

1/19/21

**Resolution in support of recognition and redress for Linnentown, its descendants, and Athens-Clarke County Black communities harmed by urban renewal; acknowledging the City of Athens' collaboration with the University System of Georgia in the destruction of the Linnentown community and the displacement of Black property owners through urban renewal; supporting the establishment of memorials and historical places in honor of Linnentown; supporting the allocation of funds in the annual budget for the economic and community development of historically impoverished communities; calling on the Georgia General Assembly to establish a formal body to address the legacy of slavery and segregation in the State of Georgia and to determine the appropriate forms of material redress:**

WHEREAS, as early as 1900, Athens Black families began to settle in a twenty-two acre area called "Linnentown" which was bounded by the currently existing Baxter Street, Church Street, and South Finley Street, and formerly contained the unpaved Lyndon Row and an unpaved portion of Peabody Street on what used to be Judge Newton's plantation land;<sup>1</sup>

WHEREAS, from 1900-1960, Linnentown grew to fifty Black families and was a burgeoning and self-sustaining Black neighborhood consisting of skilled members of the Athens community including plumbers, electricians, beauticians, brick masons, housekeepers, and cooks;<sup>2</sup>

WHEREAS, Linnentown families were tax-paying residents with decent, albeit low-paying jobs who were building up generational wealth through the ownership of and investment in real property and durable goods;

WHEREAS, in December 1954, Linnentown property owners petitioned the City of Athens to pave Lyndon Row in its entirety and install a street light.<sup>3</sup> By January 1955, the Mayor and City Council approved an ordinance to pave Lyndon Row, and by February 1959, approved additional ordinances to pave Peabody Street, South Finley Street, and Church Street in their entirety, which would have upgraded water and sewage infrastructure and enhanced general accessibility for all Linnentown residents, thereby improving their lives and property values. These ordinances were not followed and the improvements were not implemented for Linnentown residents;<sup>4</sup>

WHEREAS, the Housing Act of 1949 established the Federal Urban Renewal Program, which disproportionately affected Black Americans across the United States between 1950-1971;

WHEREAS, in 1959, the Housing Act was amended to allow universities and colleges to participate in the Federal Urban Renewal Program without providing housing for displaced communities;

WHEREAS, between 1959 and 1961, University of Georgia President Omer C. Aderhold corresponded with several local, state, and federal officials, especially Athens Mayor Ralph Snow, University System of Georgia Chancellor Harmon Caldwell, and United States Senators Richard B. Russell and Herman Talmadge to request that they leverage political power for the University System of Georgia to obtain a federal urban renewal contract with the City of Athens to "clear out the total slum area which now exists off Baxter Street [i.e. Linnentown]";<sup>5</sup>

WHEREAS, the City of Athens and the University System of Georgia have a history within Black communities of acquisition of property through eminent domain for the purposes of urban redevelopment, e.g. in 1920, the University of Georgia Board of Trustees minutes allocated \$25,000 to purchase a tract of unspecified Black-owned properties “for the protection of [university] property and the safeguarding of the young women in [the university’s] charge,”<sup>6</sup> and then in 1950, a city planning map shows Linnentown as specifically targeted for urban redevelopment;<sup>7</sup>

WHEREAS, from 1962-1966, the University System of Georgia contracted with the City of Athens to demolish Linnentown in the name of ‘slum clearance’ in order to erect three ‘luxury’<sup>8</sup> dormitories—Brumby, Russell, and Creswell Halls—by means of the urban renewal program called the “University of Georgia Urban Renewal Program” or “Project GA R-50.” This project operated concurrently with the “College Avenue Redevelopment Project” or “Project GA R-51.” Both projects were federally funded through the former Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHFA) which was superseded by the current department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD);<sup>9</sup>

WHEREAS, the City of Athens seized Linnentown properties through eminent domain for as little as \$1450 and families were displaced to public housing or sporadically throughout the City of Athens;<sup>10</sup>

