



Rebecca Alexander

DISPLACEMENT, (DE)SEGREGATION, AND DISPOSSESSION

Race-class frontiers in the transition
to high school

Education Studies

Collection Editor
JANISE HURTIG

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PUBLISHING



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Dr Janise Hurtig



This book is dedicated to the young people, families, teachers, school leaders, and community organizers who entrusted me with their stories, experiences, concerns, and ideas. I am forever grateful for all that you shared.

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Abstract

Drawing on two years of fieldwork in “Glenview,” a historically Black suburb, and “Westside,” the historically white, wealthy community just across the freeway, this book analyzes segregation and gentrification in schools and communities. Situated in California during the 2007–2008 sub-prime crisis, the text follows nine young people from different sides of a race-class neighborhood border as they transition from racially isolated middle schools to a diverse but internally segregated high school. Locating the schools within the broader histories of these communities, the text illuminates how youth and families work to produce, contest, and engage racialized space in and beyond schools.

Keywords

School Segregation, Desegregation, Middle School, High School, Race, Dispossession, Gentrification, Frontier, Community, Family, Tracking.

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Introduction

A “high school transition meeting” for students planning to attend Westside High School (Westside) was announced on a Thursday afternoon at Dolores Huerta Middle School (Huerta). News of the meeting had just arrived from the district, although the meeting was to be held later that same day. Student volunteers were sent to the eighth-grade classrooms to tell anyone who would be attending Westside High School to call their parents because there would be a meeting that evening at 6:00 with school officials. At 6:00 p.m., a small handful of families were perched awkwardly on the tiny round plastic seats of the fold-down school lunch tables. The high school officials—eight of them in total, dressed in suits and business casual—fiddled with a slide projector perched in the middle of the cafeteria, shining its trapezoidal light onto the far wall where it was distorted by an outcropping. There were piles of handouts on the stage. Everyone was silent except the youngest children, who fidgeted.

As the first official took the microphone for introductions, it became apparent this was intended to be a meeting for the Westside school district, not just Westside High School, and that all four district high schools would be presenting. Unfortunately, only students thinking of attending Westside High—a school that was not the default school for most Huerta students—were

present. No one corrected this error. Instead, the officials proceeded with slide presentations describing the assets of their campuses: robotics classes, a full slate of honors and AP courses, a water polo team, a brand-new theater, touch screen white boards. They described courses most Huerta students would have no access to, even if they attended these schools. Many would be placed in remedial courses, requiring them to attend extra periods of non-college-prep English and math, foregoing all electives. Others, placed in higher tracks, would be shut out because of jobs, long commutes, family responsibilities, and fees. None of the speakers addressed this.

The third speaker was from Elmwood School, the assigned school for most Huerta students. She did not have a PowerPoint, but instead held up a stack of photocopied papers. "I wasn't sure what kind of meeting this was going to be," she said, "so I brought copies of the school rules." She continued, "a lot of students from this district seem to have trouble with the school rules, so I thought it was important to make sure you understand them before you enter our schools." She handed copies to the tables and returned to her seat. Moments like this, in which Huerta students were framed and approached as problems, were part of what made teachers from Huerta very worried about how their students were treated in the transition to high school and at Westside district schools.

Dolores Huerta Middle School

Huerta was a big school surrounded by a chain link fence. Students regularly spelled out messages to the community by poking Dixie cups between the fence links to form large dot-letters. The

first day I visited, they had written “stop the violence;” another day they wrote “love your roots.” The school was on the east side of an eight-lane freeway, in the heart of Glenview, a working-class community of color in California. A Catholic church stood next door. Between the church and school, a woman sold elotes (corn on the cob) and chicharrones (pork rinds) to passers-by from a pushcart. Parents and children clustered at the bus stops and filled the sidewalks of Creek Road, the busy suburban street in front of the school. On the school side of the fence, students could usually be seen walking or running around the track that surrounded the soccer field. A colorful mural of a giant eagle painted on one of the walls was visible in the distance.

