

S.O.B. FEST: A COMMUNITY CONCERT AGAINST GENTRIFICATION

On August 13, 2011 the Save Our Barrios Coalition sponsored the first *S.O.B. Fest* at the Women's Civic League Hall located in the community of Logan Heights in San Diego. Logan Heights is a mostly Mexican-Latino and African (Black) community with a long history of struggling for its cultural and political rights.

The *S.O.B. Fest* was created with the purpose of opening a non-commercial space for cultural expression that engages the community and the artist with the issue of gentrification in Logan Heights, a community that is in danger of gentrification and capitalist real-estate speculation.

The issue of gentrification and the deterioration of the spatial, social, and economic bonds of the barrio is a constant reminder of the relationship between working class people and large-absentee landowners. For capitalist-corporate developers and their urban policy executioners (City of San Diego), the Barrio is a gold mine waiting to be exploited and "redeveloped". Herein lies the key to how urban policy directed for the benefit of "private" interests makes possible a process of uprooting and displacement of working class and poor people.

CULTURE AND ORGANIZATION IS ESSENTIAL TO RESISTANCE

Cultural (artists) and community organization is essential in the resistance against this process of exploitation and displacement. The role that art and artists play are quintessential not only for the "visualization" of the community's self-determination and empowerment, but also in undermining, denouncing, exposing the bureaucratic process of dis-empowerment.

For years neglected by the city government –causing some areas of the community to be designated as "blight"—under California redevelopment law Logan Heights is an example of denigrated living spaces that require the use of urban policies for redevelopment. A juridical definition of blight is:

"An area in which the combination of conditions set forth...is so prevalent and so substantial that it causes a reduction of, or lack of, proper utilization of the area to such an extent that it constitutes a serious physical and economic burden on the community that cannot reasonably be expected to be reversed or alleviated by private enterprise or governmental action, or both, without redevelopment."

What hides behind this definition is the relationship of domination that is present and operating within this process. And it is through this city-sponsored process that residents and tenants are stripped of their ability to control the future of their homes and community culture.

The *S.O.B. Fest's* main objective was to engage both artist and community, primarily youth, in direct action against gentrification. Specifically, the raising of consciousness against the process of gentrification and connecting grassroots organizations that are active in progressive and revolutionary struggle.

ARTISTS AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS WORKING TOGETHER

Artists from San Diego and Calexico donated their time and expertise as a gesture of grassroots direct action. *Tío Trip*, from Calexico California was pleased to connect with like-minded San Diego musicians. The *Kozy Korners*, from South Park and Logan

Heights, offered a strong beginning for an afternoon of diverse musical genres. As the summer night came to the Women's Civic League, *Brian Cangrejo and the Handsome Five* made sure that the *S.O.B. Fest* would be remembered for the quality of its art and reality of its political nature.

AN EVENT THAT SPEAKS TO REALITY

The *S.O.B. Fest* would not have been possible without the integral participation of grassroots community organizations that believe in the self-determination of the Chicano-Mexicano and working class communities of Logan Heights. Because the *S.O.B. Fest* is a non-commercial space for grassroots community participation and information, Raza Rights Coalition, UHURU Solidarity Network, Historic Barrio District, Unión del Barrio, Chicano Park Steering Committee, Ant Hill Collective/Worker Fund, and the Association of Raza Educators (A.R.E.), were fundamental in producing this non-commercial setting where people could come to enjoy music that speaks to them about their social reality and have access to cutting edge grassroots organizations.

The first *S.O.B. Fest* celebrated could not have been possible without the committed support by the aforementioned musicians, grassroots organizations, the Women's Civic League, and members of the Save Our Barrios Coalition: a special shout out to Monica Bernal, Alfredo Soria, and Blue Ramos for their organizing and production expertise.

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COMMUNITY, ARTISTS, AND ORGANIZERS, RESIST GENTRIFICATION