WHEREAS, through intimidation,<sup>11</sup> weaponized code enforcement,<sup>12</sup> inequitable property value judgments,<sup>13</sup> controlled demolition by fires,<sup>14</sup> forced tenancy and rent,<sup>15</sup> tokenized Black representation,<sup>16</sup> invasions of financial privacy,<sup>17</sup> and paternalistic relocation policies,<sup>18</sup> Linnentown was effectively erased without a trace by the City of Athens and the University System of Georgia;

WHEREAS, by 1966, the City of Athens had sold all Linnentown properties to the University System of Georgia for \$216,935,<sup>19</sup> and by 2019, the University’s current land value plus improvement value of this property totaled \$76 million for a return on investment of 35,000 percent with an annualized return of approximately \$8.8 million (11.6 percent per annum);<sup>20</sup>

WHEREAS, instead of investing money and resources into Linnentown for it to achieve middle-class status, the City of Athens and the University System of Georgia perpetrated an act of institutionalized white racism and terrorism resulting in intergenerational Black poverty, dissolution of family units, and trauma through the forcible removal and displacement of Black families, and the accumulation of the majority of their wealth and political power within the University System of Georgia and the City of Athens;<sup>21</sup>

WHEREAS, a total of 176 Black families compared to 122 white families were displaced by both Project GA R-50 and R-51 between 1962-1974, which shows that a disproportionate number of the Athens Black population were affected by urban renewal in Athens, Georgia and that urban renewal strategically targeted Black communities like Linnentown through dispossession and erasure;

WHEREAS, between 1959 and 1974, over 70 universities and colleges in the United States received federal funding for urban renewal, including the University of Georgia, Georgia State University, Georgia Tech University, and the Medical College of Georgia, which displaced 324 Black Americans in the State of Georgia from 1961-1974;<sup>22</sup>

WHEREAS, in the words of the activist James Baldwin said, “Urban renewal is negro removal,”<sup>23</sup> the erasure of Linnentown is a key example of larger patterns of collaboration between public institutions of higher education and federal, state, and local government agencies to seize and dispossess Black-owned properties, which reflects the legacy of slavery and Jim Crow in both Athens, Georgia and in the United States at large;<sup>24</sup>

WHEREAS, on September 14, 2019, Athens-Clarke County Mayor Kelly Girtz publicly stated that properties in Linnentown “would be worth hundreds of thousands of dollars each if preserved in their original locations, and an asset those families would have been able to rely upon to build wealth”;<sup>25</sup>

WHEREAS, in 2019, Congress passed H.R. 40 “Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act” which establishes a commission to examine the socio-economic effects of slavery and to consider appropriate remedies;

WHEREAS, between 1989 and 2020, at least seven municipalities (Asheville, NC; Chicago, IL; Detroit, MI; District of Columbia; New York, NY; Philadelphia, PA; and San Francisco, CA) and seven state legislatures (California, Maryland, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, and Texas) have adopted resolutions acknowledging the legacy of slavery and calling for reparational remedies for the lasting effects of segregation and racial violence; and<sup>26</sup>

WHEREAS, this resolution results from research funded by the Athens-Clarke County Mayor’s Office through an internship provided by its *Community Improvement Program* grant and fully supported by *The Linnentown Project*, which is a community-led project headed by former Linnentown property owners to celebrate the history of Linnentown and to educate the Athens community about the legacy and impact of urban renewal in Black communities.

**NOW, THEREFORE, let it be resolved by the Mayor and the Commission of Athens-Clarke County, Georgia that:**

Section 1. The Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County acknowledges the fundamental injustice and resulting harm to Linnentown and other Black communities as a result of urban renewal by the City of Athens and the University System of Georgia.<sup>27</sup>

Section 2. The Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County, in partnership with Linnentown residents, shall seek to establish a partnership with the University System of Georgia to recognize the history and legacy of Linnentown and its descendants through the installation of an on-site ‘Wall of Recognition.’

