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"The Dream is in the Process:" Environmental Racism and Environmental Justice in Boston, 1900 to 2000

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An Abstract of the Dissertation Presented
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The following work explores the evolution of a resident-directed environmental activism that challenged negative public perception to redevelop their community. Beginning in the 1950s, city leaders justified the dislocation of non-white residents from Boston's South End with the argument that they failed to maintain personal property and degraded community institutions. Most of these minority residents were forced to move to Roxbury. From 1963 to 1983, Roxbury lost 2,200 housing units. The vacant lots led to illegal dumping, and increased toxicity in the air, water, and soil from undesirable land use businesses such as asphalt plants. As a result, banks, supermarkets and pharmacies refused to locate in the area. By 1985, the Dudley area of Roxbury shared a median income with the poorest communities in the United States. The negative perception of residents, abrogation of civil and property rights, and denial of essential services led to isolation and vulnerability that instituted and enforced environmental racism.

The roots of the Environmental Justice Movement (EJM) that gained public recognition in Boston during the 1990s extend back to the nineteenth century. Minorities employed a variety of environmental strategies and actions to control their community and shape policies that impacted their community. In response to urban renewal and coupled with civil rights efforts, residents

developed an activist approach in the 1960s. In the 1970s, groups recruited participants, built organizational capacities, and improved the networking capabilities of residents. While they did not identify as environmentalists, their pragmatic pursuit of equality led to specific environmental improvements.

In the 1980s, the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) drew directly from the experiences and personnel of previous efforts to build a national exemplar of environmental justice. Building an "urban village" in Dudley Square facilitated a variety of environmentally focused initiatives that increased access to public transportation, expanded clean energy use, improved air quality, and reduced pollutants. Activist groups pioneered civic environmentalism, the philosophy that environmentalism and civic activism begins in the home, street, and neighborhood where one lives. Proponents of civic environmentalism contend that local environmental stewardship leads to sound environmental policy on larger and more complex scales.

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INTRODUCTION

ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN BOSTON, 1900-2000

By the turn of the twenty-first century, minority led activist groups in Boston redeveloped the Roxbury and North Dorchester communities with a sense of history and vision for the future. Veronica Eady, executive director of Alternatives for Community and Environment (ACE), reflected on the state of environmental justice in an opinion editorial for the *Boston Globe* on Earth Day in 1998. Eady characterized Martin Luther King as "a distinguished forefather of the modern-day environmental justice movement." Like those in the civil rights movement, minority groups employed the strategies and tactics of the Environmental Justice Movement (EJM) to demand access to power in order to improve their communities. ACE initiatives pushed Boston area residents to "expand our notion of environment" to include cities and minorities living in them.[1] The following work explores the themes of Veronica Eady's opinion piece: the evolution of a resident-directed environmentalism that challenged negative public perception to redevelop their community.

The story begins in Boston's South End where residents used the area's ethnic enclaves and nearby industrial employment to gain a foothold in the city. When urban renewal projects promised federal dollars at the beginning of the 1950s, city leaders justified the dislocation of minority residents with the argument that they failed to maintain personal property and degraded civic institutions. By the 1980s, African American and Latinx, residential options were increasingly restricted to the predominantly minority communities of Roxbury and North Dorchester. During the 1960s and 1970s, civil rights groups in Boston promoted a variety of

1 *Boston Globe*, 4/22/1998.

improvements such as home ownership, access to city services, local economic growth, cultural pride, and community control. While these groups did not identify as "environmentalists" they employed strategies to improve their environment as a means to confront racial inequality. These experiences contributed to the growth of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) during the 1980s. Using the Community Development Corporation (CDC) model, the DSNI stabilized and redeveloped Roxbury's Dudley Square, becoming a national example for a pragmatic "from the bottom up" environmentalism.

During the twentieth century minority residents advocated for "urban villages" as a means of allaying racism and rebuilding their communities. Urban villages or "mixed-use" areas contain a variety of residences, restaurants, retail stores, repair shops, theatres, social organizations, and civic resources. In the South End, the urban village model bolstered the local economy, promoted sociability, and maintained the autonomy of local institutions. Businesses open at different parts of the day provided "eyes on the street" that contributed to the well-being of the neighborhood.[2] Since the turn of the twentieth century, residents had connected housing quality, property ownership, locally owned businesses, access to cultural resources, delivery of city services, open and green space, and food options with personal and community well-being. South End residents had employed the streets, alleys, poolrooms, bars, convenience stores, social clubs, bawdy houses, theatres, and recreational areas as places of cultural expression. Because of these factors the creation, use, adaptation, and ownership of the built environment proved crucial in the South End, Roxbury, and North Dorchester. The urban village functioned as an object of

2 Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of American Cities* (New York: Harper Collins, 1961), 78. See also: Mark Roseland, "Dimensions of the eco-city," *Cities*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (1997): 197-202; Jennifer Light, *The Nature of Cities: Ecological Visions and the American Urban Professions, 1920-1960* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 2009).

racial and class struggle, the means by which groups sought to revitalize the area and reinvigorate Boston's minority community.[3]

Environmental Racism

Tracing this narrative expands the definition of environmental racism to characterize how minorities faced inequality in Boston. Environmental racism can be defined as the exclusion of minorities from the decision-making and policy creation that impacts their lives and environment, broadly conceived. The effects of environmental racism have been measured in residents' exposure to lead, proximity to waste sites, and air pollution.[4] In Boston, these factors worked in conjunction to degrade the quality of life and as a barrier to upward mobility. Preconceptions of how ethnic minorities impacted neighborhoods drove urban renewal policy and limited housing options. By the 1970s, Boston's black community lived within clearly demarcated borders, which made them vulnerable to a battery of environmental issues that will be discussed below.[5]

The idea that non-white cultures were inherently flawed and posed a danger to society proved decisive in the denial of their property and civil rights. Social workers and academics of the late 1800s argued that ethnic minorities degraded their surroundings. For example, urban sociologist Robert Park's 1915 essay "Human Behavior in the City Environment" charged that residents of working-class areas displayed a "persistent and distressing uniformity of vice, crime, and poverty" that made them "peculiarly fit for the environment in which they were condemned to

3 Giovanna Di Chiro, "Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, edited by William Cronon (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996): 299-320.

4 Shirley A. Rainey and Glenn S. Johnson, "Grassroots Activism: An Exploration of Women of Color's Role in the Environmental Justice Movement," *Gender & Class* Vol. 16, No. 3/4 (2009): 144-173.

5 For further background on African Americans in Boston, see: James and Lois Horton. *Black Bostonians* (Boulder, CO: Holmes and Meir Publishing, 2000).

exist." Park concluded "civilization, in the interest of the common welfare" demanded the control of ethnic minorities' "wild, natural dispositions."[6] These notions became codified in academia, planning and building organizations, financial institutions, and different levels of government during the 1930s and 1940s.[7] The Federal Housing Authority determined that minority residents lacked the capacity to hold mortgages, famously "redlining" areas of cities. In the 1950s, newspaper characterizations of the South End as a "skid row" shaped public opinion and justified subsequent policy decisions. Mel King, who ran for mayor in 1983, grew up in the South End and observed: "somebody else defined my community in a way that allowed them to justify destruction of it."[8]

Environmental racism in Boston functioned as a discourse to justify the marginalization of minority communities and deny essential environmental rights. In the 1960s, predominantly minority areas of the South End, Roxbury, and Dorchester lacked sanitation, housing code enforcement, and public safety services. By the end of the 1970s, many in the metropolitan area viewed Roxbury as a "race," meaning a place synonymous with blackness, and its inhabitants as dangerous. Housing quality spiraled downward, and arson cases skyrocketed. From 1963 to 1983, Roxbury lost 2,200 housing units, or forty-seven percent of its stock. Banks, supermarkets and pharmacies refused to locate in Roxbury and North Dorchester. By 1985, the area shared a median income with the poorest communities in the United States. Local building contractors

6 Robert Park, "Human Behavior in the City Environment," *American Journal of Sociology* Vol. 20, No. 5 (March, 1915): 585-615.

7 To examine how assumptions about minorities and urban space influenced government policy, see for example, the work of: Louis Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life," *American Journal of Sociology* Vol. 44 No. 1 (July, 1938): 1-24. Wirth, "Human Ecology," *American Journal of Sociology* Vol. 50 No. 6 (May, 1945): 483-488. Wirth, "Housing as a Field of Sociological Research," *American Sociological Review* Vol. 12 No.2 (April 1947): 137-143.

8 *Chain of Change: Struggles for Black Community Development* (Boston: South End Press, 1981).

and car thieves illegally dumped old refrigerators, washing machines, vehicles and other items in empty lots. Environmental racism in Boston deprived residents of their rights as citizens and created barriers to people getting everyday items others took for granted.[9]

Environmental Justice

Environmental justice advocates argue that all people have an equal right to protection from environmental degradation and seek to defend areas that have been targeted for pollution and unwanted land uses. In these efforts, the EJM pushes to shift the burden of proof from those affected by pollution to the polluters themselves. Put another way, companies should have to prove they are not harming a community, rather than residents have to prove an unwanted land

9 The pioneer of environmental racism research is sociologist Robert Bullard**.** See Bullard, *Unequal Protection: Environmental Justice and Communities of Color* (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1997): 37-45; Robert D. Bullard, *Dumping In Dixie: Race, Class, And Environmental Quality* (Abingdon, U.K.: Routledge, 2000); Geographers have examined environmental racism; see, for example: Ryan Holifield, "Defining environmental justice and environmental racism," *Urban Geography*, No. 22, Is. 1 (2001): 78-90; Jim Glassman, "Critical geography II: Articulating race and radical politics," *Progress in Human Geography*, No. 34, Is. 4 (2010): 506-512. David Smith, *Geography and social justice*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.

For an example of the philosophical literature on environmental racism, see: Laura Westra and Bill Lawson. *Faces of Environmental Racism: Confronting Issues of Global Justice* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Press, 1995).

Historians have been examining environmental racism beginning in the 1990s. See: Martin Melosi, "Equity, Eco-Racism and Environmental History," *Environmental History Review* Vol. 19, No. 3 (Autumn, 1995): 1-16. Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980* (University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

Historical research into environmental racism has explored its prevalence in minority and underrepresented communities. See: Sylvia Hood Washington, *Packing Them In: An Archeology of Environmental Racism in Chicago, 1865-1954* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004); Winona La Duke, *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1999); Laura Pulido, *Environmentalism and Economic Justice: Two Chicano Struggles in the Southwest* (Tucson, AZ: Arizona University Press, 1996); Taylor E. Doreceta, *Toxic Communities: Environmental Racism, Industrial Pollution, and Residential Mobility*. (New York University Press, 2014); Linda Nash, *Inescapable Ecologies: A History of Environment, Disease, and Knowledge*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Julie Sze, *Noxious New York: The Racial Politics of Urban Health and Environmental Justice*. (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T Press, 2007).

use will negatively impact them. To this end, the EJM pursues a policy of preventing public health problems rather than reacting to negative health outcomes. This work argues that minorities employed a variety of environmental strategies and actions to control their community and shape policies that impacted their environment beginning in the mid 1960s. While they did not typically self-identify as environmentalists, their pragmatic pursuit of equality led to specific environmental improvements.[10]

While the 1978, resident activism against toxic pollution in Warren County, North Carolina is widely conceived of as the origin of the EJM movement on a national level, the minority-led organizations that fought urban renewal policies in Boston began to develop the basic tactics, strategies, and goals of environmental justice as early as the 1960s. In Boston during the 1960s, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) demanded an end to segregation in public housing and denial of city services, while it advocated for improved housing conditions, transportation options, and employment opportunities. A coalition of groups thwarted plans for the proposed southwest extension of Interstate-93 through Roxbury in the late 1960s. Beginning in the 1970s, groups recruited participants, built organizational capacities, and improved the networking capabilities of residents. Drawing upon the ideas of African decolonization movements, activists declared that "self-determination" would lead to "community development." The Lower Roxbury Community Corporation (LRCC) built new homes in the area and directed the construction of a new high school. Mel King pioneered CDC legislation in the Massachusetts

10 Luke W. Cole and Sheila R. Foster, *From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement*. (New York University Press, 2001); Robert Gottlieb, *Environmentalism Unbound: Exploring New Pathways for Change* (Cambridge MA: M.I.T. Press, 2001); Roger Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement*. (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2005). For a philosophical perspective on environmental justice, see: Peter S. Wenz, *Environmental Justice* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1988).

legislature in the 1970s, providing activists with a vehicle for community development strategies. Efforts in Boston developed in conjunction with an "eco-populist" movement among Latinx, American Indian, and African American groups across the United States. This networking agenda helped them connect with academics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), bringing gravitas to the improvement agendas of the 1980s.

In the 1980s, the DSNI drew directly from the experiences and personnel of previous efforts to expand participation and the durability of improvement plans. Because of the DSNI's enlarged civic capacity, it gained eminent domain rights to rebuild the area. During the 1990s, DSNI programs built cooperative, multi-family, and single-family homes, revitalized buildings in Dudley Square, and constructed Dudley Commons as a focal point for the area. Activist organizations, including many CDCs, piloted a number of initiatives that increased access to public transportation, expanded clean energy use, improved air quality, and reduced pollutants. Residents spearheaded garden initiatives and park improvement plans to enliven empty lots, augment green space, and provide locally-grown vegetables. The DSNI and ACE also removed pollutants from old industrial facilities and converted the buildings for business development. The proliferation of CDC's and the rise of ACE in the 1990s demonstrated the effectiveness and durability of environmentally-focused strategies. In this way, struggles against racism are referred to as environmental justice or *civic environmentalism*. Proponents of civic environmentalism argued that environmental stewardship in the community leads to sound policy.[11]

11 There is extensive literature on civic environmentalism. See: Andrew Dobson, *Citizenship and the Environment*, (Oxford University Press, 1993); William Shutkin, *The Land that Could Be: Environmentalism and Democracy in the 21st Century*, (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 2000); Kent Portney, "Civic Engagement and Sustainable Cities in the United States," *Public Administration Review* Vol. 65, No. 5 (Sept.-Oct. 2005): 579-591; Julian Agyeman & Briony

By the early 1990s environmental justice developed into a sustained national movement, one that the DSNI stood poised to lead. In 1991, the EJM organized the first National People of Color Environmental Summit and introduced its "Principles of Environmental Justice." The declaration connected issues faced in poor rural and urban communities, arguing for "the right to ethical, balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources." Development strategies must be pursued in "balance with nature, honoring the cultural integrity of all our communities and providing fair access for all the full range of resources."[12] The EJM embraced the democratic tradition of city planning, arguing that "the built form of cities should come from the hands of their citizens; that we should reject the tradition whereby large organizations build for people."[13] The DSNI aligned themselves with the EJM and earned a reputation as a national leader in terms of organization building and project execution.

The turning point in the story of environmental racism and environmental justice occurred when activist groups changed how experts interacted with residents of Roxbury and North Dorchester. For the first three quarters of the twentieth century, academics and professional organizations studied minority residents as objects of analysis with little or no input from the people themselves. The connections that activists made with scholars at MIT bore fruit in the DSNI's work in the 1980s. By the 1990s, the academics that helped to found ACE worked with residents to identify and solve environmental problems by providing them with relevant

Angus, "The Role of Civic Environmentalism in the Pursuit of Sustainable Communities," *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management* Vol. 46 Is. 3 (2003): 345-363.

12 The principles of the first EJM sumit are widely available; see, for example, https://www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.pdf and Washington, *Packing Them In*, 99.

13 Peter Fitting, "Urban Planning/ Utopian Dreaming" Le Corbusier's Chandigarh Today" *Utopian Studies* Vol. 13 No. 1 (2002): 71.

resources and literature so that "they become their own experts."[14] Instead of justifying dislocation and alienation, professionals empowered residents. Regeneration efforts contributed to changes in public perception and discourse about minority communities in Boston. By the early 1990s, the *Boston Globe* began using the terms environmental racism and environmental justice in the same fashion that Roxbury and North Dorchester residents did.[15] The EJM publicity allowed residents to define issues for themselves.

Urbanizing Environmental History

The framework of urban environmental historian transforms our understanding of non-white urban life and political mobilization in twentieth-century Boston. Beginning in the early 1990s, scholars like Martin Melosi, Joel Tarr, William Cronon, and Roger Gottlieb pushed environmental history to explore cities. Melosi's "The Place of the City in Environmental History" argued that four factors contribute to an urban environmental analysis: natural forces, growth, spatial change, and human action.[16] Boston residents first backfilled areas of the harbor and constructed wharves to establish economic and social stability. Warehouses, merchant shops, and housing developed because of its proximity to natural features. Residents next demarcated commercial, manufacturing, and residential areas. The growth of central arteries and bridges sped transportation and access to lumber for building.[17] Melosi's categories function in a

14 Penn Loh and Jodi Sugerman-Brozan, "Environmental Justice Organizing for Environmental Health: a Case Study on Asthma and Diesel Exhaust in Roxbury, Massachusetts" *The Annals of the American Academy, AAPSS* No. 584 (2002): 110-124.

15 *Boston Globe*, 12/1/1994. See also: *Bay State Banner* 10/16/1997; *Boston Globe*, 11/16/1997.

16 Martin Melosi, "The Place of the City in Environmental History," *Environmental History Review* Vol. 17, No. 1 (Spring, 1993): 1-23. See also, Martin Melosi, "Cities, Technical Systems, and the Environment," *Environmental History Review* Vol. 14 No. ½ (Spring-Summer, 1990): 45-64.

17 William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992). This monograph explains the phenomenon described in this paragraph,

dynamic and interactive manner as natural space shapes human activity, as natural space becomes something new after human contact. Joel Tarr observed that the location of roads, bridges, and waste treatment facilities reflected class, racial, and ethnic biases.[18] Earlier urban environmental historians illustrated how a city can be understood from an environmental perspective, but as Tarr indicated, social forces shape the natural world and thus the distribution of access to environmental resources and amenities.

To understand a city from an environmental perspective requires an analysis of the social and economic forces altering natural and built space. Michael Rawson's *Eden on the Charles* explored the political, social, and economic forces that altered the natural environment in Boston. During the nineteenth century, the city created the South End out of tidal flats in order to build housing away from the noise and soot of downtown and its burgeoning immigrant population. In the latter half of the century, a more ambitious land fill project gave birth to the Back Bay. Here an orderly grid pattern of streets reflected the dictates of the Industrial Revolution and the genteel class that called its side streets home. Rawson illustrated how Boston's growth reflected competing class and ethnic visions of how the city should be laid out.[19] Matthew Klingle's *Emerald City* employed a similar environmental and social analysis to explore the development of Seattle. Railroad speculators and industrialists used the legal system to gain control of and fill in tidelands that would serve as the downtown of the city. Its new owners eliminated the

demonstrating how the growth of Chicago impacted ecological and social changes in the American West.

18 Joel Tarr, "The Search for the Ultimate Sink: Urban Air, Land, and Water Pollution in Historical Perspective," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society* Vol. 51 (1984): 1-29; Joel Tarr, "Water and Waste: A Retrospective Assessment of Wastewater Technology in the United States, 1800-1932," *Technology and Culture* Vol. 25 No. 2 (April, 1984): 226-263. See also: Martin V. Melosi, *The Sanitary City: Urban Infrastructure in America from Colonial Times to the Present* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2000).

19 Michael Rawson, *Eden on the Charles: The Making of Boston* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

designation of tidelands as communal area for residents to fish and access resources provided by tidal flux. In Boston and Seattle the adaptation of the natural environment to facilitate economic development pushed working-class residents to the marginal areas of the city.[20] Applying an environmental analysis to Boston in the twentieth century provides insight into the ways that ordinary people participated in, perceived, interpreted, and reacted to changes such as these.

Historical monographs devoted to environmental racism have established the relationship between racial inequality, residential locations, and environmental services. Andrew Hurley's *Environmental Inequalities* explored how minority residents and workers bore the brunt of the environmental degradation from the steel mills of Gary, Indiana. Sylvia Hood Washington's *Packing Them In* established that the African American residents of Altgeld Gardens in the South Side of Chicago lived in one of the most polluted urban neighborhoods in the nation. Washington demonstrated how city planners in Chicago employed the designation of African Americans and immigrants as a social "other" to segregate blacks and ethnic minorities to ensure the health of society as a whole. Central to their justification stood the 1850 *The Report of the Sanitary Commission of Massachusetts*, the first of its kind in the United States. [21] It portrayed Boston's poorest residents as sources of social and environmental problems, rather than as people forced to live in poor conditions as result of economic structures and policy decisions. In doing so, the report set a precedent for the logic planners used in designating and creating urban space.

[20] Michael Rawson, *Eden on the Charles: The Making of Boston* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

[21] Lemuel Shattuck, *Report of the Sanitary Commission of Massachusetts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1948). downloaded at archive.org. See also: Sylvia Hood Washington, *Packing Them In*, 4.

Roger Gottlieb's pioneering research on EJM efforts provides further background for this dissertation. Gottlieb's *Forcing the Spring* argued that environmentalism has deep roots in the concerns of ordinary and mostly urban people. *Forcing the Spring* gave voice to those whose "vision of the environment is woven into an overall framework of social, racial, and economic justice." Gottlieb also demonstrated how minority groups carried out different aspects of EJM work in Los Angeles. Minority areas of Los Angeles lacked markets selling fresh food. Limited public transportation options blocked access to supermarkets in nearby areas. In response, residents planted and harvested vegetables in abandoned plots, transforming areas of environmental degradation into thriving urban farms. They created local markets that catered to cultural and ethnic needs. In this way they combined environmental improvements with economic development, social networking, and cultural expression.[22] The following effort synthesizes the approaches Gottlieb employed to explain how working-class groups developed an expansive interpretation of environmentalism to execute a variety of specific projects that catalyzed community development.

The story that unfolds in the following chapters builds from the insights of several notable monographs on Boston's history. Michael Rawson's *Eden on the Charles*, Thomas O'Connor's *Building a New Boston*, Lawrence Kennedy's *Planning the City Upon a Hill*, and Sam Bass Warner's *Streetcar Suburbs* explored how major changes in Boston's physical development occurred.[23] In contrast, this work explores working-class/minority responses to large scale structural changes. Noted labor historian James Green studied and taught about the South End during the 1970s, but never published books or articles on the topic. He employed a reading by

22 Roger Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*, 34.

23 Lawrence Kennedy, *Planning the City Upon a Hill*: Boston since 1630 (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992); Sam Bass Warner, *Streetcar Suburbs: The Process of Growth in Boston, 1870-1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962).

Jane Jacobs on the mixed-use neighborhood at the outset of his course and assigned texts related to ecology. While Green did not have a fully formed environmental history discipline to augment his teaching, he understood that environmental conditions reflect social and economic inequality.[24] Boston has earned a reputation for racism in the past fifty years, but we know very little about why or how Boston developed such a virulent racial climate. This work contends that an environmental analysis assists in understanding both the way inequality functioned and how white residents conceived of African Americans and the places that they lived. Castigated by society as degrading to their environment, minority-led environmental groups responded by creating models for community improvement and urban design. African American, Latinx, and Cape Verdean residents drew upon cultural traditions and networks of mutual support to rebuild their communities.

Civic Environmentalism: Pragmatic and Transformative

The founders of ACE and the DSNI pioneered civic environmentalism, or the philosophy that environmentalism and civic activism begins in the home, street, and community where one lives. Advocates of civic environmentalism offer that environmental deterioration cannot be separated from persistent issues facing the United States like social inequality, growing disparity of wealth, and flagging political and civic engagement. From the 1960s through 2000, the ideas of civic environmentalism developed in both theory and practice in Boston. Activist minority groups redeveloped their communities from the ground up, and in doing so developed the ideas of civic environmentalism through experience and practice. Concurrently, a branch of environmental

[24] See, for example, James Green, "Urban Renewal's effect on Low-Income Housing in Boston's South End," unpublished manuscript; Box 3, Folder 2:"Boston Politics and History: South End History." Green's papers are located at Healey Library, University of Massachusetts at Boston.

philosophy developed focusing on agency in the everyday lived- in environment. Advocates of civic environmentalism argue that the basic elements of citizenship must include environmental considerations. These trends merged in Boston during the 1990s when the DSNI and ACE began to work in conjunction with one another.

Civic environmentalists argue that the environmental movement has failed to inspire broad public participation. The average individual feels neither responsibility for environmental degradation nor a willingness to become involved in environmental issues. Mainstream environmentalism's focused on wilderness and placed the objects of preservation beyond the reach of the individual, while fostering a sense of detachment regarding the environmental degradation found in lived-in places. To the individual, the "environment" often exists apart from ordinary life, a place where humanity is vulnerable.[25] The concept of an environment narrowly applied to wilderness implies that cities fail to meet the standard of "environment." Such a conclusion marginalized the environmental concerns of urban non-white residents. Environmental justice challenged the Sierra Club and other organizations in "The Group of Ten" because of their white, male, and corporate leadership. A failure to engage the concerns of minorities, women, working-class, and underclass groups inhibited the growth of a common understanding and approach to environmental efforts.[26] A lack of broad participation in environmental campaigns leads to an "analytical myopia" that discounts the value of ecosystem goods and services in maintaining human life in urban circumstances. If governments and the business world contribute to the depletion of life sustaining resources and foster a mindset that

25 William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," In William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York: W. W. Norton 1995): 69-90; Steven Vogel, "Marx and Alienation from Nature" *Social Theory and Practice*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (Fall, 1988): 371.

26 Martin V. Melosi, "Equity, Eco-Racism, and Environmental History."

ignores the situation, civic environmentalists argue that people should pressure economic and political leaders to change their policies.[27]

Framing urban issues in an ecological way means studying neighborhoods and their inhabitants in relation to one another. The basic unit in ecological study is the landscape, defined as a heterogeneous area consisting of a cluster of intersecting ecosystems, such as a watershed. Ecologists examine how systems function, respond to different forms of feedback, and change over time. Biodiversity creates resilience in an ecosystem because it can adapt in a variety of productive ways. The ecology of urban areas includes the transfer of energy, the movement of air, the quality of the soil, and the functioning of the hydrological cycle. Ecologists studying cities find that heterogeneity encourages species diversity and "spatial resilience," meaning that different features of city space interact and adapt. Ecologists argue that the notion that biodiversity creates resilience applies equally to wild, semi-wild, farm, residential, and urban areas.[28]

Civic environmentalism provides a roadmap for public participation. Building from the notion that communities with high social capacities and levels of democratic participation make decisions that improve environmental quality, civic environmentalism channels the social capital

27 For extensive treatments of this issue, see: Shiva, *Earth Democracy*; Dobson, *Citizenship and the Environment*.

28 Erik Andersson, "Urban Landscapes and Sustainable Cities," *Ecology and Society* Vol. 11 No. 34 (2006): 1-7; Barbara Eckstein and James A. Throgmorton, eds., *Story and Sustainability Planning, Practice, and Possibility for American Cities* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 2003); Mark Roseland, "Dimensions of the eco-city," 197-202; Mark Roseland, ed. *Eco-City Dimensions: Healthy Communities, Healthy Planet*, (Ottawa: New Society Publishers, 1997); Vandana Shiva, *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace*, (Boston, MA: South End Press, 2005); Anne Whiston Spirn, "Ecological Urbanism: A Framework for the Design of Resilient Cities" in *The Ecological Design and Planning Reader* edited by Forster O. Ndubisi (Washington D.C.: Island Press, 2014).

Ecologists, such as Eugene P. Odum, have long sought to integrate the study of social sciences with ecology. See, for example: Odum, "The Emergence of Ecology as a New Integrative Discipline" *Science, New Series* Vol. 195 No. 4284 (3/25/1977): 1289-1293.

of residents, organizations, businesses, institutions, and schools towards environmental efforts. Social capital refers to how groups, from families to and fraternal or neighborhood associations, to larger groups such as the DSNI, use characteristics such as mutual support, a sense of obligation, and trust to direct collective energy.[29] Enlarged social capital allows communities shape policies that affect the area. A healthy, empowered, and economically stable community can then make choices to improve the health of the ecosystem that they live in. Civic environmentalists initiate social practices and construct built environments that reduce humanity's ecological footprint. They focus on transportation methods and routes, housing type and quality, energy sources and use, waste disposal and recycling, technology application, and infrastructure. Public transit, driven by clean fuels and alternative energies, reduces the quantity of automobiles on the road and emission levels. So-called industrial ecology employs local resources, reuses materials, and recycles waste to mitigate the environmental impact of production methods. Roads, bridges, sewer systems, and parks are encouraged to have maximum functionality, economic viability, and resilience. Altering land use patterns to create "compact and diverse" mixed-use communities featuring cooperative and multi-family houses reduces the amount of land devoted to housing while encouraging foot and bicycle travel. Local agriculture creates green space and contributes to cleaner air while minimizing the ecological impact of food production.[30] The story that unfolds in the pages that follow trace the deep roots of civic environmentalism in Boston.

29 Carol Hardy-Fanta, *Latina Politics, Latino Politics: Gender, Culture, and Political Participation in Boston* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1993): 1-14

30 Mark Roseland, "Dimensions of Eco-Cities" 197-207. William Shutkin, *The Land that Could Be.*

Table 0.1: Urban Ecosystems

Size Designations	Core Functions	Natural	Social
City	Feedback ↑↓ Adaptation ↑↓ Reorganization	Natural processes ↑↓ Energy ↑↓ Waste	Communication ↑↓ Exchange, cultures, products, and resources
District			
Neighborhood			

When ecologists examine cities, they divide urban areas into three size categories: neighborhood, district, and whole city. Within these designations, areas are further categorized in five ways: commercial, mixed-use, multi-family residential, single family residential, and open space.

Table 0.2: Qualities of Resilient Urban Communities

Qualities of Resilient Urban Communities	
Social	**Ecological**
Growth	Energy Transformation
Movement	Air quality and Movement
Communication	Soil Quality and Erosion
Making and Building	Hydrological cycle
Teaching and Learning	Green Space
Play and Work	Variety of Plant and Tree life
Reflection and Worship	Wildlife

Civic environmentalists argue that cities are habitats and that every being has biological and social needs that include reproduction and growth, movement and exchange, communication, making and building, teaching and learning, play, work, reflection, and worship.

Table 0.3: Civic Environmentalist Orientation to the Environment

Individual Orientation to the Environment	
Architectural Choices	➔land ownership choice (CLT) ➔home ownership choice (cooperative) ➔building choices (materials, orientation with nature) ➔Energy choices (use, efficiency-solar, wind) ➔sociability and autonomy ↑↓
Production and Reproduction of the Home	↑↓ ➔consumer choices (clothing) ➔recycling and reuse of materials ➔cleaning materials and methods ➔energy use and methods ➔Food options (gardens and local agriculture) ➔yard choices (minimizing lawn, encouraging natural vegetation) ➔ clean and/or organic yard materials/plant food (no pesticides or harsh fertilizers) ➔connection to nature and or green space ➔ethical interactions with animals ↑↓
Local Community and Environment	↑↓ ➔connection to foot and bike travel ➔transportation options and vehicle use ➔environmental maintenance and service ➔understanding and engagement with community and environmental issues ↑↓
Interaction with Nature/ "Environmental Ethic"	↑↓ ➔control of development and environmental management ➔ participation in civic and political issues ➔participation in environmental maintenance (hiking paths, streams, bike trails) ➔ participation in land conservation and species preservation ➔reducing carbon footprint to/when interacting with nature

CHAPTER 1

"THE SURVIVAL OF THE SPIRIT IS AT STAKE:"

THE ENVIRONMENTAL ROOTS OF URBAN RENEWAL IN BOSTON

One day in 1965 while walking in the city's South End neighborhood, Martin Gopen saw Boston authorities forcibly evicting a Puerto Rican family from an apartment by throwing their mattresses and other belongings on the street. Howard Zinn, the noted historian, also happened to be on the same street. Spontaneously, Gopen and Zinn began picking up the family's belongings and carrying them back upstairs and into the apartment. As a result of their empathetic efforts, Boston police arrested both of them. The event had a profound impact on Gopen. Over the next few years he worked with Mel King, an emerging black activist who ran for mayor in 1983. Mel King inspired Gopen: "he was talking in terms of people, about the injustices done to people in the name of urban renewal, in the name of progress." Gopen reflected on his experiences and planned for the future: "It is a war worth waging and the survival of the spirit is at stake," he concluded. The "mastery of the environment" was key to the future in Boston.[31]

This chapter examines the conditions that shaped Martin Gopen's experience in the South End in 1965. How did city officials in Boston sanction forced removal as a normalized activity in Boston? What conditions made it possible to forcibly remove the Puerto Rican family and many others like them? What did Gopen mean when he said mastery of the *environment* was key and the survival of the "spirit" was at stake? Discourse about working-class residents as environmental agents drove urban renewal in Boston's South End. At the turn of the twentieth century, areas of cultural production—eateries, theatres, taverns, streets, parks, and social organizations—became contested space that reformers attempted to shape according to their

31 Martin Neal Gopen, Box 3, File 3: "Personal Notes, General 1965." Gopen's papers are archived at Snell Library Archives, Northeastern University, Boston, MA.

worldview. Settlement house workers and their associates never controlled these areas of cultural production they way that they had hoped. They did, however, function as the main conduit by which city officials and the larger public conceived of the neighborhood. Negative perceptions drove conceptualization of this problem, and access to resources and political power framed by this mindset shaped the neighborhood's history.

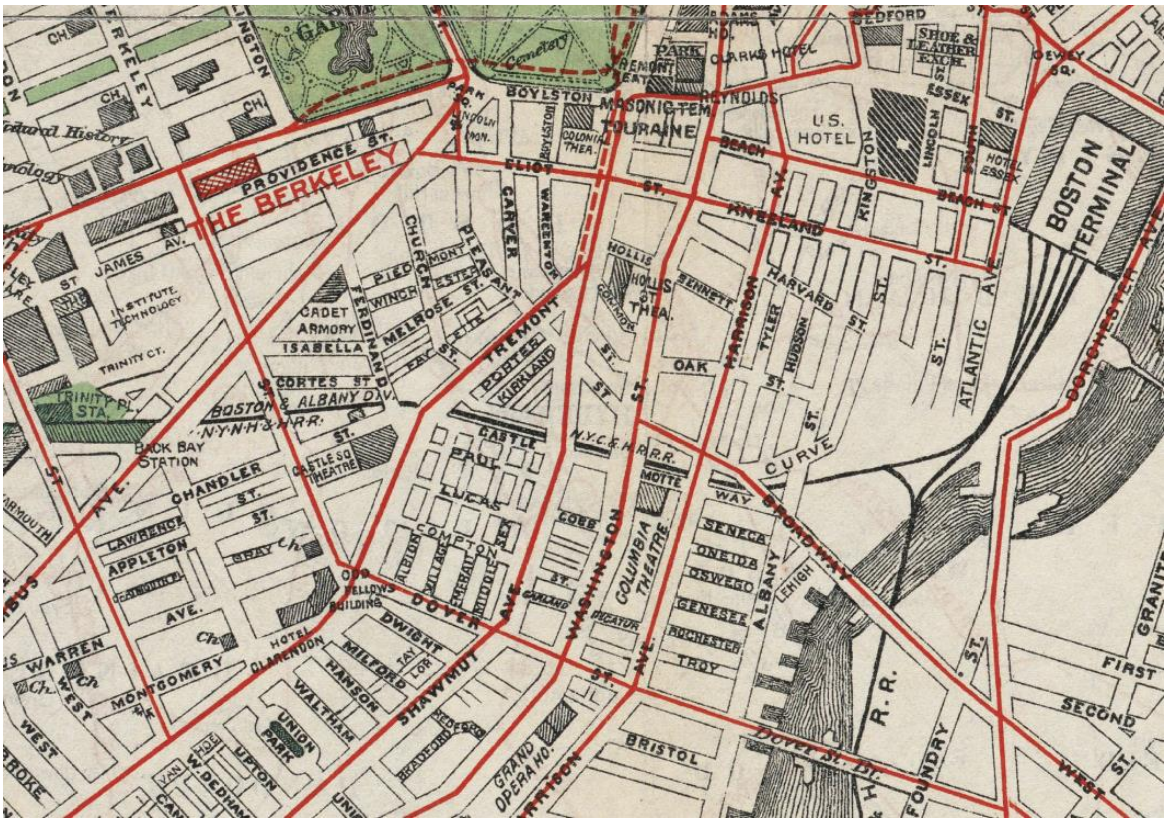

Figure 1.1:1898 map of the South End. In foreground stands the South End in relation to downtown (upper right) and the Back Bay (upper left). In addition, the map shows the New York Streets in relation to the South End and the rest of the city. (center right) (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

The South End as Boston's Premier Neighborhood

Boston's development required construction of new land and transportation systems to accommodate burgeoning economic activity and population. In the 1840s, the city filled in the marsh southwest of downtown and west of Boston Neck to form the South End. Previously,

Boston Neck provided the only means to get to downtown by land from the south. The creation of the Boston and Albany Railroad provided separation from the noise, soot, and pollution from industrial activity occurring downtown. The newly formed South End featured long avenues with parks that broke up residential patterns with green space. Architecturally, brownstone row houses with small backyards dominated residential design. Designers employed the British model of city planning featuring the so-called city house, as well as other elements of British street design and parks.[32] From 1850 to 1873, wealthy and prestigious residents like Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes and writer Louisa May Alcott resided in the South End.

