Ghetto Walls Go Up and Then Come Down but Nothing Changes:
Exploring the Old and New Urban Renewal Periods in Baltimore

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"I didn't expect to see it twice in my lifetime…. History repeats itself when you don't sit down and look at the history and analyze it and say, 'How do we keep this from happening again?'" – Dr. Helen Hicks, 81-year old woman and former Baltimore Sandtown-Winchester resident[1]

Introduction

In early April 1968, Baltimore burned. Two days after Martin Luther King, Jr. (MLK, Jr.) was assassinated in Memphis, neighborhoods throughout the city went up in flames. Over 10,000 federal guards were deployed to the city during six days of rioting, and when the chaos ended six people had been killed and 5,512 had been arrested.[2] The riots caused severe damage estimated at $12 million, about $87 million in today's dollars.[3]

Forty-seven years later, on April 19, 2015 Freddie Gray died at the hands of the city's police force following his April 12 arrest and "rough ride." Peaceful protests immediately followed Freddie Gray's death; however, riots ensued six days later.[4] Over 250 businesses, mainly in low-income African-American communities, were partially damaged; 144 vehicles and 15 buildings were destroyed.[5] At least 20 police were injured and 235 people were arrested. Remarkably, no one died.[6] The U.S. Small Business Administration estimated the damage to nearly $9 million, mostly in West Baltimore.[7]

The riot damage in 2015 was less extensive than in 1968;[8] however, there are important parallels between these two episodes. Both events were triggered by the unfair death of African-American men. Furthermore, policy makers and scholars widely accepted that intense segregation and

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[1] Quote from Joie Chen. "Baltimore Senior: I Didn't Expect to See Rioting Here Twice in My Lifetime." *Aljazeera America*. May 5, 2015, http://america.aljazeera.com/watch/shows/america-tonight/articles/2015/5/5/baltimore-helena-hicks.html [accessed October 2, 2018]

[2] Levy 2011: pp. 4, 9-10

[3] Levy 2011: p. 11. Others estimate that the total damage of the 1968 riots was 13.5 million in property damage, which is approximately $79 million in 2007 dollars (Yockel 2007), https://www.baltimoremagazine.com/2007/5/1/100-years-the-riots-of-1968

[4] Peter Herman, John Woodrow Cox, and Ashley Halsey. "After Peaceful Start, Protest of Freddie Gray's Death in Baltimore Turns Violent." *Washington Post*. April 25, 2018.

[5] The Baltimore Development Corp. estimated that more than 400 businesses had property damage or lost inventory from looting (see Daniel Leaderman. "93 Percent of Riot-Damage Businesses Open Again, BDC Says." *The Daily Record*. November 24, 2015).

[6] Hennigan, W.J., Bierman, N., and Tanfani, J. "Baltimore on Edge and on Alert." *Chicago Tribune*. April 29, 2015.

[7] Sabrina Toppa. "The Baltimore Riots Cost an Estimated $9 Million in Damages." *Time*. May 14, 2015, http://time.com/3858181/baltimore-riots-damages-businesses-homes-freddie-gray/ [accessed September 10, 2018].

[8] Mike Spies. 2017, https://www.vocativ.com/usa/justice-usa/2-maps-that-explain-the-baltimore-riots-1968-and-now/index.html

concentrated poverty were important explanatory factors of the frustrations felt by African Americans.[9] Moreover, urban renewal efforts – the razing of black neighborhoods, highway construction, and the development of high-rise public housing in the early period and the demolition of public housing, subsequent displacement, and gentrification in the current period – were executed by the city of Baltimore prior to the riots. In this paper, I argue that old and new urban renewal policies contributed to concentrated poverty associated with unrest.[10]

Theoretical Guidance: Twice-Cleared and Twice-Rioted Communities

Lawrence Vale's excellent 2013 book *Purging the Poor* assesses racial inequities and changing American values concerning low-income people and places by understanding the political processes and consequences associated with twice-cleared, low-income communities of color. Twice-cleared low-income minority communities were affected by the construction of public housing and highways in the 1940s, 50s and 60s and then decades later by the demolition of public housing in the 1990s and 2000s. He argues that "design politics" is the key to understanding twice-cleared, low-income communities. By design politics, Vale means urban redevelopment decisions where there is a removal of "sites and sights," a "cleaning out of things that should not be seen" and a "reimaging" of urban communities once perceived to be mired in poverty.[11] Vale posits that twice-cleared communities, and their surrounding areas, represent a "kind of double gentrification often on the very same site."[12]

Twice-cleared communities relate to another important concept: serial displacement. Mindy Fullilove and Rodrick Wallace define serial displacement as "the repetitive, coercive upheaval of groups."[13] Fullilove and Wallace trace how African Americans have been displaced and forced to different neighborhoods throughout the history of Pittsburgh's development. For these authors, serial displacement is a form of "structural violence" mainly led by federal and local policies that have devastating consequences for low-income African Americans. These consequences include intense segregation and associated violence and destruction. "At present, a persistent policy of serial forced displacement of African Americans has created a persistent de facto internal refugee population that expresses characteristic behavioral and health patterns. These include raised levels of violence, family disintegration, substance abuse, sexually transmitted disease, and so on. These harms are evidently a result of the cumulative effects— including high levels of stress—of multiple displacements."[14] I assume, as Fullilove and Wallace do, that displacement can contribute to violence and unrest.

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[9] Elfenbein, Hollowak, and Nix 2011; Kerner Report 1968; Zelizer 2016

[10] I use the terms riots and unrest interchangeably. I understand these labels are politically charged and mean different things to different people. Each term also carries with it an assumed set of motivations for behaviors. My use of these terms is to communicate a set of chaotic behaviors among multiple people that resulted in severe property damage. I assume these behaviors resulted from multiple motivations and conditions, and I make no claims to fully understand what drove these acts. This paper aims to help clarify and understand policies and circumstances associated with past and contemporary American race riots.

