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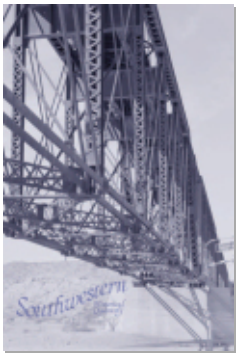

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Lines of Houstonians in front of City Auditorium in 1936. Because of the wide variety of concert and sporting events held within it, the auditorium offered events that appealed to Houstonians from different socio-economic backgrounds and racial groups. *Courtesy of the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin, Bob Bailey Studios, City Auditorium, no. 1864-w1, December 1936, DBCAH identifier e_bb_0714, Bailey (Bob) Studios Photographic Archive.*

Culture War in Downtown Houston: Jones Hall and the Postwar Battle over Exclusive Space

By Kyle Shelton*

In June 1963, wrecking crews demolished City Auditorium in downtown Houston. Opened in 1910, the auditorium housed many of Houston's most popular leisure and recreation activities for more than fifty years. On Friday nights between 1913 and 1954, the Houston Symphony filled the hall with music. On Saturdays, as the sounds of the orchestra subsided, the grunts of wrestling matches and the cheers from basketball games echoed throughout the auditorium. A diverse collection of entertainers such as B. B. King, Marian Anderson, Enrico Caruso, and even Elvis graced the stage and performed for Houstonians of all classes and races in the hall "for all the people."[1] That day in June 1963 when workers gutted the auditorium's interior to exposed beams and tore down its gothic façade, Houstonians looked on with a mix of apprehension, excitement, loss, and pride as a piece of their city's history disappeared into rubble.

Before the dust settled on the ruins of the auditorium, construction of a new building, The Jesse H. Jones Hall for the Performing Arts, began.

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[1] Quotation from "Sam Houston Music Coliseum, Music Hall, and City Auditorium Pamphlet," c. 1940, vertical file H-Civic Center, 1920–1940 (Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston, Texas; cited hereafter as HMRC). For a list of acts or activities held at City Auditorium see, Revis Smith, "The Music Hall Fuss Blamed on Growing Group Antagonism," *Houston Post,* Jan. 24, 1963; Ann Holmes, "Jesse H. Jones Hall for the Performing Arts Opening Night Program," folder 6, box 4W199, Ima Hogg Papers (hereafter after cited as IMP; Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, Austin, Texas; hereafter cited as DBCAH), 2; "The Hall That Was" *Houston Post,* Oct 2, 1966, Jones Hall supplement, p. 52; "Legacy: City Auditorium Remembered," *Performing Arts Magazine* (May 1980): 53–56, vertical file H-Buildings-Auditorium (City and Main St.), HMRC.

Built mostly with funds donated by businessman Jesse H. Jones and the Houston Endowment, the new Jones Hall would echo the explosive success and progress of postwar Houston, civic leaders believed. As the new permanent home for the symphony and the centerpiece of what would become a $40 million dollar civic center, Jones Hall represented Houston's postwar campaign to become the Sunbelt's epicenter of business, commerce, and culture. Still experiencing postwar economic growth and massive population increases, city boosters believed that Houston could vault into both the national and international spotlight, and they hoped to seize the moment by constructing a downtown and wider city that would solidify such a reputation. As one of the largest changes in the downtown area, Jones Hall encapsulated a significant shift in Houston. Redevelopments like the hall redrew the city physically, socially, and culturally in a push by civic authorities to "script" downtown space as an area intended for more "respectable" forms of leisure, business, and living.[2] At a time when downtowns suffered significant decline due to suburban expansion and the flight of business to outlying shopping malls, Jones Hall and other new buildings offered a chance to reinvent central Houston and make it into the gleaming centerpiece of the city's image. Officials hoped that a new series of projects in the central city would allow them to fill the increasingly empty downtown streets with middle- and upper-class shoppers and leisure seekers and at the same time remove markers of decline such as rundown businesses and impoverished populations.[3]

The drastic demographic changes taking place in Houston after World War II left officials struggling to harness the city's growth and control the future of downtown space. Between 1940 and 1960, the population of Houston's metropolitan area jumped from 627,311 to 1.365 million.[4] Over the same time period the black population rose from 103,000 to 246,000. Unlike the growth of the white population, which spread throughout the metro area, most of the growth among groups of color occurred within the central city.[5] As minority groups became a larger por-

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[2] I borrow the idea of a scripted space from Hal Rothman, *Devil's Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998). Rothman argues that specific tourist spaces are imbued with characteristics intended to serve only the needs of tourists. Similarly, the creation of exclusive spaces in downtown Houston attempted to construct a space that could attract wealthier, white Houstonians into the central city area for recreation and leisure.

[3] Geographer Don Mitchell has argued that American cities have always been contested spaces where competing groups attempt to force their image of the city onto others. In many cases this takes the form of officials attempting to bar undesirable populations—homeless, poor, racial minorities, or simply loiterers—from downtown and exclusive spaces. See Don Mitchell, *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2003), 2.

[4] Population figures from Martin Melosi, *Effluent America: Cities, Industry, Energy, and the Environment* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001), 161

[5] Census tract level data from the United States Census of 1940, 1950, 1960, <http://www.socialexplorer.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/pub/maps/map3.aspx?g=0> [Accessed Apr. 8, 2012], shows that the

tion of the city's population and as early civil rights victories increased the voting power of minorities, city officials worried about the stability of their elected offices and about who would control the future shape of downtown. In hopes of quashing these fears, officials began to create a downtown that catered more and more to the expectations of the predominately white and upwardly mobile residents of the city's non-central communities and suburbs. Officials hoped that a remade downtown could keep their interest, business, and money connected to the central city.[6]

Annexation was another tool officials used in an attempt to tie wealthier and outlying neighborhoods to the city. In 1963 Texas passed the Municipal Annexation Act—an act that gave cities like Houston unprecedented powers of extra-territorial jurisdiction to annex surrounding unincorporated lands and subdivisions, while preventing smaller municipalities from exercising the same privileges. Even before the act ensured the city's continued ability to annex surrounding land, however, officials had pursued a program of annexation out of fear that suburban and non-central residents would incorporate their communities, take their taxes into separate municipalities, and place a growth-squelching boundary of smaller jurisdictions around Houston if they felt underserved.[7] Because of these fears, during the 1950s and 1960s officials listened evermore closely to the demands of non-central-city residents.

In order to make central city space more attractive to white residents for recreation and business, Houston's downtown development mapped out boundaries that attempted to write the activities of lower-class residents and people of color out of the story of central Houston. The redevelopment of the city's downtown in the 1960s—typified by the construction of the Jones Hall, new highways, and other urban revitalization projects—while never completely successful, aimed to make the central city into an elite and exclusive space that catered to white middle- and upper-class residents.[8] Through both visible factors like high-brow cultural activities and invisible boundaries created by the class-scripted leisure spaces of

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city's black population growth occurred in highly segregated areas near downtown, whereas white growth occurred throughout the city.

