooded, Republican lawmakers and capitalist developers were already making statements about the possibilities presented by the “clean slate” of Hurricane Katrina’s devastation (Klein 2007: 4). Klein (2007:10) describes the wave of reforms that sought to “finish the job” of the “original disaster” of Hurricane Katrina. However, the city was not as neatly “scrubbed clean” (Klein 2007: 490) as it was portrayed. Rather, significant portions of public housing were livable or required minor repairs. The “crisis” simply provided the narrative

necessary to develop a New New Orleans out of the theoretical rubble. This was made possible, in part, in that the framing of Hurricane Katrina as a crisis presented the longstanding and widespread poverty in the city as an issue that *became* a problem because of the storm. If New Orleans's crisis was one of poverty, the solution was to bring immense wealth to the city.

The concept of uneven development provides a theoretical framework for understanding processes of uneven redevelopment in post-Katrina New Orleans. Smith (1982) describes how capital invests in productive landscapes while simultaneously disinvesting in less productive areas. These processes create a see-saw mechanism. In New Orleans, these processes are visible in the landscape as well as in labor relations. Smith (2006) draws connections between so-called “natural disasters” and the uneven development and gentrification that results. Building on critiques of “disaster” and “crisis” from Roitman (2014) and Klein (2007) allows me to examine the effects of Hurricane Katrina and New Orleans's redevelopment within a broader context of longstanding socio-spatial inequalities. This approach is particularly useful in order to examine the labor geographies of post-Katrina uneven redevelopment and the creation of a “New New Orleans.”

2.3 Labor Geographies and Agency

The concept of uneven development provides a framework for understanding the spatial processes by which capitalism produces and reproduces economic and racial oppression in the landscape. I utilize this framework in order to examine the reproduction of processes of oppression, but also in order to highlight the processes by which the production of landscapes of uneven development is shaped and resisted by workers and worker organizers in New Orleans. Heynen, Hossler, and Herod (2011: 244) develop this idea, arguing that a critical understanding

of how landscapes are produced provides “a way in which to imagine how more emancipatory landscapes can be conceived and, more importantly, emplaced.”

As noted, the production of unevenly developed landscapes results from the twin processes of differentiation and equalization. This “spatial fix” (Harvey 1982) occurs as capital continually reshapes landscapes in order to mediate the inherent crises of capitalism. Duncan (1989: 135) theorizes the potential for action within this process. “The upshot of uneven development, however, is that the environments—and hence geographies—are continually developed, changed, undeveloped and abandoned” (also see Berman 1983). In this way, the theory of uneven development always already contains the opportunities for collective action against the violence of capitalism through exploiting its volatility and variability. Massey (1995) rejects rigid Marxist “laws” of capital, instead focusing on the interplays of spatial structures and social relations in particular cases. Likewise, Gibson-Graham (1996) “uncloaks” the concept of capitalism as an all-encompassing, monolithic monster. Taking a feminist approach, Gibson-Graham dissects the discursive power of capitalism instead conceptualizing it as open and porous, fragmented, heterogeneous, and but one of a multiplicity of approaches. Within this conceptualization, Gibson-Graham highlights the noncapitalist alternatives that become apparent. Gibson-Graham notes the potential for challenging fragments of capitalism in a variety of individual and collective processes, and in lived experiences. Using this emancipatory framework, I examine the roles of low-wage workers and worker organizers in New Orleans’s economic justice movement as actors shaping and challenging the socio-spatial relations of uneven development in post-Katrina New Orleans.

Critiques of Smith’s *Uneven Development* ([1984] 2008) amongst *labor geographers* expand on the arguments of Gibson-Graham (1996) and others, contending that it is people, not

simply embodied capital, who create the conditions and mechanisms by which capitalist development functions. Labor geographers examine the ways in which spaces are produced not simply through the forces of capital, but also by the social relations and actions of workers and worker organizations (Massey 1995; Mitchell 1996; Herod 1998, 2001). Critiquing Smith's *Uneven Development*, Andrew Herod (2001) describes uneven capitalist development as a process that is always contested, shaped and experienced by workers as they reproduce their labor, rather than as an internal mechanism of capital. In this way, *labor geography* provides a framework of worker agency to challenge a portrayal of workers as powerless victims or “dupes” (Herod 2001). In this thesis, I contribute to the literatures of uneven development and labor geography by utilizing an agentic approach to highlight the processes by which both capital and workers shape spaces of labor and redevelopment in New Orleans.

In “Gentrification and Uneven Development,” Smith (1982: 142) strongly emphasizes the relationship between capitalism and uneven development, arguing that “uneven development is a specific process that is both unique to capitalism and rooted directly in the fundamental social relations of that mode of production.” In this sense, the theory of uneven development and capitalist labor relations are intrinsically linked. And yet, the process of uneven development is rarely theorized with regard to the social relations and experiences of individual workers and labor organizations “on the ground.” In her extensive empirical research, Massey (1995) provides a framework for examining particular economic geographies of labor and the agency of a range of social actors in shaping the outcomes of capitalist development in place. In this thesis, I build on the work of Massey and others, to consider the unique experiences of low-wage workers in New Orleans as they experience and challenge post-Katrina uneven redevelopment.

In this way, I consider the particular places and processes of uneven redevelopment at the scale of individual workers and worker organizers.

Because the socio-spatial relations of labor are always embedded in place (see Cresswell 2004), labor geography offers a uniquely spatial perspective lacking in labor studies more generally. While labor studies theorize worker agency, they largely overlook the myriad effects of geography (see Herod 2001). Massey (1995) emphasizes the locational factors and spatial processes of capital mobility and economic restructuring. More recent work focuses on the increasingly global nature of capital (Castree et. al 2004). Herod (2001) focuses on the ways in which workers experience and shape place and space. Because workers do not exist apart from society, they are situated in place through social and economic relations (Herod 2001). Social relations of place affect the spatial configurations of worker organizing (Wills 1996, Herod 2001). In New Orleans, a spatial approach is necessary to examine configurations of racial and economic inequalities built into labor relations as the city redevelops into a high-end “tourist-magnet” (Smith 2006). The low-wage workers who provide labor to the industries of the “New New Orleans” - on construction sites, and in hotels, casinos, restaurants, and bars - face new socio-spatial relations of poverty, precarity, and alienation. These socioeconomic struggles occur in place, as workers experience, and simultaneously challenge and shape, their transforming landscape.

Feminist labor geographers draw connections between socio-spatial labor relations and social reproduction, death, disposability, and the body (McDowell 2009; Wright 2006). In *Working Bodies: Interactive Service Employment and Workplace Identities*, McDowell (2009:1) examines the “commoditization of the body” in service sector work, in which workers’ physical presentation, gender, race, ethnicity, real or performed emotions, attitudes, and tastes become

part of the market exchange. McDowell conceptualizes service work as a new form of feminized and interactive “embodied” labor. I argue that service work in New Orleans, specifically in restaurants, bars, and hotels, must be understood as performative and embodied, as well as gendered and racialized. Furthermore, embodied labor is situated in broader processes of racial and economic subordination in the city. In *Disposable Women and Other Myths of Global Capitalism*, Wright (2009: 79) describes how notions of low-wage work as “unskilled” labor reinforce the concept that low-wage workers are disposable, and must be discarded once they are “used up.” Wright explores how the supposed disposability of women maquiladora workers in the factory mirrors the murder, violence, and disposal of hundreds of girls and women in Chihuahua, Mexico. In this way, Wright draws clear connections between how low-wage workers come to be seen as disposable not only in the workplace but in society. Wright’s argument, though focused on women workers in China and Mexico, lends itself well to an examination of low-wage black workers in New Orleans who struggle for stable employment and livable wages in a city in which they face ongoing processes of death and displacement.

Recent reviews of the literature of labor geographies emphasize the need for further study around the varied forms of worker agency, experiences and mobility (Castree 2007, Coe and Jordhus-Lier 2010, Lier 2007). Specifically, Lier (2007: 829-830) calls for greater examination of worker agency beyond a strict focus on unions, a departure from the “sectoral bias” of industrial studies to studies of service sector employment, and greater inclusion of labor struggles outside of the “Anglo-American world.” This research furthers Lier’s agenda by highlighting the role of alternative (non-union) worker organization in the service sector in addition to formal unions. However, I argue that Lier’s emphasis on inclusion overlooks the absence of critical examinations of the racialized and gendered spaces of labor in the U.S.

Though the centrality of race and gender in the workplace has been discussed in detail in labor studies (Bronfenbrenner and Warren 2007; Fletcher Jr. and Hurd 2000; Roediger and Esch 2012; Fink and Reed 1994; Marable, Ness and Wilson 2006), with the exception of a few key scholars (England 1993, Gibson-Graham 1996, McDowell 2009, Oberhauser 2000, Wright 2006) labor geography fundamentally overlooks the processes by which racial and gender inequalities are built into and maintained by spatial configurations of labor. In this thesis, I argue that labor relations and the socio-spatial relations of uneven development are deeply rooted in racism and racialized processes. Thus, this research contributes to the literature of labor geographies by providing an examination of the particularly racialized labor geographies of post-Katrina New Orleans.

2.4 Racialized Labor Geographies and Black Workers Matter

In New Orleans, uneven development is not simply a product of capitalist relations, but stems from mutually reinforcing mechanisms of economic and racial oppression. Often, however, race has been treated as a secondary point of analysis within labor geographies and Marxist approaches to uneven development. I build on Ruth Wilson Gilmore's (2002: 22) argument that "Geographers should develop a research agenda that centers on race as a condition of existence and as a category of analysis, because the territoriality of power is key to understanding racism." I argue that an analysis of race, and specifically *blackness*, is crucial to understanding redevelopment, labor, and social justice organizing in New Orleans. I approach race as a social construct while acknowledging the material repercussions of racialized structures and processes. In a city with an African-American majority, built on slavery, segregation, and discrimination, *blackness* permeates all aspects of lived experience, even as it remains

undefinable. In New Orleans, capitalist labor relations and institutional racism combine to produce the specific spatial and cultural forms of uneven development. Similarly, the economic justice movement is rooted as deeply in *blackness* and anti-racist organizing as in class struggle.

In New Orleans, racialized inequalities are built into socioeconomic relations as well as embedded in space. Though some labor geographies have examined the disparate impacts of labor relations on women or people of color, few labor geographers theorize labor itself as essentially gendered and racialized. Much in the same way that Herod (2001) argues for a shift from a “geography of labor” to a “labor geography,” this research argues for a shift from a labor geography of racial differences to a racialized-labor geography. Conversely, literature on racialized social relations often overlooks the essentially economic processes by which racism is upheld. Michael Goldfield (2006) argues that white supremacy in the U.S., beginning with slavery, was built on the principle of economic domination, not an ideological belief of racial inferiority. Instead, he argues, the continued economic domination of people of color allows for the durability of racist attitudes and discrimination, as well as the persistence of white supremacy. Though his argument may be somewhat overstated, his emphasis on the mutually reinforcing mechanisms of economic and racial oppression lends a useful framework to this research.

I argue that an examination of race, and specifically *blackness*, is crucial to an analysis of uneven redevelopment, racialized labor geographies, and economic justice organizing in New Orleans. Thus, while I acknowledge race as a problematic category comprising “fluid, decentered social meanings that are continually shaped by political pressures” (Parker and Lynn, 2002: 11), I focus on race and racism as social constructs that shape the experiences and opportunities of low-wage workers in New Orleans. In this sense I build from Ruth Wilson

Gilmore's (2002: 22) argument that *blackness* must be analyzed materially. "Such a claim hardly signifies that 'Black' then always refers to the same cultural or biological object. *Blackness* is a spatially and temporally differentiated produced, and real, condition of existence and category of analysis." I argue that race and racism, as categories of analysis, are inscribed in the landscape and built into labor relations. I examine enduring socio-spatial and institutionalized racism, building upon Parker and Lynn's (2002: 7) contention that "racism should not be viewed as acts of individual prejudice that can simply be eradicated. Rather, it is an endemic part of American life." As Gilmore (2002: 16) notes, "If race has no essence, racism does. Racism is singular because, whatever its place-based particularities, its practitioners exploit and renew *fatal* power-difference couplings." Power-difference couplings, proving fatal in the wake of the storm, continue to shape capitalist investment and disinvestment in New Orleans.

In this way, uneven development is not simply shaped by capitalist mechanisms but by equally powerful, often intersectional, forces, including racial discrimination and segregation. Duncan (1989: 137) makes similar claims, noting that "Uneven development cannot be seen purely and simply as a matter of capitalist production, however central and wide-reaching this might be." Moreover, he argues that capitalist relations are, at times, interlinked with or subordinate to "mechanisms of patriarchy and ethnicity" driving "relations of kinship, gender, household, or the 'imagined communities' of locality or nation." In the case of New Orleans, capitalist labor relations and processes of racialized oppression and segregation combine to produce the specific spatial and cultural forms of uneven development. Similarly, economic justice organizations contesting uneven redevelopment engage as deeply in *blackness* and anti-racist organizing as in class struggle.

I argue that labor and economic justice organizations are increasingly attentive to the intersections of economic oppression, racism, and patriarchy. This is a departure in organizing strategy, challenging the history of the U.S. labor movement in which unions had a troubled, and often adversarial relationship, with non-white workers and anti-racist movements. The New Deal Era is often seen as a time of some advancement for both the labor movement, with the passage of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) in 1935, and for “racial progressivism,” with the New Deal’s welfare and work programs (Roediger 2005). However, while African-Americans were disproportionately employed in WPA jobs, with higher wages than in the private sector, they were also nearly twice as likely to suffer unemployment in the 1930s as their white counterparts (Roediger 2005). In fact, Edna Bonacich (1976: 34) cites the 1930s as the decade in which unemployment and underemployment for the first time became a “distinguishing feature of the black position in advanced capitalism.” It is also in this era that the American Federation of Labor (AFL) came out against the inclusion of an anti-discrimination clause in the NLRA, displaying a “willingness to see the whole bill go down to defeat rather than countenance any such clause” (Roediger 2005: 209). With the belief that white workers benefitted from the better wages and greater upward mobility that accompanied racial discrimination in the workplace, labor leaders saw it as their duty to maintain, or fail to contest, discrimination in the interest of serving the majority-white rank-and-file membership (Roediger 2005). This relationship shifted somewhat over time, as organized labor became one of the strongest supporters of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. In recent years, the labor movement has begun to understand the necessity of a “culture of inclusion” (Fletcher Jr. and Hurd 2000) to organize the growing numbers of workers of color.

Women and people of color make up increasingly significant proportions of the labor force in the U.S., most notably in service sector and public sector industries (Bronfenbrenner and Warren 2007). Labor scholars and unionists recognize these trends and advocate for the labor movement to embrace inclusive strategies and actively combat discrimination (Bronfenbrenner and Warren 2007; Marable, Ness and Wilson 2006). These scholars argue for inclusivity as a necessary tactic to challenge both racialized poverty and dwindling union membership in the U.S. and beyond. Marable, Ness, and Wilson (2006) argue that as capitalism becomes increasingly “global” and “multicultural,” notions of racial difference are intentionally maintained, reinforcing racism as a provision allowing for the disproportionately low pay of workers of color, a trend which appears in the market as labor-derived financial gains. Global capitalism, privatization, outsourcing and automation have devastated both the labor movement and economic justice movements of people of color. While capitalist political economy, especially the global capitalism of the 21st century, depends on and profits from the subordination of workers of color, a movement to counter racial domination must go beyond class struggle to incorporate anti-racist struggles within the economic justice movement.

Employment has long been used as a disciplining mechanism within racialized capitalist systems. Thus, understanding these logics at play is necessary for the sake of labor organizing purposes. To this end, Roediger and Esch (2012) describe the history of “race management” in U.S. labor. In this regard, “scientific” management techniques and racialized ideologies merged in the early 20th century in an attempt to determine which workers were best suited for each task based on race (Roediger and Esch 2012). Unsurprisingly, black workers were considered well-suited to low-paying, physically demanding work (Roediger and Esch 2012). In addition to developing ideas about which jobs “American blacks” and other groups were “naturally” attuned

to, managers pitted racial and ethnic groups against one another to keep competition high, wages low, and solidarity movements untenable (Roediger and Esch 2012). Roediger and Esch (2012: 153) argue, “Such use of racial difference was not incidental to the exploitation of labor ... but central to it.” Though “scientific” race management and blatant discrimination officially have been rejected as immoral and unscientific, ideas about where people of color belong in the workplace have persisted. Black workers are disproportionately employed in low-wage service industries.

While the Civil Rights movement was successful in ending *de jure* segregation, the “political limitations of the Civil Rights Movement to deliver meaningful change have had deleterious effects on workers of color,” shifting the blame from structural issues in the economic system to individuals who are seen as unable to raise themselves up “absent” official institutional barriers (Marable, Ness, and Wilson 2006). Due in part to this rhetoric, community organizations dedicated to anti-poverty movements in communities of color have focused on building “human capital,” through job training and skill building, rather than confronting the epidemic of bad jobs and underemployment (Pitts 2006). This individualistic view contrasts with decades of scholarship that has shown wages of African- Americans to be persistently lower than that of whites, even when controlling for education, training, and relevant skills (Marable and Wilson 2006). In addition to lower wages, workers of color disproportionately struggle with regard to “working conditions, injuries, disciplinary actions, and managerial and promotional opportunities” (Marable, Ness, and Wilson 2006: 3). African-Americans face higher rates of unemployment, and struggle for reemployment for much longer periods of time than do their white counterparts (Marable and Wilson 2006).

By 2025, people of color will comprise a majority of the U.S. population (Marable, Ness, and Wilson 2006). The percentage of the U.S. workforce has changed to reflect this trend, with workers of color increasing from fifteen percent of the workforce in 1960 to nearly half by 2004 (Marable, Ness, and Wilson 2006). With the collapse of U.S. manufacturing industries, and restructuring of the economy in the 21st century, the resulting unemployment among workers of color has largely meant the loss of stable, unionized jobs (Bronfenbrenner and Warren 2007). Re-employment options tend to offer lower wages, less job security and fewer benefits. Workers of color face a new era of “transnational corporate globalization” comprised of “alternative” employment, including temporary, part-time, on-call, and independent contractor positions (Marable, Ness, and Wilson 2006: 2-3). Marable, Ness and Wilson (2006: 3) argue that “[r]acial inequality is pivotal to the erosion of the traditional workplace, as people of color are disproportionately represented in employment that pays lower wages and lacks job security.” Thus, the “new economy” necessarily depends on the continued subordination of workers of color, persistently relegated to the bad jobs produced by capitalism.

As with the losses of union manufacturing jobs, so the destruction of public sector jobs increasingly means re-employment of workers of color in nonunion service sector jobs, characterized by low wages and few job protections (Bronfenbrenner and Warren 2007). Hotel, restaurant, and retail industries, key sectors of the “flexible” labor economy, have witnessed disproportionate growth of employees of color (Marable, Ness, and Wilson 2006). Within the service sector, workers of color face an “hourglass labor configuration,” where people of color are concentrated in lower occupational levels, rarely able to squeeze their way up (Marable, Ness, and Wilson 2006: 8). Thus the rise of service sector employment is part of the “two-

dimensional crisis of work in black communities: unemployment and *bad jobs*” (Bronfenbrenner and Warren 2007: 143).

In the restaurant industry, workers of color are spatially segregated in low-wage casual dining restaurants (rather than sit-down, or fine dining restaurants) (Jayaraman 2013). In “The Great Service Divide” Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC) exposes the racialized (and deeply spatial) divisions between “front-of-house” (wait staff, bartenders and hosts) and “back-of-house” (cooks and dishwashers) (ROC-U 2014a). A 2010 ROC report provides a particularly useful study of the growing restaurant industry in New Orleans (ROC-U 2010a). This report highlights low wages, health and safety violations, and discrimination in New Orleans’s restaurant industry, as well as the history of racial inequality affecting labor relations and “the negative impact repeated hurricanes, combined with their lack of power in the industry, have had on [restaurant workers’] jobs and lives” (ROC-U 2010a). Not only do these micro-spatial configurations represent gendered and racist labor patterns, the associated wage differentials further reinforce racialized and gendered uneven development. Thus, spatial configurations of labor in the restaurant industry both reflect and maintain socio-spatial racial inequalities. For this reason, this research pays particular attention to racialized labor relations in restaurants and other key hospitality industries.

