

THE 1992 LOS ANGELES UPRISING

Coro Lead LA

Law, Justice, and Public Safety
Issue Day - April 20, 2023

Curious Monarchs

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The corner of Florence and Normandie avenues on April 29, 1992. (Kirk McKoy / Los Angeles Times)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents

Historical Background	3
Pre-Reading	4
Location	5
Civic Challenge	6
Purpose, Outcomes, Process	8
Speaker Biographies	10
Issue Analysis	15
Glossary	17
Facts and Figures	21
Calls to Action	23
Acknowledgments	25



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The 1992 Los Angeles Uprising, also known as the Rodney King Riots, was a momentous event in the history of the Los Angeles region and the United States. Several days of unrest were sparked by the acquittal of four Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) officers who were captured brutally beating Rodney King, a Black man, after a high-speed car chase in March 1991. The video of Rodney King's beating was broadcast widely, and had already fuel to existing tensions between the Black community in South Central Los Angeles and the LAPD.

King's beating was not an isolated incident: it was part of a pattern of police brutality and racism in Los Angeles. Just weeks before, a Korean store owner shot and killed a 15-year old Black girl, Latasha Harlins, after accusing her of attempting to steal a bottle of orange juice. While the store owner was convicted of voluntary manslaughter, they only received probation and community service, provoking outrage across the Black community in Los Angeles.

The trial of the LAPD officers involved in Rodney King's beating was moved to a predominantly white suburb, and the jury largely comprised white jurors. The defense argued that the officers acted within the bounds of their training, while the prosecution presented evidence of excessive force. Their acquittal, broadcast on live television, led to protests that quickly turned violent. More than 50 people were killed, more than 2,300 people were injured, and thousands were arrested. Nearly 1,100 buildings were damaged, amounting to \$1 billion in damages.

The unrest was devastating for the Black community in South Central, where most of the violence occurred. However, other communities were impacted, including Korean Americans who were targeted by rioters. Many Korean-owned businesses were destroyed, creating tension between Black and Korean American communities.

The riots highlighted deep-seeded social and economic inequality across LA, and efforts followed to rebuild and revitalize affected areas and address racism, police brutality, and inequality city-wide. These included community-led initiatives, policy changes, and intentional dialogues between different community groups. Over 30 years later, the 1992 LA Uprising remains a symbol of the ongoing struggle for racial justice and equality in the United States. Today, we revisit the sites and sounds of the Uprising to better understand what has been learned, unlearned, and not learned in the last thirty years.

PRE-READING

listen



NPR: *The Los Angeles Riots, Race and Journalism*

watch



The 15-year-old girl who was killed over orange juice - Latasha Harlins

read



USC News: *Were Media Reports of the 1992 Unrest Fair or Foul?*

LOCATION

social justice learning institute

Social Justice Learning Institute -
Affordable Housing Development
(building is formerly Church of Latter-Day Saints)

400 Centinela Ave, Inglewood, CA 90302

The Social Justice Learning Institute (SJLI) is dedicated to improving the education, health, and well-being of youth and communities of color by empowering them to enact social change through research, training, and community mobilization.

We thank them for graciously allowing us to use this space for our Issue Day.



CIVIC CHALLENGE

civic challenge

What are the impacts and legacies of the 1992 Los Angeles Uprising in our communities, in mainstream and social media, and within law enforcement?

guiding question

What are the lessons learned, not learned, and unlearned in the 30 years that have passed since the 1992 Los Angeles Uprising amongst and between communities, media, and law enforcement?

CIVIC CHALLENGE

focusing questions

How were different communities affected by the arrest and beating of Rodney King and the verdicts of his case? Where and by whom have the impacts of the resulting riots been most felt?

How do different ethnic and racial groups, age groups, and neighborhoods remember the riots? How has their experience or understanding of the event informed their perception of law, public safety, and justice in Los Angeles?

How were law enforcement, justice, and public safety changed and not changed by the riots in terms of perception and practice?

How does our experience, or lack of experience, with the riots shape how we see the relationship between community, media, and law enforcement in Los Angeles?

What role did the media play in shaping the narratives and perceptions of the riots at the time? What about now? Whose voices have been and are being brought out or silenced?