[11] Vale 2013, p. 30

[12] Vale 2013, p. 33

[13] Fullilove and Wallace 2011, p. 381

[14] Fullilove and Wallace 2011, pp. 383-384

Several theories suggest concentrated poverty contributes to the conditions that undergird riots. For instance, historian Thomas Sugrue and sociologist Janet Abu-Lughod demonstrate that segregation and economic hardship in African American low-income communities in Detroit, New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles greatly contributed to generating unrest.[15] Furthermore, historian Michael Katz noted, "In almost every instance, police actions had ignited long-standing grievances whose roots lay in racism and economic deprivation."[16] While these prior studies mainly investigate the riots of the 1950s and 1960s, this paper examines how urban renewal efforts perpetuate economic disadvantage undergirding both past and modern riots.

In this paper, I investigate how old and new urban renewal policies relate to twice-cleared communities, serial displacement, and poverty concentration over time in some of Baltimore's low-income African-American communities.[17] I mainly, but not exclusively, focus my analysis on changing dynamics and conditions in Baltimore's Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood, one of the city's historic African-American communities, where the riots occurred twice. I argue that decisions to protect and then expand Baltimore's downtown relate to a half century of high poverty in Sandtown-Winchester.

The Twice-Rioted Sandtown-Winchester[18]

The West Baltimore neighborhood of Sandtown-Winchester was once known as "Baltimore's Harlem."[19] While not the city's first black enclave,[20] it became Baltimore's main African American entertainment, commercial, and residential hub in the 1930s and 1940s, for several reasons.[21] African-American concentration in Sandtown, in what was once a white part of "old West Baltimore," began around 1885. After the turn of the century, African Americans moved northwest after being displaced from the development of the Camden Yards Railway Station in the Pigtown area.[22] Then in 1910, Margaret Brewer, a white woman, sold her home to W. Ashbie

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[15] Abu-Lughod 2007; Sugrue 2014

[16] Katz 2012, p. 80

[17] While there are several dynamics related to persistent economic deprivation in low-income African American communities (Jargowsky 1996; Massey and Denton 1993; Wilson 1996), this paper's scope is limited to urban renewal efforts. This paper is part of a larger book project that will investigate a more comprehensive set of factors related to persistent black neighborhood poverty and its association with unrest across different cities over time.

[18] Sandtown-Winchester is defined using the city of Baltimore's designated neighborhood cluster boundaries, which for Sandtown-Winchester includes Harlem Park (Baltimore City Health Department 2017). The borders of the community consist of North Avenue to the north, Franklin Street to the south, North Monroe Street to the west, and Pennsylvania Avenue and North Fremont Avenue to the east. Some might consider this the Greater Sandtown-Winchester area.

[19] McDougall 1993; Pryor-Trusty and Taliaferro 2003; Jeremy Ashkens, Larry Buchanan, Alicia Desantis, Haeyoun Park, and Derek Watkins. "A Portrait of the Sandtown Neighborhood in Baltimore." *New York Times*. May 3, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/05/03/us/a-portrait-of-the-sandtown-neighborhood-in-baltimore.html [accessed September 16, 2018]

[20] Baltimore in the 1800s had the largest population of freed blacks compared to any other U.S. city (Orr 1999; McDougall 1993). In 1802, 32 percent of the city's freed blacks lived in Fells Point (Haywood 2008, p. 50), which contained the largest percentage of freed blacks in the city. Furthermore, just like in Washington, DC in the late 19th century, African Americans were "integrated" in neighborhoods but micro-level segregation still existed. In Baltimore, many African Americans lived in back-alley dwelling units, while whites mainly resided in homes facing the streets (Hayward 2008; Pietila 2010).

[21] Nix and Weiner 2010

[22] Orr 1999, p. 30

Hawkins, an African American man who held a law degree from Howard University.[23] This controversial home sale opened West Baltimore to more blacks, and whites increasingly fled to outer periphery neighborhoods. By 1940, the three census tracts that made up Sandtown-Winchester were over 90 percent African American.[24] The community became a vibrant, yet overcrowded area, where African American musical and intellectual icons including Cab Calloway, Billie Holiday, and Thurgood Marshall spent much of their time.[25]

Sandtown-Winchester was a segregated, African American mixed-income neighborhood for years, but it started to decline in the 1940s. First, the overcrowded conditions were taking a toll on its housing stock. Furthermore, in the mid- and late-1940s, other city neighborhoods started to open to African Americans due to block busting, the outlawing of restrictive covenants, and the movement of whites to the suburbs.[26] Those with resources left.[27] Additionally, in 1944, the city of Baltimore brought Robert Moses, the infamous urban renewal planner, in from New York City to consult on a massive highway plan.[28] Moses' plan would have constructed major highways through sections of the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood leading to massive displacement. While these plans were never fully implemented, the expectation of their implementation stimulated black middle-class exodus, housing disinvestment and deterioration, and poverty concentration in the neighborhood.[29]

In 1968, two days after the assassination of MLK Jr., riots started in East Baltimore and quickly spread to West Baltimore's Sandtown-Winchester. Buildings and businesses throughout the community burned.[30] While Sandtown-Winchester was already in decline, after the 1968 riots businesses and middle-income residents continued to flee, sending the community into a further economic downward spiral. The community would remain impoverished for decades.[31]

Despite federal and local attempts to revitalize the community in the 1990s, the neighborhood remains segregated and disadvantaged.[32] Sandtown-Winchester today is 96 percent African American; one-third of population is below the poverty line; 20 percent is unemployed; and three percent of its population is in prison, the highest level of any community in Baltimore.[33] The community was also hit hard by the foreclosure crisis and many of its streets are filled with

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[23] Pietila 2010

[24] Pietila 2010, p. 69

[25] Men of Sandtown, http://menofsandtown.org/history-of-sandtown/ [accessed September 16, 2018]

