On the East Side / "Lippitt Hill"

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1. The Narrative

Introduction

As an international student of color moving halfway across the world to study at Brown University, living around Providence's East Side on occasion felt somewhat alienating. In my first year in university, as I would attend lectures in buildings named after great, White men, and walk past grand and walk past grand, historic homes marked with plaques heralding the names of the Browns and other elite families, it often felt as though I was trespassing into a different world; one whose history precluded people of color. Fast forward to 2022, I was quite surprised when, through a class I was taking, I learned that one of Providence's most prominent Black neighborhoods had existed right above Brown University; minutes north from where I had lived just a year prior on Lloyd Avenue. Upon the area where I often passed by University Heights Apartments to frequent the local Whole Foods Market, McDonalds, and Staples, this whole neighborhood, known by its locals as the "East Side" yet referred to by developers and local media as "Lippitt Hill" during its redevelopment (Terry), had existed prior to the 1960s, roughly bounded by today's Olney St., North Main St., Doyle Avenue, and Camp Street (Stages of Freedom), shown on the map on the right. These realizations sparked me to learn; learn about the neighborhood and community that once existed in the East Side, learn about the forces that surrounded its destruction, and to share the significance of remembering and understanding the East Side / "Lippitt Hill" for today.

Life in The East Side

The East Side's Black community have a long history of residency and land displacement rooted in the East Side prior to the events of the mid-20th century. Black residents started living in the East Side since the early 19th century, as Rubertone describes how Moses Brown sold land on Olney Street to Cudge Brown, his former slave (77). Despite Cudge Brown's payment to Moses Brown, Moses Brown's negligence in providing a deed caused Cudge's family to lose most of his fairly purchased land on two lots on Olney Street; one more than 100 feet wide and a 30-foot parcel, leaving Cudge's descendants to live on the remainder of land (Rubertone 77) until 1936 ("Oral History Interviews"). As Rubertone recounts, Cudge Brown's story marks one example of the long history of unscrupulous land deals that have affected Providence's people of color, whose subjectivities are rarely acknowledged in the city's narratives (77).

According to local nonprofit Stages of Freedom, before being razed in the 1960s, the East Side was a dense, 30-acre residential neighborhood where a predominantly Black and Cape Verdean community lived alongside Jewish, Polish, and Italian residents throughout much of the 20th century. In 2017, eleven former Black residents recalled the "idyllic setting" of their community in the decades preceding the neighborhood's redevelopment, where "families flourished, block parties brought people together, vigilant parents kept an eye on each other's children, lively retail shops bustled, and life-long friendships were formed." ("Oral History Interviews"). These locals remember the East Side's remarkable sense of community. Former resident Deborah Young Tunstall recalls: "I grew up on Howell St. and I went to Doyle Avenue School. It was a community where everyone knew one another, and all the kids respected the elders. We had a fish man, oil man, rag man, fruit man, and an ice cream man," while Sylvia Ann Soares remarks how "everyone knew everyone else and if you did something, at home they knew about it." ("Oral History Interviews").

While growing up, these former residents remember the East Side, laced with little streets lined with homes and businesses, as a place that had everything they needed to live well. Virginia Veiga recalls: "Growing up on the East Side, we had a lot. More than what we got now for these kids. We had the Benefit Street Recreation Center…We had Halloween parties with Hope High School. Get the children bicycles and gifts every year." Deborah remarked: "We had markets. We had laundromats. We had things. We were poor but we didn't know we were poor. Dr. Andrew Jackson was a black dentist…We had a beautician, Grace Butler." ("Oral History Interviews").

Razing the East Side

Starting in the late 1950s, as part of a broader wave of urban renewal projects taking place across Rhode Island and the U.S at large, the East Side became marked as a "blighted" neighborhood, signaling its fate to be cleared for redevelopment. Thanks to the Slum Clearance and Redevelopment act passed in 1950, the Providence Redevelopment Agency (abbreviated PRA) was legally empowered to forcibly acquire, through eminent domain, private homes in "blighted" areas, a term mapping to residential characteristics such as narrow and congested streets, no central heating, "serious deterioration", and no private bath (Youngs). In 1959, the forcible redevelopment of the East Side was thus approved once the courts acknowledged the neighborhood as "blighted (Youngs). The 1959 Lippitt Hill Redevelopment Project was carried out with the demolition and slum clearance of the East Side being performed by the city, and the redevelopment component of the project handled by University Heights Inc., the winner from an open bidding for private firms on what to do with the cleared land (Youngs).