PURPOSE/OUTCOMES/PROCESS

purpose

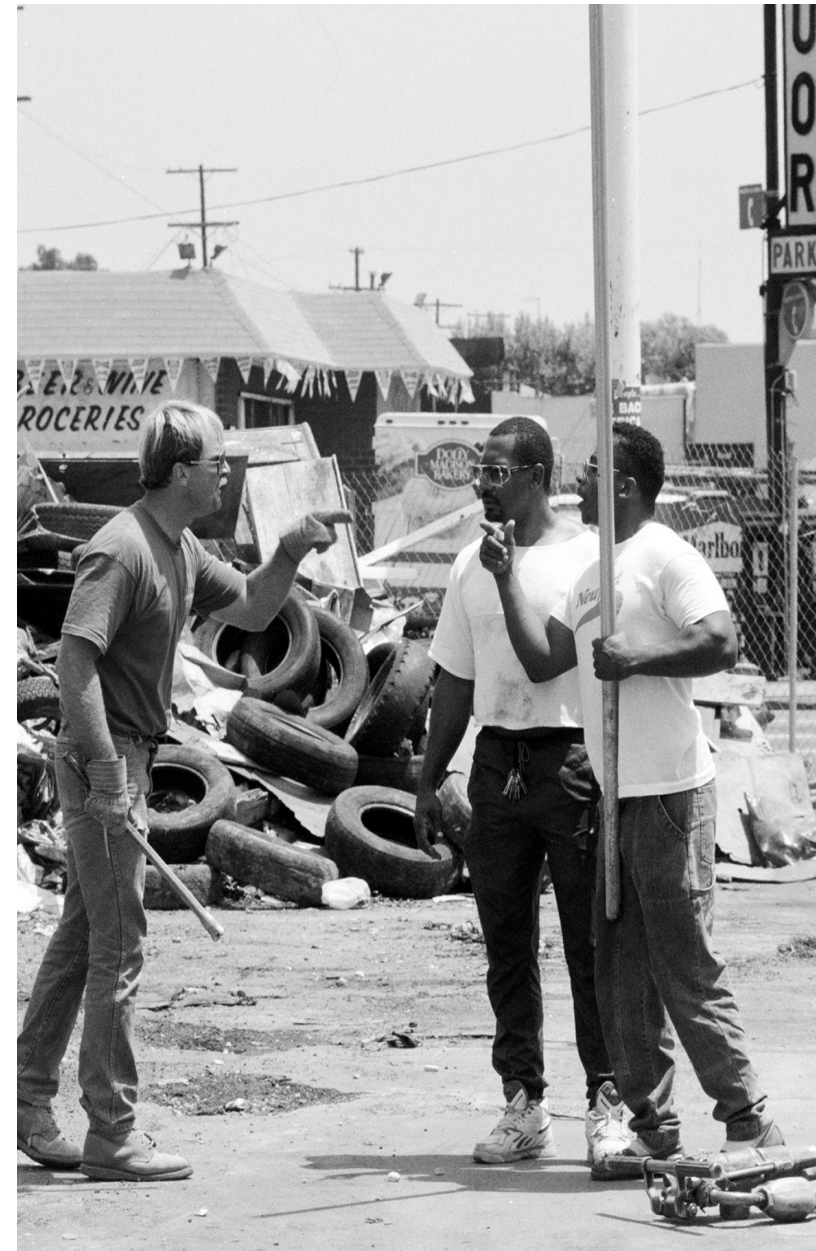
To explore the nuances in perspectives, realities, and learnings among the communities, media, and law enforcement before, during, and after the 1992 Los Angeles Uprising.

outcomes

1. Expanded understanding of the historical context, events, and aftermath of the 1992 Los Angeles Uprising.
2. Commitment to media literacy and uncovering what we don't know that we don't know.
3. Increased connection, empathy, and shared knowledge amongst the Lead LA cohort.