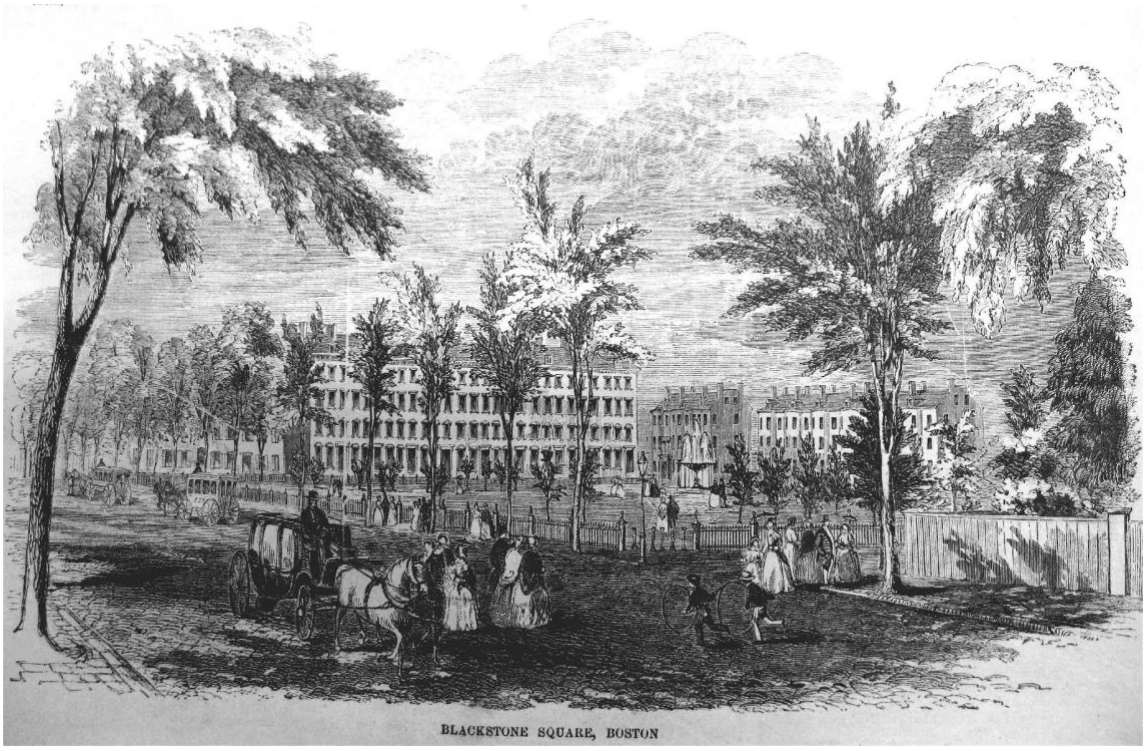

Figure 1.2: Engraving of Blackstone Square. Done in the mid nineteenth century highlights the affluence of the South End in its early days and its adherence to English notions of city planning. (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

32 Joel Blair, "History of Boston's South End" Research Grant Application, unpublished manuscript, 1979: 5. James Green papers, Box 3, Folder 3: "Boston Politics and History: South End History and Ethnic Relations."

Three factors contributed to the decline of the South End as a premier address in Boston. First, industry moved from downtown to cluster around the terminus of the Boston and Albany and Boston and Maine Railroads. Garments, leather products including footwear, and pianos were its most prominent industrial output. Second, the Depression of 1873 brought existing home values down. Third, Boston's latest landfill project, the so-called Back Bay, created a new frontier of real estate development west of Beacon Hill and Boston Common.[33] During the 1880s many of the prestigious social clubs migrated north to the Back Bay, a leading indicator of an address change for its benefactors. Separation by the railroad tracks, proximity to Boston Common, further distance from working-class residents, and an organized grid layout featuring wide avenues attracted upper-class residents. To the present day, the residences and business along Commonwealth Avenue and Beacon Street are the most impressive in Boston.[34]

Meanwhile, the built environment, population, and demographics of the South End changed considerably. The trains that arrived in Boston from the west and north facilitated industrial development and created a nexus of heterogeneous demography. Across northern New England, farm families who eked out a living on the region's thin soil sent their sons and daughters south on the railroads to find work in Boston. From the southern United States, African Americans migrated in search of work and less overt racial oppression. Residents from across Europe, the Middle East, and Asia settled in the South End. Ethnic groups often formed a plurality on specific streets, but not an overwhelming majority. While blocks remained heterogeneous, ethnicities clustered in buildings.[35]

33 Mel King *Chain of Change*, 18-23; Thomas O'Connor *Building a New Boston*, 57.
34 Edwin M. Bacon, *Bacon's Dictionary of Boston* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1886): 108.
35 Mel King, *Chain of Change*, 10-23.

To accommodate population growth, landlords bought up properties as they declined in value.[36] As a result, many large residences became lodging houses where workers rented rooms of varying quality for the night, week, or month. Lodging houses comprised about ten percent of housing in the neighborhood while a majority of residents lived in tenements. Three quarters of the South End was devoted to housing with the remainder to commercial endeavors.[37] State census takers recorded 40,406 inhabitants in the neighborhood in 1895.[38] With at least one resident living in each room, wear and tear accelerated, and the quality of housing declined.[39] For some men, drifting, hustling, petty criminality, and begging became a more attractive choice than marriage and work.[40] Men who found regular employment might enjoy upward mobility, but having a female partner contributing to the domestic economy proved the surest path to success. Becoming a huckster, or street vendor, provided the most common way to add income to the house. Taking in laundry or boarders, and preparing food offered other avenues. However, in the South End, a majority of mothers worked outside of the home as domestic cleaners and or in some type of laundry service.[41] Taken together, the area served an essential function for migrants and industrial workers as a low-rent district. Sociologist Herbert Gans argued a crucial distinction existed between the terms low-rent and slum district. As opposed to slum districts,

36 Margaret Supplee Smith and John C. Moorhouse, "Architecture and the Housing Market: Nineteenth Century Row Housing in Boston's South End" *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (June, 1993): 159-160.

37 Robert Woods ed. *The City Wilderness: A Settlement Study* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Publishing, 1899): 17.

38 Albert B Wolfe, *The Lodging House Problem in Boston* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1906): 1.

39 Several sources discuss the migration and settlement patterns of South End residents. See, for example: Alvan F. Sanborn, *Moody's Lodging House and Other Tenement House Sketches* (Boston, MA: Copeland and Day, 1895); Woods ed. *The City Wilderness* and Wolfe, *The Lodging House Problem in Boston*.

40 Sanborn, *Tenement House Sketches*, 94.

41 Woods, *City Wilderness*, 89, 98-99; Sanborn, *Tenement House Sketches*, 103.

low-rent areas "provide shelter that may be inconvenient, but that is not harmful."[42] Accounts of residential life in the South End support the utility of Gans' distinction.

The adaptation of the built environment to this influx of working-class families demonstrates the fundamentals of urban environmental history. Buildings have the potential to enhance or inhibit human freedom, augment sociability, and promote intelligence, creativity, and self-government.[43] These possibilities shaped the South End, its social organizations, and its cultural productions. Homes, lodging-houses, and tenements were divided into separate spaces for specific roles and functions. Residents slept in small eight by six rooms and socialized on the streets or in the cafes.[44] The built environment was oriented to the needs of industrial production, and this bifurcated the social reproduction of lodging-house residents in South End. Yet within the neighborhood, residents took their stand in the world.

42 James R. Green, T*he South End: Boston 2000 Neighborhood Series*, The Boston 2000 Corporation, 1976: 4

43 Roger J.H. King, "Toward an Environmental Ethics of the Domesticated Environment," *Philosophy and Geography*, Vol. 6 (2003): 14.

44 Wolfe, *Lodging House Problem*, 52.

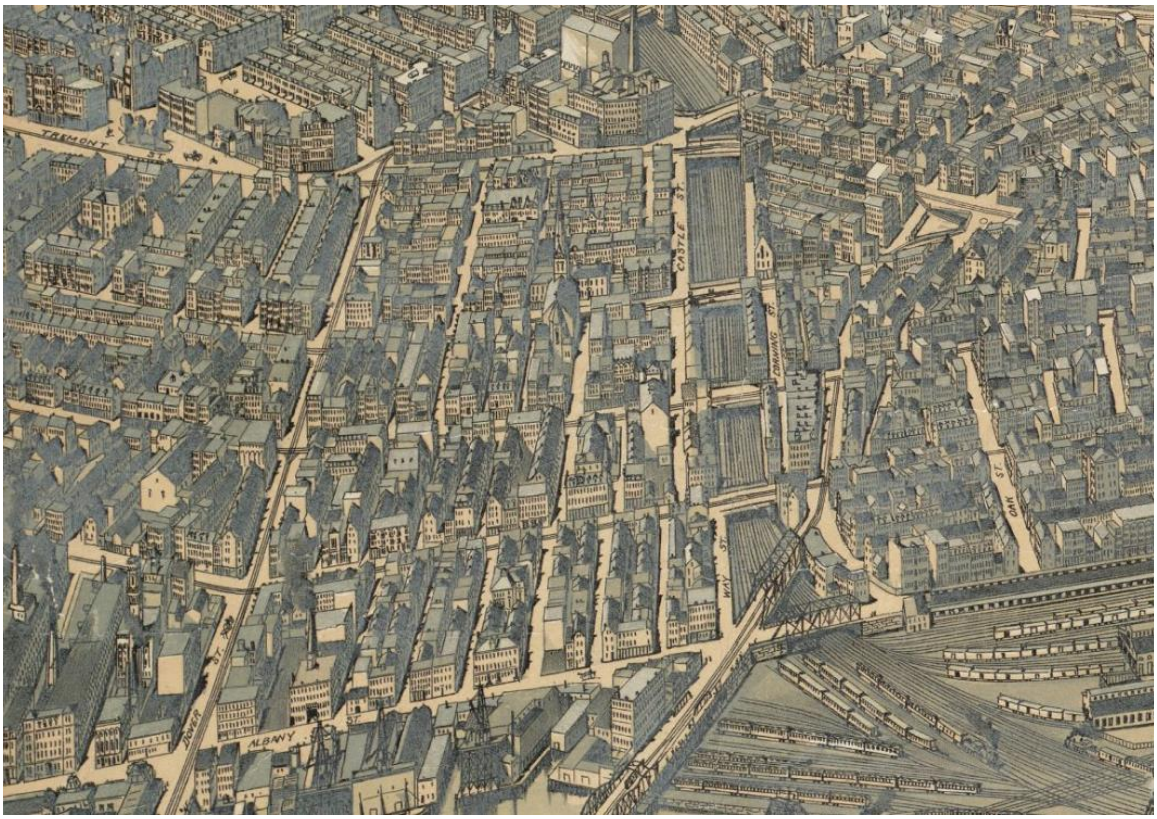

Figure 1.3: South End looking from the Atlantic Ocean. In the foreground, the Boston and Albany rail yard and New York Streets southwest of the yard. (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

The South End as a Mixed-Use Neighborhood and Minority Archipelago

Demographic information supports the assertion that the South End operated as a mixed-use neighborhood. At the turn of the twentieth century, the neighborhood contained 87 cafes, 65 basement diners, 41 saloons, 24 liquor-stores, 27 drugstores, 70 tailoring establishments, and 78 laundry service establishments. The 152 eating establishments were oriented to various ethnic tastes, and in this and other ways the built environment shaped and reflected the South End's culture. Settlement house leader Robert Woods observed, "The sights and sounds of the street constitute an important part of the recreative resources of the district. Their hold upon the people is well seen." Simply being present and observing the panorama of working-class life enlivened,

as Woods said, "the monotony of existence."[45] These neighborhoods created many alternative means of socialization because the streets themselves, along with their buildings, vacant lots, pool rooms, bars, corners, stores, social clubs, bawdy houses, and alleys, conditioned human behavior. [46]

Residents of the South End created an endemic culture by colonizing social space. For example, theatres facilitated social and information exchange, ethnic expression, and inter-ethnic interaction. Robert Woods commented that the local theatre was "useful as a purveyor of amusement to the people of the South End and of South Boston. It is the great popular resort for these two large sections." According to Woods, "every boy and man, many of the girls, and some of the women" regularly attended the theatre. At one o'clock variety features provided the opening act for the main performance at two. Between acts, musicians, comedians, magicians, ventriloquists, and athletes entertained the crowd. Repeating the same sequence at seven for the evening crowd, theatre performances allowed individuals and groups to express themselves in both orthodox and subversive ways.[47]

Business establishments took on multiple roles to meet residents' needs. In turn, this strengthened the neighborhood's social networks. For example, Meyer Murray's building had a barbershop in the front, a pool hall directly behind it, and a bowling alley in the basement. The

45 Woods, *City Wilderness*, 198.

46 James Oliver, "The Streets: An Alternative Black Male Socialization Institution'" *Journal of Black Studies* Vol. 36, No. 6 (July, 2006): 918-921. See also, William Foote Whyte, *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1943).

47 Woods, *City Wilderness*, 177-178. For an expansive discussion of the impact the theatres had on the South End see: Desiree J. Garcia "Subversive Sounds: Ethnic Spectatorship and Boston's Nickelodeon Theatres, 1907-1914 *Film History* Vol. 19, No. 3 *Movie Business* (2007): 217. For a general discussion of working-class neighborhoods as a space of cultural competition see: Roy Rosenzweig, *Eight Hours for What We Will* (Cambridge University Press, 1983).

pool hall served as a lively place of competition and social interaction.[48] The neighborhood's social networks allowed migrants to find security and build a foundation for a new life. Minnie Corder moved to the South End as a young woman from northern Ukraine in 1911 and obtained employment at a clothing factory. She became involved in union activity. Eschewing the AFL because of its conservative outlook, she joined the IWW and participated in socialist philosopher Scott Nearing's peace movement during World War One. She recalled: "I read as many books as I had time for and I really became educated in my own way. Socialism became my new religion."[49] The heterogeneity of the South End built environment facilitated social interaction and personal agency.

Because of the South End's relationship to the city's railroad network, the black population of the neighborhood expanded from 2,000 in 1890 to 30,000 by the Great Depression.[50] A portion of these residents moved from the side of Beacon Hill that flowed down into Boston's West End, while others arrived from the southern United States. Some blacks in the South End joined A. Phillip Randolph's Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, but a majority became members of the Dining Car Waiters Local 370. This union, associated with the Union of Hotel and Restaurant Workers, served as a source of black empowerment in the South End. Like the larger and more powerful Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the Hotel and Restaurant Workers extended their labor activism into a quest for civil rights and social justice. The waiters on Boston's trains became leaders in the fight to desegregate dining cars, and later, the city and nation.[51]

48 Green, The South End: Boston 200, 11-12.
49 Green, *The South End*, 7-8.
50 O'Connor, *Building a New Boston*, 59
51 James R. Green and Robert C. Hayden, "A. Philip Randolph and Boston's African-American Railroad Worker" *Trotter Review* Vol. 6, Is. 2 *Race and Politics in America: A Special Issue* (9-21-1992): 20-23.

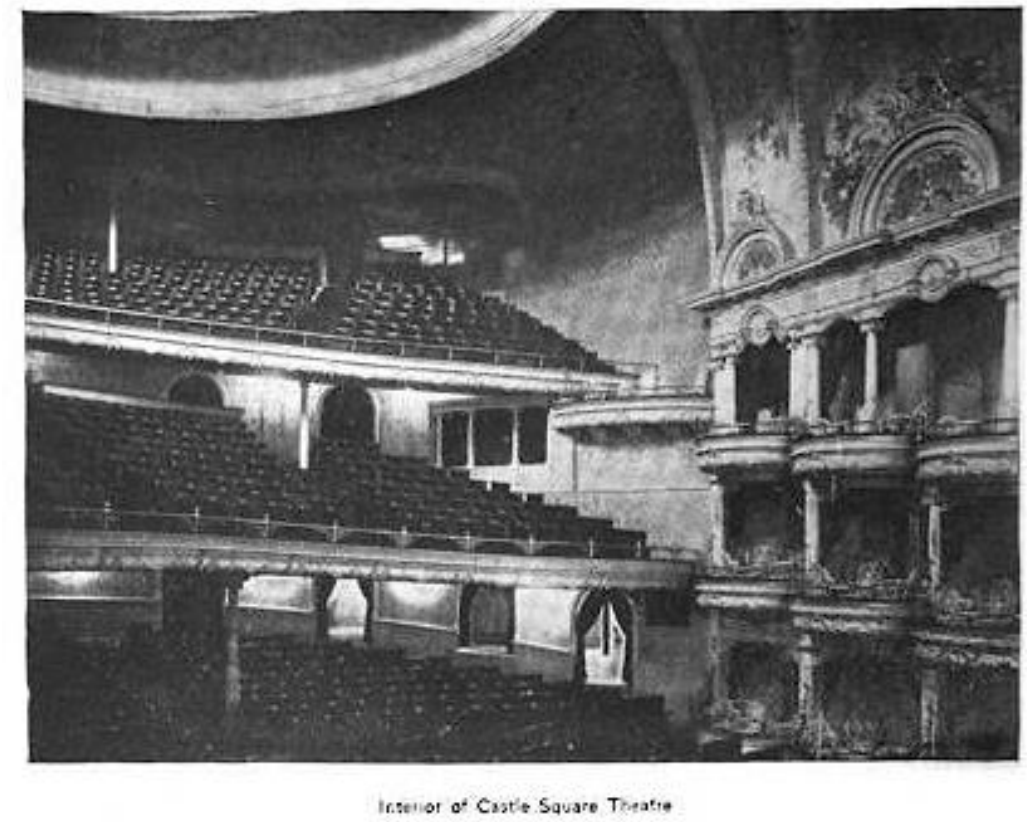

Figure 1.4: Interior of the Castle Square Theatre. (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

Figure 1.5: Postcard of Castle Square Theatre. (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

Overall, however, the economic structure in Boston posed a challenge for African-Americans in the South End. While black owned businesses populated the neighborhood, the labor force struggled to integrate into the citywide economy. Long-time resident George Adams noted: "there was no segregation in the schools, no segregation in the streets. It was only going into the labor pool."[52] If blacks were not employed in railroad work, they most often filled low-level construction and service jobs, with many women working as domestic cleaners. Resident Calvin Hicks observed: "we owned nothing, we had no infrastructure… In the early morning and then late every afternoon the public transportation system was converted into a virtual slave ship."[53]

Despite economic impediments, African-Americans formed a vibrant community in the South End. By the turn of the twentieth century, the South End and Lower Roxbury became the nerve center of African-American life in the city. William Monroe Trotter, Phi Beta Kappa graduate from Harvard College, began publication of the *Boston Guardian* in 1901. Trotter, an advocate of direct confrontation and immediate civil rights for blacks, became a catalyst for the emerging movement opposing Booker T. Washington's much more moderate agenda for civil rights. Trotter's writing in the *Guardian* sparked the thinking of WEB Dubois. In 1903, Dubois wrote the seminal *Souls of Black Folk*, which provided an intellectual foundation for opposition to Washington. In the same year, Washington visited Boston to discuss and defend his platform. Trotter played a role in what became known as the "Boston Riot," in which Washington and his associates were verbally and physically rebuked. In addition, Trotter opposed Woodrow Wilson's segregationist policies. When summoned for a meeting with the president, Trotter spoke out against racist federal policies and was thrown out of the Oval Office by Wilson.

52 James Green, *The South End*, 17-18.

53 Calvin Hicks, "The Issue of Turf in Boston," presentation to the Greater Boston Civil Rights Coalition, University of Massachusetts Boston (1981). Green Box 4, Folder 3.

Trotter also interrupted performances of *Birth of a Nation* in Boston with stink bombs and verbal bombast. His efforts garnered Boston, and thus the South End, the characterization of the "radical center" of African-American life in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century.[54]

Long-time resident and jazz musician Calvin Hicks noted that African-Americans developed a sense of "turf" in the South End. For Hicks, the smells emanating from shoeshine stands, taverns, hairdressers, and fried chicken from the Hi-Hat jazz club created a sense of security and belonging for members of the community. At the Hi-Hat, the sight of black chefs decked out in white suits and ornate hats impressed onlookers. Behind the front area, the jazz club attracted the likes of Charlie Parker, Ella Fitzgerald, and Oscar Peterson. Often referred to as "Little Harlem," the South End hosted the barnstorming Bunk Johnson Band; the group paraded up and down the streets of Columbus Avenue performing for onlookers in the summer.[55]

Formal social organization developed from peer networks in the South End's African American community. For example, the League of Women for Community Service was "Boston's protest style par excellence." Black residents used these social organizations to express their opinions about regional, national, and global affairs. In the 1930s many residents protested Italy's invasion of Ethiopia, a nod to African-Americans' cultural and ancestral ties in Africa. Residents had an anti-colonial outlook, an ethic cultivated by Trotter's *Boston Guardian* and African-American churches in the South End, in particular St. Cyprian's church on Tremont

54 Robert C. Hayden, "William Monroe Trotter: A One-Man Protester for Civil Rights" *Trotter Review* Vol. 2, Is. 1 (January 1988): 7-9; Elliott M. Rudwick, "Race Leadership Struggle: Background of the Boston Riot of 1903" *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Winter, 1962): 16-24; William A. Edwards, "William Monroe Trotter: A Twentieth Century Abolitionist" *Trotter Review*. Vol. 2, Is. 1 (January 1988): 13-17.

55 Calvin Hicks, "The Issue of Turf in Boston." Green Box 4, Folder 3.

Street.[56] Historian Joseph Heathcott observed that areas like the South End can be termed a black archipelagos because they "carved out dense networks of civil and religious institutions, political alignments, and cultural practices" during the early twentieth century. Minority archipelagos allowed black and ethnic communities to "establish a sense of permanence on the land, and to bolster black power in urban affairs"[57]

The South End in the Industrial Era: The Settlement House

Isolation had salutary effects, but it made the neighborhood vulnerable. Middle-class writer-observers and settlement house workers shaped the general public's conception of the South End. Three observers played a central role: writer Alvan Sanborn, Harvard economist Albert Wolfe, and settlement house leader Robert Woods. They shared similar backgrounds in that they attended Amherst College. As an Amherst student, Woods learned of the settlement house model studying abroad in London. His alma mater had been a hotbed of Calvinist thought and had a reputation for missionary zeal in its institutional beliefs and actions.[58] Traces of this ethic are evident in the writings of all three men. The publications of Sanborn, Wolfe, and Woods provided a way for outsiders to think about the South End, and this influenced the policies that spelled the fate of the neighborhood.[59]

56 William Worthy, "Recollections of a Black Childhood in the South End" *Boston Globe Magazine*, 12/5/1971. Green Box 4, Folder 3.
57 Joseph Heathcott, "Black Archipelago: Politics and Civic Life in the Jim Crow City," *Journal of Social History* Vol. 38, No. 2 (Spring 2005): 707.
58 Edward S. Shapiro "Robert A. Woods and the Settlement House Impulse" *Social Service Review*, Vol. 52, No. 2 June, 1978: 217.
59 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Hoboken: NJ, Wiley-Blackwell Press 1992, 23.

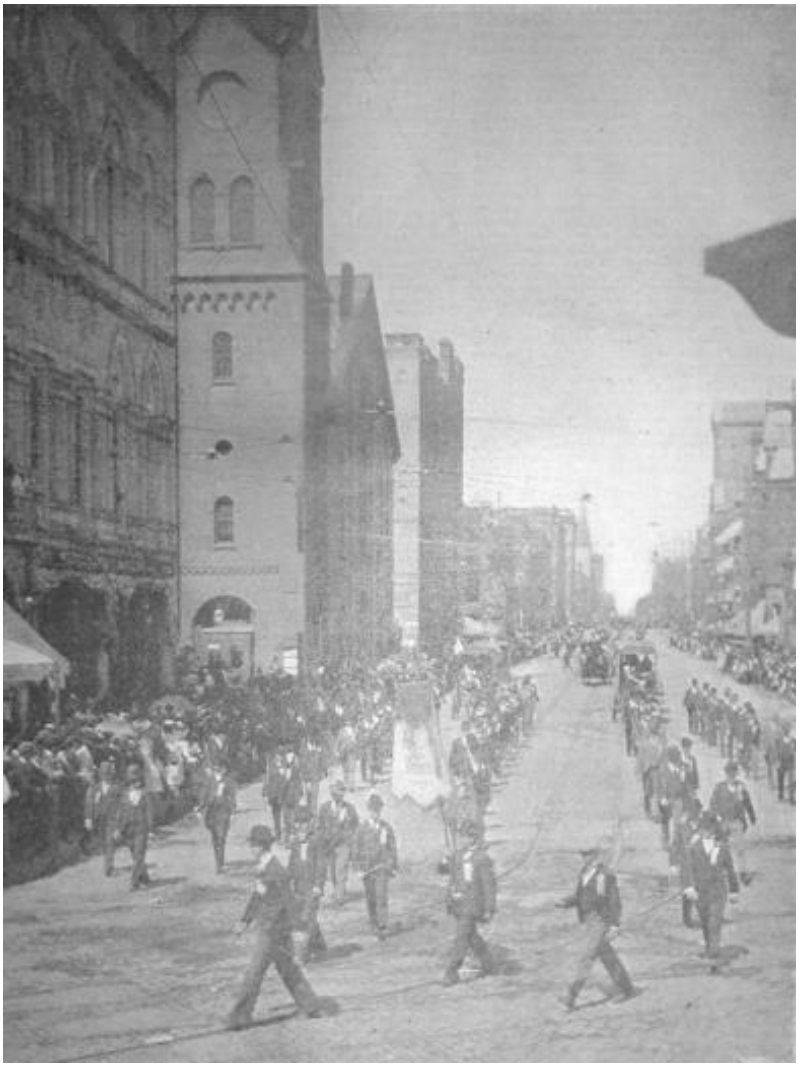

Figure 1.6: Labor Day Parade on Tremont Street in 1896. The image illustrates how the neighborhood had undergone a transformation from genteel enclave to a working-class area by the eve of the twentieth century. (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

Sanborn, Wolfe, and Woods each hoped to transform South End cultural space, but they came to contradictory conclusions. The intelligence and empathy of the lodging house residents surprised Alvan Sanborn. The resident "could usually read and write, and does read the newspapers." Residents, he discovered, also showed strong interpersonal skills, including a "perception of the workings of the human heart and mind (that) is keen and almost unerring." He also discovered a "real esprit de Corps: among them. The social obligation is heartily accepted.

Not to share one's luck with one's pals is the only unpardonable sin."[60] He concluded that "the lodgers' code of honor is not essentially different from that which prevails in the world of trade."[61] According to Sanborn, cultural customs and mores, rather than intellectual ability and ethical framework, proved the major difference between different social classes in Boston.

Albert Wolfe, by contrast, observed a "selfish individualism" among South End residents with deep economic roots: "modern competitive industry is a grimly contested game, in which every man's hand is against his fellow."[62] Individualism was especially deleterious in the South End because its neighborhoods were "made up of people who have no local attachments and are separated from one another by distinctions of race and religion. There is no concerted action for a better social life, no watchfulness over common interests."[63] Wolfe viewed the streets and the subsequent social and cultural production as a source of division that led to neighborhood malaise. The choices that residents made within the South End milieu caused these problems.

According to Woods, formal organizations were ill suited to assist in solving the neighborhood's issues. Instead, corrupt political organizations and morally debasing forms of association commanded residents' attention. Internecine strife resulted and in turn occluded the neighborhood's growth. In this way, the overall structure of urban life constrained human potential. Wolfe agreed, positing that "country and village and town know what community-life is. The city knows chiefly group-life. And within and between the groups constant conflict in an all but Darwinian struggle is the normal condition."[64] Wolfe offered a nod to New England's Puritan roots in his assessment. In the past, New England communities had been focused on a

60 Sanborn, *Tenement House Sketches*, 89.
61 Sanborn, *Tenement House Sketches*, 92.
62 Wolfe, *Lodging House Problem*, 154.
63 Woods, *City Wilderness*, 3.
64 Wolfe, *Lodging House Problem*, 154.

single church and town meeting. Reformers saw the heterogeneity of the South End as the fundamental difference between contemporary urban life and the "ideal" communities of the region's past. The fact that the neighborhood was the most diverse in Boston, not necessarily its poorest, made it the focal point of outside attention.[65]

Robert Woods had difficulty connecting the poor modes of social organization and negative behavior, however. He admitted that crime proved no more of a problem in the South End than in other sections of the city. It was not "confined to any one locality or section [of the city], but may happen anywhere throughout the entire district. In the South Cove [in the South End] even, with its traditions of lawlessness, crime is hardly more frequent than elsewhere." He concluded, "there are today no criminal centres in the South End."[66] At the same time, Woods viewed the neighborhood as fertile ground for the "microbe of criminality." In tenement areas, for example, he witnessed "debasing sights and sounds," and concluded that "contact with the vicious and depraved, induces, if it does not compel, the development of the worst morbid tendencies. A child born in such a place is almost predestined to a vicious if not criminal life."[67] For Woods, "crime and immorality" could be attributed to certain industrial areas and racial groups.[68]

Researchers surveyed the South End in order to make recommendations regarding problems and potential solutions. In important ways, these recommendations were progressive and thoughtful. For example, Albert Wolfe argued that each lodging house should contain a public parlor on its first floor where residents could socialize with one another and entertain guests. In addition, he wanted local industries to provide public cafeterias for workers to obtain affordable meals. Furthermore, he and other reformers sought to work with existing social organizations.

65 Shapiro "Woods and the Settlement House Impulse," 216.
66 Woods, *City Wilderness*, 148.
67 Woods, *City Wilderness*, 152.
68 Woods, *City Wilderness*, 170.

Woods wanted the South End House to engage in a symbiotic relationship with existing neighborhood organizations: "Whatever trade unions, workingmen's clubs, temperance societies, and even political clubs there are, ought to receive the sympathy, and so far as is possible without compromise, the active support of the settlement."[69] Woods and his associates recommended neighborhood empowerment and autonomy in a way that was quite progressive in the context of the time period. Woods argued, "The reestablishment of a degree of local government in this great district is positively necessary, not only for the political training of citizens, but for securing the local identity and local loyalty out of which the feeling of social responsibility springs."[70]

However, Wolfe, Woods, and the operators of the South End House as a whole sought to alter the space in which residents produced and reproduced their culture. For example, Wolfe's public parlors and eateries would have provided middle class folks more opportunities to direct the behavior and thought of residents. The South End's eateries represented a choice of food matched with ethnic tastes and peer associations. Eating habits were part of their heritage. In addition, neighborhood eateries functioned as a place for information exchange and social expression. Wolfe's reforms would have limited the choices and activities of residents. Furthermore, his recommendations regarding public parlors would have brought residents out from behind closed doors and into a place where social superiors could observe and direct their behavior.

Woods viewed the range of the social organizations in the neighborhood as deficient in providing structure to residents' lives. He felt theatres represented a lost opportunity to instruct residents of the neighborhood in more socially responsible forms of behavior: "the important

69 Woods, *The Neighborhood in Nation Building*, 30.
70 Woods, *City Wilderness*, 307.

point is not the harm done, but the good left undone. The power of the theatre over the masses of the people constitutes one of its greatest educational fields."[71] Moving his way up from small to large organizations, Woods observed that "It seems to be repugnant to Catholic theory that the church should enter into the non-religious life of its adherents, aside from its traditional work of education and charity."[72] Both Wolfe and Woods represented the settlement house as the social organization with the means to solve to the South End's problems.

Figure 1.7: Washington Street, 1899. The image shows the South End as a mixed-use neighborhood. The area in the right foreground, adjacent to the Cathedral of the Holy Cross would eventually become the area of one of Boston first renewal projects: Cathedral Project. (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

71 Woods, *City Wilderness*, 200.
72 Woods, *City Wilderness*, 203.

Despite the fact reformers identified the root cause of the neighborhood' issues as economic, they formed conclusions that blamed residents rather than structural economic disadvantages. Woods admitted that: "the economic bearing of these things is important, though elusive."[73] Because he could not precisely identify the problem he sought to answer, he concluded with frustration: "so much of the social wreckage must be dredged out. Any other course with this class itself is hopeless"[74] This would leave only "the honest unemployed, no longer confused with the loafer or the vagabond."[75] While not sketched out in detail, a clear pattern of thinking can be delineated. The idea that residents degraded the neighborhood began to take shape, thus justifying their removal.

The South End House played a major role in the neighborhood for years to come. The documentation of fieldworkers provides a record of the settlement's attempt to alter the culture of the South End. Woods posited that: "The first and constant effort of the settlement should be to have its men or its women come into relations of friendliness and intimacy with the people in their homes." As a result, "the homes of the neighborhood will be better in their sanitary condition, in their food, in their reading, in their enjoyments, in their morals, and in their religious life."[76] Esther Barrows, who worked at the South End House, called on residents in their homes: "if the neighborhood was our temple, then its homes were the holy of holies. The place whereon thou standest is holy ground,' was the thought impressed upon would-be callers."[77] In the home, middle-class settlement house workers instructed residents in morality and domestic economics, a practice that extended back to New York's Bowery district in the

73 Woods, *City Wilderness*, 70.
74 Woods, *City Wilderness*, 292.
75 Woods, *City Wilderness*, 293.
76 Woods, *The Neighborhood*, 29.
77 Esther Barrows, *Neighbors All: A Settlement Notebook* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1929): 14.

early nineteenth century.[78] The settlement house codified and systematized this practice, marking out a dominance ritual that became part of life in the South End.

Patterns Coalesce in the Early Twentieth Century

During the first thirty years of the twentieth century, a new pattern of thought regarding settlement work, urban planning, sociology, science, and social work coalesced. In general, planners feared that urban expansion could lead to social decay. The Swiss-French urban planner Le Corbusier, for instance, championed the "skyscraper in a park," which took form in many places, notably the Prudential Center in Boston. The Prudential, built in the early 1960s after Boston's New York Streets project, straddles the South End and Back Bay. Here employees could work, shop, and eat without ever walking on a city street. Frank Lloyd Wright championed the Garden City, designed with nature beyond the city limits.[79] This type of planning reflected a longstanding pastoral ideal in American life.[80] The expansion of the suburbs and the attempts to sanitize cities were both a result of trends like these.

At the center of this new perspective on the city was the Chicago School of Sociology and its influential practitioners, Ernest Burgess, Louis Wirth, and Robert Park, who coined the term urban ecology to describe their understanding of how cities functioned. Their research argued for restructuring cities in a way that limited organic forms of development and the types of culture that developed from it. Park felt that residents who lived in run-down districts created the poor living conditions that characterized their neighborhood. Residents of working-class sections displayed "a persistent and distressing uniformity of vice, crime, and poverty." Quoting Freud,

78 Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992): 65-75.
79 Peter Fitting, "Urban Planning/Utopian Dreaming: LeCorbusier's Chadigrarh Today."
80 Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (Oxford University Press, 1964): 3-33.