Racialized labor relations and broader socio-spatial conditions in the city influence a local economic justice movement as focused on anti-racist organizing as class struggle. Although historically the labor movement has had a troubled, if not adversarial, relationship with movements for racial equality and anti-discrimination in the workplace, new strategies recognizing the power of organizing workers of color and creating a “culture of inclusion” highlight the potential for the emergence of a powerful multidimensional labor movement in the

21st century (Fletcher Jr. and Hurd 2000). The labor battles that have dominated mainstream media over the last few years highlight the intersectional nature of the labor movement and the anti-racist struggles of communities of color. Wal-Mart strikes and fast food worker wage battles, reported on across the globe, have provided a highly visible face to the struggle against bad jobs in the U.S., highlighting both the struggle for higher wages and a voice on the job (“\$15 per hour and the right to form a union”) as well as the disproportionate concentration of workers of color in bad jobs and the economic struggles workers of color face (Resnikoff, AlJazeera.com 2014). Speaking to striking workers, Rev. William Barber, head of the North Carolina NAACP, noted the collective struggle of the labor movement and the anti-poverty struggles of people of color, stating: “I want you to know without a shadow of a doubt that the fight for labor wages and the fight for civil rights are two movements headed in the same direction” (quoted in Resnikoff, AlJazeera.com 2014). Moreover, many economic justice movements have closely aligned with the “Black Lives Matter” movement to frame the struggle for better employment within a framework of racial justice and black humanity (Jobs with Justice 2015). Organizing around the call of “Black Workers Matter,” these movements “situate worker organizing in the broader context of building black power for human rights and dignity” (Thomas-Breitfeld, et al. 2015). In New Orleans, racialized processes of low-wage employment within reconstruction and hospitality industries inform a labor movement calling for racial and economic justice, and in turn confronting not only discrimination and bad jobs but also broader processes of uneven development in the city.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I provided an overview of the theoretical and conceptual framework informing this research. I examined the concept of uneven development as a framework for understanding how racial and economic inequalities are key mechanisms of landscape production within capitalist development. I built on critiques of the concept of uneven development for privileging disembodied capital as the sole actor in processes of landscape production, highlighting the theoretical position in labor geographies focused on the role of workers and worker organizers in experiencing and shaping uneven development. Within this framework I took an emancipatory and agentic approach to examine the possibilities inherent in the unstable and contested processes of uneven development. Specifically, I focused on those low-wage workers who are integral to the reconstruction and hospitality industries driving New Orleans's uneven development and to activist workers and worker organizers contesting racialized labor relations and broader socio-spatial inequalities in the city. I focused on the central, though often overlooked, importance of race and *blackness* in low-wage and precarious employment, in labor and economic justice organizing, and in processes of redevelopment in post-Katrina New Orleans.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

3.1 Introduction

I interviewed Toya (July 2015) in a Laundromat in Uptown New Orleans. After scheduling and rescheduling a number of times with me, this was the only window of time that would work for her. The first failed attempt was a weekday at the office. The office was in a small house in Treme where the New Orleans Workers' Center, housing *Stand with Dignity* and the *Congress of Day Laborers*, shares office space with a non-profit law firm. I had been going there most days, often getting into long discussions with Toya or Mr. Alfred about justice, oppression, and "the movement." When it came time for the interview though, I could see Toya stiffen up. Beyond being a little resentful about taking time out from her already over-extended schedule, I realized she was also somewhat suspicious of my position as a researcher. We talked about the now widely acknowledged fact that the Department of Homeland Security tracks Black Lives Matter activists, and that the Department of Defense funds University research through the Minerva Initiative (Choudhury, ACLU.org 2015). Though I assured her that I had no hidden motives, we talked earnestly about the potential for unintended ways the project could be harmful. We rescheduled the interview for another time. But on that night she was too tired after working all day, attending a City Hall meeting, and attending to her family and the social reproductive work that is always waiting for her. Determined to get an interview recorded before I had to leave New Orleans, I pressed her to let me join her at the Laundromat. First we drove across town to bring her mom to a doctor. Then we loaded the machines and sat in my car with

the air conditioner running while her partner stood guard over the running washers. When it was time for folding we moved the interview inside. We spoke about life, loss, injustice, oppression and hope into a tape recorder propped up on a pile of clean shirts.

As a community organizer, Toya is arguably in a more stable position than the un- and underemployed members she organizes with. Still, sitting down for an interview means taking time away from the endless personal and professional tasks she needs to accomplish, to tear open old wounds for a stranger. Like many of the people I spoke to, Toya's life, not only in regard to her organizing work, involves struggles against poverty, precarity, alienation and the erasure of black voices. The process of getting to know her and interviewing her highlights the ways in which social science research is inherently extractive. I tried to counter the extractive potential of qualitative and ethnographic research methods by working around her schedule, doing favors for her, and helping out with menial tasks, but also by trying to build an honest relationship with her, being accountable to challenging questions about my motives and positionality, and committing to be as open about my professional and personal goals as I asked her to be. These choices, embedded in my research methods and methodology, are informed by feminist research approaches and a commitment to service research (Trauger and Fluri 2012) and scholar-activism (Derickson and Routledge 2015; Nagar and Geiger 2007).

My commitment to service research aligns with the agentic and emancipatory theoretical framework outlined in Chapter Two, by acknowledging and supporting the work of economic justice organizations and valuing participants as knowledgeable agents. As Trauger and Fluri (2012: 6) argue, "A prerequisite for conducting service research is recognizing the agency of research participants. They are agents of change and exercise power over the production of knowledge." Considering research participants as co-producers of knowledge and as agentic

actors in the redevelopment of New Orleans allows me to examine uneven development and racialized labor relations through the perspectives of the working people who experience and challenge these processes. This leads me to ask: **How do low-wage workers experience processes of redevelopment and the reproduction of racial and economic inequalities in post-Katrina New Orleans?** Within this broader question I ask: **How do low-wage workers and worker organizers challenge and contest processes of rebuilding to resist or reproduce the goals of redevelopment?** I investigate these questions from a methodological approach rooted in feminist epistemologies and scholar-activism, through qualitative methods of interviewing and participating with workers and worker organizers who experience the impacts of redevelopment, and analyzing media accounts of the transforming landscape.

This chapter is broken up into four general sections. First, I outline my methodological approach. I highlight qualitative and feminist research methodologies. Then, I discuss a research model based on scholar-activism and “situated solidarities” (Nagar and Geiger 2007). I link these to a broader framework of feminist methodologies which inform my use of narrative analysis as a data analysis approach, and include a discussion of positionality and reflexivity. Second, I outline the case study. Third, I detail the research methods used in this research. I outline the research design, research questions, case study, methods, and modes of analysis. Fourth, and finally, I conclude with a statement on the contributions and limitations provided by these research methods, with a focus on accountability and reciprocity.

3.2 Research Methodologies

3.2.1 Qualitative Methodologies

Qualitative research is useful in addressing “fundamental questions” concerned with social processes and individual experiences (Winchester and Rofe 2010: 5). In this project I utilize qualitative methodologies as a foundational approach to examine processes of uneven redevelopment and the individual experiences of low-wage workers and worker organizers in New Orleans. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005: xvi) note, qualitative research has a “shifting center to the project: the avowed humanistic and social justice commitment to study the social world from the perspective of the interacting individual.” A qualitative approach allows me to examine the individual experiences of uneven redevelopment rather than focusing on quantifiable landscape changes. It is only through talking to and working with people that I was able to hear about alternative or counter-narratives within development discourses. Specifically, participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and archival research provide triangulation of data sources to best examine the research questions I have laid out (Yin 2013). I chose archival research of media sources and the printed materials of economic justice organizations in order to examine popular discourses of development as well as counter-narratives and rallying messages among workers and worker organizers. I used participant observation from within a scholar-activist positionality in order to co-construct knowledge through ongoing dialogues and to gain longer-term access to groups of people who struggle with poverty, unpredictable schedules, and limited availability. Finally, I conducted semi-structured interviews in order to get at the narratives, experiences, and emotions of research participants.

3.2.2 Feminist Epistemologies

Within qualitative research, a major trend toward feminist approaches to research has centered on themes of embodiment, emotion and agency (Davies and Dwyer 2007). I build on this approach, highlighting individual narratives, emotional connections, and the exercise of agency by participants in the research process and within redevelopment. Using a feminist qualitative methodology, I frame this project within a material perspective of knowledge (Yeung 1997) while valuing both cognitive and non-cognitive ways of knowing “evidenced through embodiment or emotionality” (Davies and Dwyer: 258). As Davies and Dwyer (2007: 263) argue, the turn toward emotion and embodiment in qualitative methods recognizes “the way capital itself is increasingly animated by a range of affective processes.” Thus, rather than atheoretical or unscientific, the inclusion of multiple ways of knowing is crucial to this project, which examines power, transforming landscapes, and individual experiences.

3.2.3 Narrative Analysis

A focus on feminist epistemologies informs not only the methodologies I employ but also my theoretical approach to data analysis. For this research, I utilize feminist narrative theory, which conceives of narratives as existing within “a process intertwining rupture and repetition,” “embedded in relatively stable social power structures and histories of signification without therefore becoming entirely powerless themselves” (Breger 2015: 344). The “narrative turn” in the social sciences emerged in response to the inadequacies of “realist assumptions from natural science methods” (Riessman 1993: 1). This focus on narratives, and away from “discovering” objective truths, is one of many interventions of feminist theory that sought to challenge “the host of hegemonic regimes that constitute what passes as order and sense” (Coykendall 2015:

325). “Feminist theorists of all stripes, but in particular feminist narrative theorists, have succeeded in demonstrating how the very framing of fields of inquiry can jury-rig and short-circuit underlying systems of thought” (Coykendall 2015: 325). With this in mind, I have designed my project guided by questions and analysis approaches that elicit open-ended narratives and which give attention to the ways in which people choose to tell their stories.

For this research, I examine the ways in which narratives disrupt or support social relations of power in order to investigate how low-wage workers and organizers experience, challenge, and shape capitalist redevelopment in New Orleans. While individual narratives cannot provide the objective truth of what is “actually happening” (which does not exist), they “do tell us something” about how people represent and understand these processes (Claggett 2015: 359). Thus, “narrative analysis can be usefully employed in determining for what purpose, how, and why” (Claggett 2015: 359). Through semi-structured interviews and participant-observation field notes, I have generated meaningful experiential narratives. These narratives can be understood as representing particular (though fluid) subjectivities and positionalities, in which people tell stories in specific ways for specific purposes and which are informed by individual experiences and contexts.

I utilize narrative analysis in order to provide a rigorous examination of *how* subjects tell stories in order to determine “how the story is meant to be interpreted by the speaker” (Wiles et al. 2005: 92). Narrative analysis has its roots in feminist research, emerging as a method of analysis to challenge dominant, dehumanizing research practices (Riessman 2000). This process recognizes and respects the agency of interviewees while simultaneously allowing for “multiple layers” of interpretation (Riessman 2000, Wiles et al. 2005). Furthermore, methods of narrative analysis acknowledge the social context in which narratives are embedded, allowing for an

analysis of broader themes. Narrative analysis explores how the interview format itself impacts narratives, and in this regard, I am particularly attentive to the ways in which dialogues and conversations, as well as interview location, time, and context, shape narratives. I analyze narratives thematically as well as for the “multi-layered, contextualized interpretations of the conscious and less conscious meanings, moral ideas and values expressed” within the narrative itself (Wiles et al. 2005: 97). Within this process I look not only for the emphasized points but “the unsayable and the silence, the hesitation and the fracture” (Meloni et al. 2015: 118). Furthermore, taking account of how stories are told allows for a more comprehensive interpretation of complex, and sometimes contradictory, subjectivities. Wiles et al. (2005: 98) argue that narrative analysis allows for the possibility that “voices may disrupt our academic narratives,” challenging the preconceptions within the research project. In this manner, narrative analysis allows for interpretations of data that produce unexpected or counter-intuitive themes and stories.

One limitation for some social scientist critics of narrative analysis is the lack of a “formula” to analyze and interpret the crucial parts of stories and storytelling (Wiles et al. 2005). Thus, an interpretation of the data requires a highly individualized, contextual approach to analyzing narratives. However, a close examination of narratives and narrative structures allows for a more nuanced understanding of how workers and worker organizers view the redevelopment of New Orleans and their own agency in shaping the economic landscape.

3.2.4 Scholar-activism and Situated Solidarities

I am guided by qualitative methods in which I am embedded in the research community and build relationships with participants. I extend this approach beyond simply observing research activities. Rather, I focus on a “service research” model in which research “engages with activism to create social change” (Trauger and Fluri 2012: 3). This form of “service research” participant observation, or scholar-activism, provides an effective method to interrogate uneven development and worker agency by working alongside people as they confront and struggle against racial and economic inequalities. As Cahill (2004: 12) argues, this sort of approach “goes beyond the thick descriptions of ethnographic tradition, to actually interrogating the spaces between ... to get at the nexus between social construction and lived experiences, between micro- and macro-levels of the environment.” I utilize this framework to investigate the broad social and spatial relations embedded in New Orleans’s redevelopment, as well as the understandings and perceptions of the low-wage workers who live it. I employ this specific method of participant observation as a practical method to best answer my research questions as well as out of personal commitments to supporting economic justice movements, and reciprocity in social science research.

Guided by a commitment to “resourcefulness” (Derickson and Routledge 2015), I engage in scholar-activism dedicated to an active engagement with both scholarship and activism (Routledge and Derickson 2015). Derickson and Routledge (2015: 2) argue, “[T]he role of the scholar-activist is to pursue and engage with theoretical and conceptual questions in ways that are always insistently and dialectically rooted in the struggles of everyday life.” Thus, my interest in these research questions is directly linked to my personal experiences as a low-wage service worker and my broad commitment to labor and economic justice movements and anti-

racist politics in New Orleans, and beyond. My decision to actively participate in the economic and racial justice movements which inform my research stems from a moral imperative to make use of the resources I have available to me as an academic and as an activist. As Meloni et al. (2015: 113) note, in their study of undocumented youth in Canada, “To be sure, given the unbearably silent violence of the status quo, it would have not been possible to conduct this fieldwork, in this particular socio-political context, without becoming meaningfully involved in the action.”

Reflexively, I acknowledge that my examination of, and participation with, these research communities involves studying “a world already interpreted by people who are living their lives in it,” and that I can only hope to offer “an account of the ‘betweenness’ of their world and mine” (England 1994: 87). Theoretically, I bridge this “crisis of representation” with a dedication to “situated solidarities” (Nagar and Geiger 2007, Nagar 2014). Building on the work of Nagar and Geiger (2007: 272), I argue that “the intellectual and political value of engaging in fieldwork across borders [of difference] outweighs its problematic context.” Rather than reify socially constructed categories of identity through a simple declaration of subjectivity, I recognize the institutions and structures of power that shape different and fluid positionalities. I aim to co-produce knowledge across socioeconomic and geographic divides that remains conscious of and “rooted in our specific (multiple) contexts and place-based locations” (Nagar 2014: 85). Engaging in scholar activism informed by feminist methodologies, I consider “research participants as both the object of research and legitimate possessors and producers of knowledge” (Trauger and Fluri 2012: 2). Thus, while remaining deeply reflexive of the “structurally unequal worlds” (Nagar 2014: 89) I travel between to undertake this research, I am guided by shared political commitments to creating a more equal world.

Reflexivity, not only in the writing process but throughout the research design and fieldwork, was not only impossible for me to avoid, but useful and productive to the research. As England argues (1994: 82 [emphasis in the original]), “[R]eflexivity is self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self-conscious *analytical* scrutiny of the self as researcher. Indeed reflexivity is critical to the conduct of fieldwork; it induces self-discovery and can lead to insights and new hypotheses.” As an early-career researcher, lifelong activist, and longtime low-wage service industry worker, I initially struggled with the question of how to frame my identity to the social justice organizations and possible research participants I came in contact with. Self-conscious of being perceived of as “out of place” as a young, white, college-educated woman from California with very limited knowledge of New Orleans, I was conflicted as to whether to position myself as an educated research “authority”, or whether to highlight my hesitations, reservations, but overall dedication to this research project and the work of the organizations who inform it. I quickly realized that I am only somewhat in control of the naming and framing of my positionality and accepted that my perceived identity was constantly co-constructed in the interactions and honest and challenging dialogues with participants. As England suggests (1994: 86), “We do not conduct fieldwork on the unmediated world of the researched, but on the world *between* ourselves and the researched.”

Dialogues and relationships expose the “spaces in between” our situated knowledges while allowing us to cross borders (Cahill 2004, Nagar 2014). Though crucial, this process is hardly comfortable. “It is prickly. It is to defy gravity as you raise your consciousness, while you raise others’ consciousness, while you interrogate those spaces in between, those dark corners you would rather avoid” (Cahill 2004: 12). However, it is only through this interrogation, I argue, that we are able to avoid hand-wringing, and build mutually empowering solidarity

movements and research projects. As Meloni et al. (2015: 119) argue, dialogues between the researcher and participants provides the possibility to “together co-construct a third space ... of a mutual ethical encounter.”

A shift to a project guided by “situated solidarities” opened up spaces for fluid and embodied positionalities to emerge, grounded in shared struggles for a more equitable world. An understanding of my own embodied and constantly-shifting positionality encouraged me to consider in any given moment what was most useful to the organizations. At times this meant maintaining the role of researcher and pursuing the access, information, and conversations that would best develop the research project. At other times this meant accepting failures and refusals, waiting outside of meeting rooms while people had private conversations, watching people’s children so that they could fully participate in meetings and events, picking up supplies for protests rather than attending them, and facilitating rides to and from events. In this way, this project is guided by a commitment to social justice and by the openness, vulnerability, honesty, and love built into the relationships and friendships I formed throughout the process.

During this process, I reflexively shifted to an understanding of an embodied positionality in which I acknowledge the multiple and simultaneous subjectivities embedded in my identity and the research process itself. “This methodology suggests that researcher subjectivity is not fixed or static, or in between researcher and researched, but is simply incomplete, open, and malleable. Finding a place within the research project to allow for shared subjectivities to emerge then requires researchers to renegotiate their social locations of insider versus outsider and, thus, their positions of power within the communities under investigation” (Trauger and Fluri 2012: 2). Informed by Trauger and Fluri’s theorization of open subjectivities,

I was able to move beyond the paralysis of privilege to build a project guided by shared subjectivities and relationships “across borders” (Nagar 2014).

3.3 Case study

The study area focuses on the city of New Orleans, Louisiana. This research site is selected because of its long history of racial and economic oppression, the effects of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and the major redevelopment projects that have emerged over the last decade, as well as the powerful economic justice movement that has formed around the interrelated social and economic issues specific to the city. In *The State of Black New Orleans: 10 Years Post Katrina*, McConduit-Diggs (2015: 15) reflects on a question very similar to my own: “[O]n our road to recovery, have we reproduced some of the same inequities that existed prior to the storm and impeded people’s ability to quickly recover?” The report, published by the Urban League of Greater New Orleans, sees the present moment, a decade after the storm, as a necessary moment in which to reflect on growing income inequality, rising housing costs, disproportionate incarceration of black men, and racialized health disparities (McConduit-Diggs 2015). Snead and Govan (2015), in the same report, address the fact that, though African-Americans make up around sixty percent of New Orleans’s population, over ninety percent of incarcerated adults in New Orleans prisons are African-American. These numbers are even more stark for youth incarceration; ninety-nine percent of juveniles arrested in New Orleans are African-American (Snead and Govan 2015). Snead and Govan trace these patterns to conditions of racialized poverty, un- and underemployment, substandard schools, as well as institutionalized racism. These processes inform my research as I examine a case study of uneven redevelopment and low-wage worker organizing a decade after Hurricane Katrina.

Neighborhoods in Orleans Parish

Legend:
 Neighborhood boundaries
 Parks

Scale: 0 1 2 4 Miles

Neighborhoods shown include: West End, Lakeview, Navarre, Lakewood, Dixon, Mid-City, Gert Town, Leonidas, Marlyville/Fontainebleau, East Carroll, Black Pearl, Audubon, Uptown, Touro, East Riverside, West Riverside, Freret, Milan, Garden District, Irish Channel, St. Thomas Dev, Lower Garden District, Central City, Central Business District, B.W. Cooper, Tulane/Gravier, Iberville, French Quarter, Marigny, St. Claude, Florida Dev, Florida Area, St. Roch, St. Bernard Area, Dillard, Gentilly Terrace, Gentilly Woods, Pontchartrain Park, Milneburg, St. Anthony, Lake Terrace & Oaks, Lakeshore/Lake Vista, City Park, Fillmore, Fairgrounds, Bayou St. John, Seventh Ward, Desire Area, Desire Dev, Pines Village, West Lake Forest, Plum Orchard, Read Blvd West, Read Blvd East, Little Woods, Viavant/Venetian Isles, Lower Ninth Ward, Holy Cross, Bywater, Algiers Point, Whitney, McDonogh, U.S. Naval Base, Fischer Dev, Behrman, Old Aurora, Tall Timbers/Brechtel, New Aurora/English Turn.

Inset map shows: Village De L'Est, Lake Catherine, Viavant/Venetian Isles.

Scale: 0 0.5 1 Miles

Greater New Orleans
COMMUNITY
Data CENTER
 Created by Jay Bonaguro, Feb 3, 2004, <www.gnocdc.org>
 Data sources: Water & parish boundaries (Census Tiger files), parks (ESRI StreetMap 2003), neighborhood boundaries (City Planning Commission of New Orleans)

48

McConduit-Diggs (2015: 15-16) goes on to ask, “Are we seizing this opportunity to transform the city into a better version of itself, one in which all its residents can prosper and thrive?” I argue that this is a central question of the economic justice movement in New Orleans. Rather than an incidental process, the reinscription of racial and economic inequalities is a central part of post-Katrina redevelopment. Low-wage workers and worker organizers experience and challenge these processes to work toward a more equitable future in New Orleans and the South. The economic justice movement confronts unique labor geographies, not only in the city, but across the South, in which labor organizing has a long history of failures. Bayard (2015: 41) summarizes the broader landscape of race, labor, and economics in the South: “Over fifty percent of the African American population currently lives in the South, where unions are next to non-existent and poverty levels are among the highest in the nation.” Together, this broad context of racial and economic inequality, and the erasure of working-class agency in the city of New Orleans, inform the research questions I explore and the methods I utilize.

