'Redevelopment' as Blows to the Little Body: Questions on Erasure & Its Effects on African American Health
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“I long for the community I knew, and am trying to let go of the fact that it no longer exists.”

~Lakindra Mitchell Dove

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The Albina Area, said a 1959 report, “is being hit from all sides.”


1959-1964: To build I-5 and preserve White-owned downtown properties, the City demolished 100s of homes and long-standing businesses (the majority owned by African Americans) in the Eliot, Boise, and Humboldt neighborhoods.

1970s: The city cleared homes and businesses on 25 blocks around North Williams and Vancouver Aves when Emanuel Hospital launched an expansion it couldn't finish.

“[I]f your life’s investment was smashed to splinters by a bulldozer to make room for a hospital, you could at least feel decent and perhaps tolerable about; but to have it all done for nothing…”

~Mrs. Leo Warren
WHAT ARE THE HEALTH COSTS OF ERASURE?

Family and community displacement can diminish mental, emotional, and physical well-being in a variety of ways:

- Our emotional geographies include spatial realities where memories, relationships, and transformations occur and reside.
- The financial and emotional cost of being uprooted lingers, particularly for families of modes means.
- There is no place to “be” somebody in a familiar community setting because the community has been dispersed.
- If healing from a shared trauma requires intact structures (groups, networks), processing without/outside of a shared and safe community is challenging.
- Intergenerational shadows—anxieties, unacknowledged loss (including lack of recognition from the dominant culture) are complex and challenging to identify as a cause of harm.
Some Questions to Consider:

- What tools have other communities used to reduce the potential trauma engendered by economic development?
- What is the link between these blows and the perpetuation of racial, ethnic, economic, gender, and other disparities in health, health care, and mortality?
- How would an awareness of the harms of erasure inform public policy related to our built environments, and our infrastructure investments?
- Should health care providers have a role in shaping our built environment? If so, what?
Selected References


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