Buried Under Dodger Blue:

Racial Rhetorical Criticism, Public Memory, and Fernandomania

by

Erin Victoria Zamora

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Daniel C. Brouwer , Chair
Lindsey Jane Meân
Ersula J. Ore

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ABSTRACT

In 1981, Fernando Valenzuela had one of the most unlikely rookie seasons for the Los Angeles Dodgers. Originally from a rural farm town in northern Mexico, he left an enduring legacy that persists within Mexican/American and Latinx fans and communities throughout Los Angeles. Not only did Fernando help the Dodgers capture the World Series, he captured the hearts of the people and the communities who had shunned the Dodgers for decades. This act of protest was a response to the destruction of three neighborhoods—La Paloma, Palo Verde, and Bishop—that were destroyed amid a protracted legal battle with the city of Los Angeles throughout the 1950's that culminated in coercion, violence, and a new baseball stadium. This project intends to remember the neighborhoods of La Paloma, Palo Verde, and Bishop and those who lost their homes alongside the public memory of Fernando Valenzuela's unlikely rookie season, dubbed Fernandomania, and his career with the Los Angeles Dodgers. I illumine how the public memories of Fernandomania, a moment of communitas, and Fernando Valenzuela have facilitated the public forgetting of La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop by making Chavez Ravine into a novel public idiom for American baseball rather than a site of violence and resistance. In the process of facilitating the public forgetting of these neighborhoods, the sports media commits a pernicious discursive violence upon Fernando Valenzuela's hyper-visible brown body that reveals the workings of a white racial frame designed to protect American baseball's white masculine ideology. Ultimately, the Los Angeles Dodgers benefit from Fernando's unmistakably cultural and racial Mexican identity—the source of his otherization and incongruity with American baseball's white heroism—as the transgressions of the past are slowly forgotten.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my *abuelita*, Sarah Reynosa. I can only hope I live up to her example of hard work, perseverance, and unconditional love.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On May 9, 1959, the last 20 residents of La Paloma, Palo Verde, and Bishop, neighborhoods located within Chavez Ravine, were forcibly removed from their homes by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. Their eviction was the culmination of a decade-long legal and political battle with the city of Los Angeles, and they had lost. Residents refused to leave as officers kicked in their front doors and hauled stubborn residents out. In the background, bulldozers and tractors waited, ready to demolish the homes as soon as they were officially unoccupied.

The drama played out on local television as cameramen documented the final remnants of a thriving community being destroyed (Laslett, 2015; Normark, 1999).[1] When the chaos subsided, those who had been forcibly evicted sat on the side of the road with no place to call home. Some had called Chavez Ravine home since the time of the Mexican Revolution, and now they found themselves displaced from their community that had existed for generations (Laslett, 2015). A few months later, on September 17, 1959, Walter O'Malley held a groundbreaking ceremony to celebrate the start of construction for the baseball stadium he always desired but could never secure in Brooklyn.

What initially began as an ambitiously planned yet highly controversial public housing and redevelopment project eventually dissipated into 1950's Cold War politics. After years of uncertainty, the city finally decided that the land should be sold to Walter O'Malley, owner of the newly arrived Los Angeles Dodgers (formerly the Brooklyn Dodgers), so that he may finally build the baseball stadium of his dreams and Los Angeles could become a modern city that rivaled New York and San Francisco (Podair, 2017). In place of a thriving community, a new baseball stadium would be resurrected so

that Los Angeles could have a civic institution that could bind the city together and spur its development.

"Developing" the Ravine

The original public housing project was pitched as a redevelopment project for Chavez Ravine. It was well known that the neighborhoods in the Ravine, which was one of the few places that Mexicans and Mexican Americans[2] were allowed to purchase homes in the city of Los Angeles, was comprised of dilapidated homes that did not reflect the development taking place throughout the rest of the city (Angeles, 2010). As Andy McCue (2013) writes:

> Some of the streets were unpaved. Utilities could be haphazard. There were solid houses, but there were also ramshackle dwellings teetering on hillsides. Goats and chickens wandered freely. An elementary school and a catholic church served as focal points. Chavez Ravine evoked different images. The residents saw a close community where somebody always had an eye on the kids playing outside and you could count on help if hard times hit. The elites of downtown Los Angeles saw an eyesore. The liberals in the elite wanted to improve housing conditions and conservatives in the elite wanted to clean things up. (p. 48)

The city's housing authority intended to use eminent domain to buy the property in La Paloma, Palo Verde, and Bishop from the current owners; if residents refused to sell, the city threatened to condemn their homes, take ownership of the property anyways, and not compensate them at all. Facing the pressure of losing their land for nothing, most residents sold their homes (Angeles, 2010; Laslett, 2015; Mechner, 2004; Podair, 2017). A few residents stayed, voiced their opposition to the city council, and disputed the compensation the city offered in court.

This redevelopment plan came with a caveat: residents who sold their property were eligible for housing vouchers (Angeles, 2010). By willingly selling their homes, which most residents did, they were promised that they would be first in line to return as residents of this new development. Whether that promise was articulated to the residents at the time, let alone if it was legitimate, that promise is contested by those who sold their homes (Mechner, 2004). However, the issue of the vouchers eventually became moot as political will for the public housing project evaporated thanks to a well-organized and funded opposition.

A coalition of interests that included the real estate industry, conservative Republicans, the owner of the *Los Angeles Times*, and the California State Senate's Committee on Un-American Activities fought vehemently against the project (McCue, 2013). Aside from allegedly bribing members of the city council to quash the project, private and political adversaries alleged that the leader of the housing authority ultimately responsible for organizing and implementing the redevelopment project, Frank Wilkerson[3], was a communist (Angeles, 2010; Mechner, 2004). Wilkerson, called to testify about his connections to communists, was eventually incarcerated for invoking his fifth amendment rights (McCue, 2013; Mechner, 2004). The well organized and funded opposition, armed with anti-communist fear mongering, doomed the project. Norris Poulson, recruited to run because of his opposition to the project, was elected mayor of Los Angeles (McCue, 2013). The project was killed, but the land was not returned to the residents who had already sold their property while the remaining residents, although already legally evicted from their property, were left in limbo.

With the project quashed, the federal government sold the land back to the city with the stipulation that it be used for a "public purpose." Because the city had no plans for the land, the status of Chavez Ravine and what was left of La Paloma, Palo Verde, and

Bishop remained in a state of uncertainty for several years. This uncertainty was beneficial to a handful of families who, having managed to resist the pressure to sell their homes, remained. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that the project was the victim of Los Angeles's atypical politics and political coalitions (Podair, 2017) and there is no evidence or indication that it was done explicitly to lure Walter O'Malley and his Brooklyn Dodgers to Los Angeles:

> By the time this agreement was reached in mid-1953, the community of Chavez Ravine had been destroyed. Walter O'Malley had barely begun his efforts to get a new stadium for his baseball team in Brooklyn. He would not begin to consider other locations for several more years. While the mythmakers would continue to write things such as "the bulldozers were called in to shove the poor Mexicans out and clear the land for a baseball stadium," the record clearly shows that in 1953 the city council had no idea what to do with its new property and Walter O'Malley wasn't interested in Los Angeles— yet. (McCue, 2013, pp. 50-51)

Corroborated by Podair's (2017) own retelling of the history of Dodger Stadium, it is true that there is no evidence to implicate Walter O'Malley in the events prior to his purchasing the land from the city of Los Angeles in 1957. However, the city did turn its attention towards luring the Brooklyn Dodgers to Los Angeles not long after the housing project was halted and controversially sold the land to O'Malley at a heavily discounted price. City officials became interested in attracting a major league baseball team in 1953, with newly elected city council woman Rosalind Wyman running on the platform to bring major league baseball to Los Angeles. After years of back and forth with O'Malley and strident opposition to the plan defeated, the city of Los Angeles reached an agreement to sell the land to Walter O'Malley so he could build a baseball stadium in Los Angeles.[4]

The Dodgers are Coming to Town

Throughout the 1940's and 1950's, Walter O'Malley had two priorities: beat the Yankees in the World Series and build a new stadium for his Brooklyn Dodgers. By 1955, the first goal had finally been accomplished, but the latter goal seemed more unlikely than ever. It was well known that ever since O'Malley had purchased the Brooklyn Dodgers that he wanted to build his own new baseball stadium. He was tired of Ebbets Field's limited capacity, especially in comparison to Yankee Stadium, and its limited access to transportation (Angeles, 2010; Podair, 2017). By the mid-1950's, Ebbets Field was in poor shape. Walter O'Malley always viewed professional baseball as a business, and a decaying field with a limited capacity was bad for business. He worked exhaustively for years to secure real estate to build a new stadium, but Robert Moses, then the most powerful person in New York politics, thwarted O'Malley's efforts at every turn (Podair, 2017). Meanwhile, officials from the city of Los Angeles reached out to O'Malley about bringing the Dodgers west. As the story goes, Walter O'Malley took a helicopter tour of Chavez Ravine and saw the perfect location to build his dream baseball stadium (Angeles, 2010; Podair, 20117). Los Angeles became a tempting destination, but O'Malley continued to hold out hope that Brooklyn would come through.

With the impending departure of the New York Giants[5], the national league owners set an October 1 deadline for O'Malley. He would take several extra days to make his final decision, as he was uncertain about what to do. Brooklyn was O'Malley's home and Los Angeles was an unfamiliar city. However, Robert Moses continued to thwart all attempts to secure real estate for a new stadium, and Los Angeles ultimately offered O'Malley what he wanted all along: land with transportation access that he could own and develop privately. As late as the evening of October 7, O'Malley was unable to fully commit to a move across country; meanwhile, the city government of Los Angeles was

fighting internal and external political opposition to the city's plan to sell O'Malley the land to build his baseball stadium (Podair, 2017). Despite all the hesitancies and moments where negotiations and commitments could have fallen apart, a deal was finally reached. The land was O'Malley's to own if he committed to Los Angeles. O'Malley got what he wanted from Los Angeles, but he would have to leave his hometown and take his baseball team with him.

Walter O'Malley relented and accepted the inevitable. The last baseball game played at Ebbets Field occurred on September 24, 1957; on the morning of October 8, 1957, Walter O'Malley approved the plan to move the Dodgers west (Podair, 2017). Months of painstaking negotiations and ample uncertainty paid off for Los Angeles and O'Malley. The city arranged to sell O'Malley the land at a discounted price; however, there were still a few remaining residents in the Ravine that the city had agreed to evict. According to McCue (2013):

> The mythmakers got their boost in May 1959. By then, the Dodgers had arrived and were playing in the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum while they negotiated with the city for the property that would become Dodger Stadium. Up in Chavez Ravine, there were still some twenty families living in the few houses that hadn't been destroyed seven years earlier. Most of them were disputing the amount of money they had been offered by the housing authority for their property. With the housing project dead and without plans for the land, the city had let the legal matters drop. The money had been sitting in escrow accounts, drawing interest, since 1953. Now, as the time to begin stadium construction arrived, it became necessary to move the last residents. (p. 51)

Although most of the families had already left and the community was in literal ruins, a handful of families remained.

The city of Los Angeles had already weathered fierce internal political opposition to the real estate deal that would allow O'Malley to purchase the land, and O'Malley had already dealt with civil suits and a failed referendum designed to quash the deal.[6] The last remaining residents, although motivated independently to keep their homes and livelihoods, were being used by opponents of the real estate deal. O'Malley, always the businessman, was worried about the optics associated with a forced eviction. However, the city was committed to holding up its end of the bargain and would finally clear the remaining residents out, especially since they had already been legally evicted (Podair, 2017). Of course, technicalities did not matter to the remaining residents. They would resist until the bitter end.

O'Malley was concerned that the optics of forced evictions could hurt his ability to appeal to fans from Los Angeles's extensive Mexican/American community.[7] His instincts were right, and the optics were, indeed, bad. What transpired the morning of Friday, May 8, 1959 was widely circulated in the media:

> On the morning of May 8, Los Angeles County sheriffs escorted bulldozers to Chavez Ravine. Reporters followed. As the bulldozers pushed into the wooden-frame houses, newspaper and television cameras captured Aurora Vargas struggling with deputies as she was pulled from her home. The pictures were dramatic and the television stations, then competing with newspapers to establish themselves as a source for news, played the story big. Here it was, a poor Mexican American family being evicted to make way for a privately-owned baseball stadium. The pictures were quite clear and very dramatic. The context was gone, to be replaced by myth. (p. 51)

While it is understandable to clarify that Walter O'Malley did not directly facilitate the initial evictions in Chavez Ravine, I take issue with McCue's constant reference to "myth"

and “mythmaking” in his historicization of the events surrounding the destruction of La Paloma, Palo Verde, and Bishop. Regardless of O’Malley’s complicity, the simple fact of the matter is that Dodger Stadium, O’Malley’s dream stadium, came into exitance at the expense of the Mexican/American residents whose livelihoods were tied to Chavez Ravine. Gentrification, a symptom of systemic racism as manifested within capitalist white supremacy, is not a myth. O’Malley may not have seen it that way, but the residents who lost their homes—many of whom refused to attend games for the rest of their lives—saw the truth.

With the Ravine completely evicted, construction on the stadium began. In 1962, Dodger Stadium hosted its first Opening Day. Between 1962 and 1981, plenty of white middle class men attended Dodgers games and the Dodgers went on to win two World Series in 1963 and 1965. In solidarity and remembrance for those who lost their livelihoods, many Mexican/Americans across Los Angeles eschewed the Dodgers (Angeles, 2010). Although their resistance was silent, their absence was noticeable to Walter O’Malley. It then not surprising that one of O’Malley’s first decisions when moving to Los Angeles was to hire Jaime Jarrín as a full time Spanish language broadcaster for the team. An unprecedented move at the time, O’Malley saw the business potential of appealing to the vast Spanish speaking population across Los Angeles. Access to games in Spanish created some inroads. But generally speaking, it was still apparent that Mexican/Americans had few reasons to truly embracing the Dodgers.

20 years later, that would all change.

Here Comes El Torro

On April 9, 1981, pitcher Jerry Reuss was injured and unable to start on Opening Day. To start in his place, Dodgers manager Tommy Lasorda called upon an unknown rookie from Navajoa, Sonora, to start for the Los Angeles Dodgers on Opening Day in

Dodger Stadium. Fernando Valenzuela, a 19-year-old rookie from rural Mexico, pitched an unexpected 9-inning shutout in front of the Dodger Stadium crowd (Angeles, 2010). But his success did not stop there. In his three subsequent starts on the road, he surrendered only a single run. His unexpected pitching dominance felt unprecedented and brought record attendance to the games he was the scheduled starter, despite pitching on the road (Angeles, 2010). By the time he returned to Dodger Stadium for his fifth ever start, he had pitched four complete games, three of them shutouts.

When Fernando started his second game at Dodger Stadium, the game was an unprecedented event. However, what was most apparent was the composition of fans in Dodger Stadium who had come to cheer the player affectionately nicknamed "El Torro" (the bull). Valenzuela's stunning and unexpected prowess had triggered an intense fan frenzy dubbed "Fernandomania." And the Mexican/American fans who had refused to attend games, conscious of what had occurred almost 20 years before, flocked to Chavez Ravine as patrons of Dodger Stadium (Angeles, 2010). Adrian Burgos (2007) explains:

> Winning his first eight decisions and the hearts of Dodgers fans, a new cultural phenomenon, "Fernandomania," was born. Mexican and Mexican American fans poured into Dodgers Stadium whenever the stocky left-hander took the mound. Fernandomania spread through the entire circuit, as Latino fans came out to celebrate the Mexican pitching sensation who was helping vault the Dodgers to the top of the National League West. (p. 235)

The fandom only grew as Valenzuela won his first eight starts as a rookie and became the only player in MLB history to win the Cy Young and Rookie of the Year awards in the same season.

But what was it that drew Mexican/American fans to Dodger Stadium, the site of such a traumatic memory that it was still etched in the consciousness of the

Mexican/American community in Los Angeles? Aside from his pure pitching prowess, what made him such a sensation so quickly? Surely a significant part of "Fernandomania" was his incredible statistical achievements that season and his role in helping the Dodgers finally vanquish the dreaded New York Yankees in the 1981 World Series after two unsuccessful tries in 1977 and 1978. But ultimately, it was seeing a Mexican pitcher dominate baseball. "Fernandomania" had to do with who Fernando Valenzuela was:

> Valenzuela's ascent made international headlines. In addition to his success on the ball field, his physical appearance strengthened his appeal. The prominence of his brownness and indigenousness made him a cultural hero to Mexicans and many Latinos. He was not racially ambiguous and was therefore quite distinct from those Latino (and Mexican) big leaguers in pre-integration days who had claimed Spanish blood, stressed European (often Castilian) ethnic roots, or kept tight-lipped about their Mexican ancestry. (Burgos, 2007, p. 235)

Valenzuela's race and ethnicity featured prominently in his popularity then and how he is remembered now. During the 1981 season, sports writers constantly remarked about his humble origins, his naiveté, his portly figure, and his silent demeanor.[8] For example, in the *30 for 30* documentary "Fernando Nation," interviewees looked back and remarked how Valenzuela did not have the typical Dodgers pitcher's physique: where Don Drysdale looked like a body builder, Valenzuela looked like he had "just finished winning a beer-drinking competition"[9] (Angeles, 2010). Fernando Valenzuela resembled the Mexican/American fans who were in the stands, and he was conquering the baseball world.

In subsequent years, Mexican/American fans continued to flock to Dodger Stadium to see Fernando Valenzuela pitch. Seeing one of their own take the mound and

lead the Dodgers to victory transformed the Mexican/American community's relationship with the Dodgers, Dodger Stadium, and Chavez Ravine. As Burgos (2007) explains, "His signing revived interest among Latino fans throughout the country, particularly those of Mexican origins, and helped the Dodgers attract a larger segment of Southern California's Latino market" (p. 231). As for the rest of Valenzuela's career, he would continue to have a few more dominant seasons—which included finishing second in Cy Young voting in 1985—before injuries took their toll on his career. When the Dodgers won the 1988 World Series against the Oakland Athletics, Valenzuela was on the injured list throughout the entirety of their playoff run. When Valenzuela pitched his memorable no-hitter in 1990, he was considered past his prime and was unceremoniously released prior to the 1991 season. He retired after the 1997 season after playing for several other major league teams. He now works as a Spanish-language broadcaster for the Los Angeles Dodgers and was recently honored as a "Legend of Dodger Baseball" by the Los Angeles Dodgers organization.[10]

The Lasting Impact of "Fernandomania"

Although the height of "Fernandomania" concluded in the mid-1980's, Mexican/American and Latinx fans are still a consistent and visible fanbase for the Dodgers. Valenzuela might just be another name on the long list of legendary and popular players to wear a Dodgers uniform, but his memory remains salient amongst the organization and fans.

For instance: prior to the start of the 2019 season, the Dodgers equipment manager publicly proclaimed his sigh of relief when superstar free agent Bryce Harper was not signed by the Dodgers. Valenzuela's number, 34, is not retired by the organization[11], nor is Valenzuela in the hall of fame. He was honored during the 2019 season as the third member of the Dodgers' inaugural class of players recognized as

"Legends of Dodger Baseball," but that does not mean his jersey is retired in any official capacity.[12] But in an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, the equipment and clubhouse managers explained that they have intentionally kept Valenzuela's number out of circulation as a sign of respect (DiGiovanna, 2019). The website Baseball Essential considers Fernando Valenzuela's number "unofficially" retired due to it not being in circulation since he was cut from the team after the 1990 season (Snider, 2016). Fans can still purchase a Fernando Valenzuela jersey in the team shop, and the team still celebrates his no-hitter on its anniversary in a variety of capacities (i.e. on its official social media accounts, commemorative videos in-between innings at Dodger Stadium). Fernando himself is also a color commentator alongside Jaime Jarrín –the man who once served as his unofficially translator and made his games accessible to adoring Mexican/American fans across Los Angeles and Mexico.

The destruction of the Mexican/American community that made its home in Chavez Ravine and the phenomenon of "Fernandomania" are not unrelated. The story of the public housing project boondoggle is often framed as a local political controversy reflective of 1950's politics (i.e., the Red Scare) and Los Angeles's unique political context; in actually, it is another example of historically institutionalized racism and violent gentrification. Meanwhile, "Fernandomania" appears to be another enactment of rabid sports fandom in the vein of *communitas*.[13] However, the events I have recalled in extended, but by no means exhaustive, detail contribute to the complicated, controversial, and ultimately racialized memory of Chavez Ravine, Dodger Stadium, the Los Angeles Dodgers, and Fernando Valenzuela. These racialized memories are a product of the rhetorical forces harnessed by the Dodgers and are always inherently present in sport and baseball writ large.

Furthermore, Mexican/Americans embracing of the Dodgers through Fernando Valenzuela reveals the hegemonic rhetorical power of sporting myths to erode harrowing memories of violence and inspirational memories of resistance. As fans, we remember Fernandomania and Fernando Valenzuela, even if we were not alive to watch him play ourselves. What rarely ever gets asked is why those memories are the ones remembered while the others are subtly or overtly forgotten. Some of this work is not novel. For example, Raymond Schuck's (2006) work on the Brooklyn Dodgers being remembered as a symbol for working class identity, race progress in the United States, and American identity reveals how sports and individual teams construct and rearticulate powerful and problematic myths with rhetorical implications for public memory. This project shares a similar premise but deviates in significant ways by calling explicit attention to the structures of race at work and the institutions that support those structures—namely baseball and the sports media that promotes baseball.

Aside from my explicit attention to the dimensions of race at work in the deprivation of a community's memory and the rhetorical power of Fernandomania, my project is inspired by and accountable to La Loma's, Palo Verde's, and Bishop's public memory and historical importance. This project unapologetically challenges the contemporary public memory of the Los Angeles Dodgers and Dodger Stadium by invoking the history of what happened sixty years ago in the neighborhoods of La Paloma, Palo Verde, and Bishop. The public memory of what La Paloma, Palo Verde, and Bishop were—a thriving community for Mexican/Americans who were unable to live anywhere else in Los Angeles—has been buried by a baseball stadium. I will not continue to facilitate the public forgetting of the physical and discursive violence perpetrated upon La Loma, Palo Verde, Bishop, or Fernando Valenzuela's unapologetic brown body. I have

no intention of continuing to propagate the hegemonic myths that have come to define American baseball, Fernando Valenzuela, and the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Originally, there were only a handful of public works that circulated images and narratives of Chavez Ravine prior to the construction of Dodger Stadium. Don Normark's photographs of Chavez Ravine and its community, taken in 1948-1949 when he was only in his 20's, was not published until 1999; his photobook *Chavez Ravine, 1949: A Los Angeles Story* later served as the inspiration for the 2003 documentary short titled *Chavez Ravine: A Los Angeles Story*. The Chicano-Latino theater group Culture Clash wrote and performed a play in 2003 titled *Chavez Ravine*; the politic of their work, what Garcia (2006) calls critical race theater, tells the story of Chavez Ravine from the perspective of the residents who were displaced by from their homes.

More recently, the *ESPN 30 for 30* "Fernando Nation" documentary film features a segment that re-tells the story of the failed housing project and subsequent evictions of the residents to build the stadium. Currently, there are two known organizations that advocate reinvigorating and preserving the memory of La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop. And several book projects—Eric Nusbaum's *Stealing Home: Los Angeles, the Dodgers, and the Lives Caught in Between* and John H. M. Laslett's *Shameful Vicotry: The Los Angeles Dodgers, the Red Scare, and The Hidden History of Chavez Ravine*—focus explicitly on the events that lead to the construction of Dodger Stadium in Chavez Ravine. The organization *Buried Under the Blue* advocates for referring to La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop by name and promotes the use of the hashtag #notchavezravine; they also contextualize what happened at La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop within the current political struggle to stop gentrification across other neighborhoods in Los Angeles ("Home | Buriedundertheblue," n.d.). Meanwhile *Chavez Ravine: An Unfinished Story* is a community-academic partnership that aims to preserve the history and memory of

the destroyed neighborhoods from the perspective of the residents through oral history and archival preservation("An Unfinished Story," n.d.). Clearly, the memory of La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop are being preserved for future generations to remember. But it is important to recognize that the Dodgers and the city of Los Angeles have rarely, if they have ever, acknowledged the controversy of Chavez Ravine, and the city of Los Angeles has not admitted its culpability.

The Dodgers openly recognize that it was Fernando Valenzuela who brought Mexican/American fans to Dodger Stadium. Somewhat surprisingly, there is one known occasion where the Dodgers organization did partially recognize the events that had transpired in 1959. In October 2000, members of the team's front office at the time and a handful of former Chavez Ravine residents' broke bread and extended olive branches to each other at a memorial ceremony for a priest whose congregation once included the residents of Chavez Ravine (Mechner, 2004). Otherwise, whenever sports broadcasters utter the words "Welcome to beautiful Dodger Stadium in Chavez Ravine," all fans see is a beautiful baseball stadium filled with fans and home to the Los Angeles Dodgers. Vin Scully's immortal catchphrase, "It's time for Dodger baseball!" erodes memory of the Mexican/Americans who were stripped of their livelihoods and prosperity, all for the sake of bringing baseball to Los Angeles. Nobody thinks about the fact that, "for almost a hundred years before the Dodgers began playing baseball there in 1962, Chavez Ravine was home to one of the largest and most celebrated Mexican American barrios in the American Southwest" (Laslett, 2015, p. 3).

In writing about Latinos' place in baseball's history and how this exploration reveals how the color line was reinforced, dismantled, and not always black and white, Burgos (2007) writes:

> I find inspiration for this pursuit in anthropologist Michel Rolph Trouillot's argument that history at its roots is a relationship between those who live in the present and the events of the past. History cannot alter the facts of the past: what occurred did occur. Our understanding of the past, however, evolves through new perspectives and analytical frameworks that produce new insights. (p. 5)

While Burgos grounds the exigence for his study of Latinos in baseball within the purview of history, I ground the exigence of my study in public memory. Hasian and Frank (1999) argue that history and memory are not opposites; rather, they are complementary terms that help us understand how ideologies are accepted, rejected, or modified; they are contested terrains that are not devoid of rhetoric; they go on to differentiate the nuances between history and memory:

> *Histories* are those punctuations of the time that have been accepted by the majority of intellectual communities as an authentic record of past events [...] *Collective memories*,[14] on the other hand, are the public acceptances or ratifications of these histories on the part of broader audiences. We believe that juxtaposing these terms allows us to see how histories and collective memories *together* serve three rhetorical functions--they help create our own individual and collective identities, maintain our traditions, and allow us to forget. (p. 98)

It is this dynamic of creating individual and collective identities, maintaining traditions, and allowing (encouraging) forgetting that is at work when examining the rhetorical effects that "Fernandomania" has had on the Mexican/American community in Los Angeles.

Unearthing the Past, Challenging the Present

If you ask Mexican/American Dodgers fans, even casual fans, why Fernando Valenzuela's skills diminished so quickly—Valenzuela was no longer considered in his

prime well before the age of 30—they will tell you it is because the team overused him. This is a narrative that has been repeated to me by my mother and my abuelita, who are by no means baseball experts or dedicated Dodgers fans.[15] And it is a sentiment that has been repeated in the narratives surrounding Fernando Valenzuela, including the *ESPN 30 for 30* documentary "Fernando Nation" (Angeles, 2010). However, there is also a belief that Fernando Valenzuela's success on the mound, his everlasting fame and memory, and the continued presence of Mexican/American fans in the stands at Dodger Stadium forgives the tragedy and violence that occurred in La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop. That conclusion, that there has been forgiveness, is implicit whenever the memory of Fernando Valenzuela is invoked by the Los Angeles Dodgers. It is that prevailing belief, fueled by the memory of Fernandomania, that I am challenging in this project. The Dodgers may not have directly contributed to the violence and displacement that took place throughout the 1950's, but they are complicit in eroding that memory for profit by exploiting Valenzuela's body.

That is why I intend to reveal how Fernandomania, Fernando Valenzuela, and their public memories are used to attract brown bodies to fill Dodger Stadium, buy Dodgers gear, become Dodgers fans, and forget what happened in Chavez Ravine in the 1950's. Indeed, baseball has a penchant for religious, heroic language (Butterworth, 2013), and sport has been used to cleanse images of violence (Grano & Zagacki, 2011) and negotiate violent memory (Serazio, 2010) in problematic ways. "Fernandomania" serves a similar rhetorical function: it is a catalyst that acts to facilitate the forgiving and/or forgetting of violent racialized memories that occurred in the past.
Kendall Phillips (2004)observes that scholars turn to memories, "as a way of understanding the complex interrelationships among past, present, and future" (p. 2). Furthermore, Bradford Vivian (2010) argues that remembering and forgetting are

densely interwoven dimensions of larger symbolic or discursive processes" (p. 10). It is my intention to investigate the intersection of race, public memory, and public forgetting to reveal how Chavez Ravine and Dodger Stadium have been transformed and purified—in the past and today—by the memory of "Fernandomania" and Fernando Valenzuela's mythical status in Dodgers fans' collective lore.

Therefore, I argue that the public memories of Fernandomania—a moment of *communitas*—and Fernando Valenzuela have facilitated the public forgetting of La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop. As a consequence, Chavez Ravine is a *novel public idiom*.[16] It is known as the home of Dodger Stadium and the Los Angeles Dodgers rather than a site of resistance, struggle, and violence. In the process of facilitating the public forgetting of these neighborhoods, the sports media commits a pernicious discursive violence upon Fernando Valenzuela's hyper-visible brown body that reveals the workings of a white racial frame designed to protect American baseball's white masculine ideology. Ultimately, the Los Angeles Dodgers benefit from Fernando's unmistakably cultural and racial Mexican identity—the source of his otherization and incongruity with American baseball's white heroism—because it fuels his popularity and their profits.

The subsequent chapters of this project will proceed as follows: first, I will demonstrate how Fernandomania should be understood through the lenses of racial rhetorical criticism, public memory, and *communitas* and that Fernandomania can be analyzed rhetorically (Chapter 2); next, I will explore the white racial frame and discursive violence at work throughout Fernando Valenzuela's rookie season and the *communitas* that was Fernandomania (Chapter 3); I will then analyze how the public memory of Fernandomania persists throughout the rest of his Dodger career and how that public memory is invoked in the documentary "Fernando Nation" and Fernando's "Legends of Dodger Baseball" ceremony (Chapter 4); finally, I will discuss the

implications of the analysis as they relate to Mexican/American racial identity broadly and my own Chicanx identity specifically, among a handful of theoretical implications for racial rhetorical criticism, public memory and forgetting, and rhetorical approaches to the study of sports (Chapter 5).

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[1] Don Newmark photographed the community in 1949, just a few years before the housing authority began to implement the development project and push residents out of La Paloma, Palo Verde, and Bishop. His photographs of the community that thrived in Chavez Ravine would not be published for another fifty years (1999).

[2] Hereafter, I've abbreviated Mexican and Mexican Americans as Mexican/Americans. I do this to recognize that many of the residents of Chavez Ravine and the fans who cheered on Fernando Valenzuela and treasure his memory were/are Mexican, immigrants from Mexico (such as my grandmother), or Mexican-Americans who are second (such as my mother) and third (such as myself) generation.

[3] In an interview, Wilkerson expressed regret for his role in displacing the families in Chavez Ravine without any new housing development to show for his efforts and their sacrifice (Mechner, 2004).

[4] See Podair (2017) for a recounting of the back and forth negotiation that occurred between the city of Los Angeles and Walter O'Malley and the role of Robert Moses in the eventual departure of the Brooklyn Dodgers.

[5] It is a popular belief among Dodgers fans that Walter O'Malley convinced the owner of the then New York Giants to move his baseball club to San Francisco so that the Dodgers-Giants rivalry could continue when both teams moved to the west coast. The reality is that the Giants, much like the Dodgers, faced the impossible battle of securing a new stadium and looked westward for a new home. If O'Malley decided to move the team to Los Angeles, the Giants could move to San Francisco since travel to the west coast would become worthwhile for the other national league teams; if the Dodgers remained in Brooklyn, the Giants would move to a more geographically-friendly city like Minneapolis (Podair, 2017).

[6] The vote to approve the real estate deal passed by the minimal majority required after it initially failed a city council vote. Minutes after Walter O'Malley landed in Los Angeles to declare the arrival of the Dodgers, he was served with a civil lawsuit meant to prevent his purchase of Chavez Ravine from the city. Finally, a coalition of political and private interests gathered enough signatures to support a ballot measure that allowed citizens to vote on the deal directly via a referendum; it too passed with the slimmest of majorities. The opposition to the real estate deal was quite intense and persistent (Podair, 2017).

[7] To appeal to Mexican/American, and indeed Latinx fans broadly, O'Malley hired Jaime Jarrin to broadcast Dodgers games on Spanish radio.

[8] When Valenzuela was called up to the majors, he did not speak English. Therefore Mike Brito, the scout who had discovered Valenzuela in Mexico, would often serve as his translator when reporters asked questions during the 1981 season.

[9] Yes, an interviewee does say this in the documentary. Unsurprisingly, he is a white male sportswriter.

[10] I was present for the ceremony, which took place on July 20, 2019. Fans present at the game were given a commemorative bobblehead to mark the occasion, and the stadium app's virtual reality function allowed fans to view a unique video if they possessed the bobblehead. Before the next day's game, our shuttle driver commented that the game was the most crowded bobblehead night she had ever seen at Dodger Stadium.

[11] The Dodgers technically do not have an explicit policy on requiring a player to be elected into the Hall of Fame to have their number retired by the organization (Gurnick, 2019); however, 9 of the 10 numbers retired by the Dodgers, with the lone exception to this norm being Jim Gilliam,

are players who had their numbers retired after they were elected to the Hall of Fame (Snider, 2016).

[12] Players who receive this newly created honor have a plaque lauding their accomplishments displayed in the stadium. The first inaugural class of Legends of Dodgers baseball is comprised of Don Newcombe and Steve Garvey, with Valenzuela being the third and final honoree recognized during the 2019 season.

[13] I invoke *communitas*, originally conceived by Victor Turner (1967, 1974), as applied to sport fandom by Ingham and McDonald (2003) and Nathan (2013). I explore the intersection of *communitas* and sports fandom in the literature review.

[14] There are many works within memory studies dedicated to the delineations among collective/social/public memory (for example, see Casey, 2004; Olick et al., 2011; Olick & Robbins, 1998). Blair, Dickinson, and Ott (2010) state that the plethora of modifiers that precede "memory" is evidence of the study of memory within a variety of academic fields, but that ultimately the various strands of studying memory all assume a shared sense of the past (p. 5-22; also see footnotes 26 and 27). I will explain some of these delineations briefly in the literature review and explain why I use "public" memory specifically for this project. Overall, I am less interested in the minutia of the modifiers. I prefer to draw from the common threads across the various types of memory studies to build a coherent and productive framework that best supports this project's outcomes.

[15] They both lived through "Fernandomania" in the 1980's. Whenever I mention Fernando Valenzuela in the presence of my mother, she becomes upset and reiterates her belief that the Dodgers exploited him.

[16] I will elaborate upon Bradford Vivian's (2010) conception of a novel public idiom in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHOD

Before I begin my theoretical overview and explain my methodology, I believe it is important to call explicit attention to the dynamics of race as they manifest not only within the politics of communication and rhetoric—specifically, Karma Chávez's (2015) criticism that rhetoric is biased towards citizenship at the expense of scholarship that confronts the hegemonic implications of citizenship in rhetoric, and Lisa Flores's (2016) call for racial rhetorical criticism—but within my own body and experiences. Karrieann Soto Vega and Karma Chávez (2018) argue that, "Racial rhetorical criticism should illuminate and locate the complexity of interlocking systems of oppression and privilege" (p. 320), and I apply that argument to my own body and experiences by practicing critical vulnerability. Flores (2018) writes that critical vulnerability is interrogating, "what it means to engage a different intellectual intersectionality, one that names the violences of whiteness and masculinity as different kinds of intellectual endeavors" (p. 355). I recognize that the dynamics of my experiences with race and gender are intertwined, especially the male privilege I experienced prior to my transition, and the complicated relationship that exists between my growing and evolving Chicanx identity and my love for the Los Angeles Dodgers.

I believe this process of critical vulnerability goes deeper than naming my biases or calling attention to the limits in my understanding of race and gender in academia and my own experiences. I believe my critical vulnerability provides a deep contextualization for not only why I chose this project for my dissertation, but how I choose to write this project as a trans queer Chicanx scholar and a Dodgers fan. These complicated layers of identity are important because, as both Phillip Wander (1984) and Sharon Crowley (1992) pointed out, the rhetorical critic's choices have consequences for the work that

they do. And the onus is more significant for me as a trans queer woman-of-color. Soto Vega and Chávez (2018) argue that, "those of us who are racialized as people of color and suffer colonialism must be vigilant about race, and against racism. Doing Latinx rhetorical criticism thus cannot be divorced from its inherent multiplicity and political potential" (p. 320). That is why I believe it is important to not only center race in my work but also center myself by being critically vulnerable of my knowledges, experiences, and positions in the world and how those have evolved over time and influenced my worldview, my knowledge, and my politics about race.

Flores (2018) reflects on, "Our willingness to name our complicities and to reflect on their manifestations in our thinking, writing, and being" (p. 350). She elaborates further, writing that, "Journey is an apt frame for our task. Journeys are long and rarely neatly linear. Often framed with particular goals and destinations, they take us in new and unplanned directions where we explore and confront" (p. 350). In many ways, I see this chapter establishing a set of goals and intended destinations, but by no means will I resist the unplanned directions that surely arise throughout my journey. I fundamentally believe that critics must be self-reflexive before engaging rhetorical theory and criticism, and so I practice critical vulnerability by narrating my place in the world and the experiences and identities that make me who I am as a person and scholar in my own emerging voice.

Critical Vulnerability: A Journey

Maurice Charland (2003) claims that tradition does not mean a set of mandated and unchanging practices, that it consists of giving and receiving as a relation and that it is a continuation of relations and obligations; additionally, he claims that traditions are not abandoned so much as they are revised by attempting to recover what was there all along. I read these claims by Charland in conversation with Chávez's (2015)

interrogation of the citizenship narrative and bias within rhetorical theory and criticism. Read conservatively, one could argue that Chávez is recovering what was there all along when she recounts work by many female scholars-of-color who provided alternatives to the citizenship narrative within rhetorical criticism; read meaningfully and radically, she is advocating for its abandonment.

Chávez argues that inclusion does not rupture oppressive structures but rather upholds and reinforces them. Existing structures tend to obscure those structure's flaws, so we need a radically re-conceptualized approach towards rhetorical theory and criticism that abandons the citizenship narrative and emphasizes scholars of color. This is a call that is harnessed by Lisa Flores (2016) when she argues that rhetorical criticism must reflect and engage the persistent realities of racial oppression, logics, voices, and bodies, and that we must canonize rhetorical scholars of color as opposed to ignoring their work. The call to canonize rhetorical scholars of color was a controversial one for fear that such reverence would only reinforce white colonial structures (Baugh-Harris & Wanzer-Serrano, 2018), prompting a further interrogation into what racial rhetorical critics should be and do as a practice and politic (see Flores, 2018). “Canon” and “tradition” are fundamentally problematic, no matter who they arguably center in their nexus.

As Crowley (1992) pointed out almost three decades ago, rhetoric’s "canon" contains no works by women, working people, or persons-of-color. The notions of "tradition" and "canon" have always been significant sites of controversy since both notions convey a sense of legitimacy that encourage essentialization. I bring this up because I am conscious of rhetoric’s “tradition” or “canon” excluding non-white/cis/hetero/able/male scholars and how that exclusion is reflected in the shortcomings of my own academic training and familiarity. Much of the instruction I

have received until recently has excluded the contributions made by scholars-of-color to the human communication field, and more specifically to the field of rhetorical theory and criticism. This is not new, and as much as we may try to commit to a radical academic politics, we must also be honest that our efforts may not always be enough for a variety of reasons:

> Our politics and our practices are not pure, nor can they be. In some manner, we are complicit, or we would never be allowed to remain. That complicity does not undo our transformational projects; our ignorance or willful denial of it undermines our efforts, pushing us in and to the particular arrogance of whiteness, an arrogance that fosters ways of writing and of being that discipline and scold. (Flores, 2018, p. 350)

Although my complicity early on in my studies and academic career was unwilling, I certainly recognize now the ways in which my politics and practices still have room to evolve and grow.

My politic, to take a cue from Flores's (2016) call for racial rhetorical criticism, is to put scholars-of-color at the forefront of my theoretical engagement and general practice of citation politics. Sara Baugh-Harris and Darrel Wanzer-Serrano (2018) argue that, "Critical engagement with scholars, particularly scholar of color, who take on rhetorical projects at the nexus of race, power, and institutions should always be present in work on race and broader rhetorical and critical/cultural theorizing" (p. 341); they go on to elaborate upon what citational politics can do for critical engagement which scholars of color at the nexus of race:

> Where canonization can only perpetuate static traditions and modern/colonial episteme, citational politics is a dynamic process which requires us to engage our subject, its history, and the relationship between the colonial processes that work

> to frame/liberate our subject. At its core, we read Flores' essay as a call to engage racial rhetorical research through theoretical and methodological frames that speak to lived experiences, historical exigencies, and systemic operations of power in both situated and broad scopes. (p. 341)

I carry Baugh-Harris and Wanzer-Serrano's words with me, especially those about lived experiences and systemic operations of power, as I narrate my critical vulnerability and the history of rhetorical theory that informs my project. I do my best to center scholars who occupy positions held by me, but I cannot deny the contributions made by white/cis/hetero/male scholars to the field of rhetoric, especially critical rhetoric.

Therefore, my goal is to recognize their contributions while also being honest about the shortcomings of their contributions—valuable as they may be—to what rhetoric is and its possibilities. I will build upon Flores (2016) and Chávez's (2015) arguments for reconceptualizing how rhetoric should be studied and theorized beyond its current constraints and will do my best to emulate their and others attention to race in rhetoric. It is important to recognize that, "challenging the institutionalization of white normativity requires more than a shift in content. It requires shifts in form and method" (Baugh-Harris & Wanzer-Serrano, 2018, p. 337) and that, "For all that we resist whiteness, we participate in it" (Flores, 2018, p. 352). I recognize my own ability to speak whiteness and live it, in both my personal life and academic work. I write these words conscious of the reality that efforts will not be perfect, but they will persist throughout the life of this project and influence who I am and hope to become in the future.

