

## Walking the Map

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**ABSTRACT:** In this article, I discuss how walking as mapping serves as a method for observing and disrupting spatial geopolitics, opening possibilities for alternative systems of living. I explore three theoretical perspectives—posthumanism, Indigenous and decolonializing theories of land, and Black geography—that, while distinct, nonetheless share some overlapping characteristics: the recognition and contestation of knowledge systems, the turn toward a relational ethics of living, and a call for critical and creative methods of intervention into existing systems. In the final half of the paper, I consider these orientations and their call for creative and critical methods of intervention as I review my scholarship on walking and how it has served as a form of counterstory mapping.

**KEYWORDS:** Asian American studies, mapping, walking, qualitative research, spatial racism

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Many geographers and educational researchers have noted that, while mapping orders spaces and places, its fixed categorization of data belies the fluidity of spaces and places as experienced by their inhabitants. This concern has led to research exploring how places and spaces are produced by human, animal, and plant experiences, processes, and activities (e.g., Feld & Basso, 1996; Gershon, 2017; Powell, 2010). These concerns grapple with the map as an expressive form open to reinvention, in which the conventions of mapping, such as legends, grids, and boundaries, are reformed or supplemented by new aesthetic forms of spatial depictions. The uses, methods, and forms of such mapping in qualitative research have been extensively written about across disciplinary fields, including arts-based, sensory, cultural, community, asset, and participatory mapping (see Duxbury & Redaelli, 2020).

In this article, I discuss how walking as a mapping practice serves as a method for rupturing spatial systems and structures, thus opening possibilities for alternative systems of living. I discuss three theoretical frameworks—posthumanism, Indigenous and decolonializing theories of Land, and Black geography—that while distinct, nonetheless share some overlapping characteristics: the recognition and contestation of knowledge systems; the turn toward a relational ethics of living; and a call for critical and creative methods of intervention into existing systems. I consider these perspectives and their call for critical and creative methods concerning my scholarship on walking as a means of counterstory mapping (Dyke et al., 2020). I focus on education in its broadest sense, occurring not just within schools but within communities, cultural institutions, and the land. Thus, many of the examples in this paper draw from scholars who conceive of education as occurring everywhere or whose thoughts inform critical spatial and place-based politics for educational scholarship and practice.

While I previously accounted for the important role of the sensory and the embodied in mapping place politics in my collaborative research in the El Chorrillo neighborhood of Panama City, Panama (Powell, 2010, 2008), I did not account for the significant role that walking played in our inquiry, perhaps because I had considered it a necessity for mapping rather than a process of and for mapping. Initially, the purpose of walking through the streets of El Chorrillo was to mark our area CAD maps to note existing structures, landmarks, streets, and social activities. However, the act of walking produced what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe as a line of flight, not an actual flight but a movement that perturbs existing structures. Whether those structures are buildings or minds, a line of flight is an abstract line of creative potential that (in our case) differentiated conventional mapping methods, usage, and product to something embodied, fluid, and performative: the walking and mapping, walking as mapping, are expressive forms of place and space that are both actual and virtual – that is, in the process of being actualized yet are also indeterminate. Walking in Panama was an embodied mapping process that opened up the potential for thinking of mapping, as well as geographies themselves, as something constantly differentiating from itself.

The consideration of walking as a means of expressive, actual, and in the process of becoming holds important implications for educational researchers concerned with race and ethnic studies; critical geography; diversity, equity, and inclusion; and multicultural, international concerns. In the latter part of this article, I describe my collaborative research project in San Jose Japantown, California (U.S.) called *StoryWalks*, arguing that walking as a research method for counterstory mapping facilitates an irreducible politics of both race and place: the past, present, and future enacted through these storied walks highlight the expressive, performative nature of democratic, inclusive ideals pertaining to activism, redress, interdependency, community knowledge, collective memory work, and advocacy in a historically marginalized community.

## Mapping and Walking Methodologies

Mapping research has a well-established history of use in critical qualitative research, employed in anti-oppressive and collaborative approaches to both research processes and outcomes (Marx, 2023). Sherry Marx (2023) acknowledges the creative and innovative contributions of such scholarship toward more equitable research through the disruption of existing hierarchies of research conduct as well as to understandings of place and space. Indeed, education scholars have developed creative approaches for examining normalized racist ideas and marginalized youth through sonic cartography (e.g., Gershon, 2017), journey mapping (Annamma, 2018), hand-drawn mapping of teacher taskscapes (Nolte-Yupari, S., 2020), counterstory mapping (e.g., Dyke et al., 2020; Taylor & Helfenbein, 2009), and GIS mapping (Vélez & Solórzano, 2017). Scholars examining social issues concerning children's geographies have worked with similar methods, accounting for children's movement and sense of agency through neighborhoods, schools, and communities through cognitive mapping, photography, and digital media (e.g., Nespor, 1997; Taylor, 2017), or for reimagining children's geographies amidst contemporary threats (see Lanouette & Taylor, 2022).

As a research method, walking has a long history of practice across multiple fields such as anthropology, the arts, architecture, philosophy, geography, and participatory approaches to qualitative research. In the social science fields, walking has often been used to study social-spatial relations such as mobility, place, and urban design; experiential encounters with place, health, and nature; settler colonialism and land use; and race, gender, and disability in relation to movement. Walking interviews, tours, and "go-along" interviews (e.g., Carpiano, 2009; Kusenbach, 2003; Lynch & Mannion, 2016) are longstanding ethnographic methods for both creating and understanding lived connections to place and local knowledge. In both the social sciences and the arts, walking has been a method for creative, critical inquiry; for creating embodied, sensory ways of knowing (Ingold, 2011; Pink, 2015); as interventions into spatial narratives of place (Aoki & Yoshimizu, 2015; Powell, 2019); as an artistic practice for mindful cultural activism (Pujol, 2018); as an aesthetic practice of transforming and generating architectural and landscapes (Careri, 2017); and as a creative methodology that opens to speculative practices (Springgay & Truman, 2019). In this latter category are experimentations with walking that subvert notions of walking as a privilege (and for whom) to examine political and ecological migration, colonial settlerism, racialized spaces, and place-based stories that counter formalized historical narratives (e.g., Lasczik et al., 2023; Powell, 2022; Springgay & Truman, 2019).