Section 3. The Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County shall, with the approval of the Commission, direct the Linnentown Justice and Memory Committee to determine the total amount



of intergenerational wealth lost to urban renewal and, under the Committee's advisement, shall, for as long as the Committee exists under its charge, make annual budgetary recommendations to the Mayor and Commission for operational and capital projects to provide equitable redress, including but not limited to affordable housing, economic development, telecommunication services, public transportation, and public art as redress for past harms caused by urban renewal and to foster future reinvestment in historically underfunded and impoverished neighborhoods in Athens-Clarke County.

Section 4. The Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County shall designate as historic any and all relocated Linnentown structures, erect applicable historical markers, and apply to register them with the National Register of Historic Places.

Section 5. The Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County shall seek partnership with the University System of Georgia to create and co-fund a local Center on Slavery, Jim Crow, and the Future of Athens Black Communities.

Section 6. The Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County shall explore policies regulating property acquisitions by and land swaps between the Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County and the University System of Georgia, including but not limited to policies requiring additional fees in lieu of taxes for any property acquisition by public entities.

Section 7. The Mayor & Commission of Athens-Clarke County urges the Georgia General Assembly to establish an Authority on Recognition & Redress for the purpose of formally acknowledging Black communities harmed by slavery, Jim Crow segregation, redlining, and urban renewal in the State of Georgia; and to determine the appropriate forms of compensation to redress the loss of intergenerational wealth and property as the result of historically discriminatory policies and practices.

Section 8. The Mayor & Commission of Athens-Clarke County requests that Mayor Girtz deliver copies of this resolution, upon adoption, to Governor Brian Kemp, Georgia State Senators Bill Cowser and Frank Ginn, Georgia House of Representatives Spencer Frye, Houston Gaines, and Marcus Wiedower, United States Representative Jody Hice, United States Senators Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff, the University System of Georgia Executive Director of Government Relations Casey Tanner, and the University of Georgia Vice President of Government Relations Toby Carr.

SO RESOLVED, this 16 day of February, 2021.

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_

Kelly Girtz, Mayor

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_

Jean Spratlin, Clerk of Commissions

## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> 1900 U.S. Census, Athens, Militia District 216, GA, Schedule 1:Population, pp. 6-7. Sanborn Map Company, Athens, Clarke County, Georgia, April 1918, Sheet 22, *University of Georgia Libraries Map Collection*, Athens, Ga., presented in the Digital Library of Georgia, <http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/sanborn/CityCounty/Athens1918/Sheet22.html>, accessed December 2018.; W.W. Thomas. "Map of the City of Athens: Surveyed and Mapped Under Authority of City Council," October 1874, Prepared for the Athens Historical Society, Athens GA, University of Georgia Cartographic Services, December 1974.

<sup>2</sup> See relocation records and family survey forms in *Athens, Georgia - city records, 1860-1970*, MS 1633, boxes 99-100, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, The University of Georgia Libraries. See also *ibid*, folders 10c and 11c for project maps showing 1960 Linnentown property locations. While the city's urban renewal office reported only 37 Black families affected by Project GA R-50, a count of family files and court records shows approximately 50 families. Resident testimony also confirms various occupations: Geneva Johnson Blasingame, personal interview, Athens GA, January 29, 2019; Christine Davis Johnson, personal interview, Atlanta GA, August 31, 2019; Hattie Thomas Whitehead, personal interview, Athens GA, July 31, 2019; and Bobby Crook, personal interview, Athens GA, September 30, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Minutes of the Mayor and Council of the City of Athens, "Lyndon Row," book 19, p. 271.

<sup>4</sup> Minutes of the Mayor and Council of the City of Athens, *An Ordinance of the Mayor and Council of the City of Athens, Providing for the Paving of Certain Portions of Lyndon Row, Water and Sewer Stubs, and for Other Purposes*, book 19, p. 283. See also Minutes of the Mayor and Council of the City of Athens, book 20, pp. 325-326 for additional ordinances providing paving and infrastructural upgrades for Peabody St., Church St., South Finely St., and an amendment to the previous ordinance for Lyndon Row paving. In mid-June 1954, Alderman Kimbrell "requested that Lyndon Row be put on the paving program as soon as possible," *ibid*, book 20, p. 442. By all appearances, Linnentown was slated to receive equitable infrastructural upgrades with legal and economic support of city council. Nevertheless, personal photographs between 1960-1962 show that Lyndon Row and other Linnentown streets remained unpaved and still without street lights. The ordinances were never implemented and no record of repeals exists. In 1959, the U.S. Housing Act of 1949 was updated to allow universities access to urban renewal funding. Preplanning for Project GA R-50 began early as August 1961 when the city conducted HUD mandated preliminary family surveys of the project area.

