

# African Americans and Historic Preservation in San Diego: The Douglas and the Clermont/Coast Hotels

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Embedded in the sidewalk at the San Diego downtown corner of Second Avenue and Market Street, on a block bordering the southern side of Horton Plaza, is a commemorative 24" by 18" brass plaque. The plaque reads:

Former Site, Douglas Hotel, 1924. Known as the "Harlem of the West," the hotel included the Creole Palace nightclub where black stage and screen stars of the 1930's and 1940's performed. The Douglas Hotel was the only major downtown hotel to provide accommodations to black visitors in San Diego during the era of segregation.

The plaque is the only reminder of the most important entertainment venue, and the main place of lodging, for African Americans in downtown San Diego during the first half of the twentieth century. Celebrities such as Billie Holiday, Duke Ellington, and the Mills Brothers, stayed and played there. Today, most pedestrians walk by without ever noticing the plaque's existence, unaware of the city's history represented by the Douglas Hotel, which was torn down in 1985 to make way for a mixed-use residential and commercial development.<sup>1</sup>



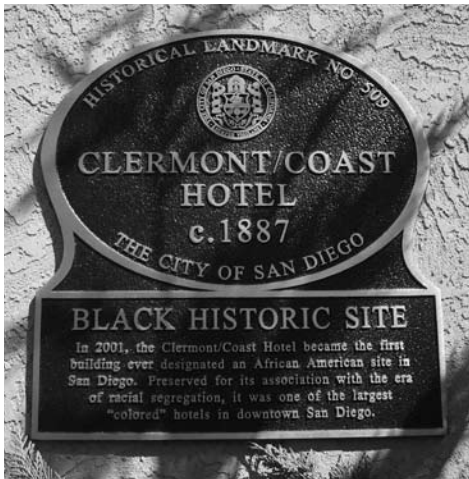
*Plaque commemorating the Douglas Hotel at the northeast corner of Second Avenue and Market Street, 2007. Photo by author.*

In contrast, two decades after demolition of the Douglas Hotel, the city in 2005 placed a bronze plaque on the front of the Clermont/Coast Hotel, proclaiming the historic status of the building. The plaque reads: "In 2001, the Clermont/Coast Hotel became the first building ever designated an African American site in San Diego. Preserved for its association with the era of racial segregation, it was one of the largest 'colored' hotels in downtown San Diego."

Why is it that the city razed the Douglas Hotel in 1985 while preserving the

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*Plaque commemorating the local historic status of the Clermont/Coast Hotel on the façade of the building facing 7th Avenue, 2007. Photo by author.*

Clermont/Coast Hotel in 2005? What explains why the city treated these two historic properties associated with African Americans so differently? From 1980 to the present, the city has prioritized urban growth and redevelopment over historical preservation and also largely failed to recognize structures of social and historical significance to people of color as worthy of preservation. The reason why the one hotel was destroyed and the other saved, then, has nothing to do with a change at the top. Rather, the Clermont/Coast Hotel was saved because an African American grassroots movement forced the city to change.

## Urban Renewal, Economic Development, and the Growth Machine

Downtown areas across the country experienced economic decline in the post-WWII era as suburbanization accelerated and residents, businesses, and manufacturers increasingly favored suburbia over the aging downtowns. From the 1950s through the 1970s, cities partnered with the federal government to revitalize their urban cores through urban renewal and the construction of the interstate highway system. Established by the Housing Act of 1949, the major goals of urban renewal were to revive urban economies and improve housing for the poor by eradicating substandard buildings in business and residential areas and constructing new, modern structures. The Interstate and Defense Highway Act of 1956 provided funding to build new freeways connecting urban areas.<sup>2</sup>