[6] The process of creating downtown spaces that catered to middle class and upper class whites that were increasingly moving to suburban areas is discussed in Alison Isenberg, *Downtown America: A History of the Place and the People Who Made It* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 166–202; Samuel Zipp, *Manhattan Projects: The Rise and Fall of Urban Renewal in Cold War New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 174–181; John Rennie Short, *Alabaster Cities: Urban U.S. since 1950* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 49–52.

[7] For a more thorough discussion of the Municipal Annexation Act and the use of Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction see Melosi, *Effluent America*, 194–195; Robert Thompson, "'The Air Conditioning Capital of the World': Houston and Climate Control," *in Energy Metropolis: An Environmental History of Houston and the Gulf Coast*, ed. Martin Melosi and Joseph Pratt (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007), 94. Even before the new annexation powers created by the Municipal Annexation Act of 1963, Houston made several significant annexation pushes in 1943, 1949, and 1956.

[8] The idea of consciously constructed elite spaces can be seen in Margaret Pugh O'Mara, *Cities of Knowl-*

buildings such as Jones Hall, new borders were formed throughout the downtown that dictated which Houstonians were encouraged to access and enjoy downtown space.

The City Auditorium to Jones Hall transition magnified the creation of these exclusive boundaries by highlighting several key struggles in the development of downtown Houston. First, the transition led to debates over the meaning and value of high and low culture to the city. Second, it demonstrated the growing civic power held by communities outside the central city. Third, it showed the weight that pursuit of the label "modern city" held in Houston politics. Fourth and finally, Jones Hall itself illustrated how both the physical and emotional impact of a building could signify progress and limitation at the same time. While the old City Auditorium catered to all members of the Houston community with its unassuming façade and plethora of cultural activities, Jones Hall towered over nearby buildings and exuded a privileged aura with its monumental architecture and its presentation of solely fine arts performances. Investigation into the struggles and meanings surrounding the demolition of City Auditorium and the construction of Jones Hall demonstrates how Houston officials implemented—consciously and unconsciously—political, cultural, and class-based geographies of exclusion in its downtown area from the postwar period through the 1960s.[9]

To reveal the significant changes embodied by the construction of Jones Hall, this article will be divided into three major parts. The first part explores the "wrestling controversy" of 1963. This controversy arose when Houston officials attempted to allow professional wrestling once again to share a venue with the Houston Symphony while Jones Hall was built. Despite a history of shared space at the auditorium from 1913 to 1954, advocates for the symphony vociferously defended the right of the orchestra to maintain separate facilities at the city's Music Hall, where they had moved in 1954, throughout the construction of Jones Hall. The outcome of the controversy illustrated the shifting political priorities embracing the more exclusive tastes of middle- and upper-class whites. The second section places the City Auditorium-Jones Hall transition within the decades-long attempts by civic leaders to brand themselves and Houston as a modern city. The third section delves more deeply into the creation of geographies of exclusion and the limits of accessible public and semi-

edge: Cold War Science and the Search for the Next Silicon Valley (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005). While O'Mara discusses the case of suburban knowledge centers like Silicon Valley, the processes of creating elite, racially and socioeconomically homogenous suburbs shares many elements with the re-creation and restriction of downtown spaces.

[9] With the use of the phrase "geographies of exclusion" I am drawing upon the ideas of Sarah Deutsch in her work *Women and the City: Gender, Space, and Power in Boston, 1870–1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). In this work, Deutsch argues that historic actors competed to create conceptions of space that reflected different political structures, economic realities, and racial and gender ideologies.

public space by examining the class-based exclusions generated by the changing shape of downtown. Before beginning these major sections, though, a brief discussion of 1960s Houston will set the stage for the events taking place while the walls of Jones Hall rose.

Postwar industrialization and its accompanying population boom formed the foundation of 1960s Houston. As in other Sunbelt cities like Phoenix, Atlanta, and Charlotte, the growth of industry and the arrival of air conditioning fed the population increase. The explosion in value of Houston's industry was staggering. By 1955, because of new factories and increased output, the value of the city's industry rose by an incredible 600 percent over prewar levels. The massive oil companies, the nascent aerospace industry, and burgeoning international port brought in more and more residents each day. The simultaneous growth of industrialization and population led to sprawling suburbs and the construction of serpentine highway systems that brought suburbanites into the central city and workers to the industrial employment areas. These forces also contributed to changes in the social and racial order of the city.[10]

Houston, like most American cities in the late 1950s and early 1960s, experienced a huge groundswell of agitation for equal rights led predominately by African Americans and Hispanic activists. On the heels of sit-ins in Greensboro, North Carolina, black students from Texas Southern University staged sit-ins at several downtown lunch counters in March 1960 and demanded desegregated services. Houston's white business establishment and elected officials, hoping to moderate the rising racial conflict, instituted a media blackout on the protests and attempted to negotiate a settlement with black activists and community leaders out of the public eye. As in other Sunbelt cities such as Atlanta and Charlotte, which desegregated most public spaces without serious violence or conflict, the ultimate goal of white city leaders in Houston was to protect the progressive public image of the city. In the end, the negotiating parties agreed to desegregate downtown businesses without fanfare or further protest, thereby preventing Houston from becoming yet another southern city with an all-too-public "race problem."[11]

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[10] For further discussion on the general importance of air conditioning to the growth of the South, see Raymond Arsenault, "The End of the Long Hot Summer: The Air Conditioner and Southern Culture," *Journal of Southern History* 50 (November 1984): 597–628; For industrialization figures, see Merline Pitre, *In Struggle Against Jim Crow: Lulu B. White and the NAACP, 1900–1957* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 59.

[11] For a description of the process of desegregation in Houston, see the film *The Strange Demise of Jim Crow: How Houston Desegregated Its Public Accommodations 1955–1963,* directed by David Berman (Galveston: Institute for Medical Humanities, University of Texas Medical Branch, 1997, videocassette). For discussion of moderated civil rights agreements between southern white business establishments and communities of color see Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006). For another Texas example, see Brian D. Behnken, "The 'Dallas Way': Protest, Response, and the Civil Rights Experience in Big D and Beyond," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 111 (July 2007): 1–30.

Although business leaders and civic officials recognized that they needed to cede some privileges to communities of color, they stopped well short of allowing African Americans and other minority groups to gain equal power in the city either spatially or politically. At the same time the city purported to meet the demands of civil rights activists, the white business establishment, elected officials, and white suburban and city residents all scrambled to establish new forms of de facto segregation and protect the social, racial, and economic status quo of the city as much as possible. In this vein, city officials and boosters recognized that the unprecedented development and building boom throughout Houston presented a unique opportunity not only to remake the face of the city, but also to redraw its avenues of access to downtown facilities.[12]

The Houston that existed as construction on Jones Hall began, then, was a city undergoing drastic changes. The destruction of City Auditorium and the building of Jones Hall reflected the city's drive to become a city of "educated, religious, sympathetic and vigorous men and women who strive to make today a part of the treasured tradition of tomorrow." [13] At the same time, though, its marble columns and frame of steel and concrete served as the foundation of a rebuilt central district that intended for full access to its resources and facilities to go to only a slice of the city's population. It is at the intersection of Houston's self-promotion, self-creation, and physical demarcation during the postwar period that the intertwined histories of City Auditorium and Jones Hall emerge.

