

Portland State University

PDXScholar

Special Collections: Oregon Public Speakers

Special Collections and University Archives

6-27-1967

"The City as the Foundation for the Development of Subcultures"

Donald Pollard

Follow this and additional works at: <https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/orspeakers>



Part of the [Urban, Community and Regional Planning Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Pollard, Donald, "The City as the Foundation for the Development of Subcultures" (1967). *Special Collections: Oregon Public Speakers*. 1.

<https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/orspeakers/1>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Special Collections: Oregon Public Speakers by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. For more information, please contact pdxscholar@pdx.edu.

Donald Pollard, "The City as the Foundation for the Development of Subcultures"
Portland State University
June 27, 1967

PSU Library Special Collections and University Archives
Oregon Public Speakers Collection
<http://archives.pdx.edu/ds/psu/11060>

Transcribed by Julian Younger, June 12 - June 20, 2020

Audited by Carolee Harrison, August 2020

PSU Library Special Collections and University Archives presents these recordings as part of the historical record. They reflect the recollections and opinions of the individual speakers and are not intended to be representative of the views of Portland State University. They may contain language, ideas, or stereotypes that are offensive to others.

LYNDON MUSOLF: We've blocked a little more room for some of you to come up, if you wish. I am Lyndon Musolf of the Urban Studies Center, and this is the first of a series of speakers for the Portland State College summer program, City '67. I think it's very fitting that we start with a representative of the regional office of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, since this department has certainly brought about and stimulated new programs and activities and concepts and ideas dealing with the problems of the urban areas of the country.

It is even more fitting that we were able to bring here Mr. Donald Pollard, who is the director of the planning branch of the regional office. This regional office incidentally covers eleven of the Western states, hence why he likes to point out—I think he makes regular trips out there—and has had an interest in this area for a long time. He had his BA and MA training at the University of Colorado, including internships in some major cities. He's had work experience in the cities of Phoenix and Fresno. He's been with HUD, now, for some time and is, as I said, one of the top offices in the regional office of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. He's had a special interest in certain aspects of this that goes beyond his training and his work in the office; he's had a personal interest in many aspects of urban problems. One of these includes the concept of the subculture, and what this means in the urban society of today. It's one of the things he wants to talk about today. He has very kindly consented to leave time at the close of his talk for any questions, and particularly about this particular area of his interest. So without taking any further of his valuable time, I want you all to meet Mr. Donald Pollard of HUD.

[applause]

DONALD POLLARD: I'll also say that I've consented to leave town. [laughter] There are a couple of things we probably better get out of the way to begin with. First, the fact that I purposely did not write this, because I can't think of anything worse for me to come up to Oregon, to Portland, and read you something that I could have sent to you. I'd rather make it as spontaneous and leave the question and answers to see what kind of spontaneity we can elicit, and in effect, let you become a part of this talk, because there are relatively few guidelines.

The second part is that I think we'd better get some definitions out of the way, because subculture is about anything you want to make out of it, and I think we'd better get our parameters down to something we can handle, and then we'll get into the more interesting parts of it. First of all, so that we can, we'll eliminate all the professors now with the definition of culture, because they probably won't agree with this at all; but in the context that I want to talk about it today, a culture is the way people react, and let's talk about the way people react who we might call "the American people." You know, it's impossible to say, "This is an American," but yet, in the general context, the way people react is a way of looking at what their culture is really about, sometimes a very uncomfortable way of looking at their culture.

So, when we get to the question of a subculture, I am going to further digress, and say that a subculture is just that which is new. We won't push the simile too far, but you might say that a subculture are the sparks that are emitted from the flint of society. Now, some sparks take hold and burn, and others drift away and are forgotten. Subcultures, I would imagine, we would safely say are the type of things that come and go. Those which are successful, so to speak, have a very unsuccessful history of being absorbed, and it's not the type of valiant death that you would like to see happen to a going subculture when it first erupts, but that's their fate. Now, I'd like to raise a few questions today about subcultures, and get out of this definition thing and into the reality of what's going on in our cities today.

I'd like to first talk about why do these subcultures develop? And then I'd like to talk about, for a little bit, what some of these new subcultures are, and then let's relate it to the cities that we're building today, and see if there's something about the cities we live in which cause these to happen. And finally, try to wind the thing up and see if there is a way that we can design a city—believe it or not, design a city—to either maximize or best use the ideas that are produced by subcultures in its most positive effect. Now you can see there's all kinds of pitfalls in this, but let's start out by analyzing for just a few moments, what are some of the things that have caused subcultures to come up? And I think we get a little more comfortable with the idea of subcultures.