process

10:00-10:10 a.m.	Introductions
10:10-10:15 a.m.	Opening video
10:15-10:20 a.m.	First observations
10:20-10:40 a.m.	Question formulation technique
10:40-11:30 a.m.	Facts and figures with Professor Kyeyoung Park
11:30-11:45 a.m.	Snack break
11:45 a.m.-12:35 p.m.	Media literacy practice and fishbowl
12:35-1:35 p.m.	Lunch
1:35-1:40 p.m.	Self reflection
1:40-2:40 p.m.	Moderated panel
2:40-2:45 p.m.	Coffee break
2:45-3:05 p.m.	Walk and talk
3:05-3:35 p.m.	Conversation with Professor Julia Lee
3:35-3:55 p.m.	Letter to self with Professor Julia Lee
3:55-4:00 p.m.	Closing



SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

donny joubert



Donny Joubert, President of the Watts Gang Task Force and Director of Moonlight Basketball, is a violence prevention specialist who has devoted more than 34 years of his life to keeping the peace in his beloved community of Watts, CA. Joubert was raised in the Nickerson Gardens housing community and was five years old when the 1965 Watts Uprising was sparked. As a 14 year old, Joubert became gang-affiliated and, at the age of 21, he became incarcerated. It was during this stint in the criminal justice system that Joubert decided that he needed to turn his life around—and to do whatever he could to help steer other young men and women from the ravages of gang violence and incarceration. In 1992, Joubert helped negotiate the landmark gang truce settlement in Watts and also served as a community peace interventionist during the 2nd Watts Uprising that same year.

professor julia lee



Julia Lee is a Korean American writer, scholar, and teacher. She is the author of *Our Gang: A Racial History of The Little Rascals* and *The American Slave Narrative and the Victorian Novel*, as well as the novel *By the Book*, which was published under the pen name Julia Sonneborn. She is an associate professor of English at Loyola Marymount University, where she teaches Black and Asian American literature. She lives with her family in Los Angeles. Visit profjulialee.com for information on where to purchase Julia's books.

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

marsha mitchell



Marsha Mitchell is a communications and public engagement professional who believes words have power. She uses her words and power to make tangible, positive change in South Los Angeles. As the Director of Communications at Community Coalition (CoCo), she amplifies the voices of community residents who have helped CoCo win over \$14 billion in funds connected to policy changes and resources over the last 30 years. She began her career at the Los Angeles Sentinel, where she kept the African-American community abreast of critical issues as a reporter. She has managed newspapers, rebranded companies, and spearheaded communications campaigns throughout her career.

professor kyeyoung park



Kyeyoung Park is Professor of Anthropology and Asian American Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. She is the author of *LA Rising: Korean Relations with Blacks and Latinos after Civil Unrest* (Lexington Books, 2019). Her first book, *The Korean American Dream: Immigrants and Small Business in New York City* (Cornell University Press, 1997), was the winner of the Association for Asian American Studies' Book Award. Her co-authored titles include *Korean Americans Ethnic Relationship in (Multiethnic) Los Angeles* and *Cross the Pacific: The Lives of Korean Americans and their Socio-Political Engagement in the Global Age*.

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

david price



David Price serves as Director of Racial Equity for the Civil + Human Rights and Equity Department (LA Civil Rights). He leads the Empowerment and Equity team which leads the City's first Participatory Budgeting process (L.A. REPAIR), Peace & Healing Centers, Reparations Advisory Commission as well as employs a policy equity analysis across City programs and policies. David is also an Outreach & Teaching Pastor at Oasis Church LA, in Koreatown. David previously served as Senior Area Representative / Southwest Area Representative for Mayor Eric Garcetti. He oversaw the Mayor's Interfaith Collective and Mayor's Youth Council, as well as organized and delivered City resources to hard-to-reach communities. David is a native of South Central Los Angeles.

linda ravenswood



Linda Ravenswood, founding editor-in-chief of The Los Angeles Press, is an Oxford Prize in Poetry winner from Los Angeles. She is the current Edwin Markham Prize in Poetry recipient, selected by U.S. Poet Laureate emeritus Juan Felipe Herrera. She is the 2023 winner of the Arthur Smith Prize in Poetry from Madville Press. Working with arts organizations including The Poetry Society of New York and Red light Lit San Francisco, Linda fused visual and performance art in formal poetry reading and burlesque venues, as well as deconstructed live literature events. Linda is the founder of the poet laureate programme in Glendale, California, and introduces the renewed Poets Cafe programme on KPFK in LA on Wednesdays at 2 p.m.