In 1954 the Houston Symphony moved from its long-time home at City Auditorium to the Music Hall, a venue devoted to musical performances and theater arts. With the move, the symphony left behind the space it shared with wrestling and other recreational activities. Symphony proponents had worked for years to achieve this move. Far from perfect for the symphony, Music Hall nonetheless represented a more appropriate venue in the minds of most symphony goers. When the wrecking balls knocked

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[12] Many urban historians have shown that in order to maintain the social and racial status quo as segregation weakened in the 1950s and 1960s, business elites, elected officials, and white residents employed a variety of means, including real estate redlining, physical intimidation, and zoning laws, to structure a new form of racial and economic separation between groups in American downtowns and suburbs. Particularly important works here are Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Verso, 1990); Ronald Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Thomas Sugrue, *Origins of Urban Crises: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996); Larry Keating, *Atlanta: Race, Class, and Urban Expansion* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001); Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton. N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005); Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003); David M. P. Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); and Lassiter, *Silent Majority.*

[13] Speech by Gen. Maurice Hirsch to the Houston Rotary Club on Mar. 28, 1957, folder 1, box 4W200, IHP, DBCAH.

down City Auditorium in the summer of 1962 and the city proposed that wrestling and other events once again share the Music Hall space with the symphony during Jones Hall construction, the exclusivity of the orchestra's performance space fell into doubt.[14]

The Houston City Council approved a measure in January 1963 that allowed wrestling events to share Music Hall with the symphony until Jones Hall opened. A maelstrom of protest rose from concerned symphony supporters and civic leaders alike. In the end, the objections forced the city council to renege on the move and officials rerouted the wrestling events to a recreation center outside of downtown. Explicitly, the "wrestling controversy" pitted suburban housewives, cultured philanthropists, and "civic-minded" Houstonians against wrestling promoters and sports fans. Implicitly, the controversy orbited around the contest between high and low cultures and the future shape and use of the downtown. It illuminated the decision-making process of city officials and demonstrated the growing political influence of non-central city residents. By aligning their arguments within the larger context of the push for a modern city, symphony supporters gained the upper hand and reinforced the fledgling line of separation the symphony achieved with its move to Music Hall. The controversy served as the first in a series of moments building to the opening of Jones Hall in which the city reaffirmed new cultural, economic, and geographic lines that divided the downtown and opened a years-long debate on access to public and semi-public space in the city.

The changing face of postwar Houston played a significant role in the build-up to the controversy. The symphony and wrestling had shared the same stage space since well before World War II. At one point during the war, in a remarkable example of cultural cohesion, the two enterprises combined to raise money for war bonds. On the night of the fundraiser, the symphony accompanied "in anguished musical sounds, a wrestling match between Wild Bill Logan and Louis Thesz . . . It was a rare evening with Wagner and Liszt accompanying half nelson and strangle holds."[15] In the end, the event raised more than $7 million dollars for war bonds. This spirit of cooperation dissolved quickly after the war, however. Symphony backers pushed for improvement in the orchestra's situation that would allow it to rival other ensembles across the globe. Before the war the two divergent activities could share the same venue, but in postwar Houston debates about which form of culture deserved greater consideration arose. Instead of coexisting as they once did, the two squared off within the confines of Music Hall.

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[14] Hubert Roussel, "Next Hall Problem in Sight, if Council Votes in Wrestling," *Houston Post,* Jan. 23, 1963, folder 4, box 4W199, folder 4, IHP, DBCAH.

[15] "Miss Ima Hogg and a Look Backward to the Birth of the Houston Symphony," *Houston Chronicle,* Oct. 13, 1963, Houston Symphony vertical file, DBCAH.

The seeds of the 1963 controversy took root in the symphony's move from City Auditorium to Music Hall in 1954. The move signified a break between the symphony and the other recreational formats of City Auditorium. The language associated with the move clearly showed the growing disdain symphony supporters held toward the auditorium, the less-than-classical cultural events it staged, and the patrons who attended them. In addition, the move reflected the building pressure on city officials to dedicate a new and appropriate venue to the city's fine arts groups. Complaints about the limitations of City Auditorium had led to the symphony's move into Music Hall. As early as 1948, symphony organizers complained about the "deplorable condition of the Auditorium as a place to house fine music." The list of grievances included the fact that the bathrooms were "repulsive" and the unsanitary conditions were compounded by the "constant conflict with other users of the building."[16] Other critics sarcastically suggested that "saddles be placed on the rats and that a rodent rodeo be held in connection with the Symphony." While the "rodent rodeo" author felt that the city could keep the "old one [City Auditorium] for fights, wrestling matches and the like," that in the "name of Civic Progress" the city needed to "get going on a new building for the Symphony."[17] The final strike against the auditorium for many symphony supporters revolved around the state of downtown Houston, which symphony organizers saw as "filled with vagrants" and thus unsafe for symphony crowds.[18]

After the symphony moved into Music Hall in 1954, supporters pushed for improvements to the hall in order to clarify the differences between the refined symphony and the common activities held at City Auditorium. Music critic Hubert Roussel called for "a 'sophisticated' decor for the whole building to complement the 'glamour and glitter of the theatre audience.'" In addition, he argued that any improvements made to Music Hall would be moot unless the "fall carnival shows and such rackets" ceased being held in the hall.[19] Clearly, Roussel and others believed that the city would only be able to truly enjoy its symphony if the appearance of its venue matched the soaring crescendos of its music. Ima Hogg, philanthropist and one of the symphony's founders, agreed with Rousel that the symphony and other activities needed to be separated. In response to reports that the city wanted to construct a new sports arena, Hogg wrote to Mayor Pro Tem Lee McLemore to encourage city officials to properly situate any such development. Hogg urged him not to place the new

[16] Quotations from "Proposal for 1948–1949 Subscription Series," Dec. 4, 1947, folder 4, box 4W199, IHP, DBCAH.

[17] "Build a New Auditorium," *Houston Press,* Oct, 18, 1950, folder 4, box 4W199, folder 4, IHP, DBCAH.

[18] "Proposal for 1948–1949 Subscription Series."

[19] Hubert Roussel, "Music Hall Plan Set On Paper: A Run-down of Proposed Changes," *Houston Post-Dispatch,* Jan. 7, 1954, folder 4, box 4W199, folder 4, IHP, DBCAH.

arena "anywhere near where the Symphony plays. Fat Stock Show and the Symphony just do not belong in the same area."[20] In the opinion of the orchestra's backers, then, the city council's proposal to open Music Hall to wrestling and force the symphony once again to share its space with less-sophisticated outlets was a threat not just to the symphony's independence, but indeed to its entire purpose. How could the symphony succeed at providing refinement and culture if it had to alternate nights once again with screaming wrestling fans, booze, and sweat?

