



## Energy Blog

### Bringing the People's Orange County to You (P 1 of 4)

**This month's blog series shines light on Orange County sites of resistance and justice. Read along each week to learn about how social, environmental and housing movements shaped Orange County. This week, we will cover how the San Onofre became a site of resistance in Orange County.**

“The People’s Guide series was born from the conviction that we need a different kind of guidebook: one that explains power relations in a way everyone can understand, and that shares stories of struggle and resistance to inspire and educate activists, students, and critical thinkers,”

— Elaine Lewinnek, Gustavo Arellano, Thuy Vo Dang

#### **San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station**

In 1963, Southern California Edison (SCE) along with San Diego Gas & Electric began planning a nuclear reactor to generate power on the California coastline. This came less than two decades after the invention of the nuclear bomb, which had devastated the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and catalyzed the end of the second World War. Environmentalists were concerned of the hazards a nuclear power plant would bring, stating that it “could be a hazard to life and property,” in a widely circulated petition.

SCE’s plan brought protestors to the site, and despite environmental concerns, the first of three planned units was erected in 1968. Plans to construct a second unit

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began in 1973 and began construction in 1977. During the entirety of its existence, engineers and SCE representatives consistently invited the public to view the power plant to gain public approval. This transparency severely backfired in 1978 after engineering and construction firm Bechtel had installed a nuclear reactor vessel backward, raising safety concerns.

During this time, environmentalist groups such as California Coastal Alliance and the Laguna Beach Committee for the Right to Vote on San Onofre questioned SCE heavily on the plant's safety. After all, despite the various attempts to portray nuclear power as a benign good, the public knew of the destructive potential nuclear power had. In 1979, Pennsylvania had a nuclear reactor meltdown occur, which mobilized Californians to block the construction of the third reactor.

By the 90s, the first nuclear reactor had been deemed out of date and too costly to upgrade, leading to its shutdown and eventual decommissioning. According to SCE, “[d]uring its 25-year run after first criticality in 1967, it safely generated 53 billion kilowatt-hours of carbon-free electricity for Southern California and ended its operating life with a 377-day continuous run.” The plant ceased operation in 1992 and was decommissioned later that decade.

Despite the goods nuclear energy brought, there were many negatives, including labor violations. According to a Reuters article from 2008, a fire protection specialist was found to be falsifying patrol records from 2001 to 2006, creating one of many examples of a lack of care on behalf of SCE. SCE was also found to be falsifying its records in 2007 in an effort to gain greater financial incentive awards.

The power plants history of issues was under further scrutiny after the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake triggered a tsunami, which caused the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant meltdown. This powerplant was similarly built and released radiation into the ocean and surrounding environment. Californian's concerns of a nuclear disaster on the coastline were further intensified when a leaky steam pump was discovered, releasing radiation into the area. This leak prompted a temporary shut down and investigation that would eventually become permanent in 2013.

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Aptly named “the Breasts” by locals, the San Onofre nuclear reactor still stands on the coastline, seen as an eyesore by many. After the 2012 shut down, investigation by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and continual pressure by activist groups like Friends of the Earth led to SCE announcing the retirement and decommissioning of the plant.

According to SCE's SONGS Community Website, “[d]ecommissioning is a well-defined NRC process that involves safely transferring the used nuclear fuel into storage, followed by the eventual removal and disposal of radioactive components and materials from the site. Any residual radioactivity will be reduced in a manner and to a level that is safe for unrestricted use by SCE's employees and the public.” Thanks to the diligence of activists and concerned citizens, an environmental hazard is being isolated and remediated.

### **Bringing the Peoples Orange County to you then and now...**

Once again nuclear energy is being explored as part of a healthy mix of resources as we transition to clean energy. It is anticipated that Nuclear Energy will play a key role to meet the decarbonization goals in the future.