Mr Flores, the principal at Huerta, like many other local organizers, graduated from a nearby university. As a corps member with Teach for America, he was initially assigned to teach in Glenview but resigned to more effectively organize for change in the district after a number of his friends were fired for “political reasons.” “I was a very big union rabble rouser,” he recalled; “I led a funeral march with the union down the street.” The movement got media attention and propelled a change in district leadership. As a school leader at Huerta, Mr Flores had worked to build a positive school climate, reduce teacher turnover, and develop the school as a community center.

Mr Flores felt things were better in the district, but that there was much more work to do: “we have those conversations all the time ... we need to make sure that we’re using best practices, we need to make sure that we’re rigorous.” But he also reflected on the broader context of the district: “when you say Glenview, there’s usually just a couple [of districts] that are kind of approximately

similar.” He described asking other school leaders at a statewide gathering: “Who has above 90 percent free and reduced lunch? Who has above 80 percent immigrant population? Who has full inclusion with special education?” He described watching hands steadily drop until only a few leaders, with similar demographics, had their hands raised. Particularly intractable, he argued, were the “intense mandates both from the state, because we are underperforming, but also from the federal courts, because of a special education lawsuit” which was written in a way that made it very difficult to exit oversight.

One of the most frustrating parts of the work was the lack of respect from nearby communities and state entities. “A lot of what adults experience who work in ... our district is just regular, um, derision and skepticism and condescension. Never mind the fact,” he went on, “that people write movies and books about single teachers who can get results with just one class worth of our kids. Like freedom writers, whoop de whoop, you know, *Dangerous Minds*, whoop de whoop ... ‘Stand and Deliver, whoop de whoop.’ All this bullshit,” he kept going, “I mean imagine, it’s such a big deal when just one teacher can get results that nobody would care about in Glenview. It’s such a big deal that a movie and a book is written about it and it’s watched in the ghetto across the nation. Like how many times did I grow up and have to watch *Stand and Deliver*, like every Latino from [the area’s] probably watched *Stand and Deliver* like eight times, you know!! Like wow, you’re really connecting with me.”

The sense of caring community, academic rigor, and community-driven pedagogy Mr Flores had sought to create were evident throughout the school. But the struggles of the school and the

district were also very clear. At Huerta middle school there were few computers in classrooms. The two computer labs with working desktop computers were poorly maintained, particularly after the technology support staff were sacrificed to budget cuts. One teacher, Mr Jackson, brought in a small inexpensive LCD projector for his classroom purchased with his own money. Many teachers functioned without a projector or borrowed one from Mr Jackson or the principal (when the school projector was working). Were it not for a 21st century grant to extend the school day in an effort to raise test scores¹, Huerta would have had no extracurricular courses or activities at all—no art, music, woodshop, photography, or sports program. They did not have a functioning science lab and students received science instruction only once per week.

The introduction of new facilities or equipment, in and of themselves, would make limited difference at Huerta. Rather, as the budget cuts Huerta and all Glenview schools went through in 2007–2008 and 2008–2009 made clear, it was not the material goods per se, but the personnel to run, maintain, incorporate, and protect these resources that most mattered. Budget cuts stripped Huerta's staff to the bone. At one of the first board meetings I attended in the district, support staff, teachers, students, and community members packed the boardroom, leaving standing room only, to protest pink slips (layoffs) being given to bus drivers, cafeteria workers, and janitorial staff as part of an effort to cut \$1.8 million from the district budget. The following year, the board cut all the school librarians, the locksmith (whose job it was to ensure classrooms could not be broken into and computers stolen), and the technical support staff (in charge

of keeping computers working). The board considered cutting bus service for students but worried about liability (particularly because a substantial portion of their budget went to addressing five existing lawsuits). These cuts meant that the supplies that the schools did have—library books, computers, the two projectors, all of which were heavily used—would not have the staff to maintain and protect them. At every meeting, those losing their jobs—often parents, uncles, aunts, and grandparents of the students themselves, as well as those who desperately relied on the services—showed up to protest and plead. I saw board members, also elected from within the community, cry as they sat in their chambers having to make cuts they knew would hurt students and families. In contrast, a couple miles away, just over the freeway, Valley Vista Middle School (Valley Vista) was overflowing with resources.