In November 1959, East Side homeowners were forced to take cash settlements for their properties (Youngs) with little bargaining power, and by January 1961 most of the East Side had been razed ("Lippitt Hill residents get a chance to tell their story"). In total, 650 dwelling units in the

area were demolished, with 450 of these occupied by non-White tenants (Youngs). In its place stood University Heights, a complex of 482 middle-to-high-income apartments, and the adjoining University Market Place shopping center (Youngs).

Black Erasure

Formerly Providence's largest black neighborhood ("Lippitt Hill residents get a chance to tell their story"), the redevelopment of the East Side resulted in the disproportionately severe displacement of the historic black community, drastically reducing the presence of the black community on College Hill. The displaced residents of the East Side faced severe obstacles which largely prohibited them from moving back into the redeveloped neighborhood. In a 1960 housing market that legalized racial discrimination (Youngs), former residents of color faced extreme difficulty in gaining tenancy from the new landlords of the redeveloped neighborhood, even if they could afford it. A March 1959 Providence Journal article on a failed amendment to provide existing tenants preferential tenancy in the redeveloped neighborhood further highlights how the East Side's redevelopment prioritized the property rights of redevelopers to discriminate against those of existing residents to favor the business environment for redevelopers: James F. Reynolds, then PRA executive director, stated that: "It would be up to the redeveloper to decide on qualifications. He would have the final say. We say nothing about him having to take these people [the former residents]," while Charles R. Wood claims the proposal would "restrict a redeveloper's property rights…it's going to scare off redevelopers." ("Plan for Lippitt Hill Opposed").

As a result, these conditions led to national director of the Congress of Racial Equality Floyd B. McKissick referring to urban renewal in Providence simply as "negro removal" in 1966 (Youngs), resulting in the markedly reduced presence of the Black community in Providence. For example, in 1947, the "Negro Motorist Green Book" highlighting safe, Black-owned businesses for Black

American travelers to patronize hosted 10 such locations ("The Negro Motorist Green Book"). In the book's edition published twelve years later in 1959, only one location remained (Terry). These erasures created a long-lasting impact that remains today. As Ray Rickman discusses on the Black community of College Hill: "As far as I know, I'm one of only two long-term—and I'm not long-term—but I'm the second long-term black resident of College Hill. Everyone else is gone. Gone. From a neighborhood once more than a third black, to 2 out of 499." ("Oral History Interviews").

Rationalizing Redevelopment

To further understand the underlying foundations behind why the East Side was removed, I sought to also examine the rationale behind the PRA and city government's decisions. Forced redevelopment of "blighted" areas was believed to be a force of progress to accelerate prosperity, whereby the dilapidation and outdated living conditions of neighborhoods could be improved for living and business development (Youngs).

Firstly, one key component of this with the East Side, as seen through the PRA's privileging of developer property rights over that of existing tenants, involves the rationale of economic development. Then-area supervisor of Providence's Division of Public Assistance Matilda Litwin described in 1960 how "a community with slum areas and deteriorating neighborhoods suffers a three-way loss in the health and welfare of its citizens, its property values and in community morals," (Pickens and Rasquinha) demonstrating the economic rationale of increasing property values in College Hill through her focus on property values. In this dimension, the East Side was redeveloped due to its relatively low-property-value, allowing redevelopment to boost property values across College Hill. Adding on to this, in contrast to how the redevelopment ended up displacing most existing residents, certain anecdotes surrounding the planning process behind University Heights do display that some consideration was given towards accommodating existing

residents to equitably distribute the benefits of the redevelopment project. Youngs discusses how Irving Fain, the leader of University Heights Inc., publicly described the project as a milestone towards addressing racial equality for housing, with the project plan acting "as a demonstration to Providence and to America that people of many backgrounds can live in harmony," where it was implied that many of the displaced families would be able to find affordable housing in the new apartment complex (Youngs). Fain had also apparently promised to make sure at least one business in the shopping center would be black owned, a promise unfulfilled today as subsequent owners and managers of the shopping center have refused to Fain's agreement ("Oral History Interviews").