Park argued that "Civilization, in the interest of the common welfare, demands the suppression sometimes, and the control always, of these wild, natural dispositions."[81] Consequently, Park believed that people living in run-down districts could not control their behavior. That control would have to come from external forces.[82]

Under the terms outlined by the new school of urban ecology, obsolescence became a key term in planning discourse. Horace F. Clark's book, *Appraising the Home* defined obsolescence as "social deterioration,"[83] caused by a particular building's "comparative advantages for use or enjoyment."[84] Examining the ecological "growth and shift of land use districts" became the basis for this determination.[85] By the mid 1930s, terms such as neighborhood obsolescence and blight became common ways of describing and understanding the menu of options planners used to reform cities. Racial and ethnic composition directly influenced thinking. Once a neighborhood received the designation of "blighted" or "slum," it would have a difficult time obtaining resources for continued survival.[86]

The New Deal Accelerates Patterns of Thought and Behavior

The opportunity for federal dollars from the New Deal brought the issue of "slum clearance" to the center of city leaders' attention. In doing so, it called existing bureaucracies to action and hastened the creation of new organizations. The United States Housing Authority (USHA) acted as the bureaucratic apparatus to institute the guidelines associated with professional planners

81 Robert Park, "Human Behavior in the City Environment."
82 Robert Park, "Human Behavior in the City Environment," 615.
83 John E. Burton "Obsolescence and the Assessor" *The Journal of Land & Public Utility Economics*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (May, 1933): 109. In addition, see: Mabel L. Walker, *Urban Blight and Slums: Economic and Legal Factors in Their Origin, Reclamation, and Prevention* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938).
84 Burton, "Obsolescence," 110.
85 Burton, "Obsolescence," 112.
86 Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987): 191-195.

discourse regarding neighborhoods and their quality. The Boston Housing Authority (BHA), created as a subdivision of USHA and the Boston City Planning Board (BCPB), acted as local arms of federal purview. Formed in 1913, the BCPB functioned as Boston's original urban planning organization. Employing information provided by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the BCPB led efforts to formulate a "master plan" for Boston.[87]

In 1938 the New Deal offered the Boston city council the use of funds for urban improvement. The prospect of federal money inspired a debate over what urban improvement meant and how it could be properly accomplished. Clement Norton argued that "opponents of slum clearance who cover up by claiming that the real poor will not benefit…belong to the same Tory element that opposed public schools." Norton, a long-time thorn in Mayor James Curley's side, felt too many government dollars bypassed Boston because of well-documented corruption in city administration. Since federal programs offered guaranteed dollars, Norton asked: "Why not Boston?" The city paid federal taxes, and so they may as well take advantage of money the federal government offered. In addition, the funds would allow officials to disperse political patronage.

Councilor Perlie Dyar Chase, a Back Bay attorney, opposed the plan because it offered no improvements for current residents. The "20-odd millions of taxpayer money" would not solve problems for "the poor unfortunate who will be evicted from their homes and will have to seek quarters elsewhere." Chase pointed out that "These are the people who should really benefit by this government program and under the current circumstances they are not."[88] However, at this point, the weight of institutional thought and practice favored Norton.

87 Boston Housing Authority, *The New York Streets Project Proposal* (1952).
88 *Boston Globe*, 10/20/1938.

The plan to develop government sponsored housing projects gained support. Churches and universities joined government officials in calling for slum clearance. BHA member Reverend Thomas Reynolds argued that with potential federal money on the line, the city could not stay neutral: "If we do not avail ourselves of the money offered by the Federal Government…then some other place will get it and you will pay for it." According to Reynolds's calculation, "Fifty percent of the people of Boston are living in old and dilapidated housing." Due to these circumstances, Reynolds felt urban improvement followed one path: "The only way to get rid of these places will be through new building."[89]

In 1940, the city used eminent domain to remove residents along a block perpendicular to Harrison Ave, a main thoroughfare in the South End, to create one of the city's first housing projects. World War Two disrupted the project, which did not resume until 1946. This undertaking, which became known as the Cathedral Housing Project, and several others around the city, such as the Old Colony Housing Project in nearby South Boston, functioned as the city's first foray into wholesale destruction and rebuilding. [90] While officials undertook this project they mulled programs of increased scope in the adjacent New York Streets neighborhood. In 1943 and 1946 the BCPB commissioned studies to examine Boston's neighborhood and housing conditions and make policy recommendations.

The resulting studies identified problems occurring in the South End and made recommendations. The 1940 census indicated "decentralization" led to middle-class whites leaving cities *en masse*, utilizing mass transit and parkways to commute from the suburbs. "Blighted areas," the report concluded, "dragged down the rest of the community." City officials should instead endeavor to make "conditions of urban life less repellent" in order to "draw

89 *Boston Globe*, 5/2/1939.
90 *Boston Globe*, 4/12/1947.

desirable citizens back to the city."[91] The studies' conclusions illustrate that planners contemplated "two profoundly different ways to approach rehabilitation of the blighted areas." The first plan centered on boldness, with an eventual goal of a "redeveloped city" at which point "subsidiary neighborhood plans" could emerge. Neighborhood plans should be "unconfused" by "too careful adherence to present considerations." The opposing position required taking "everything as it is" and then proceeding "block-by-block" with neighborhood rehabilitation, but such an approach would render neighborhoods "frozen with the present disharmonies" and leave the city saddled with costs. Researchers in the 1940s concluded that "A constructive approach lies between these extremes and much nearer to the first." Larger-scale plans could reorganize the landscape with the added benefit of removing human causes of blight. The opportunity to employ eminent domain would reduce roadblocks to property acquisition.[92]

Environmental Conditions and Discourse

The assessment of environmental conditions proved key to the fate of the neighborhood. BCPB officials used Works Progress Administration (WPA) research to inform its conclusions. According to their findings, many residents in Boston's working-class neighborhoods lacked essential components of proper housing. Of applicants for government housing, ninety-five percent relied on oil burners in kitchens rather than central heating. More than half lacked a bathroom; most families shared one toilet in a central location. Apartments had common issues: no electricity, lack of air and light, bedrooms that could only be reached through other bedrooms,

91 *Boston Globe*, 12/13/1944.

92 Boston City Planning Board *Building Rehabilitation in Boston: A Progress Report on Reconditioning; Project Cost and Benefits to Developer City and Tenants* (1946): 15. For a general discussion of the use of eminent domain and discourse about urban "blight" see:, Wendell E. Pritchett "The 'Public Menace' of Blight: Urban Renewal and the Private Uses of Eminent Domain." *Yale Law & Policy Review* Vol. 20, No.1 (Winter, 2003): 1-53.

and three or four people sleeping in the same room.[93] BCPB writers concluded that lack of homeownership led to a decline in pride in the neighborhood and corresponding physical decline.[94] According to this information the actual physical structures were not in disrepair, but the subsidiary components, such as wiring and plumbing, required a major overhaul. Residents were being victimized twice: landlords either could not or did not update their housing; and the residents were seen as the cause of the problem because they were blamed for failing to improve houses they did not own.

Two factors caused housing conditions to decline. On one hand, absentee landlords often failed to update residences, instead allowing them to decline, in many cases to a point beyond repair. In other cases, landlords did not have the capital to provide for substantial improvement. One startling example illustrates how renters were affected by the decline of housing conditions. When the rear wall of his tenement collapsed, police arrested South End resident Frank Costanza for drunkenness. Officials condemned the building the previous week, but Costanza and a few former tenants squatted in the apartment because they had no other options for housing. The occupants were portrayed as nuisances that placed an unnecessary strain on city services. Boston's building commissioner lamented "there was nothing he could do" beyond serving eviction notices and demand absentee landlord Rose Bornstein of Mattapan do the same.[95] It is unclear if Bornstein had the money to perform the maintenance and refused, or simply lacked the funds. Either way, no one advocated for Costanza as a resident who deserved a livable residence. The *Globe* portrayed the residents rather than landlords as the problem.

93 *Boston Globe*, 1/12/1940.
94 BCPB, *Rehabilitation in Boston*, 2.
95 *Boston Globe*, 6/5/1940.

As its residents struggled to maintain essential services, the image of South Enders as environmental detriments was reinforced. City officials provided statistics to the *Globe* that emphasized the neighborhood's financial drag on the city as a whole. Each acre of South End land cost the city an additional eighteen thousand dollars compared to other neighborhoods over one year's time. In addition, each resident of a blighted area brought in thirty-four dollars in revenue, while costing the city eighty-two. Catholic leaders, present with city officials when they provided these statistics at a news conference, stated in bold terms: "One of the most malignant defects in our social system is the tolerance of the American city slums." Church leaders felt residents created the malignancy. The commission and BHA agreed: "disease ridden areas" must be razed.[96]

Newspapers followed in step with the arguments of city leaders. The negative depiction of residents was intended to impact public opinion on potential slum clearance. Take, for example, a story about the "trash" problem in the South End. According to a non-attributed source in a *Boston Globe* story, "Housewives quite frankly report the situation is mostly of their own making."[97] The assumption that residents did not bring trash to agreed upon sites for removal implicated residents in despoiling their surroundings. The author, Betty Dipessa, did not broach the issue of sanitation services performing its required duty, even though it should have been the central question in the story. Residents, Dipessa implied, destroyed their own living space.

Studies of crime in the South End again connected residents' supposed immorality with the physical conditions of the environment. Staff writer William J. Lewis of the *Globe* interviewed Back Bay precinct Captain Louis Disessa, who recently transferred from the South End. Disessa performed "a statistical survey of police stations throughout the world and came up with a report

96 *Boston Globe*, 1/4/1949.
97 *Boston Globe*, 5/18/1952.

that Boston's South End station leads the pack for pure action." Lewis did not press on the approaches used to acquire the statistics, the data itself, how it compared, and what "action" meant. As far as possible causes of crime, Disessa noted, there were "28 different nationalities and races" living in close proximity to one another.[98] The notion of neighborhood heterogeneity as a negative influence developed during the settlement house era; Disessa demonstrates how these notions had become systemic in city organizations.

Police arrested numerous South End residents on "moral charges." Often such arrests acted as code for sexual misconduct, assault, and exposure, but these charges also illustrate the expansive interpretation of law and the intrusive capabilities of the police in the South End. In one case, police raided a "card game" and arrested twenty-seven citizens for "gaming on the Lord's Day." In another, they arrested a man for setting up small-scale betting tournaments on pinball games in his store.[99] Media dissemination of crime helped cement perceptions about the neighborhood's qualities.

The Early Stages of Urban Renewal in Boston

Boston's urban planners considered the New York Streets important because of its geographic location south of downtown and proximity to proposed new transportation corridors. These streets were named for the towns, such as Oswego, Oneida, and Rochester on the railroad line that connected to Albany. In 1943, the BCPB studied the area and concluded it would be "best used, as it always has been, as low-cost residential with ancillary business only on chosen streets." The authors noted the possibilities for rehabilitating existing structures, the proximity of transportation and employment opportunities, and the availability of recreational facilities in

98 *Boston Globe*, 6/16/1948.
99 *Boston Globe*, 4/29/1946.

support of their conclusions. Its writers hoped possible renewal projects could create additional parks and outdoor recreational opportunities for residents.[100]

The demographics of the neighborhood began to change in the late 1940s, resulting in the further decline of its social status. This, in turn, would contribute to city officials' changing analysis of the neighborhood. African-American resident George Adams noticed changes to the neighborhood as more blacks moved into the South End following the war. He observed: "segregation increased as white people migrated to suburbia and black people migrated in from the southern farm areas." This trend caused an "imbalance" in the South End's housing situation: "schools began to break down and blacks were refused housing in suburbia." In addition, African-Americans choices became constrained due to government policy: "the banks made it quite difficult, if not impossible, for minority people or blacks to secure loans."[101]

A 1952 BHA proposal for redevelopment of the New York Streets reflected a strongly changed tone from the two BCPB reports produced in the 1940s. Title I of the 1949 Federal Housing Act promised large amounts of federal dollars for urban renewal projects, provided officials designed a "master plan" for the whole city. In the master plan, the New York Streets area stood right next to the proposed north-south highway, soon to be Interstate 93. The new transportation network's focus on the automobile signaled the decline of railroads. For the South End, this meant a further decline of industry after suffering from capital flight over the preceding decades. These factors coupled with the demographic changes sealed the neighborhood's fate.

The BHA's 1952 report described the South End as a threat to the city as a whole. Its authors argued that the South End was "a menace to housing and a barrier to proper business development." The layout and function of the existing neighborhood reflected "indiscriminate"

100 BCPB, *Rehabilitation in Boston*, 24
101 Green, *The South End*, 17-18.

development. Consequently, it stood "disfigured" by its own "filth." These deplorable conditions occurred because "any vestige of pride in the surroundings has long since been abandoned by the people there." Countering previous conclusions regarding housing, recreation, and employment opportunities, the authors declared: "the unfavorable neighborhood conditions are so obvious in the New York Streets area that no statistical survey of these environmental factors was undertaken." Instead the report recommended that the city "offer to potential users a level tract of land of substantial size situated close to the business heart of the city" and near to transportation junctions. Officials acknowledged that this project would require taking "most" of the land in the New York Streets area from current residents.[102]

Following the dispersal of the New York Streets assessment in 1952, both major newspapers, the *Herald* and *Globe*, featured stories on the neighborhood's purportedly deplorable conditions. The *Herald* produced a series titled "Boston's Skid Row" and the *Globe* devoted numerous articles to the benefits of slum clearance in the South End, concluding that "for our money, the sooner the tired old brick walls come tumbling down, the better." When surveying the neighborhood, Paul Kneeland, real estate editor for the *Globe*, imagined a "broken home with judgments for unpaid bills piled high on a broken kitchen table." Kneeland concluded by noting Boston had been witnessing "the slow, smokeless burning of decay" in the South End. In imagining what occurred in these private homes, Kneeland connected their residents' behavior with environmental degradation.[103]

In addition to its human toll, the New York Streets project proved a financial loss for the city. At the outset of the urban renewal, the Boston Redevelopment Authority targeted rooming houses, the essence of what made the South End a "low-rent" district. Overall, the BRA intended

102 Boston Housing Authority, *The New York Streets Project Proposal* (1952): 7-9.
103 *Boston Globe*, 4/3/1955.

to purchase 186 acres, or 30% of the total land area of the neighborhood, where it would demolish all of the buildings including 5,215 residences. In doing so, it slated a total of 7,500 residents for removal and relocation. According to the BRA, most of the residents would be moved into public housing. However, only 31% of these individuals were eligible for public housing and fewer still were relocated successfully. Most individuals reported that they never heard from the BRA. The BRA set up its relocation office in the neighborhood with only four weeks remaining before the neighborhood's slated demolition. The organization charged with relocation was also supposed to collect rents from apartment dwellers. This contributed to a dysfunctional dynamic.[104] In addition, the city had paid a total of $3,486,000 to landlords in the neighborhood, or $5.40 per acre. In 1959, 40 percent of the land still lay vacant. It sold the remaining land for a total of $467,969, or 70 cents per acre. Of the 22 acres that had encompassed the New York Streets, 6.2 acres was set aside for the relocation of the *Boston Herald*. This comprised 45 percent of the developable land in the area. Where the BRA left off, private speculators picked up. Real estate developers made deals with "slumlords" that allowed residents to be forcibly evicted from their homes.[105]

The New York Streets project set in motion the project to realign the South End's economic and residential orientation. The streets now stand directly to the southwest of the junction of Interstates 90 and 93, the two major highways that service Boston. The development of the Mass Pike and Prudential Center signaled the changing role of the South End. The east-west Mass Pike made the Boston and Albany Railroad, and its largely African-American labor force, obsolete.

104 Boston Municipal Research Bureau, *Charting the Future of Urban Renewal* (1959): 11-12. Green: Box 3, Folder 3.

105 James Green, "Urban Renewal's effect on Low-Income Housing in Boston's South End," unpublished manuscript: Box 4, Folder 3.

The Prudential signaled a post-industrial future. While these changes portended gentrification, city officials hastened this process with the expulsion of minority residents in the 1960s.

Conclusion

Mel King grew up in the New York Streets and has always defended his neighborhood as a viable place. Discourse about the South End was a manifestation of the city's power over the neighborhood. City politicians, businesses, the media, and the universities assumed the mentality of the residents, and based on this assumption, characterized their physical surroundings—and this justified their removal. King connected the development of "the highway, the universities, and the hospitals" that were "pushing people out" and the "expansion of racism that is institutionalized in our society."[106] For King, this is how racism functioned in Boston. The average residents had no way to shape the events that were altering the South End. That ability would come in time.

106 Mel King, "To My South End Neighbors." Green, Box 4, Folder 3.

CHAPTER 2:

"NO MORE ROADS OVER PEOPLE:"

ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM AND CIVIL RIGHTS IN BOSTON, 1955-1970

This chapter explores the South End, Roxbury, and North Dorchester neighborhoods of Boston from 1955-1970. During this time, the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) dislocated African American and Latinx residents from the South End as urban renewal funneled minorities to Roxbury and North Dorchester. In response to these challenges, minority groups developed organizations and programs to control the institutions that shaped life in their community.[107] While urban renewal policies employed environmental rhetoric to justify dislocation, they also employed environmental strategies in degrading the quality of residential life and making service denial a defining feature of racial inequality. Residents' geographic and social isolation allowed the community to be cut off from government programs and financial services. Poor sanitation, lack of housing code enforcement, and neglect by city institutions denied residents' environmental right to a healthy and safe community. Blaming the victim solidified a discourse about ghettos and their inherent "pathology." Urban renewal advocates acted on this premise to justify slum clearance and to explain the problems of the new ghetto in Roxbury and Dorchester. In doing so, it normalized the methods of abrogating individuals' property, human, and civil rights.

The efforts of civil rights groups in Boston demonstrate that environmental justice has existed longer than historians have previously traced. Instead of one or two events sparking a

107 For an informative overview of gentrification as the process concluded in the South End, see: Deborah A. Auger, "The Politics of Revitalization in Gentrifying Neighborhoods: The Case of the South End" *Journal of the American Planning Association* (1979): 515-522. For a monograph that justifies urban renewal policy in Boston see: Thomas O'Connor, *Building a New Boston*, 187.

national movement, environmental justice tactics developed over time through practical experience. In Boston civil rights activists focused on environmental issues and improvements, including increasing the quality of housing, access to city services, and social capabilities of residents. The community development movement was a way for minority residents to increase land and property ownership and gain control local institutions. In the 1960s, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) demanded an end to segregation in public housing and denial of city services, while it advocated for improved housing conditions, transportation options, and employment opportunities. The Lower Roxbury Community Corporation (LRCC) built new homes in the area and directed the construction of a new high school. The Black United Front (BBUF) employed a radical framework to oppose urban renewal and develop racial pride in the community. A coalition of groups thwarted plans for the proposed southwest extension of Interstate-93 through Roxbury in the late 1960s. The efforts of civil rights era groups demonstrate that environmental justice predates what is considered its official genesis at the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s. While not working under such an operation title, groups fighting for a better life in Boston labored for the same objectives their peers would a generation later.

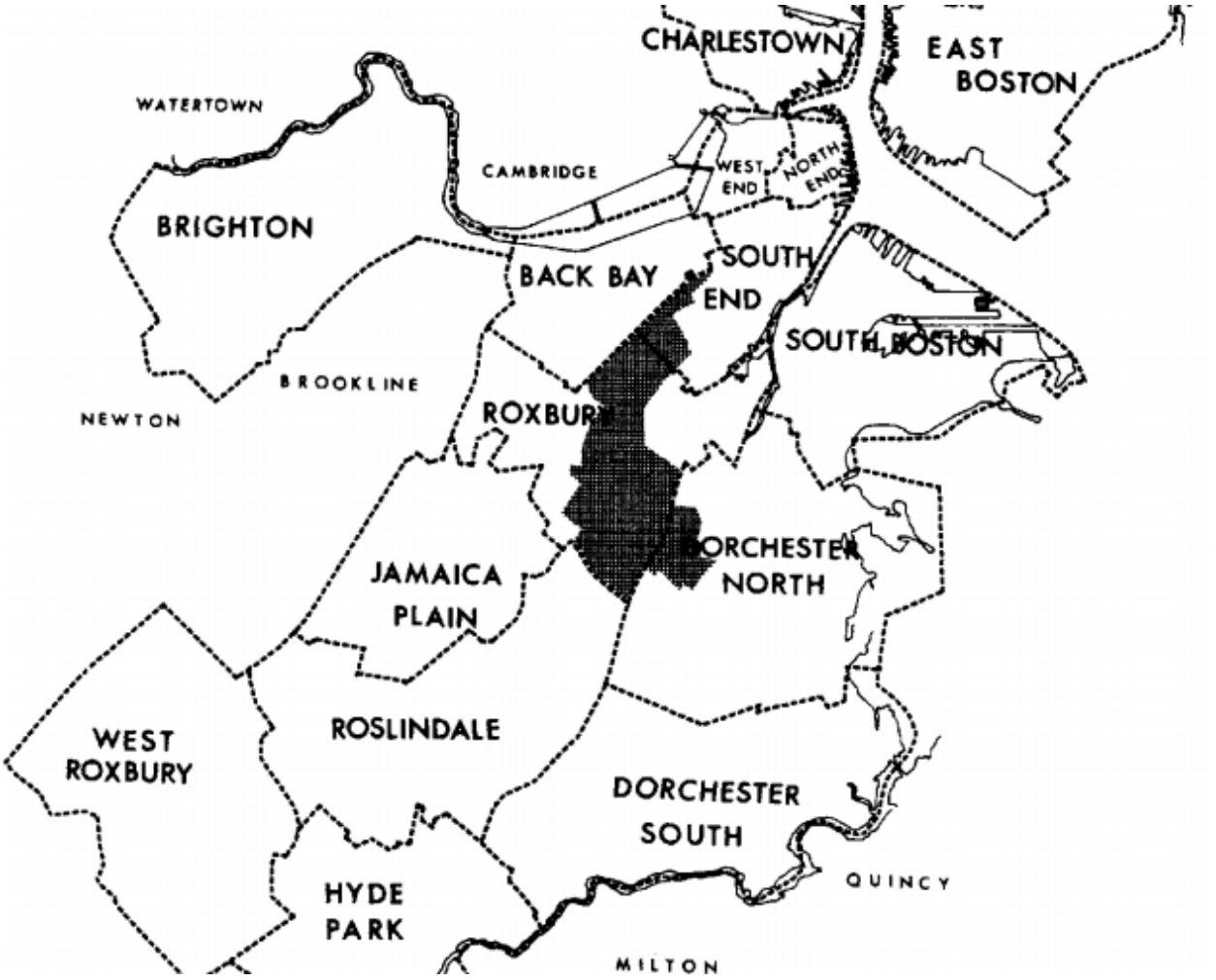

Figure 2.1: Census tracts with 50% African Americans, 1960.[108]

The Roots of Environmental Racism: Alienation and Isolation

The alienation residents felt in the South End led blacks to conclude that "being a Negro in Boston is the worst thing in the world." In the early 1960s, fewer than 1,500 of the 63,165 African American residents of Boston lived outside a boomerang-shaped area that consisted of parts of the South End, Roxbury, and North Dorchester. Real estate agencies, landlords, and

108 Massachusetts Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *Report on Massachusetts: Housing in Boston*, Washington D.C., 1963. Hereafter: "Commission on Civil Rights, *Report on Housing in Boston*."

developers demarcated these borders and sustained de facto segregation patterns that limited African Americans' residential options. According to contemporary observers, the South End functioned as "a ghetto, a reservation, set aside for beings who do not properly qualify as human. The South End's silence strikes the outsider. It is the silence of remoteness—the absence of life."[109] Isolation made it so that residents had "no way to communicate with anybody. You can't find a decent job or a decent place to live." A local reverend noted that his community "leads an existence largely independent of the city that surrounds it." At a 1966 town hall meeting designed to elicit feedback from the community, residents: "made the point that no one listens to them, no one consults them, no one considers their needs." The report on the meeting concluded "the Negro in Boston is devoid of political power."[110]

Economic conditions for Boston's blacks resembled a permanent economic depression. After 1940, African Americans migrated in substantial numbers from the American South. Before 1940, African Americans numbered around three percent of the city's total population, however by 1980, the group claimed just over 20 percent.[111] African American migrants faced a different economic situation in Boston than previous groups. Capital flight impacted the city as the shoe, textile, and leather industries moved semi-skilled jobs to the southern United States. Many blacks worked as porters on the railroads, an industry in serious decline with the rise of the interstate system in the 1950s. The percentage of the African American workforce in laboring and service jobs reflected these macroeconomic changes, dropping from 65 percent in 1940 to

109 Frank Miranda Papers: Box 2, Folder 1: "CORESpond" 3/14/1965. Miranda's papers are archived at Snell Library Archives, Northeastern University, Boston, MA.

110 "Commission on Civil Rights, *Report on Housing in Boston*."

111 Richard Broadman, John Grady, and Roy Rosenzweig, "The Mission Hill Experience in the New Boston: A Study Guide for the Film 'Mission Hill and the Miracle of the New Boston," *Cine Research*, 1979: 2. The film features many excellent interviews of residents of Mission Hill as the demography changed.

about 27 percent in 1970. Furthermore, blacks faced stiff challenges in the remaining industries. For example, in 1960, Massachusetts had 1,297 apprentices in the building trades, but only 15 blacks. By 1965, the number of apprentices had grown to 2,680; however African Americans still only held 15 positions. Blacks reported being barred from union membership, even while these same unions imported workers from other states to fill jobs. A black building contractor noted, "In all this the Negro is left out, left unemployed or underemployed." Wage earnings mirrored the declining job prospects of the black community. The difference between the white and black male median income jumped from $785 in 1950, to $1,601 in 1960, and 4,914 by 1970. In 1965, between 24.2 and 47.4 percent of Boston's of black community reported "serious employment problems."[112]

For Boston's black residents, finding a decent place to live proved "a long, discouraging, humiliating experience." The black community's isolation and low socioeconomic status negatively impacted the quality and quantity of housing. Residents reported that rooms in lodging houses were infested with rats and cockroaches, resulting in an increase in health issues including tuberculosis cases and infant mortality. Social workers told residents to relocate, but offered no assistance on how to obtain a better room. De facto segregation further limited housing options. A white landlord reported in 1963 that "we have come to an agreement that we will not rent to Negroes on this street." Researchers tested the housing market and found that blacks with similar income levels were rejected for the same apartments that accepted white tenants. For example, a black man was told "his family was too large" and that he had

112 U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *A Time to Listen, A Time To Act: Voices from the Ghettos of the Nation's Cities* (1967): 53. See also, Robert C. Hayden, "A Historical Overview of Poverty Among Blacks in Boston, 1850-1990" *The Trotter Review* Vol. 17, No. 1 (2007): 131-143; see: Income and Poverty Rate Characteristics: 1950-80 and "Commission on Civil Rights, *Report on Housing in Boston*."

insufficient income. The next day, a white man of the same familial and economic profile applied for the same apartment and was accepted without having to provide any financial documentation. The city's housing board guidelines for selecting tenants included the ability to pay rent and to respect the rights of others.[113] Since these guidelines were rarely followed, blacks in Boston entered into a "free market" that illegally colluded against them.

Table 2.1: Housing quality in Boston, white and non-white residents, 1960.

Housing	Non-White (Expressed in %)	White
Sound	47	78
Deteriorating	37	13
Dilapidated	10	2

Table 2.2: Percentage of income on housing, white and non-white residents, 1960.[114]

	Non-White	White
Under 17 percent	37	58
Between 17.5 and 22.4 percent	17	12
Over 22.5 percent	46	30

Because they lived in a socioeconomic cluster with low status and clearly demarcated boundaries, minority residents were denied city services. Pearl Lee, a black resident of Roxbury, observed that streets had not been swept in five or six months while on Beacon Street in the Back

113 "Commission on Civil Rights, *Report on Housing in Boston*," 20-21.

114 These figures summarize information presented in the Commission on Civil Rights, *Report on Housing in Boston*, 11-15.

Bay “the street sweeper was there every morning.” In the largely black section of Blue Hill Avenue, trash set outside for collection on Friday night would often stand out for days before being picked up. Neglect led to crime. A South End resident noted that “Police have isolated the South End as an area, giving it only token protection.” As a result, prostitution, bookmaking, and speakeasy types of establishments flourished. A local reverend noted that a hotel known for prostitution across the street from police headquarters in the South End remained open and its existence undocumented by the media. The reverend concluded that “anything goes in the South End.” According to residents, response times for police calls varied depending on which ethnic or racial group made the call. Black residents that called for assistance reported that it took police over 20 minutes to arrive, if at all. When a black resident called and reported, "get out here quick, there is a Negro beating up a white man" to test the response times, the police arrived in less than two minutes.[115]

In 1967, Mel King penned an essay that contended minority groups had been denied a “physically and psychologically” fulfilling existence. King explained that: “the public and private institutions that exist in black communities are almost totally controlled by business structures from outside.” These institutions advanced their own interests, and their decision-making often degraded life for residents in those communities. King drew parallels between the condition non-whites lived in Boston to the “emerging countries” of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. King proclaimed that the “nature of the colonial system is exactly parallel to the nature of the system under which black people find ourselves living in America.” To solve these problems, minority residents needed to take control of the institutions that shaped life, such as better housing, good schools, and increased quantity and quality of jobs. His essay concluded

115 Commission on Civil Rights, *A Time to Listen*, 18.

that “the power that comes from being able to participate in the changing of one’s condition” was the surest means of developing a “viable and healthy” community.[116]

Figure 2.2: Rear of houses on Harrison Avenue, 1952. This area comprised the New York Streets project. (Image: Boston City Archives) (available at: https://www.flickr.com/photos/cityofbostonarchives)

116 Gopen: Box 10, Folder 37: “New Urban League: General, 1965-1970” See: “Black Paper # 1.”

Figure 2.3: Intersection of Tremont and Shawmut Streets, 1952. (Image: Boston City Archives)

Urban Renewal in the South End: Dislocation and Dispossession

Urban renewal dislocated minority residents and decimated the institutions that made the area a minority archipelago. While residents of the South End demanded improved environmental conditions, the BRA shaped discourse about urban environments and determined which factors warranted analysis. Planners and city officials prioritized the density of settlement, air pollution, and noise pollution rather than sanitation services, regulations for the built environment, water, and sewer systems. These choices were employed to justify dislocation and allow incoming residents to dictate the agendas of their new communities. With the help of community institutions, urban renewal removed the foundation of what made the South End a mixed-use ethnic community: its working-class housing, ethnic eateries, markets, and shops that sustained

life for residents. By the close of the 1960s, minorities protested that urban renewal "shunted" them into "concentration camps."[117]

Mayor John Collins appointed Edward Logue as the "czar" of urban renewal in 1960, and in doing so accelerated the pursuit of a "New Boston." Logue had directed the renewal plans of New Haven, Connecticut. Contemporaries considered Logue a visionary of urban regeneration, on par with New York City's Robert Moses.[118] Logue and the BRA labelled the South End as a "high priority" for urban renewal. To this end, Logue called for $24.2 million dollars for a place "too promising to ignore, too near the edge of disaster for remedial action to be delayed." By 1963, the BRA had developed a plan for "massive rehabilitation" for the South End through a consortium of banks it helped develop: Boston Banks Urban Renewal Group (BBURG).[119]

In the early 1960s, the South End offered attractive features to young professionals due to its location, architecture, and layout. The neighborhood's proximity to Boston's new commercial developments extending down its east to west avenues, including the Christian Science Church and the new Prudential Center, offered employees a chance to live close to work.[120] The potential for more building along the new Massachusetts Turnpike, which had replaced the Boston and Albany Railroad, foreshadowed real estate values appreciating in the following years. According to BRA officials, the second round of urban renewal would emphasize rehabilitation rather than demolition. The BRA claimed it would renew the neighborhood and retain low-rent housing for

117 *Boston Globe*, 3/26/1969.

118 Lizbeth Cohen, "Buying into Downtown Revival: The Centrality of Retail to Postwar Urban Renewal in American Cities" *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* Vol. 611 (May, 2007): 84-93.

119 *Boston Globe*, 5/4/1969.

120 For an extensive examination of the building of the Prudential Center and the process associated with building Interstate-90 in Boston, see: Elihu Rubin, *Insuring the City: The Prudential Center and the Postwar Urban Landscape* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012).

working-class residents. Despite the plan's optimistic tone, it also called for 5,900 individuals, including 3,550 households to be displaced; 1,730 of these households included an elderly parent living with their children. The city chose not to include relocation services to displaced persons, and as a result many residents moved elsewhere upon hearing the news of the plan. In 1963, the BRA announced that 279 units existed for displaced residents, offering this as evidence that relocation housing existed, even though the plan fell far short of the number of residents that moved.[121]

By the late 1950s, BRA initiatives in the South End had failed to generate economic growth. The area cleared for the New York Streets project stood vacant for several years, until the *Boston Herald* built a new headquarters along the northeastern boundary of the neighborhood at the junction of Interstates 90 and 93. Castle Square, adjacent to the New York Streets area, had been proposed for demolition in 1959. BRA officials suggested that Castle Square's proximity to the new highways and South Station made it ideal for office space, light industry, and new housing. Residents in the South End petitioned the BRA to ensure new housing for the current residents of Castle Square, a project that eventually dislocated 644 residents. The BRA contracted with the local settlement house, United South End Settlements (USES), who in turn received compensation from the BRA when families moved. Only 77 of the 644 residents, or 12 percent, moved to BRA replacement housing; the rest dispersed throughout the city.[122]

121 Gopen: Box 10, Folder 51: "The South End Since 1960;" See: Relocation Caseload.
122 South End Area Project Committee (SEPAC), *The South End Since 1960* (Boston, 1975). (produced under the auspices of the BRA)

Figure 2.4: Castle Square Project area, 1965. (Image: Boston City Archives)

The settlement houses in the South End ensured urban renewal benefitted incoming white professionals over established residents. In 1964, United South End Settlements (USES) received a grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to study the condition of housing in the South End, with an emphasis on the brownstone row houses that predominated in the area. The settlement house gathered a committee of five representatives from the business community, five professionals, five officials from South End institutions, and 23 residents to develop plans for rehabilitation. At the outset, the committee created questionnaires to elicit feedback from the community. However, the committee's questions and methods of developing

community participation created a backlash from the neighborhood's working class. The final report submitted by USES argued that white middle class professionals would improve the quality of housing and the social fabric of the neighborhood.[123]

The housing plans for the South End targeted minority residents for dislocation. Proposals called for the retention of 75 percent of the neighborhood's housing. Of the housing set aside, brownstone row houses comprised 98 percent of the 2,900 residential structures chosen for rehabilitation. If BRA plans were to serve low to moderate-income people, the South End row house would be an important source of housing for that population. However, incoming residents made brownstone housing highly sought after. During the 1960s, the number of occupants in buildings and the median age of residents decreased, while the occupation of the new residents changed from working class to middle class. Most of the incoming residents moved from suburban towns.[124] In 1965, the BRA stated it would demolish 5,215 of the South End's 26,128 housing units. By 1975 the South End had lost 15,328 units, down to only 10,800. Martin Gopen reflected on his work with working-class residents that: "efforts to ameliorate housing is [sic] not working. There is no support at the state and federal level for activities and programs."[125] The BRA argued that the private market would sort out displacement. However, reducing supply, increasing demand, and providing financial compensation for incoming residents while forcibly evicting others created distinct advantages for new residents.

123 In 1970, the BRA produced a "working paper" on changes to Boston generally and South End specifically during the 1960s and provided an overview of how the neighborhood would evolve during the ensuing decade. See: Alexander Ganz and Tina Freeman, *Population and Income of the City of Boston: Recent Evolution and Future Perspective* Boston Redevelopment Authority, 1970. See also: Margaret Suplee Smith, *Between City and Suburb: Architecture and Planning in Boston South End* Ph.D. Dissertation, Brown University, 1976.

124 Gopen: Box 2, Folder 49: "South End: Gentrification, 1973-1978." See also: James Green, "The Destruction of the Lodging House: A Century Old South End Institution" unpublished manuscript Box 4, Folder 1: "Personal Papers, 1964-2010."

