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The Emotive Configuration and Toll of Slow Violence: Investigating the Emotional Lives of Homeless and Housed People in Contemporary Orange County, California

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Cover Page Footnote

Footnotes: 1. See bibliography cited city works projects and allocations of land for usage of Tourism in Santa Ana, Irvine, & Anaheim. 2. See California proposition 13, regarding property tax value assessment guidelines cited in bibliography. 3. See The slow violence of state organized race crime by Geoff Ward for further input on scope of criminalization on basis of race. 4. See commentary on Kantian Ethics in The Ethics of Ambiguity, by Simone de Beauvoir, pg. 33. 5. See case law Catholic Worker v. County of Orange. 6. See Necropolitics and the Slow Violence of the Everyday: Asylum Seeker Welfare in the Postcolonial Present by Lucy Mayblin, Mustafa Wake, Mohsen Kazemi. 7. See Chronic urban trauma: The slow violence of housing dispossession by Rachel Pain. 8. See Stemming the rise of Latinx homelessness: lessons from Los Angeles County by Melissa Chinchilla to further understand cultural barriers and likely of becoming homelessness Latinx communities shoulder. 9. See Chronic urban trauma: The slow violence of housing dispossession by Rachel Pain & The Ethics of Ambiguity by Simone de Beauvoir pgs 156 - 158.

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“The Emotive Configuration and Toll of Slow Violence: Investigating
the Emotional Lives of Homeless and Housed People in Contemporary
Orange County, California”

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Abstract

Borrowing on Rob Nixon’s term of “slow violence,” this paper will discuss possible foundations that structure and solidify tolls of slow violence in contemporary Orange County, California. Specifically, slow violence from an emotive perspective among Latinx homeless and at-risk individuals. Thereby, it will be shown that environmental changes in the lives of Latinx homeless and at-risk, pose a foundation for these emotive tolls that further underpin slow violence. This paper will further raise questions of moral responsibilities, since violent alienation against migrants further inflicts emotive injuries among the Latinx homeless. Lastly, this paper will discuss the importance of addressing emotive slow violence within homeless communities. Since slow violence is an unperceived issue, when left unattended, it further underpins economic burdens to cities housing this crisis, and nearby areas.

Keywords: Slow violence, Autonomy, Environmental Changes

Introduction

Violence commonly has the association of being sudden and forceful, as it is on the spectator’s face and captures their attention. When a person hears the word violence, she perhaps thinks of “pow” or “splash” sounds that are generated from events that are loud, attention

grabbing, dramatically vivid and are detrimental, destructive, or harmful (Nixon 13).

For an action or event to be considered as a violent one thereby, it appears that it must be forceful, sudden, or striking as these happen within seconds, and some kind of damage should follow from their manifestation. For example, if someone gets punched. The action of punching is sudden as it happens within seconds. Yet, when it happens, the act does not only manifest itself on the face of those present as it is striking in time, but also inflicts damage on the person receiving the punch. A vehicular accident holds similar criteria. It is sudden and it draws its spectator's attention towards its presence, where the "pow" sound is generated from the crash. Furthermore, although natural events might not be commonly associated with the word violent as these are not generated from human agency. It still follows that the term violent could still apply to them if we attribute to these natural events the properties of being sudden, loud, and inflicting damage after they have occurred. For example, earthquakes are sudden as they happen within seconds, and while or after they occur; these generate great amounts of destruction. This is similar to tsunamis, tornadoes, and other natural occurrences.

The features of suddenness, loudness and destructiveness need not be carried by an action or event for these to be considered violent ones, however. Violent actions or events are merely destructive in their very nature. And thus, could indeed manifest in unseen, silent forms that increment and prevail across time and space as Rob Nixon suggests (Nixon 2). That is, acts or events could still be considered to be violent, if these carry the destructiveness feature or detrimental aspect towards someone's or something's existence while the action or event slowly manifests across passage of time in unseen manners. Consider the spread of Covid-19. Invisible, silent, and yet, capable of deadly infesting the human population (Raj, Rohit, Ghosh, Singh). The Chagas disease is another example. The infectious disease is unseen and when untreated,

throughout time it prevails becoming life threatening (Center for Disease Control & Prevention). Countless other examples follow similar criteria. These acts or events are not sudden, loud, striking or attention grabbing. Rather, these are silent occurrences, that slowly generate detriment as they are unseen and untreated.