[26] Orser 1997; Pietila 2010

[27] McDougall 1993; Pietila 2010

[28] Crenson 2017, p. 456

[29] Lieb 2011

[30] Levy 2011; Also see Spies 2017, https://www.vocativ.com/usa/justice-usa/2-maps-that-explain-the-baltimore-riots-1968-and-now/index.html [accessed October 1, 2018]

[31] Orr 1999, p. 36

[32] Cohen 2001; Stoker, Stone and Worgs 2015; Rosenblatt and DeLuca 2015. Also see Yvonne Wenger. "Saving Sandtown-Winchester: Decade-long, Multimillion-dollar Investment Questioned." *The Baltimore Sun*. May 10, 2015, http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/baltimore-city/west-baltimore/bs-md-ci-sandtown-winchester-blight-20150510-story.html [accessed September 19, 2018]

[33] Jeremy Ashkens, Larry Buchanan, Alicia Desantis, Haeyoun Park, and Derek Watkins. "A Portrait of the Sandtown Neighborhood in Baltimore." *New York Times*. May 3, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/05/03/us/a-portrait-of-the-sandtown-neighborhood-in-baltimore.html [accessed September 16, 2018]

nothing but boarded up and abandoned rowhouses.[34] Furthermore, much of its viable housing stock is filled with low-income residents who receive government-rental assistance.[35]

In 2015, Sandtown-Winchester became one of the country's few twice-rioted communities. On April 12, 2015, Freddie Gray was arrested for allegedly carrying a pocket knife and the police took him on a "rough ride." Freddie Gray was a 25-year-old, African American resident of Sandtown-Winchester. He often hung out in and around the Gilmor Homes, the community's large public housing complex.[36] Freddie Gray died six days after his arrest from spinal injuries likely sustained from being thrown around in the back of a police-transport van during his ride.[37]

Gray's death was the breaking point for the already strained relations between Baltimore police and the African-American community.[38] There were several days of peaceful protests but on April 25 the downtown demonstrations turned violent.[39] Further, rioting broke out following Gray's funeral on April 27. On this day rioting occurred just north of Sandtown at the Mondawmin Mall. From the shopping center, the violence moved south to Sandtown-Winchester's Pennsylvania Avenue commercial corridor.[40]

While many scholars highlight aggressive police action as the prime contemporary riot determinate, Nick Mosby, the former city council member from the Sandtown-Winchester area, explained, "This is a culmination of a lot of different things. Decades old of unfair policies. Decades old of lack of development for these communities."[41] As Mosby suggests, I look back decades and decades to better understand some of the conditions likely leading to the 1968 and 2015 Baltimore riots.

Urban Renewal

Baltimore's Old Urban Renewal: Highways and Housing

In the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, many leading urban planners and policy makers thought the strategic placement of highways through African-American neighborhoods was a promising tool to spur

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[34] DeLuca and Rosenblatt 2013; Rosenblatt and Newman 2011

[35] Smith et al. 2002

[36] Peter Herman. "Friends and Neighbors Remember Freddie Gray: He 'Was Our Family.'" *Washington Post*. April 24, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/crime/freddie-was-our-family/2015/04/24/662956a2-e9d4-11e4-9a6a-c1ab95a0600b_story.html?utm_term=.1ca79545a572 [accessed September 16, 2018]

[37] Ron Snyder. "One Year Later: Looking Back at the Baltimore Riots." WBALTV11. April 28, 2016, https://www.wbaltv.com/article/one-year-later-looking-back-at-the-baltimore-riots/7100345 [accessed September 19, 2018]

[38] Starting in the 1990s and 2000s the Baltimore Police Department implemented "zero tolerance" policies such as stop and frisk, which disproportionately affected African Americans. Between January 2010 and June 2015 African Americans account for 84 percent of police stops despite being only 63 percent of the city's population (United States Department of Justice 2017).

[39] Associated Press. "A Timeline of the Freddie Gray Riots in Baltimore." April 28, 2015.

[40] Emma Patti Harris. "Baltimore Riots: Damage and Incidents of Violence." *Baltimore Sun*. April 27, 2015 and Scott Dance. "Baltimore Erupts," *Chicago Tribune*. April 28, 2015.

[41] Nick Mosby for Mayor: New Energy. New Ideas, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hNlwxR-9uO8 [accessed October 1, 2018]

economic development and blight eradication, containment, and prevention.[42] Local advocates believed highways would bring commerce and suburbanites more easily to the city. Furthermore, strategically locating the highways through blighted areas could prevent the encroachment of blackness into the downtown.[43] Local political leaders hoped that this would protect downtown property values and facilitate shopping in the central business district.[44] "Good roads would bring good people downtown."[45]

Throughout the country the construction of the highways disproportionately impacted African-American communities. Between 1957 and 1968, at least 300,000 urban housing units, mainly in African-American communities, were razed due to the construction of the country's inter-state highway system.[46] This new road system shattered African-American social capital and led to the dramatic "reorganization of urban and suburban space."[47] The reorganization would result in an even more racially segregated metropolitan America.[48]

In Baltimore, something different happened: the highway planning devastated African-American communities by facilitating disinvestment and black middle class flight rather than massive direct displacement. Some African Americans were displaced due to the highways, but the mainstay of Sandtown-Winchester was not fractured by highway displacement as had happened in many cities throughout the country.[49] In Sandtown-Winchester, the city's planning of highway construction and threat of eminent domain was enough to start the interconnected processes of disinvestment and deprivation.

For instance, part of the Franklin-Mulberry corridor, which runs through the southern border of Sandtown-Winchester, was cleared and remained vacant for years before the highway construction began. It was only partially built, due to increasing costs and protests from city-wide interracial coalitions, and eventually became known as the "highway to nowhere."[50] During this period, area homeowners moved or gave up on maintaining and investing in their homes, expecting that they would eventually be displaced when the plan was fully executed.[51] Thus, urban renewal plans can have a devastating effect even if they are never fully implemented. As Marisela Gomez, a Baltimore activist and organizer stated, "Once an area is deemed an 'urban renewal' area, private and public investment decreases and the local residents are left on their own to stem the flow of continued decay."[52]

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[42] Lieb 2011; Mohl 2000; Rothstein 2017. The Interstate Highway Act of 1956 deployed nearly $25 billion for the development of expressway through urban areas. The federal government would pay 90% of the cost and would leave it to local policy makers to make the route decisions (see Rose and Mohl 2012, p. 89).

