

15. For a critical review of changes in Filipino American attitudes, see Oscar Campananes, "Filipinos in the United States and their Literature of Exile," in *Discrepant Histories: Translocal Essays on Filipino Cultures*, ed. Vincent Rafael (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 159-192. Also, Luis H. Francia, "Inventing the Earth: The Notion of 'Home' in Asian American Literature," in *Across the Pacific: Asian Americans and Globalization*, ed. Evelyn Hu-De Hart (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999).
16. The first organization was the National Committee for the Restoration for Civil Liberties in the Philippines (NCRCLP). Later, it became the Anti-Martial Law Coalition (AMLC). Outside of the Filipino community were other organizations like Friends of the Filipino People (FFP).
17. Catherine Ceniza Choy, *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration of Filipino American History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 139-165. Choy sums up the defense campaign led by KDP activists.
18. For a history of Third World Marxist movements in the United States, see Max Elbaum, *Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao, and Che* (New York: Verso, 2002), 41-162.
19. Jeanette Lazam, interviews with author, tape recordings, San Francisco, CA, May 25, 1990 and October 10, 1990. We were both inside the building during the eviction. I witnessed this episode and she recounted it for me during these interviews.
20. Quoted in Ed Diokno, "Hotel Spirit Still Lingers," *Philippine News*, August 13-19, 1977.
21. Jerry Burns, "New S.F. District Supervisors—Six Incumbents are Elected," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 9, 1977.
22. Jerry Carroll, "Billboard Ban, Hotel Lose—Bonds Okd," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 9, 1977.
23. Herb Caen, "My Kind of Thing," *San Francisco Chronicle*, November 7, 1977.
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25. Quoted in Neela Banerjee, "Resurrection of the I-Hotel," *Asian Week*, June 13, 2001.

"Hush Puppies," Communalist Politics, and Demolition Governance

The Rise and Fall of the Black Fillmore

By Rachel Brahinsky

The Western Addition in the 1970s was still a hotbed for Black radicalism, a center for the Black Panther Party, the welfare rights movement, and emergent civil rights groups. Activists had their hands in many pots, and were deeply connected to important organizations, movements, and religious institutions throughout the City and nationally. At the same time, and not coincidentally, it was a community in crisis, reeling from decades of fighting with the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency (SFRA) over the fate of the community's housing stock and its once-thriving business district.

The neighborhood struggle was set off against a backdrop of rising downtown skylines, symbolic of the influx of corporate-backed development capital flooding into the City, which was angling to flow rapidly into the village-like neighborhoods. Simply put, the Western Addition/Fillmore District community was locked in a battle for the right to exist in San Francisco.

Although significant aspects of the City's redevelopment scheme for the area were already completed or well underway before the mid-'60s, the decade of the '70s was a time when community members amplified their struggle for permanence, drawing on the larger narratives of ethnic solidarity and sustainability that were ascending in San Francisco and nationally.

Looking back from 2010, as an outsider, it's difficult to call much about the redevelopment plan a success. A walk down the drab beige, cement-heavy, lower Fillmore—a study in contrasts between a few remaining low-rent businesses and high-end restaurants that pay homage to the decimated 1940s Jazz district—reveals a muffled sense of place. The community would feel entirely different had the Victorians that once lined these streets remained, as they do just a few blocks to the north, south, and west. Of course, it's not just the buildings that would be different—the population, had the City done more to fund rehabilitation than demolition, may be quite different as well.

On the other hand, without the multiple complexes of affordable housing that now fill out the community, most Black families—and nearly all of the low-income families that still live there outside of federal public housing—would probably be long gone from the Fillmore. These were mostly built through the Redevelopment Agency in the middle years of the long period of redevelopment that stretched from 1948 all the way to 2009. Much of this housing was a concession from the agency in response to intense community pressure. Residents had revolted quite dramatically in the 1960s, laying bodies in front of bulldozers and clogging the SFRA's top-down demolition program with lawsuits. Through the '70s, residents worked to embed humane values in the bureaucracy, with some positive results. These facts are just some of many contradictions that make up the socio-geographic landscape of the Fillmore District.

Conversations with activists, pastors, and residents who have remained since the '70s uncover something of a community-scale existential crisis that is intimately connected to a larger demographic shift underway in San Francisco today. As the numbers of African-Americans in the City decline year by year (since the peak in 1970), the City's Black cultural and economic base has eroded tremendously. Many Black San Franciscans who remain despair of any deep or lasting connection to a place that has nevertheless been theirs for decades.

In the 2000s a mayoral task force convened to look at the "Black exodus" problem, which largely stems from the nexus of rising housing costs with the continued erosion of the Black community's economic stability. It's a story that has played out in many northern cities, where Black families have moved to the more affordable suburban fringes, but the speed of San Francisco's African-American dispersal has been unmatched nationally—and it essentially began the moment the first bulldozers hit the Fillmore in 1953.