The racialized policies, and economic inequalities built into the design and development of the city over centuries, have created a landscape marked by poverty and trauma. Rather than a series of unfortunate crises, the repeated devastation of predominantly black neighborhoods, and the pervasive poverty and unemployment among New Orleans’s black workers, stem from longstanding socio-spatial relations of racial and economic subjugation. The Lower Ninth ward, now synonymous with the death and destruction of Hurricane Katrina, developed over centuries as a site of black vulnerability and trauma. Once a refuge for escaped slaves, the Lower Ninth ward became a haven for “upwardly mobile” middle-income black families under the racially discriminatory housing policies of the 1950s. Soon after, the neighborhood was destroyed by Hurricane Betsy when the floodgates were closed to protect the rest of the city (Horowitz 2014).

Seen in this context, the shocking poverty and widespread neglect of Lower Ninth ward residents during Hurricane Katrina are illuminated as ongoing reproductions of racial and economic inequality in space.

Over the last decade, redevelopment of a New New Orleans has focused on strengthening tourism industries and expanding capitalist infrastructure and luxury developments. These redevelopments serve wealthy residents and tourists while physically and psychologically displacing low-income, predominantly black residents. These residents provide the workforce of the New New Orleans: in construction, restaurants, bars, casinos, and hotels. From this position, low-wage workers uniquely experience and challenge post-Katrina redevelopment and its reproduction of low-wage, unstable employment, pervasive poverty, displacement, and the broader conditions of *blackness* in the city. With this in mind, I explore how the redeveloping landscape reshapes and reinscribes inequalities and how this process is experienced and acted on by low-wage workers and community organizers within the economic justice movement in New Orleans

3.4 Research Methods

3.4.1 Research Design

I designed this project to examine whether, and to what extent, uneven redevelopment in post-Katrina New Orleans maintains or strengthens racial and economic inequalities and how the process is experienced, and challenged by low-wage workers and worker organizers. I use qualitative, feminist, and scholar-activist methodologies and qualitative methods to explore these questions. Guided by this framework, I conducted fieldwork in New Orleans, Louisiana in June and July 2015 and parts of August 2015. During this time I lived full-time in New Orleans in the

Uptown neighborhood. New Orleans was chosen as the research site for several reasons. First, as a Southern city with very low rates of unionism, New Orleans is central to a discourse on the impossibilities of organizing in the South. This contrasts with the number of unions, community organizations, and worker organizations focusing on labor and employment issues in New Orleans. Second, the economy in New Orleans is largely supported by low-wage work and flexible work in hospitality, restaurant, and construction industries. The very low-wages, high levels of job insecurity, and often short-term employment in these industries demand further study. Third, New Orleans's history of racial and economic discrimination, segregation, and injustice are significant and well-documented and play out in new and ongoing ways. A continued focus is crucial to understand ways in which a more equitable city may be created. Finally, the timing of the field work, nearly a decade after Hurricane Katrina, meant that people had sufficient time to reflect on redevelopment, but also that the destruction of Hurricane Katrina and its ongoing effects were on people's minds as the anniversary approached. This context allowed me to thoroughly examine how redevelopment was experienced, particularly with regard to economic and racial inequalities, and the agency of workers and worker organizers in supporting or challenging these processes.

My fieldwork was originally designed to involve working full-time as a volunteer with Restaurant Opportunities Center New Orleans (*ROC-NOLA*) in which I would observe the daily work of campaigns, interview staff and worker members, and collect materials for the purposes of archival research. Upon arrival, I came to realize that my participation with *ROC-NOLA* would be limited based on changes to the staff and the lack of active organizing and local campaigns. On the recommendation of a former ROC staff member, I expanded the scope of my research design to include organizers and activists affiliated with a range of collaborative and

interrelated local social justice and labor organizations, as well as unaffiliated restaurant and bar employees. In addition to *ROC-NOLA*, I interviewed and actively participated with members and organizers of *Stand with Dignity* (part of the New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice), *Show Me \$15*, and *UNITE HERE Local 2262*. I also observed and spoke with members of *Congreso de Jornaleros* [Congress of Day Laborers] (also with the New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice), and *Black Youth Project 100* (BYP100). Together, this network of organizations provided a broad scope of the economic and social justice organizing going on in the city of New Orleans.

Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC) is a non-profit worker organization that focuses on low-wages, sexual harassment, and racial discrimination in the restaurant industry through targeting legislation, media campaigns, research studies, and public protests. Originally formed in New York in the aftermath of 9/11 as a support group for the surviving workers of the World Trade Center restaurant, where seventy-three low-wage immigrant workers were killed and the remaining 300 struggled with displacement, unemployment, and poverty, ROC has since expanded their work to eleven cities, including New Orleans.

Stand with Dignity, along with *Congreso de Jornaleros* (Congress of Day Laborers), are part of the New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice. *Stand with Dignity* organizes around issues of un- and underemployment of black workers, specifically in construction industries. *Stand with Dignity* also targets policies affecting black workers, such as the barring of formerly incarcerated people from public housing, the inclusion of a box requiring disclosure of prior convictions on initial job forms, racial discrimination on job sites, the destruction of public housing, and the lack of opportunities in New Orleans.

Show Me \$15 is the New Orleans chapter of the national *Fight for \$15* movement. This movement focuses on low-wage workers, mainly those in fast-food industries, who demand higher wages (at \$15 an hour) and a fair process to unionize. This movement has provided a highly visible face to the struggle against bad jobs in New Orleans and nationwide, as well as the disproportionate concentration of women and workers of color in bad jobs (Resnikoff, AlJazeera.com 2014).

Unite Here Local 2262 is the local union office for New Orleans and the wider Gulf region. *Unite Here* organizes workers in hotels, casinos, restaurants, convention centers, arenas, and corporate cafeterias. In New Orleans, they represent about 1,300 workers (of the estimated 70,000 tourism-related jobs) at the Loews Hotel, Harrah's, and the convention center (McClendon, Nola.com 2014a). Though a small proportion, *Unite Here* has been actively organizing workers and maintains a strong presence in the economic justice movement.

The research design was amended to involve frequent communication with *ROC-NOLA*, *Stand with Dignity*, *Unite Here Local 2262*, and *Show Me \$15* to see what, if any, assistance they needed, and to involve attending organizing and planning meetings, events, protests, city hall hearings, marches, and daily work sessions with the aforementioned organizations. On days in which no help was needed and there was no meeting or event to attend, I contacted possible participants affiliated with the organizations, and spoke to restaurant workers and bartenders in tourist areas, some of whom were later interviewed. I became embedded in the local social justice movement and made myself constantly available to assist and participate.

3.4.2 Data Collection

I conducted nineteen semi-structured interviews of workers, activists, and worker organizers in New Orleans. Interviews were conducted at the time and location of the participant's choosing and recorded via audio recorder. Recordings were later transcribed and analyzed. Interview participants were selected based on the criteria that they occupy positions as organizers with local labor and community organizations, participate with organizations as activist workers, and/or work in restaurant/bar and hospitality industries. Restaurant and bar employees were contacted through personal contact as well as chain-referral sampling. Organizers and activist workers were contacted through my ongoing participation as a volunteer and activist with the campaigns of local organizations.

Interviews were based on a template of open-ended written questions that elicited broader dialogues. I created a template of interview questions for workers and organizers (See Appendix A). Originally designed specifically for organizers and workers affiliated with Restaurant Opportunities Center New Orleans (*ROC-NOLA*), these templates were adapted to suit the variety of participants interviewed. The template was also intended to allow for additional questions to come up and to elicit unguided conversation.

Interviews were performed individually except in the case of Toya and Williana, and Josh and Hayden, who chose to be interviewed together. Toya was then interviewed individually at a later date. All other participants were interviewed in one session ranging from thirty-seven minutes to one hour and forty-nine minutes. Participants were informed of any risks and benefits to their participation, and signed informed consent forms prior to beginning the interview. Particular attention was paid to the nature of the location and any adverse effects that might stem from the (often public) spaces in which interviews took place. All participants judged that there

was no risk to their participation. In addition, as per I.R.B. guidelines, participants were asked if they would like to be identified by their first names, or if they would like an alias to be used.

Two participants chose to be identified by an alias, while the other seventeen judged that there was no harm to being identified by first name. Many organizers and activist workers noted that they regularly speak on these issues in public settings and chose to speak openly with me regarding the organizations they work with and the campaigns they work on.

I conducted semi-structured interviews based on an initial template of questions, which developed into active dialogues in which knowledge was co-constructed. The initial questions and follow-up conversations were intended to elicit narratives and personal stories, allowing participants to frame their experiences and understandings of the issues in their own words. Though the focus was on participants freely dictating their stories, I actively shared my own opinions, experiences, and motivations. Developing an “understanding of their model of the world and communicating [my] understanding symmetrically” was necessary to building the “rapport” “critical to the success of an interview” (Dunn 2010: 112). Furthermore, my participation in the dialogue was intended to build real relationships and trust, highlight my genuine interest in the issues, and make myself equally open to answering the questions I posed to others.

Semi-structured interviews were focused on subjects telling stories in their own narratives. Wiles et al. (2005: 90) describe the value of this method: “Interviews provide an opportunity to treat those whose perspectives and experiences we are interested in as knowledgeable, capable and reflective participants in the research process.” Because of this mechanism, interviews provide a particularly useful method to highlight a framework of worker agency. Participants were asked to reflect on the changes they have witnessed, their experiences

of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and the decade of redevelopment, and to identify the issues they feel are pressing (Q1). Interviews also allowed participants to share the campaigns and events in which they have participated, their ideal vision for the city, and any message they would like to share (Q2) (See Appendix A for question templates). In this way, the interview structure elicited a range of narratives around redevelopment, social and economic issues, lived experiences, and moments of agency. Interviews provide a useful tool to address my research questions within methodologies of qualitative research and situated solidarities. This method “shows respect for and empowers the people who provide data” (Dunn 2010: 102). Taking seriously the narratives of participants allows the data “to counter the claims of those who presume to have discovered the *public opinion*” – in this case, that New Orleans is back and better than ever (Dunn 2010: 102 [emphasis in the original]) - and to investigate alternative perspectives of the ways redevelopment is experienced, understood, and shaped.

Informed by qualitative methodologies, I used participant observation as a method in which I, as a researcher, was embedded in the community being studied in order to best understand the lived experience of the issues in question. As Kearns (2010: 245) notes, participant observation “has been adopted and adapted by geographers seeking to understand more fully the meanings of place and the contexts of everyday life.” I chose this method in order to understand uneven development “on the ground,” as it is experienced by low-wage workers and worker organizers. Participant observation supplements interviews because it “requires us to move beyond reliance on formalized interactions” to develop a “geography of everyday experience” (Kearns 2010: 245). This method is also informed by feminist methodologies in which data are collected through relationships, conversations, and experiences. Participant observation acknowledges that, in order to observe, the researcher must almost always be

present, and thus is part of the research (Kearns 2010). Kearns (2010: 253) argues, “We cannot blend in as researchers unless we participate in the social relations we are seeking to understand.” I see participant observation less as “blending in” and more as a process of showing solidarity. I employ participant observation within a framework of scholar-activism guided by situated solidarities (Nagar and Geiger 2007). In this way, I go beyond acknowledging my position in the research project, to assist the work of my participants and build mutually beneficial relationships.

Participant observation was conducted throughout the two-month period in New Orleans. During this time, I kept a journal of daily field notes in which I recorded the actions I had taken during the day, any contact made with local organizations or participants, any conversations had, and the events, meetings, and social gatherings I attended (see Emerson et. al. 1995). Though initially I had trouble contacting organizations, as the project progressed, I spent nearly every day engaged with organizations, speaking to workers in the community, or conducting interviews. During this time I focused mainly on what I deemed to be important events. Each night I typed up and organized my field notes from my journal. My typed field notes total approximately forty pages of notes.

This research also included photographing and videotaping various events. In June and July 2015 I recorded ten short videos and took sixty photographs. When I returned for the ten-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina (28 August 2015 – 30 August 2015) I recorded seven short videos and took fifty-two photographs. These images include some photographs of the city and my surroundings, but most images document events, protests, marches, and artistic and theatrical displays. Videos include fragments of protest speeches, healing drum circles, moments of marching, theatrical skits, panelist presentations, and acts of civil disobedience. These photos

and videos supplement my field notes as visual representations of the actions and events I documented, and also shape my own observations about the landscape as I experience it.

I utilize news sources, research publications, and documents produced by worker organizations in order to provide textual and archival support to this work. I include only publicly distributed materials, rather than inaccessible scholarly archives, with the realization that researchers' access to archives often repositions them as privileged experts (Roche 2010: 186). For the purposes of my project, I focus on the sources available to low-wage workers and produced by worker organizations. I analyze these easily accessible sources not as objective truths about events and processes, but for insight into what information is distributed to the public, and what messages, arguments, and viewpoints are provided within these textual documents. I compare the arguments, narratives, and memories of interview respondents and those I worked alongside to characterizations in the media and the documents I collected.

Archival materials were collected from the free online database of articles from the major New Orleans newspaper "The Times-Picayune" (online as Nola.com) and other popular media sources, including The New Orleans Advocate and The New Orleans Tribune. The collection of articles was focused on redevelopment issues, specifically with regard to restaurant and bar openings, tourist attractions, upcoming festivals, food news, and neighborhood changes. I also compiled articles that mentioned the organizations I worked with, major development and construction projects, reflections around the 10-year anniversary of Katrina, and the rallies, protests, and marches occurring.

In addition, I collected pamphlets, fliers, meeting agendas, and newsletters distributed by the organizations I worked with. Many of these address ongoing campaigns, feature prominent activists, highlight the problems, and address potential or realized solutions. In this way, archival

materials are useful indications of the work being done by social justice organizations and their vision for the city. I also collected signs, posters, handouts, and emblazoned fans, bandanas, and towels that were distributed to participants at major rallies and marches. These contain strong political messages meant to encapsulate the purpose of the events, as well as invitations to future actions and events.

Table 3.1: Data Table

	Overview Totals	Details
Interviews	19 semi-structured interviews (19 interviewees)	18 hours, 37 minutes total audio ~300 pages of transcriptions
Participant Observation	June & July 2015 (61 days) August 28-30 (3 days)	40 pages of field notes 17 short videos 112 photographs
Economic Justice Organizations' Distributed Materials	27 handouts, newsletters, pamphlets, meeting agendas 7 protest signs, posters, fans, bandanas, towels 1 T-shirt (Stand with Dignity)	From: Stand with Dignity, Show Me \$15, ROC-NOLA, Justice and Beyond, Unite Here Local 2262, Greater New Orleans Foundation, Workplace Justice Project, New Orleans Health Department, Congreso de Jornaleros, Gulf South Rising, Fair Immigration Reform Movement, and others
Public News Sources and Media Accounts	22 Newspaper Articles from the Times-Picayune (online as Nola.com), The New Orleans Advocate The New Orleans Tribune Volume 31, Number 6	Topics: redevelopment, new restaurants, infrastructure projects, worker organizing, protests, Mayor's speeches Issue: "Black and Blue: America's Race & Criminal Justice Problem"

3.4.3 Data Analysis

Field notes, archival documents, and interviews were analyzed for themes and keywords and concepts. The majority of the narrative data comes from the nineteen interviews, totaling eighteen hours and thirty-seven minutes of audio and nearly three hundred pages of transcriptions, that I then coded for relevant themes. Data analysis is guided by a theoretical framework of feminist methodologies and situated solidarities. Further, I engage with agentic frameworks from *labor geographies*. With these epistemologies as my starting point, I engage in narrative analysis to provide a more thoughtful approach to examining how people tell stories and the range of subjectivities embedded in narratives.

Interviews were coded by hand as well as with the assistance of the mixed-method analysis program Dedoose. Dedoose software allows for a range of visual interpretations of codes across demographic variables, while hand coding provides a more in-depth and personal analysis of themes and surprising moments. Initial codes focused on references to before or after Hurricane Katrina, workplace issues, which were broken down into issues with pay, job insecurity, discrimination, and sexual harassment, references to places and development, challenges, organizing and agency, and expressions of hope. After initial coding, I added a number of codes for themes that came up, including statements about belonging, alienation, power, race, solidarity, intersectionality, and change more generally. Coding was designed to examine the research questions set out, including to how low-wage workers experience processes of redevelopment and the reproduction of racial and economic inequalities in New Orleans and how low-wage workers and worker organizers contest and/or challenge processes of rebuilding to resist or reproduce the goals of redevelopment. However, a second round of coding was

necessary to go beyond the established goals in order to illuminate unexpected or contrary themes.

Additionally, narratives were analyzed beyond the statements in order to account for the context, positionalities, and processes by which people shared stories. Transcriptions include noted pauses and emphases, and audio files were repeatedly revisited to analyze the iterative and dialogical processes within conversations and narratives. Codes were created to signify particular emphases, hesitations, and refusals within narratives. These moments are given particular attention in an attempt to honor the way people choose to frame their own experiences, and the larger socio-spatial relations in which they are embedded.

3.5 Conclusion

I conclude this chapter with a note on how I, as a scholar-activist, understand this project “giving back.” Pulido (2008: 350) argues, “Two fundamental issues should guide how scholar activists approach community work: accountability and reciprocity.” Accountability figured into this project in that I made clear that I was open to challenging conversations, and repeatedly positioned myself not as an expert but as an ally. In all-black planning meetings I limited the amount of speaking time I took up, joining in only to synthesize some of the arguments being made and to lend an additional perspective. In these meetings I positioned myself to be open to critiques and oppositional viewpoints, and challenging conversations. This involved being asked, “Why are people of color responsible for building movements when we’re not the ones doing the oppressing?” and “Why don’t white people organize themselves like we do?” In one discussion, I was asked point blank to lend a “white perspective” to a conversation on racial employment discrimination. In each moment I tried to rise to the occasion to the best of my ability to be as

accountable to them as I asked them to be with me in discussing the racial and economic oppression they struggle against every day. Though I could hardly speak on behalf of all white people, I did open myself up to discussing at length my perspective as a young white female scholar-activist. I encouraged participants to be open regarding any suspicions or concerns with my research project. This involved answering questions about my funding sources, personal history, and potential outcomes of the research.

Reciprocity has been a greater challenge as I aim to understand the project retrospectively. First and foremost, I attempted to “give back” to these organizations by volunteering in a “rank-and-file” position (Pulido 2008: 349). Rather than taking a leadership role, I made myself available to facilitate and assist in whatever needed to be done. This is more in line in with Derickson’s reflections of early fieldwork (Derickson and Routledge 2015: 5) in which she describes how she “made herself available for any menial task that the organizations with which she worked required.” Derickson (2015: 5) argues, “critical and engaged academics need not be so timid about offering up the specific skill sets they bring to the table.” Yet, at many times, I felt my organizing skills, and access to a smartphone and car were the greatest resources I could offer up. At other times, I was most useful in providing moderate computer literacy skills, proofreading documents, or creating flyers to be distributed.

I also take seriously the reciprocal process of building relationships and friendships with the people with whom I worked, the success of which is evidenced by the numerous conversations and check-ins I have had with past participants in the months since leaving New Orleans. Though this document may not tell anyone anything about their world that they did not already know, I return it to the organizations I worked with in the hopes that they may seize any words, phrases, or arguments that strengthen their positions. At the very least, this document is

evidence that there is an ongoing struggle in a region that is said to be “impossible to organize.”

I trust that the relationships I have forged will guide my sense of reciprocity and I honor the words of support I have received from participants. Participants also expressed a level of catharsis in telling their stories, and empowerment in the knowledge that someone out there cares, and others may read this document and care.

Though I see this research as contributing to the movement for a more racially and economically equitable New Orleans, there were a number of obstacles and limitations I encountered during field work and analysis. Upon reflection, some relevant data, such as the informal conversations I had while driving people to and from meetings and events, may be missing from field notes because of my inability to record notes while driving, and my (perhaps erroneous) sense early on in the project that these conversations were not noteworthy. There were also times when I decided that allowing privacy, or facilitating the needs of organizations was more important than recording notes. These decisions were driven by my respect for participants, and my commitment to the work of these organizations. Though I was able to interview the majority of the people I worked with, time impoverishment among participants made it impossible to conduct follow-up interviews. This research was also constrained by my own limited period of field work in New Orleans. In particular, much of the first month was spent contacting organizations and trying to make connections. Originally intending to focus solely on *ROC-NOLA*, an organization with whom I have preexisting connections, I came to find that ROC was not expecting me, had little work for me, and little active organizing in progress. Though I did speak with a number of ROC members and organizers, I realized the need to expand the research project to a broader network of collaborative economic justice and labor

organizations in New Orleans. This change in research design impacted my already brief period of field work.

While I make no assertion of presenting one objective truth about what is happening in New Orleans, I describe a thoroughly reflexive research project embedded in broader commitments to social and economic justice. This project is not simply an academic endeavor, but a transformative exercise in solidarity and building relationships. As Frances Fox Piven remarks in her “Reflections on Scholarship and Activism” (2010: 810), “We are activists because of the joy political work gives us, because even when we fail, working to make our society kinder, fairer, more just, gives a satisfaction like no other, because the comrades we find in the effort are friends like no other, and also because our activist efforts illuminate our social and political world in ways that scholarship alone never can.”

