

Reparations and Infrastructure Testimony for AB3121 Meeting, December 2021 Dr. Bruce Appleyard, Associate Professor, San Diego State University

I am an Associate Professor of City Planning at San Diego State University. I earned my PhD from UC Berkeley and I recently authored the book *Livable Streets 2.0* about the conflict, power, and promise of our streets. I also grew up in Berkeley, California during a period of what I call “earnest integration” where white kids were bussed to black neighborhoods and vice versa. Starting at nine years old I attended Malcolm X Elementary School for three years before going to West Campus and then Berkeley High. I credit this value of diversity and inclusion in my upbringing with granting me a unique perspective which also gives me a sense of purpose and urgency for what we will discuss today.

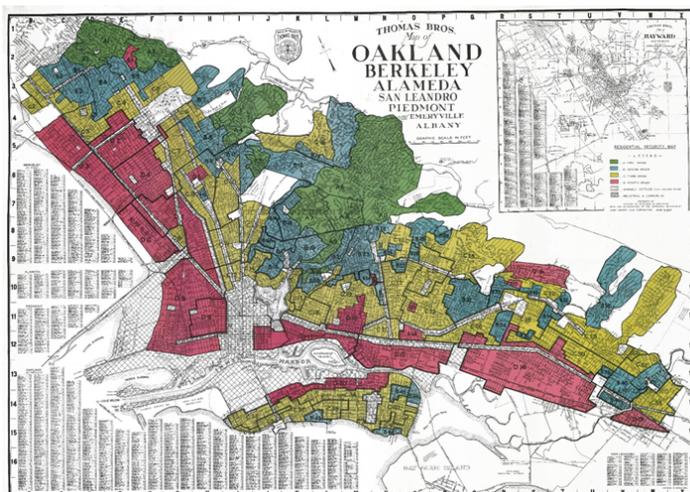
In thinking about reparations and infrastructure we need to think about the bigger ecosystem of transportation, housing, and land use and the ways the public and private sectors have created inequities and harms to African Americans through a multi-dimensional and systematic array of apartheid-like policies of discrimination from the federal government on down. This legacy of injustices and harms must be corrected.

To give an overview, African Americans have been harmed in the following ways:

- By being barred from having access to federally insured home mortgages in their own communities.
- By the building of freeways through their communities that ripped them apart and barricading them off from opportunities.
- By being barred from buying houses in the white, affluent suburbs - unable to access schools and other career advancing opportunities
- By being less served by the bus transit system they relied upon for mobility
- By being more vulnerable on the streets to both police and traffic violence.
- And now, to growing forces of gentrification and displacement due to California’s climate action goals and a renewed interest in the inner city.

Discrimination in Home Ownership

“Redlining” was one of the first major harms waged on inner-city African American communities by the federal government. The Federal Housing Administration, which was established in 1934 to solve the housing crisis, furthered discriminatory practices by refusing to insure mortgages in and near African-American neighborhoods. Through the policy known as “redlining” (see figure below), where African American communities were marked with red and given a grade of D or “hazardous investment”, residents effectively could not obtain government insured mortgages to buy homes (Rothstein, 2017).



Highway Displacement

Another major harm came in the way of highway development through black neighborhoods that forcibly carved and ripped up whole communities while walling them off from otherwise adjacent opportunities (see figure below). A freeway also impacts noise, pollution, barrier effects, and traffic violence in the surrounding community, which I discuss more below (Appleyard et al. 2021).

It should be noted that the Interstate Highway System cost approximately \$500 billion (in 2016 dollars), and predominantly favored the development of the white suburbs while leading to displacement of African American communities for the inner-city freeways.



Banned from the Suburbs

On top of redlining and highway building, the FHA was subsidizing builders who were mass-producing entire subdivisions for whites — with the requirement that none of the homes be sold to African-Americans, which were often written into the deeds and/or covenants of the newly created suburban homes. It should be noted that private citizens provided additional means of intimidation. All the above created a cascade of harms to African Americans in that they could not access rich wealthier communities that saw growth in property wealth, higher quality schools and the important effects of social connections that give people a leg up in this world (Appleyard & Appleyard, 2021; Rothstein, 2017).