[43] Hyra 2012

[44] Rothstein 2017

[45] Lieb 2011, p. 55

[46] Mohl 2000, p. 226-227. Likely over 1 million people were displaced to make room for the highway system (Rose and Mohl 2012, p. 96).

[47] Fullilove 2004; Rose and Mohl 2012, p. 96

[48] Massey and Denton 1993

[49] Anderson 1967; Fullilove 2004; Fullilove and Wallace 2011

[50] Jesse Walker. "The Wound in West Baltimore: How City Planners Killed a Community." *Reason*. May 8, 2015, https://reason.com/blog/2015/05/08/the-wound-in-west-baltimore [accessed September 17, 2018] and Rose and Mohl 2012, pp. 109, 122-133

[51] Crenson 2017, p. 461; Lieb 2010, p. 57

[52] Gomez 2013, p. 3

While Baltimore's highways did displace some,[53] a significant number of African Americans were removed through the razing of rowhouses for the construction of public housing.[54] Due to segregation, overcrowded conditions, and redlining, much of the city's dilapidated housing stock was in the West and East Baltimore African-American sections just outside of the downtown, known as the "ring of blight."[55] In these African-American city sections, the bulldozers did their damage. One source estimated that between 1950 and 1964 an estimated 25,000 people, 85 percent black, were displaced due to urban renewal projects that demolished many more dwellings than were eventually replaced through public housing construction.[56]

In some cities, invisible walls separate the white and black areas.[57] Sometimes these walls are elevated highways, roads, and railroad tracks.[58] However, in Baltimore the "invisible walls" are real walls of brick and concrete: low- and high-rise public housing. The visible signs of separation between black underclass and white middle class in Baltimore are public housing developments.

The Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) erected these walls of public housing between 1940 and 1960 to secure the borders between the "ring of blight" and downtown (see Figure 1, green dots represent public housing projects, dark areas represent census tracts where over 90 percent of the population is African American, and red outlines Sandtown-Winchester).[59] "White Baltimoreans…insisted that such [public] housing should be built within the boundaries of the existing black neighborhoods."[60] In these areas low- and high-rise public projects went up that reinforced existing segregation. In West Baltimore, the Poe Homes, built to house the poor, became the HABC's first project. It opened in 1940. It blocked off Sandtown and downtown to the south. In 1942, the Gilmor Homes were built in West Baltimore's Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood and symbolically prevented African American out-migration to the city's northwest white neighborhoods.[61] Lastly, the McCulloh Homes would become part of the wall on the eastern border of Sandtown.

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[53] Crenson 2017, p. 461. Also see https://baltimoreheritage.org/history/race-and-place-in-greater-rosemont/ [accessed September 17, 2018]

[54] Hayward and Belfoure 2008; McDougall 1993

[55] Samuels 2008

[56] Chris Gladora. 2006. "History: Housing Policy Segregation in Baltimore." *IndeyPendent Reader*, Summer, Issue 1. Also, see Rose and Mohl 2012, p. 128, for a similar displacement estimate as well as Hirsch 2003, pp. 68-69. Hirsch reported that between 1951 and 1971 16,505 households were displaced in Baltimore; 81 percent of which were African American. Another source estimated between 1951 and 1971 urban renewal displaced 25,000 households, a majority which were African American (McDougall 1993, p. 56).

[57] Clark 1965, p 11. Clark states, "The dark ghetto's invisible walls have been erected by the white society by those who have power, both to confine those who have *no* power and to perpetuate their powerlessness."

[58] Connolly 2014; Hirsch 1998

[59] Hayward and Belfoure 1999, p. 171

[60] Hayward and Belfoure 1999, p. 173. The exception was the public housing built in Cherry Hill (Pietila 2010).

[61] Luke Broadwater and Talia Richman. "Baltimore May Demolish Part of Gilmor Homes, Move Residents From Crime-Riddled Public Housing." *Baltimore Sun*. January 10, 2018, http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/baltimore-city/bs-md-ci-gilmor-homes-20180110-story.html [accessed September 17, 2018] also see Baynard Woods. "Freddie Gray's Housing Complex Still Plagued by Poor Conditions and Abuse." *The Guardian*. April 30, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/apr/30/freddie-gray-gilmore-homes-baltimore-public-housing [accessed September 17, 2018]

In the 1960s the Westside ghetto wall of separation was reinforced with two large high-rise public housing projects, Lexington Terrace, five, 11-story towers, and Murphy Homes. In East Baltimore, the public housing wall included the Lafayette Courts, one of the nation's largest high-rise housing projects, Flag House Courts, Somerset Homes, Latrobe Homes, Douglass Homes, and Perkins Homes.[62] These projects at the edge of the ring of blight would institutionalize poverty and blackness just outside of Baltimore's central business district. The visible wall of public housing just beyond the downtown on the west and east sides was a deliberate strategy to protect downtown from black encroachment.[63]

