Urban Removal: The Long-Term Impacts of the Displacement of Denver's Auraria Neighborhood

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Abstract

In the early 1970's the Auraria Center for Higher Education was established, displacing a Denver latino neighborhood, a 38-Block district at the time including, 55 families, 49 single individuals, and 237 businesses, and clearing the way for the establishment of the Metropolitan University of Denver, the University of Colorado Denver, and Denver Community College. The implementation of remedial measures for the displacement has fallen short of meeting the needs of displaced residents. The residents were promised affordable education through a program named the Displaced Aurarian Scholarship, which has similarly fallen short of its stated intentions of improving the educational attainment of the displaced individuals and their descendants. In 2022, the Colorado History Museum, as part of its Museum of Memory project, conducted 13 interviews with 21 different individuals who were displaced. This paper seeks to understand the long-term effects of gentrification upon the displaced Aurarians, centering around their social impact, economic impact, and the generational impact on the descendants of those displaced. This study utilises the Displaced Aurarian Memory Project and a framework of linked fate to contextualise past literature that examines the shortcomings of the remedial measures implemented by Denver authorities. My findings suggest that any remedial measures that provided long-term benefits to the residents happened in spite of the actions of the City of Denver and the Auraria Center for Higher Education. These remedial measures required the tedious labor of West Denver activists to develop and implement, with and without cooperation from the institutions involved.

Two Rivers
By Thomas Hornsby Ferril, 1934

Two rivers that were here before there was
A city here still come together: one
Is a mountain river flowing into the prairie;
One is a prairie river flowing toward
The mountains but feeling them and turning back
The way some of the people who came here did.

Most of the time these people hardly seemed
To realise they wanted to be remembered,
Because the mountains told them not to die.

I wasn't here, yet I remember them,
That first night long ago, those wagon people
Who pushed aside enough of the cottonwoods
To build our city where the blueness rested.

They were with me, they told me afterward,
When I stood on a splintered wooden viaduct
Before it changed to steel and I to man.
They told me while I stared down at the water:
If you will stay we will not go away.

(Auraria: Where Denver Began by Don D. Etter)

Introduction

In the early 1970s, the residents of the Auraria neighborhood in Denver (commonly referred to as West Denver by the residents at the time) were displaced by the establishment of the Auraria Higher Education Center. Their homes were cleared to make way for the establishment of the Metropolitan University of Denver, the University of Colorado Denver, and Denver Community College. The 38-block district at the time of displacement included 155 families, 49 single individuals, and 237 businesses (Etter 1972). Although some residents received forms of compensation for their homes, the implementation of remedial measures for the displacement has continually been described as falling short of meeting the actual needs of displaced individuals. Displaced residents were similarly promised affordable education through a program titled the Displaced Aurarian Scholarship. This measure was initially limited to children and the grandchildren of residents, but has since expanded to include direct descendants from someone who lived in the allotted area. In 2022, the Colorado History Museum partnered with activists from the displaced community to conduct detailed oral histories with residents nearly 50 years after the displacement. This paper seeks to understand the long-term effects of gentrification upon the displaced Aurarians, centering around their social, economic, and the generational impact on the descendants of those displaced.

To more fully understand the shortcomings of the remedial measures, it is necessary to consider the context of the Auraria Memory Project, the activists involved, and their connections to the resource networks created during the gentrification in Denver from the early 1950s to the 1970s. Past research touches upon the shortcomings of the remedial measures on paper, expanding on how they impacted the city of Denver as a whole. This paper extends that work, seeking to analyse the direct impacts of these remedial measures through first-person accounts of the individuals involved. It aims to capture the full scope of the impact of the displacement and

the long-term effects of gentrification in Denver on individuals. My findings suggest that any remedial measures that provided long-term benefits to the residents happened despite the actions of the City of Denver and the Auraria Center for Higher Education, and not because of them. Instead, these remedial measures required the tedious labor of West Denver activists to develop and implement, with and without cooperation from the institutions involved.

This paper also employs the concept of linked fate, coined by Michael Dawson as a way to understand the political behavior of Black Americans (1995). Linked fate is the phenomenon where one individual sees their fate as tied to the fate of others who belong to the same group. The sense of linked fate that interviewees expressed is potentially tied to their shared experiences of displacement, economic hardship, and shared cultural, ethnic, or racial identity. These elements of linked fate could potentially explain why some residents felt strongly connected to the fate of other displaced Aurarians, while others did not feel a strong sense of community within the Auraria neighborhood. Similarly, connection to the networks that formed linked fate attachments meant connections to resources to navigate the displacement. Residents who were not connected to these resources experienced the remedial measures of the city and the educational institutions differently.