This leads me to the necessity of practicing a critical vulnerability that names who I was, who I am, and who I hope to be as a person and a rhetorical scholar. As I continue to grow more aware about my own body and experiences with race and gender, I continue to learn how they have shaped who I am as a person and scholar. Who I am is

also central to my interest and passion for this project and my ability to bring a perspective informed by my Dodgers fandom. I am someone who celebrated Cinco de Mayo at Dodger Stadium with friends, completely unaware of the history that transpired at Chavez Ravine. I am also someone who now has mixed feelings about how the Dodgers commoditize Latinx/Chicanx culture and pride. I live within this tension every day, and it is a tension I hope to explore further in this project. Because Dodgers fandom is racialized, there is a complicated relationship between Dodgers fandom and Mexican/American identity. And when you begin to identify as Chicanx, it only gets more complicated.

So, who am I? Well, I am an Angelina[1] born in the United States. I was born Aaron Gabriel Zamora, a white passing name, and assigned male at birth. My parents were also born in the United States. My maternal abuela had the fortune of being born in the United States because her parents were migrant farmworkers picking crops in the fields in Nebraska at the time of her birth. I never had to wonder if a family member could be deported because everyone in my immediate family had birthright U.S. citizenship. I used to say that I was of Mexican descent, especially since my abuela grew up in Mexico and was the lynchpin connecting us to our family in Durango and Coahuila. I pretty much fell under the general category of Latinx/Hispanic. And I vividly remember the ride home in the car when my mom told me not to let anyone call me Chicano—for reasons I am not entirely clear about, even to this day.

Slowly, I am beginning to understand and embrace what it means to be Chicanx as part of my identity. I grew up in a household where Spanish was common because it was my abuela's and my mom's native tongue, but it was not the primary language spoken at home. Therefore, the best I can do is order food in a restaurant, that is until the server asks me how I want the eggs in my huevos rancheros prepared. So, while I am

culturally Mexican, I am also white. I cannot deny my experiences in being socialized into whiteness, often unknowingly and in more ways than I can count. And by Mexican standards, I am a *pocha*.[2] I have become aware of my whiteness and otherness, oftentimes simultaneously. I am not of here or there, *ni de aqui ni de aya*. Sometimes I feel—and literally am—disconnected from my own Mexican/Chicanx culture and community. Some days I wonder if I even deserve to call myself Chicanx. And I worry if one of the consequences of transitioning from male-to-female, resisting the male identity I was assigned at birth, will create barriers that result in reinforcing those divisions further.

I also realize that exploring my racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual identity has changed how I see myself in relation to the world around me and how I make sense of my previous experiences and normative upbringing. But I also cannot deny the privileges associated with a normative upbringing and how it influenced the way I used to navigate the world. I was raised as a cis-hetero male and therefore identified as a cis-heteromale, which meant I operated within the world as a cis-hetero male for the first thirty years of my life. I cannot deny the male privilege I experienced, even if it was a source of discomfort. That socialization is something I struggle with daily as I work to shed all the toxic and problematic characteristics encouraged by masculinity. But that struggle has also taught me to understand the deeper nuances of gender, sexuality, cisnormativity, and heteronormativity. And that struggle has informed my politics, which are a work in progress and naïve in many ways.

However, like my identity, my values and politics have evolved from when I first started as an undergraduate, a master's student, or even when I started my PhD here at Arizona State. But that does not change the inescapable truth: yes, I do love the Los Angeles Dodgers. I fell in love with the team in the spring of 2008. I went to my first

game on Cinco de Mayo with people whose potential friendship and validation I craved—and I found out that baseball is not boring if you go and see it in person. And it eventually became a strange marriage of fandom and ethnic identity that helped me feel more authentically brown. Years later, I unexpectedly encountered the truth that Dodger Stadium was erected at the expense of Mexican/Americans, people I consider *mi raza*. I also did not know what to do with that truth for a long time. I admit that I have referred to Dodger Stadium as "Chavez Ravine" not always as a politics of self-awareness, but rather as a politics of convenience. It was a convenient practice that had the superficial trappings of "woke," if even that; after all, Vin Scully or ESPN are not being woke when they refer to the area as Chavez Ravine on local and national broadcasts. Regardless, I was still a patron of the stadium and fan of the team, supporting them with what meager dollars I had.

From time to time, I still dream of returning to Los Angeles and being able to afford season tickets for myself and my family. But that is a future that grows murky as I continue to reflect upon this project and my own evolving politics, and I know that the politics of my work is more important. I also believe my previously more privileged positionality can be harnessed as an asset. I know what the process of being socialized as a sport and baseball fan looks like: after all, I was mistaken for a male. I cannot deny how my masculinity influenced and privileged how I was socialized into sports fandom generally and Dodgers fandom specifically. And regardless of my previous gender identity, as an Angelina and Dodgers fan I know the vernacular of Dodgers fandom; I also know how the vernacular of sport and baseball writ large reinforces masculinity. And if I have come to learn anything, it is that being a Mexican/American Angelina with a casual interest in baseball inevitably destines you for Dodgers fandom—unless you decide you want to root for that other team down the I-5 in Orange Country that

inexplicably thinks they are also a Los Angeles team[3]. And it is that feeling of inevitable destiny that ties being Latinx or Chicanx with Dodgers fandom that I am fundamentally questioning in my project. I have come to realize that my patronage of Dodger Stadium and the Dodgers, including my own fascination and fawning at the legend of Fernando Valenzuela, once legitimized the hegemonic influence that the Dodgers had on me in the past. I am sure that by the end of this project, if I practice the politics I claim to follow, I will have a very different perspective of what my relationship is with this team I genuinely love.

Before I end this section and commence with the lengthy literature review and exhaustive recounting of my methods, I want to leave you with this final important consideration: intermixed in the retelling of the memory of Chavez Ravine, Dodger Stadium, Fernandomania, and Fernando Valenzuela are my own memories and familiarities with the narratives that endear the Los Angeles Dodgers to baseball fans and elevate Dodger Stadium's historical importance. Those memories and familiarities are influenced by all the experiences and positions that I have explicated throughout this section. I recognize that these stories and experiences were never gathered as an official part of my fieldwork or methods, but their value is unmistakable.

For example, a memorable performance of my Dodgers fandom was taking a tour of the stadium and listening to a team representative give an "official" narrative of the stadium's history. I was not doing research for a dissertation then, nor did I have a moleskin in hand taking notes about every detail of the tour's performance and the ideologies buried within the stories and explanations. I am sure there are many scholars who would say that this is not good data and falls outside the purview of the study—and I do not want to suggest that my inclusion of these experiences fulfill the criteria of autoethnography or textual data that can be analyzed through a series of close reading

techniques. Rather, I consider these recollections a part of my voice and a way to insert who I am into this project. There is risk involved when writing in a non-academic and non-white voice with data that is not considered "rigorous"—and my response to all that is simple: fuck it.

I intermix my voice and these experiences not as a performance of ethos or fandom, but to highlight how pervasive public memory is in ways that are not immediately realized. The rhetorical implications of memory on race, identity, and ideology run deeper than we ever consciously realize in the moment, and I hope to illuminate that by interjecting myself and my experiences throughout this project. As I engage in these moments of recollection and reflection, I am mindful of Amber Johnson's (2014) argument that, "To engage your own narrative as a rhetorical artifact is to negotiate your identity" (p. 369). While I am not engaging in the same type of autoethnography as rhetorical act that Johnson describes, my hope is that these moments in which I center myself and my narrative are opportunities to practice a critical vulnerability that result in a meaningful reflection of how I personally negotiate the dimensions of race and memory that manifest in my project.

There is also something powerful when scholars center themselves in their work. Flores (2018) writes that, "Theory happens, as women of color have long argued, in our insights and reflections and with our willingness to center ourselves, not in the all-knowing voice of white masculinity or the fragile tears of white femininity but in the intersections of insistent—critical—vulnerability" (p. 354). I do not know if the unintended destination of this project will mean theory, but I feel that it would be irresponsible not to center myself as a prime example of someone whose identity was shaped by Fernandomania. I recount and explore these moments as a reflection of the

personal transformative aspects of doing scholarship and to practice a little bit of what Baugh-Harris and Wanzer-Serrano (2018) refer to as epistemic disobedience.

And so, I hope these moments contribute to your perspective and understanding just as much as they do for mine. I hope that as you read these words, you hear them in my voice. I hope you feel yourself speaking back to the page, mentally or out loud, as you read along. And I hope that maybe, just maybe, my critical vulnerability and voice will do their part to disrupt rhetoric's tradition by committing a pleasant bit of epistemic disobedience.

Beyond the Critical Turn: Racial Rhetorical Criticism

Traditional and simplistic definitions of rhetoric focus on persuasion and influence, harkening back to (and sometimes overlying upon) Aristotle. Those definitions have been reproduced *ad nauseum* and, while historically influential to rhetoric's theoretical foundations, is no longer the most common practice of critical inquiry. Rather, I invoke Lisa Flores (2016) more contemporary and succinct definition that rhetorical criticism should concern itself with, "politics and publics, with cultural discourses and social meanings, with rhetors and audiences;" she goes on to explain that critics are not solely observers, they are social actors, "guided by our theoretical knowledge, our methodological skills, and our critical senses, who seek through our work to bring both insight and judgment" (p. 6). In the following sections, I hope to articulate clearly the theoretical knowledge, methodological skill, and critical senses that will help me reach my insight and judgment.

The Ideological and Critical Turns in Rhetoric

The ideological and critical turn in rhetorical theory and criticism called explicit attention to the consequences of critic's choices, but the initially offered considerations did not go far enough. Critics were interested in uncovering rhetorics of hegemony or

domination (McKerrow, 1989) in their ideological and critically oriented critiques, but one of the primary areas overlooked was the role of race—and specifically whiteness—in rhetorical theory and criticism. One need not look further than the ideological turn in rhetorical criticism in the 1980's to understand how invisible whiteness manifested itself in the hesitancy to become conscious of the ideological choices that critics make.

The debates between scholars such as Forbes Hill versus Kathryn Kohrs Campbell and Phillip Wander revealed the delicateness and hesitancy for scholars to give up their privileged position as master interpreters of texts. The obsession with technique, as supposedly defined by Aristotle, was being challenged. The defense of technique as a standard for conducting criticism, Crowley (1992) argued, were undertaken by scholars like Hill because technique was believed to be value neutral. The threat of ideological criticism was that it could be used to demonstrate the ideological implications of even the most seemingly objective critical practices, thereby constituting an implicit critic of any critical practice that does not foreground its ethics or politics. Traditional criticism for Crowley could not be as innocent of politics as its proponents assumed it to be.

Taken a step further, Shome (1996) explicitly called attention to the colonial implications of European and European American ideologies that dominate research practices that produce discursive subjugation and essentialism. Consequently, the field moved away from neo-Aristotelian forms of criticism and began to evolve and account for ideology. As ideological criticism became the norm, critical rhetoric moved slowly towards grappling with the visibleness of race. This was not immediately apparent at first, particularly in McKerrow's (1989) germinal essay that outlined critical rhetoric and subsequent forays into the possibilities and limitations of ideological/critical rhetoric (Charland, 1991; Cloud, 1994; Hariman, 1991; Mcgee, 1990; McKerrow, 1991). Indeed, McKerrow's (1989) critical rhetorical framework focuses on dimensions of domination

and freedom and purports to unmask/demystify the discourse of power, but at no point does it specifically address race.

This is not to say that race was incompatible with the critical rhetorical approach, but rather that race was not the explicit focus of inquiry. Baugh-Harris and Wanzer-Serrano (2018) observe that, "Even moving within the critical turn, much of rhetorical studies has sought to recalibrate or redefine a new universal" (p. 337) which replicates coloniality. It is inescapable to ignore that it was white scholars neglecting the imperative to address race despite their newfound ideological and critical sensibilities. It was not until Nakayama and Krizek's (1995) unveiling of invisible whiteness, Ono and Sloop's (1995) analysis of Japanese American's vernacular, Flores's (1996) exploration of Chicana homelands, and Hasian and Delgado's (1998) investigation on the racialized discourses surrounding California's prop 197 that works, authored in full or in part by scholars-of-color, situated race as their site of interrogation.

Arguably, Nakayama and Krizek's exploration of whiteness's rhetorical yet invisible manifestations provided an opportunity for rhetoric to grapple with manifestations of whiteness as rhetorical phenomenon and within the field itself. Nevertheless, it took communication scholars-of-color almost twenty more years of pushing for race to be the explicit focus of inquiry in rhetorical theory and criticism.[4] It is only within the past few years that race and whiteness have managed to be confronted in the peer-reviewed pages of journals for the fields of communication studies (Chakravartty, Kuo, Grubbs, & McIlwain, 2018) and rhetoric (Wanzer-Serrano, 2019).[5]

Toward a Racial Rhetorical Criticism

Perhaps no other work is more indicative of this push than Lisa Flores's (2016) call for scholars to practice racial rhetorical criticism, which is "reflective about and engages the persistence of racial oppression, logics, voices, and bodies and that theorizes

the very production of race as rhetorical" (p. 5). Flores recognizes that racial rhetorical criticism is made possible by and emerges from "rich and risky" scholarship of early race scholars:

> who wrote about race as race long before it was widely recognized as deserving rhetorical attention. They wrote about race not in an isolated piece, but across their scholarship. That they, as scholars of color in an over- whelming white discipline and academy, did what they did changed forever the path of rhetorical studies in particular and communication studies at large. (p. 5)

Flores recognizes that rhetorical studies is the study of race, which is why scholars explore intersections of race and rhetoric with work that, "calls us to intellectual, social, and political action to disciplinary intervention" (p. 5). Racial rhetorical criticism is also an explicit recognition that race is already present. "Rhetorical meanings, as they circulate on and around bodies, are already race," Flores writes, "bodies that speak and listen, that exhort and cajole, that desire and hate are already race" (p. 7). Soto Vega and Chávez (2018) add that, "more work in rhetorical studies should account for race, racialization processes, and the rhetoricity of racialized bodies (both imposed and performed)" but caution that, "not just any considerations of race will do; heeding Flores's call, racial rhetorical criticism ought to be engaged carefully and responsibly" (p. 319).

For Flores, canonizing racial rhetorical criticism must be done through an intentional politics of inclusion—a notion that was not without controversy.[6] "Intellectually, morally, and politically, scholars of color engaged in racial rhetorical criticism cannot be marginalized" (Flores, 2016, p. 10). But this is not meant to be superficial inclusion. Chávez (2015) reminds us that, "projects of inclusion don't rupture oppressive structures; instead they uphold and reinforce those structures by showing

how they can be kinder and gentler and better without actually changing much at all" (p. 166). Rather, we must look to scholarship within our intellectual history that has, "attempted to rupture the normative structures of Rhetoric" to illustrate that, "projects of inclusion will not fundamentally change Rhetoric; however, posing alternative ontologies and epistemologies very well may" (Chavez, 2015 p. 166). Baugh-Harris and Wanzer-Serrano (2018) explain the dynamism that citational politics offer:

> Where canonization can only perpetuate static traditions and modern/colonial episteme, citational politics is a dynamic process which requires us to engage our subject, its history, and the relationship between the colonial processes that work to frame/liberate our subject. At its core, we read Flores' essay as a call to engage racial rhetorical research through theoretical and methodological frames that speak to lived experiences, historical exigencies, and systemic operations of power in both situated and broad scopes. (p. 341)

While I cannot claim that this project will, by its end, propose a radically different theoretical and methodological frames for understanding rhetorical theory and criticism, I intend to do my best to illustrate that a project grounded in racial rhetorical criticism that practices a conscious citational politics provides a much better foundation for tackling these considerations than a "traditional" or "critical" rhetoric foundation ever would.

Memory Studies

Olick and Robbins (1998) observe that the study of memory is a, "nonparadigmatic, transdisciplinary, centerless enterprise" (p. 106). Their assessment resonates with Charland's (2003) conceptualization of the study of rhetoric, which argues that rhetoric is a transdisciplinary field of inquiry that violates disciplinary boundaries. The fusion of memory studies and rhetoric runs deeper than their

transdisciplinary roots given that memories are inherently rhetorical and shaped by rhetorical processes. Kendall Phillips (2004) summarizes the natural link between rhetoric and memory when he observes that:

> The ways memories attain meaning, compel others to accept them, and are themselves contested, subverted, and supplanted by other memories are essentially rhetorical. As an art interested in the ways symbols are employed to induce cooperation, achieve understanding, contest understanding, and offer dissent, rhetoric is deeply steeped in a concern for public memories. These memories that both constitute our sense of collectivity and are constituted by our togetherness are thus deeply implicated in our persuasive activities and in the underlying assumptions and experiences upon which we build meanings and reasons. (pp. 2-3)

Memory's and rhetoric's ability to construct meaning is the crucial foundation that makes these two areas.

It is important to keep in mind that the field of memory studies has a long intellectual lineage that began in psychology and sociology decades before rhetoric scholars incorporated memory into rhetorical theory and criticism. Because of memory's interdisciplinary nature and its long history, there are several different ways of referring to the study of memory. Blair, Dickinson, and Ott (2010) recognize the multitude of modifiers used to describe the study of memory, a list that includes social memory, collective memory, and public memory among many others; however, what binds the various manifestations of memory together is the, "assumption of a shared understanding of the past." (p. 6). They also argue that, "the nuances of the modifiers matter" (p. 6) and point to Casey's (2004) work that delineates individual, social,

collective, and public memory. This is evident by the tremendous amount of scholarship the study of memory has produced.

I certainly do not want to sound dismissive or curt in my summary of memory studies broadly and within rhetorical scholarship specifically. When tracing the study of memory within rhetorical scholarship, I found that scholars tend to use "collective" memory or "public" memory to label and describe their conception of memory (Vivian, 2018). While these variations suggest that the nuances may be important, the citations used by all the scholars reveal that they all start from the same germinal works. From there, it appears that the critic will pick a conceptualization that seems favorable, use the modifier associated with that conceptualization, and then build a framework for their analysis. However, summarizing all the various forms of memory, parsing the nuances between social/collective/public/cultural memory, and then providing a coherent framework would fill several volumes of an encyclopedia.

Perhaps this explains why most rhetorical scholarship on the topic of memory, especially scholarship published in books, footnote a long list of citations and then select a preferred conception. Journal articles skip the lengthy footnote altogether and simply pick the framework that seems to make the most sense and then move forward. From a pragmatic standpoint, this makes a lot of sense. After all, regardless of the modifier that is chosen by the scholar, it is well understood that the assumptions of contemporary memory studies are widely shared (Blair, Dickinson, & Ott, 2010). Therefore, I will engage in a similar pragmatism by picking the widely used modifier "public" memory for two reasons.

The first reason is that "public memory" is a familiar conceptual label that frequently circulates within rhetorical theory and criticism, among a few other reasons I will elaborate upon at the end of this section. The second reason is that this project does

not seek to engage a radically new line of inquiry into the study of memory at this moment, nor does it seek to engage in unproductive critiques of different forms of memory studies. I am not interested in arguing for why "public" the most preferable or fitting modifier for the study of memory or why social memory is not really all that different from collective memory. And no, I am not interested in arguing for a new modifier. I am sure someone else at this very moment is crafting an incredibly nuanced argument for why a new modifier is necessary to open a new line of inquiry; they can have that.

All sarcasm aside, those explorations into the ontology of memory are important. But the critiques and constructs necessary for a new line of inquiry are not necessary for a functional and productive definition of memory, nor do those critiques always productively contribute to a methodological framework to guide a study. Therefore, I have decided to discuss the study of memory broadly by touching upon germinal contributions to our understanding of memory and parsing the common themes that bind the various forms of memory together. Much as Blair et al. (2010) observe that the various modifiers attached to a particular study of memory still share the fundamental premise that memory involves a shared understanding of the past, my overview of memory expands upon this insight to reveal that memory studies, regardless of modifier, must account for temporalities, identity, social structures, distortion, and forgetting.[7] While important nuances arguably exist, the commonalities between these various themes generally outweigh the delineations between collective/social/public memory.

Themes Across Memory Studies

Maurice Halbwachs (1999) argued that part of the reason why society reconstructs memory is that the past is a social construction shaped by concerns for the present. Coser (1992) went on to explain that Halbwachs believed that, "beliefs, interests,

and aspirations of the present shape the various views of the past as they are manifested respectively in every historical epoch" (p. 25). Therefore, memory is variable, not fixed, and, "is conceived as fluid and dynamic" (Phillips, 2004, p. 2). This recognition of memory's fluidity over time necessitates an attention to the dimensions of temporality within the study of memory.

Temporality is a necessary consideration for memory studies. Olick, Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Levy (2011) argue that studying memory allows scholars to shift their focus towards temporalities and, "understand what categories people, groups, and cultures employ to make sense of their lives, their social, cultural, and political attachments, and the concomitant ideals that are validated" (p. 37). Vivian (2010) reaches a similar conclusion, observing that, "we construct, amend, and even revise altogether our public perceptions of the past, including our collective interpretations of its lessons, in response to the culture and politics of the day" (p. 10). Blair, Dickinson, and Ott (2010) break down how these temporalities function when they argue that, "Public memory may be taken to serve interests, needs, and desires of the present; to establish a seemingly unbreakable continuity with the past; to mark off the present as 'a different world' from the past; and so forth" (p. 9). As memories shift throughout time, identities are constructed and contested.

Remembering has implications for identity. Memory is, "the central medium through which identities are constituted," meaning that research on memory can illuminate "why individuals and groups turn towards their pasts" (Olick and Robinson, 1998, p. 133). Therefore, studying memory is a prime gateway to understanding how identity is constructed via the temporalities of past, present and future as they are shaped by social frameworks such as media, cultural and political institutions. After all, "we depend on memory for our individual and collective sense of identity, meaning, and

purpose" (Vivian, 2010, p. 10). If memories are what individuals and groups turn to so they may reflect upon their past, make sense of their present, and look toward the future, then clearly memory has the rhetorical implications for how individuals, groups, and society view themselves in relation to the world and make sense of their lives.

Memories rhetorically construct identity, but memories themselves are also rhetorically constructed by social frameworks. Although memory is a personal cognitive process, it is guided in a variety of ways. Social frameworks, "are inevitably tied up with what and how we recall" because groups provide, "the stimulus or opportunity to recall" and "shape the ways in which we do so, and often provide the materials" (Olick et al., 2011, p. 19). Olick et al. (2011) go on to argue that:

> there are long-term structures to what societies remember or commemorate that are stubbornly impervious to the efforts of individuals to escape them; powerful institutions, moreover, clearly support some histories more than others, provide narrative patterns and exemplars of how individuals can and should remember, and stimulate public memory in ways and for reasons that have little to do with the individual or aggregate neurological records. (p. 20)

Social structures influence how individuals within a society remember and commemorate; therefore, they influence what gets remembered and how. They conclude this claim by reinforcing the role memory plays in being a carrier of identity, creating a series of relationships between temporality, identity, and social structures that require close examination.

Given that social structures play an influential role in shaping memories, it should come as no surprise that memories can be distorted for a variety of reasons. Social structures may encourage some memories to be prioritized over others, while other memories may become distorted throughout time. Halbwachs (1999) called

attention to the fact that the frameworks that influence recollection have the potential to distort recollection altogether; individuals use frameworks of social memory for their recollection, but given that, "the various groups that compose society are capable at every moment of reconstructing their past," Halbwachs argues that, "they most frequently distort that past in the act of reconstructing it (p. 182). With reconstructing a consistent reality, distortion can lead to loss, even forgetting.

Dickinson (1997) argues that, "memory works to cover the problems of identity raised in a culture of consumption and of memory loss" (p. 1). Therefore, the reconstruction of memory can serve the purposes of identity construction and hedge against memory loss, known as the dreaded act of forgetting. Vivian (2010) pushes against the common notion that forgetting needs to be framed negatively or as an opposite to memory. By treating memory and forgetting as "larger discursive processes," we can productively study how they influence one another:

> Forgetting can be a necessary spur to remembrance, provoking us to recognize the inherent selectivity of normative public memories and imagine anew, which each passing generation, what our objects of memory should be, whereas collective remembrance can become so inflexibly doctrinaire in form and content that it amounts to a grossly simplified projection of former events, and thus an unintended instance of forgetting the past in its truer heterogeneity. (p. 10)

In short, "the activity of remembering can unwittingly induce forms of forgetting and forgetting can be an instrument of remembering" (p.10). Forgetting, just as memory, is a rhetorical process.

These five themes converge in various ways with a plethora of implications for the Mexican/American community in Los Angeles. The violent and tragic memory of Chavez Raine and the inspiring and nostalgic memory of Fernandomania reveal how

temporality and identity influence the way that Chavez Ravine is forgotten (the displacement of a community) and remembered (the home of the Los Angeles Dodgers). This distortion benefits the Dodgers, allowing them to profit from Mexican/American Dodger fans after already directly benefiting from their revered community's displacement and their celebrated hero's body.

Rhetorical Approaches to Public Memory/Forgetting

A plethora of rhetorical scholars have established that the dimensions of memory are fundamentally rhetorical processes. Blair, Dickinson, and Ott (2010) argue that understandings of public memory and its places can only emerge if we comprehend their rhetorical character, which requires us to, "acknowledge public memory to be 'invented,' [...] in the more limited sense that public memories are constructed of rhetorical resources" (p. 9). Therefore, memories are not only shaped by rhetoric, memories themselves are rhetorical. Vivian (2010) explains the central role that deliberation plays in shaping the past:

> "public memory" is the result of a perpetual rhetorical process with which communities deliberate over how best to interpret the past as a resource for understanding and making decisions in the present. Deliberating parties thus craft in language as well as other symbolic or expressive forms a version of former persons and events appealing to public constituencies in light of present-day civic norms, interests, and controversies. (p. 13)

The consequences of re-shaping perceptions of the past are achieved through deliberation, and deliberation is made possible by communication and mnemonic practices. Olick and Robbins (1998) emphasize the role of mnemonic practices when studying how the, "varieties of forms through which we are shaped by the past, conscious and unconscious, public and private, material and communicative, consensual and

challenged" shape memory (p. 112). Their argument not only provides a natural entry point for rhetoric scholars, and communication scholars broadly, to examine the rhetorical compositions and functions of memory. It also puts an emphasis on the public nature of memory and how memory is shaped publicly, which in turns shapes the public.

For memories to be shaped in meaningful and lasting ways, they must be considered true. Phillips (2010) explains how memories establish themselves as "true" via rhetorical appeals:

> Rhetoric, as an art of crafting public sentiment, becomes the primary actor in establishing these mechanisms of recollection in this process of caring for the representation of the past. Rhetorical appeals serve to frame memories within established cultural forms that, in turn, establish enthymematic connections. Assuming the success of these connections then the memory of some past event becomes stabilized, indeed reified, into fixed forms that present themselves as necessary and 'true'. (p. 218)

It is important to pay close attention to Phillips's notion of rhetoric as "an art of crafting public sentiment." Combined with Blair et al.'s (2010) observation that rhetoric emphasizes "concepts of publicity (p. 6), and Vivian (2014) attention to public memory as, "the result of perpetual rhetorical processes" that occur within community deliberation (p. 13), there is a strong suggestion that "public" is the preferable modifier to utilize for this project. Blair et al. (2010) argue that using the modifier "public" in public memory "situates shared memory where it is often the most salient to collectives in constituted audiences, positioned in some kind of relationship of mutuality that implicates their common interests, investments, or destinies, with profound political implications" (p. 6).

In sum, the publicity that is inherent within rhetoric and memory suggests that "public memory" is the best conceptual term for this project. Furthermore, it provides a natural bridge to the "public forgetting" posited by Bradford Vivian's work on memory and forgetting, which understands forgetting as a rhetorical and deliberative process as well. In *Public Forgetting: The Rhetoric and Politics of Beginning Again*, Vivian (2010) argues:

> Acts of public forgetting likewise culminate patterns of collective deliberation or contestation over the meaning and value of the past as it concerns immediate social or political interests. The crucial difference, however, is that such patterns of public dialogue, debate, and advocacy end in collective ratifications to discontinue or reject customary forms of remembrance instead of public proclamations to honor and sustain them. (p. 13)

Vivian goes on to observe that, "public forgetting arises from uncommonly pivotal moments in the evolution of communal time, history, or memory" (p. 14), the implications of which are elaborated upon further in the methods section. Public memory is the most compatible with the rhetorical basis for this project's emphasis on public memory and public forgetting.

Therefore, this project seeks to understand how public memory and public forgetting work in tandem to change how Chavez Ravine is remembered. Rather than remembering the neighborhoods of La Paloma, Palo Verde, and Bishop, and a community that once was, the public remembering of Fernandomania facilitates the public forgetting—and by extension, a type of forgiveness—of the violence necessary to bring the Dodgers to Los Angeles. Consequently, the words Chavez Ravine no longer evoke memories of violence and resistance.

Communication and Sport

Bob Krizek (2017) provides a succinct and effective summary of sport communication as an area of study:

> Sport communication is the process of creating and sharing meanings by individuals participating in the embodied (combining physical and mental exertion and execution) activity of sport. Sport communication also includes the meaning-making of individuals observing the activity as well as governing, directing, or commenting on that activity. As a discipline 'sport communication' examines the influence of the communicative practices associated with sport on individuals and on society. (p. 61)

Sport is a site of created and shared meanings for participants and audience. The meanings created by sport are often interrogated through rhetorical theory and criticism. As Michael Butterworth (2017) explains it, "rhetorical study aims to add complexity and nuance, especially with respect to the simplicity often assigned to sport" (p. 22). Therefore, sport should not be regarded as simplistic or incapable of constructing meaning.

Sport as Cultural Identity and Site of Struggle

Generally speaking, "[examining] how we *communicate about* sport, how sport is *communicated to* us, and what is *communicated by* sport each represents critical opportunities to evaluate, critique, and improve our public culture" (Butterworth, 2014, p. 4). Given rhetoric's focus on "politics and publics, with cultural discourses and social meanings" (Flores, 2016, p. 6), approaching the study of sport via a rhetorical approach provides an opportunity to explore how meaning is contested within sport. Brummett's (1991) insight about the role that popular culture plays as a cultural instrument demonstrates the exigence of studying popular culture, especially when "culture gives us

not just artifacts but strategies for the symbolic construction of artifacts" (p. xix). Symbolic construction, or meaning, is contestable, and we must be reminded that rhetoric is the study of how meaning is contested (Brummett & Bowers, 1999). Texts, fragmented and diffuse, are sites of struggle over what the world means (Brummett, 2018). Meaning can be reinforced, resisted, reconstructed for a variety of purposes.

Two particularly illuminating and relevant examples that demonstrate how meaning can be reconstructed problematically examine the various capacities that media used the New Orleans Saints to declare New Orleans a city that had completely rebuilt itself and recovered from Hurricane Katrina. The first example is brought forth by Grano and Zagacki (2011), who argue that the Monday Night Football national broadcast, which celebrated the re-opening of the Louisiana Superdome, functioned as a ritual of purity to cleanse the images of violence and devastation associated with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. By showing how the Superdome was restored from the ruins of Hurricane Katrina and popular—but false—images of racialized violence, engaging in elaborate pageantry to commemorate football's return to the Superdome, and seeing the oft-maligned New Orleans Saints demonstrate various means of resolve (as a team and individually—especially quarterback Drew Brees[8]), the broadcast permitted white viewers to disengage from the systemic racism and classism that was apparent in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

In a similar vein, Serazio (2010) argues that sport journalism invoked and negotiated memories of Hurricane Katrina by invoking the New Orleans Saints: by substituting the team's winning for the city's actual recovery, he recognized that sport can bring communities together through a "medicine of myth" that has the potential to, "narcotize us from the social and political realities that are not so easily cheered away" (p. 171). Both instances demonstrate how meaning was hegemonically rewritten by

American football to overlook ongoing issues of systemic racism (only certain parts of New Orleans—the white parts—recovered) and cleanse national guilt through the thrill of football.

From a thematic standpoint, my project shares a similar trajectory: the memory of Mexican/American families being driven from their homes and livelihoods, punctuated by widespread images of the last residents being forcibly removed from their livelihood, were overwritten by a Mexican pitcher who dominated the baseball world in 1981. In the aforementioned examples, meaning was rewritten and shaped how events would be—or rather not be—remembered.

Baseball and the American Identity

Approaching sport via rhetorical theory and criticism provides the opportunity to study how culture and identity are shaped. Cawelti (1986) argues that the fundamental purpose of criticism is to play a vitally important role in the formation of culture. It is responsible for the shaping of our perceptions, the way in which we understand contemporary existence, and the awareness which future generations have of their heritage. We can examine this formation of culture by treating sport as a rhetorical artifact. According to Butterworth (2017), studying of sport as a rhetorical artifact centers on themes of rhetorical representations and sporting mythology, among others.[9] For Butterworth, representations are "situated within broader cultural narratives [that] seek to explain collective identities and purpose," which can be understood as rhetorical texts (p 19). Meanwhile, sporting mythology, "myths need not be 'true' to be effective; rather they must be true to experience and help people make sense of their place in the world" and in America, myths about the American dream and exceptionalism are actualized in sport (p. 20). Representation and mythology within sport are

simultaneously created by rhetoric and enact rhetoric that possesses implications for identity and culture.

Mythologizing in particular is very pronounced in baseball. In general, baseball possesses its own cultural value and ideologies that have been shaped by its agrarian roots and its boon that was prompted by urbanization after World War (Crepeau, 1980). Baseball has been lauded as America's pastime because it is equated with, "the essential features of the American national character" and is, "a revealing metaphor for American society and values" (Elias, 2001, p. 8). Baseball's history, "is rooted in cultural mythology" (p. 112), and has religious qualities:

> overly romanticized notions about the game's spiritual inspirations notwithstanding, the clarity of religious imagery in baseball gives it a quasi-religious symbolic power. It is a power that can guide values and provide social order, and consequently can be a convenient tool of political ideology as well. (Butterworth, 2005, p. 113)

These qualities, Butterworth notes, are reproduced in literature and film. They also manifest discursively in a variety of ways. Baseball, after all is upheld as *the* American cultural institution.

Baseball embodies, among other values, rugged individualism and assimilation politics that are fundamental to American identity. "Baseball has been viewed as a fertile ground for that 'self-made man.' The game helps develop skills for individual success, especially the work ethic and other values for the business world" (Elias, 2001, p. 10). Examples of such individualistic ideologies manifesting themselves discursively include the white, hegemonic masculinity attributed to pitcher Nolan Ryan throughout his career (Trujillo, 1991) and slugger Mark McGuire during the 1997 home run race (Butterworth, 2007). Assimilationist ideologies are also well noted by many scholars, as baseball lauds

itself as proof positive that the melting pot is not a myth (Crepeau, 1980; Voigt, 1976). In comparing media coverage of Mark McGuire and Sammy Sosa, Butterworth (2007) notes that Sosa was marginalized within the sports media discourse ad often treated as if his presence in the home run race was indicative of his desire to immigrate to the United States; meanwhile, McGuire had already been established by sports journalists as the favorite to break the single season home run record because of his white masculine prowess.

Ultimately, baseball attempts to enforce hegemonic American cultural values and ideologies at the expense of Latino and non-white players. Therefore, my project seeks to uncover similar acts of racialization and discursive violence perpetuated upon Fernando Valenzuela by the sports media and the Dodgers organization throughout Fernandomania.

Communitas in Sport

Daniel Nathan (2013) attempts to grapple with the notion of what community in sport is, especially as it relates to fandom. He makes an intriguing insight about the ability of sport to harness intense feelings of togetherness, observing that sport can bring disparate people together to, "experience something approximating *communitas*" which he explains is, "an intense community spirit, a feeling of solidarity and togetherness" that is "often shallow and ephemeral" (p. 3). Although Nathan notes here that it is fleeting and superficial, *communitas* still invites the possibility of persisting as time goes on. He elaborates on this thought further, arguing that it can be deep long lasting, and can connect generations through a shared memory; for example, a single game can generate solidarity across generations, especially a dramatic game "with an unexpected outcome or a sudden reversal of fortune" (p. 3). He provides an illuminative and well-known example: Bill Buckner's botched ground ball in game 6 of the 1986 World Series.

Buckner's error is an instance of *communitas* that connects Red Sox fans across generations regardless of whether the fans in question were alive to see the play happen live, watched it on reply the next day, or have been socialized to blame Buckner despite never having been alive to see the play themselves. For Nathan, community must be a more ordinary reality if *communitas* is such a strong and intense solidarity and togetherness.

Alan Ingham and Mary McDonald (2003) have a slightly different approach to their understanding of *communitas* as applied to sport. They engage Turner's original conception of *communitas* directly, concurring with him that "the conditions giving rise to permanent communitas have long since passed," but they do argue "that contemporary social relations present opportunities for the concept of 'community,' in the form of communitas, to be the object of much ideological work" (p. 26). Although Ingham and McDonald concur with Turner that there is little possibility for permanent communitas to happen, the ideological work of *communitas* is still very much an avenue of inquiry, nothing that "a tremendous amount of ideological effort to promote and regenerate *communitas* under a changed (structural and cultural) set of circumstances" is worthy of exploration (p. 27). They argue that spontaneous and fleeting *communitas* is provoked by the exceptional, as opposed to community embodied by the die-hard fan who roots for their team no matter how poorly the team performs, creating a misery loves company subcommunity. Nevertheless, they conclude that *communitas* is not permanent.

Nathan's notion of *communitas* persisting across time and Ingham and McDonald's interest in *communitas*'s ideological promotion and regeneration provide a productive lens for understanding Fernandomania as *communitas* and memory. Fernando Valenzuela's incredible streak of wins and shutouts to start the 1981 season

provided the exceptional spark to create *communitas* among Mexican/American fans that season. However, the first 8 starts that Valenzuela won, let alone his accomplishments throughout a baseball season interrupted by a players trike, are not as easily distillable to a single moment in the same way as Buckner's error. True, his opening day shutout is frequently revisited as a historic moment in his career given the unusual circumstances that led him to be the first rookie pitcher to start on opening day for the Los Angeles Dodgers. But the streak that endured after that first shutout is why Fernando Valenzuela became a mythologized hero in Los Angeles. Therefore, it would be hard to argue that Fernandomania the rhetorical phenomenon continues to persist as *communitas* all these years later. Such a claim would also be at odds with Ingham and McDonald's conclusion, which is in line with Victor Turner, that *communitas* is not permanent.

This this is where the field of memory studies provides crucial insights to understanding Fernandomania as a rhetorical phenomenon, and specifically where my project intersects these various areas of study. I argue that Mexican/American Dodgers fans remember the *communitas* inspired by Fernandomania and Fernando Valenzuela himself rather than experience the *communitas* that took place during each of Valenzuela's games in 1981. The memory of Fernandomania and Fernando Valenzuela is invoked by the Los Angeles Dodgers in a variety of capacities (i.e. tribute videos, ceremonies, promotions) so that it can be rhetorically deployed to allow Mexican/American fans who did personally experience the *communitas* of Fernandomania in 1981 to re-live those memories in the present. Ultimately, this allows the Los Angeles Dodgers to continually profit from the violence perpetrated upon Fernando Valenzuela's body and the buried neighborhoods of La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop.

Racial Rhetorical Praxis

Before I begin this final section, I would like to reiterate an insight provided by Lisa Flores (2016): "rhetorical critics are social actors, guided by our theoretical knowledge, our methodological skills, and our critical senses, who seek through our work to bring both insight and judgement" (p. 6). She elaborates further, later arguing that racial rhetorical criticism is a contested and complicit endeavor that seeks to, "rupture whiteness, launching transformation as we engage the very practices of whiteness, masculinity, heteronormativity, and xenophobia that relentlessly discipline us" (Flores, 2018, p. 350). For Soto Vega and Chávez (2018), racial rhetorical criticism must also, "illuminate and locate the interlocking systems of oppression and privilege" (p. 320). Together, these insights form the axiology that grounds my racial rhetorical praxis. As I articulate the rhetorical frameworks and methods that guide my analysis, I will explain how I center race as the primary lens of critical inquiry throughout my entire project.

Fragments and Racial Discourse

Because texts are understood to be larger than the allegedly finished discourse that presents itself, Michael Calvin McGee (1990) argues that text construction is the primary task of audiences, readers, and critics. In other words, there is no finished text that requires interpretation. Dickinson's (1997) argument that memory is fragmented coupled with McGee's fragmentation thesis supports my argument that there is no single "text" of "Fernandomania" out in the world that is awaiting critics because it is a mosaic of diffuse texts and racial discourses[10] spanning time that appears to be a finished discourse (McGee, 1990). If an arrangement of facts, allusions, and stylized expressions appear to be a finished discourse, then that finished discourse may be deemed useful for explaining its influence and exposing meaning as it relates to structural relationships

between the apparently finished discourse and its sources, its influence, and culture (McGee, 1990).

Although I may not necessarily practice the "epistemic disobedience toward modern/colonial logics" that Darrel Wanzer-Serrano outlines in his critique of McGee's fragmentation, I do believe that my racial rhetorical axiology attempts to engage an "altered ethics of critique" (Wanzer, 2012, p. 652).[11] I acknowledge that my praxis fails to move past modern/colonial logics. The best I can do is ensure that my praxis, per Soto Vega and Chávez (2018), avoids an isolationist attention to race. I do this by regarding racial discourses and the fragments that rhetorically construct race throughout Fernandomania and Fernando Valenzuela's public memory "as a larger structure of meaning/world-making that seeps into, emerges from, and articulates to a host of significations" (Wanzer-Serrano, 2019, p. 468). Together, these fragments and racial discourses do more than define specific public memories: they reveal the workings of a white racial frame[12] that marginalizes Mexican/American and Latinx people at a time of increased political and cultural visibility that had been occurring in the decades prior to Fernandomania.[13]

The fragments and racial discourses that compose Fernandomania include Fernando Valenzuela himself and the circulation of mediated discourses that summarized his performance and framed his persona and origins. While media is primarily responsible for reporting on how the team is doing and framing those performances, these are not the sole sources of fragments that contributed to the text "Fernandomania" during the 1981 season. Official memories that were narrated by the Los Angeles Dodgers through tributes, ceremonies, giveaways, fan events, and Fernando Valenzuela memorabilia sold in the team stores also constitute the various fragments that create Fernandomania the text. Because it is important to recognize that, "rhetoric is

a dimension of all cultural artifacts rather than a discrete set of objects or actions," it is important to incorporate this wide variety of fragments into the text Fernandomania (Brummett, 1991, p. xxi).

