

## **Nation-building in an inner-city neighborhood: The importance of knowing your history**

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*“Drivers see only pavement when they cruise past the junction of Olson Memorial Highway and Interstate 94 in north Minneapolis today. I knew that spot when it was the wild corner of Sixth and Lyndale Avenues North. It was the one place in otherwise quiet Minneapolis where people could come to gamble, get drunk, and do other things that were outlawed during the 1920s. Some people called it the Hellhole. I called it home.”*

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### **Abstract**

This paper uses the metaphor of nation-building and the ethnographic findings of Cintron’s (1997) work in a Latino/a community to explore and describe cultural situations and tensions in North Minneapolis – a predominately African-American and Hmong immigrant inner-city neighborhood. Cintron’s work describes strategies that disaffected groups of people (often immigrants) use to create opportunities for respect in conditions where they get little or no respect within a mainstream culture. These communities form insular “shadow” nations within that mainstream community, appropriating mainstream icons, language, and culture, but repurposing them to form an alternative social structure. Hobsbawm’s (1990) exploration of how people form nations by first claiming group affiliation further illustrates the power of desire and need in forming these affiliations that can become local political structures. Combined with an understanding of the racial undertones imbedded in the term “nation,” these perspectives on how people create situations of respect in conditions of little or no respect provide insights into how individuals align themselves to build community (or a shadow city-state), and how their amalgamated desires play out on a municipal stage.

### **Introduction**

In Savannah, Georgia, Marlborough Packard and his students from the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) work alongside city residents to preserve and renovate historic buildings, including low-income housing units. Designers from SCAD consult with residents to determine the features that residents would like to see incorporated into their homes. These residents might be temporarily relocated while their homes are being gentrified, but when the work is complete, they move back into their low-income homes. Savannah is a place where people know and value their city’s history. They know that James Oglethorpe designed the city around squares that give it a distinctive look and feel. They know that as an early port town,

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Savannah was hub of commerce and banking. They can see their city's history in its design; the preservation of this design and the culture embodied in the built environment involves residents from all walks of life. Currently, faculty and students from Savannah College of Art and Design work with the support of the City of Savannah and its residents to gentrify low-income housing without displacing low-income residents. The civic structure is in place, in large part, because all parties value the city's heritage and know its historical significance. The foundation has already been laid on which to build this re-gentrification project, which will bring widespread benefits to Savannah's residents without displacing them.

Contrast Savannah's experience with that in North Minneapolis, Minnesota, where residents' histories have been largely lost. For most people living in North Minneapolis, theirs is a history of immigration – of slaves being brought to America, of Jewish refugees fleeing pogroms in Russia or Romania, of Hmong families released from decades of life in refugee camps after supporting the U.S. during the Vietnam War. Most of the people living in North Minneapolis would have a difficult time recreating their family trees. Their histories are largely left behind in a homeland far away. What people “know” about North Minneapolis is that it is a stopping-off place on the way to better things. Or it is the end-of-the-line for people who have been displaced by personal misfortune or by being born the “wrong” color. What people “know” about North Minneapolis is that you'd live somewhere else if you could. But what people “know” about North Minneapolis is often mistaken and certainly does not build a strong foundation for civic pride and preservation. Gentrification hasn't come to North Minneapolis – yet. But when it does, chances are that the people who are there now will not be consulted and will be displaced.

These two examples begin to form a context for understanding the impact of a community knowing and valuing its history. When this sense of history is in place, it provides a foundation

for community building. A community without a sense of its history, however, will have a more difficult time (re)building when they do not have this historical foundation. People without a history have difficulty cohering as a community; they more readily break into divisive groups, leaving the community susceptible to a “divide and rule” approach from funding agencies, city officials, criminals, unscrupulous community “leaders,” and others with some kind of official or legitimated power. (See Hinds, 2000.)

People living in North Minneapolis today have lost a history of themselves and their forebears in that city. They are historically displaced, cast adrift in a vulnerable place, divided from the rest of the City of Minneapolis. Social isolation over time became physical isolation, as social attitudes about “others” in Minneapolis played out in urban planning policy and decisions. Power relations were manifested in the city’s built environment, resulting in the isolation of the northern neighborhoods into what is now known as North Minneapolis.

