

Greenlining: Segregation and Environmental Policies in Miami from the New Deal to the
Climate Crisis

Rosalind Donald

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Abstract

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What do people talk about when they talk about climate change? This dissertation sets out to answer this question by focusing on local understandings of climate change and the policy priorities that result from them in Miami. Through a historical study that spans from the 1920s to today and 88 hourlong interviews, I demonstrate that climate change is a historically contingent, contested, and localized concept defined by power relationships. Through a historical investigation of the narratives that connect environmental policies with segregation and efforts to displace Miami's Black residents over more than 80 years, I show how historic understandings of race and the environment inform debates about what climate change means and what to do about it today. This investigation shows how Miami's current response to climate change has been shaped by its history as a colonial city built on the maximization of land value and exclusionary planning and policies.

I find that dominant understandings of climate change in Miami have been rooted in concern for the effects of sea level rise on property prices, directing policy money toward

shoreline areas while continuing to encourage a building boom that is accelerating gentrification. This set of responses is not haphazard. As my research shows, it represents a continuation of local and international patterns of exploitation. In recent years, however, a coalition of activist groups mounted an unprecedented campaign to force the city to include social and environmental justice concerns in its policy agenda. This coalition mobilized Miami's history of environmentally-justified urban removal as a key counternarrative to policies that have historically ignored the problems of low-income areas, especially in Miami's historically Black neighborhoods, to demand a coordinated response to environmental and social vulnerability.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to Chris, Alba, and all the love to come.

Preface

This project emerged from my desire to study the way that people talk about climate change. Having spent several years as a journalist covering climate debates as mostly through a partisan frame, I'd begun to suspect that there was a lot more to it than that. I initially assumed that people meant generally the same thing when they talked about "climate change": the collection of warming gases like CO₂ in the atmosphere causing global temperatures to rise. But when I read political speeches, or comments from people talking about their experiences, hopes, and fears, that premise started to look shaky. Some people focused on what felt to be the most pressing climate change effect, like sea level rise, while others focused on technological debates, such as the viability of onshore wind power generation. People didn't seem to be talking about the same thing at all. It made me wonder what studies of people's opinions about climate change really showed.

For my dissertation, I was interested in studying a place where policymakers across the political spectrum agreed that climate change was a problem and had committed in some way to implementing measures to respond to its challenges. In and around 2015, Miami made international news for the severe flooding it was experiencing as sea levels rose. During King Tide - when the waters are at their highest - streets were flooding even when it hadn't rained. Striking illustrations would accompany articles in the media showing the iconic buildings of South Beach surrounded by blue seas - Miami's pastel palette transposed onto an apocalyptic scene, with no human in sight. Similar depictions showed an art deco street completely underwater, with tropical fish swimming past. When I told friends I was thinking of studying

climate communication in Miami, most would nod and agree it was ‘ground zero’ for climate change.

As I found when I started to attend climate policy meetings in Miami, however, the apocalyptic sublime was far from the minds of the people who spoke. Just as media coverage had suggested, sea level rise and its threat to real estate values were a major concern of policymakers, and shorefront residents worried about insurance premiums and mortgage payments. But for others, an entirely different set of worries was paramount: a lack of affordable housing, poor public transportation, and alarm at the social cost of hurricanes for people already struggling with poor housing, precarious jobs, and low wages. Even within a single city, the concept of climate change had very different meanings and consequences.

Miami is one of the most segregated cities in the United States. Its early settlements were concentrated on South Florida’s coastal ridge, a continuous rocky spine that extends to the bottom tip of the state. As the city attracted more tourists, however, wealthy whites built hotels and homes along the shoreline while Black neighborhoods like Liberty City and Little Haiti were kept to high ground. Latino neighborhoods have spread out west into drained land that is prone to flooding. Deep and continuing segregation has created a fractured urban landscape in which physical experiences of climate change can be very different. In Coconut Grove, where the shady trees turn the streets into green tunnels and most people drive, extreme heat is not of such concern, while to those on high ground, the threat of storm surges and flooding feels less immediate.

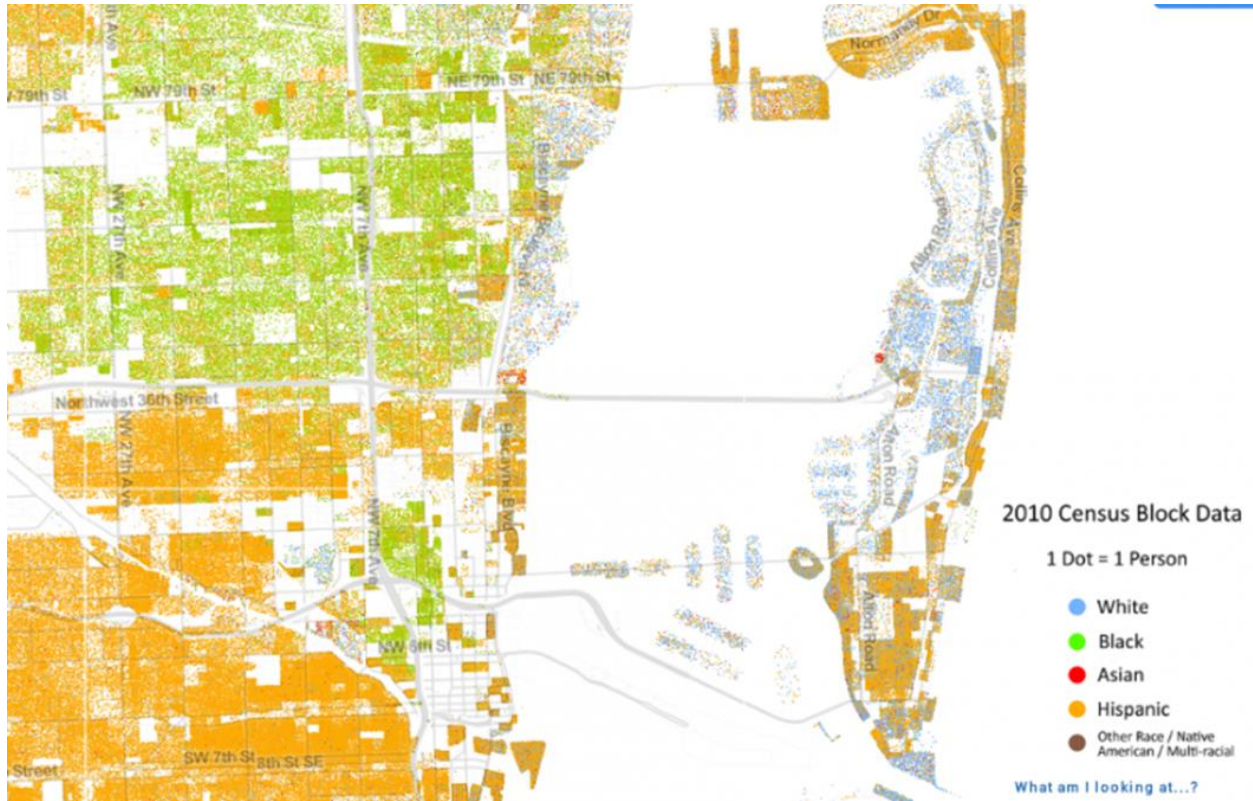


Figure 1: Miami remains one of the most deeply segregated cities by race and ethnicity in the United States (Justin Cable, "The Racial Dot Map," Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, University of Virginia, 2013)

Beyond the ways that climate change feels different in different areas, I noticed other narratives emerge. Wealthier citizens might express optimism in municipalities' capacity to adapt to climate change through planning and future technological innovations. This attitude is far less prevalent in areas like Liberty City and Little Haiti, which have received little investment for decades and are now new targets for developers due in part to their elevation. The concept of climate gentrification - the theory that developers now covet land that is relatively more protected from the effects of climate change - has become increasingly important in Miami. For some scholars, citizens, and activists, climate change and gentrification are as compellingly connected as climate change and sea level rise. Optimism in technological solutions and policies

is harder to muster in neighborhoods that have endured decades of displacement, neglect, toxic dumping, and overpolicing.

Established narratives stemming from Miami's history have become entwined with specific understandings of climate change and the priorities that emerge as a result. Different conceptions of climate change can reflect and reproduce power and powerlessness. They show that environmental policies can challenge or reinforce patterns of discrimination and displacement. In addition to conducting in-depth interviews over two years of fieldwork, I have systematically investigated an assortment of historical texts, policies, and spaces that show that deep connections between environmental policy, displacement, and segregation existed in Miami long before climate change became an object of concern. Dominant understandings of climate change tend to treat it as a shock – a phenomenon without history. But climate change is the result of centuries of exploitation of people and nature. By exploring how that history influences the development of climate change understandings in Miami, it is possible to explain how dominant interpretations may continue to perpetuate that exploitation.

This exploration of the way local and global narratives come together in climate policy is relevant beyond the county lines of Miami-Dade. As the United States and other national governments' climate policies have languished, city governments – mayors, disaster managers and sustainability professionals – have emerged as influential policy actors. Cities are a symbol of hope for environmentalists frustrated at decades of failure to tackle climate change at the international level. Mayors can take advantage of their large budgets and significant power to emerge as national and international climate policy leaders. At the same time, few US cities are changing patterns of growth and consumption that harm low-income populations, even as they introduce climate policies. Some cities' policies have circulated – often uncritically – into

national and international debates as potent local examples of climate action, even if they present no substantive challenge to the status quo. In Miami, for instance, this has meant encouraging as much building as possible to fund adaptation measures through property taxes.¹

Communication is political. This study uses the case of Miami to show that imagining a city's climate-changed future is a political act that can be conservative or subversive, egalitarian or exclusionary. By layering colonial narratives about race and the environment with later environmental justifications for the large-scale displacement of Miami's Black population from coveted land and politicians' environmental policies designed to attract newcomers while pricing existing residents out of the city, it is possible to see how discussions of climate change are suffused with power. Most people who care about climate change do not want to perpetuate segregation or enact displacement. But my research shows that an equitable response to the climate crisis is impossible unless communities specifically tackle historical injustices and understand how the ideologies that perpetuated them have become flattened into everyday narratives.

¹ Danielle Paquette, "Miami's Climate Catch-22: Building Waterfront Condos to Pay for Protection against the Rising Sea," *Washington Post*, December 22, 2014, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/storyline/wp/2014/12/22/miamis-climate-catch-22-building-luxury-condos-to-pay-for-protection-against-the-rising-sea/>.

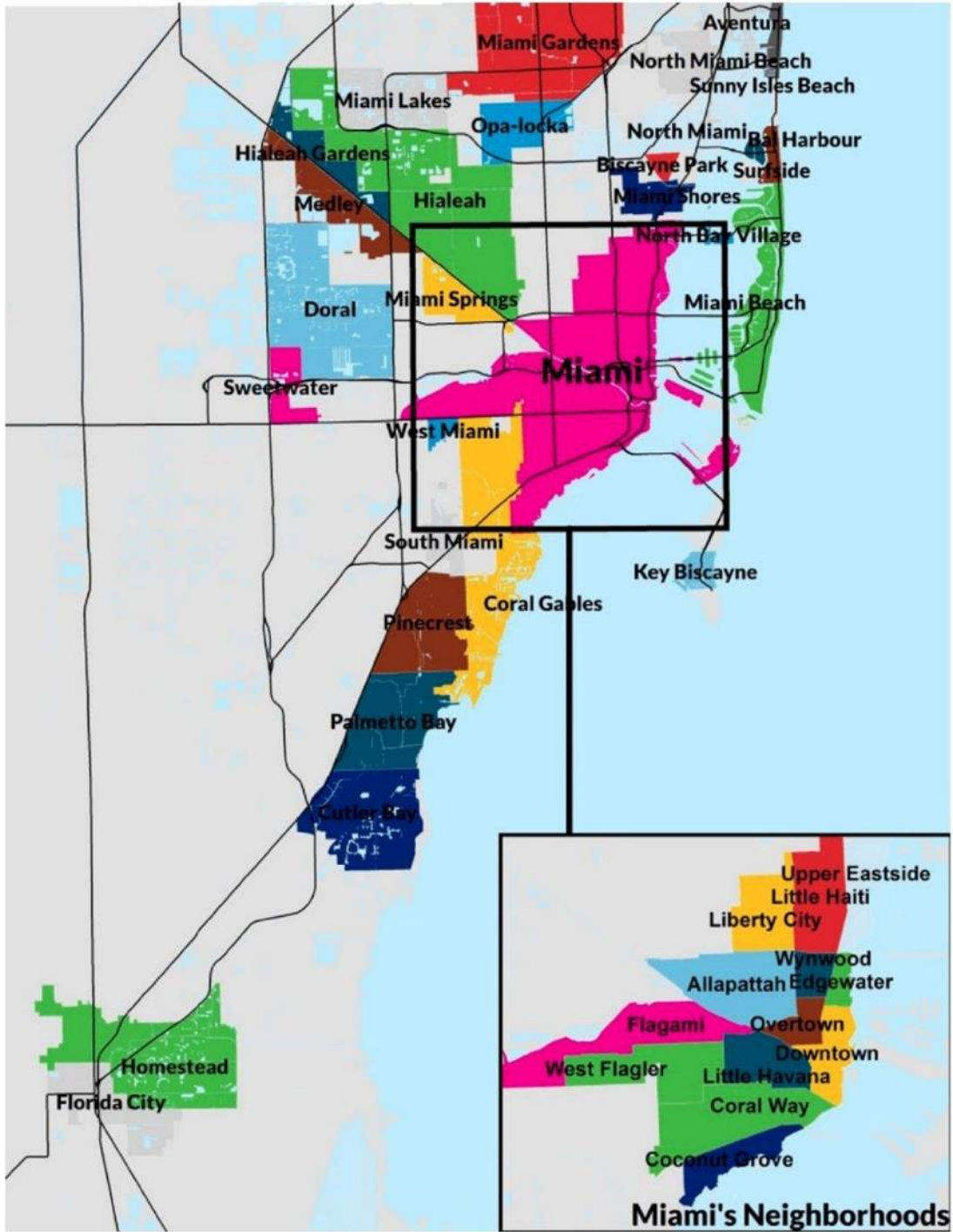


Figure 2: A map of Miami-Dade County municipalities and the city of Miami's neighborhoods (Diana Elliott, "Miami and the State of Low- and Middle-Income Housing," 2017, 98.)

1. Introduction: Environmental anxieties and racial discrimination in the Magic City

1.1 The Bright Plan and green displacement

“Oh! East is East: and West is West:”
—And though on magic feet—
(As was sung by poet of wisdom blest)
“Never the twain shall meet.”

But here ‘twixt gulf and ocean strand;
Where Nature lowers a mystic veil;
Is a wondrous fair and a magic land
—Here the twain do really meet!

For it is *here*: by the wise men planned:
—(Where the Old does not avail)—
That the Gulf ebbs east: and the Sea wends west—
By the Tam-i-am-i Trail.

Oh! Bronze is Bronze: and White is White:
—(Yet *Bronze* the first was *here*!) ...
But Bronze seems wrong: and White seems right:
...Through thrice a hundred year!

Through the grass-grown ’glades,—high froned blades
O’er channels’ flow, drop lotus bloom...
The bronze man fades—
—As the petals from their plume.
In gloom—the cypress tower...
—And somber guard his tomb.
And it is *here*—where the White has pressed!
—(Where the Old did not avail)—
That the Gulf ebbs east: and the Sea wends west:—
By the Tam-i-am-i Trail.

~George Merrick, “The Tamiami Trail,” *Song of the Wind on the Southern Shore*

In 1920, Coconut Grove’s city council adopted a new plan with great pomp and publicity. The recently consolidated town a few miles south of the rapidly expanding Miami had hired the

services of Philadelphia architect John Irwin Bright. Bright was tasked with distinguishing Coconut Grove (spelled locally as Cocoanut Grove) from the rest of Miami by remaking it as a “garden city,” like Letchworth and Hampstead Garden Suburb in the U.K., or Canberra in Australia. Based on ideas laid out by urban planner and inventor Ebenezer Howard in his influential 1898 book *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Reform*², the garden city movement sought to solve the ills that the Industrial Revolution had caused in Britain’s urban and rural communities, such as poor health and low wages in the city and joblessness in the country. Howard aimed to achieve a happier integration between town and countryside through long-term planning that placed green and civic spaces at the center of healthier, more prosperous metropolises.

Bright’s plan was different than other garden city visions, such as the federally-funded suburb Yorkship Village in Camden, New Jersey, which was constructed after World War I,³ because it imposed the ideal on an existing town, rather than planning a new city or suburb. The American Institute of Architects’ Thomas Adams called the plan to reinvent Coconut Grove “a work so tremendous in its implications as to transcend, in our opinion, any piece of town or city planning work ever done in the United States.” Bright had applied the garden city concept to “a town already in existence and which needs, as do thousands of our towns and cities, something more than the physically planned solution of their difficulties due to disordered growth.”⁴ In 1920, Miami’s growth was certainly disordered, as Florida experienced a boom in land speculation fueled by nationwide advertising and encouragement from the state. Though

² Ebenezer Howard, *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (London: Swan & Sonnenschein, 1898).

³ Robert A. M. Stern, David Fishman, and Jacob Tilove, *Paradise Planned: The Garden Suburb and the Modern City* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2013), 340.

⁴ John Irwin Bright, “The Report for the Town of Coconut Grove with Foreword by Thomas Adams,” *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* 9, no. 4 (April 1, 1921), 110.

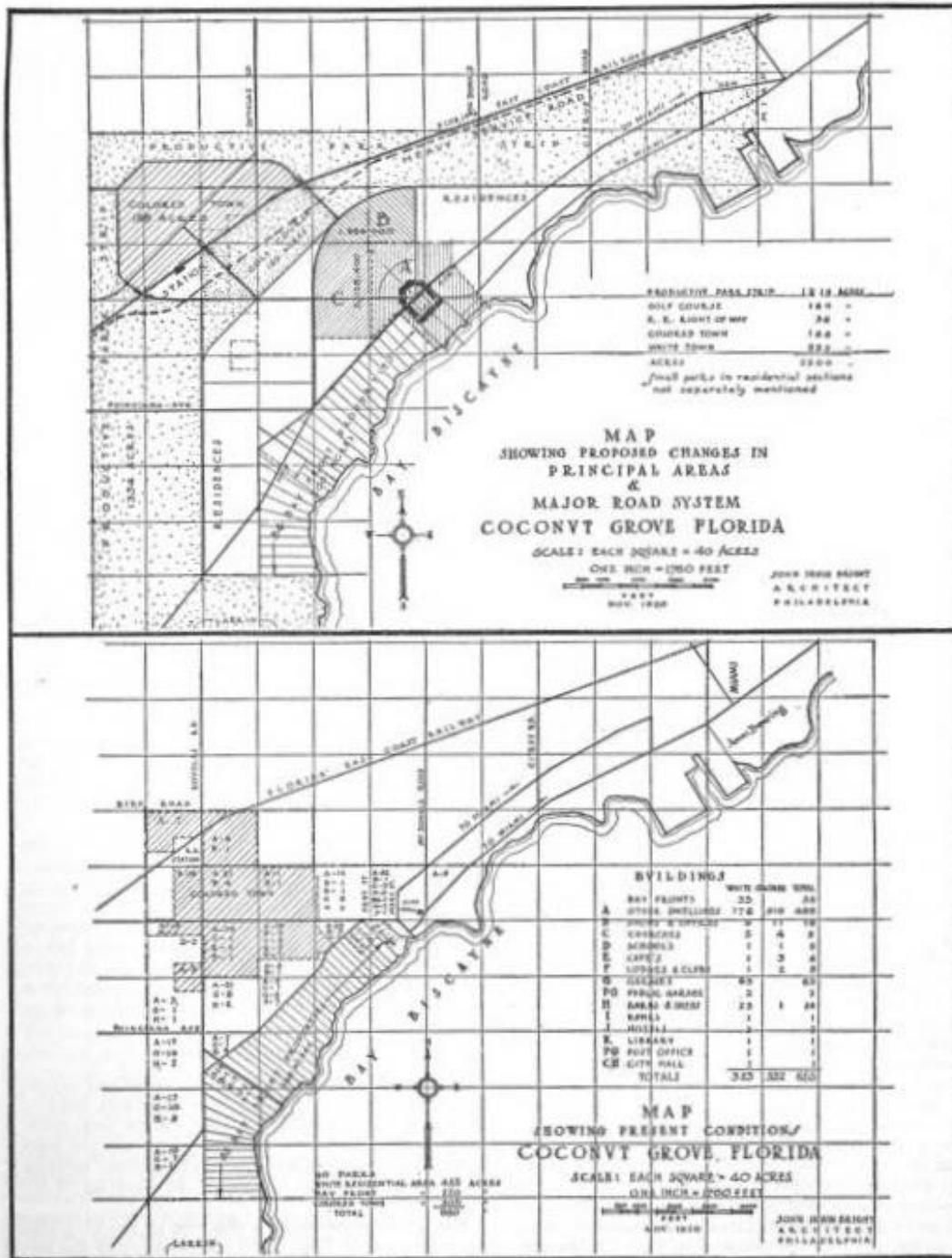
increased development had led to greater segregation, Coconut Grove was an older settlement where early residents of all races had lived in relative proximity.⁵ For Bright, this racial diversity was at the root of the disorder he perceived, depressing the value of white-owned property. He proposed that the ills of the Grove's haphazard development could be resolved, and property values increased, with two measures: creating more green space, and relocating the entire Black population beyond the city limits. While most new garden city plans in the United States – many of them expressions of the country's growing suburbanization – were implicitly for whites only,⁶ the positioning of Coconut Grove's Black community necessitated drastic intervention in order to achieve the desired level of segregation. For Bright, the town's greatest problem came “when the question arose to the respective areas to be occupied by the white and the colored races... it was done without a proper realization of the influence the mere design of the areas could have upon the welfare of the town.” According to Bright, Coconut Grove's Black neighborhood, called “Colored Town,” had “taken the form of a wedge... effectually dividing the town in to two parts.” He added: “The limitation of the desirable portion of the land whether brought about by a deliberate policy or thoughtless toleration leads to congestion and high prices and increases the cost of living for inhabitants.”⁷ Bright's claims foreshadowed a process that would become familiar in Miami. As developers, officials, and planners began to covet previously neglected land occupied by Black residents, they would claim the land could be used more productively by white residents and wealthy business interests. Plans to displace Black residents from desirable

⁵ N.D.B. Connolly, “Timely Innovations: Planes, Trains, and the ‘Whites Only’ Economy of a Pan-American City,” *Urban History* 36 (2009), 243–61.

⁶ In *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*, Kenneth Jackson noted in the development of U.S. suburbs a “tendency toward racial and economic exclusiveness.” While garden cities often aimed to achieve a mix of incomes – at least in principle – racial mixing was rare. See: Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 4.

⁷ Bright, “The Report for the Town of Coconut Grove with Foreword by Thomas Adams.”

land, and other policies that achieved the same ends, became integral to this process. Further, as I will demonstrate, environmental policies and beliefs served to justify and naturalize patterns of segregation and displacement.



COCONUT GROVE, FLORIDA

Figure 3: The Bright Plan envisioned the displacement of the residents of Coconut Grove's Colored Town to a model settlement separated from the white section by railway tracks and a 'productive park', as shown in the upper image (Design by John Irwin Bright, "The Report for the Town of Coconut Grove with Foreword by Thomas Adams," Journal of the American Institute of Architects 9, no. 4 [April 1, 1921], 110.)

Bright's version of this plan used green space with a dual purpose: to control growth and to isolate Black residents. The drawings, widely circulated, showed in place of the Grove's eclectic mixture of architectural styles, a plan for formal Spanish buildings and a mirror-lake. A "productive park" – an adaptation of the garden city principle of the agricultural belt – would encircle the town, allowing for cultivation, recreation, and growth control. To address the disruption in home values that he attributed to the placement of Colored Town, Bright proposed the removal of Coconut Grove's entire Black population to the town's outskirts, where they would be separated from the white community by the Florida East Coast Railroad line and a strip of parkland. The Kebo community, where Black residents of Bahamian descent had lived since the 1890s on land purchased from a platted homestead, would be destroyed to make room for a golf course. Bright estimated the purchase of Colored Town and moving its buildings at \$211,800 – around \$2.8 million today. The new Black Coconut Grove would be, essentially, an island.

Many Black Grove residents suffered from a lack of infrastructure, few amenities, and poor sanitation – a situation perpetuated by the city government and absentee landlords as the community grew. This state of affairs provided a useful justification for displacement plans. For Bright, the new "Colored Town" – to be created from the "wilderness" on the outskirts of the Grove – would result in "a better living and economic standard" for Black and white alike. The existing buildings would be relocated to larger lots arranged around bath houses and a day nursery for working mothers. He did not envision that the new development would be independent, however. Nor would Black residents be much better off financially. He wrote: "In order to encourage independence of action without jeopardizing success a benevolent leadership might be very necessary. The profit to the negro will chiefly lie not in money but in the improved

living condition that will inevitably be brought about.” Bright presented an image of managed growth, and of civic and environmental harmony in Coconut Grove, achieved in large part by complete segregation and paternalistic governance.⁸

The Bright Plan died as the bottom fell out of the swampland property market, a development played for laughs in the Marx Brothers movie, *The Cocoanuts*.⁹ In the end, the Coconut Grove Playhouse was the only part of the Bright Plan to be built. However, the Plan’s influence has been felt in subsequent attempts at Black removal, all closely connected with environmental policies and beliefs about nature. Miami has frequently been portrayed as an unplanned community sprawling into the Everglades and rarely saying no to new development, even at the cost of South Florida’s delicate ecology.¹⁰ This dissertation focuses on a parallel history, however: that of the community planners - many of whom have long been cognizant of the region’s unique and fragile ecology - who have sought to contain or at least direct Miami’s growth. Both Miami’s business community and its planners depended on the same thing: the existence of a low-paid and displaceable Black workforce. Black workers built the fantasyland its boosters used to lure tourists from the north and the railroad that brought them to Miami, cutting through South Florida’s thick vegetation, working coral rock, staffing hotels and white households, and digging mosquito control ditches. At the same time, Miami’s Black residents represented an important source of income for landlords, while their limited political power made displacements feasible.

⁸ Bright, “The Report for the Town of Coconut Grove with Foreword by Thomas Adams.”

⁹ *The Cocoanuts*, directed by Robert Florey and Joseph Santley (1929; Astoria, NY: Paramount Pictures).

¹⁰ Michael Grunwald, *The Swamp: The Everglades, Florida, and the Politics of Paradise* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006).

Further, even as planners and some developers wanted to manage growth, they were determined to guide it without slowing it down, ensuring that Miami could continue to attract tax dollars from development and wealthy new residents. From the late 1960s, Miami's planners did not work publicly to displace populations, and many increasingly stated that they wish to prevent displacement. Yet, under the economic and policy conditions that practices such as redlining, low wages, and poor security for renters have created, these effects continue, even if apparently market-driven displacement now makes evidence of intentionality hard to find. Today, longtime residents of historically Black areas such as Liberty City and Little Haiti face displacement due to rising rents and taxes, developments that are due in part to concern from new residents and developers about sea level rise and other environmental pressures.

In this dissertation, I explore the way environmental policies were and continue to be integral to discussions about displacement, the maintenance of racial difference, and the production of inequality. Planners, politicians, and scientists used the landscape and contemporary environmental anxieties such as urban pollution to naturalize theories of racial hierarchies, achieve segregation, and justify displacement. Later, policies aimed at reducing sprawl and encouraging urban infill put pressure on low-income, "inner-city" neighborhoods. These plans avoided discussing the city's race and class dynamics, a tradition rooted in area boosters' focus on ensuring new investors would not be discouraged by Miami's potential for civic unrest. In more recent years, meanwhile, grassroots campaigns to link calls for environmental and housing justice have pushed displacement to the top of the agenda in public meetings.

This chapter shows how, during the New Deal era and afterward, planners, developers, and politicians drew on colonial ideologies about race and the environment as they set about

creating formal structures of segregation, from redlining neighborhoods to efforts to displace Black residents. While the Bright Plan was never put into action, its influence was felt in local planning decisions in the years that followed: in parks used to create buffers between communities designated white and Black, in plans that combined urban and suburban living with agriculture, and in a singular focus on the relocation of Black communities to undeveloped land beyond the current city limits. In part, this was due to the influence of George Edgar Merrick, the developer of Coral Gables, the chairman of the Dade County Planning Board and, later, Miami's Postmaster. In this broad array of roles, Merrick – on whom Bright's plan was a likely influence – was able to use his influence to advance a greened version of segregation, helping to embed it into the fabric of Miami's landscape.

Large and hearty, Merrick was, according to Miami folklore, a dreamer, a master planner, and early environmentalist, a visionary who shepherded into being new model communities inspired by the garden city principles of space, beauty, and good building practices, despite the personal and financial costs he endured.¹¹ Local history depicts him as an idealist who published poetry and imagined Miami as a tropical Eden. Part of the pioneer generation of Miami's earliest days as a settlement, he wrote a collection of stories in honor of the traditions of the Black Bahamians he grew up with, which he titled *Men of the Magic Isles*, and their influence on how he believed Miami should develop.¹² Other accounts show that, like his peers in the business and planning community, Merrick was also a segregationist. His plan to remove Miami's entire Black population to far-flung “model negro communities” influenced Miami's urban policies for

¹¹ See: Arva Moore Parks, *George Merrick, Son of the South Wind: Visionary Creator of Coral Gables* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2015).

¹² George E. Merrick, typescript of short story collection, *Men of the Magic Isles*, n.d., Merrick Collection, University of Miami.

decades.¹³ He profited directly from the subjugation of Miami's Black citizens, the funds from his developments for space-starved families subsidizing his exceedingly expensive dream to create a whites-only planned community, Coral Gables.¹⁴ Merrick's plan to create a prosperous white community was long-lasting: To this day, Coral Gables remains 96 per cent white.¹⁵

Merrick is often credited as a lone visionary battling against the follies of unplanned, unfettered development, but he owed the success of Coral Gables and the prominence of his ideas in Miami's planning community to a range of factors, from his connections with the "pioneer" settlers and naturalists of early Miami to the inflated profits enjoyed by the city's elite at the expense of Black communities crammed into tiny enclaves. Later, he benefited from New Deal largesse and new planning infrastructures that greatly benefited Florida during the 1930s. My work highlights the ways in which South Florida's environmental history and Miami's urban policy are connected. Merrick was both a boom town speculator and an advocate for garden city-style planning who preached respect for South Florida's natural features.

Drawn from his history as a homesteader and fruit plantation owner, Merrick's knowledge of and appreciation for Miami's climate and ecology were essential to the shape of his racist agenda. His family moved to South Florida in 1898 when he was 12 years old. To encourage the colonization of the sparsely-populated area, the Homestead Act of 1862 offered settlers free land in South Florida. Merrick's father Solomon bought a partially cultivated 160-

¹³ Raymond A. Mohl, "Whitening Miami: Race, Housing, and Government Policy in Twentieth-Century Dade County," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (2001): 319–45.

¹⁴ N. D. B. Connolly, *A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 48.

¹⁵ "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Coral Gables City, Florida," U.S. Census Bureau, accessed November 20, 2019, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/coralgablescityflorida>.

acre plot from another homesteader.¹⁶ On his father's fruit plantation, called Coral Gables, George Merrick worked alongside Black Bahamians who taught him to cultivate food, clear palmetto, and work coral rock, the limestone found in South Florida. Merrick called the Bahamians he encountered while working his father's groves the "way-showers,"¹⁷ teaching him about the Florida's native flora as well as the plants they had brought with them from their homeland.¹⁸ This upbringing influenced Merrick's view of Miami's tropical ecology, his belief that development could occur in harmony with nature, and his romantic vision for a green version of segregation.

Merrick's background, therefore, was a colonial one, growing up alongside the expansion of US government control over the country's least inhabited lands and overseas to Puerto Rico and the Philippines, the previous occupations Florida had experienced under the Spanish and French,¹⁹ and the migration of Black and white Bahamians to the United States to work, fish, and cultivate land.²⁰ Nineteenth-century pioneers continued the expansion of the North American frontier in Florida through colonization, land speculation, and aggression against Native populations, while replicating modes of colonial rule developed around the world by other imperial powers. Merrick and his contemporaries extended colonial patterns of natural and human management into the administration of Miami, attempting to tame nature through

¹⁶ For a thorough exploration of Miami's development as a colonial city, see: John K. Babb, "The Viceroyalty of Miami: Colonial Nostalgia and the Making of an Imperial City" (Ph.D. dissertation, Florida International University, 2016), <https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/etd/2598>.

¹⁷ Merrick, *Men of the Magic Isles*.

¹⁸ Parks, *George Merrick, Son of the South Wind: Visionary Creator of Coral Gables*, 66-67.

¹⁹ Babb, "The Viceroyalty of Miami."

²⁰ Black workers could make around three times the amount they could on the islands. See: Claudrena N. Harold, "The Rise and Fall of the Garvey Movement in the Urban South, 1918– 1942" (Ph.D. dissertation., University of Notre Dame, 2004), 116.

drainage projects, introducing plants from around the Americas for cash cultivation and ornament, and establishing Spanish revival architecture as a symbol of dominance over the frontier.²¹

Tourism and real estate were Miami's two primary industries, providing the drive for the city's growth and fueled by drainage, land clearance, and cheap labor. The city of the 1920s was undergoing a land boom on the back Florida's program of Everglades drainage. This reclamation exposed large tracts of land, and Miami became the base for new real estate offices as national land companies bought up the new expanses for agriculture and new subdivisions. The city's population grew 440 per cent between 1896 and 1920 to 29,571. In 1923, a local survey showed that number had increased again to 47,000 inhabitants. Real estate prices skyrocketed.²² The events of the 1920s set in motion Miami's unceasing reliance on real estate growth.

Development became even more integral to Florida's economy with the 1924 passing of a constitutional amendment abolishing state income taxes and inheritance taxes. This step locked the state's counties and cities into a constant search for new development to fill their coffers, even as the limits of its ecosystems became more apparent. The state legislature prioritized two further markers of progress: the ever more rapid drainage of the Everglades and the completion of a road network that would bring more tourists south to the Sunshine State.²³

Miami's rapid growth earned it the moniker the "Magic City." Writers compared Miami Beach's growth to a giant "mushroom" sprouting overnight.²⁴ While Miami adopted and

²¹ Babb, "The Viceroyalty of Miami."

²² Victoria H. McDonell, "Rise of the 'Businessman's Politician': The 1924 Florida Gubernatorial Race," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 52, no. 1 (1973): 39–50.

²³ McDonell, "Rise of the 'Businessman's Politician.'"

²⁴ Charles Edgar Nash, *The Magic of Miami Beach* (Philadelphia: David McKay Co, 1938).

marketed the title as its own, it was, in fact, indicative of a regional phenomenon; other “magic cities” included Roanoke, Virginia²⁵ and Birmingham, Alabama. Like Miami, the railroad propelled these towns to unprecedented growth, with population outpacing the creation of infrastructure. Civic leaders neglected public services in favor of tax breaks for industries.²⁶ In the 1880s, the editor of the *Atlanta Constitution* Henry Grady won national attention with a speech to the New England Society extolling the birth of a “New South” that was based on his book of the same name. He said:

The old South rested everything on slavery and agriculture, unconscious that these could neither give nor maintain healthy growth. The new South presents a perfect democracy, the oligarchs leading in the popular movement; a social system compact and closely knitted, less splendid on the surface, but stronger at the core; a hundred farms for every plantation, fifty homes for every palace; and a diversified industry that meets the complex needs of this complex age.²⁷

“Magic cities” would transform the South, Grady believed, accommodating Northern industrial wealth and tourism alongside the old agricultural economy. Absent from Grady’s evaluation of the new cities was the tenacity with which they reproduced the racial ideologies of their older counterparts²⁸ and replicated their repressive racial structures. Like their old South neighbors, these new cities depended on the low-wage work Black citizens provided at little cost to the city due to Black communities’ neglected infrastructure and the high rents they paid to landlords.²⁹

²⁵ Rand Dotson, *Roanoke, Virginia, 1882–1912: Magic City of the New South* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2008).

²⁶ Dotson, *Roanoke, Virginia, 1882–1912*.

²⁷ Henry W. Grady, *The New South* (New York: Robert Bonner’s Sons, 1890), <https://asp6new.alexanderstreet.com/gild/gild.object.details.aspx?dorpID=1000005378>.

²⁸ Gregory W. Bush, “‘Playground of the USA’: Miami and the Promotion of Spectacle,” *Pacific Historical Review* 68, no. 2 (1999): 153–72, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3641982>.

²⁹ Chanelle Nyree Rose, *The Struggle for Black Freedom in Miami: Civil Rights and America’s Tourist Paradise, 1896–1968* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2015).

As in other New South cities, Miami's boosters embraced the legacy of slavery as justification for segregation and engaged in hyperbole about southern hospitality, boasting of the "Miami way" or "Miami spirit." Its ethos about social relations was similar to other southern cities, emphasizing urban growth and a rigid social order as mutually-reinforcing goods. Local newspapers published reports celebrating growth while preaching racial harmony, and boosters expressed confidence in the future and concern for the greater good, which they insisted would be achieved through the strict enforcement of segregation.³⁰ Merrick's hopes for the future did not deviate from this marriage of growth and segregation, but he believed that careful planning and environmental policymaking could ensure the success and longevity of that marriage.

Even critics avoided wholesale denunciation of the forces shaping Miami. Reformers like Commodore Ralph Monroe, a yacht designer and prominent early resident of Coconut Grove, criticized the tenor of progress but not Everglades drainage itself. He decried the city's environmental degradation and its founding on the dispossession of the Seminole tribe. But he and other reformers like Napoleon Bonaparte Broward, who positioned himself against state handouts to railroad and development business interests, were still committed to the progress and development of urban Miami.³¹ For Broward, who became governor of Florida, enlightened progress was connected to drainage and the reclamation of the land beneath the water for farming.³² In his poem "The Tamiami Trail," Merrick elaborated on this vision of progress,

³⁰ Thomas A. Castillo, "Miami's Hidden Labor History," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 82, no. 4 (2004): 438–67.

³¹ Devin Leigh, "To Hold Both Sides Together: Miami Historiography and the Question of the 'New Immigrant City,'" *The Zamani Reader*, March 19, 2017, <https://thezamanireader.com/2017/03/18/to-hold-both-sides-together-miami-historiography-and-the-question-of-the-new-immigrant-city/>.

³² Jack E. Davis, *An Everglades Providence, Marjory Stoneman Douglas and the American Environmental Century* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009).

weaving together narratives that affirmed white settlers' natural claim to the land, praise for South Florida's landscape, and a call to exploit that landscape with drainage technologies:

For by dredge and scoop—in vaunting dare:
They are drawing aside the door. —
In the Everglades—will lay all bare
A fabulous treasure store!³³

The belief that both environmental quality and progress through growth could be simultaneously accommodated has persisted in Floridian attitudes toward the environment ever since.

While he planned to eventually develop his own town, Merrick spent several years starting in 1912 developing tracts of land for Realty Securities Company. He eventually took over its development arm, working on subdivisions that included Kirkland Heights, Grapeland, North Coconut Grove, and Aqua Vista.³⁴ Black citizens were mostly confined to a few smaller areas, the largest of which was Miami's "Colored Town," just north and west of the business district. Other settlements included the West Grove and Lemon City, north of the central business district. Expansion was no easy matter for Miami's African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans. Despite the fact that the U.S. Supreme Court had ruled racial zoning illegal in 1917,³⁵ both northern and southern cities sought new ways to enforce residential segregation. Planners became central to the effort. Cities like Richmond, Virginia employed planners as consultants to create strategies that completely separated communities designated Black from those designated white.³⁶ Charles Knight, a Virginia planner, argued that the creation of "Negro

³³ George E. Merrick, *Songs of the Wind on a Southern Shore, and Other Poems of Florida* (Boston: The Four Seas Publishing Co., 1920).

³⁴ Parks, *George Merrick, Son of the South Wind*, 110.

³⁵ *Buchanan v. Warley*, No. 33 (U.S. Supreme Court, November 5, 1917).

³⁶ Christopher Silver, "The Racial Origins of Zoning in American Cities," in *Urban Planning and the African American Community: In the Shadows*, eds. June Manning Thomas and Marsha Ritsdorf (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997), 23-43.

residential areas” need not prevent Black neighborhoods from thriving, advocating that they should be built with “all necessary municipal services,” from paving to police protection and open spaces.³⁷ In practice, however, racial zoning was an effective tool for creating segregation, but rarely as efficient at producing improved communities.³⁸

Merrick’s career as a real estate entrepreneur and planner illustrates the tensions inherent in the interactions between planners who sought an improved form of segregation and developers who found that segregated housing was even more profitable when it lacked basic amenities. Unusually, Realty Securities also developed a new Black subdivision in a community called Railroad Shop’s Colored Addition – Railroad Shop for short – an area northwest of the city center where Black railroad workers had initially purchased property in the late 1890s. By 1915, Merrick had sold nearly 500 lots in the development, and Railroad Shop grew into a thriving community through the 1930s. Following the example of planners like Bright and Knight, Merrick displayed an enthusiasm for amenities and opportunities within Black people’s segregated communities – albeit with limitations. His Railroad Shop subdivision would include a ten-acre park and a site for an industrial school.³⁹

Merrick was adept at the spectacular tactics his Miami contemporaries employed to attract new buyers, offering free transportation to sites and promising to give away thousands of dollars’ worth of gifts.⁴⁰ However, local accounts often portray him as a breed apart from Miami’s other early capitalist carnival barkers like Carl Fisher, whose publicity ploys for his new

³⁷ Charles Knight, *Negro Housing in Certain Virginia Cities* (Richmond, VA: William Byrd Press, 1927), 36-39.

³⁸ Silver, “The Racial Origins of Zoning in American Cities.”

³⁹ “Map of Railroad Shops Colored Addition,” *Miami Metropolis*, November 9, 1915.

⁴⁰ Parks, *George Merrick, Son of the South Wind*, 158.

Miami Beach developments included the enlistment of elephants to carry building materials. When he turned to developing his own community, Coral Gables, Merrick aimed for a higher quality.⁴¹ His influences included Frederick Law Olmstead's garden city suburbs, Tuxedo Park and Forest Hills Gardens, and especially the Shaker Heights suburb just outside Cleveland, Ohio. Like Bright, Merrick was also an avid reader of Olmstead, Daniel Burnham, John Ruskin, William Morris, and Ebenezer Howard, the planner of Letchworth in the U.K..⁴² Merrick adopted a similarly strong control over architectural styles, aesthetic choices such as paint color and landscaping, and zoning requirements including setbacks and driveways. He was also impressed by the fact that the garden city suburbs attracted a range of income levels.⁴³

Floridian developers at the time frequently harkened back to Spanish colonial building forms, seeing Spanish revival architecture as the natural style for construction in tropical regions. It came to dominate Miami's expanding suburbs, reflecting colonial nostalgia and a desire to prove that Miami's land boom was not a flash in the pan, but rather permanent, steady, and serious.⁴⁴

Merrick emphasized the supposed naturalness of the Spanish revival style in a front-page *New York Times* article intended to refute Northern criticisms that Miami's growth was unstable: "Just how I came to utilize the Spanish type of architecture I can hardly say, except that it always seemed to me to be the only way houses should be built down there in those tropical surroundings." Merrick traveled to Mexico and Central America and became "more convinced

⁴¹ Jan Nijman, *Miami: Mistress of the Americas* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 26.

⁴² Parks, *George Merrick, Son of the South Wind*, 137.

⁴³ Parks, *George Merrick, Son of the South Wind*, 139.

⁴⁴ Babb, "The Viceroyalty of Miami."

than ever of the possibilities offered by the adaptations of the Spanish and Moorish type of architecture. The gleaming white coral rock, the palm trees, tropical flowers and verdure seemed to me to provide a natural setting with which Spanish architecture alone would harmonize,” he said.⁴⁵ Merrick’s architectural choices were meant to be there, he argued, gaining permanence in the landscape through their connection to colonial history. Aside from Spanish revival, Merrick incorporated Aztec and Mayan influences, as well as elements from other colonial nations such as South Africa. He, like other developers, adopted colonial practices such as the transplanting of ornamental plants and crops: Non-native palm trees from the Bahamas, Poinciana from Madagascar, and banyan trees from Latin America and India all contributed to a setting Merrick described first and foremost as tropical.

But Coral Gables’ air of naturalness – from its Spanish architecture to its palm trees – was the product of a colonial fantasy made possible through the labor and skills of low-paid Bahamian workers planting flora from outside the region, and fashioning coral rock into bricks or laying limestone roads. Despite their importance in literally building the community, Coral Gables was a “sundown town” where Black people could work during the day (the Biltmore Hotel, for example, had a sizeable Black staff), but were not allowed at night without proper identification.⁴⁶ Merrick, influenced by Shaker Heights’s mixed-income structure and the writings of Ruskin and Howard, believed Coral Gables should be accessible to people of different socioeconomic classes. Like his contemporaries, he was not, however, interested in challenging the color line. For all his romantic writings about Black Bahamians’ knowledge and skills, his lobbying on behalf of a school for Black children, and his application for a pardon for

⁴⁵ George E. Merrick, “Millions of Capital Drawn to Miami,” *New York Times*, March 15, 1925, 1-2.

⁴⁶ James W. Loewen, *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism* (New York: The New Press, 2018).

a former employee accused of murder,⁴⁷ Merrick profited from segregation through his investments in Black housing. Merrick's attitude toward Miami's Black citizens was of a piece with the colonial-style paternalism that led Dade County toward ever more radical segregation.

In 1926, just as Coral Gables was at the apogee of its fame, a Category 5⁴⁸ hurricane struck the boomtown. Many of Miami's new developments were so poorly constructed they were totally destroyed. New arrivals were blindsided by the storm's deadly second wind, which increased the number of deaths significantly. The storm burst the regional property bubble, crashing local markets, and sending shockwaves through national markets that would contribute to the Great Depression. Miami's Black population, which served its white leisure industry in fair weather, was terrorized into rebuilding it in foul. As historian Marian Moser Jones has documented, Miami's Black residents were spared the storm's greatest initial impact because only whites were permitted to live by the sea. But Black citizens in Miami and the Everglades – where the storm had killed hundreds of seasonal workers – were forced to endure great additional suffering as whites demanded their free labor to clean up the city and dispose of its corpses. The National Guard conscripted Black men and women in Colored Town, ordering them to join labor gangs and preventing them from rebuilding their own homes. Anyone who failed to comply was threatened with beatings and imprisonment.⁴⁹

Like other Miami developers, Merrick depended on his investments in Black-only developments and the low wages he paid to Black workers to prop up his fortune, an

⁴⁷ "George E. Merrick to State Pardon Board," August 31, 1936, George Merrick Papers, 1930s; Box 6, Folder 4, HistoryMiami Research Center.

⁴⁸ A Category 5 hurricane measures sustained winds of more than 157 miles per hour.

⁴⁹ Marian Moser Jones, "Tempest in the Forbidden City: Racism, Violence, and Vulnerability in the 1926 Miami Hurricane," *Journal of Policy History* 26, no. 3 (July 2014): 384–405, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0898030614000177>.

arrangement that the storm amplified. The 1926 hurricane ruined many of the land boom's millionaires, and while Coral Gables' well-built neighborhoods weathered the storm impressively, Merrick still lost most of his fortune as the costs of investments such as the Biltmore Hotel shot up. Merrick's Coral Gables Corporation filed for bankruptcy in 1929, but his investments in Miami's meager stock of rental property for Black citizens handed him an economic lifeline, the benefits of which he was keen to share.⁵⁰ Addressing a group of real estate developers in 1937 to promote the construction of new Black housing units, Merrick said:

Personally, I have handled several negro towns and know there is money in it! [...] I would not want any better monopoly than for me to be given the job of working this out in just one State of the Southeast. Let the Government give me a unit-loan facility on sound long-time base, and I can show any real estate Board the millions that are available in this! And in doing this kind of a job we can not only make Woolworth-Ford-type volume money but will make of this kind of population housing a blessing to our Southeast instead of the curse that its present housing is.⁵¹

This speech showed how Merrick reconciled progressive justifications for segregation – or “population housing” – with the recognition of a business opportunity in the new political climate. In his next roles, he would apply this combination of approaches to a wholesale attempt to remove Miami's Black population to the outskirts of the city.

⁵⁰ Connolly, *A World More Concrete*, 182.

⁵¹ George E. Merrick, “‘Real Estate Development Past and Future,’ Transcript of Address to the Southeastern Convention of Realty Boards,” November 29, 1937, RG 196, box 298, National Archives and Records Office. Cited in: John A. Stuart, “Liberty Square: Florida's First Housing Project,” in *The New Deal in South Florida: Design, Policy, and Community-Building, 1933-1940*, eds. John A. Stuart and John F. Stack Jr. (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008).

1.2 The New Deal, the environment, and racial discrimination

After the hurricane and the Depression, the New Deal's focus on construction proved a boon for Florida's economy. The state received a bounty of new funds from federally-backed projects thanks to U.S. Senator Claude Pepper's close relationship with the new President, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and its history as a region that had tied its economic fortunes to the health of the construction industry.⁵² These initiatives helped to promote economic recovery and community stability while furthering the interests of local elites. The New Deal engendered much that was positive, including closer working relationships between federal and state governments, but local governments also used New Deal funding, and the Federal Government's preference for housing arrangements that preserved segregation, to further their own efforts to consolidate power.

The flow of government money into South Florida did promote greater community cohesion and an economic recovery, both important goals of the New Deal. At the same time, however, local elites decisively shaped the content and implementation of federal projects. Thus, federal support helped to create a boom in local tourism and development, while allowing local leaders to undermine national priorities by promoting antigovernment views, as well as policies that increased racial and social inequality.⁵³ Whether in the production of post office murals, the improvement of parklands by the Civilian Conservation Corps, the construction of the Overseas Highway that linked the Keys to the mainland, or the erection of low-cost housing in Dade County, federal funds reinforced existing economic, political, and racial hierarchies even as they

⁵² John A. Stuart and John F. Stack Jr., *The New Deal in South Florida: Design, Policy, and Community Building, 1933-1940* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008), 3.

⁵³ Stuart and Stack Jr., *The New Deal in South Florida*, 5.

improved Miami's infrastructure and amenities.⁵⁴ All over the south, Democrats shaped the New Deal to conform with their priorities, particularly the maintenance of segregation.⁵⁵

Miami's civic leaders took advantage of New Deal ideology to acquire federal funding for a new housing project, Liberty Square. Built between 1935 and 1937, the proposal gained traction with federal New Deal planners because unlike other plans that focused on groups that were relatively well-off, the Black-only development would further the New Deal goal of slum clearance, demolishing substandard housing to be replaced with better buildings.⁵⁶

Liberty Square's origins lay in Miami business and civic leaders' interest in clearing Colored Town, which they saw as an impediment to the growth of the small Miami downtown business district. In the early 1930s, developer Floyd W. Davis and his business partner, Judge John Gramling, formed the Southern Housing Corporation to apply for funds from the Federal Government's new Public Works Administration (PWA) to build a Black housing site in northwest Miami, arguing that the new developments would help to ease the "menace" that the unsanitary conditions in Colored Town posed to the city. Miami's business and political leadership widely supported the proposal, which Davis and Gramling submitted in 1933. Davis's primary interest in the project came from the fact that he owned many of the unoccupied plats of land in Miami's northwestern quadrant, where the development was proposed. Gramling was an

⁵⁴ Stuart and Stack Jr., *The New Deal in South Florida*, 5.

⁵⁵ Ira Katznelson, *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time* (New York: Liveright Publishing, 2013), 15.

⁵⁶ John A. Stuart, "Liberty Square: Florida's First Housing Project," in *The New Deal in South Florida: Design, Policy, and Community-Building, 1933-1940*, eds. John A. Stuart and John F. Stack Jr. (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008), 186–222.

important city booster and used his position as a city judge to support of police clampdowns on Miami's Black population.⁵⁷

Gramling frequently used public health arguments to promote the project in letters to the PWA, as the area's unsanitary conditions left it rife with syphilis, tuberculosis, and influenza. He made it clear, however, that it was the white population that concerned him more than Black residents' health. In October 1934, Gramling wrote: "This project will be one of the greatest blessings that Miami ever had. It will not only eliminate the possibility of fatal epidemics here, but fix it so that we can get a servant freed from disease."⁵⁸ While the initial proposal was unsuccessful, Liberty Square eventually received federal funding and the project was completed in 1937. Beginning with Liberty Square, Northwest Miami became the nucleus for relocation of Miami's Black community beginning in the 1930s and continuing with urban renewal projects into the 1950s and 60s.⁵⁹

Merrick's finances took a further hit from the 1935 Labor Day hurricane, which killed an estimated 408 people, including all of those working and staying at Merrick's Caribbee Colony fishing camp on Lower Matecumbe Key. Dogged by charges of conflict of interest over his positions as both owner and commissioner of Coral Gables, Merrick received a vote of confidence, as well as much-needed income when Governor Scholz appointed him to Dade

⁵⁷ Paul S. George, "Policing Miami's Black Community, 1896-1930," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (1979): 434-50.

⁵⁸ John C. Gramling and Eugene H. Klaber, January 24, 1934, Public Housing Authority Records, Box 301, National Archives and Records Office. Cited in: Raymond A. Mohl, "The Origins of Miami's Liberty City," *Florida Environmental and Urban Issues* 12 (July 1985): 9-12.

⁵⁹ Raymond A. Mohl, "The Origins of Miami's Liberty City," *Florida Environmental and Urban Issues* 12 (July 1985): 9-12.

County's first planning board in 1935.⁶⁰ Planning boards, created by a legislative mandate, became central to the administration of New Deal programs across the United States. County planning boards passed proposals to the state and federal Works Progress Authority to acquire federal grants. At the first meeting, the board elected Merrick chair. His new position did not require him to give up his business, and he leveraged the appointment to help his projects prosper.⁶¹ These projects included roads, schools, drainage, post offices, infrastructure, and mosquito control. Many of the proposals he put forward, such as a police station, a fire station, and an art center, were within the borders of Coral Gables.

Merrick's big plans went beyond the removal of Miami's Black population to its northwest quadrant. His Negro Resettlement Plan was part of a comprehensive planning study funded by the federal government and the county commission. He and the Dade County Planning Board proposed that three "model negro towns" should be built, one on the Western fringes of Dade County near the Liberty Square site, and two others west of Perrine to the south and west of Opa Locka to the north. The plan illustrated the dependence of Miami's businesses and white households on the labor of Black citizens: Each of these areas was at least fifteen miles from Colored Town, but distance was not a problem, the Planning Board explained, since "an exclusive negro bus line service directly from these negro areas to the heart of Miami" would be established, permitting Black workers to get to domestic and service jobs downtown.⁶² Promoters, including Merrick, claimed Black residents would prefer the new areas over the "slum sections" of Colored Town, which in turn could give place gradually to the logical white

⁶⁰ Parks, *George Merrick, Son of the South Wind*, 318.

⁶¹ Parks, *George Merrick, Son of the South Wind*, 318.

⁶² "Dade County Planning Council's Negro Resettlement Plan," 1936, George Merrick Papers, 1930s; Box 6, Folder 4, HistoryMiami Archives, Miami.

development indicated by their geographical and other potentialities.”⁶³ To Merrick’s mind, the destruction of Colored Town was not only natural and logical; Colored Town’s residents would indeed prefer their new surroundings.

In May 1937, Merrick made a speech to the Miami Realty Board in which he outlined a vision for Miami’s future that combined his segregationist impulses with his hope for development that was sensitive to the region’s distinct climate. In addition to preaching the profitability of segregated developments for Black people, he painted a picture of Miami as a tropical city, quoting the pan-American views of deceased Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan, who had moved to Miami in 1912 and taken lucrative speaking engagements to promote Coral Gables for Merrick during Florida’s real estate boom. Under the presidency of Woodrow Wilson, Bryan had promoted deeper political and economic ties with Latin American countries.⁶⁴ Merrick predicted that “South Florida’s destiny lay to the south.” He argued that all of Dade County should have tropical planting just like Coral Gables and pushed for what would later become the Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden. The Realty Board published the speech in a twenty-page booklet called *Planning the Greater Miami for Tomorrow* and distributed it widely.⁶⁵

Landscape was an important factor in a wide array of the projects that came across the desks of New Deal officials. The Civilian Conservation Corps – groups of itinerant young workers employed by the government – were an integral part of the New Deal, creating many of the parks and attractions associated with the South Florida landscape. Environmental planning

⁶³ Dade County Planning Board Minutes, August 27, 1936, George E. Merrick Papers, Box 2, HistoryMiami Archives, Miami.

⁶⁴ Michael Kazin, *A Godly Hero: The Life of William Jennings Bryan* (New York: Anchor Books, 2007).

⁶⁵ Parks, *George Merrick, Son of the South Wind*, 321.

was woven, for example, into the calculations of local and federal officials working together to “redline” areas of Miami. The Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) was established in 1933 to offer long term, low interest loans to those who could not secure regular mortgages or were in danger of losing their homes through default or foreclosure.

