

The Chicago Forum for Justice in Health Policy: We Can't Gentrify Our Way to Health Equity

On Friday, December 8, 2017 at Loyola University Chicago School of Law, Health & Medicine hosted a meeting of *The Chicago Forum for Justice in Health Policy: We Can't Gentrify Our Way to Health Equity*. The event webpage includes a listing of speakers, links to videos recorded and edited by CAN TV, and slides from our panelists, and can be found here: <http://hmprg.org/Events/GentrificationEquity>.

The following notes are from the forum proceedings and provide a general overview and summary of main points from the forum. The notes are written in summary form, and can't fully capture our speakers' presentations. Hopefully, these notes will be useful for advocates and policymakers seeking to understand issues related to gentrification and community displacement in Chicago, think about potential solutions, and consider strategies, framing, and narratives likely to advance progress.

Welcome & Introduction

Margie Schaps, Executive Director, Health & Medicine Policy Research Group

Wesley Epplin, Director, Health Equity Initiative, Health & Medicine Policy Research Group

- [View presentation here](#)
- Questions for connecting gentrification and health inequities:
 - What causes gentrification and displacement?
 - What are some policy changes that can slow or stop community displacement?
- Centering the discussion of housing and community displacement and gentrification in root causes
 - Defining health equity
 - Camara Phyllis Jones' definition: Health equity is a process of assurance of the conditions for optimal health for all people
 - Valuing all individuals & populations equally
 - Recognizing & rectifying historical injustices
 - Providing resources according to need
 - Historical and contemporary injustice
 - Displacing Native Americans
 - Native Americans are most likely to be killed by police
 - All of this is rooted in the history of our country
 - How is racism operating here?
 - How is capitalism operating here?
 - Housing markets
 - Wages
 - How is gender inequity operating here?
 - Ask:
 - Who is benefitting?

- Who is being disadvantageded?
 - How do disinvestment and inequities in the public sector relate to gentrification?
 - Public education & schools
 - Public housing
 - Public health clinics
 - Tensions and relationships to explore
 - Individual responsibility versus collective, societal problem
 - Human right to housing versus property rights
 - Human need for belong, connectivity...
- Why are we here?
 - People’s right to exist and be in community are being questioned and challenged

Historical Overview

Janet Smith, Professor, Urban Planning and Policy; Co-Director, [Nathalie P. Voorhees Center for Neighborhood and Community Improvement](#), University of Illinois at Chicago (Janet’s [email](#))

- [View presentation here](#)
- Nathalie P. Voorhees Center
 - Provide information
 - Assist residents, community organizations
 - Advise on affordable housing development
 - Use sound methods to investigate timely problems in our communities
 - Have sound data to depend on
- Chicago is a city of neighborhoods
 - Chicago is a city of *segregated* neighborhoods
 - Existed for the past 30-40 years
 - Growing inequality in income
- Gentrification
 - Particular kind of neighborhood change that leads to displacement effects
 - Is gentrification just urban change?
 - Gentrification waves
 - First wave – working class minorities being replaced by hipsters
 - Second wave – hipsters being replaced by the “techies”
 - Third wave – techies displaced by bankers, and banks themselves
 - Fourth wave – international investment
 - Disinvestment – the rent gap
 - Redlining
 - Banks draw a red line around an area and will not put money there
 - Urban renewal
 - Suburbanization
 - The white flight

- Neoliberal policies
 - Privatization, seen with public housing
 - Globalization
 - Has to do with the flow of money
- Reinvestment or gentrification?
- Displacement
 - When a household is forced to move from its residence because of conditions that affect the house or what surrounds it, which
 - Are beyond the household's reasonable ability to control or prevent
 - Occur despite the household's having met all conditions of occupancy
 - Categories
 - Direct or physical causes
 - Indirect or economic causes
 - Exclusionary causes
- Gentrification is about power
- Gentrification index
 - 13 socioeconomic indicators
 - Grounded in research
 - Scored relative to city average
- Population change 1970-2010
 - After an increase in 1970-80, the south side's population decreased while the north side remained about the same or increased
 - The loop has been growing since 1970 and expanding during the 1980s
- Income 1970-2010
 - West side communities had the highest rates of poverty since 1970
- School age children 1970-2010
 - The north side has seen a lower than average increase in school age children
 - Closing schools where the children are

Keynote Address

Chloe Gurin-Sands, Associate, Metropolitan Planning Council (Chloe's [email](#))

- [View presentation here](#)
- Bridge public health and urban planning
 - Cost of urbanization, relationship between natural and built environment and health
- Gentrification and public health
 - Personal story
 - Hurricane Katrina
 - No one was helping people come back to their homes
 - Reason why the community could not get back on its feet
 - Once it was realized people weren't coming back, grocery stores and banks were built to attract new people

