

# Moulin Rouge Las Vegas: Nightlife Architecture and the Struggle for Civil Rights

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The Moulin Rouge hotel and casino in Las Vegas significantly advanced the struggle for civil rights for Black Americans, building upon a liberal optimism that had attracted several Black American artists and performers to Paris decades earlier. The Jazz Age in Paris and the Harlem Renaissance in New York during the interwar years marked a period of emancipation for Black entertainers amid festering racist resentment in the United States. In order to understand the crucial role nightlife architecture played in facilitating social change during the civil rights movement, we will first examine the increased social mobility gained by African-American women in Paris as a precursor to the history of Black people accessing education, gainful employment, and adequate housing in Las Vegas. Several key events defined the struggle for civil rights, leading to the end of segregation in the region, in which the now-demolished Moulin Rouge building played a large role.

In 1951, world-renowned American-born, Paris-based performer Josephine Baker defied American segregation laws at the El Rancho Hotel on the Las Vegas Strip by demanding that Black patrons be permitted into the casino's theatre to watch her show. Baker remained on stage, refusing to perform, until all Black ticket-holders had been granted entrance to the theatre and seated amongst their white counterparts. At a time when discriminatory Jim Crow laws dominated much of American public life, Baker's contract boldly stipulated that she would only perform for integrated audiences, a seemingly impossible feat, particularly in Las Vegas, described by Sarann Knight-Preddey (the first Black casino-owner) as the "Mississippi of the West." A large share of the population in Las Vegas was comprised of poor southern whites who had moved to the region for well-paying construction jobs at the nearby Hoover Dam, bringing with them entrenched racist views.

Prior to her performance at the El Rancho, Baker had achieved widespread success in Paris. She arrived in France with

a New York performance troupe, and had a highly anticipated debut at the all-Black musical *La revue nègre* at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in 1925. As the show's breakout star, Baker captured the French erotic imagination and reveled in the sexual liberation that had not yet occurred in America. In 1927, Baker memorably starred in *Folies du jour*, in which she donned a banana belt in a "danse sauvage." She later reminisced that freedom in Paris was "creative, social, and sexual," whereas "[i]n America, black women were corseted, policed—and policed one another and themselves."<sup>1</sup>

After a string of shows across Europe and a series of films, Baker returned to the U.S. for a tour in 1951. She encountered an America that was steeped in Jim Crow segregation laws, a stark contrast to the life she had built in France. Tracy Denean Sharpley-Whiting describes the difference in discrimination that Baker would have likely encountered at the time: "Racism American-style was different, pitiless, uncivilized, nakedly abusive; its bare-knuckled methods lacked in rhetoric and practice the paternalism of *la mission civilisatrice*, which, from the French perspective, possessed a surfeit of goodwill and intentions."<sup>2</sup> But the success Baker enjoyed in Europe was predicated upon the fetishization of the black female body at a time when non-Western forms of art had gained increasing prominence. Becoming the muse of Pablo Picasso, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Christian Dior, she was the subject of the white male gaze in an "enabling violation" which granted her increased social mobility within Parisian society. This notion of an "enabling violation," introduced by post-colonial scholar Gayatri Spivak, addresses the discernable benefits that can be derived from exploitation, though it cannot be advanced as a justification for the inflicted action.<sup>3</sup> Baker, alongside other African-American women in Paris at the time—including Jessie Fauset, Mabel Mercer, Paulette Nardal, Nancy Prophet, Augusta Savage, and Ethel Waters—experienced a degree of personal freedom and creative

control that they would not have been afforded had they remained in America. Simply put, Paris was "seductive with its lack of racial animus" and offered "freedom, opportunity, and acceptance"—despite the problematic exploitation of Black bodies.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, a vital support network formed within the growing community of Black female expatriates, largely centred around nightclub-owner Ada "Bricktop" Smith.