Critical walking methodologies have considered walking as a form of pedagogy in the broadest sense: the study of place as a form of public pedagogy regarding citizenship (Powell, 2019); movement's facilitation of sensory relationships between bodies, spaces, and places; environmental and land politics;

and the interrogation of walking's normalcy of movement through the lens of queer, feminist, and Crip theories (see Cutter-Mackenzie-Knowles & Rousell, 2022; Springgay & Truman, 2019). Critical walking methodologists have also argued that walking is complicated through geographical specificity. Motala and Bozalek (2022), for example, have argued that walking methodologies in the Global North do not translate to the Global South; they call for more global, multicultural engagements with this methodology to interrogate the ways in which the specificity of place is socially, politically, and materially entangled with walking. In these ways, walking pedagogies might contribute to citizenship education, environmental education, disability justice education, multicultural education, settler colonial and land education, and social justice education through approaches that examine the embodied politics of places.

The relationship between mapping and walking is not always evident in the literature. Few publications explicitly address this relationship. Much of the literature that overtly examines this relationship appears to focus on practical matters of urban planning and streetscapes (e.g., Ortega et al., 2020; Rosvall & Bergstrom, 2008). Several implicitly or explicitly suggest walking as a cartographic practice suited for exploring the fluid, embodied, and emergent nature of place, particularly when created through artistic practices (e.g., Lasczik et al., 2023; Motala & Bozalek, 2022; O'Rourke, 2013; Springgay & Truman, 2019). In the following sections, I examine three theoretical orientations and examples of walking and mapping research that offer critical perspectives on walking and mapping as methodological interventions into entangled knowledge systems of geopolitics, racism, the environment, and conceptions of the human.

### **Posthumanist Walking and Mapping**

Rosi Braidotti (2013) discusses the posthuman turn in the humanities, which considers the intangible nature of human boundaries (e.g., of where life begins and ends) and of all matter having agency. Braidotti argues that posthumanism can help us re-think "the historical moment when the Human has become a geological force capable of affecting all life on this planet" (2013, p.5). Questions raised from posthuman perspectives include the boundaries of "human": where the human ends and the "other" begins and the very assumptions upon which humanism and its foundations for democratized and egalitarian promises rest. A principal critique concerns the universal human, as described by a humanist philosophy, that focuses on the Western, white, able-bodied male (e.g., DaVinci's iconic Vitruvian Man) and an assumed species hierarchy; relatedly, a critique of Western capitalist narratives of progress have also been countered with accounts of precarious, relational entanglements with life on the planet that challenge human time-scales (Braidotti, 2019; Haraway, 2016; Tsing, 2015). Braidotti (2019) calls for developing critical methods that attend to how humans are embedded in differential geopolitics.

A posthuman perspective underscores the inter-relations and entanglement of species, ecosystems, and modernity. Feminist scholars, for example, have emphasized concepts of entanglement, vulnerability, and precarity that a posthuman perspective offers. Citing Marilyn Strathern's feminist, speculative method, Donna Haraway (2016) argues that it matters what stories/theories/worlds we tell other stories, theories, and worlds with. Haraway's concerns are with the inseparability of thinking-with and being-with humans and nonhumans in a type of tentacular relation, and she relies on a complex signifier, SF, to signal a playful worldmaking built through Speculative Fabulation, Science Facts, String Figures, and so on. Anna Tsing (2015, 2005) focuses on the precarity of ecosystems and biodiversity caused by colonialism, plantations and slavery, land use and ownership, and how modernity, global capitalism, racism, and the environment are entangled, leaving some more vulnerable than others. Tsing's intervention strategies vary across her work but are perhaps best summarized as a plurality of methods collectively referred to as the "arts of living" that point to interspecies, tentacular, arboreal, and weather arts across academic fields of study, as illustrated in her co-edited collection (Tsing et al., 2017).

Posthuman cartographies exist, many of which are informed by the arts and multidisciplinary fields of study (e.g., Harmon & Clemans, 2009). Posthuman walking methodologies include the work of Springgay and Truman (2019), Lasczik, et al. (2023), and Taylor et al. (2023) and focus on the entanglement of geopolitics, materiality, movement, embodiment, climate, and conceptions of the human. Mapping the Posthuman City (Ahlert & Skowronnek, 2021, <https://posthumancity.com/>) is an art installation that examines non-human species in Berlin, Germany to examine how nature and cities affect each other, how human infrastructures offer new animal habitats, and the material relationships between architecture and animals. The resulting 4-channel installation, consisting of maps, AI-generated video from citizen science data archives, and animal sound archives from Berlin's Museum of Natural History, reveals how algorithmic networks see nature and how they create new realities through visualization. While walking isn't an explicit method, the project tracks movements—walking, flying, creeping—to examine nature-city relations.