### **Nation-building and Opportunities for Respect**

This paper uses the metaphor of nation-building and the ethnographic findings of Ralph Cintron’s (1997) work in a Latino/a community to begin exploring cultural situations and tensions in North Minneapolis – a group of predominately African-American, Anglo, and Hmong immigrant inner-city neighborhoods. Cintron’s work describes strategies that disaffected groups of people use to create opportunities for respect in conditions where they get little or no respect within a mainstream culture. These communities form insular “shadow” nations within that mainstream community, appropriating mainstream icons, language, and culture, but repurposing them to form an alternative social structure. Hobsbawm’s (1990) exploration of how people form nations by first claiming group affiliation illustrates the power of desire and need in

forming these affiliations that can become local political structures. Combined with an understanding of the racial undertones imbedded in the term “nation” (Williams 1983, 213) these perspectives on how people create situations of respect in conditions of little or no respect will be brought to bear on social and cultural conditions in North Minneapolis.

In “Beyond ‘Culture’: Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference,” Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1992) explore the notion of space to reevaluate the anthropologic concepts of culture and cultural difference. The article explores the ideas of space and place and their dynamics with the notions of nation, community, and identity. While their work is primarily rooted in postcolonial theories, the ideas posed in the article are appropriate to the question of how space, place and culture contribute to the task of building opportunities for respect in North Minneapolis. In their paper, Gupta and Ferguson respond to the renewed interest in the notion of space by postmodernist and feminist theory in concepts such as surveillance, panopticonism, marginality, etc. According to the authors, the mistaken “isomorphism” between state, space, and culture is problematic because such a correlation fails to account for the existence of different cultures within a place. It also fails to account for cultures that inhabit the borders (7-8). Literature on nationalism bring to the fore the role that states play in the exercise of creating place. Place making thus becomes an extremely potent notion in the effort to (re)claim geographic space and turn it into lived space.

Questioning and/or examining the concept of nation is not simply a *postcolonial* exercise. As early as 1882, Ernest Renan in his famous 1882 lecture at the Sorbonne “What is a Nation?” approached the concept in a manner that is significant to our understanding of the task of community building in North Minneapolis. The allegiance that the citizens of the neighborhood display reflects the bonds that define nationhood for Renan: “A nation is a soul, a spiritual

principle [. . .] A nation is [. . .] a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future. It presupposes a past; it is summarized, however, in the present by a tangible fact, namely, consent, the clearly expressed desire to continue a common life” (TamilNation.org). Renan’s claim that the existence of a nation guarantees liberty is the ideological parallel of the efforts of the North Minneapolis citizenry in *creating* opportunities that help them voice their needs and preserve their experiences. These efforts may be viewed as counter narratives to the dominant narrative of nation as an essential notion. Such counter narratives build distinct cultural identities and lend voice to the people who constitute these identities.

While the citizens of North Minneapolis seem bonded together via common dreams, needs, and aspirations, the populace is ethnically and culturally varied. In fact, the multicultural nature of the place lends itself to examination through the lens of transnationalism. While the concept of transnationalism might be seemingly restricted to the sphere of postcolonial studies, it can be as easily applied to a more localized realm such as in the situation of the North Minneapolis. In fact, Francoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih in their introduction to *Minor Transnationalism* (2005) expand the idea of the transnational beyond the traditional interpretations of the term. Such pushing of definitional boundaries offers us a better insight into how marginalized individuals might create their own nations within the global/dominant nation. The authors approach the transnational as a “space of exchange and participation wherever processes of hybridization occur and where it is still possible for cultures to be produced and performed without necessary mediation by the center” (5). Their focus on a branch of transnationalism, minor transnationalism, emphasizes “transversal movements of culture” that include “minor cultural articulations in productive relationship with the major [. . .] as well as minor-to-minor networks

that circumvent the major altogether”. Such a movement “produces new forms of identification that negotiate with national, ethnic, and cultural boundaries, thus allowing for the emergence of the minor’s inherent complexity and multiplicity [. . .] [E]xpressions of allegiance are found in unexpected and sometimes surprising places; new literacies are created in nonstandard languages, tonalities, and rhythms [. . .]” (8).

