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Committed to Cultural Diversity



Black residents protest the forced demolition of neighborhood homes to make room for urban redevelopment and the expansion of Emanuel Hospital in north Portland in 1973. Nearly 50 years later, a new effort calls for the city to make restitution to Black families who were impacted. (Photo from Oregon Historical Society collection)

# Rekindling a Promise

## Historic displacement of Black families addressed

By BEVERLY CORBELL  
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Black community members with historical ties to housing lost to urban redevelopment and the expansion of Emanuel Hospital 50 years ago should be compensated with restitution, a financial promise by the city at the time but never fulfilled, according to new group of advocates rooted in the

Black community.

The Emanuel Displaced Persons Association 2 (EDPA2), comprised of families affected by the hospital expansion, partnered last year with graduate students in Portland State University's Masters of Urban and Regional Planning program to create an in-depth study demonstrating the negative impacts from housing displacement of Black community members.

Much of the historically Black Albina community in north and northeast Portland was labeled "blighted" in 1973 and marked for Urban redevelopment, which allowed the city to condemn hundreds of homes and businesses.

The executive summary of the report, titled "Reclamation Towards the Futurity of Central Albina," states that in the ear-

ly 1960s, Emanuel Hospital (now Legacy Emanuel Medical Center) and the Portland Development Commission (now Prosper Portland) began Urban Renewal projects that entailed the removal of hundreds of Black families and the demolition of nearly 300 homes and businesses.

Community members protested by forming the Emanuel Displaced Persons Association, and their efforts secured a promise by city stakeholders in 1971 "to guarantee restitution for their taken homes and businesses," according to the report, but that promise was broken and no replacements were provided.

That's the basis of current claims by EDPA2, said co-founder Byrd, who goes by one name. "The most important part of the report is restitution of the unful-

filled agreement," she said. "This is a city of Portland problem, but it's not just the city, but also Emanuel, Home Forward and Prosper Portland."

The city's answer to claims by both EDPA and EDPA2 has been to build affordable housing units such as apartments, but Byrd says that does not satisfy the original agreement because an apartment is substandard to a house, and does not allow for the accumulation of wealth by those families.

Ed Johnson, director of litigation for the Oregon Law Center, told Oregon Public Broadcasting in 2020 that building more apartments does not equate to restitution.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16