HOLC appraisal committees, made up of local bankers and real estate professionals, surveyed urban neighborhoods assigning each to one of four categories from A to D. These decisions were plotted onto color-coded so-called residential security maps. In Dade County, local HOLC appraisers made surveys in 1936 and 1938. Areas designated as Black and Latino, as well as white areas that bordered them, received the lowest HOLC ratings. The top A or B ratings were reserved for a handful of wealthy areas: Miami, Miami Beach, and Coral Gables. By 1938, local real estate businesses and banks had used the federal government’s neighborhood assessment protocols to redline all of Dade County according to racial demographics, effectively forcing minorities to pay higher rates than whites.⁶⁶

In addition to judging the desirability of an area based on its racial makeup, the state of its infrastructure, and local amenities, the authors were concerned about the environmental hazards associated with settlement in certain areas. These designations articulated what has become increasingly apparent today: Many of Miami’s wealthiest communities – including Belle Isle, Miami Shores, and Venetian Islands – were particularly exposed to hurricane winds and storm surge. The difference was, while the presence of or proximity to Black Miamians was considered detrimental and significantly affected mortgage and insurance decisions, environmental concerns did not have the same effect on desirability. Belle Isle’s “A” rating was

⁶⁶ Mohl, “Whitening Miami.”

undamaged by its vulnerability to storm surge and hurricanes, while all areas designated Black or adjacent to a Black area received a “D” rating.⁶⁷

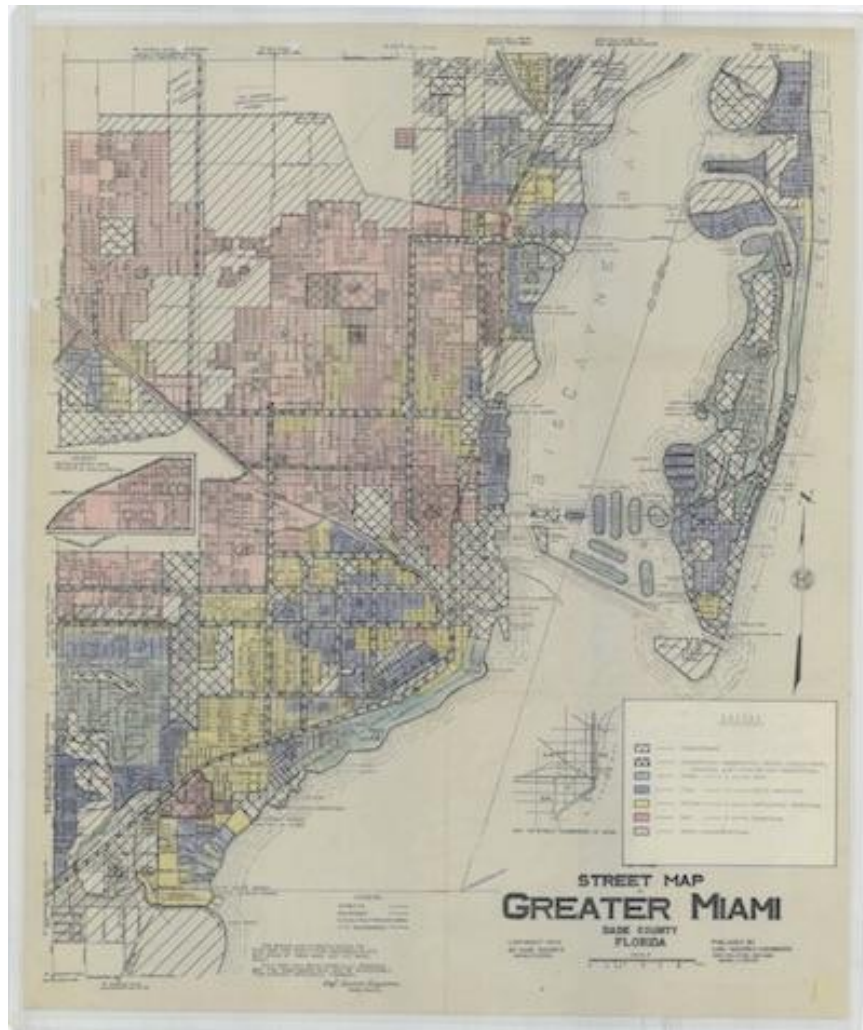


Figure 4: A redlining map of Greater Miami showing ‘A’-rated neighborhoods in blue along Miami’s shoreline despite their vulnerability to hurricanes (Federal Home Loan Bank Board, “Street Map of Greater Miami” (Home Owners’ Loan Corporation, 1934), Residential Security Maps, 1933 - 1939, National Archives at College Park - Cartographic (RDSC))

The Planning Council’s papers gave an indication of the price of progress achieved through drainage – especially the level of maintenance demanded by drained land. Let us take,

⁶⁷ Federal Home Loan Bank Board, “Street Map of Greater Miami” (Home Owners’ Loan Corporation, 1934), Residential Security Maps, 1933-1939, National Archives at College Park - Cartographic (RDSC).

for example, the area of mosquito control. Dade County's Anti-Mosquito District oversaw more than 325 miles of ditches aimed at keeping salt marsh and domestic mosquito numbers down. Black work teams with white foremen went to work maintaining existing ditches, and cutting and dynamiting new ones. To the dismay of district administrators, the drainage of the Everglades worsened the mosquito problem. "Filled" land – land that had been drained and then raised through infill – was particularly hard to manage, the district's 1937 report said, because of "a constant shrinkage of the land takes place and as it does, surface water stands and produces heavily, especially if it has a covering of grass." The presence of so many mosquitos necessitated a constant battle against disease. In 1934, for example, there was an outbreak of Dengue Fever, and Dade County lived in fear of a resurgence of Yellow Fever in the United States as air traffic from Latin America increased.⁶⁸

While South Florida's ties with Latin America increased fears of disease, it also offered opportunities to create new regional scientific alliances. Merrick petitioned the local Works Progress Authority and the Works Progress Weather Bureau to create a new infrastructure for hurricane alerts and evacuations after the 1935 storm. His requests included hurricane observation radio stations from the lower Keys to Lake Okeechobee. He also campaigned for a station in the Bahamas operated by the British colonial government and actively coordinate with the Belen observatory in Havana. Merrick argued that Miami would be the "logical center of the observation control area."⁶⁹ By 1943, the primary US hurricane forecast office was moved from

⁶⁸ "First Report of Dade County Planning Council Board" (Dade County Planning Council, 31 December 1935), George Merrick Papers, 1930s; Box 7, Folder 7, HistoryMiami Archives.

⁶⁹ Merrick to O.A. Sandquist, 20 May 1936, George Merrick Papers, 1930s, Box 7, Folder 11, HistoryMiami Archives.

Jacksonville to Miami, creating a new National Hurricane Office, a precursor to the National Hurricane Center.⁷⁰

Miami's landscape also became important to turf battles over Black zoning after Liberty Square was built. The developer, Floyd Davis, who had significant interests in the construction of properties for Black tenants, lobbied to build new developments further east, expanding the boundaries of the new Black neighborhoods toward white developments. Merrick and the rest of the Planning Board had argued that "the present eastern boundary of the Liberty Square project is as far east as the negro area should go," and that Davis should be persuaded that he could sell the lots for a higher price to white people.⁷¹ To quell white fears about the expansion of Black-only developments, developers like Davis proposed the use of landscaping. In a letter to the planning board, he argued that a park for Black people next to Liberty Square would be "well protected from the white section with a heavy bank of shrubbery along NW 62nd Street." Meanwhile, a parallel street would be created for white people, separated by a "50-foot parkway" with heavy shrubbery and, if desired, a high woven wire fence down the center. A street for the Black community – devoid of cross streets that could enable Black and white people to cross paths – would run parallel.⁷² These parallel roads still exist today. The fence was constructed as a tall concrete wall, one of several "race walls" constructed around Miami.⁷³

Merrick's influence on the Planning Board joined the New South racial priorities of the county's white elite to the region's colonial history and attitude toward ecology. Like the Bright

⁷⁰ Jay Barnes, *Florida's Hurricane History*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

⁷¹ Merrick to Preston, December 3, 1937.

⁷² Floyd Davis to J.O. Preston, November 29, 1937, George Merrick Papers, 1930s; Box 6, Folder 4, HistoryMiami Archives.

⁷³ Stuart, "Liberty Square: Florida's First Housing Project," 199.

Plan, Merrick intended to expand designs to remove Miami's Black population beyond the city limits, but he was also inspired by the writings of John C. Gifford, a part-time resident of Coconut Grove who also lived in Puerto Rico and the Bahamas. Gifford was a professor of forestry at Cornell University, specializing in tropical species. Merrick even suggested Gifford as one of his preferred candidates to fill a post on the Dade County Zoning Board of Appeals, noting his "labors in lines fundamental to intelligent planning and zoning."⁷⁴ For Merrick, Gifford's work bolstered his opposition to the poorly-constructed housing for Black people that most real estate interests had favored. Merrick wrote:

The life work of such men as Dr. John C. Gifford has essentially been used, as well as wide personal investigation through the Bahamas, Cuba, and through the West Indies by several of the members of the planning Council. It is believed that this negro subject, so fraught with the selfishness and greed of irresponsible promoters caring nothing for the future of the County, must be forever established along the lines set forth, in order to prevent a continual slum encroachment and sporadic development of such detached slums throughout our County. This is by all means probably the most necessary part of our County Long Range Plan to be forever fixed and settled.⁷⁵

The Negro Resettlement Plan envisioned the removal of Miami's Black citizens to three "distinct county areas," all of them over ten miles outside the Miami city limits: West Miami, west of Perrine in South Dade, and northeast of Opa Locka. Each location served a different purpose. The West Miami area, "free of any present white built-up areas or other white established construction or developments," had good soil for "tree and vegetable purposes" as well as canals to provide drainage. The Perrine site was a "high rocky area adapted to the type of negro town referred to in the Bahama Islands, where the civilization is quite largely based on tropical fruit trees, which crowd each individual premise and yield a large portion of the families' living.

⁷⁴ George E. Merrick to Fred H. Cone, October 16, 1937, George Merrick Papers, 1930s; Box 7, Folder 12, HistoryMiami.

⁷⁵ "Dade County Planning Council's Negro Resettlement Plan," 1936, George Merrick Papers, 1930s; Box 6, Folder 4, HistoryMiami Archives.

Here, in addition to the usual fruit trees, such as avocado, mangos, guavas, bananas, cane, and papaya, etc., are the more unusual West Indian types embracing all of the anon family.” Finally, the Opa Locka site, at the time in an area dedicated to dairy farming, would provide cheap labor to the growing areas north of Miami, and North Miami Beach.⁷⁶

Lots would be zoned large enough (at least 100 feet by 100 feet) and in such a way as to avoid overcrowding. This commission hoped that the size would allow for families to grow their own fruits and vegetables, as well as raise small livestock, supplementing their incomes with subsistence farming. The commission also wanted enough architectural control to avoid “the ordinary shack-type from developing,” instead favoring “such design types as are in use in various Bahamian negro towns, where houses of sound proportion and attractive tropical appearance, and at a cost of around \$500 have been in use through many years.” It argued that this zoning would encourage development along “model lines for a tropical community, somewhat as is done in [...] negro communities of the Bahama Islands.” It continued:

The cultivation of these tropical fruits in such a community would in great measure raise the standard of living of our Dade County negroes, make their home sites and entire towns attractive, encourage them into the use of our tropical advantages in many other ways to their economic and family good, but more than all else, will tie them to the soil in a more happy manner than they have ever been used to in Florida and will gradually build them into more loyal, capable and self-respecting citizens.⁷⁷

Gifford’s idealized view of Bahamian life accorded with Merrick’s. While Gifford was a conservationist, he did not see this stance in opposition to the view of development and progress Merrick and others shared. He even dedicated a 1911 book of essays on South Florida’s ecology to the late Napoleon Bonaparte Broward, the “father” of the Everglades drainage project, and

⁷⁶ “Dade County Planning Council’s Negro Resettlement Plan.”

⁷⁷ “Dade County Planning Council’s Negro Resettlement Plan.”

published it with the Everglades Land Sales Company.⁷⁸ In one book, *The Tropical Subsistence Homestead; Diversified Tree Crops in Forest Formation for the Antillean Area*, Gifford laid out his vision for caste-based racial harmony through the spread of subsistence farming.⁷⁹ He shared preoccupations with European colonial powers like the British, who devoted significant time and investment to planting crops from different countries in other parts of their empire, as well as the ability of white Europeans and North Americans to live in tropical areas such as the so-called “Torrid Zone” in which he placed the Bahamas and South Florida. But he was critical of the imperial model of crops tended by enslaved laborers, which he believed were recipes for environmental destruction and civil unrest.⁸⁰

Gifford argued that rather than try to impose “northern notions” on such regions, northerners should instead look to “the primitive man to learn how to support ourselves in case we are ever forced to go it alone against the wild.” For Gifford, the soil-depleting monocultures like tobacco and sugar that had been grown in the Caribbean and South Florida were inferior to farming with trees, which enriched soil.⁸¹ The ability to grow crops, Gifford believed, would raise standards of living sufficiently to stem “unrest leading to the ascendancy of color.” He argued that low living standards and low pay posed a competitive threat to white hegemony in the Caribbean:

⁷⁸ John C. Gifford, *The Everglades and Other Essays Relating to Southern Florida*, 2nd ed. (Miami, c. 1912), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/loc.ark:/13960/t9b56vj97>.

⁷⁹ John C. Gifford, *The Tropical Subsistence Homestead; Diversified Tree Crops in Forest Formation for the Antillean Area* (Coral Gables: University of Miami, c. 1934).

⁸⁰ For one history of the relationships between enslavement and monocultures, and the US place in imperial webs of trade, see Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

⁸¹ Gifford, *The Tropical Subsistence Homestead*.

[T]he whites are losing and the blacks are gaining not because of climate but because the white cannot compete in such a low standard of living. The only way to correct this is to provide the black with small subsistence homesteads and by the proper kind of education to raise his standard of living.”⁸²

Gifford believed that this pastoral ideal should also be attempted in South Florida. By raising the living standards of Black residents – up to a point – he hoped it would fulfill the dream racial harmony while maintaining segregation. He wrote:

A subsistence homestead demonstration area in Florida for the blacks is a good idea. It will serve as a sample for the whole Antillean Area. If properly guided by our government it will prove successful. They love the soil, are willing to work, and will probably strive to out-do the whites. They are fond of their homes and in south Florida you will find many unusual plants in their back-yards. In the cultivation of many things they are more successful than the whites and anything done to raise their standard of living will increase the demand for manufactured products.⁸³

Subsistence farming, for Gifford, entailed security from other ills. He said: “There are many people right now living on small tree homesteads in this Antillean Area who have never heard of the depression and were not in the slightest degree affected by the great World War.”⁸⁴ In the same way, the Great Depression of 1929 proved to be particularly fertile ground for Gifford and other advocates of subsistence farming. Gifford’s book was released in 1934. Between 1933 and 1935, the federal Division of Subsistence Homesteads created 34 New Deal-supported communities in places that included Phoenix, Arizona; Birmingham, Alabama; Reedsville, West Virginia; and Hightown, New Jersey, to encourage part-time farming in semirural neighborhoods. Inspired by the “back to the land” and garden city movements, the agency’s

⁸² Gifford, *The Tropical Subsistence Homestead*, 31.

⁸³ Gifford, *The Tropical Subsistence Homestead*, 30–31.

⁸⁴ Gifford, *The Tropical Subsistence Homestead*, 13.

director, Milburn Lincoln Wilson, cast subsistence farming as a cushion against the vagaries of the market, and garden cities as a solution to urban problems.⁸⁵

The spirit of cooperation did not extend to racial inclusiveness.⁸⁶ The owner of Biscayne Gardens, a subsistence suburb, wrote to the Dade County Zoning Commission in 1941 to register his “unqualified objections” to a proposed development for Black residents in the northwest of Miami, to be named Magnolia Park. Biscayne Gardens marketed its one-acre tracts to middle-to-low income whites for “\$10 down and \$10 per month.” For these white suburban homesteaders, however, their connection to the city was never in question. Biscayne Gardens promotional materials promised that residents would have security from the vagaries of the economy without having to give up work in the city: “An important consideration in getting ‘back to the country’ is not to get too far back! Convenience to the city is important, particularly if you have employment there.” Photographs highlighted the natural bounty of the region, like an acre of papayas said to have yielded a crop of 100,000 pounds in a year. No farming experience was needed, according to the leaflet, due to the regular bulletins published by the Florida State Department of Agriculture instructing novices “what to grow, how and when to plant it, how to bring it to success.”⁸⁷

Arguments over whether new Black communities could be developed often hinged on incumbency and whether it could be argued that an area was originally Black or white. Alternatively, if the developer could contend that the area had previously been undeveloped – an

⁸⁵ For a history of one of the new communities – Norvelt in Pennsylvania – see: Timothy Kelly, Margaret Power, and Michael Cary, *Hope in Hard Times: Norvelt and the Struggle for Community During the Great Depression* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2017).

⁸⁶ Kelly, Power, and Cary, *Hope in Hard Times*.

⁸⁷ Chas G. Brand to Dade County Zoning Commission, November 10, 1941, George Merrick Papers, 1930s; Box 6, Folder 4, HistoryMiami Archives.

especially attractive quality to developers creating subsistence communities – the land could be zoned for either racial group. Developers like Davis would argue that areas like the Liberty Square site had been occupied by Black residents for many years, and that white neighbors had moved nearby knowing they were near a Black community.⁸⁸ In contrast, Charles Brand, the developer of Biscayne Gardens, echoed the colonial ethos of other Florida boosters when he claimed that his company and customers had been “pioneers” in Dade’s backcountry:

We should not have our property valuations lowered or the salability of the present development ruined for the benefit of a private enterprise that could well be located in an area where the direct harm would be negligible in comparison and an area where adjoining property, if and when improved, would be done so with the knowledge that the negro locality was then in existence. We created this development in an area entirely undeveloped and are continuously spending more money for the further enhancement of value of property in the area.⁸⁹

The Negro Resettlement Plan was not the only proposal Merrick made in connection to subsistence farming, nor was it the only one inspired by Gifford, Howard, and Ruskin. In 1934, he proposed the development of “Biscayneland,” a “country city” in South Dade near Peters and Perrine. A land-buying syndicate would purchase one hundred thousand acres of farmland, while a Community Foundation would sell bonds to help build homes and fund what he called “little factories” of homegrown food. The proposal – possibly linked to the later resettlement plan – also provided for a “model Negro community.” Biscayneland would have a beachfront resort and an educational center for Black students.⁹⁰

Merrick’s vision remained unfulfilled, incapable of competing with the cheaply-built housing most developers constructed for Black residents. The city and county were not

⁸⁸ Davis to Preston, November 29, 1937.

⁸⁹ Brand to Dade County Zoning Commission, November 10, 1941.

⁹⁰ Parks, *George Merrick, Son of the South Wind*, 312.

supportive either, evincing a lack of interest in enforcing regulations or denying proposals for low-quality construction in Black areas. Some developers did seek to win business by promoting a better strain of segregated housing along the lines Merrick had set out, however. In 1941, W.I. Fickling, an agent for the Daval Corporation, wrote to Merrick with that year's Grand Jury report finding extreme overcrowding and neglect in Colored Town – 40,000 people lived in an area covering 90 blocks. Merrick and other city dignitaries were landlords in the neighborhood, and the conditions there led to tuberculosis rates 600 per cent above those found among other populations.

The Grand Jury found garbage was sometimes allowed to remain for weeks without collection, and several families had to use outdoor battery toilets at once. Roads were unmaintained and made only of sand or coral rock, creating pollution from the dust, further worsening lung diseases in the area. No more than 75 per cent of the “inadequate” street lighting worked.⁹¹ Fickling proposed to supply the housing specified in the Negro Resettlement Plan as a “self-maintained negro area outside any local municipality to include; bathing beach, public utilities, transportation, school, movie theatre, shopping center, and main roads to be bordered with landscaped park in addition to Public Parks within this area.” The homes would be of fireproof cement construction, with solar heat, indoor bathrooms.⁹² This proposal reflected the standards imagined by Merrick and New Deal housing officials, but these idealized plans for segregated areas were, in practice, unnecessary. While Merrick and his fellow white businessmen agreed that resettlement was desirable, they diverged on how to execute it. Overall,

⁹¹ “Report of the Grand Jury,” 1941, George Merrick Papers, 1930s; Box 6, Folder 4, HistoryMiami Archives.

⁹² W.I. Fickling to George E. Merrick, November 12, 1941, George Merrick Papers, 1930s; Box 6, Folder 4, HistoryMiami Archives.

Merrick's plans were too costly for developers looking to make quick money out of Black housing. Subsistence farming and planned communities were expensive, while the city and county happily approved a patchwork of new developments that lacked almost any kind of facilities.

The New Deal also marked the beginning of a more successful displacement: the removal of people living in the Everglades to make room for new parks. These people included members of the Seminole and Miccosukee tribes, as well as white glades dwellers.⁹³ In Miami, however, as the Urban League noted that in 1943, "very little" had been done on the Negro Resettlement Plan – developers had simply been selling lots to mostly middle-class Black families in and around Liberty Square.⁹⁴ The League, like many others, had bought the Miami businessmen's claim that the solution to the squalor the landlords had profited from for decades was to remove residents to some other location, legitimizing their plans to expand the downtown business district. Miami planners kept attempting to displace Black people, but without success until the 1950s, when they, local politicians, and slum clearance advocates used new and old environmental and health arguments to justify their decision to route the new Interstate 95 expressway through Miami's Colored Town. Until then, Miami's planners were more successful in using landscape features, such as the placement of parks, to shape segregation and create natural-seeming barriers between Black and white communities and bounding Black settlements.

By 1940, Black populations were concentrated in Colored Town, Opa Locka, Hialeah, Brown Subdivision (later Brownsville), Coral Gables (Coconut Grove), South Miami, Perrine,

⁹³ Laura A. Ogden, *Swamplife: People, Gators, and Mangroves Entangled in the Everglades* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

⁹⁴ Warren M. Banner, *A Review of the Economic and Cultural Problems in Dade County, Florida; A Study Conducted for The Council of Social Agencies of Dade County, Florida* (New York: The National Urban League, 1943), 29.

Goulds, Homestead, and Florida City. Liberty City had become the second-largest area zoned for Black residency, swallowing Liberty Square and running beyond the city limits. Links between the new and old Black neighborhoods gave Colored Town a new moniker, Overtown, because Black residents had to travel “over town” from Liberty City to reach it. A study by the Urban League noted the importance of natural features and new greenery in creating barriers between areas identified as Black and white: “Generally speaking, in each community the Negro neighborhood begins on the other side of the tracks and runs to some other barrier – another set of tracks, a canal, undesirable land, or an artificial barrier set by zoning regulations.”⁹⁵ In 1945, the Dade County Commission was discussing the creation of “the finest model negro community in the United States” as well as improvement and planned expansion of exclusively Black areas. Miami’s segregation efforts were both firm and long-lasting: By 1993, Black occupancy in the five pre-1960 housing projects ranged from 94 per cent to 100 per cent.⁹⁶

This history demonstrates how Miami’s segregation and efforts to displace the city’s Black population were deeply intertwined with elite environmental beliefs and anxieties. In turn, these ideological beliefs and narratives helped to shape Miami’s geography in ways that have had continuing impacts on prosperity, inclusion, and environmental quality. In the following section, I explore literature relevant to my thesis and map out the chapters to follow.

1.3 Miami in context

History

⁹⁵ Banner, “A Review of the Economic and Cultural Problems,” 6.

⁹⁶ “Conventional Family Locations” (Dade County HUD, February 24, 1993), tables, Adker Case File 041907, cited in: Mohl, “Whitening Miami.”

The shaping of landscape to enforce racial boundaries was not unique to South Florida. Ronald Bayor writes that “throughout the twentieth century city governments accepted racism as a basis for policy decisions and used their powers to maintain segregated societies. Using ordinances, zoning, physical barriers, separate land grants and public housing site and tenant selection, cities as diverse as Chicago, New York, Atlanta, Miami, Detroit and others added an important third force to the federal and private initiatives for segregation.”⁹⁷ As Karen and Barbara Fields demonstrate, segregation is a tool of racecraft – a term they coin to describe the modes by which race is produced and maintained as a tool to subjugate those raced as Black. Racism does not arise from race, but the practice of racism produces the illusion of race. According to the Fieldses, common formulations, such as the assertion that people are segregated because of the color of their skin, frame things so that “segregation disappears as the doing of the segregationists, and then, in a puff of smoke – *paff* – reappears as a trait of only one part of the segregated whole.”⁹⁸

Chanelle Rose’s research on the complicated racial politics of Miami exposes the confusion that often accompanied attempts to maintain segregation in a cosmopolitan city that hosted guests and new residents from the Caribbean, Latin America, and other parts of the United States, especially considering that identification papers force the mutable and contested categories of race into strict classifications. Foreign visitors who presented as Black received significantly more leeway from whites than those known to be Miami residents. But for those who could pass as Latin, segregated lunch counters and other forbidden spaces became

⁹⁷ Ronald Bayor, “Racism as Public Policy in American Cities in the Twentieth Century,” in *Crossing Boundaries: The Exclusion and Inclusion of Minorities in Germany and the United States*, ed. Georg G. Iggers (New York: Berghahn Books, 2001), 70–82.

⁹⁸ Karen E. Fields and Barbara J. Fields, *Racecraft: The Soul of Inequality in American Life* (London: Verso, 2012), 20.

somewhat more open. Lighter-skinned Miamians, adopting the air of a Latin American tourist, could occupy white spaces that were normally forbidden to them.⁹⁹

Miami's history as a destination for migrants and tourists was part of a carefully-cultivated public image as a place where "the rules are different" – a tropical enclave within the borders of the United States.¹⁰⁰ The urban historian Raymond Mohl has explored the way that such images connect to collective memory, and how they relate to Miami's power dynamics. The "first" Miami describes the tourist destination the city's boosters have carefully cultivated since the late 1890s, where natural and artificially constructed beaches and year-round sunshine attracted visitors from the United States and Latin America. The "second" Miami refers to the later image of "Vice City," the Miami controlled by drug kingpins where planes from Colombia dropped cocaine shipments into the Everglades. Neither was a Miami with a long memory. The "third Miami," meanwhile, describes a different city experienced primarily by its Black population, where memories of police brutality, race walls, displacement, and precarity run deep.¹⁰¹ Marion Moser Jones has explored the way the third Miami experienced environmental vulnerability. The 1926 hurricane devastated the poorly constructed and badly maintained housing in Colored Town, but white Miamians forced Black residents to rebuild white areas before they could turn their attention to their own homes. Poor areas of South Miami experienced a far longer and harder recovery than their wealthy neighbors.¹⁰² And today, in areas experiencing gentrification, activists and residents are concerned that the next powerful hurricane

⁹⁹ Chanelle N. Rose, "Tourism and the Hispanicization of Race in Jim Crow Miami, 1945–1965," *Journal of Social History* 45, no. 3 (March 1, 2012): 735–56, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jsh/shr087>.

¹⁰⁰ Gary R. Mormino, *Land of Sunshine, State of Dreams: A Social History of Modern Florida* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2008).

¹⁰¹ Raymond A Mohl, "Shadows in the Sunshine: Race and Ethnicity in Miami," *Tequesta*, 1989, 18.

¹⁰² Jones, "Tempest in the Forbidden City."

could accelerate the pace of gentrification as it did in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, flattening older properties to make way for expensive new developments.¹⁰³

Understanding climate change

It is easy to classify climate change as a recent and unprecedented phenomenon, but this study focuses on its historical contingency and its connections to myriad other events, regimes, and concepts. A historically informed view of what is termed as climate change is essential to understanding shared and distinct constructions of the climate crisis and what to do about it. For scientists, studying climate change has evolved as an exercise in temporal triangulation. Rising levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere have already affected the Earth in ways measured and unmeasured since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. Some scientists study climate models, feeding them information that yields possible future scenarios. Others study historical documents and natural artifacts – like ancient tree rings or cores of ice that contain air bubbles from thousands of years ago – to understand what the climate was like when the Earth had very different levels of carbon dioxide and other gases. Climate change’s timeline is one of lengthy time lags, slow change, and rapid derangements. Even if all emissions of greenhouse gas were to stop tomorrow, the world would keep warming.

Climate change’s resistance to human comprehension – its uncanny scale and scope – has prompted the philosopher Timothy Morton to reframe it as a “hyperobject,” a disruptive and elusive entity that is intangible and yet weaves its way into everyday life in unsettling ways.¹⁰⁴

But while this understanding offers an original means to think about a force that operates on such

¹⁰³ See: Vincanne Adams, *Markets of Sorrow, Labors of Faith: New Orleans in the Wake of Katrina* (Durham NC: Duke University Press Books, 2013).

¹⁰⁴ Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

a huge scale, it can obscure the human agency behind the social construction of climate change. Historians of science such have shown that understandings of and responses to scientific phenomena are not universal. Ideas, technologies, and responses transform as they travel, influenced by human and nonhuman factors like norms, environments, and infrastructures.

By applying communications approaches to questions concerning local responses to climate change, it is possible, as James Secord suggested, to cross boundaries of “nation, period, and discipline” that are “all too easily taken for granted” in fields like history and sociology.¹⁰⁵ As a communications dissertation, this project engages with publics such as voters, scholars, policymakers, and planners. David Livingstone has shown in *Putting Science in its Place*, when scientific concepts leave the “placeless place” of the laboratory, they are subject to myriad local interpretations as they travel.¹⁰⁶ In this study, I examine Miami as a node for environmental communication, connected to local, national, and international flows.

The dominant scientific understanding of climate change, as historians like Joshua Howe¹⁰⁷ and Paul Edwards¹⁰⁸ show, is historically contingent, stemming in part from Cold War research into the atmosphere that began with nuclear physics and gradually migrated into an understanding of climate. Edwards illustrates how Cold War thinking helped to shape a primarily globally-focused climate science.¹⁰⁹ Howe shows how climate scientists were highly focused on

¹⁰⁵ James Secord, “Knowledge in Transit,” *Isis: A Journal of the History of Science* 95 (2004): 654–672.

¹⁰⁶ David N. Livingstone, *Putting Science in Its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

¹⁰⁷ Joshua P. Howe, *Behind the Curve: Science and the Politics of Global Warming* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014).

¹⁰⁸ Paul N. Edwards, *A Vast Machine: Computer Models, Climate Data, and the Politics of Global Warming* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2010).

¹⁰⁹ Edwards, *A Vast Machine*.

crafting a global climate science community that controlled the way climate change was conceptualized. This global community was, predictably, predisposed to pursue global responses to climate change that focused on global solutions, particularly on the issue of carbon dioxide levels in the air.¹¹⁰

This concentration on global science and global solutions has, as Howe illustrated, meant that local climate effects and policies have until recently been relatively ignored. This enormous scale is an urgent problem. Global climate models lose resolution if you attempt to zoom in on a smaller area. Local climate models are seeing increasing demand as cities and regions attempt to forecast what might happen to them and – crucially – how much time is left specific effects are felt. But mainstream climate science is not a recent discipline, either. Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz argue in *The Shock of the Anthropocene*¹¹¹ that environmental narratives asserting innocence of human-caused environmental changes, including climate change, only emerged in the past few decades and ignore the environmental knowledge that came before.

Such understandings are not separate from modern environmental science and policy. They overlap, intersect, and influence each other. As my research demonstrates, the narratives that stem from these meetings inform the creation of infrastructure, policy priorities, and spatial practices. It has, for example, proven incredibly difficult to get rid of myths claiming that indigenous people’s land practices led to deterioration that requires intervention by “advanced” societies. To cite one specific instance, French claims that the lifestyles of nomadic farmers had led to the desertification of Algeria were proven wrong by scientists who showed that aerosols

¹¹⁰ Howe, *Behind the Curve*.

¹¹¹ Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene: The Earth, History and Us*, Translated by David Fernbach (London: Verso, 2016).

from industrial pollution had disrupted the region's climate, but the narrative is stubbornly repeated in international policy forums.¹¹²

Nevertheless, climate and environmental policies have internalized imperial mythology, perpetuating it through measures that punish indigenous farmers. In Florida, poor white communities and Native Everglades dwellers such as the Seminole and Miccosukee were dispossessed as Everglades drainage dried out thousands of acres of land, killing vast numbers of plants and animals. Alongside the gradual creation of a national park in the Everglades, Everglades residents saw their impoverishment deepen. Following a trend of displacement and erasure all over the country, the Everglades 'wilderness' – or what was left of it – was reserved primarily for the leisure of wealthy whites.¹¹³

Engineering projects represented attempts to conquer a tropical landscape but also to benefit economically from its allure. Miami's tropicality became an important selling point to tourists and potential settlers looking for farmland. New Deal projects in Miami showed a wider awareness, not just of national trends such as the rise in subsistence communities, but of the imperialist and colonial global science that served as the ideological framework and justification for many decisions, especially as they affected Black communities.¹¹⁴ Climate-informed theories of race were marshalled to help to justify and imagine segregation in which everyone took their place in the "natural" order of things.¹¹⁵ In this way, two contingent concepts – race and nature – were naturalized and deployed to reinforce each other.

¹¹² Diana K. Davis, *Resurrecting the Granary of Rome: Environmental History and French Colonial Expansion in North Africa* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007).

¹¹³ Chris Wilhelm, "Pragmatism, Seminoles, and Science: Opposition to Progressive Everglades Drainage," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 90, no. 4 (2012): 426–52.

¹¹⁴ Stuart and Stack Jr., *The New Deal in South Florida*.

¹¹⁵ Gifford, *The Tropical Subsistence Homestead*.

Local governments are once again competing for funds and prestige as they attempt to respond to a set of challenges that come together under terms ranging from sustainability to resilience to climate change. Funding for these projects comes from a range of sources, such as local taxes, philanthropic foundations, and foreign investment. The questions that inform this dissertation come from a curiosity about what it means to conceptualize climate – and more recently climate change – and what to do about it at a local level.

This study situates understandings of climate change within Miami's environmental, political, and urban history. Flooding, hurricanes, and extreme heat are all long-term features of life in the city, as are the responses – like air conditioning and flood defenses – that politicians, engineers, and entrepreneurs have relied on to offer residents and tourists a desirable standard of living. Ultimately, my dissertation will answer three questions: How have environmental beliefs and policies shaped segregation and displacement in Miami? How, in turn, has this history of segregation and displacement informed debates about the built environment? And finally, under what conditions were counternarratives that challenged the status quo able to come to the fore?

Many of the extreme weather events Miami faces as the climate warms (high temperatures, more intense hurricanes, mosquito-borne diseases, flooding, and saltwater intrusion into aquifers) are already part of local consciousness. Drying and saltwater intrusion into the Everglades were observed early in the drainage efforts that exposed land for farming and real estate development. As indigenous oral histories and Merrick's urgent calls for better hurricane observation show, South Florida residents have long been keenly aware of the region's vulnerability to hurricanes, even as boosters attempted to minimize the destruction wrought by hurricanes in 1926, 1928, and 1936. Beyond communities with highly specialized living practices, such as the Seminole and Miccosukee or poor whites living in the swamp, Miami's

livability has relied on transformative technologies, from air conditioning to drainage, that must be constantly maintained and expanded.

“Climate change” has proven particularly capacious and elastic as a term, employed in turn to challenge and reinforce the status quo.¹¹⁶ During the early 1990s, Miami officials promoted emissions reduction and energy efficiency and were rewarded with national and international acclaim. The clerk of the courts, Harvey Ruvin, was invited to attend the UN climate negotiations at Kyoto in 1996, and subsequently testified before Congress on the local benefits associated with reducing emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change. Today, emissions barely arise in policy discussions about climate change as attention shifts to the intensified flooding associated with rising seas. Instead, the term “climate change” might be deployed as a means to allay the concerns of real estate investors as officials attempt to prevent a flight of capital from the city, which, like the rest of Florida, is dependent on real estate dollars for a large part of its income. It may also be deployed to describe what local activists see as a spike in gentrification as developers turn toward cheap land on high ground, which Miami officials had zoned for Black communities and subsequently neglected. According to Houston Cypress, an artist and activist who founded the Love the Everglades movement, Miccosukee leaders have only recently started using the term – they have more frequently used the phrase “global change” – in order to have a say in local policies that affect their home.¹¹⁷

Climate science and climate policies are frequently uncritically portrayed as unalloyed goods, or at least morally neutral. This tendency becomes further entrenched in response to

¹¹⁶ Mike Hulme, *Why We Disagree About Climate Change: Understanding Controversy, Inaction and Opportunity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

¹¹⁷ Houston Cypress in discussion with the author, 2019.

attacks from the fossil fuel industry and the conservative politicians it bankrolls, as documented by Naomi Oreskes and Eric Schmidt in their book, *Merchants of Doubt*.¹¹⁸ These attacks and the scientific community's understandable defensiveness have stifled important conversations about equity in climate science and policy responses. Native protesters and their allies arguing against another telescope at Mauna Loa – also the site where global carbon dioxide levels have been measured since the 1950s – are treated by some scientists as “irrational.”¹¹⁹ Local people do not want to see another sacred site refashioned into another “placeless place,” while the priority of influential scientists is to take advantage of the Hawaiian volcanoes' dry air, which they argue allows for unsurpassed opportunities to explore the cosmos. Climate change, a term often treated as a natural fact in communication literature, shows itself to be highly particular and often contentious in local contexts. The smaller the scale, the less simple it gets. Local politics and, above all, history, are vital to understanding what people talk about when they talk about climate change. Indigenous environmental scholars have led the way in understanding climate change as a term with a history. Kyle Whyte, for example, frames climate change as a form of intensified colonization. Colonialism – and the expanded resources and cheap or enslaved labor it allowed access to – paved the way for capitalism.¹²⁰ Therefore, the links between modern luxuries, environmental destruction, the elevation of Western thought (including science), and the exploitation of labor are shown to be inseparable. Unexamined ideas about climate change can retain assumptions rooted in colonialism and exploitation.

¹¹⁸ Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2010).

¹¹⁹ Steve Miller, “Mauna Kea: Two Cultures and the 'Imiloa Astronomy Center,” *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews* 41, no. 2/3 (June 2016): 222–45, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03080188.2016.1223589>.

¹²⁰ Kyle Whyte, “Indigenous Climate Change Studies: Indigenizing Futures, Decolonizing the Anthropocene,” *English Language Notes* 55, no. 1 (2017): 153–62.

Many communications studies have examined media depictions of climate change, reasons for climate inaction, and the most effective ways to communicate climate science, especially to apparently unreceptive audiences.¹²¹ Few have taken a critical look at what happens when local leaders decide to act, however, and the literature has failed to tackle the subjective ways climate change is communicated and understood. Climate change itself remains a relatively unquestioned concept. Communications studies often treat climate policies as the end goal. Such policies are better conceived of as the beginning of a reckoning with the apparent incompatibility of business and governmental goals with the reduction of harm from climate change. International scientific and political institutions dedicated to climate change, like the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, were built with a grand, global framework for understanding and responding to the issue, and their work is still structured by this understanding.¹²²

Most climate action, however, is not planned according to internationalist visions, but is implemented in patchwork fashion around the world. Climate policies respond to local impacts according to local priorities, but little is known of how local governments understand and decide to respond to climate change. Especially in the United States, which has been mired in inaction for decades on the national stage, climate policies are driven by local decisions. It is increasingly urgent to close this gap between policy creation and local agency if we are to understand the changes to our warming world.

¹²¹ Frequently cited examples include: Saffron O’Neill, and Sophie Nicholson-Cole, “‘Fear Won’t Do It’: Promoting Positive Engagement with Climate Change Through Visual and Iconic Representations,” *Science Communication* 30, no. 3 (March 1, 2009): 355–79, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1075547008329201>; and John Cook et al., “Quantifying the Consensus on Anthropogenic Global Warming in the Scientific Literature,” *Environmental Research Letters* 8, no. 2 (2013): 024024, <https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/8/2/024024>.

¹²² Howe, *Behind the Curve*.

Climate communication scholars and researchers often argue against what is called the “two-step” mode of communication,¹²³ the idea that a well-crafted message can be received by an undifferentiated audience. This results in climate communication research that criticizes the two-step model while inadvertently replicating it, focusing on messages rather than interchanges. Most of these studies look at national newspapers or conduct national surveys, a focus that abstracts the notion of climate change and obscures the local. Finally, another problematic tendency in the research is the focus that national surveys place on differences between conservatives and liberals, setting up a dichotomy that pushes scholars and activists to focus on what might persuade conservatives to “care” about climate change. Such studies do not question climate change as a historical and contingent concept with multiple meanings. My research seeks to help rectify such issues, and to show the stakes inherent in climate narratives and their consequences for environmental and social justice.

Exceptions are beginning to emerge, however. In her book *How Climate Change Comes to Matter*, communications scholar Candis Callison illustrates how a socially-informed understanding of climate change is essential in understanding how different groups understand climate change through the lens of their experience and worldview, leading to diverse understandings and responses. Callison considers climate change as a form of life, suggesting vernaculars through which people “understand and articulate our worlds and the nuanced and pluralistic understandings of climate change evident in diverse efforts of advocacy and near-advocacy.” Climate change is understood through international scientific processes and institutions, but to “engage diverse publics and discuss ramifications and potential actions, [...]

¹²³ Matthew C. Nisbet and John E. Kotcher, “A Two-Step Flow of Influence? Opinion-Leader Campaigns on Climate Change,” *Science Communication* 30, no. 3 (March 1, 2009): 328–54, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1075547008328797>.

climate change must become much more than an IPCC-approved fact and maintain fidelity to it at the same time. It must promiscuously inhabit the spaces of ethics morality, and other community-specific rationales for actions while resting on scientific methodology and institutions that prize objectivity and from politics, religion, and culture.¹²⁴

For the Inuit elders she spoke to, for example, climate change cannot be separated from the *longue durée* of change the world is undergoing. It represents a threat to interconnected lifeways and ecologies. Indigenous-led climate policies include the growing movement to grant rights to natural entities such as lakes. When Callison refers to “vernaculars,” she is describing group-specific languages that may be incomprehensible to other groups. She writes: “It is the way that climate change is articulated, used, circulated, and understood that creates its particular form of life and hence its meaningfulness for individuals and groups.”¹²⁵

In this dissertation, I propose an additional facet to the idea of vernacular: that of the local architectural style adapted to local climate and custom, and often taken for granted as natural and permanent. Features and the decisions behind their addition may fade into obscurity despite the role they continue to play; they may change in meaning, or they may be well known and visible. Just as vernacular architecture is not necessarily uniform by area, so do local groups understand climate change in differentiated ways, sometimes to the extent of excluding one another from their activities even as they share interest in the umbrella term, climate change. My focus on the local highlights how differences in local understanding of climate change can be seen and felt in local attitudes but also in material forms, say, in the importance of pumps in

¹²⁴ Candis Callison, *How Climate Change Comes to Matter: The Communal Life of Facts* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 2.

¹²⁵ Callison, *How Climate Change Comes to Matter*, 11.

removing water from Miami's streets and maintaining the confidence of local residents, investors, and prospective property buyers, or in the remaining sections of race walls in areas now feeling besieged by developers looking to parcel up enough land to create new condominiums, malls, and entertainment complexes. Further examples show how a focus on the local can have important implications for science and policy. To cite one instance, recent research shows how local news media in Miami often uncritically report on the city's climate policies despite their potentially significant impacts on local communities, which include increased inequality in the city.¹²⁶ To cite another, Liz Koslov's research on Staten Island shows that residents are organizing together to move away from the coast and return their land to nature while avoiding talk of climate change almost completely.¹²⁷

Communications research methodologies also offer important possibilities for the study of climate change communication. James Carey saw the two-step method – or, in his preferred terminology, the transmission method of communication – as just one means of communication. This mode grew from religious missions to spread Christianity around the world, and from colonial methods of communication to send messages from center to periphery. While this has become the dominant view of what communication is and does, it is not the only one. Carey also names ritual communication as an important but neglected form. While transmission's aim is control over a network, ritual maintains community in space and time. One is not necessarily better than the other, but to truly understand communication, researchers must expand their

¹²⁶ Moses Shumow and Robert E. Gutsche Jr., *News, Neoliberalism, and Miami's Fragmented Urban Space* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016).

¹²⁷ Liz Koslov, "Avoiding Climate Change: 'Agnostic Adaptation' and the Politics of Public Silence," *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 109, no. 2 (March 4, 2019): 568–80, <https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2018.1549472>.

inquiry beyond the transmission model.¹²⁸ Stuart Hall does just that in his theory on encoding and decoding, which shows the ways that audiences can develop resistant readings of messages by powerful institutions such as television stations or scientific bodies.¹²⁹ These readings may open up new ways of understanding and reacting to phenomena like climate change.

Alternatively, ritual may be used to bolster power relations and demonize outside groups, as Andie Tucher's work on the role of family stories shows.¹³⁰ In this dissertation, I show how the transmission model is inadequate to describe the way that communication about climate change occurs. The communication I investigate is temporally layered and multi-directional. It shows that ideas about climate change are constantly circulating and changing according to physical realities, personal and community histories, and power dynamics.

Power

Miami's historical power structure is mirrored in Floyd Hunter's study of another Magic City, Atlanta, which Hunter found to be largely ruled by a "shadow government" that consisted of a small group of businessmen who decided among themselves what would appear on the city's political agenda.¹³¹ Miami's elite, made up at least until the 1970s of white businessmen from the north of the country, were deeply involved in the governance of the city. In the 1970s, as the elite demographic began to include more wealthy Cubans, white businessmen decided to embrace

¹²⁸ James W. Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (Hove, U.K. Psychology Press, 1989).

¹²⁹ Stuart Hall, "Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse [Originally 1973; Republished 2007]," in *Essential Essays, Volume 1*, ed. David Morley (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 257–76, <https://doi.org/10.1215/9781478002413-013>.

¹³⁰ Andie Tucher, *Happily Sometimes After: Discovering Stories from Twelve Generations of an American Family* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014).

¹³¹ Floyd Hunter, *Community Power Structure: A Study of Decision Makers* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1969).

their behind-the-scenes power and formed a secret alliance called the “Non-Group,” which guided decisionmaking and set the agenda for over 15 years.

Scholars have attempted to create more nuance in arguments over city power structures and to establish more sophisticated ways of describing different cities in the United States, creating hybrid classifications that allow for levels of pluralism or the lack of it. According to one study, Miami is a city in transition, potentially moving from a fairly chaotic governance structure that strongly favors the development and tourism industries to one that is potentially less reactive to those interests.¹³² While the study of who actually governs has become more complex, research into the ideological terrain that maintains the tacit and overt agreements that keep Miami’s elite in place is essential. In individual communities and society as a whole, stakeholders wield decisionmaking authority that tends to distort social structures and dynamics as they create, disseminate, and impose a set of attitudes and values.¹³³

Despite Miami’s concerted push to be seen as a national and international leader in responding to the challenges of climate change, there are notable gaps in its policy discussions on the topic. For example, much of the elite discussion about climate change focuses on certain effects, such as sea level rise, and less on others, such as the extreme heat which tends to affect lower-income residents more severely. Discussion of the reduction of carbon emissions has effectively been sidelined, a development that demonstrates what Steven Lukes calls the third dimension of power.¹³⁴ Power, according to Lukes, has three faces. It functions to 1) shape what

¹³² Laura A. Reese and Raymond A. Rosenfeld, *Comparative Civic Culture: The Role of Local Culture in Urban Policy-Making* (London: Routledge, 2016).

¹³³ G. William Domhoff, *Who Rules America? The Triumph of the Corporate Rich*, 7th ed. (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Education, 2013).

¹³⁴ Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

societies talk about, 2) determines which topics will fail to come to the fore, and 3) shapes perception itself, such that local communities might be seen to acquiesce to their own subordination.

The importance of institutions – the state, the family, schools, and the law – in perpetuating symbolic violence and gender inequalities is vital to this work. Lukes writes that power is exercised not just through the decisions made or not made, but that the “bias of the system can be mobilized, recreated and reinforced in ways that are neither consciously chosen nor the intended result of particular individuals’ choices.” He suggested ways in which controversial issues are “kept out of politics, whether through the operation of social forces and institutional practices or through individuals’ decisions.”¹³⁵ According to Gramsci, “submission and intellectual subordination could impede a subordinate class from following its own conception of the world.” Lukes added: “Gramsci viewed civil society in the West as the site where consent is engineered, ensuring the cultural ascendancy of the ruling class and capitalism’s ascendancy.”¹³⁶ But Gramsci also showed how dominant groups are constantly working to shape and reshape hegemony in response to external priorities and critiques.¹³⁷ My work shows how, for example, Miami’s constant drive to maximize real estate values – which is so dominant it has taken on a normative quality – has nonetheless evolved to at least partially acknowledge ecological concerns, histories of displacement, and the arguments of housing activists.

¹³⁵ Lukes, *Power*, 28.

¹³⁶ Lukes, *Power*, 144.

¹³⁷ George Lipsitz, “The Struggle for Hegemony,” *The Journal of American History* 75, no. 1 (1988): 146–50, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1889660>.

Local environmental questions have been important to the examination of power by Lukes and others. Lukes cites Jonathan Gaventa's study, *Power and Powerlessness*.¹³⁸ Despite poor working conditions and dangerous pollution, miners in an Appalachian valley had failed to hold to account the mining company that controlled the town, a firm whose absentee British owner imposed punishing conditions on its workers. The "process of domination generates a hegemonic public conduct and a backstage discourse consisting of what cannot be spoken in the face of power."¹³⁹ Critics have pointed out that Lukes concentrates less on the "power to," positive power that allows for the potential to make change. But other scholars have examined how power may be studied and challenged in the context of climate change. Power relations that are normally taken for granted become more visible in abnormal times, Lukes said. As Margaret Alston argued, post-disaster sites can serve as potential sites to expose and challenge them.¹⁴⁰

Hegemony in cities takes a form, according to John Logan and Harvey Molotch. They described city politics as a "growth machine" that concentrates powerful interests around the attainment of growth at the expense of all other political aims.¹⁴¹ Without vocal anti-growth interests like civic groups, growth machine politics sideline questions such as housing or environmental concerns or co-opt them to achieve growth that adopts the tone but not the implications of social movements. The city's Black community in particular suffered as a result of Miami's growth machine politics.¹⁴² While wealth may counteract the racial stratification

¹³⁸ John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1982).

¹³⁹ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (Newhaven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990).

¹⁴⁰ Margaret Alston, *Women and Climate Change in Bangladesh* (London: Routledge, 2015).

¹⁴¹ John R. Logan and Harvey Molotch, *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place* (University of California Press, 1987).

¹⁴² Nijman, *Miami*.

otherwise deeply felt in Miami, the social mobility of many still depends on the complex, and at times unique, ethnic categories that form an important part of Miami's civic culture.

State politics outside Miami civic leaders' control also play an important part in buttressing the growth machine model. The state has ensured the continuation of a low-wage worker class through a 2003 pre-emption law that ensures no municipality can change the \$8.46 per hour minimum wage, contributing to a housing crisis in a city where rents are skyrocketing but wages for a large part of the workforce remain stagnant. The state's weak tenants' rights make it easy for landlords to evict low-income renters in pursuit of wealthier tenants. Changes in Miami's elite governance structures contribute to the difficulty in tracing the effects of these policies. Where white elites under the New Deal proposed constructing new developments and providing transportation for the Black workers whose low-paid work formed the engine of the Magic City economy, today's service workers face both longer commutes as they move to cheaper properties in North Miami, Florida City, or Homestead, and a policy vacuum that has little interest in helping them.

At the same time, it is important not to class Miami as an "unplanned" city. As my research shows, policies intended to plan and direct growth – though never stop it – have been an important feature of politics both in Miami and in Florida generally. From the East Coast Railway to the Coral Gables master plan, the I-95 route to the urban growth boundary and the Miami 21 zoning plan, planning has been an occasionally influential feature of the Miami growth machine. My dissertation demonstrates the importance of a variety of objects in the Miami imagination, including redlining maps, architects' renderings of a technologically-advanced future, and the drainage infrastructure that may only be widely noticed when it fails.

Infrastructure is the expression of ideology in the land.¹⁴³ I show that power dynamics also shape what appears possible and desirable in Miami. Sheila Jasanoff and Sang-Hyun Kim's concept of sociotechnical imaginaries explains how local contexts, from incumbent infrastructures to conceptualizations of the good life, shape scientific understandings and policy responses. Their work performs an important act of synthesis, bringing the study of communications into conversation with Science and Technology Studies about what climate change is, and what it could become.¹⁴⁴

Critical studies of climate policy also inform my approach. Like other global cities, Miami is enacting climate governance through experimentation, creating "new forms of political space within the city, as public and private authority blur, and are primarily enacted through forms of technical intervention in infrastructure networks."¹⁴⁵ Policies such as tree planting, which may not have fallen under the classification of climate change adaptation or the new, more fashionable term, resilience, are now being classed as climate policies. As Mike Hulme has argued, "[T]he *idea* of climate change is now to be found active across the full parade of human endeavors, institutions, practices and stories."¹⁴⁶

A growing body of research is showing that new environmental policies, enacted within frameworks that are accelerating gentrification, may simply be adding an environmental gloss to

¹⁴³ Ashley Carse, "Keyword: Infrastructure: How a Humble French Engineering Term Shaped the Modern World," in *Infrastructures and Social Complexity*, ed. Penelope Harvey, Casper Bruun Jensen, and Arturo Morita (London: Routledge, 2016),

¹⁴⁴ Sheila Jasanoff and Sang-Hyun Kim, eds., *Dreamscapes of Modernity: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and the Fabrication of Power* (University of Chicago Press, 2015).

¹⁴⁵ Harriet Bulkeley and Vanesa Castán Broto, "Government by Experiment? Global Cities and the Governing of Climate Change," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 38, no. 3 (2013): 361–75.

¹⁴⁶ Mike Hulme. *Why We Disagree About Climate Change: Understanding Controversy, Inaction and Opportunity*. (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

practices that are making cities less and less livable for lower-income residents, raising rents in cheaper areas and forcing those who cannot afford them into environments that are more susceptible to climate extremes.¹⁴⁷ Florida’s conservation movement has historically concentrated on areas it classified as wilderness rather than the social costs of environmental planning, in part due to its makeup. The dominance of wealthy whites within the environmental movement has kept issues like environmental justice peripheral to its overall goals.¹⁴⁸ These patterns also appear in Miami, although environmental groups have begun to work to address justice concerns in recent years. As with other national parks, the conservation movement provided a rationale to displace Everglades residents. City planners used nature to separate communities designated as Black areas from those classed as white ones. This study will argue that even so-called “green infrastructure” – where, for example, mangroves and coral reefs protect shorelines from hurricanes and storm surge rather than more expensive man-made sea walls – can also form part of the segregated makeup of the city if concerted efforts are not made to address historic injustices.

Narrative infrastructure

I use the concept of narrative tradition to discuss the threads that connect Miami’s history and built environment to contemporary environmental beliefs and policies. In this way, I aim to show how the “Miami Way,” for example, has shaped environmental policies. I argue that individuals draw on narrative traditions to create shared meanings around concepts like climate change.

Narratives may conflict, pitting Miami’s planning tradition against the Sunbelt drive toward

¹⁴⁷ Jennifer L. Rice et al., “Contradictions of the Climate-Friendly City: New Perspectives on Eco-Gentrification and Housing Justice,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 44, no. 1 (2020): 145–65, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12740>.

¹⁴⁸ See Carolyn Finney, *Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors* (University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

growth and sprawl, or they may allow for compromises such as the “Smart Growth” agenda that sates growth machine concerns while rhetorically addressing environmental arguments.

Narratives may belong to a dominant culture or they might be marginalized, but these categories need not remain fixed. Campaigns for environmental justice and housing fairness have, for example, moved increasingly into the spotlight after decades at the margins of environmental and political discussions. Miami’s climate policymakers are beginning to address long memories of segregation and displacement in climate education and policy workshops. Narrative traditions are highlighted as spatial practices in landscape studies, where J.B. Jackson showed how human shaping of the land also influences language and beliefs.¹⁴⁹

1.4 Methods

To excavate the historical layering of narratives about place, environment, race, and power in Miami, I conducted archival research focusing on several moments of crisis: the Great Depression and 1926 hurricane; the construction of the interstate highway through Overtown, which intentionally displaced thousands of Black residents; Hurricane Andrew in 1993; the recession of 2008; and Miami’s worsening flooding and extreme weather. I visited the University of Miami, Florida International University, the Black Archives at the Lyric Theater in Overtown, the HistoryMiami Museum, and the libraries at the National Hurricane Center and NOAA Hurricane Research Division. I also conducted 88 hourlong interviews in person and on the phone, and attended the meetings of the Miami Sea Level Rise Committee, the City and County Commission, Miami Climate Alliance, and other community organizations.

¹⁴⁹ John Brinckerhoff Jackson. *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994).

1.5 Subsequent chapters

In this chapter, I have explored how environmentalist, colonial, and planning traditions came together in plans to displace Miami's entire Black population to the periphery of Miami under the rubric of the New Deal, turning features both natural and human-made into tools for segregation. The large-scale displacement city officials hoped for did not materialize, however, until a new federal project – the construction of the interstate road network – presented city and county officials with a new opportunity. Despite its image as a boomtown spreading rapidly and chaotically into the Everglades, I have established the central role that planning played in Miami's development.

In **chapter two**, I show how environmental and public health arguments permeated the city's language in the 1950s and 60s as it solicited support for routing the I-95 expressway through Overtown, leading to the destruction of over 100,000 homes. From there, I turn to the ways that interconnected infrastructure – the road system, Miami's limited light rail service, anti-sprawl measures, and the drainage network – related to the city's civil rights struggles through the 1970s and 80s.

Chapter three examines the significance of Hurricane Andrew in 1992 and its unequal recovery, which proved longer and harder for communities that had been redlined early in the century. I employ a mixture of archival work and interviews to understand the ways different groups like political actors, businessmen, the National Hurricane Center, and investigative journalists arrived at a collective understanding of the hurricane that challenged building practices, but not the sprawl and isolation that made Andrew the most destructive American hurricane until Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

In **chapter four**, I chart the beginnings of a movement to connect Miami's climate change vulnerability to the city's always-present housing crisis and the environmental justice movement, focusing on the archival material of Power U, an Overtown-based grassroots movement. I compare the movement's history-focused campaigns, which combined environmental justice arguments and Overtown residents' most pressing concerns, to Mayor Manny Diaz's attempts to turn Miami into a "green" global city, attracting "creative class" talent from around the world and revenue from a boom in condominium construction while overseeing a crisis in public housing.

Chapter five focuses on the rising prominence of environmental and housing justice arguments in debates about the future of Miami as the city increasingly becomes a symbol of vulnerability – and action – on the national and international stage. I show how this movement has challenged the city's understanding of climate change, especially sea level rise, as primarily a threat to tax dollars from the construction industry, leading to shifts in the makeup of committees and a new focus on affordable housing under the new umbrella term "resilience." At the same time, Overtown, Liberty City, and Little Haiti – all previously neglected areas on high ground away from the coast – are under increasing pressure from developers looking to buy large parcels of land to create new megadevelopments, a shift that some activists suspect is the result of developers looking for land "safe" from sea level rise. I examine how climate change has become understood both as an impetus for gentrification and a galvanizing force for Black communities, despite the difficulties of pushing back development in a city where real estate interests are powerful, well-connected, and a key source of revenue.

In **chapter six**, I summarize my argument before turning to consider Miami's narrative tradition of projecting a future in which current concerns are resolved through technological

fixes. As the limits of technological interventions become increasingly apparent, municipal officials are considering a different kind of approach that includes the incorporation of “green” infrastructure into climate plans and formulating new legislation that takes ecosystems’ role in protecting the land into account. Finally, I reflect on Miami’s history of environmental displacement and the meaning of a just transition in that context.

2. Environmental segregation

A woman looks out of the window of her apartment onto Liberty Square and sees pleasant, two-story homes set around a calm, green rectangle of lawn and shaded by palm trees. In its 1941 report, the Miami Housing Authority was showing off the new life it offered its tenants: green, spacious, well-kept and, above all, improving. Men work in the garden, ensuring their property is tended, as good tenants should. In contrast to the crowded streets of Overtown, the abundant greenery of the nearly 10-year-old public housing development served to attract tenants, but also to show policymakers and the public how quality public housing can improve its residents.¹⁵⁰



Figure 5: Artist's rendering of Liberty Square (Miami Housing Authority, *Forward for Better Housing* (1942) Florida International University Government Documents Collection.)

By the late 1960s, Liberty Square's green spaces had been all but swallowed up. The development had formed the nucleus of Liberty City, a collection of old and new neighborhoods that housed many of those displaced from Overtown by the city's urban renewal policies. As developers rushed to build huge blocks as cheaply as possible, green space and amenities disappeared. With lax oversight from the city and county, Liberty City grew hot, crowded, and

¹⁵⁰ "Forward with Better Housing!" (The Housing Authority of the City of Miami, Florida, 1941), Florida International University Government Documents Collection.

lacking in basic amenities. The bargain Miami's planners had offered Overtown's Black residents – a better environment in exchange for leaving their newly valuable land – went unfulfilled. In their new situation, displaced families faced accumulating trash, disease, and infestations as bad as any in Overtown, but with the added blow of being forced from their homes in what was Miami's largest Black community.

This chapter examines Miami urban renewal and transportation projects between the 1960s and the 1980s as a case of environmental segregation. As the result of policies ostensibly aimed at environmental improvements, Black communities experienced a different environmental reality than even nearby white and Latino neighborhoods. I examine environmental segregation in Miami in three ways: 1) through the distinct experiences of the vast majority of Black Miamians, which generated profits and savings for landlords, 2) through displacement that led to slum replication and even greater dislocation from Miami's centers of cultural and fiscal wealth, and, finally, 3) through environmental policies that further ignored, displaced, and disadvantaged Black communities.

Some planners and politicians, keen to decimate Overtown to grow Miami's downtown business district, initially painted new developments for Black citizens as healthier, greener environments. The environmental segregation Black residents experienced in Overtown served as justification for their displacement to ostensibly improved conditions. But as Miami's Second Ghetto grew after the Second World War and low-income housing became primarily the domain of private landlords, Liberty City grew increasingly crowded and hazardous. Rather than reversing environmental segregation, the displacement replicated it. Policies aimed at improving Miami's urban environment, such as urban renewal spurred by federal funds for transportation projects, served to further disconnect and deprive Miami's Black communities. Environmental

measures such as city cleanups and public transportation efforts to reduce the city's energy consumption and air pollution all added to this unequal burden. New train routes favored white suburbanites and led to further urban removals, for example, while cleanups served to shift responsibility for Liberty City's poor environmental standards away from the City of Miami and onto the individuals living there. Even as federal and state governments recognized the environment as a public good, the imperative to preserve and improve environmental equality did not extend to Miami's Black neighborhoods. In the 1980s, new public transportation infrastructure was framed as an environmental initiative to reduce suburban sprawl and countywide energy consumption, yet they benefited wealthy majority-white communities and harmed low-income Black and Latino residents. Even as this public transportation effort enacted further segregation, it also galvanized a new wave of anti-segregationist activism. Unions and other activists connected Black Miami residents' plight with that of Black people in South Africa, drawing on the growing momentum of the anti-apartheid movement in the United States.