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

There are physical manifestations of the New New Orleans way – shining symbols of our rebirth and our resilience. And there is perhaps no better example than the newly reopened St. Roch Market. [...] It's in places like the St. Roch Market and in people like these striving entrepreneurs where we can truly see what it means to become a better version of ourselves -- what it means to create the New Orleans that we should have been. But at the core of this vision is progress. And it's change. And change is hard. But here's the thing -- change is going to come. [...] I want you to think about the criminals who in the dark of night with hammers and paint vandalized the St. Roch Market to try to destroy what we created as a community.

- New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu, "State of the City" address (28 May 2015)

St. Roch neighborhood, if you've read anything about that, with that market they added, vandalizing and all of that, from the residents who -- the place is predominately a black neighborhood, and it always has been, but now with the stuff going on in developments it's become the hipster capital over by the Marigny, and the Bywater, and St. Roch area. It's a bunch of white kids moving into these neighborhoods and changing the landscape of the place. The people who have been there forever, generations, don't know where they're coming from and they don't do things the same. They look at it, and I see their view on it, as they're being pushed out of their place. They're being -- because they've always been shit on, and they've always been given the last end of the stick and all the rest of that, and now all of a sudden this is happening, and it causes -- and things get vandalized, because it's their community that's being changed and turned into something they don't want it to be.

- Hayden, bartender (July 2015)

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present an analysis of the research findings within the theoretical framework laid out in Chapter Two. First, I argue that the uneven development of a "New New Orleans" over the last decade focuses on capitalist infrastructure and luxury tourist attractions to the detriment of working people and long-time residents of the city. I consider public narratives of a New Orleans that is back and better than ever against the range of racial and economic

issues that have arisen, or remain entrenched in processes of landscape production and capitalist development.

Next, I describe the unique experiences of workers and activists as they struggle for employment and better jobs, and confront a range of intersectional issues. I argue that the economic justice movement goes beyond labor relations to challenge the broader conditions of *blackness* in New Orleans. I examine the highly collaborative and cooperative economic justice movement that has developed to respond to these far-reaching issues and the challenges of organizing in New Orleans in industries that simultaneously displace and alienate them within a changing landscape.

Third, I consider how uneven redevelopment is uniquely experienced by low-wage workers who are alienated and displaced by the production of a New New Orleans. I consider the intense emotional responses working people have to experiencing landscape change, but also their demands to be part of those changes and to have a voice in redevelopment. The anti-racist economic justice movement, largely organized around the call of “Black Workers Matter,” challenges the racialized labor geographies of New Orleans’s redevelopment in which low-wage, predominantly black workers are locked out of the prosperity of the New New Orleans and locked into unstable, poverty-wage jobs. I examine how workers and worker organizers challenge racialized labor geographies of low-wage employment to present alternative visions of an equitable New New Orleans. I argue that the economic justice movement shapes the process of uneven redevelopment, not simply through legislative battles and policies, but through reframing narratives of who belongs and what matters in New Orleans’s redevelopment. I see these three sections as providing an analysis of the processes of uneven redevelopment and

racialized labor geographies in post-Katrina New Orleans, as they are experienced, shaped and challenged by low-wage, predominantly black workers and activists.

4.2 The New New Orleans

4.2.1 Creation, Commodification, and the “New New Orleans Way”

New Orleans’s Mayor Mitch Landrieu, in his 2015 State of the City address, proudly proclaimed, “Nearly ten years after Katrina, we’re no longer recovering. We’re not rebuilding. Now we’re creating.” He noted signs of progress evidenced by the “restaurant and retail boom,” \$364 million World Trade Center project, and “world-class airport” under construction. To be fair, Mayor Landrieu noted that, in some ways, the city has a long way to go, and emphasized the need for economic development, affordable housing, and better schools. He addressed the traumas of Hurricane Katrina that “will never fully heal,” and the “racial reconciliation” still needed to make amends for the “nation’s original sin,” slavery. Still, much of Mayor Landrieu’s speech revolved around a development-focused concept of progress, manifested in the “501 projects worth 1.36 billion dollars.” To highlight the special flavor of New Orleans’s recovery he asked the crowd, “Can you think of any other place in the world where you can lose 100,000 people and gain 600 more restaurants than we had before Katrina?” For Mayor Landrieu, then, it is the new businesses not the return of displaced residents, which are the necessary measure of a complete recovery. As Peter (June 2015), a local organizer, pointed out in response to the Mayor’s statement, “To him, that’s a sign of the success of the rebirth or restoration of New Orleans or whatever, and it’s just – it’s deeply cynical is what it is.” The mayor also neglected to focus on the fact these new restaurants and retail stores tend to be unstable, low-wage employers. Instead, he emphasized the bigger-than-ever parades, festivals, and sporting events taking place

in the city, pandering to a tourist-centric concept of what New Orleans should be. This, Landrieu explains, is part of the New New Orleans: “Because we’re not just rebuilding the city we once were, but we’re creating the city we should have always been if we would have gotten it right the first time. This is much more than a slogan: It’s called the New New Orleans way.”

“New New Orleans” is a phrase many people are familiar with in New Orleans. New New Orleans is the term used to signify a more glamorous, upscale, sanitized, and tourist-focused city of New Orleans in the decade since Hurricane Katrina. The discussion of a New New Orleans is often accompanied by talk of resilience, rebirth, growth and progress. Thus, the destructiveness of Hurricane Katrina is juxtaposed with the wealth of capitalist development that has followed. I argue that the storm provided developers an opportunity not only to rebuild in more profitable ways, but to reframe the city as even more of a corporatized, high-end tourist destination. While physically the city was far from wiped clean, Hurricane Katrina provided the mass displacement of low-income black residents, and renewed focus on major development necessary to provide a conceptual clean slate, allowing for an ideological remaking of the city.

Though participants noted the dramatic changes since Hurricane Katrina, they see these processes as a continuation, or amplification, of racial and economic inequalities longstanding in the city. Hayden (July 2015), a local bartender born and raised in New Orleans, argued that development is driven by patterns of economic dominance and cronyism that’s “been in the works in this city since slavery ... You want to trace back some family ties, I guarantee you’ll run into the same Marigny plantation families that still run shit around there. I mean, you’ll find those names.” To Hayden, gentrification in the Marigny and Bywater neighborhoods is only the most recent stage in ongoing processes of dispossession and domination endured by black residents. Hayden draws connections between the present-day landscape changes and racialized

labor geographies and a regional economy that was built on the total control and subordination of black bodies. As neighborhoods of prior disinvestment gentrify, low-income black residents are locked out of the prosperity and locked into unstable low-wage employment. Participants noted that the broader design of uneven redevelopment in post-Katrina New Orleans appears carefully orchestrated, as might be expected given the work of city boosters and their allied partners.

“They didn't just think of it yesterday, right? So clearly it's something that's, like, been in the works. I know that the section of the land past the convention center - they're looking to expand the convention center, build a whole other water front hotel,” Peter (June 2015) argued, “Not that [these processes] weren't happening here, but before Katrina they were happening in a slower way, and ever since then, it's just been like the engine is just getting going faster, and faster, and faster.”

The development of the New New Orleans is an intentional and uneven process, involving the careful maintenance and reproduction of key tourist areas. The manufacture and commodification of New Orleans culture is at its peak in the French Quarter. “I mean, a place where a majority of people who are out of town here come is the French Quarter. They go to the French Quarter. That's what everybody knows is the French Quarter. Where you're going to see the most cops and the most shit being done, and the most care being taken” (Hayden, July 2015). The French Quarter is maintained and reproduced as the encapsulation of all of New Orleans's culture, carefully curated and packaged, without any of the “real” people or problems of New Orleans. As Josh (July 2015), another local bartender born and raised in New Orleans, noted, “The French Quarter is like the Disneyland part of New Orleans. It's like Disneyworld for adults, so everybody is from wherever, everybody's wasted all the time, which leads to a fair amount of disrespect to the servers and bartenders or whoever is working.” The “Disneyfied

BigEasyVille” development style was predicted by Neil Smith in “There’s No Such Thing as a Natural Disaster” (2006). Writing shortly after Hurricane Katrina, Smith warned of the potential for “[w]holesale gentrification at a scale as yet unseen in the United States ... oozing even more manufactured authenticity” (2006).

These processes, however, do not occur solely at the neighborhood level, but are uniquely experienced by long-time residents and working people in New Orleans whose very existence becomes part of the show. As Josh (July 2015) elaborated, “Like I said, everybody thinks it’s Disneyland. We’re not human beings. We’re the cast of New Orleans, you know what I mean?” For Josh and others, post-Katrina redevelopment is an active process of producing spaces of manufactured authenticity for the consumption of tourists. This is driven, in part, by ever-increasing numbers of visiting tourists. “Post-Katrina we’ve had an influx of outsiders coming in, looking at -- This is where the culture is. I mean, this is where houses with the fancy designs and the stuff that you see on TV, this is where people want to live. People want to walk outside and smell the food from the restaurants. They want to walk outside and hear music from the street where the musicians are playing” (Cedric, July 2015). To accommodate for increasing tourism, development in New Orleans has centered on major infrastructure projects like a new airport and hundreds of new upscale condominiums, as well as renovating and building the hotels, bars, and restaurants that draw people to the city and support tourism industries.

The French Quarter is the main neighborhood identified by participants as the center of an increasingly commodified, upscale, “touristy” New New Orleans. But the development of New New Orleans has reached beyond the French Quarter to formerly “authentic” neighborhoods, areas of prior disinvestment, and formerly low-income black neighborhoods. Many participants lamented the changes to Frenchman St., formerly considered the locals’ spot.

“Frenchman Street for me was always the place to go, because the bars down there were amazing. It was always a good mix of like tourists but a lot of locals will go down there because of the music and stuff, and I have noticed especially ever since I've been back that even Frenchman Street has become way, way more touristy and way, way more busy, which kind of sucks” (Randy, July 2015). Josh (July 2015) expanded on this topic: “Well, with the rebirth of like Frenchman Street coming back and being like the locals' answer to Bourbon Street, it's our street of bars. It's like real jazz, real music, and not just like Bourbon Street cover bands and all that stuff. That happened for *us* and that happened for the locals, and then tourists started finding out about that.” The rhetorical dichotomy of “for us (locals)” versus “for them (tourists)” was referenced by a number of participants who see development steering more and more toward the promotion of a fictional and sanitized version of the city, rather than serving the needs of residents.



Figure 4.1: Mayor Mitch Landrieu speaking at a public budget meeting

Much of the discussion around cultural commodification in New Orleans centers on restaurants, chefs, and food. Many participants described the discomfiting processes by which familiar foods have become marketing devices. “It’s different when you grow up here, because the foods that all the foodies want are just the stuff that you’ve got at home when you’re a kid. [...] And that was more just a way of poor families really keeping food on the table is taking scraps and making a meal out of it” (Josh, July 2015). As with the rise of corporatized jazz clubs, voodoo tours, and Hurricane Katrina disaster tourism, the commodification of creole-inspired food is part of an ongoing process by which tourism industries exploit the perceived exoticism and “culture” of low-income and black residents (Woods 2009; Hartnell 2009). Peter (June 2015) expanded on this point: “With kind of the rise of foodie culture and all this stuff, and New Orleans is famous for its food, as it should be, right? [...] It’s sort of this interesting intersection of like authentic pride and culture and how that gets commodified and sold and made elite in some way that it’s not accessible to the people who created that culture.” For local residents, then, the foods they grew up eating are not only being stripped of their authenticity, but are also being sold at prices that are not affordable and in restaurants where many local people feel unwelcome. The new restaurants are part of a trend toward higher- and higher-end dining establishments, many with “celebrity chefs” attached. These head chefs, many participants noted, build cooking empires based on recipes developed by generations of black matriarchs. Specifically, many participants expressed disapproval regarding Food Network star Emeril Agassi’s co-optation of traditional foods. “Emeril who is the top [pause] ‘real’ chef, learned all of his cooking cuisine from New Orleans but he does not pay homage to New Orleans unless it benefits him” (Tonyelle, July 2015). “You’ve got to think of who the celebrities of New Orleans used to be, like Louis Armstrong, like these guys that actually helped build part of what

the soul of this city is. What does Emeril do other than take stuff that we've already done and put it on TV? And add a gimmick” (Josh, July 2015).

The commodification of New Orleans’s “essence” in fine dining establishments has not resulted in opportunities for black workers in the city. I spoke to an employee at an iconic fine dining restaurant who, as a food runner working for \$2.13 and tips, made less money (sometimes not even minimum wage) and worked under more stressful conditions than he had working in the fast food industry. This particular restaurant, many participants noted, constantly overturns dozens of entry-level back-of-house positions as workers are dismissed for any reason (or no reason), or they simply give up and look for work elsewhere. Employment is also tied to seasonality of tourism in which workers are “let go” whenever business slows for more than a couple of days. In these restaurants, workers of color are spatially segregated in lower-paying back-of-house positions in upscale restaurants while managers, servers, and bartenders are most often white.

The upscale developments extend beyond the French Quarter and beyond the restaurant industry to hospitality industries more broadly. Adjacent to the French Quarter, the World Trade Center is one of the most notable symbols of redevelopment. As mentioned in Mayor Landrieu’s speech, the World Trade Center is a major development within a larger riverfront revitalization project. The World Trade Center exemplifies larger development patterns focused on infrastructure, new construction, and luxury appeal, without any consideration of how it will affect or benefit local communities and workers. While the World Trade Center will provide hotel rooms and condominiums for wealthy tourists and part-time residents, there are no standards in place for the construction workers who will renovate the building, nor the staff who

will be employed after completion. Low-wage workers are entirely left out of development plans. As Peter (June 2015) described:

That's been the way that development has gone. The city owns the World Trade Center ... It's this huge building like right on the river, right -- one side of the French Quarter sort of surrounded by all of the big hotels. It's been vacant since Katrina or before Katrina, and they've been -- They're going to lease it out to -- they're going to give a 99-year lease to a company to turn it into like high-end condos and high-end hotel rooms, right? And like there's no -- There were no standards on like what these jobs should pay, how many people should be from New Orleans, how did the construction jobs get distributed, like all of the things that in other cities we would call sort of hallmarks of like responsible development, training programs, things like that, just no consideration. Like that doesn't matter at all, right? The only thing they're looking at is 'how much money can this generate for the city?'

Another contentious redevelopment is the St. Roch market in the St. Roch neighborhood. Historically a very low-income, black neighborhood, the redevelopment of the St. Roch neighborhood centers around the construction of a large, multiple-business venue called the St. Roch market. Inside the pristine warehouse-style structure is an upscale local produce stand, multiple artisan shops, and, being New Orleans, a cocktail bar. It is an unmistakable symbol of change against the surrounding dilapidated structures and partially destroyed roads. I visited the St. Roch market on a very hot July day with Marsha, a craft bartender, and Sara, an assistant manager and former server, both of whom work at new, upscale restaurants. Marsha ordered us cocktails of grapefruit beer and Campari to cool us off. The three of us described the debate around St. Roch market – a conflict noted by a number of participants, and referenced by the Mayor in his State of the City address. The open warehouse-space housing the nineteen local businesses appears overwhelmingly white in its employees and clientele. The market is now a key tourist destination and a great place to escape the heat for a few hours. But the expensive produce and food stands are oddly positioned in a neighborhood that is in desperate need of an affordable grocery store, and residents claim that it has not provided jobs to those in the

neighborhood most in need. Even as we enjoyed our visit, my companions noted discomfort at the mismatch of trendy new developments and the communities they are built into. The issues surrounding the market have been discussed at length in local newspapers and the market was vandalized shortly after opening, presumably by discontented neighbors, including graffiti spelling out “Fuck Yuppies” (White, The New Orleans Advocate 2015). My emails to the market’s owner, who is quoted in numerous articles defending the market’s place in the community, went unanswered.

4.2.2. Selective Reconstruction and Uneven Development

St. Roch market, the World Trade Center, and other luxury housing and infrastructure projects exemplify post-Katrina redevelopment across the city. Participants noted a continued feeling of abandonment of low-income and black residents, and a disconnect between infrastructure projects and community improvement. “They’re putting in a lot of eye attraction. A lot of things that’s coming up now is a lot of eye attraction,” observed Toneyka (July 2015), a former fast-food worker who now does trash pick-up for a city sub-contractor. She went on to point out, “You know, the projects are not up anymore. They’ve torn most of them down ... and I’m looking at the City Heights coming up with more businesses – more businesses” (Toneyka, July 2015). For Toneyka, these businesses have not provided more employment opportunities. Moreover, most of the boutiques and high-end restaurants are inaccessible to low-income residents who, with rising food and housing costs, are barely able to afford essentials. Specifically, participants noted that new high-end housing complexes are very clearly not *for* them:

You have all of these condominiums being built but the economic landscape doesn't look like it could support that. ... You would sit back and think who is going to occupy that

space? So they're building those spaces for transplants, for people who are coming in from other places who are going to use them as vacation homes or who are just coming in from other places that have the revenue to live here and I don't know, because people who live here currently cannot afford the condominium prices that are -- that they're going for (Tonyelle, July 2015).

Le’Kedra, a local community organizer, argued that the developments and initiatives designed to benefit the community miss their mark. “New Orleans has redone hospitals and redone libraries, but are kids in them learning anything? ... We’re getting these infrastructures, but we’re not really having any connectivity to them to better equip our community, and it’s sad and unfortunate, but I don’t see the change that I think is relevant” (Le’Kedra). Rather than rebuild Charity Hospital, a pillar of public health for uninsured and low-income residents of New Orleans for centuries, the city of New Orleans, partnering with Louisiana State University, built an enormous new medical complex less than a half mile away (Catalanello and Myers, Nola.com 2015). The new 1.1 billion-dollar medical center, a “replacement” for Charity Hospital, is described as a “modern facility – with fixtures and furnishings that resemble the interior of a W Hotel more than they do a hospital” (Catalanello and Myers, Nola.com 2015). The hulking multi-building medical complex required the removal of more than 100 homes and dozens of businesses, seized by eminent domain, in the low-income neighborhood of lower mid-city (Gratz, The Nation 2011). Displaced residents have been pushed into surrounding suburbs where housing costs are lower, but with little public transportation to access employment in the city.



Figure 4.2: Vacant, damaged house in the Lower Ninth ward

For some participants, the medical complex symbolizes both physical displacement and alienation. Mr. Alfred (August 2015), a community organizer, expressed anger at the site: “You took people’s homes, man! You displaced those people, you know, and just put up a big old contraption called a medical complex. So what happened to the local people that was there? How they doin’?” Mr. Alfred described the medical center as a place “that the local people can’t really go into.” Though a renovation of Charity Hospital into a world-class medical facility was estimated to be possible at half the cost, LSU, the city of New Orleans, and the state of Louisiana pushed for a brand new facility (Catalanello and Myers, Nola.com). I argue that this is part of a broader attempt to reframe New Orleans as an all-new, glamorous city. Though only a half-mile away, the “cutting-edge” University Medical Center is intentionally designed to feel inaccessible to the uninsured, disabled, low-income, and working poor residents who comprised a significant proportion of the population served by Charity Hospital.

Though much of the city has been enveloped by New New Orleans’s redevelopment, spaces of less profitability are intentionally neglected and obscured. Selective processes of rebuilding and redevelopment demand that some areas remain underdeveloped, disinvested, dilapidated, and vacant. “Blight” is seen as the enemy of the New New Orleans image. Yet, uneven capitalist redevelopment in post-Katrina New Orleans necessarily neglects less profitable spaces. Marching through the Lower Ninth ward on the tenth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, vacant lots, gutted houses, and makeshift memorials litter the landscape. Thus, as tourist areas and business centers are rebuilt, renovated, and reproduced, low-income, predominantly black neighborhoods remain largely abandoned by the “recovery.” As Gene (July 2015), a transgender woman and fast-food worker noted, “You have more skyscraper-type buildings and luxury apartments than you have homes getting rebuilt. You have the ninth ward where houses are still

down!” Mr. Alfred (August 2015) echoed this point, “The investment is in structures. Not in people. That’s the investment. ...They’d rather build that airport than build affordable homes. You know? That’s the investment... It’s sad to say, but they done a good job of that.” These structures have become the sites of emerging racialized labor geographies in New Orleans. Low-wage workers, though locked out of much of the prosperity of the New New Orleans, fight for better employment at sites like the new airport, and in restaurants, hotels, and casinos.

4.2.3. Employment and Unemployment in the New New Orleans

Uneven redevelopment has also necessarily reproduced racialized labor relations and low-wage industries. Participants described the strange lack of opportunities within the prosperous New New Orleans. Reflecting on this trend, Toneyka (July 2015), a sanitation worker, noted “They’ve got a lot more jobs. Well, job sites. I’m not going to say job opportunities. I’m going to say job sites, because it’s still difficult to obtain jobs as it was before. I think it’s harder now. I really believe that it’s harder now to actually get a job than it was before the storm.” The jobs available tend to be in hospitality, restaurant, or construction industries, all of which are characterized by low-wages, precarious employment, and racial discrimination.

In the construction industry, the creation of safe, stable, good-paying jobs has not appeared to be a goal of redevelopment. In the aftermath of the storm, the city and state governments gave out thousands of construction and development contracts without competitive bidding, provisions for living wages, local hiring requirements, or community oversight policies (Browne-Dianis et al. 2006). Just one day after Hurricane Katrina, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) suspended job safety and health standards for the parishes in and around New Orleans, arguing this would lead to faster recovery efforts (osha.gov). Local,

predominantly black, workers were locked out of hiring on construction sites while Latino workers were lured in to serve as an expendable and disposable workforce for the low-wage, unsafe jobs. One Latino reconstruction worker described being paid just \$100 a week for several weeks. When he confronted his employer he was threatened with an ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) raid and forced to flee the construction site.