Significantly, the other key component, alluded to in Litwin's focus on the "health and welfare" and "community morals", centers on seemingly upkeeping the physical and social health of a community. This can be seen in how developers and officials further framed the redevelopment's aim to cleanse. For instance, in Rhode Island, this was seen when the residential quality of disrepair present in blight was alleged in Rhode Island court around time to lead to "the incidence of juvenile delinquency, aid to dependent children, tuberculosis and other diseases" (Youngs). The pathologizing rationale behind such redevelopment can be further explored through when Governor Del Sesto convened a meeting between local religious and urban leaders discussing "the housing problem as it effects the non-White population" of Rhode Island ("Study of housing needs" iii), with the executive and deputy directors of the PRA in attendance. An excerpt from the meeting's report states: "The rightful opportunity for any man to seek for himself and his family decent, safe, and sanitary housing – within his economic means and in areas of his own choice – should be a privilege entitled to all" (iv), implying a goal of improving the sanitation specifically for neighborhoods and communities of color. Adding on to this, a December 1960 Brown Daily Herald report on the East Side redevelopment project characterizes the neighborhood as "substandard, in comparison to the city of Providence" by measure of ill health, disease, juvenile delinquency,

welfare, and morals, referring to the incidence of "illegitimate births" ("Lippitt Hill Redevelopment").

Significantly, these pathologizing sentiments, placed in context alongside racist attitudes at the time, are tied with a racist sense of discomfort held by then White communities against living alongside Black communities. Before its razing, the East Side was uniquely situated as a Black neighborhood right next to where Providence's richest families lived. Ray Rickman believes that this fact was key as to why the East Side was chosen for redevelopment, as he states:

> "Now remember, this black neighborhood was pushing up against College Hill, as going from being mixed—When I came, I loved College Hill because the Browns were living one block from other browns. And the other browns didn't have any money. I'd never seen anything like this in my life. In Detroit, the Fords and the Chryslers lived in Grosse Point or Indian Village--wherever they lived, nobody black lived a block from them. And nobody, nobody, lived a block from them in a beat-up house. Or a triple-decker. I'd never seen anything like this in my life." (Stages of Freedom).

An example in Newport in 1942 helps to demonstrate the racist underpinnings surrounding housing practices in Rhode Island that precipitated the East Side's razing. Youngs describes how, when a newly built military housing area opened rentals to Black Americans, one hundred nearby White residents wrote a letter of concern to Mayor McCauley with the following five justifications:

1. "The unusual close association of white and colored children.
2. The noticeable difference in general standard of living between white and colored races.
3. According to recent health statistics, a marked difference between health and sanitary conditions existing between the two races.
4. The presence of major handicap in social affairs of the project.
5. The maintenance of the morale and prestige of the white race which in these critical times we believe are worth more than a few advantages conferred at the Tonomy Hill Housing Project affairs." (Youngs)

Thus, it can be argued that the pathologizing sentiments that described the East Side community of color as physically and socially diseased are linked with racist attitudes commonplace at the time, which provides another significant reason behind why existing residents were displaced. Thus, it is quite possible that the redevelopment project, despite the stated aims of some to

accommodate existing residents, took place to both facilitate the development of College Hill, and displace its historic Black community away from any benefits from redevelopment.