Proprietor of several popular nightspots in Paris's Montmartre district in the early twentieth century, Bricktop facilitated an informal community hub that she described as a "combination maildrop, bank, rehearsal hall, clubhouse—even a neighbourhood bar."<sup>5</sup> Bricktop was also instrumental in accommodating Josephine Baker in Paris, playing close friend and mentor to the young performer, connecting her to an established network of cultural creators, thus ensuring the continued success of her career. Historian Tyler Stovall emphasizes the importance of this community for African Americans in Paris:

[T]he experience of community was fundamental to the history of Black Americans in the French capital. Blacks did not come to Paris as isolated individuals but generally with the encouragement and assistance of African Americans already there. Once in Paris they were able to participate in a rich community life with its own institutions, traditions, and rituals. Moreover, the creation of an expatriate Black community played a vital role in easing the pangs of exile. Many blacks in Paris rejoiced in their escape from the United States but at the same time feared losing touch with African-American culture. Informal networks enabled them to recreate a Black cultural presence abroad freed from racism. [...] African Americans in the French capital did create important networks that, by establishing a new model of Black community, made a novel contribution to Black American culture. Arising from the interaction

of French and American traditions, the Black community in Paris has suggested the possibility of communal practices emphasizing cultural affinities but not based upon racial exclusion.<sup>6</sup>

The thriving community of expatriates and general acceptance Baker had enjoyed in Paris were largely absent in the United States upon her return in 1951. Several other prominent Black entertainers, including Eartha Kitt, Lena Horne, and Sammy Davis Jr., also encountered blatant discrimination in Las Vegas well into the 1950s. Even though they were permitted to perform on the Strip, they were barred from staying at the very hotels they performed in. Black entertainers were forced to stay in rooming houses in the city's predominantly African-American neighbourhood of Westside, located north of the Strip close to the historic downtown. This changed in 1955, when the Moulin Rouge Hotel and Casino opened its doors, introducing hotel accommodations and spectacular stage shows for integrated audiences.

By then Nevada had already garnered a reputation for looser social mores and a tendency for hedonism, with the legalization of convenient "quickie" divorces along with a widespread loosening of societal taboos surrounding gambling. During this period, religious institutions ceased to label gambling a sin, often resorting to bingo and lottery fundraisers in order to compensate for declining congregation attendance.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, the popularity of unaffiliated wedding chapels along the Strip from the 1940s onward offered a particular freedom from restrictive traditions imposed by religious institutions, as well as framing Las Vegas as a destination for lasciviousness.

It became apparent that nightlife would serve as an incubator for community organizing and social change, a critical factor in the advancement of civil rights for African Americans in Las Vegas. An "embedded liberalism" had begun to manifest in the American consciousness, with the restructuring of state forms to maintain peace

and tranquility through "some sort of class compromise between capital and labour" following World War II.<sup>8</sup> Stemming from Roosevelt's New Deal, which granted increased power to labour unions and generated a variety of welfare systems, regulatory constraints were implemented on market processes to ensure widespread benefit. This system initially yielded high-rates of economic growth in the years after 1945, and was responsible for producing a large and prosperous middle class in the United States.<sup>9</sup> However, a large number of these opportunities and protections were disproportionately distributed to white people, as people of colour were largely excluded from positions of power. Segregation laws maintained the hierarchies of power that had been established in the United States since its early settlement. Initially enforced only in schools and public transportation, segregation laws later dominated other public spaces like parks, pools, cemeteries, theatres, and restaurants.

As geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore notes, racism is the outcome of the "fatal coupling" of power and difference, with the imposition of difference by a ruling master class following racial lines.<sup>10</sup> With oppression occurring through alienation, the imposition of racial difference would maintain established hierarchies of power during a time of tremendous social upheaval following the Second World War. Segregation laws and discriminatory urban policy inscribed this racist differentiation into physical space, becoming particularly evident with the confinement of African Americans to the Westside. This was further reinforced by white residents who added restrictive covenants to property deeds, restricting the sale of housing or land only to "members of the Caucasian race," making it increasingly difficult for Blacks to live elsewhere in Las Vegas.<sup>11</sup>

The Westside had long been an undeveloped area of the city, as the initial seeds of investment had been allocated for development east of the railroad tracks, where property values were higher. The sequestering of Black residents to the Westside was