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

mark p. smith

Mark Smith was appointed as the Inspector General (IG) of LAPD in February 2018. He has spent his professional career overseeing and advising law enforcement agencies of varied size and geographic location. Prior to his appointment, Mr. Smith was a Constitutional Policing Advisor with the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department (LASD). Among other things, he was responsible for advising the Sheriff on issues related to accountability, adherence to best practices, policies, procedures, and operations; providing real-time monitoring, analysis, and advice to LASD investigators. Mr. Smith has also served on the Board of Directors of the National Association for Civilian Oversight and Law Enforcement.



ISSUE ANALYSIS

technical problems

Meaningful policy addressing systemic inequities and historical injustices has either been insufficient or non-existent, but is needed for progress.

Resources have not been sufficiently allocated to remedy the damages and economic losses in the areas and communities of Los Angeles most significantly impacted by the Los Angeles Uprising.

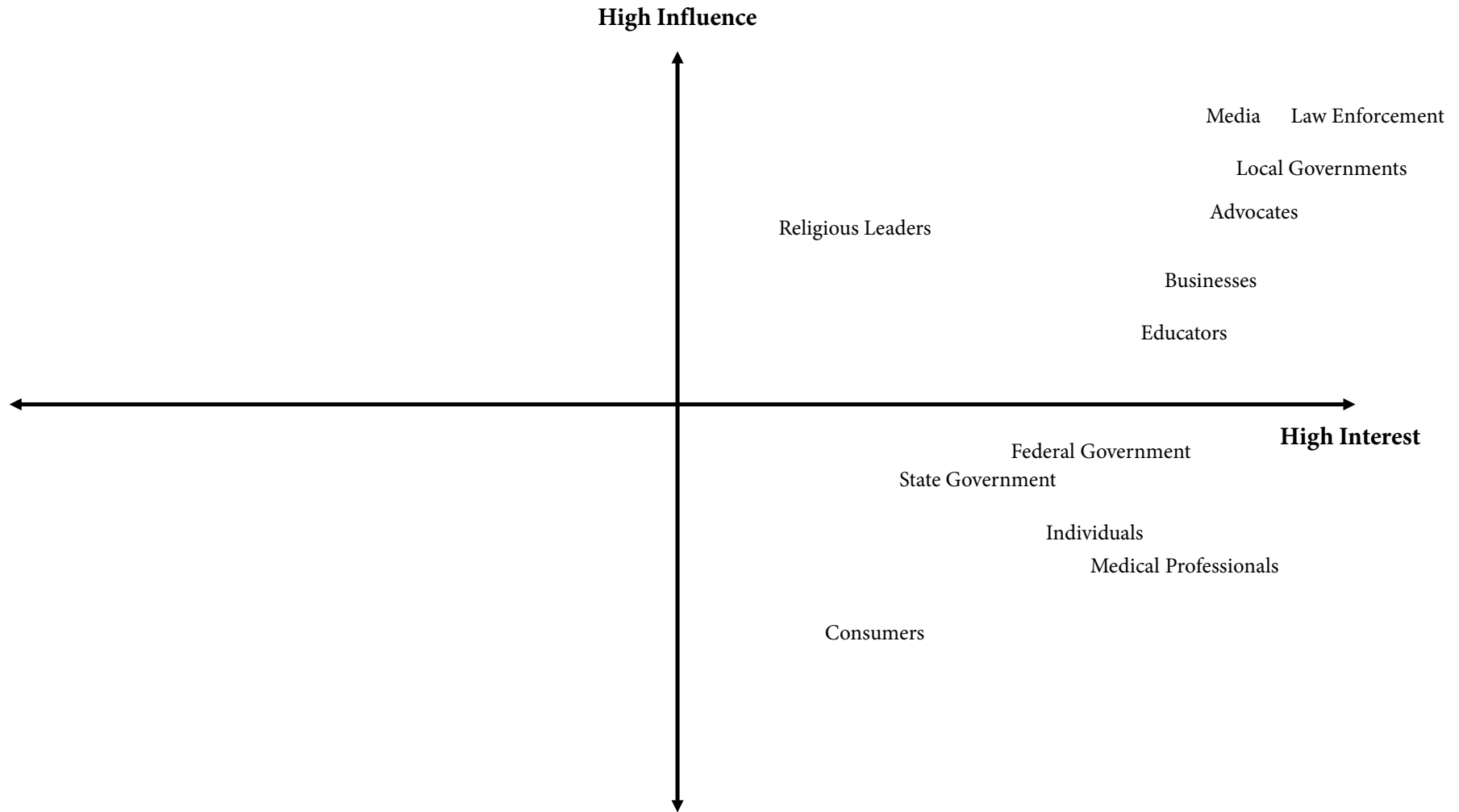
There is insufficient dialogue between communities, news media, and law enforcement to properly frame and inform language and procedure around community challenges and law enforcement.