<sup>5</sup> Omer Clyde Aderhold papers, Letter to the Honorable Richard B. Russell from O.C. Aderhold (May 30, 1961), in "Urban Renewal, 1959," UA10-110, University of Georgia Archives, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, The University of Georgia Libraries, box 59 folder 15. Instead of implementing city ordinances to install infrastructural improvements for Linnentown streets, city officials turned to urban renewal at the behest of UGA officials. On October 14, 1959, Mayor Snow invited federal officials to a city-sponsored luncheon with UGA officials to discuss "the need for an urban renewal project in an area adjacent to the University campus." Attending this meeting were "various city officials, President Aderhold, and others with the University." Copied to this letter was Georgia House Representative Julian Cox—Georgia Governor Brian Kemp's maternal grandfather. On November 3, 1959, in a letter to John E. Sims, director of USG's Building Authority, Aderhold confirmed the October 1959 meeting with "federal people, along with our Mayor [Snow], Council, and others." Aderhold and city officials were deciding how to collaborate since UGA could not contract directly with the federal government. No minutes were

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kept. In early 1961, after a USG Board of Regents meeting in December 1960, Aderhold communicated with USG Chancellor Caldwell about the need to apply for a separate Housing and Home Finance (HHFA) loan of \$3.6 million specifically for UGA (in addition to the urban renewal application) in order to fund the construction of the Baxter Street dorms. In this letter, Aderhold named Peabody Street, Lyndon Row, and South Finley Street as slated specifically for the dorms. In consultation with Georgia Assistant Attorney General James Therrell, BOR approved the UGA's urban renewal application with the city of Athens in April 1961. In May 1961 through June 1961, Aderhold communicated with Senator Richard B. Russell asking Russell to leverage the application with the federal Urban Renewal Administration. On June 8, 1961, Urban Renewal Commissioner William L. Slayton replied to Sen. Russell to "assure [Russell] that this Agency will approve the application" once funds were available. On June 29, 1961, Senator Herman Talmadge sent a telegram to Aderhold informing of the approval of the \$3.6 million federal loan for the "nine-storey women's dormitory"—Brumby Hall. In August 1961, the City of Athens began preliminary family surveys of Linnestown. The paving ordinances were never repealed and urban renewal had begun. For all Aderhold's urban renewal correspondence, see Omer Clyde Aderhold papers, "Urban Renewal, 1959," in UA10-110, University of Georgia Archives, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, The University of Georgia Libraries, box 59 folder 15.

<sup>6</sup> Transcripts of the Minutes of the University of Georgia Board of Trustees 1786-1932, volume 7, pp. 179, 199, 210, 226, and 263. Retrieved from <https://www.libs.uga.edu/hargrett/archives/trustees/trustees%201915-1931.pdf>, September 29, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> J.G. Beacham, City Engineer, *Map of City of Athens*, January 1950.

<sup>8</sup> "Brumby Means Luxury," *The Red and Black*, September 22, 1966, retrieved from Georgia Historic Newspapers, October 14, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> The Mayor and Council of the City of Athens, Georgia, "University of Georgia Urban Renewal Project Ga. R-50: Part I - Application for Loan and Grant," Binder No. 3 (May 1962), section R-231 "Legal Data," in *Athens, Georgia - city records, 1860-1970, op. cit.*, box 35; see also Minutes of the Mayor and Council of the City of Athens, *Ordinance of the Mayor and Council of the City of Athens Approving the Urban Renewal Plan and the Feasibility of Relocation for Project No. GA R-50*, book 21, pp. 463-481; Minutes of the Mayor and Council of the City of Athens, *Resolution of City Council of Athens, Georgia Respecting Land Acquisitions Prices for College Avenue Urban Renewal Area, Project GA. R-51*, book 22, pp. 383-384.