Therefore, my racial rhetorical analysis treats Fernandomania—and by extension, Fernando Valenzuela—as a text constructed by Dodger fans, the Dodgers themselves, and the hegemonic stewards of American baseball (Major League Baseball, franchise owners, the sports media). I understand that their construction is temporal in the sense that fans have experienced the rhetorical implications of Fernandomania as it took place during the height of Fernando Valenzuela's popularity in the 1980's, in the immediate aftermath of his being unceremoniously cut by the Dodgers in 1990, and/or decades later as a phenomenon being reconstructed in media (i.e., documentary) or ritual (i.e., celebrating his induction as a "Legend of Dodgers Baseball"). Therefore, the Fernandomania and Fernando Valenzuela that I examine for this project are dense reconstructions and reporting of racial discourses that are the foundation for their public memory. And as the subjects of my racial rhetorical praxis, I do not treat them as fixed or static; rather, I explore how their public memory is subject to the interests of white hegemonic institutions that economically and culturally benefit from American baseball's white ideology.

Dodger fans have experienced American baseball's white ideology via racial discourses and their implications at a variety of times via forms of representation. Stuart Hall (2017b) argues that racial discourse constitutes "one of the great, persistent classificatory systems of human culture" and that discursive systems represent and organize practices of difference (p. 46). Therefore, racial discourses shape people into who they are and how they understand difference; understanding them helps explain "how cultures symbolically nurture and engender their members" (Brummett, 1991, p.

xxi). Flores (2016) reminds critics that if they are going to analyze discourse, "understood as questions of impact, influence, or circulation, or questions of argument and audience, or questions of affect and materiality," they cannot ignore race (p. 7). That is why my project examines how Fernandomania and Fernando Valenzuela encourage Mexican/Americans to forget La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop while simultaneously maintaining white superiority and brown marginality within American baseball and the greater cultural and racial landscape of white America.

Discursive Violence and the White Racial Frame

It is important to recognize and explore the inherent whiteness of the institutions that author and circulate the fragments that contribute to the racial discourse I am analyzing. Shome (2000) criticized rhetoric that adopted "an individualized perspective on whiteness instead of a systemic one" (p. 367). I do more than acknowledge "how professional journalism itself is (and has historically been) a cultural practice that defines and reproduces normative whiteness" (Alamo-Pastrana & Hoynes, 2020, p. 69); I additionally demonstrate how these racial discourses of are part of a larger effort to protect the white masculine ideology of American baseball and the institutions that act as the stewards of that racial legacy. It is not just that journalists utilize objectivity to mask whiteness or assume that the audiences they speak to are white (Alamo-Pastrana & Hoynes, 2020), it is that journalism itself is an institution of white supremacy that utilizes a white racial frame to define and perpetuate racial discourses that protect white male hegemony in sports and American society. These discourses possess the rhetorical power to shape public attitudes and create borders between Americans and Mexican/Americans that shape race (Flores, 2003). Taken further, these white institutions collaborate to create a preferred sporting mythology that invites economic participation from those who wish to feel connected to the American Dream—a virtue

that baseball has attempted to uphold throughout its history through its mythology. And that mythology's rhetorical force has the ability to erode public memories that contradict the American Dream mythology and race as the barrier to accessing that dream.

Prior rhetorical scholarship that has examined sport has analyzed how sports media frame players character, persona, and play. For example, Butterworth's (2013) analysis of the tragic framing of Tim Tebow entailed analyzing a variety of televised segments and written profiles that lauded Tebow's football and character traits as exceptional or unusual. Roessner (2010) gathered data from local and national periodicals[14] to compare how Ty Cobb's memory was negotiated and transformed at the national and local level. Trujillo and Ekdom's (1985) study of the American values within sports writing analyzed how the *Chicago Tribune* reinforced and promoted American cultural values in its coverage of the Chicago Cubs 1984 season. Suzanne Marie Enck-Wanzer's (2009) examination of news coverage regarding abusive Black athletes uncovers how sports media pathologize rage and violence within Black men while simultaneously supporting hegemonic white masculinity. Finally, Butterworth's (2007) analysis of the 1998 home run race draws direct comparisons to the ways that sports media's heroic whiteness manifests itself rhetorically when praising Mark McGuire's pursuit of the single-season home run record and downplaying Sammy Sosa's effort to do the same.

The emphasis on race and whiteness varies amongst all these studies, but together they indicate sport media's practice of using racial discourse to construct difference in a way that upholds whiteness and marginalizes athletes of color. My praxis is informed and inspired by the studies I have just mentioned, but it also seeks to do more. Rather than just talk about race, I engage its rhetorical constructions and consequences by calling attention to racist discourse as it appears and pointing back to

the institutions and structures that perpetuate and benefit from a white racial frame. I attempt to accomplish this by naming the racial discourses that comprise Fernandomania as acts of discursive violence. Aldama (2003) defines discursive violence as, "fear-based discourses of otherization and pathologizing of subjects whose positions are at the margins and borders of dominant political and cultural apparatuses" (p. 5), while Holling (2019) conceives discursive violence as, "masking or effacing other forms of violence and/or productive of negative valence, that colludes with other manifestations of violence generally" (p. 250). I regard this violence as systemic, not individualized, and as part of an ongoing effort to racialize players—and therefore people—differently.[15]

As will be made clear in the analysis, the discursive violence committed by the sports media and the Dodgers emphasizes the otherness of Fernando Valenzuela's brown body to maintain American Baseball's white masculine ideology while simultaneously exploiting that otherness for profit. Recalling and analyzing Fernandomania, the subsequent significant events throughout Fernando's career, and recollections of its public memory provide opportunities to assess how discursive violence inflicted upon Fernando's unmistakably brown body are used to perpetuates whites' racial attitudes of Mexican/Americans and white ways of seeing and knowing Mexico. And most insidiously, the discourses that marginalize Mexican/American and Latinx people also manage to induce forgetting for the violent racist destruction of La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop from those same people.

Preview of Chapters 3 and 4

For this project, my analysis will primarily focus on two sites of rhetorical activity that contribute to the public memory of Fernandomania: media coverage of the 1981 baseball season and the more contemporary public memory rituals that create the text

Fernandomania. In Chapter 3, I will focus on the ways that Fernandomania is discursively constructed by the *Los Angeles Times* (*LA Times*) during the 1981 baseball season. In Chapter 4, I revisit significant points throughout Fernando Valenzuela's career with the Dodgers and two specific texts that recreate Fernandomania's and Fernando Valenzuela's public memory: the *30 for 30* documentary "Fernando Nation" that aired on ESPN and Fernando's "Legend of Dodger Baseball" inauguration ceremony at Dodger Stadium.

The reason I emphasize the 1981 baseball season in Chapter 3 is because this is the season when Fernandomania occurred. I argue throughout my analysis that Fernandomania is a pivotal moment of communitas crucial to understanding how and why the public forgetting of La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop takes place amongst Mexican/American Dodger fans and communities across Los Angeles. Vivian (2010) argues that pivotal moments play a significant role in public forgetting, and his argument provides a crucial foundation for why I emphasize the 1981 season and focus on Fernandomania as public memory:

> Public forgetting arises from uncommonly pivotal moments in the evolution of communal time, history, and memory, during which either a single agent or a collective body initiates such forgetting according to a double movement: in this movement, advocates simultaneously articulate a *rationale* for interrupting, or even ending altogether, prevailing paradigms of memory and coin a *novel public idiom* with which the community's relation to its past, present, and future would be configured anew, or at least in profoundly altered ways. (p. 14)

I invoke Vivian here to argue that Fernandomania is that uncommonly pivotal moment that allows the Los Angeles Dodgers and the sports media—agents in service of the collective body that is American baseball—to initiate forgetting via the double movement

Vivian is describing; the unlikely success of Fernando Valenzuela and the communitas of Fernandomania are the rational for interrupting and ending prevailing paradigms of memory—namely remembering the neighborhoods of La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop that were destroyed in 1959 so that Dodger Stadium could be erected.

The novel public idiom—in this case is Chávez Ravine—is transformed from a public memory of resistance and struggle to a public memory associated with Fernandomania and Fernando Valenzuela. I articulate how this uncommonly pivotal moment (chapter 3) comes to be and its rhetorical consequences for the novel public idiom Chavez Ravine (chapter 4). Analyzing these racial discourses are an opportunity to understand how sports media rhetorically constructs the public memory of Fernando's historic 1981 season, Fernandomania, and his everlasting rhetorical impact on the Los Angeles Dodgers, Dodger Stadium, and Chavez Ravine.

In Chapter 4, I explore how the *LA Times* and the Los Angeles Dodgers (re)construct and (re)articulate memories of Fernandomania and Fernando Valenzuela throughout the rest of his career with the Dodgers and into the present. I connect the patterns of discursive violence and the pervasiveness of the white racial frame established in Chapter 3 to the discourses used by the *LA Times* frames the rest of Fernando's Dodger career, the competing ways that Chavez Ravine and Fernandomania are publicly remembered in "Fernando Nation," and the July 20, 2019 ceremony that honored Fernando Valenzuela as a Legend of Dodger Baseball. The result of these rhetorical efforts is that Chavez Ravine becomes a novel public idiom—no longer remembered as a site of violence, struggle, and resistance—to the Mexican/American and Latinx people that root for the Dodgers and live in Los Angeles. The neighborhoods of La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop are publicly forgotten, replaced instead with the public memories of Fernandomania, the communitas it inspired, and the racial and

ethnic pride instilled among Mexican/American and Latinx people across the United States and Mexico. Fernandomania itself, and by extension Fernandomania, become carefully craft public memories that downplay prior instances of discursive violence (though not completely eliminate) so that its rhetorical force can continue to be exploited for profit.

To embark on this endeavor, I took a cue from prior sports communication studies and amassed a significant amount of data to build my analysis of Fernandomania by searching the *ProQuest Historical Newspapers Database: Los Angeles Times* for all coverage of Fernando Valenzuela that took place during the 1981 season[16] and throughout other major points in his career. Much like how the *Atlanta Constitution* and *Chicago Tribune* were regional newspapers that prominently covered Ty Cobb and the Chicago Cubs respectively due to their geographic context, the *LA Times* is the major regional newspaper for current events that take place in the city of Los Angeles. Consequently, the *LA Times* has historically featured the most consistent and significant print coverage of the Los Angeles Dodgers. My efforts are also a response to Barbie Zelizer's (2008) observation about the dearth of work that seeks to examine the relationship between journalism and memory:

> Though work on collective memory has yet to recognize the centrality of journalism as an institution of mnemonic record, memory creeps into journalistic relay in sundry ways. Each necessitates an address to the past, rendering journalism's memory work both widespread and multi-faceted. Recounting the present is laced with an intricate repertoire of practices that involve an often-obscured engagement with the past. This renders journalism a key agent of memory work, even if journalists themselves are averse to admitting it as part of what they do. (p. 85)

Given that journalism is a key agent of memory work, analyzing sports journalism's discursive practices in response to Fernandomania provides the opportunity to understand journalism's role in laying the groundwork for the public memory of Fernandomania.

And when you consider that sports journalism and American baseball work in tandem to preserve hegemonic white masculinity, it will become clear how the public memories of Fernandomania and Fernando Valenzuela are stained by the same systemic racism and oppression that destroyed the last vestiges of Mexican/American prosperity on that fateful day in 1959.

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[1] Angelena/o refers to someone who is native to and/or lives in or near Los Angeles. Gringo pronunciation is used.
[2] The term pocha/o refers to individuals, whose parents are Mexican or of Mexican descent, born in the United States and are unable to speak Spanish; even if they can speak Spanish, they are still regarded as outsiders and not truly Mexican.
[3]The Los Angeles Angels play in the city of Anaheim, which is in Orange County.
[4]The African American rhetorical tradition has been an established field of inquiry for decades and engages uniquely African American ontologies and epistemologies to guide the theorization and understanding of African American rhetoric. However, it has been noticeably absent from rhetorical scholarship produced by communication scholars.
[5] This collection of works comprises the #RhetoricSoWhite forum published in the fourth and final 2019 issue of the *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. Wanzer-Serrano's (2019) introductory essay indicts the field of rhetoric and its preeminent journal as racist.
[6] Sara Baugh-Harris and Darrel Wanzer-Serrano (2018) expressed concerns about the notion of canonizing racial rhetorical criticism; their objection is capture in the following sentiment: "The creation of such a cannon risk reducing critical, subject-oriented research on the interplay of race, rhetoric, and power into uncritical, essentialized plug-and-play scholarship with critics of color. It is bad enough that, at best, may of us get only a courtesy citation if a white (or white-trained) scholar broaches a subject on which we have spoken at length. What is missing is a deeper understanding and appreciation of racial logics and how they infuse even the most seemingly "objective" rhetorical theories" (p. 340). Flores (2018) later clarified her thoughts on racial rhetorical criticism, taking Baugh-Harris and Wanzer-Serrano's concerns into account, and moved away from the notion that racial rhetorical be canonized.
[7] Blair, Dickinson, & Ott (2010) provide their own summary of the common themes that exist across the various forms of memory studies: (1) memory is activated by present concerns, issues, or anxieties; (2) memory narrates shared identities, constructing senses of communal belonging; (3) memory is animated by affect; (4) memory is partial, partisan, and thus often contested; (5) memory relies on material and/or symbolic supports; (6) memory has a history (p. 6). Their summary informs my own summary of themes across memory studies.
[8] Grano and Zagacki recall that Drew Brees was cut from his original team, the San Diego Chargers, in the prior offseason. They note that because Brees embodied underdog characteristics of humility and hard work, coupled with his diminutive stature and whiteness, his individual success and narrative was ascribed to the city's recovery.
[9] Butterworth's (2017) summary also includes the themes public address in sport and metaphor in sport/sport as metaphor as additional ways that scholars approach sport rhetorically. (p. 14-17)

[10] By racial discourses, I am referring to Stuart Hall's conception of race as discourse presented in his W.E.B. DuBois lectures at Harvard in 1994. Specifically, Hall (Hall, 2017b) argues that, "socially, historically, and politically, race is a discourse; that it operates like a language, like a sliding signifier; that its signifiers reference not genetically established facts but the systems of meaning that have come to be fixed in the classifications of culture; and that those meanings have real effects not because of some truth that inheres in their scientific classification but because of the will to power and the regime of truth that are instituted in the shifting relations of discourse that such meanings establish with our concepts and ideas in the signifying field. This will to truth of the idea of race achieves its effects through the ways in which discursive systems organize and regulate the social practices of men and women in their daily interactions with one another" (p. 45-46).

[11] Darrel Wanzer-Serrano takes Michael Calvin McGee (and by extension, Frederic Jameson) to task for "their epistemic starting points [which] occludes the longstanding functionality of fragmentation in the colonial matrix of power and limits the possibilities for more ethical and efficacious modes of critical rhetorical praxis in a global world" (Wanzer, 2012, p. 650).

[12] By white racial frame, I mean, "an overarching white worldview that encompasses a broad and persisting set of racial stereotypes, prejudices, ideologies, images, interpretations and narratives, emotions, and reactions to language accents, as well as racialized inclinations to discriminate" (Feagin, 2013, p. 3). For a more detailed summary of the white racial frame's broadness and complexities, see pages 10-11 of Feagin (2013).

[13] I explore what this visibility entails in chapter 4 when I analyze the ESPN *30 for 30* documentary "Fernando Nation."

[14] Roessner chose the *Atlanta Constitution* because it was the largest circulating regional newspaper in Cobb's home state and *Sporting News* because it was the only continuously published national sports publication of the twentieth century.

[15] Burgos (2007) work highlights the distinctions in the ways that Major League Baseball has treated Black and Latino players. This also applies to players from Korea and Japan. Burgos notes that Latino players have frequently been the target of criticism for failing to learn English, whereas their Japanese and Korean counterparts have not. In fact, teams frequently employ translators for Japanese and Korean players.

[16] My search parameters for the 1981 season were all stories that took place between March 1981 (the start of Spring Training for the 1981 season) and February 1982 (prior to the start of Spring Training for the 1982 season).

CHAPTER 3

FERNANDOMANIA

It is honestly a bit hard to fathom exactly how out-of-nowhere Fernando Valenzuela's meteoric rise to baseball stardom was in 1981. It felt that Fernando quite literally came out of nowhere. He was signed from the Mexican professional leagues in 1979, made a short but impressive major league debut as a reliver late in the 1980 season, and then became the best pitcher in baseball in 1981. In a span of two years, he went from a nobody to a superstar. There was no anointing Fernando the next anything at the start of spring training in 1981. When summarizing season, Dan Hafner (1981) wrote that, "Although he had pitched brilliantly as a 19-year-old reliever late in 1980, there was no indication Valenzuela was headed for greatness so soon. But once Fernandomania was rolling, readers wrote to the *LA Times* to proclaim that Fernando resembled the Great Bambino and excited fans just like Koufax.

By the end of his rookie season, Fernando appeared to be the best pitcher in baseball. He managed to tie the major league rookie record of eight shutouts pitched in a season (Heisler, 1981, "For Fernando: a Sellout, a Shutout, a Record"). Scott Ostler (1981) predicted that Fernando Valenzuela was a favorite to win the National League Cy Young award because "he led the league in complete games (11), innings pitches (192), strikeouts (190), and shutouts (8)" ("Dullsville"). And at the conclusion of the 1981 season, Fernando did win the Cy Young and the Rookie of the Year awards, an accomplishment that has yet to be replicated.

There has not been another player quite like Fernando nor a phenomenon quite like Fernandomania.[1] That is why the first, overarching goal of this chapter is to recall the pivotal moments throughout Fernandomania to provide a detailed contextualization of how it was originally reported in 1981. This contextualization is important for

understanding the fragments that make Fernandomania a text and how that text is eventually remembered as communitas and celebrated as public memory. In retelling this story through the words of the reporters who contributed to its composition, I show that Fernandomania was communitas and cultural phenomenon for Mexican/Americans in 1981. I do this to explain why Fernandomania continues to reverberate within Mexican/American communities, especially Mexican/American Dodger fans, long after Fernando was a dominant pitcher or a professional player.

The second goal of this chapter is to examine how Fernando Valenzuela and Fernandomania were framed by the media in 1981. To do this, I utilize racial rhetorical criticism throughout my analysis to examine the discursive violence committed by the *LA Times* coverage of Fernando Valenzuela and Fernandomania throughout the first half of the 1981 Major League Baseball (MLB) season. I argue that this discursive violence is the product of a white racial frame that compels media to frame Fernando Valenzuela as incongruous with baseball's white ideology and essentializes Fernando to three racialized tropes: his atypical physique, his age, and his ignorance. By essentializing Fernando through this white racial frame, his distinctive and immutable Mexican race and ethnicity relegate him permanently as "other." They are also indicative of the greater struggle sports writers face when they attempting to wrestle with the incongruity that Fernando's sudden success represents: a foreign player dominating America's pastime. The media's white racial frame reinforces the belief that Fernando's success is incongruous with the ideological and mythological apparatus of American baseball.

The third overarching goal is to prove that Fernandomania was communitas and a cultural phenomenon for Mexican/Americans and Latinx communities. I do this by examining how, within the backdrop of a white racial frame promoting discursive violence, Fernandomania continues to persist as an instance of communitas that

resonates as a powerful cultural moment for Mexican/American and Latinx people and communities in Los Angeles and across the United States and Mexico. By recalling how journalists reported on Fernando's intense popularity and the legions of fans that attended his sold-out games at Dodger Stadium, I aim to demonstrate that Fernandomania was indeed an instance of communitas and a unique cultural moment for Mexican/American and Latinx people and communities. I then explain how the media pivots Fernandomania's communitas and cultural influence into an opportunity to credit recently deceased Dodgers' owner Walter O'Malley, a rhetorical shift that maintains white men's' economic and cultural influence over American baseball.

By the end of this chapter, the reader should come away with an understanding of what Fernandomania was and its prominence within the confines of the 1981 season and beyond. Recalling this early period of Fernando's career and how it was framed by the *LA Times* is crucial to understanding its rhetorical construction then and its influence on public memory now.

The Incongruity and Essentialization of Fernando Valenzuela

Fernando Valenzuela's 8-0 winning streak during and the subsequent attention he received from the English-language (aka white) press and fans set him apart from the rest of the major league. When it appeared that Fernando would just keep winning, writer Scott Ostler (1981) joked that hitters only stood a chance if his screw ball would unscrew his arm off or if he overdosed on burritos and beer. Dodgers reliver Jay Johnston joked after a game that Fernando should get, "a shot in a commercial, as the Pillsbury Doughboy (Heisler, 1981h). Meanwhile, Frank J. Sullivan from Los Alamitos wrote to the *LA Times* to suggest Fernando be called, "'Freddie,' the 'Crisco Kid' (cuz he's fat in the can), 'Super Mex' or just plain 'Fernando,' ("Letters: Valenzuela II," 1981). The fat jokes previewed here are just some of many made at Fernando's expense. And

although these and many other jokes are portrayed as innocent jabs made in jest, they emanate from a familiar mosaic of racist discourse indicative of a white racial frame. Therefore, I interrogate how the *LA Times* uses a white racial frame to interpret the mystery and incongruity of Fernando Valenzuela rising the ranks of the Dodgers' farm system so quickly to become the unexpected winning pitcher for the Dodgers' on opening day in 1981. I find that the media frames his success with a sense of wonder that confronts Fernando's racial incongruity[2] by essentializing his racialized body into a set of familiar, racist characteristics that mark him as other and preserve white ways of seeing and knowing.

Emerging Racist Tropes

> *"He has a chance to be a star," says one of his bigger promoters, Dodgers Vice President Al Campanis. (Heisler, 1981a)*

Prior to the 1981 season, the *LA Times* featured Fernando as part of their spring training coverage. They called attention to his exceptional performance as a relief pitcher and reported that he was in the running for the fifth spot in the starting rotation.[3] The profile frames Fernando as the "Dodgers' all-time leader in career won-lost percentage (1.000) and earned run average (0.00)" in its first lines, labels him a "phenomenon" and the "sensation of the Dodger's stretch drive," and remarks that, "if he is close to what he was last fall, he will be much higher than No. 5," a reference to the spot in the starting rotation that he was vying for (Heisler, 1981a). Dodgers Vice President and General manager Al Campanis claimed Fernando could be a star. Dodgers' beat writer Mark Heisler predicted that Fernando was in the running for rookie of the year.[4] Given the organization's excitement and the media's curiosity, Mark Heisler profiled the young prospect named Fernando Valenzuela in a story titled, "Valenzuela making a pitch to start."

Heisler opened his profile by contextualizing Fernando's performance as a reliever during the stretch of the 1980 season and his aptitude for learning his trademark screwball so quickly. According to the story, Fernando was called up into the major leagues, "after learning to throw the screwball in about the 10 minutes it took Bobby Castillo to explain it" (ibid). The short amount of time it took Fernando to learn this rare pitch suggests that he has natural talent; he did not need to practice throwing a screwball, he was simply able to do it. The story then remarks that, "A certain mystery exists about this phenomenon, mostly because Valenzuela speaks little English and can't explain himself" (ibid). There is no attempted to clarify that Fernando can explain himself in a different language, and there is no effort to accommodate Fernando in this profile. Furthermore, the mystery is a part of othering foreigners, especially Latinx people, that Americans cannot understand since they are unwilling to accommodate them.[5] This reinforces the power dynamics of who is forced to accommodate/assimilate to who and the consequences for failing to do so. Ultimately, the white racial frame demands that Fernando, a foreigner from Mexico, needs to speak English to make himself legible to the major leagues and its fans despite the fact that Fernando is already legible to the Spanish-speaking Mexican/American and Latinx population that lives in Los Angeles.

Throughout the rest of the profile, Mark Heisler ridicules Fernando's physique, age, and ignorance. These are the first appearances of the racial tropes that will continue to inform how the public sees and remembers Fernando. It begins with the following passage where Heisler curiously decides to contextualize a description of Fernando within the image of a Mexican werewolf:

> Because Valenzuela is a little on the round side and because he once said he likes beer and because he doesn't particularly look 20 and because he certainly doesn't

> pitch like he's 20, there has been a tendency to think of him as a kind of Mexican werewolf, werewolf being a term that originated on the beaches of Los Angeles' South Bay to describe someone who forgets to go home at night. (ibid)

The observations that Heisler reports on in this paragraph may appear innocent enough. The decision to point out that Fernando is "on the round side" and "likes beer" may seem observational and objective rather than derisive and opinionated, but the constant "observations" of Fernando's body, in both their quantity and content, quickly become obsessive and violent. And the compliment that Fernando does not look or pitch like he is 20 quickly reveals itself to be rooted within more common white ways of seeing that attribute age to racialized bodies differently.

The racialized intent of these tropes is solidified by the decision to describe Fernando as a Mexican werewolf. Racialized bodies are generally regarded as threatening or monstrous, and the decision to report on this "Mexican werewolf" belief links Fernando directly to images of monstrosity that emphasizes his mysteriousness and otherness, painting him as a dangerous beast to the (white) audience of the *LA Times*. Even if we contextualize this observation within its relative vernacular, that werewolves are individuals who forget to go home at night, Heisler is still suggesting that Valenzuela goes out frequently and drinks heavily.[6] This reinforces Fernando's affinity for beer, helps explain his round frame, and links him to unsavory behavior. It also suggests that he is an undisciplined athlete who is not professional nor takes training seriously.[7] This suggests a natural talent that is not based work ethic, a prevalent trend within racialized framings in sport.

The way Heisler reports on the disbelief of Fernando's young age also reinforces the white racial frame that helps fans wrestle with the incongruity of Fernando Valenzuela. In the profile, it is reported that the Dodgers Vice President, "keeps a copy of

Valenzuela's birth certificate on record, 'Anyone who doubts it can come up and see it'" (ibid). On the surface, it appears that Heisler is praising Fernando for being an impressive pitcher at a young age. However, this suggests that there is an obsession with knowing Fernando's real age. Why else would the Dodgers' general manager need to keep the birth certificate on hand all times? Later news stories revisit the disbelief about Fernando's youth and Campanis's decision to keep Fernando's birth certificate at the ready.[8] The frequent disbelief that Fernando is only 20 years old and executives must keep the proof on hand is part of a greater racist trope endemic to baseball. Many players born in Latin America have been suspected, and sometimes outright accused, of lying about their age.[9] And the emphasis on documentation, albeit a birth certificate issued in Mexico, is indicative of the larger obsession with Mexican's documentation to verify their immigration status. Valenzuela must prove his age just as all Mexican/Americans must prove their "legal" immigration status. These seemingly harmless musings, which are not harmless, are obsessions that reemerge throughout Fernando's rookie season. Bringing violent discourses of documentation, authenticity, and foreignness to the forefront without making the claims directly provides plausible deniability from charges of racist intent.

Another obsession that emerges from Heisler's story is the implication that Fernando is generally ignorant and unaware of his current circumstances. This perceived ignorance stems primarily from Fernando's inability to speak and understand English. This suggests that the mystery goes both ways: Fernando is a mystery to Americans (whites) and America (a white "developed" country) is a mystery to Fernando. Although he professed to have some understanding of English, Fernando relied upon scout Mike Brito or teammate Bobby Castillo to translate for him. The language barrier that lead to his quiet demeanor gave Fernando an aura of mysteriousness, and the sports media and

Fernando' teammates begin to attribute the language barrier towards his success on the field:

> The joke among his teammates is that one reason he has done so well is that he doesn't know exactly who it was he made all those dynamite pitches to last fall, that they hope he doesn't learn English and find out and spoil the whole thing. (ibid)

Although made in jest, the suggestion that ignorance played a role Fernando's early success is not innocent when placed within the larger pattern of the press deriding Fernando in ways that amount to discursive violence.[10] It reveals that Fernando's success in baseball is not earned, but rather circumstances (ignorance) playing towards Fernando's favor. This discredits his talent, effort, and accomplishments as pure, dumb luck with an emphasis on "dumb."

However, the most prevalent or pernicious form of discursive violence committed by the sports media is the obsession Fernando's physique. After providing a brief summary of Fernando's journey to the major leagues, Mark Heisler revisits the fascination with Fernando's body and eating habits. Constantly obsessing over Fernando's weight is indicative of the incongruity that Fernando represents and whites' disbelief that a non-white pudgy player could be so talented. In a way it also foreshadows how many stories written throughout the 1981 season decide to mock Fernando for his eating habits and his weight and how these derisive observations eventually contribute to significant aspects of his contemporary public memory. I will discuss how Fernando's weight and physique are a part of his public memory in Chapter 4.

Although Heisler's initial observation started by simply describing Fernando as "a little on the round side," he provides a much more vivid description of Fernando's

physique later on in the profile. This description is indicative of the white racial frame that both the sports media and the Dodgers' organization use to evaluate Fernando:

> Valenzuela has accomplished all this with a pudgy body. He is listed at 5-11 and 185 pounds, but he says he was 195 last September. "all I'm worried about," said the outgoing pitching coach Red Adams, last fall, "is that someone will make him lose 25 pounds and he'll be the most physically fit pitcher in Lodi." [...] Campanis says Valenzuela is a big eater and anyone who eats a lot of Mexican food is going to have a weight problem. He wants Fernando to get into salads, as befits a Californian. (ibid)

This fascination with Fernando's physique reveals how a white racial frame is used to make sense of the incongruity that Fernando's racialized and atypical body represents; it also denies the history of California and its population that once were a part of Mexico. His round frame does not fit the expectations that the media nor the Dodgers have of a professional athlete's body. And the Dodgers' concern with Fernando's weight implies that Fernando cannot or does not comply with the fitness goals established by the Dodgers organization. This allows the readership of the *LA Times* to assume that Fernando is either too lazy to get in shape and lose weight, or he is predisposed to being less athletic than his white and black teammates. It also reinforces the assumption that he is unprofessional and uneducated about appropriate eating habits and training regimens. Both attributes are based on racial stereotypes that deride Mexicans as lazy or inferior athletes. And given that "anyone who eats a lot of Mexican food is going to have a weight problem," perhaps Fernando's race and ethnicity were fundamentally incompatible with baseball's white ideology—an issue explored at length in the next sub-section.

By the end of spring training, Fernando was considered one of the Dodgers top prospects. He was expected to contribute for a team that had underperformed and disappointed in recent seasons. Entering the 1981 season, the Dodgers had not won their division for the past two years and were essentially returning the exact same team from the season prior, resulting in pressure from the front office to win (Heisler, 1981c). Although pitching was supposed to be the team's strength, there was some nervousness about the pitching staff heading into opening day: two starting pitchers had contracted a virus, several relievers had struggled during spring training, and two others were rehabilitating shoulder and elbow injuries (Heisler, 1981, ibid). Still, the coaching staff was confident that pitching would be the team's strength throughout the season and there were still plenty of healthy players. There was no cause for worry as opening day approached.

Essentializing Fernando

> *They stood and cheered when Valenzuela got to two strikes, after which he threw Roberts a terrific screwball for his fifth strikeout, shook a lot of hands, smiled about 1,000 embarrassed smiles in post-game interviews and went out in search of a burrito stand, leaving the world to wonder just how phenomenal a phenomenon can be.* (Heisler, 1981e)

On the morning of April 9, Mark Heisler (1981c) reported that the Dodgers workout "dissolved into confusion" because the Dodgers unexpectedly found themselves with only one healthy starter: Fernando Valenzuela.[11] When reporting on the injury fiasco, Heisler noted the following:

> What this means is that on Opening Day, 1981, the Dodgers have *one* completely healthy starting pitcher. He is 20-year-old Fernando Valenzuela, who will

become the first rookie pitcher to start an opener for the Dodgers since they've been in Los Angeles (ibid)

That forty-two-word paragraph is the only time that Valenzuela is mentioned in the entire story. The rest of Heisler's reporting recounts the chaos created by the injuries (two players were cut until the Dodgers decided that one of them was not cut after all) and highlights a bit of cruel irony heading into the series. He remarks extensively about the irony that Don Sutton,[12] a former Dodgers starting pitcher who was once their opening day starter in years past and was "the all-time winningest Dodger, not to mention the holder of eight other franchise pitching records," was now playing for the Houston Astros—the team the Dodgers would face on opening day (ibid).[13] On top of all that, the Astros had eliminated the Dodgers from the playoffs the previous season, and the pitcher who had eliminated them was starting for the Astros.[14] The season was off to an inauspicious start.

Fortunately for the Dodgers, Fernando threw a 106-pitch, five-hit shutout to lead the Dodgers over the Astros 2-0. Fernando was not only the first rookie pitcher to start on opening day for the Los Angeles Dodgers, he was the youngest pitcher in the major leagues to start an opener in fifteen years (Heisler, 1981e). Although he did not receive much attention prior to opening day, even amid all the injury drama that allowed him to start, Fernando found himself at the center of a media frenzy following his shutout of the Astros:

"He wasn't one bit nervous. He's so cool out there. I don't think he even broke a sweat."

Valenzuela was hip-deep in press, speaking through Mike Brito, the scout who signed him [...] Now, Valenzuela said, looking around, he was nervous. But before?

"When I get on the mound," he said, "I don't know what afraid is." (ibid)

Clearly there was excitement and disbelief surrounding Fernando. However, as coverage of the game unfolded, the compliments regarding Fernando's performance became framed in some more familiar ways:

> For reasons like the events of Thursday, Whether or not Al Campanis has Valenzuela's 20-year-old birth certificate in his desk or not, the world refuses to believe he is 20. They wouldn't' believe it if Campanis produced Mr. Valenzuela, Ms. Valenzuela and the hospital Fernando was born in.
>
> "He may be 20," Astros Manager Bill Virdon said Thursday, "but he pitches 30."
>
> "They're trying to tell me that guy's 20," Angels Manager Jim Fregosi said laughing last weekend. "He was 20 when *I* started playing." (ibid)

Coverage by the *LA Times* continues to emphasize the disbelief that Fernando is 20 years old and suggests that any proof that Fernando is only 20 will not convince anyone otherwise, even if the proof is irrefutable. This double edge content was likely meant to be playful and complimentary, but it still invokes problematic tropes of documentation, authenticity, and foreignness that imply forgery. The follow up comments supplied by other managers also suggest that the doubts about Fernando's age go beyond complimenting him for playing so well despite being so young. They clearly doubt his age in ways that echo accusations of falsifying birthdates that have historically been levied against Latin American players. Clearly baseball writers and coaches alike were attempting to wrestle with the player who came out of nowhere to shutout the Astros on opening day.

The ridicule does not stop with Mark Heisler's coverage of the game. In his syndicated sport column for the *LA Times*, Jim Murray[15] mocks Fernando for his weight

and inability to speak English. He does this by invoking baseball's white ideology via the memory of John McGraw[16] to demonstrate that Fernando's shutout on opening day defies baseball's heroic imagery of white-masculine individualism:

> It is not likely John McGraw would ever pick Fernando Valenzuela for his opening-day pitcher. He might not even use him on the weekends. You see, Fernando not only had never started a big league game in his life before, he doesn't even look like a major league pitcher. He is, how shall we say it—he is—well, he's fat is what he is.
>
> The next thing is, he's not on speaking terms with his teammates. At least, most of them. Fernando doesn't speak English.
>
> John McGraw would tell him to lose weight, to learn the language, and then to go down to Tidewater or someplace and learn to pitch. You see, Fernando is also only 20 years old. I mean, who does he think he is—Carl Hubbell? Fernando should be working his way up through the bushes, learning the pickoff play, signs and what to throw Cesar Cedeno on 3 and 2. (Murray, 1981)

Murray believes that a manager of McGraw's stature would never dream of allowing Fernando on his team because he is inexperienced, fat, young, and does not speak English—never mind that McGraw retired from managing 20 years before Jackie Robinson integrated baseball. Because Fernando is too young, inexperienced, and unskilled to have pitched so well, his performance defied all expectations. He is pitching just as good as the legendary Carl Hubbell, the (white) pioneer of the screwball, at only 20 years old and after only 10 minutes of instruction. A Mexican baseball player from rural Mexico with limited professional (American major leagues) experience should not be pitching better than other (white American) pitchers who have been working harder, longer, and against better competition.

This is only complicated by the fact that Fernando is Mexican. Although not commented on directly, the emphasis on Fernando's inability to speak English racializes him as distinctly not American (white). That Murry phrases the language barrier as "not on speaking terms with his teammates" suggests that Fernando is standoffish and a difficult teammate. Murry also links Fernando to César Cedeño, a once prominent Dominican player for the Houston Astros. Cedeño was a stellar young player and elicited comparisons to Willie Mayes, but by age 23 his statistics declined and he became simply an average, injury prone player.[17] While Murry is deferring to Cedeño's experience by suggesting that Fernando needs to learn what type of pitch to throw in a particular pitch count, there is also the implication that both Fernando and Cedeño are incongruous with baseball's white masculine imagery. Murray's comments suggest that they are linked by their Latinx ethnicity (Cedeño is Afro-Latino) but that they will always stand apart from baseball's white heroic legacy and fail to stand the test of time. Just like Cedeño, Fernando's skill and dominance will not stand the test of time; it is only a matter of time until he disappoints and fades into obscurity.

This implication is reinforced by the following excerpt that highlights the incongruity of a young and inexperienced Fernando pitching so well despite not embodying the prototypical image of the opening day starter:

> Opening day starters historically have been the blue-bearded, tobacco chewing veterans of a dozen or more campaigns, wily old gnarled masters to whom an opening game is just another day at the lathe. (ibid)

The image of the prototypically white opening day starter—they are literally referred to as "masters"—conjured in his column is not unfounded.[18] Opening day starters are supposed to be the veterans whose skill, hard work, and experience not only helps them handle the pressure of opening the season, it makes them deserving of the opportunity to

lead their teams to victory at the opening of the season. Why should an inexperienced Mexican who does not look like a professional baseball player be called upon to pitch opening day for one of the marquee franchises that play America's pastime?

What Murray's comments suggest is that Fernando's youth and inexperience disqualify him from deserving of such an honor. After all, the circumstances that led to his opening day shutout suggest that Fernando's opportunity was the product of the Dodgers' bad luck with injuries rather than Fernando's own hard work. Had it not been for the Dodgers letting Don Sutton walk the offseason prior, Jerry Reuss straining his calf, and Burt Hooton suddenly requiring an ingrown toenail to be removed, Fernando would not be starting. Although this narrative would later be remembered as fate favoring Fernando, Murray is implying that Fernando has not worked hard enough to deserve the honor of pitching opening day—despite evidence to the contrary.

This subtle critique of Fernando as unworthy to carry on baseball legacy continues throughout Jim Murray's column. He continues to make mockery of Fernando's weight and age in ways that reinforce Fernando's inability to become a part of baseball's legacy:

> It took Carl Hubbell all his life to perfect a screwball, Fernando picked it up between tacos.
>
> Major league baseball found Fernando practicing his art in the sombrero cities where you didn't get meal money, you had to kill the chickens yourself. Clubs were impressed by his figures but not his figure. "He looks 100 years old!" one New York scout protested. The Dodgers looked at the 91 strikeouts in 93 innings, not at the waistline. They signed him, belly and all.

> They've had the good sense to leave him alone. No one wants him to learn English, lose weight or find out you're not supposed to throw a screwball to Jose Cruz with the tying runs on.
>
> But it is likely the Dodgers have found their opening day pitcher for the next dozen years or so. Provided nobody puts him on a diet or buys him a dictionary. (ibid)

Yes, Murray is helping to establish the common practice of deriding Fernando's weight, question the validity of his age, and feed the perception that Fernando is not only ignorant, but that his naiveté is a strength that should remain unchanged. However, these comments reveal a particularly pernicious form of discursive violence that rely upon a white racial frame. So let us examine the comments in this passage one at a time.

First, when Murray suggests that Fernando picked up the screwball "between tacos," he is not only deriding Fernando's eating habits and weight, he is suggesting that Fernando did not work anywhere near as hard as Carl Hubbell, who has been perfecting the screwball his whole life. The imagery of picking up tacos is not only a racialized one, it suggests that Fernando exerts the same or more energy eating than he does practicing. When it comes to practice, its implied that Fernando is lazy or only motivated by simplistic rewards. Therefore, his talent is natural. That is the only explanation for why, despite unprofessional behavior and poor eating and fitness behaviors, Fernando remains a dominant pitcher. No one else could be as successful as him.

Second, Murry doubles down on this racialized way of framing Fernando by creating an image of Mexico that relies upon racist ("sombrero cities") and classist ("you didn't get real money, you had to kill the chickens yourself") stereotypes that emphasize primitivism. He then embellishes how old Fernando looks by claiming that a New York Yankees' scout claimed Fernando looked 100 years old, again utilizing the narrative that

Fernando's birthdate is fake.[19] Murray then suggests that the Dodgers prioritized Fernando's stats as opposed to his stature, realizing that they had stumbled upon a naturally talented pitcher with promise. For the Dodgers, Fernando's physique was something to look past. They were on a mission to find "the Mexican Sandy Koufax" after all.[20] Apparently, baseball journalists never got the memo.

Third, Murry suggests that the Dodgers have been prudent to let Fernando be Fernando. This means allowing him to be the atypical major league pitcher—non-white, Spanish-speaking, heavyset, food enthusiast, practice adverse, and ignorant. It is implied that the Dodgers do not want Fernando to learn English so that Fernando's ignorance can continue to make him a better pitcher—even if he is making risky pitches to batters. They also do not want Fernando to lose weight, perhaps under the assumption that losing weight might hamper his effectiveness. This suggests that Fernando's talents are a naïve and othered giftedness that would be lost with training and professionalism reserved for (white) American athletes.

This leads to the fourth and final implication that Murray states, which is that the Dodgers have found the new ace for their pitching staff. This is a compliment to Fernando, suggesting that he has a promising career ahead of him. However, there is an important caveat: Fernando will continue to be the Dodger's opening day starter if he does not learn English or lose weight. Therefore, the Dodgers can continue to benefit from the of a fat and stupid Mexican.

These racist tropes endure throughout the *LA Times*' coverage of Fernandomania and Fernando's career. Whether they are used by journalists writing the stories or team executives and teammates giving interviews, a consensus is eventually established that essentializes Fernando to his weight, age, and ignorance. This consensus reinforces racist stereotypes of Mexicans writ large and suggests that the expiration date on Fernando's

natural talent is sooner rather than later, especially in comparison to other (white) American baseball players. Fernando's fame and dominance will be intense but short lived, and the consequence is that he will be remembered as a "what if?" or a "remember when?" rather than an all-time great and hall-of-fame player. These practices persist throughout the *LA Times* coverage of Fernandomania and its profiles of Fernando Valenzuela. In the next sub-section, I explore how Fernando continues to be racialized during his first extensive one-on-one interview with the *LA Times*.