Preservation vs. Renewal

I would also like to bring up the way that the East Side redevelopment project ties in with broader themes of historical preservation in Rhode Island. Youngs points out how Antoinette Downing, the founder of the Providence Preservation Society who led a movement to preserve many historic homes and neighborhoods on the East Side from demolition, was herself on the board of University Heights, Inc., rendering her complicit in the redevelopment of the East Side. As Youngs discusses, this connection makes it clear that preservation was a priority for White neighborhoods on the East Side, yet the preservation of Providence's most prominent black neighborhood was secondary. Youngs' comments highlight the artificiality of behind what is fit for preservation, and the nature that race plays into the preservation of Providence as it has played out. As Rickman discusses: "It's a very complicated story…It was not a slum in the classic sense. And I believe if White folks lived there, it would have been restored." ("Oral History Interviews").

Takeaways

The story of the redevelopment of the East Side – formerly Providence's largest black neighborhood – is critical on several scopes. For the prior residents of the East Side, it is a story pivotal to their life, marking an act of structural violence committed against them while also sparking their perseverance in response in the decades that followed their displacement. Moreso than this, it is one story that remains, today, relatively hidden, where the public, including many like myself who live on College Hill and benefitted from the erasure of the East Side, remain unaware to the ways in which such violence and displacement occurred. The story of the East Side's redevelopment also

acts as a microcosm to ground how broader forces of urban renewal, gentrification, and selective historic preservation disproportionately harm people of color and communities on the margin, allowing us to ground our understanding these three forces, urgent and relevant throughout our world today, in the past; to better inform our future.

2. Sources

To examine my narrative, I consulted a variety of different sources in the process of learning about the East Side's redevelopment. Fortunately, I was greatly assisted in my project by the expansive existing body of knowledge regarding the redevelopment and history of the East Side / "Lippitt Hill" which exists online and has been compiled and expanded upon by others as recent as 2017. In the following section, I will discuss some of the sources that guided my learning.

Primary Sources

Arguably the most significant primary source I referenced was a transcript featuring the words of Ray Rickman, the executive director of Stages of Freedom, and eleven former residents of the East Side recounting their experience living in the East Side and living through its redevelopment while convening in the Providence Community Library on the evening of June 29, 2017. Transcribed by Ben Berke, the source provided me with invaluable first-hand accounts on what life was like in the East Side, which provided irreplaceable insight into the nature of the neighborhood removed from the characterizations of local media, developers, and city officials who worked towards its redevelopment.

In my search, I also came across two separate newspaper articles, one from a December 1960 issue of the Brown Daily Herald, and another from the March 13 issue of The Providence

Journal, both covering the redevelopment of "Lippitt Hill". These articles provided both a look into how local media portrayed what was going on during this time, and direct, primary quotes from officials central to the East Side's redevelopment such as PRA executive director James F. Reynolds and Charles R. Wood, the then-city urban renewal coordinator.

Another significant primary source I encountered was a physical copy of the "Study of housing needs of non-white families in the Lippitt Hill area" dating from April 1, 1960. This was a report, commissioned by then Governor Del Sesto and produced by The State of Rhode Island's Commission against Discrimination, which covered a study surrounding the housing needs of non-White families across RI, and centering on the "Lippitt Hill" area for its study on Providence County. I came across this source while searching through Brown University's library search engine, and borrowed the physical copy located in the Rockefeller library to read, with its pages falling apart and with the paper having yellowed over the decades. The report was interesting to read, as it helped provide me an understanding into how city officials viewed the act of redevelopment and was cited in my narrative for a quote that highlighted the pathologizing sentiment behind why the East Side was redeveloped.

Secondary Sources

I was fortunate that a number of authors had compiled information on the redevelopment and history of the East Side, many of these sources providing an exhaustive overview on the story of what happened in the East Side.

The online article "A Place Prepared: The Demolition of "Lippitt Hill"" written by Rai Terry, a graduate student in the Brown University Public Humanities program and Fellow at the Center for Slavery and Justice, was one such source. Terry's piece helped me understand more about the pathologizing sentiments surrounding slum clearance, and on other resources such as the shift in

the "Negro Motorist Green Book" which helped to highlight the ways that the East Side redevelopment project affected the Black community in Rhode Island.