Well, first of all, there are some of them that are caused by circumstances, purely circumstantial. The war comes along, and you have what some people might call a subculture of war babies, I guess you're war babies. So in a way, you might be a type of subculture. Actually, it's this group which is springing forth with some of the new sparks that are most interesting to watch, and we'll get to those in a few minutes. Though my home is in San Francisco—and I probably need a haircut—I don't live on Haight or Ashbury Street, so though I find that probably one of the most remarkable areas of... and exciting areas that are happening, we'll get that in a minute. But let's talk about some of these other types of subcultures, and there are some of them rather amusing, too, that happen by circumstances. I think one of the best examples, you know, the circumstance of war creates a subculture, and that's veterans. This is, indeed, a subculture all of its own, and then from veterans you get offspring organizations, like DAR, the Daughters of the American Revolution. I've spent a lot of time wondering what would ever happen if the Daughters of the American Revolution ever came face to face with the fathers of the American Revolution. Anyway... [laughter] I've also wondered sometimes if we'd ever get to that point where it would not be necessary to have a veterans' benefit. It's almost a permanent institution in our federal form of financing. That wasn't meant to be an alliteration, it just came out that way.

There are some subcultures, however, that are developed as a result of design, and these are your true revolutionaries, and you can find them throughout history. They were very uncomfortable people that popped up and created cultures all their own. The one who is referred to in the book "Are You Running With Me, Jesus" was a revolutionary in a way. There are a whole bunch of them that you can plot through, of course, and a lot of them springing up today, which leads us to an interesting situation: that we probably find more fertilizer in our fields of urban design today for these cultures to grow in, and I'm not referring again to the Haight-Ashbury section. But we have the potential of so many of these breaking around our ears that I think we're really moving into a whole new type of an age regarding subcultures. When you get to the cities, and what I'm trying to say is that when you get to a city, for example take San Francisco, you find all of these people converging with their own well-designed revolutions, and when you start fitting them together they make some very interesting collages.

One of the most interesting, I'd like to digress just a minute, has been the relationship that has developed between Hell's Angels and the hippies. You recall their first encounters were where the Hell's Angels beat the living daylights out of the hippies because they were marching in protest to the Vietnam War, and the whole issue, the fact that the hippies wanted to go through one of the Negro ghettos, and it was a potential riot at that point, and this is why the police were very hesitant in Oakland to let them march. Well, the whole thing got all mixed up

and became a real donnybrook in the middle of it, but in the process, the Hell's Angels made their first confrontation—and a very bloody confrontation it was—with the hippies. Since that time, however, they've found that they have to live closer together, and in the true spirit of the hippies, they have put their arms around the Hell's Angels and, at Christmas time—it was amusing that it had hit the front page—the hippies were having a candlelight parade. The wind wasn't blowing that night in San Francisco. They were having a candlelight parade to celebrate the death and rebirth of the Haight-Ashbury section, and were carolling and singing appropriate songs and burning incense and candles, and who was it that was their escort, but the Hell's Angels, leading them down the middle of Haight Street. A rather interesting final wedding of those two; it had a rather funny twist at the end of it though, because, it seems that a few of the Hell's Angels had their dolls sitting up on the back of their motorcycles, and there's an ordinance against riding standing up on the back of a motorcycle, so they got thrown in the clink, and the hippies all marched down to the clink and sang Christmas carols and lit candles. But this is the type of... when you bring completely divergent subcultures together, you sometimes find all kinds of strange and unpredictable results.

Well, let's go on to a third reason for these developing, and probably one of the most meaty reasons, and that's technology itself. We haven't really found any handles to get a hold of the effect of technology on the human being, as a human, not in terms of how you can catapult people through the air and foul up their eating schedule by getting them there ahead of time, or lose their baggage, or something like this, but the mere fact of how people live, the fact that you have grown up going through probably more changes than dozens of generations prior to you, and you did it all before the age of twenty. These technological changes cause a type of adjustment that I don't think we've been able to measure, but yet I think we're starting, in subcultures, if you will, to see some of the spinoff from it. Well now, those three: circumstances, design, and technology, are certainly not all, but they're three of the ways these come about, what we'll call "subcultures" come about.

Let's talk about a couple of these, put them under the microscope, and look at them, because I think there are a couple of them that come out looking rather uncomfortable. The Negro in America, for many decades, was and then wasn't a culture, and recently has re-emerged in sort of a two-fold manner. First, in the civil rights movements; but it's pretty well agreed that the civil rights movement died with the March on Washington and has taken a new turn, and in many ways the statement of Black Power is really not too accurate of an assessment of what's going on, but the fact that there is a restatement of the validity of being a Negro, and this has some really encouraging elements to it. And it's going to be extremely difficult for us, as white people, or as non-Negroes, to adjust our thinking. Now the key was the word "adjust," because this may well be the age of adjustment, and how we get through it in terms of our relationship

with subcultures will pretty well shape the future of America. It's these times of adjustment and how you face them that nations have been made on.