The built environment was not the only tool at the disposal of planners who wished to segregate cities. As discussed in the previous chapter, landscape also played an important role in isolating low-income Black and Latino populations while naturalizing their isolation, creating green barriers between ghettos and the rest of the city. These choices followed a colonial pattern. For example, after plague arrived at Dakar in 1914, the French administration established a separate African quarter, a solution formalized by colonial planning as a permanent feature of the segregated city in the 1930s. The urban planner Toussaint foresaw a green barrier between "European Dakar and native Dakar [...] an immense curtain composed of a great park"¹⁵¹ In 1914 the *Miami Herald* argued that "segregation is necessary" to prevent public health crises,

¹⁵¹ David Theo Goldberg, "Polluting the Body Politic," in *Racism, the City and the State*, ed. Michael Keith and Malcolm Cross (London: Routledge, 1992), 48.

citing cases of leprosy in India, South Africa, and the United States. It commented: “If by moving the people complained of we can assist the colored man and his family to become more reliable, moral, and enterprising citizens, we are not only aiding the race, but are making white people safer.”¹⁵² Consciously designed environmental barriers also restricted Black residents’ access to natural amenities, including most beaches. Until the 1960s, Black Miamians were forbidden on Miami Beach after dark unless they could produce identification proving they were employed by the hotels.¹⁵³

The legacy of environmental segregation continues today, but a continuing failure to acknowledge it has allowed so-called “colorblind” environmental and social policies to emerge, even as these policies have often threatened to worsen the situations of marginalized groups. This problem extends far beyond Miami. A study of the United States and Puerto Rico found that tree cover countrywide was distributed not by wealth but by race. Black, Asian, and Latino populations were more likely to live in urban heat islands without dense tree cover.¹⁵⁴ Some theorists have used the term “eco-apartheid” to examine how environmental policies have harmed communities and helped to contribute to deep inequalities in environmental quality. Andrew Ross observed this situation in the prioritization of “green” policies over the basic needs of low-income populations in Phoenix. Environmental policies such as open spaces, mass transit, recycling, mixed-use zoning, and high-density zoning could not ensure clean air, affordable housing, decent jobs, public safety, and accessible healthcare most pressing for low-income

¹⁵² “Progress Made Against Leprosy,” *Miami Herald*, January 29, 1914. Cited in: Connolly, *A World More Concrete*.

¹⁵³ Loewen, *Sundown Towns*.

¹⁵⁴ Bill M. Jesdale, Rachel Morello-Frosch, and Laura Cushing, “The Racial/Ethnic Distribution of Heat Risk–Related Land Cover in Relation to Residential Segregation,” *Environmental Health Perspectives* 121, no. 7 (July 1, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.1289/ehp.1205919>.

Black and Latino communities. Executives from firms relocating to Phoenix for its lax environmental laws simultaneously demanded a clean environment for their own housing and the cost savings they could reap from polluting poor communities.

Urban sprawl contributed to the problems of city-center populations, pulling job opportunities and services to the urban fringe and demanding constant investment in new infrastructure.¹⁵⁵ For Daniel Cohen, a future of eco-apartheid means that “longstanding environmental harms and the burdens of the no-carbon transition would be yoked to the necks of poor and racialized workers, while the spoils go to the rich – and especially, in Europe and the Americas, the white.”¹⁵⁶ Even before Miami began planning a response to climate change, the city was already an example of environmental segregation. Without specific attention to the way environmental policies could disadvantage poor and racialized groups, the environmental divide between the wealthy and the rest is likely to deepen.

This characterization adds another layer to discussions of the United States as a segregated country. In Overtown and Miami’s newer Black ghettos alike, residents were forced to live in isolated and harsh conditions, with substandard infrastructure, poor social services, inadequate educational systems, high rates of crime and violence, and a lack of green space – conditions Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton describe as American apartheid.¹⁵⁷ As Miami began to grow in the early 20th Century, its geographic arrangement perpetuated Black residents’ social isolation and economic deprivation. This enriched the city’s landlords, both Black and

¹⁵⁵ Andrew Ross, *Bird on Fire: Lessons from the World’s Least Sustainable City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 71.

¹⁵⁶ Daniel Cohen, “Stop Eco-Apartheid: The Left’s Challenge in Bolsonaro’s Brazil,” *Dissent* 66 (November 14, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1353/dss.2019.0004>.

¹⁵⁷ Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, reprint ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

white, who could collect high rents without properly maintaining their properties. It benefitted business owners who could get away with paying meager wages to Black employees, and it served white workers who, by dint of their physical isolation from minority communities, faced little Black competition for better-paid jobs. In Miami, the historian Nathan D.B. Connolly argued, “Americans, immigrants, and even indigenous people made tremendous investments in racial apartheid, largely in an effort to govern growing cities and to unleash the value of land as real estate. Even today, land and its uses serve as expressions of acceptable governance. And between the 1890s and the 1960s, people built a sturdy and supple infrastructure for white supremacy that remains very much in place.”¹⁵⁸

Segregation proved a lucrative investment, especially in places where the maximization of land value formed the basis of the economy. Slumlords could extract high rents from people who were restricted to specified areas through the threat of racist violence, while profiting from cities’ laissez-faire attitude toward sanitation and upkeep in Black areas. As the urban scholar David Theo Goldberg writes: “Any urban location becomes a potential site for the realization of commercial profit, and rent, and profit maximization tends to be blind to both history and social responsibility.”¹⁵⁹ In a pattern that repeated itself from colonial African port cities in the 19th century to the contemporary United States and Europe, neglect, overcrowding, and poor sanitation – all of which boosted landlords’ profits and saved municipalities money – also produced a continuing justification for the isolation of marginalized populations on the grounds of their poor health and pollution.. The threat that marginalized groups might “transgress or

¹⁵⁸ Connolly, *A World More Concrete*, 13.

¹⁵⁹ Goldberg, “Polluting the Body Politic,” 47–48.

pollute” the social order created reason for its reinvention, “first by conceptualizing order anew and then by (re)producing spatial confinement and separation in these modernized terms.”¹⁶⁰

Apartheid, a system linked with South Africa’s history, did not begin there, nor was it contained within the African continent. Goldberg identified apartheid as a system that circulated between colonial cities and cities in colonizing nations. Colonial urban planning created increasingly divided cityscapes in the first decade of the 20th century. In the years that followed, planning patterns in the United States and elsewhere began to reflect colonial city planning approaches, at least when it came to isolating populations. Through the Federal Government’s 1949 Housing Act, urban renewal was administered through the Division of Slums and Urban Redevelopment.

Urban renewal and public housing programs in the United States, begun in the name of slum clearance, began to produce increasingly divided cities. Between the 1930s and 1970s, the level of spatial isolation in northern U.S. cities doubled.¹⁶¹ These changes proved highly profitable for Miami’s developer class, and segregation remained good for business well into the 1980s. The Southeast of the United States experienced a flood of new money in the 1960s and 70s as industries from the northern and Midwestern states shifted their bases of operation to profit from low-wage southern labor. The region’s history of slavery and sharecropping, racist attitudes, and anticommunist hysteria created an environment in which states could pass laws that hindered unionization and guaranteed low wages.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Goldberg, “Polluting the Body Politic,” 46.

¹⁶¹ Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*.

¹⁶² Ann Willcox Seidman, *Apartheid, Militarism and the U.S. Southeast* (Africa World Press, 1990).

2.1 Environmental segregation and the reform movement

Most studies of environmental activism in South Florida have focused on the exploitation of the Everglades, but a coalition of progressive activists also analyzed environmental conditions within cities. Although most women's clubs might have considered conservation concerns to be limited solely to the wilderness, some concerned themselves with environmental problems inside the metropolis. Associations like the Florida Federation of Women's Clubs did much to advance the conservation of the Everglades, for example, while also leading the drive for improved sanitary conditions, noise abatement ordinances, and trash collection in urban areas.¹⁶³

In the early 20th century, most whites expressed indifference or professed ignorance about the conditions in Overtown and West Coconut Grove, but some reformers began to draw attention to the poor environmental condition of Black areas, connecting environmental and social concerns. Before Marjory Stoneman Douglas became a champion of the Everglades later in her life, she frequently addressed the subject of urban pollution and its unequal burden on Miami's Black communities. Rather than treating the poor conditions as endemic to Black areas, or conceiving of nature as something that exists outside the urban setting, Douglas had grown to appreciate humanity's interdependent relationship with nature, a principle that formed the bedrock of her environmentalism.¹⁶⁴

As a progressive, Douglas faulted institutions rather than individual, for society's problems. In her weekly column, "The Galley", she questioned the values of "shining cities"

¹⁶³ Jack E. Davis, "Green Awakening: Social Activism and the Evolution of Marjory Stoneman Douglas's Environmental Consciousness," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 80, no. 1 (2001): 43–77.

¹⁶⁴ Davis, "Green Awakening."

when poor children continued to live in “grey slabbed shacks in piney places”¹⁶⁵ and called to account the boosters that exploited both nature and humans while commoditizing Florida’s unique ecosystem.¹⁶⁶ The lack of health codes had allowed city leaders to deny basic amenities to low-income, mostly Black neighborhoods since Miami’s founding.¹⁶⁷ But, she later said that slums were generally felt to be “only a natural necessity in a growing city. My feeble packings and scoldings only irritated people.”¹⁶⁸ This indifference was replicated throughout Miami’s power structure, from politicians to developers and planners.

Coconut Grove, where Douglas lived, was home to a small but well-off intellectual community. The West Grove, home to 4,000 Black residents was close by, yet the white community rarely acknowledged the plight of their neighbors in the historically Bahamian district. By the late 1940s, Douglas had joined her friend Elizabeth Virrick in highlighting the environmental and social neglect of the West Grove. In Douglas’s telling, Virrick, who moved to the area in the 1920s, only became aware of the neighborhood’s struggles because she lived so close that she could not avoid them. “Elizabeth Virrick and her husband owned an apartment house backing up to the black area, and that’s how she knew about it,” Douglas said in an interview.¹⁶⁹ Virrick had attended a meeting of the Coconut Grove Civic Club in 1948 to protest

¹⁶⁵ Marjory Stoneman Douglas, “The Galley,” *Miami Herald*, February 23, 1923.

¹⁶⁶ Jack E. Davis, “‘Conservation Is Now a Dead Word’: Marjory Stoneman Douglas and the Transformation of American Environmentalism,” *History Cooperative*, November 25, 2004, <https://historycooperative.org/journal/conservation-is-now-a-dead-word-marjory-stoneman-douglas-and-the-transformation-of-american-environmentalism/>.

¹⁶⁷ Davis, “‘Conservation Is Now a Dead Word.’”

¹⁶⁸ Marjory Stoneman Douglas, “Years I Have Seen: A Prologue,” n.d., Marjory Stoneman Douglas Papers; Box 2; Florida; Prologue folder, University of Miami.

¹⁶⁹ Marjory Stoneman Douglas, “Interview with Marjory Stoneman Douglas: Elizabeth Virrick’s work in Coconut Grove’s black community,” *Everglades Digital Library*, video, June 16, 1983, http://everglades.fiu.edu/two/transcripts/SPC95A_10.htm.

plans by local developers to put multiple units of Black housing on a tract of land in between the Black and white Grove. The reverend of the local Black church, Theodore Gibson, demanded white Grove residents take responsibility for the lack of enforcement of sanitation ordinances and white slumlords' neglect, and vividly described the conditions just a few blocks away. "My people are living seven deep," he told the all-white audience. Virrick visited Gibson the following day, and the two called another meeting where Virrick presented a plan of action. The meeting ended with the creation of the Coconut Grove Citizens Committee for Slum Clearance, with Virrick as chair and Douglas agreeing to oversee publicity for the group.¹⁷⁰

On a visit to the West Grove with Virrick, Douglas said they found that "there were little houses, but they didn't have running water in them, and they had privies in the backyard and wells, and the white people's laundry was being done in the backyards of those houses, with water that was polluted from these backyard privies. [...] White people would build houses for the Negroes to rent that had no toilets or running water in them, and you could imagine the conditions."¹⁷¹ The committee persuaded the water company to extend service to every street and lobbied the Miami City Commission to pass an ordinance through a referendum requiring a flush toilet, sink, and septic tank for every residence. Thanks to the help of several banks, it raised a fund to help homeowners comply with the upgrade requirements.¹⁷² With a \$500 research grant

¹⁷⁰ Raymond A Mohl, "Elizabeth Virrick and the 'Concrete Monsters': Housing Reform in Postwar Miami," *Tequesta* 61 (2001): 5–37.

¹⁷¹ Douglas, "Interview with Marjory Stoneman Douglas."

¹⁷² Mohl, "Elizabeth Virrick and the 'Concrete Monsters.'"

from the Department of Government at the University of Miami, Douglas and Virrick began – but never completed - a book about slum clearance initiatives in American cities.¹⁷³

In this chapter, I argue that the city and county governments imposed environmental segregation on Black residents through a variety of mechanisms. Poor environmental quality in Overtown was the result of lucrative neglect on the part of landlords and lawmakers, while also justifying calls for urban renewal. Officials, determined since the 1930s to expand the downtown business area into Overtown, promised individuals who moved to remote areas in northeast Miami a better environmental quality. But as highway building and urban renewal programs focused on Overtown forced thousands of families to move, developers, landlords, and officials benefited from lax supervision to create a situation of even greater environmental inequality, compounded by increased isolation. Understood in this way, it is possible to see how Miami elites used the environmental concerns as cover to isolate Black Miamians while developers profited from the poor conditions. The neglect of Black neighborhoods added to their precarity, offering justification for displacing old residents with new wealthier ones whenever the land in question became coveted.

I show first that poor sanitation, overcrowding, and lack of basic amenities in Black areas all formed the justification for urban renewal programs through which the city and county further marginalized Black citizens living on land whites desired, pushing them out, “into the sticks,”¹⁷⁴ as Miami native Sharony Green characterized the development her parents moved to. In these areas, slum conditions were quickly replicated to the benefit of landlords and developers.

¹⁷³ Marjory Stoneman Douglas and Elizabeth Virrick, “Slum Clearance, Community Style” (unpublished manuscript, n.d.), Box 2, Elizabeth Virrick Collection, University of Miami.

¹⁷⁴ Sharony Green, “Tracing Black Racial and Spatial Politics in South Florida via Memory,” *Journal of Urban History* 44, no. 6 (1 November 2018): 1176–96, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0096144216688467>.

Secondly, I explain how environmental policies ignored Black communities' needs, worsening their situation while wealthy business leaders profited. City "cleanups" furthered the rhetoric of urban renewal while blaming residents for the poor conditions they lived in, and sent trash to incinerators that disproportionately polluted Coconut Grove's Black community. Finally, I examine how rapid transit policies, ostensibly focused on reducing air pollution and energy consumption, ushered in new waves of gentrification while diverting money from buses, the transit system that most benefited Black residents. In this chapter's conclusion, I examine how the global anti-apartheid movement's influence helped to create an understanding of Miami as an apartheid city, a rhetorical move that galvanized union and community opposition to transportation policies that benefited white commuters but worsened transportation for Black, Latino, and elderly residents.

Virrick enjoyed some successes in encouraging better code enforcement and the extension of utilities into Black areas, but she struggled in her campaign for better homes for Miami's Black community. Miami's powerful developers and other business leaders resisted, drawing on anti-communist and pro-segregationist feeling, as well as hostility to federal social programs.¹⁷⁵ Local officials only became interested in slum clearance in Miami when plans to create an interstate expressway gained federal traction during the 1950s. Plans for a highway system to connect the country with high-speed roads had circulated in federal government since the 1930s, but without success. By the mid-1950s, increased access to cars, affordable mortgages, and fears of Black encroachment on white neighborhoods drew many white families out of cities and into increasingly sprawling suburbs. At the same time, public transit ridership halved between 1945 and 1950, leaving cities choked by traffic jams. Traffic was what finally

¹⁷⁵ Mohl, "Elizabeth Virrick and the 'Concrete Monsters.'"

led metropolitan, state, and federal politicians to agree on the necessity of an interstate system. President Dwight Eisenhower, himself more concerned about the ability to evacuate cities in the case of Soviet aggression, approved the legislation for the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways in June 1956.¹⁷⁶

Local officials were put in charge of deciding the route expressways would take through their cities. In Miami's case, this put the task in the hands of the Miami City Commission. City planners entertained several routes, including a 1955 plan that followed the obsolete Florida East Coast Railway's route into Miami, a trajectory that would have avoided built-up areas of the city. The Wilber Smith engineering firm rejected that plan in favor of a route several blocks to the west to provide "ample room for the future expansion of the central business district in a westerly direction." This route would run through Overtown, and the highway planners located a four-level midtown interchange at the center of Overtown's business district, connecting the interstate with an East-West Expressway. The East-West Expressway, which connected Miami Beach and the airport, would require even more demolition of Overtown's buildings.¹⁷⁷

In 1956 the Miami Planning Board fretted that the Central Business District had not kept pace with the city's overall population growth. It put forward its plan to regenerate the area with new buildings and, crucially, "a traffic plan to end all traffic plans, a very substantial part of a \$193 million program" to ensure that the Central Business District "shall permanently become the most accessible place in a metropolis with upwards of 1 ¾ million inhabitants." It recommended that the CBD should be expanded by 25 per cent to allow for new parking areas

¹⁷⁶ Raymond A. Mohl, 'The Interstates and the Cities: The U.S. Department of Transportation and the Freeway Revolt, 1966–1973', *Journal of Policy History* 20, no. 2 (April 2008): 193–226, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jph.0.0014>.

¹⁷⁷ Raymond A. Mohl, "Interstating Miami: Urban Expressways and the Changing American City," *Tequesta* 68 (2008): 193–226.

and recommended traffic improvements including an expressway, arterial street plan, new traffic system, and the elimination of the Florida East Coast railroad terminal, all in the name of speeding up traffic.¹⁷⁸

Urban ills provided added justification for routing expressways through neighborhoods classed as troubled. Up and down the country, these neighborhoods were inevitably Black, Latino, and white ethnic neighborhoods with dilapidated 19th-century housing stock that local authorities had neglected for decades.¹⁷⁹ Egged on by state and federal highway officials and by private agencies such as the Urban Land Institute, a pattern emerged of using highway construction to eliminate blighted neighborhoods and redevelop valuable inner-city land. This was the approach favored by Thomas H. MacDonald, director of the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads during the formative years of the interstate system. Combating blight with highways was also the policy of New York's influential builder of public works projects, Robert Moses.¹⁸⁰ The interstate became a vehicle for the destruction of marginalized communities, pushed by downtown business interests and developers who saw opportunities in the expansion of the central business districts and the housing of displaced people. Profit maximization, displacement, and the creation of new infrastructure joined other forces in helping to cement Miami's segregated order.

¹⁷⁸ "The Miami Central Business District Facts and Conclusions" (Miami Planning Board, 1956), Florida International University Government Documents Collection.

¹⁷⁹ Mark H. Rose and Raymond A. Mohl, *Interstate: Highway Politics and Policy Since 1939* (University of Tennessee Press, 2012).

¹⁸⁰ Mohl, "The Interstates and the Cities."

2.2 Displacement and the promise of a greener environment

Enormous amounts of housing were destroyed in the process of building the urban sections of the interstate system. By the 1960s, federal highway construction was demolishing 37,000 urban housing units each year, and urban renewal and redevelopment programs were destroying an equal number of mostly-low-income housing units annually.¹⁸¹ Miami planners' ambition from the 1930s onward had been to claim the land Overtown occupied for the expansion of the Central Business District. Twenty years later, their chance had arrived.

Many of those displaced believed they would be able to return to Overtown. Derek Davis left the area in 1968 as part of the urban renewal process. He said:

It was still that promise or that thought left with us that they were moving everyone out of Overtown so they could rebuild the city and make it better and everybody could move back in again; and so, it was that feeling that I had as a child. [...] Yes, we are moving out but one day there will be an Overtown that we can be proud of moving back in and very soon. What I didn't realize then is that the only way that we can get a city like that again is if the community or people in that community who are there fight to get that community back.¹⁸²

The opacity of the renewal process meant that few understood its consequences for their community.

Renewal plans for places designated Federal Neighborhood Renewal Areas under the Metropolitan Dade County Urban Renewal Ordinance of 1960 and an influx of federal financial assistance under the 1949 Housing Act boosted optimism about the future of Overtown. The Atlanta planning firm Hill and Adley Associates Inc. was contracted to carry out the Central Miami Urban Renewal Area plans. The area, consisting of seven blocks bounded by the Florida East Coast railroad, was selected because it had “the highest concentration of substandard

¹⁸¹ Mohl, “The Interstates and the Cities.”

¹⁸² “Impact of Transportation Projects on Overtown,” 1997, Box 4, Black Archives.

housing in 1960 according to the US Census of Housing.” It also provided the “largest close-in area of housing available to Negroes,” easily accessible to downtown Miami and Miami Beach, thus providing a housing resource “vital to the economy and one worthy of the proposed urban renewal program.”¹⁸³

The plan listed areas for conservation as well as clearance and redevelopment to remove conditions that “created or contributed to the substandard character” of the area. It also recommended lightening traffic on residential streets and interconnecting neighborhoods, separating industrial and residential land uses, removing substandard housing, and reducing overcrowding, all while accommodating the “tentative expressway alignment proposed for this area.”¹⁸⁴ The city’s priority was to build the road, however, not to preserve Overtown.

On paper, the city planned to create “an environment conducive to the redevelopment of a sound residential neighborhood and, in addition, to provide logical areas for the expansion and/or further development of commercial and industrial uses.” Where overcrowding could be limited, schools like Booker T. Washington High and Douglas Elementary could be expanded, and room could be made for “beauty and spaciousness.” But the plan also revealed the contortions necessary to rehabilitate a neighborhood while building an expressway through it. The road would slice through Dixie Park, further reducing the limited outside space available to Overtown residents. The planners’ response was to suggest the highway be raised to make additional space for a park – albeit one located underneath the roaring expressway.

¹⁸³ Hill and Adley Associates, Inc., “General Neighborhood Renewal Plan: Central Miami Urban Renewal Area” (Miami: Metropolitan Dade Planning Department, 14 March 1963), Florida International University Government Documents Collection.

¹⁸⁴ Hill and Adley Associates, Inc., “General Neighborhood Renewal Plan.”

The renewal plan provided detailed information about the projected displacement. Overall, the planners expected the expressway and renewal projects to displace nearly 7,000 families. They believed there would be little trouble in relocating Overtown's small white population because of the "fairly good supply of housing available to white persons." But for Black residents, they said, new low-rent public housing would have to be constructed to take in the numbers that would be displaced. Many of Overtown's wealthier families had already begun migrating out as new housing opportunities arose, with some Black Miamians beginning to move into previously all-white areas¹⁸⁵ and others leaving several months before land clearing for the expressway began. But residents with fewer resources often stayed until they were forced to move.¹⁸⁶ Amendments requiring greater local participation and oversight only kicked in after the rapid demolition of large parts of Overtown, first for expressways and then for renewal. Therefore, most residents received little more than 24 hours' notice that they must clear out, with no relocation assistance save a directions to move to what Mohl termed Miami's "Second Ghetto,"¹⁸⁷ meaning formerly white areas and hastily constructed new buildings in the northeast.¹⁸⁸

The City of Miami Housing Authority played a key role in the relocation of Black Overtown residents to the northwest of the city. It was formed in 1937 after Congress created the United States Housing Authority, the same year Liberty Square opened. Its task was to

¹⁸⁵ Raymond Mohl, "Making the Second Ghetto in Metropolitan Miami. 1940-1960," *Journal of Urban History* 21, no. 3 (March 1995): 395-427.

¹⁸⁶ "Affirmative Action: Semi-Annual Report" (Miami: City of Miami, June 1983), Florida International University Government Documents Collection.

¹⁸⁷ Mohl, "Making the Second Ghetto in Metropolitan Miami. 1940-1960."

¹⁸⁸ Marcos Feldman, "The Role of Neighborhood Organizations in the Production of Gentrifiable Urban Space: The Case of Wynwood, Miami's Puerto Rican Barrio" (Ph.D. dissertation, Florida International University, 2011).

eliminate slums through the construction of housing for low-income communities. This included Black citizens living in Overtown – the community the Authority called the “number one sore spot” in Miami – as well as whites living in shacks in places like Knightsville. In its publications, the Authority linked pleasant green surroundings with the promise of clean, healthy, productive living. It positioned decent housing as the key to the “stabilization of family life” and the antidote to the slums that had become “blots upon our ‘City Beautiful.’” The Authority luxuriated in its descriptions of the development’s tropical landscaping: “Liberty Square is beautifully landscaped with grass, bougainvillea around the doors, palms and tropical shrubbery throughout. The white stuccoed buildings radiate a spirit of cleanliness.”¹⁸⁹

According to Housing Authority literature, Liberty Square’s environment had allowed its residents to become model citizens, improving their grounds, keeping them clean, and submitting to a degree of surveillance. The leaflet claimed the residents welcomed advice, suggestions, and inspections. Tenants had adjusted to “the Liberty Square environment of thrift, health and happiness.” The development contained “the first basketball court for Negroes in Dade County,” hosting the first countywide basketball tournament for Black girls and boys. Alongside good habits, the Authority reported good health in public housing residents when compared to those still living in Overtown. Underscoring the link between health, good habits, and nature, the leaflet quoted Luther Burbank, a local naturalist:

I give the plants upon which I am at work in a test... the best possible environment. So should it be with a child, if you want to develop it in the right ways. [...] Plants should be given sun and air and blue sky; give them to boys and girls. [...] All animal life is sensitive to environment, but of all living things, the child is the most sensitive. Surroundings act upon a child as the outside world acts upon the plate of the camera. [...] A child absorbs environment. [...] In child rearing, environment is equally essential with heredity.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ “Forward with Better Housing!”

¹⁹⁰ “Forward with Better Housing!”

In this way, the Authority echoed the refrains of Bright, Gifford, and Merrick in the decades before: a more humane form of segregation that drew on nature as an inspiration.

The authority went on to build over twenty more developments. By 1965, the authority housed over 300 Miamians displaced by expressway construction, code enforcement, and urban renewal programs. Competing with private landlords, the housing authority argued that it offered families an alternative to high-cost slums: “These low-income families would indeed have been ‘victims of progress’ forced to move into other slum housing, to over-crowded small units, to pay 40 to 60 % more of their income for rent – had this community not provided this public housing resource.”¹⁹¹ Photographs compared the slum areas displaced families had left with the lush, green spaces and quiet courtyards in their new accommodations.

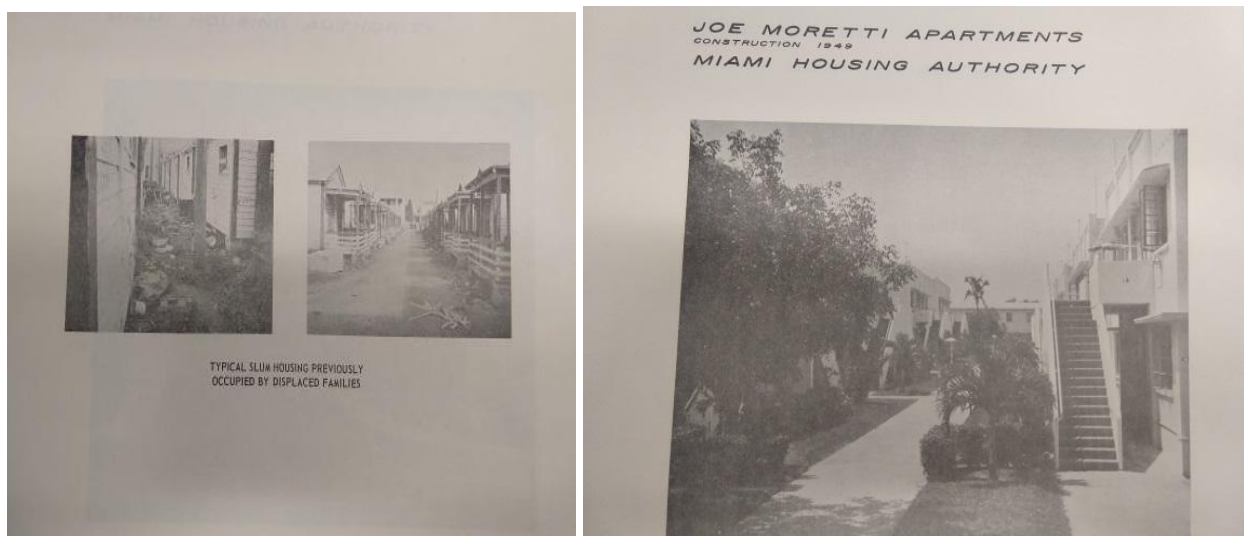


Figure 6: Comparing slum housing to new public developments (‘Relocation Housing Report’ (Miami Housing Authority, 1965), Government Documents Collection, Florida International University.)

In 1964, to comply with the Civil Rights Act, the Authority had passed a resolution stating that all its properties were to be available “upon choice to any applicant regardless of

¹⁹¹ “Relocation Housing Report” (Miami Housing Authority, 1965), Government Documents Collection, Florida International University.

race, color, or creed. This action was one of the first of its kind in the South since it went beyond the requirements of the recent Civil Rights Act required only that public agencies agree to such provisions for all developments placed under contract subsequent to the date of the Executive Order.”¹⁹² The staff working on relocation and placement was integrated, and many Black families expressed their preference for placement in white buildings, a possibility for which the Housing Authority’s Haley Sofge credited Theodore Gibson in a letter dated 1966. Black leaders, however, argued that the system was not enough to create true integration. Donald Wheeler Jones, who had taken over Gibson’s role as head of the local NAACP chapter, asserted that the Housing Association’s policy of “free choice” was hardly likely to encourage integration given that a white family had little incentive to choose a Black development. Only automatic allocation could achieve integration in public housing. Martin Fine, the Authority’s chairman, defended the system as it stood: “I, personally, would never vote to force a man to move into a certain area. Under present policy we are not violating any federal provisions or intent. Our system is designed to prevent segregation and we are not obliged under the act to force integration.”¹⁹³

Still, displaced Overtown residents were placed in Edison Courts, Victory Homes, and other previously white developments.¹⁹⁴ In its leaflet, the Authority accompanied images of shady greenery with quotes from new residents describing the “quiet,” the “large side yard” where children could play, and the ease with which residents could feel “comfortable and secure.” One tenant in originally whites-only Joe Moretti Apartments remarked on the

¹⁹² “Relocation Housing Report.”

¹⁹³ “‘Free Choice’ In Public Housing Called Sham,” *Miami Times*, October 21, 1966.

¹⁹⁴ Haley Sofge to Theodore Gibson, December 1, 1966, Elizabeth Virrick Papers Box 23, Folder 10, HistoryMiami Archives.

opportunity for social mobility relocation had afforded her: “Fifteen years ago, I was a maid for one of the families here and I used to think how wonderful it must be to have a home like this – and now here I am!”¹⁹⁵

To head off competition from private landlords, Sofge pushed the Housing Authority (increasingly called “Little HUD”) to make public housing the primary venue for relocation. Little HUD would lease existing properties from landlords rather than build hundreds of new apartments and assign buildings new property managers to take over from private companies such as the Bonded Rental Agency, which dominated the private rental market in Miami.¹⁹⁶ The move established the county as the largest provider of housing, but also marked the beginning of a stark decline in the quality of units its residents inhabited, as it took on poor quality units as its own, and inspection and upkeep suffered.

Despite continued assessments of poor environmental quality and housing standards – both from outside officials and Black spokespeople demanding better conditions – Overtown’s displaced residents argued that the community still met many of its residents’ needs. Longtime resident Rosa Green argued that the exclusion of Overtown residents from the renewal planning process had left them without a viable community: “That’s what happens when other people plan for you. Other people plan the expulsory systems and because they did we lost a viable community, a lot of people, a major high school, a florist, newspapers, and it... the list just continues. [...] It was [...] self-sustaining.”¹⁹⁷ Green’s words also paint a different picture of Overtown than one offered by white elites. In her view, despite the obstacles put in their way,

¹⁹⁵ “Relocation Housing Report.”

¹⁹⁶ Haley Sofge, “Public Housing in Miami,” *Florida Planning and Development*, March 1968, 1–4.

¹⁹⁷ “Impact of Transportation Projects on Overtown.”

Overtown's residents had created a vibrant community with thriving businesses, churches, and cultural centers. Urban renewal deprived residents of housing, but also of sources of prosperity and community.

Further demolitions followed the construction of the interstate, but the process was patchy, as was the rebuilding. The incompleteness of Overtown's renewal had created pockets of even worse deprivation, compounding neglect with decay. Commissioner Athalie Range testified before the National Commission on Urban Problems in 1967 that families were living in isolation next to empty lots. Range – who herself owned slum properties for which she charged high rates while neglecting repairs – noted that the “concrete monsters,” the huge blocks that replaced shotgun shacks in Overtown and increasingly elsewhere, were built without a thought for anything other than the “bare necessities of life.” No allowance was made for play areas, and families with no closet space were forced to keep their clothes on the bed. Range noted that housing codes had recently been toughened up, but that as a result, landlords might be forced to evict more tenants to bring their buildings into line.¹⁹⁸

The Housing Authority stepped up its drive to encourage Overtown residents to apply for public housing placements. It used the rapidly declining character of the once-viable community to persuade residents to leave for new public housing developments, arguing that Overtown's demolition was inevitable. A 1967 leaflet distributed to Overtown residents told them that the preferential status granted to people living in urban renewal areas meant they could expect a better chance at receiving public housing. These leaflets promised the opportunity to live in a greener, healthier environment - as long as they relocated. Public housing units had “both front and back yards – with trees and grass and plants,” the leaflet explained, and were located near

¹⁹⁸ National Commission on Urban Problems, “Hearings before the National Commission on Urban Problems: Volume 3” (Washington, DC: July-August 1967) <http://archive.org/details/hearings03unit>.

churches, transportation, and shopping. “When a family moves into an apartment, it becomes their home,” it touted. “They would have the same privacy that they would in a home they owned.” By that stage, however, this description was stretching the truth to put a happy gloss on the poorly-built units that were springing up in Liberty City.

The leaflet also promised public input into the urban renewal plans, while expanding on the theme of Overtown’s decline. It told residents that urban renewal workers, carrying identification, would visit each household to determine the kind of housing they needed. Overtown had become obsolete, the leaflet said. Ironically, given that the expressway had precipitated the displacement from Overtown, it explained the situation using the metaphor of a car:

Neighborhoods are like automobiles. Automobiles provide many years of service and enjoyment. But as they get older they begin to wear out. For a while the worn-out parts can be replaced. But eventually they can no longer be repaired and new automobiles must be bought.

The same thing happens to neighborhoods. For many years they provide a place to live, work and play. But they too get older and begin to wear out. For a while repairs can be made, but eventually new neighborhoods must be built.¹⁹⁹

Environmental conditions in Overtown were worse than ever by the end of the 1960s. The area had become “an urban wasteland dominated by the physical presence of the expressway. Little remained of the neighborhood to recall its days as a thriving center of black community life, when it was known as the Harlem of the South.”²⁰⁰ The expressway left the area with numerous dead-end streets and no easy route from north Overtown to Booker T.

¹⁹⁹ “Do You Live in This Neighborhood?” (Miami: Metro-Dade County Department of Housing and Urban Development, December 1967), Elizabeth Virrick Papers Box 28, Folder 1, University of Miami.

²⁰⁰ Mohl, “The Interstates and the Cities.”

Washington School.²⁰¹ Charlie Brown, an Overtown resident who had served in an army reconnaissance unit that targeted transportation infrastructure during the Vietnam War, described the destruction of the area: “I’m looking at what happened with I-95 and the transportation activity and relocations of Overtown, it’s the same kind of destruction of a community or village that is going on except you didn’t use fire power, you just [...] in a sophisticated manner disassembled the civic support and then the economic pattern and then got everyone [...] separated.”²⁰² Rebuilding Overtown certainly did not seem like a priority. Between expressway construction and urban renewal, about half of Overtown was razed, but only one urban renewal project out of four was completed in the area.²⁰³

Into the 1960s, several waves of services and programs to manage urban renewal abruptly came and went. As programs failed to produce quick results or generated political opposition, they would be halted or allowed to die. As an account from the late 1970s described it, funding and institutional support for such programs “suffered from an unusual degree of temporal inconsistency,” such that “public housing, urban renewal, below-market-interest-rate subsidies, Model Cities – each has come and gone, leaving unfunded plans and half-finished projects in its wake.”²⁰⁴ Compared to the interstate project, renewal was fragmented and poorly run.

Meanwhile, hundreds of reports justifying urban renewal continued to ignore the effects of segregation. As a 1966 report on “blight” in Miami claimed: “We do not yet know exactly

²⁰¹ “Impact of Transportation Projects on Overtown.”

²⁰² “Impact of Transportation Projects on Overtown.”

²⁰³ “Affirmative Action: Semi-Annual Report.”

²⁰⁴ Susan S. Fainstein and Norman I. Fainstein, “National Policy and Urban Development,” *Social Problems* 26, no. 2 (1978): 125–46, <https://doi.org/10.2307/800277>.

what it is that creates the lower class of life."²⁰⁵ At a meeting of the Sigma Delta Chi professional journalistic fraternity's Atlanta chapter, *Miami Daily News* editor Bill Baggs criticized the press for perpetuating silence about the effects of segregation. "What press has been bold enough to do that basic job to be informing? Very few, very few," he said. "Segregation is a form of slavery." Reticence in the media and political classes meant that environmental segregation could remain a mystery, without clear causes or systematic responses.²⁰⁶

The vagueness that allowed environmental conditions to continue unchallenged was evident in a 1967 appearance by Miami officials before the National Commission on Urban Problems, a body President Lyndon B. Johnson created that January to seek strategies to increase the supply of "decent housing for low income families." Mayor Robert King High began with a sprawling speech praising Miami's natural riches and lauding the "good and bountiful lives most Miamians live." He called Greater Miami "a banquet for the senses — the cleanest, the most well-kept and beautiful metropolitan area that you have seen anywhere in your travels. Why is this so? Why is Greater Miami an oasis, a banquet, a garden, a hauntingly lovely place, even though it is an urban center of more than 1,200,000 people?"²⁰⁷ Displacement and dislocation due to urban renewal, as well as competition from Cuban workers, isolated Black Miamians from an economic boom in the 1960s and 70s and from the idyllic city King High portrayed in his

²⁰⁵ Richard Sterne, "Social Problem Levels in the City of Miami: An Analysis of Social Problem Indices and a Delineation of Problem Areas, Prepared for the City of Miami Community Renewal Program" (Miami: Welfare Planning Council of Dade County, September 1965), Florida International University Government Documents Collection.

²⁰⁶ For a discussion of the ways in which the mainstream political conversations in the United States have avoided discussing segregation's role in the marginalization of Black communities, see: Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, reprint ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

²⁰⁷ National Commission on Urban Problems, "Hearings before the U.S. National Commission on Urban Problems."

speech. While the wealth of white and Latino citizens was increasing, economic conditions for the Black community stagnated.²⁰⁸ King High, able to take advantage of the shared silence about segregation, could treat Black citizens' dire environmental and economic conditions as a baffling problem with no discernable cause as he boasted about the superior environment enjoyed by Miamians who did not have the misfortune to live in slums.

The logic of renewal did not apply evenly for Black and white neighborhoods. In June 1966, city officials revealed another comprehensive plan to renovate and "arrest the decline of four of Miami's older and potentially pleasant neighborhoods," Edison Park, Buena Vista, Wynwood, and Santa Clara, which had become home to some of Miami's "white slums." The plan included the first of several efforts to gentrify Wynwood, which was home to a Puerto Rican neighborhood that overlapped with Overtown. Like Overtown, each of these neighborhoods had also suffered from the construction of the expressway, having lost their principal commercial corridors.²⁰⁹

Home values had declined by up to 20 per cent, and 75 per cent of buildings did "not meet minimum code standards." But unlike Miami's Black areas, redevelopment of these white neighborhoods was designed to stop populations from leaving, an attempt to stem the flight that had already seen 13,000 leave Miami between 1960 and 1965. The plan's "revitalization zones" targeted the places losing white residents fastest, in the hopes of attracting new arrivals by pricing out people of color, such as the area's working-class Puerto Rican community.²¹⁰

Planners believed the freeway would help cure sick neighborhoods and allow property values to

²⁰⁸ "Affirmative Action: Semi-Annual Report."

²⁰⁹ Feldman, "The Role of Neighborhood Organizations in the Production of Gentrifiable Urban Space: The Case of Wynwood, Miami's Puerto Rican Barrio."

²¹⁰ Connolly, *A World More Concrete*, 264.

recover. They directed federal money toward repair grants, sewer installation, and better code enforcement. Miami city and Dade County officials used grants and low-interest loans from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to provide attractive amenities to prospective wealthy white residents, such as parks and libraries.²¹¹ This miraculous release of funds for areas in which Black residents did not live showed that, where city officials wanted to, they could produce urban renewal very effectively. Environmental segregation was a chosen condition, not an accidental consequence of funding difficulties or changes in government programs.

2.3 Environmental segregation in the Second Ghetto

In the days preceding the Republican National Convention in August 1968, a Miami Beach official boasted that the city was an ideal location for the event, having been spared the racial unrest roiling cities like Chicago and Washington, D.C. The boast was lifted straight from the Miami Way playbook – a booster’s assurance that Miami’s rigid racial order meant smooth sailing for outside investors. That hubris was shaken as, on the first day of the convention, a three-day uprising broke out in Liberty City. In its aftermath, a group of local investigators concluded that the unrest did not seem to have been a response to the convention as such. The official’s claim may have fanned the flames, they suggested, as might aggressive policing. Most of all, however, when the investigators went to Liberty City – home to 45,000 people at the time – they found deeply inhospitable conditions. Few trees blocked the searing August sun, and on the streets they observed ubiquitous piles of garbage and infestations of vermin. They did not blame a single event like the convention, even as the future president Richard Nixon used it as a platform to introduce his Southern strategy, which consolidated Republican power through the region’s opposition to civil rights legislation. Instead, they pointed to Miami’s history of

²¹¹ Connolly, *A World More Concrete*, 264.

displacement and the unfulfilled promises of improved surroundings. They wrote: “A lack of effective planning and zoning controls, lax enforcement, of health, sanitation, and maintenance standards and the substantial profits to be derived from the construction and rental of high density low maintenance apartment units have destroyed the original concept of a more civilized and liveable [sic] low-cost housing area. Ironically, one of the reasons for the high population in the Liberty City area has been the displacement of blacks from other areas by various urban renewal and improvement projects without adequate housing provisions having been made for them elsewhere.”²¹²

The northwest section of Dade County, which included Liberty City and formerly white suburbs, was isolated. The growing neglect of this increasingly contiguous area helped to reinforce the effects of environmental segregation, even in wealthier areas. Sharony Green described her 1972 move to Miami Gardens, a formerly white community about twenty or so miles north of Miami: “Sand dunes and empty fields surrounded our often pastel-painted homes. We were in the boondocks.”²¹³ Black residents’ movements into white areas of Miami had created what the historian Arnold Hirsch had noticed in Chicago: a “Second Ghetto” in formerly white areas that left Black communities more isolated than ever before.²¹⁴

Though Liberty Square had begun as an effort to create a healthier urban environment, by 1968, it had lost most of its palm trees and open space. Even the park that white developers had envisioned to keep Black and white neighborhoods separate had not materialized as the lucrative

²¹² Melville Dunn et al., “The Report of the Miami Study Team on Civil Disturbances in Miami, Florida during the Week of August, 1968” (Miami: National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, January 15, 1969).

²¹³ Green, “Tracing Black Racial and Spatial Politics in South Florida via Memory.”

²¹⁴ Arnold R. Hirsch, *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago 1940-1960*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998); Mohl, “Making the Second Ghetto in Metropolitan Miami. 1940-1960.”

buildings multiplied. Urban renewal, in the hands of private developers, had become slum reproduction. New slums had emerged to house those displaced by urban renewal as well as incomers from other areas. Trash collection was so erratic in Black areas in the late 1960s that Commissioner Athalie Range reported garbage was allowed to pile up for weeks outside some apartments in Liberty City. Sanitation workers picked up trash in Black areas only when they had nothing else to do. After facing two postponements on an ordinance that would mandate garbage collection twice a week throughout the city of Miami, Range asked supporters to come to the next commission meeting with bags of trash, which they emptied on the commissioners' desks. The order, finally, was passed.²¹⁵

Private landlords had initially profited from the relocation housing that government agencies had initially been tasked with providing. But by the early 1960s, they had constructed fewer than 800 of a promised 1,500 public housing units.²¹⁶ By the late 60s, Little HUD began its policy of leasing existing buildings from landlords. This meant that public housing in northwest Dade would now occupy the concrete monsters despised by reformers and public housing advocates. Rooms were tiny and without air conditioning, and their surroundings were unfit for children to play in.²¹⁷ Far from the improved conditions the Housing Authority had envisioned 20 years earlier, however, the state instead opted to lower its standards to those of the slum landlords.

Little HUD's change in strategy coincided with a decline in environmental conditions throughout the Second Ghetto. As the 1970s rolled in, Miami's Community Relations Board –

²¹⁵ Marvin Dunn, *Black Miami in the Twentieth Century* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1997).

²¹⁶ Connolly, *A World More Concrete*, 262–63.

²¹⁷ Connolly, *A World More Concrete*, 262–63.

formed during the era of civil rights reforms – detailed a grim picture of conditions in Black neighborhoods. Demand for public housing had swelled while the federal government froze funds, only providing for another 2,000 additional units. Incidents of police brutality and neglect pushed Black residents’ patience to the limit: In Opa Locka a stray bullet killed a bystander and triggered a riot. In South Miami, a disturbance began when police tried to arrest a youth in a youth center. Rapid growth in Second Ghetto areas was overpowering local services. According to the Community Relations Board, residents of Carol City and South Dade in Miami’s outer reaches “saw their communities as orphans with deficient pools and parks, street lighting, water, sewerage, paved streets, and sidewalks.” In the Overtown renewal area, most lots were vacant and empty buildings bred rats. Combined with opportunities denied and brutal police treatment, the poor environmental conditions Black communities continued to endure were proof that optimism about Civil Rights Era measures that did not directly address the injustices Black people suffered was misplaced. The Board wrote: “America can no longer take refuge in the myth of the ‘melting pot.’ [...] Once we have taken off the rose-colored glasses of the sixties which falsely suggest that we are ‘color-blind,’ perhaps then we can bring together the beauty, the energies, and the richness of those diverse societies as synchronized gears...”²¹⁸ Instead, policies purporting to be “colorblind” proliferated, and when applied, they only served to deepen the differences between Miami’s Black neighborhoods and the rest of the city. And beneath the surface, targeted discrimination continued.

Entering the Reagan Era, Dade County showed little interest in maintaining public housing. Unlike private units, Little HUD units were not regularly inspected for code violations because, as a 1985 Grand Jury report noted, the department was exempt from requirements for

²¹⁸“Annual Report 1970-71” (Miami: Community Relations Board, 1971), Florida International University Government Documents Collection.

County building permits and inspections for repairs. Dade County had received approximately \$18 million in Federal Community Development Block Grant funds. Each year, the county distributed around 35 per cent of that money for the rehabilitation of privately-owned housing, while “only a meager amount” had been used to upgrade public housing – around \$500,000. The rest was spent on other projects. The City of Miami, meanwhile, received \$14 million in block grants, 50 per cent of which went to the rehabilitation of private rentals. No City of Miami Community Development money went to public housing, even though over 60 per cent of Dade’s public housing was located within the city limits.

Although Little HUD staff occasionally made repairs when other agencies inspected properties, the 1985 Grand Jury report concluded that their “actions were totally inept,” allowing properties and the neighborhoods where they were located to deteriorate further. In developments like Liberty Square, jurors saw “defective plumbing lines leaking over kitchens and onto food counters, kitchen cabinets falling away from the wall. Leaky roofs, exposed roof beams, exposed electrical wiring, non-functioning space heaters.” Mothers, the report said, “described to us how their children were exposed to raw sewage, rodent and vermin infestation.” In the face of these conditions, Dade County HUD had been “totally unresponsive and unsuccessful” in meeting the need for maintenance. The state of its housing made Dade County one of the “largest slumlords in Dade County,” the Grand Jury declared.²¹⁹

These conditions disproportionately affected the properties Black residents inhabited. In 1968, Dade County assumed responsibility for public housing, overseeing the construction of an additional 5,500 units. The county also opened a separate Section 8 housing office, administering

²¹⁹ “Final Report of the Grand Jury: Fall Term 1985” (Miami: Circuit Court of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida, May 13, 1986).

certificates granting rent subsidy vouchers for private accommodation in better-maintained neighborhoods. The Section 8 office was well-maintained and funded, staffed primarily by Latino workers, and located in places that were difficult for Black applicants to get to. By contrast, the staff at the public housing office was mostly Black and had inferior facilities. An investigation for a 1989 lawsuit filed by Overtown activist Anne Marie Adker found that after it noticed that Black applicants tended to apply for housing in the north of Miami while Latino applicants mostly applied in the south, the county maintained separate north and south waiting lists. A report created by the prosecution with advice from Mohl found that until 1992, the county had excluded public housing residents – most of whom were Black – from the Section 8 program.²²⁰ The plaintiffs won the case, and Little HUD agreed to distribute more Section 8 vouchers to Black applicants, but the neglect of Miami’s crumbling public housing stock continued.

While purported environmental improvements in Black areas often amounted to little more than the destruction of existing housing stock, white areas in Miami took part in national efforts to “clean up” neighborhoods. From the 1900s to the 1970s, the National Clean Up and Paint Up Bureau sponsored community spring cleanups all over the United States, often involving parades and other activities. The bureau was created by the paint industry’s first national professional organization, the National Paint, Varnish, and Lacquer Association. Frequently drawing on a sense of neighborhood pride and patriotism in its marketing materials, the Association collaborated with the Federal Defense Administration to produce a short film in 1954 called *The House in the Middle*. The clip used footage from Operation Doorstep - in which the United States conducted a nuclear weapons test on wood-framed homes, mannequins, and

²²⁰ Marc Mathieu, “A Grim Picture of Miami Dade’s Planned Racially Segregated Housing,” *Miami Times*, July 16, 1998.

cars - to demonstrate how well-kept streets were less vulnerable to a nuclear attack than neglected ones. “The house that is neglected is the house that may be doomed,” the voiceover narrates. Full-scale mock-ups subjected to the test blast “simulate conditions you’ve seen in too many alleys and backyards [...] in slum areas.” Architecture scholar David Monteyne argued that the film drew on the “kind of urban planning research that was used to justify slum clearance,” while claiming that a coat of fresh white paint could help protect decent middle class homes from the heat of an atomic blast. “It is unclear whether the producers intended to draw a parallel between the whiteness of the paint and the preservation of a segregated U.S. suburban society,” Monteyne continued.²²¹ The white supremacist conflation of orderly, well painted homes and white skin formed the other side of environmental segregation, and the desire to maintain it guided decisions such as the siting of waste disposal facilities in Black areas and the concentration of environmental amenities in areas deemed white.²⁴⁰ In this way, the urban landscape and the environmental policies that shaped it contributed in marking who was Black and who was not.

Miami’s annual Clean-up Paint-up Fix-up events were administered by the Miami Committee on Ecology and Beautification, founded in 1958 by E. Albert Pallot, the chairman of Biscayne Federal Savings & Loan Association and a member of the Metropolitan Miami Municipal Board. The committee, made up mostly of Miami’s white downtown elite, was one of the first to explicitly championed urban environmentalism, which it did under a banner of civic pride. The group organized anti-litter campaigns including its annual cleanups, planted royal palms along Biscayne Boulevard, and launched a beautification program with Miami Dade Public Schools. It also organized a week-long Royal Poinciana Festival Week each June to

²²¹ David Monteyne, *Fallout Shelter: Designing for Civil Defense in the Cold War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 28.

celebrate the red blooms of a tree brought to Florida from Madagascar. The Committee, then, promoted Miami's tropical environment, its natural resources, and its ecology.

Like many other cities, Miami continued its annual clean-ups long after the National Clean-up Bureau was shuttered. The logic of whose property was worthy of rehabilitation was reflected in the pages of the Committee's annual reports, which were predominantly populated by whites. In 1967, First Lady Claudia "Lady Bird" Johnson presented Miami with a trophy as a winner in the 1967 National Cleanest Town Contest, bringing the city "into the national spotlight [...] as one of the cleanest, healthiest communities in the country in which to live." This assertion, often echoed in local politicians' pronouncements about the city, reflected only the environment that whites experienced.

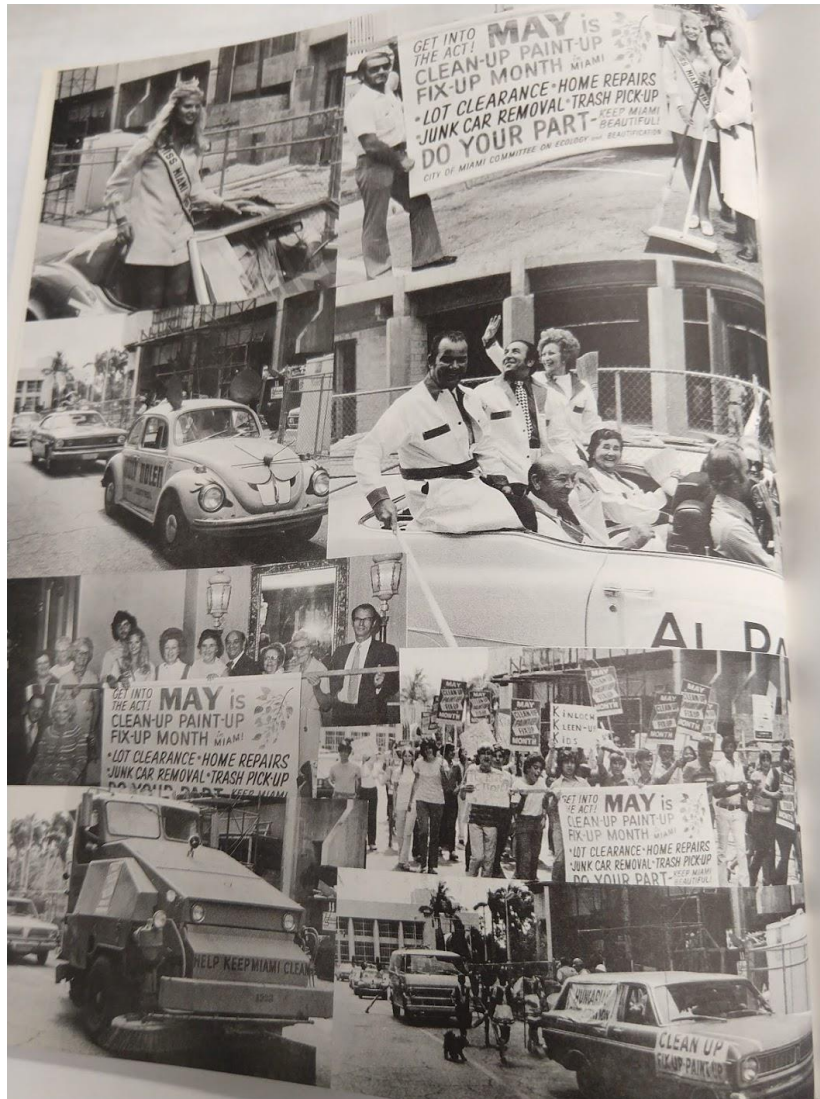


Figure 7: A ‘Clean-up, Paint-up, Fix-up’ parade through Miami (“Annual Progress Report” [City of Miami Committee on Ecology and Beautification, 1970], Florida International University Government Documents Collection.)

Clean-up efforts deflected scrutiny away from neglect by municipalities and landlords, and directed it toward individuals by stressing personal responsibility for maintaining clean streets. Theodore Gibson continued to champion renewal a decade after expressway construction had begun. When a \$28 million urban renewal project was proposed for Coconut Grove, a group of residents formed the Coconut Grove Homeowners Protective Association, which held weekly meetings. The organization’s president was E.W. Franklin Stirrup Jr., a major landlord in the

largely Black West Grove. Stirrup said urban renewal would be better termed “Negro removal,” warning that renewal had left those displaced in “worse circumstances than before.” Gibson, by contrast, called fear about losing homes “unnecessary hysteria,” brought on by a few whites independently looking to buy up property. Gibson told listeners to “repair their homes, clean them up, and fix up their yards.” To Stirrup’s derision, Gibson said: “Urban renewal comes in because an area is run down. And an awful lot of us here don’t want to repair our houses and clean up our yards.”²²² Gibson’s argument was that if renewal came to the West Grove, it would be residents’ fault – a claim that ignored the neglect, poor environmental health, and overcrowding he and Elizabeth Virrick had decried not long before.

Miami’s clean-ups also necessitated that the garbage collected be disposed of somehow. An account of a 1966 clean-up tallied up 227,246 tons of garbage burned at incinerators No. 1 and 2.²²³ Incinerator No. 2 was a huge facility at the center the West Grove, which operated between 1926 and 1970. Stoneman Douglas wrote in 1950: “In the middle of it all, a run-down city incinerator from which the Negro people had no service whatsoever, day and night spewed out its reeking smoke and sooty ash into all open windows and its flaming, blowing, half-consumed rubbish over the nearby frame houses constantly in danger of fire. No one paid much attention to the proper enforcement of city ordinances. There were no colored policemen.”²²⁴ Toxic smoke lit with ashes and embers from the smokestack blackened laundry, forced residents and children at school at Carver High and Tucker Elementary to stay inside, and lit fire to the Grove’s wood-framed houses. Many Grove residents died from various cancers. Delores Baine,

²²² Morton Lucoff, “Negroes in Grove Organize to Fight Renewal Project,” *The Miami News*, April 3, 1968.

²²³ M.L. Reese, “The Miami Story” (The City Manager’s Office, 1963), Florida International University Government Documents Collection.

²²⁴ Marjory Stoneman Douglas, “Coconut Grove, Florida, Faces its Slums,” *Ladies’ Home Journal*, October 1950. Cited in: Davis, “Green Awakening.”

who grew up in the Grove and attended Carver High, recounted being “bathed in ash and ashes from whenever they fired Old Smokey.” Baine said she and her family had all suffered from asthma.²²⁵

Despite protests from Grove residents, the City of Miami expanded Old Smokey’s burning capacity to 300 tons per day in 1960. The city promised a new smokeless incinerator, but the design was so flawed it deposited an estimated one ton of ash into the community every day. It was not until a nearby white community stepped in that things changed; the City of Coral Gables and 22 of its residents sued the City of Miami to shutter Old Smokey for good. Arlene Schokett Tobin, who taught physical education at Carver Elementary in the late 1960s, was family friends with Raymond Nathan, a presiding judge in the Miami-Dade County district court system. She asked Nathan to inspect the incinerator’s effect on the area, which was so bad children had to cover their faces to go out and play. In 1970, Nathan deemed the incinerator a nuisance and ordered it permanently closed.²²⁶ Like the “clean-up” tradition, new environmental policies also had a detrimental effect on Black communities. In this final section, I will examine the toll mass transit exacted on Miami’s Black and Latino communities, as well as the rise of a campaign by union leaders that compared conditions in Miami with the actions of South Africa’s apartheid state.

2.4 Environmentalism, transportation, and the oil crisis

In his 1973 State of the Union address, President Nixon turned to the “crisis of our cities.” Not long before, he argued, city problems had been so rife that observers had claimed cities were doomed as centers of “culture, commerce, and of constructive change.” Public transportation, he

²²⁵ “Old Smokey: A Community History” (Miami: University of Miami School of Law, November 14, 2017).

²²⁶ *City of Coral Gables v. City of Miami*, No. 67–7593 (Florida Circuit Court 27 October 1969).

believed, could lead to better public health and a better environment. To pay for it, he said federal money that had been earmarked for interstate highway construction would be redirected, and mass transit capital grants would increase by \$3 billion. Nixon added: “Good public transportation is essential not only to assure adequate transportation for all citizens, but to forward the common goal of less congested, cleaner and safer communities. As I pointed out a few weeks ago in my message on the environment and natural resources, effective mass transit systems that relieve urban congestion will also reduce pollution and the waste of our limited energy resources.”²²⁷ The growing oil crisis increased federal attention to public transportation as a solution for the declining fortunes of urban centers, but public transportation planning in Miami primarily benefited Miami’s predominantly white suburbs, while it harmed the environmental wellbeing and prosperity of Miami’s Black and Latino communities.