### **The State of This Story**

This study examines the community of North Minneapolis, a group of low-income inner-city neighborhoods that share many demographic realities with other low-income inner-city neighborhoods around the United States. North Minneapolis residents make up 18% of the population of Minneapolis, but have a lower average income than Minneapolis residents as a whole. There is higher unemployment and reliance on subsidized rent and food programs. North Minneapolis neighborhoods have a greater concentration of cultural diversity than the city as a whole, with African-Americans, Hmong immigrants, Latinos and Latinas, African immigrants, and Anglos all sharing common living quarters. They have higher rates of chronic health conditions, such as diabetes, obesity, heart disease, and high blood pressure, than people in other Minneapolis neighborhoods. In North Minneapolis, most people buy a large portion of their food from corner stores, convenience stores, and gas stations because all but one chain grocery store long ago pulled out of their neighborhoods following rioting in the late 1960s. Nearly 40% of North Minneapolis residents are under the age of 18.

In 1995, Minneapolis got the name “Murderapolis” after a record 98 people were murdered during that year. Many, if not most, of those murders occurred in North Minneapolis or involved North Minneapolis residents. According to local WCCO crime reporter Caroline Lowe, the summer of 2005 rivaled that earlier record as one of the most violent seasons the city had seen.

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In August 2005, police reported that 272 people had been shot so far that year. In her “Crime Scene Blog” reporter Lowe wrote about that summer, “Over the past 20 years, I never have reported on so many children struck by stray bullets. These kids weren't involved in any high-risk activities. They were injured doing ordinary things like playing football and walking in front of a Walgreens in the middle of the day. The kids who were shot aren't the only young victims. All of the children who have to live with the sound of gunfire as part of their day-to-day reality also are victimized. I fought back tears watching a 6-year-old North Minneapolis girl demonstrate to me last week how she reacts to gunfire. (She drops to the ground and covers her head when she hears shots fired near her house.) My children have grown up doing fire drills. These kids do bullet drills!” (posted on August 15, 2005).

There are not many positive indicators of social capital in North Minneapolis, when you look for the indicators that academics use to measure this phenomenon. Yet North Minneapolis residents strongly identify with where they live and with each other. Like it or not, they pretty much stick together. Most North Minneapolis residents are just trying to make a living, keep their families together, keep a roof over their heads, clothes on their backs, and food on their tables. They help each other out when they can. They try to ignore the gun shots you can hear outside on most summer nights, coming from somewhere you hope is not too close, aimed at someone you hope you don't know.

Minneapolis City Council Member Don Samuels represents North Minneapolis neighborhoods within the official city governance structure. He founded the Peace Foundation and a quote on their website represents the relationship between Minneapolis “proper” and the shadow city of North Minneapolis: “A Minneapolis resident recently said: ‘I could more easily get on a plane and travel across the oceans than make a trip into North Minneapolis.’ Why?

Violence in Minneapolis is concentrated, effectively isolating small, impacted areas from the rest of the city. The average person from outside these neighborhoods steers clear of them, and, in the process, becomes detached from the plight of those living there.” These quotations represent the psychology of the shadow nation, or in this case the shadow city-state. The shadow city-state is perceived by people in the mainstream culture as a place of “the other.” People in the mainstream culture are uncomfortable in the shadow city-state, so they do not go there. The rift between people in Minneapolis and people in North Minneapolis becomes imperceptibly more stressed each day, like tectonic plates shifting along a fault line. When will the stress become too much to bear?

### **Recreating a History**

While it examines the community of North Minneapolis, this study seeks to recreate a “people’s history” of these neighborhoods, giving voice to people whose experiences are not yet captured in news stories about crime, or related as official histories at the state historical society, or published in books available at Barnes and Noble. This lost history is a story about displaced people’s lives and their struggles to find places of respect with a mainstream culture that did not offer them many of those places. This is a story about people in North Minneapolis, but it is also a story about displaced, dispossessed people who find themselves thrust into new lives, new neighborhoods, new cultures.

There were two research questions that began this study:

- How do North Minneapolis residents create opportunities for respect in conditions where they get little or no respect within a mainstream Minneapolis culture?
- How does language use help North Minneapolis residents claim and maintain group affiliation?

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As we started to look at life in North Minneapolis in a systematic way, it became clear that we needed to recreate a historic context for understanding the social dynamics and relationships that characterize the day-to-day experiences of people living in this shadow city-state. We posed these additional questions to help guide this context building:

- How did North Minneapolis neighborhoods become isolated from the rest of the city?
- How does this history create a context for understanding contemporary culture and social relationships among people in North Minneapolis and between North Minneapolis and the rest of the city?