Dr. Sarah Finkeldei, an Assistant Professor in the Department of Chemistry at the University of California, Irvine (UCI), and Rob Seifert, the Department of Energy (DOE) Director of Infrastructure Disposition & Regulatory Policy, are collaborating to study surging energy demands and how nuclear energy will be a key contributor.

UCI has a strong commitment to educating the next generation of leaders in nuclear energy. The University is aware of the need for consent-based siting consortia. According to the DOE, “[c]onsent-based siting is an approach to siting facilities that focuses on the needs and concerns of people and communities. As such they are supporting DOE's efforts to facilitate inclusive community engagement and elicit public feedback on consent-based siting, management of spent nuclear fuel, and federal consolidated interim storage.” UCI is meeting the future educational workforce needs by offering Nuclear & Radiochemistry lecture and lab courses including Nuclear Reactor Operator Training with NRC license.

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UCI recognizes the next generation of nuclear reactors & waste management require a well trained workforce, and provide an opportunity for students to connect to the National Laboratories and industry.

Sources:

- (1) [Decommissioning San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station](#)
- (2) [So. Calif. nuclear plant worker faked fire checks](#)
- (3) [San Onofre nuclear power plant incidents draw attention](#)
- (4) [Fukushima Daiichi Accident](#)
- (5) [State lawmakers continue calls for feds to move San Onofre's nuclear waste](#)



## Energy Blog



### La Colonia Independencia: Anaheim Independencia Family Resource Center Unique History (P 1 of 3)

**This month's blog series shines a light on Orange County sites of resistance and justice. I'd like you to please read along each week to learn about how social, environmental, and housing movements shaped Orange County. This week, we will cover how the San Onofre became a site of resistance in Orange County.**

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The land now known as Orange County has a rich and diverse history, from being stewarded by the Tongva and Acjachemen, to being under colonial rule, to being transitioned to US ownership. This unique set of history has left a legacy on current day Orange County.

In his 1994 study, Professor Gilbert González of UC Irvine identified three different types of Mexican American communities that developed post-Mexican Revolution. The colonia tracts were a form of de jure segregation, having been specifically laid out for and marketed to the county’s growing Mexican American population. This was done in an era where systemic racism and segregation restricted sales to whites only. This form of segregation and community planning led to these colonias

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forming close, yet away from existing towns, surrounded by orange groves and vegetable farms, which provided their source of income.

Many unincorporated areas in Orange County are the former colonias of Mexican American citrus workers. The Colonia Independencia between Anaheim and Garden Grove, El Modena near Tustin, and Olive in Orange are all barrios, or neighborhoods, home to generations of Latino residents.

### **La Colonia Independencia**

The Colonia Independencia, translating to the Independent Neighborhood, was laid out in 1923 at the northwest corner of Katella Avenue and Gilbert Street, between Anaheim and Stanton. Today, La Colonia Independencia stands as a site of resistance amongst Chicanos and Mexican Americans. The neighborhood is situated within unincorporated Orange County, known as an 'island'. County islands are usually surrounded by land that is incorporated into a municipality.

This neighborhood has withstood the test of time, resisting being incorporated into Anaheim, and for good reason. La Colonia has a rich history, home to civil rights activist Gloria Lopez. After World War II, Southern California experienced a boom in urban development and Orange County's orange groves gave way to suburban development. This, in addition to systemic discrimination (i.e. white-only housing) led to segregated communities developing. Gloria Lopez played a crucial role in the de-segregation of Magnolia No. 2 High School, one of the last "Mexican" high schools to be integrated in Orange County.

Invigorated by the success, Gloria began to host community events in an effort to build a larger church. The Sacred Heart Mission church, now larger than ever, opened its doors on July 1st, 1968, becoming one of the only Spanish Mass sites amongst all of Orange County. With the new chapel opened, the old building sat unuse. This is when the then president of Community Action Partnership of Orange County, Ray Villa, approached Gloria and ask about opening a community center within La Colonia. Gloria, after some thought, agreed the center would be beneficial

## La Colonia Independencia: Anaheim Independencia Family Resource Center Unique History (P 3 of 3)

to La Colonia. After some searching and discussion, the unoccupied church reopened as the Anaheim Independencia Community Center in 1967. Gloria served as the center's first director.