When news broke that the city council had approved more than $55,000 in changes to Music Hall in order to retrofit the building for wrestling, supporters of the symphony responded quickly. Still three years away from the opening of Jones Hall, many symphony goers refused to accept that they would have to again share space with wrestling. Defenders of the orchestra responded through four main tactics. First, they wrote council members criticizing wrestling and complaining about the negative effects that the forced sharing of space would bring. Second, they explicitly threatened council members with the power of their votes and taxes. Third, they coopted the rhetoric used by many council members about the importance of supporting both sports and fine arts by calling upon the council to provide wrestling and other sports with separate and equally suited facilities. Finally, they painted their position as the route towards progress and depicted that of wrestling proponents as damaging to the city's reputation. The strength and intensity of the protests took many politicians by surprise, including the mayor, Lewis Cutrer, who originally backed the use of a shared space. In the face of effective organization and fervent response, Cutrer and other councilmen backed off. Each step of the controversy clarified a different aspect of the larger contest over control of the city's cultural and public space.[21]

The first reactions to the council's vote echoed many of the earlier concerns that symphony supporters held when wrestling and the orchestra shared space at City Auditorium until 1954. Hubert Roussel weighed in on the issue and directly chastised the mayor for approving the sale of beer and cigarettes in the hall. This, Roussel contended, would irrevocably damage "the home of our chief theatre arts and of which Houston has been proud since 1954."[22] Roussel argued that the debate would decide if "Music Hall [was] a music hall or a circus."[23] Such opinions tapped into the earlier debate surrounding the problem of combined space and argued

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[20] Letter from Ima Hogg to Lee McLemore, Apr. 1, 1960, folder 4, box 3B175, IHP, DBCAH.

[21] The city council voted to allocate the money for the refurbishment of Music Hall on Jan. 6, 1963. See Houston City Council Minutes held at the HMRC.

[22] Hubert Roussel, "Next Hall Problem in Sight, if Council Votes in Wrestling."

[23] Hubert Roussel "No Time for Comedy of One Kind: An Act Drained of Its Jokes," *Houston Post-Dispatch*, Jan 17, 1963, folder 4, box 4W199, folder 4, IHP, DBCAH.

that the symphony required a clean and respectable venue to flourish. These arguments made little headway with the council. Aside from city councilman Lou Hassell suggesting a ban on beverages in the Music Hall and Mayor Cutrer sounding the claim that the city supported both arts and sports, the council continued to support the move toward a shared venue. Rather than accept defeat, the protestors instead shifted to more persuasive tactics.[24]

To lobby more effectively for the orchestra's sole possession of the Music Hall, opponents of the shared venue turned to the power of their votes and their wallets. The majority of the Houstonians who opposed the move to combine wrestling and the symphony came from the growing non-central neighborhoods of the city and represented powerful middle- and upper-class white votes. Conscious of the significance of their voting and taxation blocs within Houston politics, symphony proponents pressed their advantage. One leader suggested that the mayor count the "loyal and devoted poll receipts in the circus and its supporters to find if" it was worth risking his political future in support of their cause.[25] Another supporter of the symphony presented a petition to the council with a header that read "these are all NASA families" and challenged the council to explain how it could justify spending $55,000 on wrestling, when a similar amount directed toward other pressing city needs in the police department, on sewage lines, or at the public hospital could be more valuable.[26] The monetary and electoral significance of these challenges from forced the members of the city council to pay attention. These moves displayed the commitment of symphony proponents to their cause and showed their willingness to challenge any politicians who stood in their way. In these lobbying efforts, moreover, opponents of the venue combination demonstrated their voting and economic power—facts that no elected politician could afford to ignore.[27]

Not only did the protestors launch an effective offensive, they also astutely deflected a key defensive tactic that city officials attempted to use by coopting its language. The mayor and other councilmen repeatedly assured Houstonians that they and the city wanted to provide for both sports and fine arts. Mayor Cutrer and his allies asserted that the best way to do so was through the short-lived hall combination. Those objecting to

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[24] Hassell and Cutrer's statements in Houston City Council Minutes, Jan. 9, 1963, HMRC.

[25] Letter from Paul G. Bell to Mayor Lewis Cutrer, Jan. 22, 1963, folder 4, box 4W199, IHP, DBCAH.

[26] "Council and Citizens Argue Music Hall Issue," *Houston Press*, Jan. 23, 1963, folder 4, box 4W199, IHP, DBCAH. Petitioner's questions about city funds from Houston City Council Minutes, Jan. 23, 1963, HMRC.

[27] Both Amy Bridges, *Morning Glories: Municipal Reforms in the Southwest* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997) and Lassiter, *Silent Majority*, discuss the energy white politicians put into catering to middle- and upper-class whites in order to overcome the changing shape of the electorate in many American cities during the late 1950s and early 1960s.

the combination anticipated this move and effectively avoided it by calling for separate but equal facilities for the two activities—even going so far as to accuse the council of not caring enough about sports to provide them with a viable, stand-alone venue.[28] Symphony backers argued that everyone should "receive fair treatment" and they wanted "wrestling fans to have suitable accommodations, but do not believe it should be at the expense of the fine arts.'"[29] By using the language that called for egalitarianism and equal facilities access, symphony supporters were able to deflect the moves of the proponents of the combination on the council, and in the end this tactic pushed several councilmen to call for a separate facility to be built for sports—a move that never happened.

Symphony supporters built off of the success of their egalitarian rhetoric and employed a language of progress as their final tactic. They depicted their side of the struggle as the one that would best bolster the image of the city and contribute much more to creation of a modern Houston than wrestling ever could. Houstonian Edward Burgess claimed that renting Music Hall to wrestling would have the "demoralizing effect of destroying the civic pride and cultural interest which is represented in the minds of a large percentage of Houston citizens."[30] Further, S. I. Morris, an architect who had designed several downtown buildings cautioned against sacrificing the status and appearance of the fledging civic center for a temporary fix.[31] By pointing to the role that civic pride played in the debate, residents added to the idea that any decision in favor of the wrestling side damaged the reputation of the entire city. Morris and others argued that siding with the wrestling proponents would irrevocably damage the city's bid to secure its much-coveted modern reputation.[32]

A January 18, 1963, political cartoon in the *Houston Post* satirized the contest over the city's image through its depiction of the wrestling controversy. In the cartoon a gang of imposing and brutish looking workmen—whose hats label them as Mayor Cutrer and the other council members—descend upon Music Hall (see image 2). The tool-toting men assert that the hall is "OK for *Music*, but it's hardly suitable for *Wrestling*." All that stands between this charging mass of lower-class, blue-collar workmen and the disfiguring of Music Hall is a small boy with a violin case held tightly under his arm. By facing the boy—who represents the cultured future of Houston—against the throngs of men, the cartoonist illuminates how the

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[28] Meredith Trube, "Bryan Students and Teacher Protest Music Hall Changes," *Houston Press*, Jan. 23, 1963, folder 4, box 4W199, IHP, DBCAH.

[29] "Council and Citizens Argue Music Hall Issue," *Houston Press*, Jan. 23, 1963, folder 4, box 4W199, IHP, DBCAH.

[30] Letter from Dr. Edward Burgess to Mayor Cutrer, Jan. 11, 1963, folder 4, box 4W199, IHP, DBCAH.

[31] Morris statement from Houston City Council Minutes, Jan. 23, 1963, HMRC.

[32] Hubert Roussel, "Next Hall Problem in Sight, if Council Votes in Wrestling."

results of the wrestling controversy could alter the image of Houston. The caption "and for only $55,000," implies that the mayor and the councilmen were not only risking the city's reputation and future through their actions, but worse, they intended to use valuable city funds to supplement a private industry.