Literature Review

The History of the Auraria Campus

The land upon which the Auraria campus sits has a complicated history. The early Colorado neighborhoods, including Denver City and Auraria City, were located between the South Platte River and Cherry Creek, where Colorado was first settled (Milligan 2015). They were established during the Gold Rush in Colorado, Denver functioning as a hub for the mining, cattle, and other industries. The area of land where Auraria sits was known for frequent flooding

because of its geography. To the South is Colfax Avenue, sandwiching historical Auraria between the river and the street, meaning that it was primed to take on excess water (Page and Ross 2016; Weinman 2017). Therefore, this space was described as undesirable for development. Despite these issues, the region offered an opportunity for lower-income, immigrant families to settle near the commercial district in Cherry Creek (Milligan 2015). This formed a cohesive Mexican and Mexican-American community in Denver, surrounding local community spaces such as St. Cajetan's and St. Elizabeth's parishes, as well as a series of local businesses and other community spaces.

The Denver Urban Renewal Authority (DURA) and the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) were established decades after this community formed, with a backdrop of a national movement towards urban renewal. Despite an anti-growth sentiment during the Sixties and Seventies, the Denver metro area underwent an expansive process of suburbanisation (Weinman 2017; Milligan 2015; Page and Ross 2016). Developer-friendly policies allowed publicly funded highway construction, water projects, and incentives for new development under a broader process of urban renewal, described as capturing misused lands for reuse through eminent domain (Weinman 2017). DURA and CCHE identified the neighborhood as a prime location for the future Auraria campus due to its West Denver location, which places it close to important roads and waterways that had previously condemned the area as undesirable.

The campus would encompass the University of Colorado, Denver, Metropolitan State College, and the Community College of Denver, all in one shared space to foster interactions between the institutions (Page and Ross 2016; Weinman 2017). Page and Ross (2016) found that the project for the development of the Auraria neighborhood maintained heavy support from local government and the downtown business community, despite resistance from the residents

of the community. In 1968, the CCHE, while working with DURA, overcame opposition to previous plans by creating the shared campus project. From 1968 through 1984, DURA acquired property through condemnation, clearing the land for the Auraria campus site. They estimated that two hundred to three hundred families left the neighborhood, drastically impacting the nearly two hundred businesses that were operating at that time (Perez 2024). Although it is unclear how many of the businesses were sustained through the period of gentrification, these changes drastically shifted the physical appearance of the neighborhood, changing the lives of community members.

Displacement as a Catalyst: Chicano Activism in Denver

While the residents of Auraria, and what was then referred to by residents in the 1970s as West Denver, faced encroaching gentrification, Denver's place in *El Movimiento* was forming in the context of a national Chicano activist movement. *El Movimiento* refers to the Chicano movement that formed in Denver, specifically, largely coordinated by Corky Gonzales and other Mexican-American activists, some of whom had personal relationships with the interviewees featured in this study. Mexican migrants had built communities in Auraria since the early 1920s, establishing mutual aid networks (Lee 2012). The Sociedad Mutualista Mexico and el Sociedad Protectora Hispana Americana were two organisations that formed through these mutual aid networks. Later on, individuals who participated in these organisations also participated in displaced Aurarian activism. This increase in activism can potentially be explained by an increase in linked fate attachment brought on by the experience of displacement. The level of integration into the community, religious networks, and access to language impacted how the interviewees experienced the displacement, and any potential linked fate attachments that were formed or strengthened due to the displacement.

Churches also played a role in community organizing. St. Cajetan's Church, built in 1926, "served as the center of Chicano life in the area," by providing residents a school, clinic, and credit union (Lee, 2012). Because research has found that congregations play an important social role in cities (e.g., they build bridges between residents, provide community services and resources, and they inject a moral tone in the community through discourse and advocacy for marginalized) it might be expected that churches will play an important role in buffering the side effects of gentrification (Crimino 2011). Furthermore, during gentrification, congregations may even compete for a limited pool of members and exploit the niches introduced because of neighborhood change (Cimino 2011). In West Denver, St. Cajatians and St. Elizabeth's parishes became strong spaces in the community. During the period of displacement in Auraria, these churches were a valuable connection point between residents and a source for the dissemination of information. This is especially true of St. Cajetan's, which had a large Mexican American population and played a significant role in maintaining Mexican culture in the community because of the actions of the parish's membership.