Who is Fernando?

> *The huge baseball-loving, Spanish-speaking population of L.A. has waited years for a genuine Mexican Dodger hero. Us gringos have Steve Garvey and Dusty Baker and the other Dodger stars available for appearances at our Rotary Club luncheons and civic parades. Let the Mexicans and Mexican-Americans have Fernando*. (Ostler, 1981h)

Following his first four victories, the *LA Times* conducted its first extensive one-on-one interview with Valenzuela about baseball, growing up in Etchohuaquila, and life as a major league star. They discuss his family background and life, reminding readers that he is the youngest of twelve and was one of eight Valenzuela's on his hometown youth baseball team (most of those boys were his brothers). This emphasizes Fernando's youth not just amongst the rest of the major leagues, but within his own family. He's the baby of the Valenzuela family, a status that helps frame his infantilization for the English-speaking media. The prevalence of his brothers, and other boys with the last name Valenzuela, on the local youth baseball team suggests a primitive world where you can only have a youth baseball team if you have enough family members to fill the roster. It is not your typical American little league roster, making Fernando's origins feel even more foreign.

Young Fernando is described as "a lanky lad at age 13" who was only allowed to pitch occasionally because his brothers believed he was too young (Montemayor, 1981). Montemayor claims that, "youth has always been a problem" for Fernando since he played with older boys who thought he was too young, and "Even now, at age 20, he is still perceived as too young to be doing what he is doing." There is a bit of irony in this framing, given the widespread disbelief that Fernando is only 20 years old. As I explained in previous sections, most baseball writers and coaches believe that Fernando is much older than he actually claims to be for reasons beyond his skill and composure.

Montemayor also provides some explanation for why fans are so intrigued by Fernando. It is the incongruity of his baseball skills and his physique and foreignness that make him the mystery that he is:

> He's an excellent batsman and fielder—and he's made it all look easy. Fans are especially intrigued by his success because he's pudgy.
>
> And there are elements of mystery in his background because of his beginnings in another country and his inability to speak English. (ibid)

Framing Fernando as mysterious has become a common occurrence across the press coverage by the *LA Times*. Another column by a different writer concluded by imploring, "Let him remain a mystery. It's more fun that way" (Ostler, 1981a). The idea that Fernando is a mystery is due to his foreign origins and the ongoing language barrier between Fernando and the white reporters, fans, and *LA Times* audience. That none of them expected someone who looks like Fernando to play well, let alone emerge as the best pitcher in baseball during the young 1981 season, is cause for curiosity and wonder.

This sense of wonder is what drives the direction of this interview by Montemayor. He explains to the (white) audience this interview with Fernando aims to provide, "a fuller picture of this man-child from a desert truck farm no bigger than the

layout at Dodger Stadium" (Montemayor, 1981). The "man-child" remark, along with other descriptions that emerge later in the interview, makes it apparent that Montemayor perceives Fernando through an infantilize gaze. Nevertheless, the interview provides a more detailed perspective of Fernando that has so far been missing from the *LA Times*. It also reveals how the white racial frame has essentialized Fernando to the same racialized characteristics across all of the attention and coverage he receives.

One prominent example is Montemayor's description of Fernando merging from his San Diego hotel room, hours before a game, to greet the reporter doing the story:

> Valenzuela opened the door wearing only a blue terrycloth swimsuit with red and white trim. He clearly does not have a classic athletic physique. From the neck down, his body is one soft area after another, no muscle definition, no ripple, nothing that would indicate that inside that frame exists a major leaguer who comes out to pitch every fourth or fifth day.
>
> "I am not strong. But I'm always loose," he said, explaining. (ibid)

This description reflects the incongruity that baseball writers, coaches, players, and fans express about Fernando's physique and his ability. He does not look like the typical (white) American athlete. However, this description concludes with a response from Fernando, who himself admits that he is not strong. Rather, his response that he is "always loose" suggests that he has other valuable qualities that make him an effective pitcher without the need to exhibit the traditional—or white—qualities associated with American athletes.

The interview continues with Fernando mentioning that he is a "television junkie" who watches movies, cartoons, and both Mexican and American soap operas. Montemayor remarks that Fernando has a baseball game on in the background of the interview, but that he "still managed to answer the questions easily and freely and with

the same calm he exhibits when he uncorks a screwball." He continues to describe Fernando's demeanor throughout the interview:

> At times, the kid in him surfaced. For instance, when asked about his girlfriend in Los Angeles, he laughed nervously, pulled his knees to his chest, rolled onto his back and then rolled around on his bed. "No, no, I'm not going to tell you anything about that," he said impishly. (ibid)

This is certainly a heartwarming human moment being described, but it also suggests immaturity and naivety on the part of Fernando. Within the greater context of the *LA Times* infantilizing Fernando, which becomes even more explicit in a profile documenting Dodgers Scout Mike Brito's relationship with Fernando Valenzuela (described and analyzed at the end of this sub-section), this reaction only serves to reinforce the perception that Fernando the "man-child" is more "child" than "man." There is a sense that the media writ large regard him as a simpleton, a body possessing raw and natural talent coupled with a brain and maturity that does not match. The only thing that makes him a "man" is the fact that he plays baseball for the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Interestingly, the assumed naiveté of Fernando is tackled directly in the interview. Montemayor revisits the writers' assumptions that Fernando "really doesn't know just how much is going on, that he is just a quiet, shy type" going about everything "with a foreigner's naivete." Fernando is provided the opportunity to clarify the assumption that he does not understand what is being said about him:

> Not entirely so. "I understand most of the questions. I understand more than people think. I read the stories in Mexican newspapers and magazines or watch TV. I don't understand all the English words, but I do understand many of them.

> Sure, I know what is going on. I don't say anything only because I can't speak English. (ibid)

In fact, Fernando reveals that he is quite aware of the derisive comments made about his eating and drinking habits, and he is not amused by them:

> He is irritated by stories about his beer drinking. "It bothers me in a way…I have never said that I drink that much. People all think that I like to get drunk. Sure, I drink a few beers, but not that much. What I do is eat a lot—steaks, salads, avocados, Mexican food, *carne asada*, beans, rice. I do like to eat. (ibid)

What we see in these two passages is Fernando addressing the assumptions that have been continuously made about him. Because Fernando has the chance to converse with someone who speaks his language and he is actually being interviewed rather than profiled from a distance or bombarded by a million questions that inevitably are lost in translation, the story reads quite different from anything else that has been written about him. The description of his relaxed rather than nervous demeanor demonstrates a rapport between Fernando and Montemayor, and Fernando has a chance to respond to the questions, comments, and events that his play is inspiring. Rather than being the subject to a columnists' whims and assumptions or have questions and responses constantly filtered through translation, Fernando can speak for Fernando.

However, just because Fernando can speak for and about himself in this profile does not mean that he can control how he is framed by the story, nor can he undo how all the press coverage has framed him so far. That Montemayor focuses on the three racialized tropes that have come to define who Fernando is—his body, his age, and his ignorance—suggest that the white racial frame used to rectify the incongruity that Fernando precipitates is much more powerful than his voice. Whatever brief opportunity that Fernando is given to respond to his critics is undone by the profile itself and the

many subsequent stories and interviews that rely upon established patterns of discursive violence to reinforce white ways of seeing and knowing.

Take, for example, an interview conducted with Dodgers scout Mike Brito. Brito is the scout who found Fernando, and Brito speaks for himself, speaks of/about Fernando, and for Fernando. And most perniciously, Brito connects the racial tropes of Fernando's weight, age, and maturity in personal ways that connects them with one another; when you think of one, you cannot help but think of all the others and attribute them to each other.

One example is when Brito paints an unflattering and condescending image of Fernando's eating habits. Not only does one of the anecdotes suggest that Fernando has no self-control, it establishes Brito as Fernando's more mature and intelligent caretaker:

> "He likes to eat," Brito said. "I let him take two or three beers with dinner, then I take him home. I tell him not to eat more than two tortillas at a time, and to stay away from pop soda. I have him drink iced tea, instead, with lemon. He loves sugar, but every time I put less sugar in it, and pretty soon he'll be drinking it without any sugar and he won't even notice." (Ostler, 1981b)

What this passage suggests is that Fernando is a child who needs to be babysat. His impulses (eating) need to be curbed by someone older and more responsible, and Brito is charged with being Fernando's "Big Brother." This infantilization is rampant throughout the piece on Brito and Valenzuela's relationship. For instance, after reminding readers that Fernando is the youngest—or as writer Scott Ostler puts it, the "baby"—in the family and the first to leave home, it is reported that Fernando's family, "has more or less entrusted Brito with the well-being of the lad" (ibid). The use of lad infantilizes Fernando, indicating that both Brito and Ostler regard Fernando as more "child" than

"man." This implies that Fernando may be easily fooled or led astray, hence the need for Brito's guardianship.

This extends to the issue of Fernando's inability to speak English. When the issue of the language barrier comes up, Brito explains that he has told Fernando to watch television to become immersed in English. The comment seems innocent enough and it fits with the image of Fernando that is being created in the press, but it obscures the Dodgers and Mike Brito's failure to provide Fernando with a formal language education. A follow up quote from Brito obscures this failure further by reinforcing the infantilized image being created by the media. "'You know what he likes?' Brito asked. 'He loves the Pink Panther cartoons. He tells me, 'Take me back to the hotel, I want to watch the Pink Panther'" (ibid). The image of a person who does not wish to miss his favorite cartoon, previous observations about Fernando being the youngest in his family, and musings about his awareness only reinforces Fernando's infantilization and suggests that he is too childish and naïve to learn English. That he can be so easily placed by cartoons, considered children's programming, cements the stereotype that Fernando is just another "dumb Mexican" who just happens to be a naturally gifted pitcher.

The Mystery from Etchohuaquila

> *Dodgers manager Tommy Lasorda, on pitcher Fernando Valenzuela: "He seems to think there's a better league somewhere else, and he's trying to pitch himself out of here." ("Quotebook," 1981)*

As the media continued to press for access to Fernando Valenzuela in between starts, they also took it upon themselves to solve the mystery of his origins. Fernando was already regarded as a rags-to-riches triumph, but everyone wanted to see just how destitute his upbringing was in ways that validated stereotypes associated with Mexicans, Mexico, and coming to America. After all, white fans had heard he came from

a farming town in Northern Mexico, but what was it like? What was it like growing up the youngest of 12 children, poor, and in a four-room adobe dwelling? Fans were curious, and reporters were eager to provide answers. They wanted to see just how poor and rural—aka Mexican—his origins were for themselves.

And so, a bit of mystery was finally revealed, but it had nothing to do with solving for Fernando's screwball—that mystery would be solved by the Philadelphia Phillies after three more victories for Fernando. No, the mystery of Fernando's upbringing was solved by Mike Littwin of the *LA Times*, who traveled to Etchohuaquila to interview Fernando's family and learn about Fernando's upbringing. Littwin (1981) paints an image of a rural town where, "a horse or a bicycle is considered a luxury" and "feet are the principle means of transportation. He goes on to paint a picture of just how isolated and remote the town is as he is arriving:

> a car, especially one carrying two Americans, evokes startled glances and the *ninos*—children—trail after it, eyes wide.
>
> These children all know Fernando, of course. They all know his record—"Cinco y Cero," any child will tell you on cue.
>
> "You can go to farm camps all over (the state of) Sonora," said Feliciano Guirado, editor of the local newspaper, "and they won't know who the President of the United States is. But they all know who pitches for the Dodgers." (ibid)

The image of Fernando's hometown created in these early lines is quite vivid. It is hard to imagine that this remote town, which seems to be disconnected from the rest of the world, produced the most popular pitcher in baseball. That disconnect, knowing Fernando's record but not the President of the United States, is painted as innocence and ignorance, qualities that have already been attributed to Fernando. For the white audience, it reinforces the belief that Fernando the mystery came from a completely

different world characterized by simple impoverished, rural life. For the white audience, this is the image of Mexico they perceive, a country that is poor, undeveloped, and populated by uneducated farmers working the fields.

The article goes on to describe the rest of the town and the modest adobe home that 17 members of Fernando's extended family occupies. The town's residents are made aware of Fernando's exploits via the local newspaper, *El Informador Del Mayo*, which reports that Fernando lives a grand, luxurious life; the residents of Etchohuaquila do not doubt that account because, according to Littwin, "that's what the United States is supposed to be, what they hoped it would be." The belief that the United States is a place of opportunity and optimism has reached the furthest and poorest parts of the world, you do not have to know who the President of the United States is to know that the United States offers prosperity. Etchohuaquila does not offer or symbolize those opportunities.

What this profile of Etchohuaquila is doing is juxtaposing "the world he [Fernando] left behind," and the glamorous circumstances that come with being a professional athlete in Los Angeles (ibid). Fernando's Mexican hometown represents poverty, simplicity, and ignorance while the United States represents wealth and prosperity. Where upward mobility did not exist in Etchohuaquila—and by extension, Mexico—American baseball has made good on America's continued myth as a land of opportunity. This is emphasized even further when Mike Littwin reports that few residents ever leave Etchohuaquila and that the town barely got electricity a decade prior. Meanwhile, Fernando has been traversing the United States and Canada as the toast of the baseball world:

> Few leave at all, in fact. Two of Fernando's sisters did, but only to be servants in Navajoa. Fernando has since been a dinner guest in that house. It's a remarkable

> story, his rise from Etchohuaquila, a *campo* as it's called, of several hundred people. Almost as remarkable as his pitching career. (ibid)

As these details are narrated to readers of the *LA Times*, the reality of Fernando's rise to prominence begins to feel like a fairy tale. That he was able escape such poverty and obscurity for stardom in the United States is hard to comprehend, but it also makes sense given that he left a place where no opportunity existed. It appears that Fernando has not left much of anything behind, and America is still the land where dreams can become reality.

Based on how Etchohuaquila is framed, it appears that the only thing that Fernando has left behind is family. However, the potential for prosperity and opportunity outweighs even the family Fernando has left behind. That the United States elicits such optimism from those who live in Etchohuaquila fits the narrative of the American Dream and America as the land of opportunity for immigrants. That optimism outweighs family, and it is exemplified by the way Littwin portrays Fernando's mother. When she is shown a picture of her son in the newspaper, she "kisses the picture, tears dwelling in her eyes" and remarks that she misses her son, but that she does not worry about him; "'The people (in the United States) will take care of him. I know they will be nice to him. I pray to God that they will'" (ibid). Truly, there is no love greater than a mother's love, but even her love suggests that Fernando is naïve and needs to be taken care of. Furthermore, this image affirms that Mexicans must come to America to access success and prosperity. Physical and emotional separation from *familia* and love (equated here with Mexico and poverty) is a requirement for success and wealth (equated here with the United States and baseball). Fernando has chosen success and wealth.

If the white audience already viewed Fernando with a sense of mystery and wonder, they were surely going to marvel at his unlikely journey to the majors. It was already improbable that a 20-year-old rookie with minimal minor league experience could dominate the baseball world so quickly and skillfully. How could that rookie have come from a farming town in the middle of Mexico? But Fernando's journey was real, it was happening before an international audience of millions, and it was even more inspiring those who were just like him:

> "He is an example," says Luis Salido Ibarra, the mayor of Navajoa. "He gives the people in the campos some hope, something to aspire to. Their lives are hard. They can see that he has been a success and that maybe they can be too." (ibid)

In fact, as Littwin reports, some in Mexico believe that Fernando is "a superman, unbeatable," so everybody wants to be a pitcher, to be like Fernando. This partially explains why so many Mexican/Americans in the United States flocked to Dodger Stadium and elsewhere to watch Fernando play. He was the most literal, real-life example of a Mexican coming to America with nothing and seemingly from nowhere and finding more fame and fortune than anyone else could have ever believed. He went from being an obscure professional player in Mexico to major league superstar in only two years. Yes, two years.

Fernando's sudden international fame, especially in comparison to the relative obscurity of Etchohuaquila, is a significant point of comparison between his former and current circumstances. Mike Littwin's profile utilizes this point of comparison to turn the audience's attention towards a familiar racialized trope that many have obsessed over: Fernando's physique. Littwin observes that Fernando's build differs greatly from his brothers, suggesting that his circumstances have vastly improved since playing baseball professionally in Mexico and the United States:

> "Muy, muy pobre (Very, very poor)," says Avelino Lucero, general manager of the Navajoa baseball and basketball teams, speaking of the Valenzuela household. "Look at Fernando's brothers. They're not fat. You don't get fat sitting at a table where there's little food." Few emerge from the *ejidos* fat. [...] Fernando, the round one, didn't begin to put on weight until three years ago, until after he left home to play professional baseball. He has continued to grow in stature, in every sense of the word. (ibid)

Littwin's observation that Fernando did not put on weight until he left home emphasizes not just how poor his family is and upbringing was, but that his physique is, in a strange way, a sign of his success. That he went from eating just enough to survive to allegedly eating all the time reinforces the belief that Mexico is ridden with poverty and scarcity while the United States remains bountiful and abundant. Etchohuaquila, the town where you barely have enough food to survive, is a stand-in for the entire nation of Mexico. And Fernando's frame is the physical reminder that he is now in America and benefiting from America's abundance.

But unlike other (white)American baseball players, it does not seem like Fernando knows how to control his eating and its effects are shown more readily on his body. This is not framed as sympathy or an explanation. Rather, it serves to remind readers of just how deprived Fernando's circumstances were compared to the circumstance he found himself in now. His lack of education, class, and professionalism out him as someone without the skill or knowledge to manage sudden fame, opportunity, affluence, and bounty it brings—i.e. food. He was never able to access any of that in Mexico because, as the profile confirms for its (white) audience, Mexico is a poor and underdeveloped country. But in the United States, Fernando can have anything he wants, even if it is irresponsibly consumed in excess.

Communitas and Cultural Phenomenon

During those first two months of the 1981 season, a Dodger game where Fernando Valenzuela was scheduled to start became an experience unlike any other. However, it also became apparent that Fernandomania was a cultural phenomenon that transcended the confines of Dodger Stadium. Many flocked to watch Fernando play while others who could not witness his excellence begged the Dodgers to at least televise it, lest they miss out on seeing the phenom for themselves. Columnists from the *LA Times* continued to discuss what Fernandomania meant for the Dodgers, the city of Los Angeles, and Mexican/Americans and Latinx communities. And they could not help but give credit to Walter O'Malley, the Dodgers owner who had passed away less than two years prior, as the person who made Fernandomania and this grater cultural moment possible.

In the ensuing subsections, I outline how Fernandomania was an example of communitas and an important cultural moment for Mexican/Americans. I also reveal how both were ultimately attributed to brilliance and vision of recently deceased Dodgers owner Walter O'Malley. I begin this section by demonstrating that, based on the media's reporting of the fans who flocked to Dodger Stadium and other ballparks to watch Fernando pitch for themselves, Fernandomania was indeed an instance of communitas; I support this observation even further by recalling how fans clamored for increased access to Dodger games featuring Fernando by way of televising his sold-out home games. I follow this with an exploration of how the *LA Times* frames Fernando Valenzuela's celebrity and importance to the Mexican/American and Latinx communities in Los Angeles during Fernandomania; although Fernandomania is an ongoing phenomenon at the moments these stories are written, there is a widespread belief that its impact will influence the Dodgers specifically and baseball widely.

Fernandomania as Communitas

Welcome to Fernando, National League. (Heisler, 1981f)

Dodgers announced tonight's Fernando Valenzuela performance is a sellout. The Dodgers will also play the Giants. (Heisler, 1981j)

The baseball world was stunned by Fernando's unexpected shutout of the Astros on opening day. His ensuing three wins, all on the road, only heightened that excitement and wonder.[21] Dodgers fans who wanted to see the phenom play for themselves were resigned to catching away games on radio or television, and his dominance on the road built up the enthusiasm. With each win came increasing popularity. Both fans and journalists were captivated by his ever-growing winning streak. And that captivation meant greater attendance figures and media attention.

As Fernando Valenzuela kept winning, the crowds grew larger and the media attention increased exponentially. Fernando's participation in a youth baseball clinic for the community—which had been scheduled in March—brought over 2,000 fans to a local park; for comparison, previous clinics typically drew anywhere from 300 to 500 attendees (Greenberg, 1981a). Mark Heisler (1981f) reported that the Dodgers started to make Fernando available at press conferences and interviews before and after games "just to accommodate the writers who wanted to talk to him." Jaime Jarrín, the Dodgers Spanish language broadcaster, remarked that, "I've been doing Dodger games for 24 years and I've never seen this kind of reaction to a ballplayer [...] People were calling up asking 'when is he going to pitch next?' and 'is he for real?'" (Ostler, 1981c).[22] In a brief interview at the baseball clinic, Fernando himself remarked that he was a bit exhausted from the attention, but he and everyone else knew that the attention and excitement was not going to be dying down anytime soon (Greenberg, 1981a). The excitement grew. Everyone wanted to see Fernando play.

While playing on the road he pitched two more shutouts and a complete game in which he gave up his first and only run of the young season.[23] Steve Dolan (1981) suggested that the, "native of Navajoa Sonora, Mexico, has a streak that former Dodger pitchers named Koufax and Drysdale might envy." An *LA Times* reader argued that a young Fernando had superior control of his pitches compared to a young Koufax, further arguing that Fernando, "brings to the Dodgers of the 1980's the kind of excitement that Sandy Koufax brought to the Dodgers of the 1960's" ("Pitcher's a Hit," 1981). There were plenty of derisive comparisons made as well. One frequent, derisive comparison that many made was between Fernando to Babe Ruth for their unflattering appearances and physique. One reader, Joseph W. Pane from Buena Park, declared Fernando to be the reincarnation of Babe Ruth, arguing that both players are great left-handed pitchers and good hitters and fielders; Pane goes on to say that Fernando, "is pudgy like the Babe—look at his face—and he bears a striking resemblance to the Babe," concluding his comparison with his observation that, "no man could possibly learn to do so well everything he does" ("Babe Ruth Lives," 1981). And when gather quotes after a Fernando win, Mark Heisler reported the following: "Noting that Fernando could do it all, pitch, hit, and eat, Dodger Vice President Fred Claire suggested this was the Mexican Babe Ruth" (Heisler, 1981h).

What could have been a flattering comparison spirals quickly into discursive violence. Both Babe Ruth comparisons mock Fernando's physique in the guise of flattery. It is hard to interpret these comments as innocent jests when fat jokes have been ever present throughout the LA Times. These comparisons reveal how impressed writers and fans alike were with Fernando's skills throughout his winning streak. As the wins accumulated, anticipation mounted. Dodger fans, now aware of this young phenom

named Fernando, awaited their chance to see him take the mound again at Dodger Stadium.

On April 27, 1981, that chance finally arrived. Heading into his second start at Dodger Stadium, Fernando led the major league in wins, strikeouts, shutouts, innings pitched, and lowest earned run average. The atmosphere in Dodger Stadium approached, and arguably surpassed, the frenzy often reserved for a playoff game. The Dodgers always had the best attendance numbers in the league, but it was clear that this Dodger Stadium sell out had to do with Fernando. He obliged by pitching "the now-traditional shutout" despite taking "subpar stuff to the mound" and hitting three singles to help drive in the Dodgers' first run,[24] and what caught the media's attention was the energy and excitement emanating from the stands:

> Dodger Stadium, which had sold out solely because Valenzuela was pitching, went crazy. When he singled his first time up, he got a huge standing ovation and Manny Mota, the first base coach, told him to tip his cap. This is the first thing anyone has had to tell Valenzuela all season. He took off his helmet to the crowd and it went crazier. While he was pitching the ninth, a teen-aged girl ran out to the mound, kissed Valenzuela and was taken into custody. (Heisler, 1981k)

Fernando's return to Dodger Stadium was a triumphant one.[25] That he contributed to that win in so many ways made it feel much more than a regular season game. His return to Dodger Stadium was an event like no other, and it signaled that Fernandomania had arrived. Fans were there, first and foremost, to see him play.

As the winning increased, so did the attention from fans and the media. Fernando was not only a box office draw at Dodger Stadium, he attracted fans at away games as well. When Fernando was scheduled to start against the New York Mets, the Mets promoted his appearance at Shea Stadium (Heisler, 1981l) and reportedly took in an

extra $310,000 in business for that game and pulled higher than typical ratings (Ostler, 1981e). Crowds were coming to watch him pitch, and the media followed suit. “Time, Newsweek, Sports Illustrated, Inside Sports, The Sporting News and Baseball Digest either plan to or put Fernando on their covers or are considering it” (Ostler, 1981e). The Dodgers had to start holding special press conferences before his starts for reporters. All anyone could talk about or focus on was Fernando, and that was reflected in the media’s coverage and the fan frenzy during games.

What all this suggests is that fans and journalists alike were quite aware of the historical potential and the unique experiences that Fernandomania was triggering. Fernando kept winning and dominating the competition. He was the most formidable pitcher in baseball, but it was the fans reaction to him that really drove Fernandomania. Plenty of talented players come and go, and there have been a few superstars who have defined their generation and their sport. But fans everywhere took quickly and passionately to Fernando in what felt like (and possibly was) an unprecedented way. Legendary Mexican American music artist Lalo Guerrero even wrote and performed two songs about Fernando Valenzuela titled “Ole! Fernando” and “Fernando, El Toro.” Fernando’s career was only several games old, and he was already a legend.

Perhaps no game typifies the communitas of Fernandomania better than Fernando’s eighth start of the season against the Montreal Expos in front of 53,606 at Dodger Stadium. It was Fernando’s bid to go 8-0, and the anticipation was immense. The excitement was not restricted to just the fans or the plays that happened during the game. It was all over. I will let Mark Heisler (1981m) describe the atmosphere that night in the stadium:

> Fernando Valenzuela made his eighth major league start Thursday night amid a carnival atmosphere that included hawkers lining the Elysian Park Ave. entrance

> to Dodger Stadium selling records about him and T-shirts with his name on them. The stadium organist played Mexican music and the press room served Mexican Food. You could infer from all this that this story has been getting bigger and Thursday night it grew some more.

What we have described here is an atmosphere that has not been typical of many sports contests. Sure, there are the occasional hawkers that sell t-shirts after major games or concerts, but it is not often that they sell records about the person who played a sports contest. It was not just the fact that Fernando Valenzuela became an instant celebrity and sports superstar, it was the fact that his presence was influential in all of these extraordinary ways—the stadium organist playing Mexican music and the press being served Mexican food—that suggested a cultural influence bigger than baseball was taking place.

As for the game itself, Fernando's eighth victory was filled with all the drama you could imagine. It was the first time in his major league career he had ever trailed as a starting pitcher, and he gave up a game-tying home run with two outs in the top of the ninth inning. Fortunately, Fernando's teammate Pedro Guerrero hit a walk-off home run to lead off the bottom half of the ninth inning. By the slimiest, and most exciting of margins, Fernando's winning streak was still secure. Heisler surmised that it, "was the closest and the best game Valenzuela had been in this year" (ibid). It was a thriller, and quite the fitting way to go 8-0.

Fans clamored to watch Fernando, and the communitas that Fernandomania exuded certainly meant great business for the Dodgers and celebrity for Fernando. After all, it meant everyone wanted to watch Fernando play. However, that does not mean that it was without its blunders. Amid all the success that Fernandomania brought for the Dodgers, the team continued to face a crucial issue: should they televise home games?

The Dodgers had established a precedent of not televising regular season home games, but this was Fernandomania. The away games that featured Fernando were a ratings boon and Dodger Stadium was regularly selling out. Despite the Mets game not being a part of the 50 away games the team had already planned on broadcasting, the Dodgers had decided to televise the game to take advantage of the ratings that Fernando would bring. Now fans were asking for even more.

As the Dodgers contemplated what they would do, Scott Ostler (1981e) made the following observation about how Fernandomania continued to draw many more fans than the Dodgers could ever hope to reach:

> Until Fernando cools off, or melts down, each of his games is a major event. And televising the game would be wonderful public relations, drawing even fringe fans who aren't sure what position Steve Garvey plays but have heard about the strange and wonderful pitcher.

Fernando's popularity was extraordinary, and the atmosphere that he roused at all his games was unprecedented. Everyone wanted to see him for themselves, and Dodger Stadium became the place to be whenever Fernando took the mound. His success combined with rabid fan interest began to influence the team's business decisions in ways they had not foreseen. The fans wanted more of Fernando, even if they could not see him in person.

The Dodgers were benefiting from the economic windfall that Fernandomania provided, and they did briefly contemplate broadcasting Fernando's eighth game (ibid).[26] His game was already sold out, so the team's financial take at the gate would not be harmed. And broadcasting the game would allow many more than the fortunate 53,000 in attendance at Dodger Stadium the opportunity to see Fernando pitch. Clearly, each Fernando game was an anticipated opportunity to experience communitas. Fans wanted

to see how the mysterious phenom from poor, rural Mexico dominated the American pastime. They may not be able to say to their progeny that they saw Fernando themselves, but they could hopefully at least say they watched him make history.

The Dodgers eventually decided to stick with precedent and not broadcast Fernando's home games, which frustrated fans.[27] In fact, it appeared as though they were more upset with the Dodgers organization than they were with Fernando's winning streak being over:

> It is a sad note that the initial tarnish to the Valenzuela magic was not his first loss on the field but a misdeed by the organization so fortunate to have his services. The Dodgers' refusal to televise Fernando's home games is a cruel slap in the face of the millions of Southern Californians who have supported the team. Apparently, no amount of love and support by the fans can sway the decision-making apparatus of the Dodger management. ("Viewpoint: Letters Fernando, Cont.," 1981)

Another letter remarked that, "I think their method of showing appreciation stinks" (ibid).[28] But what is most interesting about these reactions is that they are less about the outcome of the game and more about the desire to watch it. There is a sense that fans want to experience the feelings of excitement and communitas inspired by Fernando Valenzuela. To miss out on watching Fernando play was missing out on baseball history and an experience unlike any other.

Amid all the talk of the sellouts and carnival atmosphere at Dodger Stadium, what fans ultimately wanted was to feel like they were a part of Fernandomania. Even Fernando's first loss, which broke his 8-game winning streak, was a moment of communitas. Their frustrations had everything to do with their inability to participate in the communitas by watching his game on television. They had nothing to do with the loss

itself. What they wanted was the experience of seeing and belonging to Fernandomania, not the result.

"Valenzuela Speaks for All of Them"

> *"Last year, we had Babo Castillo (a Los Angeles native) and he was a hero to the community. But Fernando is different—he's the real thing, not a Mexican-American. Not that the Mexican-American community has been waiting for just any Mexican to idolize. They've been waiting for Fernando in particular*. (Hoffer, 1981)

Fernando Valenzuela's spectacular play determined the outcome of baseball games and bolstered team's attendance figures, but it was also becoming apparent that he was precipitating a cultural transformation. It was not just that everyone wanted to see him play and experience the communitas of Fernandomania, it was also a matter of who wanted to see him play. It was becoming apparent that the fans cheering on Fernando at Dodger Stadium and around Los Angeles were not the "typical" Dodger fans.[29] Richard Hoffer (1981) noted the visible presence of Mexican/American fans at Dodger Stadium during Fernando's victory over the Expos:

> The Montreal Expos, the National League's French-Canadian entry, were in town, making Chavez Ravine bilingual in an official sort of way. Unofficially, of course, Dodger Stadium has been bilingual some time now, especially those nights Fernando Valenzuela pitches.
>
> Thursday night, for example, you could cover several acres in Dodger Stadium and not hear a whole lot of English spoken [...] What you heard was a little bit of Spanish. Well, what you heard was a lot of Spanish.

Fans were coming from Tijuana, Ensenada, and Mexicali to see Fernando play. Hoffer goes on to suggest that "the Fernando Phenomenon" is not confined to "South-of-the-Border" baseball fans, but they were a significant and growing contingent.

Even amongst the press, journalists noted that Spanish-speaking media came to cover Fernando. One observation noted that, "everywhere you looked over the weekend among the local Spanish-language media, there he was. Fernando was on the radio talk shows, Fernando was on the TV talk shows" (Heisler, 1981l). Because the catalyst was a Mexican pitcher, Fernandomania expanded baseball's appeal and prompted speculation about those who could experience its cultural influence. Scott Ostler wondered if Fernando's success would help other Mexican baseball players make the jump to the major leagues. He remarked that, "He's obviously no Jackie Robinson, but Valenzuela's phenomenal success is likely to open the doors for a lot of Mexicans who might otherwise be overlooked"(Ostler, 1981g). Ostler's take suggests that Fernandomania had precipitated a cultural and economic shift baseball had not seen since Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier.[30] However, it hedges against Fernando. Ostler is suggesting that the burden of being a successful and popular Mexican-born player is no-where near the same as carrying the burden of integrating baseball. Where Jackie is considered an American hero for breaking baseball's color barrier (serving in the military also helped), Fernando is not American nor is he a civil rights pioneer. Therefore, he cannot be a hero—to Americans anyways.

It was not just their dedication and fandom to Fernando that intrigued writers for the *LA Times*, it was also how Fernando was changing the way they saw themselves. One interviewee explained that, "We have very few sports heroes (from Mexico), and any time we get one like Fernando, it gives kids hope'" (*Morning Briefing: For San Diego, Today Marks Day 20 without Colemanisms*, n.d.). In separate story, Jaime Jarrín, the Dodgers

longtime Spanish broadcaster, offered the following perspective about Fernando's cultural influence and importance:

> "Because of Fernando Valenzuela, the Mexican people now have a hero to cheer for [...] They've been looking for an idol for many years. They've had many heroes in the boxing field, but nothing like this. It's a beautiful feeling." (Greenberg, 1981b)

Jarrín and other members of the Spanish-language media believe that Valenzuela's appeal transcends baseball, that his age (he's 20) and humble origins (he grew up in a four-room house on a communal farm in Etchohuaquila, Sonora, Mexico) make him much easier to relate to than the briefcase-carrying millionaires who now people [sic] the major leagues (ibid).

Fernando was the hero that Mexican/Americans had yearned for, and he was beloved because he was one of them. His incredible appeal was rooted in his story and humility: a young boy who grew up on a farm in rural poverty and, against all odds, managed to become a major league pitcher for the Los Angeles Dodgers. It was also rooted in the reality that he proved that Mexicans could play baseball just as well as white Americans. His rags to riches story, made possible by dominating America's pastime, fulfilled the promises of the American Dream. By extension, he was demonstrating to other Mexican/Americans that they too could the American Dream.

Fernandomania was becoming bigger than baseball, and its effects could be seen in a variety of ways. Alan Greenberg's (1981b) article "Valenzuela Turns Barrios Upside-Down" sheds light on just how popular, powerful, and influential Fernando's success was to the Mexican/American and broader Latinx community in Los Angeles. One of his interviewees, an assistant principle who worked at an elementary school in a predominantly Latinx community, explained that an advisory council meeting had to be

rescheduled because Fernando was pitching and the parents did not want to miss the game. The assistant principle remarked that, "'You drive around the community when he is pitching [...] and all you see is radios'" (ibid). Greenberg goes on to explain:

> And, you see pride. Valenzuela's phenomenal success—eight straight wins before his first loss—is sweet for all Dodgers fans, but especially for those in the Mexican-American community who share his heritage. Who among us doesn't stand a little taller, smile a little broader when someone who shares our background, our roots, is standing the world on its ear? (ibid)

Obviously, that pride takes special meaning when someone like you dominates the sport colloquially referred to as America's pastime. But that pride is also rooted in the belief that Fernando's success, along with the way he was handling it, was changing the ways that broader American public—white people—saw Mexicans.

Part of this is rooted in how Fernando's had been discursively constructed by the media, namely his innocence and humble origins. As Roberto Casas from West Covina put it to columnist Richard Hoffer (1981), "'I'll tell you what we like about him [...] its not just that here's a Mexican player making it big. That's a part of it, sure. [..] What we like is that he's keeping his head straight.'" Casas's comments suggest that Fernando's appeal to English-speaking (white) audiences is rooted in Fernando's embodiment of respectability via his innocence. Fame and fortune—though his $40,000 rookie salary was hardly a fortune by major league standards—had not tarnished who he was: the poor kid from rural Mexico. And the media's use of a white racial frame ensured that Fernando did not threaten American or baseball's white masculine ideology. That Fernando embodied the innocent and ignorance attributed to him by the English-language (white) press and fans, rather than arrogance, made his appeal endearing and safe.

Hoffer follows Casas's comment with his own remark that, "his [Fernando's] youthful mixture of confidence and naivete appeals" to fans; he goes on to recall how Fernando fooled around in the dugout one night and when Tommy Lasorda pretended to chew Fernando out, Fernando responded, "*siete y cero*" (Hoffer, 1981). Clearly Fernando made baseball fun. He was not just dominating hitters and winning, he was doing it with a humble flair and a boyish smile. Obviously, the ways in which he had been infantilized previously by the press had influenced this aspect of his appeal. His antics were regarded as innocent and charming rather than immature and unbecoming of a professional. It allowed the white audience to praise Fernando for his youthful zeal even when many in the press had previously joked that Fernando was older than he was.

But none of that compared to what Fernando Valenzuela represented for the Mexican/American and the greater Latinx community. There were those who believed that Fernando's success meant that he was obligated to set a good example for those he left behind in Mexico when went to play baseball for the Los Angeles Dodgers. As the governor of Sonora, Fernando's home state, once told Fernando the winter prior, "'You are a hero here. You will be watched by everyone, especially the children. You must set a good example'" (Littwin, 1981). Fernando was just a hometown hero back then. Now that he was an international star and a living legend, he was burdened with the responsibility of representing many Mexican/Americans.

Although he was shouldering that burden, it was arguably having a positive impact for many Mexican/Americans. Armando Guerra, an editor for the prominent Spanish-language newspaper *La Opinion*, had this to say about Fernando's influence:

> "Fernando has had such an impact on the community that things are changing a lot," Guerra said, "The Mexican-American community sometimes doesn't

> understand that they have reason to be proud. All over our community, people are talking about the guy who throws balls."
>
> "When newspapers or TV stations talk about Mexicans, they always seem to talk about the wrong side of our people. The most identification that white Anglos have with Mexicans is that they are poor people or that they committed a crime or are in gangs. He (Valenzuela) lets people know that there are other kinds of Mexicans. I don't care about baseball, but I'm proud that one of my people is in that position." (Greenberg, 1981b)

Fernando was not just popular, he was transformative. And perhaps that explains some of the assumptions of his innocence and naivete. He arguably may not have been aware of the cultural influence his play precipitated. He did not sign up to be Jackie Robinson and change baseball forever, nor did he intend to become a hero to many Mexican/Americans and Latinx people across the United States and Mexico. That it happened so suddenly only made it even more difficult to fathom, but perhaps that is also a consequence of the lack-of-representation of Mexican/Americans in American popular culture.

Despite being undeniably racialized as Mexican,[31] Fernando's still managed to attain widespread celebrity. Even if his success was incongruous with the white ways of knowing and baseball's white masculine ideologies, you could not deny the fact that he could play really well or that he harnessed identification amongst Mexican/Americans without even trying. Fernando's experiences and his identity, at their core, resonated with many Mexican/Americans in Los Angeles because they were authentically intertwined. He did not try to downplay his origins, race, or ethnicity. If anything, the naivete constantly attributed to him meant that all he knew was how to remain authentic and true to his origins. Fernando was just a Mexican, which gave Mexican/Americans a

reason to be proud. And that same naivete meant that Fernando could not be found guilty of trying to be a "proud Mexican" intent on destroying baseball's hierarchy, so his talent did not pose a prolonged threat to whites—even if the occasional fan letter attempted to belittle his accomplishments.[32] Fernando had no carefully crafted public persona designed to make him appeal to whites or Mexican/Americans. He was simply Fernando.

As the media continued to report on the communitas of Fernandomania and the cultural transformation it brought, writers began to wonder just who exactly deserved credit for this phenomenon. Fernando was just some poor, ignorant kid from Mexico after all. He did not know what was going on around him, so how could he possibly receive the credit for Fernandomania? As reporters continued to cover the ancillary cultural effects and influences of Fernandomania, they turned to the past for answers. In the next subsection, I document how the *LA Times* credits recently deceased Dodgers owner Walter O'Malley for having the vision and tenacity to reach out to the Spanish-speaking population of Los Angeles by hiring the first Spanish-speaking broadcaster in major league baseball and scouring the Mexican profession leagues for a talented Mexican player. The decision to credit the Dodgers' beloved (white) owner suggests that the power to influence the culture of baseball rests in the hands of wealthy, hallowed, intelligent, tenacious, and enterprising—or W.H.I.T.E.—owners.

Credit the Rich, White Man

After Fernando, no one else received as much attention as Jaime Jarrín, the Dodgers Spanish language broadcaster. Virginia Escalante (1981) writes for the *LA Times* that, "with the media blitz accompanying the spectacular pitching of the 20-year-old Mexican left-hander, Jarrín has been thrust into the spotlight." He was a vital in-between for the Spanish-speaking fans and the Dodgers. It was his voice that connected

baseball and Spanish-speakers in Los Angeles. She describes Jarrín as the "Spanish-language counterpart of Vin Scully" (Escalante, 1981) and Frank del Olmo (1981) observes that "Jarrín has long been well-known in the Latino community." He was one of the most prominent and accessible sources of information for the Spanish-speaking fanbase then, and these descriptions of Jarrín still hold true for today's Mexican/American and Latinx Dodgers fans.

Although he had been the Dodgers Spanish play-by-play radio broadcaster since 1959, Jarrín was suddenly attending post-game interviews and press conferences not as a reporter, but as Fernando's translator—an additional role he was not compensated for. And Fernando's exponentially increasing popularity meant there was a greater demand for the Spanish play-by-play radio broadcast provided by Jarrín. When Fernando lost his first game, millions of Spanish-speaking listeners tuned in thanks to the "27 new stations added to the Dodgers Spanish-language network. Six stations have regularly carried Dodgers games in Spanish" (Escalante, 1981). In fact, "In the upper deck and in the recess of the left and right field corner, there were more radios tuned to Jarrín than to Vin Scully" (Greenberg, 1981b).[33] Escalante (1981) further remarks that:

> Stations in Mexico City and Hermosillo have been airing games since he Dodgers played the Mets in New York recently. Other stations in locations such as Guadalajara, Los Mochis and Navajoa carried the broadcast for the first time in Valenzuela's next start against the Phillies.

