

Meaningful Spaces:  
Place and Deservingness in Kittitas County's Shady Acres Crisis

by

Molly Marie Verhey

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for graduation with Honors in Environmental Studies-Politics

Whitman College  
2017

*Certificate of Approval*

This is to certify that the accompanying thesis by Molly Marie Verhey has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with Honors in Environmental Studies-Politics.

---

Shampa Biswas

Whitman College  
May 10, 2017

*Table of Contents*

**Table of Contents** ..... iii

**Acknowledgements** ..... iv

**Section I.** Introduction: Shady Acres ..... 1

**Section II.** Imagining the American West ..... 5

*Historical Context: Kittitas County*..... 7

*Fair and Rodeo, Past and Present* ..... 9

*‘The West’ as a Project of Whiteness* ..... 12

**Section III.** Place in Shady Acres Through the Lens of Deservingness ..... 16

*Arguments for and Against the Event Center Master Plan* ..... 17

*“Undeserving”* ..... 21

**Section IV.** A “Possessive Investment in Whiteness” ..... 28

**Section V.** Conclusion ..... 32

**Bibliography** ..... 34

## *Acknowledgments*

This thesis would not have been possible without the help and generosity of many people to whom I owe a great deal.

First, thank you to Shampa Biswas for her constant encouragement and guidance, her hugely influential tips, her willingness to meet with me at odd hours and with short notice, and for frequent reminders that my ideas were worth pursuing.

Second, thank you to Don Snow for challenging me both intellectually and as a writer, for patiently helping me hone my thoughts, and for offering affirmation and constructive comments in equal measure.

Third, thank you to my family and friends, without whom I wouldn't have ever made it to this point: in particular to my parents, for their unwavering support in all forms, and to both of my grandmothers, for believing in the importance of education and helping make mine possible.

And finally, a tremendous thank you to my interviewees and the Shady Acres community for lending me their patience, stories, and time.

## **I. Introduction: Shady Acres**

Just a few hundred yards from the Kittitas County Fairgrounds' northern entrance lies a cluster of homes arranged around the edges of a gravel road, forming a near-circle. Trees surround the Shady Acres Manufactured Home Park's 3.5 acres.

Lupe Huerta<sup>1</sup> told me about the community, where her parents have lived for thirteen years. "I think the sense of community and sharing of resources and love for each other is pretty strong," she said. She continued:

You come in, and these bushes used to block your field of vision, and most of the children like to play in that little curve, at the top of the cul-de-sac. So my dad chopped them down so you could see the kids. And I thought, 'Oh, this is a really good idea.' The neighbor across the way put up a basketball hoop. He just nailed it to the tree so that kids could play. That little cul-de-sac is where everyone comes together. (interview, Feb. 24, 2017)

Shady Acres Manufactured Home Park, home to over one hundred low-income, primarily Latinx people in Ellensburg, Washington, is at the center of this thesis. In 2016, many Shady Acres (SA) residents and other supporters began to mount resistance to a plan put forward by the sitting Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to purchase the SA property from private landowners and, eventually, evict residents in order to expand the fair and rodeo grounds.

SA has stood at the core of many discussions in Kittitas County since the BOCC's plan to purchase the Park became public in April of 2016. The notice of the County's plan to purchase came as a shock to SA residents—neither county officials nor the selling landowners had consulted the people who have made their homes at SA, many of whom have lived there for more than ten years. Instead, the residents were alarmed to see a

---

<sup>1</sup> All names of individuals quoted or interviewed in this thesis have been changed.

publication about the imminent purchase and likely loss of SA homes appear suddenly in the local newspaper, printed only in English.

“Nobody told us about this,” Huerta recounted. “This was coming from left field. We were completely excluded from the planning process. There was no significant effort to meet with the community, let alone a notification” (interview, Feb. 24, 2017).

The landowners initiated sale discussions with the county in 2014. The sale went through in August 2016, and included the land under 58 manufactured home units, three single family residences, a neighboring laundromat and tavern, and all of the buildings on the land with the exception of some occupant-owned homes, all for a sum of \$1.45 million (Willmsen 2017). The SA property has been on a list of possible acquisition sites for a fair and rodeo grounds expansion since as far back as the 1980s (interview, Feb. 17, 2017). Its purchase is in compliance with the 2016 Kittitas Valley Event Center Master Plan document,<sup>2</sup> which includes the SA area in its strategic planning but hardly acknowledges the people who would have to move in order to make the plan a reality. In response to the threat of eviction, many residents formed a homeowners association, and the group began to seek legal advice. The date of evictions remained unclear for more than eight months until, in early 2017, the County offered five-year leases to members of the SA Homeowners Association through a third party management company. However, as of February 2017 the county commissioners have said little about the future of SA, and presumably still plan to evict residents after the five-year time period.

---

<sup>2</sup> The BOCC emphasizes that the expansion would not just be of the fair and rodeo grounds, but is really a plan to expand what they refer to as the “event center.” I choose to refer to the expansion as one of the fair and rodeo grounds or simply as the “Master Plan” for reasons that will become evident.

The SA situation has become a point of local contention, with over 150 letters to the editor, opinion pieces, and news articles published in *The Daily Record* in less than a year. The discussions have brought to the forefront Kittitas County's lack of sufficient affordable housing, the role of race in the threatened evictions, local government competency, and local values. The SA case was a major topic in the 2016 County Commissioner elections, in which two of the three Commissioners involved in the SA case were reelected.

That a low-income community of color stands to lose its homes to an expanded Fair and Rodeo Grounds in an overwhelmingly white, rural town in the American West seems, to me, significant. One SA resident quoted in an early newspaper article even told a reporter, "It's all for the Rodeo" (Major and Martinez, 2016). Indeed, the SA situation in Kittitas County is a vortex of social and ideological tensions that have converged in a local conflict over a contested place in an area that has long roots in the American West—roots that, for many who live there and who visit seasonally for the rodeo and fair, extend very much into the present. Interestingly, discussions about SA, particularly on the part of proponents of evicting the residents and implementing the Master Plan, privilege particular lifestyles, ideologies, and people above others, all while claiming that racism is not a relevant factor in the SA case. These elements have led me to consider the role of place in social constructions in the SA case. In my analysis, I seek to address the following question: *How and why are Shady Acres residents constructed as "deserving" or "undeserving" of place and community in Kittitas County?*

"Place" is relatively difficult to define. Henri Lefebvre notes that space is not something "empty" or innocent, but instead "Space [is] fashioned and molded from

historical and natural elements, but in a political way” (Lefebvre 1970, 170). Lefebvre talks about “lived space,” or the space where individuals’ own imaginings, identities, and values collide with popular perceptions of space and their physical surroundings (Shield 2004, 210). This is what might most closely be related to “place” as I will use it here: an area infused with values that are passively experienced but not static, rather constantly being shaped by and shaping the people who inhabit it. Rendered meaningful by the ideologies and social elements shaping it, place is built where popular imaginations and personal understandings of place tangle with an area’s history, demographics, identities, context, and physical form.