Valley Vista Middle School

Valley Vista was just off a busy thoroughfare, but otherwise sat amid homes and quiet streets. There was a mural on one wall, painted from digitalized photos of the students. On my first day visiting the school, I was ushered into a room where six middle school students sat, headphones on, monitoring computer flat screens. In front of them, a glass window peeked into a sound studio with multiple TV cameras, a microphone, and two studio chairs. The door to the studio opened and we rushed in. Mr Wilson, the principal, gestured for me to sit next to him in a chair. “Before I start,” he addressed the camera, “I want to introduce you to a very special guest who you’re going to be seeing around campus. This is Becky Alexander.” I waved at the camera and said

"hi" as instructed and smiled. "Becky is a graduate student at the University of California and for her research she's going to be working here at Valley Vista Middle School, looking at how you get along with and interact with each other and then following some of you to Westside High." My introduction was transmitted to all the classrooms via closed caption TV while the students learned to operate cameras, control audio and visual outputs, and direct.

I was stunned by the opulence of this encounter. It wasn't simply the technological equipment or the magnitude of putting a professional TV station in a middle school and TVs in all classrooms. Rather, it was having the resources and teachers to train and supervise students, the time and tools to integrate the technology into the overall structure of the school, and the staff to maintain and update all that equipment. I would soon learn that other elective classroom spaces with a similar level of development included a woodshop, photo lab, and computer lab.

While Valley Vista had roughly 25 percent more students than Huerta, they had three times as many teachers working with their eighth-grade students and offered six times as many courses. There were only five eighth-grade teachers at Huerta and 17 at Valley Vista. All Huerta eighth-grade students were placed into two core course offerings (Eighth Grade Core and Eighth Grade Math/Science). At Valley Vista, students chose from at least 17 courses including Eighth Grade Spanish and French, Woodshop, Art, Video, and four levels of math. The science lab course was run by a designated science teacher with full lab equipment. All Huerta students took Algebra I, while Valley Vista students could choose between Middle School Algebra, High School Algebra,

and Geometry (a tenth-grade course). The funding for much of this came from a private educational foundation, through which Valley Vista parents contributed over \$1 million per year to support the school.

Teachers at Valley Vista described the ample professional development resources they received. Ms Hegel, a newer eighth-grade core teacher, explained “everything that I’ve asked for, they’ve been able to do in some way, and it’s not about just throwing money at the problem, but it’s ‘oh, I really want to learn more about this’ and so, you know, ... here’s a book to read ... I’ve been sent to Virginia twice to be trained in differentiated instruction, you know ... they’re just so supportive and they have the resources ... I feel so lucky.”

Not only was the school wealthy, but many students were also. They start “in kindergarten knowing they’re going to go to college,” Ms Hegel explained. She described the vacation homes, lavish extracurriculars, travel, and ample supply of private tutors that nurtured her students. A handful of Glenview students were bused to Valley Vista through a transfer program called Swap that settled a desegregation lawsuit in the early 1980s. The school would otherwise be even more white and almost all upper middle class and wealthy. As it was, the school had a small portable cart from which school lunches were served to the handful of free and reduced lunch recipients.

