

Gentrification and Public Health: Opportunities and Challenges in Change

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Longtime residents consider East Austin a victim of its own success. It's a narrative locals in transforming neighborhoods across the country would recognize: As recently as the 1990s, East Austin's population was around 90 percent Latino; the area's families having carved homes here in the decades following a 1928 law that segregated Texas' capital. Officials neglected the area for decades—unless, of course, something undesirable, like a power plant, needed a home. For those things East Austin was the chosen favorite.

Fast-forward 20 years and the neighborhood boasts the farmers' markets, coffee shops, and food trucks required of a blooming hipster haven. Land value has skyrocketed, and so have rents and down payments. Much of the community, including locals that spent years standing up to a government that handed them little else but power plants and tank farms, could no longer afford to live there.

Throughout the 20th century, the community came together to protect its neighborhood—many times to great success. "We were forced to live on the other side of town, but we made something real beautiful out of it," said activist and longtime East Austin resident Susana Almanza in a documentary interview with Andrew Padilla.

For example, in the 1990s community leaders combated what Almanza called "environmental racism," demanding the closure of the Holly Street Power Plant. Eventually, in 2009, the government ceased the plant's operations.

This is where the victim-of-its-own-success moniker comes into play. As blights and polluting structures were demolished, residents from greater Austin started moving in. The effect snowballed until, by 2014, housing prices had increased 10-fold.

"They don't even realize the struggle it took to clean up the community," Almanza said. "We cleaned it all up just so the new [residents] can come in and take over the barrio."

"Now that it's clean, it's sort of like a punishment from the city."

Despite the fact that the term dates back more than five decades—and its socio-political causes back much, much further—the task of understanding gentrification has taken on a new urgency. Researchers grapple to parse its context, causes, and consequences, while advocates and community leaders strive to keep their neighborhoods from dissembling or, barring that, stanch the disastrous effects of that community dissolution.

What actually causes gentrification? How detrimental are its effects? What happens to communities that are continuously broken down? How do we facilitate neighborhood development that isn't harmful for people who live there? On a

Monday in late April, a group of researchers and activists gathered on the 23rd floor of a Manhattan midrise, at the New York State Health Foundation headquarters, to ask these questions, investigating themes that resonate here-and-now.

At Columbia's scientific symposium on gentrification and public health, put on by the epidemiology department at the Mailman School of Public Health, researchers shared their own dissections of the origins and implications of gentrification, calling upon a spate of tools from the academics' arsenal: historic records, data mapping, statistical regressions, and potent stories from on-the-ground ethnographic research. Here, too, advocates shared their own findings about neighborhoods fractured by gentrification.

The task at hand was not to pin down a solution to the displacement of poor communities—though quite a few were discussed—but rather to braid disciplines to inform researchers and organizers, and to contextualize their work. The symposium was about inspiring new collaborations and reiterating the importance of studying every undulating tentacle of the topic.

Gentrification is, to put it succinctly, the fragmentation or total displacement of a community caused by the influx of people of a higher socioeconomic and/or ethnopolitical class. At the outset it's not all that complicated: when people or institutions with more money decide a piece of land is valuable, the onrush of wealth drives up housing prices, squeezing out the neighborhood's original dwellers.

The effects of such a shift can be severe: epidemiologists and others in public health have long established the health woes of people whose lives have been uprooted. People often must leave their jobs and move into lesser-quality housing. These life events are paid for by working more, or cutting out costs associated with medical care and healthy lifestyle choices. People in unstable housing are more likely to suffer from HIV/AIDS. The psychological effects are long lasting and dire.

Epidemiology researcher Dr. Rodrick Wallace made his point the most starkly: "Gentrification," he said, "is ethnic cleansing."

To introduce the symposium, its hosts Dr. Mindy Fullilove, Dr. Robert E. Fullilove, and Dr. Gina Lovasi first presented a video by filmmakers Aubrey Murdock, Molly Rose Kaufman, and Havanna Fisher. Spurred by the gentrification of Upper Manhattan—particularly the construct of new luxury building in Washington Heights—"The Domino Effect" revisits the improvement of the nearby Highbridge Park, wondering for whom, exactly, did the city invest. The mini-documentary studies the answers within the context of American urban planning.

