

ARISTOCRACY WITHOUT BORDERS  
**MULTI-NATIONAL  
CORPORATE WEALTH**

POINT OF  
DISRUPTION

POINT OF  
DISRUPTION

URBAN ATTRACTION

**HISTORIES OF DISINVESTMENT AND EROSION OF  
PUBLIC SECTOR**

**MASS TRANSIT AT THE  
EXPENSE OF COMMUNITIES  
OF COLOR**

**URBAN  
CONCENTRATION  
MULTIPLIES CAPITAL**

COLONIALISM 101

**INTERNATIONAL  
LABOR AND WEALTH  
EXTRACTION**

"ARTS DISTRICT", U.S.A.

"REVITALIZATION", U.S.A.

POINT OF  
DISRUPTION

POINT OF  
DISRUPTION

GENOCIDAL TACTICS

**ERASURE OF  
EXISTING CULTURAL  
WEALTH**

SURVIVAL TACTICS

**CULTURAL  
DISTRICTS AS  
PLACEKEEPING**

ARISTOCRACY WITHOUT BORDERS

**UNIVERSITY  
WEALTH**

"MIDTOWN", U.S.A.

GENOCIDAL TACTICS

**DISPLACEMENT TO  
VULNERABLE "DOWNSTREAM  
COMMUNITIES"**

SURVIVAL TACTICS

**LAND OWNERSHIP IN  
"DOWNSTREAM  
COMMUNITIES"**

"DERIVATION OF  
SoHo", U.S.A.

**ALL OF CAPITALISM  
IS STOLEN LAND**

REMAPPING U.S. GENTRIFICATION  
AND ACCUMULATION, WWII-2017



## INTRODUCTION/CONTEXT

Gentrification, redevelopment, and displacement have become one of the defining crises of neoliberal capitalism. Since the inception of the NEA Our Town grant and accompanying white paper on Creative Placemaking in 2010, the role of the arts in gentrification has always been hotly debated. In 2016, debates over the complicity of artists and the growing "creative placemaking" field were reignited largely due to protests of art galleries in Boyle Heights, Los Angeles (Defend Boyle Heights), and increased visibility of artists working against displacement of low-income, working class, communities of color (Chinatown Art Brigade).

For 25 years, Project Row Houses (PRH) has been the standard-bearer for the transformative potential of art within community, inspiring many national and international projects through its hyperlocal work. However, projects inspired by Project Row Houses have also drawn their own criticisms for their complicity in neighborhood redevelopment and displacement.

As I (Carol Zou) embarked upon a fellowship with Project Row Houses, these questions were present in my inquiry:

>> What is the relationship between art, creative placemaking, and displacement of vulnerable communities?

>> How does PRH resist displacement, compared to placemaking projects inspired by the the organization? Can the PRH model be replicated?

>> Can displacement be conceived not just as a hyperlocal issue, but also as a regional and even global concern? What perspectives are gained when perceived from this standpoint?

As a resident fellow, I explored these questions through attending monthly Emancipation Economic Development Council (EEDC) meetings in 3rd Ward; and visiting with artists, planners, activists, and funders in cities across the United States where the housing crisis has come to a head.

Through these conversations, I began to parse similar global, national, and local processes driving redevelopment in hyperlocal contexts. This has led me to conclude that local housing crises are part of a much larger global crisis driven by neoliberal capitalism and its spatial manifestation. This publication draws upon oral history and field research to remap shifting urban geographies, unmasking the various forces that coalesce to force the displacement of vulnerable communities.

I believe that our movements succeed when they are multi-faceted and address systemic problems from multiple pressure points. While housing advocates are working overtime on tenant rights, land trusts, and other hyperlocal housing concerns, I believe that it is just as important to address the other processes and potential points of disruption that I have outlined.

I am heartened by the work of my interlocutors and of the networks that are beginning to emerge between housing movements in different cities. I hope that we can continue building cross-disciplinary networks that address the relationship between housing, adjunct unionization, transit access, cultural equity, and other movements that seek to address inequality under neoliberal capitalism.