The history of these projects, however, was marked by the destruction of low- and moderate-income communities, especially those inhabited by African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans. By 1967, for example, urban renewal projects had displaced approximately 400,000 families, the majority of whom were low-income racial minorities. The construction of highways led to the destruction of 330,000 housing units by 1968. The targeting of minority communities was often clear and purposeful. Local governments strategically developed and employed images of racial minority communities as “blighted” neighborhoods and “slums” to justify displacing residents and businesses and to make room for redevelopment projects. These explicitly racialized urban renewal programs earned the well-deserved title: “Negro Removal.”<sup>3</sup>

In a pivotal work on race, William J. Wilson contends that government policies changed as a result of events during the 1960s, in particular the Civil Rights Movement. Prior to the 1960s, the state established laws and institutions that generated and supported racial inequality. Wilson argues that after the 1960s the state worked to implement and enforce racial equality. While there are important arguments countering Wilson’s claim that the significance of race has declined,

there is a difference between explicitly state-sponsored inequality and supporting policies that are believed to be color blind or race neutral.<sup>4</sup>

Concern about the massive displacement of residents and small businesses, loss of housing for low-income residents, and urban renewal's limited success as an economic stimulus for cities (despite its enormous fiscal and social costs), led to the end of urban renewal and its replacement by the Community Redevelopment Act of 1974. This Act aimed to improve housing in and the economies of urban areas, and also attempted to end the worst practices of urban renewal by incorporating greater involvement of community residents in the planning process for economic redevelopment projects. Rather than the large-scale demolition of entire neighborhoods, the Act emphasized the conservation and rehabilitation of existing structures.

Shifts have also occurred in historic preservation. During the first half of the twentieth century, preservation focused on structures reflecting historic events of national significance, major buildings of aesthetic importance, and the work of prominent architects. Structures associated with racial minorities were largely ignored. In 1966, the National Historic Preservation Act amended the 1935 Historic Sites Act, expanding preservation criteria to include the social history of structures and properties of local (rather than just national) significance. Some historic preservationists used these changes in the law to preserve sites related to the everyday lives of immigrants, the working class, and racial minorities.<sup>5</sup>

As a result of new "color blind" policies in government as well as important changes in urban redevelopment and historic preservation policies, San Diego government, like that in other cities, moved away from deliberately removing communities of color and razing historic structures associated with racial minorities. But this hardly meant that post-1960s urban renewal in San Diego became race-neutral.

After 1960, the city of San Diego did not, by and large, pursue historic preservation as an important goal in and of itself. In the United States in general, and San Diego in particular, growth policies have been a central concern of city politics, and developers have played major roles in the formation of public policy. Promoting new development and luring tourists, conventioners, and suburban shoppers back to downtown are the primary objectives. Historic preservation, rather than an important goal in itself, became another tool in the development of areas to produce tax revenues for cities. This process of economic redevelopment has been controlled by local political and economic elites and aimed at generating profit for major developers, business interests, property owners, and tax revenue for local governments.<sup>6</sup>

After the 1960s, the elites who dominated urban economic development in San Diego and in other cities did not deliberately target African-, Mexican-, and Asian-American communities and structures for destruction, as their predecessors once did. In fact, sometimes these elites preserved minority historical structures, but often if they served the interests of economic development. Over all, though, the buildings associated with racial minorities have not fared as well as other historic structures. This is because many elite participants in urban economic redevelopment projects tend to be largely blind to the history of people of color. They frequently failed to see why the homes and businesses of people of color were "historically significant." This blindness is why post-1960s urban development



*Market Street Apartments took the place of the Douglas Hotel. View from the southwest corner of Second Avenue and Market Street, 2007. Photo by author.*

