

# Conceptualizing the New Urban Renewal: Comparing the Past to the Present

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#### **Abstract**

In the 1990s and 2000s, inner city neighborhood redevelopment occurred throughout the United States as billions in public and private investments entered impoverished black communities. This revitalization process led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of African-Americans. Based on this circumstance, some scholars suggest that this circumstance was a return to the past urban renewal period (1949-1974). While there have been many case studies of contemporary inner city redevelopment, this article uses a comparative historical approach to claim that we have entered and completed a new urban renewal period (1992-2007) that rivals but yet is distinct from the old urban renewal period in four important ways. First, the new urban renewal was a central business district (CBD) expansion strategy, whereas the old urban renewal was a preservation strategy. Second, the dynamics driving the new urban renewal were more complex and included global, federal, and local factors, while federal forces were more important in structuring the old urban renewal. Third, the consequences of the new urban renewal were not explained by race alone but involved an interaction between race and class. Lastly, the new urban renewal was associated with rising suburban poverty and the old urban renewal institutionalized the inner city ghetto. Specifying the parallels and differences between the old

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and new urban renewal periods is vital for understanding how twentiethand twenty-first-century urban policies, and their consequences, relate to an ever-changing metropolitan America.

## **Keywords**

urban renewal, inner city redevelopment, race, housing policy

#### Introduction

On July 28, 2004, clinical psychiatrist Mindy Fullilove presented on her compelling book *Root Shock* to a packed audience at Sister Space, a bookstore on Washington, D.C.'s U Street, a historic African-American area experiencing gentrification. Fullilove argued that many African-Americans displaced during the urban renewal of the mid-twentieth century experienced severe emotional and psychological trauma from having their social networks and communities—their roots—destroyed. In a twist of fate, seven days after the talk, federal marshals arrived at Sister Space to evict the bookstore and its two African-American owners. Sister Space lost a prolonged legal battle with their landlord over renovations and escalating rents. A community bookstore that once facilitated an intellectual ethos among black women was removed, while upscale condominiums, bars, and restaurants popped up along the redeveloping U Street corridor (Ruble 2010).

On the South Side of Chicago, in the historic African-American Bronzeville neighborhood, nearly 17,000 low-income people were displaced as the community's public housing was torn down (Hyra 2008). Many former public housing tenants were unable to remain in Bronzeville since most landlords refused to accept rental vouchers. Those displaced from public housing had to find apartments in declining areas near the city's edge or in the inner suburbs where poverty was increasing.

In the past two decades, New York City's Harlem property values skyrocketed. In the 1980s the city was selling Harlem brownstones for \$1 to nonprofits; in the 2000s these now rehabilitated homes were selling for more than \$1 million. Moreover, federal resources from the Empowerment Zone (EZ) Initiative were used to redevelop sections of 125th Street, Harlem's main thoroughfare. With these upgrades, national chain stores, such as Marshalls, H & M, and The Body Shop, became commonplace. As mainstream establishments arrived in Harlem, commercial rents soared on 125th Street and forced the displacement of several longstanding mom and pop black-owned businesses (Hyra 2008). The situations in black inner city

Washington, D.C., Chicago, and New York City were not unique; they represented a broader phase of central city redevelopment in metropolitan America.

From 1992 until 2007, we witnessed the new urban renewal phase. During this period, billions of federal funds, most notably through the EZ Initiative and the Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE VI) program, were deployed to stimulate central city redevelopment throughout the country. The revitalization of low-income black communities was national in scope and occurred in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Durham, Charlotte, Atlanta, Minneapolis, Houston, Los Angeles, and Portland (Bennett and Reed 1999; Bennett, Smith, and Wright 2006; Boyd 2008a; Fainstein 2005; Freeman 2006; Fullilove and Wallace 2011; Gibson 2007; Goetz 2003, 2011a; Grogan and Proscio 2000; Hackworth 2007; Hyra 2008; Moore 2009; Pattillo 2007; Podagrosi and Vojnovic 2008; Ruble 2010; Vale 2002; von Hoffman 2003).

Some scholars have called the recent development "another round of urban renewal" (Goetz 2011a; Smith 2006) and a "return of urban renewal" (Fainstein 2005). Goetz (2011a: 283) notes that the recent round of urban renewal has "remov[ed] a racially identified subgroup of poor away from land that has become ripe for investment and a new round of profit-taking." He posited that federal policy connected with "the demolition of public housing is not a departure from previous [urban renewal] policies but instead is a seamless extension of them." Further, Smith (2006: 279) claims that the contemporary urban development period is "no different from the urban renewal efforts begun in the 1950s."

While the development that took in the 1990s and 2000s resembles the old urban renewal in many ways; several critical differences distinguish the contemporary redevelopment phase. The more recent redevelopment period was a central city expansion strategy, was driven by a more comprehensive set of development forces, had mixed consequences for urban black America, and was associated with suburban poverty concentration. Based on these important differences, rather than an extension of the old urban renewal period, we have entered and completed a new urban renewal phase.

It is important to conceptualize the new urban renewal for at least three reasons. First, the new urban renewal framework provides a more accurate understanding of the pattern of the gentrification of inner city black communities in the 1990s and 2000s. While several scholars rightfully connect federal public housing demolition legislation (i.e., HOPE VI) with the new urban renewal (Bennett and Reed 1999; Cisneros and Engdahl 2009; Goetz 2011a), a broader set of development factors at the global, national, and local level form a more precise account of this situation. This insight corrects a

misperception of recent scholarship that has overemphasized the role of the federal government, particularly the HOPE VI program, in understanding recent patterns of urban gentrification.

Second, the lens of the new urban renewal clarifies the racial repercussions of certain federal housing and redevelopment policies. Some scholars label the new urban renewal another round of "Negro removal," or connect it with "serial forced displacement" of the past, implying that all of urban black America suffers negative consequences from recent redevelopment efforts (Fullilove and Wallace 2011; Goetz 2011b). While the new urban renewal is directly linked to displacement among hundreds of thousands of African-Americans (Goetz 2011b), black businesses and individuals also financially benefited from inner city revitalization in the 1990s and 2000s (Boyd 2008a; Hyra 2008; Pattillo 2007) and this development is linked with the revival of iconic black neighborhoods. The racial implications of the new urban renewal are tied more to class than race.