Urban Renewal

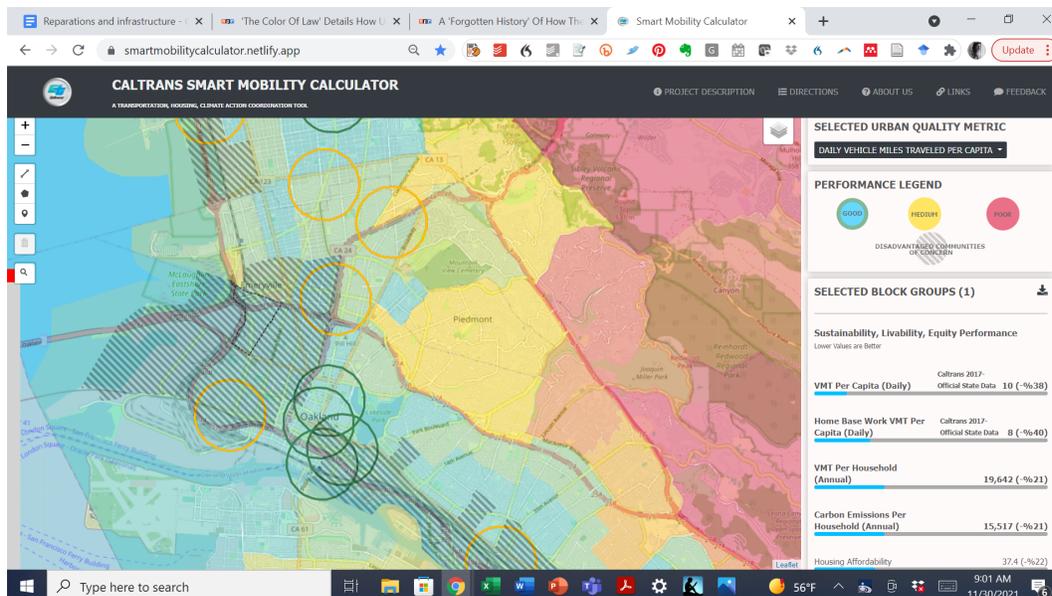
Places like West Oakland were also ravaged by forces of urban renewal from public housing to military port reclamation. In the 1950s, when the federal government started distributing millions for urban renewal projects, the city declared the redlined areas “slums” and began to clear them out.

All of this at the hands of the federal government, which was effectively an unreachable force that community members could not access and communicate with, like they could a Mayor or City Councilor.

Concerns over Gentrification

Fast forward to today and we can see that the areas that were redlined are now ripe for redevelopment as they are in more accessible locations (to transit and highways) and to many, now more attractive than the auto-dependent suburbs. Through the use of the Smart Mobility Calculator (see figure below) I developed for Caltrans we can also see the areas of disadvantaged communities (in hatched areas) have some of the lowest Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs), which now make them attractive for development to meet California's climate action goals, especially through such bills as SB 10, SB 743 (CEQA exemption for areas of low VMT) and SB 35 (streamlining CEQA processes for affordable housing). These means measures need to be put in place to help stop displacement that can come from gentrification.

(For more, see <https://smartmobilitycalculator.netlify.app/>)



According to Rothstein (2017), today African-American incomes on average are about 60 percent of average white incomes. But African-American wealth is only about 5 percent of white wealth. Most middle-class families in this country gain their wealth from the equity they have in their homes. So this enormous difference between a 60 percent income ratio and a 5 percent wealth ratio “is almost entirely attributable to federal housing policy implemented through the 20th century” (Rothstein, 2017).

Public Transit

Another way infrastructure has created inequities and discriminations is how public transit has been funded and operated. Oftentimes transit funding has been the development of expensive rail projects that serve white suburbs at the expense of bus service that serve African American communities. Several famous cases have fought this battle, namely the LA Busriders Union in the 90s and the Darensberg vs. MTC case in the SF Bay Area in the 90s and 2000s (Golub et al. 2013).

African American communities in the East Bay were, in effect, “imprisoned through a series of public private policies which, on the one hand, immobilized them and, on the other hand imposed on them the burden of others’ mobility by running regional transportation infrastructure through their communities” (Golub et al. 2013).

Police Stops and Traffic Violence

When thinking of infrastructure we also need to think of how things affect people walking, bicycling, and driving. The first item in this area could be police stops, which inordinately occur to African Americans. Among drivers of color, the percentage is estimated to be double the national average (24% vs. 12%) (Engel & Calnon, 2004; Epp, et al., 2014). For black drivers, the likelihood of being searched has ranged from no-difference, to two (Engel, et al., 2009) to four times (Armentrout, Goodrich, Nguyen, Ortega, Smith, & Khadjavi, 2007; Barnum & Perfetti, 2010) as frequently as White drivers (Chanin in Appleyard et al. 2021).

