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Editor's Note

Steven E. Bradley cares about football and Los Angeles; he wants his readers to care as well. In "Football in the City of Angels," Bradley chronicles the historical record of football in L.A., and argues that the city needs a professional football team—now. Research, carefully organized support, and a clearly considered refutation allow Bradley to stay one step ahead of his readers. L.A. football fans may be delighted, but why should others care about this topic? Not into football? Not from L.A.? Perhaps there is some characteristic of this essay that fosters involvement in this issue anyway. Consider what makes an argument worth reading. What inspires a writer to make an argument?

Football in the City of Angels**Steven E. Bradley**

Los Angeles: the second biggest city in the country and entertainment capitol of the world. Over four million people call Los Angeles their home. A city with great sports tradition, heritage, and success, surely it would have a professional football franchise to call its own, right? Wrong! Despite being home to the Dodgers, Lakers, and Kings, Los Angeles currently has no football team. The lack of professional football in L.A. is a disappointing occurrence that must change in the near future.

It doesn't seem too long ago that quarterback Jim Plunkett was throwing deep bombs across the field and halfback Marcus Allen was running for big gains and touchdowns. Well, that's because it wasn't. Thirteen years ago, Los Angeles had two successful NFL franchises: the Rams and the Raiders. According to their official website, the Rams came to Los Angeles in 1946. They originally played their home games at the L.A. Coliseum, but by 1980, the Rams played their games across town at the more appealing Anaheim Stadium. Although not in L.A. anymore, they kept Los Angeles in their name for marketing purposes. Guided by their dominant defensive front, the Los Angeles Rams reached Superbowl XIV, but unfortunately lost to the Pittsburgh Steelers (Rams History). Unlike the Rams, the Raiders came to L.A. much later in the century. The Raiders made the move from Oakland to Los Angeles in 1982. During their short but sweet stint there, they played in the L.A. Coliseum. Already an established franchise, the Raiders came into Los Angeles as an immediate contender and raised the cities' morale greatly when they defeated the Washington Redskins in Superbowl XVIII, giving Los Angeles its first and only Superbowl Championship (Raiders History). During the 1980s and early 1990s, aside from New York, Los Angeles was the only city with multiple NFL teams.

Despite their successes, both teams would give up affiliation with the City of Angels in 1994. The Rams left for St. Louis while Raiders made a U-turn

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and went back north to Oakland. There were many little reasons behind the move, but the central reason was simple: money. Both teams wanted new or renovated stadiums, along with luxury box accommodations, and a whole package of other expensive goods (The NFL in Los Angeles). Los Angeles didn't want to fork over the money, but St. Louis and Oakland did. So following the '94 season, the Rams and Raiders left. Los Angeles quickly went from having two teams to having none.

Having spent thirteen years in the Los Angeles Unified School District myself, I can safely say that many current young football enthusiasts who didn't experience the glory days of the Rams and Raiders are disappointed that they have no home team to cheer for. Seeing much smaller cities in the country have successful NFL franchises doesn't make coping any easier. Buffalo and Green Bay both have NFL teams, despite the fact that Los Angeles has about ten times the population of them combined. If these small cities can maintain a professional football team, surely the world-renowned Los Angeles can.

Right after the two teams left L.A., there were immediate talks to try to get a team back in the area. In 1999, because there were an odd number of teams in the league, there were plans to add a newly created expansion team to the NFL. Los Angeles was supposed to receive the team, but plans were soon scratched when a stadium deal could not be reached. The team was rewarded to Houston instead, and is now called the Houston Texans (Houston Texans). Various other teams, including the New Orleans Saints, San Diego Chargers, and Minnesota Vikings, have all been rumored at one time or another in the past decade to be considering a move to Los Angeles (Farmer). But rumors were all that they were, and no move took place.