My analysis will connect this idea of place to history and myths of the American West, ultimately arriving at an analysis of the SA situation through the lens of deservingness theory. In my treatment of deservingness, as elsewhere in this work, I will analyze the Event Center Master Plan itself, newspaper articles and opinion pieces, and excerpts from personal interviews with three individuals central to the SA case: Lupe Huerta, an advocate for the SA community whose parents live in SA; John Powell, a Kittitas County Commissioner and planner of the proposed expansion; and Clarke Alderman, a Central Washington University professor of anthropology who is also active in advocacy work for the SA community.

First, I will provide an overview of Kittitas County’s history and context as a part of the American West. Because the fair and rodeo are central to the SA case and defining elements of Kittitas County itself, I will examine their significance as important and ritualistic cultural phenomena that reify myths of the American West. From here I will provide a brief overview of “the West” as a subject of critique among New Western

historians, and as a historic project of whiteness aided by casting place as empty rather than meaningful and propelled into the present by nostalgia for an “old West.” Here I will begin my treatment of deservingness theory, where I will examine conflicting valuations of place on the part of county officials (and their supporters) and SA residents.

Ultimately, I argue that SA residents’ valuation of place is rooted in home and community while the county’s is bound in myths of the American West reified by rodeo and fair, as evidenced by arguments for and against the Master Plan. SA residents are constructed as undeserving of place because of the racialized imbalance of power between the two valuations of place. What’s more, by masking the importance of perpetuating the West for local white identity behind economic language, proponents of the Master Plan cast place as neutral even though it is imbued with meaning. Because conceptualizing space as neutral is implicit with white privilege, doing so allows county officials to deny accusations of racism and continue a possessive investment in whiteness, furthering the exclusion of SA residents for white western interests.

## **II. Imagining the American West**

On a recent trip with a friend to visit her relatives in Portland, her family unwittingly encapsulated something about my hometown:

“Where are you from?” they asked. “Ellensburg, Washington,” I told them.

“Oh, we love Ellensburg. It kind of feels like it’s been left behind in time, you know? Such a nice little western town.”

Ellensburg, the seat of Kittitas County’s government, does indeed feel like the “nice little western town” they remembered. When I asked Commissioner John Powell

how he would characterize the area, he emphasized the county's long history of resource and agricultural economies, adding, "I think that continues to shape and define its character even today, frankly, and you notice that in dramatic ways and in very subtle ways" (Interview with author, Feb. 17, 2017).

There are many visible markers to corroborate Powell's assessment. Run a Google image search of Kittitas County, and the top results are idyllic barns surrounded by wildflowers, the snow-covered peaks of the Cascade Mountains overlooking the area from the northwest, and a mural of the county fair depicting livestock judging. The Kittitas Valley floor is carpeted by irrigated farmland. In Ellensburg, an aluminum statue of a bull sits on a bench downtown, cowboy hat perched in its lap—a "boy cow" in homage to the "cowboy spirit" of the area. Many of the old buildings in Ellensburg's small downtown share structural elements with those built after a fire gutted the town in 1889, including old brick walls adorned with fading mural-style advertisements for Coca Cola and the Palace Café. A worn baby-blue mural just off Main Street shows a blonde woman riding a kicking horse. Her image is echoed by a more recent scene advertising the Ellensburg rodeo of a cowboy on a white bucking bronco, hat in hand. Similar pictures occur in window paintings that crop up at downtown businesses pronouncing "Welcome, Rodeo Fans!" Locals often incorporate cowboy hats and boots into their everyday dress. The Ellensburg School District (at least for the entirety of the thirteen years I was a student in Kittitas County) even begins school the Wednesday after Labor Day every year so that students are able to participate in the fair and rodeo, as well as help their families with the hay harvest. Indeed, Michael Allen, an Ellensburg-raised American historian, writes, "When I was a kid growing up in Ellensburg in eastern

Washington State, rodeo loomed large in my family's and neighbor's lives and imaginations... in a rodeo town, the show is present in one way or another all year round" (Allen 1998, 1). These facets of life in Kittitas County are not random—they speak to the continuing reality and influence of the American West.

*Historical Context: Kittitas County*

The county's relationship to the American West, and history as a physical part of the West, are key aspects of Kittitas County as a place. From a historical perspective, the existence of Kittitas County is itself a direct product of western expansion at the expense of the Native people of the area, particularly the Kittitas band of the Yakama Nation. In addition to seasonal residence of larger groups, the Kittitas Valley was the site of year-round settlements of the Yakama people, as well as the location of meeting and council grounds where Native peoples from across the region would gather (Caveness 2012, 7-10). White contact in the area first occurred in 1812 and 1814 with a small number of fur traders. Little other interaction between whites and the Native people happened until the 1840s, at which time a Christian mission was established. The Kittitas Yakamas remained in the area until the conclusion of the Yakima Indian War of 1855-1858, when, as a result of massive territory loss from the war and the deceitful wording of the 1855 Walla Walla Council Treaty, most of the Yakama people left the Kittitas Valley for the Yakama Reservation. White settlement drastically increased from 1871, aided by the gradual improvement of paths over Snoqualmie Pass and connection to the Seattle area (7). Originally incorporated into Yakima County, Kittitas County broke away in 1883, and Ellensburg was promptly incorporated, garnering a stop on the Northern Pacific Railway (Caveness 2009, 7). In 1909, the addition of the Chicago, Milwaukee, and Saint Paul rail

line better connected Kittitas County to Seattle from the west and Chicago from the east, further facilitating population growth (9).

Kittitas County was primarily characterized by resource-based economic development during its early years, in particular mining and logging in the upper county and farming and cattle driving in the Kittitas Valley due to access to grazing and water, as well as the ease of watching herds for miles in every direction (9). Diversity in the county increased, particularly during the peak gold and coal-mining period in the 1870s and 1880s. When a strike broke out among white miners, the mining company brought black workers to the County, increasing the black population of the upper county to nearly 22 percent (Caveness 2012, 7-10). Chinese settlers arrived following the discovery of gold in northern part of the Kittitas Valley in 1873, but they were eventually ousted by white miners eager to monopolize the gold mining business (9). Mexican/Latinx inhabitation of Central Washington began as early as the 1860s, and was intensified by an influx of people fleeing the Mexican Revolution between 1910-1920. This was coupled with increases in work opportunities related to growing development and spread of commercial agriculture in eastern Washington. The Mexican-American population of Washington increased dramatically in the 1940s related to Bracero work programs, and by the 1990s many eastern Washington counties were between 10-18 percent Hispanic, although some cities, particularly those in the Columbia Basin, have since increased to between 25 percent and 90 percent Hispanic (Garcia 2007, 7-10). A 2015 census estimated the Kittitas County's population was 43,269 people, 91.8 percent of who are white and 8.9 percent of whom identify as Latinx or Hispanic ("Quickfacts," U.S. Census 2015). It is worth noting that in addition to being overwhelmingly white in county

population, all three of the county commissioners involved in the SA case are white, as are the vast majority of Kittitas County elected officials and the entirety of the Fair and Rodeo Boards.