Jarrín said the number of Latino fans at Dodger Stadium has increased—largely because of the Sonora born Valenzuela—and it also is the team's advantage to promote its image outside the United States (ibid.) The Dodgers popularity was expanding, and Jarrín's voice was playing a significant role in bringing Dodgers baseball to Mexico. He was

already an icon for Spanish-speaking sports fans in Los Angeles, and now a wider audience had the opportunity to appreciate him.

It is important to point out Jarrín's unique role in 1981: the Dodgers were only one of two teams to broadcast games in a language other than English (the Montreal Expos broadcast games in French), and they were the only team to broadcast games in Spanish (del Olmo, 1981a).[34] It is also important to note that Jaime Jarrín had been hired by Walter O'Malley so that the Dodgers could appeal to the Spanish-speaking population in Los Angeles. It was reported that Jarrín, while having intense loyalty for the Dodgers organization and current owner Peter O'Malley, had the most effuse praise for Peter's father, Walter. In an interview with Frank del Olmo (ibid), Jarrín recalls Walter O'Malley's desire to sign a Mexican baseball player; "'He was always asking me when I was going to find him a good Mexican ballplayer,' Jarrin recalls fondly. 'He knew the impact it was going to have in this city.'". Clearly, Walter O'Malley recognized the economic boon a Mexican baseball player could bring to the Dodgers—something he expressed directly to Jarrín—but talented baseball players, regardless of country of origin, are hard to find. The decision to broadcast Dodger games in Spanish, according to Frank del Olmo, was a significant reason for the Dodgers appeal to Los Angeles's Latinx communities. Jaime Jarrín broadcasting games in Spanish makes Fernando Valenzuela's appeal to Mexican/American and Latinx fans across the United States possible.

What is most interesting about this argument is the way Frank del Olmo frames it. He calls explicit attention to a not-so-pleasant memory that continues to circulate among Mexican/Americans living in Los Angeles:

> There are Chicanos in Los Angeles who insist that Fernando Valenzuela is the second-greatest gift that Mexicans have given the Los Angeles Dodgers—the first being Chavez Ravine.

> That cynical one-liner is told often these days in the barrios, but good-naturedly. Long-time Latino residents still remember the controversy that arose in 1959 when the Chavez Ravine barrio was bulldozed to make way for Dodger Stadium. Remarkably, little resentment remains today about that old battle over urban renewal. (del Olmo, 1981a)

Aside from the fact that this is the first and only time that the subject of Chavez Ravine's past has come up throughout the coverage of Fernandomania, it is also a rather curious invocation of a dark public memory. The other time that the Chavez Ravine controversy is brought up in press coverage of Fernando Valenzuela is when he was cut from the Dodgers in 1991, which will be touched on in Chapter 4.

While the story of what happened to La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop have likely circulated amongst many Mexican/American communities in and around Los Angeles, Olmos is choosing to make a direct connection between that public memory and Fernando Valenzuela. His intentions appears to be a lighthearted remark, but the way the subject is broached by del Olmo, much like the faceless generalized Chicanos he invokes in his introduction, indicates that the public memory of La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop is a null issue. Bygones are bygones, and apparently the Mexican/American community holds no resentment against the Dodgers.

The reader is left to take del Olmo at his word, unless they personally are connected to a community that still harbors resentment towards the Dodgers.[35] It has been over 20 years, and the memory of Chavez Ravine's destruction apparently circulates amongst Mexican/Americans as little more than a cynical saying. The names of the neighborhoods—La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop—are not even mentioned in the article.[36] He believes it is remarkable that there is little resentment leftover, implying that Mexican/Americans are magnanimous and have accepted the Dodgers as a part of

Los Angeles at the expense of a historical neighborhood that a significant portion of their community once called home. Arguably, the passage of time and the conditions of the present—a popular and talented authentic Mexican pitcher accessible to the Spanish-speaking Mexican/American community in Los Angeles—has changed attitudes. And it is that accessibility that del Olmo hangs on to as he credit Walter O'Malley for Fernandomania.

Frank del Olmo uses this frame to ground his argument: that Fernando Valenzuela is not necessarily responsible for the Dodgers ability to appeal to the Mexican/American and greater Latinx communities in Los Angeles. He goes on to argue that the business acumen and foresight of Walter O'Malley lead him to make the unprecedented decision to hire Jaime Jarrín as the Dodgers' Spanish-language broadcaster. Therefore, it is O'Malley who should receive credit:

> At first, one might attribute this feeling of goodwill to Valenzuela, the likable rookie pitcher from the Mexican state of Sonora, whose success this strike-shortened baseball season has delighted Anglo baseball fans as much as it has Latinos.
>
> But the explanation for the Dodgers popularity with local Latinos goes back to before Valenzuela was born 20 years ago—to an unprecedented decision made by the late Dodgers owner Walter O'Malley shortly after moving his team to Los Angeles from Brooklyn in 1958.
>
> O'Malley, always regarded as one of the most farsighted businessmen in baseball, decided early on that in Los Angeles the Dodgers would broadcast their games in Spanish as well as English. (del Olmo, 1981a)

Jarrín's ability to reach Mexican/Americans and Latinx Spanish-speakers in Los Angeles and beyond can ultimately be attributed back to Walter O'Malley's brilliant business

acumen. And the phenomenon that literally bears Fernando Valenzuela's name ultimately traces back to O'Malley. After all, it was Walter O'Malley who told Jarrín that he wanted a Mexican baseball player for the Dodgers so the team could appeal to the Mexican/American residents living in Los Angeles.[37]

Besides, there is no way a country bumkin from Mexico could possibly be responsible for creating the economic boon and cultural impact brought by Fernandomania. Yes, Fernando may be filling more seats with brown fans and Jarrín was the cultural touchstone to reach out to them, but it was the rich white businessman who possessed the vision to make both happen. O'Malley's decision to bring a Spanish-speaking broadcaster to the organization—a first in major league baseball, just like Jackie Robinson—and to search all of Mexico for promising players are the reasons why he has set the Dodgers up for success even after he passed away in 1979. In death, O'Malley's memory does more than loom over the Dodgers and Fernandomania: it takes credit for Fernando's and Jarrín's skill and labor—while failing to compensate them appropriately for it, I might add.[38]

The decision to credit Walter O'Malley is not surprising. Aside from being remembered as a brilliant and forward-thinking businessman, crediting the recently departed O'Malley means that it is the wealthy white men who control American baseball, both culturally and economically. Just as it was Branch Rickey who made the decision to sign Jackie Robinson,[39] it was Walter O'Malley who decided to scour Mexico to eventually find Fernando Valenzuela. Had it not ben for the brilliance, foresight, and progressiveness of these great white men, there would be no Jackie Robinson or Fernandomania. But more importantly, baseball's white masculine ideology remains secure thanks to the stewards (i.e. owners and executives) who control baseball financially and culturally to ensure that its white masculine ideology remains secure.

And to ensure that control continues to extend beyond the confines of the field, praising the business brilliance or O'Malley diminishes any culpability for his role—real or imagined—in the destruction of La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop. These neighborhoods, lost more than 20 years ago from the time of Fernandomania, are forgotten so that Walter O'Malley can continue to be hailed as a business visionary and dedicated steward of American baseball in death.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I sought to accomplish the following three tasks. First, I provided a detailed contextualization of the important events that comprised Fernandomania and how it was originally reported in 1981. I provided this contextualization for two reasons: it is important to understand the series of events that comprised Fernandomania to understand Fernandomania as a rhetorical text composed of fragments; second, the way that journalists report on Fernandomania shapes the discursive foundation for Fernandomania's public memory. Together, the reader should come away with an understanding of what Fernandomania was, how it was influential within and beyond the 1981 season, and why it was deemed incongruous with American baseball's white masculine ideology and mythos.

Second, I demonstrated how those journalistic accounts were laden with discursive violence indicative of a white racial frame. I examined the racist framing that was used to make sense of Fernando Valenzuela's incongruity. This racist framing utilized racist tropes that derided Fernando for his physique, age, and ignorance to preserve white ways of seeing and knowing. Coaches, fans, and writers alike all confronted the incongruity of Fernando Valenzuela. Writers and fans alike regarded Fernando with sense of mystery and wonder that preserved white ways of seeing and knowing relative to baseball's white masculine ideology. The trope of Fernando's atypical

physique is used frequently to obsess over and judge his eating and drinking habits. However, the trope regarding his age is defined by a tension between infantilizing Fernando and doubting the legitimacy of his youth. Away from the baseball field, he is painted as naive and child-like; on the baseball field, many doubt his youth because he is so skilled and poised. The third trope regarding his ignorance emerges from the way writers infantilize Fernando in conjunction with his poor, rural, and foreign origins. By applying the white racial frame to Fernando's hometown, Etchohuaquila serves as a stand in for the poor and underdeveloped nation of Mexico as a juxtaposition to America's wealth and prosperity. Altogether, these discourses reinforce racist perceptions of Mexicans and Mexico all while build the foundation for how Fernando and Fernandomania should be understood during the 1981 season and eventually remembered in the present.

Finally, I sought to demonstrate how Fernandomania was both an example of communitas and an important cultural moment for Mexican/Americans and Latinx communities across the United States. I recalled how the media reported on Fernando's intense popularity, the legions of fans that attended his sold-out games at Dodger Stadium, how his games became regarded as events in and of themselves, and how many fans were left wanting to witness and participate in Fernandomania any way they could. I also recalled how the *LA Times* reported on the cultural transformation that was precipitated by Fernandomania, and how that cultural transformation was ultimately credited back to former Dodgers owner Walter O'Malley. Crediting O'Malley preserves white men's economic and cultural of baseball; they are the omnipresent guardians, in life and death, of American baseball's white masculine ideology. Credit O'Malley for Fernandomania also diminishes any remaining culpability linking the destruction of La Paloma, Palo Verde, and Bishop with his decision to move the Dodgers to Los Angeles.

In conclusion, this account of how the *LA Times* framed Fernandomania is important for understanding Fernandomania's contemporary public memory. By describing and analyzing the fragments of discursive violence, communitas, and cultural influence that create Fernandomania, I can reveal how they construct both Fernandomania's and Fernando Valenzuela's public memory. The next chapter will draw connections between the foundations established in this chapter among previous and contemporary acts of public memory.

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[1] The *LA Times* actually experienced some reader backlash for their constant coverage of Fernando. Scott Ostler (1981d) cited some of these criticisms of the coverage (and Fernando himself) in a column. Among the anonymous letters Ostler cites: "'I love sports [...] but this Fernando Valenzuela thing is getting out of hand. I think...just because he's 5-0 in the win column, they have him higher than Jesus Christ'." Ostler provides a rebuttal and emphatically justifies his colleagues' continued coverage of Fernando with the aid of the words of the immortal Vin Scully: "What we're doing is having a good time recognizing and saluting a young player who came out of nowhere and is kicking sand in the faces of the big guys, and enjoying it. We were tired of writing about salaries and strikes and players who won't talk and pitchers who can't pitch. So don't blame us, blame Fernando. As Vin Scully said, wrapping up Sunday's Fernando gem, 'You know, you try to put it into perspective....You're aware of how tough this game is, having tried to play it...its truly phenomenal what this young boy has done.' Aw, what does Vinnie know?"

[2] I understand racial incongruity to mean that a racialized person's characteristics, skills, successes, or other traits significantly defy white ways of seeing and knowing so much that whites must find a way to make sense of the dissonance they experience in ways that continue to maintain and perpetuate whiteness.

[3] Across those 10 relief appearances, Fernando had a 0.00 ERA and earned two wins and a save. His base-out runs saved, a statistic that calculates how many runs a relief pitcher prevents when he enters the game with opposing players on base, across all 10 appearances was 5.80. For context: 0 runs saved is considered statistically average while anything above 0 is considered statistically above average. Simply put, Fernando was exceptionally effective at stopping opposing players already on base from scoring during the stretch of the 1980 season.

[4] This prediction was made within a somewhat reasonable context: two Dodgers rookie pitchers had won rookie of the year in 1979 and 1980, meaning a win for Fernando would be three Dodgers rookies winning the award in a row (Heisler, 1981b). Furthermore, the Dodgers have historically been praised for their ability to develop players through their farm system and lead the majors with the most rookie of the year awardees (18), double the next team on the list (the New York Yankees with 9). The Dodgers franchise also holds the major league record for most consecutive rookie of the year awardees (5, 1992 – 1996).

[5] As I pointed out in Chapter 2, Anthony Burgos discusses how Latino baseball players are often subject to criticism for not learning English, a criticism not often held against their Asian counterparts.

[6] Even within the internal logic of the profile, the decision to describe Fernando as a "Mexican werewolf" does not make any sense. In the very next paragraph, Heisler remarks that, "Actually, Valenzuela is described as quiet by people who know him."

[7] This becomes apparent in stories written later in Fernando's career where the Dodgers admit that they permitted Fernando to abstain from participating in weightlifting between starts. This was a training regimen typically prescribed for all the Dodgers starting pitchers.

[8] A similar comment about Fernando's birth certificate in Campanis's office is made in the story recapping Fernando's opening day victory a month later.
[9] There is a longstanding habit of questioning the authenticity of Latin American player's birth certificates, claiming that they are forged so that they can legally claim to be younger and therefore hit free agency when they are younger. The most notorious and persistent contemporary example is the age controversy surrounding Albert Pujols. Many allege that Pujols is older than his birth certificate claims and forged a new one so that when he became a free agent in 2011, he could earn more money as a younger player still in his prime.
[10] This emphasis on ignorance also establishes some of the initial groundwork for later articles and profiles that infantilize Fernando. For instance, this profile informs readers that he is the baby of the family—a fact that is brought up repeatedly during the height of his winning streak and brought into further focus when they profile his entire family. When the article discusses how Fernando tends to feel isolated amongst non-Spanish speakers, they describe his tendency to stay in his room and watch television, especially cartoons—another observation that gets brought up and expanded upon in future profiles.
[11] Jerry Ruess was originally scheduled to start on opening day, but he strained his calf and could not go on opening day. Burt Hooton was the next man up, but he had an ingrown toenail that would prevent him from taking Reus's place. Other possible starters on the pitching staff were recovering from nagging injuries sustained throughout spring training. Valenzuela was actually throwing batting practice the day before the season's inaugural game, and as the only healthy starting pitcher the Dodgers had no choice but to have him start.
[12] Don Sutton's number 20 is retired by the Los Angeles Dodgers. He is in the hall of fame.
[13] The reason Mark Heisler focuses on Don Sutton is that Sutton signed with the Astros because the Dodger's offer was not competitive, despite Sutton playing 15 years for the Dodgers. "Sutton wasn't what you call flattered that the Dodgers, for whom he had won 230 games, didn't come closer to offering his free market price (Sutton says their offer was half the Houston $3 million)" (Heisler, 1981d).
[14] Although the Houston Astros cheated their way to a World Series in 2017, there was no alleged cheating during the 1981 season.
[15] Jim Murray was a renowned sports columnist who wrote for the Los Angeles Times for 37 years. At the height of its popularity, his sports column was syndicated in over 150 newspapers nationwide. He was also known for his caustic humor (Reilly, n.d.).
[16] John McGraw is the hall of fame manager of the New York Giants. He won three world series titles and has the second most wins in the history of the major leagues Part of how he is remembered, aside from being a winning manager, is that he once held the major league record for most ejections from a game. The National Baseball Hall of Fame contextualizes McGraw in the following way: "McGraw collected a total of 10 National League pennants and three Fall Classics while mixing brilliant strategy with tempestuous emotion. He was the first manager to win four consecutive pennants in either league, and set a major league record with 131 ejections (since surpassed by Hall of Famer Bobby Cox)" ("McGraw, John | Baseball Hall of Fame," n.d.).
[17] César Cedeño was involved in a highly publicized incident where his mistress was accidently killed while spending time with him in a hotel room in the Dominican Republic; some suggest he never got over the incident, while others look at a variety of other factors that caused his decline (Schoenfield, 2012).
[18] This is emphasized in the documentary "Fernando Nation" when a reporter juxtaposes Fernando's unathletic physique with Dodgers hall of fame pitcher Don Drysdale's athletic physique.
[19] The New York Yankees actually attempted to sign Fernando before the Dodgers, but their contract offer came in a few hours too late.
[20] This is a sentiment that was expressed by late-Dodgers owner Walter O'Malley. It has been repeated numerous times both during Fernandomania and when remembering Fernandomania. I explore this sentiment later in this chapter and touch on it again in chapter 4.
[21] In his next start at San Francisco, Fernando struck out ten batters and only gave up four hits and one run; he had gone just over 34 innings before he gave up his first earned run (Heisler, 1981f). In the following game against the Padres in San Diego, Fernando pitched a five-hit shutout

with ten strikeouts, no walks, and in a remarkably efficient 103 pitches (Heisler, 1981k). This was doubly remarkable as Dodgers manager Tommy Lasorda had announced two days prior he would be starting Fernando on short rest(Heisler, 1981g) and had previously stated that there would be no number five starter in the rotation (Heisler, 1981e). And in a rematch with the Houston Astros in Houston, this time a head-to-head matchup with Don Sutton, Fernando pitched a seven hit shutout and struck out eleven batters.

[22] Ostler's column title "Fernandomania" is the first instance where the word "Fernandomania" appears in the *LA Times*. It is rather innocuous, as Ostler does not call any special attention to it.

[23] Allow me to provide a bit of context for what Fernando had accomplished up to this point in the season: he had pitched four complete games for victories, three of them were shutouts, his earned-run average (ERA) was 0.25, and he had thirty-six strikeouts. At one point a column remarked that, "Valenzuela's ERA looks like some of the Dodgers' batting averages" ("Pitcher's a Hit"). As for his skills as a hitter, a different story had remarked that Fernando's individual batting average—.333—was above the team's batting average—.247 ("Morning Briefing: Here's Some Basic Advice from the Television Booth," 1981).

[24] After the game, Mike Brito remarked that, "he really doesn't have his stuff today" to which Mark Heisler (1981g) astutely quips, "The Giants had a little trouble telling" followed by a humorous anecdote to emphasize the point: "Martin swung at a screwball that dropped a foot or so and asked the plate umpire to look at the baseball. The umpire, Fred Brocklander, looked at it, though it looked like a baseball and threw it back to Valenzuela, who then threw Martin another screwball and struck him out." Heisler concludes his anecdote by remarking that Fernando had, "struck out a mere seven Monday, the first time in four games he's been under 10." Despite not being at his best, Fernando did not give up any runs. He also managed three hits in his four at bats, pushing his batting average for the season to .438 (highest on the team). To describe his performance as remarkable feels like an understatement. Fernando literally did it all that game.

[25] I can only imagine what it was like that night at Dodger Stadium. I can say I attended an incredibly memorable rookie debut, Yasiel Puig's in 2013, but even the excitement around Puig seems to pale in comparison to Fernando Valenzuela. Sure, when I saw Yasiel in his first professional appearance at Dodger Stadium, my friend and I remarked at how gifted of an athlete he was; to this day, I have never seen anyone who could run from home plate to second base as quickly as Yasiel Puig. I was there the next game when he hit his first two major league home runs—and yes, one of them was in my direction because I was sitting in center field. I remember the collective gasp as the bat cracked on contact with the pitch (perhaps the loudest crack of the bat I have ever heard) followed by an avalanche of cheers as Dodger Stadium went berserk. I remember thinking I had witnessed history, and in some ways I did even if Puig did not become the next Bo Jackson.

[26] Scott Ostler points out that, "The Dodgers have televised five-regular-season home games—opening day in 1962 [which was the opening of Dodger Stadium], the last game of a pennant-race season in '71, and those three crucial Houston games at the end of last season."

[27] Fan frustration with the Dodgers was not contained to televising games. Prior to the game against the Phillies, Dodgers manager Tommy Lasorda had announced that he had dropped one of the starting pitchers from the rotation, and fans immediately complained that the Dodgers were intentionally moving Fernando's next home start one day earlier to boost ticket sales and guarantee two sellouts (Heisler, 1981m). Fans who had bought their tickets ahead of time with the intention of seeing Fernando suddenly found themselves watching a different player take the mound instead. Edward Kaz of Northridge blasted the Dodgers organization for pulling what he called "the ultimate sports con job" to extort sellouts, remarking that "When the Fans were yelling 'El Toro,' they didn't realize they were about to be given a bum steer. Shame on you" ("Viewpoint: Letters Fernando, Cont.," 1981).

[28] One fan was against the idea of televising games, writing that those "who pay their way into the ballpark annually are the supporters, and Mr. O'Malley shows his appreciation to *them* by providing first-class baseball, and in an immaculate and delightful place to watch it" ("VIEWPOINT: Letters TV or Not TV," 1981).

[29] Prior to Fernandomania, the Dodgers were perceived to be a white businessman's team. I touch on this in chapter 4 as I analyze how Fernandomania is remembered.

[30] I say this fully conscious of the fact that, despite baseball's mythologizing and historical revisionism of that historical moment, Jackie Robinson playing for the Brooklyn Dodgers and integrating baseball was a momentous occasion that was not free of consequences. By integrating the major and minor leagues, the Negro baseball leagues, which were primarily comprised of Black players (and to a lesser extent Latin American players) and Black owned teams, became financially unfeasible when white-owned teams absorbed most of the talent into their major league rosters and farm systems.

[31] Anthony Burgos has examined Latinos at baseball at length, and one of his observations is that many Latino players historically attempted to or did pass for white/European or were racialized as black players. This is what made Fernando Valenzuela stand out: he was undeniably Mexican.

[32] Several fans did write to the Los Angeles times to complain that Fernando was receiving too much attention. One reader named Achilles Johnson from North Hollywood doubted whether Fernando was pitching as well as the hype made it seem and suggested he had not proven himself: "What's all the fuss about Valenzuela? He's not so hot. Has he thrown a no-hitter? No. A one-hitter even? No. What kind of a pitcher does he think he is? Winning is OK, but let's see something *interesting!* And all the hoopla about his hitting. Someone even compared him to Babe Ruth. Fat chance. I wanna see a grand slam, with "Freddy" pointing to the center-field bleachers first. I mean come on! Is this baseball or is this baseball? Let's see him *really* prove himself" ("Viewpoint: Letters: Viva Valenzuela," 1981). What a heel.

[33] The upper deck and the left and right field corners (also known as the pavilions) are generally regarded as the cheap seats at Dodger Stadium. There is actually an old George Lopez joke where he talks about watching Dodger games from the left field pavilion, which he affectionately refers to as the area where all the Mexicans sit because they are the cheap seats.

[34] Frank del Olmo goes on to explain that other teams have experimented with Spanish broadcasts on a limited basis. He notes that the San Diego Padres and Oakland A's broadcast home games in Spanish (but not away games) and the Texas Rangers broadcast some weekend games in Spanish. Aside from the Dodgers, only the Huston Astros had broadcast all their games in Spanish, but they stopped a couple of seasons prior due to budget cutbacks.

[35] Such a community does exist—former residents of La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop and their descendants. They will be discussed in Chapter 4.

[36] I discuss these implications in chapter 4 when I discuss how Chavez Ravine has become, per Bradford Vivian, a new public idiom.

[37] This is a sentiment that is also expressed whenever the public memory of Fernando Valenzuela is celebrated. I will touch on it in Chapter 4.

[38] In the profiles of Jarrín, it is mentioned many times that he did no receive additional compensation for serving as Fernando's unofficial translator. Meanwhile, Fernando's rookie salary was a mere $40,000, a paltry amount that incurred jokes and speculation about what the Dodgers would pay him after his rookie season—and how much Fernando would demand.

[39] This is something that is said almost verbatim by Bobby Valentine, a former Dodgers player, who was interviewed for "Fernando Nation." According to Valentine, Walter O'Malley would frequently invoke the history of Branch Rickey signing Jackie Robinson to break baseball's color barrier as precedent for finding a talented Mexican baseball player for the Dodgers.

CHAPTER 4

THE PUBLIC MEMORY OF FERNANDOMANIA

> *There is a parallel in Dodger history for dealing with a "special popularity" that goes beyond exceptional playing ability. I am thinking of the Brooklyn Dodger's appreciation of Jackie Robinson.[1] Just as Robinson was able to transcend the racial differences between himself and the majority of Dodger fans, so Valenzuela has been able to transcend the language differences between himself and most, but certainly not all, of Los Angeles.*
>
> *Granted, Valenzuela has had an easier time of it than Robinson did, thanks to more enlightened times. But just as Robinson came to be more than just a sports hero to this nation's black minority, so Valenzuela has come to symbolize much more than that to Latinos. (del Olmo, 1981b)*

Although the intensity of Fernandomania faded away, Fernando Valenzuela had several good seasons beyond his rookie year. Even when the Dodgers struggled, Fernando drew fans into Dodger Stadium and continued to pitch complete games. He remained popular and became one of the most iconic players for the Dodgers. He never won the Cy Young again, but he finished second in 1986 after leading the National League in wins and complete games.[2]

However, the 1987 season saw all the innings and pitches begin to take their toll on Fernando. His earned run averaged increased, his screwball became too hittable, and he suddenly found himself past his prime. Those fans who believed that the Dodgers' historically abuse their pitchers' arms until they are no longer effective felt as though they were proven right. By the time the Dodgers won their second World Series of the decade in 1988, Fernando missed a significant portion of the regular season due to injury and was left off the playoff roster. When he was cut in 1991, he was only 30 years old.

And through all the good and bad seasons, the writers who covered the Dodgers continued to point out that 1981 was never replicated by Fernando. Fernandomania, from a statistical and popularity standpoint, loomed over this entire career. It was the metric used to judge every pitching performance, and it was declared that he had failed to live up to it again.

Although Fernando's entire career may not have lived up to Fernandomania, Mexican/American and Latinx Dodger fans continued to be a significant presence at games and within the greater Dodger fanbase throughout and beyond Fernando's career. In the years since Fernando last played for the Dodgers, there have been numerous iterations of public remembrance—from documentaries about Fernando Valenzuela to bobble head giveaways and ceremonies to honor him. These instances provide an opportunity to recognize the rhetorical force of Fernando's and Fernandomania's public memories. Not surprisingly, both are remembered in racially problematic ways. Therefore, this chapter provides an overview and examination of the rhetorical consequences that the public memory of Fernando Valenzuela and Fernandomania have had on the forgiving and/or forgetting of Chavez Ravine and the Mexican/American neighborhoods of La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop.

I will begin by summarizing how the *Los Angeles Times* framed the rest of Fernando's career by attending to the ways that they moved Fernandomania to the past by constantly comparing Fernando's post-1981 popularity and performance against his rookie season. I will focus on some important moments throughout his career, such as his infamous holdout prior to the beginning of the 1982, his downfall beginning in 1987, and the outcry when he was cut from the Dodgers in 1991. But generally speaking I will be reporting on how the public memory of Fernandomania was invoked throughout the rest of Fernando's playing career and how journalists discursively shifted

Fernandomania into the past and used it as an impossible-to-replicate metric for the rest of Fernando's major league career.

Following my reporting of Fernandomania's memory throughout Fernando's playing career, I will examine how the public memory of Fernando Valenzuela and Fernandomania rhetorically constructs a *novel public idiom* to transform the public memory of Dodger Stadium and Chavez Ravine so that the racist violence that destroyed La Paloma, Palo Verde, and Bishop is forgiven and/or forgotten. Focusing on the ESPN *30 for 30* documentary "Fernando Nation," I examine how the public memories of Fernandomania and Chavez Ravine have become intertwined so that the racial oppression that ultimately made Dodger Stadium possible and is forgiven and/or forgotten. Ultimately, what the film represents is the way that that Chavez Ravine's public memory has been transformed by Fernando Valenzuela and the rhetorical implications of exploiting the communitas, ethnic and racial pride that was Fernandomania.

After examining how the public memory of Chavez Ravine's destruction is forgiven and/or forgotten, I will conclude by revealing how a celebration of Fernando Valenzuela's public memory reveals the extent that the public has forgotten La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop. I analyze the ceremony that commemorates Fernando's inauguration as a "Legend of Dodger Baseball" to understand how Fernandomania and Fernando Valenzuela are remembered by the Dodgers and how these public memories recapture the communitas, racial, and ethnic pride his rookie season inspired. Ultimately, these tributes facilitate the public forgetting of La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop by rewriting the public memory of Chavez Ravine. As a consequence, the public remembers Chavez Ravine as synonymous with Dodger baseball—and by extension

Fernandomania and Fernando Valenzuela—rather than the Mexican/American community that once thrived there.

Putting Fernandomania in the Past

Although Fernando Valenzuela did eventually lose a game and a baseball strike interrupted the 1981 season, his historic rookie season had its Cinderella ending: not only did the Dodgers capture the 1981 World Series championships, but Fernando was awarded the Cy Young and Rookie of the Year for his regular season performance—a feat that has not been replicates. And as the season progressed and it became clear that Fernando was a frontrunner to win the Cy Young, writers began to speculate about how much the Dodges would pay Fernando for his second season. [3]

But even within that 1981 season, writers were already beginning to declare the end of Fernandomania. While it is true that Fernando did eventually lose after starting 8-0 and the 1981 baseball strike derailed some of the momentum of Fernandomania—and dragged out a midseason slump—it was generally believed that he could not replicate those first eight wins.[4] When writing about Fernando's first post-strike start, Mark Heisler made it clear that the excitement had died down:

> Fernandomania, a phenomenon associated with better times, met the second half of the baseball season Tuesday night, but somehow it wasn't the same. The game drew a nice crowd but didn't sell out. The fans who used to line the roads into Dodger Stadium hawking Fernando pennants, records, T-shirts, and bumper stickers were gone. And so, after a mere 3 ½ innings, was Fernando Valenzuela. (Heisler, 1981n)

And by Fernando's second post-strike start, Fernandomania seemed like a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away:

> There was an air of nostalgia surrounding Sunday's game at Dodger Stadium, even though the memories rekindled were just three months old, before there was a strike or split season.
>
> Fernando Valenzuela was pitching, there was a sellout crowd, the first of the Second Season, and the Dodgers won. Just like the old days.
>
> Only it wasn't really a repeat. (Edes, 1981)

There was a greater feeling of distance between the "second" season and the magic of Fernandomania from the "first" season.[5] It was almost as if the strike, which lasted 50 days, had relegated Fernando's 8-0 start to the distant past.

However, what was becoming clear is that writers were placing Fernandomania in the past by emphasizing the similarity or difference of each start that followed Fernando's 8-0 winning streak. This constant practice of asking "was this Fernandomania-esque?" after almost every start continued throughout the remainder of the 1981 season and his major league career. In short, Fernando had become a victim of Fernandomania. Whereas the scrutiny Fernando once faced was a result of the media's attempt to reconcile the incongruity of his success via a white racial frame, this new scrutiny of Fernando's performance and popularity seemed to un-deify him. Rather than foolishly ask "will he ever lose?" as they had done before, reporters implicitly suggested Fernando's performance and popularity had already peaked and was now in decline. Every start was scrutinized, and the rubric was Fernandomania.

Sadly, that metric would either work against Fernando or fail to provide any additional favors. Whether it was failing to meet the spectacular expectations of replicating Fernandomania—a shutout, double digit strikeouts, multiple hits, a carnivalesque atmosphere at Dodger Stadium, a winning streak, and the communitas

that all those variables engendered—or demanding a fairer salary, Fernandomania did not always benefit Fernando.

The Holdout

> *My advice to all Dodger fans is to appreciate Fernando Valenzuela while you have the chance. Judging from the well-known M.O. of the Dodger organization concerning gifted starting pitchers like Tommy John and Don Sutton, Fernando won't be around long. When his contract is up for renewal the Dodger "brain" trust—Peter and the Wolf (Al Campanis)—will turn down a reasonable multimillion dollar request, he'll play out his option year and get snapped up on the free-agent market. Then he'll return to Dodger stadium in another uniform and be booed–Jeri Silberbon, Los Angeles* ("Viewpoint: Letters: Viva Valenzuela," 1981)

The issue of Fernando Valenzuela's salary prompted a variety of takes from those writing to and for the *LA Times*. Staff writer Frank del Olmo (1981b) expressed disappointment that both the Dodgers front office and Fernando's own agent, Antonio (Tony) DeMarco, did not appreciate Fernando's cultural and social influence; he believed that "both seem to appreciate Valenzuela more as a sports and business commodity than they do as a social phenomenon." Readers wrote to the *LA Times* to express sentiments in a similar vein. Dave Grant of Encino wrote, "How sad that Tony DeMarco believes that 'the first thing associated with greatness is a lot of money.' I guess he never heard of John Robinson" ("The Valenzuela Talks Con and Pro," 1982). The communitas of Fernandomania and the public image of Fernando Valenzuela were being tainted by all the parties' concerns with money.

As the saga unfolded, everyone was implicated with varying degree. The Dodgers received some flak for refusing to raise their salary offer. Scott Ostler (1982) referred to

the disagreement over a few hundred thousand dollars as "measly" and wrote that the Dodgers' management had, "its money stuffed securely under the team mattress." Some fans criticized the Dodgers by asking, "what do the Dodgers want, blood? Or maybe they think Fernando Valenzuela, because he is a Mexican from a small town, will take anything they want to give" ("Letter to the Editor [15]," 1982). One fan letter argued that, "Fernando has more support than most people think" while another claimed, "I hope Fernando sticks it to them, that is my thought and I am behind him 109 ½ %" ("The Mailbag," 1982). One fan letter went even further, arguing that, "the Latin majority will stay away in droves from their former territory of Chavez Ravine if an equitable agreement is not reached" (ibid). Although there were fans who criticized the Dodgers front office for not submitting a more generous offer, it was ultimately Fernando who faced the most violent criticism.

When writers and fans criticized Fernando, they utilized a white racial frame to allege that Fernando's race gave him no right to a higher salary. This began with Mark Heisler's suggestion that Fernando's decision to pursue a higher salary by holding out was being met with disapproval from his fellow Mexican/American and Latinx community. Citing an editorial in *La Opinion*[6], Heisler (1982) reported that there was no popular support for the holdout "anywhere, not even in Los Angeles' Latino community". He even interviewed an editor from *La Opinion* and a journalist close to Fernando's agent to support his claim that the Latinx community disapproved of Fernando's salary demands and holdout. This rhetorical maneuver permits Dodger fans to use disagreement within the Mexican/American and Latinx community as a justification for absolving their white ways of seeing and knowing Fernando's holdout. If the Latinx community that Fernando inspired with his stellar play did not support him, white fans could be assured that their objections were not reliant solely upon Fernando's race.

And yet the way that writers and fans promoted their objections within the pages of the *LA Times* suggested that race, indeed, was their primary reason for disparaging Fernando. Jim Murry (1982) used common racist tropes to argue that Fernando did not deserve a higher salary, let alone sit out of training camp to pursue one:

> And a kid from Etchohuaquila, Mexico, with little or no formal education, a non-citizen who cannot speak the language, wants $1.4 million a year for a job where he works only every fourth day and then for no more than an hour and a half. And he usually requires a backup to come in and finish the job for him.

Murray's words indicate that Fernando's origin and status—a non-English speaking and uneducated non-citizen from rural Mexico—disqualify Fernando from deserving of a raise. Murray also points out that Fernando only pitches every fourth day for no more than an hour and a half and requires a backup to finish the job—the common workload of starting pitchers—suggesting that Fernando does infrequent and incomplete work. Therefore, Fernando does not deserve a raise because, regardless of ability, he will always be a dumb and lazy Mexican.

The fans who wrote to the *LA Times* to criticize Fernando were even more vicious. A couple of them were ready to figuratively and literally deport Fernando. One fan proposed trading Fernando to Alaska so he could "sit on a cake of ice to cool down" and then "point him in the direction of the nearest Berlitz, if he comes back" ("The Mailbag," 1982). Another fan was openly hostile about Fernando's inability to speak English, writing "I object to his not speaking English" (ibid). Meanwhile, another fan wrote, "Add my husband and I to the list of (those in favor of) letting Fernando go back to Mexico. The same for his Beverly Hills agent!" (ibid). Despite a historic rookie season accompanied by enormous amounts of praise and speculation for a prosperous future, fans regarded Fernando as utterly disposable.[7] That INS deputy director Jerry Sewell

made a public statement indicating that Fernando's refusal to report to training camp was a refusal to work and therefore a violation of his agreement with INS to play baseball in the United States ("Fernando Situation May Get Complicated," 1982) only confirmed Fernando's disposability.

Since Fernando was under a rookie contract, the Dodgers held all the power. The team could renew his contract at almost any price without his needing to sign it. And if he did not play, he would have to return to Mexico. He held no bargaining power and could literally be deported for exercising what little leverage he had. Many sports writers had pointed out that the odds had always been stacked against Fernando, and his holdout was proving futile. And so on March 23, 1982, after missing the first three weeks of spring training, Fernando finally reported to the Dodgers' facility in Vero Beach, Florida. Fans resented Fernando upon his return. When it was announced that Fernando would pitch the next day over the public address during a game, fans booed (Heisler, 1982b). When he pitched, there were a few boos, and as Heisler (1982c) reports, "One fan yelled 'Go back to Mexico!' but in general, the reaction was mixed. A few people even stood and applauded him." There was plenty of racist bitterness towards Fernando. The hostility revealed that any communitas created by Fernandomania did not render Fernando Valenzuela indispensable. It did not matter that Fernando won accolades or led statistical categories. He was disposable because he was regarded as nothing more than a dumb and lazy Mexican who asked for more than he deserved.

Although the resentment from Fernando's holdout lingered into the beginning of the 1982 regular season, it did not last forever. But something became clear as Fernando's career progressed beyond those first eight wins and his improbable rookie season: Fernandomania was no longer, but its memory would continue to cast a permanent shadow over Fernando Valenzuela throughout the rest of his career.

Not Quite Fernandomania

> *The great bubble of Fernandomania is gone, along with the illusions it was built on, replaced by something more stable, mere popularity*. (Heisler, 1982i)

As the 1982 season opened, there were questions about how the holdout would affect Fernando's popularity, namely his ability to draw sell-out crowds to Dodger Stadium. Fernando's first start of the 1982 season was framed in the following way:

> For Fernando Valenzuela, who is 21 and has seen many things, his introduction to the 1982 season was still a little different. It rained in Southern California. People booed. Pressure was cascading on him from everywhere, his spring training had consisted of a total of five innings and he wasn't in shape to go nine. So he settled for going six nationally televised shutout innings, striking out four and driving in a run, as the Dodgers beat the San Diego Padres, 6-0, Saturday afternoon. His circus was rolling again, apparently little changed by the holdout. A crowd of 46,692 saw it, making 17 Dodger Stadium starts for Valenzuela and 16 sellouts, even if this wasn't his friendliest sellout. (Heisler, 1982d)

Despite not being in shape to go a full nine innings, it seemed as though Fernando's first start of the 1982 season indicated that he could fulfill the expectations he himself had set during his stellar rookie season. But fans were still bitter about Fernando's holdout. When recapping a game later that month, Heisler (1982e) pointed out that 1982 was "Fernandomania II, which includes his holdout and his team's losing streak," and he wondered "who the fans were going to boo, Valenzuela or the Dodgers, or both?" Although Fernando would pitch well, the crowds shrunk. Fernandomania had "fallen on harder times" (Heisler, 1982f). He was not racking up scoreless inning streaks and shutouts like his rookie season, and he was not commanding the same box office draw.

Some suggested his holdout had played a significant role in killing whatever was left of Fernandomania. When profiling Fernando towards the end of the 1982 season, Mark Heisler (1982) opened his story with the words "Fernandomania II, or the fat kid strikes back" and provides the following insight about the decline of Fernandomania:

> The mania died hard when Valenzuela failed to report. His appeal probably had to do with the fact that the was so young, and looked so *innocent*, although someone pointed out after the similar fall taken by Magic Johnson, post-Westhead, that had more to do with what people wanted to believe. Valenzuela was never innocent, if there was big money to be made, he wanted it. (Heisler, 1982i)

The consequence of Fernando's holdout, according to Heisler, is that it ran contrary to the public image of Fernando when he was a rookie: a quiet and innocent ballplayer from rural Mexico. By comparing his holdout to the consequences of Magic Johnson demanding that head coach Paul Westhead be fired immediately,[8] Heisler suggests that a monetary motive has existed all along and that, like the dissatisfaction with Magic, it is hard to reconcile those actions with the player's popular image. But most consequential of all, if Fernandomania was already fading into the past, then the holdout only expedited its status to the past tense.

After the 1981 season, it became clear that Fernandomania was an omnipresent reference point to the past. Fernando seemed incapable of replicating or escaping the long shadow he had cast upon himself during those first 8 starts of the 1981 season. When framing his first start of the 1983 season at Dodger Stadium—a shutout victory—the post-game coverage described Fernandomania as, "fickle and runs in both directions, and by the time its namesake, Fernando Valenzuela, took the mound Sunday, the flow was definitely outward-bound" as his "loyal following gazed longingly towards the hills"

(Heisler, 1983a). The crowd was smaller, and his reception was somewhat mixed due to a poor performance in his previous game combined with the recent news that he had been awarded a million-dollar salary in arbitration (ibid). Even a trademark Fernando pitching performance did not seem like enough to excite fans who once cheered for him or inspired writers who once glorified his pitching prowess. The mania was over and coverage, like Fernando's games, became mundane.

That is not to say Fernando suddenly became a terrible pitcher or was not a draw. In that same 1982 profile it was reported that, "Valenzuela's average attendance in Dodger Stadium is still almost 4,000 higher than the team's average" (Heisler, 1982i). Early on in the 1983 season, Fernando held an 8-2 record—his best since his rookie season—and won five straight games while pitching six complete games to lower his earned-run average from 4.37 to 3.07 (Heisler, 1983b). And although his win-loss record for the 1984 season was a woeful 12-17, looks were quite deceiving. He was second in the majors in complete games and "His record of 12-17 looks less unimpressive when it is known that the team scored one run or none in 13 of those games, and fewer than two in 18 of them" (Murray, 1985). Statistically, Fernando was a top of the rotation starter for the Dodgers, but he was not as dominant or magical as Fernandomania.

But make no mistake, there were also bad streaks that made Fernando look worse than mortal. In the build up to a game against the Chicago Cubs during the 1982 season, it seemed that Fernandomania was getting back on track, with a sellout crowd at Dodger Stadium ready to cheer him on. But the result did not match the anticipation:

> Three straight complete games and all was forgiven. The fans piled back into Dodger Stadium once more, ending the kid's non-sellout streak, and for one shining moment, Fernando Valenzuela was boffo again, just like last season.