Violence, therefore, seems to be more than just an occurrence that is on one's face strikingly and destructively. It seems to be a more complex phenomena since it can manifest itself in undetected ways, not limited to human agency, as it slowly develops across time and space (Nixon 11). Thereby, putting in jeopardy the existence of those that are affected by this unseen and gradually developing kind of violence.

Identifying the presence of violence when unperceived appears like a difficult task to accomplish, especially when it is manifested in a manner that is not considered a traditionally violent one. By appealing to Rob Nixon's term of "slow violence"-- a phenomena that slowly manifests through time and space as it is unseen (Nixon 2) -- this paper seeks to uncover and discuss possible foundations that structure and solidify tolls of slow violence in contemporary Orange County, California. These tolls are emotive, as they are unseen, and further underpin the prevalence of the phenomena manifested across time and space among the lives of Latinx communities. That said, these emotive tolls could be described in terms of emotive slow violence. That is, as the emotional injuries that are unseen and that prevail across time and space among Latinx communities, specifically among homeless groups. For these lack the presence of a stable form (Desjarlais 66) and thus, appear as almost non-existent as they live in the shadows, where they are unperceived by housed and at-risk individuals.

While slow violence and homelessness lack attention, in addition to the emotive tolls these carry. Latinx homeless and at-risk populations, further shoulder emotive configuration tolls

that further underpin the prevalence of emotive slow violence in Orange County, California. It appears that there is a communication gap between the housed and unhoused individuals, which further contributes to the development of emotive slow violence, especially among the Latinx communities. Not only among those that are unhoused, but also among those at risk of becoming unhoused. These emotive tolls appear to be correlated with the presence of environmental changes in the lives of the unhoused or housed individuals in contemporary Orange County. By environmental changes I mean, changes in their financial, social, emotional, physical, and housing opportunities among the Latinx communities. Which, seem to be correlated to unseen emotional injuries endured among Latinx people.

Methodology

This journal appeals to Archival research. It draws its analysis from archives pertaining to various forms slow violence manifests in. Whether it be through criminalization, psychological trauma, necropolitics, or social relations -- including emotional trauma. Moreover, this archival research involved meticulous analyzing of current events and close reading of case law, news articles, books, and statements regarding the presence of emotive slow violence in contemporary Orange County. Thus, showing the links between slow violence and its emotive tolls within the lives of the Latinx homeless and at-risk communities.

Purpose

This journal aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How do homeless and unhoused Latinx people understand and confront the emotional underpinnings and contours of the slow violence shaping their everyday lives in contemporary Orange County, California?
2. Do homeless and unhoused Latinx populations connect or collaborate when shouldering

the emotional configuration and impact of slow violence in contemporary Orange County, California?

Moreover, this research shows that developments aimed towards high standards of living, possibly trigger emotive tolls upon homeless and at risk of becoming homeless communities, including the Latinx community. While developmental changes in the homeless' environment gradually occur from innovations aimed towards raising standard values of life in Orange County, California; the lives of the homeless or unhoused with the at risk housed people, appear to devalue in existence through prevalence of emotive slow violence.

Expensive Orange County - Findings

It was found that Orange County, California is amongst the most expensive places to live in the US (Burrow, Kingplinger). Its economy is strong and seems divided from the South and North area. The former seems powered by skilled labor while the latter by unskilled labor (Mathews, Zócalo Public Square).

Furthermore, Orange County houses several fortune 500 companies in sectors of finance, technology, fashion, healthcare, and others (International Education Center OCC Blog). It is conveniently located close to hiking trails, while it also houses coastal areas such as Laguna Beach, Newport Beach, Huntington Beach, and Long Beach (tripadvisor.com). In addition to the above, its typical climate ranges from tolerable to agreeable (bestplace.net).