The video presented the problem: that government policies dating back to the 1890s set the stage for urban renewal, gentrification, and other forms of forced displacement. The narrative begins with Jim Crow laws, which, up North, translated to banks and real estate companies limiting where blacks could live and open businesses, usually to neighborhoods with substandard living conditions. It continues into the aftermath of the Great Depression, when the government decided where to invest New Deal money based on factors like the number of foreign-born residents and people of color. Neighborhoods that were already neglected, of course, were given the lowest scores, furthering disinvestment.

Fast-forward a few decades, and the city labels some of these neighborhoods “slums,” using eminent domain to demolish swathes of housing and community buildings in favor of university infrastructure or shiny cultural centers. In the 1970s, planned shrinkage, which Fisher calls a “catastrophic form of disinvestment,” fomented the burning of neighborhoods through the closure of select fire departments in poor, stressed neighborhoods throughout the city.

In between, these communities have been further broken up by “highway development, deindustrialization, mass criminalization, and the foreclosure crisis,” Fisher says in the documentary. Gentrification “is often viewed as a natural process,” but the long history of forced displacement indicates otherwise.

Gentrification often comes hand-in-hand with the beautification of communities, like the rehabilitation of Highbridge Park. In the documentary, Fisher addresses this outright: “I do want my community to be improved, but not at the risk of it being destroyed.”

‘The eve of mass displacement’

Richard Marciano on Redlining and the New Deal.

But let’s back it up. First up at Columbia’s symposium was the work of Dr. Richard Marciano, the director of the Digital Curation Innovation Center at the University of Maryland. For his “Mapping Inequality” project, Marciano and his co-authors scanned and quantified data from the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation, a New Deal program Franklin D. Roosevelt created to refinance mortgages to prevent mass foreclosures in the years after the Great Depression.

Over the next three decades, the U.S. government financed over \$120 billion in new housing, Marciano notes, though less than 2 percent of that real estate was available to non-white families.

Essentially, the HOLC put in place appraisal methods that kick-started a practice known as redlining, or the institutionalized denial of (or greater charge for) services.

The 1930s appraisals are painful to read, describing neighborhoods in terms of their racial makeup and the immigration status of its inhabitants. What's more, documents from that era explicitly discouraged realtors from "introducing any individuals whose presence will clearly be detrimental to property," with the capacity for detriment based largely on "race or nationality."

Elsewhere documents describe nonwhites as "adverse influences" that neighborhoods needed "protection against." A particularly horrifying part of the Federal Housing Administration underwriting manual in 1935 compares these "influences" to bad odors:

Important among adverse influences are the following: infiltration of inharmonious racial or nationality groups; the presence of smoke, odors, fog, etc.

Using these appraisals, HOLC categorized neighborhoods into colors, with "red" neighborhoods "characterized by detrimental influences in a pronounced degree, undesirable population or infiltration of it."

By "redlining" neighborhoods, the government was cataloging where they weren't going to send resources—decisions based largely on race, religion, and country of origin. This, as Marciano said, "institutionalized exclusion." From there the government drew up secret residential "security maps" for U.S. metropolises.

"It's Third Reich-like, and it's happening around the same time," Marciano said.

Marciano and his co-authors endeavored to digitize these maps, and succeeded in building them using Google Maps, ultimately making neighborhood-specific data just a click away with access to archived documents and other interactive elements.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the red areas of these maps aligned incredibly well ("fits like a glove," Marciano said) with maps of urban renewal projects that happened decades later. It's not hard to see why: systematic neglect translates to less federal mortgage aid, fewer parks, and poor public schools. The denial of investment contributed to the slum-like conditions the federal government tried to eradicate in the '50s and '60s.

Urban renewal is what Marciano dubbed the "second act" of gentrification. In the United States it began in earnest with the Housing Act of 1949. By the 1960s, Harlem-born writer James Baldwin famously termed urban renewal "Negro Removal," as it had the effect of clearing away existing neighborhoods, and rebuilding with structures and services that were not accessible to prior residents.

Marciano looks at the period by way of the changes seen in Asheville, North Carolina. He and his team pored over the city's historic records from 1970, which

were transferred to UNC Asheville in 2007, and spoke to long-time residents, hoping to “recreate the face of the neighborhood on the eve of massive displacement.”

Research unearthed what he called “a really vibrant African-American neighborhood,” one brimming with churches, parlors, funeral homes, and more. As urban renewal of the 1960s and 1970s ran its course, real estate records show what Marciano called “typical neighborhood vacation.”

