“The unmistakable roots of the universal solidarity of the colored peoples of the world are no longer ‘predictable’ as they were in my father’s time—they are here.”
—Lorraine Hansberry

Since the moment I found out I was a 2019 UH KGMCA + PRH Fellow, I began to contemplate how I would begin to research a community I am not immersed in or identify with culturally. The first step was to learn about Third Ward, the region’s demographics and the current issues the community faces. I had done some research beforehand to apply for the fellowship and inquired with Houston artists while contemplating how to further my performance ethnography work initiated with Santana’s Fairy Tales. With some knowledge I established the guiding questions for my work:

- "Can conceptual art be a driven force in combatting gentrification across urban communities?"
- "Can the retelling of history and the future, from a person of color point of view, reclaim and reinstate historical context, current social justice narratives and storytelling in urban neighborhoods?"

Until recent months, I was unaware how much Houston’s POC art scene had developed in between two spectrums: from what some refer to as “rasquachismo” or “guerrilla art” to the traditional “high art” established by white culture. In the name of research and personal inspiration, and with support from the fellowship, I attended a walking tour in Third Ward, the Latino Arts Now! Conference at University of Houston and met a diverse and amazing Houston artists community at the “Brown Artist Retreat” hosted at DiverseWorks, organized by renowned artists Rafa Esparza and Risa Puleo. Along the way, I’ve also been reading and skimming various genres and titles, such as the Third Ward Complete Communities Action Plan, Emergent Strategy, Black Water Rising, Lot, Asian Texans, Root Shock, Black Women in Texas,

---

1 The “Introduction” titled The Future Has a Past in the book Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity by Gaye Theresa Johnson starts with this quote. I recommend reading the entire book!
2 Check out the recent article put out by Smithsonian.com titled: “Why the Chicano Underdog Aesthetic ‘Rasquachismo’ Is Finally Having Its Day”
3 Read more about DiverseWorks at www.diverseworks.org
How Racism Takes Place, Brown, Not White, The Art of John Biggers, and The Complete Works of Pat Parker, just to name a few.

I’m ashamed to admit it, because it would add to Houston’s issues of gentrification, but over the last three months I have fallen in love with the Houston art scene — correction: the black and brown Houston art scene — and even caught myself thinking I could live and thrive here as a brown artist, more so than in my own city of Santa Ana, California. As you can imagine my mind is overwhelmed with criticism, ideas and even imposter syndrome. It has been challenging to get words to the page while trying to avoid appropriation, exclusivity and misrepresentation of history in order to adhere to my own literary citizenship critiques.

And somehow, even with imposter syndrome lurking nearby, my creativity surfaced along the way. Over the last couple of months, I established a timeline and concept for a literary multi-media project. Over the next month or so, I hope to nurture a direct connection with community folks in Third Ward and surrounding areas to assist in developing a storyline and possibly creative collaborations as well. I have also met and plan to work in partnership with the Arts & Technology Center and U.S. Latino Digital Humanities at University of Houston to further develop the research into multi-media art and digital archives. As for the literary component, I adapted a combination of academic and sci-ific styles to begin the project—utilizing footnotes, history and adaptations of photos to redefine terms like “minoritize” and introduce philosophy based on the poetry of Pat Parker. With similar aspirations that Gayle Theresa Johnson states in Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity, the

---

4 Pat Parker January 20, 1944 – June 19, 1989, African-American lesbian feminist poet and activist, whose family first lived in Third Ward but eventually moved to Sunnyside due to financial hardships. She moved to Oakland, California at 17 years of age.

5 Yes, I was inspired by Octavia Butler, Adrienne Maree Brown and graphic novels.
final project will be “about interracial antiracist alliances, about divisions among aggrieved minority communities, and about the cultural expressions that emerge from shared urban spaces.”

Through a few conversations, and after trying to figure out how to approach when and where Third Ward actually began, I started the photo collection and timeline with the Jewish community in 1844...