In Solidarity,

Carol Zou  
Project Row Houses - University of Houston Center for Art and Social Engagement Fellow 2017

###

## INTERNATIONAL LABOR AND WEALTH EXTRACTION; OR, THIS SH\*T WAS ALWAYS GONNA BE COLONIAL

Redevelopment and displacement, like many other processes, is fundamentally rooted in a paradigm of race/class inequality.

Without delving into the entire history of colonization, I want to highlight how these dynamics are replicated specifically within the arts and creative placemaking sector. The arts sector is one of the most inequitable sectors in which artists are expected to be grateful to work for free or for an exploited wage in exchange for professional opportunity.

This becomes an issue when artists start to appropriate forms of every day life. All of a sudden, instead of a social worker or a public educator, a funding source can instead pay an artist a significant lower wage to perform these ideas in their work.

The trickle-down effect of labor/racial inequity in the arts means that artists will replicate this form of labor exploitation onto other people that they engage in their work. The employment of artists as contract labor without employment benefits means that the artist has no choice but to participate in subcontracting labor without employment benefits. The attitude of asking artists to work for free means that artists will participate in asking their collaborators to work for free.

Is social practice art the neoliberalization of social services?

###

## MULTI-NATIONAL CORPORATE WEALTH

The global city depends upon attracting streams of global capital that drive local development at a faster pace than the pace at which a city could redevelop utilizing just its internal resources.

Companies like Quicken Loans in Detroit; Facebook, Google, and Twitter in the San Francisco/Oakland/Silicon Valley area depend upon streams of global capital to purchase land and build compounds in their local neighborhoods. Likewise, Wall Street in New York City aggregates financial capital from all over the world and utilizes that capital to redevelop and privatize neighborhoods.

Cities looking to redevelop/modernize/stimulate the economy are focused on attracting multinational industries such as Amazon (Dallas and Philadelphia are currently competing). Cities often offer subsidies and other incentives to attract multinational companies.

This is the direct relationship between an international colonialist model in which international resources are redirected and exploited by multinational corporations to colonize local municipalities.

###

## UNIVERSITY WEALTH

Universities are one of the only other major players with enough significant capital to purchase land. Once again this capital is derived from sources external to the city, especially as the rising price of higher education causes universities to court out-of-state and international students who can pay higher tuition.

Universities utilize the land that they purchase to create amenities for their students, most of whom are positioned by either their ability to pay tuition or their class mobility through the university as middle to upper class citizens.

Like their multi-national corporate counterparts, universities privatize security as well as property. The hiring of additional private security forces regulates and determines who gets to traverse privatized spaces.

University students sometimes stay in the cities where they went to school and make property investments in the city without contextual understanding of the way in which their actions affect the greater property dynamics of the city.

Examples of university investment in land include University of Pennsylvania, Temple University, Drexel University, University of Detroit-Mercy, and many others.

###

## HISTORIES OF INTENTIONAL DISINVESTMENT/ EROSION OF PUBLIC SECTOR

Current gentrification trends are the inevitable outcome of decades of disinvestment in the public sector and the urban core.

For example, Detroit purposefully disinvested in black communities in the city when black laborers began to unionize. This is the backdrop that prompted the auto industry to leave and which incited the 1967 Detroit Rebellion.

Additionally, the city of Detroit enlists underhanded methods designed to foreclose and seize housing.

This leads to a cycle where private property ownership -> seized by the city -> redistributed to private developers

Philadelphia also disinvested in its black urban core when white communities fled to the suburbs. Tax abatement laws meant that the city could foreclose on property owners when property owners could not pay the sudden increase in taxes.

Neoliberal paradises like Dallas and Houston emerge from a laissez faire political context that has never had social services in the first place.

Former mayor of NYC, Michael Bloomberg, is responsible for selling off public lands to private developers.

Redevelopment and displacement cannot happen unless a city is already complicit in a history of redlining and public disinvestment that creates a weak public sector, paving the way for privatization of public property.

###

## MASS TRANSIT AT THE EXPENSE OF COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

Mass transit is a vital need for low-income and communities of color who do not have transportation access. However, when mass transit is built, this often results in eminent domain practices that lead to the increased valuation of surrounding land prices and the geographic destruction of neighborhoods.

Examples of mass transit developments that have lead to increased housing prices for the communities of color they serve include: Gold Line in Los Angeles, Q Line in Detroit, and Park Avenue station/Orange/Red Line in Dallas, TX.