Orange County also houses popular tourist attractions such as beaches in the aforementioned cities, the OC Fair each summer in Costa Mesa (ocfair.com), Disneyland, the Anaheim Convention Center, Angel's Stadium, and Ducks stadium in Anaheim; Knott's Berry Farm in Buena Park, Bowers Museum of Cultural Art in Santa Ana, and nightlife in all its cities (tripadvisor.com). Orange County has many Universities such as UCI, CSULB, CSUF, Chapman

University, and others. (ocgov.com). Moreover, with appealing geographical locations, an educated workforce, diverse residence, touristic popularity, low unemployment, Orange County's economy is robust and diverse, making it an attractive place to do business in (Location OC Orange County).

It appears that as Orange County provides many conveniences to its residents. Its standard of life rates highly along with its housing rates. It was found that while cities of Orange County are popular to live in, the demand for housing is high, and thus, its pricing follows to increase (Hearn, dailytitan.com). Since Orange County's housing market is among the costliest in the US, its median rate for a one-bedroom apartment as of 2018 was rated at \$1,493, and a three bedroom apartment at \$2,626 (Dillon, voiceofoc.org). However, minimum wage workers in Orange County could afford to pay \$572 per month in rent, and not the \$1,493 or the \$2,626 previously mentioned (Dillon, voiceofoc.org). Thus, to put this into perspective, in 2018, unskilled minimum wage laborer's, such as janitors, waiters, restaurant service workers or others, would have had to work 104 hours per week to afford a one bedroom apartment (Dillon, voiceofoc.org). It was further found that Latino racial groups were among the highest living in levels of poverty in Orange County (2019 UCI Community Health Needs Assessment).

That said, it was further found that lack of income is a proxy for determinant of health (2019 UCI Community Health Needs Assessment). That is, many poor residents in Orange County do not have enough for healthy food or housing. Thus, these groups are more prone to experiencing chronic health detriments. Moreover, often older people who live alone and are found at the highest levels of suffering health conditions often live in insecurity and cannot afford their medications (2019 UCI Community Health Needs Assessment). It was further found that when individuals suffer from physical and mental complications, retention of jobs is at

jeopardy, thus placing them at risk of becoming homeless (Boyd-Barrett, The Orange County Register). Furthermore, it was found that the Latinx community hesitates to seek mental, financial, and social assistance when needed. Altogether, a sense of skepticism towards authority figures appears to be the reason for Latinx communities stigmatizing the seeking of help from social assistance resources (Boyd-Barrett, The Orange County Register).

The Unhoused, Housed, and their Housing Cities - Findings

Since 2015, there were 4,452 counted individuals as homeless, it was found that in 2017, there was a 7.6 increase of homelessness in Orange County (Walker, The Orange County Register). Current number of homeless estimates at 6,850 presently (2019-2020 Orange County Community Indicators). The number could be higher however, as there are Latinx homeless that could be underestimated. Especially, Latinx members from the older age groups, as these are among the hardest to count in Orange County (2019-2020 Orange County Community Indicators). The highest ethnic group recorded as homeless in Orange County were whites which make up 32.4% of the population in OC, yet Latinos were disproportionately reported at smaller fractions as homeless, compared to their overall numbers (Replogue, Lais.com). Moreover, whites were overly represented at 64% of being in permanent supportive housing while Hispanics were at 22% (“Homelessness In Orange County” 30).

It was further found that some people that become homeless in Orange County lost their jobs. With high rent prices, they lost their homes. Thus some ended up living in their vehicle and got it towed due to regulations impeding being parked in one spot for too long. Without a job, home or car, life eventually turned more difficult. Some had no money to get their car back from the tow yard. To avoid more infractions for sleeping on the streets or being harassed by others - many of these individuals migrated to the channel where the Santa Ana river passes, known as

the riverbed (Catholic Worker v. County of Orange).

Moreover, attitudes regarding the growing homeless crisis were found to be divided. On one spectrum there are groups that assist these unhoused people through shelters. These organizations aid with goods to the unhoused (Catholic Worker v. County of Orange). On the other spectrum, it was found that the homeless were forced away from public areas, thus, leading to homeless people taking shelter at the riverbed area (Catholic Worker v. County of Orange).