Another letter to Mayor Cutrer from Houstonian Carolyn Williamson pushed the mayor to recognize the importance of Music Hall—and the symphony's sole use of it—to the city. After making sure to establish the middle-class status of herself and her husband by pointing out that she worked at "one of the large law firms" downtown and her husband at "one of the major oil companies," Williamson jumped into why she believed the combination plan would hurt the city. Williamson made her case by arguing that while the combination would hurt the city economically, the real damage would be done to the city's reputation. She told Mayor Cutrer that when she moved to Houston she recognized "the very great privilege that would become my lot to attend the concerts of our great Symphony." She told the mayor of bragging to her friends all around the globe about the amazing culture and refinement available in Houston. If officials catered to wrestling fans, however, Williamson doubted whether "anyone in Shreveport, Louisiana, New York or Manchester, England, [was] going to write" to her about the city's culture and promise. In the minds of protestors like Williamson, the terms of debate were clear: Cutrer and the city council could back down and continue Houston's move toward sophistication or they could uphold their decision and send the city's reputation for refinement and culture into a tailspin.[33]

Houstonians opposed to the council's plan did not completely dominate the debate surrounding the wrestling controversy. Nor were proponents of the combination shy about employing a progress-oriented rhetoric to depict their side of the debate. One supporter of the merger, Revis Smith, reminded Houstonians of the shared past of the two cultural outlets at City Auditorium and chided the antagonists of both sides. Smith wondered if any concertgoer enjoyed hearing the music "of Rosa Ponselle or Frieda Hempel" any less "because the Auditorium had housed a dance marathon or a faith healer within a week." He accused the opponents of a measure of elitism and asserted that "if Houstonians [did] not start putting all shoulders to the same wheel and working together," that they would not be able to "accomplish anything, no matter how worthy." Smith's statements attempted to flip the arguments of the symphony proponents to show that the road to becoming a modern city could run in more than one direction.[34]

[33] Letter from Carolyn Williamson to Mayor Cutrer, Jan. 24, 1963, folder 4, box 4W199, IHP, DBCAH.

[34] Revis Smith, "The Music Hall Fuss Blamed on Growing Group Antagonism."

Image 2: Illustration by Bill Saylor, *Houston Post,* January 18, 1963. Here, the cartoonist suggests the future of the fine arts in Houston is at risk if the symphony were forced to Music Hall.

Other supporters of wrestling in Music Hall argued that wrestling's long-term and good-standing tenancy, its large fan base, and its importance as a recreational outlet for Houstonians should not be overlooked. Paul Boesch, a wrestler and promoter, asked that the council not make a decision based on the protests of what appeared to be a handful of people out of a city of one million. Charlotte Ford reminded the council that wrestling fans were not uncouth, but rather upstanding citizens who supported the city and would treat the hall with respect. Two of the most interesting voices of support for wrestling came from A. E. Warner, the president of the Negro Chamber of Commerce, and John Herrera, a Hispanic man who claimed to speak for the majority of Houston's Hispanic population. Both Warner and Herrera argued that the working-class populations of blacks and Hispanics in Houston could rarely afford to attend the fine arts events at the Music Hall, but that wrestling and other sports provided them with a recreational outlet they could afford. In addition, Herrera and Warner claimed that the outreach programs wrestling promoter Morris Sigel instituted in the black and Hispanic neighborhoods provided many youths with a positive activity to pursue—one that could help keep them away from juvenile delinquency. Overall, supporters of wrestling challenged the idea that locating sports in the downtown or in city buildings could threaten the progress or value of either. Indeed, they made it clear that sports provided many Houstonians with accessible recreational activities in ways that the symphony and other fine arts performances did not. In the end, though, the voices of the wrestling proponents did not rise above the din created by symphony supporters and opponents of the move.[35]

After two weeks of petitions, lobbying, and public hearings, Mayor Cutrer and the city council shifted wrestling to an entirely different venue, backtracking on its earlier vote to approve the combination. In explaining the decision, the mayor attempted to pacify the two sides by declaring that there "was never a controversy between wrestling and the symphony or the performing arts. It was just matter of attempting to find some way of serving the interests of all of our people."[36] While Cutrer glossed over the depth of the conflict, he was unable to deny that competing cultural interests and even the city itself were engaged in a contest to determine who would control Houston's civic agenda, funds, and image. By making the city council back away from its earlier vote, Houston's non-central and

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[35] Paraphrased testimonies of Boesch, Ford, Warner, and Herrera in Houston City Council Minutes, Jan. 23, 1963, HMRC. The arguments presented by the proponents of the combination recall those of opponents of federal urban renewal projects in other American cities who argued that neighborhood businesses, institutions, and interconnections were valuable parts of the city's fabric. See Zipp, *Manhattan Projects*, 197–294.

[36] "Cutrer Rules Out Wrestling at Music Hall," *Houston Post*, Jan. 25, 1963, folder 4, box 4W199, folder 4, IHP, DBCAH.

wealthier citizens demonstrated their influence in civic decision-making.[37]

After the controversy cooled off, it was announced that the wrestling events would be held in Recreation Hall, a city-owned building just outside of downtown that housed athletic events of all kinds. Instead of spending the $55,000 on improvements to Music Hall, the city paid $18,200 to add a new floor and chairs to Recreation Hall.[38] In celebrating their victory, the opponents of the Music Hall combination continued to trumpet the ability of the fine arts to bring pride and progress to the city. The victory also signified the end of a major form of recreational access in downtown Houston for several decades. With the destruction of City Auditorium and the rejection of wrestling moving into Music Hall, almost all non-musical or fine arts recreational outlets were removed from the immediate downtown. The geography of the downtown changed after the controversy and entire groups of Houstonians found themselves and their recreational interests excluded from the growing civic center area. The symphony, on the other hand, played in Music Hall until October 1966 and then moved into Jones Hall, at the heart of what was fast becoming the modern city of civic leaders' imagination.

When the symphony moved into the new Jones Hall in 1966, it reentered a downtown that had undergone numerous changes in the orchestra's decade-plus stint at Music Hall. In 1964 Houstonians elected Louie Welch as the city's first postwar Republican mayor, and the white Houstonians who voted for Welch joined the ranks of white voters across the country that turned to the Republican Party and its pro-business, centrist conservatism in attempts to move away from their segregationist pasts and find new paths to protect their interests.[39] While these political changes took place, the city's civic and business leaders continued the push to shape the city and its downtown into a model city. As one of the city's major downtown developments and cultural outlets, Jones Hall provides a valuable view into the city's changing shape.

The push for an arts center and the construction of Jones Hall was grounded in the context of citywide renewal and reconstruction efforts.

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[37] Numerous scholars have discussed the importance of having influence over city planning decisions and the consequences of not having such power. Geographers Ruth Fincher and Kurt Iveson, *Planning and Diversity in the City* (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2008), 28, discuss the importance of democratic decision-making and procedural fairness in creating equity in civic planning. See Robert Bullard, *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1990) and Rhonda Williams, *The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women's Struggle against Urban Inequality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004) for an in-depth analysis of the consequences of unequal access to civic decision-making powers.