Urban “infill” – increasing density in cities – was becoming an environmental concern for officials worried about the effects of sprawl. This rising concern also reflected the desires of young professionals who no longer wished to commute into town from the suburbs. In 1974, a *Town and Country* magazine profile of Miami found that the infill plans meant that the “gangling adolescent” sprawling out into the Everglades was at last “maturing.” Alongside a changing debutante scene, good nightclubs, and its status as a magnet for tourists from a host of countries, the piece gave much credit to County Manager R. Ray Goode for his efforts to revitalize the city core. Goode had arrived in Miami in 1961 to work as a county budget analyst and had risen through the ranks. He was the principal architect of the Decade of Progress bond issue, a \$553 million capital improvement plan passed by voters in 1972. It qualified for \$2 billion in matching

²²⁷ Richard Nixon, “State of the Union Message to the Congress on Community Development,” (speech, Washington, D.C., March 8, 1973).

funds, leading to new libraries, the Metrorail transit system, and other municipal improvements.²²⁸

Rail transit formed the basis of growing local government interest in reducing the county's energy consumption and controlling sprawl. The Urban Mass Transit Act of 1964 had provided money for local governments to bail out private transit companies and improve urban transit systems. Dade County, like many other metropolitan governments around the country, bought up privately owned and operated local transit systems. Concern about pollution was not the only environmental issue driving local policy. Since the Arab oil embargo of 1973, the oil crisis had sparked efforts to conserve energy in local government that dovetailed with growing anxiety about the pace of urban sprawl, even as easily-permitted and lucrative low-density developments proliferated. Sprawl had caused higher-income Americans' energy consumption to increase significantly since the 1950s, attributable largely to home air conditioning and longer and more frequent car journeys. Spurred by Congress's 1978 Comprehensive National Energy Plan, Dade County's Planning Department produced its own energy conservation goals and policies to be achieved through urban development. It recommended more transit-oriented development – energy efficiency ordinances for construction, solar easements, recycling, and the construction of homes around transit hubs and of mixed-use developments to reduce the length and frequency of car trips.²²⁹

The planners hoped that where the expressway had failed, a new heavy-gauge line called Metrorail could revitalize the urban core. New zoning codes and the attraction of new rail stations would encourage urban infill, “revitalizing” the many pockets of the city that had been

²²⁸ Patricia Linden, “The Maturing of Miami,” *Town & Country*, January 1974.

²²⁹ “Energy Conservation: Proposed Goals and Policies for Urban Development” (Miami: Metropolitan Dade Planning Department, 1978).

allowed to fall to neglect. Miami would construct “towns in town” around some of the new stations, allowing wealthy workers to live within walking distance from their offices. A new civic center, for example, would concentrate public services in one place, from libraries to law courts. These projects, aimed at attracting affluent new residents and workers, failed to serve Black residents. In 1980, four police officers were acquitted of killing Arthur McDuffie after they ran him off the road on his motorcycle and beat him to death. Writing in the *Irish Times* in the aftermath of the 1980 riot, Sean Cronin described what he saw as a tenet of U.S. ideology: The riots were a dangerous fad, not the result – as a Presidential Commission had found in the 1960s – that “America was de facto an apartheid society.”²³⁰ A blue ribbon commission found that “[t]he long-time residents of Overtown have been excluded from virtually all economic prosperity in surrounding areas such as the Garment Center expansion to the north, the OMNI/downtown area to the east, the Civic Center/Hospital Complexes to the west, and the Government Complex to the south.”²³¹ Metrorail added to the list of facilities located in Overtown that were geared toward affluent newcomers rather than existing residents.

Metrorail continued downtown’s encroachment into Overtown.²³² A 1979 analysis for the redevelopment of Overtown judged that its southern portion could become a “significant residential node, offering apartments, townhouses, and perhaps condominiums” to downtown workers. But to make the area attractive for new arrivals, the planners foresaw “significant clearance or rehabilitation of existing buildings and the provision of certain amenities. Residential development in Overtown will also require more evidence of security and area

²³⁰ Sean Cronin, “Miami Rioting Exposes Apartheid America,” *The Irish Times*, May 26, 1980.

²³¹ “Findings and Recommendations” (Miami: Overtown Blue Ribbon Committee, 1984).

²³² Mohl, “Interstating Miami.”

revitalization.”²³³ After the Overtown Metrorail station was built, Dade County planned to ask the Urban Mass Transportation Administration for funds to demolish 260 homes over four blocks and relocate their occupants in order to make room for a “pedestrian plaza, street beautification and open space and recreation improvements.”²³⁴ This would constitute the largest number of families to be displaced by the rapid-transit system, and it was to happen in an area that had already been sliced into sections by the north-south I-95 and east-west I-395 expressway systems. T. Willard Fair, the director of the Urban League of Greater Miami, maintained the old claim that those living in poor housing in Overtown would have the opportunity to move into better circumstances and receive relocation expenses. Fair said the area’s proximity to downtown and the new Government Center meant it was “too valuable for low-income housing.”²³⁵

In addition to displacing more Overtown residents, Metrorail gobbled up funds for Dade County’s bus service, which served over 250,000 riders a day, most of them Black, Latino, or elderly. Back in 1976 when the county commission campaigned for the new \$1.25 billion Metrorail system, the referendum passed by a slim margin due to high Black and Latino turnout inspired by the promise of a fleet of over 1,000 buses. Many of Dade’s Black residents, including those who had moved into town from Florida’s rural hinterlands, relied on public sector jobs like those that would staff Metrorail. Public transportation also offered Black citizens access to desegregated schools, hospitals, public libraries, and jobs. Both through its employment

²³³ City of Miami Planning Department, “A Market Reconnaissance Analysis and Determination of Development Opportunities in the Overtown Area” (Miami: January 11, 1979).

²³⁴ “Metro-Dade Transportation Association: Public Meeting,” *Miami News*, October 31, 1980.

²³⁵ Bill Gjebre, “200 Families Face Displacement in Transit Plan,” *Miami News*, March 5, 1980.

opportunities and freedom of movement, public transportation offered Black citizens a route to the middle class.²³⁶

Around the same time, labor attorney Mark Richard visited the London headquarters of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) where he first heard of union boycotts of products imported from South Africa. One striking poster featured common consumer items from the country riddled with bullet holes and dripping with blood, and was emblazoned with text: “This is Apartheid – Don’t Buy It.” Richard bought dozens of the posters to bring back to the Executive Board of the Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 291 in Miami. Dade County commissioners were demanding concessions from the TWU amounting to \$6,000 per worker, and the workforce was 70 per cent Black and 20 per cent Latino. A TUC official told Richard that “in his opinion the apartheid mentality didn’t only exist in South Africa, it appeared to be alive and well in Miami.” The observation led to a breakthrough in the TWU 291’s strategy to fight Dade County Transit Authority in its strategy “to make minority workers and their communities pay for the mistakes of what experts say is one of the most mismanaged transit systems in the country.”²³⁷ This was a moment when global condemnation of apartheid was rising, drawing attention to the strenuously-ignored subject of segregation in the United States, and increasing the potential embarrassment officials faced as a result of the comparison. By publicly evoking apartheid, the TWU made it much harder to gloss over the county’s tactics as unintended consequences or the workings of the market. The frame of racism put Dade on the defensive.

²³⁶ Andy Banks and Guillermo Grenier, “Apartheid in Miami: Transit Workers Challenge the System,” *Labor Research Review* 1, no. 10 (1 April 1987), <https://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/lrr/vol1/iss10/8>.

²³⁷ Banks and Grenier, “Apartheid in Miami.”

Union members operated Miami's bus service, which served 200,000 predominantly Black, Latino, and elderly riders every day. Ten years after the referendum that founded Metrorail, the county's fleet of buses was the nation's oldest, and had been slashed from 670 vehicles to 500 – a far cry from the 1,000+ buses the community had been promised.²³⁸ Meanwhile, Metrorail trains served just 20,000 riders per day – most of them young, white, and male – while taking up 40 per cent of the Metro Dade Transportation Administration's operating budget. Dade County commissioners planned make up the shortfall from the huge costs of operating Metrorail by cutting bus service and forcing bus riders to make rail transfers to connect to other lines, a shift that required many students in Black and Cuban neighborhoods to leave home two hours early to get to school on time. Black and Latino workers lost jobs after their suddenly interminable commutes made them late, and elderly people found it difficult to reach the county's only public hospital. On top of this, Metro Dade Transit Association (MDTA) also planned to cut union members' wages and increase bus fares by 33 per cent.²³⁹

Over a long battle with the county commission, the union collaborated with the local Black and Latino communities to argue that like the apartheid government of South Africa, Dade County endorsed a dual system of wages, working conditions, and transportation – one for whites, and one for the Black, the Latino, and the elderly. Committees on media organizing, membership action, research and materials, and community partnership mobilized call-ins to the commission, appearances on radio talk shows, rallies, and candlelight vigils. One leaflet was headlined “Apartheid Strikes Dade Transit,” describing the dual systems the union identified. Another called a meeting of a blue-ribbon panel on transportation convened by the commission

²³⁸ Banks and Grenier, “Apartheid in Miami.”

²³⁹ Banks and Grenier, “Apartheid in Miami.”

and MDTA a “Ku Klux Klan meeting.”²⁴⁰ Union representatives were quoted daily on television and in newspapers. One TV news report showed 200 Black and Hispanic transit workers in front of a Metrorail station in a Black neighborhood with signs declaring “Stop Apartheid at Metro-Dade.” Black rail and bus riders joined the workers in pouring rain. City councils in nearby Hialeah, Opa Locka, and Sweetwater were among several who passed resolutions for support, and the Florida Consumers Federation committed to providing trained organizers. National groups such as the Citizen Action lobby also showed support. Chicago and Cleveland officials told the TWU they would support the union if it wanted to call a boycott of conventions and tourism in Dade County.

In mid-August 1986, the union made public a study it had commissioned from the polling firm Professional Research Institute, arguing that MDTA was discriminating against poor elderly Black and Latino transit users. That week, MDTA chief Joe Fletcher was fired and County Manager Sergio Pereira promised the union a better contract that would put the transport workers on a par with white-dominated unions. He also restored some of the canceled bus routes. Commissioners up for reelection said more buses would take precedence over rail expansion. After it emerged that Pereira was not delivering on his contract promises, the union filed unfair labor practice charges against the members of the Blue-Ribbon Task Force. After the union served the Task Force members with subpoenas, the county agreed to drop all but a few demands and grant union members the same raise other county employees had received.²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ Andy Ryan, “Union Plays Racism Card in Contract Debate,” *Miami News*, July 16, 1986.

²⁴¹ Banks and Grenier, “Apartheid in Miami.”

2.5 Conclusion

In linking the experience of Black, Latino, and elderly Miamians to that of Black South Africans living under apartheid, the Transport Workers Union connected with a national and international union movement against the South African government and struck a chord with local transit riders who depended on buses. It would not be the last time Black activists in Miami would invoke apartheid to achieve political ends. In 1990, Miami's Cuban-dominated county commission snubbed a visit from Nelson Mandela due to his refusal to denounce Fidel Castro and Yasser Arafat.²⁴² The Black Lawyers Association, led by H.T. Smith, persuaded Black organizations to boycott Dade County until its officials issued an apology to Mandela, took measures to promote Black economic interests, and reformed the political system to provide greater Black representation. Before the end of 1990, the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Organization of Women had canceled Miami conferences, resulting in a \$60 million loss in convention business.

In talks between Black and white leaders (the Cuban community was excluded), the boycotters won concessions that included a corporate-funded scholarship program at Florida International University, plans to promote Black workers in the Miami tourism business, and a retroactive statement from the Commission honoring Mandela.²⁴³ However, even after mobilizing formidable allies to participate in a three-year boycott, H.T. Smith's demands and the white leaders' concessions resembled Miami elite promises to Black communities after the city's riots. They failed to tackle the causes of Black Miamians' marginalization, promising greater

²⁴² Michael Warren, "Anti-Apartheid Leader's Visit Inspires Blacks, Offends Cubans," *Associated Press*, June 29, 1990.

²⁴³ Guillermo J. Grenier and Max J. Castro, "Triadic Politics: Ethnicity, Race, and Politics in Miami, 1959-1998," *Pacific Historical Review* 68, no. 2 (1999): 273-92, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3641988>.

participation in Miami's economic engine while stopping short of the measures that could fundamentally address the city's systemic racism.

In this chapter, I have explored the ways in which a system of environmental segregation perpetuated the economic and spatial isolation of Black residents, forced them to inhabit an unhealthy environment that shortened lives, increased exposure to extreme heat and illness, and enacted environmental policies that exacerbated the disproportionate environmental burden Black communities bore. I showed how downtown interests used environmental policies to continue attempts to displace Overtown residents. Far from being "colorblind," the policies of the latter half of the twentieth century perpetuated and deepened environmental apartheid in Miami.

3. Making Hurricane Andrew: Sprawl, Smart Growth, and Displacement

In 1997, Bill Clinton addressed a room full of TV meteorologists on his vision for a United States response to climate change in the months before the negotiations for the Kyoto Climate Treaty. Warming up the crowd before Vice President Al Gore offered an early version the climate science presentation that would become *An Inconvenient Truth*, Clinton promised a formula for tackling emissions without tamping down the economic growth the United States achieved in post-war decades:²⁴⁴

[W]e must embrace solutions that allow us to continue to grow the economy while we honor our global responsibilities and our responsibilities to our own children. We have worked too hard here from the first day to revitalize the American economy to jeopardize our progress now. And furthermore, we cannot make changes that will leave whole chunks of that economy out in the cold without having a response to them.

So the question is, can we emphasize flexible, market-based approaches? Can we embrace technology to make energy production more efficient and put fewer greenhouse gases into the atmosphere? Is there, in short, a way out of astronomical taxes or heavy-handed governmental regulation that will permit us to gradually bring down our greenhouse gas production and still grow the economy and enjoy what we've been enjoying here for the last four and a half years? I believe the answer is yes.²⁴⁵

As well as hoping to allay the concerns raised by Clinton's predecessor George H.W. Bush about the effect emissions cuts would have on the economy, Clinton and Gore hoped that weathercasters – who had scientific training and enjoyed levels of public trust that would make

²⁴⁴ Joyeeta Gupta, "A History of International Climate Change Policy," *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 1, no. 5 (2010): 636–53, <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.67>.

²⁴⁵ *Global Climate Change* (Washington, D.C.: C-SPAN, 1997), <https://www.c-span.org/video/?92129-1/global-climate-change>.

any politician or journalist envious – might talk to their audiences about climate change.²⁴⁶

Among the well-coiffed crowd were John Morales and Bryan Norcross, Miami’s top-rated local weathercasters. Thousands of Miami citizens credited the two for saving their lives five years before on the eve of Hurricane Andrew.

On August 24, 1992, Hurricane Andrew wrought \$25.3 billion worth of damage, left 250,000 people temporarily homeless, and killed 65 across the Bahamas, South Florida, and Louisiana.²⁴⁷ In Dade County, around 375,000 people – nearly 20 per cent the population – bore the brunt of the destruction to property. Ten per cent of the county’s total housing stock was rendered “useless.”²⁴⁸ An article in the *Washington Post* described a “sense of excitement” among critics of sprawl who imagined that Andrew had created an opportunity to rethink development patterns. Though they feared that a rush to rebuild could lead to the same old shoddy building practice and the continued proliferation of “strip shopping malls and cookie-cutter subdivisions,” Andrew was also a “tremendous opportunity for sensible regrowth.”²⁴⁹ Disaster experts called Andrew a “laboratory” for understanding disaster mitigation and suggesting new ways forward.²⁵⁰ Despite the excitement, however, the most consequential response to Andrew was reform to the South Florida Building Code, not an effective reevaluation of where building should occur. Development continued apace, but with stricter

²⁴⁶ James Bennet, “Clinton Nudges TV Forecasters On Warming,” *New York Times*, October 2, 1997, <https://www.nytimes.com/1997/10/02/us/clinton-nudges-tv-forecasters-on-warming.html>.

²⁴⁷ Edward N. Rappaport, “Hurricane Andrew,” *Weather* 49, no. 2 (February 1, 1994): 51–61, <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1477-8696.1994.tb05974.x>.

²⁴⁸ “Final Report of the Dade County Grand Jury: Spring 1992” (Miami: Circuit Court of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida, December 14, 1992).

²⁴⁹ William Booth, “Planners Point to Andrew’s Silver Lining,” *Washington Post*, September 21, 1992.

²⁵⁰ David Godschalk et al., *Natural Hazard Mitigation: Recasting Disaster Policy and Planning* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1998), 103.

rules governing what was built. In addition, Miami's aversion to discussing the causes of racial inequality led to a general view that Andrew affected rich and poor alike, masking a starkly unequal recovery process and increasingly divergent levels of wealth.

Clinton's speech offered the prospect of "decoupling" economic growth from emissions, an approach that allowed enjoyment of the fruits of growth without the harm. During the 1980s and 1990s, Miami officials had been attempting their own feat of decoupling, allowing the city to grow and deepen its tax base by attracting wealthy new residents, while halting the creep of sprawl into agricultural areas and sensitive wetlands. The case of Andrew offers a window into attempts to decouple growth from its deleterious effects on a local stage. Studying this balancing act at a local scale shows that the harm inflicted on poor communities – especially Miami's Black communities – through racially-discriminatory legislation and urban sprawl, were carried over into "smart" growth policies.

Disasters expose the weaknesses of societies, but the narratives about the problems – and the solutions – that arise are just as likely to perpetuate them as to spur change. This chapter traces the path to a solution through the actions of several groups: meteorologists and engineers, builders, journalists, a group of businessmen tasked with coordinating the recovery, and architects who proposed a new paradigm of sustainable development in the region. From the interactions between these different groups, a solution emerged to solve the problem of poorly built homes. It avoided tackling the sprawl and growth that had put many in danger, or the discriminatory housing practices that helped to drive growth and left Miami's Black population particularly vulnerable. Andrew was severe enough to displace a quarter of a million people and cause significant changes in Miami-Dade, yet it was still insufficient to spur many hoped-for changes. Instead, growth accelerated, but this time with a stronger building code and better

enforcement. While some argued that the storm was an admonishment of the unadulterated growth machine politics for which Miami was famous, Andrew's story was an important illustration of the resilience of such coalitions and narratives. It illustrated the difficulty of recasting a landscape shaped by state laws that required a constant influx of people and racially discriminatory policies that had encouraged suburbanization, as well as a political consensus about growth.

3.1 The growth before the storm

Miami is frequently described a “growth machine.”²⁵¹ Its political system has been dominated by development interests since the city's inception, but its scope has changed over time. This evolution coincided with a change in Miami's political elites, evolving from a paternalistic system dominated by white bankers and developers to a Latino-dominated ruling class operating in a globalized development market.²⁵² That move coincided with a shift in Miami and many other US cities toward a preference for “value-free development” – the notion that free markets alone should determine land use, and that land-use regulation endangers both the wider society as well as the specific places designated as areas of value. According to this reasoning, markets are the “only legitimate mechanism” for determining not only what is produced, but where and how production should occur, taking control of local business decisions away from communities. Cities like Miami instead did what they could to attract investors in the pursuit of aggregate

²⁵¹ Jan Nijman, *Miami: Mistress of the Americas*

²⁵² Jan Nijman, “Globalization to a Latin Beat: The Miami Growth Machine,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 551 (1997): 164–77.

growth – a goal on which many of the city’s influential citizens agreed, from elected officials to academics.²⁵³

Long before the ascent of Latino leadership, Florida already favored “growth machine” policies. As part of its drive to attract new settlers, the state’s constitution forbade the levying of income taxes. In the absence of income tax revenue, the state’s leaders realized development was one means to increase the state’s tax base, albeit one that necessitated a constant stream of new arrivals and developments. The policy made economic growth and development synonymous.²⁵⁴ Increasing numbers of Cuban migrants beginning in the 1950s and 60s allowed this community to become an increasingly powerful force. The old Miami business elite joined forces with the new Cuban elite to make the most of the international business opportunities Miami provided.²⁵⁵ The city’s internationalization had fostered the emergence of a political and socioeconomic elite dominated by growth interests. Miami’s dominating ethos of profit maximization as a social good - the Miami Way - meant that there were few impediments when the growth machine threatened public interests.²⁵⁶

Miami’s early growth, which had been confined to the coastal ridge and Coconut Grove, had given way to a rise in homesteading in southern and western portions of the county during the Great Depression. That pattern had escalated between the 1950s and 70s with the resurgence of rapid suburban development in the county’s outlying areas. In 1980, the Mariel Boatlift

²⁵³ John R. Logan and Harvey Molotch, *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place* (University of California Press, 1987), 33.

²⁵⁴ Robyne S. Turner and Margaret S. Murray, “Managing Growth in a Climate of Urban Diversity: South Florida’s Eastward Ho! Initiative,” *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 20, no. 3 (March 2001): 308–28, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456X0102000304>.

²⁵⁵ Nijman, “Globalization to a Latin Beat.”

²⁵⁶ Nijman, “Globalization to a Latin Beat.”

brought 120,000 Cubans to Miami, many of whom stayed permanently. After the U.S. abandoned its support of the right-wing Contras in Nicaragua in the late 1980s, an influx of working-class immigrants from Central America, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Haiti moved to the United States. Conversely, migration of whites from other parts of the United States had slowed, becoming negative after 1970. Many long-term residents left the increasingly diverse city: The white population reduced by 24 per cent between 1980 and 1990.²⁵⁷ One former county manager who left government to work for the Babcock Company, one of the nation's largest homebuilders, called the 1980s a "period of a silent hurricane," when development went unchecked.²⁵⁸ Between 1970 and 1990, more than 70 per cent of the county's residential growth occurred in unincorporated Dade. Forty-two per cent of Dade County's developed land was devoted to residential housing, most of which was made up of single-family homes.²⁵⁹

Four powerful building associations operated in South Florida: the Latin Builders' Association, the Builders Association of South Florida, the Associated General Contractors, and the Associated Builders and Contractors. They were all in competition to house the Cuban immigrant community, who had gradually saved enough money to buy their own homes in the suburbs. A handful of companies had built South Dade's new suburbs over agricultural land and wetlands, companies like Lennar, Miami Dade's largest builder, and Arvida/JMB Partners, owned until 1987 by the Walt Disney Company. Developments such as Country Walk, Lakes by

²⁵⁷ Guillermo J. Grenier and Betty Hearn Morrow, "Before the Storm: The Socio-Political Ecology of Miami," in *Hurricane Andrew: Ethnicity, Gender and the Sociology of Disasters*, eds. Walter Gillis Peacock, Betty Hearn Morrow, and Hugh Gladwin (London: Routledge, 1997), 40.

²⁵⁸ Lisa Getter, "A Disaster Long in the Making," *Miami Herald*, December 20, 1992.

²⁵⁹ "Final Report of the Dade County Grand Jury: Fall Term 1989" (Circuit Court of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida, May 15, 1989).

the Bay, and Ridgeview Gardens were advertised as a “city beyond the crowd,” with wide streets, green spaces, and manmade lakes.²⁶⁰

Following a nationwide pattern, Miami’s suburbanization after World War II intensified the racial disparities formalized through Jim Crow segregationist laws and practices that concentrated minorities – particularly Black Americans – into poor, isolated neighborhoods with few opportunities for wealth creation and limited job mobility.²⁶¹ Policies that provided tax breaks for homeownership coupled with the Federal Interstate Highway Program, which connected city centers to cheaper land on the edges of the urban core, to disproportionately benefit affluent, middle-class households. At the bottom of the income spectrum, Miami’s Black population was excluded from these inducements and isolated in depopulating urban centers that were bleeding job opportunities and investment.²⁶² Globalization compounded the problems. Writing in the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew, Yang Zhang said: “[U]neven access to credit (both residential and commercial) and globalization-induced economic restructuring,” which hit Black and Latino populations particularly hard due to the higher proportion of people in lower-skilled jobs, “helped precipitate structural discrimination against poor residents in city centers.”²⁶³ Since 1900, there had been several Black settlements in South Dade: Homestead,

²⁶⁰ Peter Eisner, “Hurricane Debris Sparks Debate: Florida Building Standards Questioned after Killer Storm,” *Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, September 5, 1992.

²⁶¹ Massey and Denton, *American Apartheid*.

²⁶² Terry Moore and Paul Thorsnes, “The Transportation/Land Use Connection: A Framework for Practical Policy” (American Planning Association, Planning Advisory Service, 1994).

²⁶³ Yang Zhang, “Will Natural Disasters Accelerate Neighborhood Decline? A Discrete-Time Hazard Analysis of Residential Property Vacancy and Abandonment before and after Hurricane Andrew in Miami-Dade County (1991–2000),” *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design* 39, no. 6 (December 1, 2012): 1084–1104, <https://doi.org/10.1068/b37121>.

Florida City, South Miami, Perrine, and Goulds. Isolated by the mechanisms of environmental segregation, these rural Black communities also lacked basic amenities and infrastructure.

As subdivisions sprouted in South Dade, the region had begun concurrently to try to mitigate coastal hazards from events like hurricanes and to preserve delicate ecosystems. Starting in the 1970s, officials began to discuss implementing an “Urban Development Boundary” that would prevent new developments from encroaching into the Everglades beyond a designated point. In 1985, Florida adopted the Growth Management Act in an attempt to curb the development encroaching on natural habitats all over the state. At the local level, Dade’s 1988 Comprehensive Development Master Plan prohibited expenditure that subsidized extra development of public and critical facilities and mobile home parks close to the shore in the designated Coastal High Hazard Area. The plan required potential sea level rise to be considered in the design and location of public facilities, and aimed to concentrate growth and development around centers of activity, promote contiguous growth patterns and infill in “blighted and already developed areas,” and protect sensitive natural and agricultural lands to the west.²⁶⁴ The plan contained loopholes, however, allowing it to remain flexible in the face of developer demands. Hotel developers who wished to build in the Coastal High Hazard Area would gain permission by falsely claiming that the structures would be vacant during hurricane season, for example.²⁶⁵ For its part, the anti-sprawl movement’s rhetoric, planning and legislation was almost silent on the roots of the sprawl problem in discriminatory practices such as redlining.²⁶⁶ As I show below, the ensuing measures sought to balance continued population growth and development

²⁶⁴ Godschalk et al., *Natural Hazard Mitigation*, 110.

²⁶⁵ Godschalk et al., *Natural Hazard Mitigation*.

²⁶⁶ Zoë Prebble, “Anti-Sprawl Initiatives: How Complete Is the Convergence of Environmental, Desegregationist and Fair Housing Interests?,” *Buffalo Public Interest Law Journal* 30, no. 1 (September 1, 2011): 197–225.

with environmental preservation, but they relied on old practices of displacement to allow for a theoretical decoupling of growth from environmental impact.

3.2 Finding a narrative

As engineers toured the disaster area in the days following Hurricane Andrew, poor construction began to emerge as a major factor in the scale of the devastation. Focus in the media and public forums shifted toward subpar building practices as the task force found widespread use of roofing staples instead of nails, and homes with roof trusses that were not anchored to walls. Reginald Walters, Dade's Planning Director until 1992, said the competition among builders to slash costs and pocket more profits had become cutthroat, and “shoddy construction” was the result. He said: “I've had builders say to me, ‘Reg, you wouldn't believe the competition, the fierceness, almost to the point of not good business practices.’”²⁶⁷

In this section, I examine the emergence of a response to Andrew that promised stronger buildings, exploring how different groups coalesced to elevate this cause of the destruction above all others. I also discuss less-successful attempts to address the growing sprawl that was putting pressure on South Florida's ecology and infrastructure. Finally, I show how Miami's elite groups avoided addressing the role racial inequality played in Miami's built environment and the way this inequality contributed to vulnerability and lengthened recovery times. This response emerged from elite conversations, but was aided by a network of factors: failing instruments that created a controversy over wind speeds, immigration patterns, earlier investigations into building practices, obdurate suburban infrastructure, disaster recovery legislation, and a lack of flooding. The case of Hurricane Andrew shows how, even when policies do not explicitly discriminate

²⁶⁷ William Booth, “Building Code Shortcuts Blamed for Some Losses,” *Washington Post*, September 2, 1992.

against underserved communities, a failure to address underlying vulnerabilities and power imbalances can instead compound them.

3.3 Meteorologists, journalists, and the boundaries of expertise

Just after 4:30am on August 24, 1992, the storm blew the radar and anemometer – the instrument used to measure wind speed – off the roof of the National Hurricane Center in Miami. Andrew’s winds also decimated other official instruments in the hurricane’s wind field. While the Hurricane Center’s satellites, radars, and airplanes continued to track and forecast Andrew’s progress toward Louisiana, readings from all publicly funded weather stations in the storm’s path were inadmissible. Some broke in the wind. Others, like the one at Homestead Air Force Base were switched off or removed before the storm made landfall. Andrew’s eye – where the strongest winds are found – was only 15 miles in diameter, so it squeaked past the weather stations it failed to destroy. One report read: “Neither of the two conventional measures of hurricane intensity, central barometric pressure and maximum wind speed, were observed at official surface weather stations in close proximity to Andrew at landfall.”²⁶⁸ The limited number of observations meant hurricane scientists had a much harder time estimating Andrew’s maximum sustained wind speed and peak gusts as it hit land.²⁶⁹ To complicate matters further, hurricanes do not behave uniformly over land, especially in built-up areas where trees and buildings interact with the airflow, creating completely different circumstances that range from rapid, violent gusts to relative shelter.

²⁶⁸ Edward N. Rappaport, “Preliminary Report: Hurricane Andrew 16-28 August 1992 (Updated 10 December 1993) (Addendum 7 February 2005 - Category 5 Upgrade)” (Miami: National Hurricane Center, 1993), <https://www.nhc.noaa.gov/1992andrew.html>.

²⁶⁹ Rappaport, “Preliminary Report.”

The National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration's Hurricane Research Division, also based in Miami, released an advertisement in the *Miami Herald* calling for members of the public to send in measurements they had taken on instruments at home during the storm.²⁷⁰ Scientists visited the respondents to interview them and inspect their instruments. They discounted many for what they deemed to be nonstandard measurements, but they judged a few to be credible. A brother and sister living a quarter of a mile apart recorded nearly identical barometric readings, for example, that suggested Andrew had behaved unusually, strengthening over land when hurricanes usually get weaker as they encounter buildings and other obstacles.²⁷¹

The public call came despite the fact that the Hurricane Center knew roughly how fast the storm's winds were. It had tracked Andrew using data from satellites, radars, and specialized "Hurricane Hunter" aircraft. Using these proxies, the Hurricane Center estimated Andrew was around a Category 4 storm with sustained winds of no more than 156 miles per hour.²⁷² But without on the ground estimates of sustained wind speed and highest gusts, the strength of Hurricane Andrew became contestable. Based on studies of the wind damage to buildings, the Wind Engineering Research Council, a group of engineers who study the effect of winds on buildings, claimed the Hurricane Center had overestimated Andrew's average speed over land, especially in the places that had been destroyed. Rather than Category 4, they put wind speeds at Category 2, indicating a sustained wind speed of 96-110 miles per hour. Compounding the

²⁷⁰ The call drew on a long association between professional and non-professional meteorologists. Field networks of lay observers, taking measurements and communicating them to scientific authorities, were essential to early meteorology. See: Jeremy Vetter, "Lay Observers, Telegraph Lines, and Kansas Weather: The Field Network as a Mode of Knowledge Production," *Science in Context* 24, no. 2 (2011): 259–280.

²⁷¹ Mark D. Powell, Samuel H. Houston, and Timothy A. Reinhold, "Hurricane Andrew's Landfall in South Florida. Part I: Standardizing Measurements for Documentation of Surface Wind Fields," *Weather and Forecasting* 11, no. 3 (1996): 304–328.

²⁷² Rappaport, "Preliminary Report."

confusion, the meteorologists and engineers used different terminology and procedures to create surface wind analyses.²⁷³

The groups attacked each other's credibility. Bob Sheets, the head of the National Hurricane Center argued in turn that "so-called wind engineers" were relying on "overly simplistic models" to arrive at their conclusions.²⁷⁴ Sheets called the engineers "highly overrated in their ability to determine what the wind is on the basis of damage." The engineers countered that the hurricane scientists were backing up claims by powerful people that Andrew was an unavoidable act of God, not a tragedy caused by careless growth. "Hurricane Andrew was not the monster that all the developers and all the politicians want to believe," said Peter Sparks, one of the engineers. Sparks said Sheets "wants to give the biggest figures he can lay his hands on. I don't know if he's paid by the mile per hour or what."²⁷⁵ These expert conflicts compounded the narrative focus on building techniques and inspection over other concerns.

The numbers had a direct bearing on the outcomes of cases brought against builders accused of failing to build developments flattened in the storm to code. After the storm, engineers in Jeeps had fanned out into the wreckage of South Dade. In several areas, they found roofs insecurely stapled on and hurricane straps that did not connect to the rest of the house, spurring a crop of class action suits against the developers. If the engineers' estimate were accurate, it would boost the plaintiffs' case. Along with some politicians, developers like Lennar

²⁷³ Mark D. Powell, Samuel H. Houston, and Timothy A. Reinhold, "Standardizing Wind Measurements for Documentation of Surface Wind Fields in Hurricane Andrew," in *Hurricanes of 1992: Andrew and Iniki One Year Later* (Miami: 1993).

²⁷⁴ William Booth, "Most Official Gauges of Hurricane Andrew Were Gone with the Wind," *Washington Post*, October 27, 1992, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1992/10/27/most-official-gauges-of-andrews-speed-were-gone-with-the-wind/e6d64842-b459-4d5e-88d2-d91be4b7571b/>.

²⁷⁵ Booth, "Most Official Gauges."

contended that the winds were so strong that no house could have survived.²⁷⁶ State Attorney General Janet Reno called the Hurricane Research Division to check how strong the winds “really were to allay some of the rumors swirling around.”²⁷⁷ Reno told local reporters: “We are investigating what damage could have been averted and if anyone was criminally responsible.”²⁷⁸ The fight also heightened conflicts between the insurance industry, pushing for more exacting housing codes, and builders who argued insurers were advocating for “bomb-shelter-type homes” – ugly and, worse, expensive.²⁷⁹

A piece in the *New York Times* hinted that the debate was not just about the correct way to measure hurricanes. With homeowners suing builders for fraud and breach of contract, a law professor quoted in the piece said the wind debate was a “classic jury question,” setting up the debate as “one expert versus another expert.”²⁸⁰ The *Times* wrote: “Which number sticks – particularly in the perception of Hurricane Andrew – will shape decisions about the way homes are built, what they will cost and who may shell out how much in homeowner liability lawsuits.”²⁸¹ Expert opinions, then, were central in validating the experiences of those whose homes were destroyed, as well as in steering the direction in which narratives about Andrew would coalesce.

²⁷⁶ Booth, “Most Official Gauges.”

²⁷⁷ Powell, Houston, and Reinhold, “Hurricane Andrew’s Landfall in South Florida. Part I.”

²⁷⁸ Mike Williams, “Andrew Spurs Probe of Building Code Violations All Volunteer-Built Habitat Houses in S. Fla. Survive,” *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, September 8, 1992.

²⁷⁹ “Florida Builders Gird for Lawsuits Over Homes Damaged in Storm,” *New York Times*, October 4, 1992, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/10/04/us/florida-builders-gird-for-lawsuits-over-homes-damaged-in-storm.html>.

²⁸⁰ Curtis Morgan, “Stakes High in Debate over Wind,” *Miami Herald*, October 8, 1992.

²⁸¹ Michael Quint, “A Storm Over Housing Codes,” *New York Times*, December 1, 1995, <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/12/01/business/a-storm-over-housing-codes.html>.

The controversy helped to focus attention on building practices in South Dade. Sheets had long been an advocate of protective measures like hurricane shutters. In an interview after the storm, he told a local academic about how hurricane shutters of his own design had been crucial to his home's survival.²⁸² Sheets advocated revisiting the strengths of past architectural styles. Unlike the engineers or insurers, he did not condemn the South Florida building industry, but focused on newer architectural preferences for airy wood-framed homes over traditional concrete block construction with small windows. At a conference the following year on the lessons learned from Andrew, he argued that the focus on poor construction was misplaced: "I think that the wrong message went around the country today, the message that I find out there is that they believe nearly all the damage was a result of 'shoddy construction'. The fact is, that the great majority of the homes in this community that suffered considerable loss are much better built than 90 per cent of the homes in coastal areas from Texas to Maine."²⁸³ He called Country Walk, the development most famous for its total destruction, "beautiful" and "reasonably priced." The notetaker at the conference session expressed surprise that Sheet's emphasis was on "short-term human and property safety." not "long-term protection and restoration of the environment." This presentation focused on examples of the hurricane's effect on construction, but did not address the hurricane's effect on the natural environment, nor the protection nature affords from hurricanes.²⁸⁴ The challenges to the Center's wind speed measurements and the resulting push to strengthen the Florida building code appeared to have focused Sheets' attention

²⁸² Bob Sheets, interview by Lauren Markoff and Eugene F. Provenzo, Jr., March 3, 1993, https://web.archive.org/web/20060901093009/http://digital.library.miami.edu/andrew/html/sheets__bob.html.

²⁸³ Bob Sheets, "Opening Session: Dr. Bob Sheets," 1993, International Hurricane Center; Box 1; Folder 15, Florida International University.

²⁸⁴ Sheets, "Opening Session: Dr. Bob Sheets."

on building practices, not the systemic causes of hurricane damage. This focus, whether calculated or not, meant that Sheets did not risk censure from local policymakers or the development community.

Other scientists were taking a broader view, however. The National Weather Service (NWS), administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), issued a report on Hurricane Andrew that differed from its usual reports after major storms. “NOAA’s partnership role with states in managing the Nation’s coastal zone, NOAA’s trustee responsibility for marine resources, and other agency wide concerns compel NOAA to step outside of the traditional NWS format in this preface to comment on Hurricane Andrew’s consequences in south Florida and Louisiana,” it read. “We would do well to heed the warnings that population growth and land use practice in the Nation’s Coastal Plains have set a stage for a series of hurricane disasters and associated economic consequences of unprecedented proportions.” Improvements in warnings and forecasts had increased the lead times NOAA and the NWS could give emergency management officials to act. “But, if disastrous consequences are to be mitigated, the coastal zone and other areas at risk must be managed in recognition of the awful threat to life and property that hurricanes pose.”²⁸⁵ Compared to the National Hurricane Center, the National Weather Service was under less of an obligation to work with local municipalities, giving it freer rein to criticize development patterns.

When the coasts were relatively undeveloped, natural systems recovered quickly from hurricanes. But according to the report, migration to the Sun Belt had brought more people and property to the coasts than ever before, and many newcomers had never experienced a hurricane.

²⁸⁵ National Weather Service, “Hurricane Andrew: South Florida and Louisiana August 23-26, 1992” (Silver Spring, MD: U.S. Dept. of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Weather Service., November 1993), <https://www.weather.gov/media/publications/assessments/andrew.pdf>.

The NWS report warned: “This inordinate burden is leading to evacuation times in some areas of the country that are double the effective warning times that the National Hurricane Center (NHC) can provide.” New construction nationwide had occurred primarily on barrier islands and coastal flood plains. “Such development almost never relates to natural geographic or geomorphic limits of areas vulnerable to hurricanes. In most places, infrastructure is designed and subdivisions are approved without reference to the need to evacuate low-lying areas quickly,” it said.²⁸⁶ These problems were exacerbated by the continued destruction of the land’s natural protective features. Localities all over the U.S. had paved over beaches, dunes, tidal wetlands, and mangroves, leaving hard surfaces where soft, yielding systems had once absorbed waves and wind. In addition to enforcing building codes, it argued, state and local officials needed to revise land use planning, approvals, and permits to consider the potential effects of severe storms.

The Hurricane Center and its leader Sheets were prominent voices in the local and national conversation about Andrew, but the NWS’ warnings went largely unnoticed. The Hurricane Center’s involvement in the controversy over the strength of the winds meant it was pulled into the discussion about the correct way to build homes in hurricane zones, but it remained silent on the question of development while Sheets defended building practices in South Florida. Scientists at the National Hurricane Center and Hurricane Research division were not just professional observers. They were also residents of Miami and victims of Hurricane Andrew; James Franklin, a National Hurricane Center meteorologist, who flew into storms in “Hurricane Hunter” airplanes for the Hurricane Research Division, had not bought hurricane shutters in the months before Andrew. When he flew through the storm before it made landfall – an experience he likened to the “Tower of Terror” drop tower ride at Disney World – and then

²⁸⁶ National Weather Service, “Hurricane Andrew.”

had to return home and experience the hurricane again, feeling vulnerable and unprepared after dashing to the shops to buy supplies. “I was about as scared as I remember being. [...], he said. Flying through hurricanes had always been fun. But after Andrew, “suddenly, it was less fun.”²⁸⁷ Andrew was a personal event for Miami scientists, removing the privilege of experiencing it at a remove. This made their decisions more fraught as they contributed to the narrative about the storm, and it also left them and their families physically vulnerable.

In workshops and seminars around the country, the Center did not comment on the pace of development in coastal zones despite the increasing demands it placed on predictive capacity, requiring ever greater speed and accuracy in hurricane science. Ed Rappaport, who was a junior hurricane forecaster at the Center in 1992, was its acting director when I interviewed him in early 2018. He said: “We recognize there are a variety of important factors involved that make this a very complicated subject, including zoning laws, building codes, insurance, the history of the area, and risk tolerance within the community and for individuals. And so, while we want to illuminate these issues, it's also a potentially very politically sensitive concern. We are focused on the area of educating people about what the issues are as opposed to necessarily taking a particular position.”²⁸⁸ The Hurricane Center must ensure people are evacuated in time, but avoiding discussion of overdevelopment, which puts more and more people in harm’s way and forces hurricane scientists to keep pace with ever more accurate predictions, does not mean that they are avoiding taking a position. Logan and Molotch contend that local academics such as scientists, especially those connected in some way to growth machine interests, often encourage

²⁸⁷ James Franklin in discussion with the author, March 13, 2018.

²⁸⁸ Ed Rappaport in discussion with the author, February 14, 2018.

and defend policies that further growth agendas, such as outside investment.²⁸⁹ But the case of Andrew shows the problem was more complicated than that. As Rappaport explained, the Center had to work with a wide variety of municipalities – and any appearance of taking a political position could potentially harm important relationships that needed to be preserved so as to protect populations when a hurricane threatened.²⁹⁰ The importance of development to many coastal economies meant that the Hurricane Center did not talk about the risks overdevelopment pose to communities in areas susceptible to hurricanes, while the National Weather Service report went largely unreported. In the absence of a strong voice from local scientists about the risks of overdevelopment, local and national news media were integral to creating, amplifying, and prolonging the debate about the winds, helping to focus attention on the idea that strengthening the South Florida Building Code could help to ensure Miami was better prepared next time. After the initial impact, media coverage took to contrasting the destroyed suburbs in South Dade with other more sturdily built developments, some of which were just next door. This local and national press helped to promote policy discussion that focused on Miami’s building codes. An influential *Miami Herald* investigation uncovered systematic code violations long suspected in the area. Despite some focus on developers’ lobbying efforts to develop more and more land south of the city, media sources paid far less attention to the runaway development that had created such vulnerability.

Early media reports focused on the storm’s strength and shocking footage of homes reduced to rubble. Andrew was compared to a machine: a freight train, a “blender,”²⁹¹ a

²⁸⁹ Logan and Molotch, *Urban Fortunes*, 307.

²⁹⁰ Rappaport in discussion with the author.

²⁹¹ Lisa Liebmann, “Andrew,” *The New Yorker*, August 1992, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1992/09/07/andrew-2>.

“chainsaw.”²⁹² The aftermath was “like a bomb.”²⁹³ Governor Lawton Chiles said, “I never saw anything like that. It’s like an air bomb went off.”²⁹⁴ The *New York Times* called the landscape “fantastical”: “Tall palm trees yanked out of the ground with balls of roots and turf still attached, leaving lawns looking like pockmarked green carpets.”²⁹⁵ Hurricanes are more common in South Florida than anywhere else in the United States, yet Andrew’s effect on the suburban landscape that had grown up in the previous decades seemed to unsettle observers. Just as the documentary *The House in the Middle* channeled anxieties about Soviet nuclear attack toward the suburban home in the 1950s, these descriptions equated Andrew’s destruction with hostile technologies. Yet this destruction could only have been produced through accelerated suburbanization that placed poorly constructed homes on land that otherwise would have diffused the impact of the winds.

After every natural disaster, groups and individuals try to frame news coverage to their advantage, seeking to avoid blame and, potentially, emerge with a burnished reputation.²⁹⁶ These sources, with all their biases and prejudices, “originate much of what appears on the airwaves, as well as the pages of newspapers.”²⁹⁷ State officials blamed the federal government,

²⁹² Morgan, “Stakes High in Debate over Wind.”

²⁹³ “Hurricane Andrew’s Legacy: ‘Like A Bomb’ In Florida,” NPR.org, accessed March 22, 2017, <http://www.npr.org/2012/08/23/159613339/hurricane-andrews-legacy-like-a-bomb-in-florida>.

²⁹⁴ James Barron, “Hurricane Andrew: Hurricane Rips Through Florida and Heads into Gulf,” *New York Times*, August 25, 1992, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/08/25/us/hurricane-andrew-hurricane-rips-through-florida-and-heads-into-gulf.html>.

²⁹⁵ Barron, “Hurricane Andrew.”

²⁹⁶ Susanna Hornig, “News Frames and the Nature of Truth: The Effects of Quotation Use and Controversy in Stories about Science,” *Southwestern Mass Communication Journal* (Spring/Summer 1989): 41–49; Sue O’Brien, “Disasters and the Making of Political Careers,” in *Risky Business: Communicating Issues of Science, Risk, and Public Policy*, eds. Lee Wilkins and Philip Patterson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 177–96.

²⁹⁷ Lynne Masel Walters and Susanna Hornig, “Faces in the News: Network Television News Coverage of Hurricane Hugo and the Loma Prieta Earthquake,” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 37, no. 2 (1993): 219,

helping to unlock funds and military aid – it was an election year, after all, and George H.W. Bush was trailing Bill Clinton in the polls. After engineers’ reports began to suggest buildings had failed, reporters sought to determine whether someone was to blame for Andrew’s destruction. Their sources weighed in on whether shoddy construction could have been behind the devastation in South Dade. Many officials – often those connected to the development industry – were fatalistic, echoing builders’ claims that the winds were so strong that nothing could have been done to prevent it and avoiding the question of whether so many homes should be built in hurricane zones. Some politicians sided with the developers. The director of the county Building and Zoning Department, Carlos Bonzon (whom the Latin Builders’ Association supported in his bid for County Manager in 1995²⁹⁸) maintained that the South Florida Building Code was the strongest in the country. Eduardo Roca, a general contractor and former Dade building inspector, said, “My personal opinion, when you’re hit with winds of up to 160 miles per hour, something’s got to give.” Miami Mayor Steve Clark, who “hid in his house” after the storm and refused to help the immediate response, said, “There’s nothing we could build today with home construction that would stand. I suspect the wind was over 200 miles per hour.”²⁹⁹

Despite these claims, the word “shoddy” became inseparable from discussions about the city’s housing stock. Some homeowners had suspected that construction was not up to par before Andrew hit. In 1991, owners at Hampshire Homes, a development 21 mile south of Miami, sued Lennar for failing to adhere to the South Florida Building Code after they said they discovered construction flaws. Following the storm, some homeowners said they found nails and staples that

<https://doi.org/10.1080/08838159309364217>.

²⁹⁸ Jim DeFede, “Dade Divided,” *Miami New Times*, January 26, 1995, <https://www.miaminewtimes.com/news/dade-divided-6363795>.

²⁹⁹ “What Went Wrong,” *Miami Herald*, December 20, 1992.

“had gone through the plywood without hitting the trusses and that were much farther apart than the six inches mandated by the South Florida Building Code.”³⁰⁰ Andrew Lopez, a printer who lived in Country Walk, told the *Associated Press*: “It was the most beautiful neighborhood you could imagine. It was picture perfect, New England-style, wood-frame homes. It was our dream house, and in about 50 minutes it was gone. I didn't know it was badly built. Now I've been up on the roof. I've seen all the wood up there – all substandard stuff as far as I can see.”³⁰¹ That hopeful would-be suburbanites – many of them recent immigrants – found their new homes were thinly-constructed simulacra was a potent metaphor. While older, whiter suburbs had survived, Andrew appeared to show that detached homes in leafy surroundings were not available in the same way to everyone.

The destruction of the American dream of suburban tranquility – especially focused on Country Walk - became a major theme in news coverage. Sheets said he suspected part of the reason was that “some people from the media lived there.”³⁰² Soon after Andrew, TV news programs aired frequent discussions on the area's building codes. A CNN segment compared a home built by Jimmy Carter's affordable housing nonprofit Habitat for Humanity, which only received minor damage, to the more expensive homes bought for \$100,000 and \$150,000 in areas like Country Walk, where builders had used wood frames and staples instead of the nails, thereby promoting recommendations for improvements in the South Florida Building Code, like a ban on the use of staples and particle board in constructing roofs.”³⁰³

³⁰⁰ “Florida Builders Gird for Lawsuits Over Homes Damaged in Storm.”

³⁰¹ Catherine Wilson, “Homeowners Find Poor Construction, Risk More with Rebuilding,” *Associated Press*, August 27, 1992.

³⁰² Sheets, “Opening Session: Dr. Bob Sheets.”

³⁰³ “Housing Industry in Florida Will Undergo Policy Changes,” *CNN News*, September 9, 1992.

Prompted by the “finger-pointing”³⁰⁴ between homeowners and builders in Andrew’s aftermath, *Miami Herald* staff met soon after the storm to plan an investigative piece that would get to the bottom of the controversy and achieve a more objective view of what – or who – was to blame for the destruction. Steve Doig, the paper’s research editor, had been working to make his home habitable in the first few days after the storm. When he came back to work, he said, he and his colleagues felt it was time to go beyond covering the day to day recovery. “A group of us began to look at the question: Was this an act of God, or was this somehow our fault?”³⁰⁵ The *Herald*’s investigation illustrates sources’ ability to frame the problems and solutions associated with Hurricane Andrew, as well as the role of “critical incidents” in bolstering the credibility and status of journalists.³⁰⁶

In an interview, Doig said he was “primed” to write the story. He had reported on hurricanes for the *Herald* in the years before Andrew, and in 1991 he had published an article showing that given the relative frequency with which hurricanes made landfall in South Florida, the region was experiencing an unusually long dry spell. The *Herald* had also covered criticism from bodies like the Dade County Grand Jury concerning the weakening of the building code. Further, Doig had written articles on construction in the region that made heavy use of the information contained within tax records like the size of the property, its sale price, and the type and year of construction, among other variables. “I realized we could take the property tax roll,

³⁰⁴ Steve Doig in discussion with the author, June 27, 2019.

³⁰⁵ Doig in discussion with the author.

³⁰⁶ Barbie Zelizer, *Covering the Body* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

merge it with this database of the damage inventory and see if there were patterns,” he said. This research yielded a “smoking gun”: the year of construction.³⁰⁷

Doig’s analysis showed that many of the neighborhoods worst hit were not affected by the strongest winds. Rather, the best predictor of destruction was when the subdivision was built. Doig found that “houses built since 1980 were 68 per cent more likely to be uninhabitable after the hurricane than homes built earlier.” The *Herald* collated experts’ competing conclusions on the causes of the peculiar pattern of damage in South Dade, but Doig also offered his own analysis, drawing on county damage reports, scientists’ wind maps, and property tax records, among others. That December, the *Herald* published Doig’s work as the centerpiece of “What Went Wrong,” a Pulitzer Prize-winning special report. It wrote:

Bad construction or big wind? Poor design or weak building materials? Experts rushed forward to explain. Meteorologists talked of 200 mph wind "streaks" that tore certain houses apart. Engineers saw numerous construction flaws in the rubble. In each case, the expert was forced to draw quick conclusions from a scant sampling of data. No one knew the overall pattern. No one had hard data to back up scores of impressions from the field. After a peak gust reading of 163 mph was registered at the National Hurricane Center in Coral Gables, many believed that a killer storm simply flattened South Florida, like a 160-mph rolling pin.³⁰⁸

The *Herald* had found the answer that others could not. It argued that the age pattern settled the debate over whether the wind was the only culprit, or whether poor design, lax inspections, and inadequate materials were also to blame. The investigation established the *Herald* as an expert voice as well as an adjudicator in the emerging local and national narrative about Hurricane Andrew.

³⁰⁷ Doig in discussion with the author.

³⁰⁸ “What Went Wrong,” *Miami Herald*, December 20, 1992.

“In the past, this would have been the kind of story where we would’ve quoted both sides and left it up to the reader to decide which one’s right and nobody would have had an idea,” Doig said. “But when we were able to get a look at the pattern and to say that new homes were more likely to be destroyed than older ones and to map them and show the quiltlike pattern of the damage and that even in the same winds you have some places that did great and others that were just completely destroyed. And that data went beyond just the words from both sides to show something that people could visualize and begin thinking about, that’s an important element of data reporting.” The *Herald’s* coverage aimed to take “anecdotal findings,” like previous reports by the *Herald* and other media outlets or the findings of Dade’s Grand Jury and put them into context. Doig’s analysis found that a contractor convicted in 1986 of bribing an inspector to approve roofing jobs had built 30 homes left uninhabitable by Andrew.³⁰⁹ The data Doig and his colleagues uncovered gave the *Herald’s* reportage added gravitas at a moment when Andrew’s meaning was still up for grabs.

Doig stressed that journalistic expertise was essential to reading the results of his database investigations. “When you use a computer like this, it doesn’t tell you why,” he said. “It just tells you what happened, and you still have to do traditional reporting to find out why that pattern was there.” The report helped strengthen the case for building code reform. “The construction code has been stiffened,” Doig told *Computerworld* magazine after the Pulitzer announcement. “A new code about to go into effect will address a number of the problems that led to the patterns we found.”³¹⁰ The code – which had been weakened in several areas such as allowing staples instead of nails for roofing – was strengthened, more inspectors were hired, and

³⁰⁹ Gary H. Anthes, “Miami Paper Gets Pulitzer Thanks to Stats Analyses,” *Computerworld*, May 3, 1993.

³¹⁰ Anthes, “Miami Paper Gets Pulitzer.”

inspections were made more rigorous. It was not the data alone, but the combination of quantification and interpretation that made the *Herald* investigation so authoritative.

Doig suggested that the investigation alone could not have led to the prevailing understanding that the disaster was the result of poor building codes. It was also a politically convenient narrative that focused attention on a small part of the problem. The code changes were the most obvious consequence of the story, he added, in part because they were the “easiest to focus on.” The Grand Jury and the *Herald* had shown that the code had been weakened, and that there was a pattern of destruction linked to weakened codes and poor inspections. “There was movement to toughen the building codes and give more resources to the building inspectors and other of the easy fixes that could be done. It’s easy to pass an ordinance saying, okay, you have to use three quarter inch plywood instead of half-inch, or whatever. And then, the people who are making those decisions can sit back and say, ‘Aha, we’ve done something.’”³¹¹

The question of whether the *Herald* would – or could – have pushed a solution that curtailed growth also brings into focus the role of the paper in the wider community. According to Logan and Molotch’s conception of the city as growth machine, anti-growth stances are antithetical to a local newspaper’s overall role in that machine. A pro-growth bias exists regardless of individual reporters’ coverage, or individual articles exploring growth curtailment or the economic inequalities and corruption that result from growth machine politics. They write: “The newspaper has no ax to grind except the one that holds the community elite together: growth. This disinterest in the specific form of growth, but avid commitment to development generally, enables the newspaper to achieve a statesmanlike position in the community. [...] The publisher or editor is often the arbiter of internal growth machine bickering, restraining the short-

³¹¹ Doig in discussion with the author.

term profiteers in the interest of more stable, long-term and properly-planned growth.”³¹² Like many of Florida’s newspapers, the *Herald* had been a bullish advocate of growth in Miami’s early decades, extolling the benefits of investment in the area while minimizing the threat of hurricanes. After the 1926 hurricane killed 372 people and caused \$100 million in damage, the *Herald* and fellow South Florida newspapers, minimized the scope of the damage and the danger of living in a hurricane area. Time and again, when devastating extreme weather struck, South Florida’s business captains and their allies in the press pushed to rebuild bigger than ever.³¹³

The *Herald* also investigated the Latin Builders Association (LBA), which had begun to amass members and wealth from the beginning of the 1980s and had pumped millions into County Commissioner races. The LBA grew from 100 members in the early 1980s to 1,000 by 1992. In 1988, members of the organization helped get Joaquin Avino – the brother of a member of the LBA’s board – appointed as Dade County Manager. The LBA and other building industry groups had successfully campaigned for the approval of cheaper materials, like roofing staples instead of nails. When they asked for permission to push further into undeveloped South Dade, they also got it. Additionally, the Association helped to persuade the County Commission to open 2,800 acres of land in West Dade to development.³¹⁴

Despite this knowledge, the *Herald* investigation did not probe deeply into the role of overdevelopment in the disaster. Instead, the investigation touted the importance of good building practices, framing the problem as predominantly one of poor-quality construction rather than an inherently dangerous location. Its reportage spotlighted a developer whose subdivisions

³¹² Logan and Molotch, *Urban Fortunes*, 307.

³¹³ Ted Steinberg, *Acts of God: The Unnatural History of Natural Disaster in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

³¹⁴ Getter, “A Disaster Long in the Making.”

suffered relatively light damage, for example. Raul Munne, developer of Munne Estates, was praised in an article for using thicker plywood, nails instead of staples, and roof bracing that ensured the homes on his estate did not collapse.³¹⁵ In another article in a special section called “What You Can Do,” engineers, architects, and builders gave advice to future homebuyers. While most, like Herb Saffir, the Miami-based engineer who co-created the Saffir-Simpson hurricane scale, and the architect Gene Farmer, advised readers to obtain reports, hire engineers, and go onsite to inspect the building themselves, only one, Jose Mitrani, was quoted advising buyers to remember that 20 or 30 miles inland was still near the coast when it came to hurricane vulnerability.³¹⁶ Despite individual investigations of corruption or critiques of overdevelopment, the newspaper as a whole remained committed to growth. This meant that while it could back a push for better building codes or criticize individual players, the prudence of growth itself was not up for sustained debate.

3.4 Finding the culprits

The Dade County Grand Jury had waged a long war against the bad building and insufficient inspections booming all over the region. Its investigations blamed builders and individual officials and departments, but it, too, stopped short of a systemic critique of the race to pave South Dade. Instead, it turned the blame on individuals and the community at large for failing to ask enough of developers and regulators. The *Herald*'s reporters used Dade County records from magnetic tapes to show that some inspectors reported making as many as 80 inspections in a day, four times the maximum number thought possible.³¹⁷ The inspection figures corroborated

³¹⁵ Don Finefrock, “Munne Estates Rode out the Storm,” *Miami Herald*, December 20, 1992.

³¹⁶ “What You Can Do,” *Miami Herald*, December 20, 1992.

³¹⁷ Newsweek Staff, “What Went Wrong.”

evidence from private investigators working for a Dade County Grand Jury three years previous: Inspectors were under pressure to meet the demands of the building boom in South Dade and were falsifying reports or carrying out no more than cursory inspections. A jury began to investigate the construction industry and county inspectors after one woman in Northwest Dade could not get compensation from her developer for irreparable roof leaks in her new \$140,000 home. It uncovered structural deficiencies in eight five-story, low-income housing buildings that were so serious that the floors and ceilings constantly shook. The jurors were “dumbfounded” that buildings could be code-compliant despite glaring problems like leaking roofs, buckling floors, and doors that did not open or close.³¹⁸

Private investigators had followed inspectors as they took early lunches and claimed impossible numbers of inspections. A 1989 Grand Jury report stated: “One electrical inspector reportedly stopped at fifteen sites during his eight-hour inspection day. In reality, he went to one commercial construction site for approximately thirty seconds after having spent thirty minutes eating breakfast and proceeded to spend the next hour at a bowling alley watching a woman bowl. [...] The inspector did not stop at any of the assigned locations on his route sheet which he indicated as inspected.” Inspectors claimed to be carrying out a dizzying average of 28.7 inspections per day, and that number later skyrocketed to 80.³¹⁹

The Grand Jury report from Fall 1992, filed that December, reflected the mixed emotions of Miamians. Many of the jury members had lost much in the storm, and their report turned the blame on “all Floridians” for failing to learn the lessons of previous hurricanes:

³¹⁸“Final Report of the Dade County Grand Jury: Fall Term 1989.”