It was found that many unhoused people were forced out of the riverbed areas in the cities of Orange County, California. It was also found that a notice was issued, asking to report any suspicious persons or activity in the riverbed area. Methods for dispersing the unhoused away from these public areas were through hostile architecture. That is, certain structures or locations where the homeless were known to reside, were either removed or remade to be uncomfortable to use for extended periods of time (Catholic Worker v. County of Orange).

Emotive Configurations of Slow Violence in Orange County - Discussion

Orange County, California is an attractive place to live in for various reasons. It is conveniently located close to touristic attractions and great public eyesight views, employment opportunities prevail and keep growing, it houses great educational institutions, in addition to having a fortunately pleasant climate year-round. Because of the conveniences Orange County offers, the standard of life of those living in its cities increase. That is, as there is abundance in tourism, economy, employment, and education in these geographical locations; the value of properties within these geographical locations increase. As standards of living and value of properties in Orange County prevail and increase, the demand in housing increases and thus is needed to be met for people wanting to live in Orange County. Thereby, spiking property value and pricing for housing in Orange County. Especially, within those areas nearby touristic places,

such as beaches, Disneyland, Angel stadium, and others.

While there are spikes in the demand for housing and its prices, simultaneously, it appears to follow that cities such as Santa Ana, Irvine and Anaheim for example, actively work to further increase or conserve the high standard of living in their cities.¹ Otherwise, tourism, economy, property value and thereby, quality of life would decrease in these cities. Therefore, to conserve the value of living in Orange County, it is seen that public projects are proactively executed. Schools get renovated or built, new apartment complexes are built, work on roads increases, public libraries are established, building of new hotels and other touristic attractions housed by these cities are also executed. Thus, attempting to secure the high standard of living in Orange County. Although these environmental changes are indeed positive ones, as these further secure the high standards of living, it appears that the quality of life of those living in low socioeconomic statuses decrease, thus, decreasing their value.

So, when city renovations or environmental changes occur, such as the building of a new hotel, park or malls and any other structures that increase property value, the result is an increase in rent price and value (Collins, The Orange County Register). Apartment complex owners therefore, pay higher property tax. Subsequently, to make the additional money paid in property taxes, that the landlords increase rent prices to renters.⁴

While renovations in cities increase property value and standards of living, it appears that the value of those living in low socioeconomic statuses decreases. This is because further social problems appear to arise from increasing rent prices to those at risk of becoming homeless or already at a state of homelessness. The following correlation follows. As property value

¹ See in bibliography, cited city works projects and allocations of land for usage of Tourism in Santa Ana, Irvine, & Anaheim.

⁴ See California proposition 13, regarding property tax value assessment guidelines cited in bibliography.

increases along with rent prices, physical health, mental sanity, and humanity of those in low socioeconomic statuses decrease and are placed in jeopardy. These aforementioned complications appear to carry emotive tolls that configurate a structure of slow violence. Thereby, structuring underpins of slow violence among individuals in low socioeconomic status, while in the shadows of contemporary Orange County. Allow me to elaborate below.

Although the skilled worker, in Orange County, might be able to afford the expenses of property taxes increasing, home renters or those living in apartments do not share the same luck. Individuals that work in intense unskilled labor positions, such as janitorial, landscaping, painting, carpet cleaning, restaurants or hotels service, or others, can only earn so much. Even if they hold multiple jobs to survive paycheck to paycheck, surviving in financial uncertainty places a sense of instability and insecurity upon their daily lives. This puts them at risk for suffering health conditions as they lack the financial means to receive good quality food, or housing. Moreover, if these individuals living in poverty were to lose their job, they would be at risk of becoming homeless as their survival depends on their checks and not savings.