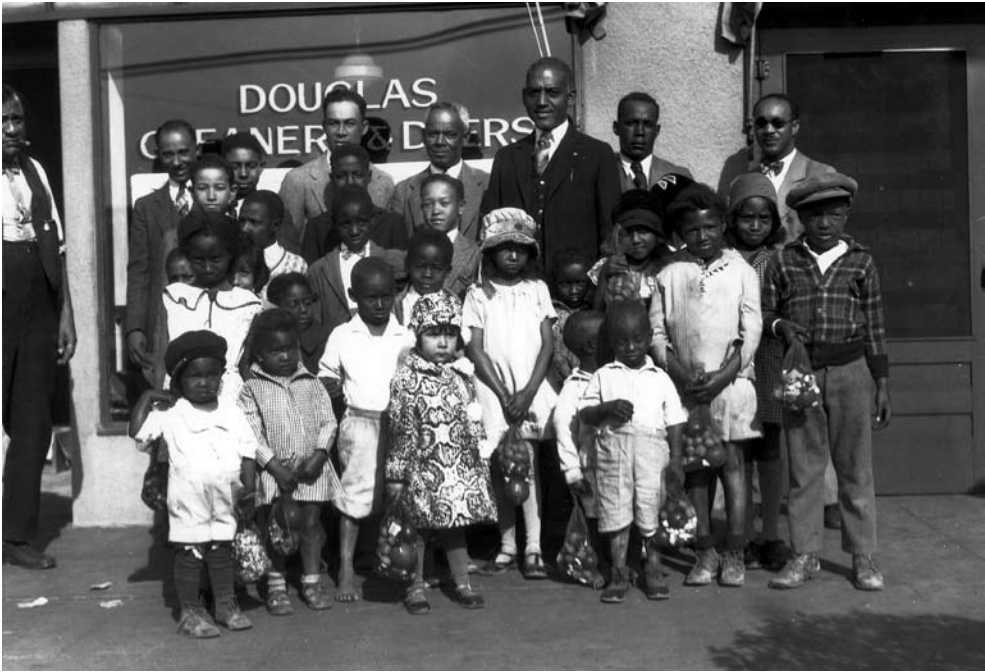
continued to be racialized.<sup>7</sup>

The results of racialization born of blindness (rather than malice) are quite evident in Southern California. A 1986 evaluation of “Los Angeles’s designated cultural-historic landmarks,” for example, determined that only 2.3 percent referred to African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, or Native Americans, despite the long histories of these groups in the city. The Douglas Hotel was demolished in 1985 and examining the San Diego Historical Resources Board’s (HRB) list of “Historical Landmarks” as of 1986 provides an indicator of what was considered historically important at that time. The list has 369 sites and structures.



*Hotel Douglas Entertainers, April 1, 1930. © San Diego Historical Society Sensor 7-316.*

In terms of a historical connection with racial minority communities, two dealt with Mexican Americans, one with Filipino Americans, and eight with Chinese Americans. No site or structure dealing with African Americans made the list. Eleven out of 369, or, three percent, is better than the Los Angeles list, but still small, especially taking into account that five of the Chinese American sites and the one Filipino American site made the list as part of the 90 buildings grouped together



*George Ramsey with community members 1929. © San Diego Historical Society UT 20962.2-4.*

and listed in the Gaslamp Quarter Historic District.<sup>8</sup>

The dramatic difference in the number of structures and sites for whites as compared to racial minorities in the San Diego and Los Angeles lists, and the absence of structures related to African Americans on the San Diego list (until the Clermont/Coast Hotel was added in 2001), suggest the tendency of routine, institutional processes to recognize structures that reflect the history of white communities rather than those of racial minorities. As a result, while the clear intent of urban renewal's "Negro Removal" is missing, with seemingly race-neutral policies, the results may be similar.