³¹⁹“Final Report of the Dade County Grand Jury: Fall Term 1989.”

Each of us has failed to be sufficiently responsible to ask the necessary questions of our governmental regulators, of our construction industry, and of ourselves. Collectively, we allowed the South Florida Building Code to become outdated; we allowed our builders to use questionable construction techniques and materials; we allowed our enforcement agencies to lessen their diligence in code enforcement; and we allowed ourselves the luxury of never asking questions about the structural integrity of our homes or the appropriateness of the materials used. Andrew's most obvious lesson was that we were not prepared for this hurricane, neither as individuals nor as a community. This mistake must not reoccur.³²⁰

In this formulation, the idea of individual responsibility for hurricane preparedness echoed Sheets' narrowing of the problem to making one's own home hurricane-proof. Community responsibility, meanwhile, was constructed as individual homeowners knowing enough to band together and demand better from developers and inspectors, even in a situation where local and state officials had abrogated their regulatory duties. In a world of unregulated housing, individuals were tasked with policing the safety of their homes themselves. Excluded from this understanding of community was anyone with less control over where they lived, such as renters – especially those who had no choice but to live in substandard housing.

The jury argued that whatever the wind speed, experts had concluded that the South Florida Building Code's wind load requirements were insufficient and needed to be strengthened.³²¹ Like the *Herald*, however, the jury only mentioned growth management practices briefly, and it expressed confidence that sufficient planning could safeguard the county against further hurricanes:

Adequate building codes, enforcement, growth management and land use planning all need to be better integrated at the state and local levels. The present rebuilding is a vital component of mitigation and pre-disaster planning for future storm events. Yet, despite their obvious interrelationship, there is little policy integration between the Dade County Department of Building and Zoning, the Office of Emergency Management and the Dade

³²⁰ "Final Report of the Dade County Grand Jury: Spring 1992."

³²¹ "Final Report of the Dade County Grand Jury: Spring 1992."

County Planning Department. Through proper planning, we can become disaster resilient and resistant.³²²

In its follow-up report for the Fall 1992 term, the jury noted that the changes to the South Florida Building Code went into effect on June 1, 1993, incorporating almost all the reforms suggested by the Spring Term Grand Jury.³²³ One building industry representative recalled attending around 40 meetings at the Board of Rules and Appeals to negotiate the changes.³²⁴ The jury report exposed the difficulties in investigating national building companies, as well as the complex land deals that underpinned uniform-seeming developments. Locating documents became incredibly complicated. What appeared to be single large developments were in fact patchworks of smaller developments that involved numerous companies and models of home. And while the developers cooperated in handing over documents, they had to be retrieved from warehouses, sometimes in different parts of the country. The focus on building code enforcement also had unintended consequences.

What kind of effect did this discourse have on public perceptions of the storm, its causes, and its remedies? In the first weeks after the storm, members of the public quoted in newspaper articles still generally blamed nature for the destruction.³²⁵ But that perception appeared to change with time. A telephone survey of South Florida residents published a year after the storm illustrated mixed understandings about the causes of the damage. Most respondents

³²² “Final Report of the Dade County Grand Jury: Spring 1992.”

³²³ “Final Report of the Dade County Grand Jury: Fall 1992” (Circuit Court of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Florida, August 4, 1993).

³²⁴ Building industry representative in discussion with the author, June 1, 2018.

³²⁵ Michael B. Salwen, “News of Hurricane Andrew: The Agenda of Sources and the Sources’ Agendas,” *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (December 1995): 826–40, <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769909507200406>.

overestimated the strength of the winds. Yet, the majority also blamed the damage on lack of code compliance rather than inadequate codes themselves. And despite their belief that the winds had been far stronger than meteorologists and engineers had estimated, most thought affordable housing could be built to withstand major damage in hurricanes.³²⁶ One winner of a competition for the top ten “ideas for Dade” after Andrew proposed distributing a list of the “worst 10” contractors in Miami to the media. Another suggested a classification system of homes based on their level of hurricane resistance.³²⁷

Some professionals criticized Miamians’ decisions to live in a hurricane-prone area, emphasizing the importance of a sense of personal responsibility for the risks they bore. At a conference on the aftermath of Andrew, Eugene Lecomte, the head of the American Society of Civil Engineers, argued:

It has become accepted that people have the right to live where they want [...] along the sea coasts or the river’s edge, atop a mountain, over a fault line, or in tornado alley. By exercising the right to choose where they want to live, the following question arises: ‘Do individuals have the right to pass on the ‘risks’ associated with residing in hazard-prone locales onto the rest of society?’ [...] Traditionally, our society has embraced concepts which anticipate that each individual will be responsible, and accountable, for his or her own obligations – including those for ‘risks’ knowingly assumed. In recent years, society has moved away from this tradition. Should an effort be made to reinstitute the old standards and call upon individuals to again assume the responsibility for their conscious decisions by taking the steps necessary to ‘prefund’ their potential losses?³²⁸

The code changes were overwhelmingly popular. When, a few years later, the state incorporated South Florida into a statewide building code, over 5,000 people showed up to

³²⁶ Earl J Baker, “Beliefs about Hurricane Andrew, Construction, and Evacuation,” in *Hurricanes of 1992: Andrew and Iniki One Year Later* (Miami: 1993).

³²⁷ “Innovation Committee and Miscellaneous,” n.d., International Hurricane Center; Box 2, Folder 1, Florida International University.

³²⁸ Eugene L. Lecomte, “Redefining the Roles Insurers and Engineers Play in Hurricane Preparedness and Mitigation” (conference keynote, Hurricanes of 1992: “Andrew and Iniki One Year Later,” Miami, December 1, 1993).

protest against any potential weakening.³²⁹ Meanwhile, anti-growth measures remained relatively obscure and tended to be unpopular with local governments and the public. This is not because local governments are unaware of risk. As a 1998 study argued: “Many people view natural hazard risks, especially the long-shot ones posed by low probability/high consequence events, as facts of life and acts of nature that are often inexplicable and cannot be completely avoided. Popper (1983) noted that professional land use planners will act to prevent or reduce risks, but will do so fatalistically, without firm expectations that they will succeed.”³³⁰

Discussion in the public domain remained focused not on where to build, but how. Scholars of community power have investigated the way that only certain questions may reach public debate. Publicly-made “decisions” may be bitterly contested, but they are unlikely to fundamentally harm the interests of the most powerful elites. In the end, Miami’s developers settled most of their cases without admitting liability, while stricter building codes posed no true challenge to their freedom to build. “Non-decisions” – the questions elites resolved behind closed doors – were instrumental in deciding the outcome of Hurricane Andrew.³³¹

3.5 We Will Rebuild’s business-friendly recovery

In 1992, Miami’s power structure was in a “volatile limbo,”³³² with the corporate entities that formed its power structure – companies like CenTrust, AmeriFirst and Miami Savings Bank – withdrawing from public life due to financial troubles. Miami’s Cuban elites, meanwhile, were

³²⁹ Jeff Blair in discussion with the author, 2019.

³³⁰ Philip R. Berke, “Reducing Natural Hazard Risks through State Growth Management,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 64, no. 1 (1998): 76–96.

³³¹ Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, “Two Faces of Power,” *American Political Science Review* 56, no. 4 (December 1962): 947–52, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1952796>.

³³² John Koenig et al., “Power: A City-by-City Look,” *Florida Trend*, February 1990.

rapidly consolidating power,³³³ but had not yet ascended to the dominant political and commercial position they would later attain. In the conclusion of their book *City on the Edge*, Alejandro Portes and Alex Stepick chart the rise of a Cuban political class in Miami and conclude that while new immigrants had gained a toehold in the city's power structure, it was Miami Dade's "Anglo"³³⁴ business elite that dominated the Andrew recovery effort.³³⁵ This was no accident, however. Immediately after the storm, President Bush called on Alvah Chapman, the former chief executive of the *Miami Herald's* publisher Knight-Ridder, to head up a private sector coalition to raise and distribute recovery funds. The new body would be called We Will Rebuild!, and it would follow the template of Rebuild L.A., the group formed to direct the reconstruction of Los Angeles after riots protesting racial discrimination destroyed large parts of the city in the 1980s. The group would go on to direct \$28 million of donations to a range of concerns.³³⁶

Chosen for his influence and connections in the region, Chapman had spent a lifetime amassing power in South Florida. A graduate of the Citadel Military College in South Carolina, he had been accused of managing Knight-Ridder poorly, yet enjoyed a reputation as a conscientious and civic-minded community leader. A former Knight-Ridder staffer said: "He has a sense of integrity that sometimes slops over into rectitude. Alvah prays every morning." In business, he attempted to drive out or buy up competing newspapers on Knight-Ridder's turf like

³³³ Kenneth J. Lipartito et al., "Miami: Leadership in a Global Community" (Center for Leadership Current Research, 2012), https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/lead_research/6/.

³³⁴ 'Anglo' is the Miami term used to describe whites regardless of provenance.

³³⁵ Alejandro Portes and Alex Stepick, *City on the Edge* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), <https://www.ucpress.edu/book/9780520089327/city-on-the-edge>.

³³⁶ Walter Gillis Peacock, Hugh Gladwin, and Betty Hearn Morrow, eds., *Hurricane Andrew: Ethnicity, Gender and the Sociology of Disasters*, (London: Routledge, 1997).

the independent *Detroit News*. A former editor of one of his publications said: “Alvah Chapman likes monopolies. He would have been happy running a utility like Florida Power and Light, except for the regulations.”³³⁷

Chapman had long been part of Miami’s firmament of non-decisionmakers. Fittingly, he and Harry Hood Bassett, chairman of Southeast Banking Corp, had formed a fraternity of a dozen CEOs in 1971 called the “Non-Group” to meet once a month in members’ homes to discuss public business. Maurice Ferré, mayor of Miami during the 70s, called the group “the shadow government of Dade County.” Chapman was known as the “linchpin in the Miami Business Machine.”³³⁸ Merrett Stierheim, the former Miami-Dade county manager, told the *Herald*: “If I faced a problem as county manager, I could tell Alvah I would like to meet with the Non-Group. Things got done.” While critics argued that local governments were the proper entities to conduct public business, Ferré argued that the businessmen were filling the political vacuum created by feuds between Miami-Dade’s cities, all with weak-mayor governments structured to limit mayoral power. After the McDuffie uprising in 1981, Chapman needed just seven phone calls to secure \$3.5 million for a redevelopment project in Liberty City.³³⁹ The project’s emphasis on business recovery and failure to engage with grassroots community leaders foreshadowed both the focus and the criticisms of We Will Rebuild’s work.

The Business Assistance Center aimed to encourage the reestablishment of Black businesses lost in the riots, which would then provide jobs for inner-city residents. In the ten years that followed, however, results proved mixed. While the effort helped to create some

³³⁷ Sharon Reier, “Hildy Johnson Breaks Miami,” *Financial World*; *New York*, September 19, 1989.

³³⁸ Nijman, “Globalization to a Latin Beat.”

³³⁹ “Fond Farewell Knight Ridder,” *Miami Herald*, June 25, 2006.

businesses, the record was patchy. Overall, the local and federal assistance projects succeeded primarily in establishing businesses outside the target area.³⁴⁰ Critics argued that compared to the depth of neglect the Black community had faced, the scale of investment from this private philanthropy-backed initiative was meager.

Compounding the problem, Miami's elites tended not to speak to Black leaders within affected working-class areas like Liberty City or Overtown, and instead invited middle-class Black citizens to discuss possible responses to the unrest. One Liberty City leader said: "They invited the middle-class Black people downtown who did not participate in the riot and asked them, 'Why did you all riot?' They didn't know, so what they did was articulate their own frustrations, which were 'We're not in business, so if you put us in business we will not riot.' And so the white community went out and raised seven million dollars to put us in business [...] but the riots didn't occur because Blacks are not in business and the folks who rioted couldn't go into business tomorrow if they wanted."³⁴¹ White leaders in the business community disagreed with their critics, arguing that their effort was unprecedented in the country. After white businesses owners had committed walking the extra mile, they claimed, "Blacks must start helping themselves."³⁴² By condensing the Black community into a monolith, Anglo elites could avoid engaging with people whose needs went far beyond the business-focused responses they were prepared to offer, spending millions on ineffectual solutions rather than engage with the violence, segregation, displacement, and environmental deprivation that structured life in the city and lay at the heart of Miami's uprisings.

³⁴⁰ Marvin Dunn, *Black Miami in the Twentieth Century*, 297.

³⁴¹ Portes and Stepick, *City on the Edge*, 179

³⁴² Portes and Stepick, *City on the Edge*, 179.

In the 1980s, the Non-Group was a force to be reckoned with, supporting favored political candidates and involving itself in questions such as homelessness. Still, only unofficial narratives acknowledged its existence. One union official reportedly described the group thus: “The Non-Group is an organization of billionaires and multimillionaires who control the destiny of Miami and all the surrounding municipalities, including Miami Beach. They control those cities politically, and they think they own them. [...] Several Cubans have been allowed to join, but they’re the leaders of the Latin Builders Association. The only reason they got in is that they have money and political power. There are no women or blacks in the Non-Group.”³⁴³ The group was initially formed from Miami’s two most powerful factions, bankers and developers, and operated for over ten years before the *Herald* finally wrote an article about it, a delay possibly attributable to the presence of several *Herald* affiliates on the Non-Group’s roster. The paper’s 1985 feature on the group listed members from the construction industry including Charles Babcock Jr. and Ray Goode, the Chairman and President respectively of the construction materials firm Babcock Co, and Charles E. Cobb the chairman and CEO of Arvida Disney Corp, one of the builders accused of shoddy construction in 1992.³⁴⁴

With the Non-Group’s co-founder Bassett, Chapman selected 56 contacts to serve on We Will Rebuild’s board, an “invitation-only group of insiders.”³⁴⁵ Most hailed not from Miami’s new, international political and business elite, but from its older, Anglo core. Board members who were also part of the Non-Group included Ray Goode and Martin Fine, a lawyer who

³⁴³ Alex Daoud, *Sins of South Beach* (Pegasus, 2007).

³⁴⁴ Celia Dugger, “The 38 Who Secretly Guide Dade,” *Miami Herald*, September 1, 1985.

³⁴⁵ Elaine Enarson and Betty Hearn Morrow, “Women Will Rebuild Miami: A Case Study of Feminist Response to Disaster,” in *The Gendered Terrain of Disaster*, eds. Elaine Enarson and Betty Hearn Morrow (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), 171–84.

represented developers. It initially conducted its meetings privately, in violation of Florida's sunshine laws.³⁴⁶ We Will Rebuild! began with a \$500,000 grant from the Ford Foundation; it held its first two board meetings less than two weeks after Andrew, with businesses loaning their executives as staff and office space in Coral Gables lent by IBM.³⁴⁷

We Will Rebuild! possessed significant power. Together with county commissioners, it selected two South Dade neighborhoods for special help, agreeing that volunteer contractors would not need special licenses to rebuild, creating an exception to a rule that had hamstrung volunteer construction. They selected Country Walk, a largely white middle-class area, and Richmond Heights, a mostly Black working-class area.³⁴⁸ We Will Rebuild! also turned a damaged 43-acre park in Homestead into a youth and community complex, spent \$500,000 repairing and rebuilding 14 churches, issued a \$750,000 loan to create cheap housing for migrants, hired consultants to advise local leaders on how to keep the government from shutting down the Homestead Air Force Base, and supporting the South Miami Chamber of Commerce and the Greater Homestead/Florida City Chamber of Commerce to the tune of \$226,500.³⁴⁹ WWR funds were also allocated to projects located in Homestead, including approximately \$3.3 million in grants, of which the lion's share was used to build a youth and community center. An

³⁴⁶ Jim Mullin, "Tony Ridder and the Heritage of Arrogance," *Miami New Times*, October 31, 1996.

³⁴⁷ Kristin A. Goss, "The Controversial Power Broker Behind the Hurricane Recovery," *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, March 23, 1993.

³⁴⁸ "We Will Rebuild Selects Projects, Volunteers Get a Break," *UPI*, December 16, 1992, <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1992/12/16/We-Will-Rebuild-selects-projects-volunteers-get-a-break/6262724482000/>.

³⁴⁹ Goss, "The Controversial Power Broker Behind the Hurricane Recovery."

additional \$1.2 million was granted to Homestead Habitat for Humanity to build two major housing projects.³⁵⁰

Like the Non-Group, We Will Rebuild! was remiss in recruiting members other than white males. Only 11 of the 56-person board and 30 of 160 trustees were women, while Blacks and Hispanics were similarly underrepresented. Chapman was described by an interviewee for a study about We Will Rebuild! as a “frightening man” who could jeopardize the career of anyone who crossed him, and he and his chosen colleagues resisted any suggestions that would change the makeup of the group.³⁵¹ Chapman publicly claimed the board had formed by chance, and the diversity of the group at the outset was dictated by who volunteered, insisting that members “are what they are.” Yet, he added that the group was founded in response to President Bush’s request for “community leaders” – not the grassroots – to take charge. “You don’t get grassroots leaders to come together and start leading,” Chapman said.³⁵² In drawing this distinction, the President may have been indicating who he believed had enough power to enact a response, but his comments also suggest that leadership – for Chapman and for the President – entailed a certain amount of understanding of the way things were traditionally done. Grassroots activists would go on to take positions on some of We Will Rebuild’s committees, but none gained entry to the board.

Community leaders argued that the mostly-elite group was out of touch with the problems of underserved communities, focusing on long term business recovery at the expense

³⁵⁰ Nicole Dash, Walter Gillis Peacock, and Betty Hearn Morrow, “And the Poor Get Poorer: A Neglected Black Community,” in *Hurricane Andrew: Ethnicity, Gender and the Sociology of Disasters*, eds. Walter Gillis Peacock, Hugh Gladwin, and Betty Hearn Morrow (London: Routledge, 1997), 220–21.

³⁵¹ Enarson and Morrow, “Women Will Rebuild Miami.”

³⁵² Goss, “The Controversial Power Broker Behind the Hurricane Recovery.”

of immediate needs like housing and childcare. “They don’t know the community they’re trying to serve, and therefore don’t know the nature of the problem,” said Marie Lee, the chief executive of Homes For South Florida, who had waited months for news on a grant proposal. She added: “It’s an uptown group trying to deal with a downtown problem.”³⁵³ We Will Rebuild! could not address the community’s needs because it did not know the community. Lee also hinted at the reality of segregation in her comment: White elites from “uptown” were ill equipped to address the needs of the mostly Black and Latino communities who were struggling to survive even before Andrew hit “downtown.” Further, women were significantly more likely to care for close and extended family, but their needs received little attention. Childcare facilities in tent cities and at community centers were lacking, and domestic violence increased to crisis level. Researchers found one group of mostly women and children living in trailer park with no access to a phone because the owner had forbidden it.³⁵⁴

In December 1992, activist Lisa Versace helped form a coalition of 36 women’s groups dubbed Women Will Rebuild – without the exclamation point - in order to address the lack of attention toward women’s and children’s needs.³⁵⁵ Steven Mainster, head of the Centro Campesino Farmworker Center, a community development corporation in Florida City, observed that it was difficult for grassroots leaders to attend We Will Rebuild’s meetings. “We tried, but the meetings are so frequent and so much time is involved that we couldn’t get any work done.” Like the Non-Group, We Will Rebuild’s board eventually expanded, rising to 62 members from 47, including women and Black and Latino members. According to Chapman, the revamped We

³⁵³ Goss, “The Controversial Power Broker Behind the Hurricane Recovery.”

³⁵⁴ Enarson and Morrow, “Women Will Rebuild Miami.”

³⁵⁵ Goss, “The Controversial Power Broker Behind the Hurricane Recovery.”

Will Rebuild! was “the most culturally diverse, geographically diverse, gender diverse organization of this size and significance that I’ve known about in my 32 years in the community.”³⁵⁶

By early 1993, the group had raised around \$25 million in gifts and pledges for distribution, plus about \$2.3 million more to cover operating costs. But despite meeting weekly for months, it had distributed only \$7.2 million. Some frustrated community leaders privately dubbed the group “We Will Remeet.” Chapman argued that the group was focused on long-term recovery: “We did not want to rush out without knowing exactly what we might do that could make a difference. We could’ve gotten rid of the money real fast if we’d wanted to do that. If we’d just divided it up and given every person who’d had a serious loss \$300, that would’ve ended the program right there.”³⁵⁷ But the enterprises that emerged, including a NASCAR racetrack in Homestead, had more than a whiff of the pork barrel about them, focusing disaster recovery money nominally intended to reduce the area’s vulnerability to future storms on projects that had no long term hurricane mitigation benefits beyond the broad goal of economic growth in the region.³⁵⁸

Community leaders also questioned the group’s focus on supporting business organizations at the expense of new housing. Chapman argued the following year that there was “no point in building houses unless people have a place to go to work and get a paycheck.”³⁵⁹ A group of Florida-based researchers investigating the recovery found a widespread belief that

³⁵⁶ Goss, “The Controversial Power Broker Behind the Hurricane Recovery.”

³⁵⁷ Goss, “The Controversial Power Broker Behind the Hurricane Recovery.”

³⁵⁸ Godschalk et al., *Natural Hazard Mitigation*, 133.

³⁵⁹ Goss, “The Controversial Power Broker Behind the Hurricane Recovery.”

rebuilding groups did not need to focus on building new homes. One attendee at a redevelopment planning committee meeting asserted, “[W]e don’t need to worry about housing, it will take care of itself.”³⁶⁰ The individual made that statement as conversation veered toward housing, their assumption being that the market would take care of housing without intervention. As the researchers noted, this confidence overlooked failures in market mechanisms that existed even when a disaster was not present. The market did not provide housing for low-income households – many of whom were people of color.³⁶¹ Several new housing developments were built, but they served specific ends; one of the largest housing projects to be funded by We Will Rebuild! served as accommodations for migrant agricultural workers, effectively subsidizing agribusiness.³⁶²

This neglect of housing was neither inevitable nor automatic. In the weeks immediately following Andrew, We Will Rebuild’s Housing Committee was exploring the use of prefabricated housing – which had generally stood up well to the hurricane – as a possible way to house moderate- and low-income families. Goode, Fine, and others solicited recommendations for prefabricated housing manufacturers who might take future contracts. We Will Rebuild! arranged for two sample houses to be constructed in Homestead by World Housing Inc.³⁶³ The

³⁶⁰ Walter Gillis Peacock and Chris Girard, “Ethnic and Racial Inequalities in Hurricane Damage and Insurance Settlements,” in *Hurricane Andrew: Ethnicity, Gender, and the Sociology of Disasters*, eds. Walter Gillis Peacock, Betty Hearn Morrow, and Hugh Gladwin (London: Routledge, 1997), 171.

³⁶¹ Peacock and Girard, “Ethnic and Racial Inequalities, 172.

³⁶² Kevin Yelvington, “Coping in a Temporary Way,” in *Hurricane Andrew: Ethnicity, Gender and the Sociology of Disasters*, eds. Walter Gillis Peacock, Betty Hearn Morrow, and Hugh Gladwin (London: Routledge, 1997), 110.

³⁶³ Creed C. Black to Robert Stroh, September 1992, International Hurricane Center; We Will Rebuild Correspondence; Box 2; Folder 3, Florida International University.

organization was also grappling with the need to create a projected 32,000 units for migrant workers needed to pick that year's harvest.³⁶⁴

The group's focus appeared to shift over the subsequent months, however. In private, members were circumspect about funding affordable housing. Innovation Committee chair Sandy Lynn argued the group should stop thinking about building new affordable housing in areas that "don't want it" and focus instead on rebuilding communities.³⁶⁵ Who counted as a "community" depended on fine economic and racial distinctions. Poor, displaced, people appeared not to belong to a community at all. Leaders in Goulds, a poor rural town, for example, had pushed back against plans to build low-income housing and a center for homeless people, arguing that the town should not be forced to take on facilities that "other communities would not stand for." One said: "You're not going to see one of these places in Coral Gables. If we're not careful, we're going to end up looking like part of Overtown."³⁶⁶

The group seemed out of touch in other ways. We Will Rebuild's supporters praised its civic-minded dedication, but detractors argued the group was slow to rise to the challenge posed by a disaster in a deeply unequal community and unreflective of the community it served.³⁶⁷ The group would tour stricken areas sweltering in the late summer heat by air-conditioned bus.³⁶⁸ Additionally, Non-Group members benefited from We Will Rebuild's activities. After the

³⁶⁴ Bill Shade to Coordinators and Facilitators, n.d., International Hurricane Center; Box 2; Folder 3: We Will Rebuild Correspondence, Florida International University.

³⁶⁵ "We Will Rebuild Innovation Committee Minutes," n.d., President's Office; Box 2; Folder 1 (Blue Binder), Florida International University.

³⁶⁶ Kathy Glasgow, "Going South," *Miami New Times*, October 12, 1995, <https://www.miaminewtimes.com/news/going-south-6363493>.

³⁶⁷ Goss, "The Controversial Power Broker Behind the Hurricane Recovery."

³⁶⁸ Enarson and Morrow, "Women Will Rebuild Miami."

committee decided to award rebuilding contracts for large areas to single developers, it gave the contract for Country Walk exclusively to Arvida, the builder that had constructed the faulty development in the first place, claiming that using a single contractor would make the rebuilding more efficient.³⁶⁹ We Will Rebuild's innovation committee explored other means to bring economic growth to the region, emphasizing the group's preference for business-friendly and neoliberal solutions. Homestead instituted a foreign trade zone – allowing businesses to receive, warehouse, and re-export products duty-free - at the suggestion of its assistant city manager, as well as bidding to become the winter training home of the Cleveland Indians and for the relocation of the Miami Grand Prix. One member suggested a project be instituted in South Dade to aid in weaning people away from welfare. The project would take the form of a lending institution, similar to the Gramman Bank in Bangladesh, and present entrepreneurial opportunities for people below the poverty line who want to start their own small businesses. This required \$50,000 in seed money,³⁷⁰ and We Will Rebuild! allocated \$236,000 to the joint Homestead/Florida City Chamber of Commerce in part to fund the plan.³⁷¹

The group steered the recovery in the direction of its leaders' priorities and interests. True to the growth machine model, it favored business growth over addressing the causes of poverty in the area. One of We Will Rebuild's projects appeared to contradict Miami's favored model of growth at any cost, however: its sponsorship of brainstorming sessions to guide the rebuilding process. For some planners and architects, Andrew appeared to offer an opportunity to remake South Florida according to a less-sprawling template and in harmony with community

³⁶⁹ "We Will Rebuild Selects Projects, Volunteers Get a Break."

³⁷⁰ "We Will Rebuild Innovation Committee Minutes," November 18, 1992, International Hurricane Center; Box 2; Folder 3, Florida International University.

³⁷¹ Dash, Peacock, and Morrow, "And the Poor Get Poorer," 220.

needs. The model beginning to take shape in South Florida's planning community became increasingly influential in its attempts to manage growth, reduce the state's impact on nature, and reduce the vulnerability to hazards like hurricanes. However, while the plan proposed to "critique old problems and propose new strategies for reconstruction," it avoided discussion of the fundamental reasons for Dade's vulnerability.³⁷² This evasion meant that despite attempts at community involvement, the ideas that emerged from the brainstorming process risked displacing even more people who would never benefit from improved planning and infrastructure.

Although much of the rebuilding process focused on projects rated and funded as they emerged, We Will Rebuild! also provided money for a more systematic approach to rebuilding after Andrew. Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, a practicing architect and professor at University of Miami, received \$100,000 for a proposal to create a new comprehensive master plan for South Dade that would focus on ecological revitalization and a smaller footprint on the land. This plan was to be produced through workshops where invited professionals and locals could collaborate on new ideas.³⁷³ For the planners, the Andrew's destruction presented a "tremendous opportunity" to implement sensible ideas.³⁷⁴ Projects like Plater-Zyberk's seemed like a breath of fresh air, but an overreliance on design to solve problems in the face of entrenched structural predispositions toward sprawl and overdevelopment hampered the effectiveness of such endeavors.

³⁷² "South Dade Reconstruction Planning Study," October 1992, International Hurricane Center; Box 2; Blue Binder, Florida International University.

³⁷³ "South Dade Reconstruction Planning Study."

³⁷⁴ Booth, "Planners Point to Andrew's Silver Lining."

In the weeks after Andrew, faculty at the University of Miami's School of Architecture had begun to contact colleagues at other universities that had experienced natural disasters and connect with community members to see how they might help. The School formed the Architectural Recovery Center (ARC) as a temporary umbrella organization made up of work groups on building technology, historic structures, landscape, and master planning. Each group involved faculty, professional groups, government agencies, interested persons and groups, and students. In the 1990s, the University of Miami's architecture school was becoming an important hub for New Urbanism. The style's adherents – Plater-Zyberk very much included – favored communities based on “neo-traditionalist” design principles: mixed-use communities built around green spaces, with roads designed to encourage walking and bike use. Her firm, Duany Plater-Zyberk had distinguished itself as one of the most prominent voices of the movement. New Urbanists offered “traditional” development as an alternative to the suburban development that had characterized much of the latter half of the twentieth century, emphasizing regional planning over case-by-base approvals for developments. South Florida was becoming an important site in the evolution of New Urbanism, with planners and architects coalescing around what they saw as the problems of sprawl in the years to come – especially in Miami.

Rather than root Dade's destruction in its poor inspection practices, Plater-Zyberk and her colleagues attributed it primarily to poor design. “Long before the hurricane, South Dade had been recognized as poorly planned, lacking community facilities, and with little sense of neighborhood or community identity,” wrote Richard Langendorf, a professor of architecture at the University of Miami, participated in the program through the school of architecture's computer lab.³⁷⁵ New Urbanist principles such as the addition of community centers, he argued,

³⁷⁵ R Langendorf, “Towards an Improved Information Utilization in Design Decisionmaking: A Case Study of the Hurricane Andrew Recovery Efforts,” *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design* 22, no. 3 (June 1, 1995):

would have “greatly aided in responding to the immediate needs of the hurricane victims.” He contended that rebuilding efforts should not simply restore the previous development but seek “sounder development patterns.”³⁷⁶

To achieve this end, Plater-Zyberk proposed the use of a practice that was emerging as New Urbanists’ favored planning tool: Workshops called “charrettes” to brainstorm ideas and solicit contributions from experts, representatives, and community members. The term charrette comes from the French word for “little cart,” and in professional circles, it refers to a period of intense work before a deadline. During the 19th century, students exhibiting at the *École de Beaux Arts* in Paris would jump on the little cart used to collect final works before their exhibition and add final touches to their drawings. The New Urbanists’ charrettes took place over several days, with contributions from groups with specific expertise and a stake in the community. They were deliberately fast-paced, involving multiple simultaneous discussions on different aspects of the plan, with organizers and consulting experts overseeing proceedings. In an interview, one architect noted that the process was either “useful or useless, depending on how it’s run.”³⁷⁷ At a We Will Rebuild! Innovation Committee meeting, the chairman Modesto Maidique said if the charrette were the only major thing accomplished by the committee, its innovative format would have made a “tremendous contribution to the rebuilding of South Dade.”³⁷⁸

315–30, <https://doi.org/10.1068/b220315>.

³⁷⁶ Langendorf, “Towards an Improved Information Utilization.”

³⁷⁷ Architect in discussion with the author, 2017.

³⁷⁸ “We Will Rebuild Innovation Committee Minutes,” November 18, 1992.

Other collaborators on the project included Florida Atlantic University and Florida International University's Joint Center for Environmental and Urban Problems. Other invitees included representatives from the Army Corps of Engineers and Environmental Protection Association, elected officials like the mayors of Homestead and Florida City, and citizen groups.³⁷⁹ Charrette organizers emphasized that the process would be “non-exclusive” and that contributions from South Dade's communities would be vital to the project's success.³⁸⁰ The event took place over three weekends in November 1992, culminating in a community presentation.³⁸¹

New Urbanism emphasizes specific attention to local and regional ecosystems, and the participants' work included digitizing a large map of Florida's natural environmental systems at the turn of the 20th century to inform regional plans.³⁸² The plans that the group presented included a regional ecosystem restoration plan, a vision for the Redlands that would include parks, a museum of agriculture, and a village for migrant workers in Florida City called Little Guatemala, designed by the architect Roberto Behar.³⁸³ The plan for the Redlands, for example, aimed to increase the profile of the area's agricultural community through eco- and food tourism as a means to fend off more suburban developments in agricultural land.³⁸⁴

³⁷⁹ “WWR Charrette Planning Document,” October 21, 1992, Box 1; Hurricane Center and Pre-conference Correspondence, Florida International University.

³⁸⁰ “We Will Rebuild Innovation Committee Meeting Minutes,” October 16, 1992, National Hurricane Center; Box 2; Folder 3, Florida International University.

³⁸¹ Langendorf, “Towards an Improved Information Utilization.”

³⁸² Langendorf, “Towards an Improved Information Utilization.”

³⁸³ Judy Cantor, “We Built This City,” *Miami New Times*, March 9, 1995, <https://www.miaminewtimes.com/arts/we-built-this-city-6362597>.

³⁸⁴ “Redland: A Preservation and Tourism Plan” (Miami: University of Miami School of Architecture, 1993).

In the case of Florida City and Homestead, the groups proposed neighborhoods organized around a main street to encourage walking, and a “Pioneer Village” that would house shops, civic buildings, and a visitor’s center. The idea was not merely to restore Florida City, for but to recreate it, allowing the community to “rise from the hurricane wreckage with a series of model neighborhoods, each with its own public park and community center, and an old-fashioned main street.”³⁸⁵ The charrettes invited some bemusement. A *Herald* article noted: “So far, everything presented in a series of charrettes – a word describing the manic idea sessions – remains just that: a jumble of ideas.” Even the head of the Enterprise Foundation, a not-for-profit that had funded the Homestead charrette, said the plans were overambitious. “In some places, it’s a bit unfair to raise expectations too great,” he said. “Many things are probably unrealistic.”³⁸⁶

In the years after Andrew hit, the nature of the charrette tool – its speed and its dependence on a single coordinator - raised concerns about whether it can be as equitable as intended.³⁸⁷ In the case of the South Dade charrette, results were mixed. Despite efforts to make sure the charrettes were inclusive, residents raised serious concerns about some of the plans. They worried that certain ideas threatened to displace residents of communities already suffering. While one charrette – in the small suburb of Naranja - resulted in an amicable agreement with residents who wished to move and make space for Everglades restoration, the Homestead and Florida City workshops proposed the relocation of low-income residents to create commercial spaces. While Florida City officials supported the plan, residents complained that the city was focusing too much on future economic development and not enough on

³⁸⁵ Beth Dunlop, “Designers Unveil Plan for New Florida City,” *Miami Herald*, November 3, 1992.

³⁸⁶ Todd Hartman, “Will Brainstorming Sessions Bear Fruit in S. Dade?,” *Miami Herald*, August 22, 1993.

³⁸⁷ Sophie Bond and Michelle Thompson-Fawcett, “Public Participation and New Urbanism: A Conflicting Agenda?,” *Planning Theory and Practice* 8 (December 1, 2007), <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649350701664689>.

immediate housing needs.³⁸⁸ The new affluent residents that the city was hoping for may never come, while existing residents risked being pushed out.³⁸⁹ The plan was eventually scrapped.

In Homestead, resident groups were particularly opposed to plans to demolish a farmworkers' neighborhood to create the Pioneer Village – so-called because Homestead was one of the earliest rural settlements in the county. The Pioneer Village plans included a wall and gate separating it from the city's primarily Haitian and Hispanic West neighborhood, and planned for new homes that would be unaffordable to most of the agricultural workers that had previously lived in the area. Although the plan included some low-income housing, more expensive properties took priority. Leaders from the African-American, Hispanic, and Haitian communities formed a coalition in 1994 to demand input into the plan. The developer in charge of realizing the Homestead plan, Bill Finley, argued that he was simply doing as the Homestead City Council had asked when it adopted the charrette. Yet, he also betrayed his own prejudices. Echoing earlier justifications for displacement focused on unsanitary conditions and undesirable people, he added: "We came up with a plan to rejuvenate downtown and clean up a crime-infested neighborhood of flophouses. This city has suffered from successive waves of migrants."³⁹⁰ City officials also portrayed the agricultural workers' area as dominated by single men who would drink in the streets. But others said this characterization unfairly demonized the area, which also provided homes for families. The Enterprise Foundation, a not-for-profit that had funded the Homestead charrette, withdrew its support for the plan two and a half years later,

³⁸⁸ Dash, Peacock, and Morrow, "And the Poor Get Poorer," 220.

³⁸⁹ Dash, Peacock, and Morrow, "And the Poor Get Poorer," 220.

³⁹⁰ Lisa Arthur, "Homestead Renewal Plan Stirs Tensions," *Miami Herald*, March 29, 1995.

calling it “urban removal” and criticizing the lack of concern for low-income housing.³⁹¹

Homestead’s city council still invested \$30 million to implement the project.³⁹²

Observers noted other concerns with the long-term viability of the plans. Even in places that had been almost completely demolished, recasting the landscape would not be easy. According to some participants, existing roads, utility lines, and property lines were not given adequate consideration.³⁹³ Additionally, the charrettes focused on problems of “traditional suburban development” rather than on reducing risks from future extreme weather.³⁹⁴ A review of the projects in 1999 found that the most significant outcome of the charrettes was a bikeway-greenway that followed the route of the former East Coast railway along Miami’s coastal ridge, but many of its other plans were shelved.³⁹⁵ Resident outcry, cost, viability, and existing infrastructure, in different combinations, scuttled many of them.

While participating architects like Dan Williams insisted that the plans had the long-term development of South Dade in mind and were not intended to be put in place straight away, the journal *Progressive Architecture* deemed the outcome of the charrettes a “professional disappointment.”³⁹⁶ In an interview after Hurricane Katrina, Andres Duany, Plater Zyberk’s business partner and husband, reflected that based on his experience after Andrew, the fruits of charrettes conducted after disasters would be broadly visible in 10 to 15 years, and observed that

³⁹¹ Arthur, “Homestead Renewal Plan Stirs Tensions.”

³⁹² Dash, Peacock, and Morrow, “And the Poor Get Poorer,” 220.

³⁹³ Godschalk et al., *Natural Hazard Mitigation*, 121.

³⁹⁴ David J. Brower and Susan E. Hass, “Pre-Event Planning for Post-Disaster Recovery and Reconstruction: The Hurricane Andrew Experience in South Dade County” (Chapel Hill, NC: Center for Urban and Regional Studies, University of North Carolina, n.d.).

³⁹⁵ Godschalk et al., *Natural Hazard Mitigation*.

³⁹⁶ “Visions beyond the Flood,” *Progressive Architecture*; *New York* 75, no. 10 (October 1994): 37.

the rebuilding required by disasters can speed up the planning process. “You can design all you want, but most cities have to molt,” he said. “Things have to be knocked down and reassembled. Here, you catch it at the rebuilding. The outcome is still years away, but it's fast for planning.”³⁹⁷

Miami Commissioner Dennis C. Moss, elected in 1993, used HUD Community Development Block Grant money and \$73 million from FEMA to extend water and sewer lines along the Highway 1 corridor, the “old” road that extends from downtown Miami to the Florida Keys. Moss organized workshops in eight communities along the corridor to identify priorities, like affordable housing, new libraries, daycare centers, and services, incorporating projects that had been “legitimized through public meetings” from the earlier charrettes.³⁹⁸ Half of the projects funded went toward the rebuilding of existing properties, and the other half went toward new projects.³⁹⁹ Consistent with the New Urbanists’ vision for expanded public transportation, which they hoped would combat sprawl by concentrating development around transit hubs, Moss was instrumental in obtaining a new express bus link along the Flagler rail line that ran from Dadeland to Florida City.

The New Urbanists’ failure to take Miami’s history of displacement into account resonates with sustained criticism of the movement by architects and urban studies scholars. David Harvey called New Urbanism a neoliberal “antidote” to suburbanization that touts the “sale of community and boutique lifestyles to fulfill urban dreams.” He argued, however, that New Urbanism had much to recommend it beyond doing battle with the conventional wisdom of development interests such as bankers and developers. He supported its commitment to thinking

³⁹⁷ Cheryl Weber, “Andrés Duany,” *Architect*, Architects Making a Difference, June 16, 2006, https://www.architectmagazine.com/practice/andres-duany_o.

³⁹⁸ “The Moss Plan” (Miami-Dade County, September 7, 1993), https://www.miamidade.gov/district09/library/moss_plan.pdf.

³⁹⁹ Godschalk et al., *Natural Hazard Mitigation*, 123.

about new developments as parts of a region rather than as isolated units. He also lauded its focus on public space and civic architecture as “arenas of sociality” and its ability to incorporate an “ecological dimension to design,” as well as its challenge to car-based forms of urbanization. But in practice, Harvey contended, many New Urbanist developments had themselves been “greenfield” developments “largely for the affluent.” Worse, New Urbanism was not capable of “getting to the crux of urban impoverishment and decay,” he said. The emphasis of firms like Duany Plater-Zyberk on “traditional” design as a salve for social ills could not repair the tears to the social fabric caused by the disappearance of jobs and the persistence of racial stratification.

Despite many of the planners’ good intentions, several of the initial charrettes and later plans that applied New Urbanist principles to larger areas of South Florida implicitly relied on the displacement of underserved communities to achieve their ultimate goal of economic growth without sprawl. Beginning in 1994, for example, a new series of South Florida charrettes employed New Urbanist ideas to consider how western portions of Broward and Dade County would be developed. Participants recognized the available land within the boundaries set for urban development would soon run out. Building further into sensitive ecological areas in and around the Everglades was not an option. Roy Rogers, a developer working for Arvida, coined the term “Eastward Ho!” to sum up the ethos of several initiatives to encourage development within the “eastern urban part of the region.”⁴⁰⁰ The resulting report, also titled “Eastward Ho!,” begins with a “look back from 2025,” listing the benefits the plan would have achieved by tackling the problems of growth. It would allow South Floridians to “acknowledge – and work to correct – racial, ethnic, and social tension stemming from the lack of economic and social equity

⁴⁰⁰ Jean Scott, “An Overview of New Urbanism in South Florida,” *Congress for The New Urbanism Florida Chapter* (blog), 2002, <http://cnufloida.org/resources/new-urbanism-florida-articles/an-overview-of-new-urbanism-in-south-florida/>.

in the region.” It would reallocate funds required to maintain the now-vanquished sprawl back into existing communities, and “green” technologies like public transportation, vehicles that emit less pollution, and energy-efficient homes would promote a healthier environment.⁴⁰¹

The urban area Eastward Ho’s planners were eyeing – known as the I-95 corridor – had become home to increasing numbers of South Florida’s poorest new residents, as well as Miami’s low-income Black communities. Despite the deep influence that the racial politics of space has had on urban settlement patterns, especially on the emergence of suburbia and its perpetuation of segregation in new forms, New Urbanists rarely tackled questions of race substantively. The same went for “Eastward Ho!” An article by Florida Atlantic University professors Robyne Turner and Margaret Murray argued that while, if successful, the impact of the redevelopment would initially include a significant amount of gentrification, planners failed to mention it. Further, they limited their community engagement to elite groups, avoiding the task of understanding the needs of Miami’s diverse citizenry.⁴⁰²

The planners’ portrayed the perceived blight of the I-95 corridor as a problem that could be addressed with an “infusion of residential and business investment,” ignoring the underlying causes of that blight. This resulted in a “power-evasive planning technique.” By glossing over how it would ensure that low-income communities’ lot would improve, the report implicitly relied on the displacement of less-powerful groups while promising to avoid it. While the plan discussed the importance of increasing affordable housing, for example, it failed to substantively address where it would be located or how locations would be determined. It discussed the

⁴⁰¹ “Eastward Ho!: Revitalizing South Florida’s Urban Core” (South Florida Regional Planning Council, 1996).

⁴⁰² Turner and Murray, “Managing Growth in a Climate of Urban Diversity.”

importance of participation and local support – but only of the plan as outlined. As Turner and Murray observed:

[P]olicy attention on environmental encroachment in the South Florida region may, in fact, be an unintentional subterfuge to ignore racial and social tensions that exist in this urban area that are a result of inequities in economic and political power. Planning studies can evade issues of race and power and, instead, make physical and spatial change and associated deterioration the focus of public policy. We have found that in the necessity to protect the ecological balance, planners and policy makers have not considered the implications that such a population shift will have on the social, cultural, and political fabrics of existing neighborhoods.⁴⁰³

These consequences raise important questions about the approach of the New Urbanists. While they have advocated thoughtful regional planning centered around public transportation, their work too readily glossed over the exploitation, segregation, and displacement that lay behind the archetypal communities they sought to recreate. Their models of community engagement risked tokenizing local input in cases where residents were particularly vulnerable.

Faced with stubborn infrastructure and existing development patterns, planners and architects had hoped that the destruction wrought by Andrew might be the catalyst to spur development that puts less pressure on the fragile South Florida ecosystem. Federal disaster legislation made funds available for rebuilding but aimed to encourage replacement structures that were more resistant to future extreme weather. Whereas the Category 4 hurricane that hit Miami and the Beach in 1926 was “huge, slow and sloppy,” destroying an area stretching 60 miles from Moore Haven on Lake Okeechobee all the way to Homestead, Andrew was “like a killer pit bull – small, strong, quick and incredibly mean.”⁴⁰⁴ Andrew’s eye was only 10 miles across, and while it recorded a 16.9 foot maximum storm surge that destroyed Burger King’s

⁴⁰³ Turner and Murray, “Managing Growth in a Climate of Urban Diversity.”

⁴⁰⁴ L. Parks, “Until Last Week, Storm of ’26 Was THE Hurricane,” *Miami Herald*, August 30, 1992.

national headquarters, Andrew was a relatively dry storm that did not inundate much of the floodplain.⁴⁰⁵

Because it was so fast-moving, the hurricane was unable to build up a large envelope of water that would have created massive storm surge and flooding. Richard Olson, the Director of Extreme Events Research at Florida International University, said: “You want to look at the hurricane hazard as wind, water and flooding. Andrew, in a sense, was a partial lesson because it didn’t teach the water lesson. [...] Water events teach you land use lessons; wind events tend to teach you building code lessons.”⁴⁰⁶ The lack of flooding during Andrew meant that many homes were rebuilt without considering future flood risks, even as sea levels rose. Under the National Flood Insurance Plan, homes in floodplains damaged by over 50 per cent of their market value had to be rebuilt or replaced. But FEMA agreed to relax its standards in the case of Hurricane Andrew, meaning that neighborhoods that could have been retrofitted remained vulnerable to future flooding.⁴⁰⁷ Some national media discussion aside, moreover,⁴⁰⁸ the narrative of Hurricane Andrew did not include a discussion of climate change.

After Andrew, neither the advocates for a stronger building code nor those attempting to redesign South Dade examined the reasons why so many homes were destroyed. Neither the press nor advocates for improved mitigation examined why so many Miamians were choosing suburbia. While new subdivisions were multiplying on greenfield sites, Miami’s inner city was being vacated. Racial policies had created a situation that growth-oriented politicians – and many

⁴⁰⁵ Rappaport, “Preliminary Report.”

⁴⁰⁶ Richard Olson in discussion with the author, January 26, 2018.

⁴⁰⁷ Godschalk et al., *Natural Hazard Mitigation*, 123–24.

⁴⁰⁸ Sharon Begley, Daniel Glick, and Robert Service, “Was Andrew a Freak - Or A Preview of Things to Come?,” *Newsweek*, September 7, 1992.

others – were keen to avoid discussing. There is a reason that anti-sprawl initiatives have more frequently been associated with environmental ends than the desegregation of urban and suburban space.⁴⁰⁹

3.6 An unequal recovery

Miami's pursuit of growth had necessitated the suppression of discussions of racial inequality.

The geographer Jan Nijman wrote that the “twinning of growth and internationalization has resulted in social polarization with an important ethnic dimension. Miami's growth strategies tend to deprive Miami's blacks (natives and immigrants such as Haitians) of equal opportunities in sharing the benefits of growth.”⁴¹⁰ Nathan Connolly took the argument further, contending that Miami's growth was based on violence against and oppression of its Black population.

Black people forced into ghettos had to pay high rents to landlords – many of whom were city elders, both Black and white. In this way, segregation served as a steady flow of cash through the city's boom and bust cycles. Segregation, violence, and the absence of access to education and higher-paying jobs also meant Black workers were a reliable source of cheap labor to support the service economy.⁴¹¹ The growth machine relied on an absence of discussion of this history.

Post-Andrew rhetoric often repeated the claim that the hurricane was a “great equalizer,” affecting rich and poor alike.⁴¹² When one public official on a helicopter tour of the devastation saw a damaged swimming pool outside an expensive home, he exclaimed, “Look ... look at

⁴⁰⁹ Prebble, “Anti-Sprawl Initiatives.”

⁴¹⁰ Nijman, “Globalization to a Latin Beat.”

⁴¹¹ Connolly, *A World More Concrete*.

⁴¹² Betty Hearn Morrow, “Disaster in the First Person,” in *Hurricane Andrew: Ethnicity, Gender and the Sociology of Disasters*, eds. Walter Gillis Peacock, Betty Hearn Morrow, and Hugh Gladwin (London: Routledge, 1997), 8.

that... No one escaped the impact of Hurricane Andrew.”⁴¹³ This story about the hurricane obscured the far longer and harder road to recovery for poor, mostly Black neighborhoods. A year after the storm, wealthy neighborhoods like Whispering Pines were almost completely rebuilt with new roofs, new gardens, and new cars. Neighborhoods that had been redlined were less likely to have received insurance payments or, if they got anything, to receive compensation the full amount lost.⁴¹⁴ Many residents were living in condemned houses. “One of the most disturbing things is the disparity, in terms of ethnic and racial differences, in insurance coverage and the reports of underpayments and the consequences for their recovery,” noted Walter Peacock, a sociologist at Florida International University who surveyed residents about the aftermath of Andrew.⁴¹⁵ The researchers found that the number of people who were uninsured, underinsured, or whose insurers did not live up to their agreements, was significantly higher in neighborhoods that had been redlined. Segregated areas were not only more vulnerable to storm damage due to ageing housing stock and neglected infrastructure; they were susceptible to the redlining practices that have long guided the banking and insurance industries.⁴¹⁶

Andrew drew “national attention to the need for housing in low-income communities,” leading Habitat for Humanity to increase its presence in the area and build a 200-home model community. Various public and private ventures were established to promote homeownership, but efforts to build low-income housing were much slower. Researchers reported a “reluctance

⁴¹³ Peacock and Girard, “Ethnic and Racial Inequalities in Hurricane Damage and Insurance Settlements,” 171.

⁴¹⁴ William Booth and Christina Sherry, “South Florida’s Labored Rebirth,” *Miami Herald*, August 17, 1993.

⁴¹⁵ Booth and Sherry, “South Florida’s Labored Rebirth.”

⁴¹⁶ Peacock and Girard, “Ethnic and Racial Inequalities,” 187.

even to rebuild the grossly inadequate stock of subsidized apartments.”⁴¹⁷ This meant that despite programs designed to assist the development of modestly- and low-priced homes, the housing recovery “remained a middle-class phenomenon.”⁴¹⁸ Making matters worse, landlords with properties in white neighborhoods were accused of refusing to rent to Black applicants. Others evicted low-income tenants to charge higher rents to wealthier prospects.⁴¹⁹ Rental housing fared much worse in rebuilding than single-family units. Ray Goode, president of We Will Rebuild!, said up to 80 per cent of damaged homes were in some state of habitability, but rental units were much less likely to be repaired. In Homestead a year after Andrew, only half of the 4,500 rental units owned by absentee landlords were under reconstruction. A mere eight of 1,100 mobile homes left in the community were still standing. Most who lost their residences left Homestead, and the majority of those who moved into the mobile homes that FEMA brought into the area were low-income residents who were permitted to stay in the trailers for 18 months.⁴²⁰

While the federal government supports building in disaster-prone places, recovery in the United States is a “market-based,” insurance-driven process.⁴²¹ The many gaps in this approach, such as the higher likelihood that Black households will be uninsured or underinsured, were expected to be partially filled by volunteer associations. Rather than discuss the inequities in the insurance market, officials pointed to philanthropic organizations as a solution to the slow

⁴¹⁷ Betty Hearn Morrow and Walter Gillis Peacock, “Disasters and Social Change: Hurricane Andrew and the Reshaping of Miami?,” in *Hurricane Andrew: Ethnicity, Gender and the Sociology of Disasters*, eds. Walter Gillis Peacock, Betty Hearn Morrow, and Hugh Gladwin (London: Routledge, 1997), 234.

⁴¹⁸ Yang Zhang and Walter Gillis Peacock, “Planning for Housing Recovery? Lessons Learned from Hurricane Andrew,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 76, no. 1 (December 31, 2009): 5–24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944360903294556>.

⁴¹⁹ “Landlords Accused of Housing Discrimination,” *Miami Herald*, 1992.

⁴²⁰ Booth and Sherry, “South Florida’s Labored Rebirth.”

⁴²¹ Morrow and Peacock, “Disasters and Social Change,” 234.

recovery of Black areas. The few civic organizations that existed in the poor rural parts of Miami were badly damaged in the storm. Lieutenant Governor Buddy McCay argued that Homestead's relatively speedy recovery compared to the even needier communities nearby was due to its ability to create "civic infrastructure," coordinating volunteers to help rebuild the city.

McCay emphasized the importance of building new neighborhood associations, community development groups, and social service centers. "There's going to be an effort to utilize the private not-for-profit sector to the maximum extent," he predicted.⁴²² Civic organization was necessary to attract resources and to navigate the complex process of making individual claims for repair and other aid. Kristin Goss, a journalist for *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* wrote: "The rebuilding could take two to three years in the best-organized areas, such as the City of Homestead. It will take much longer in other communities, such as Florida City, Naranja, Perrine, and Richmond Heights, which lack strong political and non-profit leadership."⁴²³

A group of 30 churches, businesses, community development groups, and educational organizations formed the South Dade Alliance to coordinate "competing and conflicting plans for redeveloping the area" and to direct state and federal dollars to "appropriate recipients." The Alliance aimed to have the region declared an enterprise zone to attract businesses with the promise of tax breaks and a light rail extension to the area. Bethel Missionary Baptist Church's Reverend Carlos Malone, who helped organize the Alliance, said the hurricane "made us keenly aware that those of us with leadership skills are held accountable for leadership in the

⁴²² Kristin Goss, "After Hurricane Andrew: A Long, Slow Recovery," *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, March 23, 1993.

⁴²³ Kristin Goss, "After Hurricane Andrew: A Long, Slow Recovery," *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, March 23, 1993.

community. Sometimes it takes storms to get people to see things as they should be.” We Will Rebuild’s Non-Group DNA was apparent in its emphasis on philanthropy to fill the gaps in services that members noticed in poor rural areas of South Dade, which had been consistently neglected by the government. The group donated \$500,000 toward a “one stop center” for social services provided by local community groups in a damaged 5 1/2-acre strip mall in Homestead, purchased by the Salvation Army. Chapman said “social-service infrastructure” in South Dade “wasn’t very good to start with. We hope we’ll leave it better than it was.”⁴²⁴ Like the responses to the uprisings of the 1980s, these measures reflected elite disinterest in tackling systemic problems. Where Hurricane Andrew exposed the inequalities in South Dade, it was clear the ready solution would not be government attention to historically underserved areas, but philanthropic stopgaps.

In the wake of Hurricane Andrew, initiatives to aid low-income Black and Latino areas were primarily geared toward boosting business, weaning people off welfare, and philanthropic support. However, the most common approach to racial disparities was to ignore them as much as possible. “The regression of blacks in Miami’s development is rarely addressed explicitly in public debates, except by blacks themselves,” wrote Nijman. Racial conflict damaged the city’s image and its potential for growth. “Thus, structural conflict must be avoided and, if it persists, must be played down in rhetoric.” When car rental agencies handed tourists maps of areas to avoid after eight tourists were killed in nine months between 1992 and 1993, it would “never be explicated that these are Black areas.” In fact, rather than discuss the structural problems that Miami’s growth strategies created for the Black population, city officials and businesses applauded Miami’s multiculturalism.

⁴²⁴ Goss, “After Hurricane Andrew.”

In Miami, the problem was particularly bad because racial groups were so stratified. Nijman said: “Miami’s ethnic elites do indeed share a common purpose in terms of preferred economic growth strategies. But even if elites share the same interests in the city’s growth strategies, the large majorities of the respective ethnic groups remain largely segregated. [...] Money can function to bridge those gaps to some extent or to render one’s ethnic identity partially irrelevant. But this solution only applies to the wealthy.”⁴²⁵ Miami’s internationalization and emergence as a Latin success story overshadowed the experiences of many Hispanics as well as Black people of U.S., Haitian and other Caribbean origin.⁴²⁶ Public debates rarely addressed the situations of Black residents. Stories in local newspapers documenting crime and deprivation would allude to an “underclass” but rarely discuss racial discrimination as a fundamental driver.⁴²⁷

While rural South Dade’s neglect became national news, the storm’s most iconic images were of destroyed suburbs. It was not Florida City that made the headlines, but Country Walk and the lost promise of suburban prosperity that became emblematic of Andrew’s destruction in local and national media discussion. And rather than address racial marginalization, responses to the crisis targeted sprawl and the building companies that profited from it. The Grand Jury emphasized the sheer level of media interest in the destruction of the “planned unit divisions” that had contained most of Dade’s recently-constructed housing at the time:

The sheer graphic, widespread and apparent uniform destruction of many of these developments invited the focused examination of disaster analysts, the community, and the media. Film crews, locally and from all over the world, documented the widespread

⁴²⁵ Nijman, “Globalization to a Latin Beat.”

⁴²⁶ Portes and Stepick, *City on the Edge*.

⁴²⁷ Nijman, “Globalization to a Latin Beat.”

destruction. Daily film clips revealed the domino-like rows of collapsed roofs and walls of what were once thriving family communities.⁴²⁸

Most post-Andrew narratives excluded South Dade's low-income Black population. South Miami was portrayed as a district of new arrivals, but Goulds, Perrine, and Florida City were home to many third- and fourth-generation citizens. Refusal to count them among the affected "family communities" allowed for the unequal, incomplete recovery they endured to go unnoticed.

Anti-sprawl commentary, though less mainstream than the focus on building codes and vow to rebuild, also excluded the experience of Miami's Black communities. The *Herald* columnist and writer of Florida noirs, Carl Hiaasen, was one of the most vocal critics of the way sprawl had spread across South Dade. Appearing on NPR's *All Things Considered* to criticize overdevelopment, he said: "You know, there is something traumatically equalizing about a hurricane like this. It is an incredible reminder of the fragility of this peninsula that we're on – how low it is, how vulnerable, not just to flood surges, but to this kind of raking, horrible wind. I mean, if nothing else, people ought to be thinking twice about even moving down here. [...] What happened down here, as tragic as it is, was inevitable by the way we developed this place." Hiaasen blamed the "engine" that ran the state from the turn of the century onward – the compulsion to develop – but did not address the discrimination that fueled it.⁴²⁹ The lack of this understanding among the growth management community obscured the interconnectedness of Miami's problems of inequality and environmental destruction, and allowed for the emergence

⁴²⁸ "Final Report of the Dade County Grand Jury: Fall 1992."

⁴²⁹ Linda Wertheimer, "Overdeveloping in Florida Hurricane Zones," *All Things Considered* (NPR, September 4, 1992).

of plans that avoided the discussion of inequality while relying on the existence of a vulnerable, displaceable population to achieve the ends of urban infill and gentrification.