The good news is despite these recent letdowns, there is a current movement to get a team in Los Angeles in the near future. According to the Los Angeles Times, "NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue affirmed the league's intent to put a relocated or expansion team in the Los Angeles area in time for the 2008 season" (Abrahamson). How it will happen is unknown at this time. There are some talks of adding an expansion team, but that would disturb the even thirty-two-team eight-division league alignment that the NFL has in place right now. Another possibility is a smaller market team, like the Jacksonville Jaguars, moving to Los Angeles (Farmer). However, many small market teams have very dedicated fan bases that would not let the franchise go without a fight. Another issue in question is where the team will play its games. Prior to 2005, there were four propositions for possible stadium locations in Anaheim, Carson, the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, and a renovated L.A. Coliseum (Anaheim). However, Carson and Pasadena pulled out of the race so the only two possible sites remaining are currently the L.A. Coliseum and Anaheim (Options). California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger has made it clear that he not only wants one team in LA, but two teams. "We're getting not only one NFL team to the Los Angeles

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area, Southern California, but to actually get two teams. That's why I came. Why limit it?" (Schwarzenegger). The Governor might have to wait more than he would like to get two teams in L.A., but getting one team in the next couple of years is not a long shot at all. Because of the increased interest by public officials such as Governor Schwarzenegger to bring a team to L.A., it looks like it's not a matter of if a team will come, but when.

There are also some benefits of not having a team in LA. First of all, there are no blackouts of football games for Los Angeles during the season. Often times, if the Rams and Raiders wouldn't sell out home games, executives would black them off television as a punishment. The only way to see the games would be to go out and watch them live. Secondly, living in LA myself, I have experienced traffic worse than one could imagine. Traveling on the 101 south towards the intersection of the 405 in bumper-to-bumper traffic is a very forgettable experience. During the fall when football starts, traffic would only become worse during the home games. Additionally, the city would have to pay for police enforcement to monitor traffic and security at the games. Fans get too much into the game sometimes and cause rowdy disturbances on occasion, so a properly trained law enforcement team is very important to have.

But who cares about those little inconveniences when the benefits of having a team are so great? Los Angeles has the second biggest media market in the country. Advertising for the team would be huge. Everywhere, businesses would want their names associated with the team. Moreover, people who commute to the games from more than two hours away would need places to eat and sleep. Hotels, restaurants, gas stations, and other support businesses would all benefit greatly from having a team. Additionally, a reputation that has circled Los Angeles for years is the amount of gangs and street violence occurring in it. These claims, which are sometimes exaggerated, are unfortunately somewhat true. According to the Los Angeles Community Policing, "The city of Los Angeles is home to 463 gangs with 39,032 members" (Winton). The NFL is trying to be more community oriented with their franchises. Right now, they are using the "Join the Team" platform to promote community awareness:

The NFL's Join The Team platform encourages people to unite with NFL teams, players and partners to give back to communities across America. Join The Team is a call to action—a way for everyone to come together and make a difference through community involvement. Many players are going out helping kids in the local communities with writing, reading, responsibility, etc. (Join the Team)

Many kids look up to football players as heroes and role models. But without a team, in a large gang-filled city like Los Angeles, many little kids may find heroes and influences in the wrong places and turn to drugs, alcohol, and other abusive behaviors to help deal with their problems. Football players have the

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popularity and respectability necessary to influence kids to stay on the right path.

Los Angeles needs a football team. The popularity of football in America is immense:

Since the 1990s, football has surpassed baseball as the most popular spectator sport in the U.S. The 32-team National Football League (NFL) is the most popular professional league. Its championship game, the Super Bowl, is watched by nearly half of US television households, and is also televised in over 150 other countries. (Popularity)

Most cities don't need a professional football team and can function fine without one. Los Angeles is not one of those cities. Football is America's new pastime. Fans relate to football in a way that is only matched by soccer in Europe. Fans live and die with their football team. In basketball and baseball, one wouldn't see fans in the audience covered in face paint and war gear ready to go to battle with their team. In football, it is an everyday sight. More than any other sport, fans of football feel like they are part of the team. Los Angeles misses the enthusiasm, joy and passion that professional football brings. It needs to return. The City of Angels deserves to fly high and prosper. In this country, it can't do that without a professional football franchise. For nostalgists, done are the days of Jim Plunkett handing off to Marcus Allen for a touchdown. But who knows what new superstars Los Angeles will produce when the NFL finally returns to the City of Angels.

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