> But then they started the game. In keeping with the recent decline of the Dodger starters, Valenzuela went out and took the fastest pounding of his major league career, six runs in the first two innings. […] there were 50,904 watching in Dodger Stadium. Of course, when the night went south, they started booing Valenzuela. *Sic transit gloria*. (Heisler, 1982g)

Fernando was no longer the darling who once inspired standing ovations simply by tipping his cap to the crowd. When he performed poorly, he was booed, just like any other player. And even when Fernando would follow a poor performance with a better one, there was a discernable difference in the way that writers covered those victories:

> This time, Fernando Valenzuela sold out Dodger Stadium *and* won the baseball game, suggesting that Fernandomania II is starting to approach the level of I. This was somewhat of an improvement over his last start, when he sold the place out and hit the showers before half the people were in their seats. (Heisler, 1982h)

Heisler's pessimism about whether the magic of Fernandomania could be recaptured only reiterates the truth that Fernandomania—the shutouts and the sellouts—was the rubric by which all of Fernando's performances were judged. That he had more bad outings than before left a bad taste in the mouth of fans and expedited the public memory of his rookie season and those first 8 wings further and further back in the past.

This transition from present to past became even more apparent in ensuing seasons. During the first month of the 1984 season, Fernando was struggling and Fernandomania was becoming the exception rather than the norm:

> Fernandomania finally came to life Friday night at Dodger Stadium […] Losing to Valenzuela is supposed to be old hat to National League teams, but not in 1984. Valenzuela began the night with an 0-2 record and a 6.75 ERA. He hadn't lasted

> past seven inning or allowed fewer than four runs in three previous starts. (Dolan, 1984)

Even the use of "mania" at the end of "Padremania" in the article title is a reference to the San Diego Padres' fast start to lead the division and their scoring sixty runs in their first eleven games of the young season, suggested that Fernandomania was a cultural and historical reference point for baseball (ibid). Writers were memorializing the peak of Fernando's career and popularity even though he was still in his mid-twenties and pitching well for the Dodgers.

One prominent example is Jim Murray's retrospective of all the disbelief surrounding Fernando's skill—physique and age as well—when he took the major leagues by storm in 1981. And naturally, Murray began by referencing Fernando's weight, starting with jokes that Fernando resembled Orson Welles, Montezuma, and Santa Claus. He followed those insults with the following "quips":

> Fernando Valenzuela was the unlikeliest character to put on a big-league uniform since the day Babe Ruth hung his up [...] The silhouette was a cross between that of a guy with a pillow tied around his middle and an Irish bartender. Jackie Gleason got the part if they made it into a movie. (Murray, 1985)

Murray then goes on to recall the disbelief surrounding Fernando's age, due in part to his maturity and command:

> Prevailing opinion was that Valenzuela's age was somewhere between 45 and infinity. A large school of thought held that he had been found frozen in the ruins of Macchu Picchu [sic] and thawed out for the season. There was no way this could be the body and the arm of any recent teen-ager [...] Rival Managers not only wanted to see the ball, they wanted to see his birth certificate. There was some notion that he might have learned to pitch against General Custer.

> He never did any of the things rookies do. He never kicked the water cooler when he lost. He never threw his cap in the air when he won. He treated baseball as if it was just another day in the fields. (ibid)

In many ways, Murray is remembering Fernandomania quite accurately. His column captures the original obsession with Fernando's foreignness, physique, and age. Just as much as Fernandomania was about Fernando's improbable string of victories and shutouts, it was also about how the media and fans employed a white racial frame to rectify the incongruity that Fernando epitomized. Although the obsessions' intensities had waned in years after, they had clearly ingrained themselves as a part of Fernandomania's, and by extension Fernando Valenzuela's, public memory.[9]

A Sudden and Unexpected Decline

> *Will enthusiasm for Valenzuela's brilliance and stamina blind Lasorda's foresight and lead him to push his wonder boy to more and more super efforts—for example strenuous nine-inning stings with only three days rest? I am no kinesiologist but it seems to be that the Big Blue Wrecking Crew—true to its name—has turned out more than its share of cripples. For heaven's sake, Tommy, handle this one with care. Viva Valenzuela!—Hugh Caldwell, written in response to Fernando Valenzuela's Opening Day victory in 1981 ("Viewpoint: Letters: Viva Valenzuela," 1981)*
>
> *To be sure, this is not 1981. What we have here is the under-side of Fernandomania, in numbers and atmosphere—Scott Howard-Cooper in 1987 reporting on a bad outing and loss by Fernando amid the worst season of his career. (Howard-Cooper, 1987)*

After his rookie season, there was plenty of optimism about Fernando's future. Baseball writers quipped that they would rename the Cy Young award after Fernando.

Mike Scioscia, the Dodgers catcher, once said, “I’ll tell you one thing about him. The best is yet to come. If he stays healthy, he’s going to be something else” (Heisler, 1982i). Mike Downey (1986) remarked that Fernando’s left arm, “should be pampered and polished, like expensive crystal. A lot of prayers ride on that wing. A lot of Dodger worshipers’ pennant hopes, perhaps.” Downey continued, remarking at Fernando’s durability:

> The only question is, how much can that arm take? Is it made of flesh and blood? Does it suffer aches and pains like everyone else’s? Will the hinge ever rust or the rotator cuff unlink? Should it be oiled, or massaged, or held together with Krazy Glue, or what?
>
> Will Fernando Valenzuela ever miss a turn?
>
> The guy just keeps going out there pitching, pitching, pitching. One night, they left him out there so long he threw 163 pitches. Relief pitchers put up hammocks in the bullpen when he works. (ibid)

Although Fernandomania had given way to burgeoning newcomers like Roger Clemens, Downey believed that Fernando “just keeps throwing” and “is not just getting older. He is getting better” (ibid).[10] In his first six seasons, Fernando Valenzuela was voted an All-Star. He also started for the Dodgers on opening day five times (1981, 1983-86). Aside from his record year of winning the Cy Young and Rookie of the Year in 1981, Fernando also won two Silver Slugger awards (1981, 1983) and one Gold Glove Award (1986).[11] When the stalwarts of the Dodgers vaunted infield from the 1970’s—Steve Garvey, Davey Lopes, Bill Russel, and Ron Cey—eventually moved on to other teams,[12] Fernando proved to be the constant throughout the 1980s.

However, something strange happened as the 1987 season was underway. Fernando suddenly found himself in an unprecedented slump. At one point, Fernando

had only managed to win two games over the previous seven weeks, which prompted some concern:

> Fernandomania, that sweeping cultural phenomenon of the early 80's, made a return engagement in recent weeks, though in a drastically altered form.
>
> Just like old times, all eyes have been on Dodger pitcher Fernando Valenzuela whenever he takes the mound. The difference is that people want to know if the talk is true, if Valenzuela really has prematurely lost what had made him special in the first place.
>
> The most profound slump of Valenzuela's career even had some on the Dodgers wondering if six seasons of throwing screwballs had twisted that valuable left arm into something resembling a corkscrew. (McManis, 1987)

McManis's coverage suggests that the concern for Fernando's struggles was palpable to the intrigue he stirred during his rookie season. However, Heisler diffuses some of the concerns with optimism by explaining that "Valenzuela has thrown three straight complete games, two of them victories" (ibid). Dodgers catcher Mike Scioscia adamantly defended Fernando, saying that "'He just pitched a masterful game today. He still is a great pitcher. You guys act almost surprised by it or something'" (ibid). And Tommy Lasorda, the Dodgers' manager, initially chalked Fernando's struggles up to nothing more than a slump. But the mild, initial concerns expressed by the Dodgers gave way to a growing list of reasons that explained why Fernando was struggling.[13]

McManis (1987) also dives deeper into the speculation surrounding Fernando's struggle, and one of the first causes mentioned are the number of innings Fernando has thrown for in the past three seasons. "There had been speculation that the reason Valenzuela's earned-run average crept as high as 4.24 was that his arm and shoulder were sore after throwing more than 260 innings in each of the last three seasons" (ibid).

Additionally, it was suggested by opposing managers and scouts that Fernando's fastball had lost velocity and "his screwball had gone flat," intensifying speculation that he was dealing with a lingering injury (ibid). Dodgers' pitching coach Ron Perranoski and catcher Mike Scioscia suggested that Fernando's delivery had changed slightly to compensate for soreness. Whatever the reason for Fernando's struggles, 1987 was his worst season. He set career highs in earned run average (3.98), hits allowed (254), and home runs allowed (25) while setting the Dodgers franchise record for most walks allowed in a season—124 (McManis, 1988a). By 1988, the speculation surrounding Fernando's downfall was rampant. His inability to perform became the focus.

The causes for Fernando's decline continued to be litigated within the pages of the *LA Times*. The most common excuse was the belief that the previous seven seasons of pitching had "wrung out his left arm" (ibid). And after initial denials from Fernando that he was fine, he realized that he needed to make some changes:

> Now 27 and about to start his eighth major league season, Valenzuela finally has realized that fundamental changes in his approach are needed if he hopes for a return to previous form.
>
> It's not as if Valenzuela is past his prime. Always the prodigy, Valenzuela seemingly has thrown more pitches than players considerably older. Valenzuela has started 234 games and averaged 257 innings a season. Assuming that he has averaged 120 pitches a start—a conservative estimate-Valenzuela has thrown more than 28,000 pitches so far as a major leaguer. (ibid)

McManis's article goes on to explain that for the first time in his professional career, Fernando was participating in the standard weightlifting program that the Dodgers prescribed for their starting pitchers. Previously, the Dodgers had excused Fernando from these types of workouts and other forms of conditioning because they did not want

to mess with his success (ibid). But the most significant observation, that Fernando had likely thrown more pitches than other (older) starting pitchers, was the most alarming statistic. Even if it was a rough estimation, it suggested that his arm had been used up.

There were those who offered alternative explanations not directly related to Fernando's overused arm. The Dodger's pitching coach continued to insist that Fernando had developed a hitch somewhere in his delivery. Former Dodgers' pitcher Don Sutton, at 43 and still pitching in the majors (not that well), felt that his longevity—and having pitched more innings than Valenzuela at the same relative point in his career—dismissed the overused arm theory (McManis, 1988b). Valenzuela shared a similar sentiment, saying that "the suggestion that that he is overworked is itself overworked" (ibid). Some even suggested that, "The biggest problem, according to those close to Valenzuela, is that the public and media expect too much from him" (ibid). This sentiment harkens back to way that the *LA Times* continued to measure the rest of Fernando's career against his rookie season, which only sensationalized Fernando's decline further.

Amid the plentiful explanations offered for Fernando's sudden decline, there was hope that his decline was not permanent. But that hope died quickly as Fernando spent a majority of the 1988 season on the sideline with an injury. The *LA Times* conveyed the sad truth that if you caught a game that Fernando was scheduled to start, you were signing up to watch his downfall:

> But others were interested in Valenzuela's start against the Houston Astros that night for another reason. They had come to see if the reports of Valenzuela's demise were true.
>
> They had come to see if, as was the case in the previous two home starts, he would exit in failure before the end of the third inning. To see if his screwball really had flattened out and his fastball fattened up. To see if, astonishingly, a

fickle fringe of Dodger Stadium fans would boo him for the fourth straight time. (ibid)

Although he had won that night against the Astros, receiving a standing ovation from the crowd, "the doubts and doubters remain" as Fernando continued to struggle and have more bad outings than good ones. Fernando's downfall was happening right before fans own eyes.

With the playoffs on the horizon, speculation mounted that the Dodgers would make their World Series push without Fernando. By the end of the 1988 season, even Fernando himself was resigned to not making the playoff roster. Although he managed a few relief appearances towards the end of the regular season, Fernando was viewed as a declining pitcher. When the topic of being included on the playoff roster came up, "Valenzuela himself indicated that it might be best not to include him on the playoff roster, either as a starter or reliever," even going as far to say that, "Valenzuela did not seem eager" (McManis, 1988c). When it was announced that Fernando was officially being left off the playoff roster, it was considered a significant blow; although he held a career 1.93 ERA in the three National League Championship Series he had played in, there was little surprise he would be sitting out (Plaschke, 1988). When interviewed about being left off the playoff roster, Fernando again seemed resigned that it was best and discussed his plans to begin throwing and working out in Los Angeles over the offseason rather than spending it resting at home in Mexico, as was customary for him in during previous off-seasons (ibid). He was willing to make necessary changes in his routine and approach so that he could regain some semblance of his former self.

Despite a slightly more stable performance the next year, it was beginning to feel as though Fernando's days with the Dodgers were dwindling. The Dodgers would not publicly admit their desire to trade or release him, making Fernando's status the

elephant in the room. Fernando was on the downside of his career, and his diminishing popularity was not going to save him.

End of an Era

> *For an organization that prides itself on tradition and its history (it seems every season is an anniversary of something or other), the Dodgers' release of Fernando Valenzuela is a surprise and a disappointment—Dan Beck, Studio City* ("Letter to the Editor [2]," 1991)
>
> *Fernando Valenzuela may be the only Dodger in Los Angeles history that fans would rather lose with than win without—Rick Wallace, Malibu ("Dodger Fans Are Feeling Let down as Result of Fernando Being Let Go," 1991)*

Following the 1988 season, it became clear that Fernando's time with the Dodgers was dwindling. The front office believed that his best days were well behind him, which led to a brief contract standoff during the 1990 offseason. As Ross Newhan (1989) saw it, "The phenomenon known as Fernandomania may still pump in the hearts of Dodger fans, but Fernando Valenzuela seems convinced that his team is no longer demonstrating it." Despite the front office's hesitancy, Fernando and the Dodgers managed to reach an agreement. He would pitch for the team for one last season.

Going into the 1990 season, Fernando developed a cut fastball to compensate for his now ineffective screwball, a pitch that many speculated was responsible for wearing out his arm. As always, catcher Mike Scioscia was optimistic. He believed that a new pitch would help Fernando become "a more complete pitcher" who no longer needed to throw 140 pitches in a game (Newhan, 1990). When Dodgers pitching coach Ron Perranoski was asked about Fernando regaining what made him so unhittable, he provided tempered optimism within a peculiar framing:

> I don't think you can compare him to what he did early in his career because you're talking about a pitcher who was headed to the Hall of Fame, but I see him becoming effective. I see him becoming a winning pitcher again." (ibid)

It is a bit strange to say that Fernando went from a pitcher "headed to the hall-of-fame" to a mere (hopefully) "winning" pitcher. Perranoski's framing pushes back on the continued practice of measuring Fernando against his previous success, but it also suggests that Fernando is no longer headed to the hall of fame.

This sentiment confirms that the Dodgers believed that Fernando could at best become a dependable starter again, but that he would never recapture his previous form:

> The 1990 season turned out to be another bad year for Fernando statistically, but it did include one prominent highlight: Fernando's no hitter.[14] But even that was not enough to delay the inevitable. Prior to the start of the 1991 season, the speculation that Fernando may not make the Dodgers roster intensified. Many within the organization felt he had not recovered from the shoulder injury he experienced during the 1988 season, and others believed that Fernando had cost the team a division title in 1990 by going 1-3 with a 8.40 earned-run average in his final six starts; additionally, his 4.59 earned run average for 1990 was the worst of any regular National League starter. (Plaschke, 1991b)

He had struggled during spring training, which was typical, but it did not inspire the front office's confidence in Fernando. During spring training, the Dodgers played an exhibition game in Monterrey, Mexico, and fans gave Fernando a loving homecoming knowing that the end of his time with the Dodgers was near and his better:

> Before the end of spring training, the Dodgers may trade or release pitcher Fernando Valenzuela.

> But after Sunday, they won't be able to do it without remembering the screams, the bells, the shrill whistles—all sounds of a 27,000-seat stadium passing along a love note to a hero.
>
> They won't be able to do it without remembering the sight and sound of a proud Valenzuela, pitching in Mexico for the first time in 10 years, showing his coutryment he hasn't forgotten 1981, either [...] It was only an exhibition. But to those who understand Valenzuela's search for shreds of Fernandomania, it was much more. (Plaschke, 1991a)

That exhibition game in Monterrey was a metaphor for Fernando's career in 1991, a shadowy reminder of long ago. Just like Fernandomania, the crowd was excited to see their hero triumph against the opposition, and Fernando delivered by pitching five strong innings, only giving up two hits and one run, and hitting a single that scored a run for the Dodgers.

But it was also a faint echo of what once was. The crowd was smaller, the hero long past his prime, and the cheers rooted in nostalgia rather than futurity and hope. These were not cheers for a Fernando who could finally lead the Dodgers to pennants and championships. This was not a Fernando who promised to change the way Mexican/Americans and Latinx people were perceived in baseball and by the American public. This was a hero's farewell, a last hurrah that Fernando had deservedly earned. But it was earned much too soon.

On March 29, 1991, the sports section of the *LA Times* delivered the final verdict: at 30 years old, Fernando had been cut by the Los Angeles Dodgers:

> "The slow death of Fernandomania reached its conclusion Thursday when Dodger officials decided they had seen their once-great pitcher struggle for the last time [...] Said Dodger owner Peter O'Malley: "All careers must end."

> Valenzuela does not agree that this is the end of his and hopes to prove the Dodgers wrong. (Plaschke, 1991b)

As news of Valenzuela's release came out, writers discussed the many reasons why Valenzuela was cut despite his relative youth and popularity, even if Fernandomania was well in the past. Once again, the issue of the number of innings he pitched came up. "Critics have long speculated that Valenzuela's diminished performance was hastened by the many innings he pitched every season—2,348$^{2/3}$ innings in 10 full major league seasons" (ibid). This prompted a response form the Dodgers that attempted to remember Fernando in his prime quite differently:

> The Dodgers answered those critics Thursday by saying that Valenzuela never had tremendous control, meaning his "normal" games involved more pitches than normal. They also said it was difficult to judge his arm strength because he never wanted to leave a game. (ibid)

This excuse offered by the Dodgers contradicts the original impressions of Fernando. His reputation as a rookie was centered on his superior command of his pitches and his incredible composure when on the mound; this was, after all, the alleged source of all those jokes surrounding the accuracy of his age. It was not until Fernando struggled that his command and control was questioned, which would be the norm for any other pitcher. And an early excuse offered by the Dodgers' coaching staff was that Fernando's delivery changed due to soreness. If soreness was a lingering issue, why did the Dodgers fail to address it? Why did they not take precautions and rest him? Was it really that imperative that Tommy Lasorda constantly move from a five-man to a four-man starting rotation during the regular season?[15]

Even in the wake of Fernando's no-hitter, Mike Penner (1990) had compared Fernando and Orel Hershiser, Fernando's teammate who led the Dodgers to the World

Series in 1988, to offer a blunt contextualization of where Fernando was heading and why he was being forgotten:

> Then the arm gave out and Fernando was all but forgotten. He missed the last half of the 1988 season, and the trip to the World Series fantasyland that came with it, sitting idly by while being replaced in Dodger hearts and minds by Orel Hershiser.
>
> Fernando was hit with a fate worse than retirement. Still shy of his 29th birthday, he was moved to the past tense. He became Exhibit A in the escalating argument that the Dodgers abuse their starting pitchers. When Hershiser ultimately took his turn under the knife, Valenzuela resurfaced as a point of reference. *Well, look what happened to Fernando*.

Penner points out that Fernando was no longer a part of the Dodgers future and that the Dodgers had themselves to blame. That the Dodgers abused their starting pitchers was an open secret that fans and writers all knew. After all, it was Hugh Caldwell who had written to the *LA Times* back in 1981 expression his caution against overusing Valenzuela; Caldwell even went as far to write that, "Big Blue Wrecking Crew—true to its name—has turned out more than its share of cripples" and implored Lasorda, the Dodgers manager, to treat Fernando with care (Caldwell, SILBERBON, Hayes, Johnson, & al, 1981). This was not a random excuse or unfounded piece of criticism. It was common knowledge that was revisited again in the wake of Fernando being cut:

> Some say the real reason for the end of Valenzuela's Dodger career occurred in the last couple years. They said it was not a problem of overuse, but of adaptation.
>
> "Management never realized that since his shoulder problems, Fernando was not the same pitcher," one veteran said. "They would leave him in blowout

games in the seventh and eight innings, and then five days later he would be worthless. They did not protect him." (Plaschke, 1991b)

The charge that the Dodgers overused Fernando was even discussed in the 2010 *ESPN 30 for 30* documentary "Fernando Nation," which is discussed in the next section.[16] And although the Dodgers attempted to divorce themselves of responsibility for Fernando's arm being worn out[17] (ibid), many still implicated the Dodgers in Fernando's downfall. And although his career was not over, Fernando never regained any of the prominence or dependability he had once demonstrated, and he left the major leagues for good after bouncing around several teams following the 1997 season.

Fernandomania, Forgiveness, Forgetting

The public memories of Fernando Valenzuela and Fernandomania remain cherished by (and financially valuable for) the Los Angeles Dodgers and the Mexican/America and Latinx communities in Los Angeles. If you walk down Sunset Blvd. from Vin Scully Way, you can see murals of Fernando Valenzuela adorning buildings. Walk into the team store and you will find shirts and jerseys that adorn Fernando's name and iconic number 34. His likeness has been used numerous times for bobblehead giveaways. And his presence figuratively and literally lingers—he currently serves as a color commentator for the Dodgers' Spanish broadcast team alongside Jaime Jarrín, the man who used to serve as his unofficial translator.

As I had observed in Chapter 3, many writers and fans had already recognized the greater cultural transformation inspired by Fernandomania. Mexican/American and Latinx people came to Dodger Stadium to watch Fernando Valenzuela pitch. Part of what made their presence so visible was their difference. These fans were brown and Spanish-speaking or English-speaking with discernible Spanish accents. But their presence was also noticeable due to its unprecedentedness. It is important to remember that what

happened to La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop in the 1950's was not a secret, nor had it been completely forgotten. And as I mentioned in Chapter 1, the public memory of what Chavez Ravine was before the Dodgers continues to circulate to this day.[18] Residents who were displaced still harbored resentment, and others who were not displaced themselves participated in the resentment as well. All of this is to say that the public memory of a Chavez Ravine that thrived before Dodger Stadium persists, but it does not circulate widely.

If you ask most Dodger fans—even Mexican/American and Latinx fans—about Chavez Ravine, the most salient thought on their mind will be Dodger Stadium and the communitas and memories associated with their last visit. Even those who knew a neighborhood once existed there probably do not know the names La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop, let alone that a church and school are literally buried under the stadium (Mechner, 2004). Some public remembering persists through formal and informal retellings of the history, but the hegemonic presence of Dodger Stadium and popularity of the Dodgers displace those memories just as much as they displaced the community that once stood there.

So why bring up La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop in this project about Fernandomania and Fernando Valenzuela? Where, exactly, does Fernandomania and Fernando Valenzuela fit into the public memory of Chavez Ravine? And even if they are connected, what rhetorical force has Fernandomania played in the public forgetting of La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop?

I believe that question is best answered by my racial rhetorical analysis of the *ESPN 30 for 30* documentary "Fernando Nation" directed by Cruz Angeles.[19] "Fernando Nation" retells the story of Fernandomania and the 1981 season by contextualizing the communitas Fernando's play inspired along with its historical and cultural consequences

for Mexican/American and Latinx people, the city of Los Angeles, and the Los Angeles Dodgers. The story of Fernandomania is coupled with the memory of Chavez Ravine because together they are the dialectic of remembering and forgetting that exemplify how discursive processes that bind remembering and forgetting to become interwoven through time (Vivian, 2014). By emphasizing the public memory of Fernandomania's communitas as inclusive of race, specifically Mexican/Americans and Latinx peoples, a *novel public idiom*[20] is created to discursively tie the public memory of Fernandomania with the public memory of Chavez Ravine. In the following subsections, I use racial rhetorical criticism to interrogate race's place in the construction of that *novel public idiom*, which uses racial and ethnic pride to forgive and/or forget the destruction of La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop by celebrating the public memory of Fernando Valenzuela and Fernandomania in the documentary "Fernando Nation."

Remembering to Forget and/or Forgive

In the opening sequence of the film, the following soundbites play over various clips of b-roll footage of the city of Los Angeles:

> "Fernando was the most amazing thing, especially from the Los Angeles perspective."
>
> "The world was just twirling on his finger. And he was nobody from nowhere."
>
> "The Fernando story, it's almost mythical. When he was called up, all we knew about him was he was this 19-year-old pudgy kid from Mexico."
>
> "He didn't speak English, and it was driving everybody crazy because you wondered, 'what is going through this kid's head?'" (Angeles, 2010)

As much as these soundbites frame Fernando's career as something mythological or magical, they also draw upon the discursive practices used to report on Fernandomania during the 1981 season. Emphasizing that "he was a nobody from nowhere" or describing

him as a "pudgy kid from Mexico" all harken back the previous iterations of discursive violence that belittled Fernando's origins, humility, and physique. But none of that matters when, as another interviewee puts it, "It didn't seem real, what he was doing. It was the sort of thing you'd see in a movie and go, 'come on, that's a movie'" (Angeles, 2010). These sentiments repeatedly weave their way throughout the film and underscore Fernando's enduring popularity.

The most interesting aspect of "Fernando Nation" is that it juxtaposes Fernando Valenzuela's improbableness to the tragic history of Chavez Ravine[21] by reinforcing his lingering presence within Dodger Stadium. Early scenes feature Fernando walking through the locker room and other stadium facilities, reflecting (in English) upon what has changed about the stadium from his time as a player in the 1980's. Then the film cuts to Fernando standing on the top deck of the stadium behind home plate with the camera is at his back, framing Fernando in the center of the shot while he looks out at the entire stadium. Suddenly, the conversation switches back to Spanish as the interviewer asks, "Before they built the stadium here in Los Angeles, there was a conflict with the Mexican Community that was living here. They never told you about that story?" While the interviewer asks his question, the film cuts to old black and white video footage shot from a helicopter above the Dodger Stadium construction site followed by video footage of police officers forcibly removing one of the Mexican residents from her home in Chavez Ravine. The three police officers, one holding her feet and two holding each arm, carry the woman out of her house against her will. As these images play, Fernando, in Spanish, responds to the question: "No, never. They never spoke about what happened."

This moment and its imagery are both fascinating and crucial. That Fernando was never told about what happened for Dodger Stadium to be built speaks volumes about the institutional memory of the Los Angeles Dodgers organization. I can

personally attest to the fact that if you take a tour of Dodger Stadium, at least back in 2015, there was no mention of what happened to Chavez Ravine by the tour guide. When she spoke of moving dirt and gravel and building the stadium into the hill, it was as if there was no neighborhood there in the first place. It was made to sound as though it was all open land just there for the taking. Maybe she mentioned the surrounding neighborhoods, which you pass through as you drive up to Dodger Stadium, once during her tour.

After the film "Fernando Nation" narrates a bit of the history of Chavez Ravine accompanied by black and white footage of the Mexican/American community that used to live there, the images and mood transition to a much more somber tone as video footage of the original housing project plans and white men in suits visiting the community in the Ravine play on. All the while, the Los Angeles Dodger's Team Historian, Mark Langill, recalls the initial plan to create a housing project in the area and the vouchers that would allow former residents to return when the project was completed. He goes on to explain that, "Frank Wilkinson, who was the head of the housing authority at the time, was accused of being a communist. And so that took care of that project right there." That last sentence is quite a casual assessment of a historical event that adversely affected the livelihood of many people. The whole exchange is also chilling because the shots of Langill are framed so that you see him sitting in a chair in front of a large color picture that is an overhead shot of Dodger Stadium. The image is almost indicative of the story being told: a stadium built by white men for white men occupying land that was once belonged to a thriving Mexican community.

In the recounting of this tragic public memory are subtle but clear efforts to distance the Los Angeles Dodgers from what took place in Chavez Ravine throughout the 1950's. "All of this was going on years before the Dodgers came," says Langill. His words

convey a sense of distance from the political fallout of the housing project and the violence and painful memories perpetrated upon the residents. It is not that Langill is lying, but his words do hedge against the audience's judgement that the Dodgers are culpable for the failed housing project. However, we also know that it was the project's failure that allowed Walter O'Malley to purchase the land and build the baseball stadium he coveted. Steve Wulf, a sportswriter interviewed for "Fernando Nation," explains that O'Malley's business acumen always came first, and that he saw "a golden opportunity to make money in Los Angeles." This all fits with the public memory of Walter O'Malley the businessman who made baseball in Los Angeles and, even in death, Fernandomania, happen—more on that in a second.

Langill chimes in again: "Walter O'Malley took a helicopter ride over the Chavez Ravine area. He saw 300 acres centrally located. He wanted to build his own ballpark." Of course, there is no mention of the former or current residents of the Ravine, and the film cuts to the jubilation experienced by some at the news that the Dodgers would be arriving in Los Angeles. Then the film cuts to the footage of police officers forcibly removing residents from their homes and bulldozers destroying houses. Angeles includes prominent activist Dolores Huerta as an interviewee. Huerta explains that she was called by one of the remaining residents the day of the forced evictions, "I drove up to Chavez Ravine and picked her up, and she was sitting there, desolate, and everything around her was just in ruins." Clips of a family sitting on the side of the road, distraught, reveal the human toll.

Finding a Mexican Gem

Although this sequence of narration seeks to divorce the Dodgers of culpability for the destruction of Chavez Ravine, "Fernando Nation" does not shy away from explaining the consequences of the community's destruction. It is mostly felt by the

Dodgers—the "innocent party" in all of this—because the substantial Mexican/American and Latinx population in Los Angeles refused to attend games. Luis Rodriguez, a novelist and poet, recalls the effect that the traumatic memory had on the Mexican community, stating that when the stadium was finally completed in 1962, "Mexicans for the most part wouldn't go. They wouldn't go to the games. They had the stain of 'remember Chavez Ravine.'" This is confirmed by Stan Brooks, a television and film producer, who explains that there was always a disconnect between the team and the city. Fans were "primarily white men" because the team felt like a "businessman's team." The team's ownership understood that they had to reach a greater number of fans, and the best way to reach the fan base who actively shunned the team was to have one of their own play for the Dodgers. As legendary Spanish broadcaster Jaime Jarrín put it, the team made it a point to find "the Mexican Sandy Koufax" to bring Mexican fans to the stadium.

What is interesting about this series of interviews is that they push back on a previous assumption made during Fernandomania while validating another. Recall that Jaime Jarrín's Spanish-language broadcasts, not Fernando's incredible pitching, was originally credited for creating a relationship with the Mexican/American and greater Latinx Dodger fanbase in Los Angeles. It was also Walter O'Malley's business acumen and foresight that informed his decision to hire Jarrín, which paid additional dividends during Fernandomania. However, the accounts given by Luis Rodriguez and Stan Brooks suggest that those bleachers were a sea of white. Their observations suggest that the team struggled to connect with Mexican/American and Latinx fans, hence the team's desire to find the "Mexican Sandy Koufax." However, the desire to find that exceptional Mexican baseball player only goes back to that initial attribution that Walter O'Malley was a brilliant businessman. He may not have had the power to literally manufacture a

Mexican baseball star, but he could make sure that his team would be positioned to sign one when they found him. And as well all know, they did.

As the film begins to retell the story of Fernando's rookie season, beginning with his unscheduled but stellar debut for the Dodgers on opening day, familiar tropes that were used to disparage and deride Fernando make themselves known. As interviewees are asked about how Fernando was received by the public, they do not mince words or descriptions. They describe Fernando as pudgy, having long hair, and looking like a typical Mexican. This image is directly contrasted with the image of former Dodger pitching legend Don Drysdale, who is described as tall and athletic. Where Drysdale looks like he, "walked off a Mr. Universe competition," Fernando looked like he just finished, "a beer drinking competition." Interviewees also attest to his unusual wind up, framing it biblically: Fernando would take his eyes off the batter and look up to the sky, "looking to the heavens for guidance" as he would complete his windup and throw his pitch.

The film calls attention to the noticeable difference in the Los Angeles Dodger fanbase during Fernando's second start at Dodger Stadium. The stands are no longer a sea of white, as the film shows images of brown fans cheering on Valenzuela. At one point, an interviewee states, "It was like god sent him here, he was pre-ordained."[22] Another explains that his second start at Dodger Stadium, after winning his first four starts, was an event unlike any other. It is here where "Fernando Nation" mentions that the media dubbed this event Fernandomania, as Dodger Stadium hosted its largest crowd in seven years the night that Fernando returned to pitch at home. Numerous clips demonstrate the crowded stands and the overwhelming Latino presence; fans are seen wearing Fernando pins and holding signs, celebrating as if it were a playoff game. As one interviewee put it, "Latinos invaded Dodger Stadium" to watch him pitch. "The Dodgers

knew what they were doing. It was a P.R. machine. They had something, they wanted to sell it. He obviously was a great product." Fans who were being interviewed in the stands were no longer the typical white, businessman that originally made up the fan base at Dodger Stadium. They were working class Latinx fans who came specifically to see Fernando pitch and cheer for him. The Dodgers found the Mexican Sandy Koufax and the Latino fans flocked to Dodger Stadium. Two years after his death, Walter O'Malley's dream had finally become a reality.

Interestingly, the film exhibits a tension between the beloved public memory of Fernando Valenzuela and Fernandomania and the realities of the major leagues, namely that professional sports are ultimately a business. I say this because "Fernando Nation" constantly reminds the viewer that the Dodgers sought talented players from Mexico for years so that the team could tap into the Mexican/American residents of Los Angeles. Mark Langill recalls this sentiment, explaining that "if the Dodgers could find that one gem from Mexico, they could tap into that entire market." The film supports this statement with a video clip of an interview with Al Campanis that recalls conversations he has had with Walter O'Malley about their collaborative desire to find a talented Mexican baseball player so that the Mexican/American population will be motivated to come and see one of their own playing in Dodger Stadium. It is a straightforward plan: put one of their own on your team and play them so the fans will come. In some ways, these interviews and testimonies should tarnish the mythical framing of the documentary's introduction and the story it is ultimately recounting. These sentiments, highlighted again later when the film covers Fernando's holdout, suggest that finding Fernando was less an accident and more the result of a concerted strategy by the Dodgers to appeal to a potential fanbase that had continued to shun them for almost twenty years. But because the public memory of the poor kid from Mexico becoming the

most recognizable baseball player in America is too precious to tarnish, it endures despites these bits of sobering reality.

Furthermore, all these testimonials about recruiting a talented Mexican player (or recruiting a Spanish-speaking broadcaster) reinforce Walter O'Malley's public memory, namely his business acumen and contributions to baseball. One interviewee, ex-Dodgers player Bobby Valentine, describes how O'Malley would invoke the history of Jackie Robinson.[23] As Valentine explains, "Walter did in fact say, 'with Branch Ricky at the helm, we got Jackie Robinson, and we broke the color line.' His ideas were always expansive and one of his ideas was that there had to be more international expansion." Finding a talented Mexican player was about business, and baseball was and still very much is a business. Interviewees do express how difficult it is to find such incredibly talented players, let alone talented players of Mexican heritage. But ultimately, nobody at any point in the film finds this strategy of appealing to Mexican/American and Latinx fans questionable or problematic. After all, the business reality of professional baseball is secondary to the impressive story being told. And given that Fernando emerged during the cultural and political moment that he did in conjunction with his ability to heal the wounds from injustices of the past only benefits the Dodgers more. The team that integrated baseball is now also the team that helped heal the wound inflected upon Chavez Ravine.

A Novel Public Idiom

As "Fernando Nation" narrates Fernando's historic 1981 season and his baseball career with the Dodgers, the film also touches on important historical events that led up to Fernando's debut for the Dodgers in 1981. After recounting the injustices and tragedy of Chavez Ravine, the film briefly summarizes the Mexican/Latino political awakening that takes place in the 1960's and 70's, namely the United Farm Workers Movement and

the Chicano Movement. The film utilizes video clips of Cesar Chavez addressing workers in the fields and news footage of the Chicano Blowouts and Chicano Moratorium that took place in the late 60's and early 70's. The film also revisits the economic and political unrest that the newly elected Reagan administration faced in the early 1980's, the growing Latinx population across the United States, the dehumanizing immigration raids, and the greater pattern of discrimination against Latinx people. The recollection of these events attempts to explain why Fernandomania became such a significant and lasting cultural phenomenon. The film contextualizes its public memory within the broader history of Mexican/American and Latinx social and political activism across the United States, suggesting that awakening of Chicanx and Mexican/American identity and political activism provided the foundation for Fernandomania to become a cultural phenomenon bigger than baseball.

By linking Fernandomania to the destruction of Chavez Ravine and the Chicano Movement, the public memory of resistance to the takeover of Chavez Ravine becomes displaced. Rather than being contextualized as the start of the Chicano Movement and the fight for justice and equity, the destruction of La Lloma, Palo Verde, and Bishop are viewed as a one-off event rather than the catalyst for a greater social movement. Laslett's (2015) book on the history of the area and its community points out that the fight to save La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop, and the televised resistance by the last holdouts was a vital moment for the Chicano movement. Because previous urban renewal projects that took place around Los Angeles happened quietly, Ronald W. López (2009) argues that the acts of resistance is what made their efforts heroic and revered amongst Chicano activists throughout the 1960's and 70's. When interviewed by the *LA Times* about the aftermath of the evictions, López explained that, "'The fact that they fought, fought, fought, showed people that they were going to stand up. And people can identify with

that'" (Baxter, 2008). Their resistance was inspirational and brave, but the public memory of that resistance has been eroded away by historical inaccuracies[24] and more joyful public memories. Chavez Ravine is no longer a site of remembering resistance, but rather remembering players and championships.

By portraying the violent destruction of La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop as disconnected from the genesis of the Chicano Movement, the film can celebrate and overstate the contributions Fernando made to Mexican/American and Latinx identity. In the film, Latinx writer Luis Rodriguez claims that, "The Chicano movement brought a lot of people to the streets, and that was part of that. But here were people coming out to Dodger Stadium and there was still a sense of pride. For us it was like a Mexican could be as good as anybody." This statement suggests that participating in the communitas of Fernandomania and Fernando's public memory and the influence are akin to those who protested—and sacrificed their bodies and lives to state-sanctioned violence—in the name of the Chicano Movement of the 1960's and 1970's. What this narration does is emphasize the racial and ethnic pride dynamics of Fernandomania at the expense of forgiving and/or forgetting the fight to save—and remember—La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop.

The emphasis on racial and ethnic pride is intensified by the ways that the interviewees laud Fernando. "There will never be another Fernando Valenzuela," recalls Estela Lopez, a Los Angeles-based broadcast journalist. "Not just statistically, not just in terms of the win loss column. But the times, the moment that he came into this city and into that stadium, there will never be another time like that." Dolores Huerta adds her own perspective, stating that Fernando, "touched people in their hearts, really. In their hearts. What he was, was also part of them." Using Dolores Huerta, co-founder of the United Farm Workers along with Cesar Chavez, to advocate for the historical importance

of Fernando Valenzuela adds ethos to the sentiment the film is trying to convey. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of images—brown protestors holding signs demanding equality while happy brown Dodgers fans flock to get an autograph from Fernando—suggests that Fernando and his memory healed the tension and turmoil that had erupted across during the Chicano Movement. By giving Mexican/Americans and Latinx people an avenue to become invested and participate in baseball, violent trauma from the past seems to have faded. And by displacing the memory of resistance, the destruction of La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop can only be viewed by the audience within a vacuum rather than a grander and growing historical narrative of white supremacy that marginalizes Mexican/American and Latinx people.

By displacing the memory of La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop, the film "Fernando Nation" can successfully convey the moral that the public memory of Fernando Valenzuela and Fernandomania has facilitated forgiveness for the violence and injustice that destroyed La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop. The dark memories of the past have been eroded away and filled by new memories of El Toro taking the mound. This last quote from Estela Lopez is indicative of an interesting belief about Fernando's impact on the Latino community:

> When you think about the tears and the agony that so many Mexican families had to go through to leave that beloved neighborhood, and now a Mexican hero comes to the mound on Chavez Ravine. There was a sense of history that on that same ground where so many Mexican families lost a dream, a Mexican came and placed a stake on a new dream.

As this soundbite plays, the film flashes back to the previous video footage of the families being removed from their homes in Chavez Ravine. Then the film cuts to Fernando in the present day under the bright lights of Dodger Stadium walking to the mound wearing his

number 34 Dodgers jersey. He clutches the baseball in his hand as he winds up to throw a pitch. The stadium is empty, but as the camera pans around Fernando standing on the mound. There is a feeling of re-living the magic from his younger years as a Los Angeles Dodger. The film ends, leaving the viewer with a sense of nostalgia and hope for the future. Despite being reminded of that dark past, Fernando's presence on that pitcher's mound, just one more time, makes everything feel all better. Lopez's sentiment coupled with the poetic imagery of Fernando taking the mound once again is beautiful and powerful.

There is no doubt that Fernando was and still is an important icon to Mexican/American and Latinx communities. What Estela Lopez says is quite powerful, and at first glance it is easy to suggest that her words are solely her opinions or are used so that the film can frame the public memory of Chavez Ravine and Fernandomania in particular (and problematic) ways. But when coupled with Luis Rodriguez's previously stated observation, that "the culture needed a Mexican indigenous person for that moment," it suggests that there is a truth behind Lopez's words. And if you see who attends games at Dodger Stadium today, you quickly realize that the Dodgers are not the white businessman's team anymore. Mexican/Americans and Latinx fans flock to Chavez Ravine all the time, but not to take up residence and create livelihoods like their kin did almost 70 years ago. Instead, they take up a temporary residence that is contingent upon their ability to afford entry at the gate; if you cannot afford entry, you are not allowed to return. Mexican/Americans may have flocked to Dodger Stadium in the 1980's to see Fernando pitch, and although their memory persists as a part of Fernandomania, their physical presence was always temporary. When the lights went out at the end of the night, the stadium was empty.

Mexican/Americans continue to attend games, and from time to time they will get misty-eyed when the stadium camera cuts to Fernando sitting in the broadcast booth alongside Jaime Jarrín—I know I certainly do—but the fans are not shedding tears for the families that lost their homes more than 60 years ago. The image of "El Toro" looking to the heavens from the mound invokes warmth and nostalgia, while the images and memories of the Mexican families that raised their families fade into obscurity. The narrative articulated in this film—that forgiveness has happened over the decades—might be easy to dismiss as a narrative restricted to this single text, disconnected from the greater social reality.