Latino and black workers are often hired without going through legal channels and put into dangerous circumstances, without the protection of Worker's Comp should anything go wrong. Josh (July 2015), a local bartender noted how "Right after Katrina, all the people that came down rebuilding, these fly-by-night construction places throwing up Chinese drywall that leaks toxic fumes... What the hell? And that was just -- That was given a grant by our own government." Hayden (July 2015), also a local bartender agreed, "Yeah, see that's not like some construction crew you hire coming in and fucking up the job, that's like the city government just being irresponsible and not giving a shit." One such incidence of unsafe and unregulated construction was the Iberville projects demolition site, where an OSHA complaint over exposure to hazardous chemicals resulted in fines to contractors. Mr. Alfred (August 2015), a lifelong resident, community organizer, and former construction worker, described the penalty as "good, but not good enough." He described the struggle at the Iberville site: "It was sad to see men being exposed to that. 150 black men. Low wages. Removing asbestos and lead with no equipment. Transferring it back home to their children, and their wife, and everybody else -- exposing everybody to it. Wasn't nothing fairly done about that till we stepped in" (Mr. Alfred, August 2015).



Figure 4.3: Iberville site

The Iberville site, where public housing was torn down and replaced by mixed-income housing, is just a small part of the larger process of constructing the New New Orleans, a “new city” in which the health and well-being of low-wage workers are, at best, an afterthought. While Latino workers continue to be exploited in reconstruction industries based on citizenship status, black workers find themselves to be unwanted or equally disposable to construction companies. Mr. Alfred described a number of development sites contested due to discriminatory hiring. On one such site, the McDonogh 35 site, a “Not Hiring” sign was posted even as truckloads of Latino day laborers were routinely brought in each day. “The community was saying, ‘Yeah, they’re hiring. I’ve seen two guys go over there today, two Latino guys, two white guys went over and got hired.’ So we started watching them” (Mr. Alfred, August 2015). Though a public battle led to the removal of the “Not Hiring” sign, black workers were sent across the city and surrounding suburbs to apply for jobs. The three that were eventually hired were fired a few weeks later and told their work was completed even as the construction continued.

Much of the city’s progress plan, as evidenced by the Mayor’s speech, and his “Path to Prosperity” construction job training initiative, revolves around continual development. The “Path to Prosperity” program boasts apprenticeship trainings and priority hiring centers for “disadvantaged” workers. But, as of August 2015, the graduates of city-based training programs I spoke to had yet to find employment. One participant, Ms. Williana (July 2015), described completing a number of training or apprenticeship programs which, though free, provide no income during the process nor the guarantee of a job at the end of it. “All these trainings but no kind of pay. So here we don’t have no money ... but we have to eat and all this has to come out of our own pockets. ... One apprenticeship program I had to buy my own work boots” (Ms. Williana, July 2015). Ms. Williana explained the issue: “They’ve got all these training centers.

I've completed 2 or 3 apprenticeships in construction, you know. And I haven't received a construction job yet," Ms. Williana says, "Now they want us to do another 60-day program." Still, she says, "I really want to go into this construction thing because this is where I've been putting all my training in. Why do all this training and see I've never had the job doing it?" (Ms. Williana, July 2015). Another graduate of a training program, a young man who at the time I met him was moving into a temporary homeless shelter, took a job in a restaurant when he couldn't find employment in the construction field in which he had trained. I have since heard he's been fired for speaking up about discrimination and unfair working conditions in the restaurant. He is currently working "on-call" at the Superdome.

In the restaurant and hospitality industries, uneven redevelopment is characterized by poverty wages, precarious employment, and racial discrimination amidst immense wealth and prosperity of hospitality businesses. The hotels, casinos, and convention centers largely cater to year-round tourism and the seemingly constant stream of festivals. As Mayor Landrieu boasted in his "State of the City" address: "The New New Orleans way is us hosting a half a million people for the Jazz Fest, thousands of sailors, soldiers, marines for Navy week, and thousands of people for the Zurich classic. But here's the thing – all at the same time!" Peter (June 2015), a union organizer, provided a counterpoint to the mayor's speech: "The model of development that I've seen pursued by the city has just been focused on let's do as much of that as we can, right? Let's bring the Super Bowl here. Let's bring the all-star game here. Let's bring all these big events that bring a lot of visitors and just pump more money into a system that locks people in poverty."

Though a key facet of New New Orleans development, festivals shape the unpredictable, seasonal, and sporadic employment in hospitality industries, and the demands of serving large

waves of people takes a major toll on workers. Randy (July 2015), a hotel worker, described numerous conventions, festivals, and events where he dealt with long hours, rude and demanding guests, and stressed out co-workers. During the week I interviewed him, his hotel hosted hundreds of teen girls for a volleyball tournament whose mothers and coaches were verbally abusive and difficult to please. As Randy described it, “That was a complete nightmare ... Like we were slammed. Our wait time was an hour and a half, but I got it up there and I knocked and the mom came out from the next room and just belittled me for the next ten minutes.” When asked about his worst day of work, Randy described a week where “I think the Ravens played the 49ers, and we had Mardi Gras the following week or the week before, and that happens every once in a while. Apparently in this industry, in my hotel, they call it Super Gras, and it's just a nightmare. It was just awful.” Marsha (July 2015), a bartender, described the toll of continual festivals: “Every year around spring time I'm just so done with the city. I'm like ugh! It's after Jazz Fest, it's after Mardi Gras, it's after football season, it's after tourist season, so I'm like after that, I just always just want to like run away.”

The hospitality, restaurant, and construction industries in New Orleans, as with many other industries nationwide, increasingly contract out many of their positions to sub-contractors and temp agencies. Thus, workers become even less valuable to the businesses who are not even technically their employers. Seasonal, temporary, and sub-contracted workers endure poverty wages, high levels of insecurity, and little opportunity for upward mobility. Peter (June 2015), a union organizer, described how restaurant groups and hotels directly hire front-of-house workers (who are disproportionately white and more-highly paid) while “your cooks, your dishwashers, your janitorial staff, your housekeepers, are employed by sub-contractors who really are kind of like bottom-of-the-barrel employers.” Peter went on to describe “sub-contracted housekeepers

who worked at the same property for nine years, right, basically since the properties re-opened after Katrina and haven't gotten a raise the entire time they've been there, right? And they're still making \$9 an hour and don't have benefits.” To summarize how he views the hospitality industry Peter stated:

The reality is that these jobs pay very, very poorly and are very precarious, and in terms of the number of hours, and scheduling, and things like that, where it makes it -- I mean, I -- It's astonishing to me and a credit to the strength of the people in this industry that they maintain families and lives and everything with the way this industry is set up, because it sort of assumes, like, that the people that make your money are going to be poor forever, right? There is not a path way out of poverty for workers in the hospitality industry other than organizing.

In the restaurant industry, a staple of the New New Orleans, workers face discrimination, sexual harassment, verbal abuse, and high rates of turnover. Marsha (July 2015), a craft bartender, described being advised by a supervisor on how to better please customers: “‘Maybe if you wore some make up, like do your eyes, put some red lipstick on, do your hair all cute,’ he's like, ‘you'll get a different response. Like maybe show the girls a little bit.’” Knowing that the majority of her income comes from her tips, Marsha said she was not even offended, she just took the advice. Tonyelle (July 2015), an organizer, described the practice of positioning attractive female employees at the door of restaurants to lure in customers: “This is a largely tourist area, but still, don’t use your employees to pull patrons in because of the way they look.” Women, however, are also chastised for being too flirtatious or suggestive. Toneyka (July 2015) described being reprimanded for joking with a customer’s father by calling him “Dad.” “I was uncomfortable that [my supervisor] came at me about that matter in that way, and then I was confused, because I didn't know how I was supposed to tone down and not do certain things, if I was supposed to make my tips” (Toneyka, July 2015). Many of the bar and restaurant workers I spoke to, especially the women, described the performance of working for tips. Sara (June 2015)

noted the many roles she takes on – daughter, wife, therapist, robot – to suit the needs of restaurant “guests.”

Workers in the service industries of the New New Orleans – in restaurants, hotels, casinos, bars, and convention centers – are subject to verbal abuse from both customers and managers. Josh (July 2015) described an irate customer, unhappy with the preparation of her steak who called him “retarded” and asked: “Do you even have an education?”. Toneyka (July 2015) described a time where she took over service of a customer for a white server finishing her shift. When she brought out the customer’s plate he told her he “didn’t want [her] black hands on his food.” She described how he refused the plate: “He didn’t want the food. He didn’t want me, a black person, handling his food and his drink” (Toneyka, July 2015). Toneyka noted that managers and supervisors do very little about complaints of racism and sexual harassment. Gene, a lifelong resident and transgender woman working in fast food, has experienced racist, transphobic, and homophobic comments from customers, supervisors, and managers. She described one particularly degrading job interview: “They told me I would have to dress as a boy if I wanted the job” (Gene, July 2015). In another scenario, a customer commented on her hair and then called her a “little fag” and said, “That’s why you can only work in fast food.” On another occasion a customer told Gene, “I don’t want your kind taking my order.” When making polite conversation with one elderly customer the woman said to Gene, “You’re not supposed to be talking to me. You’re just here to take my order.” For many service workers I spoke to, aggressive and inappropriate comments are just part of the job. They see very few options to combat this trend, nor opportunity for other types of employment in the New New Orleans.

4.2.4. Racialized Labor Geographies in the New New Orleans

The restaurant industry is also well-known for its spatial relations of racial discrimination and segregation. Many participants described how, in many new, hip, or upscale restaurants, the visible employees are predominantly white, while black workers and other workers of color are segregated in lower-wage, back-of-house positions as cooks or dishwashers. At one hip pizza place in the gentrifying Marigny/Bywater area, Maxine (June 2015), a restaurant server, described dismay that every employee, including the cooks, were white. She confronted a manager about how he could employ an all-white staff in a historically black neighborhood but he had no answers for her. Marsha (July 2015), a craft bartender, described working in a hip, upscale bar where managers, concerned about the restaurant being seen as discriminatory or a force of gentrification, actively sought out a single, token, black employee:

I was working at a bar, and they looked at me and they went, ‘I need you to hire some people. Make sure you hire a black person.’ ... And I was like -- I looked at them and I was like, ‘this is a joke right?’ They were like ‘No, we need black people. Everyone we have is white. Bring in some of your black friends and let's try and get them on.’

Karmen (July 2015), a bartender, described her experience working at a yacht club. Though an overall positive experience, Karmen (July 2015) noted her discomfort at working in an all-white establishment: “I was the only brown thing in that place.” Participants also described working for all-white management, seeing black co-workers being passed over for promotion in favor of white co-workers, and white co-workers receiving preferential treatment.

Racial discrimination and favoritism are especially harmful in tipped employment where preferential treatment determines income. Peter (June 2015) noted, “what really determines your tips is like your schedule, your sections, how they cut the floor, things like that, which is so often informed by favoritism, whether that takes on like a racial character, a gendered character, or just like a ‘this is my buddy so I'm going to look out for him.’” Randy (July 2015), who noted that he

is well-liked by his managers, argued, “The way schedules are worked out or who gets to go home early, there’s always this feeling like ... favoritism definitely is alive and well.” He mentioned another co-worker who has tried multiple times to move up in different departments and positions but is repeatedly blocked from advancement because he is perceived to have a bad attitude. Because tipped industries are largely non-union, characterized by highly insecure jobs, there’s very little recourse to counter favoritism, discrimination and nepotism in the workplace. Thus, tipped workers also must constantly perform their value to those in control of scheduling and sections. For Peter (June 2015), the central issue is “we have no voice in how this stuff works here. There’s no process for how scheduling happens or how these decisions get made, and they always get made based on the boss’s interest not in the workers’.”

4.2.5 Instability and Disposability in New Orleans’ Labor Geographies

For dissatisfied workers in unstable jobs, the options for change largely revolve around leaving to find another bad job, or speaking up and being terminated. Toneyka (July 2015) identified job insecurity as the most important employment issue, followed by opportunity, and preferential treatment. Before landing her current job in subcontracted trash clean-up for the city, Toneyka described her many previous jobs: “I’ve went through house cleaning, fast food joints like Burger King, drive-thru, I did front counter, I did hostess, waitress, a little bit of bartending, cooking, dishwashing.” Nearly all participants noted the instability of low-wage jobs, incredibly high turnover rates, and the treatment of low-wage workers as disposable. Josh (July 2015) described a widespread attitude among bosses “to treat human beings as if they’re disposable. It’s like, ‘oh, you won’t do it? You won’t play ball? I’ll replace you.’”

The instability and high turnover rates in reconstruction, restaurant, and hospitality industries mirrors the treatment of low-wage, predominantly black, workers as disposable in processes of uneven development city-wide (see Wright 2006). Workers see an incompatibility between the wealth their labor generates, and the extent to which their labor is valued. Randy (July 2015), who works for a major luxury hotel chain, described the city as a “tourist paradise” where “people who are making a shit ton of money off our labor don’t see fit to spread the wealth around.” He argued, “They just feel like we’re very replaceable. And I know it’s not just my hotel. It’s across the board, any hotel or any service industry you go to, it’s, ‘You’re server 652. If you don’t like what we’re doing or what we’re offering, we’ll replace you and bring in 658.’ And that’s no way to treat people.” Cedric (July 2015), a local organizer, echoed this argument, describing his views on the restaurant industry: “It’s an industry that really drains you, and people work so hard, and they’re always at work, and in such a high demand area like New Orleans.” Still, in the restaurant industry, “it’s like ‘hey, you’re a great waiter or waitress, but if you sick for two days you’re going to get replaced’” (Cedric, July 2015). Randy (July 2015) described how the precarity of hospitality jobs is marketed to employees as freedom:

I still remember my orientation they were explaining how great ‘Right to Work’ was, and they were like ‘it’s so wonderful that we have this situation, because at any time you want, you can leave your job. You can quit and there’s no problem, and at any time we want, we can fire you and there’s no problem.’ It struck such a weird chord with me, because I’m like, ‘people don’t want to leave their jobs.’ I’ve never actually worked a job where you can’t leave.

Instead, Randy worries that any mistake could put him in a desperate situation. “If life happens you could be screwed. I mean, there’s no guarantees with any of these jobs. You piss off the wrong person one day and you could be walking out without a job” (Randy, July 2015).

Though seemingly disparate industries, I argue that construction, hospitality, and restaurant jobs comprise a broader category of low-wage employment in the redevelopment industries of the city. The low-wage workers who provide labor to the industries of the New New Orleans (on construction sites, and in hotels, casinos, restaurants, and bars) face new socio-spatial relations of poverty, precarity, and alienation. Seasonal, temporary, and unstable structures of employment mean that workers move from restaurants to hotels to construction sites as these are the few employment options available, and often offer immediate employment. Construction workers physically build the New New Orleans, as condominiums, mixed-income housing, restaurants, bars, hotels, and capitalist infrastructure projects expand. The low-wage workers employed in the hundreds of new restaurants, bars, and hotels serve the continuous influx of tourists. For many research participants, both workers and organizers, there is no distinction between the various types of employment. In all of the redevelopment industries, black workers and other workers of color are relegated to the least desirable positions, treated as disposable, spatially segregated, and rendered invisible in the New New Orleans.

The uneven redevelopment of a New New Orleans in the decade since Hurricane Katrina focuses on the expansion of major capitalist infrastructure projects and tourist-focused hospitality industries. By the mayor's "yardstick of capitalist profit" (Smith 2006), New Orleans is fully recovered and is now "creating" (Landrieu 2015). For low-wage workers, however, the New New Orleans provides little to be optimistic about. In speaking on the World Trade Center development, Peter (June 2015), a union organizer, summarizes this pattern of redevelopment: "Alright, you're going to have another 400 hotel rooms with workers that are going to be sub-contracted and make \$9 an hour, and not have health insurance, and work until their bodies break, and like, might as well just knock the building down for all the good that's going to do the

city.” For Peter, the struggle is to get the city and developers to see the creation of better jobs as a worthwhile goal of development and something “they’re willing to put institutional weight behind.”

4.3 Intersectionality and Collaborative Organizing

4.3.1. Hit from All Directions

In New Orleans, workers struggle not only against bad jobs but also against the uneven redevelopment of the landscape and the broader conditions of racial and social oppression in the city. The disposability and precarity of low-wage workers in the informal and “flexible” redevelopment industries, predominantly black workers, but also women, Latinos, and LGBT workers mirrors larger processes of abandonment and oppression in the city. Childhood poverty, failing schools, record-high murder rates, police violence, juvenile detention and adult incarceration (overwhelmingly of black men), the destruction of public housing, the lack of access to employment, and the scourge of bad jobs all work as mutually reinforcing mechanisms to lock people into poverty and desperation. Referring to Gini coefficients, based on U.S. Census data, to determine income inequality, in 2014 New Orleans ranked second-worst in the country for income inequality in cities over 250,000 (McClendon, Nola.com, 2014b). The wealthiest twenty percent control sixty percent of the income in the city while the bottom forty percent control less than eight percent (McClendon, Nola.com, 2014b). Black unemployment rates are double those of white residents and as many as fifty-two percent of black males are categorized as “not in the labor force” (Sams-Abiodun and Rattler, Jr. 2013). Furthermore, though African-Americans account for around sixty percent of the city’s population, ninety percent of incarcerated adults are black, and ninety-nine percent of juveniles arrested are black (Snead and

Govan 2015). Income inequality, racialized poverty, and mass incarceration combine with losses in affordable housing, unstable and low-wage jobs, and the destruction of community networks to leave people in highly precarious situations. Mr. Alfred (August 2015) described the challenges of mobilizing members: “It’s hard to organize a person who needs immediate stuff at the time... It’s so hard, Caroline, to get people who are being hit from all directions – nowhere to live, can’t find work...”

Mr. Alfred’s personal commitment to organizing is informed by a range of issues he has confronted. Raised in a Black Panther-run neighborhood in New Orleans, known as the Calliope projects, Mr. Al learned the importance of community networks early in life. He described to me how the community barred the police from entering, preferring to settle neighborhood disputes with their own judicial system. He was kept fed by the Black Panther free breakfast for children program, and was parented by every family in the community. As a teenager in the 1970s, Mr. Alfred spent three years in prison, where he learned that the judicial system is broken and poor people of color have to fight back. He described how, at the time, the only privilege in the prison was the TV. He organized along with other prisoners to demand books, including legal texts, in order to educate themselves. As a merchant marine later in life, he confronted discriminatory hiring practices. Despite struggles with drug addiction in the 1980s and 1990s, Mr. Alfred continued organizing.

When Hurricane Katrina hit, he stayed behind in Calliope to help his elderly neighbors, many of whom he had known for decades. He described the traumatic experience: “Just seeing my community being... flooding! Unnecessarily! Because the next day the sun was shining. I didn’t leave until four days later. I didn’t get out of here. I had to swim out. But I knew I had to save other people” (Mr. Alfred, August 2015). He described getting mattresses to support

people with “bodies floating everywhere.” He later returned to his Calliope home only to find it slated for demolition. Faced with unemployment, poverty, and the loss of his home, Mr. Alfred demanded a job on the site, and the hiring of other local workers who, if they were going to lose their homes, at least needed a job. He and his neighbors discussed direct action and chaining themselves to the gate so that construction vehicles could not enter, but because they all had prior felonies, nobody could risk arrest. At this point, he said, “Thank God the Workers’ Center came along.” In the years since, Mr. Alfred has seen his home of fifty years torn down, where the foundations still stand vacant. Three years ago, on his birthday, his son was killed in a drive-by shooting, while he was in a meeting, talking to Workers’ Center members about how to stop violence in the black community. The irony of this incident highlights how far-reaching and prevalent violence and death are for black residents. It also highlights how interconnected these issues are with organizing for better employment and for a more equitable city.



Figure 4.4: Remaining foundations of the former Calliope projects

4.3.2. Intersectionality and Organizing

The intersections and influences of black community autonomy, lack of access to education, incarceration, racial discrimination, drug addiction, trauma, and poverty in Mr. Alfred's life inform his commitment to organizing black and brown workers not only around jobs, but also around survival. For Mr. Alfred, the struggle for full and fair employment is not merely an economic issue, but is always rooted in the broader conditions of life for black men in New Orleans. Likewise, in New Orleans economic justice organizations mobilize around labor issues of bad jobs and underemployment, but also around displacement and alienation, racist monuments, failing schools, high incarceration rates, high murder rates, police violence, cuts to food stamps, LGBT profiling, losses in affordable and public housing, and chronic unemployment. Organizers and worker activists do not see these social and economic struggles as distinct from one another but as intersections of oppression, mainly the crises of *blackness* in New Orleans.

Mr. Alfred described how the struggle at the McDonogh 35 construction site, mentioned above, illuminated broader implications around the lack of access to employment for black workers. The McDonogh 35 site, challenged for bringing in Latino day laborers even as local black workers were told they were not hiring, was a construction site in which a historic school was rebuilt in a different neighborhood simultaneously with the renovation of a juvenile detention center. The original McDonogh 35, opened in 1917, is significant as the first public high school for black students in the state. The new school site, built with FEMA funds, was built directly adjacent to a juvenile detention facility euphemistically and ironically named the Youth Study Center. Given the unmatched incarceration rates in New Orleans, and the lack of employment opportunities on the construction site, the connections were all too apparent to Mr.