Gloria's vision grew the center, bringing families together and building a sense of community that soon outgrew the center. By this time, Magnolia No.2 had gone and what was left was an empty plot of land. This is where the Anaheim Independencia Family Resource Center you know, stands today. The new center was built in the 80s with the help of CAP OC and Community Service Block Grant Funds. Although Gloria has now passed, Community Action Partnership of Orange County honors her legacy and hard work by managing and operating the Anaheim Independencia Family Resource Center. Without her work and advocacy, the center would not be what it is today.

Sources:

(1) [Early Orange County Colonias](#)

(2) ['Island' in O.C. seeks to honor its past](#)

(3) [Gloria Lopez's Legendary Activism Began With the Integration of an Anaheim Mexican School](#)



## Energy Blog



### Central Orange County, the Epicenter of Change (Page 1 of 3)

**This month's blog series shines light on Orange County sites of resistance and justice. Read along each week to learn about how social, environmental, and housing movements shaped Orange County. This week, we will discuss Central Orange County's unique development. We believe that history provides context for the present and must be remembered to honor those who came before us.**

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Orange County was once a rural county, home to farmland and migrant workers who settled near their work. Through suburban sprawl and city planning, Orange County has undergone several transformations. Once home to cities named the "egg capital of the world" or the "chile king", Central Orange County's unique history has given way to its unique development.

Driving down Highway 39, Beach Boulevard, the cultural landscape changes often, switching between Vietnamese, English, Spanish and sometimes Korean signage. Stores change names but the same, monotonous toned industrial zones persist as the highway cuts through communities. Central Orange County is sandwiched between Anaheim and Santa Ana. The authors of The People's Guide to Orange

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County writes “[a] German American wine-growing cooperative founded Anaheim in 1857, naming it with a Spanish German hybrid word meaning “Home by the Santa Ana River.” After being devastated by crop disease from a lack of diverse farming, the area transformed to grow a variety of crops.

But that is not the only thing that has changed. An article from UC Irvine writes:

“As the agricultural landscape shifted from grape growing and hog farming to citrus groves, the political landscape also shifted. During the first half of the [1900s], the Ku Klux Klan built a stronghold in the county, most notably in Anaheim. By the mid-1920s, racist and antisemitic sentiments increased with propaganda, and Klansmen were [elected to office]. [...] In the 1930s, racial segregation and discrimination became visible in daily life activities including schools, public swimming pools, theaters, and restaurants.”

These extremist sentiments permeated across the county, normalizing segregation and violence against minority ethnic groups. Despite this history, immigrants would continue to settle on the outskirts of working industries, seeking refuge in the community. This is how several ethnic communities arose. Westminster is the oldest of the three central cities, established in 1870. Today, Westminster is known as “Little Saigon”, hosting the largest Vietnamese population outside of Vietnam. This is largely in part due to the Vietnam War when many refugees resettled at Camp Pendleton. The land in Westminster was cheap and close, leading to the rapidly rising Vietnamese population.

Like Westminster’s beginnings as a farming town, Garden Grove was established in 1893 and incorporated in 1956. Garden Grove is home to a substantial Vietnamese population, being a part of the “Little Saigon” area. Garden Grove was once a bustling farming community, home to various berry farms and other orchards, prompting the name “Garden Grove”. Today, the city is cut up by freeways and its berry legacy lives on through the Annual Strawberry Festival.

Stanton, California, began similarly, with its origins can be traced back to a land grant under Mexican rule. By the 1900s, now under US rule, the land was now used as a railway with a sparse population growing. The city was incorporated into

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Orange County in 1956 and has seen rapid growth in all sectors. In 1983, Stanton became a site of resistance to police violence after a policeman shot and killed a five-year-old in his own home. What a policeman thought to be a possible robbery turned out to be a child home alone in a sparsely furnished room, reflective of the economic struggles many in Stanton faced. The event sparked protests among Stanton residents and is one of many examples of police killings that have happened in OC.