125 Gopen: Box 3, Folder 3: "Personal Notes, General 1965."

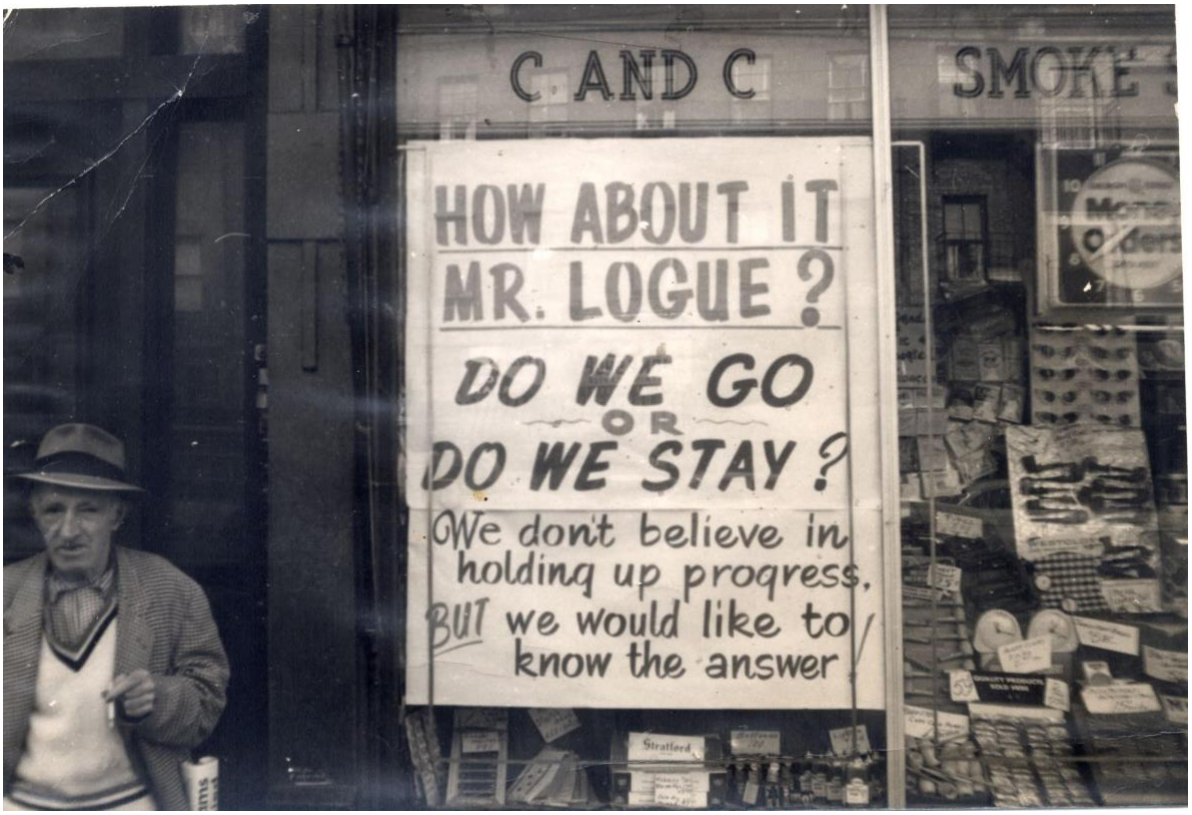

Figure 2.5: Urban Renewal Sign in the South End, mid 1960s. (Image: Boston City Archives)

Resident experiences with the Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD) demonstrated that efforts seemingly designed to assist the city's working class contributed to a decline in status. With an infusion of two million dollars from the Ford Foundation, ABCD began operating with the charge of functioning as the "human side" of urban renewal in Boston in 1962. In 1965, federal policy altered ABCD's mission when it became charged with overseeing the War on Poverty in Boston. A participant described ABCD's evolution: "before one set of nebulous local goals could be defined and digested another group of even more nebulous objectives, backed by big federal money, was thrust upon it." Federal funds came with few guidelines or administrative controls. As a result, the "Johnson rush" doomed the group's work as federal funds were consumed by patronage networks and otherwise inefficiently applied.

Elliot L. Richardson, the state's Lieutenant Governor, observed ABCD was a "spectacular disappointment" because of its "sloppy and confused administration." Minority participants in ABCD maintained that the organization would have been more effective if it could have developed a set of policy initiatives without outside interference.[126]

A lack of support from key government officials left minority residents without any influential advocates. Mel King petitioned Housing and Urban Development (HUD) secretary Robert C. Weaver, the first black cabinet secretary in US history, explaining that he had been sold a "bill of goods" on urban renewal. He cautioned Weaver that residents of Roxbury would make every effort to halt government programs undertaken without widespread resident input. King convinced Weaver to tour Roxbury so that he could, according to King, witness the failures of urban renewal first hand. King's tour and explanation of conditions persuaded Weaver that urban policies harmed minority residents. Weaver promised to make "recommendations" to his superiors, however the meeting and tour failed to generate any changes in policy. In December 1966, Mel King and a group of black community leaders from across the United States met with Vice President Hubert Humphrey to discuss the condition of minority neighborhoods in the nation's cities. King reported that Humphrey, one of the most liberal politicians in the US, knew little about the "actual conditions" in cities. If a close ally in the federal government existed, it would have been a liberal politician like Humphrey, but King surmised a disconnect between minority residents and those in the highest positions of government.[127]

The BRA limited the information it provided to South Enders, discounting the working-class response to urban renewal and displacement. Residents reported that the BRA's South End office

126 Miranda: Box 2, Folder 14: "Flyers, Pamphlets, and Magazines: General 1966;" see: "Boston Forum: Poverty in Boston."
127 Gopen: Box 10, Folder 29: "Mel King for Mayor: General [1966-1983]."

could not specify the number of subsidized houses for low-income residents in the neighborhood. Individuals in the neighborhood that provided assistance to the BRA in one area such as housing, transportation, schools, and recreational facilities reported they received little information regarding other endeavors, or how the pieces fit together as a whole. Henry Wood, a resident of the South End, noted that "as a result of a lack of leadership and a lack of information, a void has been created. Rumors and misinformation pervade, encouraging fear and suspicion within the community." A 1975 report on urban renewal in the South Ended concluded, "the original process for dealing with the community had not been effective in filtering information down to the neighborhood and street level."[128] City officials reacted to a human rights crisis—the influx of working-class blacks from the American South—by blaming the migrants, dislocating them, and contributing to their inferior status. The BRA treated a human rights crisis with an environmental component as a "social problem."

[128] Gopen: Box 10, Folder 51: See: "Committee for a Balanced South End."

Figure 2.6: BRA Advertisement for Urban Renewal, circa 1952. (Image: Boston City Archives)

Figure 2.7: Muriel Snowden, Co-Founder of Freedom House. (Image: Boston City Archives)

Figure 2.8: Architect's Rendering of the Prudential Center, late 1950s. (Image: Boston City Archives)

Civil Rights' Environmental Focus

The Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) dealt with issues in Boston through the lens of environmental justice, employing the same methods that the Dudley Street Initiative (DSNI) would implement 20 years later. For example, CORE developed businesses owned and operated by community members and petitioned First National Bank for loans to redevelop the area. It also established a standing employment committee that completed a study of Boston's businesses

and potential job opportunities for the city's minorities. The group engaged in direct action with a variety of organizations, including supermarkets, in an attempt to bring more food options to Roxbury and North Dorchester. These efforts include a price comparison of basic staples to ensure local markets charged fair prices. In an attempt to combat negative stereotypes in the media, CORE induced local newspapers to cover housing conditions in Roxbury and the South End. Finally, CORE cleaned up its community without the help of city services. Upon going weeks without trash pickup, Roxbury residents brought their trash to city hall and dumped it with a sign that read, "Signed: The Citizens and Taxpayers of Roxbury." CORE established some important precedents in analyzing and acting upon environmental inequality broadly.[129]

CORE's philosophy and tactics facilitated activism in Boston's black community. Organized in Boston in 1964, CORE functioned as a local chapter of a national organization that fought to end racial discrimination by using direct and non-violent methods. An activist approach required the "arousal and action" of blacks' political self-consciousness to engage in concerted action for an agreed upon set of objectives. The group addressed schools, training programs, welfare, and housing as specific points of inequity that undermined life for African Americans. Action towards these goals required "a multi-pronged movement" that would counter the "economic and political powerlessness of the Negro community." CORE developed multiple non-violent approaches, including demonstrations, street corner rallies, canvassing, and community organization, with a goal to "crystallize the issues and mobilize the people." The group organized welfare recipients to collectively "fight the abuses" of the city's welfare programs; demanded improved housing conditions; called for increased employment opportunities; and argued for increased budgets for mostly black schools and for the integration of schools in mixed-race

129 Miranda: Box 2, Folder 1. See 3/11/1966- "There's A Real Community Action Program: Trash dumped where the city will notice it" and 1/31/1966.

school districts. CORE also created its own educational program, opening "freedom schools" in which small seminar-like teaching environments educated participants about political issues and voter registration efforts.[130]

Boston's chapter of CORE made housing problems the focal point of its activism. The group participated in picket lines, sit-ins, rent strikes, community organization, negotiation, and legislation proposals to improve housing conditions. They attacked slumlords and petitioned the state to improve housing conditions for Boston's black residents. In 1964, CORE authored a brochure called "Why we Picket" that demanded the landlord at 90 through 96 Hammond Street repair his rental unit, including removing mice and cockroaches, repairing broken windows, removing fire hazards, and replacing exposed sewage pipes. By 1966, CORE had established guidelines for rent strikes in response to housing code violations. Tenants had to have a specific identifiable issue from a list that included rats, roaches, plumbing leaks, flooding, or holes in ceilings, floors, or walls. To participate, the resident needed to be up to date on the rent and have provided a complaint in writing to the landlord. At that point, the tenant could call the housing inspection department to inspect the apartment and find visible defects. After these requirements had been met, residents could receive assistance at the CORE office and work with a lawyer to file a complaint in Boston Superior Court. CORE distributed a rent strike fact sheet to residents of Roxbury to encourage participation.[131]

CORE made housing improvements and ownership the centerpiece of its efforts. The group argued that the BRA offered only "lip service" when attempting to solve the problems of housing for the working-class. Because of the limited supply of housing for African Americans, plans to

130 Miranda: Box 2, Folder 12: "CORE National."
131 Miranda: Box 2, Folder 3: "CORE, Boston: Housing 1964-1968" See: "Why we Picket" and "Rent Strike for Code Violations" 1966.

demolish housing and construct the proposed Southwest expressway through Roxbury proved non-negotiable. Such plans, the organization argued, worsened housing prospects for Roxbury residents and benefitted suburban commuters. While residential options declined due to urban renewal policy, the public housing system suffered from poor management. In 1965, 4,500 applicants competed for 500 new units in public housing while the bureaucracy dealing with public housing proved inefficient and insensitive to tenants' needs. In 1965, CORE acted on behalf of residents currently living in or eligible for public housing. The group charged that the "City acts weakly on CORE's slum demands," asserting that officials inspected rental housing in Roxbury but failed to ensure landlords perform necessary repairs.[132] In 1967, the group created a "Proposal for New CORE Housing Program" that outlined methods for funding the purchase, rehabilitation, and construction of cooperative housing. Efforts made toward the development of cooperative housing would include residents in the planning process and provide for a tenant education program designed to assist them with navigating the housing market.[133]

As a leading advocate for civil rights in Boston, CORE became a liaison between the federal government and the black community, a role that greatly expanded during Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty program. According to federal legislation, money designated for so called community action programs would fund groups representing minority neighborhoods so they could "have a powerful and effective voice in planning for and bringing about needed improvements in their own communities." For CORE, this included assisting in the development of a Head Start program and neighborhood youth corp. CORE also developed and supported Mothers for Adequate Welfare (MAW), a group of concerned women organized to demand

132 Miranda: Box 2, Folder 1: "CORESpond" 3/14/1965; 4/11/1965; 5/16/1965; 5/16/1965.
133 Miranda: Box 2, Folder 4: "CORE, Boston: Housing 1964-1968;" see: 6/6/1967 "Proposal for a New CORE Housing Program."

improvements to the welfare offices and programs. These problems involved, as one participant put it, "not knowing our rights, not having good hospitals we can go to, (and) not having enough money." MAW demanded that mothers on welfare hold positions on the department's board of appeals, help to run day care centers, and to get the maximum amount of money allowed by law.[134]

In May 1967, the Lower Roxbury Community Corporation (LRCC) developed as a vehicle for African American opposition to urban renewal. A 1962 report by the Harvard Graduate School of Education that recommended a 5,000 student campus style high school in Boston spurred the development of the LRCC. The plan called for 60 acres to be set aside in the Madison Park area of Lower Roxbury, of which 57 acres would be claimed by eminent domain. In response to the BRA's plans, members of LRCC created a petition signed by 350 residents and met with the BRA, including Ed Logue.[135] In 1968, when the federal government charged city planning boards with eliciting greater resident participation, the LRCC countered that these committees failed to represent the community. LRCC members opposed legislation that suggested the construction of prefabricated homes in Roxbury, on the grounds that it diminished both the quality of housing and potential employment opportunities from construction. Finally, the LRCC demanded an end to the BRA contracting with suburban developers to direct renewal projects, arguing that it put money into the hands of private developers who sought profit over rebuilding communities.[136]

134 Miranda: Box 2, Folder 14: "Flyers, Pamphlets, and Magazines:1966" See: "What is MAW?"

135 Lower Roxbury Community Corporation (LRCC) Folder 8: "Washington Park Urban Renewal Area Bulletin 1970." LRCC records are located at Snell Library, Northeastern University. Hereafter: "LRCC: Folder___"

136 LRCC: Folder 1: "Board Minutes." See: 5/5/1969 and 7/3/1969.

Figure 2.9: Proposed Campus High School Area, 1967. (Image: Boston City Archives)

The LRCC's plan for community development identified the objectives, and developed the strategies and tactics of environmental justice. The group developed a cadre of individuals who could function as a consultant to residents and liaison to city agencies. To advocate for residents' needs, the group initiated five committees to address areas of concern in Roxbury: housing, services, business development, relocation, and education. The housing committee suggested that cooperatively owned housing, including new buildings and rehabilitation of existing structures, would quell displacement, increase supply, and keep real estate prices down. Out of its committee work, the LRCC demanded that the community be provided essential services, including food, banking, laundry, health and beauty stores. The services committee argued for

healthcare, dental care, family counseling, daycare, recreation, speech and hearing, drug and alcohol counseling, and programs for the elderly. The LRCC also instituted short term and concrete objectives such as a field day in July of 1968. A local resident commented on the "fun and excitement. The games, booths, and entertainment all were great!"[137] In 1968, the group designed the Campus High School in Roxbury and the housing component of the project. The Model Neighborhood program made the LRCC sponsor/developer of renewal activity in Lower Roxbury.[138]

Minority Residents Fight for Community Control

Urban renewal activated the political consciousness of individuals who viewed increased control over local institutions as means to confront racism and improve the quality of life for the community. One such individual, Martin Gopen, grew up in Brookline, an affluent suburb of Boston, and as a graduate student in English at Boston University during the late 1950s, heard Mel King speak during his campaign for the Boston school board. King, an emerging black activist who would eventually publish several books and run for mayor in 1983, changed Gopen's academic and life plans that evening: "He was talking in terms of people, about the injustices done to people in the name of urban renewal, in the name of progress." As a result of

137 LRCC: Folder 5: "Brochures" and Folder 9: "Voices."

138 Boston Redevelopment Authority, *Summary Report on the Proposed Campus High School*, July 1966; BRA, *Campus High School Site Alternatives*, 1966. LRCC: Folder 7: "Project Area Committee Minutes" For a retrospective analysis documenting the intentions and shortcomings of the Washington Park Plan, see: Richard Heath, *An Act of Faith: The Building of the Washington Park Renewal Area, 1960-1976* (Boston University: Urban Affairs and Planning Department, Boston City Series, 1990). For a sharp critique of urban renewal in Roxbury and a discussion of development efforts in the black community see: Mauricio Gaston and Marie Kennedy "Blueprint for Tomorrow: The Fight for Community Control in Black and Latino Boston" *Radical America* Vol. 20 No. 5 (September-October 1986).

hearing this perspective, Gopen took a position with King in USES working in the literacy and employment training programs.[139]

In 1967, Gopen and King formed Citizens for a United South End (CAUSE) to provide a voice for the dispossessed. At a March 1969 city council meeting, CAUSE demanded a quid pro quo for displacement in the South End. The group advocated for five thousand housing units in Lower Roxbury and demanded that the BRA acquire houses for rehabilitation and development for and by the minority community. According to CAUSE, minorities should "carry out the programs to the fullest extent possible including, management, administration, and construction activity." For its part, the BRA claimed that it had no jurisdiction to "delegate any of its authority" to neighborhood associations. Martin Gopen reflected that, "right now I'm experiencing much pain in that I see the goals and realizations of our efforts becoming less and less attainable while justification for the struggle escalates."[140]

In 1968, the Puerto Rican community merged with CAUSE and won the development of the Villa Victoria (Victory Housing) along Tremont Street, constructing nearly 400 units housing and rehabilitating another 200 units. In January 1967, nine Puerto Rican families along West Newton Street near Massachusetts Avenue participated in a rent strike after the landlord turned off the heat. The families' effort activated a political consciousness in the neighborhood's six to seven thousand Latinx residents. While the landlord turned the heat back on, the residents channeled their efforts into an "Action Center" designed to assist residents with their housing concerns. The center insisted that city building inspectors examine buildings with broken sewer pipes and rat infestations. City officials inspected and condemned buildings and assisted residents with finding other homes, but the problem of housing shortages still existed. The

139 Gopen: Box 3, Folder 3.
140 *Boston Globe*, 3/26/1969; *Boston Globe*, 5/4/1969; Gopen Box 3, Folder 3.

Action Center argued that urban renewal severed trust with Latinx residents after USES contracted with the BRA to displace Puerto Rican residents and encourage middle class families to move in. Tony Molino, an action center leader, charged the BRA and Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty with marginalizing Latinx residents by attempting to break up "the ghetto." Rather than work with the "paternalistic" settlement house, Puerto Ricans joined CAUSE. Together with CAUSE, Latinx residents won a hard-fought victory to direct their own lives and community through the establishment of Villa Victoria.[141]

In 1968, plans for a parking lot in the South End developed into a microcosm of the class and race-based struggle for land in the neighborhood. John Hynes, Boston's mayor, facilitated plans for a parking lot adjacent to John Hancock corporate headquarters. In opposition to city agencies, CAUSE developed "sound plans for low and moderate-income housing" at the same site. At first, Martin Gopen and several members of CAUSE blocked the entry to the proposed parking lot as a symbolic act of resistance. However, when a van accelerated and knocked Mel King to the ground, resistance among protesters stiffened. Gopen ran next to the van, ripped off its antenna and pounded his fist on its windshield. A ruckus ensued. The Boston Police arrived, put Mel King in handcuffs, and placed him in the back of a police van. Gopen climbed into the back of the van, grabbed King, and ran for an escape. They were both arrested, and Gopen charged on multiple counts.

The arrest of Gopen and King led to the "Tent City" protest. This organic expression of opposition to urban renewal helped protesters to develop further interventions on behalf of working-class residents. In the parking lot, participants organized tents into arts and residential

141 *Harvard Crimson*, 11/16/1967. See also: Mario Luis Small, *Villa Victoria: The Transformation of Social Capital in a Boston Barrio* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004; Rachel Bratt, "Community Based Housing: Potential for a New Strategy" *The Trotter Institute*, Paper 21 (1985).

districts, connecting the different sections with roads, including a main thoroughfare. The students at the graduate school of urban planning at MIT assisted with the logistics. King and Gopen convinced suburban commuters to park their cars in the driveways of the residences to give the neighborhood a greater sense of authenticity. Together, the group created, "a carnival like atmosphere." As the time wore on, activists developed competing visions of the protest's mission. In addition, undercover police infiltrated the makeshift neighborhood, shaking the confidence of the participants. When a local reverend offered ten thousand dollars for the activists to disband, a quorum viewed it opportune time to acquiesce. For his part, King felt ending the protest was "one of the biggest mistakes that we ever made" because it gave the appearance that the group could be bought off. Despite the setback handed to Tent City, CAUSE continued to push forward with its housing agenda.[142]

A "New Environment" Worsens Inequality in Roxbury

Urban renewal activity impacted Roxbury through several initiatives: the Washington Park program, the development of public housing, and the availability of home improvement loans. Upon assuming control of the BRA, it became imperative for Edward Logue to see existing projects through in order to gain approval for new endeavors from the federal government. Put simply, the overhaul of the downtown core would not happen if Washington Park remained incomplete.[143] Logue recalled asking: "'what does the neighborhood need?' Back came 'police station, courthouse, housing, schools, and parks.'" Middle-class blacks, who had seen their community drastically changed by low-income migrants, viewed urban renewal as a lifeline to a

142 Gopen: Box 10, Folder 15: "Tent City, 1968" See also: BRA, *Subsidized Housing in the South End*, 1978; *Boston Globe* 4/29/1968.

143 John H. Spiers, "Planning with People': Urban Renewal in Boston's Washington Park, 1950-1970" *Journal of Planning History* (8/2/2009): 229. See also: Langley C. Keyes, *The Rehabilitation Planning Game*.

sinking section of the city. Logue reflected in 1990 that Washington Park "was increasingly becoming a ghetto. There was a need for stability."[144] Urban renewal in Roxbury subordinated the concerns of residents most in need because planners viewed working-class blacks as a problem society must control rather than a product of society's problems.

In 1963 Mayor John Collins and the BRA presented a redevelopment proposal for the Washington Park area that offered to "plan with the residents" of Roxbury to create "a new environment for the people who live there." Previously, however, Logue had announced that the BRA held no responsibility for finding new housing for residents displaced by renewal. So when Logue and Collins announced their desire for "maximum feasible participation" from resident groups, it implied working with established middle-class organizations. BRA authors noted that many residents in the Washington Park organized block associations charged with maintaining the environmental quality of the neighborhood but concluded these groups could not fully implement their improvement agendas without the assistance of a "master plan." The report concluded that some residents "pose a serious threat to the community" because of their inadequate home maintenance. According to BRA planners, "such blighted areas" led to rat infestations, disease, including tuberculosis, and a growing number of fires that would require demolition. In the late 1950s, 81% of residents in the Washington Park area could not afford the median apartment rental in the city. Since Boston's African Americans had limited housing options outside the immediate vicinity, renewal of housing in the area would be crucial to the residents' fortunes.[145]

144 Richard Heath, *An Act of Faith*: Quotes from Ed Logue in this chapter are taken from: Appendix "A Conversation with Edward J. Logue" (non-paginated end matter)
145 Boston Redevelopment Authority, *Your New Washington Park: A Bold Program in Urban Renewal* (1963). (accessed at archive.org)

The black middle-class Freedom House (FH) signed off on urban renewal and contributed to the marginalization of working-class blacks. Started in 1949 in Roxbury by Muriel and Otto Snowden, FH functioned as an African-American civic group created in the settlement house model. Muriel Snowden, a graduate of Radcliffe, considered herself the voice of the black community and chief interlocutor with BRA officials. FH organized improvement projects in the late 1950s, but while doing so, it kept many block associations separate. Preventing the associations from combining limited cross-pollination of ideas and development of neighborhood-wide leaders and leadership organizations. In addition, FH preferred to work with homeowners as opposed to renters, assuming that renters lacked "character." Muriel Snowden argued residents needed to develop their "social standards" in order to keep the neighborhood clean.[146] Ed Logue reflected that the Snowdens opposed low-income housing in Washington Park – "period."[147]

The BRA rebuilt Washington Park as a "complete community" to fix the perceived social ills that plagued the area. Ed Logue explained: "there will be no long-range solution to the social problems unless we get rid of bad housing." The city paid $25 million of the estimated $75 million cost to rebuild the streets, clear land, and install water, sewer, and electricity, at which point it planned to sell the land to private developers to facilitate construction and rehabilitation, with 1,772 houses slated for improvements. The BRA promised that dislocated residents would be moved into "decent, safe, and sanitary housing." The plan offered to build 1,500 new units of "attractive and modern" public housing dispersed throughout the area in town and row houses. According to planners, five new schools, a library, police station, recreational facilities, and parks would avert the juvenile delinquency that had become prevalent. For Dudley Square, a new

146 Spiers, "Planning with People," 236.
147 Heath, *An Act of Faith*, 26-29.

civic center and shopping mall would replace several "seedy and rundown" buildings. In total, the renewal area comprised 502 acres, 71 percent of which consisted of residences, or 356 acres. Eighty-five acres with 985 buildings on it met the bulldozer. The greatest housing clearance occurred on the streets where the poorest African American migrants resided.[148]

Mel King characterized Lower Roxbury's "renewal" as "neo-colonialism in its most subtle form," a process that kept blacks "in their place." By 1967, 2,500 households had moved permanently, to which the BRA added an additional 900 families before 1970. In 1968, the BRA invested over twenty-seven million dollars in federal funds to renovate 2,300 apartments on a "crash" schedule. Designed to encourage developers to rehabilitate housing for low income residents in great quantity in a short amount of time, plans for Lower Roxbury intended to "break away from traditional concerns with financial soundness and without red tape to respond to the needs of ghetto residents." The BRA announced that Section 220 of the Housing Act called on area banks to "stand ready with loans." In reality, the BRA directed banks to offer market rate loans to minority residents. This policy offered access to mortgages that most minorities could not otherwise attain, but without assistance most could not meet the requirements. Many of the property owners who obtained loans through BRA programs displaced their tenants at the outset of rehabilitation. This population went unrecorded by the compilers of official statistics.[149]

Rather than providing renewal funds for residents and locally owned businesses, the BRA gave contracts to suburban companies to rehabilitate sections of Roxbury, thus channeling money away from, rather than into the community. Within two years, the BRA claimed success

148 Heath, *An Act of Faith*, 47-58; Spiers, "Planning with People"; BRA, *General Neighborhood Redevelopment Plan: Roxbury and North Dorchester* (1965). Edward Logue, *Proposed Program for Extending Urban Renewal Action in the Roxbury and North Dorchester GNRP Area* (3/11/1965). (GNRP= General Neighborhood Renewal Plan)

149 BRA, *Your New Washington Park*, 1963.

by noting that 2,291 residences had been rehabilitated and were on the market for at or below the market rate in 1969. Residents, however, viewed the project as a failure, charging the housing rehabilitation with creating "human hardships and inequities caused by the program's initial design and administration." Only about 38 percent of the designated "Washington Park Urban Renewal Area" residents were eligible for relocation benefits as displaced households. Furthermore, critics of the plan argued that rehabilitation of rental housing increased displacement instead of providing increased housing and a path to home ownership. Martin Gopen charged that suburban contractors essentially colluded with local officials to rob Roxbury residents.[150]

The blockbusting of Mattapan pushed the geographic cluster of African Africans to the south so that Roxbury functioned as the northern border, North Dorchester as the midpoint, and Mattapan as the southern border. In the late 1960s, a federally guaranteed loan program provided a path to homeownership for the city's minority community. BBURG organized access to and directed the federal loans, and in doing so selected Jewish sections of Dorchester and Mattapan, where a majority of residents had paid off their mortgages. Blockbusting ensued. In this process, unscrupulous real estate agents used lies and disinformation to stoke racial animosity. As a result, many Jewish residents sold their homes, which were in turn financed through the federal program facilitated by B-BURG.[151]

150 Gopen: Box 10, Folder 57: "New Urban League: Evaluation of the Boston Rehabilitation Program, 1969;" see also: Boston Redevelopment Authority, *Family Relocation Department Report 1968-1969*.

151 Hillel Levine and Lawrence Harmon, *The Death of an American Jewish Community: A Tragedy of Good Intentions* (New York: Touchstone Publishing, 1993): 3-20. See also Peter Dreier, "Redlining Cities: How banks color community development" *Challenge* (November-December 1991): 18-20.

BRA policies bifurcated the Mission Hill section of Roxbury along racial lines. Mission Hill had functioned as one of the many ethnic neighborhoods in Boston, turning over from Polish to Irish at the turn of the twentieth century. The loss of industrial jobs and concurrent trend toward suburban living in Boston caused white residents to move from Roxbury after World War Two. Increasingly, the BRA looked to the area to put its new public housing projects. During the 1950s and 1960s, the BRA constructed Columbia Point, Bromley Heath, and Mission Hill Extension housing projects in order to house displaced minority residents. Along the west side of Mission Hill, near Brookline, Harvard University acquired property to develop teaching hospitals for its medical school, a trend other universities and institutions quickly followed. An affluent young white population moved into the western side of Mission Hill while African Americans' choices were limited to the areas closest to the predominantly black Lower Roxbury.[152]

Public housing contributed to a decline in minority residents' status and became connected with racial conflict and poverty in public perception. Gilbert Avery, a pastor of a black church in Roxbury, noted that in 1965 the Mission Hill housing project was 97 percent white, while Mission Hill Extension was 98 black. Avery noted that "Parser Street which divides the two projects is like the Berlin Wall." The rental office had two windows for service requests and payments. Avery observed that "except for the absence of two signs saying 'white' and 'colored' it might as well be Birmingham, Alabama." In the late 1960s, white residents fled and blamed African Americans migrants for the decline of the neighborhood.[153] Conditions in subsidized housing suffered. For example, prior to a scheduled bathroom renovation at Mission Hill

152 Broadman, "The Mission Hill Experience in the New Boston," 1979.

153 U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *A Time to Listen, A Time To Act: Voices from the Ghettos of the Nation's Cities*, 1967, 65. For an overview of the development of public housing in the United States, see: Edward G. Goetz, *New Deal Ruins: Race, Economic Justice, and Public Housing Policy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013).

Extension, residents never met with project managers. Residents had suggested new sinks and medicine cabinets but instead had their showers moved and unwanted tiles put in place. When tenants filed a complaint, they were told the project had run out of funds. The BHA contracted with the same construction companies despite documented fraud and faulty work. In turn, BHA officials looked at the tenants' policy as a product of "outside agitators."[154]

The Development of Black Radicalism

The Boston Black United Front (BBUF) demanded that minority residents control the institutions that shaped life in Lower Roxbury. In June of 1967, a Mothers for Adequate Welfare (MAW) sit-in protest at the Grove Hall Welfare Office sparked the establishment of BBUF. Boston police removed MAW members and welfare office employees. The police became overwhelmed with the volume of people, and when chaos ensued, they used batons to quell the surge of protesters. According to eyewitnesses they employed excessive force. Later that evening, a group of tactical patrol policemen assembled in front of the Operation Exodus office and fired between 40 and 100 shots in the air. The incident left the community outraged that they were attacked while bringing forward a legitimate complaint. Stokely Carmichael gave a speech in the wake of the MAW protest urging the development of a "United Front in Black Communities" across the nation. Carmichael emphasized the black community's need to identify common ground in order to increase participation and organizational strength of united front efforts.[155]

154 Boston Public Housing Tenants Policy Council: Box 1, Folder 41. Records are located at Healey Library, University of Massachusetts Boston. Hereafter, TPC.

155 Boston Black United Front: Box 1, Folder 4: "BBUF, administrative files: Goals, 1970-1974" See: Goals of the Boston Black United Front (6/9/70). Hereafter: "BBUF." Records are located at Roxbury Community College Boston, MA. For a general discussion of radical African American opposition, see: James Boggs, *Pages from a Black Radical's Notebook: A James Boggs Reader* eds. Stephen M. Ward and Grace Lee Boggs (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2011). See: "The Revolutionary Struggle for Black Power."

The united front demanded that urban renewal be arrested and any further plans enacted with it as the principal developer. In April of 1968, the BBUF issued a "Statement of Demands" that called for the transferring of ownership of white businesses to black business owners, fully staffing every school by blacks, and hiring black police captains to command stations in black neighborhoods. The BBUF's manifesto argued that wresting control of city bureaucracies interacting with Roxbury would strengthen the local economy, give residents more political clout in planning decisions, and allow residents access to greater services. To that end, the manifesto insisted that ABCD cease operating as an "umbrella agency in the black community," arguing that it could function more effectively. Instead, the BBUF and other resident-directed organizations should direct all renewal funds to black-owned businesses and cooperative housing developments. Finally, the BBUF asserted that the black community should own and operate all of the public housing in the area.

The BBUF outlined a "self-help" plan for local economic growth as a means of community development. The group appealed to banks for loans and offered to work with consulting firms in the design and execution of plans. To this end, BBUF called for local financial institutions to make $100,000,000 in loans available to black residents and organizations. It envisioned Boston's various agencies contracting with black-owned businesses, including street repair, garbage collection, and maintenance functions by utility companies. An increased number of black personnel in city agencies, departments, divisions, and bureaus would assist this effort. In the long term, BBUF hoped to develop individual wealth, secure an economic foundation for the community, and reduce the cost of living for blacks in Boston.[156]

156 BBUF: Box 1, Folder 6: "BBUF, Statement of Commitment, Statement of Demands, Statement of Purpose, 1968-1970."

The BBUF dubbed the Community Research Review Committee (CRRC) "community control in action." The group featured representatives from various professions, organizations, schools, and agencies. The committee posited that a network of professionals and scholars would create a common understanding and framework for disseminating social science research. CRCC efforts defended the community from racial stereotyping. For example, its flyer declared "CRRC is needed because the black community needs to protect itself from being researched to death! The studies that have been done, have been used to justify the exploitation and oppression that we know." The assumption that minorities inherently degrade their surroundings continued to inform the decision making that impacted the area. Noting that scholars attempted to show that, "black people are retarded and maladjusted to control their urge to change their environment." the CRRC worked to counter bureaucrats' longstanding practice of defining black culture in order to justify dispossession.

The BBUF, coupled with a variety of organizations, blocked the proposed Southwest expressway through Roxbury. The removal of approximately 5,000 housing units for highway projects in Boston between 1962 and 1969 heightened Roxbury residents' sensitivity to potential incursions. "Operation Stop the Southwest Corridor" developed in earnest at the outset of 1969. In the summer of 1969, the BBUF conducted a study of the proposed highway and concluded the project would negatively impact the community and instead suggested improvement of the Orange Line, the city's main form of public transportation through Roxbury. A rented storefront served as a "Community Information House" to distribute pamphlets, flyers, and handbills to residents in order to enlist them in opposition plans. Charles Turner noted in the summer of 1969, "Operation Stop demonstrates our position of no more roads over people. This land is ours

and we will use it for our own purposes." BBUF proved an effective force as Governor Francis Sargent cancelled plans for the proposed highway in 1970.[157]

Conclusion

Urban renewal demonstrated a fundamental fear of working-class residents because it declared that such people had to be removed to improve the area. Long held racist stereotypes were employed to color perception and shape policy initiatives. While dislocation posed challenges to residents, the removal of community institutions made it more difficult for displaced persons to recover. Civil rights group challenged urban renewal by demanding redress for the housing and community institutions that they had seen decimated. To institute its agenda, activists raised issues that were environmental in scope: controlling land, providing adequate housing, and accessing services other citizens took for granted. Activist organizations coalesced around community-built cooperative housing, arguing this model provided a buttress against urban renewal policies and put power in the hands of ordinary residents. To forward its agenda, civil rights groups expanded participation, built organizational capacities, and strengthened the networking capabilities of residents. These achievements set the stage for the EJM of the 1980s.[158]

157 BBUF: Box 1, Folder 5: "BBUF: Administrative Files, Organization and Analysis, 1969."

158 For a discussion of how activists focused on community development to confront inequality, see: Gregory D. Squires, *From Redlining to Reinvestment* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1992). See chapter: "Community Reinvestment: An Emerging Social Movement;" for a full discussion of community-based housing; and Rachel G. Bratt, *Community-Based Housing: Potential for a New Strategy.*

CHAPTER 3

"THE DREAM IS IN THE PROCESS"

ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, 1970 to 1980

The period from 1970 to 1980 in the South End, Roxbury, and North Dorchester illustrates how government policy and jurisprudence reshaped the environment of these communities. During this time, the city encouraged gentrification in the South End while the federal government drastically reduced the funding available to minority residents and groups. While urban renewal marketed the South End for white middle class professionals, the "new environment" of Roxbury and North Dorchester, reflected a fundamental fear of minority residents.

