

Student Podcast Transcript
Los Angeles: On Film and On Record digital exhibit
Host(s): **Itzel Lopez**
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Transcribed by: **Itzel Lopez**
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Biographical Note: **Itzel Lopez**, California State University at Northridge, undergraduate student.

Podcast Transcription: **LA Transportation and Social class in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?***

IL: Hello! Today is Saturday December 5, 2020. The Roosters are up and ready to start the day!

My name is Itzel Lopez and I am at my lovely home and I will be your host today. I am an undergraduate ESM (English Subject Matter) student, and this is my last semester at CSUN! I hope everyone is doing well and staying safe. Winter break is on its way so stay strong! Alright let's get started!

Today I will be discussing the film *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* In the film *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* it portrays LA's destruction of the Streetcar system and the transformation of LA's transportation system that affects minority communities through the portrayal of colorful imagery of the Toons and Toontown which in this case represent minority communities in LA. For those who never seen or heard of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, basically the film follows Eddie Valiant, a private investigator who must exonerate Roger Rabbit, a "Toon", who has been accused of murdering a wealthy businessman. With the help of Jessica Rabbit and Roger Rabbit, Eddie discovers Judge Dooms plan on building the freeway and demolishing Toontown. Eddie, Jessica and Roger Rabbit must find a way to stop Judge Doom before Toontown is demolished and gone forever. However, there is also another subplot in the film, which involves the construction of LA's new

transportation system such as the freeway and buses and the portrayal of Toons as well as their social status in society.

Starting off with LA transportation system, in the film people relied on the streetcar transportation to travel. In the beginning of the film Eddie is seen riding the streetcar and these kids ask him why he is riding the streetcar instead of his own car. His response to that is "who needs a car when L.A got the best public transportation system". At one point of the film Eddie also says, "Nobody will drive this lousy freeway when they can take the red car for a nickel,". The streetcar was accessible and very affordable to many minority working-class people. Despite LA's streetcar system being affordable and accessible to many lower-class citizens, with the new freeway, access to affordable transportation will be very difficult. Judge Doom mentions in the film, freeways would have the following "a string of gas stations, inexpensive motels, and wonderful, wonderful billboards reaching as far as the eye could see". It is obvious that the freeway would only benefit the upper-class and possibly the middle class who can afford these luxuries and motor vehicles to drive on the freeway.

Sy Adler's article "The Transformation of the Pacific Electric Railway: Bradford Snell, Roger Rabbit, and the Politics of Transportation in LA" discusses the transportation of LA going from the Railway to a bus operated transportation in LA. This article mentions General Motors and its reason why the Railway system is dying in LA because of financial loss. This gave the automobile industry to rise and other transportation systems such as buses are also coming into the scene of LA. Adler mentions the change of streetcars to other methods of transportation, "The conversion of city streetcars to buses, therefore, deprived them of city trackage and hastened their replacement by moto trucks,

many of which, incidentally, were produced by General Motors”(58). The transportation in LA was going to change forever. Now introducing motor vehicles and buses, the streetcar system will be demolished. As mentioned earlier, motor vehicles are a luxury for those that can afford it. With the introduction of the new transportation in LA, the minorities and lower class are left out. In the same article they discuss the film *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* and its accurately to the situation of the streetcar system being demolished. They mention Judge Doom’s plans for the freeway and states “People would have to drive on the freeway; there would no longer be an alternative” (81). Judge Doom and the LA county didn’t offer an alternative for those that can’t access the freeway instead they prioritized the upper class since they would bring revenue. Moto vehicles were only accessible to those that can afford it, which leaves the minority communities out of that option. With no other alternative minority communities are forced to find another solution to their transportation issue.