In contemporary Asheville, Marciano noted, “it’s a lunar landscape; there’s not a house you would recognize.” Everything—those small businesses and community centers—“has been removed.”

It all, Marciano noted, comes back to redlining. “You can literally see the cumulative impact, the domino effect, of one policy after another. The redlined areas of the ‘30s and ‘50s exactly fit the areas that where removal occurred.”

‘A vulgar, criminal intrusion’

Trushna Parakh on the perception and effects of gentrification.

To showcase the detrimental effects of gentrification, Trushna Parakh, an assistant professor of geography at Texas Southern University, presented vignettes from New Orleans Tremé neighborhood to show differing perceptions of the demographic changes happening in a historically black part of the city.

George, a resident she interviewed, described the changes in terms of police activity, and how he “couldn’t move about the neighborhood freely without being stalked by the police,” Parakh said. “Because he wasn’t in a car and he had an increased presence outside, he would be bothered by police. He was routinely harassed without any reason.”

Gentrifiers, Parakh said, are “notorious for calling the police.” In the mind of new residents, they are improving the neighborhood by calling the police. As one wealthier new resident told Parakh, ““I feel like I am much more proactive, you know, I call the cops [...] you know, I care about the community.”

As new residents are also more likely to make noise complaints, gentrification threatens place-based culture, one defined in Tremé by its parades, bars, and live jazz. Certainly this scenario is echoed in [other cities known for their musical history](#).

“Loss goes well beyond displacement,” Parakh says, citing “the erosion of place-based knowledge and customs, loss of social networks, and the closure of vital neighborhood institutions.”

One of the residents she interviewed does not mince words, calling newcomers “a vulgar criminal intrusion into our streets. [...] They] come in, buy the houses—and

they look nice but there ain't no spirit in the house. When the drums come, they don't come to the door and greet the people, they call the police."

'800 houses demolished to make room for a shopping center and a doggy park'

Marisela B. Gomez on John Hopkins in Baltimore.

Community activist and public health professional Dr. Marisela B. Gomez calls the growing footprint of Johns Hopkins University "really vicious," but that is just how development works in Maryland's largest city. Gomez, who herself got her Medical Degree, her Masters of Public Health, and her PhD at Johns Hopkins, calls it "rebuilding: Baltimore style." Some people call Baltimore "Hopkins City," she said, which "gives you a sense of where the power lies."

The expansion of Johns Hopkins into greater East Baltimore began with urban renewal in the 1950s. The rhetoric surrounding the expansion—then as it is now, in Baltimore as it is in New York and Austin and Los Angeles—was all job opportunities and public works projects. Talk of helping the poor, Gomez insisted, "is just the bait."

"Then there's the switch, once we get rid of the poor people, we have built the community we want." It's a method that relies on fragmentation and fracturing surrounding communities. Proof of the trick, she says, is simply that, when it comes to planning, "we don't ask the community that's there. We ask the community that's coming in."

As for the introduction of jobs, the effects of serial forced displacement, and the continual break up of communities by way of government neglect outlined in Marciano's research, mean "there is no employment opportunity," because there's no work force with the skills the university needs.

"These people have a history of incarceration, they have drug-use history, they have not participated in the educational system that allow all of us to participate," Gomez said. "They have been fragmented, and not given that opportunity, so they can't compete."

'The last clean up is us leaving.'

Andrew J. Padilla on the consequences of shifting neighborhoods.

Andrew J. Padilla has crafted a career out of documenting changing neighborhoods like his own East Harlem. At the symposium, he spoke about his *El Barrio Tours*, and how communities fight to determine their own fate.

That quest for self-determination had duplicitous effects for East Austin, Texas, whose zip code considered the "second-most gentrified" in the country. Padilla, a filmmaker, interviewed community leaders last year, uncovering a troublesome narrative: the more success community members had expelling polluting structures

the government inflicted upon East Austin, the closer the neighborhood inched to gentrification, and the removal of the lifeblood of the community.

Video footage from 1994 shows community leaders in the thick of their efforts to clean up the neighborhood. People Organized in Defense of Earth and her Resources, or PODER, was working to remove the 15-story Holly Street Power Plant, which Robert Donley, then the chair of the Holly Street Power Plant Closure Committee called a “heath strain on the citizens of this community,” and an imposition on the “peace and tranquility” of the neighborhood.