Most accounts of urban renewal blame a walled-in imperial Redevelopment Agency, which is an appropriate and easy target—since most of the key players are gone from the spotlight or have died. But the agency was not the only player, and a look at the '70s uncovers a time of both dynamic opposition and determined cooperation in the Black community as it struggled to both be a "community" and to reform and challenge the top-down politics that characterized urban planning in the 1950s and '60s.

Human Removal

Many San Franciscans have seen the 1999 KQED documentary on the neighborhood known as the Fillmore, or Western Addition (depending who you ask), which lays out the history of redevelopment's failures. Not as many may have come across a much earlier film, a 1974 black and white documentary dubbed *Redevelopment: A Marxist Perspective*. Opening with a bouncy warble of horns and voices, the film follows the San Francisco skyline as it rises from the 1940s onward—until a band of voices chants in movement-style folk rhythm, "Stop! We don't want what you have to offer!" With that, the singers announce the presence of political resistance, and the camera begins to pan through the empty lots and crumbled bricks of the mid-1970s Western Addition—an apocalyptic, disintegrating landscape.

Later in the film, the camera settles on the face of a young Black man named Arnold Townsend, who offers a sharp critique of San Francisco's plans for his neighborhood. "The problems of urban decay that face the Fillmore... were manufactured," he insists, noting that the first public step in the crusade to tear down the Fillmore was a newspaper campaign highlighting isolated examples of deterioration and extreme overcrowding. Images of boarded-up businesses and vacant lots shared space on the pages of the *San Francisco Chronicle* with 1940s and '50s headlines reading "San Francisco Slum Areas Breed Disease," "More Blighted Housing Found in SF," and "City Planners to move 10,000 out of Slum Area."

Those headlines presaged the initiation of a complete re-scaping of the neighborhood, a concept that was first hatched back in the 1940s when business leaders formed an alliance focused on revamping a few key neighborhoods. It was one prominent variation of a nationwide effort to restore land values in US central cities following the Great Depression and World War II. The racial and political overtones of the choices made (in terms of which neighborhoods would

be targeted for change) set off decades of community response. What had been pitched nationally as "urban renewal" was re-christened, using the racial parlance of the times, as "Negro removal."

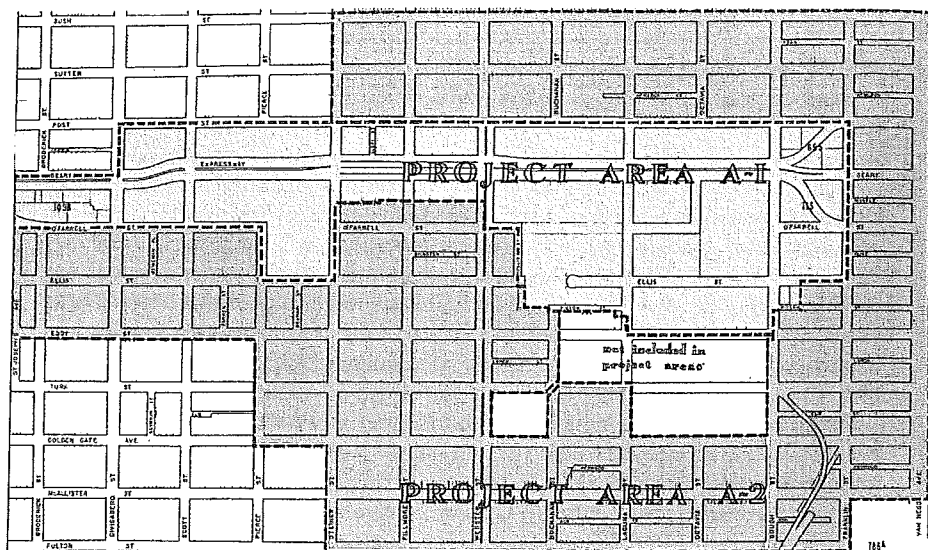
Indeed, many redevelopment zones selected in San Francisco were working-class areas, often home to people of color, including the old produce market near the Embarcadero (now developed as the Golden Gateway), South of Market (which was home to working-class single room occupancy hotel dwellers and gay leather bars), and two massive portions of the Western Addition, which by then was largely (but not entirely) African-American and Japanese-American.¹

City planners and mayors legally justified their claims to these spaces by naming them "blighted," and called for an urban reclaiming in the name of the public good. The public that would benefit the most from these new land claims was a specific group, narrowly defined. As best described in Chester Hartman's epic *City for Sale: The Transformation of San Francisco*, a downtown-government coalition emerged to promote a very specifically targeted urban makeover. The rise of business-class leaders as de facto urban planners was solidified through the formation of the Blyth-Zellerbach Committee and the San Francisco Planning and Urban Renewal Association (SPUR), which promoted targeted neighborhood revivals that emphasized demolition rather than preservation. Redevelopment czar M. Justin Herman, by all accounts a brilliant and autocratic official, was the agency's most infamous figurehead.