Auraria residents had only a few months between when they heard of the plan for the downtown campus and the six-million-dollar special bond election that funded it (Lee, 2012). Residents received leaflets describing the dislocation and dismemberment of the community. Centro Cultural, a Chicano and Jewish coalition, and the Auraria Residents Organisation (ARO), headed by Father Pete Garcia from St. Cajetan's Church, provided outlets for residents to navigate the displacement when it became difficult to receive this information (Lee 2012). Centro Cultural was a non-violent and inter-ethnic coalition established as an activist alternative to the more militant Crusade for Justice established by Corky Gonsalas (Lee 2012). Centro Cultural was created in part by the work of several interviewees, or their parents, who were

involved in Auraria Activism. The Denver branch of the American Jewish Committee (AJC) helped guide the formulation of the physical spaces that hosted Centro Cultural. Specifically, the AJC helped coordinate town hall meetings and physical spaces for the Auraria residents to receive information about the displacement process, and subsequent remedial measures that were in development during the time Centro Cultural was active. The AJC participated in the coalition until 1971, around when the processes of displacement began. Members of St. Cajetan's Parish maintained important leadership roles in Centro Cultural, coordinating the distribution of information and resources to the residents during the displacement, particularly through the schools connected to St. Cajetan's and their neighbors at St. Elisabeth's (which included the Ave Maria clinic) .

Past literature has examined the outcomes of different aspects of the mutual aid frameworks in place during the displacement. Perez (2024) looked at Father Garcia and the role of St. Cajetan's Church in forming ARO to advocate for Auraria residents specifically. One of the earliest examples of what this organising involved was conducting a household survey, finding that more individuals eligible for relocation supported a bond issue attempting to allocate funds for building and supporting the development of low-income housing. In 1970, ARO members advocated for new low-income housing, subsidized home purchases, and measures to rebuild debilitated homes. In this process, they secured funds for a health clinic, contested zoning laws that would replace existing homes with city highrises and commercial buildings, and fought transportation plans that would direct extreme traffic through the neighborhood (Perez 2024). This process ultimately changed the cultural makeup of the community living there, making this context vital to understanding the shortcomings of the remedial measures the city took in addressing the long-term impacts of the displacement.

Remedial Promises

The displacement of West Denver was occurring in tandem with a policy favoring urban renewal and investment in large infrastructure projects such as highways and high-rise buildings. This incited a national wave of interest in the preservation of historical structures being threatened in the process of renewal. This movement encountered resistance when the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 was passed, which created the legal structure to pursue the preservation of historical West Denver. A 1967 City of Denver Preservation Ordinance was added after the Skyline urban renewal project tried to raise 26 blocks containing the oldest architecture in Denver (Etter 1972; Page and Ross 2016). This ordinance was overseen by the Denver Landmark Preservation Commission (DLPC), which created a policy framework that created historic districts and designated individual landmarks to be overseen (Page & Ross 2016). Such a legal framework provided the structure for Auraria residents to preserve some of the important buildings, although not all. These sights include St Cajetan's Church, Emmanuel Chapel, St Elisabeth's block on Ninth Street, and the famous Tivoli Brewery (Page and Ross 2016; Weinman 2017).

To receive federal funds for infrastructure changes, DURA was obligated to "rehouse in safe, decent, and adequate housing in a manner which [would] not be detrimental to any of the families involved," by Federal regulations and Colorado Urban Renewal law (Perez 2024). As part of the remedial measures taken by Auraria authorities, the Displaced Aurarian Scholarship was developed to address the concerns of local activists. West Denver activists sought to prevent the displacement, and then to get support and resources for residents during displacement, and then they sought remedial measures thereafter to support residents with the long-term impacts of

displacement. The most publicized of these efforts led to the development of the scholarship, which promised affordable higher education to the displaced Aurarians.

Complications of promises made: The Displaced Aurarian Scholarship

The scholarship initially applied to only the displaced residents, but was eventually expanded to include their children and descendants. Although in theory, the scholarship would allow the original 227 displaced residents to pursue a low-cost education at the campus, the reality and efficacy of the scholarship have repeatedly been challenged by the displaced residents and literature on the topic (Perez 2024; Page and Ross 2016; Weinman 2017). Residents were assured, despite not receiving physical documentation, that their children could receive an education on the new campus and that the scholarship would extend for residents between 1955 and 1973 to include individuals displaced by events interrelated to the establishment of the Auraria Center for Higher Education (Perez 2024). In 1994, after rigorous community campaigns, the schools extended scholarships to the displaced residents' children and grandchildren. If the project were implemented with its stated intentions, it would alleviate the impact of the displacement on the educational attainment of the descendants of displaced Aurarians who were disconnected from the academic resources their parents had accessed through the private catholic school system tied to St. Elisabeth and St. Cajetan's. This measure also sought to address the promise of an education on the new campus that several residents mentioned was made by Denver authorities during the displacement, but was never clearly documented.