Last, scholars have recognized an increase in suburban poverty in the past two decades. Much of the suburban poverty literature has been demographic in nature (Frey 2010; Kneebone and Garr 2010) or has addressed the shortfall of social services in suburban areas with rising poverty (Allard 2008; Allard and Roth 2010). Little research, with the exception of Bennett (2006), has investigated the conditions that have given rise to the movement of poverty from the inner cities to the inner suburbs. This comparison of the old and new urban renewal periods sheds some light on circumstances associated with rising suburban poverty rates.

While some of these themes were touched on in my 2008 book, *The New Urban Renewal: The Economic Transformation of Harlem and Bronzeville*, this article expands and builds on my original analysis in at least two important ways. Much of my research has focused on the redevelopment of a small group of African-American communities. The point of departure for this article is to connect the revitalization processes, and their consequences, witnessed in these inner-city African-American communities to a broader development trend that occurred throughout the country. To make this generalization, I combine my own data from Washington, D.C., Chicago, and New York City with information presented in other contemporary inner-city redevelopment investigations. This is not to say that the assertions made about the new urban renewal apply equally to all U.S. cities but this contemporary development pattern is clearly well beyond a few select metropolitan areas.

Second, while much prior work, including my own, details elements of the new urban renewal using a case study method (e.g., Boyd 2008a; Goetz 2003; Pattillo 2007), this article uses a comparative historical approach (see

Mahoney 2004; Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003). The comparative historical method allows for an assessment of the similarities and differences between the old and new urban renewal periods, which give deeper meaning to contemporary urban policies and outcomes.

In the remainder of this article, I first briefly review the elements of the old urban renewal. Then I turn to an analysis of the new urban renewal, and argue that although there are several similarities between the old and new urban renewal period, critical differences exist that are important for understanding contemporary inner city gentrification patterns, racial consequences of recent urban policy, and the movement of poverty to the suburbs.

# The Old Urban Renewal, 1949-1974

Urban renewal typically refers to a period between 1949 and 1974 when there was a massive national effort to remove blighted properties and poverty from areas surrounding central business districts. Policy makers argued that the removal of blighted properties and the redevelopment of slum areas would help cities become more economically viable. The redevelopment would generate an economic engine through attracting middle-income residents to the city (Greer 1965). While the removal of blighted properties had occurred prior to 1949, several elements, including the revitalization strategy, scope, disproportionate negative impact on African-Americans, and its association with the concentration of urban poverty, distinguish the urban renewal from prior city-rebuilding efforts.

Urban renewal was a downtown preservation and minority containment revitalization strategy. As aggregate city populations declined because of white flight (Beauregard 2006; Jackson 1985), the Black Belts within Northern and Midwest cities expanded. Between 1950 and 1960, nearly a million and a half southern African-Americans headed to various U.S. cities, most in the Northeast and Midwest, during the second wave of the Great Migration (Lemann 1991). The black migrants of the 1950s were not as fortunate as their predecessors in finding stable employment since manufacturing jobs were relocating out of the city (Vernon 1966). With this new population, the Black Belts became larger and poorer and expanded toward the central business districts (CBDs).

Many downtown business leaders perceived that unmitigated black invasion would lower CBD property values. Business leaders feared a black presence would deter and urban customers from frequenting the CBD (Hirsch 1998; Gotham 2002). This fear prompted city business and political leaders to plan for the redevelopment of blighted areas near the downtown. This

redevelopment strategy, once federally funded, would essentially wall off the downtown and prevent a black influx. Thus, urban renewal was a CBD preservation strategy.

Urban renewal, officially launched with the passage of the federal Housing Act of 1949, was national in scope. This act, along with subsequent housing acts, provided billions in federal resources to local authorities to redevelop areas deemed blighted (Avila and Rose 2009; Foard and Fefferman 1966; Teaford 2000).<sup>2</sup> Between 1949 and 1962, an estimated \$3 billion was spent (Anderson 1967); adjusted for inflation, the estimate approaches \$17 billion (in 2000 dollars). When added to the renewal funds deployed between 1963 and 1973, the total cost of the old urban renewal likely exceeded \$30 billion (in 2000 dollars).

Federal resources heavily underwrote development costs and enticed real estate developers to design and construct new housing towers, university and hospital buildings, large commercial spaces, and convention centers in blighted central city areas across the country.<sup>3</sup> Between 1950 and 1974, urban renewal was associated with bulldozing an estimated 2,500 neighborhoods in 993 cities (Fullilove 2005).<sup>4</sup> In these 2,500 redeveloped neighborhoods, an estimated 400,000 residential units were demolished (Weiss 1985). Most of these residential units were older tenements and single-family homes that typically housed African-Americans.

There is little evidence that minorities benefited during urban renewal: race trumped class in many ways. The old urban renewal disproportionately affected people of color and disrupted the neighborhoods and lives of thousands, if not millions, of minorities. In *The Federal Bulldozer* (1967), Martin Anderson estimates that by 1963 more than 609,000 people had been displaced because of redevelopment projects, and that once all pipelined projects were completed the figure would likely increase to 1.6 million. Of the 609,000 people displaced by 1963, two thirds (406,000) were racial minorities, mostly African-Americans. Moreover, of the estimated 2,500 razed urban renewal neighborhoods, approximately 1,600 were African-American communities (Fullilove 2005). Not only did urban renewal affect African-Americans who were displaced but "because of the interconnection among all black people in the United States, the whole of Black America experienced root shock" (Fullilove 2005: 20).

In certain cases, urban renewal projects created some jobs for minorities (McKee 2009); however, throughout the country, almost all of the spoils from the urban renewal development went to white firms and companies.<sup>6</sup> In most situations, urban renewal projects were designed by white business leaders and were intended to benefit white CBD businesses as well as

white-controlled firms associated with development (Hirsch 1998; Holliman 2009; Zipp 2010).