The examination of life in Roxbury as a result of urban renewal makes clear how environmental racism degraded the community and life for its residents. De facto segregation created an "enclosure" of geographic and social isolation. In Roxbury, the BRA constructed subsidized housing projects designed to contain and isolate minority residents. The newly installed civic buildings inhibited social interaction, instead projecting a desire to "rule" the residents. Urban renewal's housing rehabilitation efforts in Roxbury allowed outsiders to profit from shoddy workmanship while the built environment suffered. Urban renewal made the community and its residents vulnerable to the denial of essential environmental services, including housing and sanitation. The lack of city services acted as a leading indicator for the loss of secondary services such as supermarkets, banks, pharmacies, and retail stores that deemed Roxbury too dangerous. Environmental degradation continued as the area became a target for arson, illegal dumping, and increased toxicity in the air, water, and soil from undesirable land use businesses such as asphalt plants. Residents felt the effects of environmental racism in their

everyday lives: in homes that could not keep the damp out, in air that contributed to asthma, in long trips to acquire healthy foods, and in a fundamental sense of insecurity created by dislocation and a distinct lack of concern or protection by city officials.

Facing dispossession and dislocation, the minority community began rebuilding through the community development model. These activists challenged racial stereotypes and demanded control of the institutions that shaped life in the community. Drawing upon the ideas of African decolonization movements, activists declared "self-determination" would lead to "community development." Latinx organizations defended residents from dislocation and retained subsidized housing in the South End. Durable social service agencies assisted the Latinx community in a variety of endeavors. The BBUF surged forward with its "nation building" effort to build positive cultural identity in the black community. The Lower Roxbury Community Corporation (LRCC) built new homes in the area and directed the construction of a new high school, connecting residents with planners in the process. Mel King pioneered Community Development Corporation (CDC) legislation in Massachusetts as a state representative in the 1970s, providing activists a vehicle for community projects. The philosophy, strategies, and actions of these groups demonstrate that environmental justice in Boston emerged from groups focused on community development as a means of confronting racism. These objectives would come to fruition with the emergence of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) during the 1980s.

Figure 3.1: Allen Crite, "Douglass Square Boston," 1936. (Image: Wikimedia Commons) Allen Crite was a longtime resident of the South End who illustrated and painted his neighborhood as an urban village with a variety of different ethnic groups in his cityscapes.

Figure 3.2: South End from the old John Hancock Building, 1959. (Image: Boston City Archives)

The South End: Gentrification Amid Declining Resources

Scholars have drawn the connection between modern-day gentrification and more straightforward land takeover schemes. For example, gentrification and the first territorial acquisition undertaken by the Puritans in the Pequot War hold much in the way of similarities, and this trend continued throughout the history of contemporary North America. Puritans dehumanized the Pequots and used divide and conquer tactics in order to occupy Indian territory and remove an opposing group. Afterwards, the Puritans colored popular perceptions with a narrative that blamed the enemy in order to justify their own behavior and to free them to act similarly in future scenarios. This process became codified in jurisprudence in 1823, when the

U.S. Supreme Court ruled that after settlers "discovered" land, Indian groups could not own or sell that same land. In doing so, the court abrogated American Indians' land rights based on the notion of European cultural superiority. This reflected a belief that social "others" failed to act as effective stewards of land.[159] The same ideas and actions undergirded urban renewal and gentrification. It is telling that so-called urban pioneers functioned as the principal catalyst of gentrification, echoing a term used to describe settlers of the American West a century earlier.

James Green, a historian who lived in the South End, argued that his community's constructive inter-ethnic relations offered a much-needed example to rest of the city. Much like his mentor at Yale, C. Vann Woodward, Green challenged prevailing assumptions about race relations, albeit in twentieth century Boston rather than in the Jim Crow South.[160] He attacked the *Boston Globe* for providing uncritical support of urban pioneers, offering instead that the South End offered a "hidden history" of racial cooperation. In a 1974 article, he observed that "Boston's South End does indeed have a unique history of racial harmony and community solidarity." For 77-year-old Olive Decosta, race had proven "no issue at all" in the 1920s and 1930s because "we were all poor." Ruby Smith, a long-time African American residents of the South End, observed: "our kids are used to playing together, black, white, and Spanish."[161] To Green, the policies of the 1970s increased racial strife because they sharpened the boundaries between race and class, particularly in the last bastion of heterogeneity in Boston, the South End.

159 John Bartlett, "Malcolm X, Gentrification and Housing as a Human Right." *truthout.org* (5/27/2015). Accessed on 8/4/2018. https://truthout.org/articles/malcolm-x-gentrification-and-housing-as-a-human-right/

160 James Green, "Boston's Other Side: South Enders on the Art of Getting Along" (unpublished manuscript) Box 3, Folder 3.

161 James Green, "Learning from the South End's Ethnic Tradition" *The Boston Phoenix* 6/24/1975. Box 3, Folder 2.

James Green chronicled the history of the South End in order to recommend a course of "corrective action." He authored "Urban Renewal's Impact on Low-Income Housing in the South End" during the mid-1970s to document how urban renewal obliterated the South End's core functions as a starting point for migrants, a home for Boston's poorest residents, and a place for residents to obtain low-skill or semi-skilled work. Renewal activity displaced working-class residents and subsidized residential improvements for white migrants to the neighborhood while failing to produce viable replacement housing in the same area for working-class residents. To confront the economic and racial segregation challenging working-class residents, Green and his peers, including Ro Whittington, who became a key figure in the DSNI, and Martin Gopen, organized a "Tenants' Rally Against Racism." The protesters demanded an end to the "racist hysteria" that had triggered unlawful and unjust evictions against minorities. However, police continued to break up public protests against urban renewal projects, particularly those that concerned African-Americans and colonized people in Africa and Southeast Asia. Minority and working-class residents denounced the police force's violation of their constitutional right to freedom of speech and assembly.[162]

Following a longstanding practice, incoming urban pioneers denigrated their new neighbors in order to shape public perception. They took leadership roles in the South End Historical Society to emphasize its brief period as the WASP capital of the city. City officials and newcomers removed signs of the South End's past as a working-class enclave: Dover Street, the epicenter of "skid row," became East Berkeley Street. They provided stories to media outlets claiming that working-class people had stirred up "racial hatred."[163]Affluent South End residents

162 William Worthy, "Recollections of a Black Childhood in the South End" *Boston Globe Magazine*, 12/5/1971. Green: Box 3, Folder 3.

163 Barbara Ibarra, "National Housing Policy and Housing Development: The Effect of Noise Standards on Inner City Rehabilitation" MIT Master of City Planning Thesis (May, 1974); James

initiated a lawsuit that charged that low income housing would have a negative "environmental impact," Relying on racist assumptions to characterize what would be considered an "environmental" concern. As a result of winning the case, they implemented sanctions against noise and high population density that excluded low-income residents from the South End.[164] The sanctions placed CORE's demand for improved housing code enforcement and standard sanitation services as less important than the environmental expectations new pioneers. As working-class holdovers in the South End observed, the city had "marketed" the South End for incoming white professionals.[165]

The argument that minority residents degraded their environment continued to undergird arguments for displacement. This perspective was expressed clearly by Dr. Frank Horn, who wrote "A Frank Look at the South End and Its Future." A chemist by profession, Horn employed his "expertise" to justify gentrification and displacement. Horn's essay charged that African Americans, "have an inimical and harmful disregard for physical and aesthetic maintenance of personal property and a higher propensity for criminal behavior." Horn distorted reality to argue that minority residents degraded their community. He declared: "the filth in some parts of the South End is testimony, not to poor [trash] collection, but to the filthy habits of some tenants." Middle class "experts" had employed similar sentiments since the inception of the South End as a working-class neighborhood, and their assumptions are essential to understanding how racism functioned in twentieth century Boston.[166]

Green, "The Destruction of the Lodging House: A Century Old South End Institution" unpublished manuscript Box 4, Folder 1: "Personal Papers, 1964-2010."

164 Melvin H. King, "To: My South End Neighbors" date unknown, circa mid 1970s. Green: Box 3, Folder 3.

165 Paul M. Wright, "The South End on My Mind", 2000. Green: Box 3 Folder 3.

166 Gopen: Box 12, Folder 22: "South End Project Area Committee."

Over the course of the 1970s, the federal government accelerated gentrification by reducing funds provided to Boston. The decline in federal funding denied minority residents fair housing opportunities. The new policies "streamlined" urban renewal, model cities, historic preservation, housing rehabilitation, and water and sewer improvements into one block grant community development revenue sharing program, referred to as CDRS. Policy makers touted the changes as an opportunity for community-based organizations to apply for money and improve neighborhoods under their own direction. However, the nature of grant writing limited the number of groups that could obtain funding. In 1973, President Richard Nixon "impounded" federal urban renewal funds. The following chart displays the Nixon administration's funding plan for Boston from fiscal year 1974 to 1980.

Table 3.1: Federal Funding for Urban Renewal Programs in Boston 1974-1980

Year	Amount Provided or Expected (in millions USD)
1974	44
1975	30.3
1976	28.7 (expected)
1977	27.2 (ex)
1978	20.2 (ex)
1979	15.8 (ex)
1980	11.9 (ex)

Martin Gopen and Mel King charged that the design and implementation of urban renewal institutionalized racism in Boston. They argued the budget choices, and the subsequent reduction in housing vouchers for poorer residents, violated civil rights laws that mandated non-

discrimination in the delivery of federal funding and services. In addition, the new federal budgets ceased subsidizing groups that had provided a voice for less well-off residents of the South End, silencing residents advocacy.[167] According to King, people with "limited physical and economic resources" had been unfairly labelled as having "no values." Newcomers with more resources determined "what my life is going to be about or what is going to happen in my neighborhood." The newfound homogeneity of the area created a "sterile" environment as a result.[168] King observed that the BRA's "dislocation program" allowed junkyards to remain while destroying viable housing." Housing, environment, and services" had been compromised "to accommodate the monetary interests of a few." As a result of these experiences, longtime South End residents had been "brutalized." He concluded, "policy based on a model which emphasizes physical development as opposed to human development will never create positive changes in the city." The city had enriched itself, its corporate entities, and its universities, but had pushed minorities aside to accomplish this goal.[169]

Over the course of the 1970s, government agencies accelerated gentrification. The root word of gentrification, gentry, indicates the group that benefited from this process: those who drew upon their status and wealth to further increase their standing in society. Incentivizing gentrification for suburban residents functioned as "anti-local economic development." Rather than improving the community for its existing residents, or simply allowing them the same tools that other citizens had to improve their lives, gentrification pushed low-income residents further to the margins in an ongoing "othering" of status. Those negatively impacted witnessed a decline in economic opportunity, employment options, educational quality, and public health. In sum,

167 Gopen: Box 10, Folder 6: "Federal Urban Policy, 1978."
168 Melvin H. King, "To: My South End Neighbors" date unknown, circa mid 1970s. Green: Box 3, Folder 3.
169 Gopen: Box 10, Folder 49.

gentrification functioned as a set of political and economic practices designed to elevate the status of incoming residents over long-time denizens.[170]

Urban Renewal Degrades the Environment in Roxbury

Over the course of the 1970s, the BRA completed its work in Roxbury and North Dorchester with the construction of several civic buildings and subsidized housing projects. By the end of the 1970s, to many residents of metropolitan Boston "Roxbury was a race" and a place that white residents feared. The fate of the area was evident during the 1976 bicentennial celebration. To celebrate Boston's important historic role, the city produced an essay and photos for a "Neighborhood Series" collection. The series producers chose not to represent Roxbury in the collection despite its importance in the American Revolution. Instead, the series devoted a selection to "Boston's Blacks" during the revolution, but little since. The omissions in the centennial celebration were indications of a much larger racial divide. Many middle-class whites viewed Boston's neighborhoods in terms of strict boundaries that could not be crossed. For example, in 1974, Louise Day Hicks, Boston's steadfast opponent of racial integration, vetoed improvements to Roxbury's expansive Franklin Park as chairwoman of the city's ways and means committee, noting "our people can't even go to it." Hicks's assertion suggests the subtle functions of this racial divide. Black residents could not control where they lived or lift the weight of political, social, and economic institutions contributing to poverty and inequality in their communities.[171]

Civic buildings constructed during urban renewal revealed what Richard Heath, a BRA planner and academic, called the "architecture of fear." Heath commented in his retrospective

170 James Jennings "Gentrification as Anti-Local Economic Development: The Case of Boston, Massachusetts," *Trotter Review*: Vol. 23, Is. 1 (2016).
171 Heath, *An Act of Faith*, appendix.

analysis of the Washington Park project in 1990 that architecture "speaks to how society sees itself" because it "sends messages and impulses to the resident as well as the passerby." Heath concluded that the newly constructed built environment in Washington Park "responded to a city seen as threatening." The new police station, with its low roof and long windows directly under the roofline resembled a "bunker." The modernist style civic center/courthouse created a physical sense of control, representing a "very dramatic statement about the way government saw itself and the way it wanted to portray itself to the citizens." Heath concluded the civic center "speaks the language of brute power," as its design reveals a desire to "rule the community." Rather than large doors and a grand entrance like many libraries have, Roxbury's branch library featured entrances on the side shaped like funnels. Such a design limited interaction with the community and could be easily cordoned off in case of danger. Logue attributed the library's appearance to the perception the general public had of Roxbury residents, reflecting that "I wanted to see large glass windows so that from the street you could look in and see people reading. What we got was this big wall of glass bricks." He concluded, "I guess that's the way people thought about Roxbury in the late '60s." Once constructed, the buildings shaped the thought patterns, individual behavior, and social activities of residents and outsiders. Taken together, the architecture of Washington Park contributed to a negative perception of the community.[172]

Rather than rehabilitate the neighborhood, BRA housing projects created "blight." The design and construction of housing communicated planners' view that blacks were maladapted to society because the new structures "had no relationship to its surrounding community."

172 Heath, *An Act of Faith,* 107 and Logue appendix; BRA, *Roxbury: Background Information, Planning Issues and Preliminary Neighborhood Improvement Strategies* (1975) BRA, *Demonstration in Boston: The Midstream Program* (1966).

Thousands of units faced inward away from streets or stood at the end of cul-de-sacs or behind large parking lots. For example, the BRA constructed Westminster Court as a "cloistered" space, while Academy Homes was an "enormous, cold, and intimidating" structure with difficult to locate entrances, standing on a dead-end road. The homes were accessed through a courtyard and the development ended in a "pile of concrete and weeds." The Warren Gardens housing complex shared "nothing of itself with the rest of Roxbury." With respect to housing built during the 1970s in Roxbury, Richard Heath concluded: "the architecture predicts the problem and plans for the solution."[173]

Figure 3.3: Construction of Academy Homes, 1967. (Image: Boston City Archives)

173 Heath, *An Act of Faith*, 10; 99-101; Bill Weismantel, *Design Coordination in the Redevelopment of a Boston Streetcar Suburb*, Boston, MA: BRA, 1967.

Figure 3.4: Construction of Academy Homes, 1967. (Image: Boston City Archives)

The city of Boston failed to initiate new construction programs or prevent pollution in the area, even as the city itself was becoming affluent. Incomplete projects created vacant lots when the Model Cities Administration (MCA) pioneered the Infill Housing program in the early 1970s. The BRA selected 300 vacant lots across the city for its "prefabricated system" of "instant housing." The Development Corporation of America (DCA) took charge of the program's construction but overextended financially and subsequently folded. The two blocks where the DCA began construction were never completed, while the remaining land remained vacant for 15 years. The area that comprised the former Notre Dame Academy, slated to be a part of the

Academy Homes subsidized housing, lay vacant until the 1980s. The “planned” mom and pop stores were graded and curbed but remained vacant, converted into vegetable gardens for 25 years.[174]

Washington Park had been “made by planners” but had to exist on “the political whims of government and city agencies which could often prove arrogant and elusive.” When Kevin White became mayor in 1968, his administration chose against assigning a project manager and staff to complete Washington Park renewal plans, as they “simply had other things on their mind." Richard Heath observed that “no one in government had the courage” or pride to take up the funding to complete housing and/or provide standard city services. Heath offered the words of Boston’s first political leader, John Winthrop, to reprimand contemporary city leaders. He challenged them to "make others’ conditions your own. No man is made more honorable than another."[175]

While city policies limited residential options for minorities, subsidized housing provided less of a support system due to mismanagement and neglect. A 1992 congressional committee studied the so-called “severely distressed public housing” system and found that contrary to popular perception, ninety-four percent of housing stock stood in good repair. Residents of Boston’s subsidized housing projects stood in contrast to the national experience. For example, in the Orchard Park project during 1976 and 1977 tenants complained of lack of lighting in entry ways, which increased break-ins and vandalism; malfunctioning hot water and heating systems in bathrooms; and mice, cockroaches, and large accumulations of trash in vacant dwellings.

174 Heath, *An Act of Faith*, 70-77, 101-102. Dorchester Area Planning Action Council, *A Proposal for the Comprehensive Community Development Project* (Boston, 1972); Housing Innovation Inc, *Physical Development Plan for the Boston Model Neighborhood Area* Prepared by the Boston Model Cities Administration (1972).

175 Heath, *An Act of Faith*, 78, 84-85; BRA, *Neighborhood Strategies Area Program: Roxbury-Sav-More District* (1978).

Despite the major renovations and repairs required across the city's public housing, in 1978 the mayor reduced funding from $2.5 million to $600,000. In 1979, a resident report argued that given the residents' low income, they should be given an opportunity to perform sweat equity to supplement rent. The Boston Housing Authority (BHA) and its associated contractors opposed the plan.[176]

Despite millions in federal and state modernization grants, conditions remained "deplorable." The BHA had a backlog of $54 million from the federal and state level dating to 1970. In addition, money for BHA projects often became the object of competition between city organizations. For example, in 1980 Mayor Kevin White and the BHA feuded over federal funds, as White denied the BHA access to two million dollars.[177] In 1980 federal judge Paul Garrity placed Boston's housing projects in receivership. With forty thousand tenants living in the city's twenty-five subsidized housing areas, a BHA administrator admitted that "we're the biggest slumlord in the state of Massachusetts." The BHA had 5,000 vacant and uninhabitable apartments, a rate more than twice that of any large housing authority in the United States. When he placed the BHA in receivership, Judge Garrity explained that "indescribable conditions," caused "incalculable human suffering" for many of the BHA's tenants. Garrity condemned the BHA's ineffective administration, remarking that "if the BHA were a private landlord it surely would have been driven out of business long ago or jailed or most likely both."[178]

As a result of policies impacting their community, minority residents "learned how racist this goddamned city is," leading many to conclude that those in power considered them "still niggers." A student from Roxbury Community College (RCC) argued that the city had created a

176 TPC: Box 5, Folder 10: "Mission Hill Main, 1976-1977" and Folder 15: "Orchard Park 1976-1977."
177 TPC: Box 5 Folder 10.
178 *Boston Globe*, 2/9/1980; 8/8/1980; 9/1/1980.

"war zone." Students in the RCC survey identified uncompleted public housing projects, , inability to get mortgages, lack of recreational opportunities, social isolation, and alienation for youth as major obstacles challenging the neighborhood.[179] During the 1970s, arson cases skyrocketed as absentee owners sought to collect insurance money. A Dudley resident observed that for a while, "every night there was a fire." A local reverend recalled: "I can remember kids being dragged out already dead, kids being dragged out in flames, the father in flames, running out of the house screaming and the neighborhood just stunned. And it happened again and again and again." From 1963 to 1983, 47 percent of housing stock, or about 2,200 units were destroyed. Local building contractors illegally dumped garbage in the vacant lots, while car thieves left stripped down and/or burned automobiles, attracting further dumping by small-scale operators. Longtime resident Che Madyun remarked: "No human being should have to live in that kind of situation… there is nothing that says because you don't make a whole lot of money, that you should live in filth."[180]

179 Roxbury Community College, Report for community meeting held 5/13/1981: "The Dudley Neighborhood" Records of the Grants Management Association, Box 5, Folder 7: "Committee Minutes, 1984-1985." Hereafter "Records GMA_". For an eyewitness perspective, see: Peter Medoff and Holly Sklar, *Streets of Hope: The Fall and Rise of an Urban Neighborhood* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1994): 37-112.

180 New Day Films, *Holding Ground: The Rebirth of Dudley Street*, 1996. See also: Nuestra, *Capital Investment Plan*, Records GMA: Box 4, Folders 30 and 31: "Nuestra Comunidad Development Corp."

Figure 3.5: Abandoned appliances behind Roxbury homes, 1959. (Image: Boston City Archives)

Figure 3.6: Abandoned Vehicle behind Roxbury tenements, 1960. (Image: Boston City Archives)

Community Development Confronts Environmental Racism

Community development necessitated a focus on environmental conditions. Chuck Turner argued for a "philosophy that talks about how we live day to day as we are going to our goal." Archie Williams could not "go into homes where the roof is falling and the walls are falling and there's no heat and the kids are hungry and not want to do something." During the 1970s, the black community came to understand that "the priority for low income families is HOUSING." According to Mel King, land and homeownership would help residents "expand the concept of shelter to contribute more directly to community," and in doing so "change their relationships to each other and their environment in a positive way." Such efforts would counteract the

frustration, depersonalization, and fragmentation that had defined life in Roxbury and North Dorchester. Improving everyday conditions implied that "the community must control the action," a process that entailed understanding "the relationship between self-determination, community control, and the support of community-based institutions." Pursuing community development implied residents taking control of institutions that influenced housing, food options, service delivery, and the local economy.[181]

Local residents channeled their frustrations by confronting the daily injustices that shaped their lives. Protesting fulfilled a desire to express agency and helped residents to gain a greater understanding of policies impacting the minority community. Tenant organizer Alajo Adegballoh, observed, "I'm still finding out about myself. What can I achieve? What can I do in this whole area where I see problems?" Chuck Turner, who went to Harvard and became a state representative from Roxbury, reflected on his personal journey: "I almost did not survive the torment of trying to figure out why everything was so crazy." The totality of events made residents conclude they lived in an "unjust system" that made "it impossible to fulfill yourself completely." People living in the neighborhood did not initially seek recourse through activism, but the problems that they faced on an everyday basis forged a determination to fight back. CORE member Dennis Blackett noted that "I wasn't ready to go south" and join the SNCC; however, he did have the urge to "do something" and "got very pissed off on the inner belt thing." After his first protest with SNCC, Noel Day recalled, "the city stomped the shit out of

181 Gopen: Box 10, Folder 30: Mel King for Mayor: "Campaign Strategies, 1976-1979;" Mel King.

us...that was my radical education. It was interesting, 'cause all those cops were doing was creating radicals."[182]

Pan-African anticolonial strategies and actions provided a framework for community development. Minority residents saw the cumulative effects of racism as analogous to conditions experienced in colonial African nations, decrying their removal to a so-called "enclosure." Activists referred to Roxbury as a Bantustan, or apartheid town. Leaders argued the community needed to "alter some of the colonial economic mechanisms that marginalize them." The new civic buildings performed their necessary functions, but they were flawed in both implementation and design, pushing minority residents to the margins of an increasingly affluent city. Residents connected the ideas, methods, and bureaucratic structures that undergirded urban renewal and European imperialism. In each case black populations dealt with the ill effects of having resources and self-determination limited.[183] Ted Parrish noted that the system kept "people, not only in our community, but in the rest of the world in a dependent and oppressed position." As a result of these conclusions, activist groups adapted the ideas of their African compatriots to improve Roxbury and North Dorchester.[184]

During the first half of the 1970s, the BBUF strengthened the consciousness of the black community in Boston. By developing cultural pride, the united front defined itself in opposition to the image that American society projected on to black communities. The BBUF wanted to create a so called New Black Nation in areas that blacks dominated demographically because of its belief that "black people everywhere must unite or perish." To accomplish its objectives, the

182 Mel King, *Chain of Change*. The quotes in the preceding paragraph are drawn for oral interviews that King conducting with other minority leaders in 1974. These interviews are in the epilogue of King's work, pages 197 to 263.

183 Gopen: Box 10, Folder 30.

184 King, *Chain of Change*, appendix interviews.

BBUF went forward, "politically organizing the community, culturally educating the masses of black people, and providing for the protection and defense of black people." Employing the term "operational unity" as its guiding principle, affiliated organizations agreed on the general principles of self-determination and community development while retaining their own organizational autonomy. The front hoped such networking would overcome the weaknesses and augment the strengths of the community as a whole. Halting the construction of the southwest expressway and funding community activities acted as examples of effective operational unity. Such "collective action" would provide the black community the ability to take control of the economic and social "forces that shape our lives." To this end, the united front sought to develop cooperatively owned housing and businesses, with a focus on retail, healthcare, social service, security, and communications.[185]

The front facilitated the process of community development through its "nation building" program. The BBUF's "Basis for a Black Nation," explained its philosophy. For example, the front defined unity and self-determination as being able to "speak for ourselves instead of being defined and spoken for by others." Collective work and responsibility meant the black community had to understand one another's issues and work cooperatively towards solutions. It meant maintaining small businesses by pooling profits to assists upstart entrepreneurs. Participants vowed "to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than when we inherited it." To promote its agenda, the group promoted holidays to celebrate black cultural heritage, such as Malcolm X's birthday which the group called "Black Solidarity Day in Boston."[186] In the long term, the united front hoped to create its own "black city" in Roxbury by

185 BBUF: Box 1, Folder 4: "Administrative Files: Goals, 1970-1974": see "Goals of the Boston Black United Front 6/9/70, Operational unity" and "Letter from Chuck Turner to members of BBUF: 12/5/1971"

186 BBUF: Box 1, Folder 8: "Black Solidarity Day, 1970-1971."

seceding from Boston in order to "create the independent institutions we must have if we are to survive."[187]

The front developed programs to bring their goals to fruition. For example, the Black Economic Development Association of Roxbury functioned as a wholesale manufacturing cooperative that also facilitated loans to local businesses. It supported black music through the Roxbury Action Program (RAP) and the Boston Cooperative Music Industry. These music groups also participated in a neighborhood clean-up. In the 1970s, the BBUF worked with the Black Panthers to begin an intercommunal youth institute, a program facilitated by Northeastern University.[188] Classes included community health and survival; wealth, power, and racism; speed and analytical reading; strategies for community change; black civilization past and present; history of the black revolt, Swahili; and black education for self-determination. Finally, the united front helped develop a big brother and big sister program.[189]

While the group facilitated the community development movement in its critical early stages, the BBUF dissolved due to external pressures and internal missteps. The group struggled to defend a statement of demands that many observers characterized as "a little strong." United front leaders supported its statement as "urgent and reasonable" given conditions in the minority community, but the damage had been done. At the same time, the group altered its leadership format, switching from co-chairs to one leader, a situation that proved too much stress for one person. And while the group successfully raised $500,000 for community development, it was beyond the organization's institutional capacity to manage, maintain, grow, and distribute these

187 BBUF: Box 1 Folder 6: "Statement of Commitment, Statement of Demands, Statement of Purpose, 1968-1970."
188 BBUF: Box 6, Folder 6: "Member Organizations, 1969-1970."
189 BBUF: Box 6, Folder 4: "Afro-American Institute, 1970."

funds. Demands changed as the organization moved to a stable institutional structure, and as the BBUF reacted to evolving circumstances it succumbed to the pressure.[190]

In the early 1970s, the Lower Roxbury Community Corporation (LRCC) connected ordinary residents with the planning process. The LRCC acted as an intermediary, negotiating with the Model City Administration (MCA) and enlisting community participation. The proposed "Campus High School," originally designed to house most of Boston's 5,000 plus pupils, evolved into the Madison Park High School which still serves the community of Roxbury in 2018. The LRCC's partnership with the MCA also yielded hundreds of units of viable low rent housing designed by black architects. Under the auspices of the MCA, the organization also built and developed social service agencies integrated into the complex. In contrast to other housing built by the city during urban renewal, the LRCC constructed durable houses that were part of the community.[191] Through its efforts, the LRCC initiated a model that other groups would emulate to rebuild the community

The New Urban League (NUL) developed to build the financial strength and social capital of local residents. To make black communities "healthy livable sections of the city," the NUL demanded that marginalized residents participate in planning their own communities. The NUL's slogan of "one person, one vote" challenged affluent white residents' disproportionate amount of power. Urban renewal and gentrification augmented the social, political, and economic status of those who lived outside the neighborhood. Mel King described the NUL's efforts as "first time the poor stood up and spoke" as a unified organization in opposition to polices deleterious to

190 King. *Chain of Change*, 106-107.

191 King, *Chain of Change*, 203-204. See also: BRA, *Project Selection Rating Report: Lower Roxbury Social Services Complex Neighborhood Facilities Program-Model Cities Sub-Area 2* 1972. (unpaginated pamphlet) retrieved from archive.org. 7/31/2018.

their lives. The group focused on educational, youth, and economic development to create "vehicles" for poor minority residents to control the institutions that shaped their lives.

"Operation Making it Work" facilitated community control of small businesses and local service agencies. However, toggling between providing interventions and working to build stable community institutions kept the group in constant crisis mode, unable to crystalize a clear set of operational procedures. Each problem that the group attacked connected to another set of interconnected issues. For example, the NUL's effort to address educational issues related to students' health, nutrition, housing, parents' employment status, and the ability of parents to obtain clothing for their children. Because of the pressing needs of these issues, the NUL formed committees to study issues and plan solutions. However, pressures exerted by these problems forced the group to push out the committee work prematurely. In addition, some of these groups had overlapping objectives. Failure to discuss their strategies and objectives with one another further complicated these initiatives.[192]

In 1969, resident Hubie Jones created Alianza Hispana so that the Latinx community could "control its own fate." Jones hired Frieda Garcia, a graduate student at the New School for Social Research who organized residents, particularly women, to develop La Alianza into a social service agency on Dudley Street by 1971.[193] For instance, Betsy Tregar, a teacher at the Winthrop School, served as a board member of La Alianza from its founding until 1995.[194] In 1971, the organization established a bilingual school in Roxbury-North Dorchester at Denison settlement house to help assist newcomers acclimate to the area.[195] By 1976, La Alianza augmented and reorganized its services by creating one central organization that connected the

192 King, *Chain of Change*, 140-146.
193 *Bay State Banner*, 12/17/1998.
194 *Bay State Banner*, 10/19/1995.
195 *Bay State Banner*, 5/6/1971.

educational, employment, housing, psychological services, and youth needs of the area's Latinx population. The group functioned as a legal advocate for residents and lobbyist for legislation impacting the community. These activities led it to act as a real estate representative for potential homeowners. In addition, La Alianza connected with technical schools and local colleges to assist area youth with gaining access to training and educational programs.[196]

By the late 1970s, the Latinx community had developed durable social service organizations. Nuestra Comunidad, or "New Community," advocated for residents housing needs and to preserve Dudley Square from developers who lived outside of the area. Nuestra demanded that residents "own or have a stake" in all institutions that impact life in the community. The group held public meetings and brought a number of stakeholders together to share information and direct resident energy toward improvement projects. Nuestra organized tenants in apartment buildings to confront landlords regarding maintenance and improvement projects. The group developed architectural plans and constructed an apartment complex that housed twenty residents, stewarding the project from concept to completion. Most importantly, it prevented 375 through 385 Dudley Street, a building that functioned as the "epicenter" and "strategic core" of Dudley Square, from being auctioned by city officials. By the mid-1980s, Nuestra staff found it difficult keeping up with its development plans and potential opportunities.[197]

196 *La Alianza Inc.: An Overview*, 1978: 1-17. Records GMA: Box 5, Folder 11"Dudley Area Reports 1976-1984." See also: *Bay State Banner,* 12/17/1998.

197 Nuestra Progress Report, 12/31/1985. Records GMA: Box 4, Folder: 11.

Figure 3.7: Bruce Bolling (Images: Wikimedia Commons)

Mel King and the Institution Building Stage

Mel King stands as the key figure from the period of urban renewal in the 1950s to the subsequent revival of the Dudley Street area in the 1990s. At each stage of his career, he championed minority residents' interests while building an intellectual and pragmatic framework for environmental justice in Boston. He grew up in the South End during the 1930s and 1940s and saw his home meet the bulldozer in the New York Street project. As a result of his experiences, King became an activist in the 1960s, a state representative in the 1970s, and runner up in the 1983 mayoral election. King argued the issues facing Roxbury and North Dorchester required an educational strategy that challenged the negative perception of the community. For King, education facilitated a problem-solving mindset that allowed individuals to provide a "critical intervention" in society. King's 1981 book, *Chain of Change: Struggles for Black*

Community Development, argued that self-determination through community development would counter the problems racial inequality posed. Civil rights work evolved from the 1960s, when minorities demanded the same rights and privileges as white residents, to the 1970s, when activists improved the living conditions and social capital of residents.[198] King facilitated institutions that would help improve large sections of the city and a multitude of residents in the ensuing decade.

As a state representative during the 1970s, King pioneered first-in-the-nation legislation that facilitated resident-activist groups' ability to redevelop their communities through Community Development Corporations (CDC). King enlisted the participation of concerned residents, leaders of local organizations, students, and academics for a weekly breakfast in which attendees researched specific topics and presented their findings for discussion and debate. King and fellow attendees crafted the legislation introduced to the Massachusetts House of Representatives at these morning symposiums. His peers reflected that King proved "indefatigable" in forcing legislators to "do the right thing" and pass the bill. The legislation defined a CDC by its non-profit status and its operation in a specific area with low-income residents. Once it was established, any resident in the purview of a CDC qualified for membership. Members elected the board, of which at least half would be comprised of residents from the CDC area. The legislation included the creation of Community Development Finance Corporations (CDFC) that operated as a bank designed to serve CDC's. King's bill became a national model that helped CDC's to proliferate in the next decades.[199]

198 Gopen: Box 10, Folder 30.

199 Carl Sussman "Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation: Looking Back at Our Foundation" (10/4/2017). https://cedac.org/blog/looking-back-at-our-foundation/ Retrieved on 7/31/2018.

To develop CDC legislation, King drew upon the ideas of the Community Land Trust (CLT) movement. By acquiring land for various development or residential projects, CLT's offered an organizational blueprint for marginalized groups to achieve self-determination. CLT principles drew upon a history of rural cooperatives, credit unions, and utopian and socialist movements and first appeared in the "New Community" of Albany, Georgia. At the same time that Martin Luther King undertook a more noted civil rights struggle in Albany, his cousin, Slater King, started the first CLT in response to the negative effects of sharecropping. Landowners thwarted tenant farmers protest for racial justice with the threat of eviction. Canvassers arrived at a simple solution: if blacks owned property they would increase their economic and social status and be able to protest for political rights.

A CLT combines multiple parcels under one non-profit owner and permanently removes the land from the market. CLT's protect an individual homeowner's investment through "shared equity" in housing. The use of a ground lease restricts the resale price of homes and directs homeowners to sell their property to those in need of affordable homes. Homeowners retain investment equity and often earn a modest profit. In 1972, the first CLT in the nation published a detailed explanation of its ideas and methods in the *Guide to a New Model for Land Tenure*. The regular newsletter, *Community Economics*, expanded upon how CLT's could challenge displacement, facilitate cooperation, and increase homeownership for marginalized residents in both rural and urban areas. Mel King's legislation helped CLTs to obtain nonprofit status and gain access to government funding.[200]

200 John Emmeus Davis, *The Community Land Trust Reader* Cambridge, MA: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, 2010 and *The CLT as an Innovative Model of Organization* 1988.

Conclusion: *The Dream is in the Process*

During the 1970s, Boston's black community moved beyond the objectives of the civil rights movement by connecting it to the ideas and practice of African anti-colonial movements and then applying a pragmatic environmental focus to improvement efforts. These efforts provided a crucible of experience and paved the way for the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative and the flourishing of a full-fledged environmental justice movement in the 1990s. The organizations cultivated cultural pride, networked with government and financial institutions, gained control of land, and built housing. At a 1979 New Year's Eve party Mel King presented a poem to his peers. A reflection on what occurred in the previous decade, it projected an optimism about the future, as King's poem proclaimed:

Thoughts on a Dream Deferred

The dream is in the process
And not the outcome
It is found in the struggle
For Peace
And not achieving it
In the working of the artist
And not in the creation
In the sun's rays
And not the sun
In the belief that we can.
12/31/1979 11:58 PM.[201]

[201] Gopen: Box 2, Folder 29.

