

Thesis

The core concept of “*Undoing the Black Urban Regime*” is that the upsurge of black political leadership in New Orleans, especially Mayor Sidney Barthelemy, did not support the power of underprivileged black residents. Rather, the author proclaims that the “Black Urban Regime” eventually destroyed these communities by concurring with white corporate interests to gain ground for a neoliberal readvancement strategy revolving around gentrification, displacement, and financial restructuring. The central question driving the chapter is, “Did political incorporation into the mayor’s governing coalition increase or undermine public housing residents’ ability to defend their homes?” The answer is exclusive as the incorporation erodes their community-based initiatives by making them dependent on political allies whose interests rest fundamentally on the conflicts with their own.

Support for Thesis

1. Economic Stress and the Push for Displacement

The author strengthens the thesis first by demonstrating that removing the St. Thomas public housing complex was not a random market result; it was a volitional method shaped by tourism and real estate interests. New Orleans’s thrift is heavily reliant on riverfront tourism, and developers saw St. Thomas as a challenge to dilating wealth into the lower Garden District. Statements from the utmost developer, Pres Kabacoff, who called St. Thomas the only blockade to major redevelopment, serve as strong evidence. This makes the author’s reasoning cogent. It portrays that displacement was needed to open land for capital, not to fix poverty. The economic forecast fits well with widespread learning on state-led gentrification, especially Neil Smith’s

concept of the “revanchist city”, where aristocrats attempt to “take back” urban spaces from the poor.

2. Political Complicity of the Black Urban Regime

Second, the author shows that the black political elite played a judicious role in empowering displacement. Mayor Barthelemy and Councilman Jim Singleton reinforced policies that would strikingly diminish public housing, such as stamping out half of New Orleans’s public housing stock. The Rochon Report, delegated under Barthelemy, openly suggested the depletion of HANO and targeted St. Thomas for “dedensification”. The author uses this report to demonstrate the paradox of black political power. Though these leaders were based on the votes of public housing residents, they enfolded policies shaped by white business aristocrats. This testimonial evidence is powerful as it depends on official city documents and recorded political decisions that clearly showcase willful policy-related choices, not accidental repercussions.

3. The Role and Breakdown of Intermediaries

At last, the author investigates how organisations like the “People’s Institute (PI)” were persuaded into the regime through jobs and promises of influence, only to undergo political and moral conflict when displacement strategies are discovered. The moment PI organisers publicly condemned the Rochon Report portrays, as per the author, a gulf between the black elite’s neoliberal project and the requirements of working-class black residents. The support of this evidence lies in its human angle; it refers to how personal alliances, activism, and political compassion can break down under pressure.

Remaining Question

Still, some questions remain. First, after the political division, what absolute strategies did St. Thomas residents and PI activists use to oppose redevelopment? Through this chapter, it has been delineated that the political schism, but not the instant strategic steps, is relevant. Second, the long-lasting effect on fundamental PI organisers, like Barbara Major and Crystal Jones, remains blur. Having a crisp knowledge of this break impacted their later schism that would elucidate the wide-ranging aftermaths of the regime's collapse.

Comparison to other Readings

This chapter has an interlinked relation with the themes in urban studies about neoliberal governance and the paradox of black political incorporation. Just like other scholars who have not argued against post-Civil Rights urban politics, here the author demonstrates how black mayors sometimes underwent huge structural pressure to prioritise corporate advancement over community needs. It corresponds to wide-ranging criticism about the limits of political representation when economic power remains largely in the hands of aristocrats, showcasing patterns that are seen in cities like Atlanta and Chicago.

References

Arena, John. (2012). "Undoing the Black Urban Regime: Resistance to Displacement and Elite Divisions, 1986–1988." Chapter 2 in *Driven from New Orleans: How Nonprofits Betray Public Housing and Promote Privatisation*. University of Minnesota Press.