## **The Douglas Hotel**

African American businessman George Ramsey, and his partner Robert Rowe, built the Douglas Hotel in 1924, providing, according to local historian Micheal Austin, the "only place of quality lodging and entertainment for Black visitors to the city of San Diego during a period of intense segregation in the United States."<sup>9</sup> Cecile Picou, a writer for the *Voice & Viewpoint*, San Diego's major African American community newspaper, notes that in 1923, whites lynched twenty-nine African Americans across the nation, and "Leeches from that parasite became infectious in San Diego's White population with posted signs reading, We do Not Cater to Negro Patronage, and For Whites Only." She described the importance of the hotel within this context of extreme discrimination:

Segregation had created an insufferable and bleak situation for African Americans. And their most common problem[s]: Where



Exterior of the Douglas Hotel facing Market St. No date. © San Diego Historical Society Sensor 7-139.

could a[n] African American get something to eat? What hotel would accommodate him? Where would someone go for entertainment? When the Douglas Hotel opened in 1924, the African American finally found that everything he needed, was in one place. Located at 206 Market Street, the hotel maintained a restaurant, card room, barbershop, dry cleaners, bell boys and billiard rooms. The adjoining room was the Creole Palace nightclub, well[-]known for its jazz/blues, boogie-woogie, Charleston music and dancing.<sup>10</sup>

Austin's and Picou's argument that the hotel provided a refuge for African Americans during an era of racial exclusion was echoed by African Americans who shared their memories of the hotel in *San Diego Union-Tribune* articles. They described the hotel as a welcoming safe haven and an entertainment mecca. Bea Wilson stated that "the hotel was a comfortable place, with no fear of being bothered day or night. People felt right at home there....Walking into the Douglas, gave the African American a sense of having a place that they could call their own." Fro Brigham, a jazz musician and Creole Palace manager during the 1940s and 1950s, remembered that "there wasn't another place like it. People came from L.A. just to visit the Creole Palace."<sup>11</sup>

The hotel also served as an important place of employment. As Austin notes, "There was a lot of tourism in San Diego during that period, and there were plenty of jobs, mostly service-oriented, for black people." Austin explains that "the most prized work was at the Douglas because it paid relatively high wages and its success ensured job security.... People valued their jobs there.... They worked very hard to make it a nice place."<sup>12</sup>

The postwar expanding economy, changing patterns of segregation, and suburbanization, however, drew African Americans to new residential, shopping, and commercial opportunities beyond the downtown area. Austin explained that



*Creole Palace performers at the Douglas Hotel facing Market Street, c. 1934. © SDHS #20009.*

“By the late 1950s the glory days were gone.” Similarly, the *Voice and Viewpoint* wrote, “By the end of the ‘50s, the Douglas Hotel had become a flophouse, with rented out rooms.”<sup>13</sup>

Located directly across the street from Horton Plaza’s (the main downtown shopping center) southern edge, and just west of the Gaslamp district (the major downtown restaurant and bar area), the Douglas Hotel was in a prime location for the city’s redevelopment efforts. The Centre City Development Corporation

(CCDC), which was in charge of downtown redevelopment, proposed a four-story project for the Douglas Hotel site that would cover the entire block. Street-level commercial space, underground parking, and 192 apartment units in the floors above would replace the two-story Douglas Hotel.<sup>14</sup>

## **Historic Preservation and African Americans**

The standard city procedures for redevelopment and historic preservation led to the demolition of the Douglas Hotel. Evaluating the physical condition of the Douglas Hotel and other structures on the block, CCDC in 1984 stated that “The block is extremely blighted.” In terms of the Douglas Hotel’s historical value,



*George Ramsey and Joe Louis stand by Skippy Smith, owner of the Pacific Parachute Co. in 1942. © SDHS #96\_19521.*

the 1984 CCDC Environmental Impact report noted that “The Douglas Hotel is not listed on any city, state or national historical list or register. In addition, it was not identified in the ‘Report on Significant Structures in the Centre City Redevelopment Projects’ compiled by CCDC and approved by the City Historic Sites Board.” While the structure may not be significant architecturally, the report did recognize its possible value in terms of the city’s social history, acknowledging that “Although the Douglas Hotel has not been identified as a unique ethnic cultural resource, its previous use as a nightclub and hotel catering to black patrons in the 1930s and 1940s may be of historical interest.” Rather than saving the building from destruction, however, the report suggested that “the Redevelopment Agency proposes establishment of a photographic/commemorative display on the early days of the Douglas Hotel within the proposed development.”<sup>15</sup>