- Gentrification and MPC's work
 - Non-profit, non-governmental
 - Grappling with how to minimize displacement
- How gentrification affects health
 - Gentrification
 - Reinvestment into a devalued neighborhood to create a new residential and commercial infrastructure for middle- and high-income residents
 - Displacement
 - With or without racial shift
 - Economic, cultural, social pressures
 - Displacement can happen without gentrification
 - Why is this a public health issue?
 - 33.7% of Chicagoans are cost burdened
 - Not only individual choice, population patterns
 - Underlying structures
 - Factors related to gentrification
 - Income/wealth, history of disinvestment, status of current assets
 - Race
 - Renters
 - Already experiencing discrimination along these demographic lines, already facing health inequities
 - Physical and financial health effects
 - Further difficulty finding affordable, healthy housing
 - Homelessness
 - Inequity in transit, job, and commute options
 - Environmental exposures
 - Less access to services and institutions
 - Healthcare
 - Education
 - Cultural
 - Social and emotional health effects
 - Stress
 - Violence & injury
 - Policing
 - Mental health
 - Social & cultural loss
 - Complexities
 - Nobody wants their neighborhood to be disinvested
 - Pros of neighborhood change without displacement
 - Example: filling vacancies
 - Investment can bring needed resources and improve quality of life
 - Mitigate harms of racial & economic segregation
 - Cons of neighborhood change without displacement
 - Social loss

- Cultural & institutional loss
 - Loss of economically and relevant services, resources
 - Political shifts
 - We have to do something, so how do we do better?
 - Measuring health progress
 - Key questions
 - Who is leaving, who is staying?
 - Where do people move when they are displaced?
 - What are the net effects of staying in a changing/gentrifying neighborhood?
 - To whom do the benefits of mixed-income neighborhoods accrue?
 - Opportunities for measuring progress
 - IPUMS databases – track where people are moving
 - Matching public health practice & research with emerging housing and economic research
 - Epidemiologists, we need your help!
- What can we do?
 - Community engagement & knowledge building
 - (genuine) community involvement
 - Tools
 - Gentrification Index (Voorhees UIC)
 - Early warning system (UC Berkeley)
 - Community Impact Assessment Tool (MPC)
 - Equitable investment
 - Helping local businesses and homeowners prepare for change
 - Understanding triggers and planning in advance of major investments
 - Neighborhood Opportunity Fund
 - Continue building affordable housing, inclusionary zoning
 - Affordable Requirements Ordinance
 - Role of anchor institutions (e.g. hospitals)
 - Building affordable housing, investing in neighborhood infrastructure
 - Housing cost policy options
 - Rent control
 - Property tax freeze
 - Progressive income taxes
 - Regional approach
- Questions
 - Kathy Powers, Northside action for justice
 - Melvin Thomson, executive director of non-profit on south side
 - Some areas have disinvestment and no gentrification
 - Their needs have an even higher priority

Voices: A Multimedia Presentation

- [View presentation here](#)

Feedback from the Field Panel

Jawanza Malone, Executive Director, Kenwood Oakland Community Organization

- One of the oldest membership based organizations
- Dual approach to community health
- Directed toward equitable education, affordable housing
- KOCO
 - Been around since 1965
 - Came to the neighborhood in 1997 and learned about the neighborhood
 - Displacement and gentrification is not just a policy issue, but a violent act
 - Consider the emotional trauma
 - Young people being forced to go to different and unfamiliar schools
 - Lose 6 months of learning
- Current environment prioritizes profit over people
- Chicago Housing Initiative
- Campaign to bring necessary reform to the Chicago housing authority
- Forming a coalition to bring rent control to Chicago
 - Partner with north side action

Juliet de Jesus Alejandre, Youth Program Director/Lead Organizer, Logan Square Neighborhood Association

- Works with brown and immigrant youth
 - Young people have interesting analysis
 - Grew up in a time of disinvestment
 - Youth felt the need to fight the loss of money for schools and loss of housing
 - Black and brown people are being pitted against each other when they need to work together
 - Work of storytelling
 - Addressing the narrative, and shifting the narrative
 - You have to feel worthy before you begin to fight
 - Genealogies – where are we from?
 - Youth become experts in zoning practices
 - Helped to shape the 606 Preservation Ordinance
 - Who we are, the stories we tell, and the policy changes that can come from that

Roxanne Smith, Communities United

- Grass roots leader
- An initiative renters organized to stay in their homes
- Key part of expanding roots to avoid gentrification
 - Social justice organization that engages in the community to make a difference
 - Variety of issues, particularly affordable housing
 - Renter in foreclosed building

- Communities United informed her of her rights and offered to work with her
- Mental stress of being displaced
- There's a major rent difference from one block to the next
- ROOTS program
 - Keeps people in their houses and provide affordable housing
 - Convene with different partners to advance this work
 - Work with developers to preserve units
 - Costs less to preserve than to create a new unit
- Works with west side neighborhoods: Austin, Albany Park, Belmont Cragin, Humboldt Park

What does the opposite of gentrification look like?

- Strategic investment for our people by our people
- Looking at health as an anti-violence strategy
- Promote mental health wellness with an especially traumatized group
- How to create improvement and connections without making the community a commodity
- Allowing the community to thrive

How do we build power to change these inequities?

- Coalition building
 - Primary methodology to create change
 - Communities have to be able to operate as communities
 - Community implies you have a relationship to the people around you
 - Those relationships have been eliminated in Chicago neighborhoods