<sup>10</sup> For a vacant lot, Lillie Bell Hunter was awarded only \$1450 by *in rem* condemnation. She appealed by jury and won \$2500 but still lost the property. See *Mayor and Council of the City of Athens vs. Vacant lot on the west side of S. Finley Street, Athens Ga., Lillie Bell Hunter, et al*, Superior Court of Clarke County, Docket 16384, March 6, 1964. For a lot including a structure, Abbie Thomas and Callie Jackson (181 Lyndon Row) received the lowest judgment of \$2600. See *Mayor and Council of the City of Athens vs. 181 Lyndon Row, Athens, Georgia; Annie B. Thomas and Callie Jackson*, Superior Court of Clarke County Georgia, Docket 16502, May 14, 1964. However, the overall lowest judgment awarded was only \$650 to Susie Simmons (429 S. Finley) for a vacant lot on the west side of S. Finley St. She appealed and won \$4420—but still lost the property. See *Mayor and Council of the City of Athens vs. Vacant lot on west side of South Finley Street, Athens Ga.; Susie Simmons, Mark Ray and all other heirs and creditors of Lila Ray deceased*, Superior Court of Clarke County Georgia, Docket 17660, May 4, 1966; see also docket 16382.



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<sup>11</sup> Before her family relocated, Christine Davis Johnson (193 Lyndon Row) reported active bulldozing in close proximity to her house in the middle of many nights during construction; Christine Davis Johnson, personal interview, Atlanta GA, August 31, 2019. Geneva Johnson Blasingame (123 Lyndon Row) spoke of a meeting her father, Davis Johnson Sr., attended on university campus in late 1962 where he was told his family had “no choice” but to move; Geneva Johnson Blasingame, personal interview, Athens GA, January 29, 2019. Bobby Crook (167 Peabody St.) reported that prior to relocation, piping and other construction material were constantly placed on their property near the house without consent; Bobby Crook, personal interview, Athens GA, September 30, 2019.

<sup>12</sup> See “Family Survey Form - Confidential” in *Athens, Georgia - city records, 1860-1970, op. cit.*, boxes 98-100. Even if a property met all code requirements listed, the appraiser had the option to judge if a property were dilapidated. As listed in the family survey, code enforcement question number five asks “Is this dwelling in sound condition?” If *any* item, including number five, were checked ‘no,’ then the structure would be condemned as ‘substandard’ or blighted. Using code enforcement, only seven out of approximately fifty Linnentown structures (including rental and non-residential properties) were deemed standard, whereas twenty out of forty white properties in the project area (including rentals) were standard. Compare survey forms for white families, found in box 98, to those of Black owned properties in *Athens, Georgia - city records, 1860-1970, op. cit.*, boxes 98-100. See also Urban Renewal project map dated 3/9/1961 in *Athens, Georgia - city records, 1860-1970, op. cit.*, folder 10c. See also “Informational statement,” *ibid*, box 98 folder 1 for criteria for “standard housing.”

<sup>13</sup> In Linnentown, thirty-three property owners (out of approximately fifty families) owned thirty-four properties. The average size of a house was five rooms. Not adjusting for inflation, by 1961, the average annual income per Linnentown property owner was \$2150 and the combined annual income for Linnentown property owners was \$64,545. The average *in rem condemnation* award was \$5750 with a maximum of \$12,250. The overall award value for all Linnentown properties was \$195,500. For Linnentown property owners, this implies an *estimated* combined Black wealth (= property award + income) of \$260,045. The average wealth for property owners was \$7880. Compare this to white property owners within the GA R-50 project area (*Wray St., Hall St., Florida Ave, Waddell St., S. Lumpkin St*). Approximately forty white property owners held forty-five properties (three of which were in Linnentown). The average house size was six rooms. The average annual income for a property owner was \$4900. The combined annual income for white property owners was \$93,100. The average *in rem condemnation* award for white-owned property was \$13,240 with a maximum of \$39,500. The combined award value for all white-owned properties in the project area was \$529,500. For white property owners, this implies an *estimated* combined wealth of \$622,600 with an average \$15,565. Calculating conservatively by percentage difference, then, the average property gap was \$7480 (78 percent) with an average income gap of \$2750 (78 percent), and an approximate wealth gap of \$7685 (66 percent). By 1961, the combined income gap was \$28,555 (36 percent) which is comparatively moderate to the other gaps. Nevertheless, individual white property owners in the project area received an average \$7490 (230 percent) *more* for their properties than individual Black property owners in Linnentown. For the raw data, see “Income and Wealth data for Project GA R-50” and “Equity & Gap Analyses,” compiled by *The Linnentown Project*; see also *in rem condemnations*, family survey forms, and relocation records in *Athens, Georgia - city records, 1860-1970, op. cit.*, boxes 35; 98-100.