Figure 1. The Ghetto Wall of Public Housing in Baltimore, 1960
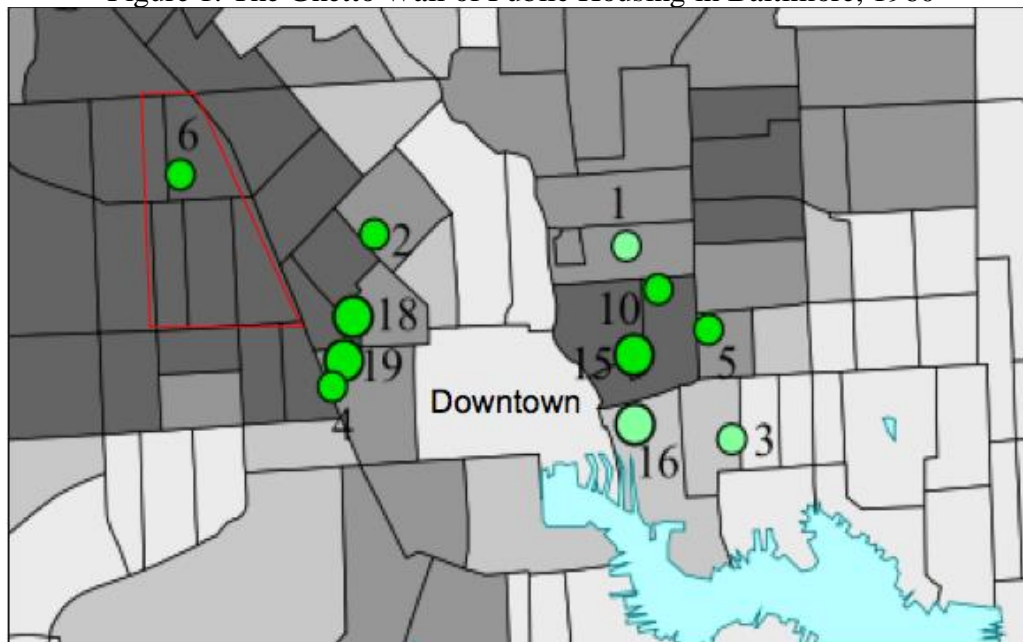
Source: ACLU of Maryland, Thompson v. HUD Case, available at
https://www.aclu-md.org/sites/default/files/field_documents/map3_1960.pdf

The Kerner Report specified that urban riots were primarily caused by the proliferation of segregated, impoverished black ghettos. We do not know the extent to which Baltimore's old urban renewal contributed to concentrated black poverty and the riots of 1968. First, the elimination of restrictive covenants and the continued movement of whites into the suburbs, opened up new urban communities for middle-income African Americans, and some moved out of places like Sandtown-Winchester.[64] Second, racist redlining lending practices, promoted by the federal government, and labor market discrimination, also contributed to the creation of the African American "ring of blight" in Baltimore.[65] However, it is hard not to pinpoint highway

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[62] Lieb 2011, p. 174 and JoAnna Daemmrich. "Lafayette Courts Ends In 20 Seconds of Explosions, Cheers, Tears." *Baltimore Sun*. August 20, 1995, http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1995-08-20/news/1995232004_1_lafayette-rise-murphy-homes [Accessed September 17, 2018]. Flag House Courts, the Latrobe Homes and Perkins Homes were originally designated as white-only projects but by 1964 they were predominantly African American. By 1969, these projects were over 90 percent African American (Hirsch 2003, p. 61).

[63] The HABC would place the majority of its scattered site subsidized housing behind the walls of public housing in West and East Baltimore, which would further impoverish Sandtown-Winchester (see Figure 3 on page 13).

[64] Durr 2003; Pietila 2010

[65] Massey and Denton 1993; Gomez 2013; Orr 1999; Pietila 2010; Rothstein 2017

planning and the placement of public housing disproportionately in African-American communities as important contributing factors in concentrated poverty, rising racial animosity, and stress for African Americans, which all might have been critical undercurrents of the '68 Baltimore riots. As one author stated, "Public policy [in the old urban renewal period] declared over and over again that Baltimore's black neighborhoods were disposable" and needed to be behind ghetto walls.[66]

While highway planning, downtown protection, and public housing project placement, were key factors that contributed to declining conditions in Sandtown-Winchester from the 1940s to the 1960s, in the 1990s and 2000s housing demolitions, displacement, and downtown expansion, would perpetuate the community's precarious conditions.

Baltimore's New Urban Renewal: The Harbor and Housing

Redevelop plans for Baltimore's Inner Harbor began in the 1970s,[67] but took off in the 1990s and 2000s.[68] The Inner Harbor's redevelopment symbolized the city's transition from a declining industrial area to tourist-centered, entertainment-focused post-industrial town. This transformation was solidified when one of the Inner Harbor's central sites, the 1895 Power Plant, was redeveloped into one of the locations for the international restaurant chain Hard Rock Café. The restaurant opened in 1997 with a huge 65-foot neon guitar placed on one of the four 200-foot-tall red brick smokestacks that once projected the coal-burning electrical plant's pollution clouds.[69]

White real estate developer James Rouse was the mastermind behind the Inner Harbor's redevelopment. In the 1970s Rouse saw the rundown port and envisioned it as Harborplace, a "festival development" with shops, restaurants, a convention center, an aquarium, science centers, and hotels.[70] He believed that public and private investments could turn the harbor into a tourist destination and stimulate the redevelopment of nearby neighborhoods. Rouse convinced four-term, Mayor William Donald Schaefer (1971-1987) to use public dollars to "create several popular Inner Harbor attractions."[71]

Harborplace set in motion the city's main economic development strategy and growing spatial inequality.[72] While 24,000 people were on the waitlist for public housing, the city spent their federal community development funds to undergird downtown development. The initial beneficiaries of this development strategy were white "developers, financiers, real estate

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[66] Lieb 2011, p. 52. The phrase "behind ghetto walls" references Lee Rainwater's 1970 classic study of public housing.
[67] Crenson 2017, pp. 491-492
[68] Nick Gillepie. "Baltimore's Long History of Failed Development and Urban Renewal." *Reason*. April 28 2015, https://reason.com/blog/2015/04/28/baltimores-long-history-of-failed-develo [accessed September 17, 2018]
[69] Robert Sharoff. "Redevelopment Enriching Baltimore's Inner Harbor." *New York Times*. August 3, 1997, https://www.nytimes.com/1997/08/03/realestate/redevelopment-enriching-baltimore-s-inner-harbor.html [accessed September 27, 2018]
[70] Crenson 2017, p. 492
[71] Stoker, Stone, and Worgs, p. 53
[72] Crenson 2017, p. 493

speculators, suburbanites, a few affluent condo dwellers, and tourists."[73] At the same time, low-income African Americans in the ring of blight "sank deeper into poverty" as the private and public housing stock, within and beyond the walls of separation, fell into severe disrepair.[74]