The slum clearance of the urban renewal period did not alleviate urban blight and poverty; rather it shifted it from one city area to another. Many displaced people relocated to replacement public housing in other sections of the city (Hirsch 1998; Holliman 2009; Zipp 2010). Much of the replacement public housing was built in areas that were already predominately African-American. Thus, urban renewal facilitated the creation of the "second ghettos" and institutionalized segregation (Hirsch 1998; Massey and Denton 1993; Turner, Popkin, and Rawlings 2009; Wolfinger 2009; Zipp 2010). While several factors led to increased levels of segregation and neighborhood poverty, such as white flight (Massey and Denton 1993) and manufacturing job loss (Wilson 1996) from the city, one cannot overlook the primary role that federally subsidized urban renewal projects had on concentrating neighborhood poverty and institutionalizing the "dark ghettos" (Clark 1965; Massey and Kanaiaupuni 1993).

# The New Urban Renewal, 1992-2007

The new urban renewal period rivals the old urban renewal in many ways. Between 1992 and 2007, billions in federal funds were deployed to stimulate the redevelopment of the "second ghettos." Federal funds, such as the HOPE VI program and the EZ Initiative, facilitated inner city revitalization across the country. The intent of these federal interventions was to remove blight and concentrated poverty by razing distressed public housing, attracting middle-class families to new, mixed-income developments, and incentivizing the movement of private business capital to the inner city (Goetz 2011a; Hyra 2008).

# Downtown Growth and Expansion

While the new urban renewal had many of the same features of the past, the current urban revitalization was a downtown growth and expansion strategy. This growth and expansion strategy was linked to the back-to-the-city movement (Atkinson and Bridge 2005). For example, between 1990 and 2000, the three largest U.S. cities, New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago, experienced a 9%, 6%, and 4% population increase respectively. Moreover, between 2000 and 2010, Washington, D.C.'s population increased by 5.2%. Although these figures may not seem large, compared to the population loss these cities experienced for the previous 50 years, they are extraordinary and drastically different than the aggregate population loss that occurred during the old urban renewal.

Evidence from Chicago, New York, and Washington, D.C. illustrates the downtown expansion. For example, between 1980 and 2000, Chicago's downtown, the "Loop," experienced a 150% increase in population and New York City's Manhattan experienced a 7.6% increase. At the same time, their property values skyrocketed. From 1980 to 2000, the median home value increased 266% in the Loop, and 581% in Manhattan. In addition to increased population and booming property values, these cities also experienced job growth, particularly in the high-wage service sector. Between 1980 and 1998, New York and Chicago added 222,000 and 150,000 jobs respectively (Hyra 2008). Moreover, between 1996 and 2003, Washington, D.C. added 41,600 employment opportunities (Fuller 2004). Many of these jobs were located in the CBD and in the high-wage financial and business service sector.

With an influx of a new upper-income population in downtown areas, real estate developers looked to expand the core of cities by developing underutilized public housing communities near the CBD (Bennett 2006). Hyra (2008) demonstrates that increased property prices in New York and Chicago's CBD related to the redevelopment of the nearby inner city areas of Harlem and Bronzeville. Furthermore, other authors show that downtown expansion was linked with inner city neighborhood redevelopment in New Orleans and Houston (Gotham, Shefner, and Brumley 2001; Podagrosi and Vojnovic 2008). In Pittsburgh, Fullilove and Wallace (2011: 387) note that HOPE VI newcomers to the African-American Hill District were "emotionally linked to downtown, not the historic Hill," suggesting that the redevelopment of the Hill represents a central city expansion. Lastly, Goetz's (2011a) national study shows that, while holding other variables constant, cities with greater rent gaps between citywide private market and public housing median rents were more aggressive in razing public housing during the new urban renewal period. This empirical study suggests that hot housing market cities used HOPE VI to promote further growth and centralization by razing economically underutilized properties. The accumulation of both qualitative and quantitative evidence suggests that the new urban renewal was a downtown expansion strategy.

# National Scope

One of the characteristics that distinguished the old urban renewal from other city-building efforts was its national scope; the new urban renewal has also affected many U.S. cities. From 1992 and 2007, nearly \$80 billion was made available for inner city redevelopment from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (these programs will be described in the next section). These federal dollars helped to stimulate the economic redevelopment

of low-income black communities in many major cities across the country (Boyd 2008a; Fullilove and Wallace 2011; Gibson 2007; Goetz 2003; Grogan and Proscio 2000; Hyra 2008; Moore 2009; Podagrosi and Vojnovic 2008; Ruble 2010; Vale 2002; von Hoffman 2003). Moreover, between 1996 and 2007, 163,393 units of public housing were demolished in 139 cities, demonstrating the breadth of this national redevelopment effort.

## Global, Federal, and Local Development Forces

While the old urban renewal was largely driven by federal policy, the new urban renewal was associated with a more complex set of development forces including federal, but also global and local, dynamics. The new urban renewal officially began in 1992 with the enactment of the HOPE VI program. Between 1992 and 2007, the HOPE VI program deployed more than \$6 billion in grants to local housing authorities to raze distressed public housing units and replace them with mixed-income housing developments (Turner, Popkin, and Rawlings 2009). HOPE VI grants were designed to redevelop large tracts of land and ranged from \$30 to \$50 million.

With HOPE VI funding, many housing authorities implemented major citywide plans to raze public housing in distressed communities. In Chicago, nearly all of its infamous public housing high-rise projects, many located just outside of the CBD, were demolished as part of the city's \$1.6 billion Plan for Transformation (Bennett and Reed 1999; Bennett, Smith, and Wright 2006). In 2009 Atlanta's public housing authority completed the demolition of its entire traditional public housing stock. New Orleans, which once had nearly 12,000 public housing units, now has only 1,000.