Immediately after the storm, approximately 100,000 people or 28 per cent of South Dade's population left neighborhoods covered in refuse, which had stood for days, weeks, and even months without electricity, running water, or security⁴³⁰ Most went north, away from Miami altogether. At the same time, many stayed due to factors such as a lack of economic resources. While whites were the most likely to leave, South Dade's Black population increased. One study showed the cruel irony of residential segregation: While predominantly Black neighborhoods were more likely to encounter barriers to recovery, their residents also found it much harder to relocate after disasters.⁴³¹

Evidence of insurance redlining prior to Andrew meant Black and Latino low-income households were more likely to be stuck in structures that were unsafe.⁴³² In the years since Andrew, South Dade remains one of the few places in the metropolitan area where it is still somewhat affordable to live. According to anecdotal evidence, areas like Homestead and Florida City are becoming the new homes of people displaced from central neighborhoods by rising rents and taxes. At the same time, a new generation of Black leaders emerged from South Miami after Andrew. In 1993, Dennis C. Moss was elected County Commissioner for District 9, which contains much of South Dade. Larcenia Bullard, later State Senator for Richmond Heights, was

⁴³⁰ Peacock and Girard, "Ethnic and Racial Inequalities," 191.

⁴³¹ Peacock and Girard, "Ethnic and Racial Inequalities," 203.

⁴³² Zhang, "Will Natural Disasters Accelerate Neighborhood Decline?"

voted into the Florida House just months after Andrew and fought other legislators to keep federal hurricane dollars in South Dade.⁴³³

In contrast to South Dade's long, slow recovery, the injection of federal aid and insurance money spurred a boom in South Florida more generally. The *Wall Street Journal* reported:

[I]n spite of— some economists suggest because of— Andrew, Florida rebounded. Hurricane Andrew may have been a physical and environmental disaster, but it was an economic godsend. The catastrophe jump-started the economy by creating a massive source of investment from insurance claims and government assistance.⁴³⁴

Despite the efforts of the charrette organizers, most of South Dade was rebuilt according to existing planning incentives. South Dade's population grew from just over 300,000 in 1990 to nearly 528,000 in 2017, and the region added 75,000 units of housing.⁴³⁵ Andrew spurred more, not less, sprawl, albeit with some islands of New Urbanist planned communities. The debate over wind speeds and building codes gave the impression of resolving the problems exposed by Andrew, even as sprawl absorbed many of South Dade's rural areas, manifesting in new subdivisions with Spanish-sounding names and walls to protect residents from the noise of the highways they often back onto.

Despite their bad press, construction companies profited from debris removal and new construction. P&Z Construction Company allegedly combined the two. After it was hired by the Army Corps of Engineers for \$14.4 million to ship half a million tons of debris to sanitary landfills, workers claimed that it instead illegally dumped the debris into trenches on a site where

⁴³³ Robert Beatty, "Two Decades after Hurricane Andrew," *South Florida Times*, August 16, 2012, <http://www.sfltimes.com/uncategorized/two-decades-after-hurricane-andrew>.

⁴³⁴ "Silver Lining," *Wall Street Journal*, October 31, 1992.

⁴³⁵ Andres Viglucchi, "How an Area Destroyed by Hurricane Andrew 25 Years Ago Underwent a Radical Change," *Miami Herald*, August 20, 2017, <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/miami-dade/homestead/article168213702.html>.

Lennar planned to build a new subdivision.⁴³⁶ In 1998, the new Republican governor, Jeb Bush, commissioned a survey that found a strong majority of respondents wanted more state involvement in regulating sprawl. Bush appointed a blue-ribbon panel – most of whose members were connected to real estate interests – to suggest “real” reforms. Its recommendations died in the Florida legislature under pressure from lobbyists.⁴³⁷

In the years since the hurricane, charrettes have become a common occurrence in the planning process in Florida.⁴³⁸ Plater Zyberk has been instrumental in shaping the Miami landscape with interventions such as the Miami 21 building code. New Urbanists have also been active in other post-disaster contexts, such as the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. The University of Miami’s Center for Urban and Community Design was founded in the wake of Andrew to promote collaborative planning processes that focus on resilience and sustainability.⁴³⁹ New Urbanists continued to be visible as well, quickly establishing new charrettes after Katrina. Critics, however, remained vocal. Writer Mike Davis called the New Urbanists an “architectural cult.” He reported to readers of *Mother Jones* that during the Mississippi Renewal Forum, “Duany whipped up a revivalistic fervor that must have been pleasing to [...] descendants of the slave masters.”⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁶ Warren Richey, “Workers Claim Andrew Debris Buried in Dade,” *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, May 26, 1993, <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/fl-xpm-1993-05-26-9302130861-story.html>.

⁴³⁷ Alan Farago, “Jeb Bush and the Environment,” *CounterPunch.Org* (blog), October 24, 2002, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2002/10/24/jeb-bush-and-the-environment/>.

⁴³⁸ Victor Dover, “Charrettes for New Urbanism” (Unpublished book chapter, 2001), <http://sienadeepservice.pbworks.com/f/Charrettes+explained.pdf>.

⁴³⁹ “School of Architecture Center for Urban and Community Design,” University of Miami School of Architecture, 2020, <https://cucd.arc.miami.edu/>.

⁴⁴⁰ Christopher Hawthorne, “In the Rush to Rebuild, a House Divided - Los Angeles Times,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 4, 2005, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2005-dec-04-ca-neworleans4-story.html>.

Peter Sparks of the Wind Engineering Research Council continued to argue that the Hurricane Center overestimated Andrew's wind speeds. Overall, he claims, high wind speed estimates let planners and builders off the hook for bad construction and overdevelopment.⁴⁴¹ But that was not the end of the story. In 2002 – timed to be released 10 years after Andrew hit South Florida – Hurricane Research Division scientists retroactively “upgraded” the storm to Category 5 on the Saffir-Simpson scale based on recent findings about the eyewall structures of major hurricanes.⁴⁴² Originally designed as a simple metric to warn those living in a storm’s path of the level of damage they could expect,⁴⁴³ the Saffir-Simpson hurricane scale had also become a measure of the hurricane’s significance for posterity. This shift affected climatologists and hurricane researchers seeking to understand long term hurricane patterns and suggested a new hierarchy of knowledge in the co-production and communication of storms, in which past measurements are scrutinized according to present standards.

Hurricane Andrew’s upgrade also served a much wider audience including insurers, building code designers, and emergency managers. For example, the number of Category 5 storms to have hit South Florida affects models of risk. According to the Hurricane Center’s analysis – and counterintuitively - the upgrade potentially lowered the chance of a storm like Andrew hitting South Florida. Insurers like AIG have argued against assuming that another Andrew is less likely as a result. They argue that the number of people now living in South Florida puts even more people in danger should an Andrew-sized hurricane hit the region.

⁴⁴¹ Steinberg, *Acts of God*, xxv.

⁴⁴² Christopher W. Landsea et al., “A Reanalysis of Hurricane Andrew’s Intensity,” *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society* 85, no. 11 (November 1, 2004): 1699–1712, <https://doi.org/10.1175/BAMS-85-11-1699>.

⁴⁴³ Debi Iacovelli, “The Saffir/Simpson Hurricane Scale: An Interview with Dr. Robert Simpson,” *Mariner’s Weather Log*, April 1999, <https://novalynx.com/store/pc/Simpson-Interview-d53.htm>.

3.7 Conclusion

Jordan Commons, the 187-unit affordable and energy efficient New Urbanist community in South Dade, received the attention of the Clinton administration through the Sustainable America program. Harvey Ruvin, the Clerk of the Court who was chair of Dade County's Urban Carbon Dioxide Reduction Project, showcased the development when he testified before the Committee on International Relations in 1997. Citing concern about the city's vulnerability to sea level rise, the group worked with 14 communities – five in the United States and nine others around the world – to develop local action plans. He said: “[A]lthough we are talking at the national and central government level in Kyoto, many of the powers that are needed to put in place the measures that we talked about are vested in local governments.”⁴⁴⁴ Unlike many of the other policy responses to Hurricane Andrew, the Habitat For Humanity-built Jordan Commons concentrated on the needs of low-income households, offering affordable housing that would also conserve energy and thereby lower the community's bills. As a result of his work and the spotlight let by Andrew, Ruvin went on to represent the United States at the Kyoto climate negotiations as an expert in local climate politics.

Miami's attempts to decouple growth from environmental harm appeared to receive a boost after Andrew. Planners and architects talked about South Dade as a blank canvas that promised new opportunities to reimagine growth with more attention to regional planning, environmental hazards, and human-scale neighborhoods that could alleviate some of the stresses of sprawl. But rather than challenge the sprawling building patterns that had come to dominate South Dade, the debates about what or who was to blame for the destruction centered around

⁴⁴⁴ “Global Climate Negotiations: Obligations of Developed and Developing Countries: Hearing before the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives,” Committee on International Relations, 105th Cong. (1997), <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/pst.000032135077>.

how homes were being built, not *where*. This focus was abetted by challenges to scientists' authority, journalists adjudicating the debates over wind speeds, and criminal investigations into poor building practices, as well as the specific character of the storm itself, a hurricane that could teach the "wind lesson" of the need for better structures but not the "water lesson" of the consequences of poor planning practices.

Miami scholars describe a shift in power from the Anglo elite to a globally-facing Latin cadre of business-owners and politicians. Most Anglos of the Miami business elite – a group that benefited from the inequality in Miami – took a paternalistic stance, adopting tax-deductible philanthropic initiatives in response to crises such as Hurricane Andrew and the uprisings that had preceded it. The city's Latino elite did not operate in the same way, focusing instead on creating global business connections. The two approaches paralleled the shift away from segregation-era spatial politics, which paved the way to urban sprawl through discriminatory lending, and toward the new globalized economy, which reinforced urban dispossession while rendering segregationist policies less visible through narratives of multiculturalism and equal opportunity. The impacts of segregationist policies continue to be felt but not addressed, leading to anti-sprawl initiatives that replicated and exacerbated their effects.

Among those who wished to draw attention to the effects of sprawl, the white elite that dominated We Will Rebuild! focused on its own interests. According to its response to Andrew, growth management could be part of the rebuilding process, but only if it coincided with strategies to bring in investment. This focus overshadowed other concerns such as housing and childcare. While the New Urbanists offered the chance to reimagine a more sensitively-planned South Dade, in practice, its designs could not address entrenched problems such as racial inequality and infrastructure conducive to sprawl. New Urbanism has continued to be an

important part of Miami's growth management and climate change policies, but its lack of detailed attention to racial inequalities has left open the possibility of uneven outcomes such as the gentrification of the I-95 corridor. Miamians' aversion to discussing the causes of racial inequality led to a general view that Andrew affected rich and poor alike, masking a starkly unequal recovery process and increasingly divergent levels of wealth.

4. Competing dreams of a green city

Newtown, Gainesville, Georgia's tiny Black community, opened Sheila O'Farrell's eyes to the links between urban renewal and long-term assaults on environmental health. The segregated community was built on a landfill site after a tornado tore through Gainesville in 1936.

O'Farrell's organization, Environmental Community Action, joined Emory University and the Newtown Florist Club – a community fixture that bought flowers for local funerals and cared for the sick - to document the fact that Newtown's residents were disproportionately dying from the same kinds of cancer and lupus. "That's really when my education started, you know, about how bad it was," she said.⁴⁴⁵ O'Farrell's career as an activist began in the 1980s with a campaign against toxic dumping on the land where her family hunted and farmed, joining forces with other affected populations until the group successfully defeated attempts to make the South a dumping ground for waste from all over the world, and adding impetus to the burgeoning environmental justice movement.

After honing her organizing skills at the Highlander Center in Tennessee,⁴⁴⁶ O'Farrell – who is white – had worked undercover as part of the anti-Ku Klux Klan network, and worked to bridge the differences between white and Black through another organization, Carolina Fair Alliance. It was there that she met Denise Perry, a union organizer working in South Florida. "We met and could tell we had a similar racial analysis, and an analysis of social change in common,"⁴⁴⁷ said O'Farrell, who moved to Miami to take a union organizing job. Barry

⁴⁴⁵ Sheila O'Farrell in discussion with the author, February 11, 2020

⁴⁴⁶ The Highlander Center founded in 1932 in Newmarket, Tennessee, supports community organizing in Appalachia and the US South.

⁴⁴⁷ O'Farrell in discussion with the author.

University gave the pair space to found Power University (or Power U), an environmental justice group that would focus, like the campaign in Newtown, on urban environmental problems.

O’Farrell and Perry focused their campaigning efforts on one place: Overtown.

The environmental justice movement helped to redefine what is considered as the environment, expanding the term to cover everything from inner cities to more remote environmental “sacrifice zones,” and it broadened the conception of who might be considered a “green” subject.⁴⁴⁸ By the 1990s, the term “environmental racism” had moved into widespread use in social movement, scholarly, policy, and media networks. In 1994, President Clinton signed an executive order decreeing that “each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.”⁴⁴⁹ The movement had begun in small towns and remote counties like Love Canal in New York, addressing the unequal toxic burden working class communities and communities of color faced.⁴⁵⁰ But work by activists, scholars, and policymakers was increasingly envisioning the city as an environmental space, too – with environmental justice as an organizing model for urban

⁴⁴⁸ Dorceta E. Taylor, “Blacks and the Environment: Toward an Explanation of the Concern and Action Gap between Blacks and Whites,” *Environment and Behavior* 21 (1989): 175–205, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013916589212003>.

⁴⁴⁹ William J. Clinton, “Memorandum on Environmental Justice,” *Digest of Other White House Announcements*, February 11, 1994, 279–80.

⁴⁵⁰ David Naguib Pellow and Robert J. Brulle, *Power, Justice, and the Environment: A Critical Appraisal of the Environmental Justice Movement* (Boston, MA: The MIT Press, 2005), 8.

communities.⁴⁵¹ Recognizing nature in urban environments was an important environmental justice priority in itself.

In this chapter, I examine two opposing environmental imaginaries that each centered the city as a place of environmental concern and considered environmental regeneration a fundamental part of the remaking of Miami's urban fabric. Manny Diaz, the city mayor from 2001 to 2009, saw improvements to Miami's environment as a key part of his mission to turn around a city that had lost its urban core and reduce the pressure its expansion was putting on the surrounding ecosystem. Power U, an environmental and social justice organization based in Overtown, also campaigned for environmental improvements in the urban core. Both challenged imaginaries that separate the urban from the natural, attempting to build new environmental understandings. Both spoke not just to their local constituencies, but to national and international environmental networks.

For Diaz, environmental policymaking – and especially his war on sprawl – served as a way to connect with other powerful “green” mayors such as New York's Michael Bloomberg. City planning was so important to his administration that it became the central plank of Diaz's climate policy. But while suburbanization was partly to blame for the gutting of the city center, Diaz's “global city” policies also ate away at the security of all but the wealthiest Miami residents. In contrast, Power U sought community legitimacy, connection, and mutual support by tying together environmental and social justice concerns – particularly in relation to housing – under the banner of the Right to the City Alliance. The most fundamental difference in the two visions of urban nature was in their construction of “green” subjects. Diaz's priority was to use Miami's environment to attract new, wealthier citizens, while Power U and its allies argued for

⁴⁵¹ Maureen A. Flanagan, “Environmental Justice in the City: A Theme for Urban Environmental History,” *Environmental History* 5, no. 2 (2000): 159–64.

better eco-health for Miami's existing constituents. Although the discussion of sea level rise was absent from both environmental visions, this battle over who might be seen as "green" has become increasingly important as Miami real estate has again increased in value even as regular flooding puts additional pressure on the city fabric.

This chapter uses these two contrasting examples to explore how the redefinition of nature to include urban environments can be used to challenge – or accelerate – the displacement of low-income populations. In the case of Diaz, environmentalism was key to his bid to raise Miami's status as a world city, a position he continued to benefit from, most recently as the co-chair of Bloomberg's 2020 presidential campaign. While promising that all Miami citizens would benefit from a better-planned Miami, Diaz, the city, and the county also presided over the worst housing crisis Miami-Dade had yet seen, adding the unspoken caveat that low-income residents who could no longer afford the global city's high prices were not included in his green vision. By linking environmental justice arguments to Overtown residents' more pressing concerns about housing, Power U was able to mobilize residents to successfully fend off the Crosswinds development, a rare achievement for a majority Black area of Miami. Even though Power U did not speak about climate change during its anti-gentrification campaigns, it helped bring arguments that combine environmental and housing justice to the fore of the city's climate politics.

4.1 The battle for Overtown

In 2005, city Commissioner Arthur Teele died by suicide, shooting himself in the lobby of the *Miami Herald* at 5:30pm – just in time to make the local evening news. That day, the *Miami New Times* had published a story repeating unsubstantiated allegations against Teele from an investigation report by the office of Miami's District Attorney, Katherine Fernandez Rundle,

accusing him of a laundry list of indiscretions that ranged from accepting Gucci bags full of cash from drug dealers to regular liaisons with sex workers. According to his friend, the *Miami Herald* columnist Jim DeFede, it was the last allegation that hurt the most; how he would face his wife and his church? DeFede, who had illegally taped the off-the-record conversation with Teele, was fired hours later, ostensibly for the breach of Florida's strict rules on consent in audio recordings. Others believed the *Herald* was glad to get rid of DeFede, who had made a career muckraking against Miami's developer-politician class. In addition to a tape for his wife and one for DeFede, Teele had left a folder of documents for the reporter about Crosswinds, a planned condominium development that would take up three blocks of public land in Overtown. Police gave the bag straight back to Teele's widow after deciding it had no "investigatory merit," so DeFede never saw the documents. "What are you gonna do," he asked. "Wrestle the widow [...]?"⁴⁵²

Teele, a former army ranger who had served as national head of Blacks for Reagan-Bush in 1980, had risen to the head of the Urban Mass Transit Administration within the federal Department of Transportation, giving him the power to send \$220 million in federal funds to Miami's Metromover and Metrorail transit systems in response to the Overtown and Liberty City uprisings of the 1980s. Later, Teele moved to Miami to work as a lawyer, dealing with the mostly white Non-Group headed by Alvah Chapman Jr., the *Herald's* publisher. Teele was elected to the county commission in 1990 and in 1993, he became commission chairman.⁴⁵³ Despite the *Herald's* endorsement, Teele lost a bid for the position of county mayor in 1996 to Alex Penelas, a Cuban-American Democrat.

⁴⁵² Tom Austin, "Miami Noir," *Columbia Journalism Review*, February 2006.

⁴⁵³ Austin, "Miami Noir."

The campaign had been a fight over development issues: Teele criticized Penelas for approving a no-bid contract to redevelop the destroyed Homestead Air Force Base into an industrial park and commercial and residential center. Penelas in turn pointed at Teele's support for a county decision to use tax revenues to pay for the Miami Heat's new basketball stadium on the downtown waterfront that bordered Overtown. After the loss, Teele moved to the city commission⁴⁵⁴ where he was also in charge of the Overtown and Park West Community Redevelopment Agency. The previous year, Teele had been arrested for chasing an undercover officer who was following his wife, and he suspected Diaz, the city manager Jose Arriola, *Herald* executive editor Tom Fiedler, white developers, and Fernandez District Attorney Rundle of conspiring against him due to his opposition to Crosswinds, a project he had called a "land grab."⁴⁵⁵

In previous years, city and county officials had found it difficult to persuade private developers – their preferred custodians of development – to build new projects in Overtown. Overtown's CRA had been attempting to attract private developers to build new condominiums on public land since the 1980s. In 2005, the city gave the project to Crosswinds Communities, a residential housing and development company based outside Detroit, in a no-bid process to build luxury homes.⁴⁵⁶ The company's urban development director, Matthew Schwartz, had previously worked for the City of Miami and had written an Overtown revitalization plan in the 1980s. The plan had called for the clearance and acquisition of several city blocks, some of

⁴⁵⁴ Kirk Nielsen, "Diverse Dade County Elects Its First Mayor," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 30, 1996.

⁴⁵⁵ Kirk Nielsen, "Just Because You're Paranoid," *Miami New Times*, December 23, 2004, <https://www.miaminewtimes.com/news/just-because-youre-paranoid-6342211>.

⁴⁵⁶ Tony Roshan Samara and Grace Chang, "Gentrifying Downtown Miami," *Race, Poverty & the Environment* 15, no. 1 (2008): 14–16.

which had since been developed into projects such as the nearby Miami arena.⁴⁵⁷ City officials believed Crosswinds was the city's best hope for attracting higher-income residents to Overtown. Minimum yearly income to qualify for a home in the new development would be \$40,000. A study found that monthly rents over \$350 would be too high for most Overtown residents, while the market rate for a one-bedroom apartment in Miami-Dade County was \$775 per month. Most Crosswinds apartments would be rented at market rates, while 1,000 or more of the units would sell for between \$200,000 and \$300,000.⁴⁵⁸

Beyond the details of the case, it was illustrative of much longer histories of Miami's racial and economic alliances and divisions. Journalist Tom Austin wrote an article in the *Columbia Journalism Review* discussing the local media's deep involvement in Miami's development politics: "Essentially, Crosswinds is a symbol of two contrary development visions for Overtown. A generally white power structure believes that condos will fix pretty much anything, with Crosswinds in particular raising property values in Overtown and ushering in the return of the black middle class, which is still connected to Overtown's powerful churches. On the other side of the equation are residents who worry about the toll of gentrification on these gritty but authentic neighborhoods for the poor and working class."⁴⁵⁹ The *Herald* had gone some way to represent a broader swathe of Miami in its reporting, staffing, and opinions,⁴⁶⁰ but it remained a firm supporter of establishment-backed developments like the publicly funded Miami

⁴⁵⁷ Marita Thomas, "City Hands Troubled \$220M Overtown Project to Crosswinds," *GlobeSt.Com*, February 10, 2005, <https://www.globest.com/sites/globest/2005/02/10/city-hands-troubled-220m-overtown-project-to-crosswinds/?slreturn=20200104160319>.

⁴⁵⁸ Jim DeFede, "DeFede: Development for Overtown Not the Wealthy," *CBS4* (blog), April 5, 2006.

⁴⁵⁹ Austin, "Miami Noir."

⁴⁶⁰ Portes and Stepick, *City on the Edge*, 14–17.

Performing Arts Center, which had been opposed by Teele and others, and the American Airlines arena. Knight Ridder's head Tony Ridder was a leading proponent of both. As Austin noted, "every publication in Miami continues to be fed by condo ads." The *Herald* had always pushed for the arts center, and "somehow [the center] had finally kick-started Overtown's manifest destiny, namely condominiums."⁴⁶¹ On July 28, 2005, a *Herald* editorial opined: "It's time to move forward on the Crosswinds project in Overtown, Miami's historic – and blighted – black neighborhood." The piece conceded that gentrification could displace low-income residents, "but only if the redevelopment proceeds in a vacuum that doesn't take poor residents' needs into consideration."⁴⁶² The editorial board's hedge illustrated the unequal conflict at the heart of the newspaper's coverage: It could not ignore the threat to Overtown, and individual reporters might publish critical articles, but as a business, its alliances and economic stake in the real estate sector were stronger.

In 2006, Crosswinds spokesperson Mark Coats said the development was designed to build up the neighborhood and attract the workforce community, reaching out to "the middle-class blacks who need to be a part of Overtown to really make it work." Fifty of the 1,000 units would be donated to the city to house current Overtown residents; 20 per cent of the rest would be set aside for affordable housing. Critics, however, remained unconvinced. Perry, Power U's co-founder, was quoted as saying: "The project is environmental racism, serving only the interest of the wealthy. The project disrespects Overtown's legacy of a rich black historical community. The project does not offer affordable housing options."⁴⁶³

⁴⁶¹ Austin, "Miami Noir."

⁴⁶² Austin, "Miami Noir."

⁴⁶³ DeFede, "DeFede: Development for Overtown Not the Wealthy."

4.2 Miami's chief architect

It took Jeb Bush until his second term as Florida's governor to realize that although Floridians want to see growth, they also demand protections for the environment. Reacting to the disapproval of voters frustrated with his failure to address environmental concerns, the former developer launched a campaign to purchase and preserve "environmentally sensitive" plots of land, particularly in the Everglades. Bush signed the Florida Forever bill, a huge land-buying program that recognized the economic value of protecting Florida's natural beauty.⁴⁶⁴ Unlike the governor, who focused on the pull of the places that Florida still classed as "wild," Manny Diaz focused on improving nature within the city. Bettering Miami's urban environment was part of Diaz's plan to pull Miami into the trend of urban revival that began in New York, Chicago, Boston, and other U.S. cities in the 1990s.

When Diaz was elected, Miami's population was still declining as wealthier citizens streamed into move the suburbs.⁴⁶⁵ The new mayor's plan to attract money back to the city was also his plan to make Miami more sustainable: a focus on increasing density, attracting people to return to the city's urban core through a combination of planning and development money from around the world. Diaz hoped the strategy would secure Miami's status as a global city – a node in the global flow of information and capital, imagined to be untethered by national boundaries and regulatory systems.⁴⁶⁶ Diaz reflected on this conceptualization of a "sustainable" city by design in a 2016 speech: "City design was not a part of my campaign platform. It certainly was

⁴⁶⁴ Matthew T. Corrigan, *Conservative Hurricane: How Jeb Bush Remade Florida* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2014), 171.

⁴⁶⁵ Lauren Murphy, "From Havana to Harvard: An Interview with Manny Diaz," *Harvard Journal of Hispanic Policy* 22 (2010/2011): 11–15.

⁴⁶⁶ Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

not my first priority on day 1! Yet, the single most critical step for environmental and economic sustainability is embracing smart growth, designing a city that makes sense, a city that works. I knew we needed to plan our future. The status quo was unacceptable!” A city’s mayor, he continued, had to become its “chief architect” and recognize that city design is “at the *heart* of everything we must do in order to make our city livable and sustainable.”⁴⁶⁷ According to his speech, planning could cure many of the urban ills he connected to suburbanization, but despite his apparent concern for residents experiencing problems such as crime and disinvestment, his focus was on another kind of resident all together. Diaz’s plan was far more concerned with the type of people he wished to attract to Miami: new urban residents drawn by, as he put it, “new transportation options, walkable communities and quality of life.” The “magic” formula for attracting and retaining the “best and brightest” was to design “a great place to live; designing a city that works.”⁴⁶⁸ To this end, Diaz proposed Miami 21, a new master plan the city. Rather than push Miami’s sprawl further into the Everglades, the mayor hoped that his plan would promote growth within the city center.

Although the plan was his flagship strategy for raising Miami’s profile, improving living standards, and making the city greener, Mayor Diaz’s underlying focus was to attract international investment. While waiting for the code to be implemented, he lost no time in encouraging a rapid increase in development, bolstered by allies on the city’s commission and increasingly easy credit. The *New York Times* wrote in 2008 that since his election, “More than 100 million square feet of residential and commercial space has been added.”⁴⁶⁹ Diaz’s plan to

⁴⁶⁷ Manny Diaz, “Why a City’s Mayor Has to Be Its Chief Architect,” *ArchDaily*, November 4, 2016, <https://www.archdaily.com/798720/why-a-citys-mayor-has-to-be-its-chief-architect>.

⁴⁶⁸ Diaz, “Why a City’s Mayor Has to Be Its Chief Architect.”

⁴⁶⁹ Damien Cave, “Miami Ponders Whether the Good Outweighs the Bad,” *The New York Times*, November 21, 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/22/us/22miami.html>.

attract new residents was working; the new condominium buyers included baby boomers moving south and, to a greater extent, new residents and investors from abroad, especially Latin America and Europe.

The city had lacked a code since the 1980s, and even that one had never formally been adopted.⁴⁷⁰ Despite their criticism of the city's previous building regulations, which were widely agreed to be vulnerable to manipulation, the mayor and city commission overwhelmingly voted in favor of new developments – even large, controversial ones. When development within the city had slowed in the period before Diaz's election, the quirks of Miami's zoning code were less obvious even as they allowed developers significant leeway. During the building boom of the early 2000s, however, "the mechanisms of government were overwhelmed."⁴⁷¹ A developer could build a tower block in a low-density neighborhood and the city could do no more than request alterations, leading to the odd spectacle of enormous condo buildings jammed up against two-story single family homes in several residential neighborhoods.⁴⁷² By 2004, the high-rises had spread from Little Havana to Coral Way, and along Biscayne Boulevard, with another 69 approved major projects in the pipeline. Activists, such as a coalition of 20 city homeowner groups called Mami Neighborhoods United, asked for a moratorium, but the mayor and commissioners showed little interest in slowing the boom.⁴⁷³

⁴⁷⁰ Laura A. Reese and Raymond A. Rosenfeld, *Comparative Civic Culture: The Role of Local Culture in Urban Policy-Making* (London: Routledge, 2016).

⁴⁷¹ Cave, "Miami Ponders Whether the Good Outweighs the Bad."

⁴⁷² Andres Viglucchi, "City Aims to Put Lid on Zoning Anarchy," *Miami Herald*, April 24, 2004, http://www.miami21.org/Media_050424.asp.

⁴⁷³ Viglucchi, "City Aims to Put Lid on Zoning Anarchy."

Condominiums were easy to build, but Diaz also planned to revive a number of stalled large-scale projects that he hoped would “inspire buyers to fantasize and dream,” he said, and create an attractive community for future residents. Among these were a tunnel connecting the port to the expressway to reduce traffic; a new stadium for the Florida Marlins baseball team (now the Miami Marlins); boundary expansions and time extensions for redevelopment projects in Overtown and the downtown Omni area; a light-rail streetcar system; city contributions to a new performing arts center; and the construction of Museum Park, which would house the Miami Art Museum and the Museum of Science.⁴⁷⁴ Diaz moved to connect the developments together as a single project, creating what he called a “mega plan.”⁴⁷⁵

The systematic dismantling of Overtown’s urban fabric over 40 years had left many large empty lots that could serve as space for big projects. Many of these endeavors – development in Overtown, the performing arts center, and Museum Park – would be sited through the establishment of a Community Redevelopment Area (CRA), a tool for redevelopment created by the Florida government in 1969 to funnel money from property tax increases into community projects. To qualify, local governments had to find that “one or more slum or blighted areas” existed in a community.⁴⁷⁶ Diaz’s plan, comprising all the projects, was approved in 2007. Upon their completion, four new high-rise buildings stood across from Museum Park, serving, the mayor said, as advertisements for “the advantage of buying a condo in the area because of the surrounding neighborhood: a symphony hall, an opera and ballet house, art and science

⁴⁷⁴ Manny Diaz *Miami Transformed: Rebuilding America One Neighborhood, One City at a Time* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 159.

⁴⁷⁵ Diaz, *Miami Transformed*, 160.

⁴⁷⁶ Richard A. Harrison, “The Community Redevelopment Act of 1969: A Historical Perspective with Commentary on the 1984 Amendments,” *Stetson Law Review* 14, no. 3 (1985): 623–48.

museums, and a beautiful park overlooking the bay, all within short walking distance.” When the waterfront was completed, Diaz claimed it had “few rivals in the world” and formed an “entirely new urban core for Miami.” To rebuild the city, bring in new residents, and populate a “24/7 downtown Miami,” the city needed amenities to be enjoyed.⁴⁷⁷ As *Frommer’s South Florida* warned readers, downtown, “desolate and dangerous at night,” was undergoing a renaissance due to the condo boom that would transform it into “the new South Beach.”⁴⁷⁸

The new developments caused property prices also began to rise in nearby Overtown. Diaz argued that the Overtown CRA should be part of the mega-plan to bring investment to “a neighborhood that had gone ignored.”⁴⁷⁹ But rather than focus specific policies on the needs of Miami’s poorest areas, the city instead took the approach that increased economic activity would improve the lot of every citizen. Diaz portrayed critics as “civic activists who [...] cried that I was thinking too big, pushing too large of an agenda.”⁴⁸⁰ But this was not their only critique. Activists were also concerned that the new performing arts center was focused on attracting the upper-middle class, not serving Overtown’s existing residents whose median income was only \$15,000. One interviewee for a 2008 study complained: “The mayor’s vision is Miami as a hub of international activity with no neighborhood left behind. But [...] there are structural weaknesses that need to be dealt with. [...] There is a veneer of prosperity in the city that masks what is really going on.” Another interviewee who supported Diaz described the mayor’s vision in similar terms: “The mayor’s objective is to increase the international economic activity and

⁴⁷⁷ Diaz, *Miami Transformed*, 163.

⁴⁷⁸ “Frommer’s South Florida: With the Best of Miami & the Keys,” 2008, <https://epdf.pub/frommers-south-florida-with-the-best-of-miami-amp-the-keys-frommers-complete-6th.html>.

⁴⁷⁹ Diaz, *Miami Transformed*, 161.

⁴⁸⁰ Diaz, *Miami Transformed*, 161.

have it trickle down to the powerless communities in Miami, particularly the African-American community, by expanding real estate and articulating to people in those communities the importance of foreign trade.”⁴⁸¹ Overtown’s neglect had turned it into the first place the city looked to create the new infrastructure of a global city, justified by the promise that the rising tide of capital would lift all boats. That infrastructure has since grown to include other large projects, such a high-speed rail station geared toward corporate travelers and tourists. The execution has not always lived up to the plan’s ambition, however. To cite one example, the private Brightline rail corridor currently only extends to West Palm Beach, just 72 miles away.⁴⁸²

Like George Merrick in the 1920s, Diaz wanted to shape the urban landscape rather than reactively approve projects piecemeal. He sought to promote a different kind of planning process and code, organizing the city around the form of its buildings, not the use to which they were put. This was the approach New Urbanism advocated – encouraging mixed-use development organized around key landmarks which would serve as reference points for future development. Miami-based architects Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk were the lead consultants. Both had been at the forefront of the New Urbanist movement, and their firm, Duany Plater-Zyberk (DPZ), was heavily involved with the charrette process after Hurricane Andrew. The plan they arrived at would have to both accommodate growth but shape it into the template of a global city.

Miami 21, finally implemented in 2005, was a rezoning plan that, according to one analysis, “accepted the existing landscape of capitalist urban development while coordinating six

⁴⁸¹ Juliet F. Gainsborough, “A Tale of Two Cities: Civic Culture and Public Policy in Miami,” *Journal of Urban Affairs* 30, no. 4 (October 2008): 419–35, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9906.2008.00406.x>.

⁴⁸² Jesse Saignor and Eric Dumbaugh, “South Florida’s Brightline: The Public Costs of Private Rail,” *Institute of Transportation Engineers Journal* 88, no. 9 (September 2018): 33–39.

elements, including economic development, transportation, parks and public realm, arts and culture, and heritage preservation.”⁴⁸³ While New Urbanism’s core tenets include the creation of mixed-income neighborhoods, in practice, Miami 21 left significant room for interpretation on this front. It offered developers bonus building capacity in exchange for contributions to a “Public Benefits Trust Fund,” which would bankroll workforce subsidies and affordable housing, create and maintain parks and open spaces, preserve historic structures, restore brownfield sites, and promote green building standards. The city decided how to distribute the funds every year based on the City Manager’s recommendations.⁴⁸⁴ The plan was an exercise in reconciling Miami’s high-rise cityscape with New Urbanist principles like low density, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods. According to this argument, the condo boom in itself served the ends of sustainability. Diaz wrote: “Every residential condo built in downtown Miami means one less residential suburban development encroaching on the Everglades.”⁴⁸⁵ Development could continue apace without the environmental damage Florida was famous for.

If Clerk of the Courts Harvey Ruvlin chose an affordable housing project (one designed by DPZ) to represent Miami’s climate leadership to the UN a few years earlier, Diaz chose the high-rise condominium. As cities like New York began to take the international stage in climate negotiations, Miami 21 also became the basis of Diaz’s climate plan. While President George W. Bush refused to ratify the 2005 Kyoto Protocol and his brother Jeb remained mostly silent on the issue, Diaz was among the first signatories of the Mayors Climate Protection Agreement to

⁴⁸³ Jan Lin, *The Power of Urban Ethnic Places: Cultural Heritage and Community Life* (London: Routledge, 2010), 122.

⁴⁸⁴ City of Miami Planning Department, “Miami 21 Public Benefits: Frequently Asked Questions” (Miami: 2020), accessed February 3, 2020, http://www.miami21.org/pdfs/miami21_faq-publicbenefits_080905.pdf.

⁴⁸⁵ Diaz, *Miami Transformed*, 167.

implement Kyoto standards in cities around the world.⁴⁸⁶ Mayors had become “first responders” in the struggle against climate change, and smart growth was the core of Miami’s rescue mission. Diaz said: “What had started as my strong belief that a city must plan for its future had become an integral part of the fight against climate change. All of a sudden, you connect city design to a city’s carbon footprint.”⁴⁸⁷ Miami 21’s focus on greening and easy transit provided a ready answer for how the city would reduce its greenhouse gas emissions.

Two additional features of Miami 21 would become important to the city’s future as the effects of climate change became more intense. First, although flooding such a problem that the city had to install pumps to remove water from the streets when it rained, Miami 21 did not factor sea level rise or building elevation into its zoning requirements. Second, in 2009, the city approved a new measure called a Special Area Plan (SAP) that allowed planners and developers “with contiguous holdings to play outside the strict lines of the zoning code,” according to the *Herald*.⁴⁸⁸ SAPs allowed far greater height and density, as long as the developers created new public spaces, streets, and amenities and gave planners and the city commission a greater say in the form of the final product. The first SAPs were granted in Miami’s core, resulting in developments like the huge mixed-use mall Brickell City Center. But as I discuss in chapter five, later developments began to spring up in residential neighborhoods on higher ground, many of which have historically been low-income Black and Latino communities due to white elites’ preference for shorefront developments. The *Herald* reported in 2017 that “as SAP applications

⁴⁸⁶ Jennifer L. Rice, “Local Climate Governance and Global Climate Change: The Case of the US Mayors Climate Protection Agreement” (Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers, Las Vegas: Association of American Geographers, 2009), <https://search.proquest.com/docview/746002559?pq-origsite=summon>.

⁴⁸⁷ Diaz, “Why a City’s Mayor Has to Be Its Chief Architect.”

⁴⁸⁸ Andres Viglucci and David Smiley, “Redesigning Miami, 9 Acres at a Time,” *Miami Herald*, January 13, 2017, <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/miami-dade/article126501109.html>.

proliferate across the city for everything from tech villages to mixed-use residential and commercial districts and even school and hospital redesigns, the sheer size and scale of some of the proposals is giving many city residents pause, if not provoking outright alarm.”⁴⁸⁹ The scale of Special Area Plans meant that they could represent “instant gentrification,” according to the *Miami New Times*.⁴⁹⁰ Even though the Congress of the New Urbanism has in recent years sought to use planning to address the joint problems of climate change and discriminatory land use policies and to foster density and low-carbon transit systems,⁴⁹¹ Miami’s experiences suggest that without a committed administration, New Urbanism, like other planning regimes that do not demand specific remedies to inequality, can become a tool of green urban removal.

Special Area Plans have emerged as a way to tailor the city toward the preferences of new residents who are deemed desirable. Shortly after Diaz came to power, Richard Florida’s book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, was released, helping to shape many mayors’ idea of what the new iteration of city resident could look like.⁴⁹² *Rise*, as Florida often referred to his book, framed the influx of people to cities in the 1990s as a phenomenon led by artists and bohemians. This precipitated a shift that made urban centers the hubs of a new “creative” economy driven not just by artists, writers, and musicians, but academics, entrepreneurs, restaurateurs, and workers in the media, science, and tech sectors. The artists at the leading edge were seeking, according to one article, “walkable neighborhoods with distinctive architecture, a diverse

⁴⁸⁹ Viglucci and Smiley, “Redesigning Miami, 9 Acres at a Time.”

⁴⁹⁰ Jerry Iannelli, “Little Haiti Activist Sues to Stop Massive, Controversial Magic City Development,” *Miami New Times*, July 31, 2019, <https://www.miaminewtimes.com/news/little-haiti-miami-activist-sues-over-magic-city-innovation-district-development-11231715>.

⁴⁹¹ Laurie Mazur, “New Urbanism Is Far from Dead—but It Is Evolving,” *Public Square*, October 24, 2017, <https://www.cnu.org/publicsquare/2017/10/24/new-urbanism-far-dead%E2%80%94it-evolving>.

⁴⁹² Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

population, a vibrant street and cultural life and amenities like cafes, bars, parks and bike lanes.”⁴⁹³ Mayors from Diaz to Bloomberg, along with business groups and urban activists hoping to stimulate an “entrepreneurial revolution” in cities embraced Florida’s articulation of a newer kind of urban renewal spearheaded by unconventional, “creative” people. In 2016, 36 per cent of workers nationally made up the creative class, according to Florida. On the face of it, the creative class mirrored national demographics: White workers held 73.8 per cent of creative class jobs, compared to 12 per cent for Black workers. But this ratio did not hold from city to city. Service-economy cities like Miami had the lowest rates of Black employment in the creative class. Florida’s study was a reminder, he said, that race and class overlap at the “upper reaches of the new economy” as well as in professions where wages are lowest.⁴⁹⁴

Miami’s Wynwood neighborhood was exactly the kind of district developers and the city were hoping to transform. Under Diaz, Wynwood quickly changed from a Puerto Rican *barrio*, home to car shops and other small industrial outfits, into a magnet for the creative class.⁴⁹⁵ The city and DPZ identified Wynwood as a “Priority Development Area” that could attract “media production industries.”⁴⁹⁶ In the early days of the development and in defiance of regulations,

⁴⁹³ Andres Viglucci, “Miami Now Winter Home to ‘Creative-Class’ Thinker Richard Florida,” *Miami Herald*, August 19, 2012.

⁴⁹⁴ Richard Florida, “The Racial Divide in the Creative Economy,” *CityLab*, May 9, 2016, <http://www.citylab.com/work/2016/05/creative-class-race-black-white-divide/481749/>.

⁴⁹⁵ For an account of Wynwood’s transformation, see: Marcos Feldman, “The Role of Neighborhood Organizations in the Production of Gentrifiable Urban Space: The Case of Wynwood, Miami’s Puerto Rican Barrio” (Ph.D. dissertation, Miami, Florida International University, 2011).

⁴⁹⁶ Economics Research Associates, *Wynwood Priority Development Area Analysis, Prepared for Miami 21; City of Miami; Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company* (Miami: June 2006), <http://www.miami21.org/PDFs/relatedefforts/wynwoodpda71306.pdf>.

Diaz even told the developer of studio lofts that if artists wanted to sleep in their workspaces, there would be no reprisals.⁴⁹⁷

In 2012, Florida, who had just moved to Miami, called the city a “great laboratory,” citing Wynwood and the neighboring Design District, which had been remade by developer Craig Robins into a luxury retail district where designer watches and sports cars could be bought from shopfronts guarded by private security. Florida was intrigued by Diaz’s attempt to manufacture neighborhoods desirable to the creative class in places he would not have deemed desirable – glossing over the fact that Wynwood, especially, had been a viable neighborhood before its makeover. “Can you create it? That’s what’s uber-interesting to me,” he said. “Wynwood and the Design Center are not great places like Georgetown or London. But there is an urban scale that’s being rescued in a magnificent way. If these people in Miami can really do it, then you might be able to do it just about anywhere.”⁴⁹⁸ The Miami 21 partners claimed that they were looking to expand the city’s economic base beyond real estate development, and to make sure that existing residents had opportunities to live and work in its changing districts.⁴⁹⁹ The mayor’s plan showed that in practice, his focus on attracting new residents represented a continuation of the city’s campaign of urban removal, however.

4.3 Power U’s case for environmental justice

Power U campaigned for three years against Crosswinds, joined by Overtown residents who turned out to protest the project. Eventually, the county took control of the land from the city and

⁴⁹⁷ Feldman, “The Role of Neighborhood Organizations in the Production of Gentrifiable Urban Space”.

⁴⁹⁸ Viglucci, “Miami Now Winter Home to ‘Creative-Class’ Thinker Richard Florida.”

⁴⁹⁹ “Wynwood Priority Development Area Analysis.”

the project was halted.⁵⁰⁰ In a city where higher income residents were more likely to be able to band together and resist new high-rises and big-box stores in their neighborhoods, majority Black areas were deemed less politically powerful and therefore less able to fight the city's push for big new developments.⁵⁰¹ This pattern meant that the demise of Crosswinds was a rare and significant victory for Overtown residents. To counter Diaz's vision of a green environment to attract wealthy incomers, Power U formulated an alternative environmental narrative, connecting environmentalism to Overtown residents' most pressing concerns.

Perry and O'Farrell wanted to build an organizing foundation based on "urban concerns in low-income city neighborhoods."⁵⁰² They decided to create a second "community-owned and operated grassroots organization" based in Overtown. The environmental justice movement has concerned itself with providing alternatives to dominant narratives that present the disproportionate environmental burdens faced by low income communities – particularly communities of color –as the price of progress when they are acknowledged at all. In this vein, Power U defined its primary mission as "presenting, exposing, and reversing environmental racism" through its grassroots members' participation and leadership, organizing residents to stop toxic dumping, contamination of schools, and transportation-related pollution from Miami's expressways.

By 2006, that mission had evolved thusly: "Power U Center organizes and empowers low-income communities of color fighting for environmental, economic and social justice in

⁵⁰⁰ Eileen Smith-Cavros and Emily Eisenhauer, "Overtown: Neighborhood, Change, Challenge and 'Invironment'." *Local Environment* 19, no. 4 (April 1, 2014): 384–401.

⁵⁰¹ Reese and Rosenfeld, *Comparative Civic Culture*.

⁵⁰² "Power U Center for Social Change Organizational Overview (2006)," 2006, Power U Center for Social Change Records, Box 1, Folder 17, University of Miami.

Miami-Dade County. Power U is building a powerful metropolitan, membership-based organization led by people traditionally locked out of the circles of power through grassroots organizing, direct action, leadership development, and political education.”⁵⁰³ Dealings with Miami elites in previous decades showed how successfully business leaders and politicians had narrowed the basis for engagement. In response to the Miami uprisings and Hurricane Andrew, this narrowing had presented business-focused responses as sufficient redress, placing the burden on individuals to pursue equality alone. Diaz’s version of environmentalism promised to reverse the effects of urban sprawl and environmental segregation, while excluding those who had suffered from experiencing the benefits. Like the apartheid protestors in the 1980s and 1990s, Power U connected local and global currents of exploitation, but took that process several steps further, presenting an integrated picture of racism and environmental destruction and demanding interconnected responses commensurate with their scale.

Beginning in 1999, Power U aimed to build political analysis, skills, and consciousness for members and community residents. At its monthly Saturday Schools, attendees would discuss “local, national and global community struggles for justice and equality” as well as participate in leadership development programs to “increase the capacity of members to effectively lead political struggles and organize their community.”⁵⁰⁴ While campaigning for a noise wall to protect inner-city areas from the roar of I-95, Power U and its affiliate Neighborhoods in Action used workshops and newsletters to inform residents about the effects of noise and air pollution from expressways.

⁵⁰³ “Power U Center for Social Change Organizational Overview (2006).”

⁵⁰⁴ “Power U Center for Social Change Organizational Overview (2006).”

Unlike the wealthier, predominantly white, communities stretched along the route of I-95 north of Miami to Palm Beach, those in the northwest of Miami had no barrier separating them from the thoroughfare. After the Florida Department of Transport added two extra lanes to the road, the noise from the road increased, throbbing through the community, disturbing residents, and shaking homes' foundations, not to mention the effect the emissions had on the air. A 2001 newsletter told readers when to see an audiologist for problems related to hearing loss, but also sought to frame the problems the community was experiencing as issues of environmental justice. It read, "Environmental injustice is when low income or people of color communities are overburdened with the pollution effects from activities from which white or wealthy communities receive the benefits."⁵⁰⁵

After the noise wall campaign succeeded, Power U remained focused on Overtown. In addition to the construction of I-95, O'Farrell said, Overtown suffered from toxic dumping and proximity to industry: "There was the concrete plant, and all kinds of factories there, and they had built the I-95 on top of people. [...] When the city of Miami dredged the Miami Canal to get bigger ships in there, they put the sludge in Wagner Creek, right in the middle of Overtown."⁵⁰⁶ In increments, Power U's work stitched together a picture of environmental segregation as it drew connections with other forms of discrimination in order to reframe daily life.

Environmental justice advocacy has long been closely connected with the academic community through collaboration and the circulation of ideas.⁵⁰⁷ In a 2006 workshop, Power U

⁵⁰⁵ "Neighborhoods in Action Newsletter, Issue 2" (Neighborhoods in Action, May 2001), Power U Center for Social Change Records, Box 1, Folder 22, University of Miami.

⁵⁰⁶ O'Farrell in discussion with the author

⁵⁰⁷ Sherry Cable, Tamara Mix, and Donald Hastings, "Mission Impossible? Environmental Justice Activists' Collaborations with Professional Environmentalists and with Academics," in *Power, Justice, and the Environment: A Critical Appraisal of the Environmental Justice Movement*, ed. David Naguib Pellow and Robert J. Brulle

members read a modified version of R.A. Walker's 2004 article "Power of Place and Space: Local Dimensions of Imperial Economic and Development Policy," which compared processes like gentrification to "imperial" environmental exploitation.⁵⁰⁸ Walker's analysis of an imperial city founded on the displacement of Native people and drawing resources both from the local hinterlands and as global markets had focused on San Francisco and California more broadly, but Power U adapted the text to address the situation in Miami. Where Walker spoke of "urban renewal" projects displacing low-income people at the behest of the city's ruling class of industrialists and bankers, Power U talked about the exploitation of the state's water supply and desecration of the Everglades:

Real estate is a critical dimension of internal imperialism. [...] When Miami wanted to expand banking business, technology industry, transportation or housing, they eagerly conquered new space by such devices as filling in the Everglades, and building I-95. [...] That process of internal conquest continues to this day, leaving many more unemployed, hopeless and homeless. A similar process is leveling much more of Miami with a comparable targeting of black neighborhoods – and continues through Mayor Manny Diaz's campaign to gentrify the city with his dream of a new vibrant Miami.⁵⁰⁹

The adapted article connected its environmental and gentrification critiques with an argument rooted in class, identifying an empire led by the Cuban exiles who received federal government support and had the backing of white elites through the Republican Party and Miami's older white business dynasties.

We may think of Miami politics as more liberal than central and northern Florida (as the south goes, goes the nation) but when it comes to those at the top of the local business and political hierarchy, their command over space and place is just as fierce as and

(Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 68.

⁵⁰⁸ R.A. Walker, "Power of Place and Space: Local Dimensions of Imperial Economic and Development Policy," *Race, Poverty & the Environment* 11, no. 1 (2004): 7–8.

⁵⁰⁹ "Power U Looks at Imperialism and Gentrification" (Power U, 2006), Power U Center for Social Change Records, Box 2, Folder 20, University of Miami.

unrelenting as any Bush incursion into Iraq. [...]. Among the most famous of the dynasties over the years are Flagler, Colonel W.J. Worth, Boylegreen. This is not a matter of leading individuals or families, however, but of the leadership of class. [...] They guard their geography well, with gated communities and condominiums hidden along the ocean fronts of Coconut Grove and Bal Harbor. The fight against gentrification is to struggle for the poor to have such privileged access to space and power over their homes and workplaces. They live within the empire but without it at the same time.⁵¹⁰

This description sketches not just the practices of environmental injustice, but also the landscape of environmental segregation, showing how it made the Miami Way possible.

Assessments during the first 20 years of the environmental justice movement have pointed out its limited public recognition despite an enthusiastic reception in parts of the political and academic landscape.⁵¹¹ Perry and O’Farrell focused on providing education about environmental racism and organizing strategies, but were also careful to connect these concepts to the existing concerns of residents. When the Florida Department of Transportation agreed to build the noise wall, for example, Power U members and Overtown residents also negotiated 30 jobs for local residents. Furthermore, Power U drew on time-tested strategies of housing activism, as the issue proved especially important to residents, overshadowing other issues like jobs.⁵¹² Relocation “was a bigger detriment to the community than it may seem on the surface,” O’Farrell said, because people are dependent on the social networks in their neighborhoods. She added:

You may have three children and the lady down the street that you’ve known all your life is the person who cares for those children while you’re working two jobs. And so once those networks are broken up, even if you can afford to move to another place, you don’t have that – and it is a part of preserving your environment in the way that it meets your needs and it’s your home.

⁵¹⁰ “Power U Looks at Imperialism and Gentrification.”

⁵¹¹ Pellow and Brulle, *Power, Justice, and the Environment*.

⁵¹² Samara and Chang, “Gentrifying Downtown Miami.”

Housing, then, represented environmental quality in a way that encompassed economic and social wellbeing.

By 2006, Power U's focus had shifted to anti-gentrification activism and generating a vision of environmental improvement in opposition to that of Diaz. The group used direct action, advocacy, and community-building campaigns to promote "housing equity and resident empowerment in low-income communities." For Power U, the most potentially harmful project was Crosswinds. In addition to its direct-action tactics, Power U's campaign against the development included a lawsuit and legislative advocacy. It also worked to preserve tenant rights and low-income housing, organizing residents who were facing rent increases, evictions, and slum living conditions in private rental accommodation, as well as monitoring threats against the dwindling affordable housing stock.⁵¹³

In May that year, Power U representatives met with Los Angeles-based anti-gentrification activist Gilda Haas, who had advised the group to focus on the project's use of public land and research the value of public property. The following month, Power U wrote a response to the plans Crosswinds had produced alongside the Overtown CRA, expressing skepticism toward the trickle-down economic and environmental benefits the plan and the city promised. Power U cited CRA executive Frank Rollason's admission that "gentrification is an inevitable byproduct of development in the area," and expressed dismay that there was no specific commitment to affordability for current low-income residents. The organization was particularly critical of the CRA's use of public land for a private, market-rate development. It invoked laws governing environmental assessments of new developments, arguing that no new assessment had been performed for the project when Crosswinds took it over from another

⁵¹³ "Power U Center for Social Change Organizational Overview (2006)."

developer in 2005. It also pushed back against the claim that Crosswinds could turn Overtown into a desirable neighborhood; in their eyes, Overtown already had many desirable features.

To the proposal's suggestion that new Crosswinds residents were "colonists" who would "demonstrate the viability of close-in convenient neighborhoods," Power U bristled against this tendency to describe low-income neighborhoods as lacking,⁵¹⁴ arguing that residents already knew Overtown was a viable community, while "[g]iven the history of colonialism and displacement and genocide of precolonial communities, colonialism should not be accepted as part of the redevelopment of Overtown." The plan held that the new buildings must "reflect the community's cultural heritage. [...] The redevelopment of these neighborhoods should occur within the context of these histories and new development should both acknowledge the past traditions and further their future." Power U was not impressed, retorting that cultural heritage is sustained by residents, not just architecture.⁵¹⁵ Point by point, the activists showed how Crosswinds's rhetoric mirrored colonial narratives that positioned wealthy incomers as responsible stewards of the land while blaming existing residents for Overtown's disinvestment and disconnecting them from their cultural heritage. In 2006, Power U submitted an Environmental Community Impact Report on the proposed use of public land for luxury condo development in Overtown and won its first lawsuit against the City of Miami for improper building procedures – a regular win for richer communities, but unheard-of in Overtown.

The Crosswinds fight emboldened Power U. In several following campaigns, organizers strategized on how to build on the success of their anti-gentrification work and strengthen their

⁵¹⁴ John Kretzman and John McKnight, "Building Communities from the inside out: A Path toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets" (Evanston, IL: Institute for Policy Research, 1993), <https://resources.depaul.edu/abcd-institute/publications/Documents/GreenBookIntro%202018.pdf>.

⁵¹⁵ "Power U Critique of CRA Amended Plan" (Power U, June 5, 2006), Power U Center for Social Change Records, Box 1, Folder 15, University of Miami.

transportation organizing. The group decided to campaign against a planned additional ramp in Overtown, connecting the I-395 expressway to 14th Street. Documents show that the group reasoned the campaign was “not housing work but is the base of how development can happen.”⁵¹⁶ By thinking about housing in a broader context, Power U could transfer the momentum from its success against Crosswinds into other campaigns. In its case against the ramps, Power U mirrored city language describing ideal green communities:

Overtown is a pedestrian and bicycle community. We endorse directing transportation spending that increases the safety of pedestrians such as wider sidewalks, pedestrian friendly traffic lights, and bicycle right of ways and improved public transportation. By security a pedestrian friendly community this can add to the value of Overtown. Increased traffic increases crime, accidents, pollution, and unhealthy constituents. Studies indicate that people retreat from the sidewalks and community when roads become more congested or traffic increases.⁵¹⁷

Power U also drew on an alternative narrative about Overtown, highlighting its desirable features and connection to Miami ecosystems. As O’Farrell explained in an interview, Overtown residents had long gathered and fished at waterways within the neighborhood, even after the beach was integrated. Wagner Creek was once a popular fishing spot. Artesian wells bubbled up, and gopher tortoises lived on its banks.⁵¹⁸

The ramp, on the other hand, threatened to further isolate Overtown and damage important local amenities. It would bring heavy traffic to several Overtown schools and destroy a community garden Marvin Dunn, a professor of psychology at Florida International University,

⁵¹⁶ “14th Street Ramp Bullet Points”, Power U Center for Social Change Records, Box 2, Folder 1, University of Miami.

⁵¹⁷ Trenton Daniel and Larry Lebowitz, “Community Wins Political Victory over Highway Ramps,” *Miami Herald*, n.d., Power U Center for Social Change Records, Box 1, Folder 15, University of Miami.

⁵¹⁸ Sheila O’Farrell in discussion with the author.

had planted on an empty lot. Power U argued that the ramp represented an environmental injustice because they benefited the wealthy – like the patrons of the new performing arts center – at the expense of Overtown residents. The Metropolitan Planning Organization eventually scrapped the ramp plan at the request of County Commissioner Audrey Edmonson.⁵¹⁹

Miami's hot real estate market had made the problems faced by Power U even more complex. Through 2006, the organization was working with Florida Atlantic University professor Jaap Vos and his graduate students to generate a report to assess local development plans. In an email from that year, Vos apologized for his late responses to Perry's questions. The problem was, the situation in Overtown was so complex that he was finding it hard to know how to approach it with the tools at his disposal. When he started the project, he said, he thought other experts who had tried to "help" Overtown before just weren't genuine, that they were shortsighted, and that their solutions were "mostly a reflection of their lack of concern for the residents." Months later, he was at a loss. He wrote:

I am starting to see that the challenges facing Overtown are so complicated and the issues so pressing that regular planning processes and tools cannot help the community. All the tools I have available to me as a planner seem useless, some offer a glimmer of hope for a while but when we model some of the long term consequences, they always end up doing the same thing, displace the current residents.⁵²⁰

This email points to the difficulties inherent in combating multinational real estate money, but also hints at some of the limitations of expert training in responding to those problems in a global city that had adopted the unregulated market as its growth model.

⁵¹⁹ Daniel and Lebowitz, "Community Wins Political Victory over Highway Ramps."

⁵²⁰ Jaap Vos to Denise Perry, "Overtown Report," Letter, March 16, 2006, Power U Center for Social Change Records, Box 1, Folder 1, University of Miami.

As long as developers were not interested in Overtown, the problem had been to attract investors in despite the poor prospects of earning a return. Since 2004, interest in Overtown had increased due to its proximity to downtown and its relatively cheap land, as well as a marginalized community with limited financial and political ability to stop unwanted development. Overtown land was cheap and rising demand meant investment was no longer a risk for developers. The problem for Overtown residents had become keeping unscrupulous developers out, especially in a community where 89 per cent of residents were renters and therefore vulnerable to the vagaries of the market. With homeowners, it would be possible to tell them not to sell. But, “[f]or renters, there is just no protection and for a landlord there is no incentive to maintain or improve properties,” Vos wrote. “Maintenance and improvement probably mean higher taxes which you have to pass onto tenants.” In areas where homeownership rates were high, residents had protection of government initiatives such as the Save Our Home Program, which limited tax increases. But for renters there was just “no protection at all.”⁵²¹ The sudden influx of developers into Overtown would be just as disastrous for renters as the aftermath of Hurricane Andrew, leaving those unprotected by homeownership with no recourse. And even if the area was successful in securing new affordable housing for a couple of hundred residents, it was a drop in the bucket compared to the 2,700 affordable units needed to house Overtown’s population.