This project is in its initial phase, where we are still finding the most helpful questions to guide us as we seek the history of these neighborhoods through people's stories that are for the most part recollections and memories passed down through generations. We are looking for shadows and remnants, what Walter Benjamin (1968) would describe as a history of the vanquished – a history of those taken captive and overcome by the victor's dominant story. In Michel Foucault's terms, the story of North Minneapolis continues to reside in the legitimized knowledge contained in official histories of Minneapolis, but it resides as a shadow knowledge. De Certeau (1984) would call this a naïve knowledge that has been (re) educated into a dominant knowledge regime. Bourdieu (1999) would call this knowledge a residue – it resides between the lines of mainstream histories. Every now and then a piece of history about the people in North Minneapolis can be found among other people's official histories. But recreating the history of the people who live in North Minneapolis today is a process of exploring absences, reading shadows, and reconstructing a story from small bits of other people's lives.

### **The Beginning of a History**

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Before World War II, North Minneapolis neighborhoods were made up of Irish, Italian, German, and Polish immigrant families. It was one of the few places in the Twin Cities where Jewish families could settle and by 1924, over 15,000 Jewish immigrants lived in this area of the city (Peterson 2003). African-American residents, who numbered 4,176 by 1930, also tended to live either in North Minneapolis or on the south side near Fourth Avenue South and 38th Street. The Minneapolis Urban League was established in 1925 to assist African-Americans in overcoming obstacles in employment, education, housing, health care and social services. (Minneapolis Public Library 2001). The Northside neighborhoods were closely knit and held together by a series of locally owned small businesses that served most of the residents' needs. Residents bought goods and services from other residents. The wealth of the neighborhoods largely stayed in the neighborhoods and multiplied. Life still had its hardships, especially for Jewish immigrants who settled in the city that Carey McWilliams, editor of *The Nation*, described in 1946 as "the capital of anti-Semites in the United States" (Moskowitz 1995). Many of these immigrants from Poland, Romania, or Russia had escaped pogroms and persecution in their native countries, only to find their new lives in Minneapolis constrained by limited access to jobs, housing, and other necessities. Although some nationally known criminals rose up from these Minneapolis neighborhoods, most residents tried to make honest livings and many opened neighborhood businesses. These earlier immigrants in North Minneapolis shared the same concerns with their contemporary counterparts: family, safety, health, and respect.

When you compare life in North Minneapolis before World War II and today, one of the most apparent differences is the sense of isolation that pervades life there today. Before 1953, these neighborhoods were largely self-sufficient, but were intimately connected to other areas of the city and to St. Paul by streetcar lines that ran through North Minneapolis business and

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residential neighborhoods. People living in this northern part of the city could easily travel around the Twin Cities for the price of streetcar fare. The streetcar service ended in 1953, gas-fueled busses replaced the electric cars, streetcars were either burned or shipped to other cities, and streetcar lines were torn up. Bus routes were less extensive than the previous streetcar routes and schedules were less frequent. People living in North Minneapolis had a more difficult time staying connected to the rest of the Twin Cities.

In 1960, slum clearance came to downtown Minneapolis, which had the distinction of being the first city in the U.S. to initiate a federally funded beautification program in what became known around the country as “urban renewal.” A 1959 article in the *Harvard Law Review* described the urban renewal process this way: “Such a program normally involves the acquisition of all or most of the land within a designated area by a local public agency through purchase or condemnation, the demolition of the structures on the land, and the conveyance of the cleared parcel to a private entrepreneur bound to redevelop it in accordance with a municipally approved plan” (Sogg and Wertheimer, 505). The approach most often used in this renewal process was “total clearance” (Sogg and Wertheimer 1959, 505). As early as 1960, Lyman Brownfield described the effects of this “total clearance” on the people who once lived in the renewed area: “...the net result [of the initial phase of an urban renewal program] has been to dislocate families and businesses, scatter church parishes and neighborhood groups, remove property from the tax rolls, and leave in the wake of these accomplishments gutted buildings and rubble-strewn lots. If urban renewal stopped there, it would have few proponents” (732). By 1961, more than 127,000 families in the U.S. – the majority of whom were people of color – had been displaced by renewal projects and over 20% of these families were relocated to substandard housing or had moved to unknown locations. (Anonymous 1964, 1081) In a 1974