The HOPE VI program was associated in many areas with the redevelopment of the surrounding community (Cisneros and Engdahl 2009; Goetz 2011b; Turbov and Piper 2005; Zielenbach and Voith 2010). In many communities where public housing was razed, mixed-income replacement housing, tied to the HOPE VI grants, was built. This development activity in some areas stimulated broader community redevelopment, as adjacent vacant lots were bought, single-family private market homes were built, and abandoned properties were rehabilitated.

Enacted in 1993, the EZ Initiative also propelled the new urban renewal. The program was a competitive initiative, where cities, based on the strength of their proposals, were selected to receive \$100 million block grants, to stimulate business development and job creation in low-income areas (Hyra 2008). The businesses in EZ areas received tax breaks and had reduced regulatory requirements for a 10-year period (Ranney 2003). In 1994,

impoverished areas in Chicago, New York, Cleveland, Detroit, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Los Angeles were selected. The EZ designation helped to stimulate private capital investment, and an evaluation demonstrated that in all but one of the selected sites there was an increase in the number of jobs five years after the launch of the initiative (Hebert et al. 2001).

The HOPE VI program and the EZ Initiative were the signature programs of the new urban renewal period; however, ample federal money also came from two block grants, the CDBG and HOME programs. The CDBG program, which began in 1975, deployed money based on a needsoriented formula to metropolitan areas for infrastructure development (Richardson 2005). The CDBG funding had few restrictions but cities were required to spend the bulk of it on projects that benefited low- and moderate-income communities (Rich 1993). The HOME program, enacted in 1990, also funded municipalities through a needs-based formula for the purpose of creating affordable housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income individuals. The cumulative funding levels and development strategies of the HOPE VI, EZ, CDBG, and HOME programs provided the federal capital and revitalization strategy that helped stimulate the new urban renewal.

Aspects of economic globalization, particularly downtown centralization and expansion within global cities, as well as the integration and deregulation of financial markets, were linked with the new urban renewal (Hyra 2008; Ranney 2003; Sassen 2000; Wyly, Atia, and Hammel 2004). Centralization, increased CBD population, job opportunities, and capital, related to the role of certain cities in the global economy. Strategic U.S. cities, such as New York, Chicago, and Washington, D.C., attracted high-wage workers to their CBDs in the 1990s because of their command and control functions within the international economy (Sassen 2000). The concentration of upper-income service sector managers in certain cities expanded their CBDs and created housing demand in nearby low-income neighborhoods (Fainstein 2000). While not all U.S. cities that experienced the new urban renewal were global cities, other international forces, connected with the global economy, influenced the inner city redevelopment of urban America.

A second global force associated with inner city development was the availability of capital and credit (Gramlich 2007; Ranney 2003). Credit for home purchase, once denied to black inner city areas, flowed into these communities at unprecedented rates and helped stimulate the inner city gentrification pattern (Howell 2006; Ranney 2003; Wyly, Atia, and Hammel 2004). For instance, Wyly, Atia, and Hammel's (2004) analysis of prime mortgage lending between 1993 and 2000 in 23 large U.S. metropolitan areas shows

that the rate of mortgage lending in the inner city outpaced overall city and suburban rates. The deregulation of financial markets forced countries to compete in worldwide credit markets. This worldwide competition was associated with financial product innovation, particularly risk-based priced mortgages (both prime and subprime) and their securitization (Getter 2006; Sassen 2009; White 2004).

Some of this credit came in the form of subprime loans, as inner city markets went from being red-lined to green-lined. Subprime originations, which disproportionately went to African-Americans, increased from \$35 billion in 1994 to \$625 billion in 2005 (Gramlich 2007). Ding et al. (2008: 212), in their subprime-lending analysis of Atlanta, "found a strong geographic concentration of higher-priced lending in African American tracts and low-income tracts, even after including other tract-level explanatory variables." This increase in inner city credit, combined with federal funds, fueled the new urban renewal.

The credit that stimulated inner city redevelopment was connected to international financial markets (Hackworth 2007; Ranney 2003; Wyly, Atia, and Hammel 2004; Wyly et al. 2009). Mortgage companies and commercial banks originating prime and subprime loans in inner city areas sold them to financial institutions that repackaged these pooled loans into mortgage-backed securities (MBSs). These MBSs were then sold to both domestic and international investors (Sassen 2009). The increasing demand for MBSs by national and foreign investors helped make large sums of capital and credit available to inner city areas, which facilitated urban redevelopment projects.

Ranney and Wright (2003: 132), in their assessment of the redevelopment of Chicago's Black Belt, argue that one key to understanding its gentrification is "the integration of real estate into global capital markets." They state the "integration of financial markets is a major factor driving changes in the housing market and the gentrification of many cities" (132). Further, Wyly, Atia, and Hammel (2004: 623) note, "Securitization, institutional structure, and increasingly sophisticated market segmentation have altered the relationship between mortgage capital and the inner city."

While global and federal forces were critical to the new urban renewal, local decisions by elite African-American politicians and real estate developers and middle-income African-American homeowners were also important to the redevelopment of inner-city America (Boyd 2008b; Goetz 2011b; Pattillo 2007). Washington, D.C.'s African-American mayoral and city council leadership deployed \$23 million in subsidies to an African-American development team to help finance the construction of a large mixed-use

building with 300,000 square feet of commercial space and 180 residential units, which contributed to the redevelopment of a formerly low-income, African-American neighborhood (Hyra 2011). In Chicago and Washington, D.C., African-American directors of the housing authorities controlled the distribution of HOPE VI funds, and their actions contributed to inner city development. In New York City, African-American development companies built luxury housing that contributed to Harlem's redevelopment (Hyra 2008).

Another important local dynamic was the political actions of African-American homeowners who reinvigorated inner city civic associations (Hyra 2008). With the movement of the black middle class to the inner city, many civic associations became dominated by black middle-income interests, which often favor community improvements. The political actions of the black middle class contributed to neighborhood revitalization by discouraging additional subsidized housing and social services and supporting the construction of upper- and middle-income housing (Boyd 2008b; Hyra 2008; Pattillo 2007). In the 1990s and 2000s, the urban black middle class became part of Logan and Molotch's (2007) urban growth machine, reinforcing the idea that local as well as international and national forces culminated to drive the new urban renewal.