### **Indigenous and Decolonial Walking and Mapping**

While place is central to walking and mapping research, Indigenous scholars have critiqued the concept of place within settler colonial histories and practices, wherein there is an attention to Indigenous understandings of land (e.g., Tuck & McKenzie, 2015) that include the consideration of nonhuman inhabitants and how they determine place. In an analysis of territory and settlement of settler states similar to posthumanist perspectives, there is a critique of human-centeredness and the animacy that attends to all matter; yet, Indigenous scholars such as Kim Tallbear (2012) argue that the vibrancy found in matter has *always* been attended to by Indigenous peoples both in geological forces and animals and

not just in humans. Tuck and McKenzie (2015) argue that it is necessary to attend to the "cracks and fissures through which Indigenous life and knowledge have persisted and thrived despite settlement" (p. 8). Like Haraway, Tallbear also warns about the stories we use to story our knowledge of the world. Genetics research, for example, is viewed as the dominant epistemology regarding human origins rather than as a white settler storytelling practice, a view of evolution that enacts racist understandings of Indigenous peoples despite its efforts to undo racism by proving that there is no biological category to race (Reardon & Tallbear, 2012).

Storying the land to make, name, and reconstruct places after colonization is a practice and process discussed by several Indigenous scholars (Yi, 2016). In exploring the literacies of the Land, Sandra Styres (Kanien'kehá:ka) acknowledges how Indigenous landscapes are storied, forming spatial and temporal tracks left by ancestors over time that can be read. "From the time we are born our stories intersect and connect with other stories as we walk this earth" (Styres, 2019, p. 28). Overlapping layers of storied tracks are buried deep or near the surface. Yi (2016) argues that storying the land enacts cartographies after colonization that meld geography with Indigenous histories, wherein the past becomes pathways through a storied landscape and the transmission of such stories and place names becomes a means of cultural and physical survival in relation to colonial land settlements and the remapping of boundaries and properties.

Indigenous practices of walking and mapping are numerous. One example is the Indigenous Mapping Workshop Collective (<https://www.indigenousmaps.com/>), which offers a virtual space for mappers to share resources and training to map Indigenous lands so that Indigenous peoples can practice land stewardship practices such as preservation. Mapping, the collective write, "is critical to supporting Indigenous rights and interests, decolonizing place and pace, and sharing Indigenous stories of the land" (Indigenous Mapping Collective, 2021, para. 1). Australian Aboriginal walks are often expressed through songlines (oral maps of the landscape), dreaming tracks, and song spirals; sometimes the depictions are a means of maintaining pathways, stories, songs, passages, and cartographies (Norris & Harney, 2014). Artist Dorothy Napangardi describes her paintings of women's walking and singing across Country<sup>1</sup> as an invitation for placing oneself in movement, a mapping of passages rather than territory. Country is not simply representative of land, but "has awareness" and animacy (Gay'Wu Group of Women, 2019, p. xxii, cited in Lasczik et al., 2023).

### **Black Geographies, Walking, and Mapping**

Katherine McKittrick examines how questions of race and Blackness inform "geographic thought" (Hudson & McKittrick, 2014, p. 234). What happens, she asks, when we notice how our intellectual politics, our systems of knowledge, "are deeply embedded in practices of territorialization" (p. 234)? More recently, McKittrick (2021) has written about how the "types and kinds of geographic terms

such as space, location, position, and mapping are utilized without attending to the politics that underwrite these terms." Modernity and the map, underpinned by Transatlantic slavery and colonialism, situate Black people and places outside of modernity. Existing spatial concepts and theories, in other words, serve to normalize social inequalities and uneven geographies (McKittrick, 2021). Black geographies—the slave plantation, uricide, the prison, transatlantic slavery and slave ships, and slave quarters, among others—are predicated on spatialized violence and the erasure of a Black sense of place (McKittrick, 2011). McKittrick (2006, 2011) highlights how slavery prompted alternative mapping practices during and after the transatlantic slave trade that existed in an alternative space to 'real' maps: fugitive maps, literacy maps, family maps, and music maps, among others.

Writing about these challenges, McKittrick asserts that critical interventions employing creative aesthetics and emphasizing relational and connective knowledge might address the call to observe an existing social system (such as mapping and its inherent social and physical ordering). Such interventions might call out a social system's normalcy, thereby potentially providing new conditions to rupture an existing social system and build different living systems from the "something else" that is always "going on" (Wynter, 2003, cited in McKittrick, 2016, p. 9). Such techniques, she warns, must also be wary of falling back into existing systems of knowledge.

An example of walking and mapping techniques that engage the public in conversations about race and spatial narratives is artist Walis Johnson's *The Red Line Archive and Labyrinth*. Johnson's work focuses on the history of redlining practices, an illegal yet sustained practice of coding and delineating neighborhoods to evaluate risks for real estate development, and the systematic denial of loans and mortgages, among other financing to those living in certain coded areas (see more description, below) based on race or ethnicity. For one of her public art projects, Johnson created a maze from red ribbon to connote the once-redlined area that now houses the Weeksville Heritage Centre in Brooklyn, New York. Participants walked this red line with the artist as a means of counter-mapping that questions racist and classist mapping practices while generating conversation about new Black geographies (as well as communities of color and the working class) of New York (WalkingLab Podcast Episode 2: <https://walkinglab.org/podcast/walking-as-counter-mapping>). In their WalkingLab podcast series, Springgay and Truman (2019) reference McKittrick in their analysis of Walis Johnson's project. Their reference serves to examine Black geography as placelessness and to emphasize the artist's method of intervention.<sup>2</sup>