Although there was interest among city residents to preserve the Douglas Hotel, no major lobbying effort occurred. Picou notes that “most African Americans wanted to try and raise money to restore and preserve the Douglas Hotel, but that never happened.” A 1979 article in the *Voice and Viewpoint* declared in the title that a “Drive starts to save Douglas Hotel.” The article explained that “James Pusey, 42, a retired Navyman and graduate student in history at the University of San Diego said if there is a campaign to restore the Old Globe Theater and the Aerospace Museum, why can’t there be a drive to preserve and restore the Hotel Douglas?” Interviewed in 2001, Pusey recalled that his efforts did not go beyond his class research and explained that “I wasn’t really involved in an effort to save the Douglas, it was more a class project to do research.”<sup>16</sup>

African Americans held conflicting opinions about the Douglas Hotel’s historical significance, as did whites, and this may have contributed to the lack of action to save the hotel. The Douglas Hotel had a controversial history. Its existence was a stark reminder of racial exclusion and segregation. Although exclusively all-white hotels from that era also existed downtown, this aspect of their history did not generate the same concerns as the Douglas Hotel because white racial privilege often went unrecognized. Also, while the hotel’s importance as an African American-owned business and place of entertainment was clear, others, such as Jasper Davis (the second black on the San Diego police force) noted its location in the Stingaree District, San Diego’s former center of illegal behavior, such as prostitution, gambling and other illicit activities. While there is disagreement on whether or not prostitution actually occurred in the hotel, it is known that when owner Robert Rowe passed away several months after the hotel opened, Mabel Rowe, his widow, took over his work responsibilities, lived in the hotel, and, as a madam, ran her prostitution business at a nearby hotel. As Reverend George Walker Smith, an African American and one of the city’s major community leaders, explained, “I don’t know why people place so much emphasis on the Douglas Hotel. There are other historic things that happened down there.”<sup>17</sup>

African Americans in San Diego have achieved a fair record of electoral success. From the election of Leon Williams in 1969, African Americans have elected a steady stream of representatives to the San Diego City Council. In 1990, at about the time that the city demolished the Douglas Hotel, the African American population in the county was 159,306 out of 2.5 million people, or just about 6.4% of the total population. African American community activism concentrated on



economic development, public education, political empowerment, and employment issues in southeast San Diego, the contemporary center of the African American population.<sup>18</sup>

African Americans did not use their political capital on downtown historic preservation in the 1980s. According to Larry Malone, who was the community program director for the San Diego Historical Society when the Douglas Hotel was slated for demolition, leaders were too busy with issues in southeast San Diego to focus on historic preservation downtown. He explained that “no one was really advocating at that time and historical preservation was just taking off. No individual or groups organized. We lost a jewel.” Like Malone, San Diego resident Karen Huff believed that the failure to save the Douglas Hotel resulted from lack of knowledge about local history. Huff explained that “San Diego itself didn’t know much about historic preservation until the 1970s, and clearly by 1980s there was not any movement in the black community in preserving historic sites....There was no organization.”<sup>19</sup>

This changed, however, when Karen Huff helped establish the Gaslamp Black Historical Society (GBHS) in 1999 to prevent the further loss of downtown’s African American history. The Society’s brochure states that:

Our mission is to study and ultimately recommend ways of mitigating the impact on black historic and cultural properties in the downtown redevelopment areas....Our mission is to preserve, protect, interpret, and restore the historic Harlem of the West. Our goal is to be the catalyst for black history preservation in San Diego County. Our goal is to provide research and archived material documenting the lives of pioneering blacks in San Diego....Our goal is to become a community asset by preserving a piece of our San Diego heritage.<sup>20</sup>

