

Housing, health, our bodies, and our relationships to space are intertwined, not unlike a braid or strands of DNA. These strands, and how they twist around each other, reveal a lot

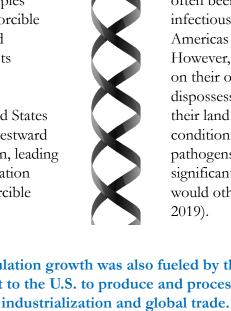
Eviction and Burning of Chinatown During the Plague Pandemic, Honolulu, Hawaii, 1900

about the social, political, and economic systems of the United States—and about which bodies, houses, and places are protected, and which are dispossessed. [Read More] Implicit in the nation's housing history The massive death among Native populations in North America has is a broader history of displacement

found themselves subject to forcible removal from their homes and communities as settler colonists expanded through the region. The 19th century in the United States was largely characterized by westward expansion and industrialization, leading

and dispossession. Native peoples

to urban economic and population growth and continuing the forcible dislocation of Native peoples. who were forcibly brought to the U.S. to produce and process the materials that fueled



often been attributed to the spread of infectious diseases brought to the Americas by European colonists. However, these diseases did not spread on their own—the eviction and dispossession of Native peoples from their land and homes created the conditions that allowed these pathogens to proliferate, leading to significantly higher morbidity than would otherwise have occurred (Ostler, 2019). Massive economic and population growth was also fueled by the labor of enslaved peoples

States profited directly from the sale of Slavery and malaria formed a vicious enslaved people and the commodities cycle, with slavery introducing the most they produced, as well as from sales dangerous form of malaria, falciparum taxes collected from slave trade itself.

Banks even provided mortgages that treated enslaved people as loan collateral (Murphy, 2023). In some southern states, plantation banks were financed in part through the selling of bonds to investors, including wealthy northern industrialists. The 1863 Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th Amendment ended the legal treatment of enslaved people as property and denied slaveholders compensation for the loss of "property" as a result of emancipation.



malaria, to the Americas in the late 17th century, and spreading it from the eastern seaboard to the plantations of the South. Native populations—whom colonizers attempted to force to work in newly-malarious areas—often died of the disease, as did European indentured and free workers. This increased the demand for labor, with a premium placed on enslaved individuals from regions of Africa where falciparum malaria was endemic, based on their presumed innate resistance to the parasite, thus further entrenching the cycle of forced labor and disease (Esposito, 2022). Malaria was not effectively controlled in the U.S. until the systems of slavery and sharecropping were ended and the

the reach of the malarious mosquitoes of the Deep South (Humphreys, 2001). At the turn of the 20th century attempts to prevent epidemics led to racist quarantines and vaccination policies, while building codes led to "Racial Covenants." In 1899, as plague reached Honolulu, residents of Chinatown in the city were

> evicted from their homes, which were slated for a "controlled burn." The

> Great Migration allowed hundreds of thousands of people to move beyond

Great Fire of London in 1666, which other race was the majority. Mayor Mahool justified the ordinance as possibly contributed to the plague's follows: "Blacks should be quarantined retreat in following years, provided a

in isolated slums in order to reduce the incidents of civil disturbance, to prevent the spread of communicable disease into the nearby White neighborhoods, and to protect property values among the White majority." Reference Link Such racial zoning ordinances spread throughout the country until the Supreme Court ruled against them in Buchanan v. Warley (1917). In response, private owners, real estate developers, and agents turned to property-level restrictions. These racially restrictive