The young generation—and that's about as difficult to define as ever—is another type of subculture, that is as chameleon and mercurial that you'll ever find; because it's taking so many different forms. You see, there are, just in San Francisco—I'll use that as an example because I can cite specific ones there—but you find in your major metropolitan areas, the larger the more, and the larger the metropolitan area the more pronounced these cultures become. You find just among young people, a complete scattering of new groups, that are such a challenge to be able to deal with. I feel like a square of the establishment now, saying that, but yet they are an entity. Let's identify a few of these.

First of all, one which is probably most frequently overlooked are the young people who are in the city because their parents are paying them to be there. Now, this group usually has some type of "defect." It may be based in our mores, it may be physical, but it's a defect and it's uncomfortable to have these little kids around the house, so they pay them to live elsewhere. You know, in our stable homes this may not seem to be a reasonable and a valid analysis of a subculture. But if you'll travel with me sometime through the Tenderloin area of San Francisco, you'll find exactly what we're talking about: a completely different culture that blooms after 11:00 at night, and finally ends up closing down shop, so to speak, at 4:00 in the morning, three or four hundred of them in San Francisco alone. This is not to be confused with the hippies, that's a completely different organization. Yet it is a type which it is almost impossible to touch, and let me give you one example, and they found this also with hippies. These kids are there because they are... they have been told that they're an outcast from their own family, and therefore they are probably an outcast from civilization. They are there, and in many cases, don't want to be identified. But yet, to service these people, one of the first things you "have to ask" is, "What's your name?" and you never get a straight answer on that one, you just will decide that. So you're really dealing with a group of nameless, or fictitiously named people, that will not give you a social security number, because they either have astutely as avoided it, or wouldn't let you know because it could be traced; and it's, in effect, a young skid row, because many of the characteristics of this young group are identical to the other subculture, which is equally difficult to handle, if not almost impossible, which is called "the single man on skid row." That's what they always called me every time I walked down skid row, because I'm single. But I'm speaking of what you might call one of the two halves of a subculture called "the unidentifiables." They don't want to be identified, and that's why they're in skid row, it's a place to hide.

Now if you've ever tried to deal with an area of a community which we'll call a skid row, it is almost impossible to get any valid statistics as to what is involved in that area. For example: How many people are there? You know, it varies: up, down, maybe with the crops, maybe not. Where do they come from? Who knows, they won't tell you. What are their problems? Well who knows, because there probably isn't some type of a health, or otherwise, program to help them. And nine times out of ten, if there is a program to help them, it's either in conjunction with the jail or it is located a considerable distance away from them.

Before we lose—because there's been sort of similarities—before we lose this theme of “the unidentifiables,” which is a type of, or example of skid row and some of the young people who have been thrown into a large city, have this characteristic. There is another type, though, of an unidentifiable, that really isn't looked at very closely, and we come all the rest of the way around the circle, and find one of the basic objections of hippies, and it is the “unidentifiable barbecue cult.” These are the people who live in suburbia, and suburbia, if there was ever an area without a name, Los Angeles has been referred to as “seven suburbs looking for a city.” Since I just spoke last Saturday in Los Angeles, I had to find out something also against San Francisco, and it's equally grim in some respects. They kid me because when I return to San Francisco, I say I always know when I'm home, because each morning I throw up the window and stick my head out and I can hear the birds cough. That was getting a little off the subject, but the point is that in suburbia, we have meaningfully built nice homes, and have lost one of the most valuable parts of our ability to live, and that's to have an identity with place. This is... well, it may not seem as apparent to you because you live here, but the populated area of the Portland metropolitan area really has no identity. The only identity you really have a maybe a two-focused area, one of them is Lloyd Center and another one is downtown. The third one, which is the most identifiable to everybody who's never been here, is the Columbia River, but that seems to be pretty well ignored here in the city.

Now, the young people have begun to sense that the barbecue cult isn't everything that it was cracked up to be, that there's something missing in your instant breakfast, that there needs to be more to life than to have a little party in the backyard, that there are challenges in terms of something that's outside of that backyard, and that these challenges are, in some way, saying something to the younger generation, who has much energy and much talent. This is, in many ways, the appeal of the Kennedy administration, the appeal of the Youth Corps and the Peace Corps, et cetera. And it's pulled them out, and even the appeal of the demonstrations and the summer trips to the South, as disastrous in many respects as they were, and as productive. But this is beginning to evolve a type of reaction to suburbia that we're going to have a little difficulty in measuring, and a lot of difficulties in coping with.