Table 3.2: Boston Demography, 1950 to 2010: Roxbury and the South End

Date	1950	1980			2010		
Place	Total Population	Total Population	+/-	% change +/-	Total Population	+/-	% change +/-
Boston	801,444	562,994	-238,450	-29.80%	617,594	+ 54,600	+8.9%
Roxbury	101,326	43,571	-57,755	-57.00%	49,111	+5,528	+11.3%
South End	49,753	25,672	-24,081	-51.60%	29,612	+5,511	+13.4%

Table 3.3: Comparison of Housing Statistics, Boston and Roxbury, 1950 to 2015

Date	1950	1980			2015		
Place	Total Housing Units	Total Housing Units	# +/-	% change +/-	Total Housing Units	# +/-	% change +/-
Boston	218,103	218,456	+353	+.02%	261,492	+ 43,036	+12.9%
Roxbury	28,215	18,234	-9,981	-35.40%	18,373	+1,139	+ 6.20%

Table 3.4: Racial Demography in Boston and Roxbury, 1950

Date	1950			
Place	Total Population	White	Non-white	% non-white
Boston city	801,444	758,700	42,744	6%
Roxbury	101,326	75,893	25,331	25%

Table 3.5: Racial Demography in Boston and Roxbury, 1980

Date	1980			
Place	Total Population	White	Non-white	% non-white
Boston city	562,994	395,000	190,000	21.00%
Roxbury	43,571	2,701	34,373	80%

Table 3.6: Racial Demography in Boston and Roxbury, 2010

Date	2010			
Place	Total Population	White	Non-white	% black
Boston city	617,594	295,886	373,583	55.40%
Roxbury	49,111	3,683	28,484	58%

Table 3.7: Comparison of Immigration Statistics, Boston and Roxbury, 1950-2015[202]

Date	1950	1980		2010	
Place	Foreign Born	Foreign Born	% of Boston pop.	Foreign Born	% of Boston pop
Boston city	144,092	84,000	15%	177,563	26%
Roxbury	NA	4,793	11%	7,121	25%

202 The preceding figures are adapted from: *Historical Trends in Boston Neighborhoods Since 1950* provided by the Boston Planning Development Agency research division, December 2017. http://www.bostonplans.org/research

CHAPTER 4

"THE NEIGHBORHOOD HAS DECIDED WHAT IT WANTS:"

THE DUDLEY STREET INITIATIVE IN THE 1980s

During the 1980s, Roxbury and North Dorchester residents established a durable community development organization that confronted inequality through a variety of environmental improvements. African American, Latinx, and Cape Verdeans drew upon their cultural traditions to plan and prioritize the objectives of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI), an effort in which women took a leading role. The DSNI balanced the needs of stakeholders in the community, developed plans for an urban village in Dudley Square, acquired a level of political stature that allowed it to advance its agenda, and obtained outside funding for major projects. The DSNI accomplished these objectives with the help of leadership who had been veterans of the community development movement extending back to the 1960s. Short-term goals such as pollution prevention and neighborhood clean-up activities brought a greater number of participants into the activist fold than any previous organization in the area. Nowhere was this more apparent than the DSNI's "Force" campaign that served as a unifying strategy and rallying cry for residents: "The Force is with You!"

The DSNI efforts in the 1980s turned the community around after years of decline. The "Don't Dump on Us!" effort confronted polluters and led the city to shutter three illegal transfer stations. Muralists, sponsored by the DSNI, painted expressions of positive identity meant to confront negative stereotypes about residents. Winning eminent domain rights to a total of thirty acres, fifteen taken from private property owners and the other fifteen contributed by the city, established the DSNI as a leading activist organization in Boston and the United States. In turn, the DSNI secured two million dollars from the Ford Foundation for the development of

affordable housing and had architects devise plans at their direction. By the close of the 1980s, residents had achieved the first step towards self-determination in community development.

Through learned ethnic traditions and lived experience, DSNI leaders and members took a different view of what constitutes civic activity and political participation. People who participated in the DSNI examined the world closest to them: their houses, yards, streets, and neighborhood. La Alianza and Nuestra Comunidad began working with urban planners in 1981 and by mid-decade the DSNI employed experts to help articulate improvement schemes. After decades of confronting objectification by bureaucracies and financial institutions, the DSNI dealt with these organizations as equals. This turning point allowed residents to rebuild an urban setting that supports civic life and environmental stewardship. The DSNI empowered the social organizations and institutions that had sustained life for the community before urban renewal altered the course of Boston's history. As the 1990s dawned, the area stood ready to build housing and create an urban village in Dudley Square.

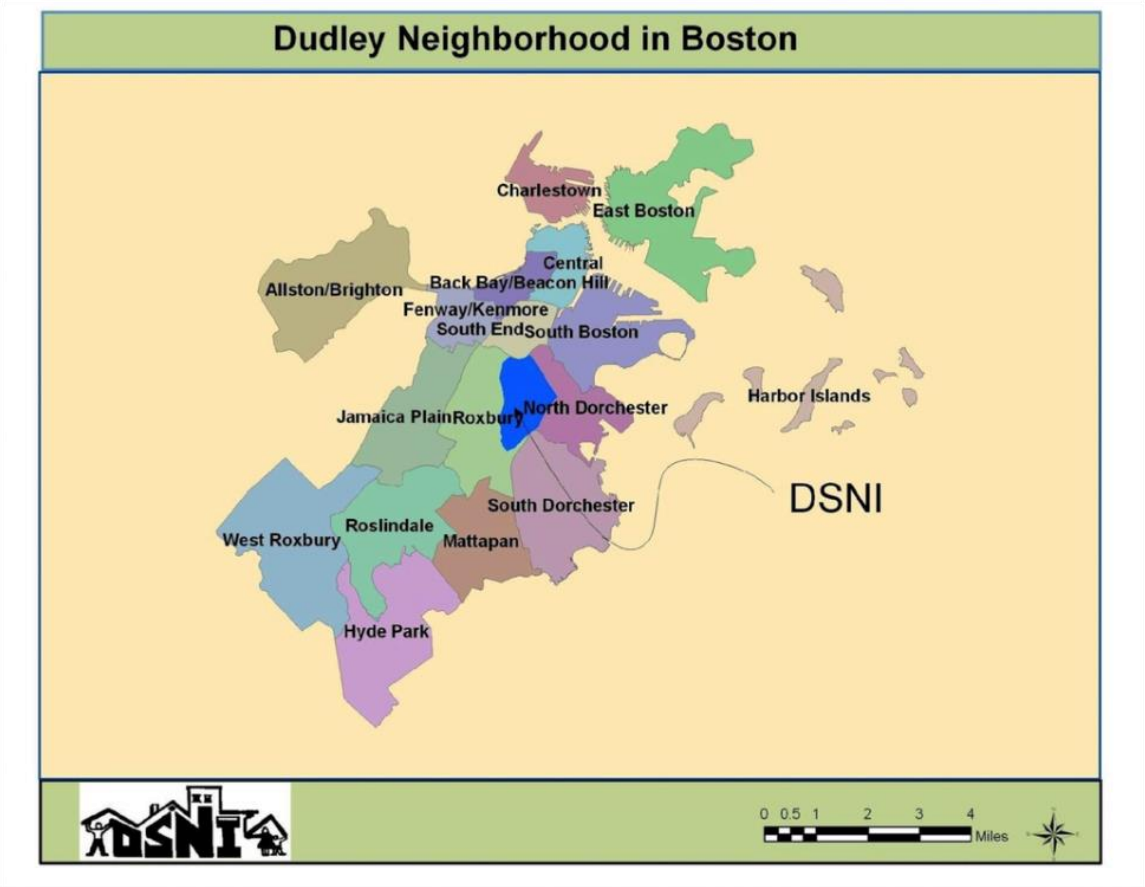

Figure 4.1: Dudley Area in the context of Boston. (image: DNI.org)

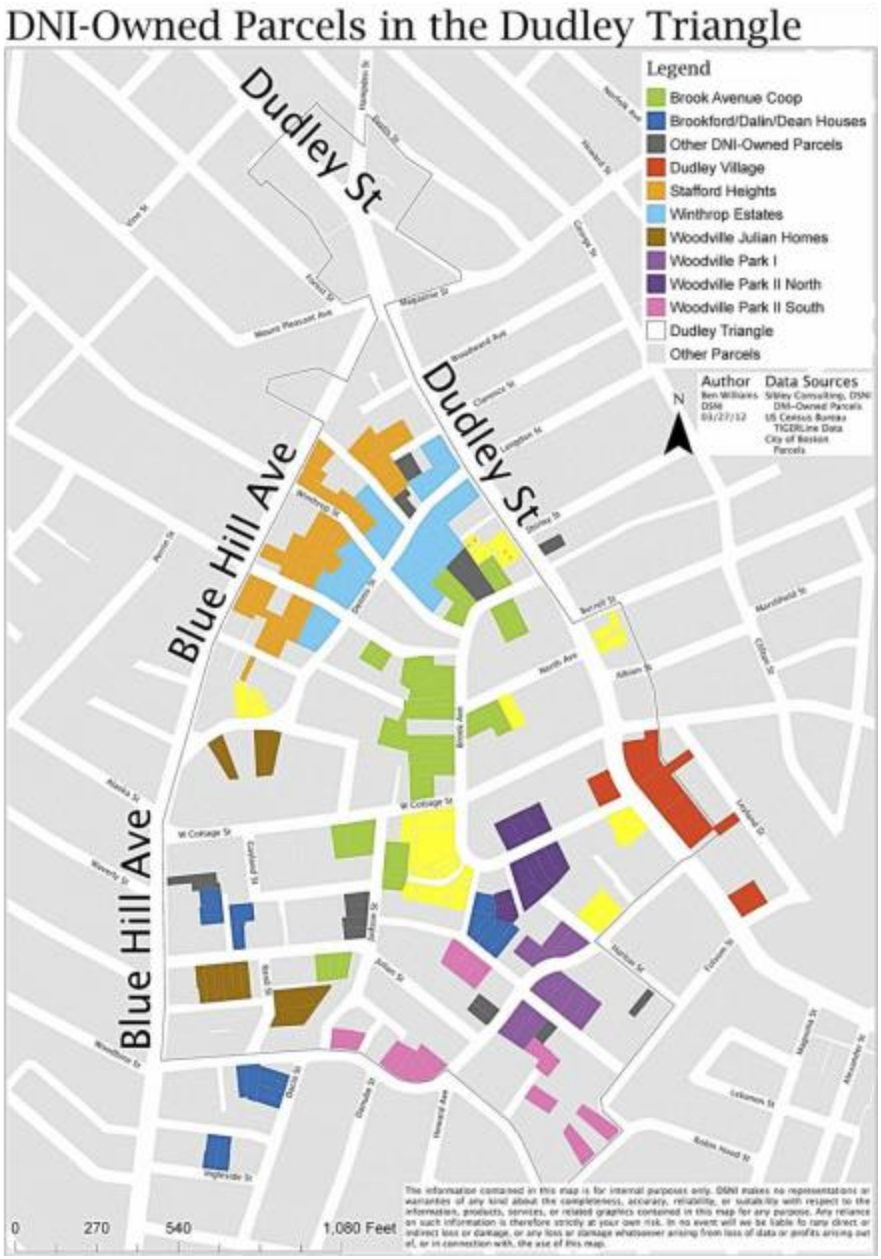

Figure 4.2: Land owned by Dudley Neighbors community land trust, 2019. (Image: Dudley Neighbors Inc.) (available at: https://www.dudleyneighbors.org/)

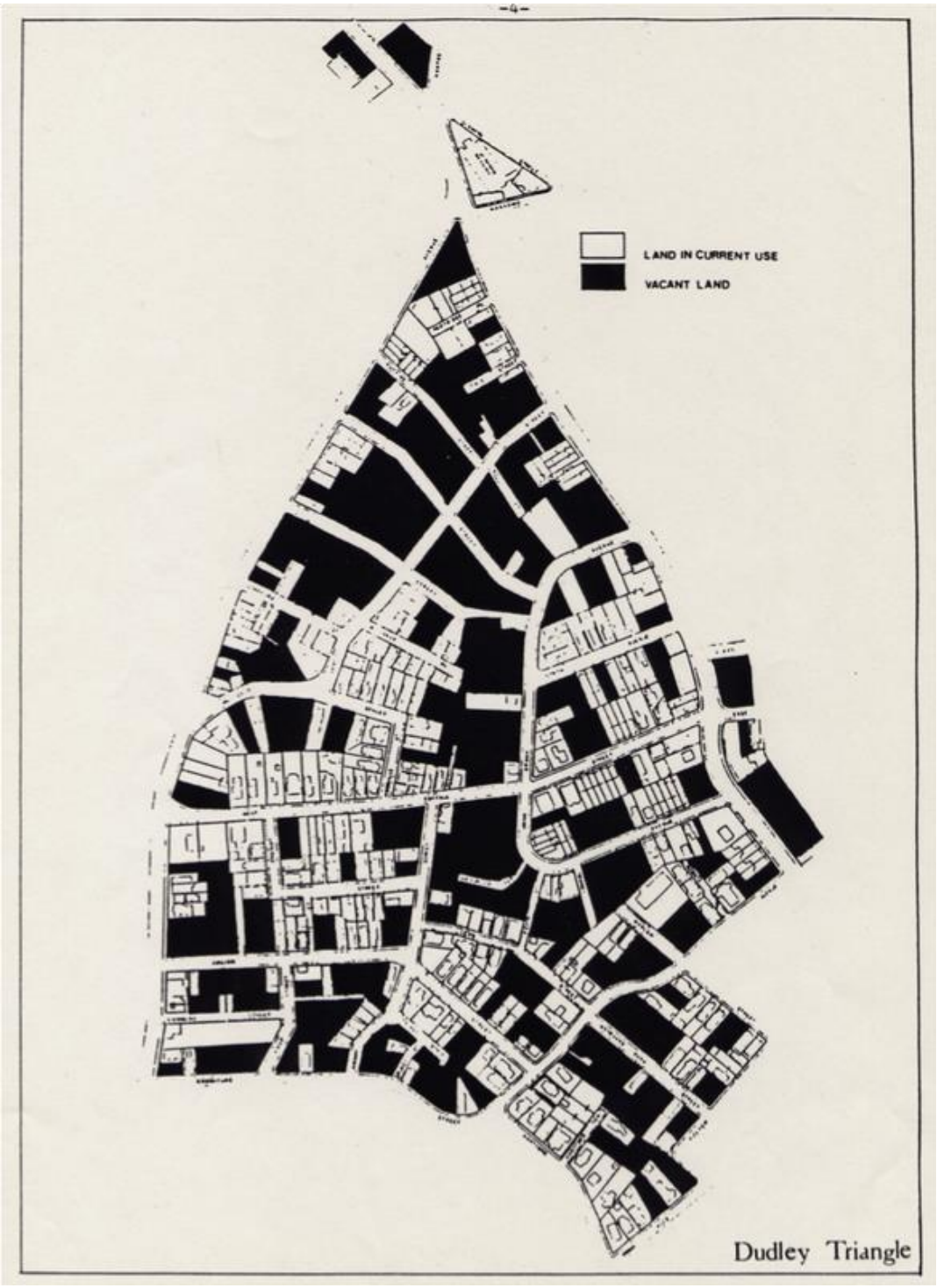

Figure 4.3: Map depicting the Dudley Triangle,1984. Vacant lots shown in black (Image: Dudley Neighbors Inc.)

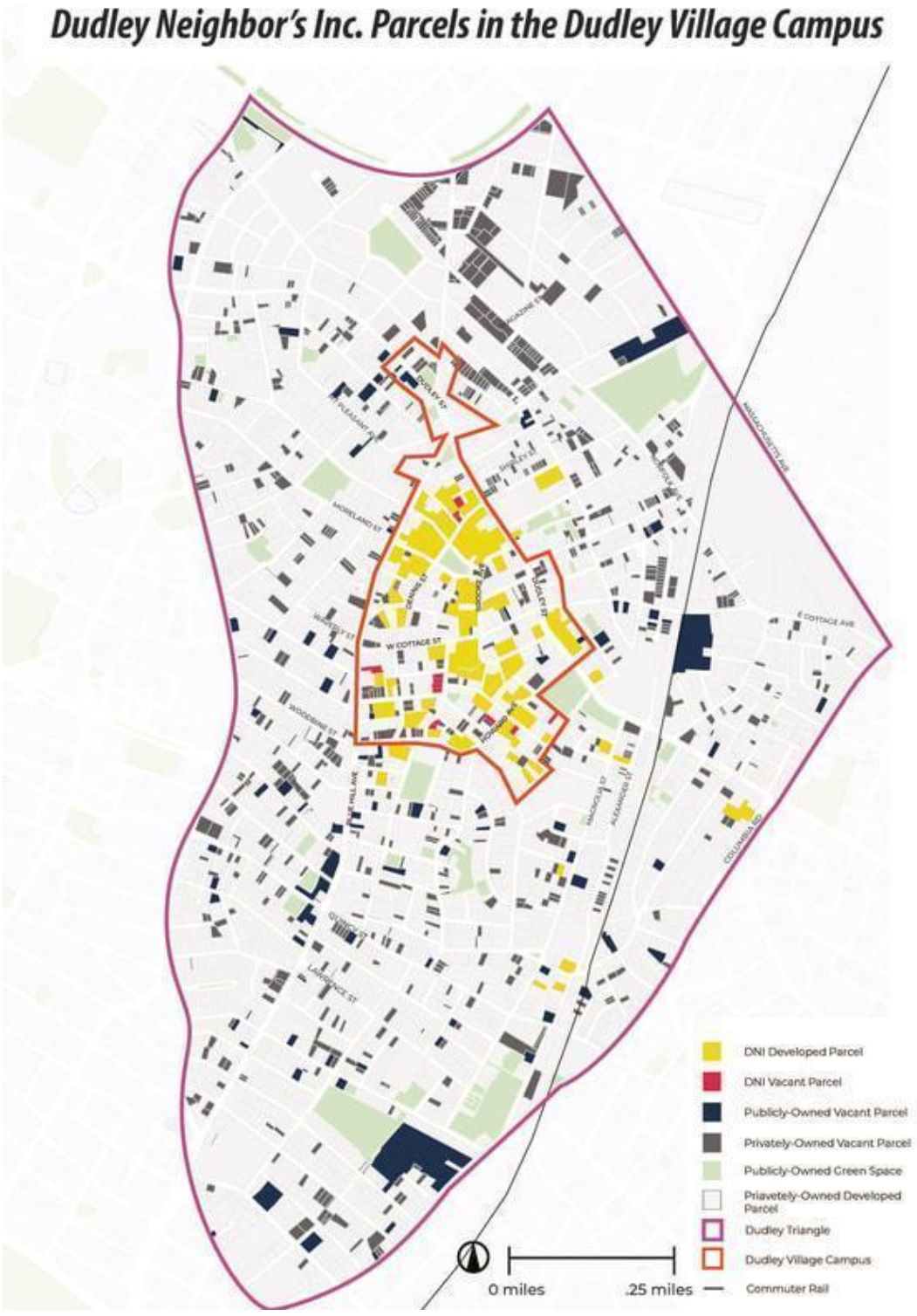

Figure 4.4: Dudley Triangle within "Dudley Village Campus." This shape is roughly the same as the Dudley Area in the context of Boston map. The DSNI developed the land in yellow. (Image: Dudley Neighbors Inc.)

Dudley Street in 1980: Antecedents of Redevelopment

Cape Verdeans migrated to Roxbury in the late 1970s and continued their cultural traditions in their adopted environs. Cape Verde, an archipelago located off the northwest coast of Africa, had been Portuguese colony from 1460 until 1975 when an armed rebellion expelled the Portuguese.[203] Independence from Portugal and expanded immigration opportunities in the United States facilitated migration in the 1970s. After 1975, Cape Verdeans moved to the Boston area, and in particular the Roxbury and Dorchester neighborhoods.[204] Buoyed by independence, the neighborhood life of Roxbury sustained cultural practices such as independence day and holiday festivals like the So-Sabi Festival.[205] Many in Boston identify as "Cape Verdean" rather than black, white, Portuguese, or African. In Cape Verdean society, elders encouraged younger people to "tell their story," a symbolic call for Cape Verdeans to assert their individuality and ethnic pride.[206]

Women drove activism in the city's Hispanic community. The 1980 census recorded 36,000 individuals of "Spanish origin" in Boston with the largest concentration of residents in Roxbury, North Dorchester, and Jamaica Plain, with Puerto Ricans comprising the largest subgroup. According to the census, forty percent, or around 14,400, of these residents lived in poverty.[207]

203 *New York Times*, 7/5/1975; Terza A. Silva Lima-Neves "Some Kind of Funny Puerto Rican?" *Cabo Verdean Identities and Transnationalism"* A Presentation for World View 2017 Africa Seminar University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (3/29/2017).

204 Marilyn Halter, *Transnational Archipelago: Perspectives on Cape Verdean Migration and Diaspora* (Amsterdam University Press, 2008): 35-45.

205 *Boston Herald*, 5/17/2000. *Providence Journal*, 5/7/1985. See also: Halter, *Transnational Archipelago*.

206 Raymond A. Almeida, *Cape Verdeans in America, Our Story* Tchuba, the American Committee for Cape Verde (1978).

207 La Alianza Inc, "Alianza Hispana: An Overview" See also: Russell Paul Lopez, "Boston's Hispanics and the 1980 Census: Where We Live" Hispanic Office of Planning and Evaluation (HOPE). Records GMA: Box 5, Folder 11.

Poverty and low socioeconomic status functioned as a barrier for Latinx residents to become players on Boston's political scene. By 1988, there were only four elected Hispanic officials in all of Massachusetts, all serving on school committees.[208] Boston's Latina community, viewed "taking a stand" as an essential function in life, from voicing one's opinion in family discussions and decision-making to joining activist and community organizations. Latina community-centered focus had "profound causes and consequences" because it facilitated connections with community members and collective methods of organization. Sociologists and political scientists argue that Latina concept of political participation facilitated personal and community involvement in Boston.[209] While Hispanics played a limited role in statewide politics, women formed the majority of membership of groups such as La Alianza, helping to enlarge their stature during the 1980s.

In 1981, La Alianza, Nuestra Communidad, and MIT's Urban Planning Department produced *From the Ground Up: A Strategy for the Dudley Street Neighborhood*. The publication contended that city, state, and federal organizations direct funds to resident-owned businesses and organizations for community development. *From the Ground Up* advocated for the creation of a resident-directed organization to lead community improvement endeavors. This group would focus on creating and sustaining green space, in particular the development of urban agriculture. Publicly owned land and vacant lots would be converted into community owned farms that produced high yield cash crops. A home building committee would help residents to attain homeownership, provide employment, and stimulate the local economy. Its authors employed the

208 B*oston Globe*, 6/5/1988.
209 Carol Hardy-Fanta, *Latina Politics, Latino Politics*, 1-14.

Community Land Trust (CLT) framework for acquiring land.[210] F*rom the Ground Up* marked the key turning point in redevelopments efforts, as experts who participated in Dudley's resurgence helped residents articulate ideas and develop their own strategies for neighborhood improvement.

Despite the challenges posed by environmental racism, residents saw potential in themselves and the community. In 1981, students at Roxbury Community College completed an assessment of the area based on interviews with residents. Interviewees noted that pride in the community and the built environment, particularly the Dudley Block's architectural character, could serve as a foundation for improvement efforts. In addition, homeowners' maintenance of their property, in spite of the vacant lots and illegal dumping, demonstrated a sense of perseverance. As one person put it: "the neighborhood is still alive. It is a unique neighborhood in Boston because several races and language groups live in the same neighborhood in peace together." Echoing the Boston Black United Front a decade earlier, a student argued that residents must create a "united front" across "common interests" to "find the cause of the problems, attack the targets, and go on to build one strong community within clear boundaries."[211]

210 Total Studio Report, "From the Ground Up: A Strategy for the Dudley Street Neighborhood" MIT, 1981. Records GMA: Box 5, Folder 12.

211 Roxbury Community College, Report for community meeting held May 13, 1981: "The Dudley Neighborhoods" Records GMA: Box 5, Folder 7.

Figure 4.5: Dudley Square, 1978. (Image: Boston City Archives)

Mel King's 1983 campaign for mayor of Boston facilitated the rise of the DSNI. The effort brought together socialists, feminists, progressive blacks, and minority ethnic groups. King forged a "Rainbow Coalition" in Boston politics, a model Jesse Jackson emulated in the 1984 presidential campaign. At the campaign's outset, King promised legislation that would reverse economic and political policies that worked against the average Bostonian. The campaign defined issues facing minority communities: "in national and international contexts." King contended that the "giant triplets" of racism, materialism, and militarism connected conditions in Boston, to those in Detroit, and South Africa. King won the primary and faced Ray Flynn, city councilman from South Boston, in the general election.

King lost to Ray Flynn, but as a result of his strong finish politicians realized the strength of the city's minority community. The campaign provided important lessons for both activists and city politicians. Newspapers, television, and the radio outlets obscured King's message by

portraying his campaign as divisive for "injecting" race into the election. Members of the campaign reflected that softening the message did little good, because black politicians were portrayed as troublemakers when advocating for progressive causes. In order to advance their agenda, neighborhood groups concluded that they needed to employ different strategies beyond participating in mainstream politics in order to advance their agendas. The campaign had brought many residents into the activist fold, and its conclusion made its participants eager to launch self-help initiatives. The table had been set for a group to bring the interests of the community to the fore.[212]

The Birth of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative

In 1984, academics, activists, philanthropic institutions, and leaders of neighborhood agencies convened as the "Dudley Initiative" in order to plan a comprehensive community development program. In September, the Riley Foundation, a local small-scale charity, facilitated the initiative's first meeting at the Shirley Eustis House in Roxbury. By November, members forged a preliminary governance structure and mission statement. It proposed a 21-seat board: four from the primary ethnic groups in the neighborhood: black, Cape Verdean, Hispanic, and white, one city official, one state official, five non-profits from health and human services, two Community Development Corporations (CDC), two small businesses, two larger businesses, two members of the religious community, and two at-large seats.[213]

The group declared self-determination in redevelopment of the community as its mission. The initiative began important work in its first sessions, as members identified interest groups and people that needed to participate; developed protocols to facilitate discussions between groups

212 Melania Bruno and Mauricio Gaston, "Latinos For Mel King: Some Reflections" in *Radical America,* 67-80; Candace Cason, "The Mel King Campaign and the Black Community" in *Radical America,* 41-46.

213 "Dudley Initiative Meeting Minutes." Records GMA: Box 5, Folder 7.

and engage in a collaborative decision making processes; designed methods to acquire information and disseminate it to the community; and devised ways to "enhance the capacity of existing groups." In January 1985, the group drafted *The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative: An Overview*, which functioned as a constitution for the organization. On January 16th, members ratified the guidelines and protocols of its founding document and adopted the name Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative.[214]

The first public meeting at St. Patrick's Church on Dudley Street helped residents overcome their fears of "renewal" projects. Che Madyun, a classically trained dancer and educator, and others in attendance reported their concerns, including: enhancing coordination between existing neighborhood groups, enlarging the participation of ordinary residents, and expanding property ownership for the community. According to Madyun, the DSNI board claimed: "we're gonna have community input, we're gonna rebuild this neighborhood, it's a comprehensive plan." Madyun stood up and asked: "How many of you live in the neighborhood? And nobody raised their hand." To her, the DSNI appeared like so many of the other so-called renewal projects: "You always have people from downtown or somewhere else coming and telling you what you need in your neighborhood."[215]

214 "The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative: An Overview, January 1985" Records GMA: Box 5, Folder: 7.

215 *Holding Ground*, 5. See also: DSNI, "Evaluative Summary: Initial Community Meeting 2/23/1985" and DSNI Minutes, "Community-Wide Meeting: St Patrick's Church 2/23/1985" Meeting minutes for preparation for the community-wide meeting are available in the same folder. Records GMA, Box 5, Folder: 9 "Community Meetings, 1985-1986."

Figure 4.6: Che Madyun. Circa mid 1980s. (Image: Rudy Bruner Award)

Rather than consisting of outsiders, the DSNI functioned as a coordinating organization for existing neighborhood groups. Nuestra Comunidad and La Alianza jointly published the plan for the Dudley Street in 1981 that served as a springboard for the initiative's first work.[216] The DSNI developed its organization and governing philosophy directly from existing neighborhood groups that also received funding from the Riley Foundation. Melvyn Colon and Nelson Merced pioneered the DSNI's early work, and they led Comunidad Nuestra and La Alianza respectively. Colon, who lived on School Street in Roxbury, earned a B.A. from Yale and an M.A. in City Planning from MIT, focused on housing issues for Nuestra, negotiating with city officials to increase affordable housing opportunities. Nuestra proved instrumental in maintaining community control of the block at 375 to 385 Dudley Street, the buildings viewed as the "heart"

216 La Alianza and Nuestra CDC, "In Search of Community: A Strategic Planning Conference in Boston's Dudley Street Neighborhood" *MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning* (July, 1984). Records GMA, Box 5, Folder 13.

of improvement efforts. Before it had its own space, the DSNI held its first meetings at La Alianza and Nuestra.[217] The efforts that brought the DSNI to fruition had been developing for two decades, but the meeting sparked broader public participation that proved critical to its early work, including enlisting Che Madyun.

In July 1985, the DSNI held a retreat on Thompson Island in Boston Harbor to determine the practical considerations of community self-determination. These sessions helped the group to prioritize projects, determine ethical and responsive procedures for handling residents' needs, devise ways to empower community members, and develop systems for functioning as a clearinghouse for important information. The members of the retreat, including Madyun, Colon, and Merced, identified the specific steps necessary to achieve its goal, including: acquiring land, augmenting train and bus service to the area, enlarging existing housing and increasing affordable housing options, developing the political strength of the area, increasing recreation opportunities, and expanding green space in the neighborhood.[218] As a sign of its ascendant status, the DSNI obtained the designation of Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) from the BRA. The BRA's agreed to "undertake all planning and development efforts in conjunction with the community" as a result of the DSNI's classification as a PAC.[219]

The DSNI empowered residents and integrated the community's priorities into the mission of the organization. Women formed a majority of its leadership and helped the DSNI expand to 500 members.[220] Che Madyun viewed her election as president of the DSNI in 1986 a turning point

217 Records GMA, Box 5, Folder 9.
218 Records GMA, Box 5, Folder 3: "Board Retreat, 1985." See records for 7/27/1985.
219 "Contract to Insure Citizen Participation By and Between Boston Redevelopment Authority and Planning Advisory Committee." Records GMA: Box 5, Folder 7.
220 See, for example: DSNI Meeting Minutes, "Attendees of 3/11/1985 Dudley Meeting at Roxbury Multi-Service Center: RE: Elections/Credentials Committee." Records GMA: Box 5, Folder 7.

in Dudley's history, noting: "planning never happens with the people who are going to have to live with the day to day result of whatever is planned or built or designed, involved from the beginning." Peter Medoff, executive director of the DSNI, offered that: "building leadership in the community is our biggest accomplishment."[221] To expand participation, the DSNI created focus groups consisting of between eight and fifteen residents. The focus group asked participants general questions about neighborhood life and encouraged residents to respond through stories rather than through data acquisition. Using a moderator and discussion protocol, residents discussed their everyday activities and concerns, such as shopping or interactions with law enforcement.[222] Through conversations with the community, the DSNI identified focus areas including: childcare, job training, recreation and athletics, community centers, tenant assistance, and educational programs.[223]

The DSNI enlarged the stature of existing residential groups. In 1985, La Alianza obtained rights to a vacant lot adjacent to its property at 413 Dudley Street where it converted 10,000 square feet of land to a community garden. Nuestra Comunidad provided financing for the project in addition to funds for rehabilitating the home adjacent to the vacant lot. La Alianza obtained a Neighborhood Development and Economic Authority grant of $28,000 to help construct a vegetable garden, playground, and sitting area. Roxbury Community College instructor Peter Del Tredici's, assisted the project and enlisted Anne Winston Spirn's landscape architecture class at Harvard to participate in a design competition from which La Alianza selected the winner.[224] The DSNI worked with Nuestra to obtain an agreement from the city's

221 *Boston Globe*, 5/6/1988.
222 Nesbitt and Plumer, *The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative Revitalization Plan: A Comprehensive Community Controlled Strategy* (DAC International: September, 1987): 49.
223 Nesbitt and Plumer, *The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative*, passim.
224 *Boston Globe*, 3/29/1985. See also: Handbill for 5/21/1985. Presentation at Piper Auditorium, Harvard University "Boston's Vacant Land Resource: Landscape Architecture

Boston's banking and insurance communities to participate in the rehabilitation of nearly 9,000 housing units and to provide financing for 3,400 new units. In addition, Nuestra Comunidad and three other CDC's redeveloped 17 buildings, converting them into 84 housing units. Collectively, CDC's convinced the BRA to provide mortgage financing for credit-worthy residents.[225] In 1986, La Alianza sponsored a Youth Week to foster the notion that: "we are not isolated in this area. We want to stay and be a part of it." The event assembled youth leaders from the four ethnic groups and the program's agenda facilitated an understanding of the common problems and experiences that challenged the community.[226]

Collecting Victories: Don't Dump on Us!

Peter Medoff, hired by Madyun, instituted, short-term campaigns so residents could realize they possess, "some power and can have some victories."[227] The group immediately turned its attention to pollution and polluters who operated in the neighborhood. Companies that housed buses and large equipment in the neighborhood, which, along with its location next to a bottleneck on Interstate 93, caused Roxbury to have the worst air quality in the city. In 1986, a proposed garbage incinerator slated for Roxbury demonstrated "a lack of understanding of air quality issues and, at worst, a total lack of concern for the health of the powerless minorities in the area." Gail Lattimore of the DSNI declared, "we are simply tired of being used as a dumping ground." More than 500 DSNI members voted unanimously to reject the city's proposal. In 1987 the DSNI began its opposition to repeated proposals for an asphalt plant in Roxbury.[228]

Students Present Their Visions- Alternative Designs for the Dudley Street Neighborhood" Records GMA, Box 5, Folder 9.

225 *Boston Globe*, 3/21/1986.
226 *Boston Globe*, 8/2/1986.
227 *Holding Ground*, 7.
228 *Boston Globe*, 12/3/1986.

The “Don’t Dump On Us!” campaign organized residents to demand essential environmental protections from the city. In 1986, 1,000 vacant lots in the Dudley area made the community vulnerable to illegally dumped items.[229] Nelson Merced declared that “The Don't Dump On Us!” served as a message to city hall and the media that were “trashing” the neighborhood. The DSNI translated the slogan to unify ethnic groups behind a shared goal: in Cape Verdean Creole, nos somos lixo means, “we're not a garbage can;” no somos un basurero in Spanish means "we're not a dumpster."[230] Fifty residents and community activists blocked the entrance to the K&C trash transfer station in Roxbury, one of three companies that illegally operated in the area. The city’s claim that it attempted to shut down these transfer stations without success left residents incensed. The 650 families that lived in the Orchard Park housing development took matters into their own hands. Melvyn Colon led the protest with a bullhorn, shouting: “they pick this community to do their illegal dumping. Do they think we can't fight back? I think this action demonstrates that we're gonna fight back.” Like CORE had during the 1960s, protesters threatened to dump garbage at city hall if the mayor’s office refused to assist them.[231] The DSNI created a publicity campaign to intensify its message and define issues facing the area for the broader metropolitan area.