### **Walking's *More-than* Interventions into Mapping**

What interests me about walking and mapping in the above theoretical perspectives and research are three areas of concern for mapping research. The first involves exploring a "more-than" perspective, a call to inquire into the more-than-human and more-than-meets-the-eye. This challenges the conventional

understanding of the human category, contesting it along the lines of racism, capitalism, and the interconnectedness of ecosystems via veins, roots, rhizomes, creatures, weather, commerce, materials, and other matter. A more-than-human cartography suggests a mapped account that looks less like grid lines and more like collaged time-spaces, less like nation-state boundaries, and more like walking and flight paths with interspecies lines of movement and border crossings. The second concern examines the onto-epistemology of research methodologies. The theories that frame and guide them should be critically observed so that we recognize and attend to a knowledge system's normalcy and its sedimented inequities and beliefs. This involves questioning who is forcibly expelled from the category of 'the human' and, consequently, from various urban, rural, suburban, woodland, and tourist spaces, including homes. The third concern calls for interrogating normalcy through creative interventions. Interrogating normalcy—taken-for-granted systems of knowledge—can involve employing creative aesthetics and interventions to unsettle and make possible new social conditions. Walking can intervene in mapping's system of knowledge by foregrounding movement, story, paths, and performative elements of life, emphasizing relational and connective knowledge to people, species, and land. Through walking, a map might start to differentiate from itself, offering new insights and perspectives. The examples cited in the previous section are a sample of the wide variety of critical approaches to addressing such questions.

In my walking research, I have analyzed the intertwined relationship of walking and storytelling in the historic neighborhood of San Jose Japantown, California (U.S.). Because I have previously discussed Indigenous practices of mapping and walking and their connection with storying, I acknowledge the Tamien Nation, whose citizens have direct lineages to precontact villages of the Greater Santa Clara Valley and were there long before white settlerism and immigration established the city of San Jose and its surrounding areas. My research focuses on Asian American immigration and the neighborhood of San Jose Japantown; therefore, I do not explicitly address Indigenous land politics or the storying and mapping of the land by the Tamien Nation. My walking research starts with the historical, racial, and politically motivated discrimination of Asian Americans, with a particular focus on Japanese Americans, rather than on indigeneity, land, and settler occupation. Secondly, while my research focuses on Asian Americans living in Japantown, I recognize the significant scholarly contributions of Black geographers in arguing that U.S. racial and economic inequalities are definitively spatial and that, beyond mere recognition of inequalities such as those found in redlining, interventions are needed to create new possibilities. These scholarly insights affect my own inquiry. My concerns have focused on the spatial racism inflicted by the redlining of Japantown and the forced incarceration of its residents during World War II, which displaced thousands of Japanese American residents, and how the seemingly mundane gestures of a walk might matter for critical place inquiry (Powell, 2022). With these concerns in mind, I discuss below how walking serves as a process and practice of counterstory mapping.