*Fair and Rodeo, Past and Present*

The first annual County Fair occurred in 1912, followed by the first official Ellensburg Rodeo on September 13, 1923 (“2016 Kittitas” 2016, 1). Though originally held at various locations throughout the county year-to-year, the final and current site of the fair and rodeo grounds rests on land that was once the location of a Kittitas Yakama camp at the foot of locally known Craig’s Hill (Caveness 2009, 91). Now the Kittitas County Fair and rodeo occurs every year over the week leading up to Labor Day, and it is the largest tourist attraction in the Ellensburg area, featuring a carnival, livestock and arts exhibits, a pioneer village, a Yakama Village, various vendors, and, of course, the Ellensburg rodeo itself. Powell estimates that 50,000-60,000 attendees visit the fair and rodeo each year, many of whom come from out of town. The Rodeo is considered one of the top ten professional rodeos in the nation, making it a source of local pride for many (“Ellesburg Rodeo” 2017). “Surround all this,” says the Ellensburg Rodeo website, “with the fun of the Kittitas County Fair, the old-west hospitality of the City of Ellensburg, and you can understand why in Ellensburg, it’s *More than just your average Rodeo*” (“Ellensburg Rodeo” 2017; original emphasis). The Kittitas Valley Event Center Master Plan, in fact, begins with a history of the Rodeo that reads almost like an homage: “The event became an annual celebration of both the town and western culture... It was this interest [competition] as well as income potential and a desire to honor the already-

waning romantic notion of the Old West that prompted local townspeople to sponsor the event” (“2016 Kittitas” 2016, 1).

Rodeo itself has been the subject of substantial anthropological analysis and investigation. Elizabeth Atwood Lawrence speaks to its cultural significance, writing that “The contests and performances of rodeo are remarkably patterned and repetitive, comprising a kind of ritual event which serves to express much that is significant not only in the lives of its participants and audiences, but also within the society that endorses it” (Lawrence 1982, vii). Lawrence argues that rodeo identifies, exaggerates, and performs explicit themes of the American West, particularly the pastoral life of the cowboy, in a form of cultural production that “expresses something relevant, not just for Westerners but for Americans, about the way they see themselves and their past” (10). Born from Buffalo Bill’s Wild West and nostalgia for a waning way of life (like that expressed in the Event Center Master Plan), the central image of rodeo is, of course, the cowboy, frequently perceived as the embodiment of toughness, masculinity, independence, and the subduing of nature (Lawrence 1982, 81). Importantly, the ritual performance of rodeo reifies agrarian ideals of “the West” for consumption by rodeo attendees (270). Through rodeo and fair, Lisa Peñaloza writes,

Western meanings extend temporally back to the past, as consumers actively employ them in keeping alive important cultural traditions and values regarding nature, competition, freedom, and community, which are associated with the past development of [the United States]. Meanings extend forward from past to present as well, as consumers invoke elements of the romanticized Old West in their comparisons of elements of rural and urban life. As such, the show serves as an exotic spatial-temporal site for consumers, as old and new come together and apart, adding and taking away historical associations in producing western culture. (Peñaloza 2001, 391)

Rodeo is a locus of distillation for myths of the American West, which are then consumed by those who identify with them in a cyclical process. The rodeo helps keep the romanticized “old west” alive for those who feel a particular nostalgia for it, and those people, in turn, keep the rodeo alive. Because of this and the importance of the rodeo locally, rodeo and all that it symbolizes are an important aspect of what fills place with meaning for many in Kittitas County. The fair, too, while perhaps a little less symbolically over determined in its connections to “the West,” plays an important role: the education and perpetuation of myths of the west in youth. Through fair and rodeo, the county’s dominating cultural identities essentially market the prevailing essence of place—agrarianism and “the West”—by enacting the ritual practices of fair and rodeo, which cement and validate the self-aggrandizing white Christian culture of the west as it has been popularized. Kittitas County is able to fuse the present, past, and future of the county as a place to “the West” through fair and rodeo.

Rodeo and whiteness, importantly, are intimately tied. Central Washington University anthropology professor Clarke Alderman asserts that there is a distinct racial element to rodeo:

Rodeo emerges out of these fascinating colonial or postcolonial appropriations of both Native American practice and larger Mexicano/Nuevo España/Chicano practices on the land, intersecting with more or less white cowboy culture as it was commercialized in the late 19th century, especially through the famous wild west shows. There’s this very interesting multi-cultural history to the rodeo that’s largely obscured now, and rodeo has become a celebration of white nationalism, claiming a kind of white space for the hegemony of white Christian culture.

The Ellensburg Rodeo, Alderman says, is consistent with this, and contains further elements of the erasure of non-whiteness beyond appropriation by white westerners.

Though a relatively recent change in the past ten years (at which point the presence of

Native Americans was relegated solely to the back of the rodeo parade) at the beginning of each night of the rodeo, representatives from the Yakama come down Craig's Hill, which overlooks the rodeo arena. In the arena they perform a dance, but mere minutes later the King County Rodeo Posse (largely white men on horseback) races around the Rodeo arena, literally obscuring the tracks of the Native people and, according to Alderman, "leaping right into the symbolic reconquest of the West and re-positing of the west as a 'terra nullius,' as an empty space within which whiteness can establish itself" (Interview, 25 Feb. 2017). What's more, at the best-attended night of the Ellensburg rodeo, Xtreme Bulls, Alderman notes that at past rodeos participants, who are usually male and white, have been told "to gather in the shape of a cross with flaming torches... reconstituting a very old narrative, even if they don't think of themselves as reenacting the rituals of the knights of the Klu Klux Klan" (Interview, 25 Feb. 2017). These examples of erasure of the presence of Native people and other people of color through dominating symbolic displays of whiteness in the Ellensburg rodeo, coupled with the fact that the land under the rodeo and fair grounds has important historical and cultural significance for the Yakama and other regional tribes, makes it plain that the rodeo parallels and reproduces a dominant thread of "The West": the removal and erasure of people of color to make way for whiteness and its interests.

*"The West" as a Project of Whiteness*

"The West" itself is a subject of great debate among scholars. Proponents of a "new" approach to the West emphasize the West less as a bounded place and more as a continuing process. Patricia Nelson Limerick, a primary voice in New Western history, maintains that the West and its conquest is not a thing of the past, asserting instead that,

“The conquest of Western America shapes the present as dramatically—and sometimes as perilously—as the old mines shape the mountainsides” (Limerick 1987, 18). New Western historians primarily seek to subvert generalized and romanticized notions of the American West in popular imagination. Such thinkers ground themselves in lived history and aim to make visible the experiences of groups typically marginalized, stereotyped, or left out in most popular narratives of the West—largely women and people of color (Hausladen 2003, 5). Doing so, however, has not necessarily had much effect on the continuing influence and scope of white-centric myths of the West. As a result, one criticism of New Western history’s purview is made by Dan Moos. Moos argues that “[A]s these historians try to undo the mythic West through the conscious rejection of its terms, they disregard the reality of the myth itself. New Western historians have overturned the Triumphalist narrative, but they have also lost sight of the enduring cultural power of a myth that continues to circulate, even when emptied of content” (Moos 2005, 11). Study of the West, therefore, is often constituted by the balance of telling stories of obscured lived experiences and understanding the west’s often troubled legacy, while also examining the ways in which the West and its myths continue to influence popular imagination. “Whatever else [the West] may be,” writes historian David Hamilton Murdoch, “it is not history. That is to say, as an interpretation of America’s past it tells us less about the nineteenth-century West than it does about how twentieth-century Americans have chosen to think about themselves” (Murdoch 2001, 4).