Huff explained her motivation for creating the organization, “The Douglas Hotel was black-owned and it was a beautiful structure where all the top jazz acts played. Once I heard that it was being torn down, I couldn’t believe it....I promised myself that I would become involved in the community to prevent the loss of other black historical sites in San Diego County.” Huff co-authored a February 2000 proposal submitted to CCDC requesting that the city recognize the importance of downtown’s African American history, stating that:

(a)the City of San Diego, and the Centre City Development Corporation should recognize the contributions of Blacks to the development of the Gaslamp/Stingaree districts, (b) the creation of a CCDC committee working in conjunction with the Gaslamp Black Historical Society’s preservation and restoration efforts...<sup>21</sup>

The 2000 proposal requested that CCDC fund a study of the history of African Americans in the area, stating that “in order to prevent further destruction.... CCDC must immediately provide for a historical study of the Harlem of the West district....CCDC, and the City of San Diego must admit and recognize the contributions of Blacks to the developments of the Gaslamp/Stingaree districts.” The proposal also stressed the economic benefits of an African American historic



*Exterior of the Clermont Hotel at the northeast corner of 7th Avenue and Island Ave. No date. © SDHS #6589.*

district. It noted that in the past, “urban renewal [was used] for tearing down and erasing ... Black culture sites,” but that “worlds of changes have swept across this nation in recent years whereby the advantages of recognizing the contributions of Blacks to the development of American cities have proven to be an economic boom, enhancing the flavor of a particular historic area.” The report pointed out “Memphis, Tennessee...with its focus and redevelopment of Beale Street as the Blues-Mecca is attracting valuable tax dollars to the city” and that “other cities like Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit, and even Boise, Idaho are reclaiming and restoring their Black Cultural Sites.”<sup>22</sup>

### **The Clermont/Coast Hotel**

In 2000, development interests threatened the Clermont/Coast Hotel with destruction. The hotel, then an aging halfway house, was located at 501 7th Avenue, two blocks due north of the future baseball stadium, Petco Park. Developers wanted to transform the hotel into a parking structure for the new ballpark. In contrast to the absence of any major attempt to support the preservation of the Douglas Hotel, Karen Huff and the Gaslamp Black Historical Society fought to preserve the hotel as a local African American historic landmark.

The Clermont/Coast Hotel was built in 1887 as a lodging house, and before such an old structure could be altered or destroyed, the CCDC required that the Historical Resources Board examine the building for historical and/or architectural significance. In 2000, Scott Moomjian conducted a study of the hotel. Moomjian reported that the 1988 Centre City Historic Survey of the Clermont/Coast Hotel gave the building a “Tentative Rank: 3.” He referred to the 1988 report and stated that “Prior historical research has determined that the Coast Hotel is both historically and architecturally insignificant.” He explained that the “3”

ranking “meant that it was not eligible for the local register.” After conducting his own research on the hotel, Moomjian discovered that the hotel’s name changed repeatedly. First called the Occidental, the hotel became known as the Clermont, and then, in the 1960s, the Coast. He explained that his research has found “no historical evidence was identified which would support a determination that the Coast Hotel exemplifies or reflect elements of San Diego’s, Centre City’s, or the 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue area’s historical, archaeological, cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, landscaping or architectural development.” He concluded that “no historically significant events or individuals were ever associated with the Coast Hotel.”<sup>23</sup>

At its July 27, 2000 meeting, the Historical Resources Board considered the designation of the Clermont/Coast Hotel as a historical resource. The Board decided to request that Moomjian conduct further research and respond to questions raised by board members concerning the architectural and social significance of the building, particularly in terms of the African American history of the area. Moomjian’s second report noted that the GBHS had prepared a “Black Cultural Sites List,” which identified the Clermont/Coast Hotel in the following way: “Though never black owned, [the] hotel catered to blacks during era of segregation 1920’s-1960’s. Hotel’s occupants continued to be primarily black until the mid-1980’s.”<sup>24</sup>

According to Moomjian’s second report (released February 2001), the fact that the Clermont/Coast Hotel was associated with African Americans during the period of segregation was not important enough to warrant historic designation.