This text contributes to the *novel public idiom* that has emerged in the wake of Fernandomania, which is that the memories of Fernando Valenzuela, Fernandomania, and the Los Angeles Dodgers are more central to Mexican/American and Latinx ethnic and racial identity than the public memories and histories of resistance, protest, and struggle. By extension, Chavez Ravine is no longer remembered as a site of Mexican/American prosperity taken away by wealthy and powerful white men or a struggle to resist the efforts by different wealthy and powerful white men to deprive what few Mexican/Americans remained of whatever prosperity they had left. Instead, Chavez Ravine is more and more solely remembered as the home of Dodger Stadium and Dodger baseball. As time has progressed and a plethora of new public memories take hold, Mexican/American and Latinx people are only further disconnected from that memory of prosperity and struggle. In its place, the novel public idiom substitutes donning a Dodgers baseball cap and a Clayton Kershaw jersey as a sign of prosperity and waiting out the Dodgers' championship drought as a sign of struggle. As I said back in chapter one, whenever anyone hears he words "Chavez Ravine," they will almost always

remember the communitas associated with Dodger Stadium and Dodger baseball while forgetting the public memory of racial injustice and prosperity denied.

By selectively remembering Fernandomania and Fernando's career, the Dodgers can continue to benefit from Fernandomania now just as they did in 1981, facilitating the public forgetting of La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop while commodifying Mexican/American and Latinx ethnic and racial identity whenever possible. It also allows the Dodgers to reconstruct the public memory of Chavez Ravine in their favor. That was Walter O'Malley's business strategy after all. He wanted a Spanish-language broadcaster to reach the significant Spanish-speaking population of the greater Los Angeles area, and he wanted the "Mexican Sandy Koufax" to attract Mexican/American and Latinx fans. It continues to be the Dodgers business strategy now as they host their "Viva Los Dodgers" events throughout the regular season and sponsor special giveaway and bobblehead nights that commodify various ethnic and racial identities.

Remembering and Honoring El Toro

> *"There will never be another one like him. This will never happen again. Never."—Jaime Jarrín, in reaction to the news that Fernando Valenzuela had been cut by the Dodgers. (Plaschke, 1991b)*
>
> *"I've said this before, and I say it in measured tones, but the 1981 season and Fernandomania bordered on a religious experience. Fernando being Mexican, coming from nowhere, it was as though Mexicans grabbed onto him with both hands to ride to the moon"—Vin Scully remembering Fernandomania and reacting to the news that Fernando Valenzuela had been cut by the Dodgers. (Hudson, 1991)*

On September 21, 2018, the Los Angeles Dodgers announced that they were creating a new way to commemorate previous players who played for the Dodgers.

Named the *Legends of Dodger Baseball* program, it was announced that Don Newcombe[25], Steve Garvey, and Fernando Valenzuela would comprise the inaugural class enshrined during the 2019 season. Dodgers Owner and Chairman Mark Walter stated "This group epitomizes what it means to be a Dodger, not only with their incredible careers on the field but also through their dedicated service to the Los Angeles community" while Dodgers President and CEO Stan Kasten added that the designation included "the creation of a permanent home to celebrate the great players, personnel and moments that have helped make the Dodgers one of the most storied institutions in professional sports"(Kavner, 2018). Although players would be enshrined in formal and permanent ways—an induction ceremony prior to a game, a commemorative bobblehead given away to fans, and a plaque honoring the player and his contributions to Dodger baseball that would be hung in the stadium—this was not a hall of fame induction, nor was the player having his number retired.

Accompanying the team's announcement of the *Legends of Dodger Baseball* program was a special video narrated by Vin Scully which provided a summary of each players accomplishments, reminding fans about what made these players so popular, prolific, and therefore worthy of being honored; as the voice of the Dodgers, Vin would also narrate the tribute videos that honored every player at their induction ceremony.

As the third honoree, Fernando's ceremony was held on July 20, 2019. However, Fernando made an appearance at the "Old Timers Game" the month prior and received a raucous standing ovation—Dodger Stadium not even being at half capacity—despite only briefly waving to the crowd once from just outside the dugout and not participating in the four-inning scrimmage. Despite that "Old Timers Game" also coinciding with Steve Garvey's "Legends of Dodger Baseball" induction, meaning the first 40,000 fans in attendance would also receive a Steve Garvey "Legends" bobblehead, from my estimation

there were easily more fans at the stadium for Fernando's induction ceremony than Garvey's. The day after Fernando's induction, my mom and I took the access shuttle from where we parked outside the stadium to the Viva Los Dodgers fan event being held prior to that day's game, and the driver remarked something akin to, "I have seen it crowded on bobblehead days, but yesterday's was intense. I've never seen the stadium that packed for a bobblehead day." In my mind, I immediately thought, "yea, because Fernando."

Although a pre-game ceremony is not the reason why fans came to Dodger Stadium that night, there was a different feel that evening. Yes, people were packing into the stadium early to get their free giveaway (you do not want to be late and miss out on your bobblehead) but there was also excitement in their air. When the ceremony began and Fernando came out onto the field, you could feel the joy emanating from all the fans as they rose to give him a standing ovation.

The ceremony began, just as all the others, with a tribute video narrated by Vin Scully.[26] He opens the video by referencing Fernando's humble origins, remarking that "Every once in a while, it's nice to hear a story about how anyone, no matter where they live, what family they are from, or how much money they have, can make a significant impact on the world." However, Vin would not narrate this tribute alone. Following Vin's opening remarks, Jamie Jarrín begins to tell Fernando's story in Spanish (with English subtitles), adding that:

> This legend begins in the tiny town of Etchohuaquila, Mexico, where a 12-year old boy who had never dreamed of the future began to have aspirations of becoming a professional baseball player. At the time, his ambition wasn't to make it to the major leagues. It was simply to become a better player, one step at a time.

Vin takes over the narration, telling the story of how a scout—Mike Brito is not mentioned by name, but several images collaged together show Brito with Fernando[27]—witnessed Fernando striking out all the players he faced. Fernando was signed and left "the state of Sonora for the state of California" to begin his path towards major league stardom.

As the year 1979 flashes on the jumbotron, Vin provides contextualization for how successful the Dodgers franchise was through 1979, pointing out their three championships (1959, 1963, and 1965) since moving to their new home. But for all the glory and success, something was still missing:

> In 1979, the Los Angeles Dodgers were a very successful team. They had won three World Series titles since moving to their new home and had appeared in the Fall Classic three times during the decade of the seventies. But Dodger owner Walter O'Malley knew that there was something missing. The city was [sic] roughly a quarter of its population being Hispanic, most of them Mexican Americans, didn't have a baseball player from their home country to cheer for.

This segment paints an interesting and incomplete context about the fact that the Dodgers had not won over everyone in Los Angeles. For all their success in the 1960s and 1970s, it is true that the Latinx community had not come to embrace the Dodgers. But the cause, it is suggested, has to do with the players on the team. According to video's account of history, Walter O'Malley recognized that the team needed a Mexican baseball player so Mexican/Americans could root for him and embrace the Dodgers. This harkens back to sentiments expressed by Jaime Jarrín during Fernandomania in which he explains that O'Malley was obsessed with finding a great Mexican ballplayer to appeal to the Mexican/American and Latinx communities in Los Angeles. This public memory, as retold by the Dodgers, omits the inconvenient truth about their own history with the

Mexican/American community that refused to embrace the Dodgers. By reconstructing their own image and memory, the Dodgers contribute to the public forgetting of the historical violence and injustice that took place in Chavez Ravine.

Images of Fernando's opening day victory litter the screen as Jarrín points out that, "That all changed on April 9, 1981, when the kid from Etchohuaquila was the opening day starter at Dodger Stadium. He performed magnificently, throwing a complete game shutout." The video tribute uses a graphic of an analog portable television to inset a clip of Fernando's final out from that opening day win with Vin's original call from the game: "What a way to start! Fernando Valenzuela, in his first big league start, pitches a shutout." Vin takes over the narration, pointing out that:

> Throwing complete games would become the norm for the rookie. His next three starts would be complete game victories on the road. After allowing just one run over his first four starts, he returned to Dodger Stadium for his first start there since opening day. The atmosphere was electric, and there was a new fanbase in attendance.

Then the graphic of the portable television shows clips of interviews with fans at Dodger Stadium. They are all Latinx, and most of them speak Spanish or English with accents. As a Spanish guitar plays gentle music in the background, all the fans in the clips proclaim their praise for Fernando's, with one fan smiling and pronouncing ecstatically, "We want Valenzuela to keep it up, and keep pitching like he pitch! [sic] And he is the greatest, like Muhammad Ali!" Clips of fans in the stands, who are very clearly Latinx, cheering for Fernando are mixed in. One clip shows a group of fans holding a white banner that proudly states "Viva Fernando."

Even if you are like me and you cannot help but obsess over that glaring omission about Chavez Ravine's history and the problematic framing of the Dodgers past, it is

hard not to feel the communitas that the video attempts to capture. There is something powerful about seeing a young Mexican pitcher who could easily resemble my cousins, *mis primos*, from my *abuelita's* side of the family in Mexico. And there is something beautiful about seeing so many fans who resemble family members and people I grew up with beaming with optimism that their hero is literally someone who is just like them. I may not have been alive to witness Fernandomania myself, but there is something inspiring about those images on the screen. There is no disputing that Fernando had the ability to bring Mexican/Americans and Latinx fans together or inspire them with his gifts. That the video shown in the stadium that day is capable of moving this trans/queer Chicana well practiced in being skeptical speaks to the rhetorical force of the film.

After the series of fan interviews plays, Vin chimes in again as newspaper clippings of Fernando's various starts throughout his first 8 games:

> Yes, this was the player Walter O'Malley had been hoping for. The young lefty, who seemed to look towards the heavens prior to every pitch, lived up to the moment throwing another complete game shutout. April 27, 1981, was the day that the phenomenon known as Fernandomania was born and the aftereffects of this cultural moment continue to be felt 38 years later.

A collage of images of Fernando in the present plays for fans. Images include Fernando standing alongside Jaime Jarrín in the Spanish-language broadcast booth, Fernando sitting next to Vin Scully up in one of the press boxes near a television camera and the two of them standing together after throwing out the first pitch prior to game two of the 2017 World Series, and Fernando sitting a few seats away from former California Governor Jerry Brown. Vin's words along with the images of an older Fernando still wearing a Dodgers uniform and being an active member and affiliate of the Dodgers organization speaks to his continued presence and everlasting influence. It may have

been decades since he last pitched for the Dodgers, but the cultural influence of Fernandomania is everlasting.

The collection of images then shifts to older photos of Fernando during his early playing days with Jarrín summarizing Fernando's incredible streak, pointing out that Fernando had gone "the distance in each of those victories." He is re-acquainting the audience with Fernando's numbers over that span followed by Vin summarizing the awards Fernando earned at the end of the season—Cy Young and Rookie of the Year, also pointing out he is the only player to win both in the same season—and concludes with a reminder that Fernando was a world champion in 1981. Jarrín points out that Fernando had also won two Silver Slugger awards for being an excellent hitter, and then reminds audiences about Fernando's ability to go the distance every game he started by comparing his numbers to another Dodger great, Sandy Koufax:

> From 1983-1987 he [Fernando] averaged 13 complete games a season. In fact, in 1986, he won 21 games and had 20 complete games. The most in Dodger history since Sandy Koufax had achieved the same in 1966.

The video then replays the final moments of Fernando's memorable no-hitter at Dodger Stadium, and Vin declares that, "the magic of Fernandomania was not finished yet" as the image of the LA Times sports section documenting "The Night of Two No-Hitters" features prominently up top with the image of another headline, "'Fernando fever' hasn't stopped," just below. The image of the portable analog television returns to show a clip of the final out that sealed Fernando's achievement, accompanied by Vin's original call of the last play. Jaime Jarrín adds that, "It would be difficult to name any other member of the Los Angeles Dodgers who has made a more lasting impact on this organization and this city than number 34."

The rest of the ceremony featured Mike Soscia and Jaime Jarrín giving speeches to honor Fernando and commemorate his greatness. This was followed by Fernando's own acceptance speech in front of the growing crowd at Dodger Stadium. Their remarks did not deviate from the official narrative presented by the Dodgers' video presentation. There was no mention about the screwball that suddenly went flat, the arm that suddenly tired, or the unceremonious end to the hero's career. It was all pleasantries and positivity. It was a day to remember Fernandomania and honor Fernando, not dwell on the forgotten realities that also lay in the past.

Remembering and Resentment

> *He said, "please, your son is on a baseball team. Let's go to the Dodgers as a family." I'll never go again. I hated it. I didn't enjoy it. It was like dancing on a grave. – Carol Jaques, interviewee and former resident of Chavez Ravine (Mechner, 2004).*

There are those, of course, who still remember Chavez Ravine as the beautiful and thriving community it once was prior to its destruction. For them, it was a place of happiness and prosperity. Now Dodger Stadium represents a dark memory where hopes and dream were taken away, even if the Dodgers are not directly responsible for the community's destruction.

For those who remember those happy times coming to a dark end, they continue to stay away all these years later. Aurora Fernandez, previously known as Aurora Vargas, would attend the annual Palo Verde-Loma-Bishop Cultural and Historical Association picnic held in Elysian Park, just down the hill from Dodger Stadium. When she was interviewed in 1988, she expressed her refusal to lay eyes on the stadium itself, let alone attend a game there: "'I've never even seen it […] I don't have any grudge against the Dodgers […] My grandchildren go to the games…The Dodgers are my favorite team. But I

just can't go in that stadium'" (McGarry, 1988). When Amelia Chico, a former resident of Chavez Ravine, was interviewed for the documentary film *Chavez Ravine: A Los Angeles Story*, she explained that "When I saw the bulldozers moving the land, I said 'You know I'm never go see a Dodger game.' Though I was a Dodgers fan [sic]" (Mechner, 2004). There is an intriguing mix of resentment and revere for what happened to Chavez Ravine and the Los Angeles Dodgers. Clearly, those who were directly affected and remember what happened can divorce the Dodgers from direct complicity while still maintaining the public memory of La Loma, Palo Verne, and Bishop through their choice to refuse attending Dodger games.

Those tensions have never quite gone away, especially for those who continue to live in the areas surrounding Dodger Stadium. When Peter O'Malley announced he was selling the Dodgers in 1997, Latinx residents who lived in the neighborhoods adjacent to the stadium were not sorry to see him go. They had been upset that he ignored their concerns about stadium noise, trash, traffic and crime. And the announcement brought lingering resentment to the surface:

> They denounced him for not doing more for the surrounding communities and decried his father, Walter, for the way he acquired the property for the stadium and how the residents were evicted.
>
> "I never bought a ticket to a Dodger game and I never will," said Virgina Pinedo-Bye, who was raised less than a mile from the stadium and still lives in the neighborhood. "When Dodger Stadium opened, me and a girlfriend threw tomatoes at it. I still feel the same way about the place." (Willilams, 2019)

There are still a few who contest how Chavez Ravine should be seen and remembered. Where others see a ballpark, they see the heartbreak and violence that destroyed their livelihood and community.

To add insult to injury, the monument to that destruction continues to wreak havoc on the community's livelihood. As recently as 2019, controversy erupted again when the Dodgers ownership, Guggenheim Baseball Management, announced extensive renovations to Dodger Stadium for the 2020 season and All-Star Game; residents of adjacent Solano Canyon voiced their frustrations to city hall and asked the city to halt the project (Willilams, 2019). All these decades later and those who were fortunate enough to stay continue to have their prosperity infringed by fans going and coming from games. Without a doubt, Chavez Ravine belongs to the Dodgers. The only prosperous community that can be found in the ravine is the one fans pay to be a part of 81 times a year (not including exhibition and playoffs). But hey, at least Dodger Stadium is neighborly enough to remind fans leaving the ballpark to be courteous towards their "neighbors." How thoughtful.

There is clearly a complicated relationship that continues to persist to this day. It is one that many Dodger fans easily ignore. And it is not hard to see why. Pennant races and debating whether Clayton Kershaw is the ultimate playoff choker is much more stimulating and interesting than questioning what one's patronage does to erase the public memories of the past. As more and more fans continue to flock to Dodger Stadium to break attendance records and cheer for the Dodgers to finally bring that long-awaited World Series trophy home, Chavez Ravine only becomes more synonymous with the public memory and image of the Los Angeles Dodgers and historic moments like Koufax's perfect-game or Fernando's opening day shutout.

And while Fernandomania may not have single-handedly buried the memory of La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop, it has played a significant part. Dodger Stadium had already irrevocably transformed the physical landscape of Chavez Ravine, and through time erased its public memory with newer ones. Fernandomania is one of those newer

memories. And while it does not live on today and did not live on past 1981, the communitas it inspired continues to reverberate among Mexican/Americans and Latinx people across Los Angeles. Even if they do not explicitly remember Fernando Valenzuela or Fernandomania, they are a visible presence in the stands as the Dodgers have become ingrained in Chicanx identity, culture, and lore. And while the public memory of Chavez Ravine prior to 1951 occasionally pops up every once in a while, like an echo, it is quickly and easily overwhelmed by the pop of a catcher's mitt after a fastball crosses home plate, the crack of a bat hitting a home run, and the pandemonium from the crowd when that home run ball goes over the wall.

Today, Chavez Ravine is home to Dodger Stadium and the Los Angeles Dodgers. The public memory of La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop remain buried, just like the remains of the Palo Verde grammar school, by Dodger blue. Occasional memories of the past reappear, and some are more substantial or transgressive in their remembering than others. But at the end of the day, there is no question that Chavez Ravine belongs to the Los Angeles Dodgers.

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[1] The Dodgers showed their appreciation for Jackie Robinson by attempting to trade him to their bitter rivals, the New York Giants, in 1956 after his worst statistical season. The trade fell through because Robinson, unbeknownst to the Dodgers, had decided to retire.

[2] Although Fernando won more games and pitched the most complete games in the National League, Mike Scott of the Houston Astros lead the National League in earned run average and tied for the most shutouts thrown that season. Scott also gave up fewer hits than Fernando (182 to 226), had more strikeouts (306 to 242), and had a better *walks plus hits per inning pitched* metric (0.923 WHIP) than Fernando (1.155 WHIP).

[3] When play resumed following the strike, Mark Heisler (1981n) reported that, "Fernandomania is also old enough that Valenzuela's advisors have begun thinking about the next contract" and cited $750,000 as their desired terms. He dedicates an entire column to the inevitable standoff the seems to be brewing between Fernando and the Dodgers front office. In his feature, Heisler (1981o)calls attention to the fact that, "the Dodgers don't say quite as much about Fernando as they once did" because money is at stake; Heisler also reported that, thanks to "the publicity bonanza Valenzuela has received [...] his drawing power; his special appeal to Los Angeles' huge Latin population" and his phenomenal 8-0 start, Dodgers executives admitted that negotiations with Fernando's management would be unprecedented.

[4] After going 8-0, Fernando lost his first game against the defending champion Philadelphia Phillies, led by reigning NL MVP Mike Schmitt and the legendary Pete Rose. He would then post an ugly 1-4 record over his next 8 starts with a 6.46 ERA, a far cry from starting the season undefeated with eight wins in a row and a 0.50 ERA. To add insult to injury, "for the first time

since Fernandomania sprang to life, a few boos were directed his [Fernando's] way" in his second post-striek start (Edes, 1981).

[5] The reason why the latter part of the 1981 season is referred to as the "second season" is because Major League Baseball decided that teams in first place prior to the strike were considered the division winners of the "first season." The standings would be reset after the strike, and teams could play for first place again during the "second season" and the winners of each season would face off in an additional playoff round prior to the League Championship Series. Yes, it was confusing for writers and fans back in 1981 as well.

[6] *La Opinion* is popular and well-regarded Spanish-language newspaper based in Los Angeles.

[7] Fernando was not without his supporters in the press. Scott Ostler (1982b) criticized fan outrage in his column, arguing that "all he [Fernando] did was almost single-armedly pitch the Dodgers into the World Series." Frank del Olmo (1982) remarked that although he was not a Dodger fan, he liked Fernando and rooted for him "in a quiet sort of way" because Fernando gave the city "a sense of community;" del Olmo goes on to say that he, "appreciates anyone who helps this community better understand and appreciate its largest ethnic minority, 3 million Mexican-American."

[8] During the 1981-1982 season, Magic Johnson stated after a win that he wished to be traded if Lakers coach Paul Westhead remained in charge. Magic infamously said he, "wasn't having fun" and wanted out, despite winning a championship (and Finals MVP) his rookie year. The next day, Lakers owner Jerry Buss (who allegedly had already contemplated firing Westhead) gave into Magic's wishes and promoted Pat Riley to head coach. Magic was booed in ensuring home and away games for his actions.

[9] Although writers would recall the seemingly distant past between Fernandomania and the present, they still held Fernando's subsequent seasons (1982-1986) with high regard. At the end of the 1982 season, Scott Ostler (1982c) praised Fernando for his 19-12 record and his ability to win 11 games following Dodger losses. During the 1983 season, a story by David Reyes discussed the dearth heroes in the Latinx community, but the most popular one was, of course, Fernando ("Latino Heroes"). When remembering his rookie season, Jim Murray (1985) remarked that, "His poor pitches were hard to see. His good pitches disappeared altogether" and remarked that, "Probably no player since Ruth ever had the same unreserved affection in the hearts of his sport's fans as Valenzuela." In a 1985 profile that revisited Fernando's rookie season, back when he was still considered a mystery, Mike Downey (1985) recalled Valenzuela's improbable ability to dominate hitters with his screwball. "Nothing much has changed for Fernando on the mound, that is for sure [...] but the eyeballs still search for the heavens, and the screwball still veers away from right-handed hitters, and the hometown crowds still come out en masse to see him pitch.

[10] Following the 1986 season, Fernando finished second in the Cy Young voting. He led the National League in complete games (20) and wins (21) despite the Dodgers leading the major leagues in defensive errors (161) and finishing fifth in their division, well out of playoff contention (Newhan, 1986). The Dodgers were also one of the worst hitting teams in the National League that season, meaning Fernando's wins were deflated (and his losses inflated) by his team's meager offense.

[11] Fernando appeared on a few Most Valuable Player ballots following the 1981, 1982, 1985, and 1986 seasons. He placed as high as 5th in 1981.

[12] Garvey, Lopes, Russell, and Cey set an MLB record for being the longest tenured infield to play together. They appeared in three World Series (1977, 1978, 1981) finally winning on their third try.

[13] The only consistency in Fernando's pitching was his hemorrhaging runs. By July of that a season, Fernando had followed up that win against the Reds with ugly losses to the Pirates and Cardinals—both in which he lasted only five innings and gave up five and six runs respectively—and then a seven hit shutout against the Pirates at Dodger Stadium (Howard-Cooper, 1987). Following that victory, he struggled again. In the ensuing two games, Fernando only lasted no longer than six innings and giving up as many as eight runs.

[14] Amid the downturn of his career, the magic of Fernandomania came back to life the night of June 29, 1990 when Fernando pitched a no-hitter against the St. Louis Cardinals at Dodger Stadium. As the story goes, Fernando was getting ready in the locker room when teammates

relayed news that Dave Stewart, a former Dodger and teammate of Fernando, had just successfully pitched a no-hitter for the Oakland A's. Fernando's response? "That's great, now maybe we'll see another no-hitter." Later that evening, Vin Scully made the following call as the Dodgers successfully converted a double play to end the game: "Fernando Valenzuela has pitched a no-hitter! If you have a sombrero, throw it to the sky!" To this day, this is the only time in the modern baseball era that two no-hitters have been pitched on the same day, and it is the only no-hitter that Fernando threw in his major league career.

[15] In reading the summary of games during Fernando's career, it was common for Tommy Lasorda to use a four man starting rotation when a pitcher would be injured or ineffective rather than have a reliever or a call up from the minors come and fill in for one game.

[16] And if you ask any Mexican/American or Latinx Dodger fans who were alive during Fernando Valenzuela's career, they will likely reiterate that the Dodgers abused his arm for profit.

[17] Plaschke (1991b) reported that, "The Dodgers also wonder how many innings Valenzuela pitched before he signed with them in 1979." The implication is that Fernando had pitched many innings from as far back as when he was 14, and that he could have started to wear his arm out even before he came to the Dodgers.

[18] Several written works on the history of the Dodgers' move to Los Angeles discuss what happened with varying details and intensities. Michael Schiavone's book *The Dodgers: 60 Years in Los Angeles* dedicates just two pages to the controversy—apparently a footnote might be perceived as dismissive. Andy McCue's (2013) publication "Barrio, Bulldozers, and Baseball: The Destruction of Chavez Ravine" in *NINE* focuses on the controversy surrounding Dodger Stadium's construction; however, it is ultimately adapted from McCue's (2014) larger book project, *Mover and Shaker: Walter O'Malley, the Dodgers, and Baseball's Westward Expansion*, an account of Walter O'Malley's life and his successful but controversial tenure as owner of the Dodgers—the latter sentiment being one that Ray Shuck would definitely agree with. Jerald E. Podair's book *City of Dreams: Dodger Stadium and the Birth of Modern Los Angeles* contextualizes Los Angeles' unique politics and presents an extended account of the original housing project, the political forces that killed it, and the various sentiments and hurdles that led to (and almost derailed) the Dodgers move to Los Angeles. But no written account is more detailed or scathing than John H. M. Laslett's book *Shameful Victory: The Los Angeles Dodgers, the Red Scare, and the Hidden History of Chavez Ravine*. Laslett (2015) sets himself apart by incorporating not only the voices of the Los Angeles politicians or businessman Walter O'Malley, he intentionally labors to tell the story from the perspective of the Mexican/Americans whose livelihoods were threatened. Laslett provides a rich contextualization of Chavez Ravine's history from before the post-World War II and New Deal periods where most accounts of the history and memory begin. This is not to say his account is perfect or that it could not be better, but of those few written histories that I have had time to encounter thus far it is the most thorough and enlightening.[18] And these are just the written accounts of the history of Chavez Ravine and the Dodgers move to Los Angeles.

[19] On the documentary's website, Angeles is described as a local Los Angeles filmmaker.

[20] Bradford Vivian (2014) explains that a novel public idiom allows "a community's relation to its past, present, and future [to] be configured anew, or at least in profoundly altered way's" (p. 14).

[21] Prior to the release of "Fernando Nation," there had already been several documentaries that recounted what happened to Chavez Ravine and La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop in the 1950's. Jordan Mechner's (2003) film *Chavez Ravine: A Los Angeles Story* weaves the black and white photographs taken by Don Newmark along with interviews from former residents, many of them who were children, who remember being evicted from their homes to make way for the public housing development; even Frank Wilkerson, the original head of the Los Angles hosing department who spearheaded the project, is an interviewee. And the educational series *Lost in L.A.*[21] features an episode that recalls the history of Chavez Ravine in the early days of Los Angeles' existence along with the story of the eviction controversy. However, Cruz Angeles's film is one of the few pieces of media—the other being an episode of the podcast *99% Invisible*—that draws a direct connection between the public memories of the battle to preserve the Mexican/American community of Chavez Ravine and the transformation (and implied

forgiveness) Dodger Stadium experienced as a result of Fernando Valenzuela and Fernandomania.

[22] This type of messianic language was not uncommon, even during Fernandomania. When Fernando finally lost his first game, a fan by the name of Jose Patrirez of Ontario wrote to the *LA Times* to joke that, "If Valenzuela had shut out the Phillies, I know there would have been a statue of him standing right next to our lovely Lady of Guadalupe" ("Viewpoint: Letters Fernando, Cont.," 1981).

[23] Branch Rickey, the general manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers, is credited with signing Jackie Robinson. At the time, Walter O'Malley was the team's attorney and had purchased a portion of the team, but he was not the principle or outright owner of the Brooklyn Dodgers. It is suggested that, as the team's attorney, O'Malley worked to shield the Dodgers from legal liability when they signed Robinson and helped with the team's covert effort to scout Black players; however, this has been disputed. It is well known that Branch Rickey and Walter O'Malley despised one another, with O'Malley eventually firing Rickey when he became the controlling owner of the Brooklyn Dodgers.

[24] One prominent example takes place within the "Fernando Nation" documentary, specifically when Los Angeles-based journalist Estela Lopez asserts that the residents who left Chavez Ravine in the 1950's did so willingly and that eminent domain was used only to remove the last residents who had held out. This is fundamentally not true (eminent domain was used to acquire all the property for the housing project) and glosses over the fact that many residents felt pressured, manipulated, or outright threatened by the Los Angeles Housing Authority. In fact, it was widely reported by former residents that the Housing Authority coerced people into selling their homes by threatening to condemn them and leave homeowners with no compensation whatsoever; therefore, the owners decided it was best to sell and receive some money rather that none at all.

[25] Don Newcombe, along with Jackie Robinson and Roy Campanella, helped integrate baseball. He is one of only two players, the other being pitcher Justin Verlander, to win Rookie of the Year, the Cy Young, and Most Valuable Player in his career. Newcombe is not in the hall of fame, while Robinson and Campanella are and therefore have their numbers retired by the Dodgers.

[26] Although I was in attendance for Fernando's ceremony, took copious notes, and filmed the ceremony from my own seat, I also found the tribute video uploaded to the Dodgers' YouTube channel. I played back the video several times and checked my notes with the generated transcript of the video for accuracy.

[27] At one point while researching coverage of Fernandomania in 1981, there is a brief mention in one of the stories that Mike Brito was not the original scout for the Dodgers to have seen Fernando pitch in the Mexican baseball league. Rather, a different scout reported seeing an interesting prospect, and then Brito came to watch Fernando play and reported to the Dodgers' front office that he had found a prospect that the team should sign. This is not mentioned often, and this interesting mention challenges the official public memory established in 1981 and reinforced in "Fernando Nation" that Brito alone discovered Fernando. Not including his name during this portion of the story, but using images instead to convey their relationship, is a fascinating omission.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In his 1994 W.E.B. DuBois Lectures at Harvard University, Stuart Hall explored the complicated relationship between race, ethnicity, and nation. His observations remain insightful and provocative, and I have found myself pondering Hall's observations about race as a discursive system:

> The discourse of race, with its pathologization and fetishization of the other in bodily terms, is, from this perspective, a historically specific, particularly vicious and virulent manifestation within that larger discursive formation of cultural difference that we may call Eurocentrism or Westerncentrism. To reframe race ontologically in this way is in no sense to dismiss or underplay its historical specificity or the disastrous historical consequences of its effects over the centuries. Quite the reverse. It is to take race seriously as a discursive system for the production of otherness—a cultural and historical system that operates in the signifying field—and to acknowledge its real and differential effects, thereby refusing its reduction to some biologically guaranteed transcultural or transhistorical notion of difference grounded in nature. (Hall, 2017a, pp. 82–83)

As I read this argument made by Stuart Hall from over two decades ago, I cannot help but think about Lisa Corrigan's (2016) observation that, "rhetorical critics only recently have come to see racial constructs as discursive as well as material phenomena that travel across time and geographic location" (p. 189). These arguments and observations reinforce the crux of Flores's (2016) argument for racial rhetorical criticism—that rhetorical critics must understand race as rhetorical—and highlight the imperative to understand rhetoric and race.

If we as rhetoric scholars are going to understand how the discourses of race impose hegemonic difference, then we must understand how rhetoric authors, shapes, promotes, contests, and resists those discourses. And we must do so in ways that not only names race and interrogates its place within particular instances and contexts, we must also do so in ways that do not (entirely) rely upon methods and knowledges that have historically—and at times, proudly—perpetuated racism and white supremacy. This becomes more imperative within the study of public memory—an area of study that has not always been cognizant of the implications of race and whiteness within their works.

I open with these remarks by Stuart Hall, Lisa Corrigan, and Lisa Flores to note that there is still plenty of work to be done to understand how race manifests rhetorically and permeates the areas of study that I have engaged throughout this project. And given the natural affinity that the study of public memory and sport have with the study of rhetoric, it is important to interrogate the racial logics at work. If indeed, "rhetorical theories and methods provide one set of humanistic resources with which to examine the social formation and transformation" of public memory (Vivian, 2018, p. 293), I *insist*[1] we understand race's role in encouraging acts and ways of public remembering. And I hope that my project has made my insistence quite clear.

In this final chapter, I aim to explore what it means to construct and maintain a racial rhetorical axiology and praxis throughout the life of a prolonged project and the implications of carrying that on throughout a career. I reflect on my previous experiences as a conventionally (read: white) trained rhetoric scholar and how those previous assumptions still shape how I approach rhetorical criticism as a racial rhetorical critic. I believe that my axiological and praxiological commitments to racial rhetorical criticism transcend beyond the boundaries of this project. By treating my experiences as such, I hope to emphasize that racial rhetorical criticism is a transformative and liberating

endeavor that encourages a continued practice of critical vulnerability that does not end with the completion of a project.

Following my exploration of racial rhetorical criticism as praxeology and axiology within and beyond scholarship, I examine the implications of attending to the studies of public memory/forgetting and sport through racial rhetorical criticism. Similar to the ways that I explained the points of convergence and divergence with early critical rhetoric scholarship and racial rhetorical scholarship, I trace the ways that public memory/forgetting and sport have converged and diverged with the study of racial logics of difference and oppression and explain what a racial rhetorical approach to the study of remembering/forgetting and sport offer.

And finally, I will pause and reflect upon Fernandomania, Fernando Valenzuela, and the complicated intersections of Chavez Ravine and Dodger Stadium with Mexican/American and Latinx identity in Los Angeles. With my final words, I hope to contest those public memories and cultural connections while pondering what that contestation means for me as someone who identifies as a Dodger fan and a Chicana.

Racial Rhetorical Axiology and Praxis: Dis/obedience?

> *[…]the imperative of racial rhetorical criticism goes beyond the page, as the same exclusive racist logics that contribute to the marginalization of work that centers race are the same exclusive racist logics that inform how white and nonwhite faculty, colleagues, and peers within our very white fields, very white disciplines, and very white departments, interact with each other. (Báez & Ore, 2018, p. 332)*
>
> *Racial rhetorical criticism, as modeled in this forum, provides much more than a little light; it makes and keeps the promise. It rewrites the practice of*

> *rhetorical criticism. It does so through the radicality—or monstrosity—of our presence. (Flores, 2018, p. 353)*

How are we, as rhetorical critics, supposed to interrogate and understand race's discursive function? This has perhaps been the predominant question at the forefront of my mind as I have embarked on this massive—and deeply personal—project. Naming race is a necessary start, but that is not enough. Yousuf and Calafell (2018) ask the following question:

> in calling for racial rhetorical criticism might we distinguish between those scholars who use race as a focus of study in order to contribute to larger rhetorical theory and those that actually are concerned with cultural nuance, citing the work of scholars of color who study race, and theorize not just about rhetorical theory, but also race? (p. 312)

It is this distinction, "using" race to understand rhetoric versus interrogating the intertwined logics of race and rhetoric to understand both, that illustrates the challenge for young racial rhetorical scholars like myself. We must be aware that much of the scholarship we have encountered previously amounts to nothing more than a "flattened articulation of race that is not sharply attuned to the nuances and/or the complex economic and geopolitical process of racialization," which Colpean and Dingo (2018) refer to as *drive-by-race scholarship* (p. 306). As young scholars, we should resist the urge to treat race as a means to an end. Instead, we should take it upon ourselves to reveal the intricate and intimate relationship that is race and rhetoric. As Houdeck (2018) argues, "the white garbs that don rhetorical studies need to be removed, its logic laid bare" so that, "rhetoricians can meet at the intersections to thread together a critical ensemble more appropriate for the task at hand" (p. 295). This project marks my entry into this endeavor.

It is important to know that this endeavor is a difficult one. Baugh-Harris and Wanzer-Serrano (2018) point out that the task of "challenging the institutionalization of white normativity requires more than a shift in content. It requires shifts in form and method" amid a "perceived epistemic deficit" (p. 337). It does not help that the many of the tools developed within the study of rhetoric have been used to perpetuate whiteness and privileges "white speak."[2] Law and Corrigan (2018) argue that "white speak" prevents, "critical inquiry and alternative ontological and epistemological frameworks" which stifles the performance of critics of color (p. 326). This has been ingrained by the Euro/Western-centric ideologies that have historically defined the academy, and indeed the entire settler colonialist project. Soto Vega and Chávez (2018) argue that, "the entire settler colonial heteronormative system from which most white dominant scholarship arises must be under critical and constant scrutiny" so that critics do not reproduce "exclusionary colonial and racist logics" (p. 319). These deeply embedded logics create gargantuan barriers. Tearing them down will not be easy. Suffice to say, if we are to engage the ontology of race as a discursive system that produces otherness, we must do so in ways that do not rely upon its own Euro/Western-centric ideological formation.[3]

In many ways, the question I posed at the beginning of the previous paragraph—and the citations-as-response that followed—have been lingering as I typed and revised every word of this project and made many active and passive choices about how this endeavor would unfold. In her response, Flores (2018) reminds readers that, "Journey is an apt frame for our task. Journeys are long and rarely neatly linear. Often framed with goals and destinations, they take us in new and unplanned directions where we explore and confront" (p. 350). This project is nearing the end of its journey, and I am left wondering about the implications of my decisions and what, if any, ethics and accountability I have created or abided by throughout this project. I wonder how much

my proficiency in speaking whiteness—albeit not as proficient as my non-melanated colleagues—has hampered my ability to break away from the conventional (white) approach to rhetorical scholarship that defined most of my academic training. Have I practiced the epistemic disobedience that I hoped? Has my project amounted to more than *drive-by-race scholarship*? It is true that journeys take unexpected turns, but we must also be able to see the deviations as they come. I wonder if I have been blindfolded, or if I have blindfolded myself, so that I could proceed down a familiar path. Did I willingly ignore the possible deviations available to me?

I ask these questions conscious of the reality that scholars of color and of race, "are overwhelmingly, still, self-taught" (Flores, 2018, p. 350). I also ask these questions conscious of the fact that I (un)knowingly engage in whiteness for survival, and I am not alone:

> For all that we resist whiteness, we participate in it. We are all about some forms of inclusion. Even as we regularly do the intensely emotional and undervalued work of race in our classrooms, with the students we mentor, in our writing, and often in our service, we too dwell in whiteness, if only to the minimum degree required for simple survival. Perhaps for some of us only because that is a language we must demonstrate fluency in if we are to continue to be included. For others of us, or at least for myself, because that is one of the languages I was raised in. (Flores, 2018, p. 352)

In practicing my critical vulnerabilities, I named the ways that I had participated in and benefited from cis/hetero masculinity and the language of whiteness. But simply naming those vulnerabilities does not excuse the choices I have made as Aaron Gabriel Zamora or Erin Victoria Zamora. What matters is what I chose to do now and in the future. But

the question remains: how do I remove the blindfold and ensure that I am not tempted to put it back on? How can I do better?

I pose these questions because they are at the heart of this project: a learning experience in forming a racial rhetorical axiology and praxis. I believe that understanding my choices as a critic are fundamental to understanding my project's implications. In a way, my critical vulnerability permits me the opportunity offer myself as an illustration of what it means to try and (un)learn and resist Euro/Western-centric assumption of rhetoric, communication studies, and academia writ large. Consciousness is one thing, and I would argue that my axiology demonstrates that I am critically consciousness that my assumptions have deeper implications. However, I recognize that my actual praxis may leave something (or a lot) to be desired. More scholars-of-color could have been centered in my literature review and methods, albeit the study of public memory appears to be a predominantly white endeavor. I wonder if I have genuinely practiced transformative inclusion as I constructed the foundation for this project, especially since my analysis focuses on rather conventional texts emanating from predominantly white voices and white institutions.[4] Yes, I critically interrogate their hegemonic narratives and memories, but their voices—not Fernando's, nor La Loma's, Palo Verde's, and Bishop's—are ultimately the emphasis of my project.[5]

The memories that are recorded, remembered, and rearticulated are those that that emerge from the dominant group, and I recognize that those privileged voices are the predominant voices I have relied upon in this project. And while I have critically interrogated their consequences, the voices of those who lost their livelihoods—and those who continue to stand in solidarity with them—continue to be left out of the conversation. For those reasons, I believe that we need a more critical, vernacular, and participatory means of studying the rhetoric of memory. We must interrogate the racial

logics within the dominant public discourse that declares what memories are official and true; we must rendering visible and make public the vernacular voices of resistance who continue to articulate stories and truths that counter those memories uncritically accepted as true; we must elevate those voices by asking them to participate in our work as holders of truth and everyday practitioners of resistance.

As scholars-of-color, we are often (un)knowingly raised among these voices. We are aware of their existence, their power, and their prescriptions for everyday living. But we are also aware of how they are rendered invisible or illegitimate. But if we as scholars wish to obliterate the center so that we can explore, celebrate, and learn from the margins, then we must invite a chorus of voices—academic or not—to participate. We must carefully examine and confront the cost and risks of challenging hegemonic myths and ideologies through this critical, vernacular, and participatory axiology and praxis so that we may learn meaningful strategies of resistance from those who have been practicing it every day their entire lives. And dare I say, we may also learn ways to build actual, lasting community and thrive.

Suffice to say, in the wake of #CommunicationSoWhite and #RhetoricSoWhite it is one thing to name race and identify the insidiousness of racism, colonialism, and white supremacy within rhetoric and the communication discipline writ large. Some actively choose to deny its ongoing violence by perpetuating it even further while others remained deafeningly silent; others engaged in white liberal platitudes publicly and interpersonally to protect their white fragility. But for young scholars like myself who were deceived into believing there was no critique of Enlightenment thinking or alternative to the Aristotelian rhetorical tradition until very recently, how do we avoid falling back into those traps within our own scholarship? How does a graduate student who has been indoctrinated in Euro/Western-centric rhetoric—save for maybe two

seminars late in her doctoral training—develop a racial rhetorical praxis and program of research at that?

I am comforted at the notion that the project of racial rhetorical criticism is not a lonely endeavor that one person must endure. Rather, it is, "a coalitional and intersectional journey, each piece of it part of an unfinished and always partial mosaic" (Flores, 2018, p. 351). I do not have to provide a definitive answer for all these questions today. Rather, I should continue to ask these and other questions of myself, my work, and my colleagues. But these questions do prompt serious introspection, and I must now reckon with how impossible it felt to break away from the conventional (white) ways of seeing and knowing that I participate in as a rhetorical critic. The greatest revelation I take away from all of this is that the conventional (white) path is the easiest to follow because it is the most rigid. Its hegemonic obedience presents a path that is straightforward and free of deviations; if you have the dungeon map (canon) and are proficient in the language (white speak) the map is written in, then you can navigate your way through the dungeon. It is easy to pontificate the ways that rhetorics of domination operate, wash your hands clean, and then walk away.