# Peril and Profit for African-Americans

The racial implications of the new urban renewal were more nuanced and complex than the prior redevelopment phase. In the new urban renewal, race mattered but the benefits and negative consequences can only be understood through an intersection of race and class. While lower-income African-Americans were displaced, more affluent African-Americans were benefiting financially from the renewal process. Furthermore, the new urban renewal was associated with the redevelopment of iconic black neighborhoods.

The disproportionate, and negative, impact of the new urban renewal on African-Americans was directly connected to the demolition of public housing. The razing of distressed public housing displaced nearly 240,000 people, 80% (192,000) of whom were African-American (Goetz 2011b). This inequitable racial displacement impact is clear, since in 2000 African-Americans only made up 48% of the nationwide public housing population (Goetz 2011b). The disproportionate impact on African-Americans can be explained by the fact that the HOPE VI funds were used to raze the most distressed public housing stock, which were occupied primarily by African-Americans.

While the disproportionate racial displacement impacts were clear, evidence is mixed on whether displaced public housing residents benefited in meaningful ways from their new neighborhoods (Cisneros and Engdahl 2009; Curley 2010; Fischer 2003; Goetz 2010; Oakley and Burchfield 2009; Oakley et al. 2010; Venkatesh et al. 2004). Some scholars and policy makers claim that displacement was a net positive benefit since many individuals moved to slightly less poor neighborhoods (Buron, Levy, and Gallagher 2007; Kingsley, Johnson, and Pettit 2003; Popkin et al. 2002). Furthermore, many relocated individuals felt their new communities were safer (Popkin, Leventhal, and Weismann 2010).

Other scholars suggest these positive benefits do not outweigh the negative costs associated with dismantling people's social networks and removing them from improving neighborhoods. Imbroscio (2008: 122) challenges the "dispersal consensus" by noting that the HOPE VI program imposed "massive human costs" on the urban poor without sufficient evidence that this course of action will ultimately benefit them. Furthermore, Goetz (2011b: 1585) points out that "the evidence is clear and consistent in showing that displacement from distressed housing projects has had no demonstrative positive effect on employment, earnings or income of individuals." He and others, such as Smith (2006: 279), note that public housing reforms, including the HOPE VI program, "will do little to benefit the very poor."

A very small percentage of displaced public housing residents returned to the newly created mixed-income neighborhoods that replaced the razed distressed public housing stock (Marquis and Ghosh 2008). Some HOPE VI advocates speculate that the returning population will benefit tremendously from living in a new, mixed-income community. Unquestionably, their physical living environment will be upgraded; however, there is mounting evidence that in the short run mixed-income communities have not substantially improved these residents' lives (Chaskin and Joseph 2011; Joseph and Chaskin 2010; Tach 2009).

Chaskin and Joseph (2011: 232), who have been tracking the interactions among low- and middle-income tenants in two Chicago mixed-income housing projects, state, "There is thus little evidence to support expectations that reducing the isolation of public housing residents by integrating them (and other low-income residents) into mixed-income communities will provide access to the networks and resources of their higher-income neighbors." This finding is not isolated to Chicago; other research in Boston and Washington, D.C. has found that when racially and economically diverse populations live in close proximity, microlevel class segregation and conflict often emerge (Hyra 2011; Tach 2009).

While the evidence is mixed on whether the urban poor will benefit from being removed from distressed projects, the new urban renewal definitively aided some affluent and middle-income African-Americans (Boyd 2008b; Hyra 2008; Pattillo 2007). Black real estate development firms, such as Ellis Development Group in Washington, D.C., East Lake Management and Development in Chicago, and Full Spectrum in New York City, constructed and managed new large-scale housing developments in the inner city and profited from aspects of the new urban renewal. Moreover, certain black churches, such as Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem and Metropolitan Baptist Church, once in Shaw, sold their land or redeveloped it through affiliated community development corporations (Hyra 2008, 2011). Some redevelopment financing occurred through small black-owned banks, such as Carver Saving Federal Bank in New York City and Industrial Bank in Washington, D.C. Lastly, long-term black homeowners who sold their properties prior to the housing bubble burst also profited. 15 Reverend Hicks of Metropolitan Baptist Church notes that revitalization of Washington, D.C.'s Shaw neighborhood, with its increased property values, "permitted many members of the congregation [who owned and sold their homes] to move to a higher standard of living outside of Shaw."16 This situation highlights the need to understand the new urban renewal and its consequences on urban black America through the lenses of both race and class; the less advantaged were displaced, while middle- and upper-income African-Americans benefited financially.

The new urban renewal was also associated with the redevelopment of some historic black communities (Boyd 2008a; Freeman 2006; Goetz 2011b; Hyra 2008; McKinnish, Walsh, and White 2010; Moore 2009; Pattillo 2007; Ruble 2010; Staight and Timberlake 2010). 17 The redevelopment of iconic black neighborhoods may hold symbolic meaning for black America. Places like U Street, Bronzeville, and Harlem in Washington, D.C., Chicago, and New York City, respectively, have a rich history of racial uplift between 1900s and 1930s when these communities were economically integrated under strict legal lines of segregation. Because of deindustrialization, black middle-class flight, and continued racial segregation (Massey and Denton 1993; Wilson 1996), in the 1970s and 1980s these areas became known for their concentrated poverty and crime. However, during the new urban renewal period, these communities developed economically and became recognized for their African-American cultural and historic past (Boyd 2008a; Hyra 2008; Ruble 2010). Some scholars suggest the redevelopment of these historic black neighborhoods represents cultural as well as economic progress for African-Americans (Hyra 2008; Pattillo 2007). Just as Fullilove (2005) claimed that the old urban renewal hurt all blacks because of bonds of solidarity among this racial group, the new urban renewal was beneficial to a large segment of African-Americans because it was associated with the redevelopment of iconic urban black communities.