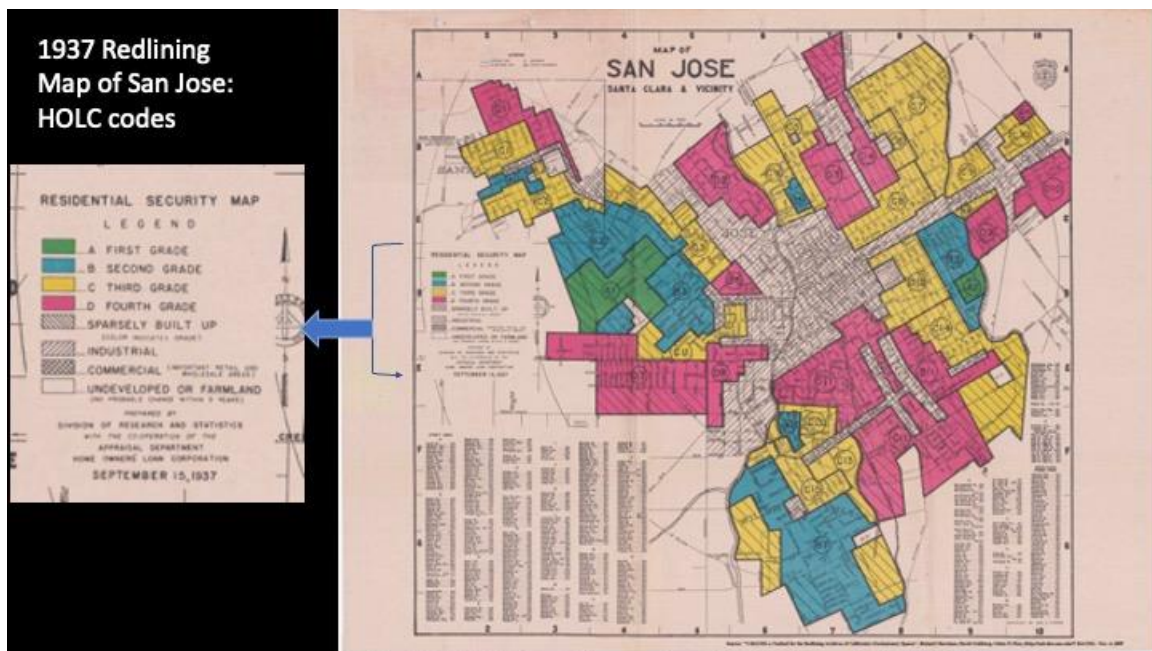


## Walking San Jose Japantown: Counterstory Mapping

A research project in collaboration with my community research partner and a long-time resident of Japantown, PJ Hirabayashi, our StoryWalks project consisted of asking neighborhood residents to take us on a walking tour of the town. Over three years, we engaged in about 30 StoryWalks with individuals, pairs, or small groups, ranging in ages from 5 to 91 years. We realized early on that while a walk through town is a patterned habit—e.g., walking from one's apartment to the market—the opportunity to reframe a walk as a tour could serve to defamiliarize walking habits, yielding stories that, in many ways, counter-mapped specific locations across time and place. Defamiliarization is a technique for dislodging habits, preconceptions, and assumptions that involves experimentation with new practices that allow for multiple processes and outcomes (Braidotti, 2013). While we hadn't intentionally utilized the technique of defamiliarization, our extensive walking tours nonetheless created opportunities wherein participants would reflect on how they were able to see the neighborhood with a new perspective and, importantly, see walking as a connective tissue among sites as well as histories, other places, and timescales. As a result, the walks became practices of counterstory mapping. *Counterstorying* employs community knowledge, traditions, collective memory work, autobiography, and critical historical research; rather than validating one story over another, counterstories seek "to complicate understanding of the truth" (Atwood & López, 2014, p. 1145). *Countermapping* recognizes mapping as a political practice of nation-state control regarding dominant, often colonial views of territory and often employs cartographic techniques to create culturally informed knowledge of place (Halder & Michel, 2018).

In the 1930's, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) promoted home ownership through federally backed loans as part of President Roosevelt's New Deal to stimulate the economy. In 1934, the FHA Underwriting Handbook incorporated "residential security maps" into their standards to determine where mortgages could or could not be issued. These maps listed neighborhood characteristics like "inharmonious racial or nationality groups" alongside "Smoke and odor" (Jackson, 1980, pp. 435-436). Developed by the Home Owner's Loan Coalition (HOLC) and used by the Federal Home Loan Bank Board to deny lending and investments to minorities, these were color-coded maps—Green for "Best" and Red for "Hazardous"—to indicate the level of security for real estate investments in 239 American cities (Mitchell & Franco, 2018, p. 20). Redlining derives from the practice of drawing a red line on a map to delineate areas where financial institutions would not invest or back mortgages based on racial, ethnic, and religious composition without regard to residents' qualifications or creditworthiness (The Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston, 2021). Neighborhoods predominantly made up of African Americans, Catholics, Jews, and immigrants from Asia and southern Europe were deemed undesirable.

The discriminatory practices captured by the HOLC maps continued until 1968, when the Fair Housing Act banned racial discrimination in housing. However, as Rothstein (2017) notes, redlining was a state-sponsored system of segregation that has impacts on communities today. A study released by the National Community Reinvestment Coalition (Mitchell & Franco, 2018) showed that the vast majority of neighborhoods marked "hazardous" in red ink on maps drawn by the federal Home Owners' Loan Corp from 1935 to 1939 are today much more likely than other areas to comprise lower-income, minority residents, locking neighborhoods into concentrated areas of poverty. San Jose was one of those redlined cities, and Japantown was a redlined neighborhood. Figure 1 is a 1937 map showing the HOLC color codes for neighborhoods of San Jose. Figures 2 and 3 are a contemporary map of San Jose and an overlay of the original redlined area on today's Japantown, respectively.



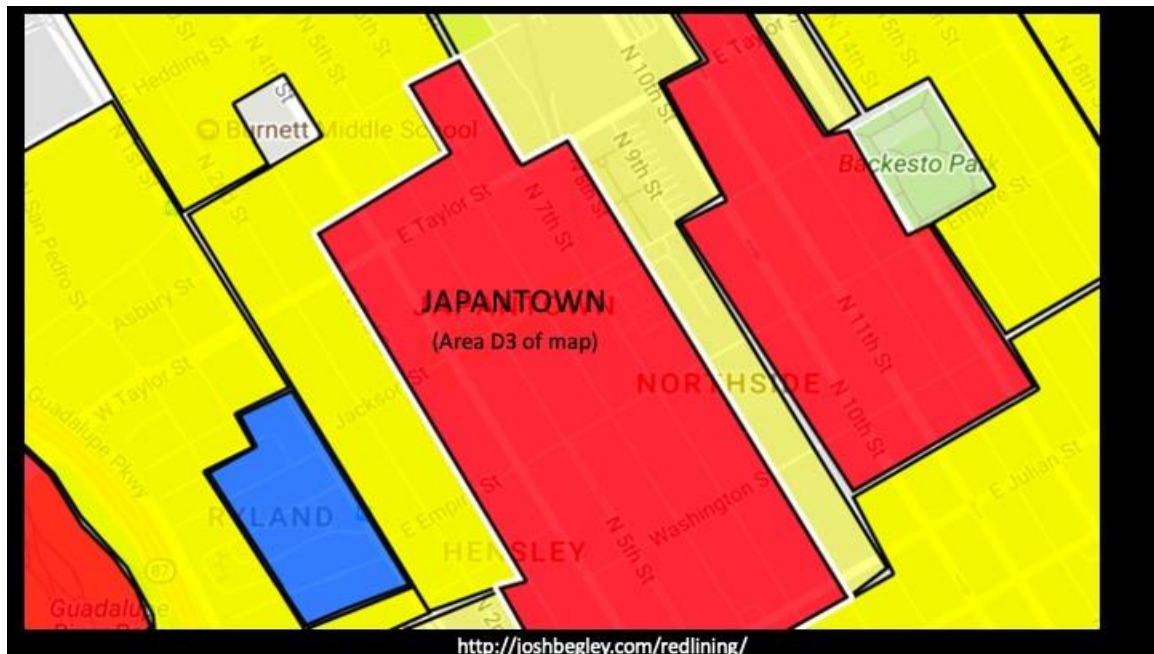
**Figure 1**

A 1937 A San Jose "residential security map" and a closeup of the map legend, created by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation [Map]. <https://joshbegley.com/redlining/>



**Figure 2**

Map of Japantown. Google Maps, 2015.