The Colorado legislature has left the implementation of this remedial measure to the three schools, meaning that scholarship eligibility and guidelines vary by institution. Many of these guidelines created limits on what the scholarship could be used for and who is eligible,

preventing some Aurarinas from accessing the scholarship altogether (Perez 2024; Page and Ross 2016; Weinman 2017). Largely, the remedial attempts of Auraria authorities fell short of what was promised, leaving the displaced residents to navigate displacement in isolation.

An important facet of the gentrification of Auraria included the dismantling of the mutual aid networks that had existed previously. Although activists sought to maintain these structures, the physical displacement of individuals from the space meant that their absence included a loss of the resources they could provide to the community. Community members were isolated from each other, and the governmental remedial measures could not account for the gaps left by displacement. I suspect that the shortcomings of these remedial measures have continued to impact the living former residents and will be referenced by the interviewees of this study. Also, I speculate that these effects will extend through generations as their grandchildren and descendants face ongoing social, economic, and cultural consequences.

Theoretical Framework - Linked Fate

The displaced residents of Auraria have experienced a variety of long-term effects from their displacement in the late 20th century. I utilise the concept of linked fate as a motivator to connect the political activity of the residents to their experiences during and long after the period of displacement (Dawson 1995). A strong perception of linked fate means that an individual sees their fate as tied to that of other individuals in their ethnic group. Sanchez and Masuoka (2010) build on these concepts, studying linked fate among Latinos in America. This framework understands the political behavior of Latino communities given the context of immigration experiences, race, and socioeconomic status. Linked fate moves us beyond concepts like shared historical experience. During the period of displacement, from the early 1950s to the late 1970s (the period determined by the Displaced Aurarian Scholarship), several displaced individuals

engaged in Denver politics to slow or stop the displacement and to fight for remedial measures to ease the effects of the displacement on the former residents.

As such, the linked fate framework helps us to understand how race, economics, and migration experiences shape the political activity of the Auraria residents. Understanding their behavior through the formation of linked fate and the processes that lessen this link allows future research to expand on the long-term effects of gentrification as they impact the cohesive and interpersonal features of West Denver's Latino population.

Methods

In 2022, the Colorado History Museum, as part of the Museum of Memory project, conducted 13 interviews with 21 different individuals in Auraria when residents were given notice that their buildings would be demolished for the construction of the Auraria campus. Although 21 individuals or families are named, and 13 are the focus of the interview questions, several other family members with a connection to Auraria participated in the interviews. Many of these interviews were conducted in the family homes of interviewees, creating opportunities to hear from these individuals, which is why they are mentioned here. There were 3 interviewers, two of whom participated as interviewees in an oral history themselves. The Memory project also included a library exhibition of archival materials, a community mural, and the construction of a robust map and database centered around 9th Street, detailing the history of the residents of Auraria before the campus was built. The map and database were coordinated through the University of Colorado Denver, spanning from 1955 to 1973.

The 13 oral histories taken from 9th Street residents were conducted by two women and one man with connections to the area. The early interview questions focused on describing what it was like living in Auraria. For example, residents were asked, "What smells do you

remember?" Other questions focused on the Displaced Aurarian Scholarship, what the experience of displacement was like, and what the long-term impacts have been upon their lives, and the lives of their children, grandchildren, and in some cases, great-great-grandchildren. Every interview was concluded with the question, "What do you want your descendants to remember about you and your time in Auraria?" Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to two and a half hours. Some interviews included only the resident named in the interview (most of whom were teenagers during the displacement), while other interviews included several generations of family who experienced the displacement or the aftermath. The interviews contain 11 listed female interviewees and 10 listed male interviewees. Most residents (19) used language such as Hispanic, Latino/a, Indigenous, Mexican, Mexican American, New Mexican, Chicano/a, or a variety of these terms to describe themselves, while two residents described themselves as descending from Eastern Europe. Although this sample is small, it can still shed meaningful light on the long-term experience of displacement from the Auraria campus. To make sense of these interviews, I listened to each audio file at least twice and captured the themes between them, utilising transcripts to confirm this information.