Exterior of the Moulin Rouge Hotel and Casino, “America’s First Interracial Hotel” (April 1955). Source: *Dreaming the Skyline: Resort Architecture and the New Urban Space, 1955*. 0043:0212. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

formalized by Mayor Ernie Cragin’s refusal to renew licenses for Black businesses unless they moved west of the railroad tracks. Through increasingly aggressive action, the Westside grew, becoming a neighbourhood exclusively comprised of Black businesses, residences, and schools. The community established an independent economy in which Black residents patronized Black-owned businesses, a development further reinforced by the shuttering of clubs that catered to a “mixed trade” or an interracial clientele.<sup>12</sup> In recorded interviews with local residents, Jackson Avenue would come to be described as “the Strip for African Americans,” and as a phenomenon that, according to Westside entertainer Jerusha McDonald Hilton, “mirrored the Harlem Renaissance.”<sup>13</sup>

The wartime shortage of building supplies also meant that the rapidly expanding community had limited access to construction materials, forcing whole families to live in cars, tents, shacks, and lean-tos. As the end of the war and the closure of local factories became imminent, city administrators embarked

on an urban renewal campaign to bulldoze homes that failed to meet building codes or fire safety standards in an explicit effort to drive Black residents out of town.<sup>14</sup> However, this move had the effect of further crowding residents in the homes that remained.

In 1948, the Westside Chamber of Commerce was formed to advocate for infrastructural improvements and investment within the community, at a time when the neighbourhood lacked basic municipal services, adequate medical care, or even a fire station. Low property values were often cited by Las Vegas city administrators as reason enough for their refusal to invest in infrastructure, further perpetuating the substandard condition of Westside buildings. The local chapter of the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was also unsuccessful in its various attempts in the 1940s to pass a Statewide Civil Rights ordinance through an exclusively white state legislature.

Nightlife architecture thus came to provide critical opportunities to subvert these imposed social orders and challenge discriminatory urban policy. This began with the announcement that the Nevada Biltmore Hotel and Casino, which had been operating

close to the Westside neighbourhood, was transitioning to an entirely Black workforce in an effort to attract an underserved local Black clientele in 1949. Initially opened by Hollywood restaurateur Robert Brooks in 1942, the Polynesian-themed Nevada Biltmore stood in stark contrast to Western-themed resorts like the Last Frontier and El Rancho Vegas that were popular at the time. According to historian Bob Stoldal, after several years of successful operation, business began to dwindle and ownership exchanged hands. By 1948, a group of owners acquired the struggling property and began marketing to a local clientele rather than competing for out-of-town visitors that the hotels on the Strip were courting. In a bold move to redefine the struggling hotel, the all-white group proposed that the Biltmore, one of Las Vegas’s six major properties at the time, be converted into a resort that catered exclusively to African Americans. As a result, Mayor Cragin refused to renew alcohol and gaming licenses for the establishment, and the hotel ceased operation within weeks of the announcement.

Highlighting the importance of access to gainful employment in empowering marginalized communities, the President of the Las Vegas NAACP, Woodrow Wilson, commented on the closure of the Biltmore, stating that it was “a really sad situation for the Black community. It would have helped to raise the economic status of the community because that would have put Blacks in positions of authority, management and the like by having people make the type of money that executives and sub-executives make in the hotel industry.”<sup>15</sup> The Biltmore was the only first-class Las Vegas resort where money from African Americans was accepted and, after its closure, there were no establishments that served a Black clientele. The African-American population had grown to comprise ten percent of the city’s population during the 1940s and yet remained largely ignored by businesses and city administrators. The development of new casinos was largely focused on the Strip, immediately south of Las Vegas city limits, centered around an

empty stretch of U.S. Route 91, which formerly connected Los Angeles to Salt Lake City. Casino operators there would successfully block several annexation attempts by the City of Las Vegas and eventually secure designation as the unincorporated community of Paradise in 1951.<sup>16</sup> With unincorporated township status, developers could purchase cheap swaths of desert land and circumvent municipal slot-machine and ad valorem taxes, establishing a precedent for smaller government and greater corporate influence.

Recognizing the opportunity to open a hotel for an underserved middle-to-upper class African-American market ultimately proved appealing to white investor Will Max Schwartz, who had acquired a parcel of land on west Bonanza Road in the Westside. After successfully recruiting several partners for the project, Schwartz built the \$3.5-million Moulin Rouge Hotel and Casino in 1955, defiantly billed as “America’s First Interracial Hotel.”<sup>17</sup> Featuring “Las Vegas’s largest kitchen,” a distinctive sign by famed graphic designer Betty Willis, and an Olympic-sized swimming pool, the Moulin Rouge was featured on the cover of the 20 June 1955 issue of *Life*, attracting widespread national attention.<sup>18</sup> Famed boxer and part-owner Joe Louis also greeted patrons at the door, further extending the clout of celebrity attributed to the establishment.