**Figure 3**

Begley, J. (n.d.). *Redlining California* [Digital Map]. <https://joshbegley.com/redlining/>

Another significant event was the internment of over 120,000 Japanese Americans in 1942 under Presidential Executive Order 9066, issued after the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor (Powell, 2022). This order served to empty San Jose Japantown of many of its residents, housing, and businesses. Executive Order 9066 called for the relocation of approximately 120,000 Japanese American citizens along the Pacific coast to what is commonly referred to as internment camps and relocation centers, although many today take issue with the language and seek to call them concentration camps (see, for example, the Japanese American Incarceration collection at the National Museum of American History). These 10 relocation centers were built in remote, desolate areas far inland, typically in desert-like conditions, imprisoning Japanese Americans in concentration camps across the United States, scattering families, destroying businesses, and violating U.S. citizenship.

Japantown today is home to Japanese Americans, Chinese Americans, Filipino Americans, and Latino Americans. It is also home to The Japanese American Museum of San Jose (JAMSJ), which houses archives from the internment, including an installation of a barracks created by a resident of Japantown who was interned as a young man. Additionally, numerous historical plaques, signs, public memorials, and art installations refer to immigration, settlement, internment, and individuals who resided in the town. These sites serve as intentional forms of public pedagogy, designed by residents and civic planning boards to educate those embarking on self-conducted or docent-led tours of the town about its history and Asian immigrant settlement. Moreover, an annual Day of Remembrance (DOR) is observed on February 19th, marking the day that Executive Order #9066 was signed and authorized the Japanese American internment. On this day, reflections and personal stories about the internment and its impact on the loss of civil liberties are shared, alongside discussions about its implications for contemporary civic life. The event, for example, has extended its support to movements like Black Lives Matter. A national event, the San Jose Japantown DOR is hosted by the neighborhood's Buddhist Church, featuring guest speakers from civil rights groups, politicians, and those who were incarcerated. As part of the event, there is a candlelit, silent walk through the main street of the town for remembrance and reflection.

Many stories shared during our walks intertwined identity politics concerning the illegal mortgage lending practice of redlining and, notably, the Japanese American internment issued via Presidential Order #9066, policies and practices of spatial racism that profoundly impacted the neighborhood. Several walking participants reflected on Filipino, Chinese, and Japanese immigration to the Santa Clara Valley and the Japantown area, highlighting policies and events that physically shaped its borders and buildings. For instance, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and The Immigration Act of 1924 limited the number of immigrants allowed entry into the United States through a national origins quota that excluded Asian immigrants altogether, aiming to "preserve the ideal of U.S. homogeneity" (Office of the Historian, 2021, para. 8). Although matters of public and historical record, these policies were interwoven into many participant stories as they walked PJ and I to medical and law practices, churches, and business

centers within Japantown. During one walk, José Muriera, then President of the South Bay Filipino Society, elaborated on the shared history of discrimination that gave rise to a Pinoy town and Chinatown adjacent to Japantown, which provided safe spaces for these immigrant groups.

Among our walking tours, many participants visited the same public stops: the museum; the memorials and monuments at the center intersection of town; several historic buildings such as the Issei Memorial building; the Ikoi no Ba benches, peaceful places for reflection symbolically marking five moments in Japanese American history—internment, festivities, farming, immigration, and culture (Japantown Business Association, 2021); Hori Midwife house; Roy's Café, a coffee shop in the middle of Japantown; San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin; the Wesley United Methodist Church; the Corporation Yard that was once Chinatown (and now current holds a Civic Center); and Okida Hall, a former theater and rehearsal space but now an Ethiopian Church. However, the pathways, routes, and stories they shared differed remarkably, punctuated with personal accounts, past and current events, and future imaginings; and, of course, other sites unique to each participant. Effectively, the stories individually and collectively collaged and threaded together spatial-temporal dimensions of place that belie any single narrative or map.

### **Counterstory-mapping Incarceration**

The counterstory mapping (Dyke et al., 2020) that occurred through walking is best described through the stories themselves. Several of our walking participants referred to internment, with a few experiencing incarceration directly: Jimi, Joe, and Arlene are three such participants, whose accounts are briefly described here. Jimi, 91 years old at the time of our walk (and since deceased), was imprisoned at age 20. A volunteer docent, curator, and contributing artist at the Japanese American Museum of San Jose, Jimi's tour included a barrack room installation built from blueprints, photographs, and his memories. Jimi's walk was full of historical accounts. At one point, we went to one of the museum's offices so that he could share some historic maps of the area. Joe, also a volunteer docent at the museum and in his late 70s at the time of our walk, took me on a 2-hour walk through the museum rather than through the neighborhood; our walk entwined the museum's exhibitions with Joe's personal stories of incarceration as he described his experiences as a boy in the camps. We viewed aerial maps and photographs of the prison camps, as well as many other exhibits. At one point, Joe pointed to an aerial photograph of the barracks where he and his family were imprisoned. His father, a U.S. government translator for the immigration department, was arrested when Joe was just 9 years old. Deemed a security threat due to his duties, his father was sent to a high-security camp for dangerous prisoners. Joe, along with his mother and three siblings, were sent to a different camp, where he did not see his father for two years.