Myths of the West and conventional Western History usually tend towards an East-West dialectic in which all movement is inaccurately linear and parallel, most often flowing from east to west. This is in part rooted in the fact that Western history and its

myths contain ideas, stated or otherwise, about who participated in the West and in what ways. Historian Frank Van Nuy notes that architects of the West felt that “undiluted by alien culture and blood, true Americanism had made its way west and there made its last stand,” making quite clear that to be considered American during westward expansion was to be white (Van Nuy 2002, 11). Further, Van Nuy states, “the creation of Western societies, whether detailed in mugbook histories, dime novels, or motion pictures, was portrayed as fundamentally the product of white pioneering... alien and unassimilable foreigners, devoid of pioneer qualities, portended doom for the survival of this most American of American regions” (15). This points towards the significant whitewashing of the American West in popular imagination. Jason E. Pierce adds that white settler ideas of “Americanness” frequently excluded new immigrants and “foreigners” but claimed to include in its project of nationalism Indigenous peoples and Mexican and Chinese laborers who were helping to build the West. Tellingly, though, such “inclusion” existed only to the extent that non-whites “knew their place and added a veneer of exoticism and variety” (Pierce 2016, 104).

Clearly, the West as a historical project of expansion was a white nationalist one, aimed at creating a racially homogenous region of “prosperity” and “civilization” legitimated through Manifest Destiny. Of particular interest to the previous deliberation on rodeo and fair, in many ways the white project of the West was propelled through the expansion of agriculture and the westward advancement of Thomas Jefferson’s yeoman farmer (Barraclough 2001, 25; Pierce 2016, 123). Laura Barraclough cites Frieda Knobloch’s argument that “agriculture and colonization in the American West worked together as material and ideological processes... intended to bring conquered or unsettled

territories under the stable settled control of the state and into a productive and profitable regime of land ownership” (Barraclough 2001, 26). One way this occurred was through the dispossession of Indigenous and Mexican land. Exclusionary land-use policies ensured that once transferred to white hands, land would remain under white management (10). Jefferson and Frederick Jackson Turner’s visions of the American West were bound up in the promise of near Edenic white, rural pastoralism in which agro-economic conversion was considered an unconditional improvement over what occupied those spaces before. The region of the West in the present, as in the past, is far less white than the planners of Western expansion might have liked. Still, white supremacy of the West can make racial others invisible to dominant narratives, and this is what tends to happen in the romanticized narratives of the West that New Western historians seek to challenge. Myths of the West continue to reverberate in the present, often in ways that obscure the harm done by whites and whiteness.

Importantly, because access to land and land ownership was a marker of whiteness in the American West and land and agriculture were so ingrained in the creation of white identity, landscapes in the West today “are crucial grounds for the negotiation of whiteness in the transition from explicit white supremacy to ‘color-blind’ neo-conservatism, a transition still very much in process” (Barraclough 2001, 10-18). This is furthered through the creation of what Barraclough calls transition narratives. Transition narratives reframe conquest “in a way that recuperates the legitimacy of the colonizing force and its social and cultural precepts, thus securing hegemonic rule in conquered territories through appeals to shared heritage...the present emerging, as if inevitably, from the past; and the inevitable emergence of culture, over time, from

nature” (11). The result is the creation of a white national identity rooted in (stolen) place and, in the case of Kittitas County (as elsewhere), reified through practices like rodeo (11). Constructing place as neutral, according to Barraclough, “naturalizes and normalizes” systems of power and privilege such that, “the root forces creating inequality are made invisible in the landscape, thereby deflecting critique and containing dissent by suggesting that only those [who] occupy and use the landscapes are responsible for the way it looks” (18). Landscape shapes ideologies and social movements in ways that “secure hegemonic consent in support of the legitimacy of existing social order” (18). Simply put, human actions are shaped by inequalities, and also play a role in (re)producing them in space (Soja 2010, 72). Whiteness in the West continues to erase the lived experiences in place of people of color, reframing place in terms that claim emptiness, neutrality, and availability for whites. In doing so, valuations are made by privileged social structures regarding which values in place are “valid” or “deserving” and which are not. These valuations do not occur in a vacuum, but are instead racialized.

### **III. Place in Shady Acres Through the Lens of Deservingness**

A useful frame through which to examine the role of race in place is deservingness theory. Deservingness theory is a framework of political analysis that asks critical questions about how, why, and by whom social groups are constructed and along what lines (often variations of and intersections between race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, age, etc.). Sanford F. Schram explains deservingness theory as a way to “examine how unarticulated understandings of ourselves and others influence judgments about inequality, what causes it, and what we should do about it” (Schram 2015, 81).

Deservingness theory often seeks to interpret how policy, in particular, frames social groups in ways that “send messages” to those included and excluded from a group about the extent to which, and under what conditions, groups or individuals are “worthy” of particular goods (social, economic, ideological, political, etc.). Anne Schneider and Helen Ingram address this, arguing that:

Advantaged groups get the message that they are good, intelligent people and that their problems are central... They can expect to be treated with respect. [Disadvantaged/negatively constructed groups], on the other hand, realize that they are controversial...their problems are mainly the responsibility of the civic society or faith-based institutions rather than government, and that other people’s interests are more important than their own.” (Schneider and Ingram 2008, 31)

*Arguments for and Against the Event Center Master Plan*

Arguments for and against the Event Center Master Plan (and therefore the expansion of the fair and rodeo at the expense of SA residents) are particularly revealing when considering deservingness and the role of race and place in the SA situation. Testimonies were presented for (16) and against (19) the purchase during a public comment period at a meeting held in August 2016 to discuss the County’s decision to purchase SA. Proponents of the Master Plan who spoke included Kittitas County Fair Board members, Ellensburg Rodeo Association members, and a 4-H<sup>3</sup> livestock committee representative. Opponents included SA residents, relatives, and other community members.