City officials—organized after passage of the federal 1949 Housing Act through the new Redevelopment Agency—first identified what would be named Western Addition A-1 by the mid-'50s, basically in tandem with the City's plan to widen Geary Street into a four-lane boulevard at the intersection of Fillmore Street. The 44-block area of A-1 included a small chunk of lower Fillmore Street, spanning from Japantown out to St. Mary's Cathedral at the corner of Geary and Gough (the Japantown mall, many nearby hotels, and the massive cathedral were all products of the A-1 plan).

It was just one piece of what had become the City's primary majority African-American neighborhood, during the population boom that came with the World War II labor surge—and with the forced removal of Japanese-American families to internment camps during the war.² Black property owners in the district, once the area was named blighted and targeted for demolition, stopped or slowed repairs in anticipation of the neighborhood overhaul. While SFRA policies called for the purchase of structures and payment to families to leave rentals, displaced families and businesses reported dealing with intimidation tactics and years-long struggles to get loans or other support to keep their structures whole, struggles that typically ended with their displacement. Many were not technically evicted, but they argue that by virtue of facing a system that refused to help them invest and develop, their properties crumbled and were then easily devalued as slum structures by the SFRA.

By the mid-60s, most of the A-1 demolition was complete, with 4,000 people displaced—and Geary Street had become a "Mason-Dixon Line" dividing a poor, Black lower Fillmore from the largely White and increasingly wealthy Pacific Heights. By then a larger zone, A-2, was also underway. The new project increased the SFRA zone by an additional 60 square blocks, from Van Ness Avenue on the east side to St. Joseph's Street to the west (near Masonic), and north to south from Bush to Grove Streets.



The two Redevelopment Agency "Project Areas" A-1 and A-2.

The A-2 program did not move forward with the same pace and vigor as A-1, largely because the A-1 experience politicized the community—and because an A-1-related lawsuit forced the SFRA to promise replacement homes for the displaced. The trick of holding the SFRA (or any agency) to that goal is still a problem today, but the 1968 lawsuit was one of many legal efforts nationally that gave displacees a legal promise of relocation assistance.

The fight against A-1 had offered a template for resistance in the next round. The fight over A-2 would be materially different, with more community participation and more affordable housing built. Still the SFRA would demolish hundreds of structures by 1970, displacing 10,000-13,000 people.³

Making of the Black Fillmore

Prior to the war, White San Francisco already had a terrible track record in its treatment of racial and ethnic minorities. Violently enforced labor discrimination and housing and businesses-district segregation against the Chinese and Japanese has been well documented.⁴ When it comes to Blacks, the often-repeated story is that African-Americans were well-treated until World War II. The idea is that because their population was relatively tiny, Blacks weren't viewed as threatening to the larger society and were therefore either generally accepted or ignored.

In fact, the number of racist incidents that took place was small, but the rate—the number in relation to the population—was not particularly small. Albert Broussard's finely detailed text *Black San Francisco* shows that the tiny Black community wrestled with a long march of cases of discrimination in housing, work, and education. Yet these events didn't seem to significantly mar the City's liberal/progressive reputation, which was built largely on its history as a maverick political center and its position at the forefront of labor and environmental struggles, not racial ones.

When the US Navy, Kaiser, and other massive shipyard managers recruited

Blacks from the South to build World War II fighting ships and bombs, anti-Black discrimination was suddenly much more visible. The Black population leapt from around 4,800 in 1940 to more than 43,000 ten years later. Around 12,000 Black newcomers settled in the Fillmore, which was one of the few places that would accept African-American tenants, partly because of the newly available homes made vacant by Japanese-American families sent off to internment camps.

The Fillmore community had been multi-ethnic—the City's "little United Nations"—since the 1906 quake pushed many communities together there. The Black in-migration turned the community into a central space of cultural production for the City at large. It wasn't a utopia—but it was a time and a place that supported Black-owned businesses, with a thriving nightlife, and with that delicate creature that we call a sense of community beginning to take root.

That sense was just budding—Blacks had come from Texas, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Alabama, and more, settling with cousins and others from their hometowns. The same social networks that helped people get to the City (and find housing and jobs) were nurtured by the close quarters of the neighborhood. In interviews residents recall a small-town feeling in the middle of the City. In that sense it was no different from many other San Francisco neighborhoods.