Students from Huerta and Valley Vista went to high school together at Westside—a blue-ribbon public school of more than 2,000 students that served students from four different cities and more than 16 different schools. Glenview students were

dispersed between the four Westside Unified High School District schools as part of a desegregation plan, but the internal tracking and dynamics of the district evidenced the limits of that work. Westside boasted a robust slate of AP courses but was heavily tracked. Five levels of courses—Advanced (AS/AP), Regular (R), Basic (B), Below Basic (BB), and Far Below Basic (FBB)—corresponded to the categories on California State assessments and starkly divided the school, largely by race, class, and neighborhood. While Westside administrators and teachers often blamed Glenview School District (and their purported failures) for the racialized tracking and achievement patterns, teachers, administrators, and families from Glenview worried that, despite the abundant resources at this high school, their students were not being well served.

The transition to high school

When I asked him about the transition to high school, Mr Jackson, an Eighth Grade Core teacher at Huerta, quickly responded, “it’s horrible, just horrible.” He described endemic failures in communication “like for registration, not a single parent was there for their child to sign up for classes.”

Me: Were they invited?

Mr J: I have no idea! I mean, I didn’t even really know when the registration people were coming for sure.

Mr Jackson had tried to intervene in the process: “they were putting them all in ... support classes so it’s like Math, Math, English, English, PE, go home. I literally had to sit there and be like NOOOOOO, he’s a better student than that! That seventh-grade

test score doesn't show who he is now! I really had to advocate for them," he continued "'cause the kids were just sitting there wide eyed ... 'hey strange white lady circling things on paper.'" Mr. Jackson hadn't been able to get a sub for that day, so he had to leave his class alone for periods of time in order to be in these meetings; "...it was such a horrible day."

Mr Jackson's advocacy was shaped by what happened in his first year teaching at Huerta. He hadn't understood the system. "I was like one of the kids, watching them circle all these things," he said, but when his students came back they told him "how much they HATE it ... how they've got all Fs ... I was like, there's no way I'm going to let that happen to these kids again, and so I really pushed for them to get these good classes." Mr Jackson visited Westside High School to see what his students experienced. He vividly recounted the tracking. He saw a mostly white English class studying Shakespeare: "it was very, like, well structured and everybody was on point." Then, he "went to a support reading class and it looked very similar to my class as far as color goes" but "the teacher just stood up there at the front and just talked, talked, talked." He imagined for the students "it was just kind of like, 'I don't care about this teacher, this teacher doesn't care about me, I'm just going to bide my time...that was just hard to watch."

Other Huerta teachers expressed similar frustration with the transition. "The communication is really bare bones," Mr Billings, the other core teacher, told me. Westside officials came to his class to present, but "there were no visuals and there were these ladies or men standing and talking. The kids had no idea really what they were talking about." He said that his students, when they do come

back, “don’t really have much to say. Usually, they’re embarrassed to talk about it. Oftentimes they’ve had bad experiences.” He told the story of one student who was failing Geometry because he kept missing the bus. “You know, kids come back and they say, ‘I’m getting Cs, Ds, Fs,’ I’ve never had a student come back and say, like, ‘I’m doing stellar.’ They’ve got to be embarrassed,” he went on, “they’re not in the high classes, they don’t feel successful, they’re taking low grades.”

Mr Billings had met with leaders from one of the high schools at the district office to talk about how unfair the system was. He suggested it might be better if, at minimum, students from individual schools in Glenview were kept together at the same high school so they could stay in community with one another. Even better, he thought, all the students from Glenview should go to the same school, since “kids cannot buy into the community, cannot buy into something.” He went on, “if you want the families of Glenview to, like, own their children’s education, you should make it easier for them to be involved. That means it should be somewhere that they can walk to, somewhere close and all together.” The PE teacher simply told me, “You have to write about this! And you have to do a god job!”

The contrast between Huerta teachers’ concerns and the glowing way Valley Vista Middle School teachers described the transition was dramatic and unsettling. Ms Hegel reflected on how academically prepared her students felt: “they’ll say they feel so prepared ... so on top of things, they totally get it ... I hear really good things about the kids that go on ... a lot of them ... just, find their stride ... it just brings tears to my eyes because I’m like, you finally got it, and you finally have found, you know, who you

are." She attributed this success to the work of the school, saying "I feel like we have really, really high expectations ... maybe to the point of being too extreme ... I don't take excuses, I don't deal with any of the stuff."