After Schaefer was elected Maryland's Governor in 1986, Kurt Schmoke became Baltimore's first elected African-American mayor.[75] With Baltimore's new black majority and the election of Schmoke, there was hope he would redirect redevelopment priorities to the ring of blight over the downtown.[76] Initially, Schmoke made good on his campaign promise to expand neighborhood redevelopment beyond outside the downtown area. In fact, Schmoke formed a partnership with the Enterprise Foundation, a community development foundation founded by James and Patty Rouse, and Baltimoreans United in Leadership and Development (BUILD), a reputable, congregational-led community organization.[77] Together, these partners launched a $130 million comprehensive community initiative to tackle housing, job training, business development, education reform, policing, and community building over a 10-year period in Sandtown.[78] However, the project was woefully unfunded for the needs of the neighborhood, had management conflicts, "and failed to attract much in the way of private investment."[79]

While Schmoke created some new neighborhood initiatives, during his three terms as mayor (1987-1999) his administration remained centered on downtown expansion. The entertainment themed downtown development continued in the 1990s with the construction of sports stadiums.[80] In 1992 and 1998 the Camden Yards baseball complex and the Baltimore Ravens Football stadiums opened next to each other.[81] Each were financed almost entirely with $500 million in public funds and these major developments greatly advanced the downtown and inner harbor area expansion. Baltimore continued to bet on the entertainment industry to replace its declining industrial base.

The central city investments were occurring in a period of severe economic decline for Baltimore. For instance, between 1980 and 2009, manufacturing decreased from 19 percent to 4.5 percent of the city's employment base.[82] Additionally, the city continued to lose people; between 1990 and 2010 Baltimore lost nearly 16 percent of its population. The city also had an increasing poverty rate, which was already high. Between 1989 and 2010, the poverty rate rose

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[73] Crenson 2017, p. 501

[74] Crenson 2017, p. 501; Orr 1999. p. 36

[75] Mayor Schmoke was the second black mayor of Baltimore as Clarence H. Burns was appointed to finish out Schaefer last year as mayor.

[76] In 1980, Baltimore had become 54 percent African American and the white-dominated politics of the city and downtown were shifting to the new majority population. This shift started under Schaefer when in 1984 he appointed Bishop L. Robinson, as the city's first African American police commissioner.

[77] McDougall 1993; Also, see https://www.enterprisecommunity.org/about/what-we-do/our-history [accessed September 27, 2018]

[78] Rosenblatt and DeLuca 2015; Stoker, Stone, and Worgs, 2015

[79] Stoker, Stone, and Worgs, 2015, p. 55. Other scholars would argue that the initiative over time did help to stabilize Sandtown (see DeLuca and Rosenblatt 2013 and Rosenblatt and DeLuca 2015).

[80] Chapin 2004

[81] Walters and Miserendino 2008

[82] Wolman, Horak, Sola, and Hincapie 2015, p. 36

from 22 percent to 26 percent.[83] Urban policy expert Harold Wolman and his colleagues deemed Baltimore the quintessential "distressed former industrial city."[84]

Despite the doom-and-gloom economic scenario for Baltimore, the downtown/inner harbor investment gamble was a winning play, depending on your perspective. In the 2000s the downtown neighborhoods around the inner harbor started to gentrify, with increased income, property value, and educational levels. In the 2000s, a remarkable 23 percent of the city's lower-income census tracts, several near the inner harbor, gentrified (see Figure 2, dark blue represent areas that gentrified).[85] These redeveloping neighborhoods included South Baltimore, Federal Hill, and Downtown. In the prior decade, only 9 percent of Baltimore's low-income tracts gentrified.[86] There was something about the inner harbor redevelopment of the 1990s, and nearby public housing revitalization efforts, that helped attract mainly white Millennials to central city Baltimore in the 2000s.

Figure 2. Baltimore's Gentrification in the 2000s
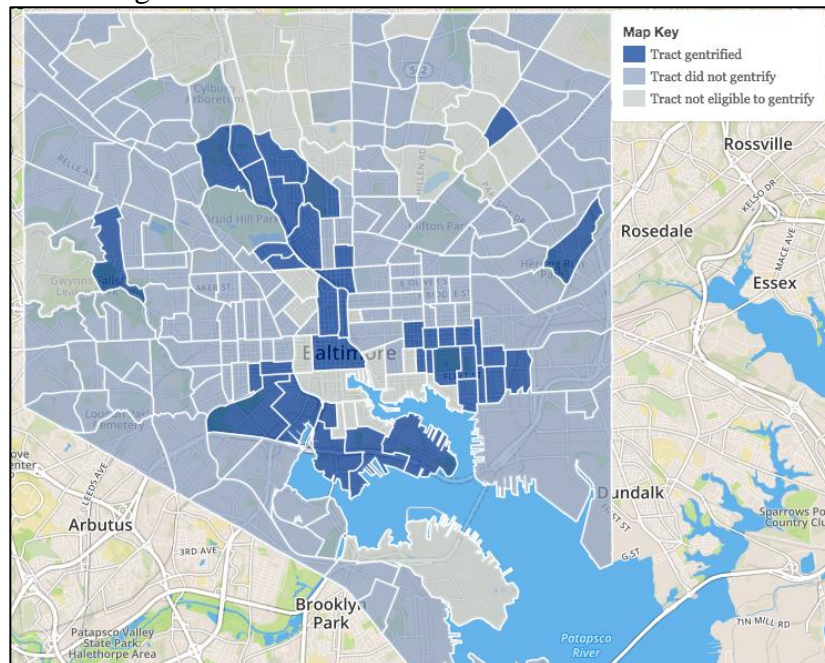
Source: Governing Magazine, February 2015, available at
http://www.governing.com/gov-data/baltimore-gentrification-maps-demographic-data.html