Also, like many City neighborhoods (with Chinatown and Japantown as the most visible remaining examples) the Fillmore took shape because of exclusion. Blacks generally couldn't live in most of the City, often because landlords wouldn't rent or sell to them (most famously, even Willie Mays faced racially exclusive covenants when he tried to buy a house below Mt. Davidson). The Western Addition was one of a handful of places without such covenants—so the newcomers crowded into Victorian flats, often squeezing many families into one home, sleeping and cooking in shifts to share the space.⁵

It was the kind of experience that brought people together—and which simultaneously engendered stereotypical racialized thinking on the part of the White majority. Thus, because Blacks were forced to crowd together, the racist notion that Black people like or tend to live that way was one of many racially-inscribed memes that later provided support for redevelopment.

The Jazz District was lively and world-renowned, luring Billie Holiday, Duke Ellington, Miles Davis, Dinah Washington, and others to play in its clubs. In local memory it was a place that attracted and welcomed people of all backgrounds, but it was one of the few places with a wealth of businesses welcoming to African-American customers. The unwritten rule was that Blacks stayed west of Van Ness to socialize, and it was a center for Blacks in other small pockets of the City. Those living all the way out at Hunter's Point, next to the naval shipyards, generally weren't welcome in the Third Street business district adjacent to their homes. So they traveled across town to visit Fillmore theaters and bars, too.

When the SFRA was "finished" with the Fillmore, 883 businesses had closed, 4,729 households had been forced out, and 2,500 Victorian homes had been demolished.⁶ The map of segregation began to shift. With the fall of Fillmore Street, African-Americans turned to Divisadero Street, which was already a central economic zone in the Black community. But Divisadero never grew to be the thriving social center that Fillmore had been. This period also saw the rise of the Third Street Black business community, as the Hunter's Point Black community swelled with Western Addition refugees.

Politics and Networks

The double blows to Civil Rights politics represented in the slayings of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Bobby Kennedy in 1968 was felt in the Fillmore. Residents had become increasingly radicalized through the formation of the Western Addition Community Organization (WACO) a few years earlier, in a political milieu that was heavily inflected with the national and international movements of the times. There were cooperative houses where residents tried carving out alternative lifestyles. James Farmer's Congress of Racial Equality had an active local chapter, and many residents were embroiled in the San Francisco State College fight for ethnic studies that erupted that same year.⁷ The Black Panther Party had an office on Fillmore Street, near the intersection of Eddy Street (where Yoshi's jazz club now stands), alongside neighbors who had played a key role in electing a young and relatively radical African-American, Willie Brown, to the very White California State Assembly back in 1964.

In the context of the federal War on Poverty, which created funding streams for social programs, many of the keystone ideas of the affordable housing movement emerged during this time, and the Western Addition housing battles—which influenced policymakers like Brown and US Congressman Phil Burton—played a key role. This included policies like inclusionary zoning (which requires a portion of new housing developments contribute to a city's affordable housing stock), local hiring requirements (so that development projects employ local residents), and the mandate that governments provide replacement housing for redevelopment evictees.

The Black community in the Fillmore was largely made of three wings, as activist Wade "Speedy" Woods remembers it.⁸ The ministers and few remaining business owners made up one flank; the Afro-centric cultural nationalists (following Kwanzaa creator Maulana Karenga) formed another; Woods was part of a third, politicized wing, made up of the Panthers and many others who were focused on class struggle. The three were not necessarily at odds with each other; it was a time during which African-American politics was consciously expanding and evolving. All three camps were connected to the greater Bay Area Black political scene, where Blacks were challenging the White power structures of the East Bay (gaining some institutional success through the election of Black—and self-proclaimed socialist—Ron Dellums to the US Congress in 1970).

Terry Collins, who migrated from Indiana via Los Angeles in 1967, remembers study groups where people read Marx's *Capital*, and where political consciousness was crafted through a collective process. Collins was sucked into the redevelopment fight immediately, and became an active member of WACO. "We watched Victorians on Gough Street ripped to the ground. I actually cried," he remembers now.

A group steeped in Saul Alinsky's organizing model, and inspired by the anti-bulldozer writings of Jane Jacobs, WACO was the central organization for radical anti-SFRA activism. (Herman opposed WACO, calling it a "passing flurry of proletarianism.") Collins had linked up with WACO as a member of the Black Students Union (BSU), based at San Francisco State. The SF State branch was a largely working-class group, part of a national web of BSUs, devoted to tying student members to local community struggles. (The BSU mission had been sealed at the 1967 Black Youth Conference in Los Angeles—the same event that spawned the boycott threat against the 1968 Olympics.) Graduates from this time

were among the founders of KPOO radio (89.5 FM), the first Black-owned independent station in the west.