Now, let's hurriedly go to the question—I may have missed a point in here—but let's go to the question of: how do you go about designing a city to maximize the resources that you have in it? And the only resources that you have in a community are the people that are there. Well, you see, we look at the city today and we find real chaos. I hesitate to ask Kay Rich—I saw him some place around here—how many elected officials there are in the Portland metropolitan area. There's almost one for every federal program that the federal government has dreamed up. The metropolitan areas really have been so disintegrated by their governmental structures that you can't get to them. And here is where an effort to try to do something about design of a community, you know, make sense out of Portland, or San Francisco or Los Angeles, to try to make sense out of it and give meaning to it runs a-cropper of one of the most unbelievable subcultures that we've run into today.

Now, I'll get to that one in just a moment, but let me identify exactly what I'm talking about by "designing a city so that it does something for you." That's easy to say, but what do I mean? Let's take Los Angeles, where you have great sprawl, you know; forty, fifty miles in all directions, and in a community such as Phoenix or Fresno, where I've worked, or most communities, you have suburbia and downtown, and therefore in the operation of the community, the way people live in it, at 8:00 in the morning they all come downtown, and at 5:00 they all go home, so you build freeways to and from, and you can pretty well design... Not Los Angeles. They live all over and they go all over, and the—I had it some place with me—the freeway pattern for Los Angeles is something like this, and there is really no particular sense to the community, no real identity. Because even downtown Los Angeles has lost its identity; people have left it. It's truly seven suburbs looking for a city. Well now, how could you do something to design this?

If you would use rapid transit, for example, you could probably increase density along the rapid transit line, which for the first time in—well, again, for the first time—gives some identity to movement through the Los Angeles area. Rapid transit, as a tool, the way we move people, the way we make it convenient, is one of the most effective ways of shaping, designing, if you will, your community. If you're not familiar with what BARTD is, the Bay Area Rapid Transit District, BARTD is spelled B-A-R-T-D, it is one of the few major experiments and efforts in developing a mass transit since the development of the subways in New York. BARTD is to be completed some place around 1970, and it's going to have a fantastic, almost uncalculable, effect on the Bay Area in terms of the way you can move people. For example, all of a sudden it becomes much closer to go to the Oakland airport from downtown San Francisco than to go to the San Francisco airport. Downtown Oakland becomes much more important as a retail center, because it's easy to get to for most of the people in the Bay Area, rather than downtown San Francisco. You know, and here we go again with the problems of our core cities.

Now, this is what we're talking about, the design of how you live in your city. And who have we bumped up against? Well, there's a subculture that comes in here that is one of three. Now, there are four types of people in an urban area. By the way, urban, to this group, is a dirty word. The four types of people in an urban area: the informed, the uninformed, the misinformed, and those who don't want to be informed. So you've got three-to-one odds against progress already, but it's this "probably don't want to be informed," but most charitably called "uninformed," subculture that I speak to now.

At the heart of most of our communities in the West has been a very strong urge to identify our little city, you know, Downtown USA. And, if you don't think that television cameras bother you, you're incorrect. But, in Downtown USA there has developed a concept known to political scientists as "Home Rule"—now it's your turn, everybody smile. Home Rule is that ability to identify ourself and our little barbecue culture, and keep it, because, you know, we've escaped from downtown, and we love City Beautiful, and Home Rule is there to protect it. You've got 'em all around here, every city has them. Home Rule is the concept that this subculture rallies around, and they say, "any attempt to unify the urban area, and to design it, is bad. As a matter of fact, it's tied in to a very suspicious plot"; and they have a couple of books out about this plot, which goes all of the way to Russia, and it's a rather interesting group to look at, but it's a disastrous group, in many respects, because it stands as one of the greatest stumbling blocks to progress in terms of developing our cities, and here's why: We can no longer attempt to solve our city problems on a city-by-city-by-city basis. There are 95 cities and 9 counties in the Bay Area. They have to plan certain functions on a unified basis. For example: the disposal of garbage, the disposal of sewage. That's why we talk about the effluent society.

Now, how you provide water, for example, to the Los Angeles area, must be done on a regional basis, no individual city can do this. But it's this singular effort to try to design your metropolitan areas where we find people today that has come head-on with this other subculture, which stems probably from the John Birch Society, that waves the flags of Home Rule, and instantly says that you're either communist or you're tied into a great conspiracy for metro government. I don't think that we will ever see metro government, period. I think we'll see some limited forms of it, and we already do. For example, you find the metropolitan sanitary or sewer district in Seattle, and these are attempts to go after the total urban area's problems. But I don't think you'll ever find a whole urban area becoming a metro government. Dade County, in Florida, in Miami, has attempted this, and I think it will probably remain as the example of one metro government, and it's fraught with all kinds of problems, but to say that this is a hallmark and that this is a pattern for tomorrow is being a little presumptuous.