Public Housing High-Rise Demolition: The Walls Come Down

Those who have watched The Wire, the well-known HBO series about Baltimore, know about the Terraces. In the series' first season the Terraces depict the Lexington Terrace, a five building, 11-story high-rise public housing complex. In the show these West Baltimore high-

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[83] Wolman, Horak, Sola, and Hincapie 2015, p. 45
[84] Wolman, Horak, Sola, and Hincapie 2015, p. 33
[85] Maciag 2015
[86] Maciag 2015. Between 1990 and 2010, the percent of people in the city with a B.A. or higher increased from 16 percent to 24 percent (Wolman, Horak, Sola, and Hincapie 2015, p. 37). It seems many of these people increasingly located near the downtown.

rises are controlled by a fictitious drug lord, Avon Barksdale. In real life, this public housing project, located just off the southeast edge of Sandtown and western edge of downtown, has been plagued by gang and drug violence for years. For instance, former U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Henry Cisneros recalled that on a 1993 visit he wanted to walk through the Terraces but was warned by the Baltimore Housing Authority Police that it was unsafe due to potential "cross-fire of a drug deal gone wrong."[87]

High-rise public housing projects in the mainstream media are often associated with blackness, violence, and drugs. While many of the high-rises in cities like Baltimore and Chicago have elements of the drug trade in them, rarely are most residents involved in these illicit activities. However, the site of public housing high-rises often carries a stigma and raises fear of violence and crime. The projects are often feared because they are perceived, as Mayor Kurt Schmoke noted, as "warehouses of poverty…characterized by high crime rates [and] significant unemployment."[88]

Just like the revitalization that occurred to the old warehouses and factories along the inner harbor, the warehouses of the poor, the projects, needed to be upgraded too. However, rather than rehabilitation, they were completely razed. In the 1990s, to clear the ill "sites and sights" near downtown, Baltimore demolished most of its public housing high-rises and built mixed-income housing, mainly rowhouses, in their place.[89] The demolition occurred to some of the projects (Lexington Terrace in West Baltimore and the Lafayette Courts in East Baltimore) that made up the original wall of separation between downtown and the ring of blight (See Figure 3, Xs represent removed projects, the yellow dots represent scatter site public housing units, and dark areas represent census tracts where over 90 percent of the population is African American).

To help facilitate the razing of Baltimore's high-rise public housing wall, the city received over $166 million from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development through its Housing Opportunity for People Everywhere (HOPE VI) program between 1993 and 2010.[90] The city used these funds to demolish public housing units and built rowhouses in their place. The new rowhouse communities were mixed-income containing both subsidized housing and market rate units.[91] Some of the market rate dwellings sold for over $300,000.[92] With the implementation of HOPE VI, inner areas of Baltimore's ring of blight became twice-cleared communities and some of these areas gentrified.

The razing of public housing removed a powerful symbol of violence and crime, signaling to investors and new residents that these areas, just beyond the traditional central business district,

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[87] Cisneros and Engdahl 2009, p. 3

[88] Quote in Cisneros and Engdahl 2009, p. vii

[89] Vale 2013, p. 30

[90] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, HOPE VI Revitalization Grants, FY 1993-2010, https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/DOC_10014.PDF [accessed October 2, 2018]

[91] Charles Belfoure. "In Baltimore, Public Housing Comes Full Circle." *New York Times*. March 19, 2000, https://www.nytimes.com/2000/03/19/realestate/in-baltimore-public-housing-comes-full-circle.html [accessed October 1, 2018]

[92] Brower et al. 2008. "Heritage Crossing at 5: Successes and Challenges in a HOPE VI Development," https://www.arch.umd.edu/sites/arch.umd.edu/files/attachments/projects/Master%20Final%20Report.pdf [accessed October 1. 2018]

were now safe for redevelopment and downtown expansion.[93] While it took some time, the HOPE VI neighborhoods attracted new investments. For instance, the University of Maryland at Baltimore expanded their footprint outside of the downtown to open an $11 million BioPark located near where the Terrance project was once located.[94] Jim Hughes, director of the new technology center, noted, "We're excited that the success of the BioPark is spreading a little deeper into the community."[95]

Figure 3. The Ghetto Wall Removed, 1995-2001
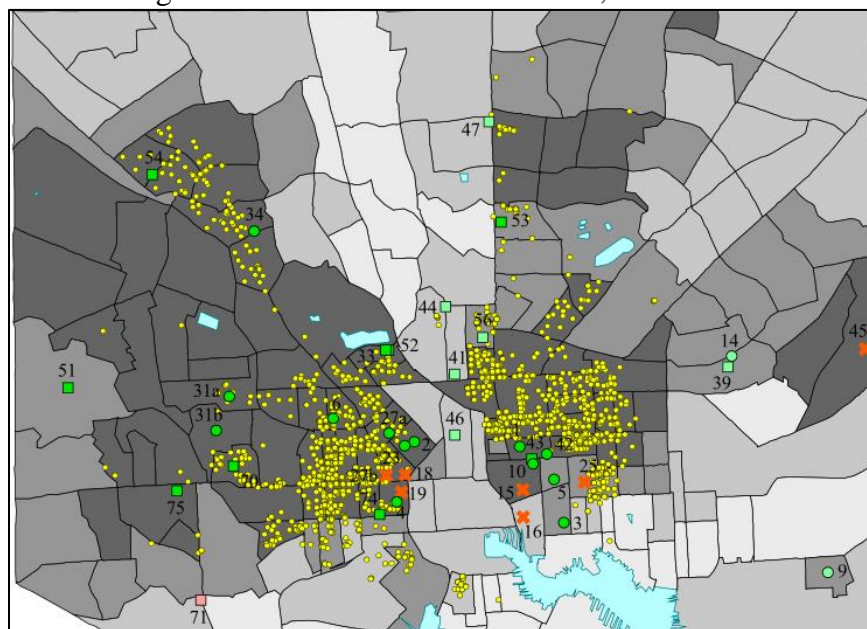
Source: ACLU of Maryland, Thompson v. HUD Case, available at
https://www.aclu-md.org/sites/default/files/field_documents/map7_2000.pdf