For some BSU students co-op housing in the Western Addition was home. One such place was called the Big House, at 560 Page; another was called the Black House. Recalls Collins, "We lived collectively, had meetings there, we did political education. We'd have fundraising parties. We thought internationally and globally." Global conflicts and national liberation efforts in South Africa, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Cuba, felt connected to the fight with the SFRA.

WACO, originally founded by White activist ministers, but later taken over by Blacks, had grown increasingly militant at the end of the decade. Its organizing efforts spawned a key lawsuit. The suit took the SFRA to task for failing to consider replacement housing during the first round of demolitions; when the plaintiffs won, federal funds were halted for the Western Addition until the SFRA developed a substitute-housing plan.

The attorneys managing the case came from the legal backbone of the movement, the San Francisco Neighborhood Legal Assistance Foundation (SNFLAF, known colloquially as Sniff-Laff). "SNFLAF had about 60 attorneys, five neighborhood offices and a law reform unit downtown. They were kind of a wild bunch, as you can imagine, a very aggressive group of people who really wanted to do stuff," says Sid Wolinsky, SNFLAF's first director of litigation. "We did an in-depth study of what was most needed for the poverty community in San Francisco and it didn't take long for it to emerge that housing was the number one problem."

SNFLAF also brought lawsuits on jobs, sweatshops, police brutality, gender discrimination, and other things. But, Wolinsky says:

there was no question, housing was it. And we saw this huge agency, the Redevelopment Agency, gobbling up what was left of affordable housing. We took on representation of the WACO suit, but frankly we were too late. We did what we could there, but almost immediately turned to Yerba Buena, which was in a much earlier phase, and we were able to be much more successful.

One of the key figures in the WACO suit and in the community-at-large was Mary Rogers, a neighborhood icon self-schooled in redevelopment legalese. Rogers was one of many residents who risked their lives in front of the City's bulldozers, and she remained an outspoken advocate until her death in 2006.

"Mary was the one," remembers Collins. "She knew more about this stuff than anybody. She saved so many houses. A lot of the 236 [federally funded affordable] housing was because of her. She was involved in education, housing, welfare rights, everything." Rogers stood out, but she was only one of a political cohort that included many female leaders. "There were a lot of women who were really something in those days, really strong women who'd get out and fight against any injustice: Inez Andres, Lily Ransom, so many others. These people are all gone now."

Negotiating Participation

On the heels of the WACO lawsuit, SFRA chief Herman and Mayor Joe Alioto—who had once headed the SFRA commission—decided to try a new tactic to deal with the active and angry community. Thus was born the PAC—

system of community participation in the SFRA. The Western Addition Project Area Committee (WAPAC) created an institutionally accepted—and funded—venue for community involvement. Bit by bit the key players in WACO were lured onto the PAC. Its board had more than 70 members at the beginning, including Hannibal Williams, who had been a central WACO leader.

WAPAC soon became the primary venue for local development politics, signaling a potential end of widespread radical anti-redevelopment activism in the community. By creating an official venue through which community members could participate, the SFRA co-opted community power, offering radicals an insider seat. When first “Speedy” Woods and then Rev. Arnold Townsend (the young man from the Marxist documentary later became a church leader) tried to win a seat on the city Board of Supervisors, they partly based their citywide pitch on their experience with WAPAC.

Rev. Townsend remembers WAPAC’s formation as the death knell for WACO, “The way that it was set up was so brilliant. You create WAPAC and you put the money in WAPAC—so everybody went there and WACO kind of died out. Before any development can go forward, the rule was you have to go through the PAC, and if the PAC can’t make a decision in 45 days then the Agency can do what it wants.” Herman’s brilliance (if indeed it was Herman’s idea) was in making WAPAC so huge, which made achieving consensus a near impossibility. Even a simple majority might be hard to come by, as each project bidder lobbied board members under the 45-day rule. Says Rev. Townsend, “By the time I became chair [in the early ’70s] there were 54 people. With that number you still have a tough time getting a quorum.”

By its very structure, the PAC both allowed people to have a say, and diluted their participation. During Rev. Townsend’s tenure as chair, he oversaw a reduction in the board’s size to 25, and then 15 later on, which he thought was more manageable.

Though the rage of the ’60s was perhaps tempered by WAPAC, and by the new protections that appeared to be coming for the second redevelopment zone, Western Addition politics were not always civil and ordered. Former Black Panther Bennie Stewart remembers:

there was one occasion where Justin Herman was attacked at a public meeting. There was this guy named Christopher Lewis (in those days he was a “jammer”). He was about 6’2”, weighing about 225 lbs., not a small guy. There was one occasion where Chris leaped over a lectern and collared Justin Herman and threatened to slap the shit out of him. Some people say Justin never really fully recovered from that threat.⁹

Herman died from a heart attack not long afterwards in 1971. Townsend remembers being at meetings, when he was chair of WAPAC years later, where he believes he was the only person in the room without a gun. “As far as we were concerned, it was a life-and-death struggle.”