Valley Vista Middle School students all went to Westside High School unless they opted for private school. Mrs Hegel reflected on how "Valley Vista Middle kids really bond with each other in a way." While they had cliques in middle school, she heard that in high school they "would just all sit together and they were this big blob ... they've found this comfort and they've found these friends that they love and it's like a support system for them." As she talked it was clear she was describing a particular sub-set of her students, those who called themselves the "popular kids."

Ms Hegel didn't feel like she had much initial understanding of the placement process. "I realized my first year I was just scrambling." Unclear on the difference between levels, she just placed all 50 students in honors or AS courses. Following this experience, she, like Mr Jackson, spent a day shadowing. The AS classes resonated with her, "I was like, this is just like the way I teach ... that's a lot of what Valley Vista is and the teachers ... just expect the kids to do what they're supposed to do." She contrasted this to the regular class where "it's a lot of the same material and the same concepts but it's a lot more ... added instruction, in a way." She added that in the regular classes "they find a few ways to teach things, whereas in AS it's like, you get it, move on, or you have to figure out a way to find it out by yourself." She did not visit support classes as she did not anticipate any of her students being placed there.

I asked her about her students' experiences coming together with kids from different schools. "I hear a lot more from parents," she said. "They're worried about their kid, you know ... being with the masses or being in such a diverse school where it's so dangerous and stuff like that." She was skeptical about parents' concerns: "you have got to be kidding me Think about what goes on in the private schools. I hear stories about parties and drugs ... these are high school kids, they're all morons." But she had heard the high school was "really divided. I mean," she said, dropping her tone, "I think it's like the white kids and the minority kids, whatever the groupings might be ... Tongan or Hispanic or African American, whatever it is. It's definitely a stigma ... you know, white kids, they're in AS and it's da, da, da. I guess I shouldn't only say white but it's sadly the majority, you know, all the Valley Vista ... kids, they go to AS, they go straight A, they do this and all the other kids don't. There's a total division [but] you can't expect them to, I mean it's not always a Lifetime movie where they're gonna be best friends."

This book

This book takes up where these teachers' questions leave off. What were young people's experiences as they transitioned from these middle schools to Westside High? How did they make sense of themselves, their communities, and one another in the process? What did this inequality mean to them and how did they navigate, contest, and participate in it? This book tells the stories of eight young people and the communities and contexts that surrounded them as they made the transition from

these racially isolated middle schools into this desegregated but deeply divided and inequitable high school. Four students (Memo, Khalil, Jaqueline, and Rahul) were from Huerta and four (Cam, Amy, Talli, and Jonathan) were from Valley Vista. I began my research during their second semester of eighth grade, at their middle schools. The book follows the students as they begin ninth grade at Westside High School. The historical and ongoing formation of the deep race-class lines that students of color, in particular, had to navigate—in the school, the neighborhood, and beyond—are central to understanding how injustice permeated and was reproduced and contested in these schools. Each chapter focuses on one of the students, exploring their ninth-grade experience in relation to their middle-school years and ending with an epilogue based on their reflections several years later. The final chapter shares the story of Elijah, an artist, community organizer, and former Westside student from Glenview who I met after he graduated. His story expands the conversation out to think more broadly about Glenview as a pedagogical space.

