Transmitting Aural Borders: Racialized Sounds, Automobility, and Criminality in *Calling All Cars*

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Abstract. The 1930s radio broadcast *Calling All Cars* subverted the genre of hard-boiled detective fiction to dramatically tell stories of "true" local crime committed in Southern California. Each episode was filtered through the police to sonically discipline its local listeners, promote citizen surveillance, and constitute an aural border that criminalized racialized populations.

Automobility has long been perceived as a central facet of living the good life in the United States. Cotten Seiler, for instance, argues that throughout the twentieth century, automobility signified the freedoms underlying what it means to be an American, as driving produces the "sensations of agency, self-determination, entitlement, privacy, sovereignty, transgression and speed" (41). Driving and car ownership became entangled in a notion of national belonging and economic viability, creating what Seiler calls a "republic of drivers," but like the provision of citizenship itself, driving has been maintained through racialized legal codes that create disparity and limit inclusion. Questions of who was eligible to be included in the republic of drivers became increasingly contentious with the looming economic collapse during the Great Depression. As Dust Bowl laborers took to the road and headed west to find work in one of the nation's largest internal migrations, movement came to be perceived as a "social cost" (Carpio 143). Though already marginalized in spaces like Southern California, brown, Black, Asian, and Indigenous populations' mobility were subject to increased police control. Central to justifying such disciplinary practices was the use of cultural representations that extolled the police and maligned racialized subjects.

Notably, police departments like the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) worked with corporate sponsors and commercial radio networks to develop a police docudrama,

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