Central Orange County has also become a site of disenfranchisement and underinvestment. Although California was an early adopter of increasing voter access, many minority and ethnic groups were not granted the right to become citizens or vote until well into the 1900s. And even then, voter intimidation and other voter-restriction laws created a large gap in voter participation from these groups.

Central Orange County also happens to be the largest geographical area that CAP OC serves. The top five areas served for Weatherization and Utility Assistance happen to be Garden Grove, West Anaheim, Westminster, Santa Ana and El Modena. CAP OC recognizes that history reflects on the present and the cultural norms of the past have had a hand on the present outcomes. We encourage you to learn more about Orange County and check out [The Peoples Guide to Orange County](#).

Sources:

(1) [The People's Guide to Orange County](#)



## Energy Blog

### Heat Mitigation Strategies for Cities (Page 1 of 2)

**This week's blog is written by Octavio Adame Negrete is a first-generation Mexican American going into their 4th year of college at UCI majoring in urban planning. They plan on using their degree to help redesign cities and make them more accessible and affordable, as well as overall appealing.**

Cities that suffer from more frequent and severe heat waves as a result of climate change are recognizing that heat mitigation measures are essential. Due to their limited green space and dense infrastructure, urban areas often experience hotter temperatures than rural ones. This phenomenon is known as the "urban heat island effect." Heat-related health hazards, energy costs, and environmental deterioration are all made worse by this effect. Cities can build stronger and more habitable ecosystems by putting heat mitigation techniques like greener landscaping, cool roofs, and thoughtful urban planning into action.

To lower urban heat, green spaces are crucial. Urban trees, rooftop gardens, and parks all cool the air through evapotranspiration and create shade. According to the EPA, well-planned green spaces may reduce citywide temperatures by around 2°F and shaded temperatures by as much as 9°F (EPA, "Reducing Urban Heat Islands"). Cities like Los Angeles are setting the benchmark for urban forestry and tree planting programs because they recognize the advantages, which include better air quality, habitats for wildlife, and storm water management.

Cool pavements and roofs are also essential. According to Levinson and Akbari of

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of Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, reflective roofing materials reduce indoor temperatures without the need for extra air conditioning by 50–60°F. In a similar vein, cool pavements with high reflectivity help to cool the surrounding areas by reducing heat absorption on sidewalks and roads.

These effects can be enhanced by intelligent urban planning. Compact, efficient developments that reduce the retention of heat are produced by zoning regulations that restrict impermeable layers and expand green spaces. For example, shade structures along sidewalks or at bus stations shade walkers from direct sunlight, improving the comfort and walkability of the city environments.

The benefits extend beyond cooling. By reducing energy use, the demand for air conditioning, and greenhouse gas emissions, heat mitigation techniques promote healthier communities and are in line with environmental goals. In addition, green spaces increase property prices, improve aesthetics, and provide recreational areas that make cities more livable. Additionally, by building resilient, climate-friendly communities, these actions lower the frequency of heat-related illnesses by shielding vulnerable people from severe temperatures.

As a result, establishing sustainable, livable cities involves funding urban heat mitigation techniques such as cool materials, green areas, and sensible zoning. With advantages in the social, economic, and environmental spheres, these actions provide an effective solution to the escalating problems brought on by climate change.

Sources:

- (1) [Reducing Urban Heat Islands: Compendium of Strategies](#)
- (2) [Heat Island Group](#)
- (3) [Urban Heat Island Mitigation Strategies](#)



## Energy Blog

Do you know who the Acjachemen People are? (Page 1 of 3)

**This month's blog series shines a light on Orange County sites of resistance and justice. Read along each week to learn about how social, environmental, and housing movements shaped Orange County. This week, we will discuss the history of the Acjachemen Nation, the original people who inhabited the land that is now known as Orange County. We believe that history provides context for the present and must be remembered to honor those who came before us.**

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The Acjachemen (A-ha-che-men) Nation lived on the coastlands of Orange County for more than 10,000 years, prior to Spanish colonization. This land is known as Putuidem to the Acjachemen. You may be familiar with the San Juan Capistrano Mission that was built along El Camino Real, which the Acjachemen helped construct. It was during this time that Spainards dubbed the nation the Juaneño Band of Mission Indians.