Some notes on my frames and language

To think through these contexts, I use a critical race-class perspective (Leonardo, 2012). This lens understands race and class at the intersection between different interlocking systems—white supremacy, coloniality, and capitalism. Race is a socially constructed category. This means that a certain set of chosen physical characteristics that have no special meaning on their own were given social, political, legal, and ideological relevance in order to create differences in rights, privileges, and power

(Leonardo, 2009). Whiteness, as a category, was constructed from people wildly diverse in their linguistic, religious, political, and economic backgrounds as a means of determining who would be defined as fully human—fully eligible for the rights of personhood and property. Capitalism as a political–economic system thrives and depends upon class inequality and racialization and has been a key tool in producing this subjugation. One way this has happened is through the provision of whiteness as a form of privilege that gives white people some limited social power even when they don’t have economic power, thus limiting inter-racial solidarity in resisting unjust economic conditions (Roediger, 2007). Whiteness is a socially constructed category (Perry, 2002), but unlike Blackness, it “does not describe a group with a sense of common experiences or kinship outside of acts of colonization and terror” (Dumas, 2016). Coloniality as a system links capitalism and white supremacy, justifying the seizure and occupation of land; mass displacement, murder, exploitation, and torture; and theft of resources (Quijano, 2000). It justifies such practices as compatible with democracy through racio-ideological logics that structure Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color as less than fully human (Grande, 2018).

BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) is an important language construction for talking about the interconnected ways people have been subject to racial and colonial oppression and engaged in resistance, without conflating different forms of historic and contemporary structural violence (Grady, 2020). In this text, however, I primarily use “people of color,” naming specific groups when I am talking about that group. This is a slightly older construct but is the one both people in Glenview and scholars

were using at the time I did my work. It emerged, following the phrase “women of color,” out of coalitional organizing as a way to construct common struggle in resistance to white supremacy (Moraga and Anzaldúa, 1983). More recently, scholars and organizers have been attentive to the urgency of holding space for coalition while recognizing how systems of oppression like antiblackness (Dumas and Ross, 2016) and settler colonial occupation (Tuck and Yang, 2012) affect people differently depending on their own group histories with racial capitalism (Robinson, 2019) and may require different organizing strategies. BIPOC opens up this complexity, but I don’t use it until the end of this text because it wasn’t the frame people were using at the time. One of the challenges with using BIPOC is not misusing it in ways that occlude the specificity it is intended to add or bring back to the fore. Many Pacific Islanders identify as First Nations peoples, and many Black and Latinx students have Indigenous ancestry (for example, Memo, as he got older, sometimes identified as Indigenous, tracing his Purepecha roots), but I also don’t want to misrepresent the extent to which indigeneity is represented in this text or context. The specificity of antiblackness can also get occluded when BIPOC is used to collapse group identities.

I sometimes use Black and Brown, which, again, is a common organizing construct, often used to talk about organizing against shared circumstances Black and Latinx folks grapple with. The construct is particularly salient in Black and Brown Power movements and movements to collaborate for racial justice (Irizarry and Rosa, 2015). The use of Brown is sometimes expanded to non-Black communities of color more broadly; particularly, people who self-identify as Brown. I use Brown in a way similar to “of

color,” following Bettina Love’s (2019) usage. I primarily use the term Black to refer to people racialized as such, because it points towards the constructed nature of the category and is globally inclusive. Black is capitalized and white is not because Black describes a social connection grounded in something other than privilege. I do occasionally use African American if I know that is what somebody prefers to be called or it feels more respectful, for example when I am first introducing someone before I know how they prefer to identify. African American is used primarily for people from the United States, and in some cases throughout the Americas, whose ancestry descends from Africa. Both terms, although contested, emerge out of generations of organizing and movement work focused on self-definition; honoring African roots, lineages, traditions, knowledges, and frameworks that long precede colonization and enslavement; and recognizing how Blackness functions as both a racial construct or racial project and a space of global, diasporic collective organizing, cultural production, and knowledge generation (Ogbar, 2019). What people prefer to be called is tied to their personal and political preferences and to the extent possible I endeavor to follow these preferences.

I use Latina, Latino, and Latinx to refer to people with heritage tracing to Latin America, depending on what I know about how they identify and prefer to be referenced. When I am speaking, I use Latinx. At the time of my research, I would have used Latino/a or Latin@ to be gender inclusive but these are both in a binary, whereas Latinx is constructed to include all genders and can indicate broader boundary work (Torres, 2018). Latinx is an ethnicity, in which people are racialized in different ways.