Rousing stage shows ultimately distinguished the Moulin Rouge from other casinos, with a third 2:30am show added by public-relations director Martin Black.<sup>19</sup> Black recognized the potential of offering a late-night show in Las Vegas, as casinos typically ran only two shows nightly: one post-dinner at 8pm and another at the midnight cocktail hour. The addition of an energetic “third act” to the roster at the Moulin Rouge proved appealing to revelers from the Strip, and routinely drew majority white audiences.<sup>20</sup> Instead of remaining in the Strip casinos after their shows, stars like Cary Grant and Nat King Cole would make appearances at the Moulin Rouge, and even conducted impromptu performances there.



Meeting at the former Moulin Rouge Hotel café that would end official segregation in Las Vegas (March 1960). From left to right: Woodrow Wilson (NAACP), Lubertha M. Warden Johnson, Bob Bailey (NAACP), Clesse Turner (County Commissioner), Butch W. E. Leyboldt (Sheriff), Hank Greenspun (Las Vegas Sun), Dr. James B. McMillan (President of the NAACP), Oran Gragson (Mayor), Dr. Charles I. West, Ray K. Sheffer (Chief of Police), Art Olsen (County Commissioner), possibly David Hoggard, and Donald Clark (NAACP). Source: The African American Experience in Las Vegas Collection, 1960. 0334:0008. Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

Renowned for his work at the Harlem Cotton Club, famed Black choreographer Clarence “Lucky” Robinson was hired to develop two original stage shows. The result was a frenetic French Can-Can and a Watusi, derived from a high-energy African dance and incorporated colourful costumes produced by an in-house seamstress. These shows would herald an array of Parisian-style productions that opened along the Las Vegas

Strip. To Las Vegas, Paris exuded a fantastical sophistication, so its incorporation served to infuse the Strip with a similar elegance and culture—along with risqué topless revues. The opening of the Lido de Paris show at the Stardust in 1960 featured the Strip’s first topless revue, by director Donn Arden, who had produced several shows at the Lido in Paris.<sup>21</sup> The resulting show was a technical feat, mounted in a completely redesigned theatre that featured “six hydraulic lifts that moved props, musicians, and performers thirty feet below or ten feet above the stage.”<sup>22</sup>

These popular and debauchorous late-night performances attempted to capture the spirit of sexual liberation that had enthralled Parisian audiences decades earlier. Unlike their Parisian counterparts, however, the

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casino resorts of the Las Vegas Strip sought primarily to capitalize on this imported social liberalism to generate capital in a predominantly service-based leisure economy by tapping into an increasingly prosperous middle class. An interconnected community of expatriate African-American women and their contemporaries reinforced Ada Bricktop’s Paris nightlife scene largely through necessity. The communal gathering that was facilitated by Bricktop’s Paris, and the Moulin Rouge Hotel and Casino both served to further intertwine these operations. For instance, the Moulin Rouge provided lucrative employment opportunities to Westside residents at a time when they were restricted to precarious back-of-house work at other casinos, as cooks, maids, janitors, and porters. Along with employment, the Cadillac wing of the hotel comprised of duplexes was specifically allotted to employees and locals for longer-term rentals. Moulin Rouge employee Alice Key fondly remembers the comingling of local residents and employees within these accommodations, with food often provided to everyone, indicating the role played by the casino as an informal community hub.<sup>23</sup>

Unfortunately, the Moulin Rouge was shuttered for undisclosed reasons just six months after opening. Las Vegas Review-Journal columnist John L. Smith suggested that the success of the Moulin Rouge stage shows may have contributed to its demise, since casinos only made money at the gambling tables—not in the showroom.<sup>24</sup> Others speculated that the market may have been oversaturated, as the Riviera, Dunes, and Royal Nevada all opened the same year as the Moulin Rouge, and all experienced financial hardship in their initial year of operation. Some have also suggested that the organized crime syndicates that controlled Strip casinos shut down the popular off-Strip destination, or that probable profit-skimming operations that occurred in most casinos had cut too deeply. Whatever the reason for the closure, the Moulin Rouge would be unable to attain its former popularity in the years that followed.