adaptive challenge

Practices, perspectives, and behaviors are deeply entrenched and reinforced between and among communities, news media, and law enforcement, perpetuating a vicious cycle that protects establishments (law enforcement, news media) and disempowers communities.

ISSUE ANALYSIS

stakeholder mapping



GLOSSARY

1992 los angeles uprising | los angeles riots | rodney king riots | 1992 los angeles civil unrest

On April 29, 1992, Los Angeles experienced a major outbreak of violence, assault, looting, and arson in response to the acquittal of our white L.A. Police Department Officers (on all but one charge) connected to the use of excessive force in the arrest and beating of Rodney King. The uprising lasted for six days and ended with 63 people dead, over 2300 injured, more than 12,000 arrested, and over \$1 billion in property damage.

For the purposes of our Issue Day, we will be referring to these events as the 1992 Uprising although you may hear our speakers referring to this day by other names listed.

blockbusting

Blockbusting refers to the practice of inducing homeowners to sell their properties at below-market prices by using scare tactics, often based on race or ethnicity, to create the perception of an imminent neighborhood decline or a potential influx of residents from a minority group.

bloods and crips truce

The Crips and Bloods gang truce in 1992 was a peace agreement brokered by community leaders and gang members in Los Angeles, following the Rodney King riots. The truce aimed to reduce gang violence and promote unity, and led to a significant decrease in gang-related homicides in the following years.

civil unrest

Civil unrest usually refers to a situation in which members of a society engage in public protests, demonstrations, or other forms of collective action to express dissatisfaction with a particular issue or grievance. This can include acts of civil disobedience, vandalism, and violence, and may be sparked by political, social, or economic factors.

GLOSSARY

c.r.a.s.h.

Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums (C.R.A.S.H.) was a specialized anti-gang unit of the LAPD formed in the late 1970s to combat gang violence. C.R.A.S.H. used aggressive tactics, including stop-and-frisk searches, to target suspected gang members, but faced criticism for its racial profiling and civil rights abuses.

curfew

Curfews were imposed in Los Angeles in 1992 in response to the riots that erupted after the acquittal of four LAPD officers in the beating of Rodney King. The curfews required all residents to stay indoors during certain hours to prevent further violence, looting, and arson.

han

“Han” is a Korean word that can be difficult to define succinctly due to its complex cultural and emotional connotations. It can refer to a sense of deep-seated sorrow, suffering, or resilience in the face of adversity, often associated with the Korean people’s historical struggles and collective spirit.

excessive/deadly force (police brutality)

The use of excessive force, usually physical, but potentially in the form of verbal attacks and psychological intimidation, by a police officer.

looting

Looting refers to the act of stealing or taking goods, property, or valuables from a place, typically during a chaotic or violent situation such as a riot or natural disaster.