Additionally, the highway as a form of mass transit also physically utilizes eminent domain to disrupt the boundaries of established low-income and communities of color. Examples include: highway that separates Chinatown central business district from Chinatown North/Callowhill in Philadelphia, I-10 in Los Angeles, and the highway that was built through Chinatown in Detroit.

## URBAN CONCENTRATION MULTIPLIES CAPITAL

In The New Urban Crisis, Richard Florida finally apologizes for championing the "creative class" as a driver of redevelopment. In the appendix, Florida's definition of the creative class does not only encompass artists and cultural producers, but espouses a broader definition of "creativity" as defined by capitalism-computer science and mathematics, architecture and engineering, business and finance, law, healthcare, etc. The "creative class" designation for which Florida is known and maligned is actually another way of describing white collar work in less white collar manners.

Florida does however, make the argument that cities are still valuable as spatial arrangements because the proximity of resources produces a "multiplier" effect. The question/challenge is how to harness the "multiplier" in favor of vulnerable communities, versus an influx of global capital.

###

## ERASURE OF EXISTING CULTURAL WEALTH

Art is often framed as a driver of gentrification. However, this ignores the history of cultural production that low-income and communities of color have historically engaged in to promote community identity, social cohesion, and public safety. A concept developed by Tara J. Yosso, Associate Professor, Chicano and Chicana Studies, University of California Santa Barbara, Cultural Wealth is:

<< An array of knowledges, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and used by Communities of Color to survive and resist racism and other forms of oppression >>

Just as cities aggregate and multiply capital, they are also overlooked locuses of cultural wealth as a form of resistance. The trend with gentrification is to "whitewash" existing cultural production by the local community. Examples include: black power mural in East Austin, Notorious B.I.G. mural in Brooklyn, Basement Gallery mural in Oakcliff, Dallas.

###

## CULTURAL DISTRICTS AS PLACEKEEPING

Naming cultural districts names the cultures that exist in a space apart from the dominant white culture, which is often named as "invisible".

The naming of these cultural districts performs several valuable functions.

>> Delineates boundaries for the neighborhood (very important when boundaries are being encroached upon)

>> Maintains the cultural memory of the neighborhood and names the residents as cultural producers

>> Serves as an entity to leverage funding/resources specific to the district

This becomes a paradox when cultural districts are evacuated of the people who maintain its culture (Black Arts Movement Cultural District in Oakland, CA). Cultural districts are not a magic bullet, but rather a stopgap.

###

## DISPLACEMENT TO VULNERABLE "DOWNSTREAM" COMMUNITIES

It is inaccurate to say that New York City, Philadelphia, Dallas, Houston, Los Angeles, etc. is being gentrified. Instead, specific neighborhoods that are located at the periphery of redevelopment are communities that are at risk. It is possible to predict gentrification patterns AND to cultivate sites of resistance by examining downstream communities.

For example, the redevelopment of San Francisco has forced out residents to Oakland as a "downstream" community. Vulnerable downstream communities are: NYC -> Queens, Harlem the Bronx, Brooklyn; Dallas -> Vickery Meadow, West Dallas, South Dallas, Pleasant Grove; Houston -> Third Ward; San Francisco -> Oakland; Los Angeles -> Boyle Heights, El Sereno, Highland Park, South Central, Skid Row, Long Beach; Philadelphia -> North Philly, West Philly, South Philly; Detroit -> One Mile, Mexicantown.

Term adopted from PolicyLINK

###

## LAND OWNERSHIP IN "DOWNSTREAM" COMMUNITIES

Art and community redevelopment projects take different forms depending on the ability of an art project to own land in cities. There are almost no art and community redevelopment projects in NYC and San Francisco that include property ownership by artists/arts

## KEYWORDS/DEFINITIONS:

>> CREATIVE PLACEMAKING - a term that has gained popularity in arts funding, it describes the use of artistic strategies to create an impact on a neighborhood scale, often in collaboration with nonprofit, government, and other institutional stakeholders.

>> GENTRIFICATION - the redevelopment of neighborhoods that have often experienced years of systemic neglect, which results in increased real estate prices, rent hikes, and eviction of existing residents.