Arlene began her tour of the store by telling the story of how she and her siblings were born in the Japanese American Topaz detention camp. Coming from a long line of merchants, reaching five generations back, Arlene's father came from Japan to the States and set up his store initially in San Francisco in 1902 before relocating to Japantown. During WWII, her father helped manage a cooperative department store at the Topaz, Utah detention camp, where Arlene and one of her brothers were born. Notably, Arlene described her store as a "quasi-museum," explaining, "We figured we have history, [so] we're going to share it with people. Plus, it gives us an opportunity to talk about internment because many people in our country still don't know." Among the archives in her store are customer-signing books dating back to 1939, initiated by her father out of human interest. Occasionally, someone viewing these books will recognize a name. While Arlene has donated some of her archives to the local museum, she has several different collections, many of which have been consigned. She refers to the items that come into her store as "cherishables," including plates, *ochawan* (rice bowls), *yukatas*, *kimonos*, textiles, and her grandfather's hand-drawn sketches of hats, gloves, and shoes transferred to metal engravings for printing advertisements for the store. She pointed to a photo of her father and his unauthorized home movie taken while in the prison camp, the only one ever made. Her father and his films were featured in a later documentary, she explained, accepted into the national registry in 1996, the second only private film ever accepted after Abraham Zapruder's Kennedy assassination short film. She also shared a news clipping about her brother, who helped carry the 2002 Olympic torch through Twin Falls, Idaho. Eventually it would end up in Salt Lake City, Utah, where her brother had spent the first three years of his life in the Topaz prison camp, Arlene noted.

The walks led by Jimi, Joe, and Arlene served to map the policies and places where racialized bodies were labeled as the criminal other, deemed undeserving of citizenship. Yet, their personal stories, which accompanied these walks, also mapped their creative engagement in founding and developing both formal and informal museums, serving as docents, participating in civic programs like the annual Day of Remembrance, and, in Jimi's case, creating museum installations and other public art projects. These endeavors actively resist any singular narrative regarding place and race politics. Jimi, Joe, and Arlene demonstrate a critical understanding of the pedagogical imperative in their pursuits, each of which fosters open-ended gatherings, connecting people and history across different times and places.

### **Counterstory-mapping Redress, Reformation, and Development**

At the request of PJ, my community research partner, we conducted numerous walks with community activists from Japantown's *Sansei* (third) generation, who were born after World War II and engaged in activities related to redress, reparation, and redevelopment, alongside younger generations. In this section, I highlight a few individuals who contributed to our research: Duane, a

documentary filmmaker and retired professor; Susan, a civil liberties activist and member of the Nihonmachi Outreach committee; Carol, a local business owner and lifelong resident; Tamiko, Carol's daughter and a local artist; Matt, a performer in San Jose Taiko with long-term involvement in the town's cultural events; and Ken and PJ, both of whom led separate artwalks for young children.

Both Duane and Susan separately discussed the Issei Memorial building, formerly a Japanese American hospital that served individuals rejected by the San Jose hospital due to racial discrimination. It has since been repurposed as a civic office building hosting numerous cultural organizations. They highlighted its role as an incubator over time, fostering ideas for the community's future. For instance, Duane recalled its use as a meeting place for young activists in the 1970s. As he explained, "These meetings gave birth to San Jose Taiko, Asian Law Alliance, Yu-Ai Kai [the local senior center]. It's really kind of an incubator, I think, and still acts as an incubator today for community ideas" (Powell, 2022, p. 263). Susan also mentioned how redlining drew the boundaries and containment area that became the neighborhood known as Japantown. Despite its origins in racist and discriminatory practices, she emphasized how such boundaries provided safe spaces and opportunities for civic practices, organizations, businesses, and political movements, including reparations and redress measures.

Carol, a local business owner who grew up in Japantown, spoke of a relational ethics of care and sustainability within the community and for the preservation of the main street's environment. During our walk, she pointed out buildings that once housed businesses, as well as relatives' and friends' residences. Notably, her family's café occupies the space where her father's gas station once stood—an important historical landmark for many residents. In tribute to her father's business, she named her café "Roy's Station." As a business owner, Carol collaborates with others to avoid duplicating specialty items sold by neighboring businesses, emphasizing her consciousness for the other establishments. Her ethics of sustainability and community care extends to nurturing the plants long the main street's stores and sidewalks with coffee grounds from her café and the local tofu shop (which, at the time of this writing, no longer exists), as well as bat guano. She notes that the city trees and storefront plants would not have survived the drought—a climate event that occurred during the time of our walk – without her efforts.

PJ and I walked with several artists, including Carol's daughter, Tamiko, who worked at Roy's Station along with her seven siblings and is also a local website designer, tattoo artist, and community artist. She described her visions and activities as an artist and a long-time community member with extensive family connections. In addition to walking me through the main street to point out graphic design and banners designed by family and friends, she also walked me to the Corporation Yard, which at the time of the walk was a fenced-in, empty lot. It had also been the site of her Japantown Mural Project. Hired by the city of San Jose, she coordinated an effort that included 60 9x6 foot panels created by over 50 artists; they covered the fencing that spans the length of Jackson Street between 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Streets, so that people could walk down the street and see other artists

who are from Japantown. Other artists include several from the San Jose Taiko ensemble, a group that PJ and her husband, Roy, cofounded in 1973 with others to create performances and educational programming to empower diverse voices and build cultural understanding (see <https://taiko.org/mission>). Like Duane and Carol, Tamiko's stories and tour referred to a diverse racial and ethnic past, present, and future hope for what Duane termed a "multicultural community." Tamiko discussed the history of the neighborhood, which had been historically Chinatown and also had a large Filipino community as having an ethnically inclusive sensibility. For her, Japantown isn't about specific racial and ethnic groups but rather a common history that is important to the identity of the neighborhood and respect for that history. Her vision for Japantown was an inclusive one, involving the maintenance of a small business atmosphere.