Well, that's the last of these subcultures that come along. The real question is: How can you then approach urban America today and, in effect, orchestrate all of these subcultures and culture into becoming a community? How we do this is really going to determine whether our democratic processes are valid, because we cannot, at any point, just let one of the subcultures run rampant, and say, "This is the way it will be." On the other hand, we have some challenges before us, that I'd like to illustrate a couple of examples, and then let your imagination carry it from there. You've all heard of the concept of new communities, new towns, new cities. This is pretty well misunderstood, because most people think that it is going out into a cow pasture and building a whole new city. It's much broader than that; it's a technique by which you create living area for large numbers of people. For example, we have a number of cities that, for one reason or another, have a disaster, for example we had one in Alaska that was sliding down into the ocean, instantly. We knew we had to do something. So it was, in effect, a place to call for new cities, and part of the process has been to move the whole city up onto the hill that isn't sliding into the bay, and that is one example which is not usually thought of as being a new town concept.

But let's look at the new town concept as to what it offers to us. For example, you can now control climate. You know we do this every once in a while. We send a man to the moon, and he takes our climate with him. You know, it's amazing that the federal government, for which I work, can send a man to the moon and feed him and clothe him and let him breathe, and he exists and they get him back, but yet I can't even get here without losing my baggage. Well, we've got to turn some of this technology around and apply it to human beings here, in our cities, where we live, and therefore I say climate can be controlled, and it can. Technology and industry is dealing now with new cities that they can put a plastic dome over. They were able to do it in the stadium in Houston, of course, but now they're talking about entire cities, to control the temperature and the climate. Well, this is possible. So, there is one experiment that's going on now, it's still purely in the planning stages, but is to construct a total community of about 50,000 inside of a completely controlled environment someplace in Minnesota. HUD is participating in this planning project, as are a number of other agencies. And, inside this dome, where you have controlled... you know, you no longer have to worry about the exodus in Minnesota in the winter to Florida, and therefore the loss of sales tax, which is a great drain on the economy of the state of Minnesota. You can have people living there, and if they want to live outdoors they can, because outdoors is pleasant.

Well, one of the things that they're exploring right now is to design this community so that there are no automobiles inside the city limits. The automobile—bless it—operates at about 5% efficiency, the one that's going by now is operating at about 5% efficiency, if it's lucky. And yet, it's designed for sixty, seventy miles an hour for maximum efficiency; well, even though I'm

sure you have all done it, the downtown area is not designed for sixty or seventy mile per hour cars, contrary to what I saw a couple nights ago down here. I thought I recognized a few of you [laughs], and if you recognize me, I was the one that hit you with a cane. But in attempting to design an efficient way of moving people in a city, and excluding cars, you start talking about horizontal sidewalks, elevators, and vertical development rather than sprawl. Well now, to do this, let me tell you one of the basic ideas that you get to in a community. Downtown Los Angeles is not so dissimilar from most downtowns today, where 50% of the surface of the area called downtown is devoted either to the moving or the parked automobile. 50% is devoted to the automobile.

Now, if you can reclaim half of your land in terms of new design, you've got something going for you, but you've got some rather unique things that can take its place, one of which is a mall, or a mall concept. I got all tangled up in one of those in Fresno. And they're great ideas, because they, at the basis of them, give you a springboard for all kinds of things to happen, maybe the original happenings in downtown. And here's where I think we had one of our best examples of an orchestration of a community in terms of design. In Fresno, for example, when they opened the mall, nobody knew what to do with it; they didn't even know what a mall was going to look like because it was the first major mall in the West, the third in the world, or the third in the United States, of course they've had malls for years and centuries in Europe, but here was the first one opening up and everybody was just sitting around scratching their head and wondering what to do with it. So we, in essence, went to the subcultures. Before the thing opened, we said, "Look! How'd you like to present your culture, whatever it may be, in the mall?" "We'd love to, except, how? What do we get into? You mean downtown? The only people who sit down downtown are drunks and bums." You know, it's true. So we said, "Now look, forget everything you thought of in terms of your city, and think of an area which is about the size of this inside room, and we'll rope it off for you, and that's for you to perform in."

Well now, we didn't have ladies down, you know, flipping pancakes or something like this, but we did have the Chinese community present one of the Chinese operas. Fantastic things; you'd have to endure one to know what we're talking about. Secondly, we had the Japanese community, which was badly split and we got into all kinds of flack there because we chose the wrong one, but we had the Japanese community decide that they wanted their Obon Festival, which is their Ancestors' Day, you've never even heard about it and most people in Fresno hadn't. You should see it, because it's some of the most beautiful dancing—community dancing—that there is, it'd always been over in another part of Fresno that nobody ever went to except a few nuts like myself, and all of a sudden it was downtown, and drew 4,000 people, who were intent on going back the next year. But here, all of a sudden, was an opportunity for them to be in the heart of the community. Well, to make a long story short, it was a way of

presenting some 250 different organizations which represented, in their way, a type of new emergence of culture, of expression of themselves in the heart of the community. And if you were shopping, if you were unfortunate enough to be shopping at the time, you would bump into all kinds of things: a judo display, or something.