‘Hush Puppies’

Of course, it wasn’t just the radicals who were pulled in to work within the SFRA. The Fillmore community had many more centrist political leaders—who

often were best known for their Sunday-morning work behind the pulpit. Rev. Wilbur Hamilton eventually was promoted to Agency head. Hamilton was just one of many pastors that tried to work from the inside; many more engaged in development deals that shaped the housing and economic stimulus plans of the SFRA.

With religious leaders’ importance in the Black community, the eventual involvement of nearly all Black Western Addition pastors in the SFRA web—either as employees, leaders, or as development bidders later on—was probably inevitable. It also seemed to suck the life out of any potential opposition leadership as the last of the major bulldozing tore a multi-block gash that was to remain through the 1990s in the center of the district.

Some versions of the Western Addition story blame the preachers for linking up with the SFRA by sponsoring housing developments—alongside unions—and getting a piece of redevelopment’s housing-subsidy largesse. Townsend sees it differently. “Preachers were integral in the community. They were misunderstood. In a lot of ways they were cheated. They were inexperienced. But the housing that they built is what kept some people here.” There were multiple dimensions to the process: it was in the preachers’ financial interest to sponsor initiatives to keep congregation members in town—and their efforts also helped people stay who could never have otherwise afforded San Francisco housing in the ’80s and ’90s.

The churches were important community spaces for many reasons, including survival in a racist society, particularly for those not interested in experimenting with the Hippie variation of collectivist living. Reverend Amos Brown, who arrived in San Francisco late in the decade, puts it this way, “Blacks were not accepted anywhere. The only place where Blacks could be somebody was in church on Sunday morning.”

Rev. Brown tried his hand at redevelopment, and found that even the title of Reverend didn’t entirely smooth the road to accessing investment funds, leaving him with a bitter story of racial redlining. His focus was the vacant six acres between Turk, Steiner, Eddy, and Fillmore Streets that now includes Safeway and the massive Fillmore Center. “When I got here we had exclusive negotiating rights, but lenders wouldn’t support our efforts there. It was vacant for years. There were [impromptu community] gardens down there when I got here. But then Don Tishman shows up wanting to do that area.”

Essentially, Rev. Brown felt that the SFRA pushed his development group together with Tishman, who is White. “We were over a barrel, so we reluctantly became partners with him. We insisted that there be one Black-owned building in that complex—and there is one,” although even Tishman, he says, couldn’t finance the project entirely through local banks. Part of the problem was that federal housing dollars were shrinking from the mid-’70s onward. Redlining by public and private institutions exacerbated the problem. Townsend and Woods also blame lending discrimination on the racial makeup of the developers and the community they were trying to serve.

Although he was involved himself, Rev. Brown—who later used his pulpit to launch a brief political career on the Board of Supervisors—also sees the role of church leaders critically. For him, involving pastors in development was the SFRA’s not-so-subtle attempt to silence opposition to the City’s plans and muffle anger about racism in lending. “Involving the churches was part of a ‘hush puppy

program,” a loaded term that has etymological roots in slavery, as Rev. Brown tells it:

When they had fish fries in the South, when they had cornmeal left around, they'd roll it in the grease and throw it out to the dogs who were yapping and barking outside, and say 'hush puppies.' And the slaves that were out there that couldn't get enough to eat would snatch up the food for themselves. That's where it came from, 'hush puppies' were supposed to shut them up.

And so we did throw some hush puppies out to Black ministers, to shut up the masses to keep them docile. ... You look at these churches that were gotten under redevelopment, and you look at some of this housing. What was not done [alongside those projects] was what was necessary to give Blacks the economic security that was needed, through jobs, through loans, so that businesses could develop. They didn't give that to us.

Indeed, the continual degradation of African-American economic stability has challenged efforts at community uplift. “Black people couldn't get loans,” for housing rehabilitation, for business expansion—for much of anything, says Collins, who was once embroiled in his own multi-year struggle to buy his Webster Street home. Once the well-paying jobs of the war years had disappeared, for those interested in experiments in community there were a few options. Collins participated in a Food Conspiracy¹⁰ on Downey Street in the Haight-Ashbury and took advantage of the free clinic movement for health care.

But those '60s innovations weren't accessed by everyone. Many just gave up on San Francisco, moving to the East Bay and beyond. Some, like Townsend and Woods, stuck around, trying to direct redevelopment in any way that they could. “It was a time of resistance in the community. But because we knew it was a *fait accompli*, we were trying to make it work for us,” Townsend says.