For most investors, Overtown was simply underutilized prime real estate ripe for the taking, Vos explained. Investors were needed who would be willing to invest in current residents, committed to working with them and local officials, and willing to make “suboptimal economic decisions based on a genuine concern for the current residents,” he continued in his

⁵²¹ Vos to Perry, “Overtown Report.”

email. “I am willing to think that it is possible to find these kinds of investors and that it is possible to do this.” But once one careful development had been completed, there was nothing to stop residents of surrounding buildings from being displaced.

4.4 Hegemonizing is hard work

As Diaz and his administration worked to construct an ideal of a world city in Miami, he was careful to acknowledge the displacement the city and county had caused in the past. Officials have embraced the work of scholars like Raymond Mohl and housing activists like Elizabeth Virrick and Theodore Gibson, who forced city elites to recognize the effect urban renewal had on Overtown and Liberty City. Any actor hoping to steer Miami’s prevailing ideology knows that it is contested terrain, requiring them to placate “aggrieved populations” as well as attain control over them.⁵²² It is a fallacy to suggest hegemony is unchanging: maintaining is a constant effort requiring dominant groups to make concessions to the populations they have wronged in order to legitimate their control over resources and institutions.⁵²³ As the cultural theorist Stuart Hall commented: “Hegemonizing is hard work.”⁵²⁴

In Miami, the promotion of development remained a powerful legitimizing ideology, as did “green” policies, regardless of their effects on residents. Miami’s histories of activism had begun to demand other considerations, too, however, as the defeat of Crosswinds demonstrates.

⁵²² Leon Fink, “The New Labor History and the Powers of Historical Pessimism: Consensus, Hegemony, and the Case of the Knights of Labor,” *The Journal of American History* 75, no. 1 (1988): 115–36, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1889657>.

⁵²³ George Lipsitz, “The Struggle for Hegemony,” *The Journal of American History* 75, no. 1 (1988): 146–50, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1889660>.

⁵²⁴ Stuart Hall, “Oral Presentation,” (1987) Notes in possession of George Lipsitz. Cited in: Lipsitz, “The Struggle for Hegemony.”

These histories are ever-more embedded in Miami's cityscape, and in how actors talk about it. Gibson and Virrick have been so embraced by the city that parks are named after them. Diaz acknowledged the effect I-95 and I-395 had on citizens, admitting that they had "essentially sliced Overtown into four sections, destroying a once thriving Miami neighborhood."⁵²⁵ Aware of the road's political significance, Diaz proposed to remove or bury I-395, in contrast to FDOT's plan to widen the highway and eating into more of the area. Although the depressed highway idea was rejected, FDOT agreed instead to replace I-395 with a higher, safer bridge "much like the iconic bridge built as part of the Boston Big Dig project."⁵²⁶

The promise that Overtown could be restored to its former cultural and economic glory was less politically dicey. Diaz and his predecessor, Maurice Ferré, had both promised more expensive new apartments in Overtown would bring back the area's lost middle class. This rhetoric glossed over the fact that as Miami's economy was increasingly linked to global trade and banking, its middle class was diminishing. Although the city's reliance on tourism had ensured there were plenty of low-wage jobs since the 1920s, "the expansion of interregional trade and financial services coupled with low pay for public sector employees produced an hourglass income structure typical of global cities, where low-wage workers provide personal services to higher-income financial workers and ancillary professionals, and the middle sector is comparatively small."⁵²⁷

Florida's tax system also contributed to inequality in Miami. The decision to ban income tax left the state's municipalities dependent on property taxes for revenue, tying the state's

⁵²⁵ Diaz, *Miami Transformed*, 154.

⁵²⁶ Diaz, *Miami Transformed*, 155.

⁵²⁷ Elizabeth M. Aranda, Sallie Hughes, and Elena Sabogal, *Making a Life in Multiethnic Miami: Immigration and the Rise of a Global City* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2014), 155.

fortunes to the growth its founders wished to promote while attracting incomers opposed to taxation. When development slowed, tax revenue shortfalls would result, leading to cuts in health and education services as well as workforce reductions, furlough, and pay freezes. In addition, the state legislature voted in 2002 to prevent any municipality from changing its minimum wage, ensuring that it would remain the same whether workers lived in rural Florida where the cost of living was cheap or in Miami, one of the world's most expensive cities.⁵²⁸

Even with all these factors considered, Miami's investment in traditional routes to the middle class has been minimal, with disparities made even starker by its neoliberal economy. This structure has been particularly harmful to communities for whom public sector jobs were a route to greater financial stability, like Miami's Black communities.⁵²⁹ In 2010, Miami's private practice attorneys made 133 per cent of state attorneys' salaries. The trend holds true throughout the public sector, even compared to the rest of the state. Miami's teachers, librarians, and teacher assistants made 75 per cent of the Florida average.⁵³⁰ The city's development was not designed for these groups, either.

Market forces and the lack of regulations protecting renters were not the only reasons why low-income Miami residents were susceptible to displacement. Beginning in June 2006, the *Herald* published a Pulitzer award-winning series showing that the city and county had engineered a crisis in the city's public housing sector. Among other misdeeds, these articles – the result of a collaboration with the grassroots Miami Workers Center – found that the federal government had awarded Miami-Dade County \$35 million in 2000 to build hundreds of new

⁵²⁸ Aranda, Hughes, and Sabogal, *Making a Life in Multiethnic Miami*, 151.

⁵²⁹ Genie N.L. Stowers and Ronald K. Vogel, "Racial and Ethnic Voting Patterns in Miami," in *Big City Politics, Governance, and Fiscal Constraints*, ed. George E. Peterson (Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute Press, 1994), 63–84.

⁵³⁰ Aranda, Hughes, and Sabogal, "Racial and Ethnic Voting Patterns in Miami," 116–17.

low-income homes, but that only three had actually been constructed. Miami-Dade's Housing Agency and Department of Community Development had awarded millions of these dollars in advance to developers with political connections.⁵³¹ They then failed to sanction the developers or take back public land after they built few houses, or in some cases, none at all. The Housing Agency had also pledged more than \$87 million to construct 72 developments that would contain more than 8,300 units, but only 14 of the projects were completed.⁵³²

In some cases, the Housing Agency sold homes intended for low-income residents to real estate investors.⁵³³ Further, the Agency diverted \$5 million earmarked for homebuilding to pay for its new office building, along with a \$287,000 sculpture of stacked teacups called "Space Station." Even as the authorities were failing to build new homes, they continued to destroy old ones. The Miami Dade Housing Agency had demolished more than 1,400 aging housing units since 1992 and sold another 20. By 2006, the waiting list for housing vouchers in the county had grown to 41,000 before it was closed all together. Miami had one of the nation's highest levels of vacant public housing, as the city was in the habit of boarding up units after families moved out. Scott-Carver Homes, a low-income development of 800 units, had been demolished with a promise to rehome its residents in 2003. Three years later, many were still homeless.⁵³⁴ Miami activist Max Rameau described the situation in these terms: "The harsh truth is that Miami-Dade County and the City of Miami did not try to increase the number of low-income housing units and fail; they tried to decrease the number of low-income housing units and succeeded. The real,

⁵³¹ Debbie Cenziper, "House of Lie\$ (1)," *Miami Herald*, July 23, 2006.

⁵³² Cenziper, "House of Lie\$ (1)."

⁵³³ Cenziper, "House of Lie\$ (1)."

⁵³⁴ Debbie Cenziper, "House of Lie\$ (3)," *Miami Herald*, July 25, 2006.

albeit unstated, public policy of local governments is to decrease the number of low-income housing units in order to manufacture a severe housing crisis and advance gentrification, resulting in a bonanza for developers who watch their holdings blossom and their investment in local graft return substantial dividends.”⁵³⁵ Diaz defended the administration of Miami public housing. In a *Herald* op-ed, he wrote: “There is no crisis in housing. [...] Mistakes were made and will be made, but we learn from and fix them. Does this amount to a crisis? Absolutely not.”⁵³⁶ He and other Miami officials insisted there was no need to enact any new housing policies, as existing affordable housing systems were adequate.⁵³⁷ As Miami’s history of displacement, and Little HUD’s record showed, that statement could not have been further from the truth.

4.5 The Right to the City

The *Herald* investigation confirmed what had until that point been suspicions about the county and city’s intentions, and it spurred a new wave of activism connected to land rights in Miami. In response to the reports, called “House of Lie\$,” local housing and social justice activists seized an empty public lot that had been designated for housing that was never built, and constructed the Umoja Shanty Town. The settlement consisted of 20 wood framed structures, a kitchen, a garden, and a “green” toilet. Umoja, which means “unity” in Swahili, was designed to give shelter and food to homeless people, and to make a political argument. The group made its stance

⁵³⁵ Max Rameau, *Take Back the Land: The Umoja Village Shantytown* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2012).

⁵³⁶ Manny Diaz, “There Is No Crisis in Housing,” *The Miami Herald*, June 11, 2007.

⁵³⁷ Feldman, “The Role of Neighborhood Organizations.”

explicit when it erected a sign that read “Take Back the Land.”⁵³⁸ Umoja activist Max Rameau articulated the project’s ethos:

This movement is fundamentally about land; we have the right to control the land in our community and use it for the public good; the government is an integral part of the problem and, therefore, cannot be depended upon to forge a solution; and development is not about buildings, paved streets or technology. Rather, true development is fundamentally about the lives and potential of actual people. We have only one demand: Leave us alone.”⁵³⁹

In contrast to the colonial arguments made by developers since the 1920s, Rameau was asserting that Liberty City residents were the land’s rightful stewards.

The 2007 Superbowl brought a global media spotlight to Miami for a week of events, culminating in the big game. That Sunday was doubly symbolic for the city. Hosting the Super Bowl was an important achievement for an ambitious mayor, and the city’s treatment of its homeless constituents as it tried to “clean up” its image in advance of the 1989 Super Bowl had been so draconian that a U.S. District Judge had ruled that the police could no longer arbitrarily arrest the homeless.⁵⁴⁰ Sixteen years later, a diverse array of community activists, grassroots organizations, and homeless people arranged their own counter-events to draw attention to the crisis. The Center for Pan-African Development, the Sierra Club, LIFFT, the Miami Workers Center, Power U, the Service Employees International Union and, South Florida Jobs with Justice were just some of the local groups heavily involved in the week of actions.

In the days before the game, activists erected a new tent city, this time at Government Center to hold press briefings and coordinate different groups. Importantly, the tent city marred

⁵³⁸ Mark Rameau, “Blast from the Past: Taking It Back in Miami,” *Earth First!* 38, no. 2 (Summer 2018): 37–38.

⁵³⁹ Rameau, “Blast from the Past.”

⁵⁴⁰ Grant Miller, “Homelessness Doesn’t Exist during Super Bowls,” *Biscayne Bay Tribune*, November 14, 2019, <https://communitynewspapers.com/biscayne-bay/homelessness-doesnt-exist-during-super-bowls/>.

the image the city hoped to project to visitors and the media.⁵⁴¹ On January 31, activists took visiting media on a “Tour of Shame” to highlight housing inequality in Miami, stopping at Crosswinds condominium development, meeting with day laborers in Allapattah, visiting Fisher Island – the wealthiest resort in the US, – and then following a worker home to Little Haiti where reporters were fed pumpkin soup.⁵⁴²

One of the reporters on the tour was *Los Angeles Times* correspondent Carol J. Williams. She spoke to Laurie Dowdell, who had kept a vigil for days at “The Wall,” a billboard on the site of the razed Scott-Carver public housing complex, where she and 850 families had been evicted three years before. “They said they were going to tear down this place and rebuild - give us a better place,” she told Dowdell, but Scott-Carver residents were still waiting for their new housing. Her two daughters had gone to live with her cousin in Atlanta while she cleaned homes and worked odd jobs in Miami. The *Times* reporter observed that at Umoja, participants were holding guerilla art parties and a gentrification teach-in. Later, Dowdell visited the Blue Lakes Mobile Home Park where residents said their electricity had been shut off by the property owner to drive them off prime urban land. On February 1, members of Take Back the Land, Umoja, and Power U were arrested while opening two vacant apartment units in Overtown so two homeless families could move in, one of whom had resided at Umoja. That was not the end of the festivities, however:

A few hours later, the Glitz and Glam Granny Cheer Squad, homeless women from the Scott-Carver complex, rolled up on a flatbed truck to an NFL media event to wave pompoms and cheer for new public housing. They shouted their encouragement to

⁵⁴¹ Jhonluna, “Miami’s Take Back the Land: Superbowl Week of Action,” *Earth First!*, April 2007.

⁵⁴² Jhonluna, “Miami’s Take Back the Land.”

neighborhood youths on hand for a football clinic at a sports and education complex that the NFL built for Miami after the 1995 Super Bowl.⁵⁴³

Power U's interest in environmental justice as one among several goals was echoed in the approach of its coalition members. Of *Take Back the Land*, Rameau wrote: "While race was not a major part of the axioms, there was plenty of room inside of those principles for individuals to advance their own hard race-based line. In the same way, there was space for a hard environmentalist line as well as lines in which economic analysis was primary."⁵⁴⁴ The flexibility of the organizations' approaches reflected a broader national push to connect activist organizations and see if claims to urban space could form the basis of an effective uniting "frame."⁵⁴⁵ Power U and other Miami activists had joined with a network of urban community-based organizations in January 2007 to form a national alliance called the Right to the City Alliance. Their movement is rooted in academic and social justice work. In 1968, Henri Lefebvre wrote that the "right to the city is like a cry and a demand [...] a transformed and renewed right to urban life."⁵⁴⁶ The right to the city can be seen as something in motion, "continually being remade as new groups initiate new claims in new contexts."⁵⁴⁷ The Alliance built on the work of the 2004 World Charter for the Right to the City, which defined the right to the city as "the equitable usufruct of cities within the principles of sustainability, democracy, equity, and social

⁵⁴³ Carol J. Williams, "Homeless Take the Football and Run with It," *Los Angeles Times*, February 2, 2007.

⁵⁴⁴ Rameau, *Take Back the Land*.

⁵⁴⁵ Mark Purcell, "To Inhabit Well: Counterhegemonic Movements and the Right to the City," *Urban Geography* 34, no. 4 (June 1, 2013): 560–74, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2013.790638>.

⁵⁴⁶ Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities*, trans. Eleonore Kofman and Elizabeth Lebas (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 158, <https://www.amazon.com/Writings-Cities-Henri-Lefebvre/dp/0631191887>.

⁵⁴⁷ Purcell, "To Inhabit Well."

justice.”⁵⁴⁸ One activist from Rhode Island who took part in the 2007 meeting observed that a right to the city analysis put the focus on the “colonization of entire communities and highlight[ed] the national and international dimensions of gentrification.”⁵⁴⁹ Inspired by theorists like Lefebvre, as well as the World Social Forum, the Right to the City Movement was savvy about the ways in which a narrative “frame” could function. It could allow organizations from different parts of the country to share strategies and amplify each other’s campaigns; it could help as a tool to demonstrate to organizations’ constituencies the ways in which their concerns were connected to larger forces; and it could help local groups band together to campaign against problems, even if their priorities diverged.

Gihan Perera, Executive Director of the Miami Worker’s Center, spoke about how the coalition worked to appeal to activists from different backgrounds and classes while influencing their political consciousness. The Right to the City could connect with both low-income residents and members of the white-dominated environmental movement who might otherwise be attracted by Diaz’s green vision. When, in 2007, developers and county commissioners pushed to extend the Urban Development Boundary – a zoning barrier created in 1983 to prevent development from spilling further into the Everglades – and promised in exchange more affordable housing for low-income citizens, Right to the City organizers used it as an opportunity to unite urban housing activists and environmentalists – an interracial coalition of working-class and middle-class individuals. Perera said:

To build this environmental/labor/community coalition, there is a low road and a high road. The low road is: labor wants jobs; the environmentalists want green buildings; the community wants houses. Traditional organizing theory is, “Just match up those self-

⁵⁴⁸ “World Charter on the Right to the City” (Social Forum of the Americas; World Urban Forum; World Social Forum, 2004), https://www.hlrn.org.in/documents/World_Charter_on_the_Right_to_the_City.htm.

⁵⁴⁹ Samara and Chang, “Gentrifying Downtown Miami.”

interests and there you've got your coalition.” But I feel like we are at the end of being able to operate at that low level of self-interest because if we don't *adopt each other on a higher plane*, the coalition is going to be limited to that self-interest. So, for example, if the environmentalists are happy that they are building green houses but don't understand the importance of supporting the African American community's political power, it will not be a solid coalition. Once that project is over, if the threat to the African American community still continues, those concerned about environmental issues may not be there with support. So our job is to keep the conversation going. Yes, you're here for green buildings, but you also have to be doing this to actually build the power of a black community [...]. That has to be central to their consciousness as environmentalists.⁵⁵⁰

Persuading Florida's large environmental groups to oppose green urban removal took a long time, O'Farrell told me. Traditional environmental groups like the Sierra Club and Audubon Society were interested in the “beautiful things,” not “a place like Overtown.” It took the presence of endangered gopher tortoises on the banks of Wagner Creek to interest of the Sierra Club in toxic dumping in Overtown.⁵⁵¹ Groups like Sierra and the Audubon Society had initially supported Diaz's plans for a greener, denser Miami before Power U and other grassroots organizers explained their potential impact on low-income residents. “It's not like anybody doesn't want greenways and all of that, but it was a plan that people that live there had not been involved in at all,” O'Farrell said.⁵⁵² Building a wider network helped to keep that conversation going.

A national network also enabled activists to speak to struggles in other cities, connecting environmental injustice with housing concerns. In 2006, Power U invited Detroit residents to speak at a hearing on Crosswinds and describe how they had been displaced by one of the

⁵⁵⁰ Connie Cagampang Heller and Gihan Perera, “The Right to the City: Reclaiming Our Urban Centers, Reframing Human Rights, and Redefining Citizenship” (San Francisco, CA: Tides Foundation, 2007).

⁵⁵¹ O'Farrell in discussion with the author.

⁵⁵² O'Farrell in discussion with the author.

company's previous projects. Perry and Power U used the Right to the City concept to show that Crosswinds was more than a local fight. Perry noted:

We could have carried on the Crosswinds campaign as only being mad at our local commissioner [...] but then we're missing the entire picture. Neoliberalism, corporations [...] all of those pieces would be missing. [...]. When our members talk about Crosswinds, they also look around the city of Miami at the increase in poverty, the increase in homelessness. As we help people understand it more, they can name it even more clearly, but they already understand it. It's just about sharing theory and language amongst organizations, which will help build a broader-scale movement.⁵⁵³

Shared theory and language were important tools in mounting campaigns against processes that had become naturalized, such as displacement in the service of real-estate-based growth and the neglect of low-income communities.

The Right to the City movement also provided the opportunity for groups like Power U to speak to neighborhoods that face gentrification but lack Overtown or Liberty City's historical grievances with the city. In a city where racial stratification was severe, the organizations hoped to foster increased cooperation along class lines. Cubans had become the predominant racial group in Miami politics, but the level of Cubans' social ascent depended upon when they arrived. While the first wave of Cuban arrivals – mostly middle and upper-middle class professionals – received significant economic and social support from the U.S. Government, but later arrivals tended to have benefited far less from U.S. foreign policy priorities.⁵⁵⁴ While Cubans who arrived from the 1980s onward still received more opportunities and support than Haitians fleeing the dictatorship of Papa Doc and the devastation of natural disasters,⁵⁵⁵ they still found

⁵⁵³ Samara and Chang, "Gentrifying Downtown Miami."

⁵⁵⁴ Aranda, Hughes, and Sabogal, *Making a Life in Multiethnic Miami*.

⁵⁵⁵ Portes and Stepick, *City on the Edge*.

themselves struggling with prejudice and a lack of opportunity in ways similar to other Latin American and Caribbean migrants.⁵⁵⁶

4.6 Conclusion

These strategies were visible on August 31, 2007, when Power U and the Miami Workers Center joined other groups to storm the Housing Agency of New Orleans to demand the right of return for residents whose homes had been destroyed by Hurricane Katrina and who had received no aid to allow them to go back to their neighborhoods. And on June 19, 2008, Right to the City Miami, made up of Power U, the Miami Workers Center, Vecinos Unidos, and Florida Legal Services targeted the 40th convening of the United States Conference of Mayors, held in the city. The group held a parallel meeting, the People's State of the City Summit, to "discuss a people's platform for the U.S. urban agenda in 2008."⁵⁵⁷ Nearly all of Right to the City's members went on to play significant roles in the Occupy movement around the world in 2011 and 2012. More recently, following the wishes of Overtown residents, Power U has turned its attention to problems such as school safety and the criminalization of young people.

Although climate change did not feature explicitly in the campaigns of Power U or the other Right to the City members, the connection between environmental and housing justice has become key to activist platforms as Miami works to respond to sea level rise. Influencing a developer-led political class continued to be a struggle, however. In 2008, Perry was among the Right to the City activists who acknowledged that their reach would be limited unless they got

⁵⁵⁶ Aranda, Hughes, and Sabogal, *Making a Life in Multiethnic Miami*.

⁵⁵⁷ "March on the Mayors!," 2008, Power U Center for Social Change Records, Box 2, Folder 1, University of Miami.

candidates elected to office.⁵⁵⁸ So far, two commissioners sympathetic to Miami activists' cause have been elected: Eileen Higgins and Daniella Levine Cava.

⁵⁵⁸ Gihan Perera et al., "Winning the Right to the City in a Neo-Liberal World" (Urban Strategies Roundtable, Miami: Right to the City Alliance, 2008).

5. Miami through the lens of climate gentrification

Maggie Fernandez, a former government employee, had been invited to speak at a 2018 meeting of Miami's Sea Level Rise Committee about her nonprofit, Pay Up Climate Polluters, and a proposal to ask the city to tally up how much it was spending to deal with the effects of climate change each year. The committee's chair, land use lawyer Wayne Pathman, told Fernandez that any topics beyond sea level rise were outside of the committee's purview. "We are the sea level rise committee, not the climate committee," he said. "I, as the chair [...] want to explore this idea and how we can do certain things, but if we decide we want to take up all climate initiatives in the city, I don't think that's what the [city] administration wants." During public comment, Fernandez expressed frustration with what she felt was a lack of urgency to deal with climate change among board members. Further, she said, the committee did not reflect the diversity of the community it was supposed to serve (eight of its nine members were men), had limited its scope, and had achieved little to change policy since its formation in 2015.

At several administrative meetings I attended in Miami— particularly meetings of the fractious City Commission — someone on the dais would take offense at criticism and launch into a tirade. Proceedings that often started late could stretch hours into the evening, or conversely, would be abruptly halted altogether. On the night in question, Reinaldo Borges, an architect and member of the Sea Level Rise Committee since 2015, took umbrage at criticisms of the committee's record and makeup, but also at Fernandez's views on what its jurisdiction should be. He told her: "This is not a climate change meeting. [...] [M]y action plan as an architect in this community is to think through adaptation. I don't want to spend an ounce of my energy on this planet right now fighting the polluters. Because I think we all are that." Many climate impacts such as sea level rise were already locked in by past emissions, he added. He told Fernandez to

focus on finding solutions, not telling the committee they were incompetent or criticizing its equity balance. Other committee members apologized to Fernandez, but the matter did not end there.

Fernandez, who knew the mayor of the City of Miami, Francis Suarez, texted him to tell him what happened.⁵⁵⁹ Borges's wish to keep focusing on adapting to climate change rather than examining the responsibility of the biggest polluters reflected a way of doing things that activists were increasingly pressuring the city to change. The same was true of whether bodies like the Sea Level Rise Committee represented Miami's communities. That night, however, the optics were particularly bad: Borges left Fernandez in tears, and another committee member, José Regalado, had told Fernandez she was out of line for accusing Borges of "mansplaining" to her. The incident prompted a deeper reassessment from the mayor's office. What was the Sea Level Rise Committee's role? Should it focus solely on the threat flooding posed to Miami's property values and its tourism- and development-focused economy, or should it encompass other aspects of debates about climate change and what to do about it? And who should be represented within it?

In this chapter, I change focus from the materials that officials, planners, architects, and activists have produced to interviews conducted in-person and on the phone with individuals connected to Miami's climate conversation. I use these conversations and the meetings I attended to interrogate how the narratives and coalitions I observed are historically grounded and contextualized. Unlike the impressions I formed from historical sources, which provided a limited ability to see how people reacted to narratives of green urban removal, this I approach

⁵⁵⁹ Jerry Iannelli, "Member of Miami Sea Level Rise Committee Berated Climate Activist Until She Cried," *Miami New Times*, April 2, 2018, <https://www.miaminewtimes.com/news/miami-climate-activist-berated-for-trying-to-sue-fossil-fuel-companies-10221528>.

made it is possible to see how people employ narratives like the “Miami Way” or historical critiques of segregation as they make sense of climate change. I show how segregation has created very different understandings and physical experiences of climate change and, correspondingly, different solutions.

I focus on the evolution of understandings of climate change in Miami, especially the rising prominence of environmental and housing justice arguments in mainstream political debates about Miami’s future as the city becomes an increasingly visible global symbol of climate vulnerability and climate action. The movement to put equity at the center of climate change planning presents a challenge to political narratives that frame climate change as predominantly a threat to development and real estate investments connected to sea level rise, as well as the policies that have emerged from that characterization. It also complicates Miami’s effort to emerge as a global climate leader through its participation in national and international alliances.

As a result of this shifting discourse, committee makeups have changed and policymakers have begun to include affordable housing under the new umbrella term “resilience.” At the same time, Overtown, Liberty City, and Little Haiti – all previously considered undesirable areas on high ground away from the coast – are under increasing pressure from developers looking to buy large parcels of land to create new megadevelopments. I examine how climate change has become understood as both an impetus for gentrification and a galvanizing force for activists, despite the difficulties of pushing back against development in a city where development interests are powerful, connected, and a key source of revenue. With these power dynamics in mind, I appraise the uneven consequences of climate gentrification in historically disenfranchised areas.

Further, I show how two new terms – resilience and climate change gentrification – collide with the older narratives about the city, its nature, and its people that I have discussed in previous chapters, including colonial narratives of conquest and discovery, the Miami Way, boosterism in the press, the tension between urban renewal and urban removal, and arguments for environmental justice. These narratives, fragmented in their adoption across demographics and frequently across space, each have different implications for understandings about climate change, what should be done about it, and who should benefit.

The rise of “resilience” has been a crucial force in shaping local, national, and international responses to climate change. Although the term remains ill-defined, its flexibility has allowed municipalities in Miami to participate in international discussions about resilience, and to accommodate shifting ideas about what climate change means for Miami and shifting priorities in talking about and addressing it. Resilience functions as a “lens” that allows the connections between different problems to come into focus. It can be interpreted in ways that support the Miami Way and its continuing legacy of development and displacement, or to highlight the needs of the city’s most vulnerable. Miami has also become the focus of a new climate lens that has shifted the public and policy conversation about responses to climate threats: climate gentrification. Although contested, this lens has brought into focus the connections between Miami’s history of displacement and environmental racism, as well as its current vulnerability to climate stresses.

Finally, I examine the climate movement’s success in changing both policy and narratives, as well as a new turn in the area’s climate discourse as cities in the Greater Miami area declare a “climate emergency” and Miami itself adopts a “net zero” target for carbon emissions, a goal that had been mostly absent from climate conversations for several years. At

the same time, a growing number of voices are beginning to advocate for a just retreat from a delicate ecosystem that soon will no longer be able to support the needs of its 6.1 million people.

5.1 Evolving understandings

The 2009 election of Mayor Tomás Regalado, a Cuban-American Republican, seemed to reverse the city of Miami’s climate conversation. Regalado, who ran against Diaz’s “big picture” administration with promises of fiscal responsibility and tax cuts, rarely spoke about climate change in his first years in office.⁵⁶⁰ While Regalado remained silent, climate change impacts had begun to encroach on daily life with increasing regularity. Miami was already experiencing sunny day flooding, king tides, and more frequent and severe tropical storms and hurricanes. Over the past decade, flood events in Miami – one of the most vulnerable cities in the country to sea level rise – have increased in frequency by 400 per cent.⁵⁶¹ There are several reasons that the flooding poses such an eminent threat to the city. Sea level rise in Southeast Florida is approximately 15 per cent higher than the global average, according to research by local scientists.⁵⁶² In addition, Miami’s average elevation is only six feet above sea level. The coastal ridge that served as the main base for population and infrastructure until Miami’s postwar suburban boom is only 12 feet above the water. By comparison, New York, also considered vulnerable to sea level rise, sits an average of 33 feet above sea level. Finally, Miami’s bedrock

⁵⁶⁰ Damien Cave, “A New Mayor for Miami,” *The New York Times*, November 4, 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/04/us/04miami.html>.

⁵⁶¹ “These U.S. Cities Are Most Vulnerable to Major Coastal Flooding and Sea Level Rise” (Climate Central, October 25, 2017), <https://www.climatecentral.org/news/us-cities-most-vulnerable-major-coastal-flooding-sea-level-rise-21748>.

⁵⁶² “Unified Sea Level Rise Projection” (Southeast Florida Climate Change Compact Sea Level Rise Work Group, 2015).

is made of limestone, meaning that water from the ocean soaks into the soft rock and gurgles up through the land, drenching lawns and concrete, and rendering dikes or walls ineffective.⁵⁶³

In Florida, about 300,000 homes are located less than three feet above the high-water mark, as well as 2,555 miles of roads, 35 public schools, one power plant, and 978 EPA-listed sites such as hazardous waste dumps and sewage plants. At six feet, these numbers grow to more than 16,000 miles of road, 300 schools, 14 power plants, and 5,509 contaminated sites listed by the Environmental Protection Agency.⁵⁶⁴

By 2013, Miami's flooding had begun to catch the attention of the national press. That year, the *Rolling Stone* published an article ominously titled "Goodbye, Miami," quoting scientists and engineers on the extent of the problem, as well as officials' general failure to recognize its seriousness.⁵⁶⁵ That year, Philip Levine, the CEO of a cruise company, was elected mayor of Miami Beach after promising to "fix" the flooding that was crippling the island's economy and running a campaign video in which he pretended to paddle home from work in a boat.⁵⁶⁶ Even Regalado began to change his mind. In a 2017 interview, he did not attribute his newfound interest in climate policy to national press attention, evidence from scientists, or the city's worsening flooding, but to conversations with his son. Jose Regalado had come back to

⁵⁶³ "Climate Change Impacts in the United States: The Third National Climate Assessment" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Global Change Research Program, 2014), <https://www.globalchange.gov/browse/reports/climate-change-impacts-united-states-third-national-climate-assessment-0>.

⁵⁶⁴ Benjamin H. Strauss et al., "Florida and the Surging Sea: A Vulnerability Assessment with Projections for Sea Level Rise and Coastal Flood Risk," Research Report (Princeton, NJ: Climate Central, April 2014), <https://sealevel.climatecentral.org/uploads/ssrf/FL-Report.pdf>.

⁵⁶⁵ Jeff Goodell, "Goodbye, Miami," *Rolling Stone*, June 20, 2013, <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/why-the-city-of-miami-is-doomed-to-drown-20130620>.

⁵⁶⁶ *Philip Levine for Mayor of Miami Beach "Paddle"* (Miami, 2013), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9niAnh9KZw>.

live with his father after his mother died, and, according to the *Miami Herald*, he began to talk to his father about climate change over coffee each morning.⁵⁶⁷

This shift was visible in 2016 when Regalado asked Republican presidential candidates to tell him what they planned to do about rising seas, and when he called on President Trump to talk about climate change as Hurricane Irma threatened the city in 2017. That year, he also began to drum up support for a bond dedicated to funding climate change responses, which was to be raised through a portion of Miami's property tax. He started to shift his political messaging, standing in floodwater from that year's king tide in Shorecrest, one of the few seafront blue-collar areas in Miami, and posting pictures of flooding overwhelming seawalls on Twitter.

Urgent items on Regalado's agenda included updating a 2012 stormwater study that failed to take sea level rise into account, thereby missing the urgent need for infrastructure improvements in places like Shorecrest, which was already experiencing "weeks of extreme tidal flooding every year."⁵⁶⁸ Diaz, who had made the installation of pumps to deal with flooding an important part of his platform, did not link that flooding with climate change. For him, responding to climate change involved encouraging the construction of more efficient buildings and reducing car travel. But during Regalado's two terms, climate change became explicitly and indelibly linked to sea level rise and the attendant flooding that was now happening rain or shine. Both mayors, however, shared a desire to reconcile climate action with development, a marriage that was hoped for around the world, but especially in Florida.

⁵⁶⁷ David Smiley, "How 4 a.m. Chats Persuaded Miami's Republican Mayor to Care about Sea-Level Rise," *Miami Herald*, October 6, 2017, <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/politics-government/article177433831.html>.

⁵⁶⁸ Smiley, "How 4 a.m. Chats."

A mosaic of climate efforts began to form in both Miami and Miami Beach, drawing inspiration from Miami-Dade’s long-running climate plans dating back to 1993, as well as its participation in the Southeast Florida Climate Change Compact, a collaboration with Broward, Monroe, and Palm Beach Counties.⁵⁶⁹ The county’s focus, discussed in previous chapters, had remained on encouraging density at the urban core. Its County Climate Change Advisory Task Force, made up of 200 officials, academics and other experts, had issued recommendations that were included into the County Sustainability Plan and the 2014 County Comprehensive Planning Guide.

Gestures toward climate change action have not guaranteed that such action actually takes place, however. Until activists began to put serious public pressure on his administration, Regalado could benefit from positive headlines for talking about climate change without any accountability for following through, just as his predecessor, Diaz, could receive international attention for his climate policies that did not pay attention to sea level rise. In 2015, the county’s \$6.8 million budget made no mention of climate change. Activists organizing the Miami People’s Climate March to coincide with the marches happening around the world in September of that year noticed the absence, and brought out 200 residents – some wearing inner tubes and water wings – to the budget hearings, prompting Miami-Dade to create the County Office of Resilience and allocate \$75,000 toward the position of Chief Resilience Officer.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁹ For a comprehensive overview of the County’s climate change efforts, see: Dumitrita Suzana Mic, “Producing Collaborations Through Community-Level Processes of Climate Change and Water Management Planning” (Ph.D. dissertation, Florida International University, 2015), <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1761185540/abstract/10597484A9934469PQ/1>.

⁵⁷⁰ Ladra, “Miami-Dade Budget 2015 Rally Is for Climate Change Funds,” *Political Cortadito* (blog), accessed February 20, 2020, <http://www.politicalcortadito.com/2015/09/17/miami-dade-budget-climate-change/>.

5.2 The rise of resilience

Resilience was becoming an increasingly popular term in urban policy circles, promoted by wealthy think tanks and NGOs. It focuses on cities' ability to "bounce back" from "shocks" like extreme weather and deal with "stresses" like climate change. Over the past 30 years, "resilience" has become an increasingly popular concept in disciplines such as engineering, political ecology, psychology, sports, urban studies, and risk management. Its conceptual attractiveness extended even to the beauty industry: Estée Lauder named a range of face creams it released in the early 2000s "Resilience Lift." In the field of disaster management, Hurricane Katrina in 2005 emerged as an example of the need for resilience when New Orleans's levees, pumps, and canals failed despite the predictability of such an event in the region.⁵⁷¹ Katrina showed, as one book about resilience said, that "first-world countries" could be vulnerable, too.⁵⁷²

Resilience appeared to resist precise definition yet offered an answer for almost anything. An op-ed in the *South Florida Sun Sentinel* reflecting on the human-caused disaster during and after Katrina hinted at how this flexibility could border on fuzziness, calling resilience a "squishy set of qualities that allows a person or community to bounce back."⁵⁷³ Resilience's applicability to environmental concerns has grown increasingly prominent. Andrew Zolli, the author of a book *Resilience: Why Things Bounce Back*, declared in a 2012 *New York Times* op-ed that the concept

⁵⁷¹ Arjen Boin, Louise Comfort, and Demchak CC, "The Rise of Resilience," in *Designing Resilience: Preparing for Extreme Events*, ed. Louise Comfort, Arjen Boin, and Chris Demchak (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press 2010) 1–12.

⁵⁷² Kathleen Tierney, *The Social Roots of Risk: Producing Disasters, Promoting Resilience* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Business Books, 2014).

⁵⁷³ "Lessons We Learned from Katrina," *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* (originally published in the *Chicago Tribune*), August 27, 2015.

of sustainability, which he characterized as efforts to “put the world back into balance,” had failed in the face of increasing imbalance, as seen in the disruption wrought by Hurricane Sandy and searing drought in the Midwest. Resilience, meanwhile, focused on “how to help vulnerable people, organizations and systems persist, perhaps even thrive, amid unforeseeable disruptions.”⁵⁷⁴ Zolli, like other resilience adherents, associated the attribute with the “new” realities of the first decade of the 21st century.

Also around the turn of the millennium, “resilience thinking” was gaining popularity with city planners as they updated aging infrastructure, for example, to fortify systems against a range of threats that were top of mind in a post-9/11 world: terrorism, extreme weather, and energy disruption. Unlike sustainability, resilience encompassed a range of policy areas, from the environment to technology and cybersecurity. Resilient infrastructure could mean “smart” microgrids that collect data on their users, or the term could be extended to include natural features such as wetlands serving as a “buffer against hurricanes.”⁵⁷⁵ Policy recommendations encouraging urban adaptation to multiplying environmental and security risks have proliferated from governmental and non-governmental sources like the 2012 campaign by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction *How to Make Cities More Resilient*, and the Rockefeller Foundation’s 100 Resilient Cities initiative that makes funds and training to cities it identifies as vulnerable.⁵⁷⁶

Through 100 Resilient Cities, Rockefeller made \$200 million available to cities on its list for consultant services and access to its network. In 2015, Greater Miami and the Beaches –

⁵⁷⁴ Andrew Zolli, “Learning to Bounce Back,” *The New York Times*, November 2, 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/03/opinion/forget-sustainability-its-about-resilience.html>.

⁵⁷⁵ Zolli, “Learning to Bounce Back.”

⁵⁷⁶ Jim Bohland, Simin Davoudi, and Jennifer L. Lawrence, *The Resilience Machine* (London: Routledge, 2018).

consisting of Miami-Dade County, the City of Miami, and Miami Beach – were selected to join the group. One of Rockefeller’s most important acts was to fund Chief Resilience Officers, official posts in member cities. Miami-Dade County founded its Office of Resilience in 2015, led by Jim Murley, also head of the South Florida Regional Planning Council. Miami Beach’s Chief Resilience Officer is Susanne Torriente. In 2016, Jane Gilbert was appointed as the City of Miami’s first Chief Resilience Officer, setting up an Office of Resilience and Sustainability. Together, under the purview of 100 Resilient Cities, the three municipalities have produced the Resilient 305 strategy, a plan to increase the Miami region’s resilience to shocks, including climate change.⁵⁷⁷ Since the 2018 election of a new Florida governor, Ron DeSantis, the state also briefly gained a resilience officer, Julia Nesheiwat, a former hostage negotiator with the State Department.⁵⁷⁸

From municipality to municipality, the focus on resilience differs, however. Gilbert’s work focused on developing Miami’s climate resilience response – responding to climate change and sea level rise, with a focus on hazard mitigation.⁵⁷⁹ The role is structured in such a way that Gilbert had her own staff, but was not part of any existing department. This gave her more leeway to “challenge the status quo,” she said, working across departments that had not always cooperated in the past and encouraging them to factor climate change into their decisions. Jeremy Calleros Gauger, a planner for the City of Miami, described how, for example, the existence of the office had made considering problems like sea level rise in projects all over city

⁵⁷⁷ “Resilient 305: Greater Miami & The Beaches,” 305, accessed February 12, 2020, <https://resilient305.com/>.

⁵⁷⁸ Alex Harris, “Florida’s Climate Czar Pays a Visit to Miami-Dade. Does It Signal New State Support?,” *Miami Herald*, October 2, 2019, <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/environment/article235674367.html>.

⁵⁷⁹ Jane Gilbert in discussion with the author, March 12, 2019.

government the new “status quo” rather than a topic that frequently evaded staff’s attention.⁵⁸⁰

The restoration of the Miami Marine Stadium, built in the 1960s as a venue for powerboat racing, would now fall under the rubric of resilience, requiring it to accommodate a certain amount of sea level rise.

Miami Beach applied the term to its most recent strategic plan, using a framing it calls the “lens of resilience,” which, it argued, “helps us clearly see our shocks and stresses,” allowing the city to survive shocks like “storms and special events” as it copes with ongoing issues like “aging infrastructure and congestion.” The plan groups these problems and the associated solutions into “vision areas,” and invites readers to “put on your lenses and get ready for some strategy.”⁵⁸¹ Miami Beach’s definition of resilience also includes security-focused concerns such as cyberterrorism. Despite its interpretational fuzziness, the idea of resilience as a “lens” that allows the linkages between policy concerns that may otherwise be dealt with separately has been productive in Miami’s municipal governments.

Resilience’s broad applicability has made it a site for contestation. As Moses Shumow, a professor of journalism at Florida International University, remarked in an interview, used to apply to buildings and infrastructure, resilience, as conceived at the municipal level, can ignore the history of resilient people who live in Miami.⁵⁸² Like “sustainability,” resilience has been used as a rhetorical means to accommodate the drive for consumption and development alongside environmental protection, to the detriment of populations who bear the costs (but not the rewards) of attempts to create a “win-win.” Large new developments that risk displacing

⁵⁸⁰ Jeremy Calleros Gauger in discussion with the author, February 19, 2019.

⁵⁸¹ Raul J Aguila et al., “Our Future in Focus: 2019 Strategic Plan Through the Lens of Resilience” (City of Miami Beach, 2019).

⁵⁸² Moses Shumow in discussion with the author, February 5, 2019.

lower-income residents – many of whom work in essential service jobs – have claimed the moniker, for example, asserting that elevation and on-site renewable energy generation assure the development’s longevity and green credentials.

A counternarrative has emerged among community organizations and others, meanwhile, that focuses on the need to ensure low-income residents have resilient housing and paints as resilient the people who have lived for generations in Miami or came as refugees. Speaking of Little Haiti, a low-income area on higher ground, community organizer Marleine Bastien described the story of Haitian migrants who came to Miami in the 1960s and 70s and turned the area into a “thriving, culturally diverse neighborhood” out of “sheer resilience, determination, and courage.”⁵⁸³ By shifting the focus from infrastructure onto people – as Power U did in response to the plans for Crosswinds – Bastien and other activists add another facet to their narrative against displacement. Others in community meetings have pointed out the way that “bouncing back” presumes that returning to how things were before is desirable, when policies could instead aim to improve on that baseline in economically and environmentally vulnerable places.

The conflict between different narratives of resiliency has emerged with increasing persistence, challenging the narrative of Miami as a “perky engine of commerce” in official settings. In chapter one, I discussed the importance of the “Miami Way” to the city’s development, an ethos that espoused a need to build in order to secure revenue; a faith in technology’s ability to tame nature; a reliance on service industries and tourism staffed by low-paid workers; a rigid, racially-stratified class system that ensures a continued supply of precarious workers to local businesses; and a lack of union organization. I have also shown how

⁵⁸³ Brad Wong, “Miami’s Little Haiti Organizes on Gentrification,” *Marguerite Casey Foundation* (blog), July 4, 2018, <https://caseygrants.org/who-we-are/inside-mcf/miamis-little-haiti-organizes-on-gentrification/>.

environmental concerns can be incorporated into the Miami Way, framing green space and clean air as necessary for maintaining the city's competitiveness as an engine for tourism and an attractive place for desirable new residents. Studying the Miami Way and its evolution provides a strikingly unadulterated case of a city conceived of and governed as a growth machine. As federal funding for cities has decreased, industrial cities have lost their economic base, service industries grow, and work becomes more precarious, localized variations of the Miami Way seem to be spreading. And as other scholars have demonstrated, Miami has represented an important early example of challenges other US cities may come to face as migration accelerates around the country.⁵⁸⁴ I argue that the same can be said of the city's exposure to the threats of extreme weather and the effects of climate change under ever more extreme deregulation, even as municipalities and the state begin to reckon with those threats.

Miami's real estate boom stalled only briefly after the global financial crisis. Soon, more cranes than ever were visible breaching the skyline along the waterfront, assembling buildings with helipads, private automobile elevators, and glass-walled penthouses offering 360-degree views of the city, the ocean and Biscayne Bay. This constituted a "lopsided" comeback for the wealthy, including opportunities to buy and tear down old properties, and build in their place "new Gatsby-esque" mansions, even as most people found themselves unable to get a mortgage.⁵⁸⁵ The boom coincided with a sharp increase in flooding, especially on Miami Beach, where instances rose by 400 per cent between 2006 and 2016.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸⁴ Alejandro Portes and Ariel C. Armony, *The Global Edge* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2018).

⁵⁸⁵ Martha Brannigan, "South Florida Housing: The Boom, the Bust, and the Rebound," *Miami Herald*, May 4, 2014, <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/miami-dade/article1963878.html>.

⁵⁸⁶ Shimon Wdowinski et al., "Increasing Flooding Hazard in Coastal Communities Due to Rising Sea Level: Case Study of Miami Beach, Florida," *Ocean & Coastal Management* 126 (June 1, 2016): 1–8, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ocecoaman.2016.03.002>.

Officials like Miami Beach’s Philip Levine encourage the continuing construction of luxury developments for several reasons, one of the most important being that it raises tax and property revenues,⁵⁸⁷ increasing the funds available to municipalities to pay for the infrastructure to serve a growing population and at the same time preparing for ever greater pressures from flooding, hurricanes, and heat. This leaves municipalities in the strange position of encouraging development – which leaves them more vulnerable as they proliferate flood-prone concrete surfaces and put more assets in the way of future hurricanes – because it will help them pay for the infrastructure needed to cope with increasing vulnerability. Reining in development, especially in the urban core, has been anathema to most Miami politicians. When asked whether the developers might stop building on the waterfront given the predicted rise in sea level, Mayor Regalado answered: “The developers? Of course not.”⁵⁸⁸ Miami’s position may not be much different from that of other world cities. Plans to reduce development or even retreat from the shoreline are few and far between. After Hurricane Sandy, for example, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg painted redevelopment on Staten Island’s ruined shoreline as a moral duty. Leaving the area free from future development was unthinkable. Instead, it should be redeveloped with “resilient” buildings that would bring new commerce to Staten Island.⁵⁸⁹

In Miami, too, adaptation measures have seemingly helped to maintain the development cycle. In 2013, Miami Beach embarked on an aggressive set of adaptation policies to raise roads,

⁵⁸⁷ David Kamp, “Can Miami Beach Survive Global Warming?,” *Vanity Fair*, December 2015, <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2015/11/miami-beach-global-warming>.

⁵⁸⁸ Matt Vasilogambros, “Taking the High Ground—And Developing It for When Sea Levels Are Higher,” *The Atlantic*, March 6, 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/03/taking-the-high-ground-and-developing-it/472326/>.

⁵⁸⁹ Michael Bloomberg, “Mayor Bloomberg Presents the City’s Long-Term Plan to Further Prepare for the Impacts of a Changing Climate,” <http://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/200-13/mayor-bloomberg-presents-city-s-long-term-plan-further-prepare-the-impacts-a-changing>.

build sea walls, and install seawater pumps in response to residents' complaints about increasingly problematic flooding. During king tide, even on sunny days, residents were wading through dirty water to get to work or buy groceries. As I explore further in the conclusion to this dissertation, the measures have created complicated new perceptions of risk. Like Bloomberg's positioning of resilient new infrastructure as the solution to qualms about development, the new pumps help to maintain the illusion of a dry Miami Beach, further fueling the boom.⁵⁹⁰ One reporter found that realtors at Miami Beach condo viewings frequently commented that the city had "fixed" sea level rise with the pumps.⁵⁹¹ At the same time, politicians have admitted freely that all the pumps represent a "band-aid," not a long-term solution. In such cases, the tendency has been to point to future technologies. Confronted with the suggestion that his fixes were not permanent, the former mayor of Miami Beach, Philip Levine, argued, "human innovation" would produce "innovative solutions to fight back against sea level rise that we cannot even imagine today."⁵⁹² In this case, then, resiliency involves not only maintaining the pace of building, but also gesturing toward expected future innovations.

Such optimism looks to the future but draws on Miami's history as a place where settlers used technologies such as drainage to cope with increasingly hostile surrounds. In an interview in 2018, Wayne Pathman, a land use lawyer and the chairman of the City of Miami's Sea Level Rise Committee, demonstrated how the Miami Way has remained constant in attitudes toward

⁵⁹⁰ Kamp, "Can Miami Beach Survive Global Warming?"

⁵⁹¹ Sarah Miller, "Heaven or High Water," *Popula*, April 2, 2019, <https://popula.com/2019/04/02/heaven-or-high-water/>.

⁵⁹² Elizabeth Kolbert, "Miami Underwater," *The New Yorker*, December 2015, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/12/21/the-siege-of-miami>.

challenges like sea level rise. New technologies, big plans, and clear regulation could allow Miami Beach to continue to grow, he explained:

A few years ago, when Rolling Stone magazine did their article by Jeff Goodell, they made it sound like complete doom and gloom and pack your bags, it's time to leave. Well, hundreds of articles have been written since then. Still we have flourished down here in terms of development, but we need to develop and build differently. [...] The sooner you start, the better chance of you actually having the opportunity to do it and do it right and, at the same time, encouraging development in the area because they will see that, OK, the city has a plan on how they're going to address this issue. [...]

I think man has figured out a lot of things. We got to the moon. When people came here in 1905 or the 1900s what they saw was not what you see out my window. It was swamp, mosquitoes, hot, trees and look what they built. [...] I think that we can be resourceful. I think you have to accept Mother Nature... she's coming... but I think we can adapt to things. The critical issue to me is when do we start.⁵⁹³

According to Pathman, planning was not the enemy of continued development in Miami but its savior. Several interviewees suggested that the municipalities are rushing to squeeze in as much development as possible before the next crash, but others contend that the demand is unlikely to go away soon, especially in the context of immense interest from overseas buyers. One interviewee - a land use lawyer - commented that six years ago, she had expected building to die away in the face of the growing obstacles posed by sea level rise, as well as a slowdown in the condo market, but international investment has fueled interest in Miami as a place to park wealth and enjoy a warm climate in exclusive developments in Brickell, Downtown, and the Design District, without the perceived dangers of crime and economic turmoil in countries such as Brazil and Venezuela.⁵⁹⁴ The New York-based developer Witkoff announced in January 2020 that it would move to the area to build a series of new projects in Miami-Dade. "We believe in the

⁵⁹³ Wayne Pathman, interview by Kathy Hersh, Miami Design Preservation League, October 11, 2018.

⁵⁹⁴ Land use lawyer in discussion with the author, March 15, 2019.

growth of Miami,” the company’s executive Vice President Alex Witkoff told the *Herald*.⁵⁹⁵

This technological optimism – also the engine of Everglades drainage – promises the materialization of machinery that has not yet been invented. This colonial narrative also assumes that low-wage labor will still somehow be available to propel the Miami Beach economy, even as the cost of living continues to soar.

In addition, the attention to flooding has pushed pumps to the forefront of the list of available responses. Getting water off the streets is portrayed as the most important climate-related goal. Pump stations may remove inconvenient water, but they are extremely energy-hungry, and South Florida’s electricity provider, Florida Power and Light, has lobbied against renewable electricity production from sources such as solar power. Despite the Miami-Dade’s early focus on reducing energy emissions, the rising prominence of sea level rise made the overall mitigation of climate change and its non-flooding effects less of a priority. Resilience advocates have been working to change that: Alissa Farina, the City of Miami’s Resilience Programs Manager, acknowledged that while the city was “not doing a ton right now” to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, she was working to find ways to ensure the city was “tackling climate change at both ends,” both working on adaptation and lowering emissions.

The Miami Way has helped to produce a conceptualization of climate change response that emphasizes the need to maintain development to fund adaptation that will encourage further development. By decontextualizing climate change and, until recently, making the primary concern the maintenance of property values and the pace of development, the meaning of resilience can be reduced to maintaining optimism among city investors and promising future

⁵⁹⁵ Rebecca San Juan, “The New York-Based Real Estate Development Firm Witkoff Is Expanding to Miami,” *Miami Herald*, January 15, 2020, <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/business/real-estate-news/article239177528.html>.

technologies that may never be invented. Meanwhile, other aspects of climate change have remained less discussed, such as the city's role in reducing carbon emissions and the concerns of low-income neighborhoods. Determined to change this situation, community activists mounted a campaign to get their concerns addressed and change the dominant discourse about climate change and in policy approaches.

5.3 Climate change in the “Third Miami”

In 2017, Hurricane Irma became the worst hurricane to batter Miami since 1992. Its winds reached 145 miles per hour, and unlike Andrew, Irma brought significant storm surge, flooding downtown Miami and cutting off the Keys. At a Sea Level Rise Committee after the storm, one speaker recalled looking back at his home on Miami Beach as he evacuated. If the storm destroyed it, he remembered thinking, he'd simply rebuild because that was what Miamians had always done. This reality might hold true for some Miami residents, although it is becoming increasingly out of reach as insurance rates rise, even for those who receive funds from FEMA to rebuild their homes.⁵⁹⁶ While television cameras initially focused on the spectacle of water inundating Brickell, Miami's financial district, a different kind of disaster was unfolding in low-income areas, even ones that escaped flooding due to their position on high ground. Poorly maintained rental apartments fared badly under the stress of the winds, leaving many without housing after the storm. Service workers who evacuated before the storm or who could not come to work in its aftermath risked being fired. Some of the problems residents faced were new:

⁵⁹⁶ Ron Hurtibise, “Hurricane Irma’s Costs Are Still Rising, and so Could Your Insurance Rates,” *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*, February 28, 2019, <https://www.sun-sentinel.com/business/fl-bz-property-insurance-rate-rise-predicted-20190228-story.html>.

Without electricity, electronic cards for food allowances would not work, leaving people without food.⁵⁹⁷

For people on low incomes, preparing for and responding to hurricanes is a challenge at every step. Assembling the food and other supplies needed to ride a storm out is costly. Evacuation without a car in Miami is challenging, and employers are not always understanding if people do not make it in to work. Even if people are allowed time off work to escape a hurricane, missing a few days' pay could put them at risk of losing their homes. For renters, the hurricane was an especially stressful time. Landlords could choose not to repair damaged buildings, leaving tenants homeless.⁵⁹⁸ Val Jonas, a civil rights lawyer who represents sex offenders in South Florida, recalled the difficulties she encountered in finding places for her clients in hurricane shelters. Sex offenders in Florida are often homeless because they are banned from living near children, and they have also been barred from public hurricane shelters in the state.⁵⁹⁹

Maggie Fernandez, a member of the Miami Climate Alliance and now a senior advisor to County Commissioner Eileen Higgins, told me that Irma brought the climate vulnerability of Miami's low-income communities to the forefront of the public and political imagination.⁶⁰⁰ She recalled speaking with Valencia Gunder, a climate and housing activist based in Liberty City, who knew that her community was not ready for the hurricane. As Irma threatened, Gunder set up the Community Emergency Operations Center, which delivered help to 18 low-income

⁵⁹⁷ Tanvi Misra Walljasper Soren, "Mapping the Poor in Irma's Path," *CityLab* (blog), September 12, 2017, <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2017/09/the-poor-in-irmas-path/539412/>.

⁵⁹⁸ "How to Help and Volunteer in Miami after Hurricane Irma," *The New Tropic*, September 20, 2017, <https://thenewtropic.com/hurricane-irma-volunteer-donate/>.

⁵⁹⁹ Val Jonas in discussion with the author, 2019.

⁶⁰⁰ Maggie Fernandez in discussion with the author, 2018.

communities before other aid reached them.⁶⁰¹ People in Miami’s low-income areas are living in a state of constant precarity even before a hurricane strikes, a situation made worse by environmental segregation’s effect on community health.

This segregation has rendered environmental experiences highly localized, and made it harder for lower-income areas to have their concerns addressed. A year after the storm, Liberty City residents were still asking the county to remove a huge pile of hurricane debris from the only residential landfill site in Miami-Dade. The county had claimed the debris was all organic and did not represent a danger to drinking water, but the landfill was attracting vermin and mosquitoes. Residents and reporters had photographed non-organic waste such as mattresses in the mound, which was located near homes and a kindergarten.⁶⁰² At a coordinating meeting for Miami Climate Alliance members, one Liberty City organizer compared the concern in the news about the impact of plastic waste on ocean animals like turtles with the relative absence of coverage of the humans in Liberty City who were enduring dangerous circumstances as a result of climate change, environmental racism, and inequality. Both turtles in the ocean and children in Liberty City were suffering from the notion that the debris of capitalism can be thrown “away.” Her critique highlighted how the colonial placement of nature in an idealized – if threatened – wilderness blocked Liberty City residents from becoming subjects who deserve eco-health in the same way charismatic animal species do.

Gunder is one of several prominent women of color building new narratives about climate change that center the disproportionate burden low-income communities are facing.

⁶⁰¹ “How to Help and Volunteer in Miami after Hurricane Irma.”

⁶⁰² Isabella Vi Gomes, “Liberty City Residents Worry They’re Being Poisoned by Huge Hurricane Irma Dumpsite,” *Miami New Times*, November 3, 2017, <https://www.miaminewtimes.com/news/miami-dade-dumps-hurricane-debris-in-liberty-city-9798918>.

Across activist circles, I was struck by the number of women – many of whom claim African-American, Latinx, and/or Caribbean heritage – demanding that climate change be addressed through tackling poverty in addition to its most visible effects, and through finding new ways to communicate the urgency of climate change to different constituencies. The contrast is all the more striking when compared to Miami’s heavily male-skewed formal power structures such as the city and county commissions.

Through these new modes of talking about climate change, community activism on old problems, such as the continued dominance of slum landlords in Overtown and Liberty City, has gained new salience in public debates due to some activists’ success in linking housing to Miami’s climate discourse. While Miami’s slumlords were once identifiable individuals, they are now much more likely to be companies based elsewhere in the country or, increasingly, the world.⁶⁰³ The difficulties encountered in locating the companies investing in Miami housing after Hurricane Andrew have multiplied in the interim, showing that the city’s international property market is by no means limited to luxury condominiums. Ninety-five per cent of the owners of apartment blocks in Overtown are not based in the area. Many in Liberty City and Overtown are run by absentee LLCs with names like “World Domination.” Landlords will amass liens on their properties for keeping them in such poor condition that residents live with blocked-up plumbing, leaks, and vermin, but then have them canceled when they sell the property to the next owner.⁶⁰⁴ Struggle for Miami’s Affordable and Sustainable Housing (SMASH), a member of the Miami Climate Alliance, aims to connect work to increase affordable housing with climate

⁶⁰³ Nadege Green, “Tenants Say Liberty City Apartments Are Unlivable” (WLRN, November 25, 2014), <https://www.wlrn.org/post/tenants-say-liberty-city-apartments-are-unliveable>.

⁶⁰⁴ Housing activist in discussion with the author, April 4, 2019.

change adaptation by creating a community land trust for affordable housing in Liberty City.⁶⁰⁵ Meanwhile, others have been working on crafting legislative responses to allow municipalities to raise Florida’s minimum wage so that low-wage workers can afford rising rents, as well as new renter protections.

Another way activists have drawn attention to the unequal burden of climate change borne by the poor is through transportation reform. Unions and transportation activists have shown that Miami’s worsening traffic is compounded for low-wage workers who are dependent on public transportation to get to work at places like the hotels on Miami Beach. Buses are infrequent, routes chaotic, and several transfers are often necessary, sometimes to go just a short distance. In addition to suffering from poor air quality as a result of Miami’s famous traffic, patrons of public transportation must wait at stops that rarely have shade.⁶⁰⁶ Public transportation is all the more necessary when employers like the Fontainebleau Hotel require workers to pay for parking. Unions including the AFL-CIO and Unite Here Local 355, which represents hotel workers, have been attempting to link the problem with climate change concerns, and to field a new crop of climate activists. For example, one union organizer I spoke to described efforts to raise the problem with local and state authorities, as well as to encourage bus drivers to measure temperatures on board buses.⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰⁵ Adrian Madriz, “BREAKING NEWS: SMASH Has Site Control for Community Land Trust! | SMASH,” accessed February 14, 2020, <https://www.smash.miami/breaking-news-smash-has-site-control-for-community-land-trust/>.