While new investments are expanding the downtown footprint, knocking down the housing projects led to low-income African-American displacement, many of whom ended up in sections of West and East Baltimore further from the central business district. A 2002 Urban Institute HOPE VI study tracked the relocation of Baltimore residents from three HOPE VI sites, Lexington Terrace (on the West), Flag House (on the East), and Hollander Ridge (far East). The study demonstrated that the displaced residents with rental assistance went to many different neighborhoods throughout the city. A few even found housing in the Baltimore suburbs. Many of these new neighborhoods were slightly less impoverished yet similarly racially segregated. However, the study also found a number went to West and East low-income minority areas within or in proximity to the existing ring of blight (see Figure 4, each star represents a HOPE VI
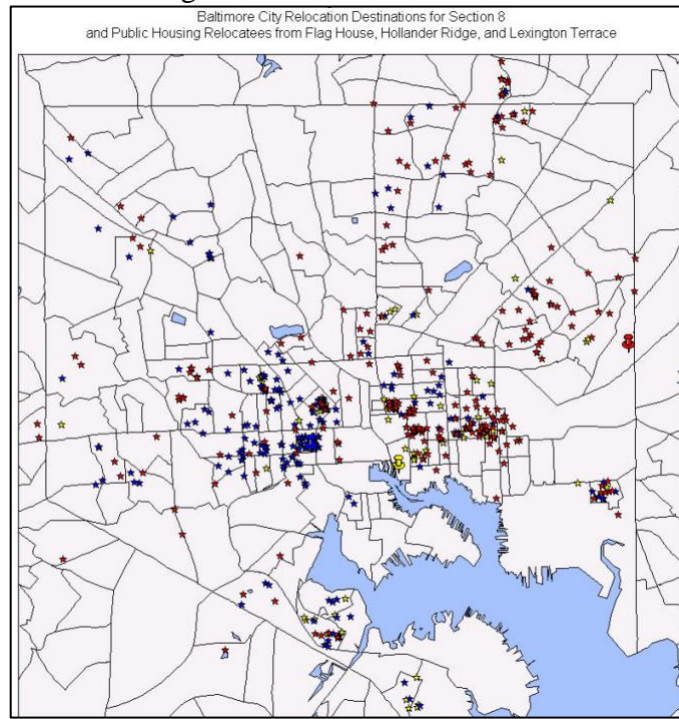
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[93] Nix and Weiner 2010, p. 183. The destruction of the wall was made into a public spectacle. Hundreds of people watched from a distance as the buildings were dynamited and imploded. When the dynamite blasted, each high-rise building collapsed on top of itself and a large cloud of dust rose much like when detonating an atomic bomb.
[94] Natalie Sherman. "Lion Brothers Building to Open in December." *Baltimore Sun*. August 18, 2016, http://www.baltimoresun.com/business/bs-bz-lion-brothers-groundbreaking-20160817-story.html [accessed October 2, 2018]
[95] Quote from Natalie Sherman. "Lion Brothers Building to Open in December." *Baltimore Sun*. August 18, 2016, http://www.baltimoresun.com/business/bs-bz-lion-brothers-groundbreaking-20160817-story.html [accessed October 2, 2018]

relocatee).[96] The HOPE VI program in Baltimore did not alleviate concentrated poverty but rather pushed it outward and further from the central business district.

Figure 4. HOPE VI Relocatees

Source: Smith et al. 2002, available at
https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/60636/410592-Housing-Choice-for-HOPE-VI-Relocatees.PDF

The demolition of the projects led to a situation where many of those displaced moved to minority areas of West or East Baltimore with already high poverty concentrations. Places like Sandtown-Winchester received numerous low-income public housing refugees, while new mixed-income communities built with HOPE VI funds stimulated the revitalization of some of the areas where the old public housing sites were once located. Rather than alleviating racial and spatial inequality, Baltimore's public housing reforms reinforced and perpetuated it.[97]

Conclusion

The 1968 Kerner report strongly suggested that the riots primarily stemmed from the ill circumstances in isolated, impoverished, communities of color.[98] In Baltimore, old and new

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[96] Smith et al. 2002, p. 29

[97] See Thompson v. HUD. In addition to public housing reforms, it is important to understand how the Great Recession and the foreclosure crisis impacted the conditions of Baltimore's African-American neighborhoods. This was beyond the scope of this paper. In addition, as the ghetto walls went down, police practices changed in Baltimore and became more aggressive with the implementation of zero tolerance policies, which disproportionally affected African-American communities. It is important to account for and connect the demolition of the ghetto walls, poverty re-concentration, aggressive police practices, and the Great Recession fallout to conditions that might have undergirded Baltimore's contemporary riots.

[98] The Kerner Report 1968

urban renewal policies contributed to the segregation of low-income African Americans. Serial displacement was enacted to protect and then expand the downtown. Housing historian Lawrence Vale noted in his 2013 book, *Purging the Poorest*, that the building and then demolition of public housing represented to some policy makers a reclaiming of space "from unruly behavior."[99] At the same time, Mindy Fullilove declared that the reclaiming process through displacement is a form of state-sponsored violence.[100] The displacement process, the pain it caused and the conditions it facilitated, might have led to another unruly act – the riots. We built the ghetto walls and tore them down but nothing changed.

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[99] Vale 2013, p. 315
[100] Fullilove and Wallace 2011