This is only one way that I think we could make the community, you know, this thing we live in, inhabitable and a foundation to make things happen, you know, to have our happenings in. It's this spirit, which—everybody now knows what a happening is—it's this spirit of the happening that needs to be put into our cities, so that it can happen. And thank goodness, we have subcultures like the hippies who are forcing us to look at this. I was reading about one the other day that went out and bought a hunk of rope, and they hung it on a tree—they weren't going to hang anybody, like you might expect some subculture—but they made a swing out of it in Golden Gate Park, and they invited everybody to come along and swing on the rope. Fortunately, they have decided also to close the main street in Golden Gate Park and give it back to people and bicycles every Sunday. No cars in there. New York is doing the same thing in Central Park. Fantastic ideas. We're discovering, you know, that people can live in their communities, and when they can live in their communities, they can react with themselves, to each other, and to the surroundings. You know, that's what civilization is all about. Thank you.

[applause]

[audio skips and speaker resumes mid-sentence]

POLLARD: ...twelve, and I detect some rumbling stomachs, but if it gets to growling too badly just get up and walk out, but if there are questions or if you just think you want to say something, let's open this up and talk for a while. I hope maybe this has stimulated some ideas, but let's talk, see what can happen around here. Yes?

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1: Isn't the Park Blocks sorta like a mall, in a sense? Activity can be presented there.

POLLARD: Walking up here this morning, we were saying that, "Isn't it fortunate that somebody was able to preserve this out here?" The fact that when you look out the window you see two things, green and glass; cars—which aren't really doing anything—and a vacant park. You know, that's for people out there, and it should be designed in this way, providing open space. Other than just providing open space—there are some disastrous effects of providing open space just in itself—the little square down here, that is designed beautifully so the sidewalks cross like this, and the park benches go parallel to each other right up and down each one. How inhuman,

or unhuman, can you get? What can you do there? You can't even get on the grass. Well, you know, it's better than a filling station. Okay, more comments. Sure.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2: What are the [unintelligible]... Brasilia?

POLLARD: Don't. [laughs] Brasilia, as you're all aware, is the new capital of Brazil, and it was an experiment... it was sort of Disneyland South, because it took the idea of a man, a great man, and attempted... and has built a great city, but now the challenge of Brasilia is to get people to live there, in the middle of the jungle, middle of the Amazon, of the jungle area. Maybe where they can manipulate people better than we can, they'll get people there. But if we've learned... we've learned a lot, I hope, from Brasilia. One of them is if you're going to start designing a city, start with the people that are there and find out what it is they need. Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 3: Mr. Pollard, you remind me of the lies of someone in the vast [...] city, is this beautiful park area we have outside of the college. Only yesterday, excuse me, I think it was about six months ago, the state practically confiscated the park as if for purposes of a freeway, of all things. Now, what do you have in mind, or how have you, in Los Angeles and San Francisco, coped with the state and the federal government encroachment on the, well, such as a beautiful area like this for the purposes of a freeway. That's... I think it's very obvious with the desecration of the property, let alone that it's a great disservice to the people who are using the city property [background noise; high-pitched interference] Will you please comment on how you are, down there, who are supposed to be setting the example for the nation, are coping with the encroachment [loud laughter in foreground] from the federal government and the state highway system [high-pitched interference] on the poor of the city?

POLLARD: Well, San Francisco is poor, but I think that the demonstration that San Francisco has made has been one of the most... I hope has been one of the most valuable things in demonstrating what shouldn't be done. Now, let's approach this subject in two ways: First, if you have not had a chance to read Mr. Lawrence Halprin, H-A-L-P-R-I-N, Mr. Lawrence Halprin's book on freeways, I hope you will. Larry Halprin is an excellent, world-renowned landscape architect, and he can [laughs] the conclusion of his book is pretty good, the last two words are "dinga-ling." [laughter] Goateed Larry ends his book by saying "Freeways are here, they are a part of our culture, and they are a needed part." You know, our challenge is to figure out how you fit 'em in. Well, San Francisco was able to fit one of them in by, instead of having them parallel, they put one on top of another. The fact that they just happened to carry it across in front of the Ferry Building, which is the most outstanding landmark down there, other than Yvonne D'Angers, is, you know... I'm amazed, you know, that nobody knows who Yvonne D'Angers is. Well, yes, somebody does. To the professors around here, we're going to have to

expand this course and take you all to San Francisco. But, the freeway, the Embarcadero Freeway, literally obliterated the end of Market Street which, even through the earthquake and fire, the Ferry Building survived, and it now survives, like myself, sort of peeking over the freeway. Well, that's one example of what not to do, and I think that the Embarcadero Freeway is the most quoted, the most photographed, example of "Look out, fellas, here it comes." To that extent, it probably is an example of benefit.