*Clermont/Coast Hotel. Exterior of the Clermont Hotel at the northeast corner of 7th Avenue and Island Ave, 2007. Photo by author.*

The second report stated that additional research “failed to identify any evidence which would establish that the Coast Hotel was ever important to the San Diego African-American community” and concluded that “no historical evidence was identified which would support a determination that the Coast Hotel is either historically or architecturally significant.”<sup>25</sup>

In March, the Historical Resources Board issued their report, finding that since the building had experienced extensive alterations, it was not architecturally significant. In terms of its historical and social significance, the report acknowledged that similar hotels in the city once served African Americans and that a number of African American-owned businesses and properties previously existed in the area, but no substantial evidence existed that demonstrated the importance of the Clermont/Coast Hotel to the African American community. The report stated that the hotel did not meet the criteria for historical designation, explaining that

although staff recognizes from the record and additional studies that hotels of this type did play a significant role in providing housing for African-Americans and there is information available to point to a number of African-American owned properties in the general area, there is no clear or specific evidence on the record of the role of this particular hotel in serving the African-American community.<sup>26</sup>

In August 2001, Karen Huff, representing the GBHS, researched and authored a report, “Hotel for Colored People (A Supplemental Assessment To The Clermont/Coast Hotel).” This report acted as the catalyst for the reversal of the Historical Resources Board’s assessment of the hotel. Huff’s realization of the historic importance of the Coast Hotel occurred when she came across an advertisement for the hotel in a mid-1950s San Diego County telephone directory. The advertisement stated that the hotel was “COLORED.” An enlarged photocopy of the advertisement appeared on the cover of Huff’s August 2001 report. According to Huff’s report, the Clermont/Coast Hotel was historically significant because it was “the very first hotel in San Diego County to be officially recognized as segregated or ‘colored only.’” Huff discovered through her research that Eugene and Mamie Deburn bought the hotel around 1922, and, as Huff explained, “A black owned or operated hotel in San Diego recognized as ‘black only’ was unique.” Huff pointed out in her report that unlike the Douglas Hotel, which allowed both African Americans and whites to rent rooms, the Clermont/Coast Hotel served only African Americans. Huff noted that Charles T. Robinson bought the hotel in 1938, and in 1945 the Clermont became a black-segregated hotel and “was officially identified as ‘A Hotel for Colored People.’”<sup>27</sup>

The Historical Resources Board responded quickly to Huff’s research. In a September 6, 2001 report, the HRB used Huff’s findings as the basis for recommending a city historical landmark designation for the hotel. The HRB report summarized the history of the area, noting that in the “early 1900’s the area around the hotel became settled by African Americans,” and that in “the 1920’s the area immediately surrounding the hotel was settled by numerous businesses owned by African Americans.” The report concluded that “based on the new information submitted by the Gaslamp Black Historical Society staff believes

that the Clermont/Coast Hotel is a significant structure reflective of the African American settlement in central San Diego, and a documented remnant of the area's segregated era of development from 1920 to 1960."<sup>28</sup>

The owners of the hotel opposed the historical landmark designation. One of the owners, Arturo Zepeda, explained, "I have trouble with the concept of trying to preserve an eyesore....It's a halfway house....This building looks nothing like it did in its heyday." Although the hotel was in poor shape, missing in this assessment was an evaluation or appreciation of the social significance of the structure.<sup>29</sup>

On December 20, 2001 (the day of the Historical Resources Board meeting to decide on the local historical landmark designation of the Clermont/Coast Hotel), the Gaslamp Black Historical Society staged a demonstration in front of the hotel. A group of about thirty people shouted "Save our history" and "Keep these walls up." They then marched to City Hall for the HRB meeting. The HRB voted unanimously in favor of the historic designation.<sup>30</sup>