In 1910, Baltimore Mayor J. Barry

Mahool signed into law an ordinance

preventing Black and White residents

from moving onto blocks where the

property deeds, explicitly dictating who could purchase, rent, or inhabit the property. It was not until Shelley v. Kraemer (1948) that these covenants were ruled unenforceable, as because they violated the 14th Amendment's equal protection clause. After World War II, the mass adoption of automobiles spurred suburbanization among middle- and working-class White populations who were eligible for federally underwritten mortgages. At the same time, new technologies—antibiotics and insecticides—promised a new era of control over household pests and infectious disease. Following World War II, city planning shifted its focus to the modernization

of central cities, partly in response to concerns over public health and safety,

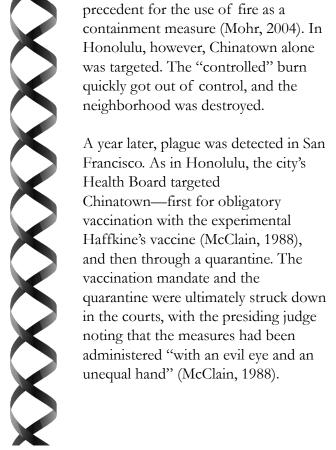
capital needed to purchase homes in

In central city areas, on the other hand,

these new communities.

building quality, and the increased

covenants were embedded written in





federal funds underwrote the demolition and clearance of entire neighborhoods. Targeted neighborhoods were disproportionately inhabited by low-income, minority, and immigrant populations. Neither suburban expansion nor urban renewal benefitted all residents equally. Low-income and minority borrowers faced significant barriers to qualifying for home loans in suburban housing developments, and social pressures rendered many of these communities

off limits to them. Meanwhile, urban

neighborhoods, intensifying de facto

concentrating low-income and minority

residents in areas damaged by the very

renewal restructured central city

racial and ethnic segregation and

industrial activities that had fueled

urban growth. In the 1960s, Rachel Carson's Silent Spring highlighted how environmental exposures to hazardous materials—including those encountered in the home—were linked to disease. At the same time, the civil rights movement called for intervention on multiple chronic social and economic conditions fueled by explicit and implicit racism. The 1967 Kerner Commission Report, examined the "racial disorder" (race riots) taking place in cities across the United States and concluded that "Our Nation is

moving toward two societies, one

Martin Luther King Jr., leading to sweeping federal legislation like the

Social and political pressure intensified following the assassination of Rev. Dr.

protected classes. While these new laws

black, one white-separate and

unequal."

represented an important change for housing consumers and providers, many of the challenges present in an already unequal housing environment remained. SARS-CoV-2 spreads easily within households (Li, 2021), evictions can lead to larger household sizes, as those affected often "double up" by moving in with friends or family. This increase can



introduced in the United States as a public health measure, in initially to combat polio, which was briefly and mistakenly believed to be spread by flies (Conis, 2022). DDT quickly became available to individual homeowners and played a role in shifting the burden of household pest control from the state to individuals (Biehler, 2009).

The development of antibiotics led to a similar shift of responsibility from the

state to the individual. For those with access to medical care, infectious

diseases could be directly managed

during World War II to control body

lice (which transmit typhus) and mosquitoes. Following the war, it was

The Public Health Service Act of 1944

healthcare system. Among many other provisions, it enabled the federal

was drafted amid opposition to

proposals for a national socialized

between physicians and patients. This change reduced the perceived need to address housing and other conditions that facilitated the transmission of these pathogens. As the prevalence of many infectious

diseases waned in the United

States—though not in much of the rest of the world—federal attention turned

toward chronic health conditions. For

many of these conditions, Rachel

Carson and others envisioned, or

benign—it was the incurrence of

many others) that threatened the bodies of those who lived within.

presented, the home as goodly and

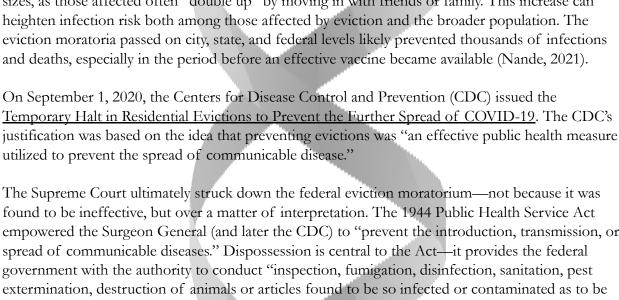
poorly or unregulated chemicals into

the home (insecticides, lead paint, and

Federal funding and investment, as well as the attention of pharmaceutical

companies, also turned towards chronic

Fair Housing Act of 1968, which diseases, as these affected a growing explicitly prohibited housing proportion of their perceived discrimination on the basis of race, constituents and customers. gender, sexual orientation, and other