[38] "City Delays Funds for Music Hall," *Houston Press,* Jan. 23, 1963, folder 4, box 4W199, IHP, DBCAH.

[39] For further discussion of the Republican Party's emergence in southern urban and suburban politics see Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*; Kruse, *White Flight;* Self, *American Babylon;* Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001).

City officials and observers looked at the downtown and saw a space divided between fantastic growth and depressing decline. One *Houston Post* article lamented that "the blight of decay and the relentless spread of slums in Houston [could] be seen easily from any one of a dozen comfortable spots in the city. As from the window of the mayor's office on the third floor of the City Hall; from the multi-million dollar expanses of the Gulf Freeway, Eastex Freeway, or Hardy Street Bridge."[40] Through the building of spaces such as Jones Hall and the wider push for improved cultural and physical spaces in the central city, Houston's leaders attempted to remove signs of blight—at least those most visible from the new downtown.

From the end of World War II through the construction of Jones Hall, the symphony's boosters constantly attempted to connect the strength of the city's image to the success of the symphony. Ima Hogg wrote to a group of Houston's leading men in 1947 thanking them for meeting with her regarding plans for the eventual construction of a venue like Jones Hall. In the letter, Hogg linked the hope for a modern Houston with the cultivation of a strong cultural center in downtown Houston. She reminded the city's leading men that just as the city continued to garner a positive reputation for its financial and industrial success, it should continue to attain "the best in every field of the arts and civic culture." Hogg believed that no other institution or development helped a city's image more than a "proper music hall or opera house—the right environment where people gather and mingle to enjoy and discuss performances."[41] Hogg's push for a new cultural center for the fine arts carried into the 1950s and 1960s. As civic leaders contemplated building such a center, they simultaneously pictured the future shape of the entire downtown. Their progress-focused pattern of decision-making benefited the ideas and hopes of a minority of Houstonians and dismissed the opinions of others—a process most readily apparent in the wrestling controversy.

The campaign to build Jones Hall mirrored others taking place across the United States in the 1950s and 1960s. A number of American cities made similar attempts to shore up their cultural reputation by building major arts centers during this time. Inspired by the opening of the Lincoln Center in New York City and plans to build a National Cultural Center in Washington D.C., Houston, San Francisco, and Santa Fe all initiated plans to construct new art and performance centers. Classical music reached its apex in popularity throughout the country, and cities competed with one another to procure the best European talent and to foster American virtuosos. Some scholars suggest that this drive toward new facilities and to promote the fine arts stemmed from efforts to compete

[40] "Core: City's Heart Needs Treatment," *Houston Post*, Jan. 16, 1958, folder 4, box 4W199, folder 4, IHP, DBCAH.

[41] Letter from Ima Hogg to Potential Donors, July 7, 1947, folder 4, box 4W199, IHP, DBCAH.

with Soviet cultural outputs. A key piece to this cultural component of the Cold War stemmed from the importance that both superpowers placed on presenting their society as the most advanced. Whether or not Ima Hogg and other symphony leaders saw the campaign for a cultural center as an explicitly Cold War campaign is unclear, but they continued to push city officials to build a new performing arts space that could reflect the city's and the country's refinement.[42]

The cultural environment of the 1950s proved to be fertile ground for Houston's arts supporters, who continued to hammer home the idea that a modern Houston could never truly exist without a properly housed and funded arts system. Maurice Hirsch, then president of the Houston Symphony Society, reflected on the importance of the arts when he delivered a speech to the powerful Houston Rotary Club in 1957. In his remarks, Hirsch rehashed Ima Hogg's argument of the previous decade and celebrated Houston's international reputation as "a city of commerce and industry" known for its "oil and sulphur and chemicals, its cotton and lumber, its manufacturing enterprises, transportation facilities and magnificent buildings." Hirsch acknowledged the importance that commercial success played in the city's future, but urged the Rotarians to ensure that Houston avoided becoming "hidebound in useless tradition nor weakened with calcified cultural senility." Hirsch charged his listeners to help the city develop "a burning and unquenchable desire to create a more resplendent life" through its cultural output. Aware that he was talking to a room of powerful men, Hirsch also rejected the traditionally gendered image of culture as the feminine side of society. He dismissed the perception and asserted that "no nation and no community has developed a transcendent culture except on a vigorous, manly, and broad-based material foundation with a progressive, bold and sometimes even assertive spirit." Hirsch and other cultural leaders linked the success of Houston's future to the growth of its cultural infrastructure. Here too, echoes of Cold War rhetoric emerged in Hirsch's depiction of high culture as a tool in proving the strength of America's manly and formidable spirit. With their staunch advocacy, Hirsch and Hogg joined the national conversation concerning the development of the arts and prepared the ground for the building of Jones Hall and the continued restructuring of downtown Houston.[43]

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[42] Zipp, *Manhattan Projects,* 158–196. Zipp argues that renewal projects in New York City like Lincoln Center demonstrated America's commitment to the arts and reshaping its cities into modern centers of culture. See also Karene Grad, "When High Culture Became Popular Culture: Classical Music in Postwar America, 1945–1965" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2006), 142. Grad, like Zipp, argues that much of America's push for the arts in the 1950s was motivated by worries about the negative impact of Soviet propaganda and Soviet high culture on America's claim to being more modern than their Cold War competitors.

[43] Speech by Gen. Maurice Hirsch to the Houston Rotary Club.

Walter Walne, who assumed the presidency of the Symphony Society after Hirsch, explained the significant changes taking place for the symphony and Houston as construction of Jones Hall progressed. Touching on the approaching inaugural season at Jones Hall, Walne urged his readers to remember that the symphony was not just for high culture lovers, but went further and served as "Houston's Orchestra—our Orchestra." Walne celebrated Houston's "civic movement," which brought "out all the spirit of cooperation, of sharing, of giving, which is in the nature of its people."[44] Walne's words demonstrated that the city had pursued Hirsch's call seven years before and lauded the fact that Houston sat on the cusp of its greatest cultural achievement. Hogg, Hirsch, Walne and other civic leaders pushed for the development of Houston's cultural spaces in the hope that one day the culture of the city could match its "ever-expanding business community," and that the two combined "would benefit one another as the city became more populous and significant in the growth of the southwest."[45]

With the columns of Jones Hall slowing rising skyward and the city itself continuing to grow outward, the shape of Houston changed with every passing day. In addition to the construction of the hall and other new buildings, the city broke ground on several new road projects that began in the mid-fifties and early sixties. City leaders celebrated the infrastructure and its ability to provide "a mold within which downtown can . . . achieve a definite form" similar to the natural boundaries of other major cities like San Francisco and New York that helped to foster those cities' "urban spirit."[46] Although the new roads brought suburbanites into town and symbolized Houston's status as a city of the future, they often displaced entire neighborhoods of the city and proscribed downtown space from specific groups. Most of the displacements occurred in low-income or minority areas. Some road developments cut off previous routes into downtown Houston or hemmed residential areas in between highways.[47] Writing in the mid-1960s about the state of black neighborhoods, renowned columnist Saul Friedman predicted the "death" of the historically black Fourth Ward because of its restricted boundaries. The ward was "cut off by the bayou and its freeways, the downtown area, and the wealthy areas to the south and west." Friedman pointed out that while urban revitalization and

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[44] Letter from Walter Walne to patrons, 1964 Symphony Program, folder 2, box 4W198, IHP, DBCAH.