People can be Latinx and white, Black, Indigenous, and they can be from a wide range of countries, languages, and religions. Many Latinx people have mixed ancestry that includes African, European, and Indigenous descent and identify as mestizo or mixed. Some Mexican-American Latinx people trace their roots to land (still Indigenous land), stretching from the US/Mexico border to Wyoming, that the US occupied and Mexico ceded in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. US promises to respect Mexican land rights were disregarded throughout California and other seized territories as courts and police refused to prosecute white squatters or uphold the rights of Mexican landholders. The phrase “we didn’t cross the border, the border crossed us” describes this relationship of occupation and displacement (Acuña, 2014).

I use both Asian and Asian-American in the text, depending on how individuals identify. Much of the broader discourse refers to Asians as a racial category, which includes people of Asian descent who, like members of other racialized groups, could have had ancestors in the US since long before the declaration of independence or could have recently arrived. Asian-Americans are diverse in language, religion, time of arrival, national ancestry, and class. The socially constructed category, again, largely has to do with how people have been racialized in the US and by US immigration policy and how they have united in struggle against mutual oppression (Takaki, 1990). Pacific Islander and Polynesian are clumped with Asian in census categories but racialized differently in the US. I use these terms, Polynesian and Pacific Islander, interchangeably, as did people in this study, to refer to people from Tonga, Samoa, Fiji, and other Pacific Islands. While many

customs are shared across the islands, different languages, colonial histories, and traditions also make this a constructed category (Labrador and Wright, 2011)

Racial analysis is vital for describing how white supremacy functions and people grapple individually and collectively with racism across class divides, but it can also occlude critical relations of class and power within groups and across racialized groups. Race and class intersect because of the histories described above. Black, Latinx, Indigenous, Pacific Islander, and some Asian groups make up a disproportionate share of those in poverty, with negative economic wealth or without access to well-paying jobs and higher education. Wealth and whiteness are concentrated together, as are social and political power in the US. These are broad patterns, rooted in political policy and social practice, and tell important stories about inequality. There are also important stories they leave out. Most Black, Latinx, Pacific Islander, and Asian people in the US are middle class or above, despite garnering lower wages than whites, and over 40% of people living in poverty in the US are white. The white families described in this book are very wealthy and in no way representative of white people in general. Similarly, even though many families in Glenview struggle, only 25 percent are officially below the poverty line and many are middle class. Other more solidly middle class and elite Black and Brown suburbs exist elsewhere (Patillo, 2013). There are people of also color from across the class spectrum living in Westside and other majority white suburbs and white people of various class statuses living in Glenwood and other majority-of-color communities. The polarization of race and class in this context is, however, similar to that in many other

urban and suburban contexts where service economies bring white wealth and working people of color together.

I draw on four core concepts to help me understand these young people's experiences, identity construction, and the spaces and places they were a part of. These are: displacement, (de)segregation, dispossession, and the frontier. Each concept describes a particular kind of structural violence or harm that helps situate these young people's stories through a critical race-class lens. Discussion of each concept is embedded throughout the text as "learning objectives." As I discuss each learning objective, I also elaborate on the creative, generative ways people, including youth, respond to, resist, and rework these violences. I highlight language, concepts, and theories that help show both the depth of what is lost and harmed, but also the persistence, survival, resilience, resistance, defiance, and regenerative capacity of people, schools, and communities in the face of persistent displacement, segregation, and dispossession.

Context of the work

I worked in Glenview and Westside schools in the late 1990s. I returned in 2007 and worked and lived in these communities for five more years². I returned for follow-up interviews and to meet with and interview Glenview community activists, older youth, elders, and organizers in 2017. I have lived and worked in both communities described in this book. My understanding of the dynamics I describe is partial and forever growing, but what I have learned has primarily come from combining the theoretical tools described in this book with close observation, or deep hanging out, with young people and interviews with