In the testimonies, proponents emphasized private property rights, safety concerns, and the need for more space for livestock at the fair. One commenter stated that the living conditions in SA pose health and safety issues for residents and that opposing

---

<sup>3</sup> 4-H is a network of youth development clubs. In Kittitas County, 4-H most heavily represents clubs that focus on agriculture and livestock. I am a 4-H alum of a poultry club called the Kittitas Flyers.

the purchase is akin to “keeping” SA residents in unsafe and unsanitary conditions. A member of the Rodeo Association asserted that he had lived in SA in 1976 and supported the County’s purchase because it was the private property owners’ right to sell to whomever they wished. The livestock committee member stressed in particular the need for more space for animal exhibitions in order to allow the greatest number of local children to continue to participate in 4-H programs at the fair. One woman, citing the importance of agricultural education, stated, “The children are our future. I support the purchase of this property and I support it for the future of this county, which is the youth” (Buhr and Martinez 2016).

In addition to these arguments, the BOCC have generally argued that repurposing the SA property would be beneficial for Kittitas County at large because expanding the rodeo and fair grounds would provide an economic boost for the county. However, when I asked John Powell about the economic impact of an expanded Event Center, it seemed unclear what the actual economic effect would be. Powell noted, “[There have been] no studies on the economic impact. Before we would invest in construction on those sites we’d have to do a feasibility analysis on that, we’d do a market study. We’d do an economic study before we move forward with those investments. We don’t want to spend a bunch of money building something that we’re not going to recover the costs from” (interview, Feb. 17, 2017). Powell has also expressed that the expanded facilities are necessary to meet rising attendance at the fair and rodeo. Further, he has claimed the BOCC had a public mandate to purchase the SA property, as it was “the will of the people” (Buhr, 2016). This statement was based on a survey section included in the Master Plan, in which the item most ranked “highest” priority (by 29 percent of

participants) reads “acquire the manufactured home park to resolve code and safety issues; facilitate better low cost housing options for occupants; and restore and adequately buffer Wilson Creek” (“2016 Kittitas” 2016, 31). However, the survey was not available in Spanish. What’s more, participants were asked to rank each item on a scale from lowest- to highest-priority, but had no way to mark that they did not want to see something done at all. Further, only 679 people out approximately 43,000 in the county completed the survey—around 1.6% of the County’s total population, or 2.6% out of those 24,521 registered to vote as of November 8, 2016 (31). Just 197 people ranked the item as a highest priority for the planned expansion—a number hard to consider a public mandate.

Testimonies by opponents to the purchase of SA, on the other hand, emphasized community, the difficulty of relocation, and the impact of uncertainty resulting from the purchase on residents. A resident stressed that there is simply not enough affordable housing in the county, and that particularly for those with multiple children relocating was extremely difficult. The resident argued that to get affordable housing for a family with four children the house was required to have four bedrooms, and only four such affordable housing units exist in the county. Some also raised concerns about the effects of moving on their families, and said they didn’t want to lose the site of the memories they had made at SA. “I got married in that trailer park. We brought the babies home there,” one woman said (Buhr and Martinez 2016). Others stressed that relocating costs money and time that residents don’t have to spend. An older white man living in SA cited high medical costs for a back condition that has left him hardly able to walk, the physical effects of which would further impede his relocation. Many mentioned the highly

supportive community that they have in SA, and that the lives and families of residents should come before having more space for parking lots or exhibited animals for the fair and rodeo.

SA residents had met with County Commissioners about the purchase earlier as well, including at a May 2016 hearing of the BOCC. The testimonies from the meeting were collected and titled “Words of Shady Acres” (Auslander 2016). A selection of these testimonies to the Commissioners is included below, attributed to initials for privacy:

I never thought we would go through something like this, through decisions that adults are taking that do not take into consideration the impact upon us. We haven't been able to sleep well. I don't know if you are a father or a mother. I am a mother. Imagine coming home every day from work, imagine your children saying, what are we going to do? What answer can I give them, when I don't know myself? My heart has been broken in many pieces because of the decisions you are making. We are such a beautiful creation that God has made. We are not dependent on anyone else, we depend on ourselves, to provide for ourselves.  
-JL

I believe that you all have houses and your children sleep peacefully and you sleep well, but when I get home my children ask where are we going? Will we be sleeping under a bridge? We pay \$325 per lot rent. Looking online I see that to the equivalent house we'd have to pay \$1200 to \$1800. Where will I get that money from? Would I take away clothing and food from my children? I understand your work, you have the capacity to help us in a good manner. You are saying you are going to find a good solution but we are not seeing that yet. We need action, please.  
-SL

I feel confused, hearing there is no plan for all these families, even though you are asserting you care. As we just heard, the families are going through a very traumatic period. If I had the resources so that my family didn't have to go through this trauma, I wouldn't be here. From one side I hear don't worry, but I can't but wonder what is going to be the end of this situation. I don't know if it would be better to have an exact date or to continue in this trauma when we don't know what is going to happen. After hearing all that has been said today I feel like I have made my home in the sand.  
-RDLR

*“Undeserving”*

Applying deservingness theory to the arguments made for and against the fair and rodeo grounds expansion reveals elements of how county officials and their supporters’ idea of place contrasts with that of SA residents. At its core, the SA debate is over the best use of a piece of land—land which happens to be in close proximity to the fair and rodeo grounds. SA residents’ valuation of place is clear: it is home, lived space, a place for community and family; place filled with all the associations and values that come along with attachments to place as home. Residents’ relationships with place, however, are repeatedly ignored or framed as undeserving by the county and its supporters. Indeed, the very fact that the SA case has been a point of contention already shows deservingness at play. That SA residents have built a community, homes, lives, memories, and families (all of which would be highly difficult to relocate), is apparently not enough to exempt SA residents from potential eviction in the eyes of proponents of the Master Plan, and SA residents’ interests are instead overshadowed by more powerful interests tied to literal and figurative investments in the West. The message, then, in accordance with Schneider and Ingram, is that SA residents’ existence in place and connections to place are controversial, and SA residents are not “worthy” of unquestioned and unchallenged existence in place.

SA residents are constructed as undeserving of their place and community through problematic representations (or exclusions) of the SA community, among other ways, through the Master Plan document itself. The document largely omits mention of the people who live at SA, despite the fact that residents’ homes are at risk. Only a small portion of the report is dedicated to a discussion of SA; the community is only referenced

three times in the main text of the document and twice in the appended survey. Only twice in those five references is it acknowledged that SA is, in fact, home to actual people (and still, they are referred to in economic terms as tenants) (“2016 Kittitas” 2016, 5). The brief nature of the document’s attention to SA itself speaks volumes: more page space is devoted to the homage to the beginning of Rodeo in Kittitas County than is to SA and its residents, and the total discussion on SA would barely fill a page in the 42-page document. Further, though the document includes maps of both the existing and planned event center, SA is omitted from both maps: it is a blank space initially, but has been filled by RV parking spaces in the next image. These elements send two potential messages: either the impact the plan will have upon SA residents’ lives and community isn’t considered significant, or the document intentionally attempts to minimize the degree to which the SA community is visible—or both.

