Inequality and Democracy Research Fellowship Program

Name of research supervisor at organization: Anne Orchier and J. Walton Senterfitt, Ph.D

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Title of research project: Investigating the outcome of CBAs and connection to gentrification

Scope of research:
When real estate developers and politicians push projects that will directly displace residents, CBAs (community benefit agreements) are often presented as the “best option” to offset the damage and an alternative to opposing development entirely. We want to know:

- How many CBAs have been struck since the 1984 Summer Olympics and where, mapping the scale and correspondence to gentrifying areas of Los Angeles
- To what extent (if at all) these CBAs have been upheld, particularly around “right of return” for those who were directly displaced
- What the process of obtaining this information looks like, and how the relative level of access to inform and transparency corresponds to accountability

Location of research and other activities:
NOlympics LA imagines that most of the research will take place by way of reviewing city data and archives, online and whenever necessary, in person. It will also likely require interviews with individuals involved in drafting and managing the CBAs. To be honest, we are not sure what the process of reviewing adherence to the CBA terms will look like or how available that information will be, so it is difficult to say where and how that research will take place.

This research project would be managed in coordination with the one proposed by Union de Vecinos Eastside Local of the LA Tenants Union, so members of the combined team could check in with the researcher on a regular basis to assess progress and determine any adjustments necessary to the research plan. They would also be welcome to attend NOlympics meetings as relevant, which we could determine with them on an ad hoc basis. Those meetings take place across the city.
Deliverables:
- List of CBAs in Los Angeles since 1987
- Map of CBAs in Los Angeles since 1987, plus any corresponding data around shifts in demographics, rise in rents, and any other relevant measurements of gentrification
- Assessment and analysis of outcomes of as many of those CBAs as possible, including identifying what percentage of CBAs are currently being tracked or are possible to track

Qualities of the research fellow:
Since NOlympics LA anticipates that some of this data will be difficult to track down and/or measure, it would be ideal to work with someone who is comfortable both in identifying creative research approaches, or alternative ways of answering the same questions, as well as someone who can provide deeper analysis of what it means for that information to be inaccessible.