article, Steven Cord characterized the effects of urban renewal as destruction of low-cost housing, forcing the “displaced millions...to crowd into already overcrowded slums elsewhere...Negroes and Puerto Ricans have been especially hard hit. They have numbered two-thirds of the evacuees, thus validating the cry that ‘urban renewal is Negro removal’” (184). Cord cites studies showing that the people living in targeted renewal areas were largely opposed to the projects, despite developers’ claims that good alternative housing awaited them in other areas of the city. “If good quality, conveniently located low-rent housing is available...why then is it necessary to force these people out of their homes with a bulldozer?” (184). Cord, too, listed “psychological and sociological hazards” for the evacuees: “Familiar neighborhoods are broken up, friends are scattered throughout the city, old people are forced to rebuild their lives among strangers” (185). In Minneapolis, 25 blocks in the center of the city were razed, 200 buildings were destroyed, 3000 residences were lost and the people living in these demolished buildings were left to find new, low-cost housing in an era of housing shortage. Over 40% of the downtown area was razed and parking lots were built where many of the demolished buildings once stood (Hirshoff and Hart 2002, 4). For the next 40 years, parking lots and steel-and-glass buildings dominated the downtown Minneapolis landscape. Very few people lived there.

The migration of low-income Minneapolitans from downtown to North Minneapolis began with the city’s “slum clearance” program. Restrictions on Jewish families living in other areas of the Twin Cities and its suburbs relaxed and many of these families moved to the suburbs. Rioting in 1967 destroyed a large portion of the retail businesses in North Minneapolis and most of family-owned operations were not re-opened and large chains were not willing to step into fill the retail gap because of the social unrest (Davis 2002, 159; Peterson 2003). North Minneapolis

neighborhoods were further isolated when highway construction resulted in an insurmountable physical barrier around this troublesome part of the city.

With the movement of people from the city to the suburbs, congested automobile traffic on surface roads became a problem. Minneapolis transportation planners joined the ranks of transportation planners across the United States in putting forward plans for an extensive interstate highway system, part of which would connect Chicago to Minneapolis via Highway I-94. When highway construction was being planned in the late 1950s, the residents of the mixed-ethnicity Rondo neighborhood in St. Paul created a citizen coalition to address the destruction of their neighborhood from the planned highway route. They did have some success in securing promises of new housing construction to replace those that would be destroyed by the highway. But after the highway was built, few new residents were built and the remaining neighborhood was predominantly African-American rather than reflecting the mixed-ethnicity of its former days. A Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) history of I-94 recounts the planners' goals, which included slum clearance as well as improved traffic flow: "Like planners and political leaders in many other major metropolitan areas, the Twin Cities leaders at first embraced the concept of building freeways through their core cities. They saw the superhighways as a way to relieve congestion, spur economic growth and, in many cases, as a tool to clear what were considered blighted areas and promote redevelopment" (Minnesota Dept. of Transportation 2006). These planners believed that properties along the new freeways would increase in value because of the opportunities for retail development. As the freeways were built and the actual experience of life alongside the freeway was realized, however, these areas along the freeway became more undesirable for community life than anticipated. Like urban renewal projects, freeway construction projects disrupted neighborhoods and displaced people. The

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Mn/DOT history on their website notes the opposition that these projects engendered: “Building I-94 and other freeways in the Twin Cities area mirror the experiences of many other metropolitan areas. Civic leaders initially welcomed the freeways, but then faced increasing opposition to them based on environmental, cultural and social justice issues.” Quoting I-94 engineer Bob Cartford, this history continues, “Cartford said criticism of the freeway system on environmental grounds and the displacement of thousands of homes and businesses grew louder in the early 1970s” (Minnesota Dept. of Transportation 2006). This citizen opposition succeeded in stopping plans for some of the city’s freeways, but not the section of I-94 that opened in 1981-1982, cutting through North Minneapolis neighborhoods. Some say that the location of parkland along the Mississippi River was an important factor in deciding where to route I-94 through North Minneapolis. Others say that the decision of where to put I-94 through North Minneapolis had to do with commercial interests at the Port of Minneapolis and their need to move cargo from ships to trucks to inland destinations via I-94.

Whatever the reasoning, the final section of I-94 is a 6- to 10-lane physical barrier separating North Minneapolis from the rest of the city, with Highway 55 forming another multi-lane barrier on the south. By 1982, North Minneapolis was still the area of the city where people could find low income housing and where many immigrants settled. Unlike most of its history, though, the area was now home to a large number of people who had been displaced from other parts of the Twin Cities, had their neighborhoods disrupted by urban renewal and/or freeway construction, and were now physically isolated from the rest of the city. Over 20 years later, one North Minneapolis resident referred to this area as “the Wild West” because there was the feeling that the law didn’t come to this part of the city. “Anything goes here,” she said.