⁶⁰⁶ Kate Stein, “Transit Group Gives Miami-Dade County Public Transit A Failing Grade,” *WLRN* (blog), accessed February 20, 2020, <https://www.wlrn.org/post/transit-group-gives-miami-dade-county-public-transit-failing-grade>.

⁶⁰⁷ Union organizer in discussion with the author, 2019.

5.4 Climate gentrification

One of the most effective – and widely disputed – means of connecting climate vulnerability to the legacy problems associated with redlining has been through discussions of climate change gentrification. Neglected areas on Miami’s coastal ridge such as Liberty City and Little Haiti have seen increases in speculation from investors looking to develop Special Area Plans and other developments. I argue that like resilience, climate change gentrification functions as a “lens” that allows the concept to fulfill different functions in the city’s climate change discourse. Gunder and fellow Liberty City activist Paulette Richards have said that their community has known for years that the area’s high elevation would attract wealthy speculators eventually, just as Overtown’s proximity to the downtown area had made it a target for urban renewal.⁶⁰⁸

Miami has also attracted researchers investigating whether climate change was driving new gentrification. Since 2012, Tulane University professor Jesse Keenan had been studying what he believed to be an increased demand for land in places that are relatively protected from the impacts of climate change. After hearing anecdotal accounts of rising land prices inland, Keenan and his colleagues carried out a study of property values over time in Miami in 2015.⁶⁰⁹ They found that residences on the shoreline, in areas such as Miami Beach where some of the area’s most expensive homes were built, had decreased in value in relation to those inland on higher ground, which remained much cheaper but had gained relative value.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁸ Nadege Green, “As Seas Rise, Miami’s Black Communities Fear Displacement from the High Ground,” *WJCT*, November 5, 2019, <https://news.wjct.org/post/seas-rise-miami-s-black-communities-fear-displacement-high-ground>.

⁶⁰⁹ Jesse M. Keenan in discussion with the author, 2019.

⁶¹⁰ Jesse M. Keenan, Thomas Hill, and Anurag Gumber, “Climate Gentrification: From Theory to Empiricism in Miami-Dade County, Florida,” *Environmental Research Letters* 13, no. 5 (April 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1088/1748-9326/aabb32>.

Both assertions – that climate gentrification is a continuation of historic patterns and that it is a new national and international-scale phenomenon - appear credible in Miami’s runaway housing market. Interviewees regularly cited evidence that they felt backed up the notion that living close to the water is losing some of its allure. For example, Jorge Damian de la Paz, who researches land use patterns at the University of Miami’s Office of Civic and Community Engagement pointed out that homes valued in the millions are increasingly up for sale in expensive neighborhoods such as the Venetian Islands, a string of manmade islands that in the 1930s were awarded an ‘A’ rating from redliners despite their exposure to hurricanes.⁶¹¹ Meanwhile, higher neighborhoods such as Little Haiti and Liberty City are experiencing an onslaught from speculators. Renters face even greater precarity, while homeowners have reported receiving phone calls in the early hours of the morning from speculators.

At the same time, few developers will admit that elevation has been a factor in their decisions to target Little Haiti or Liberty City. Most have claimed their interest comes from the areas’ proximity to growing hotspots such as Wynwood and the Design District. There is certainly evidence that this is true. Wynwood and the Design District have spurred an increase in investments by LLCs in neighboring areas for at least four years, according to Hernan Guerrero Applewhite, a planner who worked as the City of Miami’s Housing Development Coordinator and now has his own consulting firm. Still, he said, he could believe that developers who have witnessed sunny day flooding and the inundation after Irma “tacitly, anecdotally, are beginning to realize what’s happening.”⁶¹² A luxury Miami Beach home broker quoted in the *Miami Herald* said the idea that prices are changing because of sea level rise is “fake news,” citing data that

⁶¹¹ Jorge Damian de la Paz in discussion with the author, 2019.

⁶¹² Hernan Guerrero Applewhite in discussion with the author, March 8, 2019.

showed the median price of a single family home in Miami had gone up every month for six years straight. “I have not talked to one buyer – not one – who said, ‘I’m not buying in Miami because of sea level rise,’” she said. “It’s a simple ebb and flow of the real estate market, not the ocean.”⁶¹³

In at least one case, however, a developer overtly linked their choice of site to rising sea levels. The Magic City Innovation District, an 18-acre area in Little Haiti named for the mobile home park it displaced, is tailor-made to answer the needs of the “creative class” the city has been hoping to attract with initiatives such as a plan to turn Miami into a tech hub.⁶¹⁴ Little Haiti Commissioner Keon Hardemon last year did away with requirements to force developers to build affordable housing on-site, instead negotiating a \$35 million package of community benefits.⁶¹⁵ In its application for SAP status, Magic City’s developer highlights the area’s elevation under the heading “resilience.” The plan describes other “green” ambitions, such as the preservation of mature trees. Architects’ visualizations, circulated in the press, show diverse crowds gathered in community spaces influenced by Haitian architecture.⁶¹⁶ Further, the application emphasizes Magic City’s position on South Florida’s coastal ridge, where city and county planners have been encouraging urban infill connected to public transportation. “The Magic City SAP has been located and designed with an eye towards sustainability and resilience,” reads a section of the

⁶¹³ Alex Harris, “Climate Gentrification: Is Sea Rise Turning Miami High Ground into a Hot Commodity?,” *Miami Herald*, December 18, 2018, <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/environment/article222547640.html>.

⁶¹⁴ “Inside Magic City,” *Magic City Innovation District® - Miami’s Innovation and Entertainment District* (blog), accessed February 11, 2020, <https://magiccitydistrict.com/inside-magic-city/>.

⁶¹⁵ David M. Winker, “Magic City SAP - We Have to Do Better,” *Miami Times*, August 1, 2019, https://www.miamitimesonline.com/opinion/magic-city-sap--we-have-to-do-better/article_22fd306a-b478-11e9-8a08-4fdabf316509.html.

⁶¹⁶ “Magic City Innovation District Special Area Plan Concept Book” (Miami, June 20, 2018), <https://www.scribd.com/document/384128980/Magic-City-SAP>.

project’s application letter. It adds: “Its location on a high coastal ridge will help to protect the Magic City SAP campus area from flooding and potential sea level rise issues.”⁶¹⁷ The most recent iteration of this call came from the Urban Land Institute in a report commissioned by the city, which points out the need for greater development in “naturally resilient” areas such as the coastal ridge.⁶¹⁸ According to Magic City and the Urban Land Institute, then, resilience does not relate to infrastructure or people, but is a feature land can possess alone, removed from the context of what or who already exists there.

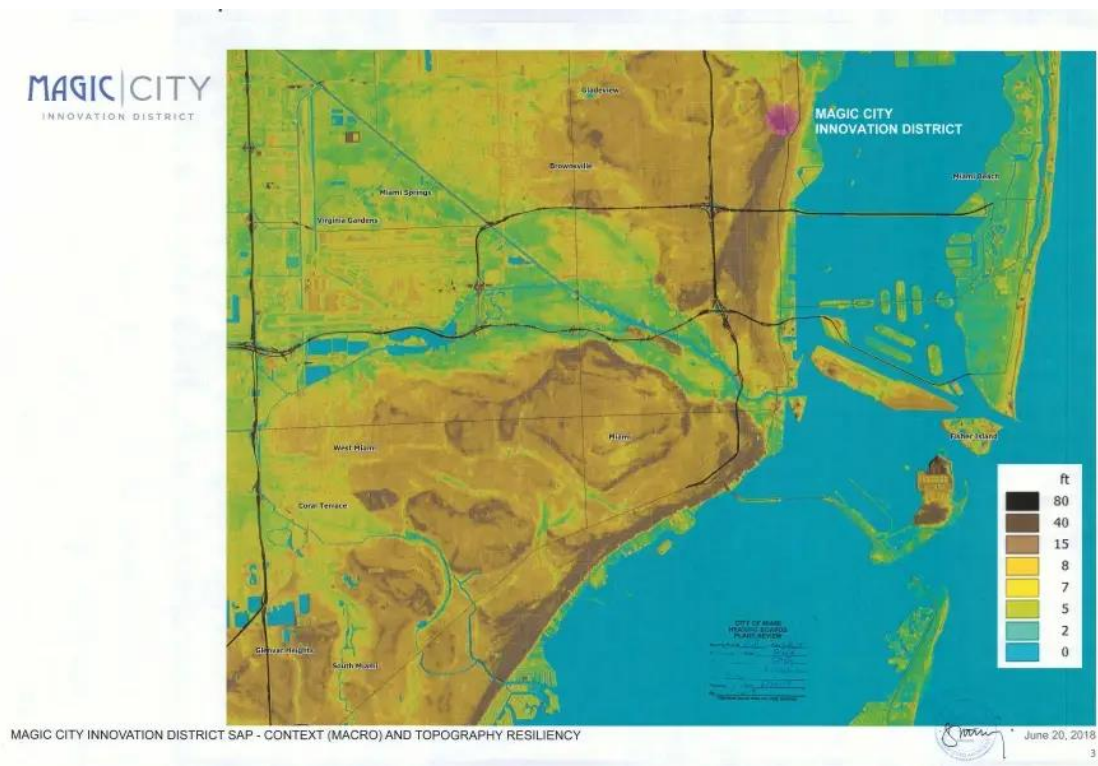


Figure 8: A page from the Magic City ‘concept book’ showing the planned development’s location on the coastal ridge (“Magic City Innovation District Special Area Plan Concept Book” (Miami, June 20, 2018), <https://www.scribd.com/document/384128980/Magic-City-SAP>.)

⁶¹⁷ Green, “As Seas Rise, Miami’s Black Communities Fear Displacement from The High Ground.”

⁶¹⁸ “Waterfront Resilience: Miami, Florida,” A ULI Advisory Services Panel Report (Miami,: Urban Land Institute, June 2, 2019), https://americas.uli.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/ULI-Documents/ULI-ASP_Report_Miami_FINAL.pdf.

Magic City has become emblematic of critiques of climate change gentrification in the press and at community meetings where residents spar over whether such development is a benefit or a detriment to the area.⁶¹⁹ Keenan argued, however, that his definition of climate gentrification diverges from that of many local activists. The evidence indicates that the gentrification in Little Haiti and Liberty City is “mostly (but maybe not entirely) driven by a classic gentrification model that hasn’t historically been driven by climate change”, he said.⁶²⁰ Instead, according to his research, climate gentrification may occur across multiple scales: neighborhoods, municipalities, regions, and countries, and take into account economic opportunities and investment in climate-resilient infrastructure as well as the relative safety from climate shocks that Little Haiti offers. Therefore, sea level rise in Miami Dade County may lead to climate gentrification in Central Florida, which is more insulated from climate shocks. Likewise, sea level rise on the east coast may lead to climate gentrification in Atlanta, which has abundant housing and employment opportunities.⁶²¹ This distinction separates Keenan’s formulation of climate gentrification from the green urban removal I have described in previous chapters, but maintaining that separation can be difficult in Miami’s narrative landscape.

Keenan acknowledged that although in theory, “climate gentrification will affect people of a lot of different racial or country of origin demographic characteristics throughout the country,”⁶²² what advocates have done was important in highlighting that municipalities should

⁶¹⁹ Keenan in discussion with the author.

⁶²⁰ Keenan in discussion with the author.

⁶²¹ Keenan, Hill, and Gumber, “Climate Gentrification.”

⁶²² Keenan in discussion with the author.

not repeat past mistakes, especially because lower-income communities tend to have less political power to oppose projects or negotiate community benefits packages commensurate to the size of the development.⁶²³ Certainly, the package negotiated by Commissioner Keon Hardemon, who represents Wynwood, Overtown, and Little Haiti, is far smaller than the \$100 million well-to-do Bal Harbor negotiated for a \$500 million SAP.⁶²⁴ Community activists Marleine Bastien – the founder of Family Action Network Movement (FANM) – told local journalists that the developers, who had been meeting with FANM and local residents, had stopped doing so in the weeks before the City Commission agreed to the development. Bastien cited Keenan’s article, arguing that climate change is “inverting what count as desirable and undesirable places to live.” Further, Bastien highlighted the way that Miami’s extreme spatial stratification had affected the visibility of the most vulnerable to climate change. She argued: “There are no pictures on the 6-o’clock news showing the families displaced by climate gentrification, even though being priced out of one’s home or business by speculators looking for higher ground has more of a permanent impact than, for example, being temporarily displaced by a storm.” Bastien’s quote highlights that gentrification is occurring all the time, not just after extreme weather. It is also a permanent displacement, not the kind of short-lived climate change impact that is more often highlighted in the news.

Several interviewees said they believe gentrification in Little Haiti may have started out as the next step for developers expanding out from Wynwood and the Design District, but that they expect interest in high ground to increase. Whichever permutation activists have adopted, by linking climate change gentrification to the historical patterns of creating and enforcing

⁶²³ Keenan, Hill, and Gumber, “Climate Gentrification.”

⁶²⁴ Winker, “Magic City SAP - We Have to Do Better.”

environmental segregation that I discuss in earlier chapters, activists like the Miami Climate Alliance and FANM have forced Miami officials to attempt to answer the question of what will happen to the city’s low-income communities as they face the effects of climate change. This focus on Miami’s past forms a counternarrative to the tendency to act as though Miami had no real history. Marvin Dunn, a former professor of psychology at Florida International University and author of a book on the history of Black Miami, said the city’s penchant for ahistoricity “allows people who don’t know that history to come in, build, and destroy what was here.”⁶²⁵ As Shumow recounted, Developer narratives about Wynwood for example, have painted the neighborhood as industrial dead space, obscuring its history as an immigrant neighborhood. The Magic City development, meanwhile, took its name from a mobile home park that was bought and its residents evicted, but its developers painted the lot as a wasteground.⁶²⁶ Kilan Bishop, the Sea Level Rise Committee’s one female member at the time of Maggie Hernandez’s critique of the body, successfully pushed for a resolution to investigate climate gentrification by the city.⁶²⁷ This makes Miami the first city in the United States to systematically study the effects of climate gentrification and formulate potential solutions.

Climate gentrification allows people who have been focused on one or the other problem to consider the two in tandem. As mentioned above, the term – like “resilience” – works like a lens to bring into focus connections between factors that might otherwise seem unrelated. For

⁶²⁵ Marvin Dunn in discussion with the author, March 5, 2019.

⁶²⁶ Shumow in discussion with the author.

⁶²⁷ “R-18-0501 A Resolution of the Miami City Commission Directing the City Manager to Research Gentrification That Is Accelerated Due to Climate Change, in Areas That Exhibit Low Area Median Income Rates and High Topographic Elevations; Further Directing the City Manager to Research Methods to Stabilize Ad Valorem Property Tax Rates in Order to Allow as Many Residents Who Wish to Remain in Their Neighborhoods to Do So.,” Sea Level Rise Committee (2018).

example, gentrification has increased public consciousness of climate change. Kate Stein – a former climate reporter for WLRN public radio in Miami who is now the Sustainability & Resiliency Officer for the town of Surfside – said that she observed community members, both in low-income and better-off communities, looking into climate gentrification “regardless of whether they believe climate change is the main driver. [...] So climate change is becoming more in the public consciousness because of the gentrification happening.”⁶²⁸ In Little Haiti, community leader Leonie Hermantin had noticed that although there is no easy way in Creole to talk about climate change, the term had come to stand in for gentrification itself: “You do hear about climate change, but people only use it when they want to say, ‘Oh, it’s about climate change gentrification,’ and people repeat ‘climate change gentrification’ even if they don’t know about sea level rise.”⁶²⁹

The concept of climate gentrification also provides activists a means to articulate the possibility that without care, adaptation measures could contribute to the gentrification of historically neglected neighborhoods. Two activists who formed a social enterprise after Irma to fix up damaged homes so their owners would not be forced to leave, have argued that gentrification through adaptation is already happening in Little Haiti through the creation of bike lanes and traffic mitigation, for example – things that the neighborhood had always needed but had not received until developers began to express an interest.⁶³⁰ In this way, the climate gentrification argument offers a vehicle for counternarratives that critique the vision of “neoliberal nature” that, according to local media studies scholars Moses Shumow and Robert

⁶²⁸ Kate Stein in discussion with the author, May 24, 2018.

⁶²⁹ Leonie Hermantin in discussion with the author, February 12, 2019.

⁶³⁰ Little Haiti activists in discussion with the author, 2019.

Gutsche, is often found in Miami climate policies.⁶³¹ This notion, first described by Michael Mascarenhas, describes how neoliberal reform created a “colorblind racism” that favored “economic liberalism over government intervention.” This predisposition has extended to changing environmental paradigms – a “neoliberal nature” that emphasizes the “register of the economy” over other components of sustainable development like “environmental sustainability and social justice.”⁶³² In the face of reforms that have made pinpointing the culprits of environmental injustice harder and harder, the developers targeting Little Haiti, just like Crosswinds before them, present an easily identifiable target for criticisms of gentrification with “green” promises. By applying the lens of climate gentrification, activists can show that unless they specifically address questions of equity, large developments with attractive green credentials still stand to deepen Miami’s environmental segregation and add to its ranks of displaced people.

5.5 Communicating in a fractured space

Miami’s spatial stratification – a state Shumow and Gutsche described as “fragmented urban space”⁶³³ - and uneven climate impacts have led to important differences in the ways that activists and officials attempt to talk to various constituencies about the threats of climate change and potential responses to them. Linguistic and cultural differences – and continued segregation – have created a fragmented picture of both what climate change means and the favored remedies for it, which in turn creates continuing clashes with policy models that focus primarily

⁶³¹ Shumow and Gutsche Jr., *News, Neoliberalism, and Miami’s Fragmented Urban Space*.

⁶³² Michael Mascarenhas, *Where the Waters Divide: Neoliberalism, White Privilege, and Environmental Racism in Canada*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2014), https://books.google.com/books/about/Where_the_Waters_Divide.html?id=2YWtRn0I7a4C.

⁶³³ Shumow and Gutsche Jr., *News, Neoliberalism, and Miami’s Fragmented Urban Space*

on sea level rise along the shore. New attempts to communicate about climate change have revealed other peculiarities about Miami audiences. Alex Harris, a reporter for the *Miami Herald*, was one of the first local climate reporters in the country. Among her most popular articles ever was on the threat sea level rise posed to septic tanks in areas – often in Miami’s south and west – that were never connected to the sewer system.

The climate education-focused CLEO Institute, meanwhile, learned that in order to connect with lower-income neighborhoods such as Little Haiti and Liberty City, they would have to do things differently than in wealthier areas. Workshops would have to take place in the evening, serve culturally appropriate food, and provide childcare so that parents could attend. After consulting local residents, CLEO’s director Caroline Lewis found that concerns linked to climate change were often specific to the area. Residents in Liberty City, for example, were less concerned about sea level rise but, given the vulnerability of the housing stock and the scale of displacement from the area, wanted to talk about “emergency management,” “heat and health,” “education and why more people who live in their communities did not know about [climate impacts],” and “climate gentrification because they were telling us anecdotally that they were feeling preyed upon by developers.” These differences make it hard to identify with the portrayals of climate change that often appear in the national news, which focus on shorefront flooding and its risk to property values. In contrast, lower-lying communities like Shorecrest wanted to talk about flooding, not gentrification, and why their streets were not being pumped out when Miami Beach’s were.⁶³⁴ Other groups have also focused on hurricanes rather than sea level rise in their outreach to communities on higher ground. Catalyst Miami, a social services organization, created a program to coordinate community-led hurricane responses to make up for

⁶³⁴ Caroline Lewis in discussion with the author, August 8, 2018.

official delays in reaching certain areas. There, too, gentrification causes concern. At a meeting I attended in 2018, one participant expressed worry about how gentrification could make the aftermath of hurricanes less safe, as incomers do not know their neighbors and may be more likely to call the police on people of color, or could create language differences that may lead misunderstandings.

More concerted attempts at getting communities to talk about the effects of climate change have also revealed the limitations of climate education programs that presume that global scientific models will be universally appealing. For Gabriela Noa Betancourt - a local union organizer working on the intersection of climate and labor - a presenter who spoke largely in scientific jargon showed that the voices that dominate the climate debate can be “alienating for people who don’t fit the traditional profile of environmentalist.” For the union, transit problems and the concept of climate gentrification, illustrated with maps that show the coastal ridge and the locations of low-income communities, feel far more “real and imminent.”⁶³⁵ Emily Gorman, an organizer for the Sierra Club, described deep divisions within the climate movement itself that complicate the building of coalitions. In Magic City, for example, she finds members in opposition over their divergent visions for environmentalism. Some picture responses to climate change as “green infrastructure” like waterways that help the city deal with flooding, “and that’s it”. Others are looking at affordable housing, local food, and social services. Each offer a “very different vision for what the future looks like,” leaving activists with the challenge of developing a shared vision for “what community should look like.”⁶³⁶ Without common narratives that center housing needs – the climate gentrification lens – environmentalists who prioritize

⁶³⁵ Gabriela Noa Betancourt in discussion with the author, March 13, 2019.

⁶³⁶ Emily Gorman in discussion with the author, March 7, 2019.

questions such as green infrastructure and reducing emissions may see gentrification as a separate problem rather than one that environmental policies can exacerbate.

Officials running workshops to identify potential responses to sea level rise noticed stark differences in community concerns and awareness based on their location and income level. County resilience officials like Katie Hagemann and Sandra St. Hilaire found, for example, that awareness of inland flooding was much less pronounced than flooding along the coast: “People don’t know that the flooding is everywhere: western communities are also at risk.” Meanwhile in Liberty City and Little Haiti, gentrification “overwhelmed other considerations.”⁶³⁷ The focus on coastal flooding might lead some to believe that climate change is “all a coastal wealthy high end real estate problem,” a view that might pit “the homeowner against the city or the developers, or people concerned about gentrification,” according to Miami’s former chief resilience officer Jane Gilbert, who left the role in 2020. Her response was that “this is a challenge that’s facing us all and our future depends on how well we work together to make a solution.”⁶³⁸ This focus creates a burden of responsibility onto a potential coalition that may never form, however. It also suggests that it is more productive to coalesce around a single climate change narrative. But as the experience of Hurricane Andrew has shown, a single narrative risks subsuming the voices and needs of the least powerful, especially given climate change’s disproportionate impacts on those groups. Forging a uniting narrative centered on equity will demand important shifts away from the status quo. Efforts to highlight climate change’s unequal impacts on rich and poor had been gaining momentum in Miami since the People’s Climate March in 2015. Happening worldwide, the marches represented an important change in tone when compared to mainstream

⁶³⁷ Katherine Hagemann and Sandra St. Hilaire in discussion with the author, May 1, 2019.

⁶³⁸ Gilbert in discussion with the author.

climate demonstrations in the past, attempting to create a coalition of activists that put the environmental justice, indigenous, and labor movements – “frontline communities” – at the center of their message, a marked contrast to dominant climate discourse that had centered whiter, wealthier environmentalists’ and scientists’ appeals to ideals of pristine nature and charismatic animals like the polar bear.⁶³⁹ The Miami Climate Alliance, formed to organize the march, now contains over 100 organizations and many more affiliates, from Power U to the League of Women's Voters, from Catalyst Miami to the Friends of the Everglades and Sierra Club. Its focus is “equity and resilience [...] increasing understanding of climate change as a threat to all forms of justice.”⁶⁴⁰ This narrative frame creates common ground for groups with very different priorities.

After the march, the group began to put pressure on all levels of Miami’s government to factor equity concerns into their resilience planning. Although at least one county official had noted that the effects of the urban building boom had included gentrification and the need for a complete redesign of the downtown Miami water infrastructure, “social justice and vulnerability” remained a “sparsely addressed topic within climate-change adaptation planning contexts” other than task force recommendations for affordable housing.⁶⁴¹ When in 2016, the county’s yearly budget did not include line items to help low-income communities, Caroline Lewis, director of the CLEO Institute, wrote to county commissioners to air her frustration. According to one article, Murley responded that the budget would address “some of her concerns” through new

⁶³⁹ Margi Clarke and Marcy Rein, “People’s Climate March,” *Race, Poverty & the Environment* 20, no. 1 (2015): 58–64.

⁶⁴⁰ “Miami Climate Alliance,” Miami Climate Alliance, 2020, <http://miamiclimatealliance.org/>.

⁶⁴¹ Dumitrita Suzana Mic, “Producing Collaborations Through Community-Level Processes.”

personnel to deal with flooding events and \$800,000 for consultants to research “sea-level rise in poor and rich communities alike.”⁶⁴²

More recently, resilience policymaking appears to have shifted, at least in terms of language. Robin Bachin, a history professor at University of Miami and head of the public outreach-focused Office of Civic and Community Engagement, argued that activism centered on the climate concerns of the area’s poorest may be changing politicians’ policymaking focus, which has historically been on catering toward future residents, to also consider its low-income residents, many of whom work in the service industries that form the backbone of Miami’s economy.⁶⁴³ After Alliance members conducted letter-writing and other campaigns, the 2018 county budget contained more line items focused on the most vulnerable, including research into access to social services.⁶⁴⁴ In 2017, the Miami Forever Bond, Regalado’s legacy policy, contains “equity” as one of its key “guiding themes,” alongside “economic return” and modernization.⁶⁴⁵ And in 2018, its first declared list of spending priorities included \$100 million toward affordable housing. Miami Beach’s “resilient” strategic plan also lists poverty and the lack of affordable housing as “stresses” to address.⁶⁴⁶ When one housing activist I spoke to was recruited to the Alliance’s steering committee, he decided to focus on housing as a

⁶⁴² Natalie Delgadillo, “How Sea-Level Rise Is Affecting Miami’s Low-Income Communities,” *CityLab* (blog), October 23, 2016, <http://www.citylab.com/weather/2016/10/sea-level-rise-is-affecting-miami-low-income-communities/505109/>.

⁶⁴³ Robin Bachin in discussion with the author, April 4, 2019.

⁶⁴⁴ Kate Stein, “Advocates Cheer ‘Significant Wins’ for Resilience Efforts in Miami-Dade’s New Budget,” *WLRN* (blog), September 26, 2018, <https://www.wlrn.org/post/advocates-cheer-significant-wins-resilience-efforts-miami-dades-new-budget>.

⁶⁴⁵ “Bond Vision & Guiding Themes,” The City of Miami, 2017, <https://www.miamigov.com/Government/Departments-Organizations/Capital-Improvements-OCI/Miami-Forever-Bond/Bond-Vision-Guiding-Themes>.

⁶⁴⁶ Aguila et al., “Our Future in Focus: 2019 Strategic Plan Through the Lens of Resilience.”

climate change problem, bringing the resilience and climate gentrification lenses together. He said:

Now the Miami Climate Alliance understands the concept of climate gentrification and is 100% against it. [...] That's really been what the focus of our organization has been in our organizing has been, just getting people to understand what climate gentrification is. [We need to get] solutions in place that give these frontline communities the resilience that they need [...] through affordable housing in areas that are particularly susceptible to this kind of speculation. And so now when we're having a resilience conversation at the city and county level, that includes the production of affordable housing that previously wasn't happening before. Before, it was mostly all about adaptation, stormwater management [...] which are all very important, but they were missing a huge component, which was where are people going to live if all of this infrastructure is in place? Because right now it's looking like they're not gonna be able to live anywhere.⁶⁴⁷

By adopting the intersection of the resilience and climate gentrification lenses as a platform, SMASH can intercede in the broadest possible conversation, challenging the tendency to avoid the history of race and class discrimination in both housing and environmental policies. At least in planning sessions so far, resilience representatives are attempting to account for that history. Murley, for example, chose affordable transit-oriented development as his team's focus at a workshop run by Columbia University's architecture department and local planners and architects.⁶⁴⁸

While Miami's climate activists have successfully fought to force local governments to consider the needs of low-income communities in resilience rhetoric, old practices and narratives – such as the tendency to rubberstamp developments and avoid community input – are harder to change. Zelalem Adefris, Catalyst Miami's climate lead, explained that while the Miami Forever

⁶⁴⁷ Housing activist in discussion with the author.

⁶⁴⁸ Thaddeus Pawlowski and Grga Basic, "Resilience Accelerator: Southeast Florida" (Columbia Center for Resilient Cities and Landscapes; 100 Resilient Cities; Greater Miami and the Beaches), accessed October 27, 2019, https://crcl.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/content/Miami/Workshop%20Photos/Resilience%20Accelerator%20Workshop%20Report_Southeast%20Florida_WEB-compressed.pdf.

Bond included “equity” as a guiding principle for policymaking, encouraging community participation is a much harder task. The city announced its bond spending priorities in 2018 without community consultation, for example. Catalyst successfully lobbied to have “community leadership” included as an acceptable qualification for membership on a citizen’s oversight board for the bond, which had previously required a degree and therefore severely limited who could join. But most of the other city committees are dominated by white men.⁶⁴⁹ Without sufficient oversight, some interviewees have worried, the needs of poor communities will go unaddressed. These could include increasing shade through tree cover, access to air conditioning, or the problem of rising seawater seeping through septic tanks.

Beyond a focus on unity, resilience officials have also spoken about how they plan to prioritize adaptation projects in equitable ways. Doing so is a challenge, given the historic lack of investment in the infrastructure of lower-income communities of color. Alan Dodd, head of the city’s Department of Resilience and Public Works, said that as the city decides its budget, it is working to “make sure that we’re allocating all the money towards the entire city by districts and not just by the people who pay the most taxes.” In working on the city’s stormwater management, for example, they aim to focus on the areas where flooding is most severe. “Typically,” he said, “that will be in some of the more impoverished neighborhoods, and that’s the way it should be. You take care of the worst first.”⁶⁵⁰ The first tranche of the Miami Forever Bond also allocated money toward the worst-maintained roads in the city in order to improve neighborhood infrastructure, although work is not yet underway.

⁶⁴⁹ Loren Berlin, “How Catalyst Miami Is Working to Make a \$400 Million Municipal Bond a Model for Equitable Climate Adaptation,” *Catalyst Miami* (blog), July 8, 2019, <https://catalystmiami.org/how-catalyst-miami-is-working-to-make-a-400-million-municipal-bond-a-model-for-equitable-climate-adaptation/>.

⁶⁵⁰ Alan Dodd in discussion with the author, February 22, 2019.

Further complicating matters for policymakers, resilience programs and infrastructure improvements cannot protect residents from displacement. Tacit practices skew the political process in favor of pushing through large developments like Magic City, several interviewees noted. City Commission members tend not to “mess” with each other’s projects, for example, so that they will not encounter retributive opposition when they want to do something in their own district. Others suggested that Miami governments still hope to limit community involvement due to the potential extra expenditures it may entail for unforeseen considerations. State level interventions can also limit the possibilities for action that would help to alleviate problems like income inequality or the kind of environmentalism prioritizes the needs of those on the lowest incomes.

For example, the State Supreme Court recently struck down an attempt by Miami Beach to set a higher minimum wage.⁶⁵¹ Union representatives campaigning for less precarious conditions for minimum-wage workers and renters have found their task in Tallahassee vastly more difficult than in Miami-Dade. Ron DeSantis, the Republican who replaced Rick Scott as governor in 2018, has voiced a greater commitment to environmental concerns, appointing the state’s first resiliency officer, but has also packed the state Supreme Court with judges who have since rejected attempts to loosen preemption on matters ranging from municipality control of minimum wage laws to a state ban on municipal attempts to cut plastic waste.⁶⁵² This conservative framework creates an important tension with mayoral rhetoric focused on independent action.

⁶⁵¹ Dara Kam, “A Revamped Florida Supreme Court Says No to Miami Beach’s Own Minimum Wage Law,” *Miami Herald*, February 5, 2019, <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/business/article225553350.html>.

⁶⁵² Union organizer in discussion with the author.

This government intervention to shape market conditions, meant that gentrification pressures followed a “hot” housing market with a vengeance. Interviewees often emphasized the strength of market forces and expressed little faith that government intervention could slow gentrification trends. When I asked Murley whether he felt building affordable housing in transit-oriented developments might help alleviate the pressures of gentrification, for example, he responded that he had “never in 40 years of working seen any regulation or government program being in a dominant position in steering the market. The key is private property, and if you’re not in the system, the market is very, very tough,” with demand coming from foreign, domestic, and local buyers.⁶⁵³ Some activists see relocation as inevitable. Their focus has become on ensuring that it happens in a way that does not lead to dislocation, displacement, and homelessness. Some have focused on campaigning for community benefits from developers, while others are focusing on demands such as green jobs, affordable housing in safe buildings, and green infrastructure that connects diverse communities rather than separating them.

5.6 Conclusion

Climate gentrification has helped to create new, historically-informed understandings of climate change that at least tacitly acknowledge the area’s history of segregation and force more officials to contend with the environmental fragmentation it has created in communication and engagement strategies as well as policymaking. It is too soon to tell how successful activists and policymakers have been at bringing this understanding to the mainstream of climate policymaking, but changing outcomes as well as rhetoric will prove an uphill battle in the face of the practices that have deep roots in the Miami Way.

⁶⁵³ Jim Murley in discussion with the author, February 15, 2019.

6. Conclusion: Life at the Limits

When I arrived in Miami, I was fascinated by the way that climate change had come to mean very different things to people depending upon where they lived, their experience of government, and the environmental conditions they experienced. Climate gentrification had become a term that referred to current patterns of gentrification and displacement, but also to a much longer history of segregation. I wanted to know the extent to which these patterns related to environmental policies. It was and is a local story that is part of a global trend.

Critical climate change scholars have compellingly documented the way that environmental segregation is developing in more and more cities around the world,⁶⁵⁴ leading to displacements in the name of environmental best practice.⁶⁵⁵ Historians have shown both how environmental policies have displaced people from land that became national parks, including the Everglades,⁶⁵⁶ and how urban renewal was in fact a policy of urban removal.⁶⁵⁷ Less work, however, has been done to explore the connections between these movements. In this dissertation, I investigate the narratives of policymakers and activists to show how policies designed to displace and exploit Miami's Black population intertwine with ideologies encompassing race, the environment, and capitalism. The narratives that stemmed from these starting points connect colonial projects such as the creation of Miami's botanical gardens with its New Deal-era plan to relocate Black residents to tropical subsistence farms. They are visible

⁶⁵⁴ Daniel A. Cohen, "Democracy or Eco-Apartheid," *Center for Humans & Nature*, January 31, 2013, <https://www.humansandnature.org/democracy-daniel-aldana-cohen>.

⁶⁵⁵ Idowu Ajibade, "Planned Retreat in Global South Megacities: Disentangling Policy, Practice, and Environmental Justice," *Climatic Change*, September 2, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-019-02535-1>.

⁶⁵⁶ Laura A. Ogden, *Swamplife: People, Gators, and Mangroves Entangled in the Everglades* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

⁶⁵⁷ Mohl, "Whitening Miami."

in the creation and maintenance of environmental segregation, which has endured since the city was founded. They can be found in Miami-Dade's responses to Hurricane Andrew and to the effects of climate change, or the colonialist rhetoric of developers over the decades. They form the discursive infrastructure that helps to shape how Miami policymakers conceive of what climate change represents and what to do about it.

This investigation of the narratives, infrastructures and spatial policies that underlie Miami's environmental conversations shows that while the city is often portrayed as an anomaly – unusually environmentally vulnerable, corrupt, and generally odd – it is in fact an ideal place to explore the intersection of local, national, and international political currents. Miami was involved in the circulation of colonial environmental knowledge and segregationist policies. It has been shaped not just by local boosters, but by Tallahassee's pro-growth policies, from the income tax ban of the 1920s to the Bush-era minimum wage restrictions and today's ban on plastic bag legislation. Miami has also been part of global climate discussions since the 1990s, aiming to be at the forefront despite a climate a budget in the millions, not the billions.

Through this study of the strategies different actors have brought to the discussions about race, space, the environment, and climate change, I show that the term "climate change" cannot be assumed to have universal meaning, and climate action cannot be viewed as an unalloyed good. As Miami's history shows, within current regulatory, political, and ideological frameworks, environmental policies are more likely to deepen unjust practices like environmental segregation than to challenge them. At the same time, the case of Miami shows that counternarratives that force at least partial acknowledgement of the city's history of displacement have been successful in ensuring that problems like affordable housing, which are not always associated with environmental policies, have made it onto the agenda. As the effects

of climate change accelerate, the question becomes whether these advances can translate to a more just understanding of retreat.

I set out to investigate the discursive infrastructure that scaffolds understandings of climate change in Miami and show how, in turn, the narratives that compose it have created or denied space, both rhetorical and physical, for action on environmental concerns and social justice. I wanted to learn: What does climate change mean in Miami? What does action on climate change entail, and who benefits from that understanding? I found that planners and politicians have used beliefs about Miami's environment – and the environment itself – to justify and naturalize segregation. The environmental segregation that emerged from these policies continues today, enabled in part by narrow conceptualizations of climate action. But by understanding climate change as one result of the exploitation of humans and nature, the city's history is reconfigured. Miami's tradition of exploitation has become an important campaign touchstone for a growing coalition of activists advocating simultaneously for environmental and social justice, especially in the area of housing. Policymakers are faced with a choice: They can begin the process of addressing environmental apartheid, or they can deepen the unequal division of environmental quality and accelerate decades-long patterns of displacement in the name of preserving economic growth.

6.1 Summary

Using archival research and 88 hourlong interviews, I traced how Miami's attitudes toward climate change have historically be suffused with colonial ideologies about race and the environment, coupled with adherence to a growth machine model dependent on low-wage labor. I examined how different actors strategically positioned themselves within, and eventually outside, this discursive infrastructure. I concentrated on collecting data centered on political

responses to several moments of social and environmental crisis in Miami, and connected each to larger patterns. Each juncture led to the displacement of low-income, mostly Black, communities due to a combination of “market forces,” legislation, and direct intervention from politicians and planners: the hurricane of 1926 followed by the Great Depression and the New Deal; the destruction of Overtown to make way for the I-95 and I-395 expressways and the Miami riots of the 1960s and 80s; and Hurricane Andrew and its uneven recovery. In the final two chapters, I move to examine the slow disasters of climate change and climate gentrification in the context of the 2008 recession and Hurricane Irma in 2017.

The materials I used for each event show how narratives connecting racist beliefs, colonialist attitudes, environmentalist ideologies, and arguments about growth, displacement, and land use became less overt while still retaining many of the assumptions of the early texts, debates, and land use plans. As political responses to climate change became ever narrower, they retained the older narrative infrastructure, helping to ensure their effects have been the same: the pursuit of idealized new residents at the expense of the displacement and segregation of low-income people. Environmental policies have been integral to these strategies. In each instance I examined, I showed how these layers of governance interacted as the actors changed, connecting the paternalistic strategies of New Deal administrators and the Anglo business elite with the color- and class-blind growth strategies that followed neoliberal reform and the installation of a new, Cuban-dominated business and political elite.

In the first case, I established the use of environmentalist policies in the service of economic growth based on segregation in Miami and illustrate how it connected with global colonial discourse about race and the environment. I show how New Deal economic policies, redlining, and colonial racial and environmental ideologies came together in the ambitions of

Miami's business and planning communities, especially in the work of George Merrick, the founder of Coral Gables. Merrick realized planners and business leaders' hopes of removing the entire population of "Colored Town" – later called Overtown – to the city's periphery in order to grow the downtown area. From that early point in the city's history, Miami's growth rested on a combination of exploitation and environmental destruction. These two strands came together in the confined places designated "Black." The unsanitary and dangerous conditions they endured functioned to produce enormous profits to both Black and white landlords, while also serving as a logic for future removals of Black people.

Merrick shared the enthusiasm of his counterparts in business, development, and planning for the "Miami Way" – a combination of boosting Miami's unique attractions as a destination for tourism and development with the New South's rigid segregation and reliance on the low-wage work provided by Black laborers. Merrick blended this ethos with the racial and environmental ideologies of John Bright, whose plan for Coconut Grove envisioned the wholesale removal of the Grove's "Colored Town," and naturalist John C. Gifford's enthusiasm for tropical ecosystems and subsistence farming as a way to maintain racial harmony and prevent the "rise of color." When Merrick planned to remove the residents of Overtown to subsistence communities on the outskirts of Dade, he promised Black workers, presumed content in their "natural" tropical setting, the ability to overcome the inconvenience of distance with "exclusive" public transportation. While most Merrick's ideas were never enacted, Merrick was not alone in deploying Miami's ecology to create, maintain, and naturalize racial segregation. "Natural" boundaries such as parks and waterways formed the boundaries of racialized communities in the same way that roads, railway lines, and walls did.

In chapter two, I establish another layer essential to understanding the development of Miami and the environmental attitudes that have grown with it: the maintenance of racial boundaries through environmental segregation. I explore more deeply how landlords profited from the denial of infrastructure, eco-health, and environmental amenities to Black neighborhoods. Planners advocating for the construction of the expressway system through Overtown then used the health and environmental disasters that resulted from such profitable neglect as justification for the displacement of thousands of people from the economic and cultural heart of Miami's Black community. Dade County's new Housing Authority echoed these misleading characterizations as they encouraged Overtown residents to move to new public housing developments in the northeast of the city, where the first of these – Liberty Square – was built. Echoing Merrick's vision of better, albeit more distant housing for Black residents, the Housing Authority argued that public housing on Miami's peripheries offered low-income people an improved environment that, in turn, would foster racial harmony and ensure its residents were productive, grateful members of society. This rhetoric belay the reality for most of those relocated to Liberty City, the area that grew up quickly around Liberty Square as developers moved to cash in on a new opportunity to extract high rents with no obligation from the city or county to provide infrastructure or open space. Miami's Black housing model simply reproduced slum conditions in Liberty City and the growing area around it where Black families settled into areas whites were vacating for the suburbs. Cleanup initiatives worked to place the blame on residents – not the government – for poor environmental conditions, while erasing Black areas from their publicity efforts and framing them in terms of slum clearance.

Environmental segregation, therefore, functioned in several ways: to isolate Black communities, to increase slumlords' profits, and to stigmatize Black communities while

providing justification for slum clearance and displacement. The concept of segregation was evoked to resist further discrimination and displacement in the name of environmental policies, too. Metrorail, a new heavy-gauge rail system, was conceived as a response to rapid suburbanization and traffic congestion, and was intended to reduce oil consumption and the march into the Everglades. Funded in the wake of the uprising of 1980, the system was designed around the needs of suburban city workers while cannibalizing funding for the county bus system, which served a mostly Black and Latino population. The construction of new train lines and stations would also once again displace Overtown residents. Transportation union workers and bus customers staged protests calling Miami an apartheid city with a two-tier transportation system, eventually reversing some of the county's attempts to erode bus service and the status of its drivers. Activists reprised the theme of apartheid when local Cuban politicians refused to welcome Nelson Mandela to Miami in 1992, staging a three-year boycott of Miami conference facilities thereby threatening a major source of income. When Anglo business leaders came to the table to negotiate with Black protesters, however, the Miami Way limited the imagination of potential recourse to business training, promised support for Black businesses, and hotel industry scholarships.

In chapter three, I use Hurricane Andrew, which struck Miami in 1992, to examine how a potential opportunity to address hyperdevelopment, segregation, unequal access to political decisionmaking, and increasing environmental vulnerabilities became a response focusing on improved building codes and business-focused recovery. I demonstrate how a wide variety of expert voices collectively shifted attention from the environmental destruction caused by sprawl to corrupt developers and poorly enforced building codes, all while obscuring the experiences of Miami's poorest communities. Instead of seizing the chance to rebuild a more equitable city, the

response to Andrew accelerated white flight, concentrated poverty in Black and Latino parts of South Miami, and inaugurate a building boom that far outstripped even the runaway development that had occurred before the storm. While paternalistic responses were still apparent in the activities of the “Non-Group” as manifested through We Will Rebuild’s initiatives, the aim had shifted almost entirely to promoting business recovery, leaving housing “to the market” except in cases where rebuilding was being used in an attempt to attract wealthier new residents.

The local and national growth consensus, clearly illustrated in President Clinton’s claim that growth could continue while emissions reduced, interacted with norms about experts’ roles in public discourse and shaped the narratives about the root causes of the destruction wrought by Andrew. While the National Weather Service had criticized growing development along America’s coastlines, for example, the National Hurricane Center chose to limit its advice to the construction of individual homes and subdivisions rather than comment broader patterns. Investigations by the *Miami Herald* and the Miami-Dade County Grand Jury shed light on corruption in the development industry, but the *Herald* balanced this criticism with its traditional role as a local booster, while the Grand Jury’s criticisms were tempered by its insistence on placing partial culpability on individuals for not demanding better housing. This focus on the building industry led to a satisfying narrative conclusion without raising questions about systemic problems such as segregation’s continuing effect on environmental conditions or the costs of overdevelopment.

In chapter four, I contrast an even narrower vision of climate change action – Mayor Manny Diaz’s plans to turn Miami into a green, international engine of commerce – with the rise of an environmental justice movement focused on bringing attention to Miami’s continuing

patterns of displacement and environmental segregation. From 2001, when construction was booming, to 2008, when the global recession was hitting Miami hard, Diaz aimed to elevate Miami to the status of “global city” alongside places like Michael Bloomberg’s New York. Diaz connected his climate plan, which ignored sea level rise but focused on promoting density in Miami’s urban core, with initiatives to bring new wealth into the city through an explosion of condominium construction and overtures to artists and other members of the “creative class” to work and live in Wynwood, formerly a working-class Puerto Rican neighborhood. In this way, Diaz hitched his ambitions to turn Miami into a leading city actor on climate change to the old Miami project of gearing public policy toward newcomers.

As news emerged that the city and county had created a crisis in public housing through tactics like shuttering units, local grassroots activists were galvanized to greater and more public actions that linked local gentrification and the neglect of low-income residents to the wider forces of globalization and imperialism. This framing fed into a broader national movement, the Right to the City coalition. In Miami, these work also encouraged “traditional,” predominantly white environmentalists to connect their primary focus – the destruction of South Florida’s environment outside the city – with gentrification, challenging their longtime acceptance of “environmental” policies that sped up the displacement of low-income residents. Both Diaz and Power U’s positions placed nature within the city as well as outside it, but while Diaz saw the greening of Miami as a strategy to attract new, “desirable” residents, Power U sought to serve those who already lived there.

In more recent years, Miami’s racial, spatial, and environmental fragmentation have been expressed through different groups’ understandings of climate change. Communities living by the shoreline are most concerned about sea level rise, whereas for some residents in higher-lying

areas, climate change has become synonymous with gentrification and low-income neighborhoods' greater vulnerability to hurricanes. Through interviews with individuals involved in discussions about climate change, I use chapter five to examine how narrative devices such as the "Miami Way" and the perspective of those left behind by development intersect with ideas about what climate change is and what to do about it. I explore the importance of the twin lenses of "resilience" and "climate gentrification" in the debates that have emerged from activists' demands to consider historic discrimination when policies are being considered. Both resilience and climate gentrification are flexible terms that have come to accommodate multiple meanings while remaining influential on policymaking.

The collision of these lenses with long-running narratives have created multiple conversations about climate change. The developers of Magic City – a billion-dollar residential shopping, technology, and culture "campus" – have touted the development's "resilient" credentials in its pitches to the city, citing its relatively high elevation and plans for energy efficient buildings and on-site open space. Local critics, meanwhile, have promoted the theory that developers are pursuing a strategy of climate gentrification as they eye previously neglected land on high ground. The place of history has become important in many of these narratives, as when white business leaders cite the drainage of the Everglades and creation of a habitable island on Miami Beach as evidence that the area will find ingenious means to continue to thrive and grow even as the waters rise. According to this formulation, underpinned in law and policy, continuing to build in this fragile place is not counterintuitive, as it provides tax funds for adaptation while ensuring a continued flow of affluent new residents.

This contemporary reprise of the Miami Way tends to ignore the low-wage labor needed to produce continued growth and the increasing difficulties those workers face in living and

getting around Miami-Dade County. Climate policies focused on preserving Miami's economic engine have only rarely addressed the need for its workers to stay afloat, too. A growing group of environmental and social justice activists has intervened in the climate conversation with a counternarrative that connects past and current climate and housing policies with the displacement that continues due to high rents, weak tenant protections, and a minuscule minimum wage. Organized under the Miami Climate Alliance, environmentalists' demands for action on sea level rise are explicitly connected to the work of housing and labor advocates, and as a result, local policymakers have begun to include provisions such as affordable housing into climate plans such as the city's Miami Forever Bond and Miami Beach's Action Plan. Climate gentrification has become an important focus for these demands, despite disagreements over whether it is really happening or happening in the way that some activists have claimed. Policymakers have attempted to accommodate both narratives in their responses, encouraging development while noting the importance of affordable housing.

As urban centers increasingly recognize the current "climate crisis," the City of Miami's has promised to address carbon emissions in its climate plan and shown new interest in the possibilities for "green" infrastructure to complement and in some cases replace the "gray" responses like sea walls and pumps favored by politicians just a few years earlier. These broadener reckonings with Miami's interlocking problems have produced some original attempts to understand the relationships between humans and nature. Miami Beach's dune plan and attempts to balance the rights of different species as it hopes to increase mangrove cover along the shore serve as compelling examples and are discussed in detail below. More frequently, however, the wrangling of nature into the framework of "ecosystem services" folds these policies into an overarching concept of "neoliberal nature," an understanding of sustainability that sheds

the need to consider questions such as social justice and the importance of alternative forms of knowledge in favor of an idealized form of consumption decoupled from environmental impacts. Without steps to fully address how the disasters of segregation, sea level rise, and environmental vulnerability interconnect and amplify one another, belated changes in attitudes toward nature still have the potential to accelerate gentrification, increasing the population of displaced vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The question remains: Miami for whom?

6.2 Life at the Limits

Whizzing through Miami Beach on an electric trolley, I had joined a group of policymakers and academics from all over the country to inspect the city's new "green" sea level rise infrastructure. "When we plant mangroves, we have to consider that this leaves less space for seagrass, which is important for turtles and manatees," a city resilience worker told me.⁶⁵⁸ In the years since Philip Levine had implemented his accelerated concrete-only plan to deal with sea level rise, Miami Beach officials had changed tack in significant ways. In some cases, they were reassessing how best to engage with a predominantly wealthy and highly vocal population on adaptation plans such as raising roads. Just as interesting, city officials were examining ways to use natural features such as mangroves to protect their area from flooding and storm surge. The model, crudely put, of installing pumps to protect development and property values, which in turn generate the revenue to pay for more pumps, is becoming increasingly hard to defend. Before I turn to my final conclusions, I will examine several examples in which different groups are experimenting with new understandings of climate change and climate action in Miami, as well as the power relations they entail.

⁶⁵⁸ Resilience worker in discussion with the author, February 13, 2019.

After coming to work for the city, the resilience worker drafted a pathbreaking plan for the management of Miami Beach's sand dune, and now works to protect the city's natural resources. The Army Corps of Engineers created the dune in the late 1970s to create a buffer between the city and the Atlantic Ocean, and to lower the burden of beach renourishment.⁶⁵⁹ Eventually, the dune became a self-sustaining system, anchored by sea grapes and other plants, and home to its own feral cat colony and population of cat feeders. Her job was to create legislation that balanced city needs and tastes with the health of the dune system. For example, while sea grapes tend to grow tall, thus creating an extra barrier against the sea, the city police were concerned about homeless people taking shelter in the thicket and crimes being committed in the relative seclusion they afforded. Thus, the plants are trimmed short. Similarly, cat feeding is limited to designated plastic feeding stations disguised as logs. She is also tasked with considering how to balance the needs of different species as the city attempts to increase its green infrastructure.

Enthusiasm for creating or preserving green infrastructure has come from the understanding that landscapes contain their own protections against extreme weather. Mangroves, considered useless for much of Miami's history, clean water and reduce storm surge, protecting the land that lies behind them. Coral and oysters protect coastlines, too, and unlike human-made structures like sea walls, they grow taller as sea levels increase. "Blue" infrastructure has also become a common topic at conferences and workshops. Increasing the number of waterways offers the possibility of "living with" water, rather than creating expensive technologies that remove it from the land's surface. A "green and blue" combination ideally

⁶⁵⁹ "Strategic Beach Management Plan: Southeast Atlantic Coast Region" (Division of Water Resource Management, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, 2018), <https://floridadep.gov/sites/default/files/SBMP-SoutheastAtlanticCoastRegion.pdf>.

creates a more permeable land surface in which flooding occurs but is less disruptive of daily life than in a cityscape dominated by dry streets.

Miami Beach officials have found that “green and blue” infrastructure is in many cases more popular with residents than gray measures alone, while the idea of plants and animals growing to accommodate rising seas could save money over the long term. Additionally, resilience professionals know that pumps are only effective for as long as they are still above water, and several of those installed under Levine have already been overwhelmed in recent years due to power outages during storms. The short-termism of many of Miami’s climate plans may become increasingly obvious as sea level rise continues to speed up.⁶⁶⁰ This accelerating rise has forced officials to, at least partially, think about what Miami Beach might look like over a longer period, and nearby communities have been watching their rich neighbor’s experiments closely. County officials, for example, have been experimenting with workshops that barely mention pumps, to encourage residents to entertain alternative measures in the places where the tax base is not as high. After all, many of those who work for the Beach’s tourism industry can only afford to live there if they share apartments.

⁶⁶⁰ John Boon et al., “Anthropocene Sea Level Change: A History of Recent Trends Observed in the U.S. East, Gulf, and West Coast Regions,” Special Report in Applied Marine Science and Ocean Engineering (Virginia Institute of Marine Science and Ocean Engineering, College of William and Mary, February 1, 2018), <https://scholarworks.wm.edu/reports/1111>.

Learning to Live with Water – Through Pilot Projects



MIAMI BEACH IS THE ICON

- The City of Miami is taking a forward-thinking approach to climate adaptation.
- The City should implement “Living with Water” pilot projects that involves the City and its residents to suggest that resiliency strategies are a common cause. This will create enthusiasm for the plan.

Figure 9: Slide from an Urban Land Institute presentation encouraging Miami Beach to adopt a blue-green infrastructure approach (Nicole Martinez, “Living with Rising Sea Levels: Miami Beach’s Plans for Resilience” (Urban Land Institute, May 23, 2018).)

Some local advocates have been campaigning for green and blue infrastructure that might help to alleviate some of the social and political isolation environmental segregation has created. Take El Portal, a leafy village on the coastal ridge surrounded by low-income communities north of Little Haiti. There, community members have pushed for green infrastructure that would help connect neighborhoods separated by Little River and the Florida East Coast Railway, and for better public transportation to serve residents. Unfortunately, this example appears to be more exception than the rule. Beyond vague assertions that a greener city will be more pleasant for everyone, discussions of affordable housing appear to have remained relatively separate from those on blue-green infrastructure.

One important example illustrates how green and blue infrastructure alone cannot remedy imbalances of power. Everglades restoration projects have become an important part of South Florida’s sea level rise strategy. Restoring freshwater flows out to sea may help to keep out

saltwater, which threatens the Biscayne aquifer and fragile soil with salinization. The Army Corps of Engineers' strategy has been to keep Everglades water levels as high as possible year-round, an effort that runs against the wishes of the Miccosukee who live in the Everglades. Houston Cypress, the artist and activist, explained that the tribe had argued against the policy because the natural raising and lowering of water levels with the seasons is essential for plant and animal species to reproduce. Miccosukee representatives had only just begun to adopt the term "climate change" because it helped them to advocate for their positions in debates over Everglades policy, which occur between a wide array of interests including the Army Corps, farmers, environmentalists, and scientists. Cypress described the devaluation of traditional knowledge in this arena meant Miccosukee expertise was often ignored or plagiarized by other groups. That year, however, the Miccosukee were proven prescient when water levels had gotten lower than they had in decades and bird numbers blossomed.⁶⁶¹

Looking to the future, many of Miami's municipalities – such as the City of Miami, Miami Beach, and Coral Gables – have bowed to pressure from activists and declared a "climate emergency."⁶⁶² The city, too, has announced that it plans to reduce its carbon emissions to "net zero" by 2050, joining C40 Cities, an international climate organization that helps cities to reduce their carbon emissions. Quoted in the *Herald*, Mayor Francis Suarez said, "[I]f we really want to be here forever we can't just react to what mother nature is doing. We have to do everything in our power not to make matters worse, but to make matters better."⁶⁶³ *Herald*

⁶⁶¹ Cypress in discussion with the author.

⁶⁶² Alex Harris, "After Campaign by Young Activists, Miami Declares 'Climate Emergency.' It's Symbolic, for Now.," *Miami Herald*, November 22, 2019, <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/environment/article237617209.html>.

⁶⁶³ Alex Harris, "Miami Sets Ambitious Emissions Goal: Carbon Neutral by 2050. How to Get There Isn't Clear," *Miami Herald*, January 18, 2020, <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/environment/article239370733.html>.

climate reporter Alex Harris noted that in a large, car-centric city, the path to achieving that goal is far from clear. Some of the people I spoke to were concerned that not just policymakers, but activists and scientists, were not talking about Miami's inevitable inundation. Even if global emissions reduce dramatically, Miami's freshwater supply is at severe risk of being contaminated by seawater well before the worst flooding happens. Further, even areas on high ground will not be particularly habitable if they can't be reached, or if their utilities are cut off by the water.

Greg Bloom, a community organizer, described his dismay that few groups are willing to discuss the idea of retreat from the shoreline at all. "The paradigm of resilience is very conservative," the activist said. "Let's just talk about keeping water off the streets; let's be sure to give everyone the information they need to retrofit their own house or whatever." Imagining a situation in which such measures are useless, one where no amount of personal responsibility will resolve nature's incursion into century-old infrastructures, can be unbearable. He continued: "So, when I start saying things like, 'What about mental healthcare for everyone? What about grief counseling for people who go through the process of dealing with the future death of their community?,' their eyes glaze over, because it's traumatic."⁶⁶⁴ Laurencia Strauss, a local artist, argued that Miamians are already moving through the stages of grief, but that most are in a stage of denial. "We are living with a terminal diagnosis," she said. "But instead of dealing with that loss head on and organizing around that for adaptive actions such as managed retreat, we are mostly doing everything we can to prolong the way of life here as we have known it to be, buying time and bargaining for the idea that life here can stay the same as it has been."⁶⁶⁵

⁶⁶⁴ Greg Bloom, in conversation with the author, 2019

⁶⁶⁵ Laurencia Strauss in discussion with the author, 2019.

Beyond Shorecrest, one tiny enclave that is experiencing worse than usual shoreline flooding, mainstream talk of retreat is postponed indefinitely to the future. Those who can afford to move from areas like Liberty City and Little Haiti to Homestead, Florida City, and other parts of South Dade face less-publicized risks, including septic tanks threatened by flooding, or salt contamination of freshwater wells. Under these circumstances, it is too early to tell who might stand to benefit from recent acknowledgements by Miami's governments that climate change cannot be tackled by narrowing its problems and solutions to those most compatible with politicians' and developers' priorities. The displacement has already started for the most vulnerable, even if the direct reasons for it are older and less dramatic than the one sees in artists' renderings of Miami Beach underwater. As we consider who will get to stay to see Miami's hoped-for transformation into a green and blue city, the answers may be rooted in Miami's lifetime as a segregated city. A study begun by academics investigating the neighborhoods in which house prices recovered after the 2008 recession suggested that the biggest factor in recovery was the number of white people, even though, as one of the authors said, "there are hardly any of us left in Miami." Whiteness acts as an anchor in turbulent times. The assets it confers give choices about whether to stay or leave.

It feels like another injustice to consider that just as Miami residents have begun to gain traction in forcing a reckoning with histories of green urban removal, they are facing even greater turbulence due to the effects of climate change. Already, engineers and businesses have begun to treat the city as a canvas for exclusive floating settlements and other expensive arrangements for a new wave of colonists.⁶⁶⁶ The activist tools that Miamians have developed,

⁶⁶⁶ David Caraccio, "This Houseboat of the Future Is a \$5.5 Million Floating Home Designed for Sea Level Rise," *Miami Herald*, April 30, 2019, <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/community/miami-dade/article229685834.html>.

however, are becoming even more essential to imagining a future in which there is space for equal access to grief, connection, and care.

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