And they were working with a changing agency. After Herman's death in 1971, the SFRA was never quite the demolition-happy entity it had been, and there was some space for reformers, although it was uneven. John Elberling today runs TODCO, the nonprofit housing corporation in SOMA that was created out of its own epic SFRA fight. As he puts it, “A-1 was clearly racist; then, times change. And with A-2 the city powers—that-be had two things in mind. Yes, slum removal—but maybe also the ability to build a better African-American neighborhood.”

The interplay between a morphing liberal agency—which nevertheless had the protection of urban land values as a core concern—and a desperately struggling community happened against the backdrop of deepening economic insecurity. In that climate Woods says Blacks in the Fillmore both used, and were used by, minority contracting programs:

You'd have Blacks that wanted to become developers and get in on the development boom and you'd see them go to the agency and the guy would say, “this is my 30% minority partner.” Then when they'd go back to the agency after the project was approved and everything, and they'd say that because of the financial markets, things like that, he only owns 1% now. You had

a lot of people just going out for themselves instead of looking out for the community.

And then lot of people died during the '80s—but in the '70s it was an exciting time, you'd get a lot of groundbreaking ideas. The big thing that didn't happen that everybody had hoped for was the commercial opportunities. You walk down Fillmore St. now and, all the businesses that were replaced, you can count them on one hand. The economic opportunities that people hoped for never materialized—or they didn't go far enough. That happened across the country, you'd see communities that went through urban renewal, but they never got going economically.”

Rise and Fall

Outside of the micro-politics of the Western Addition, a bifurcated political scene was evolving. The '60s had ended with a liberal-progressive turn in national housing policy that favored rebuilding over razing. But the election of Richard Nixon in 1968 signaled the eventual slow starvation of poverty-program funding. Progressive redevelopment ideas, community health programs and legal services like SNFLAF, creations of the War on Poverty, struggled to survive.

Locally the City was shifting slightly leftward. The 1975 citywide Community Congress pulled together groups from all across town. One of the core goals that emerged from that event was a commitment to transform elections to the Board of Supervisors to a district-based system. The district elections fight became a central plank in Western Addition politics. By the mid-'70s residents had decided that electoral reform was necessary to bring real change to the SFRA (in a shift that mirrored radical Black politics nationally). Concurrently blue-collar jobs moved out as San Francisco was remade as an office- and service-based economy.¹¹

Nevertheless, redevelopment fights garnered attention on the national level, with the passage of the Uniform Relocation Act (URA) in 1970. The law insisted that displacees from federal development zones be guaranteed housing replacement. It was a tremendous milestone in the legal battle to protect urban communities. Enforcement of the URA still plagues San Francisco, however. An early attempt by SNFLAF was only partially successful in forcing the City to honor the “certificates of preference” for new Western Addition housing that were issued to A-2 displacees. Arnold Ellis, a Black Western Addition-born SNFLAF attorney, cut his legal teeth on the URA case in the late '70s. “We had a client named Mary Rogers who had been displaced,” Ellis recalls. “Our goal was to force the SFRA to allow people to return, and it became a class-action suit. Some of our named plaintiffs were able to move in [but] we didn't get anything near what we wanted. Many people had moved to the South, or lost their certificates.”

Success in the Fillmore, then, is perhaps best measured in doses—small projects pushed forward, small victories for individual families or businesses who managed to survive. Woods takes pride in having convinced the SFRA to preserve a few particularly well-kept Victorians which were moved to a mid-Fillmore spot. Dubbed Victorian Square, for a time the group of buildings was mostly Black-owned, including the site where Marcus Books—the West Coast's oldest Black-owned bookstore—still remains in 2010. But each success like this comes laced

with stories of Black-led development partnerships that were denied contracts or delayed for so long that they could never get off the ground.

Woods and Townsend didn't win their citywide bids for Supervisor, but the pitch for district elections was successful, ushering in Ella Hill Hutch and Harvey Milk to the Board of Supervisors in 1977, after the election of George Moscone as mayor in 1975. Yet as the decade wore on, the visible symbol of redevelopment's failures glared out from empty development sites like Rev. Brown's. The ghost town feel those vacant lots created would haunt political leaders. In an interview with KQED in the 1990s then-mayor Willie Brown conceded that one of the worst mistakes he and others made in the Fillmore (while he was the leader of the State Assembly) was allowing the bulldozing to happen without precise clarity on how quickly new projects would move forward.