# The New Geography of Poverty

While the old urban renewal moved poverty within the city, the new urban renewal was linked with the movement of poverty beyond the city limits. In 1999 the top 100 metropolitan areas had more poor people living in the central city than in their corresponding suburbs; however, by 2008 that demographic had shifted and there were more poor people in the suburbs (Kneebone and Garr 2010). The demolition of public housing and the revitalization of inner city neighborhoods have coincided with a shift of poverty from the inner cities to the inner suburbs (Allard 2008; Allard and Roth 2010). Neighborhoods that received HOPE VI grants and relocated tenants prior to 2000 saw their poverty rate drop, on average, 7.6 percentage points more, between 1990 and 2000, than the average citywide poverty decline rate. (Goetz 2011b). Most relocated public housing residents found new housing units within city limits in segregated neighborhoods (Oakley and Burchfield 2009), but some moved to inner-suburban areas. <sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, redevelopment, linked with the new urban renewal coincides with the out-migration of African-Americans from several cities. Some scholars speculate that this broader out-migration pattern is connected with the gentrification of inner city black neighborhoods (e.g., Hyra 2008; Goetz 2011b). Between 2000 and 2010, Washington, D.C., Chicago, and New York City lost 39,000, 180,000, and 100,000 African-Americans respectively (Frey 2011). Frey states, "In New York like many other cities, blacks are leaving the city for the suburbs and elsewhere." Beyond inner city development and public housing displacement, other conditions have given rise to the decline of inner suburbs, such as immigration, sprawl, and inner-suburban white flight (Orfield 2002), but there is no question that the revival of the central city and inner city gentrification coincided with the movement of poverty to the suburbs. The past round of urban renewal was associated with the creation of the second ghettos and the new urban renewal was associated with the development of the "second suburbs."

# End of the New Urban Renewal

The reduction of two important development resources brought an end to the new urban renewal in 2007. In July of 2007, the flow of capital and credit

slowed as subprime loans began to default at record levels. Foreclosures and the freeze of credit markets not only slowed the redevelopment process in inner cities but nearly brought down the entire U.S. financial sector and led to a national and global recession (Kirk and Hyra 2010; Squires and Hyra 2010). In addition to the worldwide financial crisis, the federal government drastically reduced the HOPE VI program. In the fiscal year 2010 federal budget, only \$5 million was allocated for the HOPE VI program. The limited availability of federal and private funds ended the new urban renewal period.<sup>20</sup>

# Discussion: Comparing the Past to the Present

There are several similarities between the old and new urban renewal. In both time periods, billions in federal funds were critical to stimulating the redevelopment of underutilized areas located near central business districts across the country. During the old and new urban renewal periods, most of the targeted neighborhoods were African-American and this racial group suffered disproportionately from displacement. Lastly, the redevelopment in both periods was associated with altering the geography of metropolitan poverty. Because of these similarities, several scholars claim the recent urban redevelopment pattern, and its consequences on urban black America, are tantamount to the repercussions of the old urban renewal (Fainstein 2005; Fullilove and Wallace 2011; Goetz 2011b; Smith 2006).

This is not the case, and several critical differences exist between the old and more recent urban development periods which justify the claim that we have entered and completed the new urban renewal. First, the development strategies of the old and new urban renewal periods were different. In the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, cities were losing middle-income white populations and urban renewal efforts were designed to preserve and protect the CBDs. In the 1990s and 2000s, the urban renewal effort was a downtown growth and expansion strategy. For scholars, particularly urban historians, who will likely more thoroughly investigate the reasons that motivated contemporary large-scale urban redevelopment, this distinction is critical for it demonstrates that downtown expansion pressures can guide national policy just as much as downtown preservation interests did decades earlier.

Second, the dynamics of development are different and the new urban renewal was influenced by a more complex set of change factors. During the old urban renewal, federal policy was the driver of redevelopment. Federal funds provided the bulk of money for land acquisition and spurred the redevelopment process. In the new urban renewal period, federal efforts to produce the capital necessary for inner city redevelopment were augmented by global influences, in particular downtown centralization and the availability of global capital and credit. Furthermore, local, elite African-Americans were driving redevelopment projects and black middle-class homeowners were advocating for community improvements, including upper-income housing construction. In *Making the Second Ghetto* (1998), Arnold Hirsch argues that the symbolic architects of the old urban renewal were all white; in the new urban renewal some of the development actors were African-American.

Understanding the importance of development dynamics beyond the state and their relationships to a new phase of urban renewal is vital. In an increasingly global world where urban space is influenced by multiple forces, it is important for scholars to grasp the importance of local, national, and global forces that shape the metropolitan landscape. The concept of the new urban renewal encourages scholars to be mindful of multilevel gentrification forces that affect urban areas.

Third, the impact and consequences of the new urban renewal are not entirely based on race, but are determined by an intersection of race and class. There is near scholarly consensus that the old urban renewal was detrimental to urban black America. This is not the case with the new urban renewal. Federal policy, more specifically, the HOPE VI program, and related inner city development, displaced low-income African-Americans, yet it also directly and indirectly benefited certain segments of the African-American community. To solely qualify the new urban renewal as "Negro removal" or a "return to urban renewal" would misrepresent its overall and complex impact. Thus, to understand the racial implications of the new urban renewal the intersection of race and class must be considered.

Lastly, the old and new urban renewal shifted metropolitan poverty to different locations. While the old urban renewal institutionalized the inner city black ghetto, the new urban renewal is associated with the movement of poverty to the inner suburbs. The old urban renewal helped to create the "second ghettos" but the new urban renewal facilitated the formation of the "second suburbs." As researchers continue to document the increasing rate of suburban poverty (Frey 2010; Kneebone and Garr 2010) and begin to design policy solutions to address the lack of suburban social services to tackle this circumstance (Allard 2008; Allard and Roth 2010), it is critical that the scholarly community better understand the factors associated with the movement of metropolitan poverty. The new urban renewal paradigm suggests that inner city redevelopment was associated with emerging inner-ring suburban poverty.