The essay "Urban Renewal and Rhode Island: A Complicated History" by Miguel Youngs working at the Rhode Island Historical Society was another central source that I constantly referred to in my research. Youngs' article gave a broad overview and timeline of the events surrounding the East Side / "Lippitt Hill"s redevelopment, and also helped me to understand the rationale behind why the PRA was legally empowered to acquire blighted neighborhoods. Youngs' work also helped me to learn about the broader historical context of racist housing practices and urban renewal that the East Side was one part of.

Ben Burke's special to the Providence Journal also was another article that made up the foundation of my project, painting a history of the East Side while also integrating direct quotes from the talk with Ray Rickman and former residents on June 29, 2017 which helped to ground their quotes and personal experience within a broader timeline.

Patricia E. Rubertone's book, "Native Providence: memory, community, and survivance in the Northeast" also was cited in my project, as Rubertone's work regarding the land ownership and loss of Cudge Brown and his family helped me to learn about how historically rooted the East Side's redevelopment was in a long-lasting trend of inequitable housing practices.

I also used a 2022 Brown Daily Herald article on "Lippitt Hill" and the displacement of non-White communities in Providence, written by fellow classmate Katy Pickens and Rhea Rasquinha, as another source which helped me to gain a foundational understanding on the events surrounding the East Side, while also allowing me to learn about other key sources cited such as articles from the Providence Journal which greatly informed my research.

3. Broader Connections

The significance of the East Side's redevelopment story can be seen in the many ways in which the East Side's redevelopment reflects broader themes we have discussed in the course.

While conducting my research, I was constantly reminded about the ways in which the East Side's story reflects our class discussions on "dissonant" heritage and the complicated politics of heritage. The East Side story fits into the idea of heritages in conflict, as a key tension that arises in the story is how the East Side, as Providence's predominant Black neighborhood, becomes razed for the goal of redevelopment, while other parts of College Hill where the dominant White community resides in become preserved as historic heritage. For the Providence of 1959, this meant that there was a critical difference in how different interest groups saw the meaning and value of the East Side. Existing residents like Deborah Tunstall saw it as a neighborhood where "we didn't know we were poor" while many outside of the East Side saw it as simply as "blight" destined for destruction. One parallel from the course that matches this sentiment is Mydans' New York Times article discussing the public plan to displace the residents, who lived there for generations, of Fort Mahakan in Bangkok. The Fort Mahakan story highlighted, to me, how differing definitions of heritage create different perceptions of value on what to keep, and what to destroy. As Professor Chatri Prakitnonthakan says in Mydans' article, "the government's definition of history is palaces and temples…the community is not part of history, by the government's definition." Similarly, the story of the East Side mirrors this in how city officials failed to see the heritage value of the predominantly Black East Side neighborhood, instead choosing other locations in College Hill to preserve. In this vein, the Black community of the East Side are, like the community of Fort Mahakan, not seen as a legitimate part of Providence's history for many redevelopers and officials.

Adding on to this point, I found that this conflict in whether places such as the East Side are valid and legitimate parts of heritage also extends to our discussions on experimental preservation, particularly with how such preservation deals with the vernacular and the quotidian. In Oteros-Pailos's article, he talks about the aims of experimental preservationists today in preserving objects once considered ugly or unsavory and "usually excluded by official narratives" for the development of cultural heritage. While city officials at the time considered the East Side's urban space simply as "blight" with little to no cultural value, experimental preservationists today could arguably view the East Side, with its vernacular architecture, as critical towards the cultural and historical heritage of Providence.

The narrative of the East Side also closely ties into the spatial imagineering of cities like Providence. Yeoh discusses this idea of spatial imagineering through examples spanning several cities across Southeast Asia, where the act of selective heritage conservation and creation in the city in places such as Singapore acted as a critical component as to how cities market themselves (948). Greenfield's chapter on historic preservation in Providence highlighted how this idea of spatial imagineering took place in the historic preservation of Providence in the 1940s and 1950s, right before the redevelopment of the East Side. Greenfield describes how Northern Benefit Street was rebuilt in "the image of an idealized past," where "middle-class white families remodeled and restored tarpapered colonials previously occupied by Black families. They removed cheap siding, repointed chimneys, replaced windows, and turned junk-filled yards into urban gardens" (1), part of a process of preservation which successfully "raised property values and drew middle-class residents back to the city" (13). The East Side's redevelopment fits right along into this process – a process where markers of Black communities in Providence's urban space are silenced to market a palatable, somewhat imagined, and incomplete portrayal of history.