GLOSSARY

marshall law

Marshall law refers to the imposition of military control over a civilian population, often during times of emergency or unrest. Under martial law, normal constitutional and legal protections may be suspended, and the military assumes authority over law enforcement and other civil functions. This can involve curfews, travel restrictions, and other measures intended to maintain public order and safety.

operation hammer

Operation Hammer was a large-scale law enforcement initiative carried out in Los Angeles in 1988 in response to rising crime rates and gang violence. The operation involved the deployment of thousands of police officers and federal agents to conduct aggressive sweeps and raids in predominantly African American and Latino communities, resulting in numerous arrests and allegations of excessive use of force and civil rights violations.

police misconduct

Police misconduct encompasses illegal or unethical actions or the violation of individuals' constitutional rights by police officers in the conduct of their duties.

reginald denny

Reginald Denny, a white man and former truck driver, was attacked, dragged from his truck and brutally beaten on April 29, 1992 by four Black men who became known as the "L.A. Four." Four South Central residents who were watching the incident live on television, raced to the scene, put him back in his truck and drove him to a nearby hospital where doctors were able to save his life.

residential segregation / redlining

Residential segregation or redlining refers to the physical and social separation of different racial or ethnic groups into distinct neighborhoods or areas within a city or region, often resulting in unequal access to resources and opportunities.

GLOSSARY



rodney king



latasha harlins



soon ja du

rodney king / latasha harlins / soon ja du

In 1991, four L.A. police officers, all of them white, savagely beat Rodney King, an African American man. Caught on camera by a bystander, graphic video of the attack was broadcast to homes across the nation and worldwide. Thirteen days later, tensions worsened when a Korean American convenience store owner, Soon Ja Du, shot and killed a Black teenage girl, Latasha Harlins, who was accused of shoplifting. Du was convicted of voluntary manslaughter and sentenced to probation and a \$500 fine—an outcome that left many South Central residents angry and frustrated. Tensions however reached a tipping point on April 29, 1992, when the officers in the Rodney King police brutality case were acquitted.

sa-i-gu

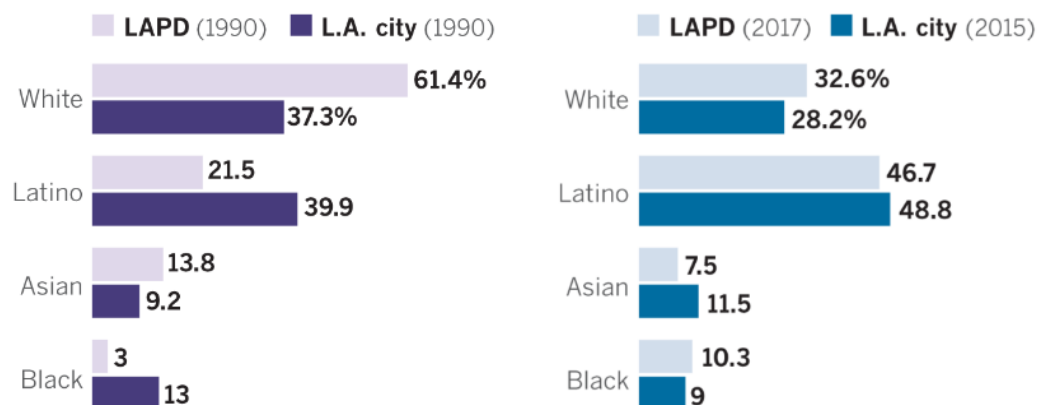
Sa-I-Gu refers to the Korean term for the 1992 Los Angeles riots. Many Korean-owned businesses were targeted and destroyed during the riots, causing significant economic and emotional damage to the Korean-American community. It directly translates to “four twenty-nine.”

south central / south l.a.

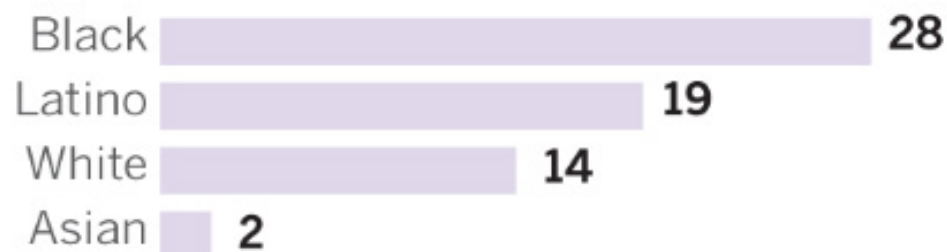
South Central Los Angeles, also known as South L.A., is a region located in the southern part of Los Angeles, California. It is home to a predominantly African American and Hispanic population, and has historically experienced high levels of poverty, crime, and gang activity