The graphic below shows that African Americans, in this case San Jose, were stopped at an inordinate rate as compared to their underlying population, especially in areas bordering redlined areas. This has been well documented with the rise of phone based videos and is shown in research (Chanin in Appleyard et al. 2021). These stops have also resulted in many deaths.

The other harm we should consider is that African American are not only stopped at an inordinate rate by police, but they are victims of traffic violence at a higher rate than their underlying population, and at a higher rate than their white counterparts (Appleyard & Appleyard, 2021).

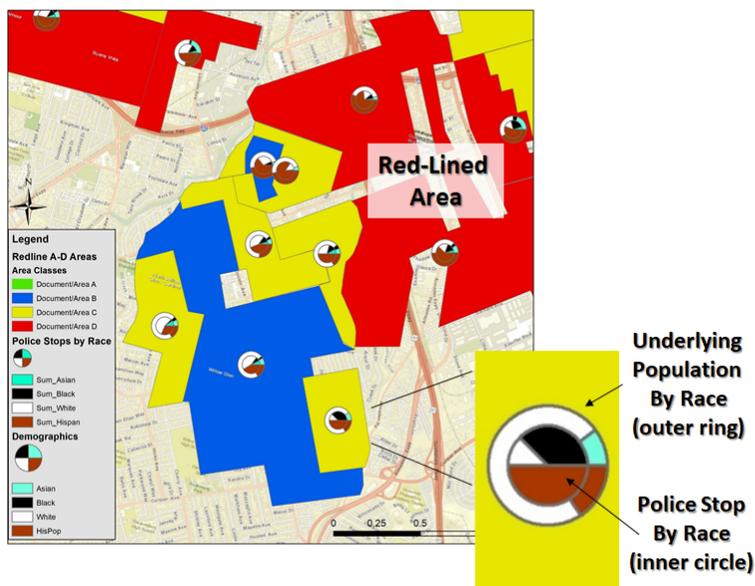
Streets of low-income communities and those of color are disproportionately at risk of traffic-related deaths or serious injury. For example, Fox and Shahum (2017) point to the following studies illustrating this inequity:

1. People killed while walking are twice as likely to have a low income.
2. African-American children are twice as likely and Latino children are 40% more likely than white children to be killed while walking. (Fox & Shahum, 2017, p. 1).

In an ongoing study with SDSU faculty colleagues Joshua Chanin and Joseph Gibbons, some of our preliminary finding show what appears to be an underlying spatial pattern of discrimination associated with police stops in San Jose, CA. The map below shows a side-by-side comparison of *Police Stop By Race* (inner circle) against the *Underlying Population By Race* (outer ring), with former redlining districts shown in the background.

Through this comparison we can see not only physical patterns of a spatial legacy of racial discrimination, but also a possible functional/operational pattern of discrimination carried out by “enforcers” in and around the Street Ecology.

Looking at this and other similar maps, one can start to visually detect a possible pattern where areas bordering between white and more diverse communities have higher rates of people of color being stopped by the police--creating a functional barrier, alongside the physical ones (Appleyard et al. 2021).



Homelessness

African Americans are also often over-represented in the homeless population. From surveys in San Diego, they have amounted to over 31 percent of the homeless population, while only constituting about 5 percent of the underlying population (Welsh et al., 2021)

Recapitulation

To sum things up, African Americans have been harmed in the following ways:

- By being barred from having access to federally insured home mortgages in their own communities.
- By the building of freeways through their communities that ripped them apart and barricading them off from opportunities.
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Through all the above, many African Americans have been denied the right to get ahead and move into the Middle Class.

Policy Recommendations

On top of reparations we can think about policy remedies that can open up the affluent suburbs to African Americans, such as getting rid of exclusionary single family zoning and allowing townhomes and apartments in single family housing zones. SB 9 and SB 35 both go a long way toward making this happen. But banks also need to make changes to facilitate financing for home ownership in these types of developments. These starter homes would allow more access to build wealth and enter the middle class. For highways that were built through neighborhoods, we can offer reparations and funding programs like those offered in Syracuse, New York. We can also tear them down or run them underground and reconnect the community. For neighborhoods attracting gentrification, we can create anti-displacement programs which can include rental and home-buying assistance, business loans, and other programs.

In closing, there has been a multidimensional array of policies that systematically robbed African Americans of the ability to get ahead. This must be made right.

Key References

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