<sup>14</sup> Five properties (141 & 143 Peabody St., 122 & 193 Lyndon Row, and 548 S. Finley St.) were demolished by fire with the assistance of the Athens fire department most likely for training

activities. Note that not all residents had been relocated when the fires occurred. Remaining families likely watched their neighbors' houses burn. No white-owned houses in Project GA R-50 were demolished by controlled fires. See *Athens, Georgia - city records, 1860-1970, op. cit.*, box 99 folders 22, 23, and 29; box 100 folder 8.

<sup>15</sup> For many Black families in urban renewal, the more dehumanizing aspect of immediate forced tenancy and rent was its stark resemblance to the sharecropping many families had only begun to escape by 1960. Federal urban renewal policies required local public authorities (LPA) such as municipalities to enforce tenancy and charge rent on acquired properties. By 1966, the city collected precisely \$28,304.61 in rent payments; see "Citizens Advisory Committee, 1961-66," *ibid*, box 40 folder 5. Any tenant unable or refusing to pay rent was listed as delinquent. Even the Subcommittee on Minority Housing recommended to the program's relocation staff to forcibly evict tenants who refused to resolve delinquent rents; see *ibid*. While both white and Black residents were affected by this policy, the list of delinquent rents were always disproportionately Black. White tenants had the disposable income and were better equipped to relocate far more efficiently and quickly than Black families. This meant less time as a tenant. By August 1966, long after many families had relocated, three white residents—R.E. Gambrell, E.M. Dillard, and L.L. Johnson—amongst eight Black Linnentown residents were listed still delinquent. Gambrell, Dillard, and Johnson owed \$169—only 32 percent of the total \$529 owed to the city; see "Charge-off of delinquent rent for Project No. Ga. R-50," *ibid*, box 98 folder 4.

<sup>16</sup> Black male property owners willing to participate in and cooperate with the urban renewal project were quickly tokenized by the city and the university in order to show the approval of Athens Black communities like Linnentown. To do this, the City of Athens formed a Subcommittee on Minority Group Housing which reported to the program's Citizens Advisory Committee. The subcommittee members, which varied in size between 1963-1968, consisted of three to five Black male property owners. Project GA R-50 procedures included a 1962 "Report on Minority Group Considerations" that specifies the nature of this subcommittee: "The [Citizens Advisory Committee for Urban Renewal] consisted of ten members of which three were *colored leaders* [who] met with the site occupants [i.e. Linnentown residents] for a discussion of the problems concerning the occupants. The Chairman of the Sub-committee for Minority Group Housing and the colored occupants discussed the problem of relocation. [...] In addition to the *Negro leadership* which has discussed the relocation programing, the past Mayor [i.e. Jack Wells] and present Mayor [i.e. Julius Bishop] have freely discussed the urban renewal project with the minority site occupants. The *Negro leadership* of the community has indicated that they do not object to the reuse of project land for public purposes and the proposed relocation of Minority families to other areas meets their approval" (emphasis added); see "Report on Minority Group Considerations," Binder No. 3 (May 1963), section R-216, in *Athens, Georgia - city records, 1860-1970, op. cit.*, box 35. However, handwritten notes and resident testimony show only confusion, disapproval, and distrust amongst Linnentown residents towards the entire project; see *ibid*, boxes 99-100. Again, Geneva Johnson Blasingame reports her father, Davis Johnson, Sr., being told that they had "no choice" but to leave, which left Johnson demoralized and powerless. Ms. Blasingame reports that her father ceased repairing and updating 123 Lyndon Row upon receiving this news. Almost no evidence exists to verify that the city and university held *formal* and *fair* meetings with Linnentown residents. Instead it appears that members of the Subcommittee were tokenized as *ad hoc* "negro leadership" to serve as a veneer for the approval of Athens Black communities like Linnentown. This was strategic. The city and university would have faced greater risk of violating federal anti-discrimination housing policies had they proceeded with the project if Black residents