[45] Pamela Young, "History of the Houston Symphony Orchestra, 1913–1966" (M.A. thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 1970), 155.

[46] "A New Cultural Heart," *Houston Post,* Oct. 2, 1966, Jones Hall supplement.

[47] For discussion and layout of Houston's freeway development, see Erik Slotboom, *Houston Freeways: A Historical and Visual Journey* (Houston: Oscar F. Slotboom, 2003). Pages 119–140 deal specifically with the construction of Interstate 45 and U.S. Highway 59. The construction and right-of-way claims aimed to remove mostly vacant or condemned property, but inevitably displaced the homes and businesses of many Houstonians.

highway construction signified progress to city officials, to many African American residents it meant razed neighborhoods, confined spaces, and the constant threat of "new developments that will dispossess them."[48]

Downtown development projects like Jones Hall combined with roadway developments to link the city center and its political, recreational, and cultural spaces more concretely than ever with non-central neighborhoods and outlying suburbs. While the city undoubtedly made cultural and developmental gains in the 1950s and 1960s, the benefits of these gains did not fall equally among Houstonians and instead placed new limits of spatial access on much of the city's population. More and more of the city's resources were devoted to the interests of non-central and middle- and upper-class whites. It was within this context of simultaneous expansion and limitation that Jones Hall opened its doors in 1966.[49]

The language of the official program for the opening night of Jesse H. Jones Hall reflected the grandiose vision of the building's architects. To concertgoers and passersby alike the program suggested that the building was best appreciated "like a sculpture, from all sides." Its "curving shell-like form" and "rectangle of marching columns eight stories tall" anchored the visitor's eye, and the exterior walls, "sheathed in wheat colored travertine marble . . . quarried at Tivoli near Rome," linked Jones Hall with the Roman Coliseum and other glories of architecture's past.[50]

The concert celebrated the new hall in ecstatic terms. While thousands of elite Houstonians walked into the foyer, hundreds of other Houstonians took in the scene from adjacent sidewalks and nearby buildings. The space between these two groups illustrated the developing geographies of exclusion in the downtown area. Opening night of Jones Hall modeled the new patterns of restriction employed throughout Houston in several ways. The building's physical appearance and size exuded an air of privilege, and the concertgoers themselves displayed refined taste, dress, speech, and surplus income. Through each of these expectations, Jones Hall overtly enforced numerous levels of exclusion.[51]

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[48] "Life in Black Houston" (manuscript), folder 9, box 13, *Houston Chronicle* Series 1965, Saul Friedman Papers, SC123, HMRC.

[49] For the role that downtown development played in the creation of restrictive urban areas see Davis, *City of Quartz*; Bayor, *Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta;* Keating, *Atlanta;* Gregory Crowley, *The Politics of Place: Contentious Urban Redevelopment in Pittsburgh* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005). For further discussion of roads being viewed as a form of progress, see Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); and Self, *American Babylon.*

[50] Ann Holmes, "Jesse H. Jones Hall for the Performing Arts Opening Night Program," 18–20.

[51] In *Manhattan Projects,* 182–196, describing the similar case of Lincoln Center, Zipp shows that proponents of the new development recognized the exclusive nature of the site and its performances and argued this exclusivity was good for the reputation of the city. For an interesting discussion of the role of physical architecture in creating exclusive space in America using the example of the remaking of the

When Jones Hall opened in October 1966, the city's elites celebrated it as an indication of their success in the push for a modern and refined downtown. The *Houston Chronicle* lauded opening night as the dawn of Houston's "Age of Elegance."[52] The festivities surrounding the birth of this new age reveal the place the hall and other downtown developments held in the city's future. Houston's wealthiest residents came out in all their finery on opening night as a "fashionable phalanx began to arrive—waves upon waves of opulently gowned ladies stepp[ed] from sleek limousines . . . on the arms of their tuxedoed and tail-coated gentlemen."[53] Onlookers sensed the separation that the hall and its wealthy patrons created. They felt the shape and geographies of downtown Houston shifting. Just as one newspaper caption read, these Houstonians could tell that they were meant to remain on the "outside looking in."[54]

Not all working-class Houstonians found themselves excluded from opening night, however. During the festivities "captains of industry sat next to corporals of carpentry" as some of the hall's constructions workers, "tilesetters, plumbers, and carpenters exchanged blue collars for white ones" and were feted as honored guests at the event. John T. Jones Jr., nephew of Jesse Jones, lauded the workers and said that they recognized that the hall "was not just another job, just another place to work," but rather was the "receptacle of the hopes and spirit of the city." Access to these civic dreams, however, did not apply to all Houstonians equally. While the workers received well-deserved recognition for their labor on opening night, their presence in the hall clearly had an expiration date. The *Houston Chronicle* depicted the workers' time in the hall as a Cinderella-like visit, where cummerbunds threatened to turn back to tool belts and the men stood dazzled by the enormity of the building and its finery. Juxtaposed next to the behavior of the city's elites, the workers were depicted as provincial and out-of-place. One worker told the reporter that he was "off to find 'where the free beer'" was and another left at the end of the ceremony not to mingle with other concert celebrants, but to rush down to the basement to see if the building would "really stand up." The article's dismissively playful tone about the workers presence made it clear that they were not the clientele that the hall intended to host after opening night. As the workers left the building that night, they passed through

governmental center of Albany, New York, see Deyan Sudjuc, *The Edifice Complex: How the Rich and Powerful Shape the World* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 185–205.

[52] Holmes, "Jones Hall—A Debut in Splendor," *Houston Chronicle,* Oct. 4, 1966, folder 3, box 4W200, IHP, DBCAH.

[53] Ibid.

[54] *Houston Chronicle,* Oct. 4, 1966.

and faded into the crowds of fellow Houstonians who would rarely have the opportunity to be patrons of "their" hall's future events.[55]

Just as working-class Houstonians recognized that the hall priced them out of attendance and that the buildings represented a world they were not a part of, people of color could likewise perceive that the hall and its events were intended for a mostly white audience. After World War II the symphony and its supporters held a centrist view toward contemporary racial ideologies, a stance evidenced most readily in the integrated music competitions it held for school-aged youth after 1949. This centrism demonstrated that any gap that Jones Hall created between communities of color and fine arts spaces was not necessarily created consciously by the symphony.[56] Conscious or not, however, the inclusion of people of color stopped at a fairly shallow level. Unlike the City Auditorium, very few minority performers appeared on stage or in the hall's seats for events. And, as the earlier testimonies of A. E. Warner and John Herrera to the city council pointed out, very few people of color could afford the regular events at Jones Hall. The simple fact that neither of the two major African American newspapers in the city, the *Houston Forward Times* and the *Houston Informer and Texas Freeman,* mentioned the opening of the hall in their October 4, 1966, editions or in the issues from the months around the announcement to build it in 1963 until that date illustrated the detachment between Houston's black community and the hall. When compared with the vast amount of coverage in the *Houston Post* and *Houston Chronicle,* the absence of space devoted to the opening of a $7.5 million public space in the black papers suggested that the African Americans perceived that the building and its events were not intended for their use.