The progressive impulse in the Western Addition was also stymied by one of the stranger plot twists of 1970s history. Jim Jones and his People's Temple—located in the center of the Fillmore District—captured the political and social imagination of many African-American Western Addition residents. Lured by Jones's promise of an antiracist, egalitarian society—and deeply frustrated with the decimation of the Fillmore—many radicals, according to longtime housing activist Calvin Welch, were among those who died in Jones's 1978 mass suicide.¹²

Eventually, a decent amount of affordable housing was developed although it never matched the housing that was destroyed. And it was not restricted to low-income families who had been directly displaced by the Redevelopment Agency. A 1996 SFRA assessment counted 2,794 affordable units in A-2 and 2,009 in A-1, alongside 2,727 new and refurbished market rate apartments.¹³

In light of this, one longtime observer and political insider insists that it is wrong to label the Fillmore story as a failure, noting that the number of African-Americans in that area remained high for many years. It's true that the Black Fillmore didn't shrink as quickly as the Black population elsewhere in the City. From 14,000 in 1960, the number of Blacks living in the Western Addition dropped to about 10,926 in 1970, but stayed steady for the next decade as the citywide population dropped. These numbers were calculated for John Mollenkopf's book *The Contested City*. A later assessment of block-by-block data would likely show significant change, however; the total citywide African-American population had dropped to 46,779 in 2005 (down from 88,000 in 1970) including a large number of Blacks living in Bayview-Hunter's Point.

Although a period of racial stability in the 1970s and '80s can be read through census figures, those numbers don't tell the whole story. By the time replacement housing was available, many evicted families were either uninterested or unable to return, or were unaware of the new housing opportunities. Longtime residents say that the Black community that remained through the 1980s and '90s included many new families and individuals. They happened to be African-Americans, but they weren't old timers. That very particular sense of community that had been forged in the pre-bulldozer years—as cousins moved in together, and small town Southern friends reunited—was never recovered.

And although some community members returned, the Black business community was never resuscitated. Today's Fillmore and Divisadero business districts have just a handful of Black-owned enterprises, and quite a few of those are inaccessible to the low-income families (of any ethnic background) living nearby.

It's been a half century since the first bulldozers ripped apart the redwood structures lining Geary, Post, and Sutter Streets—a demolition governance program born out of liberal "urban revival" planning. The contradictory framework that sought to renew generalized (read: White) public spaces by eliminating the public and private spaces of a particular community inspired Fillmore residents to fight back. A key piece of the Fillmore legacy, then, is political and legislative success that rippled out through the city and nation. Still, though it galvanized a generation of activists, urban renewal bled the heart of the Black Fillmore, and the impact of that history still colors redevelopment's legacy today.

Notes

1. Other neighborhoods affected by redevelopment include North Beach, Chinatown, and the Mission. See Estella Habal's essay "Filipino Americans in the Decade of the International Hotel" in this volume.
2. Though they shared community boundaries with Japanese Americans, and shared a common battle against the SFRA's program of community removal, the story for Black and Japanese-American Western Addition residents has been different. The Japantown scheme, laid after Japanese-American citizens returned from WWII internment camps, was designed to draw in Japanese capital. The mall complex built there did not revive much of the pre-war residential community, but international capital made a difference in creating something quickly that African-Americans, just a few blocks away in the same neighborhood, could not replicate. Another essay is needed to do justice to the Nihonmachi story.
3. Pinning down the exact number of displaced people in the Western Addition is difficult. Various sources offer different numbers, but this range is probably very close.
4. On the Chinese, see Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: A Study of the Anti-Chinese Movements in California* (University of California Press, 1971).
5. For more on Fillmore covenants, see Lynn Horiuchi's "Object Lessons in Home Building: Racialized Real Estate Marketing in San Francisco," in *Landscape Journal* 26, no. 1, (March 2007).
6. Leslie Fulbright, "Sad chapter in Western Addition history ending," *SFGate*, July 21, 2008, <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/07/21/BA6511Q4G0.DTL> (accessed February 23, 2010).
7. See Margaret Leahy's essay "On Strike! We're Gonna Shut it Down!" in this volume for a deeper look at the SF State Strike.
8. Thanks to the many people who generously shared their time and insights in interviews for this essay, including: Terry Collins, Rev. Amos Brown, Wade "Speedy" Woods, Rev. Arnold Townsend, Arnold Ellis, John Elberling, London Breed, Calvin Welch, and several SFRA staffers.
9. Bennie Stewart (lecture, New College of California, 1994). Cited online at www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=WACO_Attacks_Redevelopment (accessed February 23, 2010).
10. See Pam Peirce's essay "A Personal History of the People's Food System" in this volume for the reach of the Food Conspiracy movement.
11. See Jesse Drew's essay "San Francisco Labor in the 1970s" in this volume for an in-depth analysis of labor during this decade.
12. See Matthew Roth's essay "Coming Together: The Communal Option" in this volume for a more in-depth look at People's Temple.
13. *San Francisco Redevelopment Program Fact Book 1995-1996—Summary of Project Data and Key Elements*.

Further Reading

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- Hartman, Chester. 2002. *City For Sale: the Transformation of San Francisco*. Berkeley: UC Press.
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