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publicly and legally objected. But since communities like Linnentown already lacked collective political, economic, and legal power, the arbitrary selection of a few Black males by white decision makers intentionally filled a power vacuum for the only purpose of showing the city and university's adherence to civil rights and removing potential roadblocks to the project. The legitimization of Project GA R-50 comes as the cost of Black tokenization. Just one of the intergenerational effects of this type of tokenization is, in turn, the increased accumulation of political power away from Black communities.

<sup>17</sup> Upon learning only recently that the City of Athens and the University of Georgia gathered and kept financial information about residents seemingly without verbal or written consent, Christine Davis Johnson (193 Lyndon Row) felt deeply retraumatized by an invasion of financial privacy. Christine Davis Johnson, person interview, Atlanta GA, August 24, 2019. To verify income on Black families, city records show officials checking employer bookkeeping records, social security checks through residents' bank accounts, tax returns, and even checking life insurance policies to verify ages. No written consent or subpoena exists granting approval for these searches. There is no evidence that white families received the same scrutiny. See *Athens, Georgia – city records, 1860-1970, op. cit.*, box 99 folders 18-19, box 100 folders 8 and 14.

<sup>18</sup> Urban renewal is paternalism simply by another name. Project GA R-50 is no exception. In fact, as Parkview Extension opened in 1959, the City of Athens and the University of Georgia aimed to relocate many Black families from so-called “slums” to public housing. See The Mayor and Council of the City of Athens, Georgia, “University of Georgia Urban Renewal Project Ga. R-50: Part I - Application for Loan and Grant,” Binder No. 3 (May 1962), section R-223 “Relocation Plan,” in *Athens, Georgia - city records, 1860-1970, op. cit.*, box 35. Policy was to prioritize public housing for Black families not only as a way to ameliorate poverty and to give communities access to better facilities, but also with the sincere intention to make them more civilized. Tom Hodgson reports that his father, Paul Hodgson, the executive director of the city's Urban Renewal Department, repeatedly expressed deep frustration at the disapproval and distrust from the Black community toward the project; there was never intentional “malice” and the city wanted to improve the lives of these communities, Hodgson reports (Tom Hodgson, personal interview, Athens GA, August 5, 2019). This, however, assumes paternalistically that Black communities did not and could not understand what was best for them. In fact, this was the official stance of white female social workers hired by the city's Urban Renewal Department to assist the city and the university relocate as many Black populations as possible to public housing. Maude W. Keeling, a social worker for the program, wrote in *The Athens Junior Assembly Reporter* (June 1968) that “By early 1967, about one-half of the relocation caseload consisted of multi-problem families—families who had the least resources of any kind. Such families suffer not only from economic poverty but from the depressed view of life it imposes as well. They do not know what a better way of living is, or they have given up any hope of achieving it long ago”; see “General Correspondence,” *ibid*, box 40 folder 16.