Alfred. He explained, “We looked at the school-to-prison pipeline. It’s right literally across the street. They’re building them together. Both of them [are] under construction at the same time. When you don’t give young men opportunities, then chances are, you are going to put them in that place that’s next to the school” (Mr. Alfred, July 2015). On a visit to the site in July, both the vacant school, which opened in August 2015, and the juvenile jail appeared ready to begin the sorting process.

Mr. Alfred’s work with *Stand with Dignity* at the McDonogh 35 site highlights how the economic justice movement in New Orleans is acutely aware that the struggle for good jobs is inseparable from racialized poverty and oppression in the city. *Stand with Dignity*, an organization that struggles against black underemployment in New Orleans, also successfully fought for a “ban the box” policy to remove the requirement that applicants disclose prior convictions on initial job forms. In addition, they continually press the Housing Authority of New Orleans to establish fair procedures for formerly incarcerated people to return to public housing. For Ms. Williana, a former resident of Calliope and a local activist, this fight is personal. She lives in public housing with her daughter’s four children while her daughter serves a jail sentence. When her daughter is released, she won’t be able to join them for up to seven years.

Le’Kedra (July 2015), another community organizer I worked with and interviewed, described her view on the movement in New Orleans like this: “I think is very critical right now, because I feel like when you think about New Orleans and the murder rate and the education system and the criminal justice system, like it’s daunting. Yeah, and so I just want a new sense of renewedness for this city, a new sense of resilience, a new sense of urgency to get it right and not settle.” For Le’Kedra, organizing confronts the processes which drive interrelated and

oppressive systems of poor education, violence, and mass incarceration. Using the language of “resilience” common in post-Katrina development rhetoric, Le’Kedra presents an alternative concept of a New New Orleans in which people are safe and empowered.

4.3.3. Organizing Struggles and Struggling to Organize in New Orleans

Organizing faces particular challenges in New Orleans. For one, low-wage workers must come to see their individual grievances as part of a broken system, rather than due to personal fault or bad luck. “There’s no shortage of crappy jobs out there,” Peter (June 2015) argued, so “people kind of have to make the decision ... ‘Am I going to work somewhere until I get fed up or they get fed up with me then I’m going to work somewhere else ... and then the same thing is going to happen again, and again, and again? Or am I going to, like, change this?’” Peter also pointed out that prior to the dismantling of public housing and welfare programs, New Orleans had an “infrastructure that supported a poverty economy here that doesn’t exist anymore because it all got sold off.” Low-wage workers living in inexpensive subsidized housing could survive on poverty wages in the past, albeit precariously. The same workers now must navigate the redevelopment industries that treat them as disposable without state support.

Low-wage workers do not see economic opportunities or hope for change through the current political and legislative systems. Referring to Governor Bobby Jindal, Josh (July 2015) noted, “He was a Rhodes scholar and you’ve got this guy denying evolution, trying to get it out of our textbooks in the state of Louisiana ... and just outright denying the Supreme Court decision for marriage equality. I mean, now tell me if we have good politicians here.” Peter (June 2015) noted, “There are certain things which we [the union] will commonly do in other states which we can’t do here, right?” For one, in the state of Louisiana municipal and local

governments are barred from setting a higher minimum wage, requiring paid sick days or set scheduling, or enacting other protective labor laws. As Peter noted, “It’s against the law. Like even if the city of New Orleans wanted to say this new medical center down the street has to be built union, they couldn’t.” Still, Peter argued, “Politics might line up a little more on the bosses’ side here than they do in California, but I think if we’re honest, like politicians a lot of times aren’t really on our side even if we think they are.” Peter’s point speaks to decades of the national Democratic Party becoming increasingly conservative, scaling back welfare, abandoning affirmative action, and expanding the police state, while largely abandoning the labor movement, which remains a strong electoral bloc (Goldfield 2006). In New Orleans, though more left-leaning than the rest of the state, politicians do little to support labor organizing.

Workers and worker organizers, however, also often expressed optimism and a sense of empowerment. Peter (June 2015) challenged the idea that workers in Right-to-Work states “don’t want unions, or they’re too conservative or something like that.” Rather, he argued, “People are people and they want something better for themselves and they ultimately understand that, like, the person they work for has a lot more power than they do, and they want to change that.” If “Right-to-Work,” section 14B of the Taft-Hartley Act, doesn’t fundamentally alter labor relations – as Peter said, “the boss is still the boss, the workers are still workers” – it has been considered the “chief obstacle to organization of the South and Mountain West” (Lichtenstein 2011: 517-518). Thus, in New Orleans, at the time of my field work, only 500 hospitality workers, of the estimated 39,000 direct hospitality jobs, were “covered by a [union] contract” (Peter, June 2015).

4.3.4. Organizing the South: Countering Racialized Labor Geographies Through Inclusion

Economic justice organizing in New Orleans is part of a renewed effort to “organize the South.” Though there were some significant organizing successes in the South in the 19th and early 20th centuries (Herod 2012), over the last several decades the organized labor movement has had little success in gaining any strength in the South. This is due, in part, to Right-to-Work legislation and the local political climate, but also due to the failures of unions to reckon with labor’s bureaucratic stagnation and discriminatory past. Historically, the labor movement has had a troubled, if not adversarial, relationship with anti-racist organizing and anti-discrimination movements in the workplace. As Peter (June 2015) noted, “There is the very real history of, like, racism in the labor movement down here where African-Americans have been, like, intentionally excluded from certain jobs through the union.” In trying to organize workers, Peter mentioned that he is confronted by “people who have experience that themselves or their parents or grandparents who have.” The labor movement in New Orleans must contend not only with a lack of a generational culture of unionism, as is somewhat more common in the Northeast (Randy, July 2015), but with the social memory of union racism, exclusion, and ineffectiveness. The shift to a “culture of inclusion” (see Fletcher Jr. and Hurd 2000) is a central tenet of the organizing campaigns of *Unite Here Local 2262*, and other unions and worker organizations in New Orleans. For unions committed to a “culture of inclusion,” organizing the predominantly black, low-wage workers in New Orleans requires a commitment to their specific economic, social, and workplace issues “internally, at the bargaining table, and in politics” (Bronfenbrenner and Warren 2007: 144). The organizations I worked with in New Orleans showed a dedication to these principles, focusing not only on building membership, but also on actively struggling for economic and social justice more broadly.

Internally, *Unite Here Local 2262*, *Stand with Dignity*, *Show Me \$15*, and the Restaurant Opportunities Center show a commitment to representing workers of color as members as well as in leadership and paid positions within the organizations. As Fletcher Jr. and Hurd (2000: 67) argue, organizing black and brown workers and women requires internal restructuring of the labor movement, historically led by white men, as new members will “wish to see themselves reflected in the leadership and staff of the unions.” Of the worker organizers I interviewed for this research, all but one self-identify as black, half are women, and the majority were born and raised in New Orleans or surrounding Louisiana cities. Rather than tokenism, representation of local black workers and women in leadership positions is central to building an economic justice movement rooted in, and supported by, broader communities of people in New Orleans. Peter (June 2015), who noted that “the labor movement has a not undeserved reputation of being run by a bunch of old white dudes,” argued that the challenge for his union is “How do we develop more and more African-American leaders who are from New Orleans, so that they are the leaders of this organization?” For Peter the challenge is not only for the strategic benefit of mobilizing workers through representation, but is also about building a new labor movement.

The local origin and/or length of time organizers have lived in the city is crucial to building rapport and relating authentically with workers who have lived through decades of economic and social hardships, and who survived Katrina. Additionally, workers are wary of the “non-profit-industrial complex” (Toya, July 2015) that has become dominant in the decade since Hurricane Katrina. As Josh (July 2015) noted, “New Orleans has always had a problem with corruption, and of course it was the most corrupt element that reared its head after Katrina, where as many people came down here to help, there were probably an equal number here doing damage.” Peter (June 2015) echoed this sentiment, noting that “This is a city that’s got all kinds

of stories about this organization is popping up to that, and this organization is popping up to do this, and then when it gets hard they give up and they go away, right? When the grant money runs out from the Ford Foundation or whoever, they pack up their tent and they go someplace else. And like, we have to be different. I believe we are different than that. We have to continue to be different from that.” Given the historical failures of union organizing campaigns, and the impermanence of many non-profits’ commitments, Peter described how many workers are surprised to hear that he is committed to staying in New Orleans and continuing to build the union for however long it takes. In reflecting on his own positionality in the city, Peter (June 2015) said: “This is a city that’s had a lot of different people come through, especially in the last ten years, like promising things, and starting things, and not finishing things ... after I had been here about a year they’re like, ‘so when are you going to leave?’ I’m like ‘No, I actually live here.’” Because of the general mistrust common after a long history of corruption, oppression, and ineffectiveness of non-profits, unions, and community organizations, personal connections are crucial to movement-building.

4.3.5. A New Labor Movement: Unions, Worker Organizations, and Workers’ Centers

The challenges of labor organizing in the South have also led to an economic justice movement in which the focus expands beyond formal unionism. Though *Unite Here Local 2262* is a chapter of an international union, the other organizations I worked with, *Show Me \$15*, the *Congress of Day Laborers*, *Stand with Dignity*, and *ROC*, can be categorized as worker centers and economic justice organizations. With the exception of *Show Me \$15*, these worker organizations do not focus on unionism as a central goal. I argue that these worker organizations comprise an alternative labor movement that aims to organize workers and reshape the economic

landscape through grassroots worker mobilization and community support. The proliferation of labor organizations outside of or beyond formal unions represents a different attempt at building worker power in New Orleans. Activist workers and worker organizers see this economic justice movement as being less about institutionalized organizations and more about building connections in the community, grassroots mobilizing, and challenging broader processes of racial and economic oppression in the city. As previously noted, unions have an unsuccessful organizing record in the South, and a troubled history of racial exclusion and discrimination. Though organizing explicitly around issues of jobs and employment, economic justice organizations in New Orleans organize with, but also beyond, unions and the formalized labor movement. At the same time, many in New Orleans's economic justice movement consider themselves to be building a new labor movement. As Alicia Garza, one of the founders of the "Black Lives Matter" movement noted, "I consider myself to be a part of the labor movement, but I guess the question is 'Does the labor movement consider me to be part of it?'" (quoted in Bayard 2015: 45).

Furthermore, I argue, somewhat counterintuitively, that the distinction between formal unions and worker organizations is largely insignificant in New Orleans. In New Orleans, the unions who have made a renewed attempt to organize workers work closely with worker organizations and economic justice organizations to form a broader, and deeply collaborative economic justice movement in the city. This is, in part, out of necessity, as unions and worker organizations are severely limited in resources and membership. Economic justice and labor organizations in New Orleans confront a generally hostile political and social climate which makes it difficult to garner financial support or raise membership. Thus, to build strength, a range of organizations, including *Show Me \$15*, *Unite Here Local 2262*, *Stand with Dignity*, and

the *Congress of Day Laborers*, partner with one another, hosting collaborative events, “turning out” to each other’s actions, and at times sharing membership across groups. On a practical level, *Unite Here* and SEIU (Service Employees International Union), which provides the majority of the funding for the *Fight for \$15* movement nationally, contribute financial strength to the movement, providing a considerably stronger financial resource base than less formal organizations and community groups. The collaborative nature of the economic justice movement is not simply about the mobilization of financial resources. The movement relies on networks, friendships, and personal and professional relationships to influence the broader community. Clemens and Minkoff (2004: 159) describe the successes of this mobilization strategy in regards to the farmworkers’ movement: “The mutualistic practices of these models allowed the movement to subsist with minimal resources and encouraged horizontal communication.” I contend that this argument holds true in regard to the economic justice movement in New Orleans. As McCarthy and Zald (1977: 1213) argue, movements rely on a “variety of resources that must be mobilized, the linkages of social movements to other groups, the dependence of movements upon external support for success, and the tactics used by authorities to control or incorporate movements.” Because there is little opportunity to shape pro-worker legislation at the state level, tactics focus on disruption and collaborative mobilization “on-the-ground.”

Given this framework, the economic justice movement in New Orleans has adapted to form a uniquely collaborative community of organizing across a range of issues. The groups I worked with partner with one another for planning meetings, marches, picket lines, community forums and city hall meetings. These organizations are highly cooperative, at times sharing members across organizations. Protest T-shirts play a unique role in highlighting solidarity both

within organizations and group support to other organizations. It would not be unusual to see a member of Stand who is also a member of *BYP100* wearing a *Show Me \$15* T-shirt. Formal unions like *Unite Here* partner with worker and community organizations among which unionism is not the primary goal. This community of collaborative organizations forms a movement that goes beyond empty rhetoric to challenge the conditions of the city more broadly through new diverse forms of solidarity.

Gene (July 2015), a trans woman and fast food worker who is active in the *Fight for \$15*, told me, “With *Show Me \$15* we’re not just about \$15, we are diverse within the community. We have our allies like *Stand with Dignity* for the people that are just coming home from jail, with *Congreso* with the deportations, with *Unite Here* trying to get other union workers, with *BYP*. We really are very diverse and we try to hit the different allies. You know, they help us, we help them when we can and most of our issues all focus on all of them because they are all within our own city.”



Figure 4.5: Wall display featuring several organizations

4.3.6 Collaborations and “Black Workers Matter”

Gene was one of the many people who helped organize a community forum around income inequality. The event included a panel of representatives from a range of organizations, including *Show Me \$15*, *Congreso*, *Stand with Dignity*, and *Black Youth Project 100* (BYP100), and a short, collaboratively written play. In play planning meetings, members of *Unite Here*, *Congreso*, *Show Me \$15*, and *Stand with Dignity* went around telling stories of injustice and inequality they faced in the workplace. I wrote down the stories as people talked, as I was tasked with helping to write the play. Mr. Alfred described how it felt to be confronted by the “No Hiring” sign at McDonogh 35 site even though he knew they were hiring. A member of *Congreso* spoke of being transported to a construction site in Florida where he was fired for demanding the pay he was promised and threatened with a call to immigration. Abandoned in Florida with no money, he had to wait for several days for a family member to drive to get him. Gene spoke about the transphobia she faced in a job interview. Another *Show Me \$15* activist described an abusive manager at a fast food restaurant who called her a dog and at one point threw a hamburger at her for working too slowly in an unfamiliar position. After several other people spoke, I told my own story of a time I worked as a server where wage theft and sexual harassment were common. One day the owner, who drank heavily on the job, pulled me in to his office and fired me without explanation but told me if I called back in a few weeks and begged I could probably have my job back.

After we told our stories, we talked about the collective themes of helplessness, injustice, and evil bosses. We also discussed how bad jobs strain and tear apart families, impede education, and the lack of upward mobility for low-wage workers. After a few more play planning meetings, the skit was finished. The play, performed at the “Public Forum on Income Inequality” (30 July 2015), showed a family struggling against a lack of upward mobility, a mother sexually

harassed on the job, a father who, as a fast food worker, is verbally abused by customers and fired for talking back, and a son who leaves school to find a job in construction. Luckily it is a happy ending, the construction site pays \$15 an hour, it is union, and they are still hiring.

The event was attended by about sixty people, including clergy and local politicians, as well as local individuals concerned with income inequality in the city. Many attendees, however, were members or organizers with *Show Me \$15*, *Stand with Dignity*, *Restaurant Opportunities Center*, *BYP100*, *Congreso de Jornaleros*, *Unite Here Local 2262*, and other community organizations and social justice groups. Many of these people were the same people who, a month before, had attended a *Stand with Dignity* rally at City Hall regarding the airport construction campaign. At the rally, clergy and local politicians made statements on the bullhorn, as well as representatives not only from *Stand with Dignity*, but also *Unite Here Local 2262*, and *Show Me \$15* making statements to the group. The various groups were identifiable by their T-shirts, and spoke as representatives of their organization. The message, however, was a unified one. Both the speeches and the signage proclaimed the rallying cry that unites low-wage worker activists in New Orleans: “Black Workers Matter.”

Strategic framing plays a significant role in New Orleans’s economic justice movement (see Benford 1997; Snow 2004). Messaging is evident in protest T-shirts, flyers, pamphlets, press releases, protest signs, and organizational newsletters. Key phrases are repeated and integrated into the language of local economic justice organizations. The economic justice movement’s mobilization around “Black Workers Matter” highlights the keen awareness that the struggle for good jobs is inseparable from the broader conditions of *blackness* in the city. “Black Workers Matter” builds on the momentum of the national “Black Lives Matter” movement, positioning the movement around “Black Workers Matter” within the framework of premature

death, abandonment, and the right to belong synonymous with the Black Lives Matter movement. The positioning of the movement as “Black Workers Matter” is not accidental. Strategically, the Black Workers Matter movement re-frames a phrase (“Black Lives Matter”) that has become broadly legible and understood in order to assert the importance of economic concerns in addition to social conditions of *blackness*. In this way, the Black Workers Matter movement is able to appeal to participants already aware of, and concerned with, the Black Lives Matter movement.

In the context of New Orleans, the alignment with the frames of Black Lives Matter also speaks to the broader conditions of life in the city. The violence and death implied in the Black Lives Matter movement resonates with black workers in New Orleans who see the lack of economic opportunities as part of ongoing processes of abandonment, disinvestment, and death in their communities. In a city where redevelopment has been more concerned with luxury condominiums, retail stores and restaurants, and major capitalist infrastructure projects than the ability of black residents to live, work, and survive in the city, framing an economic justice movement around the right to belong, as workers and as people, provides a powerful counterpoint to the city’s framing of redevelopment and successful recovery.



Figure 4.6: *Stand with Dignity* rally with support from other organizations

4.3.7 Bridging the Gap and Building Solidarity

The collaboration of economic justice organizations within a unified movement energizes both worker activists and community organizers. For one, seeing a larger community of support sustains activists who are confronted by a range of challenges. As Le’Kedra (July 2015), a community organizer, argued, “I do feel that there are benefits. As you’ve [seen with] *Stand with Dignity* and *Justice and Beyond*, and *Show Me \$15*, that there is definitely some collaboration and solidarity that’s happening and trust being built and people supporting each other.” Le’Kedra went on to describe how this impacts her commitment: “When you think about the people who are part of this fabric of this social justice fight that we fight for and with, and they take moments out of their days to show up in a real way ... it creates the space for my heart to smile.” Gene (July 2015) pointed to the uniquely collaborative movement as part of a larger project to build a unified and supportive city in New Orleans.

These collaborations also involve considerable personal effort to “bridge the gap” in order to develop “transformatory solidarity” (Johns 1998). Older activists are gently corrected about proper pronoun usage when referring to a fellow activist who is a transgender woman. Black workers collaborate with Latino workers with whom they have a language barrier. The Workers’ Center, housing both *Stand with Dignity* and the *Congress of Day Laborers* (*Congreso de Jornaleros*), actively re-frames capitalist rhetoric which pits black and Latino workers against one another. *Congreso* and *Stand with Dignity* promote solidarity among un- and underemployed black workers and un- and underdocumented Latino workers. The Workers’ Center’s website describes their commitments to intersectional worker organizing:

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, African American workers were locked out of the reconstruction, while immigrant workers were locked in. Poor and working class African Americans faced racial exclusion, while immigrant workers experienced brutal exploitation. Three years later, in the context of a global economic crisis, jobs and immigration continue to be sharply divisive wedge issues. The political economy of race

has made displacement, statelessness, and indentured servitude a permanent reality for poor and working class communities of color in the Gulf Coast. The New Orleans Workers' Center for Racial Justice is dedicated to organizing workers across race and industry to build the power and participation of workers and communities. We organize day laborers, guestworkers, and homeless residents to build movement for dignity and rights in the post-Katrina landscape. (nowcrj.org/about-2/)

The construction and perpetuation of racial and ethnic divisions has long been a tactic for inhibiting solidarity in the workplace (Fletcher Jr. and Hurd 2000). Marable, Ness, and Wilson (2006: 2) argue that social constructs of racial difference “obscure the entrenched system of inequality ... fraying the broader working class along narrower identity lines.” Mr. Alfred (August 2015) described the process by which he realized that Latino workers were not the enemy: “I just thought ‘they taking our jobs!’ After working next to them, my Latino family, I realized these are good people. They just want to work like we need to work.” As with the play we all worked on, organizations have designed strategies and spaces for communicating and understanding the shared struggle. “Having those story circles with them, you understand that corporations and companies were playing games with us...understand, we had a language barrier, [so] we begin to do skits. ... To do those skits and plays really showed that, okay, it’s time for us to unite and come together up against this system that’s really playing games with us” (Mr. Alfred, August 2015).

4.3.8 Material and Symbolic Successes and Struggles

Though economic justice organizing will almost certainly continue to be an uphill battle, workers and organizers pointed to a number of concrete and abstract successes in the movement. In *Stand with Dignity*'s airport campaign, a contract with an unfair contractor was successfully challenged. "We found out about this non-local contractor that was about to win, had racist tendencies, and many times refused to hire local workers and had asked the Industrial Development Board to lower the percentage of local workers that he had to hire." Toya (July 2015) noted, "So as an organization, *Stand with Dignity* went to talk [at City Hall] about the reality of work in the city, the reality of that contractor, and had members testify." The result was that the Aviation Board re-opened the bidding process and began considering *Stand with Dignity*'s demands for local "disadvantaged" hiring, training programs, health and safety protections, better wages, and community transparency within the process. Using language, ideas, and terminology developed by *Stand with Dignity*, Mayor Mitch Landrieu developed the STRIVE project, which includes local organizations (including Stand) as primary hiring sites, and a thirty-day training program to prepare people in the community for jobs at the airport. Toya (July 2015) noted, "We saw in this process that the Aviation Board really heard the community."