### **Pre-Colonial Times**

Prior to 1775, the Acjachemen Nation lived in permanent, well-defined villages and seasonal camps. According to the Acjachemen official website “[v]illage populations ranged from between 35 and 300 inhabitants, consisting of a single lineage in the smaller villages, and of a dominant clan joined with other families in the larger

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settlements. Each clan had its own resource territory and was "politically" independent; ties to other villages were maintained through economic, religious, and social networks in the immediate region.”

The Acjachemen Nation were stewards of the land, practicing a hunter-gatherer subsistence life style. They worked with the land to develop the resources they relied heavily on. They also practiced prescribed burnings, a once lost practice of traditional ecological knowledge. As the Acjachemen Nation grew with the land, so did their knowledge of it, making them expert stewards of the land.

### **The Missionary Period**

During the colonization of the land we know now as California, Spanish colonists erected a cross on an Acjachemen religious site to signify their intent on converting them. Throughout this period, the Spanish military and Catholic church continued to impose on the Acjachemen Nation and convert the population. Unfortunately, during this time, new diseases were also introduced to the nation, decimating the native population, and allowing the Spaniards to continue to encroach on indigenous land.

Despite this, the Acjachemen resisted assimilation, or blending into Spanish society, by practicing their religion and other cultural traditions. This was met with more violence from the Spanish in an attempt to discourage knowledge from being passed down to younger generations. Converted, or baptized, Acjachemen were known as “neophytes”.

### **Under Mexican Rule**

In 1821, Mexico had won the revolution and was free from Spanish rule. In 1826, the first Mexican governor of “Alta California” issued a proclamation of emancipation, which freed any neophytes and indigenous peoples from Spanish Missionary rule. Despite this, indigenous people of California were still facing heavy discrimination and land titles were rarely formally issued. This land rights issue left the Acjachemen vulnerable to “being forced to work on public projects if it was determined that they had reverted to a state of dependence on wild fruits or neglected planting crops and herding or otherwise failed to continue practicing

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Spanish-imposed methods of animal husbandry and horticulture,” according to the official Acjachemen website. The lack of land recognition left the mission area to be transformed into a pueblo to be incorporated into Californio ranchos.

### **The American Period**

After the Mexican-American war and the Treaty of Hidalgo was signed, land was seized from Mexicans. This dispossession of land was worse for the Indigenous people of California, essentially looping them into another “cycle of conquest”. What violence and dispossession had begun with the Spanish had worsened under American rule.

Today, after centuries of dispossession, disenfranchisement, and injustice against the Acjachemen. American occupation resulted in increasing power and wealth for European immigrants and Anglo-Americans to own land and property, a sharp contrast to the pattern among Californios, Mexicans, and Indigenous peoples. In 2021, after years of legal battles, the Acjachemen people were able to celebrate the opening of the Putuidem park, “featur[ing] traditional dwellings, known as kiichas, alongside historic signs, stone grinding tools, log benches, ramadas for shade and a large amphitheater for gatherings.” Land rights are an ongoing battle for indigenous groups across America, but it is due to their continued activism that these victories can be made. To learn more about Putuidem Park, check out [PBS SoCal’s webpage on a Peoples Guide to Orange County](#).

Sources:

- (1) [New Orange County Park Space is a Gathering Space for Indigenous Americans](#)
- (2) [Acjachemen History](#)
- (3) ESSAY: The Acjachemen Nation ORANGE COUNTY’S FIRST INHABITANTS