In November 2005, the city placed a bronze plaque on the front of the hotel, proclaiming the historic status of the building. The building's new owners - Anthony Laureti, Larry Sidiropoulos and Ashley Abamo - paid for the plaque and the installation. The three-story hotel, with its fifty rooms, currently serves as a residential hotel to low-income renters.<sup>31</sup>

## **Conclusion**

San Diego's "growth machine" successfully worked to reverse the decline of the downtown area and to construct high rise office buildings, preserve older structures, and transform the area into the region's main entertainment site for residents, tourists, and convention attendees. During this process, to its credit, CCDC carried out formal reviews of the Douglas and Clermont/Coast Hotels. The studies examined the hotels for historical and architectural significance to San Diego in general, and the African American community in particular. The results of the studies, however, concluded that the buildings were not historically significant.

The destruction of the Douglas Hotel served notice to African Americans about the need to conduct their own research to discover and preserve the remaining downtown buildings connected with African American history. As Larry Malone described the situation concerning the Douglas Hotel, the African American community was not involved in historic preservation at that time, and as a result, "We lost a jewel." Therefore, community members needed to be educated, and they mobilized around the issue of historic preservation. Research by Karen Huff and the Gaslamp Black Historical Society uncovered the advertisements in old phone directories that established the historical importance of the Clermont/Coast Hotel.

The results of formal studies of the city on the Douglas and Clermont/Coast Hotels, the absence of buildings related to the history of African Americans on San Diego's list of historic structures until the addition of the Clermont/Coast Hotel in 2001, and the extremely small number of sites related to racial minorities on a similar list for Los Angeles, demonstrate that the social history of racial minorities often has not been recognized by institutionalized city processes. As a result, race-neutral policies still had racialized consequences. But unlike earlier urban renewal

projects (with explicit goals to demolish and remove racial minority communities), racialized urban planning in San Diego after the 1960s resulted from the decisions of elite participants in urban planning who were largely blind to African American history and the importance of preserving African American historic structures. To change racialized urban planning in San Diego, local people, such as Karen Huff, had to get involved in the politics of urban development. Grassroots community activism explains why the Douglas Hotel was lost and the Clermont/Coast Hotel was saved.

## NOTES

1. On the history of the Douglas Hotel, see Micheal Austin, "Harlem of the West: The Douglas Hotel and Creole Palace Nite Club" (master's thesis, University of San Diego, 1994).
2. Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).
3. See Martin Anderson, *The Federal Bulldozer: A Critical Analysis of Urban Renewal, 1949-1962* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T Press, 1964); Bernard J. Frieden and Lynne B. Sagalyn, *Downtown, Inc.: How America Rebuilds Cities* (Cambridge, MA and London, England: MIT Press, 1991); Raymond A. Mohl, "Race and Space in the Modern City: Interstate-95 and the Black Community in Miami," in *Urban Policy in Twentieth-Century America*, ed. Arnold R. Hirsch and Raymond A. Mohl (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993), 100-158.
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7. Hayden, *The Power of Place*.
8. Gail Lee Dubrow, "Preserving Her Heritage: American Landmarks of Women's History," UCLA Urban Planning Program" (1986), cited in Hayden, *The Power of Place*, 85-86. San Diego Historical Resources Board, "Historical Landmarks Designated by the San Diego Historical Resources Board" (2006).
9. Austin, "Harlem of the West," 1. Cecile Picou, "Douglas Hotel/Creole Palace: San Diego's Harlem

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of the West," *Voice & Viewpoint*, 22 February 1996.

10. Picou, "Douglas Hotel/Creole Palace."

11. Frank Green, "Harlem of the West: S.D.'s lively, bygone hub of black culture," *San Diego Union-Tribune*, 19 February 1991; Sarah Pattee, "Creole Palace: Memories of '30s hot spot for San Diego still warm," *San Diego Union-Tribune*, 15 January 1988.

12. Austin quoted in Green, "Harlem of the West."

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