#### Limitations and Further Research

This comparison of the old and new urban renewal is intended to be conceptual in nature; more detailed research and analyses are needed to make this comparative analysis more meaningful. First, this analysis claims that federal funds and private capital (tied to the global economy) shaped the new urban renewal and suggests the new development period, compared to the past, is driven more by private sector activity. This finding coincides with other scholars who have investigated contemporary inner city development through the lens of neoliberalism (e.g., Brenner and Theodore 2002; Hackworth 2007). However, as noted, large sums of federal funding were deployed during the new urban renewal period (\$80 billion compared to \$30 billion for the old urban renewal), which suggests that the new urban renewal was not a scaling back of the public sector. A deeper analysis of the role of federal and private funds and public-private partnerships during the old urban renewal (Zipp 2010) and new urban renewal (Hackworth 2007) is needed to better substantiate differences between federal and private capital (both domestic and global) in these redevelopment phases.

Second, the new urban renewal period had social, economic, and political consequences that were not focused on in this article. A broader analysis of the consequences, beyond the impacts on African-American neighborhoods and the spatial geography of poverty, is needed to complete the story of similarities and differences between old and new urban renewal periods. For instance, private credit and capital available during the new urban renewal period was linked to the near collapse of the U.S. financial system in 2007, and a further analysis needs to uncover the connections among these phenomena. Furthermore, during the new urban renewal, certain cities, such as Boston, New York City, Washington, D.C., Atlanta, and New Orleans, became more white (Frey 2010). More in-depth analyses of how the new urban renewal related to the economic crisis, changing urban racial demographics, and urban politics are greatly needed.

Third, other variables than the ones outlined may relate to the new urban renewal phase. Some argue that the return of people and capital to inner city relates to decreasing urban crime rates (Grogan and Proscio 2001; Von Hoffman 2003) and the migration of suburban empty nest households to the urban core (Hyra 2008). These factors were not thoroughly assessed, and examining their influence in the new urban renewal process is an important future research endeavor.

Fourth, while the new urban renewal influenced many cities across the United States, the specific processes of change and impact differs based on

unique metropolitan contexts. For instance, some U.S. cities that experienced the new urban renewal were not global cities; thus their downtown revitalization might have been more heavily tied to national policy (e.g., the HOPE VI program) or city circumstances, such as the actions of urban growth machines (Logan and Molotch 2000) or other political regimes (Stone 1989). As Hackworth (2007) and other scholars (e.g., Brenner and Theodore 2002; Sites 2003) suggest, contemporary urban redevelopment is a complex process of "glocalization" where more distant and proximate forces collide and have differential influences on producing urban change. The old urban renewal did not equally affect all U.S. cities (Staple 1970), and thus we should not expect that the new urban renewal would either. The new urban renewal framework is not intended to fit all cases perfectly but its strength and utility is that it documents a key contemporary urban redevelopment period and provides scholars a novel framework to further explore both past and more current urban revitalization patterns.

#### Conclusion

The landscape of urban America radically changed during two critical time periods in the United States. From 1949 to 1974, the country experienced the first round of urban renewal and from 1992 to 2007 another round occurred. These redevelopment periods, although occurring in different historical contexts, have many similarities including the use of federal funds to redevelop minority neighborhoods near the CBD, the displacement of poor minorities, and the movement of concentrated poverty. These similarities justify the statement that we have been through a new round of urban renewal. As historian D. Bradford Hunt (2009: 286) explains, we have "completed an ironic full circle." Urban policy in the 1950s leveled single-family-style homes that were considered unlivable and built highrise public housing. In the 1990s, a new round of slum clearance took down these high-rises and erected mixed-income villages that often tried to mimic the original housing stock demolished in the 1950s. While acknowledging the recurring pattern of slum clearance, critical differences between these two redevelopment periods exist, particularly the presence of a more complex set of redevelopment forces and a more complicated set of consequences for African-Americans. Noting the parallels and differences between the old and new urban renewal is vital for understanding how urban policy in the twentieth and twenty-first century has affected metropolitan America.

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#### Notes

- Gwendolyn E. Osborne, "From Bad Breaks to Boons: D.C.'s Sisterspace [sic]
  Plans a Comeback and Other Tales of Black Survival," Black Issues Book
  Review, November–December 2004.
- 2. Although some scholars argue that redevelopment efforts to bolster the nation's cities began before the 1940s (Avila and Rose 2009; Gillette 1995; Wolfinger 2009), it was not until the end of the 1940s that a federal and local infrastructure was ready, and more importantly funded, to stimulate massive urban redevelopment across America. Components of this redevelopment infrastructure included the Urban Renewal Administration (URA), a federal-level entity that deployed much of the funding for urban renewal projects. URA was supervised by the newly created cabinet-level agency, the Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHFA), the precursor to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (created in 1965). HHFA oversaw other key redevelopment entities such as the Public Housing Administration (founded in 1937), which provided replacement housing for many of those displaced by urban renewal efforts (Cityscape 1995).
- 3. Urban renewal was not just a housing policy, but federal transportation policies also contributed to removal of urban slum areas (Avila and Rose 2009; Mohl 2003; Rose 1990; Schrag 2006; Sugrue 1996). However, this article primarily discusses housing and community development policies.
- Urban renewal officially ended in 1974. Title I funding ceased and President Ford and the U.S. Congress repackaged urban renewal funding into the Community Development Block Grant (Erickson 2009).
- All of Anderson's figures are based on data provided by the Urban Renewal Administration and it is possible that his displacement estimates are quite