### **Maintaining a Community’s History**

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Anthropologist Mary Douglas has said, "Any institution that is going to keep its shape needs to control the memory of its members... [causing those members] to forget experiences incompatible with its righteous image and ... [bringing] to their minds events which sustain the view... that is complimentary to itself" (Qtd. in Appleby, Hunt and Jacob 1994, 154). As many communities across the United States are gentrified, or redeveloped for the convenience of suburban commuters or to accommodate new residents or businesses, this idea of remembering and forgetting history – of controlling history – is one that becomes tangible in people's lives and environments. One sustaining factor that has ensured the existence of a community's story is the physical presence of an institution that housed, warehoused, or accommodated that community. As you drive down the main thoroughfare in North Minneapolis, observing the dilapidated homes and businesses along West Broadway, it is hard not to be aware of the unseen histories that lie in those buildings. Stories of commerce, trade, work, and community life lay as dormant as the buildings. And as community development in this progressive city comes to North Minneapolis, buildings are torn down one-by-one and when each is gone, another piece of the people's history destroyed.

By comparison, there are many communities that (for reasons that cannot be detailed here) have held on to their story for decades, even with the economic deterioration of the rest of the area. One example is the Mesaba Co-op Park near Hibbing, Minnesota. This is the history of a people that shares some similarities to residents of North Minneapolis. In the early 1920's many Finnish working class immigrants populated the town of Hibbing and its surrounding communities. Finns came to the area to work on the iron mines that proliferated in the area now referred to as the Minnesota Iron Range. The park, which still exists as a thriving recreational retreat, was founded over seventy five years ago to provide the Fins with a cultural gathering

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space, since as new immigrants they often were in conflict with the locals when it came time to gather, eat, and talk with family and friends in a social setting. The original intention of the park was to rent space from the landowners in the area, but because of the recent immigrant status and the strife surrounding labor disputes on the mines, the Finns were ostracized by the larger community. Signs in local taverns read “No Indians or Finns Allowed.”

The Finn’s situation in their community was similar to overall labor movement violence during the time, which shared aspirations with civil rights movements brewing in other areas of the country. The Mesaba Park holds significant historic value as the breeding ground for the Farmer-Labor movement, which later merged to become the Democratic-Farm-Labor (DFL) party, with the help of African American labor activist Nelly Stone Johnson. Within the strife of the times, the Finns in the Iron Range, like the Jewish immigrants in North Minneapolis, became more self-determined to create their space and document their existence and contributions to the larger society. Part of the documentation of their story is the building of institutions that hold their stories. Some of the institutions still exist today. For example, when the locals would not rent to the Finns, they came together and purchased several acres of land near a lake. They organized “workbees” to clear the land, build cabins, lakefront docks, and other ancillary businesses in the area. These buildings and workbee traditions still exist today. The Finnish Midsummer Festival that started in 1929 is still celebrated annually, attracting participants from around the United States and other countries. These buildings, traditions, and gatherings are tangible evidence of the history of the Finnish people who live in the Iron Range today and their forebears who struggled to establish a place for themselves in a new community.

Institution building is an important physical manifestation of culture. One can tell much about the culture of a society by the types of buildings it has constructed – or has not

constructed. Black North Minneapolis migrant residents, unlike the Finns on the Iron Range, did not quite get to the point of collectively purchasing land, buildings, or other property. The stories of their struggles and victories are in the minds and hearts of a few residents that hopefully tell someone else before they die. The dominant story is told by the dominant voice – that of people with buildings and institutions to manifest the mainstream culture. The goal of this project recreating a history of the people living in North Minneapolis is to erect an institution out of the story itself, and encourage the building of more institutions to hold peoples’ stories.

### **Conclusion**

Revisiting one of the questions that began this study, this preliminary exploration can offer some pieces to reconstruct a history of the people who live in North Minneapolis today. We asked, “How does this history create a context for understanding contemporary culture and social relations among people in North Minneapolis and between North Minneapolis and the rest of the city?” We can initially set contemporary life in North Minneapolis within the historical context of 55 years since streetcar service ended, 45 years since slum clearance began downtown, and 25 years since the final stretch of freeway separated North Minneapolis from the rest of the city. Impacts of these planning decisions have resulted in displaced low-income residents, disrupted neighborhoods, physical isolation, lowered property values, business flight, adversarial relations with City of Minneapolis government, and local neighborhood-level allegiances.

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