Peter (June 2015) pointed to the successful organizing campaign of about 500 workers at a major casino in New Orleans, the largest single hospitality employer in the city. "By them forming their union, that sends the message – that's a clear example of workers winning a union here, which here, so far, there have not been very many examples of, right? Like there's been examples of people trying and failing, but to show that it can be done here ... that workers here don't deserve less than other workers in other parts of the country that work for the same

companies. I think that's a very concrete thing" (Peter, June 2015). Successfully unionizing these casino workers has mobilized a large number to come out in support of other organizing campaigns and economic justice struggles.

Peter (June 2015) noted Unite Here Local 2262's successes within an ongoing unionizing struggle at a luxury chain hotel in the city. He described a recent action as hotel workers, Unite Here members, and people standing in solidarity came together to make public demands for a fair process to organize a union at the hotel. The action, Peter explained, was in part about "showing the city that this is what unions can be here." Randy (July 2015), an employee at the hotel who has become active in the unionization fight, described the challenges of the struggle thus far. "Management has fought us every way. They've done every dirty trick in the book. ... But, I mean, we've held our resolve. ... It's a marathon. As long as we can keep going, I think people are going to see that" (Randy, July 2015). There have been some successes, though. "It's just so funny to see how scared management actually is of us, or like the changes they've made because we're here – giving every department certain things... I mean, our cafeteria food has gotten exponentially better" (Randy, July 2015).

Other workers and organizers noted the more abstract successes in raising awareness, and shaking up the ideological climate of labor relations in the city. "When you have [Senator] Mary Landrieu, who is hot because we're downstairs protesting ... that's a victory, because they realize – people realize that there's people here that care, that are watching you, and we're making a dent" (Tonyelle, July 2015). The actions, themselves, become sources of empowerment. As Gene (July 2015) exclaimed, "We get things done! We shut shit down!" Though worker activists and organizers see the economic justice movement as a "continuous fight" (Mr. Alfred, August 2015), the collaborative movement, largely organized around the call

of “Black Workers Matter,” sees itself intervening in processes of uneven redevelopment and challenging the intersectional issues that comprise the struggles of *blackness* in the city of New Orleans. Together they introduce an alternative vision of a New New Orleans.

4.4 Alienation and Its Alternatives

4.4.1. Displacement, Alienation, and Trauma in the New New Orleans

In this thesis I argue that the organizing work of the economic justice movement in New Orleans shapes and challenges both the physical and ideological remaking of the city into a New New Orleans. The economic justice movement confronts the reality of labor relations in the New New Orleans as well as the broader socio-spatial conditions of racialized poverty, violence, alienation and displacement. I argue that low-wage, predominantly black workers in the city of New Orleans uniquely experience the conditions of uneven redevelopment, as they struggle for employment and opportunity within a rapidly changing landscape.

Low-income (low-wage) black workers have been both physically and psychologically displaced from their communities in the decade since Hurricane Katrina. Workers of color find that they do not “embody” (McDowell 2009) the ideal service worker of the New New Orleans, and they are thus relegated to unstable, low-paying, and less visible positions in restaurants, hotels, bars, and casinos. The New New Orleans perpetuates an economy of “disposable workers” (Wright 2006) in which low-wage, predominantly black workers are dismissed once they are no longer useful. These processes mirror the disposal, displacement, and alienation that characterize the conditions of *blackness* in the city. Echoing the narratives of participants, I argue that the alienation and displacement of low-income black residents has been central, rather than incidental, to the ideological and physical remaking of the city. The ongoing traumas of

Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath contrast with the public rhetoric, reiterated by Mayor Landrieu in his “State of the City” address, that New Orleans is fully recovered. Asked to share his view on recovery, Mr. Alfred (August 2015) argued “New Orleans has not come back. It has come back in the sense – in the way they wanted it to come back. But the local people are still drowning from the floodwaters. ... Ten years later, we are still drowning from the waters of Katrina. We have never survived it yet. And the water is getting deeper and deeper and deeper.” Mr. Alfred described the traumas, not only of surviving the storm, but continuing to survive in the city. He described swimming through the floodwaters, “looting” for drinking water after the storm, seeing his home demolished, experiencing crushing poverty and unemployment in the following years, burying his son, and seeing the community of the neighborhood in which he had lived his entire life dissipate. To Mr. Alfred, there has been no recovery for black workers. There has been no relief. Low-income black residents abandoned in the storm face ongoing abandonment, as few trauma services are available and accessible. Mr. Alfred argued that when “white folks get killed” they find “consistent trauma relief.” “But for our community? We don’t have that. We just have to suffer it. Where’s the money for us as trauma victims?” (Mr. Alfred, August 2015).

I argue that trauma services, and other methods of “recovery,” have not been made available for struggling low-income residents for the same reasons that they cannot access employment and affordable housing in the city, mainly that in the New New Orleans, low-income, predominantly black residents are rendered invisible and treated as disposable. As Hayden (July 2015) argued, “The city hasn’t done their job to make people feel like they have a place and they’re welcome. ... None of the people that live out here feel like they’re valued. ... They could die the next day and nothing would happen. Or they could get shot and they won’t

ever figure it out.” The ongoing abandonment of low-income black residents is a key feature of the New New Orleans, in which capitalist infrastructure and tourism industries are built up, and less profitable areas, and people, are left out. Though minimally damaged, the Calliope projects, and many other public housing neighborhoods were demolished. Tonyelle (July 2015) described what it was like for public housing residents to return after the storm: “We thought we were going to come back home and you’re saying we can’t come back in because for some reason it’s not livable. There’s toxins because of the storm. It was all these excuses. When the real truth of the matter was, we needed you all gone. Thank you for Katrina so we can fix it up like this.” Former public housing residents are pushed further and further out of the city, as they find fewer affordable options in the heart of New New Orleans. Many participants described losing touch with community networks, which affects their abilities to access employment and help and leaves them feeling emotionally isolated. Mr. Alfred (August 2015) described what it has been like since the community of Calliope has been broken up:

Not knowing where everybody went, it’s a hurting thing. ... This was a community where, you know, if you didn’t have something you could go down the street and ask for something. But today, you don’t know who your neighbor is ... Where I’m staying at, it’s mostly college students. And they don’t ... they come and go. ... It’s like starting all over again ... I lost my community. I lost part of me – a big part of me – when I lost the people I knew.

Participants described similar processes of psychological displacement throughout the city. Toya (July 2015) described going to a restaurant on Magazine Street to celebrate a birthday, and there were no songs from black musicians in the jukebox. Other places are made inaccessible by the prices. “The price of everything has risen. That’s a sign they don’t want you there. You can’t afford it, you can’t come. We had a black restaurant shop near St. Charles. Brother couldn’t hold on. He lost out. That changed to a place called ‘Voodoo’ and the prices are ridiculous” (Mr. Alfred, August 2015). According to their website, ‘Voodoo’ serves “New Orleans-style BBQ” as

an ode to the heritage of Cajun cooking in the region. Yet, it is precisely these types of restaurants, participants argued, that drive out the “real” New Orleans institutions. “The rawness and the realness of that – like these ‘mom-and-pops’ who are trying to keep their family’s traditions and legacies alive, just trying to make it happen every day. ... Those are the things I think we should be celebrating and highlighting in this industry” (Le’Kedra, July 2015).

4.4.2. The “Real” New Orleans and the New New Orleans

The participants that I interviewed felt that they exist in two different worlds – the ‘real’ New Orleans, and an increasingly gentrified and commodified New New Orleans. “I think there’s a stark separation for, like, tourists and people who move here and transplants versus people who live here and in the day-to-day grit. It’s just very – two very different worlds” (Le’Kedra, July 2015). Low-wage workers struggle against the “day-to-day grit” while tourists and wealthy new residents enjoy the glamour and prosperity of the New New Orleans. This divide has real, material repercussions for low-wage, predominantly black workers who find themselves unwelcome in the economy of the New New Orleans except in unstable, less-visible, low-paying positions. The two worlds are also represented by temporal, spatial, and racial divides. As Tonyelle (July 2015) noted, “If you talk to anybody, they’re going to say ‘Before Katrina’ and ‘After Katrina.’ That’s the timeline.” In the Uptown area, “used to be houses, now you see bakeries” (Mr. Alfred, August 2015). In the Bywater, “used to be basically all black people. Now that has changed to *white*” (Mr. Alfred, August 2015). In Midtown, “used to be a black old community. That has changed to a big ole conglomerate medical quarter. On that corner used to sit a black little restaurant where everybody used to go ... now you got a ‘Savings and Loans’” (Mr. Alfred, August 2015).



Figure 4.8: “Exhibit Be” now-closed art space in former public housing

The displacement of low-income black residents also manifests in the ideological re-framing of the city which prefigures future economic possibilities. As Marsha (July 2015) argued, “We’re pushing [out] people that have been here, that have lived through Katrina, that have survived, that have gone through every heart ache, every hardship...” In their place, she said, “you get these posh jackasses coming in here like ‘oh, this is quaint, look at this – it’s shabby chic,’ and ‘let’s pop-up a grass-fed burger place and serve some wine with it’” (Marsha, July 2015). Josh (July 2015) described how, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, mass displacement and low property values resulted in the “wholesale purchase of properties and ... run of the land” for incoming “transplants.” As Cedric (July 2015), an organizer, argued, “It gave somebody else the opportunity to buy into the culture – *literally buy into the culture*, and so the uptown area has been gentrified tremendously.” Cedric continued, “You’ve got all these celebrities wanting to move here and be part of the revitalization and dive into the culture and just soak it all in.” The Marigny and Bywater areas have become the “hipster capital” (Josh, July 2015). Yet, celebrities and incoming residents do not want to see the poverty and institutionalized racism underlying the “culture.” As Hayden (July 2015) argued, “Some hipster kid from California is not going to come talk to some 9th ward dude that’s been living here his whole life ... because you’re scared of him, or you’re intimidated, or ... maybe there’s a sense of self-righteousness that you’re better than them.” This type of person, Hayden argued, “changes the landscape of the neighborhood in a way that isn’t how anybody who has established themselves there wants it to be.” People who have lived in these neighborhoods their entire lives become “outcasts” in the changing landscape. As homes are fixed up, property values rise, and housing costs force out long-time low-income residents.

Driving around the city, participants pointed out all the spaces they have seen change. Toya (July 2015) pointed out a vacant lot where her old school stood. She pointed to different areas of the grassy field to highlight where various parts of the school stood. Describing her memories, she conjured up an image of the phantom school. Nearby, Ms. Williana (July 2015) pointed out brand new shopping centers where homes used to stand. Mr. Alfred took me, along with a group of other volunteers, on a tour of notable sites of struggle in the economic justice movement. The tour began at Calliope, where Mr. Alfred, Toya, and Ms. Williana all lived prior to its demolition. Calliope, where the concrete foundations of people's homes still stand, across the street from an all-new mixed-income housing community, was perhaps the most salient example of uneven redevelopment, alienation, and displacement I witnessed.

4.4.3. Alienation and Employment

Many black workers also find themselves alienated from the jobs in industries catering to the wealthy tourists and incoming residents. As previously noted, black workers face racial discrimination, either segregated in lower-paying, more precarious back-of-house positions, or barred altogether from employment in the hip new restaurants and bars of the redevelopment. As Toneyka (July 2015) described, "Your appearance is what sells most of the products and you have a lot of teenagers with their own way of looking. Most of the males down here are wearing dreadlocks now. Most of the girls are wearing long hair, and that's not allowed. Your hair has to be a certain length at certain jobs. Your nails. They want to wear loud nails, the long nails. That's not allowed." Though passed off as aesthetic or cultural differences, these appearance guidelines are designed from keeping "undesirable" people from tarnishing the image of the New Orleans.

Yet, even though the “progress” and prosperity of the New New Orleans alienates and displaces low-income black residents, the economic justice movement embraces the rhetoric and industries of the New New Orleans, to a certain extent, in order to demand a share of the wealth coming into the city and a right to belong in the transforming landscape. As Mr. Alfred (August 2015) argued, “We building streets. We building bridges. We building airports. ...Make us a part of it. And it’s really easy to do for the remaining people that’s here in the city where they can *have*. When they can go out and afford the rent that’s needed to stay in this city.” Even as they lament the loss of the New Orleans that they knew, as it transforms into a high-end, corporatized playground for tourists and wealthy incoming residents, workers and worker organizers target the industries of the New New Orleans in an attempt to reform them in more economically and racially equitable ways. *ROC-NOLA* runs “CHOW” classes to train restaurant workers in fine-dining service and bartending skills so that they can access employment in the new, hip and upscale restaurants popping up throughout the city. Stand with Dignity promotes training and apprenticeship programs in the construction industry, even as organizers and members remain wary that trainings will result in good, secure jobs. Both *Show Me \$15* and *Unite Here Local 2262* struggle to reform fast-food and hospitality industries, respectively, through demands for better pay and a recognized voice on the job. Thus, I argue that low-wage workers and worker organizers uniquely experience New Orleans’s redevelopment by fighting for (good) jobs in the industries that support the remaking of the city into an unfamiliar, unwelcoming and inaccessible landscape.

4.4.4. Countering Disposability

Activist workers and worker organizers in the economic justice movement struggle against their alienation and displacement, even as they fight for employment in the industries of the New New Orleans. In one such struggle, workers and organizers with *Stand with Dignity* made use of their treatment as disposable workers to challenge unsafe working conditions and redevelopment more broadly. At the Iberville site, described above, low-wage black workers were exposed to hazardous chemicals without proper equipment. To publicize the issue, they boarded a streetcar in the business district with signs and pamphlets. Mr. Alfred (August 2015) described the scene:

We got on the streetcar and said ‘We are disposable workers.’ We had the workers to get off from work. ... We were wearing masks... told the whole streetcar: ‘You are being exposed to lead and asbestos poisoning.’ You know, ‘These men just got off from work and they don’t have no clean, you know, decomp system.’ Man! You know, that’s a white streetcar! They panicked! They stopped the streetcar, Caroline! They stopped the streetcar. They called the police. [laughing]. Because we were handing out masks on the streetcar. ‘You need a mask on. You’re being exposed to lead and asbestos.’ They were looking at me in shock [like]: ‘Oh my god! Oh my god!’ Putting their masks on [laughing] and immediately the streetcar driver called the police. We left them with some literature: ‘You should call the city and tell them how you was exposed to lead and asbestos.’ And we got a response! Immediately a response! Because the people on the streetcar they called! ... Oh, it’s funny! We marched down Canal Street. Got on Canal Street. We had people with signs: ‘You’ve been exposed.’ ‘We are disposable workers.’ Oh we had these good signs. We had literature to back us up as well. Man, I tell you, them white people got scared! [laughing] ... These are local white people, businesspeople coming from Canal in those big buildings down there, doing work.

The fact that streetcar riders promptly called the city highlights how deeply they accepted and believed the protestors’ argument that they were being poisoned on the job. For the (relatively) wealthy streetcar passengers, this treatment of low-wage black workers was not at all surprising. That *Stand with Dignity* could seize on the notion of disposable workers in the New New Orleans shows how they actively subvert, utilize, and challenge the goals of redevelopment.

Economic Justice organizations actively frame their struggles to demand a right to belong in the city. *Congreso de Jornaleros's* (*Congress of Day Laborers's*) slogan “We are Reconstruction Workers” calls attention to the precarious workforce of Latino construction workers who are often rendered invisible in the New New Orleans once structures are completed. Even more explicitly, *Stand with Dignity* proclaims “We are New Orleans.” This message demands that un- and underemployed black workers be recognized as members of the city. More than that, this slogan presents an alternative perspective on what the identity of New Orleans is. Rather than its commodified culture and gleaming new infrastructure, Stand with Dignity claims that the New New Orleans is made up of the low-wage black workers who continue to struggle to survive in the city.

Collectively, the economic justice movement rallies around the cry of “Black Workers Matter.” “Black Workers Matter” speaks to a fundamental question of black workers having a right to exist in the city, and to be considered as important actors. “Black Workers Matter” necessarily references the violence, neglect, and death facing black people in the U.S. that inspired the “Black Lives Matter” movement. The “Black Lives Matter” movement has become a recognizable movement in recent years, understood as an attempt to challenge the acceptance of the disposability of black bodies. The “Black Lives Matter” movement’s framing, as the right to survive and to be recognized, directly lends itself to the “Black Workers Movement” in New Orleans (and beyond). The economic justice movement in New Orleans challenges the conditions of *blackness* in the city to reimagine a more racially and equitable city.



Figure 4.9: Protest fan mocking the mayor and development

In the “Public Forum on Income Inequality,” representatives of a range of economic justice organizations discussed what a racially and economically equitable society would look like. The skit that opened the event serves, to some extent, as a presentation of an alternative vision of employment in the city. Overcoming a range of struggles, the family at the center of the skit succeeds in finding steady, unionized employment that pays \$15 an hour. I argue that the economic justice movement actively presents alternative visions through organizing. In part, this is what Olin Wright (2010) terms “envisioning real utopias.” Olin Wright (2010: 6) “embraces this tension between dreams and practice” to argue that working for social change while upholding utopian ideals produces both material and ideological transformations. In this way, “the *belief* in the possibility of radical alternatives to existing institutions has played an important role in contemporary political life [emphasis original]” (Olin Wright 2010: 8). New Orleans’s economic justice movement centers around collective imaginaries of a more racially and equitable New Orleans. I argue that both the “real” and the ideological work of the movement has significant impacts on the shape of uneven redevelopment in New Orleans. If the making of the New New Orleans is as much an ideological pursuit as material construction, the challenge to uneven redevelopment must also consist, in part, of forming new collective imaginaries and ideological framings of the city. The argument that “Black Workers Matter” challenges a redevelopment in which it is continually demonstrated that black workers and low-income residents do not matter. The visibility demanded by the movement, at protest sites and in front of City Hall, counters the invisibility and displacement of black workers in gentrifying neighborhoods and in the back of restaurants.

Through organizing, workers and worker organizers present their alternative visions of redevelopment in which low-wage workers matter. Economic justice organizations see this work

as central, rather than peripheral, to challenging and shaping the material conditions of life in the city. Thus, at one organization's meeting, part of the agenda was devoted to asking members to challenge their realities and envision alternatives. One question asked was: "Why do you think we lack access to education, economics, and justice but have lots of access to prisons, poverty, and disease? (Doesn't this make you feel like black lives don't matter)." The following question was: "How would it feel to have equitable access to education, economics, and justice? (Wouldn't this feel like #blacklivesmatter)." Thus, central to the meeting was challenging processes of racial and economic domination through "envisioning real utopias" (Olin Wright 2010).

Individual hopes together form new collective imaginaries. Randy (July 2015), described the "ideal job" he is working toward: "I make enough money that I can take care of my family. I don't have to worry about living that paycheck-to-paycheck lifestyle anymore. I'd love to make sure I have healthcare just in case when life does happen ... It can get taken care of and it's not a problem." Gene (July 2015) described a hope for a city where "people are coming together and everybody sees you as equal. There's no one-sidedness like you're rich or poor." Tonyelle (July 2015) argued, "I would like for the city to look like the people that live here, and [...] I don't want this to clearly sound like, 'okay, she's black so she's saying she wants the city to look like Chocolate City' but I would like the city to showcase the people that live here." Peter (June 2015) described how he understands the role of organizing in the city:

This really is one of those cities where these could be the best jobs in the city because of the wealth that's generated by them, and I think my vision would be that the hospitality industry in New Orleans is an industry where the people who work in it have their own organization that they control, where they're able to set the standards they need to have the kind of life that they want. ... So it's more about, like, that vision of what we want these jobs to be like, what we want the city to be like, and what it means for workers here to have – to have their own organization in an industry that *is* the economy in this city.



Figure 4.10: People with fists raised at the site where the levees breached

Nearly all participants expressed an alternative vision of New Orleans and of a more racially and economically equitable redevelopment. Worker organizing is seen as the process by which collective imaginaries are manifested in the landscape as material realities. Mr. Alfred (August 2015) summed up this idea:

As long as they're rebuilding New New Orleans, my vision is to have young men actually get the skill training they need and to be able to provide for their families and to be able to take care of their kids like a normal person. To remain here in the city. To be able to afford rent. Have affordable housing. ... That's the vision for New Orleans. It's the work I'm doing. I won't stop until these things take place.

The economic justice movement is struggling for labor relations in which black workers can live in the city, earn a living wage, and have some security in the workplace. But they also challenge broader conditions of discrimination, violence, displacement, poverty, and neglect in the city. Low-wage workers uniquely experience the uneven redevelopment of the city as they struggle for stable, livable-wage employment in a city that is becoming unrecognizable to them. Participants mourn the losses they have endured, not only the deaths, but the losses of community networks, familiar places, and venues where they feel welcome. Yet low-wage workers and worker organizers challenge uneven redevelopment to assert their right to share in the prosperity of the New New Orleans by creating better jobs and a more equitable economy. In demanding that "Black Workers Matter," the movement confronts the racialized labor geographies of the city that treat low-wage black workers as disposable. This rallying cry symbolizes an alternative vision of development in New Orleans. This ideological construction of a racially and economically equitable New New Orleans provides a necessary counterpoint to uneven redevelopment in the city. Though limited in resources and support, the economic justice movement in New Orleans is a significant and recognizable force in the ongoing reproduction of the landscape in the city.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

“New Orleans has not come back. It came back in the way they wanted to bring it back. But it’s not the New Orleans that we knew. It’s a New New Orleans.”

