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THE *Flea*



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8/19

AUGUST 2020 | VOLUME 26 | NUMBER 3 // NEWSLETTER OF THE CHERRYWOOD NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

Getting Beyond the Racism in Cherrywood's Deeds

by Jim Walker

The national and local self-examination of institutional racism is worth exploring at the neighborhood level. One place to start is with the physical fabric of our neighborhood and many neighborhoods developed in the first half of the 20th century.

Previous Flea articles have reviewed the history of our neighborhood and the homes built in the 1940s between the new Airport Blvd. and the old railroad (built around 1870). But, more than ten years earlier, lines that would influence the emergence of Cherrywood were already being drawn.

As early as 1928 the "Austin Plan" recommended creating a "Negro district" south of the Oakwood Cemetery in East Austin. The rationale for creating such a district reflected a national attitude of segregation that one could say still persists today. "Read, Hot, and Digitized: New Website Maps Discriminatory Redlining Practices," an online series published by the UT Libraries, outlines the formal and institutional approach to segregation that began in 1933. That year, the Federal Home Loan Bank Board established the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) to help citizens—white citizens—refinance home mortgages to prevent foreclosures during the Great Depression.

The HOLC produced "residential security maps" for major U.S. cities that color-coded neighborhoods and metropolitan areas by credit worthiness and risk. These maps and the discriminatory practice they exemplified and enabled later came to be known as redlining. An HOLC map of Austin from 1934 colors most of East Austin south of Manor Rd. in the "hazardous" category; but the streets just north of Manor Rd. (today's Cherrywood) were categorized as "still desirable."

My first home in Cherrywood is testament to this classification and how it was enforced.

The deed tied to the land of my house on Breeze Terrace, written in 1941, includes this restriction: "No part of the premises hereby restricted shall ever be owned by, held for, or rented to any person other than those of the Caucasian race; provided, however, that this clause shall not prevent the employment of other persons as domestic servants and providing customary accommodations for them on said premises." Indeed, a partial scan of census data from 1940 to 2010 shows that Cherrywood has been majority white, no doubt a legacy to the efforts of the HOLC.

Richard Rothstein's book, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, describes governmental policies and legal practices as examples of the de facto segregation embedded in the DNA of many neighborhoods across the country. While most restrictions have been ruled unconstitutional over the last decades (my deed also included a clause nullifying all restrictions on January 1, 1970), their original intent still echoes in our collective perceptions of our own neighborhoods today.

There's your history lesson. So now what? Hopefully we can say no one currently living in Cherrywood would actively defend these

restrictions or even passively try to perpetuate them in selling or renting houses or land. But, there are other considerations for further action, largely drawn from *The Color of Law*.

You might consider legally changing deed restrictions for individual properties, or an affirmative vote of many property owners within the same original subdivision to remove them across multiple properties. It would be symbolic, to be sure, and perhaps legally moot, but still worthy of the effort if you own property. Cherrywood could create a welcoming committee—a nice benefit for all new owners and renters—but with a primary goal to reach out to new residents of color and of lower income. Research shows that members of these groups typically feel unwelcome when moving into predominantly white neighborhoods.

As the Austin land development code rewrite inevitably resurfaces in the coming months, Cherrywood residents could build on proactive, pre-pandemic efforts to embrace and shape additional density and influence how the neighborhood creates specific opportunities for people of color and people of lower income. Critics have characterized the existing Austin code as exclusionary, especially in (or not) promoting or facilitating affordability; perhaps the new code will try to tackle this issue in a meaningful way that will play out at the neighborhood level.

Self-examination and taking action toward undoing the institutionalized racism in our neighborhoods, while potentially difficult, is action one chooses to make. I look forward to how Cherrywood rises to meet it.



Survival, Resistance and Transformation, by Grupo OPNI. Photo by J. Potter-Miller.

Survival, Resistance and Transformation

by Jeri Spence

In spring 2020, Cherrywood received a gift in the form of a mural painted by artists visiting from São Paulo, Brazil. Located on the east-facing wall of the house at 1603 E. 38th 1/2 St., across from Servant Church, the Austin mural joins others located in Los Angeles, New Orleans, and in the Women and Gender Studies Department on the UT campus.

The artists, Valdemir Cardoso (Val) and Carlos Moreira dos Santos (Todd), are known as Grupo OPNI. (OPNI is a playful riff on OVNI, the Portuguese version of UFO, and roughly translates as Unidentified Spray Painting Objects). Grupo OPNI are pioneer street artists and musicians who collaborate widely with other artists and musicians in the Brazilian hip hop scene. They are also the founders of an innovative art gallery space in São Paulo called Favela Galeria. The artists are very much social activists who use their gallery space to bring hope, inspiration, and fortification to their home neighborhood, a favela outside of São Paulo. For more information about the artists, visit Instagram @val_opni, @nego_todd, and @grupoopni.

The concept for the Cherrywood mural was a collaboration between Grupo OPNI and the Austin Justice Coalition (AJC), whose offices are located in the building on which the

mural was painted. João Paulo Connolly, who is the Director of Housing and Community Development for AJC, is friends with the Grupo OPNI artists who traveled to Austin for the Maloca Party, an event Connolly hosts with DJ Clayton Pepo. The Maloca Party, a celebration of Afro-Brazilian art and music, was canceled due to COVID, but the artists had already arrived before the shelter in place order was declared.