The East Side also remains particularly relevant to our class's explorations of "the underground." As Byrne explores in the Preface to "Surface Collection", the archaeological idea of "the underground" refers to a clandestine dimension of the surface where suppressed stories, often from underclasses, dispossessed Indigenous minorities, or silenced historical episodes, remain hidden in the open (x). Byrne's own understanding of "the underground" then materializes in his discussions surrounding the families of Balinese killed in the 1965-1966 massacre, whose perspective on the idyllic terrain of Bali hold an exclusive understanding of signs that outsiders could not decipher (xii – xiii). Another example of "the underground" as discussed in class comes up in Wainwright's discussion of slavery tours of London that seek to explore a hidden side of London, where if "usually a guide might regale you with stories of the birth of London's coffee culture, or charming details about the facade," such a tour would instead "paint graphic picture of a place where sugar plantation owners would meet with slave ship captains to broker deals over the fate of hundreds of enslaved Africans, thousands of miles away." In the same vein, the ways in which former residents of the East Side shared their oral history felt remarkably similar. To illustrate this, I have attached an excerpt from former resident Sylvia Ann Soares. While it is quite long, I believe that her words from 2017 – 58 years ago from when she is quoted from below – are significant enough to warrant the whole, uncut quote:

> "When I was about four years old, I lived on Bates St. Bates St. is hard to describe because it's not there now. But if you're standing in front of Staples in the University Heights, and you look over behind it sort of to the right, it came down from Camp St. and came down right about there, and then it took a left turn and came down Lippitt St. I then moved down there to 17 Lippitt St., Lippitt St. was located right where the entrance to University Heights Plaza off North Main St. is, except that they cut out the land to put University Heights Plaza in. So, if you will also look over past Santander Bank, you will see that their land is higher, and that land actually came sloping down. Our house was near the bottom, and it would've been where today the Starbucks is--who knows what's going to be there later? There's a driveway on that side. The few houses down there, you had to go up the cement steps to get to the house. So, our house would've been up in the air over that driveway if it was still here now." ("Oral History Interviews").

Sylvia's story highlights how, due to the nature of urban renewal in the East Side, the signs today pointing to where homes like hers existed in 1959 are only discernible to the few. Where many today, like myself, see an inconspicuous, hardly unique shopping center to get groceries from Whole Foods or deposit a check in Santander Bank, suppressed stories like where Sylvia Ann Soares lived remain lost in the open, present in the silences of the razed East Side. To this point, Kusno's work on the way the 1998 May Riots have been treated in the urban memory of post-1998 Jakarta also remains relevant. As Kusno writes on the ruins of damaged buildings leftover from the riots:

> "As we have seen, these spaces bear no relation to the horrors that have taken place; they have instead been dehistoricized into spaces of exchange such as the modern mall or theme park. Like the cityscape of Jakarta, these spaces speak to the silent language of the victims of the rapes. The silence invoked by these buildings, as powerful as a voice, opens up the possibility of acknowledging the difficulties entailed in representing the gang rapes." (122-123).

After learning about the redevelopment of the East Side, I find it exceedingly difficult for me to imagine returning to the shopping center built upon the site of the East Side, and not think about the silence invoked by the absence of what used to exist there.