In addition to obscuring the human presence at SA, the Master Plan employs racialized language that seeks to devalue SA. At the same time, the county and other endorsers of the Master Plan are framed as benevolent, generous, and concerned for SA residents’ welfare. The Master Plan states that the county is conducting appropriate due diligence, but does not go into detail (10). This move serves to redirect attention from the displacement of the SA community, instead associating the county with ideas of assistance and appropriateness. A similar move occurs in the survey item referenced by Powell as evidence of public mandate: “acquire the manufactured home park to resolve code and safety issues; facilitate better low cost housing options for occupants; and restore and adequately buffer Wilson Creek” (31). In addition to obscuring the fact that

SA residents would be evicted, the item paints the county as benevolent and bent on improving living conditions for residents who are depicted as dependent on whites.

Shady Acres is also described as “...not well maintained and includ[ing] a large number of derelict and deteriorating singlewide mobile homes and lean-to structures configured in close quarters” (10). It should be noted that manufactured homes are frequently associated with negative, racialized images of dependency or delinquency.<sup>4</sup> This connotation is amplified by the comment on the property not being well maintained, implying that the inhabitants (who, again, are mysteriously absent here) are at fault, seeming to imply pathological laziness. This ignores the fact that the white private landowners would likely share responsibility for general upkeep. The words “derelict,” “deteriorating,” “lean-to,” and “close quarters” are also racialized in subtle ways. In addition to revealing the societal value placed on normative standards of outward appearance for living spaces, they simultaneously imply that the residences are hardly inhabited. While some do stand empty, many are people’s homes. “Derelict” and “deteriorating” contribute to the image of poor maintenance described above. Huerta addressed such characterizations of SA: “I told [Commissioner Powell], don’t talk about these houses as being run-down and not worth it. Regardless of how they look, these are people’s homes, and they worked to purchase them. This is what they can afford, and they take pride in that. On the inside they’re clean and well organized” (interview, 24 Feb. 2017). Further, “lean-to” implies temporary-ness or vagrancy, but SA residents average eight years of residence at the park. “Close-quarters” does similar rhetorical

---

<sup>4</sup> For example, some in Kittitas County cited concerns about decreasing property values, homeless people, and addicts in response to a proposal to build affordable housing near an affluent neighborhood, a spokesperson from which stated “We’ve all worked so hard to have a nice home, and then to have a situation like that right back against our community...” (“Residents,” Buhr 2016).

work, evoking images of the “third-world” and masses of brown bodies, which, in turn, are related to stereotypical racialized images of over-fertility. The message these elements of the Master Plan send, in total, is simple: SA, particularly as it sits next to a major hub of tourism in Ellensburg, is a blight on the town’s image and therefore disposable, particularly as the alternative is the expansion of the rodeo and fair grounds. Huerta told me,

What really cemented the mentality about this community is a quote by the county lawyer, saying that the [landowners] refused to remove the manufactured homes from the land, who said ‘they’re just going to leave us with all this junk.’ And I thought, that in summary, those words, is what they think of this community. I was livid. I try to think, this is the space I’m in today, today I’m a community member, or today I’m speaking out for Shady Acres, because I still believe in being a kind person, unlike the people who called the community junk. But that’s what we are to them. And I want to make sure that they know that people like me can come out of junk. Like my brothers. Successful community members can come out of this junk. (interview, Feb. 24, 2017)

The comments from the August meetings also frame SA residents as undeserving of place. Huerta wrote a letter to the editor in the newspaper that is worth quoting at some length:

We heard about the importance of youth involvement in agriculture because “(they) are our future,” as well as praise for the commissioners for their commitment to help “these people.” All of this was simply too much to listen to. Somewhere along the way supporters of the sale lost sight of the human lives at stake with this issue. ...[H]ow can we possibly compare space for swine to that of homes for humans? How can we talk about the idea that children are our future without considering the over 50 children living in Shady Acres and the impact losing their homes will have on their lives? How can we go from being “these people” to fully acknowledged members of our community? (“Letter” Huerta 2016)

Huerta’s response to the August meeting clearly calls out that suggesting space for livestock is more important than “homes for humans” (thus framing white children as

more deserving than the Latinx children at SA) is an instance of racism. When I asked Huerta about residents' resistance to the county's plan, she added:

The community is not fighting necessarily just for the land. They want to stay there, but they're fighting for each other. They acknowledge that if you separate us, you're separating natural resources that we have, the resources that support each other. I think people are missing the point when they say well, some of you can go to Habitat for Humanity, some of you can go to the Housing Authority. It's the non-tangibles. How do you quantify those things? (interview, Feb 24, 2017)  
*Masking the Meaning of Place*

In constructing SA residents as undeserving of their homes and community, which are deemed essentially invalid by the white writers and supporters of the Master Plan, a more complicated framing of place for county officials begins to take shape. SA is not “worthy” of continuing in place, according to the BOCC and others, because the alternative is the chance to expand the fair and rodeo grounds. The chance to blend the SA area into conformity with the larger valuation of place (distilled agrarianism and myths of the West) is not one the county is willing to pass up. As we have already seen, the fair and rodeo grounds are a locus of the perpetuation and marketing of an essence of place grounded in the West, including racist elements that stem from the West as a project of whiteness. Arguments for the expansion of the fair and rodeo grounds fit with this model: they privilege property rights and instilling agrarian ideals in young minds, as well as the cultural significance of the rodeo and fair for the local area. The valuation of place, here, is quite clear. What's more, however, it is worth acknowledging that the county commissioners are in elected positions and must, at least to some extent, cater to their constituents in Kittitas County—many of whom evidently care deeply about, and have invested elements of their identities in, myths of the American West. Most interestingly, however, the BOCC has sought to justify the Master Plan through economic

terms, despite the absence of necessary economic assessments to determine the true impact of an expanded event center. From Alderman's perspective:

John Powell is interested in keeping the rodeo/rancher/grower constituency happy, but under a sort of technocratic economic development model, so for that reason he's pushed very hard to have what was a kind of quaint old style rodeo and county fair transformed into this thing called the event center, with the claim, for which there's no real supporting data, that this is going to pump a significant amount of money into the county and Ellensburg.

When I met with him, Powell was indeed insistent on referring to the expansion not as an expansion of the rodeo and fair grounds, but of a larger event center. "I think there's a distinctive difference between the two," he said. "The fair event itself is a cultural event that occurs once a year over a five-day period. The facility operates year round, it's available for a variety of uses, and it utilized in a variety of ways" (interview, 17 Feb. 2017). However, the Fair and Rodeo occupy by far the most space of any event held at the Event Center in terms of attendance, duration, and, most importantly, space in local imagination. Moreover, the character of the facilities themselves shouldn't be overlooked. According to Powell, the facilities play a particular role: "It kind of fills a niche in our community, it's a fair grounds, it's an event center, so it's not [Central Washington University] and their ballrooms, it's not Suncadia [Resort] and their luxury amenities, it's an Average Joe kind of facility, and there's a real kind of demand for that here" (interview, 17 Feb. 2017). That Powell explicitly called out the University in Ellensburg and Suncadia Resort in the upper county is telling: the Fair and Rodeo Grounds and the Event Center are seen by Powell, and likely others in the County as well, as a site for events that are easier to identify with than other facilities in the county more associated with urbanism.