Don’t Dump On Us! efforts forced the city to stop illegal dumping in the neighborhood. The group facilitated a meeting at which residents demanded Mayor Flynn halt illegal dumping. Over 100 residents attended and “put all the city officials on the hot seat.” Witnesses reported that an aide left the meeting to phone Mayor Flynn. Soon after, Flynn pledged to assist with cleaning up

229 *Boston Globe*, 6/19/1986.
230 DSNI, “Don’t Dump on Us: Agenda- June 18, 1986” The DSNI published the agenda in Spanish and Crioulo for Latinx and Cape Verdean residents. Records GMA: Box 5, Folder 9.
231 *Holding Ground*, 10.

the vacant lots by providing money and “any kind of help you want.”[232] The city installed gates on Robey and Howard Streets that prevented large trucks from gaining access to the area.[233] In all, Boston officials ordered the shutdown of six transfer stations and so-called recycling centers.[234] Che Madyun remembered the experience, “was like a symbol of hope. You couldn't tell us that we weren't going to make big changes!”[235]

In 1986, the BRA proposed a revitalization plan for Dudley, spurring fear of another round of what residents called “negro removal.” A project that included a hotel and office buildings echoed previous urban renewal schemes that relied on experts in bureaucracies to dictate the direction of neighborhoods. Che Madyun noted that it: “sounded like a plot for gentrification,” fearing the BRA was “gonna go right down Dudley Street and we're only a hop, skip and a jump from downtown.” Residents in Roxbury rallied to the cry of “Don’t Let Roxbury become another South End.” Byron Rushing observed: “most people in the DSNI neighborhood, certainly the activists, had the experience of urban renewal in other parts of the city.”[236]

The DSNI confronted the issue, publicized residents’ concerns, and organized collective action to counter speculative real estate practices and forced evictions.[237] In 1987, about 100 residents held a rally to declare an area along Washington Street an "eviction-free zone," that included 2,000 apartments and 8,000 residents. A protestor spoke out against: “the potential for greed and excessive profit and against exploitation of the powerless."[238] At public hearings held by the BRA, DSNI members and Roxbury residents recalled their dislocation from the South

232 *Boston Globe*, 7/22/1987.
233 *Boston Globe*, 11/29/1988.
234 *Boston Globe*, 8/5/1988.
235 *Holding Ground*, 11.
236 *Holding Ground*, 11.
237 Nesbitt and Plumer, *The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative*, 44.
238 *Boston Globe*, 1/30/1988.

End and spoke out against issues with the BRA's plans. To avoid the same fate as the South End, the BRA needed to respect the community's ideas for development. After reflecting on the process, BRA director Stephen Coyle noted the plan was an "A paper" but a "D minus in terms of reality." Coyle concluded that: "There's nothing like getting taken to the woodshed publicly for you to think clearer."[239] The DSNI challenged the BRA to provide Roxbury residents the support and autonomy they desired.

DSNI in the Vanguard: The Plan for Eminent Domain

In the mid 1980s, the DSNI used organizational success and political movements to advance its agenda. The 1986 city of Boston election featured a non-binding ballot question that intended Roxbury, Mattapan, Dorchester, and parts of the South End and Jamaica Plain to secede from Boston. If the initiative passed, developed into a binding ballot question, and passed a citywide election, a new city called Mandela would be formed within the confines of Boston. The Mandela plan argued that community control, including progressive housing initiatives, schools, and medical care would greatly improve communities long neglected by the city. This plan drew its name from the struggle for black liberation across the world, particularly South Africa. The Mandela initiative suffered from sustained attacks by the media and politicians, losing 33,609 to 12,349 in November 1986. Despite its defeat, the vote provided a signal to the mayor's office: minority residents were determined to redevelop their own community.[240]

With the DSNI offering the city a more palatable option than secession, the DSNI hired DAC International to help draft its comprehensive plan for the redevelopment of the Dudley Square

239 *Holding Ground*, 13. See also, Public Handout produced by DSNI on threat of displacement titled "The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative." Records GMA: Box 5, Folder 9.

240 Monty Neill, "Africa in Boston-A Critical Analysis of Mandela, Massachusetts" *Midnight Notes*, Vol.10*: The New Enclosures*, 1990. See also: *Los Angeles Times*, 9/7/1986.

area. Che Madyun reflected that to improve the neighborhood: “on our own terms, we hired urban planners who would look to us for solutions.” David Nesbitt, technical director for DAC, helped the DSNI to prioritize the issues and strategies necessary for community redevelopment. More than 200 residents participated in the creation of plans that centered on building an urban village in Dudley Square. As expressed in the final plan, residents determined that improvement efforts must address: augmenting job opportunities, developing local businesses, increasing affordable housing options, expanding social services, and improving education. Cynthia Lopes Jefferson noted that the plan “stresses services to rebuild the spirit of this community, as well as to develop the neighborhood." The DSNI celebrated the release of its comprehensive plan in September 1987 with a gathering that included 200 residents, Mayor Flynn, and City Council President Bruce Bolling. Che Madyun declared: “the neighborhood has decided what it wants and is now ready to put it into action."[241]

The first step of the comprehensive plan focused on increasing affordable housing options for local residents. The DSNI divided this work into committees: one evaluated proposals to ensure they fit with the urban village model while another worked with federal bureaucracies, such as Freddie MAC, to obtain funding.[242] These efforts entailed advocating for residents to acquire affordable mortgages, assisting with the application process, and facilitating resident interactions with banks. Beyond facilitating residents’ communication with the financial world, the DSNI bought properties in order to sell them to residents and converted buildings into affordable rental units. To augment these efforts, the DSNI offered counseling services and shelter for residents impacted by temporary displacement due to housing rehabilitation efforts. In total, the plan called for $134 million in public funds to assist with Dudley’s rehabilitation.

241 *Boston Globe*, 10/26/1987. See also: *Holding Ground*.
242 Nesbitt and Plumer, *The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative*, 39-44.

The DSNI gained the use of eminent domain to enact its housing vision, a first in the nation accomplishment for a CDC. Nelson Merced argued that the "fragmented" arrangement of vacant lots in the neighborhood inhibited redevelopment plans.[243] Instead, the DSNI's eminent domain initiative targeted 131 property owners in the neighborhood. According to this plan, landowners would sell property at the current market rate, totaling 15 acres, while the city would contribute an additional 15 acres.[244] Che Madyun proclaimed the need to work from "the bottom up and have City Hall work with us so together we can determine our own fate." Resident Harold Hughley felt a boost of confidence that "with these people, it'll be hard for anybody to step on this community again."[245] The group's slogan, "take a stand and own the land," reflected the long-term goals of minorities in the area. "Taking a stand" constituted the foundation of political activity in the Hispanic community while "owning the land" directed African American improvement efforts since the 1960s. Winning eminent domain provided a symbolic victory as well. The BRA employed eminent domain to evict minority residents from the South End; the DSNI used it as a tool to protect and enhance minority property ownership.

"The Force" Drives Community Development

With organizational momentum building, the DSNI commenced "a dramatic, visible, and grass roots" effort for environmental improvement. The DSNI proposed an initiative called "the Force" that functioned as a "unifying strategy."[246] The endeavor built off the popular Star Wars phrase "May the Force be with you," however the DSNI stressed: "The Force is with you." Described by leadership as the foundation for "a massive effort to change the neighborhood," the Force enlisted resident participation in improvement plans and interactions with the city

243 *Holding Ground*, 14.
244 *Boston Globe*, 10/28/1988; *Holding Ground*.
245 *Boston Globe*, 1/27/1987.
246 Nesbitt and Plumer, *The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative*, 39-51.

bureaucracy. The phrase helped form a network of "spiritual, emotional and physical" support among residents. In time, the Force evolved into a "cadre of community residents," who provided a "source of pride, dignity, energy" in community redevelopment. Public educational programs engaged and recruited residents who forged a self-help organization that assisted the DSNI's housing programs and job development efforts.[247]

The Force facilitated artists who painted murals to create an "alternative channel" to broadcast the cultural productions of the area. Communities employ murals to represent their culture, the history of the area, and portray future aspirations.[248] By displaying "our dreams in the neighborhood," murals resisted economic inequality and confronted negative media portrayal. A DSNI muralist commented at the unveiling of the Nubian Roots mural in 1990 that, "Channel 4, 5, 7 and 56 should be out here now. But I bet you if I got shot and I was laying there bleeding, they would come real quick and show that."[249] The Nubian Roots mural displayed "different faces of actual people in the community doing ordinary everyday things." Its creators intended to "symbolize and capture as much of the community as possible." Murals in the area portrayed immigrant homelands such as Cape Verde, while others connected injustices the community faced with issues faced in African nations.

The murals that dotted the Dudley area helped forge bonds across ethnicity, age, and class. Working on murals recruited aspiring artists and provided residents a means of self-expression. A Roxbury muralist commented: "black people (are) painting murals about themselves and their situation. Black art is not a decoration. It's a revolutionary force."[250] DSNI muralists reflected

247 Nesbitt and Plumer, *The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative*, 50-52.
248 Tim Sieber, Graça Índias Cordeiro, and Ligia Ferro, "The Neighborhood Strikes Back: Community Murals by Youth in Boston's Communities of Color," *City & Society*, Vol. 24, Is. 3, (December 2012), 263–280.
249 *Holding Ground*, 28.
250 Sieber, Cordeiro, and Ferro, "The Neighborhood Strikes Back," 266.

that they "liked the idea of them being a part of history and part of change."[251] During the summer of 1988, La Alianza facilitated the work of twenty high school dropouts age thirteen to twenty-one on a mural project.[252] That same summer, black teenagers created music and murals to commemorate 350 years of African Americans living in Massachusetts.[253]

Figure 4.7: Puerto Rican muralist, 1984. (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

251 *Holding Ground*, 27.
252 *Boston Globe*, 8/27/1988.
253 *Boston Globe*, 7/5/1988.

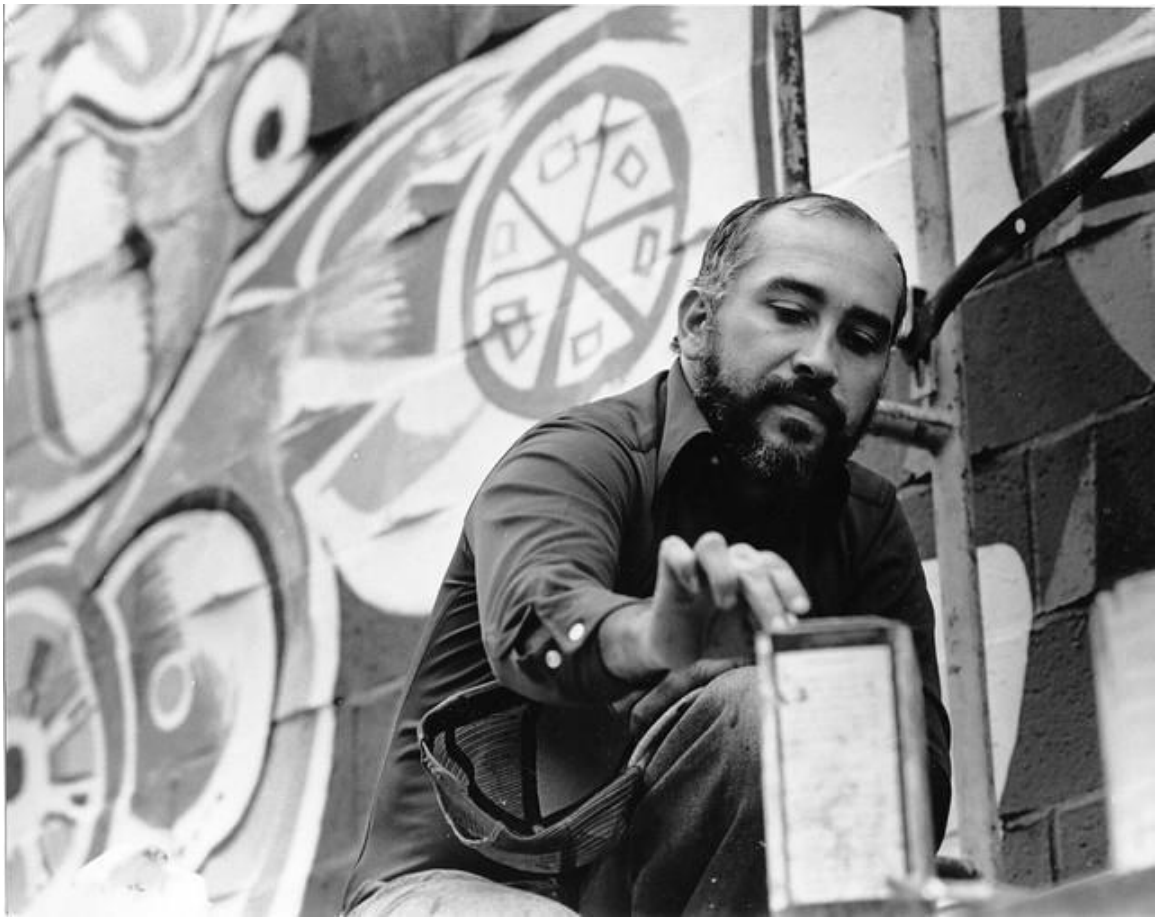

Figure 4.8: Puerto Rican muralist, 1984. (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

Figure 4.9: Nubian Roots Mural, Dudley Square. (Image: ResearchGate.org)

Completing Winthrop Estates

To facilitate the Winthrop Estates housing program, the DSNI hired Gus Newport to navigate the political system and establish connections "outside the [Dudley] triangle."[254] Newport, the former mayor of Berkeley, California, had been a civil rights leader in Rochester, New York, in the 1960s, receiving mentorship from Malcolm X. Newport arrived at the position known for his fundraising abilities. The *Boston Globe* announced Newport as "Roxbury's New Progressive Populist" when he joined the DSNI in late 1988.[255] Completing the Winthrop Estates set the table

254 *Holding Ground*, 18.
255 *Boston Globe*, 12/21/1988.

for the remaining “urban village” plans to reach fruition. At the behest of the DSNI, Boston's Public Facilities Commission designated 12 developers to build 266 units of affordable housing on 145 vacant, city-owned lots in Roxbury and Dorchester.[256]

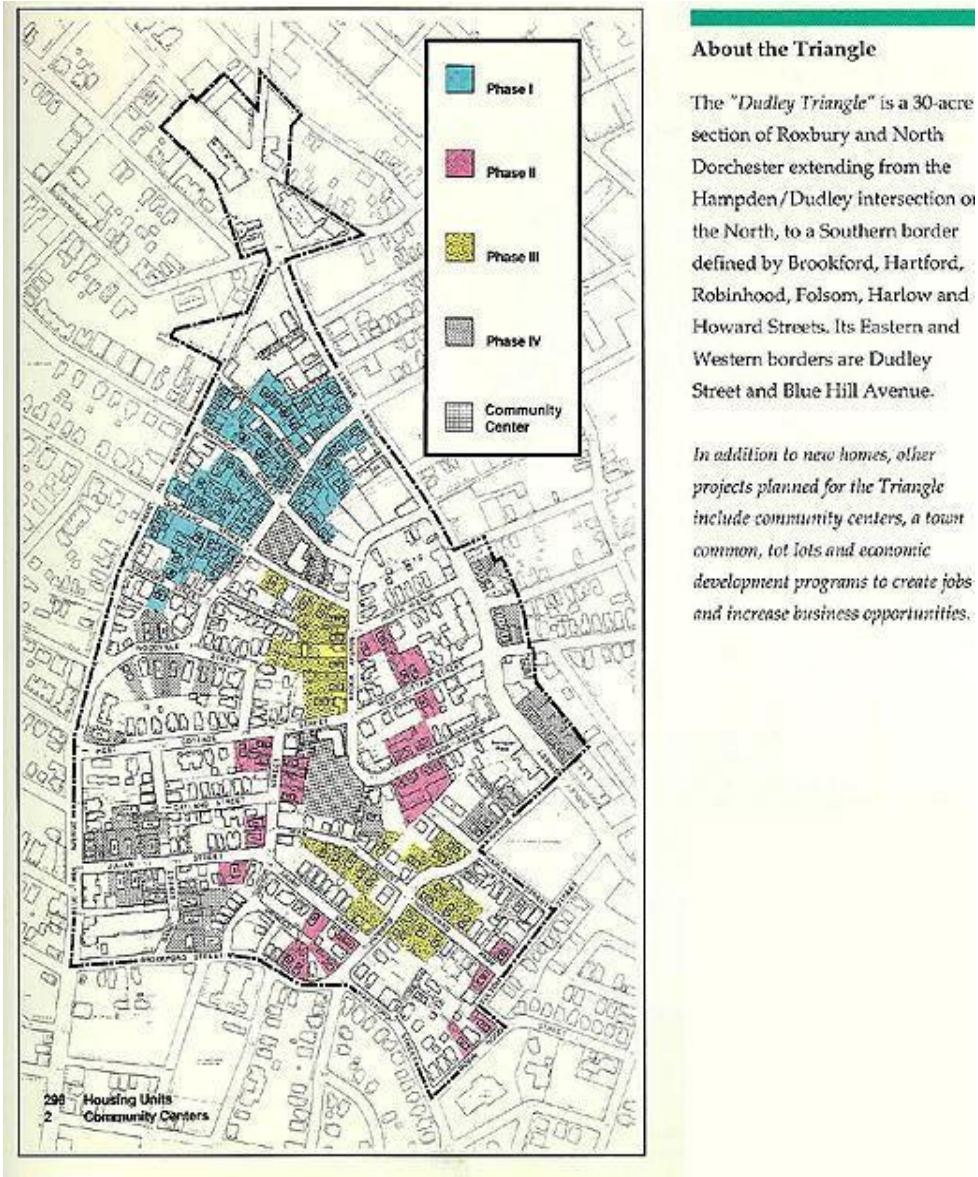

Figure 4.10: Winthrop Estates plan in Dudley Triangle. (Image: Dudley Neighbors Inc.)

The DSNI surmounted major obstacles while redeveloping the Dudley Square community. For example, upon granting eminent domain to the DSNI, one BRA board member was

256 *Boston Globe*, 12/15/1990.

overheard saying: "do you realize we're giving this land to foreigners?" Negative stereotypes and the effects of low socioeconomic status still colored perception, as evidenced in banks' continued avoidance of loan servicing to Dudley residents and businesses. In 1989, Boston police arrested six DSNI members at a protest outside of the Bank of Boston on Dudley Street. Protesters sang slave spirituals and held signs that stated "REDLINING = RACISM,' Roxbury, Mattapan, and North Dorchester."[257]

Developers wanted residents and the city of Boston to prove the neighborhood was "safe." The DSNI took upon itself the task of cleaning up Mary Hannon playground in Dorchester, one of the most prominent public places in the DSNI triangle. The so-called "safety" of the park correlated to an increase in funding sources for construction. Che Madyun observed that residents "were not able to use the park because of the drug activities." Most of the drug arrests in Boston's minority neighborhoods were suburban white men. During 1990 and 1991, Boston Police arrested 243 individuals from Quincy in Roxbury and Dorchester on drug related charges, along with 53 from Weymouth, 51 from Brookline, 130 from Cambridge, 33 from Winthrop, 39 from Newton, 68 from Somerville, 39 from Braintree, 60 from Malden, 56 from Medford, 14 from Saugus, and 92 from Lynn. [258] In order to attain a normal service-funding for construction and mortgages-DSNI members and community members overcame problems not of their making.

Racist lending practices long impeded minority-driven community development efforts. In 1989, a study commissioned by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston reported that minority groups in Roxbury and Dorchester received mortgage loans at 76 percent the rate of whites. Another study conducted by the city of Boston found that mortgage lending to white

257 *Boston Globe*, 7/13/1989.
258 *Boston Globe*, 4/27/1993.

neighborhoods compared to black neighborhoods occurred at three to one ratio.[259] In addition, banks offered loans to minority groups and businesses for the purchase but not the development of land, a signal of the risk banks associated with minorities. A different Federal Reserve study revealed that Boston banks had the highest disparity between blacks and whites in obtaining mortgage loans in the nineteen largest metropolitan areas in the United States.[260] A leading Boston banker observed: "The facts in the report are accurate. Banks are not doing enough on their own. That really reflects that they're not doing loans of any type."[261]

The lack of access to financial institutions degraded the quality of life for Roxbury and Dorchester residents. A Boston banker reported that residents of these communities, "don't have access to banking, so non-reputable things fill the void. You get these shady mortgage brokers and the check-cashing places and otherwise legalized loan-sharking that happens because people are locked out of access to regular sources of financing."[262] Elrette Marion, human resources director at Polaroid and a longtime resident of Roxbury recalled that as a youth a lack of banks in the area made it virtually impossible to cash checks and access basic banking services: "There were no banks. No cash machines. You couldn't find a pharmacy. There was no grocery store. Can you imagine?"[263] Retail stores, such as supermarkets, followed the indications of financial risks broadcast by banks and refused to locate in the area. Food choices were limited because many residents relied on convenience stores for basic staples, including produce, milk, and meat. Roxbury residents who had transportation options travelled to Star Markets on the Mattapan-Dorchester line or in the Fenway area.[264] However, in the early 1990s, Roxbury did not have a

259 *Boston Globe*, 4/21/1991.
260 *Boston Globe,* 10/22/1991.
261 *Bay State Banner*, 4/9/1992.
262 *Boston Globe,* 5/21/1991.
263 *Boston Globe,* 1/6/1994.
264 *Boston Globe,* 12/27/1992.

train or trolley line. The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) refused to service the area while proposed improvements to Dudley Bus Station were stalled.[265]

The city failed to rectify the inequities in mortgage lending practices. In early 1990, Mayor Ray Flynn and banking leaders announced that $30 million in mortgage loans for low and moderate-income homebuyers would be made available.[266] However, by July, the pool of potential mortgage money had become an "issue of contention." Boston area banks, save for BayBank and Bank of Commerce, only offered variable rate mortgages. Interest rates for variable rate mortgages reflect market changes on a month by month basis, creating an unstable situation for potential homeowners.[267] Furthermore, groups designed to advocate for minority residents proved deficient. Residents protested that the members of the Boston Fair Housing Commission consisted of white men who made decisions often to the detriment of the city's minorities. City Councilor Bruce Bolling of Roxbury noted that Mayor Flynn "is at a crossroads in terms of his relationship with communities of color."[268]

Rather than respond to problems posed by Hannon Park in isolation, the DSNI expanded its activist role. At the start of the 1990s, DSNI activists demanded the city remove abandoned vehicles and coordinated clean up days for specific vacant lots. DSNI members pressured city officials for increased street lights and green space, in addition to improved community services. This included assisting residents in understanding their housing options and listing available properties to rent or own. Finally, the DSNI developed tenants' rights workshops, homeowner buying workshops, programs to rehabilitate viable structures, and strategies to purchase land in the DSNI triangle. The master plan vision proclaimed that unleashing the "human potential" of

265 *Boston Globe*, 5/29/1992.
266 *Boston Globe* 1/11/1990.
267 *Boston Globe*, 5/1/1990.
268 *Boston Globe*, 1/7/1990.

residents would allow them to address the environmental issues that challenged the area. In 1991, Che Madyun delivered the Presidential Address to DSNI leaders, members, and community residents. The DSNI forged a "common destiny" among the various ethnic groups through "sincerity, purpose, and community collaboration." Madyun ticked off the accomplishments and plans for the next few years, intoning: "this is our community and by working together we shall overcome…together we shall prevail."[269]

In the summer of 1991, the DSNI sponsored a Summerfest at Hannon Park that resulted in the DSNI obtaining a $2 million loan from the Ford Foundation at 1% interest. The DSNI's Human Development Committee (HDC) proved instrumental to organizing and executing activities at the park. The group set up week-long programs for each ethnic group to celebrate its literature, history, art, dance, theatre, music, and writing. Arts and crafts activities offered another avenue for youth participation. Gus Newport observed that the activities became "infectious,"[270]adding: "We're going to start having block competitions for beautification. People want to do the right thing."[271] The HDC facilitated an intergenerational project that enlisted youth to conduct an interview with an older member of their ethnicity and produce a video memorializing the interviews. Members of the committee also worked with the Cape Verdean community to develop and maintain its community house, or social service center/agency.[272] The HDC provided professional training through its Young Architects and Planners project to assist with the development of Winthrop Estates. It trained ten participants in architecture and concepts of urban design. One participant, Gevel Merrero became a professional architect. Merrero's father

269 Records GMA: Box 1, Folder 9: "Work plans, 1990-1991."
270 *Boston Globe*, 9/17/1991.
271 *Boston Globe*, 10/19/1991.
272 Records GMA: Box 1, Folder 12: "Monitoring Reports, Correspondence, Meeting Minutes, and Reports, 1991-1992."

reflected: “DSNI came and told us we're not only going to build houses, we're going to build people. Gonna build our community.”[273]

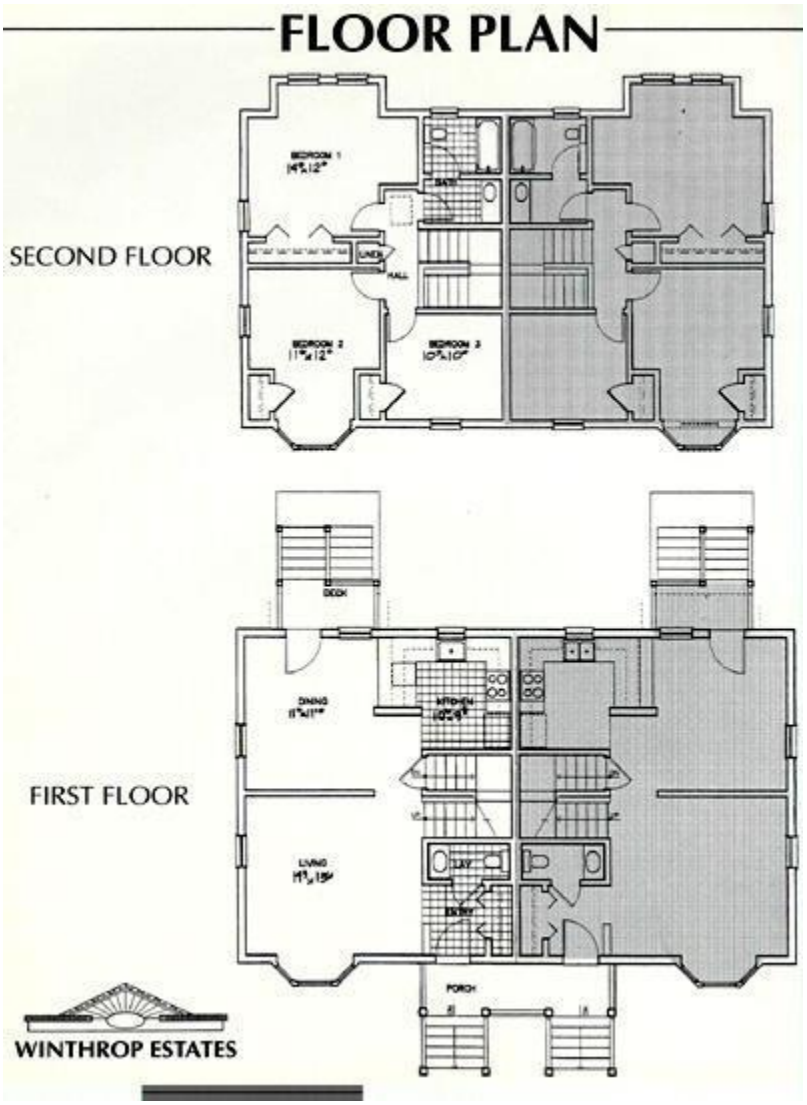

Figure 4.11: Floor Plans for Winthrop Estates. (Image: Dudley Neighbors Inc.)

The DSNI seized on the momentum built by the Ford Loan to address issues facing residents. The so-called “agency collaborative” functioned as a full-time lobbyist for the DSNI efforts, as it petitioned legislators to demand youth development, health care, literacy, educational, and

273 New Day Films, *Holding Ground*, 20.

vocational training services for Roxbury and North Dorchester. The collaborative called for a decentralized service distribution system based on resident need. The "Dudley Pride" effort continued revitalization efforts by enlisting the assistance of Harvard students with neighborhood/vacant lot clean up. In addition, it reported illegal dumping and created the Lead Poisoning Prevention Project that canvassed neighborhoods to recruit and create a record of lead pollution. Pride created "Green Teams" to connect neighborhood youth with the Massachusetts Horticultural Society and other environmental groups. They initiated activities to curb drug dealing, developed a youth committee, connected with City-Year volunteers to assist with cleaning up vacant lots, and initiated summer programs at Hannon Park.[274]

To facilitate the development of Winthrop Estates, the DSNI created Dudley Neighbors Incorporated (DNI) to negotiate the eminent domain transfers. The DNI formed a community land trust (CLT) to lease the land underneath Winthrop Estates for 99 years to developers, homeowners, and cooperatives. Employing the CLT model allowed residents to retain "control over the development and future of the community" under the slogan, "Take a stand and own the land!" Standing committees devoted to real estate acquisition, development, and marketing as well negotiating the $2 million loan with the Ford Foundation helped execute the process. DNI efforts distributed funds, and met the administrative, accounting, and oversight reporting requirements of the Ford Loan. In addition, the DNI provided legal advocacy to oppose sellers within the eminent domain hoping a court might overturn the ruling or the city failed to enforce the claim.

In 1992, the DSNI transitioned to the role of "full developer" in the Winthrop Estates project. To assist with this, the DNI developed homeowners' workshops to assist first-time homeowners.

274 "Statement to Massachusetts Elected Officials from the **Agency Collaborative** of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative." Records GMA: Box 1, Folder 9.

The group developed awareness, knowledge of opportunities, and training for home ownership responsibilities. It also maintained and protected vacant lots during the process of building. In addition to positive public perception and more access to capital, creating affordable housing had functioned as a central pillar of DSNI activity since its inception. In March 1993, the DSNI began work on Winthrop Estates, as the loan had been secured and architectural plans completed. The project began with six units consisting of 38 duplex houses on Dennis Street adjacent to Blue Hill Avenue and Dudley Street. The DSNI offered home buying classes to help new homeowners manage their investment.[275] Through its construction of Winthrop Estates the DSNI established credit, accessed funding from a variety of sources, and cultivated support from city officials.

Figure 4.12: Dennis Street before Winthrop Estates project. (Image: Dudley Neighbors Inc.)

[275] Records GMA: Box 1, Folder 1: DSNI Correspondence and Financial Info.1993-1995" and Folder 18: "Grants Management Associates Monitoring Reports, 1990-1994." The DSNI sent out letters to groups and individuals in the surrounding area of Winthrop Estates. They also compiled reports recording recent events and planning for the future of Winthrop Estates; *Boston Globe*, 3/28/1993; *Boston Globe*, 4/1/1993.

Figure 4.13: Dennis Street after Winthrop Estates project. (Image: Dudley Neighbors Inc.)

Figure 4.14: Winthrop Estates project area before construction. (Image: Dudley Neighbors Inc.)

Figure 4.15: Winthrop Estates project area after construction. (Image: Dudley Neighbors Inc.)

Conclusion

The DSNI mimicked earlier iterations of democratic striving in United States history. Lawrence Goodwyn's *The Populist Moment* examined the four steps democratic movements engage in to enhance participation, increase access, and promote the autonomy of ordinary individuals. Dudley-area activists area knew and understood these steps; participants in Mel King's election bid used this book as a guidepost for its own actions. First, the DSNI created an "autonomous institution where new interpretations can materialize that run counter to those of prevailing authority." Second, the Don't Dump on US! effort recruited new members into the world of activism. Third, the development of comprehensive plan for the neighborhood and public meetings functioned as "the movement educating." Fourth, after the DSNI earned eminent domain to reclaim and rebuild the neighborhood, the DSNI created an institutional means

whereby the new ideas can be expressed in an autonomous political way."[276] In doing so, the DSNI challenged prevailing assumptions in society and redeveloped their community under their own direction.

[276] Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America* (New York: Galaxy Books, 1977): 1-10.

CHAPTER 5

"WE MAKE THINGS HAPPEN THAT CAN'T HAPPEN:"

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN BOSTON

During the 1990s, activists in Boston defined their own strand of environmental justice. In the early part of the decade, the DSNI began to identify as members of the environmental justice movement. In 1992, Alternatives for Community and Environment (ACE) formed as residents worked with academics and lawyers to confront environmental racism. These groups coupled with the growth of Community Development Corporations (CDC)s, constructed a systematic response to environmental racism through civic environmentalism: an effort to improve social and environmental problems as an interconnected set of issues. The group's rhetoric and actions helped to define a key difference between urban environmentalism and its mainstream brethren: in order to improve urban environments, social capital must be developed. Rather than preserving natural environments, urban environmentalists must generate the human potential to improve the natural and built environments of its ecosystem: the neighborhood.

The DSNI, ACE, and CDCs completed the urban village in Dudley Square, which had been the overall mission of activists for decades. The "town commons" green space area operated as a focal point for the encircling mixed-used built environment of stores, shops, markets, and restaurants, beyond which lay a variety of housing projects undertaken by area groups. Economic development and environment amelioration worked hand in hand to enliven the cityscape. The brand of environmental justice endemic to the area involved four components: deterring and defending; restoring; controlling and building; and changing perceptions. ACE and the DSNI led multiple campaigns to improve air quality and prevent unwanted land uses from scarring the neighborhood. Restoration of old industrial sites still contaminated with pollution offered a

chance for environmental cleanup and economic development, particularly when government policy facilitated the sale of the properties for as low as one dollar. Controlling and building involved augmenting property ownership and the entrepreneurial capabilities of residents, while also enhancing cultural institutions such as theatres, street murals, and community gardens. Changing the perception of the community buttressed it against outside renewal projects and gentrification by projecting a well-developed framework of terms that groups used in an increasing share of media exposure.

Alternatives for Community and Environment and Just Sustainabilities

In 1992, a group of Roxbury and Dorchester residents teamed up with academics and formed ACE. Dubbed "new social entrepreneurs" by the *Boston Globe*, ACE workers extended the strategies of EJM activists in Boston with respect to legal action, political mobilization, and educational initiatives. The group included the Community Representation Project, the Roxbury Environmental Empowerment Project, the Massachusetts Environmental Justice Network, and the Alternative Resource Center. Much of ACE leadership drew upon expertise at the nation's top universities. The staff included William Shutkin, a graduate of Brown and Virginia Law; Charles Lord from Yale and Virginia Law; Jo-Anne Henry, a graduate of Penn and California-Berkeley's law school; and Penn Loh, a graduate of MIT and Cal-Berkeley. ACE employed their professional skills and social leverage to help residents access grant money and interact with the courts, police, and government agencies.[277] Rather than treating residents as the object of studies in which they had little or no input, Penn Loh and others at ACE provided residents with relevant resources and literature so "they become their own experts on the things going on in their own neighborhoods." Michelle Alvarez of the Massachusetts Environmental Justice Network noted

277 *Boston Globe* 9/3/1996; *Boston Globe* 10/20/1997.

that "the success of our cases depends on that partnership, because the residents are the eyes and ears of the community."[278] ACE's efforts continued the trend regarding how experts empowered residents of Roxbury and North Dorchester.

ACE leadership merged the philosophies of the sustainability movement, associated with mainstream environmental groups, and the environmental justice movement in an effort it called "just sustainabilities." The group's adoption of the word "just" incorporated the fundamental ideas of environmental justice: the environmental movement must address the problems posed by unequal protection from hazards and access to amenities based on race and class. The word sustainability, as it relates to environmentalism, derived from a 1992 conference on development strategies sponsored by the United Nations. At this conference, participants developed the concept of a "futurity principle" and/or "intergenerational equity" as a guiding principle for sustainability efforts. Development should proceed, participants insisted, "without compromising the ability of future generations" to improve their own lives in terms of "economic vitality, ecological integrity, civic democracy, and social well-being." [279] ACE chose the plural "sustainabilities" to reflect that groups bring different perspectives on how to achieve sustainability based on cultural background. The plural sustainabilities also acknowledges that the term describes a process, a product, a practice, and a goal to be achieved. This ambiguity, coupled with the term's top-down dissemination, led to limited popular understanding of the term. As philosopher Roger JH King observed: "often nothing is said about the internal dimension of sustainability. How much must people's aspirations, perceptions, attention, desires,

[278] *Bay State Banner* 10/16/1997, *Boston Globe*, 11/16/1997.