On the other hand, the Golden Gate Park, which is another stroke of luck that was given to the city of San Francisco, has a tail end which extends for another mile on to the east, into the Haight-Ashbury section. It, in effect, defines the north boundary to the Haight-Ashbury. It looks very much like this park right here, though it's approximately double its width; and the panhandle was the ideal location for the freeway, and only a year ago were the people of San Francisco able to rise up and kill off the idea of putting the freeway down the panhandle. This threat was, in effect, part of the rebirth of the Haight-Ashbury and panhandle area of the community, because they realized what they might lose. But how many times do you realize, or even think about it, the possibility of losing this street, or this park? You know, we don't. We don't... we didn't think. You know, and it was us—our parents, us, it doesn't make any difference—we sat back and allowed the riverfront of Portland to be ruined. You know, I found, after visiting here for some time, I found that you can get to the river in downtown by going through a rather attractive junk yard at the far end of the street. I'm not being unkind to the people who have planned this community, because you can plan until you're blue in the face unless people become concerned. You know, put a little guts behind it. And this is the best example—no, I won't even say the best example—but it's an example of losing a resource that you have, and losing it because we just don't think about the human being living in the community.

However, there are a couple of things in terms of making investments in rapid transit, et cetera that we have been able to—and again, you can say this is federal intervention if you want to—but part of the federal requirement for funding is that you adequately plan your freeway systems, and that they fit into your comprehensive plan, and boy that's a mouthful, but at least we're pushing in this direction. But I will say it takes pushes from both ends: the people like ourselves who live there, as well as the programs that build them. There's a question back here.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 4: Yes. [unintelligible] great institutions [...] and freeways, these different things are taken off the tax rolls, possibly...

AUDIENCE MEMBER 5: That's not true!

AUDIENCE MEMBER 4: Okay!

POLLARD: Two of the three are.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 4: Two of them, okay. They're taken off the tax rolls, and this increases the tax rates for the people who live in this area.

POLLARD: Not necessarily.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 4: Well, we have to eventually raise it to compensate...

POLLARD: Right.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 4: And do you think this is possibly a way of driving people out of the city instead of into the city, or... ?

POLLARD: Well, of course it depends on how you use it, you know. If you plunk down a college in the middle of a city, it's going to generate demands for service around it, and the question is: Is it designed properly so that the benefits and the demands for service around it cause investment, which offset the fact that you have 2, 3, 4, 5, 10 blocks off the tax roll? That's the real question of the feasibility of urban renewal, which, in many cases, temporarily takes things off the tax roll, and then resells them, hopefully. And it's in this area that you have to... you have to weigh the benefits of what are you going to... you know, what are you going to end up with? Now, I think this is one reason that we have to look at freeways very carefully; because San Francisco has, for the last, you know, 2, 3, 4, 5 years, said "Stop freeways." But yet, it's going to stagnate the community if it doesn't ultimately face up to the question of freeways. They must be built. We just can't operate our communities the way they're built unless we do something of this nature. But at the same time we should start talking about—and talking meaningfully about—investing in rapid transit. Seattle, now, is doing this. It is one of the largest community bond issues in history, that they spent nearly a billion bucks to build—and they're in the process of building—BARTD. But, the effect of building BARTD [high-pitched interference] is going to be outweighed many, many times in the terms of the development that it causes around it.

Now, a lot of times we don't really evaluate—and it's tough to evaluate—all of the quantities and qualities that you have in a project. You know, is it beneficial to the community to locate Portland State College in the heart of Portland? Well, it's probably one of the smartest ideas that had been made in a long time, because I can think of examples where colleges and

universities... one in particular, which is an architectural marvel, looks almost and, in effect, is actually located in the clouds sometimes, completely outside of the community, the fact that I won't mention that I'm referring to Santa Cruz, but you know, here is the perfect ivory tower. And you guys aren't interested in living in ivory towers, fortunately. If I can see... are there any... yes ma'am.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 6: As a city planner, how would you maximize the resources in an area like Watts? What can you do as a city planner with an area like that? [...]