At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, lockdowns transformed the home into a refuge from infection, with the specter of mass unemployment raising concerns about a huge portion of the population being unable to pay rent. In efforts to stop the virus, cities, states and the federal government acted on housing—passing legislation to halt evictions, highlighting the connection between housing and health, at least temporarily. eviction moratoria passed on city, state, and federal levels likely prevented thousands of infections

utilized to prevent the spread of communicable disease." The Supreme Court ultimately struck down the federal eviction moratorium—not because it was found to be ineffective, but over a matter of interpretation. The 1944 Public Health Service Act empowered the Surgeon General (and later the CDC) to "prevent the introduction, transmission, or spread of communicable diseases." Dispossession is central to the Act—it provides the federal government with the authority to conduct "inspection, fumigation, disinfection, sanitation, pest extermination, destruction of animals or articles found to be so infected or contaminated as to be sources of dangerous infection to human beings" followed by a comma and the language: "and other measures, as in his [sic] judgment may be necessary." The Court concluded that the "other

The Supreme Court's narrow interpretation of the 1944 Public Health Service Act limits the federal government's authority to control disease through housing policy. Indeed, if the federal government

can only act on items and individuals found to be infectious, it is unclear how it can conduct

measures" must relate specifically to infected animals or articles—not to housing.

surveillance for infectious agents that are emerging, or may do so in the future.

The 2021 American Rescue Plan Act provided state and local governments with more than \$350 billion in flexible funding for the development of tailored solutions that address the interconnected challenges of public health, unstable housing, and other recovery concerns. The relative success of short-term emergency assistance funding has led to the proliferation of projects focused on income support or basic income, based on the premise that income is a major contributing factor to housing instability, displacement, and chronic health issues (Doussard, 2024).

Bibliography Biehler, Dawn Day. "Permeable homes: A historical political ecology of insects and pesticides in US public housing." Geoforum 40, no. 6 (2009): 1014-1023.

Conis, Elena. How to Sell a Poison: The Rise, Fall, and Toxic Return of DDT. Bold Type Books, 2022.

Doussard, Marc. "Seeding policy: Viral cash and the diverse trajectories of basic income in the

United States." International Social Security Review 77, no. 1-2 (2024): 85–101.

Esposito, Elena. "The side effects of immunity: Malaria and African slavery in the United States." American Economic Journal: Applied Economics 14, no. 3 (2022): 290–328. Humphreys, Margaret. Malaria: Poverty, Race, and Public Health in the United States. JHU Press, 2001.

Yang et al. "Household transmission of SARS-CoV-2 and risk factors for susceptibility and infectivity in Wuhan: A retrospective observational study." The Lancet Infectious Diseases 21, no. 5 (2021): 617–628.

Li, Fang, Yuan-Yuan Li, Ming-Jin Liu, Li-Qun Fang, Natalie E. Dean, Gary W.K. Wong, Xiao-Bing

Law & Social Inquiry 13, no. 3 (1988): 447–513. Mohr, James C. Plague and Fire: Battling Black Death and the 1900 Burning of Honolulu's Chinatown.

Murphy, Sharon Ann. Banking on Slavery: Financing Southern Expansion in the Antebellum United States.

Nande, Anjalika, Justin Sheen, Emma L. Walters, Brennan Klein, Matteo Chinazzi, Andrei H.

McClain, Charles. "Of medicine, race, and American law: The bubonic plague outbreak of 1900."

Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 89.

University of Chicago Press, 2023.

Bleeding Kansas. Yale University Press, 2019.

Nature Communications 12, no. 1 (2021): 2274.

Gheorghe, Ben Adlam et al. "The effect of eviction moratoria on the transmission of SARS-CoV-2." Ostler, Jeffrey. Surviving Genocide: Native Nations and the United States from the American Revolution to