However, the dungeon map never leads you out. For all its rules and instructions, you can only hope to travel in circles. Racial rhetorical criticism, on the other hand, is a messy and complicated endeavor. Because there is no one path to follow to provide absolute guidance, there is no dungeon map. It may be frustrating to navigate the dungeon without a map, but that is only because (to carry on the metaphor) the dungeon map (canon) is not that helpful:

> Crafting a universal canon of racial rhetorical criticism also lets too many of us off the hook. The creation of such a canon risks reducing critical, subject-oriented research on the interplay of race, rhetoric, and power into uncritical, essentialized

> plug-and-play scholarship with critics of color. It is bad enough that, at best, many of us get only a courtesy citation if a white (or white-trained) scholar broaches a subject on which we have spoken at length. What is missing is a deeper understanding and appreciation of racial logics and how they infuse even the most seemingly "objective" rhetorical theories. (Baugh-Harris & Wanzer-Serrano, 2018, p. 340)

And perhaps that is what is so frustrating about engaging a racial rhetorical criticism as a young scholar: there is no dungeon map, and therefore we are left to grapple with how we construct our axiology and praxis—oftentimes with a dearth of scholars-of-color immediately accessible to use to offer guidance.[6] Canon perpetuates "plug-and-play" approaches to rhetorical criticism, which are easier to do because they are so prescriptive. But such practices perpetuate drive-by-race scholarship that robs rhetorical critics from confronting and interrogating race at a much deeper level.

It is precisely that struggle of holding ourselves accountable, being accountable to the scholars who paved the way before us and being accountable to the communities that we represent where we learn and understand what it means to be both critically vulnerable and obstinately intersectional. This is partially accomplished by looking beyond the works within our discipline to engage the labor of other scholars who have addressed racial logics better than our field. In their dialogic exchange, Scarlett Hester point out that, "We need to align with scholars who understand that rhetoric and communication cannot be the silos that contain work on rhetoric and race. It is a transdisciplinary project that requires us to research and read outside of the discipline, without reservation or apology" (Hester & Squires, 2018, p. 344). Their observation about engaging beyond our discipline is not without risk, but if racial rhetorical scholars

are to practice transformative inclusion and inclusion as fissure, then we must look beyond our discipline and ask better of it.[7]

We must also recognize that these projects are always aspirational and incomplete. They are never finished, but always works in progress. Perhaps that is why those who shun this work are so fearful of it. They cling to their dungeon maps because they would be forever lost without it. The "plug-and-play" is all they know how to teach and mentor (assuming that those are a priority in the first place), and consequently they produce scholars and instructors who perpetuate the same. It is not just a perpetuation of tradition, it is also a fear of becoming reliant upon us, scholars-of-color. Those who oppose or avoid this greater endeavor shun the hard work of striving for transformative inclusion and inclusion as fissure precisely because such challenges are not only more radical, they are more difficult to embody.[8]

I close this analogy (and section) with an observation, brought forth by Karma Chávez (2015), about the essays missing from rhetoric's intellectual history:

> Part of the reason why essays such as these are not included is that the challenge they pose to the inclusionary narrative exposes the problems with the narrative as it is typically construed, revealing a rhetorical world that sees agency, power, and the political in different terms altogether. Furthermore, such essays throw into question the value of historical assessments by disclosing their narrative or mythic status. These essays also help to illuminate the logics that are at work to keep a particular narrative in place. Further, when one turns away from historical assessments or the crafting of intellectual histories and toward the place where such narratives are performed or enacted—in course curricula—such historical entrenchment becomes even more transparent. (p. 170)

And so, I conclude this section by simply saying this: it is time to burn the dungeon map that leads to nowhere or, at best, the places we have already been. Canon needs to be abandoned because, "by clinging to canon we also cling to intellectual settler colonialism. Canon reinforces borders and inherently, white settler colonial ideology. Yet, in so many ways, and especially for scholars who are just beginning their academic journey, we are bound by the borders of canon" (Hester & Squires, 2018, p. 345). The borders being erected are frustrating because they are bad pedagogy, even by conventional (white) standards. They obligate young scholars-of-color to contribute to the article impact scores of dead white men and the journals they erected to institutionalize their knowledge. I know that I have straddled this delicate balance in my project and elsewhere, and I am obligated to do so until the elusive—and unlikely—label of "tenured" is assigned to me.[9]

There is an immense burden with rewriting rhetoric and confronting the canon, as Flores (2018) says, through the radicality and/or the monstrosity of our presence. I can say wholeheartedly that I have dwelled on the radicality and monstrosity of my own presence as I have navigated academia and the world as a visibly trans queer Chicana. I wonder whether my efforts have carried through my academic work, but only time will tell. However, I have learned to focus less on my own monstrosity in favor of self-love. And as our work as rhetorical critics permit us to understand the systemic and personal workings of race, we must not lose sight of the importance of self-love:

> If we engage in a praxis of radical love and nonviolence, then we see that institutional violence and unequal emotional labor are oppositional to the work of self-love. But what if we primarily imagine our intellectual work in the service of those who need to see a little light, who need to feel a surge of hope?

> The labors of radical self-love and self-care are part of a journey of self-study and self-recovery. This journey prepares you to act in the world in a humane manner of curiosity and reciprocity, not to martyr yourself. The work situates you clearly in the world and in relation to others. This kind of radical love prepares you to imagine a world of what June Jordan termed "sacred possibilities." (Hester & Squires, 2018, p. 346)

If we are to allow self-love thrive and encourage sacred possibilities, then we must change how we approach our calling to teach and understand rhetorical criticism. We need to provide, as Hester and Squires say, "a little light" to those, like myself, who are struggling to carry out this endeavor throughout their careers.

In closing, our pedagogy, mentorship, and scholarship must radically change. We must politely allow Herbert Wichlens to rest in his coffin, declare Forbes Hill the (sore) loser by putting him out to pasture, thank Raymie McKerrow for his efforts while acknowledging that they were incomplete[10], and read Michael Calvin McGee through Wanzer-Serrano[11] so that we can have a more radical and useful understanding of what rhetoric can become. We must encourage our students, instructors, mentors, researchers, and reviewers to read beyond the confines of our discipline. We must call out or colleagues who prefer to hide behind the armored gates of "canon"—white or otherwise[12]—when they encounter literature and scholars that are unknown to them. And we must, "consider what it would mean to rethink *all* rhetorical criticism as racial rhetorical criticism" (Yousuf & Calafell, 2018, p. 312). We must recognize that, "Working at the intersections of race and rhetoric is not an intellectual exercise. That is, the imperative of race in rhetorical studies is not isolated to how we do rhetorical criticism on the page, but also includes the quotidian practice of how we wield our bodies rhetorically" (Báez & Ore, 2018, p. 335). By orienting ourselves towards the ontological

and epistemological realities put forth by racial rhetorical criticism, we can better understand how it and the other intellectual endeavors it intersects with are both personal and systemic. We can create space for ourselves and our colleagues to challenge the normative assumptions within our field and the various areas of studies it informs.[13]

And if we find ourselves excluded, we will embrace it and find power—and radicalization—in that exclusion.[14]

Understanding Public Memory and Sport as Race

It has been three decades since Fernando Valenzuela last pitched for the Los Angeles Dodgers, but the fans still stand and cheer whenever he waves to the stadium from the press box or he participates in a pre-game ceremony. He is still a hero, and his public memory continues to be celebrated in various ways. Perhaps Fernando did stake a new dream for Latinos when he took the mound at Dodger Stadium, showing the world that a Mexican from a small farming town can become the best pitcher in American baseball. And like the many players who came before and after him, he is a part of the debates about the teams that almost won or maybe did not win enough. Fernando Valenzuela invites opportunities for fans to reminisce about what was and what could have been. Those who followed his career would argue that we should be talking about Fernando Valenzuela the Hall of Famer and the pitcher who won a second Cy Young award, not just Fernandomania as the brief blip of communitas en route to a World Series. We should be talking about Fernando who retired a Dodger rather than conveniently forget his unceremonious departure after years of overuse.

That is how sports and their public memories work. Sports encourages a very narrow remembering by asking "what if" in uncritical ways that invite fans to relive memories of communitas they may or may not have participated in.[15] Fans, myself included, dwell over such questions like "What if Fernando also won the National League

MVP in 1981[16]" or "What if he won that second Cy Young in 1986?" Some might ask "what if the Dodgers had made Fernando incorporate a strength and conditioning routine during the early part of his career" or "what if the Dodgers did not abuse Fernando's arm?" This "what if" game is restricted to sports outcomes as individual and exceptional instances. Phillips (2010) argues that, "people look to memory, especially the memories of important events, not only to remember those events for themselves, but also to urge others to remember them" (p. 217). Significant moments in a team's history and a player's career contribute to their public memory and mythos, and the "what if?" is a recreational rhetorical exercise accessible to fans of a particular team and/or player. And the reality is that fans are not preoccupied with asking larger systemic questions about why a pitcher like Fernando would be denied entrance into the hall of fame or having his number officially retired.

This only becomes more complicated when fans reach farther back into the team's public memory to relitigate and imagine an alternative history where the tense negotiations between Walter O'Malley and Los Angeles break down and the Brooklyn Dodgers do not relocate to Los Angeles. Phillips (2010) argued that, "the cultural concern over remembrance is driven not so much by the fear that we will forget but by the fear that we will remember differently" (p. 212). I would argue that these fun but privileged thoughts are a form of remembering differently in that they imagine alternative outcomes beneficial to a team's fans and its mythology. The consequence is that these types of alternative imaginings overtake the more critical questions that should be asked by everyone who walks through the Dodger Stadium turnstile or buys Dodgers' licensed paraphernalia. So rather than asking "what would the neighborhoods of La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop look like today?" fans imagine "what would the Brooklyn Dodgers of 2020 look like today?" As these public memories and alternative

histories are debated amongst fans, the public memories of generational consequence become more and more forgotten. As fans rehash debates about Fernando deserving to be in the hall of fame, or at the very least having his number officially retired by the Los Angeles Dodgers, we fritter away opportunities to discuss the tragedies of the past and how they are a part of racist, systemic violence that continues to happen today.

While we are occasionally reminded of the injustice that took place all those years ago, we are also reminded of that player from poor, rural Mexico who managed to redeem the Dodgers for their association with those past transgressions. Mexican/American and Latinx baseball fans came in droves to Dodger Stadium when Fernando Valenzuela wore Dodger blue, and they continue to buy tickets to Dodger games to this day. There is no longer the sentiment of "Remember Chavez Ravine." Rather, that sentiment is "See you at the Ravine. Go Dodgers!" This is where a deeper elaboration of Vivian's (2014) notion of the *novel public idiom* through an understanding of racial logics becomes crucial. It is not just that Fernandomania and the presence of the Los Angeles Dodgers have historically changed the public memory of Chavez Ravine; it is precisely that the Dodgers have replaced that place's public memory to serve their financial interests. As a consequence, fans become more comfortable supporting the team financially and perform the everyday rhetorical work of perpetuating the novel public idiom amongst themselves. That those fans are Mexican/American and Latinx suggests that forgiveness has taken place or that the loss of the community is not that important compared to the gain of a storied baseball franchise.

When discussing how and why publics remember and forget, Bradford Vivian (2014) offers the following explanation:

> Because publics remember only in a metaphorical sense—through competing narratives, speech acts, and symbols—communal memories of past events

> assume strikingly different forms based on the needs and interests of a given collective dilemma or controversy. By extension, the same must be said of public forgetting: it gains currency within public speech, language, or symbolism as a situational response to contingent needs and interests as a medium of judgement with respect to the perceived sense and value of the past. (p. 14)

Vivian's attention to the ways that past events are remembered or forgotten, although nuanced and helpful for understanding this project, pays no explicit attention to the hegemonic role of race in incentivizing and facilitating forgetting. So let us racialize these helpful—though incomplete—notions of how remembering and forgetting occur by calling out the (in)visible ways that race is present through the discursive construction and perpetuation of certain public memories. Let us name the fact the competing narratives and speech acts for what they are and what needs they serve.

I believe my analysis accomplishes this by providing a lengthy and detail recollection and analysis of the discursive violence perpetuated throughout Fernandomania and the comparison between how the public memory of Fernandomania is constructed in 1981 juxtaposed to its narration and celebration decades after his career. By analyzing how the local sports media utilizes a white racial frame to confront the incongruity of Fernando Valenzuela, we have an opportunity to understand that the "needs and interests of a given collective dilemma or controversy"—in this case, a young Mexican who cannot speak English or be defeated in 8 straight games—is rooted in whiteness. At the time of his career, baseball writers maintained the white masculine ideology of American baseball while the Dodgers reaped the rewards of sellouts and free publicity. And as long as Fernando Valenzuela and Fernandomania did not threaten the mythos of white (wealthy) men acting as the stewards of American baseball, his story was a safe one to promote for current and future purposes of profit. As a consequence,

the novel public idiom that is Chavez Ravine exists in service of American baseball and the Los Angeles Dodgers. It is therefore important to ask who is promoting these particular narratives, speech acts, and symbols, and to what end?

These acts of hegemonic remembering and forgetting need to be actively resisted so that the questions and controversies posed circulated beyond academic conversation. As racial rhetorical scholars, we must take our knowledge of how rhetoric creates, contests, and agitates to recapture what has been lost and celebrate what continues to persist. Let us do that by taking the tools of public memory and rhetoric—

> …Rhetoric, as an art of crafting public sentiment, becomes the primary actor in establishing these mechanisms of recollection in this process of caring for the representation of the past. Rhetorical appeals serve to frame memories within established cultural forms that, in turn, establish enthymematic connections. Assuming the success of these connections then the memory of some past event becomes stabilized, indeed reified, into fixed forms that present themselves as necessary and 'true' (Phillips, 2010, p. 218)…

–and combine them with the axiology and praxis of a racial rhetorical insistence:

> Racial rhetorical criticism is a contested and complicit endeavor. We rupture whiteness, launching transformation as we engage the very practices of whiteness, masculinity, heteronormativity, and xenophobia that relentlessly discipline us. (Flores, 2018, p. 350)

Let us use our tools to contest the status quo of remembering, as we have seen throughout the protests for racial justice throughout 2020, so that can properly contextualize the present as a consequence of the past. Just as Black Lives Matter traces modern day police departments to the insidious institution of slave catchers, Mexican/American and Latinx Dodger fans—like myself—must confront the reality that

our fandom is the design of a wealthy team owner who wanted his franchise to appeal to a significant demographic of the city his franchise would call home. Ultimately, our inclusion in Dodger fandom is not radical or transformative. Rather, it is a pernicious inclusion part of a greater racial project that seeks to keep us at the margins.[17] So rather than continue to clamor for the next Fernando and bless Dodger Stadium with our presence, let us remember radically.

Rather than forget the past and succumb to the hegemony of the novel public idiom, let us practice an insistent remembering that is rooted in engagement, action, and transformation. Let us invite the oft silenced voices into the conversation and practice so that the *vernacular memory* we study and promote has critical and participatory axiological and praxeological foundations that teach us how to resist predominant hegemonic forms of remembering and forgetting rooted in all forms of oppression. Instead of casually regarding Dodger Stadium as a historic, cultural institution of the city of Los Angeles and Major League Baseball, let us be brave enough to *pregunta a nuestra familia* to share their experiences and interrogate strategies of resistance—and compliance. Only with a complete picture of how some memories become "true" while others are allegedly "forgotten" can we understand why a story predicated on the gentrification of Chavez Ravine and white supremacy in Los Angeles is seldom acknowledged.[18] Instead of allowing public officials to memorialize Sandy Koufax's perfect game or Kirk Gibson's unlikely World Series home run, let us amplify the voices of those who have historically been rendered silent so that the Dodgers organization cannot continue to "forget" that their success came at the expense of a community's prosperity, the same community who now embraces them with arms wide open.[19]

And most of all, let us not conflate Fernando Valenzuela as some sort of messiah chosen by the baseball gods to stake a new dream for Mexican/American and Latinx

people every time he stepped on the pitcher's mound and looked to the heavens before he threw the baseball. Rather than consume the perfectly packaged public memories of the pitcher who went 8-0 and became one of the most iconic Dodgers of all time, let us remember that he was criminally underpaid as a part of baseball's ongoing desire to exploit cheap talent[20] and was readily discarded when he was no longer of any use. And let our remembering empower us to stay away, demand that history be recognized, and fight for the present so history does not continue to repeat itself in the present.[21]

And let any *vernacular memory* we share transcend the pages of whatever conventional forums that academia offers. Rather than merely lament the loss of La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop within the pages of a book project or call out the Dodgers' shameless exploitation of Fernandomania within the pages of *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, let us demand that the city of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Dodgers confront the past and listen to the voices it ignored over 60 years ago. This is not mere imperative: this is *insistence* and *resistance*.

Sliding into Home

It has been over sixty years since the last residents of Chavez Ravine were forcibly removed from their homes when they saw their livelihoods demolished before their very eyes. And while they only represented a fraction of those who had already been forced to leave years earlier, the destruction that took place was a dark, cathartic moment that represented how Chavez Ravine would never be the same and how La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop would slowly be forgotten. That forgetting has benefited the Los Angeles Dodgers and the city of Los Angeles. For the Dodgers, Fernando allowed the team to finally connect with the Mexican/American and greater Latinx community that is the lifeblood of Los Angeles. And for Los Angeles, the Dodgers became the civic institution that the city desperately craved and arguably needed. All of this came at an exorbitant

price, and it is a price currently being paid today as neighborhoods like Boyle Heights face an uncertain future, the looming threat of gentrification ever present.

The lesson of the Dodgers' quest to find a new home during the 1950's should be less about serendipitous fate and more about a deep interrogation of the price we are making communities of color pay for the sake of "civic pride" or "development." The "what ifs" of the tense negotiations between Walter O'Malley and the city of Los Angeles should be replaced by a radical remembering of what happened and a radical imagining of what life in La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop could be today. Let us recognize the prosperity and possibility that was taken away then and move to action to keep it from happening again. Let us not allow our persistent desire to adopt the mystique of American baseball and the Dodgers stop us. They were never made by us—though our players are certainly central to its prosperity now—nor was it ever made for us.

The public forgetting of La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop speak to the ideological underpinnings unique to baseball. Baseball is associated "with the essential features of the American national character [and] provides a revealing metaphor for American society and values" (Elias, 2001, p. 8). For 1950's Los Angeles, baseball represented development and progress, the same qualities used to justify the original Elysian Heights project. That belief, coupled with the desire for civic unity, inspired the city's decision to court Walter O'Malley and the Brooklyn Dodgers.

Baseball's mythological agrarian roots, which appealed to the urbanites migrating from rural areas to metropolitan hubs (Crepeau, 1980), has arguably been supplanted. Although in some ways baseball as an institution represents America's past, which may explain its declining popularity across the United States, the Dodgers continue to be loved by the city of Los Angeles precisely because their image and identity has evolved and changed over the years. The public memory of the Brooklyn Dodgers as symbols of

blue-collar working-class America(Schuck, 2006) became the public memory of the Los Angeles Dodgers as the white businessman's team. Once Fernandomania harnessed Fernando's racial and ethnic identification and his rag-to-riches story, the team's public memory transformed once again, this time into a symbol of meritocracy and a literal enactment of the American Dream for Mexican/Americans and Latinx communities in Los Angeles and throughout the rest of the country.

Now the Dodgers public memory unites Los Angeles by simultaneously representing what was (Fernandomania and the glory days of the 1980s), what is (Clayton Kershaw and that elusive World Series), and what could be (Mookie Betts, Cody Bellinger, and the hopes of dynasty). The Dodgers continue to lead the major leagues in attendance despite recent years of playoff and World Series heartbreak. Many players from the past have contributed to the Dodgers public memory and mythos, and many players contribute to that mythos today. But none have contributed more than Fernando.

Given baseball's already religious-like cultural mythology (Butterworth, 2005), it is probably not too hyperbolic to say that Fernando Valenzuela was the chosen one to bring Mexican/Americans and Latinx people back to Chavez Ravine as patrons of Dodger Stadium. These ideologies are at play in the public memory of Fernandomania and Fernando Valenzuela. His inspirational "Cinderella story" is one that audiences adore. It still seems too unlikely to be true. However, Dodger fandom is not a substitute for radical remembering, nor does it make up for the pain and suffering inflicted on the residents of Chavez Ravine throughout the 1950's or that black Friday in 1959 when the last residents were forcibly removed from their homes. No longer are Mexican/Americans and Latinx people returning to Chavez Ravine to take up residence in the land that once belong to their ancestors or kin. Literally buried is the neighborhood that once stood there, a testament to resilience and prosperity in the face of structural racism and poverty.

Instead, the residence that anyone takes up in Chavez Ravine is simultaneously a temporary and permanent one. It is temporary in the sense that physical entry to the stadium is contingent on being able to afford entry; if you cannot afford entry, you cannot return. But it is also permanent in the sense that Mexican/American and Latinx fandom of the Dodgers exceeds game days and has become part of the identity of the Los Angeles Dodgers. They flocked to Dodger Stadium to see Fernando pitch, but their presence, unlike the communitas that Fernando inspired, is no longer temporary. They continue to attend games and get misty-eyed when the stadium camera cuts to Fernando sitting in the broadcast booth, but as a consequence the fans are not shedding tears for the families that lost their homes six decades ago. If the audience gets misty-eyed at the image of young Fernando or 2010 Fernando, it's because they are reminded of "El Toro" looking to the heavens on the mound, not the Mexican families whose prosperity is buried below the bleachers they are sitting on.

Meanwhile, the Dodgers continue to benefit from their permanent home in Chavez Ravine. Walter O'Malley's impressive business acumen secured the future prosperity of his team for all these decades, and the current ownership plans to build upon that prosperity with new renovations to bring a new fan experience to Dodger Stadium and Dodger fans, much to the dismay of those who still live nearby. Development and progress are once again taking place in Chavez Ravine, and once again it is benefiting the Dodgers and the city of Los Angeles at the expense of those who call Chavez Ravine home.

It is remarkable that one player could have such an impact on an organization's public memory and image, let alone the public memory of a city like Los Angeles. This is not to say that Fernando bares any blame or should be considered complicit in all of this. The forces that profited from his abilities and identity held all the power and money,

quite literally. And what Fernando Valenzuela and Fernandomania reveal is the ways that public memory can have such a significant and lingering influence on the consciousness of a city and community.

You do not have to immediately think of Fernando or Fernandomania when thinking about the substantial Mexican/American and Latinx fan base that supports the Los Angeles Dodgers. By now they have become synonymous. Case in point: if you are from Los Angeles and a Dodgers fan, you will likely encounter the spelling and pronunciation "Doyers," referring to the Spanish-speakers who say "Dodgers" but with a Spanish-accent; from personal experience, everyone who I have heard use the "Doyers" pronunciation is of second- or third-generation Mexican-descent and a native English speaker. My cousin, who visibly reads as Latinx, recently attended a "Los Angeles" Angels game at Angel Stadium and was told to remain calm when he cheered for the Angels; the usher told him something to the effect of, "hey! I don't know how they do it at Dodger Stadium, but here we don't get rowdy!"—the Dodgers were not playing the Angels that day by the way, and my cousin was not wearing Dodgers paraphernalia.[22] Ultimately, to be read as visibly Latinx in the greater Los Angeles area and to be in attendance at a baseball game is to be associated with Dodger fandom.

This also permeates beyond the confines of Dodger Stadium or Los Angeles. At a recent Arizona Diamondbacks game, the white woman[23] who owned the season tickets my friend and I bought second hand remarked to her husband (under her breath but not exactly quiet either), "isn't Dodger Stadium in a dangerous neighborhood?" The fans around us remarked that Dodger fans were rowdy and aggressive. My friend and I, the only two people wearing Dodgers paraphernalia in the section (and the only readily queer people), sat quietly and watched as the Dodgers got pounded into submission by the Diamondbacks that game.[24] This just goes to show the various ways that race and

whiteness manifest within baseball and how race has become intertwined with the image of the Dodgers. There is an (un)spoken belief amongst those in Los Angeles that Mexicans root for the Dodgers. The left field pavilion has often been referred to as the area where all the Mexicans can be found.[25] There is a blog that argues that Dodger dogs are Mexican food—using the nomenclature "Doyer Dogs" to drive home the point (Flores Jr., 2019). I remember thinking that the best way to celebrate Cinco de Mayo was by attending a Dodger game—hell, my first Dodger game was on Cinco de Mayo.

And the Dodgers are certainly guilty of exploiting racial and ethnic identity to their advantage. For example, the Dodgers designate the last Sunday of every month of the regular season to hold a festival called "Viva Los Dodgers" where the team celebrates Latinx contributions to baseball. A part of the parking lot is fenced off, and fans can go three hours prior to the game to visit various booths and listen to live music. It's a free event for fans who have purchased a ticket to that day's game, and the booths are populated by companies seeking to do a public relations push with the Latinx community who are Dodgers fans. They hand out free goodies and have games for kids. Every so often, they will run a trivia contest from the music stage. And former players will make appearances and sign autographs.

Some of these Viva Los Dodgers celebrations are oriented towards specific Latinx cultures and countries, such as "Cuba Day" held in July. In September, the last Viva Los Dodgers event coincided with "Mexican Heritage Night" two days prior. For Mexican Heritage Night, the team released a special edition bobblehead that was Día de Los Muertos inspired. And to coincide with their celebration of Mexican heritage, the Viva Los Dodgers festival that followed that special bobblehead night featured a Día de Los Muertos altar with Dodger blue. Had the COVID-19 pandemic not postponed Opening Day and the entire 2020 baseball season, Dodger Stadium was set to host its first Cinco

de Mayo home game in almost a decade.[26] The reliance and exploitation of Latinx identity to fuel Dodger fandom is real, and it has become easier as Mexican/American and Latinx identity in Los Angeles continues to be intertwined with the public memory and identity of the Los Angeles Dodgers. And the catalyst for that can be traced back to Fernandomania.

From time to time, sports writers used "mania" to invoke the public memory of Fernandomania for Dodger fans in the present. Yasiel Puig's major league debut, the player whose debut I had seen for myself, was referred to as "Puigmania" a handful of times, but it never really caught on. Current Dodgers pitcher Julio Urias, who is from northern Mexico just like Fernando, was speculated to be an impressive rookie pitching prospect when he made his major league debut for the Dodgers. He drew comparisons to Fernando because he was Mexican and for his left-handed delivery, but the word "mania" was never invoked. However, the one player who certainly rivals the frenzy caused by Fernandomania is probably Hideo Nomo.

In 1995, Japanese pitcher Hideo Nomo's major league debut was met with incredible fanfare and frenzy. He had already established his popularity in Japan as an imposing pitcher for Nippon Professional Baseball, and his popularity only grew when he played in the minor and major leagues. The Japanese paparazzi followed Nomo to America to document his success, and Japanese baseball fans tuned in to watch Nomo's major league starts, despite the fact that the time difference meant that his games would be taking place early in the morning (DiGiovanna, 2002). The highlights of Nomo's rookie season, dubbed "Nomomania," included starting the All Star Game, winning Rookie of the Year, and leading the National League in strikeouts and shutouts while breaking Sandy Koufax's Dodger record for batters struck out per nine innings ("Los Angeles Dodgers Top 10 Single-Season Pitching Leaders | Baseball-Reference.Com,"

n.d.). But what Nomomania was most known for was the intense media frenzy that followed him wherever he went, prompting Tommy Lasorda to compare what Nomo was experiencing with what Fernando experienced during Fernadomania:

> "I went through Fernandomania [with Fernando Valenzuela in 1981] and then Nomomania," former Dodger manager Tom Lasorda said. "I think there were more cameras and press following Nomo than there were Fernando. I saw them taking pictures of Nomo while he was dressing, when he went to the restroom. It was unbelievable." (DiGiovanna, 2002)

Indeed, it was an apt comparison, as Nomo also brought in a whole flood of Japanese baseball fans into Dodger Stadium and the other ballparks he pitched in and paved the way for Japanese players to make the jump to the major leagues (ibid). And much like Fernandomania, the fervor did not last very long.[27]

And perhaps that is where the understanding Fernandomania purely as an instance of communitas falls short and why racial rhetorical criticism and public memory/forgetting are so important for understanding exactly what Fernandomania was and continues to be for Mexican/Americans. Fernando's rookie season inspired an intense and unprecedented communitas that reverberated beyond the established fanbase of the Los Angeles Dodgers. It was not only the spectacle—shutout after shoutout in front of a fan frenzy—it was the intense racial identification and pride that Fernandomania inspired. Where "Nomomania" was communitas, fleeting in its moment, Fernandomania persists beyond the temporal confines of Fernando's first eight starts, his rookie season, or his career. That's why the Dodgers hired him to become a color commentator for their Spanish broadcasts—after Fernando had previously rebuked the team in 1999.[28] Its why the Dodgers have honored Fernando with so many bobbleheads over the years and members of the organization have worked to unofficially retire his

number. It is also why the Dodgers exploited him throughout his career, sacrificing his body so that every screwball, ever shoutout, every victory would chip away at whatever public memory was left of La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop and create a new public memory of the thousands of Mexican/Americans cheering in the stands, willing their hero to victory.

As I reflect on these inescapable realities and internalize these memories as my own, I am glad that the 2020 MLB season had been postponed and completely reconfigured in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sure, I have attended a handful of spring training games since I first embarked on this project, but that is in Glendale, Arizona. To my knowledge, no community was immediately displaced prior to Camelback Ranch's construction in 2008.[29] I still do not know how I will feel about passing the street sign at the corner of College Avenue and Chavez Ravine Place, or when I get a glance of Elysian Park on my way up to Vin Scully Avenue so that I can show my prepaid parking barcode to an attendant and begin the long walk from my car to the stadium gates. I do not know how I will feel when I pass through that turnstile and take my seat, a Fumentos Deli Italian sub in hand—it is located in Montebello, just in case you ever find yourself in the greater Los Angeles area—and ready to cheer for my team. Memories of the past occasionally cross my mind, but it becomes easy to forget amid the conversation in between pitches. And forget about it (literally) when the Dodgers hit a home run or when the opportunity to boo Madison Bumgarner presents itself.

I cannot say I will stay away, but I cannot say that I will be entirely content when I am there. I know I will never go to a Viva Los Dodgers event ever again, and I have mixed feelings about my bobbleheads of Fernando Valenzuela and the generic Dodger player with a sugar skull head. Hell, right now I am just trying to learn to fan while trans and female. I occupy this strange in-between space of desiring to belong to a white male

institution while remembering and honoring the past. I imagine that this is a feeling that many Chicanx individuals like myself are acquainted with.

When this is no longer an intellectual project required to receive my doctorate, I must begin to ponder how I intend on living up to the commitments I have made to myself and ethics I continue to negotiate and attempt to honor. It is going to be difficult because I genuinely do not know what I will do. Simply remembering La Loma, Palo Verde, and Bishop for myself, and for others, is not enough.

I do not know if I have the strength to practice the remembering that I profess in these last pages. I do not know if I have the strength embrace the exclusion of leaving the Dodgers behind. But I also used to think the same thing about transitioning. Turns out I had the strength to become Erin Victoria Zamora all along.

El tiempo dirá.

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[1] Reflecting upon the contributions to the forum on racial rhetorical criticism, Lisa Flores (2018) writes: Overwhelmingly, the scholars in this forum model what may be the fundamental premise of racial rhetorical criticism, not imperative but insistence. Without apology or request, acquiescence or hedge, racial rhetorical criticism, as it emerges across these pages is insistent criticism. Criticism with presence. As we move forward in this endeavor, we need to turn to the practices of insistent transformational presence that flood the pages of this forum (p. 354).
[2] Law and Corrigan (2018) explain that "white-speak" refers to, "the modalities, practices, and expectations of white speech as well as the expectations created in the discipline pertaining to the modes, theories, methods, and personas accompanying rhetorical criticism and history" which functions, "through an often unstated modality of silencing, disciplining, disrupting, and regulating nonwhite and/or non-normative bodies, practices, and forms of knowledge" (p. 326).
[3] Wanzer-Serrano (2019) writes the following about rhetoric's white foundation and existence: Rhetoric is tied, inextricably, to the West; and to the extent that it's colonial or anti-Black, so be it. Accept it or leave – that's the white choice with which I've been presented more than once. And maybe they're right. Maybe, the foundation is just fundamentally flawed and #RhetoricSoWhite is an unalterable fact. Maybe the wood undergirding the façade of the House of Rhetoric is rotted to its core and I should count my blessing that I'm only a renter. Maybe many of us should simply get out while we can. Or maybe, in one of many moves of fugitivity, we should grab some tools and tear this house down once and for all. I'm continuously torn between these alternatives: an optimistic glance toward antiracist futurity and a pessimistic defiant gaze at a house tumbling down. Ultimately, however, it's not up to me or any of my colleagues of color. The rest of you have some decisions to make (p. 471-472).
[4] Flores (2016) writes at length about the importance of vernacular voices (see p. 11-13).
[5] Alexis McGee writes the following: Valuing alternative texts like songs asks us as scholars, students, mentors to re-evaluate and acknowledge the raced and gendered politics mediating ruptures between traditional (read classic or canonized Western traditions of) rhetorical methods, theory, and criticism. This highlights the very necessity of difference, of racial rhetorical criticism, in order to build and navigate fruitful hermeneutic dialogic(s). At the very least, this realization of

contention surrounding sources (and citation practices) lets us begin to see the disconnect between methods of communication, discourse, and the possibilities of Rhetoric. When we start having discussions in class, between scholars, with administrations, about the problems and possibilities accompanying the absence or restricted praxis of racial rhetorical criticism—either as topoi or discourse—we can have more critical and relative dialogues about agency, politics, theory, and methodology. As it stands now, these traditional rhetorical paradigms often stymie people of color's rhetorical agency (McGee & Cisneros, 2018, p. 302). As I read her words, I wonder how my choice in texts and my analysis perpetuates the lack of agency attributed to Fernando Valenzuela throughout his career and his public memory. I also wonder, with my fixation on the influx of Mexican/American and Latinx patrons to Dodger Stadium, how much I render invisible the choices of those who continue to stay away out of respect for and in protest of the destruction of La Paloma, Palo Verde, and Bishop.

[6] I am reminded of a footnote authored by Lisa Flores (2016) that discusses the challenges faced by scholars of race in an overwhelmingly white discipline: If you are reading this essay, and you do not know these names, particularly if you are a young scholar of color who experiences the discipline as uninviting, if not hostile, you need to know these four folks, and you need to know that they walked alone. They had no faculty of color colleagues, they had no essays on race in the discipline to read, they had no "race" caucuses and divisions to welcome and foster their growth. Though they tend to be identified in, and perhaps to identify as, intercultural communication scholars, I claim them here if only because their work was so crucial to me, but also because I suspect their location within intercultural communication was necessitated by the whiteness of rhetorical studies, which did not then know how to name them (p. 18, footnote 6).

[7] In their dialogic exchange, Catherine Squires shares the following experience that one of her students had: How responsible are we for "importing" work from other fields into rhetoric? Interdisciplinary scholars still face the problem of too few reviewers with broad knowledge of relevant theories of race. I spoke to a student who received a review from a rhetoric journal. The anonymous reviewer scolded him for not citing people of color in rhetoric and accused him of citing mainly from the "white canon." However, the author did cite scholars of color—multiple critical race and postcolonial critics—the reviewer just didn't know their work. So, this young scholar of color was punished by the reviewer's narrow vision. We need to ask: What do folks know they don't know? We cannot practice citational politics that acknowledge only a handful of scholars of color doing work in our field (Hester & Squires, 2018, p. 343).

[8] Amardo Rodriguez (2019) provides a lengthy critique on the insidiousness of inclusion. He poses the question, "But why must we be afraid of exclusion, meaning why must it be beyond our imagination and deserving of no consideration in our aspirational vision? Indeed, what would have been the possibility of Marx, Kropotkin, Goldman, Malcolm, and so many other icons without exclusion? In fact, every prophet came from a place of exclusion, as well as the beginnings of every revolution. (p. 42). Rodriguez concludes that, "We now need to find the moral courage to go beyond the wall and embrace our exclusion" (p. 45).

[9] Lisa Corrigan (2016a) made the following observation in her introduction for the Southern Communication Journal's special issue on Race and Rhetoric: it is clear that we are not matriculating scholars of color, especially Black academics, into tenure-track jobs. As I sought contributors to the preconference and to the issue, it amazed me how many of my contemporaries had been forced out of the academy while on the tenure track. Newly tenured myself, I looked up from the frantic pace of my own career to find that half a dozen Black scholars near my graduating cohort are no longer academics, which should concern us very deeply, since many of them were doing work in Black rhetorical history and theory. From those scholars of color who did have academic jobs, I heard over and again about how busy and overcommitted they already were because of how frequently they were being asked to participate as "token" interlocutors about Blackness. I also heard from a surprising number of Black scholars about how they were moving away from rhetorical study because of its hostility or erasure of scholarship by and about Black people. (p. 190). I do not intend to leave the academy or the study of rhetoric. But if the ivory tower tries to expel me from its tall and ivory walls, know now that I will not go willingly.

[10] "we argue that the critical methodological turn beginning with Raymie McKerrow has not succeeded in creating favorable conditions for the publication and celebration of nonwhite

scholars or their work, despite, say, early postcolonial critiques offered by critics like Raka Shome" (Law & Corrigan, 2018, p. 326).

[11] See Enck-Wanzer (2006, 2012) and Wanzer (2012).

[12] Catherine Squires notes that, "The insistence that scholars cite particular, well-known, "authorized" theorists of color, serves to police the boundaries: which fields and which scholars are permitted, and which scholars are unrecognized because their ideas haven't made their way into the authorized shortlist?" (Hester & Squires, 2018, p.345).

[13] Alexis McGee writes: Acknowledging the work I do as an act of political engagement reshaped my personal narrative. These sites of contention and moments of disillusionment represent the undervalued but imperative work of racial rhetorical criticism with which I and other emerging scholars grapple. Studying race—or intersectionality more broadly—consistently challenges normative practices, making my choice to continue my research more "imperative" in the hopes of changing the possibilities of rhetorical studies and experiences for other graduate students of color (McGee & Cisneros, 2018, p. 301). I hope to emulate her commitment as I enter academia as an early-career scholar recently employed as a non-tenure track lecturer.

[14] In the words of Amardo Rodriguez (2019): "Embracing exclusion is demanding. The consequences can be severe. But there is life after exclusion, and it can beautiful" (p. 46).

[15] Part of being socialized into fandom is learning the narratives and mythology of a particular team and what makes them unique. In the process, fans internalize past struggles and triumphs as if they experienced them firsthand. For example, as a Los Angeles Lakers fan I hated the Boston Celtics. But it was not until the 2008 NBA Finals that I actually watched the Lakers play (and lose to) the Celtics for myself. That did not stop me from internalizing the mythos of the Lakers' historical inability to the defeat the Celtics in the NBA Finals as failures I had experienced first-hand as a fan.

[16] He finished fifth in MVP voting in 1981.

[17] For an extensive and beautiful critique of inclusion, see Rodriguez (2019).

[18] Included in this call to *critically remember* is, among others, the need to confront how the Los Angeles freeway system came at the expense of many communities of color and that Los Angeles once elected a mayor who was openly a member of the KKK (Blazedale, 2020).

[19] When Dodger Stadium celebrated its 25th anniversary in 1987, U.S. Representative Meldon Edises Levine lauded the history that Dodger Stadium had witnessed, a long list that included Sandy Koufax's no hitters, Don Drysdale pitching his record sixth-consecutive shutout, and of course Fernando's opening day shutout and record-tying eighth consecutive victory. When he spoke of the construction of the stadium, he called it "a massive undertaking," explaining that 8 million cubic yards of earth were moved to reshape the terrain to accommodate the stadium. In 2012, U.S. Representative Xavier Becerra echoed similar sentiments in honor of Dodger Stadium's 50th anniversary, explaining that fans at Dodger Stadium witnessed Sandy Koufax's perfect game and Fernandomania. At no point did either speech mention the community that once existed, or the livelihoods buried under all the steel, concrete, and dirt.

[20] According to Anthony Burgos (2007), Latin American prospects were targeted because they could be paid less than their American counterparts and teams could circumvent the amateur draft and the cost of acquiring players via free agency.

[21] I say this recognizing that neighborhoods like Boyle Heights—which are overwhelmingly Mexican/American and Latinx—are being threatened by the onslaught of gentrification.

[22] My cousin recalled cheering because the fans at Angel Stadium were incredibly quiet despite the Angels winning. As he put it, "they are so quiet and boring. I got up to cheer and get people into the game, and I got yelled at!" Angel Stadium is in the city of Anaheim (Orange County). They are the white people's team.

[23] I point out this woman's whiteness in the same vein that George Yancy exclaims "Look, a White!"

[24] At one point, that same white woman remarked, "oh wow, he does not look like a Hernandez. Oh, he's from San Juan I guess?"— she was referring to Kiké Hernández, a prominent utility player for Dodgers who is Puerto Rican and happens to be light-skinned.

[25] I first learned about this reference to left-field pavilion from an old George Lopez standup routine that he made prior to his first sitcom.

[26] I note this because the first handful of Dodger games I attended were on Cinco de Mayo. However, after Brian Stowe was assaulted in the Dodger Stadium parking lot, the team suddenly found themselves playing away during Cinco de Mayo rather than at home.
[27] After two impressive seasons, inconsistencies and injuries hampered Nomo's effectiveness. He eventually found himself bouncing around the major leagues or demoted to the minor leagues. He did pitch two no-hitters over the span of his career, one for the Dodgers, and in 2001 he led the American League in strikeouts, but the frenzy had died and he was never voted an all-star again after his rookie season. Nomo never really established a sizeable and consistent presence of Japanese Dodger fans in the stands past his career, as Fernando had done with Mexican/Americans and Latinos, but Nomo opened the gates for other Japanese players to make the jump to the majors. Nomo retired in 2006 and continues to live in the United States, but he does not have the same type of public presence or inspire the same type of public memory amongst many Dodger fans I know—granted, most if not all of the Dodger fans I know are Mexican/American.
[28] It was reported that Fernando was still bitter about how he was released by the Dodgers in 1991, and that is why he refused the Dodgers' invitation to Spring Training.
[29]Even if no community was displaced in the 2000's to build the Camelback Ranch facility, the first nations and the indigenous peoples who formed those nations were displaced through genocide and land-theft hundreds of years before baseball became a professional sport. Those same indigenous peoples continue to be subjected to genocide and land-theft while universities and other organizations continue to make public land acknowledgement platitudes to assuage their guilt and perform "wokeness." It is time that the United States government honor the treaties it has made with tribes in the past, formally recognize the atrocities it has committed and encouraged, and make reparations for centuries of violence and death that continue today.

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