Findings

The findings of this paper are broken into the social and economic consequences that the displaced Aurarians and their relatives experienced after the displacement. This allows us to understand what the long-term impacts of displacement have been for the living and future descendants of the displaced Aurarians. Similarly, this allows us to see the role of generational traumas, broader cultural and political changes in the community, and the shortcomings of the displaced Aurarian scholarship and other remedial measures promised to the community.

Long-Term Social Impacts

The process of displacement changed the physical and human geography of Auraria. This fractured the once-close networks of the West Denver community, disconnecting families from each other and from the resources they relied on. The displacement thrust Auraria residents into chaos, forcing them to quickly make housing arrangements. One resident described what she remembered shortly after the displacement: “a lot of people are just homeless on the street. I don't think they had any choices. I think they lived with people until that money, whatever was given to them at the time, ran out, and then they were out” (Cecilia Lopez-Albertson). The social consequences of displacement are largely tied to the isolation and disconnection of mutual aid networks that connected residents prior to and during the process of displacement. Several interviewees described losing the opportunities for their families to stay together in physical proximity. A neighborhood that was once very interdependent would quickly be dispersed. One resident described her feelings of isolation after moving away from Auraria. She explained, “ I didn't feel like it was just us. It was, you know, like the neighbors. My mom knew all the neighbors. And of course, we knew all the kids in the neighborhood. And even as far as probably blocks down, you know, like it could be down two, three blocks. And we still knew all the kids from all the surrounding area” (Gloria Gallegos). The displacement disconnected these families and children from each other.

Similarly, the displacement of West Denver meant that the physical spaces that connected residents to a larger network of resources were dismantled. Some organisations and structures collapsed, for example, St. Cajetian’s removal meant that lower-income communities could no longer access the private Catholic school resources that St. Cajetan's provided. One resident explained the financial burden of education that was placed on the Aurarians. He described, “the only option we had was private education. St. Cajetan's was, how am I going to put it? Their cost

to go to school was considered affordable because they knew the community couldn't afford private [school], really" (Matteo Torres.) Because St. Elisabeth's did not have a Spanish-speaking priest, and St. Cajetians was much more affordable, many of the interviewees who were teenagers during the displacement attended this school at some point.

Although the schools provided important resources, they were not always conducive to the preservation of Mexican culture for community members. Several residents described instances of discrimination within St. Elisabeths, describing, "They were prejudiced, they were discriminatory"(Matteo Torres). This resident similarly described how it became much more difficult for his parents to access information relating to the displacement, because there were no Spanish language options provided or accessible (Matteo Torres). Although the religious institutions could provide some resources, the spread of information and accessibility of these resources varied for the residents. Another resident described similar discriminatory experiences at St. Cajetan's, explaining:

> at St. Cajetan's in the first grade, we were caught speaking non-English, and that's where everything changed. And that's when Sister Guadalupe, I think, had already warned us that if they caught us speaking any other language or cussing dirty words, that you get your mouth washed out with soap. So she took us down to the boiler room. It was this huge boiler. It looked like a big elephant. And she had this fresh soap, dial, and she gave each one of us, there were four of us and gave each one of us a bar of soap… after that, I told my parents what had happened and they came and spoke to the nun. And after the meeting, it was English only (Mark Tafoya).

Auraria residents consistently faced discrimination from different authorities, particularly relating to the use of Spanish. This made the role of informal information networks within the community even more prominent. Becoming disconnected from the community could mean cultural isolation, particularly for the younger generation of displaced residents. This discrimination was exacerbated by the economic outcomes of the displacement, which forced residents into crisis.

Long-Term Economic Impacts

The interviewees maintained a consistent sentiment, with one individual describing Auraria as "a community on the brink of success" (Francis Torres). As the migrant community in Auraria had been established for quite some time, the residents had taken root, allowing future generations to reap the benefits. One interviewee explained, "When that opportunity came in the late sixties or seventies, people were going to college and that could have easily transitioned that community into, you know, higher incomes, more social mobility because people were getting educated" (Matteo Torres). The surrounding businesses, the number of young residents who were planning on attending university, and the stability that the neighborhood had fostered over the decades were quickly fractured by the investment projects the city initiated with the principles of eminent domain.