Casting around for a creative outlet, the friends eyed the broad white canvas that was the side of the AJC's office space. After some discussion, they decided to paint a tribute to Austin's Freedmen Communities and highlight the fact that much of East Austin was once a vibrant black community of freed slaves who farmed the land, opened businesses, and thrived in spite of being forced into a segregated existence. In fact, during Reconstruction and the early twentieth century, the self-sufficient Freedmen communities offered a safe place where Black families created stability and prosperity away from the discrimination and violence of the Jim Crow South. As a result, land ownership among African-American farmers in Texas rose from 1.8 percent in 1870 to 31 percent shortly after 1900, according to historian Thad Sitton. The Grupo OPNI mural, called *Survival,*

Resistance, and Transformation, celebrates the resilience of Austin's freed slaves.

The Austin Justice Coalition serves people who are historically and systematically impacted by gentrification, segregation, over-policing, a lack of educational and employment opportunities, and other institutional forms of racism in Austin. Volunteer opportunities exist for mentorship, policy work, inmate voter registration, and community outreach. They can be found online at austinjustice.org.



Photo courtesy of Grupo OPNI



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CHERRYWOOD NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

Meetings

DON'T
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OUT!

Cherrywood Quarterly Meeting

Wednesday, Aug. 19, 6:30 pm, on Zoom



Agenda

- meeting ID 254 172 8972
- TxDoT I-35 renovation
- City plans for bikeways
- update on City code rewrite

Stay Connected

CNA WEBSITE www.cherrywood.org

NEIGHBORHOOD LISTSERV [Cberrywood at https://groups.io](https://groups.io/Cberrywood)

FACEBOOK www.facebook.com/cherrywood78722

UPPER BOGGY GREEK PLANNING TEAM WEBSITE upperboggycreek.com

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

How Can Cherrywood Pursue Anti-Racism as a Community?

by Concordia Co-op

In light of the ongoing insurrection following the murders of George Floyd, Mike Ramos, and others by police, we at Concordia Co-op would like to call attention to how white people in the Cherrywood community can fight for racial justice.

First, we promote the need to defund and abolish municipal police forces, entities with historical roots in slave patrols. In Austin, 40 percent of the city budget is allocated to policing- funding that, in our opinion, should be reallocated to housing, healthcare, and other services that address poverty, a fundamental root of "crime." We must support local fights for police and prison abolition, and commit to not calling the police for neighborhood issues. Calling the cops can be a death sentence for many people, especially when people with marginalized identities are involved, and in 99 percent of situations escalates rather than solves problems.

This is a personal issue for us. At Concordia Co-op, we have had police search our house twice in the span of a month, in response to 911 calls from neighbors. During one of those searches, a resident was handcuffed while police searched the co-op house without a warrant or our consent. We must get to know our neighbors and build networks of mutual support and brave communication instead of immediately dialing the police force, which kills an average of around 1,000 people a year.

White people must be moving wealth in significant ways to Black, Brown, and Indigenous grassroots organizations and peoples. They must support and show up to direct actions led by Black organizers and other people of color, respecting the leadership of those organizers and the autonomy of people impacted by structural violence to protest how they see fit. It is misguided to condemn looting and rioting. As former Women's March co-chair Tamika Mallory has said, "Don't talk to us about looting. Y'all are the looters. America has looted Black people.

America looted the Native Americans when they first came here, so looting is what you do. We learned it from you." Beyond just donating and protesting, sign up to volunteer for and join organizations for racial justice.

Concordia Co-op is a small housing cooperative in Cherrywood. For more information on the Co-op's alternatives to calling 911, email concordia-coop@protonmail.com.



Capitol View Arts and the Austin Justice Coalition, with support from local artists and dozens of volunteers from the Austin area, painted a 'Black Artists Matter' mural on East 11th Street the morning of Thursday, June 18. Photo courtesy of City of Austin.

HAPPENINGS

BACK TO SCHOOL, BUT HOW?



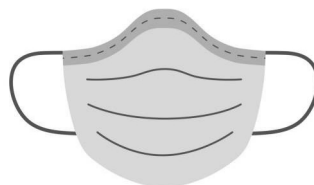
School is about the start and plans are still in flux for Maplewood Elementary. As the *Flea* goes to print, the AISD Board of Trustees is scheduled to vote on a proposal to delay the start of classes until September 8, with the first four weeks of classes to be held online,

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

The Cherrywood Buddy System is still available to anyone in need of some assistance. Even if you weren't before, but are now, your neighbors are here for you. Email buddysystem@cherrywood.org or call 512-499-0526.

STAY HEALTHY AND SAFE!

There have been 129 cases of Covid-19 in the 78722 zip code to date.



WHAT UNIVERSE IS THIS?

Former *Flea* editor Steve Wilson just released *Me Vs. The Multiverse: Pleased to Meet Me*. Book People hosted an alternate-Earth book launch on August 5, featuring Wilson (Earth 1) in conversation with Wilson (Earth 2)! Plus competitive action origami, a magic show, a Build-Your-Own-Alternate-Earth Workshop, and an interview with Yoni Brenner, the "Rio" and "Ice Age" screenwriter adapting the book into a film.



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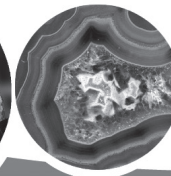
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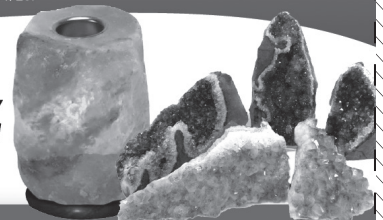
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A photograph of a smiling man with dark hair, wearing a light-colored jacket over a dark shirt. He has his hand on his head. To his right, there is a logo for 'BIRD'S BARBERSHOP' featuring a stylized bird. Below the photo, there is a red banner with white text.

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