POLLARD: First, I have to disclaim the fact of being a city planner, though I am involved up to my ears in it. But what can you do about Watts? Certainly there, you have... the closest we can come so far is to try to put some boundaries around what you can't do. First of all, you can't ignore it. Second, you can't move everybody out. So, within that, what then can you do? Well, you can start looking at the needs of the people, rather than their houses. You know, this was one of the most amazing things that you could have a riot, and have people falling over white picket fences. [high-pitched interference] You're not supposed to have a riot in this kind of an area, it's a nice neighborhood. You can drive down the L.A. freeway and you don't really know when you're going through Watts unless somebody points it out to you. Now, when they started looking at the needs of the people, though, they found out that, in many cases, because of this, you know, pattern of Los Angeles, it had captured some people who were unable to make a living. Their living that they could make was way over here, and to get there was too expensive. You know, you can't get there from here, because you don't have the money. Well, one of the projects that we're experimenting with now is to put a low cost transportation system into Watts, that takes people from Watts to their employment and back, but keeps them living in the Watts area, because in many respects it's a pretty decent place to live. I think that some of the private investments of time, talent, and other things in the Watts area have been most remarkable, and that's the reaction of the movie colony itself, in Hollywood, to go to Watts, because as I recall there was only one movie house in the area, almost no type of activity... organized activity at night. Lots of activity, man, there's action down there, but not, you know, in the most constructive vein. We're gonna scratch our head about Watts from now on, and there is no one answer. But the methodology is there very clearly: look at the people, find out what it is they really need and build from that point, rather than build stately mansions and put people into it and say "You're happy, aren't you?" Clear at the back.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 7: Speaking of [...] would you say that a few of the [audio skips and resumes]

POLLARD: I'm not sure I understood your question.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 7: I'm referring to an area that's low income, and I was wondering if you're of the opinion that... [unintelligible]

POLLARD: These areas of low income people, have some... a couple of rather remarkable characteristics that you wouldn't look at and wouldn't recognize at the outset. In many cases, they have one of the highest percentages of home ownership and one of the longest periods of tenancy. In other words, they tend to be stable. It's the influx—as the income goes down then they have to divide the house up and put two people where there was one, et cetera—you know the history there. In many respects, I think the consensus, if there can be said to be one, is that these people would rather stay where they are, and rebuild in some reasonable manner. The problem is that if you want to make a prudent investment—you know, forget people—if you want to make a prudent investment, you'd get them out of there and go build a new house. But they want to stay there, and so I would say your consensus would be that "We'd like to stay here, and fix up our house." Now, imagine what... it's unimaginable what could happen if you turn your attention—and this is what, in effect, Model Cities is trying to do—is to turn its attention in massive efforts on neighborhoods, a neighborhood in a community. And it's going to be interesting to see how this one turns out.

But, I've had a chance to work in some neighborhoods, in large and small communities, and once you break through and find some type of rapport on the human level, it's really pretty interesting what can happen. Let me illustrate. One of the biggest problems that the city of Fresno is having with a slum area—the worst in the city—was the fact that there were a whole bunch of vacant houses, shacks. And there was no way that the city, as a governmental agency, could go onto private property and tear the thing down, get rid of it. And there were, you know, drunks, bums sleeping in them, one house had... before it finally burned down, it caught on fire five times; finally the fire department was slow enough that it finally burned down, got rid of it. We went into this area with a social welfare type worker, who is not connected with welfare, but in a community home; he lived there for about two years, and after about a year and a half had established enough rapport that we could start talking, you know, we through him, about how could you get rid of some of these. And I was meeting with him one evening with some of these people and we said, "You know, if we just get these houses torn down," and they said, "Yeah, you know if we could just get those out of there." I said, "Well, you know, we'd have to have a letter from the property owner that authorized somebody to come in and tear them down." I said, "Can you get me some of those?" They said "Sure!" Next morning there were thirteen signed slips of houses that could be torn down, and they came and presented it to me. You know, the city couldn't do anything, and here I was representing the city, and yet thirteen slips, and here were these people, you know; "We're ready to go, what are you going to do?"

Well, I scratched my head again and I went to my Sunday school class that I was teaching, if you can imagine that, and they were high school kids. I said, “You swingers want to, um, tear a house down?” And that spring vacation they spent tearing the houses down. Got rid of all thirteen, and the next spring vacation, they hosted high school students from all over Northern California, to join them in a house wrecking party. And they worked for a solid week tearing down the rest of these vacant houses that there was no way to get rid of.

You know, this is putting our energy, as people, to work in a little different way. But if we just use our imagination, you know, as people, us, we can shape our community. If all we’re saying is, “It can be done, but you must capitalize on us in terms of the way we react,” and that’s what I call, at the beginning, “culture.” And the different ways, the new ways that we act, we call “subcultures,” and it’s pretty encouraging to see the sparks that are coming off of the flint of society today. My stomach just growled, and let me say it’s been a real pleasure talking with you, your attention was greatly appreciated, I hope that you have an informative series—it’s interesting to see the series that you have in front of you—and that you’ll have an opportunity to attend those. Thank you for your time.

[applause]

[program ends]