“I think the health of the citizens should be a higher priority than the cost of removal of the power plant,” Donley said in the 1994 footage.

Susana Almanza said in 1994 “this is a clear case of environmental racism. The city has admitted that this is not a place a power plant should have ever been built. Our children play here, they swim here. Our elderly are here.”

It wasn’t just the power station, either. PODER, whose goal is to influence government decisions regarding the health of people of color, recommended rerouting six major transmission lines, getting rid of the tank farm, and more.

Come 2009, PODER had pressured the city to replace the plant with a smaller, cleaner substation.

“Back then [in 1994], I’d say the population was still, I would say, 90 percent Latino,” Almanza, now the director of PODER said in the video. There’s been a big change in the ethnic breakdown in this particular zip code. So yeah, a lot of people are no longer here.”

Here’s why: 20 years ago a house “would cost you maybe about \$18,000.” In 2015, a new house goes for \$1.3 million—\$269,961 comes from the initial down payment.

PODER spent decades cleaning out its neighborhood, but success meant people from West Austin started crossing Highway 35 (the divider between “Anglo” Austin and the Austin “of color”) to live on the other side.

“They’re benefiting,” Almanza said. “I mean they’re benefiting from the struggle. [...] It’s real painful because you work hard to clean up the community only to be pushed out of it.”

“It’s sort of like a punishment from the city,” she said. “You no longer wanted to live with polluting sites and made us shut down—well guess what? You’re not going to be able to live there anymore.”

As Padilla put it, “We cleaned it up, but the last cleanup is *us* leaving.”

'The outcomes of gentrification depend on who's asking'

Angela A. Aidala on the health consequences for displaced communities.

Of course, for politicians and real estate developers, gentrification has a very different narrative. Dr. Angela A. Aidala, a research scientist at Columbia's Department of Sociomedical Sciences, points out that these populations focus on the investments in amenities and healthy community resources, as well as the increased sense of safety, property values, tax revenues, and even social mix (read: poverty is less concentrated). "Yes, it facilitates mixing—for a time."

Impacts for the original residents, however, are hard to ignore: rent increases are often financed by cutting back on healthy food and medical care, or by working more hours. Residents may need to double-up in apartments or seek less expensive, poorer-quality housing. The negative mental and physical consequences of chronic stress aren't hard to grasp. Aidala called insecurity and transience "brain poison," and an inevitable evil if "your house is a constant source of stress and anxiety."

Gentrification disrupts social networks, including family relationships and divisions of labor. It kills a sense of community (as Parakh illustrated) and scrubs areas of local culture, often shuttering small businesses. Shelters, food banks, drug centers and other social services are "NIMBY'd," a term referring to residents complaining that certain buildings should be built "not in my backyard."

Because outside communities have determined the land in gentrifying neighborhoods is now of greater value, churches and other community centers cannot pay to stay. Relatedly, when asking pastors about the most important issue facing the Harlem community, they answered unequivocally, even in 2004, "housing and development."

"Most of my parishioners [are] suffering from looking for affordable housing," one said. Another: "Several elected officials talk about affordable housing but are doing nothing. Housing is too expensive. Seniors are fine but young working people are catching hell."

Struggling with unstable housing, Aidala noted, has a tendency to make medical treatment and other health promotions particularly difficult. "I would argue that housing and neighborhood are the predominate intermediary determinants of health," Aidala said, because "housing is a manifestation of income."

Housing and neighborhoods act as an amplifier of health inequalities, Aidala said, because they are the vehicles that "carry" broader economic and political inequalities to "susceptible hosts."

Case in point: housing and neighborhoods can predict HIV risk, as homeless or unstably housed people living with HIV or AIDS are two to six times more likely to use hard drugs, share needles, or "exchange sex" than those with stable housing but

“the same personal characteristics and service use patterns.” What’s more, public prevention methods are much less effective for people in unstable housing. In fact, housing is “one of the most important barriers” limiting the use of combination drug therapy for HIV/AIDS.

‘Place matters’

Zoë Levitt on gentrification as a public health issue.

In Oakland, California, a large city in the San Francisco Bay area, children who grow up in different neighborhoods have a 15-year difference in life expectancy. “Place matters,” said Zoë Levitt, a policy associate for Alameda County’s Public Health Department.