FACTS AND FIGURES

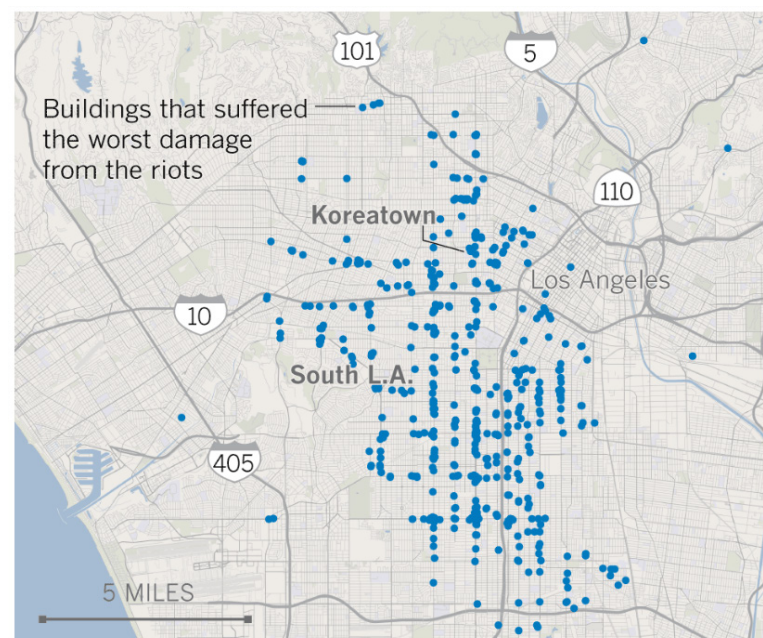
racial makeup of LAPD versus the city



deaths during the uprising by race



building damage across LA



References for Glossary and Facts/Figures

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 Wallenfeldt, K. (20 February 2023). *The Los Angeles Riots of 1992*. Encyclopedia Britannica.



**DEVELOPING
STORY**

CALLS FOR JUSTICE AT PEACEFUL RALLY

DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES

CALLS TO ACTION

Our call to action centers on a daily media literacy practice.

Using the Coro inquiry tools that we revisit today, discern when and how the media shares facts, assumptions, inferences, and opinions.

How do you move up the Ladder of Inference as you make meaning of your surroundings?

What are your initial reactions when you see images of an event compared to your understanding of the event after gathering data and understanding?

In six months, you will receive a letter with your reflections from the day, comments on media literacy, and an article for you with which to engage your critical eye.

Please take the time to revisit your thoughts and reflect on how present day events affect policing in your own communities.

Think of underlying issues that are not being told about society and your community by the media.

But most importantly, reflect on how you can make a difference.

CALLS TO ACTION

explore the transformative power of cross-cultural relationships



Read *LA Rising: Korean Relations with Blacks and Latinos after Civil Unrest* by Professor Kyeyoung Park.

discover a thought-provoking journey of identity and resilience



Read *Biting the Hand, Growing up Asian in Black and White America* by Professor Julia Lee.