One San Jose Taiko performance member, Matt, described how taiko drumming sonically mapped and brought together the neighborhood during their annual *Obon* festival performances, commenting on the corresponding time-lapse videos of *Obon*, in which hundreds of festival goers would ebb and flow at the sound of the drumming performance. Beyond that specific event, a few walking participants from the group commented on how drumming acted as a sonic presence of ethnic and community identity that mapped an undeniable and vibrant presence—a sonic cartography of a living community.

In contrast to these participant-led walking tours with multi-generational adults, PJ and I also organized two art walks with young children and their teacher from the local preschool. PJ, who co-founded San Jose Taiko and is still active with taiko (see <https://taikopeace.love/>) led a sound walk in which she and the children listened to the sounds in their neighborhood, locating and placing sounds; they created their own sounds and discussed the city sounds that they didn't hear during the walk yet comprised the city's soundscape. During another art walk, the children walked with Ken, a local stone artist, visiting several stone sculptures, the World War II internment memorials, and Ken's studio to touch and listen to the sounds of stone. They also made clay impressions and crayon rubbings of textures during our walk. These were stories produced by the spatial geographies of children.

These are but a few of the many StoryWalks that occurred as part of our project. Separately and together, the walking paths and stories countermap what Caroline Chung Simpson (2002) refers to as an "absent presence" (p. 3), a dominant representational narrative of Japanese American economic and social disenfranchisement caused by internment, relocation, and Cold War culture figured a haunted identity. Simpson argues that nation-state narratives diminish the complexity of political and historical experiences and that an absence is created through the loss of situated particulars. McKittrick's (2021) insights regarding spatial concepts and theories that normalize social inequalities underscore the geopolitics of narratives. Taken together, these arguments suggest that dominant narratives have a spatial component of placelessness for minoritized citizens.



These counterstory maps methodologically unsettle dominant narratives of community, ethnicity, racial identity, and place. The map in Figure 4 depicts the mapped storylines and paths of some of the walks using an app called *Runkeeper*, which depicts movement with red lines. These red lines do not symbolize “hazardous demarcations” found in the historic maps; I have juxtaposed 12 of these walking routes onto a redlined map of Japantown, part of a larger map of San Jose created by artist Josh Begley (n.d.), as well as an image of a Civilian Exclusion Order, a flyer posted on storefronts and telephone poles containing instructions for the evacuation and relocation of those of Japanese ancestry, a replica of which still hangs as an archive on a telephone pole in the neighborhood. Doing so allows me to foreground red lines of speculation, fabulation, facts, hopes, dreams, trauma, memories, memorialization, mourning, wanderings, and voluntary movements. Using the aesthetics of collage in Figure 5, I collapse time, space, and borders, creating a field of co-existing images that are at once in tension and in relation with one another. Rather than emphasizing borders and boundaries, these maps make visible lived stories across time, space, and place, evocative of lived experiences with displacement, redress, and new social conditions, as well as new lines.



**Figure 4**

Powell, K. *Walking and mapping red lines*. [Digital Collage].



**Figure 5**

Powell, K. *Walking Japantown*. [Digital Collage].

StoryWalks participants created place-based stories weaving personal and collective memories of specific buildings, streets, businesses, people, sounds, smells, images, empty lots, and blank walls. Facts don't hold still among these various agents. Cyndi Katz's (2004) concept of "countertopographies" recognizes both the specific attributes of places and their analytic connections to other places through what she refers to as contour lines: particular relations to a process (e.g., global streams of capitalism). Story, in this view, is more than just a human, discursive event, it is a thing made through an experience of unfolding relations moving beyond a particular place and time, producing a more-than-human cartography even while stories are intimately bound in and with humans. The StoryWalks countermapped what Lipsitz (2007) refers to as a white spatial imaginary centered on settlerism, economic competition, and racist demarcations of places and people. Instead, the StoryWalks highlighted a relational ethics of community care and sustainability. That aligns well with Haraway's (2016) concept of 'response-ability,' a matter of not just responding, but responding *well* toward how we are entangled in our relations with others. For Haraway, this is created through our relations with others, and it is inventive, uncertain, and precarious. The participants' countermaps revealed a response-ability towards people, buildings, landscapes, business plans, stories spanning past, present, and future, public art, memorials, as well as archives collected and maintained by a museum and Japantown's citizens.

Maps and mapping function as assemblages (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) composed of an interaction between the corporeal (the material, the physical) and noncorporeal, or the immaterial (movement, space, sensation), performatively

enunciating our presence in and with the world. The performative potential of walking refers to its expressive and pedagogical function, limited not just to the usual ways we think of movement as bodies, materials, and objects traveling through space and time, but to an expanded notion of movement as that which produces difference: to become something other than itself wherein it might interrogate notions of the human; to become counterstory mappings; to arrange geopolitics of histories, memories, lived experiences and places across time and space. A line, a map, a story, a walk: they are inseparable. All compose a countercartography hinging on movement that fluxes fast and slow, here and there, in habitual patterns and spontaneous wanderings.

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<sup>1</sup> Country is a term often used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that, while holding many meanings, connotes interconnections among people, land, waters, skies, and ancestry. Pol (2023), among others, states that Country is a proper noun in the same way that a person is and is thus capitalized: “Country is alive. Country is timeless. And Country is us.” As defined on the AIATSIS (2024) website, Country “contains complex ideas about law, place, custom, language, spiritual belief, cultural practice, material sustenance, family and identity.” Videos of Ngunnawal Elder Jude Barlow describing the significance of Country can also be found at <https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/welcome-country>

<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive resource on redlined maps, see *Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America*, a website that provides interactive redlined maps of the racial and ethnic discrimination in U.S. housing policies. See <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining>.

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