Her work with the aptly titled Alameda County Place Matters team strives to make it so “everyone in Alameda County, no matter where they live, how much money they make, or the color of their skin, has access to the same opportunities to lead a healthy, fulfilling and productive life.” That means ensuring the enforcement of housing codes, forging partnerships with truancy courts, and fighting for tenant protection laws, among many other undertakings.

Levitt underlined how gentrification is a public health issue. Longtime residents in gentrifying neighborhoods, she mentioned, are more likely to suffer respiratory illness and disease from overcrowding, and to offset the increased rent burden by making unhealthy budget trade-offs.

If locals are ultimately displaced, their access to work, school, health care, and medication is altered—not to mention the psychological effects of losing community support networks, which can be severe.

Levitt, too, iterated the importance of agencies working with community-based organizations, combining the data, analytical capacity, and credibility of public health institutions with the community organizations’ deep understanding of the real-life consequences of gentrification and ineffective public policy.

Together, Levitt said, the two groups can reframe development, so that communities have a say in how money is spent on their neighborhoods, as well as guarantee equitable investment across neighborhoods and protections for existing residents.

‘I’ve never heard people say we need another yoga studio’

Dawn Phillips on creating community-driven development.

“First and foremost I’m an organizer,” Dawn Phillips, who has worked for social, economic, and environment justice organizations in the Bay Area for more than 20 years, clarified. “I’m not in public health. I’ve been mostly trained by the people and the communities I’ve worked in.”

Her conclusion? “There’s a crisis,” she said. “Things are really, really bad.” To live in Oakland on minimum wage, one must work 165 hours a week. Now’s the time, she said, to figure out community-driven development.

The shift, she says, is an imperative, one only improved by working with researchers. “I’m so glad the data is validating what we’ve doing for 20 years,” she said, adding that “it’s actually very important that we base theory on the work that happens on the ground.”

So what exactly are the key components of establishing a community-driven model of development? “We have to fundamentally reclaim the notion of who is driving development,” she said. Development is very different when the government is not planning for new, wealthier, whiter residences. “We have never heard people say ‘we need another yoga studio. I need \$6 lattes. I need a dog park.’”

The solution, Phillips said, lies in a multi-pronged approach. Firstly, it’s important to stabilize the community with tenant protections that keep rents affordable for longtime residents. “If you don’t do something about housing, you can’t create the pathways for any kind of development that benefits communities and benefits people,” she said. “Organizing for tenant protection is some of the least popular forms of organizing, but we’ve got to.”

It’s also necessary to keep the individualistic, human component visible. There must be an investment in community control and ownership, reclamation of the public sector, and support of locals’ power and leadership. “We don’t believe we’re going to policy-fix our way out of this thing. We have to flip the whole paradigm.”

‘Seeing gentrification’

Jackelyn Hwang on measuring and analyzing gentrification.

The final portion of the symposium focused on the *study* of gentrification, and to this end Jackelyn Hwang, a PhD candidate for sociology and social policy at Harvard University, provided insight into the importance of defining and “seeing” gentrification, using techniques as accessible as Google Street View.

She also, it should be noted, presented something of a counterpoint to her colleagues’ ideas that gentrification is inevitable and incredibly pervasive. Before delving into her research, she first presented correlations that painted an alternative picture: that, for the most part, poor neighborhoods stay poor. Lots of poor neighborhoods don’t gentrify—or haven’t yet.

Gentrification, she said, can be seen in physical structures, specifically by determining the percentage of properties that are well kept and attractive, and the presence of new traffic signs and crosswalks, bus stops and other “public courtesies,” and, of course, large-scale developments like high-rise condos.

Gentrification is more likely to be considered “active” if the area has seen an increase in beautification efforts like painting over graffiti and prettying up private lawn areas. Another indicator: “lack of disorder or decay,” including a dearth of litter, overgrown weeds, and boarded-up housing.

Her research presents not a process of change, but rather a snapshot of “the other end” of gentrification: physical improvements and the stitching up of built environments. While the method holds water (her findings showed strong agreement with other methods of finding and identifying gentrification), it seems to be an approach most suited as a complement to studies about the cultural or political change—a.k.a. things you can't see by way of Google Maps.