Furthermore, while living in a state of uncertainty, it appears that individuals in low socioeconomic statuses in Orange County, are more prone to experience health complications. Whether these are physical or psychological. Poor health, in conjunction with poor nutrition and shelter appear to lead to poor job retention in Orange County. While someone who constantly gets sick or has mental complications and is not able to work in positions of unskilled labor that do not offer paid sick leave, their position at these jobs are thereby placed in jeopardy. It follows that a person of a low socioeconomic status, working in intense unskilled labor positions are expected to be more likely to lose their job as they are expected to get sick more often. While unskilled workers live paycheck to paycheck to survive the expensive Orange County. It is not

surprising that these individuals contribute towards the increasing rates of homelessness in Orange County.

It seems that increases in housing prices and poor salary wages in Orange County are correlated with homelessness. If housing prices increase, the poor seem unable to afford these price increments. As housing price increases because of tourism being generated by convenient locations, companies bringing property value and revenue to cities, or from city renovations, it seems to follow, that the poor in contemporary Orange County cannot keep up with their rent increments. Especially, when their salary only gets them by, month to month. Moreover, these increases in prices possibly triggered by environmental changes, seem to further inflict physical and mental injuries upon their bodies that impose their ability to keep their jobs, and thereby their homes.

As housed people undergo the stressors of surviving day to day, the unhoused, the homeless; undergoes similar detriments to their daily life. It is seen that the homeless in contemporary Orange County are harassed, criminalized, and pushed from one place to another.⁵

Both the housed at risk of becoming homeless and the unhoused, thereby experience similar emotive infractions or stress, uncertainty that can further develop mental or physical complications. Which can lead to devaluing in their daily lives as human beings. As the housed and unhoused experience the environmental changes within their communities, in conjunction with stress and other physical complications. Their autonomy, their sense of choosing or free will; seems stricken away from them. Therefore, their ability to act as autonomous free human beings is detached from them. Since autonomy is one aspect that makes a person a person, as theirs is taken away from impotence that appears inflicted upon them, their humanity devalues in

⁵ See *The slow violence of state organized race crime* by Geoff Ward for further input on scope of slow violence in form of criminalization.

their existence as persons.⁸ This appears to be the case as the housed and unhoused are both forced to comply with the environmental changes imposed upon them. The housed people at risk, are forced to work while sick in order to keep their job, thus, they are obligated to work against their will when in pain to survive. Similarly, the unhoused are obligated to displace from point A to point B against their will, as they are harassed and forced to hide in the shadows, away from public sight; without being able to exercise their choice where they would like to be.

Although both the housed at risk and unhoused seem to experience similar detriments that appear to dehumanize them. There seems to be a gap of understanding between these two groups. Housed at risk people, reject being at the border of becoming homeless and fail to empathize with the unhoused as they advocate for homeless shelters to not be housed by their cities of residence.¹⁰ On the other hand, the homeless refuse help from some housed people, as homeless or unhoused people hold skeptical attitudes towards those that can help. Thus, leading them to not seek for assistance.

Therefore, it is seen that hostile architecture is implemented in cities of Orange County, to keep the homeless away from public areas where tourism prevails and brings in revenue to the cities.¹¹ Moreover, it is seen that the homeless attempt to avoid contact with local authorities and the housed public, as the unhoused hold skeptical attitudes after they have been forced to hide from the public view. It appears to follow that both at risk and unhoused shoulder physical and mental infractions. These infractions are unseen and thereby unaddressed as these are not discussed. This appears to be because of a communication gap between the at risk and unhoused.

⁸ See commentary on Kantian Ethics in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, by Simone de Beauvoir, pg. 33.

¹⁰ See case law *Catholic Worker v. County of Orange*.

¹¹ See *Necropolitics and the Slow Violence of the Everyday: Asylum Seeker Welfare in the Postcolonial Present* by Lucy Mayblin, Mustafa Wake, Mohsen Kazemi. See also, *Catholic Worker v. County of Orange*.

At-risk housed people do not openly discuss their financial, physical, or mental struggles, and the unhoused do not seek assistance to report their needs, which could trigger open discussions to address the matter, specifically within the Latinx community.