4. Interpretive Element

For my interpretive element, I have decided to create a design of a plaque to help memorialize the locations where the razed homes of the residents of the East Side reside today. The rationale behind this choice is that this design is based on a subversion of the plaque design that the Providence Preservation Society uses to designate houses of historic value, which can be seen frequently while walking across the preserved streets of College Hill in Providence today. In the process of preparing my design, I spent some time exploring the northern part of the historic College Hill district, where many houses marked as historically preserved exist. I recorded the

plaques that the PPS and other similar organizations have used to mark specific houses as heritage worthy of recognition and preservation. A photo selection of these plaques is attached below:

Design-wise, these plaques are characterized by the tying of the name of a person, of which I encountered were mostly White, powerful men of history, to the house, along with the inclusion of the year in which the house has been built as a marker of how long-standing a specific house and piece of heritage is. With the prominence of these plaques across Providence and surrounding the former site of the East Side in mind, I designed a plaque as follows below for Sylvia Ann Soares's house, which was described by Sylvia earlier in the block quote earlier on in this report. Since I am not sure of when Sylvia's house was built, I put in a placeholder year of 1800 for now.

The design is shown below:

The design is intended to be interwoven with the amnesiac-built environment today where the East Side used to stand, with plaques matching the houses of former residents placed where a respective house used to sit, with matching information. Each plaque would also be accompanied with a QR code that could link to a website containing information regarding the redevelopment of the East Side and the displacement that followed, allowing those curious to learn more. The design would be viewed by members of the public walking by the area; especially targeting those who live and use facilities on the site of a razed neighborhood who might not be fully aware of what was destroyed in the process.

The concept is inspired by the idea of counter-monuments that act as alternative forms of commemoration that differ from traditional norms. Some examples which inspired my work are included below:

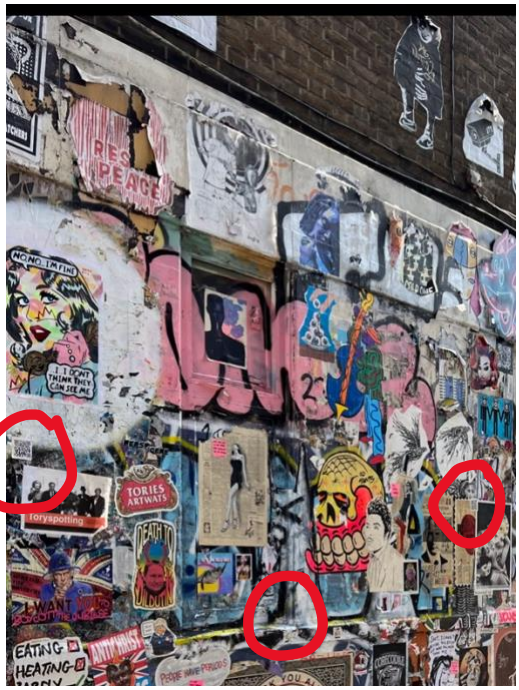
A memorial to Sammy Devenny in Northern Ireland, marking the first death of the troubles, located where he was killed (McDowell and Switzer)

The "Sunken Fountain" counter monument, where a fountain was rebuilt inverted into the ground to mark the holocaust (Young)

The "Sunken Fountain" particularly struck me as significant in how it had physically inverted the fountain that used to exist, playing into the ways in which absences can help us remember dark or unpleasant heritage in conflict and stories of loss. Inspired by this, I wanted to make a design where viewers could similarly see a subversion of the plaques common in College Hill. I aimed to contribute to this sense of subversion through, first, inverting the colors used in most of the plaques, using a stark black background with white accents rather than a white background to signify the focus on destruction versus construction, and the message on racial discrimination. Furthermore, the position of these plaques, interspersed among everyday life and spaces such as in the memorial to Sammy Devenny, would also mark a sense of aberration and dissonance away from

the specific dedication of space to existing monuments to make viewers stop and reflect more, as a reminder that is brought to the attention of viewers in a way unexpected of monuments.

The attached QR code would also help to allow these plaques act as a gateway towards learning more, especially for people like myself who were not aware of what had happened on the East Side. This choice was also inspired by how, in my travels, I have seen how QR codes have often been used to promote counter-cultural movements and ideas. For instance, I took the image on the right on a wall of street art in Shoreditch, London, where many different QR codes were pasted on the wall to promote different campaigns or ideas.



With more time, I would like to try and develop a website that would link to these QR codes, conveying the story of the East Side to the public, while also making mock physical plaques which could, with the permission of existing residents, be placed across the sites of the former East Side.

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