Several interviews described how relatives, other community members, and themselves lost their businesses during the period from the late fifties through the early eighties. Because of the demographics of West Denver and the population's shopping interests, several businesses had to restructure to support new patrons, move to a different location, or shut down because this was economically infeasible. Many of these businesses were patronized or run by the local Chicano community. One interviewee explained the feeling of physical loss of the businesses that were displaced. He explained this sentiment as he described a return trip to the campus a few years after the displacement, describing "in 77, no 75, I was walking through the Auraria neighborhood and through the west side, and I saw those houses [the Golda Mier house and another house next door that was included in the exhibit]. And all of the sudden I felt like what I would refer to as a ghost. I saw the ghosts of a community that had been there"(Tony Garcia). This physical difference is reflective of the traumatic losses the Aurarians experienced.

Some families whose houses would be destroyed, as well as small businesses, are said to have received financial support from Auraria and Denver authorities. The interviews do not include any individuals who directly received financial support in this way. One individual described, “You know, some people got money, some people got, you know, nothing. We didn't get anything. We didn't get any assistance” (Sheila Perez-Kindle). Clarity about the nature of and written records of this support are difficult to understand because there is no way to verify who received financial support and how this occurred. This pattern of inconsistency in the remedial measures continues to create issues for the displaced Aurarians and their descendants today.

The Long-Term Impacts on Descendants of Displaced Aurarians

The generational trauma of displacement has meant that even the descendants of the displaced Aurarians continue to suffer the effects of the removal long after the events occurred. One woman explains that her home was removed only for the university to move the house of a historical figure on top of the land where her house used to be. Golda Meir's (a former Israeli prime minister and Denver politician) house was physically moved from a different part of Denver to be displayed on the Auraria Campus, right where her home used to be (Sherrie Arguello). Mier was also involved early on in the political discourse around the Aurora displacement, as she is referenced throughout the transcripts. This traumatic reminder of the loss of Arguello's house is combined with a hurtful erasure of her history in Auraria. The removal of her home and history to center a historical exhibit about a different woman who did not live there is particularly symbolic of the historical erasure of the displaced Aurarians' presence in Denver.

Several interviewees described the displacement as a catalyst for their political consciousness as they saw the effects of Denver's gentrification reflected in a national setting. This history is tied to the formulation of linked fate attachments, connecting the Auraria

residents to a national political movement. The Chicano movement, which has important roots in Colorado, was fueled by the actions of many of the interviewees and their parents. One resident described how the displacement impacted his identity, explaining, “it definitely spurred political consciousness, cultural consciousness, identity consciousness, that that was a change and that was the transition as far as the getting, keeping our spaces and there were small victories that took place that kept some of the houses”(Tony Garcia). Much of the activism the interviewees engaged with surrounded efforts to slow the process of gentrification. This interviewee went on to explain that much of this activism predated the famous historical events associated with the Chicano movement in Denver. In particular, this respondent discusses his experience during the Denver High School walkouts a few years into the displacement. Garcia goes on to clarify:

> We always understood the dynamics of the city in that we were marginalized people and there was racism, and that there were places you could go and places you couldn't go. We always understood that. But I think that there was this illusion that somehow we had figured out how to circumvent it and actually live lives. And I think what was beginning to evolve out of that was this, this awareness that unless we organized ourselves and we fought, we would just disappear. And it became the first steps of my consciousness as a Chicano (Tony Garcia).

The displacement catalysed Garcia and other displaced Aurarians into a political consciousness that it is impossible to know if they would have developed otherwise. For residents who were not intertwined in the political movements of West Denver, the displacement does not appear to act as a catalyst for political consciousness.

Not every resident described a sense of linked fate during the process of gentrification. One of the individuals who described herself as immigrating from Yugoslavia discussed the harmful personal impacts of the displacement, and how she felt isolated even further because she did not feel integrated into the Auraria community. She was not aware of many of the political actions at the time, meaning that she had to sort many of the impacts of displacement out without

the community support that other residents described as vital (Kathy Prilika). However, for many of the displaced Aurarians who saw themselves as a part of a larger community, this experience was guided by networks of resources and information within the community.

A vital community value, repeatedly discussed by the interviewees, is education. Remedial measures tied to educational attainment became a prominent goal of the activists because of the overlapping process of developing political consciousness, the disconnection from previous educational resources (at St. Cajetans and St. Elizabeth), and the promises made by Auraria authorities. The Displaced Aurarian's scholarship sought to remedy the long-term impacts of gentrification upon the Aurarians and their descendants by providing them access to the educational institutions that replaced their homes and community.