- Mr. Alfred (August 2015)

“They just don’t want to see, for whatever reason, a city that has a majority-black population survive.”

- Tonyelle (July 2015)

5.1 Introduction

In this thesis I have used a qualitative analysis of field notes, participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and publicly available media accounts and distributed economic justice materials to investigate processes of uneven redevelopment and low-wage worker organizing in post-Katrina New Orleans. I engaged with the idea of uneven development (Smith [1984] 2008) to argue that processes of rebuilding and recreating the city of New Orleans over the last ten years have involved investment and disinvestment. I argued that these processes of investment in capitalist infrastructure and tourism industries necessarily support the production of a “New New Orleans,” marketed as a new, high-end, city-wide tourist attraction, to the detriment of low-wage, predominantly black workers. I built on the literatures of labor geographies to examine how organized workers perform their agency to reshape and contest the production of landscapes of uneven development. I intervened in the literature of labor geographies (Herod 1998, 2001; Mitchell 1996; Massey 1995) to focus on the increasing importance of service work and precarious or flexible employment in the current era (see also McDowell 2009). Furthermore, I built on Lier’s (2007) argument that labor geographies must

begin to account for worker organizing outside of or beyond formal union structures. I highlighted the significant role of collaboration between union members and organizers and economic justice-oriented community organizations and members. Finally, I argued that labor geographies must attend to the central importance of race in the socio-spatial relations of low-wage labor in New Orleans. In this thesis, I have investigated how racialized labor relations mirror broader processes of discrimination, subjugation, precarity, and isolation in the city of New Orleans in line with Gilmore's point that "[r]acism is a practice of abstraction, a death-dealing displacement of difference into hierarchies that organize relations" (2002: 16). Low-wage black workers are treated as disposable in the industries of the New New Orleans, as well as in the city itself (Wright 2006). I argued that uneven redevelopment in post-Katrina New Orleans reinscribes racial and economic inequalities in the landscape, in part, through the maintenance of unfair labor relations in the key industries of redevelopment: construction, hospitality, and restaurants.

Using a theoretical framework of uneven redevelopment and racialized labor geographies of post-Katrina New Orleans, I conducted research in New Orleans in Summer 2015. During this time, I actively participated in and observed the work of several labor and worker organizations in New Orleans. I utilized a methodological approach based on "resourcefulness" (Derickson and Routledge 2015) and "service research" (Trauger and Fluri 2012) in which I contributed to the work being done by organizations throughout the research project. Using a feminist methodological approach, I committed to co-producing knowledge through a dedication to "situated solidarities" (Nagar 2014; Nagar and Geiger 2007) and "scholar-activism" (Pulido 2008; Piven 2010; Derickson and Routledge 2015; Routledge and Derickson 2015). While in New Orleans, I conducted nineteen semi-structured interviews of low-wage workers, labor and

community organizers, and activist workers affiliated with economic justice organizations.

Within interviews I focused on the dialogic processes by which meanings are constructed within conversations. Interviews, as well as field notes and observations, were analyzed using narrative analysis as an approach to examining not only the statements of participants, but the emphases and silences and the broader context in which their stories are situated. To this end, ongoing relationships rooted in mutual trust and solidarity were particularly helpful to analyzing how and why participants tell their stories and share experiences.

5.2 Significant Findings

In my thesis I analyzed data to consider two key research questions: **How do low-wage workers experience processes of redevelopment and the reproduction of racial and economic inequalities in post-Katrina New Orleans? And how do low-wage workers and worker organizers challenge and contest processes of rebuilding to resist or reproduce the goals of redevelopment?** I have argued that processes of redevelopment in post-Katrina New Orleans have focused on the construction and reconstruction of key centers of capitalist profit and growth, and ongoing disinvestment in areas deemed unprofitable. I have illustrated that capitalist infrastructure projects and key tourism industries have been developed and carefully maintained, even as these industries subject low-wage workers to precarious forms of employment, low pay, high levels of job insecurity, racial discrimination and segregation, and dangerous working conditions. I argued that uneven redevelopment in New Orleans over the last decade has strengthened and reinscribed racial and economic inequalities in the landscape while simultaneously strengthening the subjugation of low-wage black workers in the workplace.

With regard to low-wage worker organizing, I have argued that economic justice organizations in New Orleans focus beyond the struggle for stable employment and livable-wage jobs to challenge the broader socio-spatial conditions of *blackness* in the city. I investigated how economic justice organizations confront labor issues as well as issues of chronic unemployment, the dismantling of public housing and food stamps, immigration raids, LGBT profiling, racist monuments, failing schools, police violence, and mass incarceration of black residents. I argued that low-wage workers do not see these struggles as distinct, but as intersections of racial and economic oppression in the city. With regard to my second research question, I argued that low-wage workers and worker organizers within an economic justice movement challenge processes of redevelopment through a uniquely collaborative struggle. I argued that the collaborations of *Unite Here Local 2262*, *Stand with Dignity*, *Show Me \$15* and other organizations challenge the goals of redevelopment by demanding that processes of rebuilding attend to the needs of low-wage black workers. I examined the material and ideological successes of the economic justice movement in shaping and/or challenging redevelopment, as well as the ways in which workers and worker organizers understand the role of the labor movement in New Orleans and ongoing challenges.

Finally, I argued that the uneven redevelopment of post-Katrina New Orleans is an attempt to re-frame the city as a new, high-end, beacon of culture and wealth for the consumption of tourists and incoming residents. This process alienates and displaces low-wage, predominantly black workers from familiar places and from an ideological sense of community. I argued that the struggle for stable jobs and livable wages within the redevelopment industries that simultaneously alienate and displace low-wage black workers represents an attempt to insert workers' welfare as a necessary component in the production of a New New Orleans. I

investigated how workers and worker organizers put forward alternative visions of development in the city and work toward new collective imaginaries and realities for black workers.

Through the analysis of data presented in my thesis, I draw the following conclusions. First, that uneven redevelopment in post-Katrina New Orleans reinscribes racial and economic inequalities in the city through selective processes of investment in capitalist infrastructure and tourism industries and disinvestment in the conditions of life and employment for its low-wage black workforce. Second, I find that low-wage workers and worker organizers, within a collaborative economic justice movement, challenge processes of rebuilding to create and reimagine alternative goals of redevelopment. Finally, I conclude that processes of redevelopment in post-Katrina New Orleans are uniquely experienced by low-wage, predominantly black workers as they struggle to make a living in a city that is changing all around them before their eyes.

5.3 Contributions

The significance of this research is comprised of its theoretical, methodological, and societal contributions. First, this research contributes a geographical approach to studies of redevelopment and employment in post-Katrina New Orleans. This thesis highlights that the social relations of labor, displacement, alienation, and gentrification occur in place within broader socio-spatial processes in the city. Within geography, this research builds on the literature of uneven development to investigate how the framing of Hurricane Katrina as a crisis, and the city of New Orleans as a ruined city in need of development, created the opportunity for rapid gentrification and capitalist development. Furthermore, I focus on redevelopment of post-Katrina New Orleans a decade after the storm to examine how ongoing socio-spatial relations of

racial and economic inequalities built into the landscape become normalized over time. While Hurricane Katrina, and New Orleans more generally, have been written about in abundance, there is relatively less empirical work considering the state of redevelopment a decade after the storm in regards to how landscapes are produced, reproduced, and reimagined in this context and how workers and worker organizers shape and challenge these processes. This research provides a thoughtful approach to critically examining racialized labor and uneven development as ongoing processes, maintained and strengthened by post-Katrina redevelopment but rooted in longstanding historical processes of racial and economic domination in the city of New Orleans.

Furthermore, I build on the literatures of labor geographies in order to highlight how low-wage workers, not simply disembodied capital, shape landscape production through confronting and challenging spaces of post-Katrina redevelopment. This research contributes to emerging scholarship in labor geographies focused on the rise of flexible and precarious employment by highlighting low-wage workers in New Orleans's industries of redevelopment – construction, hospitality, and restaurants. This research advances the body of literature addressing the racialized and gendered nature of low-wage work and the growth of precarious employment and working poverty. As manufacturing and public sector jobs continue to decline in the U.S., hotel, restaurant, retail, security, and other key sectors of the “flexible” labor economy have witnessed disproportionate growth in the employment of people of color (Marable, Ness, and Wilson 2006). In this research, I focus on the jobs that exist (and the lack of jobs) for low-income, predominantly black workers in New Orleans.

To this end, this research also contributes to a growing body of literature in labor geographies that looks beyond formal unionism to highlight the new, innovative, and intersectional movements for economic justice and labor rights. As unionism continues to

decline in the U.S., labor geographers must contend with alternative worker organizations and collectives. While I focus, in part, on the hospitality union *Unite Here*, I aim to blur the distinction between the union and the workers' centers and economic justice organizations I worked with. I argue that this "new labor movement" involves more than simply formal unions, as marginalized workers in low-wage work seek alternative ways to re-shape employment, wages, and conditions of life more broadly.

This research advances the literature of labor geographies by paying particular attention to the central role of race in labor relations and uneven redevelopment in New Orleans. While many labor geographies consider race as a secondary point of analysis, I examine labor relations as always necessarily racial and racialized. Moreover, I investigate how the particular conditions of *blackness* in the city of New Orleans are mirrored and continually reproduced in the workplace. In this thesis, I have illustrated how worker organizing attends to the conditions of labor, but also to a range of intersectional issues that impact the lives of low-wage black workers in New Orleans.

Methodologically, this research contributes to a reflexive turn in feminist qualitative research approaches. Rather than attempting to maintain a level of removed objectivity, this project benefits from the strong personal and professional relationships built within the process. The quality of data produced is, in part, a reflection of the level of access I gained through shared commitments to economic justice, and the dialogic processes of long-term discussion and interaction that guided interviews and participation. This research takes seriously the co-construction of knowledge and emancipatory approaches to research while remaining firmly grounded in theory and rigorous social science research. Within this agentic framework of

research, I employed narrative analysis as an approach to data analysis that recognizes not only stated themes and positions in interviews and conversations, but the process of storytelling itself. As noted in Chapter 3, paying attention to emphases, hesitations, silences, and repetition allows for a more developed and nuanced approach to understanding participants' stories as they intend them to be understood, within the larger socioeconomic and spatial contexts in which they are embedded. This methodological approach highlights the benefits of conducting scholar-activism within a framework of labor geographies.

This methodological approach may contribute to future research aiming to investigate worker agency within racialized labor relations and unevenly developing landscapes. As many participants noted, processes of gentrification, displacement, low-wage labor, and racial and economic oppression are not limited to New Orleans, but are occurring in cities across the world. The rapid gentrification and landscape change made possible in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina provides insight into processes of development and redevelopment in other cities as well.

The broader impacts of this research is that it strives to make visible and empower low-wage workers and worker organizers in New Orleans by highlighting their roles as dynamic spatial actors shaping, contesting, and reproducing spaces of redevelopment. In this thesis, I emphasized the narratives of marginalized workers, largely absent in the rhetoric of the New Orleans. I argued that economic justice organizing in New Orleans presents an alternative vision of redevelopment and progress. With this argument, I aim to present new collective imaginaries and realities of an equitable New Orleans.

Specifically, this thesis contributes to the economic justice movement through my commitment to “resourcefulness” (Derickson and Routledge 2015). Throughout the research project I committed to providing assistance to organizations in whatever ways were deemed

necessary. At times this meant giving rides to people or watching their kids. At other times I worked on newsletters, flyers, and worker profiles. I will also return a copy of this thesis, as well as a shorter document summarizing the research and providing recommendations, to the economic justice organizations I worked with. Through this thesis, I aim to contribute empirical and theoretical support to the movement. Many participants expressed a level of catharsis at sharing their thoughts and a sense of empowerment that their struggle will be documented. At the very least, this thesis honors the participants who shared their time and their stories with me.

5.4 Limitations, Future Research, and Final Thoughts

This research was limited by the short period of time during which I conducted field work. In addition, as the project shifted away from its original design in response to changes in the field site once I arrived, I spent a significant amount of time in the first month making introductions, getting in touch with organizations, and getting a sense of the economic justice community in New Orleans. Future research would involve a lengthier period of fieldwork, aided by already existing relationships, to allow for a more thorough and insightful examination of trends, as well as a more ethical and mutually beneficial approach to scholar-activism. This research would benefit from revisiting contacts, re-interviewing participants, and spending significantly more time working with organizations.

Second, the insights from this project are constrained to the organizations I gained access to and worked alongside. These organizations were included based on referrals from community contacts and because their stated goals are most in line with the research. This is not to say that the organizations included fully comprise the economic justice movement in New Orleans, nor that there are not other important organizations and movements with similar and dissimilar aims.

Future research would benefit from a broader perspective on economic and social justice organizing, including organizations with perhaps different or contradictory aims.

Third, future research could benefit from expanding my theoretical framework. More specifically, future research could benefit from an examination of discourses around so-called crises and the ensuing processes of “rebuilding.” Though this research does not delve too deeply into the literature on crisis, recent works such as Janet Roitman’s *Anti-Crisis* (2014) highlight how framings of events as crises, and the possibilities created and foreclosed by crisis framing, must be more thoroughly examined in future research. Adopting an “anti-crisis” perspective, and building more directly from Naomi Klein’s (2007) critiques of Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath, may provide a useful lens for examining redevelopment in New Orleans and other areas experiencing “crisis” or “natural disaster.”

Finally, future research would benefit from expanding my methodological approach. This thesis approaches uneven redevelopment and low-wage worker organizing through an emphasis on the narratives of workers and worker organizers. This is a necessary approach in order to highlight worker agency within a labor geography framework. However, given more time, future research would benefit from more extensive land-use change mapping and quantitative evidence of economic development and sites of new businesses, restaurants, and infrastructure projects, as well as gentrification in neighborhoods.

In this thesis I argued that socio-spatial processes of racial and economic subjugation in New Orleans are built and rebuilt into the landscape in New Orleans. Echoing Roitman (2014), I argued that the crisis of Hurricane Katrina, while exposing the racialized processes of abandonment, violence, and death in the midst of the crisis, obscured and normalized longstanding processes racial and economic domination, reinscribed in the landscape and in the

labor relations of low-wage work in the city. I argued that the collaborative economic justice movement is not simply an attempt to organize across a range of different issues plaguing black workers, but an attempt to reshape New Orleans within the vision of a more economically and racially equitable society (Olin Wright 2010). Thus, the call of “Black Workers Matter” goes beyond the struggle for good jobs to reframe questions of worker agency, and to re-state a right to belong in a transforming landscape. “Black Workers Matter” builds on the momentum of the “Black Lives Matter” movement in demanding an end to the accepted violence, neglect, and abandonment of black bodies. As a movement, these organizations challenge and shape uneven redevelopment in New Orleans by imagining and working toward a New New Orleans in which “Black Workers Matter.”

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APPENDIX A

Sample Interview Questions

Introductory Questions

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
 - a. How did you come to be where you are in your life?
 - b. What do you do?
 - c. What do you consider your race/ethnicity? Gender?
 - d. How long have you lived in New Orleans?
2. Tell me about how you view the city of New Orleans.
3. Tell me about how you view the restaurant industry in New Orleans.

Questions About the Workplace

4. Can you start off by telling me about your current job?
 - a. What is your position?
 - b. What do you do at your job?
 - c. How long have you worked there?
 - i. How did you get the job/start working there?
5. What kind of work did you do before you got your current job?
 - a. Where did you do this work?
 - b. Why did you stop doing that work?
6. Tell me about any experiences you have had in the restaurant industry in New Orleans.
 - a. What was that like?
 - b. What was your worst job?
 - c. What about your worst day of work?
7. Have you ever experienced any form of discrimination or been treated differently from other workers?
 - a. If so, please explain.
 - b. Why do you think you were treated differently or discriminated against?
8. Have you ever experienced or witnessed harassment or abusive treatment at work? For example, by a supervisor/employer, a co-worker, or a customer?
 - c. If so, please explain

- 9. Tell me more about these issues.
- d. What do you see as the key issues in the restaurant industry?
- e. What would you like to see change?

Questions About New Orleans, Katrina, Redevelopment

- 10. What was your experience with the storm like, both personally and with your job?
- 11. How do you think the city has changed since the storm?
- 12. Do you think the restaurant industry has changed? How?
 - a. Do you think the jobs are better or worse?
 - b. Do you think the restaurants are nicer, less nice or the same?
- 13. What do you think are the major issues/problems with the redevelopment of New Orleans and the restaurant industry?
 - a. What would you like the restaurant industry here to be like?
 - b. What would you like to see the city be like?

Questions About Agency/Involvement:

- 14. Why and how did you become active with ROC [or other organization]?
 - f. What motivated you to get involved?
 - g. Was there a specific event that pushed you to speak up?
 - h. Where did you hear about ROC [or other organization]?
 - i. Are you involved with any other groups?
- 15. Why do you think ROC [or other org] exists?
 - a. What do you think the role of [Org.] should be in New Orleans' restaurant industry?
- 16. What are some actions or activities you've done with [Org]? What was the effect of those?
- 17. How do you see your role in changing/re-shaping (or struggling to change/reshape) the restaurant industry?
- 18. What would you like others to know about your experience?

APPENDIX B

Institutional Review Board Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA CONSENT FORM

Uneven Redevelopment in New Orleans Restaurant Industry

Researcher's Statement

I am/We are asking you to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you the information about the study so you can decide whether to be in the study or not. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." A copy of this form will be given to you. You must be 18 years or older to participate.

Principal Investigator: Dr. Nik Heynen
Department of Geography
nheynen@uga.edu

Purpose of the Study

This project examines how the restaurant industry in New Orleans has changed and been rebuilt in the 10 years since Hurricane Katrina. Because race and gender play important roles in restaurant work, some questions focus on your experiences based on race or gender, or in terms of discrimination or harassment. The research also seeks to understand the role of workers and worker organizations in challenging the goals of the restaurant industry. The questions focus on your experiences and understandings of the process.

Study Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to ...

- *Answer questions in an interview based on your experiences and thoughts. Your answers will be recorded and written down at a later time.*
- *Interviews will take approximately 30 to 90 minutes. I will be performing research for June and July 2015. The final research project will be completed in April 2016.*
- *I will be performing semi-structured interviews as well as performing participant observation, meaning I will be taking notes at meetings, protests, and during day-to-day activities.*
- *Interviews will focus on your experiences. Some questions are sensitive in nature. YOU DON'T HAVE TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS THAT YOU ARE UNCOMFORTABLE WITH.*

Sensitive questions involve race, gender, discrimination, sexual harassment, inequalities, and wages.

- *Audio recording will be used during interviews.*

Risks and discomforts

- *I/We do not anticipate any risks from participating in this research.*
- *Confidentiality will be a top priority. Particular care will be taken to make sure that there are no risks of job loss or legal risks. However, there is some risk that a breach of confidentiality could create tensions at your work place or in your social life.*

Benefits

- *The research will focus on empowering workers and worker organizers. Therefore, there may be a benefit to ROC and restaurant workers.*
- *This research intends to expose injustices in the restaurant industry. Therefore, there may be a benefit to society.*

Incentives for participation

- *There are no financial incentives related to your participation in this research*

Audio/Video Recording

Audio recording will be used so that interviews can flow with conversation and the co-P.I. will not need to transcribe answers as they are spoken. Recordings will be transcribed on the same day and stored on a personal password-protected laptop. After transcription, audio recordings will be erased.

Please provide initials below if you agree to have this interview (audio) recorded or not. You may still participate in this study even if you are not willing to have the interview recorded.

_____ I do not want to have this interview recorded.

_____ I am willing to have this interview recorded.

Privacy/Confidentiality

Information collected will only identify you by first name and the date of interview. If you prefer, a false name will be assigned to your information. Identifiers based on race, gender, age will only be included if offered during interviews. Further, specific restaurant names will be omitted so that interviewees will not be connected to specific workplaces. Data will be stored on a personal password protected laptop. Field notes and audio recording devices will be kept on hand by the researcher at all times. Only the P.I. and co-P.I. will have access to the data unless data is requested by departments at the University of Georgia responsible for regulatory and research oversight.

Researchers will not release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent unless required by law.

Taking part is voluntary

Your involvement is voluntary. You may refuse to participate before the study begins, and discontinue at any time. You may skip any questions you are uncomfortable with and move on to the next question. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

If you have questions

The main researcher conducting this study is *Nik Heynen*, a professor at the University of Georgia. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact *Nik Heynen* at nheynen@uga.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form, and have had all of your questions answered.

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

APPENDIX C

Codebook

- Hope, Visions, the Future
- Challenges
- New Orleans “essence”
- Belonging, Alienation
- Change
- Great Quote
- Before/After Katrina
- Organizing, Agency
- Place, Development, Change
- Power, Empowerment
- Race, Blackness
- Solidarity, Intersectionality
- Final Message
- Workplace Issues
- Issues with pay
- Insecurity/Turnover
- Discrimination
- Sexual Harassment