Minority communities were targeted and forced out of their homes for the construction of the freeway. In this case, the Toons represent the minorities of LA. Toons are on the verge of losing Toontown if the freeway gets built. Similar to minority communities losing their homes for the construction of the freeway. Toons and Toontown are depicted in bright colors and always seem to be in a bright mood despite being treated poorly in society. This is because its masking the dark truth behind the colorful façade. In the film no one seems to be worried for the Toons or their Town being destroyed. The Toons in the film are overlooked and treated as lower class citizens. For instance, when Roger constantly messes up his lines, he gets yelled at and treated very poorly. In the same scene the director says this about Roger Rabbit, “You saw the rabbit blowing his lines. He can’t

keep his mind in his work, you know why?” Valiant responds,” One too many refrigerators dropped on his head.” Toons are belittled and not taken seriously simply because they are cartoons. They do not hesitate to be cruel and belittle them if the Toons are not doing what they were asked to do. You can see how people view the Toons, in the beginning of the film Maroon mentions how he pays the Toons, he says to Eddie “best part is they work for peanuts.” This indicates how people take advantage of the Toons by not paying them fairly or at all. Toons are not seen as part of the society rather they are lower class who can be disposed of when their use is not needed. Similar to the minority communities, they were taken advantage of and had their homes taken away so the whole LA county can ride the freeway. Another character in the film, Judge Doom doesn’t hesitate to show his hatred towards Toons. Judge Doom for instance has no remorse for killing Toons with his chemical substance “dip” if he thinks they have done something wrong. The Toons didn’t have anyone fighting for their rights to keep Toontown that is until Eddie comes into the picture. Judge Doom had bought out the red car system, “so he could dismantle it”. His hatred for Toons was his reason to buy out the red car system so the freeway can be built where Toontown is located. He has little care for what would happen if the Toon’s lost their home. Despite being a Toon himself, it seems that he will do what it takes for the freeway to be built and Toontown be demolished.

In Van Hengel’s article, they discuss the construction and operation of the Freeway (I-105) and its impact on LA County and its residents. The construction of the freeway favors the upper class and with the rise of automobiles, transportation such as the streetcar is impacted. In the article they mention, “The opening of this facility provides a natural experiment to investigate some of the ways that different populations are affected by new

transport infrastructure” (547). In the same article it also mentions which group had higher transit usage rate, “minority and low-income travelers tend to demonstrate higher transit usage” (554). The minority communities were the most affected by the new freeway. With their accessible transportation gone, they had to find another source of transportation. Similar to Judge Doom, there was no remorse for the minority communities that were affected by the freeway.

Even though minority communities were the main consumers of the red car transportation system, their situation were not taken into consideration when the freeway was being built. The same article continues to discuss minority communities and the freeway, it says, “The central portion of the corridor was identified as having the potential to be severely affected by the freeway, primarily because this area had a depressed economic character "with some of the lowest-income communities to be found in the county” (551). While Toons got their happy ending in the film, minority communities faced the struggles of leaving their homes and losing their accessible transportation.

Now think about it, if the ending of the film didn’t have a happy ending would it be more relatable to the situation occurring at that time? If the red car system was still available today would it change or impact our transportation system in modern day? People don’t acknowledge how impactful the transportation system in LA is to our daily lives. Even in present day, minorities are still the ones that rely and use the transportation system such as buses, subways, trains, or the metro. As a minority myself, I can’t imagine not having access to affordable transportation. I rely heavily on transportation every day to get to places such as school, home and other places. Well currently I don’t due to the pandemic but now with this pandemic public transportation system is currently free which can help

a lot of people. Lastly, think about this; if another situation like the dismantle of the red car system were to happen in present day but this time let's say it affects the metro, would minorities be the only ones impacted? How would it impact LA as well? Think about it.

Alright that is all I have for you today, thank you for tuning in and I hope you have a wonderful day! Goodbye!

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]

Work Cited

Adler, Sy. "The Transformation of the Pacific Electric Railway: Bradford Snell, Roger Rabbit, and the Politics of Transportation in Los Angeles." *Urban Affairs Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 1, Sept. 1991, pp. 51–86, doi:10.1177/004208169102700104.

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