Education as Resistance: The Displaced Aurarian Scholarship

The scholarship was formed to remedy the hardships the Displaced Aurarians faced, but its shortcomings continue to impact the Aurarians and their descendants. Education was described as an important cultural value for many of the Auraria residents. Jay Alire, who described many of his experiences as a teenager involved in West Denver Chicano politics, emphasised how the community values around education combined with the formation of political consciousness. He describes why he participated in the walkouts at his Denver high school, explaining, "when this bond issue came, we had already started becoming a little bit more politicized…a lot of students walked out of West High School and decided that we needed to take control of our education because it was really obvious that they were they were not preparing us to go to college. They were preparing us for manual labor jobs and jobs that did not require post-secondary education" (Jay Alire). The displaced Aurarians saw how education functioned as a barrier to economic upward mobility. Several of the interviews voiced a similar

sentiment, centering education as a primary means of alleviating the long term effects of displacement and the loss of access to education as a primary long-term effect. Another resident described the community values around education, explaining, “when we talked about how we value education, that we have the evidence of some of very successful people that came out of that area only because of our educational value, and that was demonstrated by Saint Cajetan's, the commitment many families made to Saint Cajetan's to get our education”(Frances Torres). Connecting the loss of important educational resources to the long-term impacts of displacement is vital to understanding why these remedial measures were developed.

This sentiment is in part why the scholarship was so important for community members, however, the reality of the scholarship's implementation meant that it was unable to truly alleviate these long-term harms. Several residents who were displaced at the time were not able to access the scholarship at all, which is why the scholarship was expanded to include more generations and eventually all direct descendants, only after the persistence of Auraria activists. One interviewee explains, “We didn't use the scholarship because at that time, there were no buildings on the land. And that was one of our arguments about how the scholarship was so incomplete. I mean, we're supposed to go to take classes in buildings that weren't there”(Frances Torres). However, even when the scholarship was expanded to address the needs of the residents, the actual implementation of the scholarship continued to fall short.

Some of the problems included limits on what the schools on the campus themselves could actually provide as far as post-secondary education. For instance, the scholarship initially only provided funding for degrees up to a Bachelor's. Eventually, after the efforts of displaced activists, it was expanded to cover graduate degrees. The first resident to receive a master's degree utilising the program explained, “ I specifically requested that they support me through

my master's program. And they did. And so I think that was probably the first sign of opening the door for endless education, lifelong learning opportunities for us as Displaced Aurarians" (Katelyn Puga). Accessing this scholarship meant that Puga and her siblings were able to break some of the barriers to upward mobility that their parents could not, in part because of the displacement.

Several other interviewees discussed difficulties in spreading information about the scholarship and accessing it. Francis Torres, both an interviewer and interviewee, described in detail how information around the scholarship was intentionally unclear or misleading in a way that made it difficult for individuals to even hear of its existence. She explained, " I just heard from a 53-year-old gentleman who lived there and moved as a young child that he said it would have made all the difference in the world if he would have known about"(Frances Torres). This sentiment was mirrored by many other residents who explained that accessing this scholarship would have alleviated some of the financial burden of displacement that made it difficult to access postsecondary education thereafter. Another resident explained, "There's a gap between when that conversation took place and when it was implemented… I was having a hard time finding out where the documents were" (Tony Garcia). Similarly, the daughter of Kathy Prilika explained that they did not know about the scholarship until at least 30 years later, when her son was already enrolled at Metropolitan State University (Nancy Littleford). She expanded, "I called the school and asked about the scholarship and got some information. And that set us on the path to where now we know we're part of a community of others"(Nancy Littleford). She had to pursue this information directly and had only heard of the scholarship by chance. Knowledge of the scholarship and the dispersal of information continues to be an issue for Auraria descendants who may not even be aware of the scholarship's existence.

The implementation of the scholarship was left to the discretion of the different institutions on the Auraria campus. This meant that there were huge disparities in how the scholarship was applied to individuals. The displaced Aurarians and their descendants had to navigate different hurdles and processes in order to access the scholarship. One resident explained her grandson's experience navigating this: "But my grandson, he got the runaround and he never got anything. Everybody keeps saying, we're not sure what you're talking about. And they said this, too, from the very beginning," (Cecilia Lopez-Albertson). This inconsistency in implementation meant that there was no clear path for individuals to follow to access the scholarship.