The unseen prevalence of emotive infractions generated from a conjunction of environmental changes in the lives of those living in low socioeconomic statuses in contemporary Orange County, are what appear to structure and underpin the slow violence shouldered by these unskilled workers and homeless people in Orange County. As their emotive injuries are unseen, unreported, and unaddressed. Their struggles from the environmental changes they shoulder further prevail across time and place, dehumanizing their existence through chronic trauma from remembering the experiences within space as at risk or unhoused people.¹⁴ Because these infractions occur throughout the passage of time in an unperceived manner, slow violence is thereby underpinned (Nixon 232).

It appears that the lack of communication could be attributed to cultural attitudes within the Latinx community. Such as consciously not wanting to be perceived as a burden, as a strong work ethic tradition in addition to pride and ego, stigmatize acts of openly sharing financial, physical, and emotional struggles within the Latinx community.¹⁶ Therefore, it can be deduced that the housed at risk do not communicate or acknowledge their infractions to the community. Moreover, it can be deduced that the Latinx homeless do not share or seek assistance regarding their housing situation due to a fear of local authorities and stigmatized attitudes that bar them from seeking assistance. The lack of evidence indicating Latinx people in cities of Orange County seeking for help, whether it is requested from housed or unhoused people, could be an

¹⁴ See *Chronic urban trauma: The slow violence of housing dispossession* by Rachel Pain.

¹⁶ See *Stemming the rise of Latinx homelessness: lessons from Los Angeles County* by Melissa Chinchilla to further understand cultural barriers and likely of becoming homeless that Latinx communities' shoulder.

indication of the cultural attitudes inflicting further emotive detriments to their wellbeing. Which raises a question of self-inflicted slow violence from a notion of autonomy. If they consciously choose to not seek assistance, they consciously hide their emotive injuries from the public to address. It follows that they further inflict slow violence upon their existence. But that is a matter that would need further research to be addressed properly.

Conclusion

Physical and mental hardships develop across the passage of time and progress within their spatial existence. Emotive injuries develop within the self of these at risk and already at-risk individuals. Living in a state of stress, harassment, uncertainty, and state of impotence leads to a traumatic state that is demeaning to their persona.¹⁸ This state of being is detrimental to their dignity and autonomy as persons of reason and free will. Housed and Homeless or unhoused people, are unable to make enough to support themselves in the expensive Orange County. It follows that their ability to choose is stricken away from their being. Therefore, their ability to act freely, their autonomy and thereby humanity is also detached from themselves. Similarly, the unhoused are obligated to displace away from public view and they are left impotent, and unable to choose freely upon their actions. In other words, the environmental changes in the lives of both, housed and unhoused people, inflict hardships such as physical and mental instability. These further inflict emotive infractions that affect their humanity negatively. As these emotive infractions occur across time and space, an emotive toll from slow violence prevails. It is slow violence because it gradually manifests upon these lives while being unnoticed. The housed at risk Latinx people avoid seeking assistance and therefore, records of their needs lack to be

¹⁸ See *Chronic urban trauma: The slow violence of housing dispossession* by Rachel Pain & *The Ethics of Ambiguity* by Simone de Beauvoir pgs 156 - 158.

recorded. Moreover, the homeless Latinx lacks further assistance and is less acknowledged by the public as he is forced to displace to others areas in the cities of Orange County.

Further research is needed to accurately record the interactions within the housed at risk and unhoused Latinx communities (Chinchilla), especially, regarding their experiences with emotive slow violence.

It follows therefore that a moral responsibility to address this issue presents itself. As people of reason, or autonomy, we hold the responsibility to further conserve the autonomy and humanity of others (Beauvoir 156-158). For example, those in minority groups like the Latinx communities, homeless populations including the Latinx homeless populations in Orange County, CA. Addressing the crisis of homelessness is in the best interest of these communities housing the crisis. That is because not addressing the crisis could lead to a detriment in the aesthetically pleasing atmosphere that conserves the great value of living in contemporary Orange County. Therefore, if the homelessness crisis is not addressed from its root problem, which appears to be expensive housing in conjunction with low wage salaries in unskilled jobs, it can follow that populations of homelessness can be expected to grow, eventually putting in jeopardy the tourism, employment, and social development that powers the quality of life in Orange County.

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