>> DISINVESTMENT - decreasing social services and public funding from certain areas and certain communities residing in cities, most notably the poor, working class, black/brown urban core of cities.

>> NEOLIBERALISM - describes the current global economic context, which is a model of deregulated capitalism applied on a global scale, in contrast to industrial-era capitalism that did not have structures like multi-national corporations.

>> COLONIALISM - the process by which groups/nation-states racialized as "inferior" experience military, economic, and political domination.

>> CAPITAL - a resource that can be used to generate income, like land, technology, relationships, existing income, etc.

>> SPATIAL CAPITALISM - the way in which physical space is organized according to economic needs such as worker housing and corporate headquarters.

>>SOCIAL PRACTICE - a genre of art in which artists engage ideas of community, social relationships, and/or the public sphere.

organizations, for example, because of the real estate prices in those cities. This creates a precarious relationship for art-community development projects that are dependent upon the goodwill of real estate developers and market forces at any moment.

In contrast, projects like Project Row Houses in Houston, TX and Ash Studios in Dallas, TX depend upon the availability of affordable real estate to own property and have more liability, but more control over the longevity of the project.

One concern with current creative placemaking grantmaking is the lack of engagement with the question of property ownership. Artists are called to be catalysts for community change but the real estate dynamics of the art project itself are not critically examined. This places the artist in an impossible position in which an artist is responsible for catalyzing community creativity but having their work dependent upon and often coopted by the real estate market.

###

## THANK YOU FOR SHARING YOUR MODALITIES

PHILADELPHIA / Amber Art and Design (Keir Johnston and Ernel Martinez) / Asian Arts Initiative / Jeanne van Heeswijk / Martha O'Connell / Philadelphia Area Cooperative Alliance / Southeast by Southeast (Shira Walinsky) / University of Pennsylvania Social Impact of the Arts Project (Mark Stern)

SAN FRANCISCO/OAKLAND / Astria Suparak / CultureStrike (Julio Salgado) / Favianna Rodriguez / James Rojas / Jessica Lawless / Policy Link (Jeremy Liu) / Roberto Bedoya / Weston Tureya

NYC / A Blade of Grass (Elizabeth Grady) / ArtPlace (Lyz Crane) / Chinatown Art Brigade (ManSee Kong, Tomie Arai) / Five Boro Story Project (Bridget Bartolini) / Laundromat Project (Hatuey Ramos-Fermin) / No Longer Empty (Carol Stakenas) / People's Cultural Plan (Noé Gaytán and Antonio Serna) / Sordna Foundation (Jess Garz) / Tracy Fenix

DETROIT / The Alley Project/Young Nation / Allied Media Projects / Bleeding Heart Design (Bucky Willis) / Complex Movements (Ill Weaver) / Freedom Freedom (Baba Wayne) / Just a Lil Bit Eclectic / Lincoln Art Park (Matthew Naimi) / Oakland Avenue Artist Coalition (Halima Cassells) / One Mile / Shane Bernardo

BOSTON / Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center (Shaina Lu) / Design Studio for Social Intervention (Kenneth Bailey and Lori Lobenstine) / Maria Molteni / Mallory Nezam / Urbano Project (Stella Aguirre-McGregor)

HOUSTON / Antena Houston (John Pluecker) / Carrie Schneider / Emancipation Economic Development Council (Assata Richards) / Monte Large / Project Row Houses (Ryan Dennis, Eureka Gilkey, Rick Lowe) / OCA-Greater Houston / University of Houston College of the Arts (Sixto Wagan) / University of Houston Community Design Resource Center (Susan Rogers)

CHICAGO / Place Lab Salon Sessions on Ethical Redevelopment

DALLAS / Darryl Ratcliff / Dee Lara / Giovanni Valderas / Lauren Woods / Texas Tenants Union (Sandy Rollins) / Sara Mokuria / Martha Stowe

LOS ANGELES / Annie Shaw / at land's edge / Chinatown Community for Equitable Development / Defend Boyle Heights / Los Angeles Poverty Department / Los Angeles Tenants Union / Women's Center for Creative Work

###

## THANK YOU FOR THE EMOTIONAL LABOR, TO WHICH ALL ELSE IS SECONDARY

David Orozco / Jeffer Giang