Interestingly, the effect of placing emphasis on a larger event center rather than the fair and rodeo grounds is that by taking the focus of the event center, the BOCC is more easily able to reframe the conversation in economic terms. While in part a focus on the event center allows the BOCC to try to head off criticisms that the fair and rodeo grounds are largely used only for one week out of the year, it accomplishes other work that is more relevant in thinking about the privileging of different conceptions of place. The driving force behind the expansion becomes opportunistic acquisition of an asset in order to meet demand; private property rights legitimate the site's procurement. Reframing the discussion in economic terms allows the county to effectively present place as neutral and devoid of meaning, despite the fact that the sense of place perpetuated through rodeo and fair remains deeply meaningful. In doing so, the county is able to represent the planned expansion as ultimately "good for everyone" in the county, not just those with particularly deep connections to myths of the American West (despite the traumatic uncertainty of displacement experienced by SA residents). From this perspective, the expansion is merely meeting rising demand—an inevitable step in growth. If the event center brings economic windfall to Kittitas County (and credit to the BOCC) and SA residents find houses somewhere (anywhere) else, then the county can claim overall success. Place remains deeply imbued with meaning for the BOCC and its supporters, but by arguing for an event center expansion in economic terms with a supposed public mandate and demand, the county is able to mask the racism couched in its words and actions and instead continue cultivating an image of virtuous white folks in an expanding West.

#### **IV. A “Possessive Investment in Whiteness”**

Through the lens of deservingness theory, place can be considered a sort of good that is allocated unequally in ways that send messages about who is and isn't entitled to occupy that space. Edward Soja asserts that not acknowledging place as meaningful “misses too much, making almost invisible the political and other forces emanating from the geographies we have created and in which we live our lives...blocking from view how space is actively involved in generating and sustaining inequality, injustice, economic exploitation, racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression and discrimination” (Soja 2010, 72). Race is a principle element of the production of space, not only because place is informed by processes that privilege white people and whiteness over a racialized “other,” but also because space is frequently considered empty of race. Shannon Sullivan writes, “space both constitutes and is constituted by white privilege... the idea of space as racially neutral often is complicit with white privilege, [such] that spatiality can contribute to the racial and racist division of a civilized ‘we’ from a wild ‘them,’” (Sullivan 2016, 143). She continues, “As ontologically expansive, white people consider all spaces as rightfully available for their inhabitation of them” (144). By framing space as empty and devoid of race (in other words, space as “color-blind”), systems of white supremacy mask their presence and power while continuing to oppress brown bodies. This is highly important in the SA case because by framing arguments for the Master Plan in unsubstantiated economic terms while simultaneously valuing their version of place over that of SA, the BOCC and its supporters present place that privileges white western culture as somehow neutral. In doing so, that supposedly neutral place is portrayed as colorblind and devoid of race. This

makes it easier for the BOCC and others to assert that racism is not taking place in the SA case, despite clearly deeming SA residents' claim to place undeserving.

Within the SA case, conversations surrounding race have mostly operated under a definition of racism as overt, while attempts at a more nuanced approach have been met with accusations of fear mongering or, troublingly, assertions that a few outspoken individuals are manipulating SA residents for other political aims in the fraught political climate. Alderman recounted an early instance of discriminatory language in the SA case in which Powell stressed that people “ought not to worry” as the tavern included in the SA property purchase would remain due to its iconic nature (*Daily Record* Editorial Board 2016). “It’s a well known, virtually all-white bar,” Alderman said—a bar that was instantly given immunity from the County’s plans, while the nearby homes of over a hundred Latinx people were under debate. Alderman added, “When I circulated a public email saying this was a clear example of racially discriminatory language, [Powell] blew up at me, he was furious, he called me and screamed that he would have me fired from the university. He couldn’t stand that. Everyone knows that the Klan is bad because they’re overt white supremacists, but everything else is somehow thought to be fair game.” Huerta, too, expressed that white people weighing in on the SA issue often missed the nuances of race involved in the situation: “People don’t think about those contributing factors, issues of classism, racism. Some people are like ‘Well I used to live in a mobile home park and I got out’ and it’s like, yes, but you didn’t have all these other social factors contributing to the situation that you’re in, that this community is in. They didn’t have racism to deal with, you know?” (interview, Feb. 24, 2017).

The BOCC, however, generally denies the existence of any racism in the SA case. When I asked Powell to recount opposing arguments regarding SA and what his response is, racism was first on his list: “I think probably the most concerning argument is that the County’s purchase was racially motivated. There have been a lot of comments made about racist Commissioners, and it wasn’t founded in any sort of evidence or reality. I think that some opponents have worked really hard to find that motivation.” He continued, “we want to be very forthright and very open and transparent with the community, we’ve tried to send that message, and a lot of that doesn’t get discussed because it doesn’t fit within the storyline of how this county is a racist asshole trying to kick people to the curb because we don’t have a heart” (interview, Feb. 17, 2017). Powell’s response operates under a definition of racism that is explicit and easily codified. In fact, Powell told me that if there were any “real” evidence of racism, he believed it would have been found by now (interview, Feb. 17, 2017).

Powell and his supporters are not the only ones who have argued that race plays no role in the SA situation. According to Alderman, “Even many of the Shady Acres allies actually refuse to agree that there is anything racist going on because they too are brought into this language that someone being racist is the worst possible sin you can do.” The result of such denials of racism is frequently a plea to “colorblindness”—claiming to not “see” race, and therefore be incapable of racism. This, however, is problematic in its own right, not least because rhetoric of colorblindness simply obscures the fact that whites continue to benefit from systemically racialized structures. Indeed, though certainly not unique to the American West, this may be part of the nexus where myths of the West and whiteness collide in the production of place: Sherene Razack

writes, “A quintessential feature of white settler mythologies is...the disavowal of conquest, genocide, slavery, and the exploitation of the labor of peoples of color” (Barraclough 2001, 11).

Refusing to acknowledge that race plays a factor in the SA situation is rooted in what George Lipsitz calls a “possessive investment in whiteness.” When attacking attempts to bring race into conversations about SA, those who support the Master Plan are defending whiteness and its priorities. Lipsitz provides context, stating, “[O]nce we remember that whiteness is also an identity, one with a long political history, contemporary attacks on ‘identity’ politics come into clear relief as a defense of the traditional privileges and priorities of whiteness in the face of critical and political projects that successfully disclose who actually holds power in this society and what has been done with it” (Lipsitz 1998, 66). Defense of whiteness is not merely rooted in attempts at character defense—white people profit from a continuation of white privilege. Lipsitz asserts that whiteness has economic benefits as well as being a source of power and unquestioned social citizenship (viii). Further, Lipsitz argues, an investment in white supremacy is not necessarily a matter of overt racism, but a systematic and systemic project “protecting the privileges of whites by denying communities of color opportunities for asset accumulation and upward mobility” (viii). In prioritizing white interests by expanding the Fair and Rodeo grounds at the expense of SA residents, the Fair and Rodeo boards, BOCC, and primarily white local businesses<sup>5</sup> might gain either economically from increased tourism or in the form of praise for valuing the agricultural education of local children. But even more potently, expanding the fair and rodeo directly

---

<sup>5</sup> Very few Kittitas County businesses are owned by minorities—just four percent. (“Quick facts” 2016).

contributes to the perpetuation and expansion of unquestioned white western culture and the exclusion of SA residents, who are constructed as undeserving of place.