- conservative since they likely do not account for people who were displaced by transportation construction.
- 6. There is an example from Harlem where protest to an urban renewal project brought some gains to African-Americans (Hyra 2008; Johnson 2004). In the late 1960s Nelson Rockefeller, the Republican New York State Governor at the time, wanted to construct an urban renewal project on Harlem's 125th Street. The plans were for a large high-rise New York State office building to be built on 125th Street and 7th Avenue. The development plans were heavily protested and a compromise was reached. Harlem politicians would support the project if the Governor established the Harlem Urban Development Corporation (HUDC), which would be controlled by Harlem's Democrats. The funding for HUDC was used to support housing development and would also serve to maintain Charles Rangel's (who would go on to defeat Adam Clayton Powell Jr. in 1970) political power.
- 7. Other contemporary central city redevelopment research also supports this statement (see McMillen 2003; Wyly and Hammel 1999; Zielenbach 2005).
- 8. Not all of the CDBG and HOME funds went to urban areas. Some of it was distributed to suburban counties, states, and rural areas; however, the vast majority went to urban areas. Thus, the \$80 billion is an overestimate of the federal funds available for the new urban renewal.
- 9. The effort to upgrade the nation's public housing stock began in 1989 with the Congress-mandated National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing (National Commission on Severely Distressed Public Housing 1992) but the bulk of funding to accomplish the recommendations of the commission was not deployed until the start of the HOPE VI program in 1992.
- 10. One key to this demolition process was the 1996 suspension, and 1998 elimination, by the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act of 1998, of the one-for-one public housing replacement law (Ranney 2003). Upon demolition, new public housing units did not need to be built and families that were displaced were given housing vouchers to subsidize their rent in private market apartments. The elimination of the one-for-one replacement law and the use of housing vouchers for replacement housing greatly reduced the cost of razing public housing.
- 11. Robbie Brown, "Atlanta Is Making Way for New Public Housing," *New York Times*, June 21, 2009. Also see Oakley, Deirdre, Erin Ruel, Lesley Reid, and Christina Sims, "Public Housing Relocation and Residential Segregation in Atlanta: Where Are Families Going?" Paper presented at the State of Black Atlanta Conference, Clark Atlanta University, Atlanta, GA, 2010.
- The CDBG program became law in 1974 and started funding cities in 1975 (Rich 1993).

13. This figure is a very conservative estimation of the number of people displaced from the new urban renewal. The figure only accounts for people displaced from demolished public housing units. The demolition of public housing relates to the gentrification of the surrounding neighborhoods, and with rising property values, many renters and small businesses are unable to stay. During my research in Harlem, Bronzeville, and Shaw, I have witnessed several people who were displaced from project-based Section 8 buildings that opted to turn market rate. In addition, I witnessed and heard of cases where landlords damage their buildings' roofs or foundations to get tenants out of what was deemed, after the damage, an unsafe building. Once the tenants were out, the landlords planned to redevelop for market rate rents. These types of displacement are hard to systematically measure but if situations like these were included, the displacement figure would be higher. In addition, the figure does not account for small businesses displacement and this often occurs in neighborhoods experiencing gentrification. It was easier to document displacement in the prior round of urban renewal because more units were demolished and it is easier to estimate displacement when the main vehicle for removal is the razing of a building. The extent of indirect displacement associated with the new urban renewal is highly controversial and a debated topic (see Freeman and Braconi 2004; Hyra 2008; Newman and Wyly 2006; Vigdor 2002) but must be more accurately estimated if we are to get a better account of the number of people displaced during this redevelopment period.

14. One limitation of the current displacement research is that outdated data were used to determine the poverty rates of sending and receiving neighborhoods. For instance, the Buron, Levy, and Gallagher (2007) study, which compares the conditions of HOPE VI neighborhoods and areas receiving displaced tenants from HOPE VI redevelopment sites, used 2000 Census data to estimate the poverty rate of the sending and receiving tracts to argue that displaced tenants were benefiting from HOPE VI since displaced tenants on average were ending up in lower poverty rate communities. The problem with this claim is that neighborhoods are dynamic and when public housing buildings are razed, the surrounding neighborhoods often gentrify (Hyra 2008; Turbov and Piper 2005; Zielenbach 2003; Zielenbach and Voith 2010), while the receiving tracts typically become more impoverished as they receive low-income voucher holders. Thus, a lack of current neighborhood poverty rate data makes it appear as though those displaced are leaving highly concentrated poverty neighborhoods and ending up in areas that are less disadvantaged. It is quite possible that many low-income African-Americans are being removed from improving neighborhoods and are ending up in declining communities (Goetz 2005; Hyra 2008; Imbroscio 2008; Kelly 2009). When the 2010 Census data become available, more accurate assessments of the conditions of receiving neighborhoods and potential benefits to relocatees can be made.

- However, it is important to note that the collapse of the housing bubble did take a financial toll on many black, as well as white, homeowners (Rivera et al. 2008).
- This quote comes from my ethnographic research in Washington, D.C.'s Shaw/U Street neighborhood (see Hyra 2011).
- 17. While some historic African-American neighborhoods have undergone black gentrification, others, such as Houston's Freemen's Town (Podagrosi and Vojnovic 2008) and Portland's Albina District (Gibson 2007), have experienced typical gentrification with an influx of whites. For a more comprehensive look at which black communities experienced white or black gentrification during the new urban renewal period, see Goetz (2011b).
- Dahleen Glanton and Jeremy Gorner, "CHA: Most High-Rise Residents Relocate in City," *Chicago Tribune*, April 14, 2011.
- Sam Roberts, "Slower Racial Change Found in Census of City," New York Times, July 28, 2011.
- 20. While the bursting U.S. housing bubble in 2007 and the drastic reduction in HOPE VI funding might have indicated the end of the new urban renewal, there are some reasons to believe that the new urban renewal has not entirely ended and that large-scale urban redevelopment will continue in the years to come. The foreclosure crisis has led to the deployment of billions in redevelopment dollars. Between 2008 and 2010, through HUD's Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP), nearly \$7 billion was allocated to cities to help them deal with mounting foreclosures and blight. Some municipalities are proposing to use their NSP funds to demolish units in blighted areas. For instance, Detroit plans to demolish nearly 10,000 units of housing. Thus, while the new urban renewal has slowed because of the economic downturn, it likely that aspects of the urban renewal may progress into the 2010s, especially in cities that have been hit hard by the foreclosures crisis.

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#### Bio

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