get involved in participatory budgeting

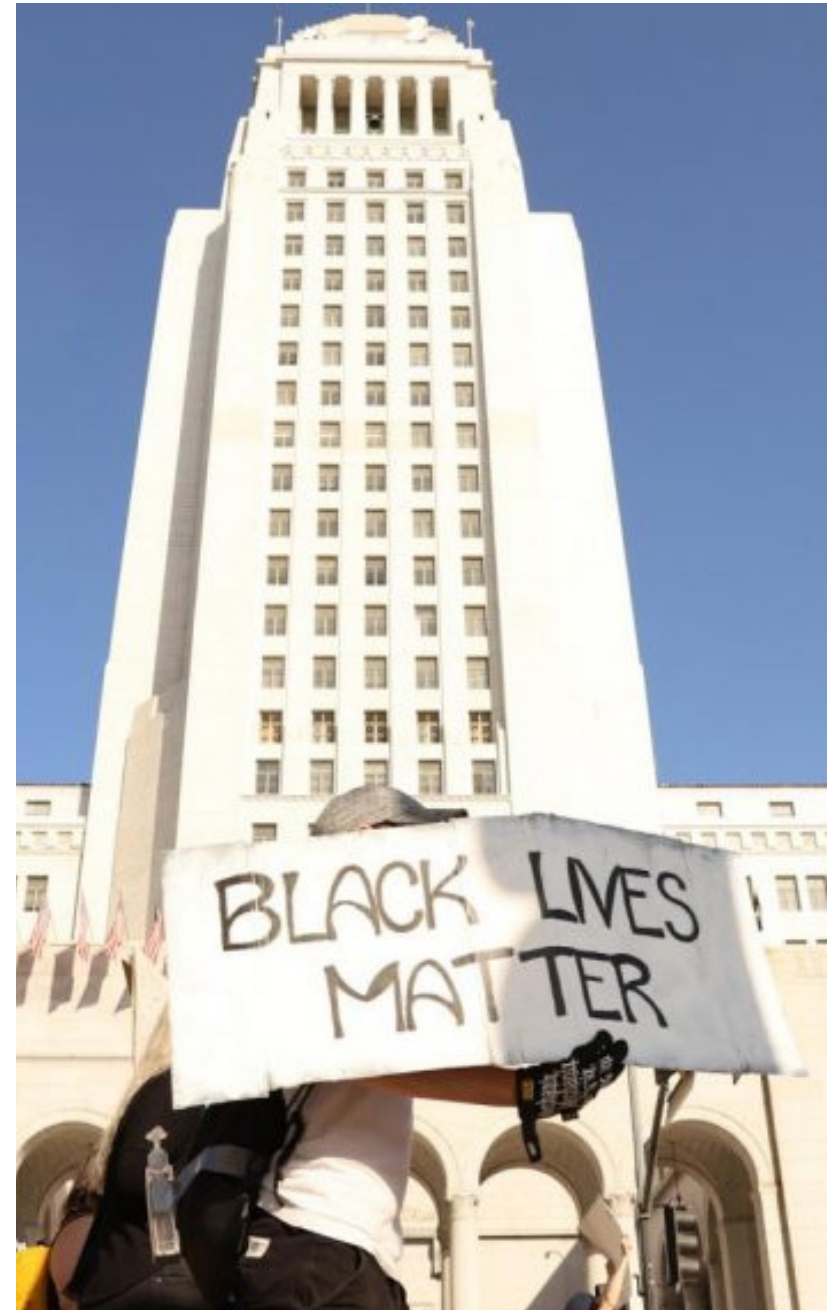


Learn more about L.A. REPAIR - Los Angeles' first participatory budget pilot program.

join your neighborhood council



Neighborhood councils are advisory bodies that advocate for their communities with City government.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Curious Monarchs express their gratitude to the following individuals and their respective organizations for sharing their time, talent, and energy to make our Issue Day possible.

David Price, Civil + Human Rights and Equity Department

Derek Steele, Social Justice Learning Institute

Donny Joubert, Watts Gang Task Force

Hugo Romero, Los Angeles County Federation of Labor

Julia Lee, Loyola Marymount University

Kyeyoung Park, University of California, Los Angeles

Linda Ravenswood, Los Angeles Press

Mark Smith, Los Angeles Police Department

Marsha Mitchell, Community Coalition

Nicole Steele, Social Justice Learning Institute

Tim Sarell, Southern California Gas Company



We give special thanks to Terry Dulan of Dulan's Soul Food Kitchen for his generous donation of lunch for our group. The Dulan family is considered the "First Family of Los Angeles Soul Food" and has fed mouths and hearts in L.A. since 1977. Use the QR Code above to learn more about this family-owned and operated business, and stop by Dulan's Soul Food Kitchen or Dulan's on Crenshaw next time you are craving generous portions, good service, and food that might remind you of being at grandma's for Sunday dinner.

Finally, we give our thanks to our Lead LA cohort, Vicki Klopsch, Maddie Bello, and Carson Bruno. You have enriched our lives and will be forever grateful for this shared experience with you.



YELLOW
PERIL
SUPPORTS
BLACK
POWER