Regardless of its rocky start, the Moulin

Rouge served as a “social condenser,” a mixing of various programmatic elements borne out of necessity that yielded unprecedented events.<sup>25</sup> In the absence of basic public provisions, the resort introduced the possibility of racially integrated social spaces, while physically claiming space for the incremental advancement of civil rights. This would provide access to services African Americans had been consistently denied by the city of Las Vegas, challenging the imposed social order and converging towards a powerful impetus for change.

In a testament to the important position of the institution within the community, in March 1960, the former hotel café came to serve as the meeting space for activists, business owners, and government officials. Frustrated with the stalled advancement of civil rights, local NAACP leader Dr. James McMillan penned a letter to Las Vegas Mayor Oran Gragson threatening “massive street protests if downtown and Strip businesses did not cease discriminatory practices by March 26.”<sup>26</sup> Concerned about the potentially damaging disruption to business, Strip casino owners and politicians attended a meeting held by McMillan and Dr. Charles West at the Moulin Rouge Café. The result of the meeting would be a pact named the “Moulin Rouge Agreement,” proclaiming the official end of segregation in the region, a historic gesture toward more socially liberalized attitudes in Las Vegas. Change was slow to manifest, however, as most Black residents could still not live outside the Westside “ghetto” and were generally barred from attending schools in white neighbourhoods. Even access to employment opportunities continued to be limited. Throughout the 1960s, various state legislatures sought to enforce equal access to accommodation and employment, but with minimal immediate effect.

In the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, the city’s slum clearance initiative tied urban renewal to the construction of the Interstate highway in order to receive federal funding.<sup>27</sup> This resulted in the widespread demolition of Westside homes and the

... Nightlife Architecture and the Struggle for Civil Rights subsequent displacement of many of the city's Black residents. Without proximity, the community's ability to gather and politically mobilize was severely compromised, and Black businesses suffered as a direct result. Keller Easterling likens the devastation inflicted by widespread development upon these communities as akin to warfare, in terms of its destruction and strategic deliberation:

Demolishing areas deemed to be blighted is a long-standing municipal practice used to revalue property or recalibrate parcels. Shifting political climates may also delete ownership, value, or physical property with a slight change of laws or master plans. Although it may hide within the folds of legalities, this covert destruction may be as devastating as wars or natural disasters.<sup>28</sup>

These ongoing developments in urban planning, in addition to major shifts in public policy, continue to disproportionately affect African-American communities in particular. The failure to recognize the discriminatory allocation of services by public and private institutions goes hand in hand with a focus on the moral imperative of the individual. The Moulin Rouge capitalized on the need for spaces that would compensate for the inadequate provision of public amenities, largely a result of the offloading of state responsibility onto business-owners and profit-driven private enterprises. The refusal to provide basic services to all residents and the reliance on private spaces to fill the void would begin the positioning of Las Vegas as a vanguard of neoliberal principles.

Frustrated by the incremental advancement of civil rights both within the city and nationally, several protests and instances of violence occurred in Las Vegas from 1969 to 1970. Largely centred around several of the city's high schools, the unrest sometimes spilled over into the streets of the Westside, resulting in looting and rioting, often after the aggressive involvement of the police force. The worst single-day riot took

place at the Rancho High School in 1970, with over three-hundred students involved; the police eventually resorted to mace to quell the brawl. After a year of civil unrest and ignoring demands from the NAACP, school-board officials finally announced plans to hire thirty Black teachers in a district that severely lacked "minority" staff. This action came despite the ongoing segregation of elementary-school students, which was finally ended in 1972.<sup>29</sup> Not only was progress made on the integration of educational institutions, the introduction of housing legislation in 1971 under Governor Mike O'Callaghan also effectively ended residential segregation in the city. As historian Eugene Moehring notes, "Under a strong open housing law, the Black and Hispanic population of Las Vegas slowly began to filter out of their traditional confines in the Westside and Vegas Heights, but not as fast as one might expect."<sup>30</sup> Despite the official pact to end segregation in Las Vegas under the Moulin Rouge Agreement in 1960, it would take over a decade to begin to see the eventual dissolution of segregation.