The crafting of an exclusive building allowed civic leaders to assert control over not just the hall itself, but further allowed them to try to dictate the future of the entire downtown area. On opening night, a *Houston Post* reporter walked the still-shabby streets around Jones Hall and documented the lives of Houstonians who, despite having watched as the hall rose, knew that they were expected to stay out of it. As the first step in the larger civic center project, Jones Hall represented a sign of things to come in the area that the reporter noted was once the scene of "brawls, forgotten dreams and empty wine bottles in forgotten doorways."[57] Jones Hall was a "new culture palace," and it had begun to drive "away most of

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[55] "Craftsmen Cited at Hall Dedication," *Houston Chronicle,* Oct. 3, 1966, folder 3, box 4W200, IHP, DBCAH.

[56] Youth competition information in folder 8, box 4W198, IHP, DBCAH; Youth concerts in folder 3, box 4W198, IHP, DBCAH.

[57] Zarko Franks, "Life-in-the-Raw Still Pulses: New Culture Palace Diminishes Shadows on Lower Texas Ave," *Houston Post,* Oct. 2, 1966, folder 3, box 4W200, IHP, DBCAH.

the shadows" from Texas Avenue as an integral piece to the city's plan to reclaim the downtown for respectable Houstonians, profitable businesses, and a positive civic reputation.[58] Although on opening night a few bars still drew a crowd, the hall dominated the area now and its associated wealth and refinement implied which Houstonians were acceptable and which were not. The city placed a large security detail of Houston police officers around the area to regulate access to the hall and protect concertgoers. The police presence suggested that the events at Jones Hall would never lead to the raucous celebrations or sporadic disturbances that sometimes took place at the City Auditorium.[59] In addition, the increased security added to the already restrictive air of the hall. Anchored by a policeman standing outside the door who to the reporter "looked nine feet tall," the security measures taken for the opening made it clear that the city fully expected to enforce its newly laid boundaries of privilege and order.[60]

The effort to create a modern downtown in the 1950s and 1960s integrally shaped Houston to the present day. With other developments akin to Jones Hall, Houston attempted to shape itself as a "truly cosmopolitan city." To accomplish this goal, civic leaders recognized that they needed to structure a downtown that operated as the city's "cultural heart as well as its financial and governmental and merchandising heart."[61] In order to modernize the city and attract white residents of non-central neighborhoods and suburbs into it, leaders and philanthropists poured resources into the growth of the arts and opened new businesses throughout the downtown area. They demolished old buildings like City Auditorium and built hundreds of new ones on top of the old foundations. New road systems connected the city's vital industrial areas with their corporate headquarters in the central city and brought the downtown into a closer relationship with Rice University and the University of Houston. Through all of these changes, the city reshaped downtown through gentrification, eminent domain, or condemnation.

Houston's path in the 1960s served as an example for how urban centers throughout the nation developed in the later half of the twentieth century. Just as in Houston, America's other major cities busily completed

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[58] In Lynn Staeheli and Don Mitchell, *The People's Property: Power, Politics, and the Public* (New York: Routledge, 2008), the authors discuss how the crafting of various public or publicly accessible spaces such as plazas, shopping malls, and parks can lead to the creation of exclusive public spaces.

[59] For example, in 1962, 3,000 concertgoers briefly protested on the streets around City Auditorium when Jackie Wilson failed to appear for a show. See "Legacy: City Auditorium Remembered," *Performing Arts Magazine* (May 1980): 10.

[60] Franks, "Life-in-the-Raw Still Pulses." For policing's roll in the creation of exclusive space, see Davis, *City of Quartz;* Mitchell, *The Rights to the City*; and Straheli and Mitchell, *The People's Property.*

[61] "A New Cultural Heart," *Houston Post,* Oct. 2, 1966, Jones Hall supplement, folder 4, box 4W199, folder 4, IHP, DBCAH.

This picture of present-day Jones Hall demonstrates the monumental presence the building presented. Jones Hall and its events both explicitly and implicitly excluded Houstonians that conflicted with the city's pursuit of a more cultured image. *Photo courtesy of the city of Houston.*

project after project in revitalized downtowns in the 1960s and 1970s. Convention centers, sports arenas, arts and cultural centers, and new office buildings replaced generations of earlier buildings; with these old structures went decades of memories, numerous forms of culture, and previous lines of physical and mental access to central cities. Urban areas across America paralleled Houston as they attempted to shape their downtowns into scripted spaces of leisure and employment for predominately white, suburban residents by pushing less respectable recreational activities, undesirable businesses, and lower-class citizens out of downtowns.

While central cities across the United States changed shape quickly during the 1950s and 1960s, their suburban environs changed at an even greater pace. Again, Houston served as a perfect example. As more and more Houstonians and migrants poured into the non-central neighborhoods and the suburban fringe, the politics of the city changed. Houston's leaders, apprehensive about the possibility that unhappy enclave neighborhoods and non-central communities would incorporate and deal a significant blow to Houston's tax base and their own electoral

chances, attuned civic decisions to the interests of predominately white and wealthier residents at the expense of lower-class and mostly minority populations. The combination of these physical and political development patterns contributed to new boundaries in Houston that defined the spaces residents accessed in their daily lives. The priorities and decisions apparent in Houston's case also shed light onto the role these forces played in the urban trends and decisions of other major American cities.[62]

In the decades since Jones Hall opened, Houston has continued to grow with incredible speed. It is now the fourth largest urban area in the United States. The suburbs continue to grow both outward and inward, and the downtown's developments match the city's wider expansion. Music Hall and the Sam Houston Coliseum were replaced by the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts, and the city's theater district has grown up around Jones Hall. It now includes several dramatic theaters, cinemas, and the Wortham Center, which houses ballets and operas. The city has two new major athletic stadiums, a major convention center, and an ever-rising skyline. Some of these venues still reflect the restricted landscapes created during the rise of Jones Hall. At the same time, though, new public spaces such as Jones Plaza—a site of free concerts and events—and the downtown sports stadiums offer greater opportunities of access to all Houstonians. Given both realities, it is clear that today's downtown is still dealing with the demographic, political, economic, and cultural shifts that took place in the city after World War II that altered the boundaries and shape of downtown Houston, shifts embodied by Jones Hall.[63]

In October 1966, as the massive glass doors of Jones Hall opened for the very first time, they opened onto much more than the inaugural concert of the hall—they opened the city itself to new patterns of downtown access and new hierarchies of culture and power. Houstonians fought for years over what shape their city would take and over which direction their future would go. The debates and outcomes around the building of Jones Hall show the winners and the losers.

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[62] For further discussion of suburban tax revolts in other major cities, see Self, *American Babylon,* and Lassiter, *Silent Majority.*

[63] Population information from www.census.gov [Accessed June 10, 2011]. Information on the current appearance of the Houston Theater District from www.houstontheaterdistrict.org [Accessed June 10, 2011].