## **V. Conclusion**

In the face of the planned rodeo and fair grounds expansion, SA residents have had to argue for their own right to exist together in a place that they have built through community and commitment. Huerta tells the story of how the community decided to name themselves Shady Acres, rather than the name frequently used by the BOCC, Shady Brook. “Shady Brook sounds like this little area over by a creek, but there’s actual acreage at Shady Acres, right? It’s not just a small thing off to the side. So using the name Shady Acres became an act of defiance for us, and while the Commissioners talk about Shady Brook, saying Shady Acres is a way of talking about the community on our own terms” (interview, 24 Feb. 2017). Renaming Shady Brook to Shady Acres was, for the community’s residents, a political act showing that they would not be overlooked or overpowered, and would instead demand to be recognized as significant.

Shady Acres residents have endured months of uncertainty as their homes, health, loved ones, and community have been at stake. Still, Huerta says, the community is committed.

Everyone decided in a meeting late last year that they’re in it to the end. They’re going to stay. They have a five year contract, so they know for the next four and a half years what they’re doing, but they’re staying till the end. For me, if this case goes to court, if we win or lose, I think it’s going to start conversations that need to be had in [the Kittitas] community about how we function. Which I’m proud to be a part of. This is the first time that we hold our community accountable. (interview, 24 Feb. 2017)

The Shady Acres case is centered on conflicting valuations of place that have resulted in the construction of SA residents as undeserving of community along racialized lines. Simply put, the SA property is of greater “value” to the county as an extension of the fair and rodeo than it is as a community of low-income, Latinx people. The county’s valuation of the SA site is bound not simply to economics, but also to the magnitude of the American West in local imagination and myths of the West as a vehicle for furthering whiteness and its interests. The SA case reads almost like a modernized tale from the “Old West”: brown bodies threatened for the perpetuation of whiteness and white interests. County officials and their supporters, however, behave as though race has played no part in their words and actions. Considering place as meaningful in local politics is crucial for understanding and dismantling white supremacy and social injustice.

## Bibliography

### Primary Documents

Alderman, Clarke. Interview with Molly Verhey. Personal interview. Ellensburg, 25 Feb. 2017.

“Ellensburg Rodeo,” EllensburgRodeo.com, 2017.

Huerta, Lupe. Interview with Molly Verhey. Personal interview. Ellensburg, 24 Feb. 2017.

Huerta, Lupe. “Shady Acres Census,” 5 Sept. 2016.

2016 Kittitas Valley Event Center Master Plan,  
<https://www.co.kittitas.wa.us/uploads/documents/kvec/Kittitas-Valley-Event-Center-Master-Plan.pdf>.

Powell, John. Interview with Molly Verhey. Personal interview. Ellensburg, 17 Feb. 2017.

### Secondary Documents

Allen, Michael. *Rodeo Cowboys in the North American Imagination* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1998).

Auslander, Mark. “Words of Shady Acres,” <http://saveshadyacres.blogspot.com/2016/05/words-of-shady-acres.html>. 30 May 2016.

Barraclough, Laura. *Making the San Fernando Valley: Rural Landscapes, Urban Development, and White Privilege*, (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001).

Buhr, Tony. “Commissioner 1 Candidates Trade Views on Shady Acres,” *The Daily Record*, July 8, 2016.

Buhr, Tony. “Residents Raise Concerns about Affordable Housing Project,” *The Daily Record*, 3 Dec. 2016.

Buhr, Tony and Julia Martinez. “Heated Debate as County Purchases Shady Acres” *The Daily Record*, 19 Aug. 2016.

Caveness, Andrew. *Images of America: Kittitas County*. (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2012).

Caveness, Andrew. *Images of America: Ellensburg* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2009).

Editorial Board. “Editorial: County has responsibility to residents,” *The Daily Record*, April 21, 2016.

“Elections and Voting: Kittitas County,” Washington Secretary of State Election’s Division, Nov. 29, 2016.  
<http://results.vote.wa.gov/results/current/kittitas/>

Garcia, Jerry. *Images of America: Mexicans in North Central Washington*. (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2007).

“Kittitas,” Office of Financial Management, 2015. <http://www.ofm.wa.gov/databook/pdf/53037.pdf>

“Kittitas County Quickfacts,” United States Census Bureau, 2017.  
<http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/53037,00>

- Hausladen, Gary J. "Introduction" in *Western Places, American Myths: How We Think About the West*, ed. Gary J. Hausladen (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2003).
- Huerta, Lupe. "Letter: Meeting did not reflect compassion of community," *The Daily Record*, 6 Sept. 2016.
- Lawrence, Elizabeth Atwood. *Rodeo: An Anthropologist Looks at the Wild and the Tame*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982).
- Lefebvre, Henri. "Space: Social Product and Use Value" in Henri Lefebvre, Elden Stuart, and Neil Brenner's *State, Space, World: Selected Essays* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009).
- Lipsitz, George. *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).
- Major, Jesse and Julia Martinez. "County to buy Mobile Home Park." *The Daily Record*, April 20, 2016.
- Moos, Dan. *Outside America: Race, Ethnicity, and the Role of the American West in National Belonging* (Lebanon: University Press of New England, 2005).
- Murdoch, David Hamilton. *The American West: The Invention of a Myth* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2001).
- Peñaloza, Lisa. "Consuming the American West: Animating Cultural Meaning and Memory at a Stock Show and Rodeo," *Journal of Consumer Research* (2001). Web. 14 Sept. 2016.
- Pierce, Jason E. *Making the White Man's West: Whiteness and the Creation of the American West* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2016).
- Schneider, Anne L. and Helen Ingram. "Social Constructions in the Study of Public Policy" in *Handbook of Constructionist Research*, ed. James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium (New York: The Guilford Press, 2008).
- Schram, Sanford F. "The Deep Semiotic Structure of Deservingness" in *The Return of Ordinary Capitalism: Neoliberalism, Precarity, Occupy* (London: Oxford University Press, 2015).
- Shield, Rob. "Henri Lefebvre" in *Key Thinkers on Space and Place*, ed. Phil Hubbard, Rob Kitchin, and Gill Valentine. (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2004).
- Soja, Edward. *Globalization and Community: Seeking Spatial Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).
- Sullivan, Shannon. "Race, Space, and Place" in *Revealing Whiteness: The Unconscious Habits of Racial Privilege*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).
- Van Nuy, Frank. *Americanizing the West: Race, Immigrants, and Citizenship, 1890-1930* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002).
- Willmsen, Christine. "Mobile-home park's residents left in dark as homes are sold out from under them," *The Seattle Times*, February 6, 2017.