During this time, the Moulin Rouge changed ownership several times and only remained open for short periods of time, still catering to a predominantly Black clientele. Local resident and activist Sarann Knight-Predy bought the property in 1985, becoming the first woman to acquire a gaming license in Nevada, as well as the first African American owner of the Moulin Rouge. Various attempts to reopen the resort proved problematic, as Predy could not secure long-term financing since her gaming licenses were only guaranteed for six-month instalments, compromising the sustained operation of the casino. Even though Predy was successful in petitioning the state of Nevada to commemorate the site in the National Register of Historic Places in 1992, several major fires would later destroy the building, and it was eventually demolished in 2010. The sign was the only building element to be salvaged and is currently housed at the nearby Neon Museum. Several plans have since been announced to redevelop the property, though all have failed

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to come to fruition.

As activist and scholar Angela Davis has argued, racial violence and segregation continue to be perpetuated through the widespread implementation of neoliberal policies begun in the 1980s under President Reagan. As the principles of embedded liberalism began to unravel, it became apparent that the system had been exhausted of its potential to fuel further economic growth. The search for an alternative economic system resulted in the adoption of free-market economics across various sectors, both public and private.<sup>31</sup> In effect, this dismantled the collectivist organization of labour in order to maintain corporate competitiveness and further accumulation. Another symptom was the off-loading of governmental social welfare onto the individual, producing an illusory emancipatory individualism. Davis reconciles the seemingly contradictory political ideologies that support both social and economic liberalization by suggesting that the appearance of social emancipation is synonymous with the individualization of social activity.<sup>32</sup> This key neoliberal process is one that encourages the ongoing deregulation of the marketplace, along with vast structural changes resulting in the dissolution of community.

The Moulin Rouge marked the beginning of the systematic divestment of infrastructure onto private businesses as the city routinely failed to provide basic public amenities to Westside residents. Developers thus seized the opportunity to tap into underserved markets, in effect privatizing public infrastructure, a practice that has been perfected on the Las Vegas Strip since it was designated as an "unincorporated community" in 1951. Ahead of the widespread adoption of neoliberal processes in the United States, labour unions were dismantled and the urban landscape was "interiorized" by sprawling resort campuses, providing the amenities and cultural spaces that the public sector could not or would not provide. Throughout the city's history, it is apparent that architecture has perpetuated systems of power and difference through tools such as segregation, the restriction of access,

and the enclosure of public space.

Just as the influence of Ada Bricktop's Parisian community would outlast its brief existence (ending with the onslaught of the Second World War), the original Moulin Rouge Hotel and Casino would eventually yield major advancements in the push toward securing civil rights for African Americans. In both contexts, nightlife provided critical opportunities to subvert the imposed social order, resulting in increased agency through community. Indeed, an architecture of social gathering that includes the provision of housing, as well as access to gainful employment and education, is capable of fostering social mobility for disenfranchised communities.

#### NOTES

1 T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, [Bricktop's Paris: African American Women in Paris between the Two World Wars](#) (Albany: SUNY Press, 2015), 41.

2 *Ibid.*, 7.

3 Gayatri Spivak, [A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present](#) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 371.

4 Whiting, [Bricktop's Paris](#), 5-6.

5 *Ibid.*, 12.

6 Tyler Stovall, "Harlem-sur-Seine: Building an African American Community in Paris," [Stanford Electronic Humanities Review](#) 5, no. 2 (1997). Retrieved from <http://web.stanford.edu/group/SHR/5-2/stoval.html>.

John Katsilometes, "Famed Designer Willis Never Tires of, 'What's Your Sign?'" [Las Vegas Weekly](#), 9 June 2008, <http://www.lasvegasweekly.com/blogs/the-playground/2008/jun/09/willis-never-tires-whats-your-sign>.

7 Mark Gottdiener, Claudia C. Collins, and David R. Dickens, [Las Vegas: The Social Production of an All-American City](#) (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 92.

8 David Harvey, [A Brief History of Neoliberalism](#) (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 9-10.

9 *Ibid.*, 11.