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<sup>19</sup> Mayor and Council of the City of Athens, *Ordinance of the Mayor and Council of the City of Athens Approving the Urban Renewal Plan and the Feasibility of Relocation for Project No. GA R-50*, book 21, pp. 478. To resolve the \$1.1 million federal loan to the City, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia (BOR) paid only the “average appraisal figure” of \$216,935 as final sale value (“land disposition appraisal”) to the for all Project R-50 properties. This value was calculated after the application of forty-six noncash grant-in-aid credits (“Section 112 Credit”) or land swaps with BOR which totaled \$864,885. This was permitted by the 1959 amendment to the 1949 Housing Act (73 Stat. 677, 42 U.S.C §1463 Suppl. 1959). For an explanation of these credits, see also Ashley A. Foard & Hilbert Fefferman, “Federal Urban Renewal Legislation,” *Law and Contemporary Problems*, 25 (4), pp. 680-681. The University began purchasing these properties in June 1955, likely in preparation for the project. This allowed BOR to purchase Linnentown property using as little cash as possible and in turn enabled the city to accumulate more land—most of which were formerly Black-owned. See Mayor and Council of the City of Athens, *Ordinance*, book 21, pp. 468-472.

<sup>20</sup> According to the Athens-Clarke County Tax Assessor, the University System of Georgia Board of Regents owns the area currently occupied by Brumby and Russell Halls (parcel 170 001N), which was formerly Linnentown. As of 2019, the land value alone is \$4.33 million. Including improvements (i.e. dorms, parking lots), it is \$75.95 million. See “Summary: Parcel Number 170 001N,”

<https://qpublic.schneidercorp.com/Application.aspx?AppID=630&LayerID=11199&PageTypeID=4&PageID=4601&KeyValue=171%20%20%20%20001N#>, retrieved October 14, 2019.

<sup>21</sup> Hattie Thomas Whitehead reports that her mother and father divorced immediately following displacement. For the effects of intergenerational trauma and mental health problems in Black communities resulting from urban renewal, see Mindy Thompson Fullilove, “Root Shock: The Consequences of African American Dispossession,” *Journal of Urban Health* 78 (1), pp. 72-80. See also Mindy T. Fullilove and Rodrick Wallace, *Collective Consciousness and its Discontents: Institutional distributed cognition, racial policy, and public health in the United States* (Springer, 2008). For the effects of economic and political destabilization through urban renewal as told through oral histories, see James Robert Saunders and Renae Nadine Shackelford, *Urban Renewal and the End of Black Culture in Charlottesville, Virginia* (MacFarland, 1998).

<sup>22</sup> Raw data provided by Robert Nelson, Director of the Digital Scholarship Lab and Head of Digital Engagement in Boatwright Library at the University of Richmond.

<sup>23</sup> James Baldwin, Interview on WNDT-TV, New York City, May 28, 1963.

<sup>24</sup> For general trends in the racialized effects of urban renewal across the United States, see the interactive mapping project *Renewing Inequality* (<https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/renewal/>). See also N.D.B. Connolly, *A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014). For the connection between urban renewal, *de jure* segregation, and redlining, see Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (Liveright, 2017).

<sup>25</sup> Athens-Clarke County Mayor Kelly Girtz’s Facebook page, accessed September 14, 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/MayorGirtz/>

<sup>26</sup> Michael T. Martin and Marilyn Yaquinto, ed., *Redress for Historical Injustices in the United States: On Reparations for Slavery, Jim Crow, and Their Legacies* (Duke Univ. Press, 2007), pp. 219-259; see also *Resolution No. 20*, “Resolution Supporting Community Reparations for Black Asheville,” Asheville City Council, July 14, 2020.

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<sup>27</sup> The demand for reparations extends well beyond the descendants of slavery precisely because the effects of slavery do not end in 1865. White terrorism and Black oppression are recodified and rematerialized throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century through lynching, Jim Crow, redlining, and urban renewal. The lasting effects can be seen today with intergenerational poverty, *de facto* housing segregation, displacement/gentrification, and nearly irreconcilable wealth gaps. See William Darity Jr and Dania Frank, "The Political Economy of Ending Racism and the World Conference against Racism: The Economics of Reparations," in *Redress for Historical Injustices in the United States: On Reparations for Slavery, Jim Crow, and Their Legacies* (Duke Univ. Press, 2007), pp. 249-254 and Roy L. Brooks, *Atonement and Forgiveness: A New Model for Black Reparations* (Univ. of California Press, 2004).