[279] This concept was introduced into academic discourse in: Julian Agyeman, Robert D. Bullard and Bob Evans, eds. J*ust Sustainabilities: Development in an Unequal World* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003). See also, Julian Agyeman, "Where Justice and Sustainability Meet" *Environment* Vol. 47, Is. 6 (2005):10-24.

knowledge, consciousness change?"[280] Seeking to clear up this ambiguity, ACE employed the civic environmentalist framework to adapt sustainability efforts to endemic environments and culture.[281]

Deterring and Defending: The Fight for Clean Air

During the 1990s, ACE and DSNI efforts improved air quality in the Dudley area. By the mid-1990s, the effects of air pollution claimed about 64,000 lives in the United States and 1,136 lives in Massachusetts per year. Dudley residents breathed the most polluted air in the state, as the square stood within 1.5 miles to 15 bus and truck depots that housed approximately 1,150 diesel vehicles. The MBTA owned the largest number of vehicles in the area, with several bus terminals and storage areas in the immediate vicinity of the square. Dudley Square abuts South Bay, next to Interstate 93, making it attractive for construction companies to house equipment in the area. In 1987, the MBTA terminated the elevated Orange Line train that ran through Dudley Square, leaving only bus service. Buses at the Dudley Square station often idled for between 30 and 40 minutes.

Studies identified the components of diesel fuel contribute to poor air quality, as its exhaust accounted for 80 percent of particulate emissions from vehicles. Two components of exhaust make it toxic to humans: particulate matter and Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbon (PAH). PAH bonds with pollen, a process that allows deeper absorption into the lungs, making its effects worse. Asthma rates for African Americans in Roxbury ran five times higher than whites in other locations in the state, with minorities suffering from hospitalization due to respiratory problems at increased rates. As a result, asthma was the number one reason for children's hospitalization

280 Roger J.H. King, "Dimensions of Sustainability: Questions and Challenges for the Road Ahead" unpublished lecture, 2015.

281 Agyeman, "Where Justice and Sustainability Meet," 12-17.

and school absenteeism. Some residents had to rely on nebulizing machines and restrictions on rugs and other dust-creating household items.[282]

In 1993, when Todesca Construction proposed an asphalt plant in the South Bay area, DSNI members unanimously voted against it and organized opposition to implementation proposals. Ros Everdale of the DSNI argued: "Todesca is asking the community to take some environmental risks, some health risks" that were unnecessary given the area's documented air pollution issues. The DSNI cited research conducted by Robert Bullard that revealed a correlation between asphalt plants and increased occurrences of asthma among residents in the surrounding area. Everdale noted that the entire area would be negatively affected, because residents "have no control over what routes the trucks take. The asphalt on the trucks is the big concern."[283] Spilled asphalt would contaminate the ground and air on surrounding streets and subject residents to environmental hazards. Ro Whittington of the DSNI viewed the proposal as an impediment to economic development: "We are really rebuilding a community. We don't think it's compatible with the use of that land." Everdale concluded, the DSNI's work represented an attempt to "put value into the community and we don't want to have an asphalt plant as a neighbor."[284]

The DSNI's Dudley Pride organization led a multi-pronged effort to fight implementation plans for the asphalt plant. Pride marshalled community members to form the Coalition Against the Asphalt Plant (CAAP) to protest at a city zoning board meeting in July of 1993. To that point, the zoning board had taken consideration of the plant without input from residents, a status

282 Jonathan I. Levy, E. Andres Houseman, John D. Spengler, Penn Loh, and Louise Ryan, "Fine Particulate Matter and Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbon Concentration Patterns in Roxbury, Massachusetts: A Community-Based GIS Analysis" *Environmental Health Perspectives*, Vol. 109, No. 4 (April, 2001): 341-347.

283 *Bay State Banner*, 7/15/1993.

284 *Bay State Banner*, 8/5/1993.

that the CAAP reversed. The CAAP efforts continued after the zoning meeting to expand participation by informing residents about the negative implications of an asphalt plant. The DSNI produced a pamphlet featuring arguments from the Massachusetts EPA, the neighborhood associations in Roxbury, Dorchester, the South End, and South Boston, the American Lung Association, and the Massachusetts Office of Environmental Affairs. The pamphlet illustrated how the asphalt plant would violate EPA standards, increase pollution, introduce harmful chemicals into the neighborhood, and create odor and traffic problems from 18-wheel trucks driving through the neighborhood. Todesca already ran a profitable business, the pamphlet argued, and did not need the plant to stay in the black.[285] The effort united residents across class, racial, ethnic, and geographic boundaries. While the confrontation took five years to resolve, CAAP efforts bore fruit in 1998 when the city's Board of Health unanimously rejected plans for the asphalt plant in South Bay, citing air pollution concerns.

In 1996, fourteen-year-old Walter Kirnon of Roxbury died an asthma attack, and this spurred the community to action. Penn Loh of ACE worked with residents to reduce asthma rates among Boston's minority residents.[286] Kalare Allen, a teacher and co-founder of ACE, created a student generated an inquiry-based curriculum with fourth and fifth grade classes in Roxbury to understand and analyze air quality and propose solutions to air pollution. ACE then enlisted the participation of researchers from the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH). Together, residents, students, members of ACE, and the HSPH measured air pollution at specific intervals over the course of 24 hours in various parts of Dudley Square. The HSPH, Allen's students, and area residents gathered, organized, and interpreted air quality data. The resulting study

285 Dudley Pride Group, "Stop the Asphalt Plant." Retrieved from Internet Archive at https://archive.org/ on 9/6/2017.
286 *Boston Globe* 5/9/1996, *Boston Globe*, 5/13/1996.

established a link between traffic congestion and air pollution, especially during the early morning and late afternoon rush hours. The evidence in the study bolstered residents' claims regarding poor air quality.

The air pollution study provided a springboard for community activism to improve air quality in Dudley Square. Allen and her students developed the Clean Buses for Boston (CBB) program to "define what the issues are and, more so, what they want to do about it."[287] The CBB mounted a campaign that pressured the MBTA to convert its diesel powered bus fleet to more fuel efficient motors that emitted lower particulates and carbon dioxide. The group argued that the MBTA, as a taxpayer funded organization, should be responsive to the needs of its constituents and emulate other metropolitan areas by converting to natural gas.[288] A group of students from local schools held a press conference attended by every major news outlet in the city where they discussed their experiences with air pollution, asthma, and respiratory issues. Students created signs and placed them around Dudley Station that reminded bus drivers that idling led to air pollution. ACE lawyers and student research volunteers uncovered a 1972 Massachusetts state law limiting the length of vehicle idling to five minutes. On chosen days, students handed out "tickets" to bus drivers that spent too long idling at Dudley Station. In 1997, students dedicated an anti-idling protest to the memory of Walter Kirnon, the teenager from Roxbury who died from an asthma attack the previous year.[289] In 1998, the Conservation Law Foundation argued that the state of Massachusetts violated the Clean Air Act when it ignored $450 million offered to the MBTA to increase transportation options and decrease air pollutants. ACE demanded the withheld federal funds should purchase fuel and emission efficient buses and subway cars.

287 *Boston Globe*, 10/23/1997, B*oston Herald* 1/11/1998.
288 *Bay State Banner*, 10/16/1997; *Boston Herald*, 1/11/1998; *Boston Globe*, 9/20/1998.
289 http://www.broweryouthawards.org/winner/tamica-davis/

Residents charged that state and local officials acted with "indifference" to the needs of minority residents.[290]

By the year 2000, activism in the Dudley area had brought about improvements in air quality through a number of initiatives. The Massachusetts Port Authority and other bus-fleet companies began using biodiesel fuel that was 80 percent refined petroleum and 20 percent soybean, rapeseed and other oils. Advocates of biodiesel noted that its higher oxygen content allowed the fuel to burn more completely, thus reducing carbon dioxide emissions and noxious fumes. In addition, ACE helped to broker a deal between residents and Mario Susi's excavation, road resurfacing, and gravel crushing company. In 1996, after six years of negotiations, Susi formalized an agreement that he claimed cost him $1.5 million to bring his property up to environmental standards. Finally, the MBTA purchased 358 new clean fuel buses in 2001 due to pressure from the CBB. To ensure air quality, AirBeat monitoring systems installed in the Dudley Square area allowed residents to track information from their personal computers.[291]

Restoration: Greening the Brownfields

The DSNI and its associates amplified clean-up efforts of the 56 toxic waste sites located in Roxbury and North Dorchester, the highest ratio in the city. Former gas stations, dry cleaners, factories, and transfer stations contaminated with hazardous waste are referred to as brownfields. The 30,000 brownfields in the United States ranged from heavy to mild toxic contamination, usually from petroleum spills, asbestos, and/or industrial solvents. Lead paint on walls and in the ground posed significant health risks.[292] Most of the 7,500 brownfields in the state catalogued by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MDEP) were in Boston or other

290 *Boston Globe*, 7/2/1998.
291 *Boston Globe* 12/30/1995; *Bay State Banner*, 1/18/1996; *Bay State Banner*, 2/1/1996; *Boston Globe* 2/27/1996; *Boston Globe* 5/2/1996; *Boston Globe*, 1/7/1998.
292 *Bay State Banner*, 9/16/1993; *Bay State Banner*, 10/14/1993.

former industrial areas such as Fall River, Lowell, and Worcester. Owners of brownfield properties found that declaring bankruptcy had more fiscal advantages than detoxification of their properties. The 7,500 contaminated properties in Massachusetts discouraged development, since new owners would assume responsibility for removing any toxins left behind. However, federal funding in the 1990s provided the "opportunity for economically disadvantaged communities to begin the process of reclaiming their environment and economy."[293] For those who decided to invest, brownfield clean-up cost less than expected, as evidenced by the 75 percent drop in the cost of environmental insurance over a four year period at the beginning of the 1990s.[294]

The DSNI used brownfield acquisition and development as an opportunity to build its urban village. In 1993, the DSNI convinced the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) to sell the former Scott & Duncan furniture factory for one dollar. Until 1989, the factory stood as "one of the prime economic assets" of Dudley Square, but it had been shuttered due to an economic downturn. The FDIC considered the factory an undesirable property because of hazardous waste on the site, but the DSNI viewed the abandoned factory as an opportunity to establish resident owned businesses, housing, and light manufacturing. After acquiring the property, DSNI officials characterized the FDIC sale as a "better way to work with the community."[295] The DSNI prevented speculators and/or non-residents from purchasing the property. Local businesses supported the effort, given the DSNI's had applied for a $1million grant to detoxify and repurpose the factory.[296] In 1995, the DSNI received a $200,000 federal grant to clean up brownfields in Dudley Square. Mayor Thomas Menino, echoing the ideas of DSNI leadership,

293 *Boston Globe*, 11/16/1996.
294 *Boston Globe*, 11/16/1996.
295 *Bay State Banner*, 2/10/1994.
296 *Boston Globe*, 8/8/1993; *Boston Globe*, 11/16/1993.

noted that "vacant lots should be looked at as resources for community development." That same year, the DSNI, ACE, and others pressured local officials to dismantle the decommissioned South Bay Incinerator in Roxbury, providing community groups with $20 million to fund the project, while the EPA removed asbestos ahead of standard demolition procedures.[297]

As brownfields grew in importance, funding for remediation projects reflected racial and class biases. President Bill Clinton proposed two billion dollars in tax breaks for brownfield clean-up in low-income areas, while the MDEP proposed $30 million to assist investors in decontamination. In 1997 William Weld, Republican governor of Massachusetts, proposed tax breaks designed to reduce brownfield acquisition costs by 20 percent and reduced the legal liability for additional pollutants discovered after the initial cleanup. While such a strategy made targeting lightly contaminated areas more attractive, residents of Roxbury decried the lack of attention paid to heavily polluted areas. Weld's proposal offered nothing to residents concerned about the former Modern Electroplating metalworking plant in Dudley Square that became one of the worst pollution problems in Massachusetts. Without government funding, the most contaminated brownfields would remain financially unattractive projects. When, in March of 1998, a brownfields law passed the Massachusetts legislature that cut funding to economically disadvantaged areas, critics charged the bill "took money from areas that really needed it and ladled it around the Commonwealth."[298]

Despite lowered funding expectations, the DSNI approached brownfields as means to apply innovative solutions to community development issues. Focus groups gathered input on residents' vision for the reconditioned factory and other locales around Dudley, creating an

297 *Boston Globe* 6/20/1995; *Boston Globe* 10/6/1995.
298 *Bay State Banner* 1/23/1997; *Boston Globe*, 2/28/1997; *Boston Globe*, 5/3/1997; *Bay State Banner* 6/19/1997; B*oston Globe*, 10/8/1997; *Boston Herald*, 3/6/1998.

"Economics with People in Mind" program to elicit support from the community.[299] The group proved a disruptive force in real estate and development in Boston. A DSNI spokesperson possessed an optimistic view of its role in brownfield work: "We make things happen that can't happen. We make up new rules as we go along."[300] To that end, the DSNI compiled a map and database locating and cataloguing environmental hazards so that residents could expand urban agriculture. Volunteers mapped vacant lots available for conversion to garden plots, cleaned up yards, and put down fresh soil.[301] Che Madyun's daughter, Yaqana Madyun, and other neighborhood youth worked in conjunction with Drumlin Farm, owned by the Massachusetts Audubon Society, in Lincoln, about 40 minutes west of Boston. On Tuesdays, the Drumlin Farm participants sold their produce at a farm stand adjacent to the DSNI main headquarters.[302]

Controlling and Building

In late 1994, the city of Boston announced it would provide 1.2 million dollars to fund the DSNI's "Dudley Commons" project on the corner of Dudley Street and Blue Hill Avenue. Trudy Coxe, formerly of the DSNI but by 1994 working as state Environmental Secretary, and Ro Whittington of the DSNI proved instrumental in seeing the project through. At the behest of the DSNI, architects and planners designed the urban village that had long been the group's goal, with the commons as its centerpiece. The proposal included an indoor recreation and health care center at Orchard Park. With input from residents, the DSNI developed governance structures for each community center in the triangle.[303] Plans for Dudley Commons considered a wide range of factors, including population density, housing for elderly people, and green space, while other

299 Records GMA: Box 1, Folder 18. A handbill titled, "Economics with People in Mind," made public appeals for participation related to factory repurposing.
300 *Bay State Banner*, 2/10/1994.
301 *Boston Globe*, 11/13/1994.
302 *Boston Globe*, 8/19/1993.
303 Records GMA: Box 1, Folder 1.

studies prepared financial and marketing plans for new properties. Across the various subjects, the authors' considered "vitality" and "diversity" essential to a revitalized Dudley community. Trish Settles of the DSNI proclaimed: "Diversity brings stability. Diversity is enthusiasm."[304] To the language and tactics of the civil rights movement, DSNI members added an ecological understanding that diversity and resilience functioned as the essential elements of a healthy ecosystem.

By the late 1990s, the community development movement in Boston was flourishing as resident-directed plans facilitated service delivery that reflected the culture of the area. Mayor Menino saw the construction of new housing cooperatives as sources of "stability to this community."[305] The DSNI also obtained a grant from the federal government for a complete renovation of the Orchard Park subsidized housing complex, adding a new health center, teen center, and offices for a tenant task force.[306] In 1999, the Development Corporation of Grove Hall began construction of a retail mall that included a supermarket and drugstore at a former brownfield. The Blue Hill Task Force hired Stull and Lee, the architectural and planning firm instrumental to DSNI projects, to create an "urban design vision" for the avenue. Plans included "macro level" designs for overall streetscape improvements along with specific projects designed to improve individual lots and small sections of property such as shared storefronts. "High visibility interventions" such as acquiring city-owned and private vacant property, were at the forefront of its efforts, along with improvements in public safety, sanitation, and infrastructure. Local business development and residential construction, the task force report argued, would

304 *Boston Globe*, 11/3/1994.
305 *Bay State Banner*, 12/15/1994.
306 *Boston Globe*, 5/29/1992; Ro Whittington, "Report to DSNI Board of Directors" 7/1/1993. Records GMA: Box 1, Folder 18.

generate a safe and clean environment and reestablish Blue Hill Avenue as a desirable and "unique" shopping district.[307]

During the 1990s, the proliferation of Community Development Corporations (CDCs) coupled with increased government funding spurred economic growth in Roxbury and North Dorchester. For example, three CDC's obtained two million dollars in grants, loans, and assistance from architectural firms to upgrade and repair thirty businesses. The Blue Hill Avenue Superette used $60,000 for renovations while M&M Variety did the same with a $51,000 grant. The 50,000 square foot Grove Hall Mall project secured $7.5 million in block grant funds. Nuestra Comunidad obtained $550,000 to redevelop a building that housed a Caribbean restaurant. Many of the entrepreneurs embraced a socially conscious ethic. Joseph Carpineto opened the Log School in Dorchester, which helped students enrolled in a GED program earn money and gain career training skills. Putnam Investments donated $35,000 to develop the company's businesses and marketing plans. Cheryl Straughter grew up in the Grove Hall area of Blue Hill Avenue, moved away in 1971, and returned in 1996 to open Keith's Place, a forty-five-seat restaurant. Straughter recalled, "I wanted to set an example. You have to show people." In 1999, David Lopes, chairman of the Blue Hill Avenue Task Force, observed that "more has happened in the last six years than has happened in the last 30 years."[308] In addition, the DSNI instituted an economic task force that conducted workshops on entrepreneurship, including developing business plans, understanding and accessing credit, and interacting with banks to obtain loans and financing. The task force offered classes in which residents created skills

307 Stull and Lee, Architects and Planners "Blue Hill Avenue: A Community Vision" Developed by: The Blue Hill Avenue Task Force (January 1996). Accessed at: archive.org. Hereafter: Stull and Lee, "Blue Hill Avenue…"

308 *Boston Globe,* 2/7/1999.

inventories and developed professional resumes while interviewing and job search classes provided a second level of support.[309]

Figure 5.1: Dudley Street, 2011. (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

309 Records GMA, Box 1, Folder 1.

Figure 5.2: Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative building, 2011. (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

Figure 5.3: Intersection of Dudley and Warren Streets, 2011. (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

Figure 5.4: Moreland Street, Roxbury 2011. (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

The DSNI driven renovation of the Strand Theatre in Dorchester “turned the neighborhood around." In 1993, the Strand received a prestigious grant from the National Endowment for the Arts that provided the theatre “a new kind of respect.” Built in 1918, the theatre had a 1,400-person capacity and retained much of the ornate furnishings, tapestries, and portraits from its early years. Theatre officials estimated that about 130,000 people used the Strand each year. The theatre hosted a Vietnamese New Year’s celebration, a hip-hop and jazz festival, as well as community meetings and political gatherings, making it a “critical piece” of the community. According to Susanne Beaton, deputy director of the DSNI, because “there are black artists, Hispanic artists who reflect the community and the kids viewing them," the theatre helped local

young people seek positive outlets. The low cost of involvement brought in a wider audience, allowing participants to “express themselves in different ways." Beaton viewed the Strand’s resurgence as a message “to those who felt the inner-city neighborhoods were dead or dying.” In addition, the Strand demonstrated that “culture and art were important.”[310] The DSNI patronized various artistic mediums as a means to improve the community. Urban Arts created public art installations as “a catalyst for urban revitalization and a means to get people really involved in community building." The “Blue Hill: Avenue of the Arts” project created public art to make Blue Hill Avenue the “cultural Mecca” of the black community. In addition, the DSNI conducted a series of artist-led workshops that engaged neighborhood teens in video production, photography, creative writing, and urban planning workshops.[311]

310 *Boston Globe*, 10/3/1993.
311 *Boston Globe*, 4/17/1994.

Figure 5.5: Handbill for "Auction of Souls." Strand Theatre, 1919. DSNI efforts helped to revitalize the Strand. (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

Figure 5.6: Interior of the Strand Theatre after renovations. (Image: Wikimedia Commons)

The DSNI expanded its networking capabilities to enlarge clean-up efforts in Roxbury and Dorchester. With the assistance of a $46,000 grant from the EPA, Roxbury Community College created an Environmental Education Center, the first institution of this type in New England. The center would offer classes about environmental stewardship, particularly with respect to preserving, regenerating, and sustaining the nearby civic environment. In 1994, a cadre of over 60 environmental lawyers from the Massachusetts Environmental Justice Network (MEJN) connected with low income and minority communities around the state to fight illegal dumping and other sources of pollution. The network employed "the enormous amount of legal protection that does exist on behalf of communities that don't have the money to hire lawyers." The MEJN also integrated a network of health professionals with environmental experts.[312] Many of these lawyers, health professionals, and academics also participated in the ascent of ACE.

312 *The New York Times*, 12/16/1994.

Conclusion: Changing Perception

In 1993, the DSNI began to employ the term environmental racism to characterize the issues facing the neighborhood. The group pointed to federal studies that demonstrated poorer communities bore the brunt of pollution, toxic waste, and other types of environmental hazards. Trish Settles of the DSNI viewed halting pollution as a rigged competition in which affluent areas resisted environmental degradation at the expense of poorer regions. Marginalizing minority groups' concerns about the environment compounded the problem because it contributed to the stereotype that minorities are unconcerned with environmental stewardship.[313] Instead, the DSNI forwarded a well-defined terminology and philosophy as a bulwark to confront negative perceptions that had deep roots in societal thought patterns. As environmental justice efforts in Boston evolved, activists moved beyond simply halting pollution in their own community. Recognizing that one community's pollution prevention efforts can create a pollution problem in a different location, the DSNI, ACE, and others used civic environmentalism adopted the notion of "just sustainabilities," aimed at reducing pollution in equitable ways.

Environmental justice efforts in Boston challenged the negative stereotypes of minorities—the premises behind the marginalization of environmental concerns affecting minority communities. Trish Settles argued that viewing urban areas as "already contaminated" failed to consider city space as an environment: "It's not going to look like rural Vermont, but there are people here using this soil and breathing this air." The DSNI wanted both the general public and mainstream environmental groups such as the Sierra Club to recognize inner city residents' stewardship. Settles noted that the "Save the Bay" movement sponsored by more affluent

313 Melosi, "Equity, Eco-Racism, and Environmental History," 7.

environmental groups enjoyed widespread publicity, but the DSNI messages that they stenciled on sewers: "Drains to Boston Harbor - Don't Dump," received little if any attention from media outlets and the general public.[314] Settles felt the unequal attention paid to similar efforts reflected how minority-based environmentalism was treated as an aberration rather than the sustained and dynamic movement it had become.

The DSNI, ACE, and the CDC movements contributed to a changed public discourse regarding the minority community. For example, a 1994 *Boston Globe* editorial announced the birth of the MEJN with the title "Environmental Justice." The *Globe* also began using "environmental racism" at the same time the DSNI began employing the term.[315] Most important to the DSNI, the *Globe's* coverage helped to forge a common language related to environmental justice efforts. In doing so, the paper provided signals to other media outlets and helped the general public understand EJM efforts according to the ideas, language, and actions of its participants. Rather than the general public receiving messages from print and television about trouble and problems in the minority community, activists in Roxbury and North Dorchester took a share of media attention to their redevelopment initiatives. Such developments continued the collective mission across organizations: self-determination in community development. These groups had learned that in order to accomplish those objectives, residents needed to define the issues facing them and propose their own solutions. The portrayal of residents and their community in media and government bureaucracies normalized inhumane treatment. That had to stop for purposeful renewal projects to begin.

314 *Boston Globe,* 11/13/1994.
315 *Boston Globe,* 12/1/1994.

CONCLUSION

RECLAIMING POWER THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The preceding chapters trace how the major institutions that shaped environmental racism and environmental justice movement itself changed over time. The notions that certain ethnic minorities degraded their surroundings and that a cordon sanitaire would limit the inimical effects of these individuals created policies that instituted and enforced environmental racism in Boston. In the early 1900s, these conflicts played out in the struggle to control the cultural institutions of the mixed-use environment, but later these assumptions justified urban renewal, dislocation, and the alienation of African Americans and Latinx residents from the South End. In response, activist organizations in Roxbury focused on rebuilding the institutions they had lost, a vision that culminated in the "urban village" in Dudley Square. Because the story in Boston unfolded in this fashion, the role of experts, participation of government, environmental factors of inequality, and focus of activist groups will be explored over time to bring this narrative to a close.

Nodes of Power Untangle through Environmental Concerns

In turn-of-the-century Boston, settlement houses acted as the key intermediary between academics and policy makers. Settlement houses drew their ideas and practices from a Puritanical worldview that saw cities as sources of vice. This orientation motivated them to tamp down the variety of spontaneous behaviors that enlivened life in the South End. As a result, its leaders as well as its rank and file made decisions and conducted daily activities that operated from the assumption that ethnic minorities posed a danger to society. Academic studies such as Robert Woods' *The City Wilderness* appeared to verify and expound upon these assumptions. When policy makers looked to settlement houses of the South End and Roxbury for direction,

these organizations viewed government funds as an opportunity to improve the neighborhood by favoring dislocation of its poorest residents. They organized studies that favored the interest of incoming middle-class residents, received funds for removing working-class residents, and helped direct planning agendas. Settlement houses helped cement the argument that urban renewal would improve the social fabric and physical environment of cities.

For minorities, further alienation resulted from the machinations of Boston's political system and bureaucracies. As the federal government expanded during the New Deal, it created numerous and far-reaching policies in a short period of time. These programs reshaped urban environments and relied on the assumptions of academics and middle-class organizations that studied or served those populations. The resulting laws, regulations, bureaucracies, and funding mechanisms reflected the notions that ethnic minorities failed to uphold social norms and maintain property. Such reasoning failed to consider the causes of minorities' living conditions and economic status as well as the effect of forced dislocation. Dominant white politicians operated with the inherent assumption that minorities would mismanage direct aid, so they funneled it to politicians' own interests and constituencies. During the 1960s, the largest influx of federal funds exacerbated dislocation in minority communities. Without money and legal protection, Boston's minority residents saw a decline in status as a result of efforts ostensibly designed to help them.

Predispositions among policy and political leaders regarding ethnic minorities created a blind spot in urban renewal that caused paradoxical economic development in Boston. Urban renewal both regenerated Boston and contributed to a decline in status for minorities. Environmental concerns about minorities drove urban renewal legislation to improve designations of space rather than improve the fortunes of residents. In most cases, planners and financial institutions

made decisions at odds with minorities interests. Legislation designed to facilitate economic development and the progress of society forced working-class residents to the margins of the economy and society, a condition they felt in environmental terms on an everyday basis in the "Bantustan" of Roxbury.

An Urban Village as a Cradle of Democracy

The connection between the working-class ethnic minority and the social fabric of ethnic neighborhoods proves key to understanding environmental racism and environmental justice in Boston. During the early 1900s, the South End's eateries, taverns, ethnic associations, and theatres sustained life for residents by protecting ethnic culture and providing social structure. Both sides of the class and racial divide in Boston understood the importance of the South End to migrant and black populations. Civil rights groups and community development activists argued the reconstitution of these institutions would create the conditions necessary for racial equality in Boston. Because of this, groups such as the Congress for Racial Equality focused on housing and the social organizations that proved key to developing a viable community. The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) formulated the notion of self-determination in community development in the 1970s. Activism in Boston stayed consistent in that it reacted to environmental conditions and responded to inequality by focusing on environmental considerations.

Civic environmentalists argue that urban villages serve as ideal models for residents to make informed decisions about living within their own natural limits, because such places contribute to both individual autonomy and communitarian practices. The multitude of groups operating out of the Dudley area expressed this ethic by forming cooperative housing and businesses to interact with economic markets and government agencies. Through their work as activists, Dudley

residents forwarded the mission of civic environmentalism. As this work unfolded, the DSNI facilitated the development of democratic leadership and a new generation of community leaders. EJM efforts in Boston developed roots, a philosophy, and objectives through its focus on community institutions, cultural identity, and environmental protection. The organizations employed an inclusive approach to stand in opposition to the traditional power structure that had worked against them.

The movement that culminated in a durable urban village in Dudley Square drew up on several cultural influences. African Americans had long-standing framework of environmental ethics that emerged from Africa and from the slave plantations of the antebellum American South. In migrating to northern cities like Boston they forged a sense of "turf" as a means of cultural protection and identity building. Experiences with urban renewal led many in the black community to reject the prevailing ethic of American society, instead identifying with anti-colonial African organizations engaged in nation building. African Americans in Boston and Africans suffering under the yoke of colonialism concluded that "high-statism," or large-scale government interventions, worked against the interests of people with dark skin color. Latinx and Cape Verdean residents augmented these transnational perspectives, particularly with respect to building oppositional organizations designed to protect local residents.

Activists in Dudley also considered their work in terms of the progressive democratic striving that was long part of the American experience. Groups operating out of Roxbury and North Dorchester adopted an outlook similar to radicals, socialists, and unionists who had struggled against social injustice throughout American history. The environmental justice efforts in Boston most closely align with the efforts of the Populists of the 1890s, albeit not on the same scale. Farmers in the American West attempted to create a mass democratic movement that defined

itself in opposition to mainstream culture. Rather than passively accept circumstances, they moved to change the way people thought about politics, economy, and society so that they could create a more just society. The civil rights movement adopted this type of political organizing with a great degree of success in the 1960s. At that time in Boston, environmental groups were likewise adopting oppositional strategies to achieve their own agendas.

Civic environmentalism and environmental justice efforts revived the long-standing goals of American radicals—democratic equality. The notion that environmental degradation and persistent social inequality work hand in hand implies a solution in opposition to the status quo culture; it means reconceiving and redesigning the systems that produce everyday life. Global agriculture and economic markets, to name a few examples, create greater inequality and degrade the environment. To counter the problems that they pose requires an alternative view of economic development and environmental stewardship. The EJM in Boston applied this perspective to the democratic striving of marginalized peoples by increasing property ownership, influencing government policy, and accessing economic development opportunities.

The leadership of Latina and African American women drove the organizational success of EJM efforts in Boston. Feminist theorists argue that to analyze the lower statuses women held in in various societies, ethnicity, sexuality, class, and religion, to cite a few prominent factors, must be viewed in conjunction with the idea of gender. In Boston, women proved essential to minority activism. They expanded the membership and outreach of La Alianza and Nuestra Comunidad. Che Madyun's leadership helped the DSNI represent the minority community, in addition to helping the organization to establish itself and its street credibility in the area. Kalare Allen's work with students, residents, and ACE leadership improved air quality in the Dudley and South Bay area.

Enlisting the help of experts proved to be the turning point in efforts to improve minority status and living conditions. The "Tent City" protest of 1968 brought MIT students to the assistance of South End residents, a relationship that Mel King nurtured in the 1970s to produce Community Development Corporation (CDC) legislation. La Alianza and Nuestra Comunidad collaborations with MIT produced *From the Ground Up*, which brought together many of the principal players in the creation of the DSNI. The DSNI went on to apply many of the strategies and objectives of *From the Ground Up*. In the critical years of the group's development, a combination of experts and residents provided the organization with solid footing and institutional momentum. ACE continued and enlarged the trend in the area of public health issues.

Environmental Justice Affirmed

Some analysts still deny that communities of color are targeted by polluters and charge that environmental justice groups are unwilling to face "inconvenient facts." According to this line of thinking, the EJM exaggerates the effects of pollution, especially when it focuses on one source. Focusing only on external sources of pollution, critics argue, shifts residents' attention away from other factors, such as diet, smoking, and alcohol consumption that are more easily controlled and contribute to positive health outcomes. Opponents conclude that the EJM lacks an intellectual foundation and produces rhetoric that incites passion rather than an informed analysis.[316] However, examining how minority neighborhoods and minority activism changed over time in Boston demonstrates the soundness of EJM analysis, goals, and tactics.

Members of ACE argued, when determining health impacts on people, that the burden of scientific proof belied a "multifactorial" reality. Penn Loh and Jodi Sugerman-Brozan penned an

316 Christopher Foreman, *The Promise and Peril of Environmental Justice* The Brookings Institution (Washington DC, 1995).

essay about the air pollution study that Kalare Allen's class led around the Dudley Station area in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. They argued that scientific information should provide a "guide to action...that takes into account moral values and democratic principles." For example, science provides clues as to why there are so many environmental health risk factors in minority neighborhoods. It substantiates the impact of these factors on everyday life. If a teenager with respiratory problems lived by a bus depot, went to school on a street that stood at a busy intersection, and lived in a house that failed to keep dampness out, then one specific cause of poor respiratory health might not be attributable. In many cases, exposures to different types of pollutants affected residents, and exposure was dispersed rather than concentrated.[317] For Sugerman-Brozan and Loh, scientific information should function as a catalyst, rather than an inhibitor, for activism.

Documenting the experiences of residents and the changes to the South End and Roxbury provides evidence of the validity of these environmental concerns. Racism prescribed a cycle of geographic and social alienation, denial of city services, degradation of the built environment, increased pollution, and decline of essential services such as banks and supermarkets in twentieth-century Boston. In the first half of the twentieth century, the South End was a minority archipelago enjoying a period of salutary neglect from the city of Boston. While mired in the doldrums economically, individuals shaped the contours of their existence through the cultural institutions and daily life of the neighborhood. The conclusions of "experts" justified the isolation of South End, charging that its residents and institutions degraded the city as a whole, a perception augmented by media portrayals of the neighborhood as a "skid row." Isolation created a vulnerability that enabled absentee landlords to forego repairs and unscrupulous contractors to

317 Penn Loh and Jodi Sugerman-Brozan, "Environmental Justice Organizing for Environmental Health," 110-124.

dump discarded appliances without legal repercussions. In Roxbury, a similar situation played out. However, the new built environment existed to contain and subordinate the agency of its residents while new civic structures projected brute strength. Environmental racism explains why conditions failed to improve, even while Boston experienced substantial economic growth between 1950 and 2000.

When environmental historians approach the city, they need to consider how policy initiatives and popular perceptions influenced neighborhood and citywide ecologies. As the field of environmental history evolved into a distinct subdiscipline, it challenged the prevailing view that the natural world was simply a backdrop for human events. Likewise, urban historians at first ignored environmental considerations. Since the 1980s a robust urban environmental history field has developed. If one is concerned about the environment and "environmental issues" then any part of the environment is worthy of consideration. Beyond that, the fundamental point this work drives home is that "anti-urban" thinking drove the racism that shaped urban policy in the United States during the twentieth century. Therefore, if one makes the argument that the cities fail to meet the standard of environmental history, they must square with the racism imbued in that assertion.

Afterthought

It is interesting to consider how Boston's development might have occurred without environmental racism shaping its course and consequences. A mixed-use and ethnically diverse South End and Roxbury would look quite different without the specific interventions of urban renewal. An African American section of the South End still operating as a "jazz mecca" that sustained music and cultural institutions would function as a leading indicator of a broader social strength. With housing rehabilitation and community development loans provided to the

residents that needed them, Boston's non-white community could have realized economic independence as real estate values increased. The continuation and enhancement of cultural institutions that served minorities would have enhanced social fabric and provided a means for residents to put down roots. Such a process would have allowed for African American and Latinx residents to take part in the increasing affluence of the city, so that, as Bluestone and Stevenson put it in *The Boston Renaissance*, a "rising tide" could have lifted "all boats."[318] A long-functioning black enclave in the South End would also provide a means for the community to realize wealth through entertainment ventures such as concerts and festivals.

In Roxbury, a new environment that did not express the raw sinews of power might have done the opposite: empowered and enriched the community. Housing development, civic institutions that enhanced community interaction, economic development opportunities for minority residents could have allowed Roxbury to stand on equal footing with nearby neighborhoods such as South Boston, Charlestown, East Boston, the North End, and Brookline as neighborhoods with a majority ethnic population. City leaders most likely would have taken less aggressive measures to quarantine a gainfully employed minority working class and an enlarging and empowered middle class. Basic environmental protections and services would have allowed residents to retain control over the community and avoid spiraling real estate prices and arson. Such a status would have allowed for greater African American and Latinx voice in political events impacting the city. However, a specific set of concerns based on environmental factors blocked events like this from occurring, and it is precisely what activist in the Dudley area built.

318 Barry Bluestone and Mary Huff Stevenson, *The Boston Renaissance: Race, Space, and Economic Change in an American Metropolis* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2000): 3.

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