10 Ruth Wilson Gilmore, "Fatal Couplings of Power

and Difference: Notes on Racism and Geography," [The Professional Geographer](#) 54, no. 1 (2002): 16.

11 Eugene P. Moehring, [Resort City in the Sunbelt: Las Vegas, 1930-2000](#) (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000), 176.

12 *Ibid.*, 176.

13 In *The Misunderstood Legend of the Las Vegas Moulin Rouge*, several residents would describe Jackson Avenue as the centre for African-American life and culture in the Westside neighbourhood, lined with several small shops, businesses, and "honky-tonk" casinos. [The Misunderstood Legend of the Las Vegas Moulin Rouge](#), directed by Stan Armstrong and Gary Lipsman (Las Vegas, NV: Desert Rose Productions, 2013), DVD.

14 Moehring, [Resort City](#), 178.

15 Bob Stoldal, "The Black Biltmore," [The Desert Companion](#) (Summer 2009): 12.

16 An unincorporated community is a region of land not governed by its own local municipal corporation but as part of a larger administrative division. In Nevada, unincorporated communities are governed by the County and have an appointed Town Advisory Board, which provide recommendations to the County Commission on local affairs. As documented by Jill Clark and Jeff Sharp,

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unincorporated townships are a designation “originally authorized to assist in the conveyance of land and are commonly thought of as a rural form of government with limited power.” This designation is typically reserved for rural areas where a governing body cannot adequately provide municipal services like garbage collection, sewage, and electricity. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Paradise has grown to become the most populous unincorporated township in the United States, continually challenging its status as an informal city. Clark and Sharp also note that “unincorporated townships have grown so large that they are functional equivalents of cities, providing a broad range of services beyond their original ‘rural’ responsibilities.” The unincorporated township, once a state of economic and political exception, has since morphed into an acceptable form of city building with essential services offloaded to the county level of governance. Modelling themselves after Paradise as a precedent of smaller government and greater corporate influence, several adjacent communities have since claimed unincorporated status, including Summerlin, Sunrise Manor, Spring Valley, and Enterprise, effectively resisting annexation by the municipality of the City of Las Vegas. Residents generally prefer the absence of a municipal level of government, as property taxes are typically much lower. Jill S. Clark and Jeff K. Sharp, “Between the Country and the Concrete: Rediscovering the Rural-Urban Fringe,” City & Community 7, no. 1 (2008): 61–79.

17 Moehring, Resort City, 182–183.

18 Betty Willis is the designer of the signature “Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas Nevada” sign located at the southern end of the Las Vegas Strip. For the design of the Moulin Rouge sign, Willis stated that she wanted to “wanted to make it as impressive and as happy and as good as I could,” in an attempt to capture the brazen ambition of the first integrated hotel in America. John Katsilometes, “Famed Designer Willis

Never Tires of, ‘What’s Your Sign?’” Las Vegas Weekly, 9 June 2008, <http://www.lasvegasweekly.com/blogs/the-playground/2008/jun/09/willis-never-tires-whats-your-sign>.

19 The Misunderstood Legend, dir. Armstrong and Lipsman.

20 Earnest Bracey, “Moulin Rouge,” interview by Joe Schoenmann, KNPR’s State of Nevada, Nevada Public Radio, 20 July 2009.

21 “Lido at the Stardust,” UNLV Digital Collections, <http://digital.library.unlv.edu/collections/showgirls/lido-stardust>.

22 Eugene P. Moehring and Michael S. Green, Las Vegas: A Centennial History (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2005), 137.

23 The Misunderstood Legend, dir. Armstrong and Lipsman.

24 Ibid.

25 Rem Koolhaas, Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan (New York: The Monacelli Press), 135.

26 Moehring, Resort City, 184.

27 Ibid., 180.

28 Keller Easterling, Enduring Innocence: Global Architecture and its Political Masquerades (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005), 162.

29 Moehring, Resort City, 193.

30 Ibid., 200.

31 Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell, “Neoliberalizing Space,” Antipode 34, no. 3 (2002): 386.

32 Angela Davis, “Recognizing Racism in the Era of Neoliberalism,” in The Meaning of Freedom and Other Difficult Dialogues, ed. Angela Davis (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2012), 173.