The scholarship made all the difference to the individuals who were able to access it. One of the children of a displaced Aurarian explains," Some of my siblings have children. And so knowing that it can be passed on to them is a really big deal. And their kids and their kids, it's breaking cycles and helping to just propel our family forward through education is a big deal " (Katelyn Puga). However, Puga, her siblings, and her father still had to jump through hoops to access these resources. Because her father did not have records with the schools in Auraria that could clarify that he lived in Auraria, they faced difficulties proving their qualifications for the scholarship. This was even though his siblings and their children had been approved for the scholarship. Extending the scholarship to three generations allowed Puga to qualify for it because of her grandparents. Puga's sister continues, "I come from Displaced Aurarians who already valued education before they even knew that that was something that I may benefit from, because of their sacrifice is amazing to me. And I think that when I'm on that campus, I feel empowered as a student and as a person because I know all of the history involving my family there"(Alyssa Lobato). As a descendant of a displaced Aurarian, accessing this scholarship and

attending school on that campus allowed her to participate in the educational legacy of her parents and their parents before them.

This scholarship has the potential to create these experiences for the descendants of displaced Aurarians, and it does not have to further exacerbate the violence of the displacement and its long-term impacts. These findings suggest that any remedial measures that provided long-term benefits to the residents happened in spite of the actions of the City of Denver and the Auraria Center for Higher Education, and not because of them. Instead, these remedial measures required the tedious labor of West Denver activists to develop and implement, with and without cooperation from the institutions involved. This dynamic of remedial measures being spurred by the activist community of the displaced residents highlights why these measures failed to address the harm done by the displacement. These remedial measures were developed in spite of the malicious lack of cooperation from DURA and the Auraria Center for Higher Education.

Conclusion

The linked fate framework explains how the activism of displaced Aurarians and the cultural values tied to their resource networks laid the groundwork for the formation of the Auraria scholarship. Similarly, it can understand how the scholarship and its shortcomings continue to exacerbate the long-term effects of the displacement upon the descendants. This scholarship has the opportunity to alleviate some of these impacts, but falls short in ways that parallel the immediate impacts that displacement had on the population, such as isolation, distress, and discrimination.

Linked fate is highest among Latinos who predominantly speak Spanish and live in Spanish-speaking communities, establishing a consistency with those who find the Spanish language a motivator of group consciousness for Latino people (Sanchez & Masuoka, 2010). The

displaced residents repeatedly discuss language, erasure of Spanish and indigenous languages, and the role that the language plays in connecting Spanish-speaking community members. Similarly, residents who did not speak English or Spanish experienced a much lower sense of connection to the Aurarian community. This linked fate framework allows a more contextual understanding of all facets of the displaced Aurarian's experiences. Linked fate, tied to the experience of displacement, catalysed Aruarian activists to push for the educational remedies that were established. The shortcomings of these remedial measures come from the same narratives of eminent domain that allowed for the displacement in the first place. Activists during the displacement were able to connect their experiences to the experiences of their forefathers. Similarly, the Aurarian descendants today are able to connect their experiences to their parents and grandparents. This political consciousness is reflective of a linked fate attachment.

Linked fate provides context for why the Auraian displacement catalyzed the political consciousness of many of the displaced individuals. This has had similar generational impacts as the descendants of the displaced continue to prioritize education as a cultural and personal value. To more fully understand the shortcomings of the remedial measures, it is necessary to consider the context of the Auraria Memory Project, the activists involved, and their connections to the resource networks created during the gentrification in Denver from the early 1950s to the 1970s.

Past research touches upon the shortcomings of the remedial measures on paper, expanding on how they impacted the city of Denver as a whole. These findings illustrate the interconnected nature of the long-term impacts of gentrification in cities like Denver. Although the remedial measures Denver authorities tried to implement had the potential to help the Displaced Aurarians, the displaced individuals had to fight tooth and nail for every piece of these remedies. Understanding the behavior of displaced Latino neighborhoods, through the formation

of linked fate and the processes that lessen this link, allows future research to expand on the long-term effects of gentrification more broadly. Future research could delve further into the specific features of the long-term impacts of gentrification, utilising the Displaced Aurarian Memory Project to contextualise the robust database that History Colorado created. This data includes specific economic information that could provide insight into the long-term economic impacts of displacement upon the specific families in the sample. Similar work could be done using quantitative methods to examine the scholarship and the concrete features of its implementation.

The Aurarian experience functions as a microcosm of national political, social, and economic discourse around education, immigration, racism, and gentrification. Their stories can provide a window into the politics of urban renewal and removal in Denver and elsewhere. These findings suggest that the long-term benefits of the scholarship came from the persistence of Auraria activists, who faced barriers from the city of Denver and the Auraria Center for Higher Education at every step. This activism formed from a linked fate attachment that developed a political consciousness around the value of education that has persisted through generations as the descendants of displaced Aurarians continue the legacy of their parents.

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