In the end, the method intends to give researchers a way to study many neighborhoods at once—identifying variables so researchers can see gentrification without an intimate knowledge of the area.

‘Housing deprivation has concurrent and cumulative negative effects on health inequality’

Susan Saegert on the financialization of housing.

While surveying the correlations of place, poverty, minority status, and health, Dr. Susan Saegert, a professor of environmental psychology at The Graduate Center CUNY, and director of the Housing Environments Research Group at the Center for Human Environments, similarly found that “poverty and minority status affects and constrains housing choice directly,” but cautioned not to “blame the wrong people.”

She spoke about the “financialization” of housing and land, and how the use and value of land is “completely separated” from the *investment* of land. “People who make the most money don’t end up owning land,” she explained. “They take profits through fees, services, and commissions. “They will not be left holding the bags when it [the housing economy] tanks.”

This separation necessarily makes it difficult for communities to have their voices heard, and makes self-determination for neighborhoods nearly impossible. “We really need to understand it,” Saegert said, adding that the solution may lie in “a reinterpretation of the community land trust.”

Essentially that means using the land not for profit, but for people. It goes back to what Phillips said about “flipping the whole paradigm.” Community Land Trusts give residents a way to pull the land from the market and do with it what the community determines is most valuable and healthy for its people.

Public policy can go a long way to making this idea more than a pipe dream. Saegert called for the end of “state-sponsored gentrification,” and increased regulation of house flipping, speculative property holding, and foreclosures forced by fees and misleading advice about loan modifications.

“It’s time to understand how creative capital is,” Saegert said. “It’s important for critics of capital to get creative also.”

Public policy can also do much to crack down on housing discrimination and harassment as well as mandate subsidized and rent-controlled housing.

‘Gentrification is a form of ethnic cleansing’

Rodrick Wallace on the fatalities of gentrification.

“Why are we engaging in the ethnic cleansing of minority neighborhoods?” Dr. Rodrick Wallace, a research scientist of epidemiology at the New York State Psychiatric Institute asked. “It’s in the very bones of the nation. A slave is three-fifths of a man; it’s in the constitution.”

To illustrate the life cost of policies of systematic neglect (which, reminder, Marciano spoke about in terms of New Deal redlining), Wallace pulled up a line graph of damage caused by New York City fires from 1959 to 1990. The escalation is starkest between 1972 and ’76. At its highest point, the graph shows fire damage was more than two and a half times the damage than in 1959. Many of these fires were isolated to poor minority neighborhoods where fire services had been all but eliminated. Wallace said the destruction of the Bronx had everything to do with government neglect—and it was purposeful.

During this time, The Bronx had a much higher increase in fire damage than New York City on the whole; Bronx fires boosted New York City well above the national average in terms of fire damage. Fire damages took a downturn the next few decades, mostly because “large areas of the city [were already] burned down.”

The consequences of these damages reverberated for decades. Social networks were destroyed, homicides went up (“to an excess of about 30,000 deaths”) and AIDS, substance abuse, and other destructive forces caused the deaths of 40,000 more. “Over a 20-year period,” Wallace said, “the breaking up of minority blocks by displacement cased 100,000 fatalities.”

Gentrification, caused by a system that prioritizes capital over communities, is another way government neglect will wreak havoc.

“It almost doesn’t matter what tool you use to break up poor, minority neighborhoods—public policy, fires, economic forces—you’re disrupting that which keeps the poor alive.”

Taking the ideas forward

Dr. Mindy Fullilove used insights from this symposium for her keynote at FitCity 10, a conference put on by the city and the New York Center for Architecture, all about promoting healthy habits via design. Her address pointedly argued that healthy

living had to confront the challenge of gentrification. She shared the two films from the symposium, “East Austin” and “The Domino Effect.”

Rodrick Wallace used the idea of the shifting form of community displacement depicted in “The Domino Effect” to write a new book on the evolution of American Apartheid.

Lourdes Rodriguez began to monitor the process of gentrification in Washington Heights/Inwood, with a view toward addressing this problem through the community consensus group she leads, City Life Is Moving Bodies (CLIMB).

Columbia's [symposium](#) on gentrification and public health took place on Monday, April 27, 2015. It is part of a greater, ongoing series of Columbia University Epidemiology Scientific Symposiums, which brings the best minds in the field together for a full day of discussions on the most pressing health questions of our time. More information can be found at its [official website](#).