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National Initiative on
Mixed-Income Communities

A TRIBUTE TO JANET SMITH BY AMY KHARE

Together, our community is mourning the loss of Dr. Janet Smith, who passed away on January 17, 2022 from ovarian cancer. After earning her PhD in Urban Studies from Cleveland State University, Janet went on to serve as Professor in the University of Illinois Chicago [Department of Urban Planning and Policy](#), and Co-Director of the Nathalie P. Voorhees Center for Neighborhood and Community Improvement.



Janet contributed nationally to the Urban Affairs Association, which honored her in 2020 with the UAA-SAGE Marilyn J. Gittell Activist Scholar Award, for her work on behalf of housing justice. In Chicago, she guided and supported numerous community organizing and labor union efforts, supported residents living in public housing whose housing was being demolished, developed practical resource guides to address local unjust efforts related to gentrification, led conference symposiums on race, housing and justice, and inspired hundreds of emerging leaders and students who benefited from her teaching and mentoring.

I will never forget the first time I met Janet in 2007 at a local convening on Chicago's Plan for Transformation. She questioned government officials, philanthropists, and others in positions of power about the displacement of public housing residents during a time when there was a shortage of available affordable rental housing in the region. She spoke truth to power even when it was unpopular and uncomfortable to name the realities of systemic racism and oppression. Years later, Janet served on my

dissertation committee and continued to push me to develop my own critical perspectives. She wrote many articles that influenced my own scholarship, including "[The End of US Public Housing as We Knew It](#)" and her edited book "[Where are the Poor People to Live?](#)".

She was a true warrior with people and communities who face racially and economically unjust realities, always arming them with resources to fight their oppression head on. She inspired me to always remain rooted in why we show up to do the work of advancing urban justice. For Janet, it was always about the people whose lives and rights and voices were not represented, but who contributed by sharing their resources, wisdom and stories with us. I will miss her deeply as a mentor and friend. May we continue to keep her fierce spirit alive in our communities and within the field of housing and community development.

RACIAL EQUITY & AFFORDABLE HOUSING: 2,400 STEPS CLOSER IN CHICAGO



Late last year, the City of Chicago announced more than [\\$1 billion in affordable housing investments in Chicago](#), the City's largest ever. The announcement is notable because of its many firsts: the first [Racial Equity Impact Assessment of Low-Income Housing Tax Credits](#) in the country, the

first time the City has funded 24 developments in one round for more than 2400 units, the first time 75% of them have been transit-oriented developments with 12 on the South and West Sides, the first development co-developed by and for indigenous populations and the first adaptive reuse of a Chicago Public School for re-entry housing. The City also announced the purchase of a more than six acre site in [Pilsen](#) to ensure its future development as affordable housing. Pilsen residents have been fighting for years to protect this space, and they won.

Commissioner at the Department of Housing with the City of Chicago, Marisa Novara said this about the investments “I'm so excited about these investments, but I'm even more proud of how we got here: as a team we have committed to examining the outcomes of our work by race and adjusting accordingly. I just think that if you need a subsidy to live affordably, you should have as many options of where to live as someone who doesn't need a subsidy. We're not there yet, but today we got 2400+ steps closer.”

Mural by Jeff Zimmerman detailing the people and cultures of Pilsen, 1900 S. Ashland Ave., Chicago, Illinois

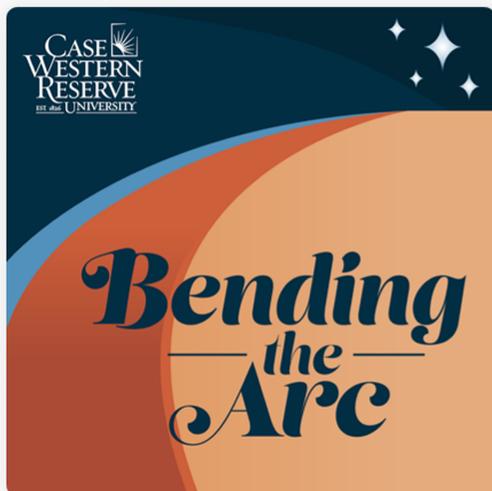
WHO INSPIRES US: RACIAL EQUITY TRAININGS + COMMITMENTS

Looking for a racial equity training for yourself or your organization?

We recommend looking into [Facilitate for Freedom Fundamentals by AORTA](#). AORTA is a worker-owned cooperative of facilitators and strategists devoted to helping their movements develop a stronger sense of liberatory vision, values, and purpose. They base their work on an intersectional approach to liberation that centers Black feminism.

We also recommend the [Centering Anti-Racist and Relational Education offerings](#) led by Resmaa Menakem if you are seeking a full commitment to racial healing and equity work. For more read Resmaa Menakem's book [My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Mending of Our Bodies and Hearts](#).

WORTH A LISTEN: BLACK FEMINIST LENS ON MIXED-INCOME COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



In this episode of Bending the Arc we talk with [Dr. Akira Drake Rodriguez](#), Assistant Professor at the Weitzman School of Design at the University of Pennsylvania and [Research Affiliate](#) with the National Initiative of Mixed-Income Communities. Dr. Drake Rodriguez co-authored an [essay for the What Works Volume](#) with [Majeedah Rashid](#) that applies a Black feminist lens to the issue of mixed-income community development. In our conversation we examine the tension between community development and community organizing and Dr. Drake Rodriguez introduces us to the notion of Black feminist-centered organizing as an approach to navigating this tension. She describes the specific case of Nicetown CDC on the north side of Philadelphia as a case of Black feminist-centered community organizing in action. Check out Dr. Drake Rodriguez's new book released in 2021, called [Diverging Space for Deviants: The Politics of Atlanta's Public Housing](#) with the purpose to "demonstrate how necessary the work of public housing and its tenants, planners, policymakers, and administrators was in making the "mecca" of Atlanta: a place for a thriving and sustained Black middle- and working-class." Order it [here](#).

WHAT WE'RE LEARNING: RACIAL BIAS IN DATA ASSESSMENT

Chapin Hall recently developed a first of its kind tool to [apply a racial equity lens to research](#). The tool assesses survey datasets for racial and ethnic bias. It provides a clear way for researchers to determine if survey data they plan to analyze were collected with a racial equity lens or not. Using the [Racial Bias in Data Assessment Tool](#) could lead to less racially biased research. The Racial Bias in Data Assessment Tool is available to anyone interested in assessing a survey dataset for potential racial and ethnic bias. The research team plans to collect feedback from researchers who use the tool to inform future revisions. The Chapin Hall research team is led by Senior Researcher Dr. [Tiffany Burkhardt](#) and includes researchers Lee Ann Huang, Reiko Kakuyama-Villaber, and Aida Pacheco-Applegate.

JOIN OUR COLLEAGUES: OPPORTUNITIES IN CLEVELAND + BOSTON

Cleveland: Cleveland Purpose Built Communities is hiring a [Project Manager](#). Purpose Built Communities (PBC) is a national model of holistic community revitalization. The model is built around education, health and wellness, and housing. Locally, Cleveland Purpose Built Communities (CLE PBC) is being led by Burten, Bell Carr, Development Inc. in the Buckeye-Woodhill neighborhood.

Boston: Our colleagues Samantha Texier and Rebekah Levine Coley at Boston College are [hiring a postdoc](#) for the study Targeting Health Disparities through Housing Redevelopment: A Natural Experiment of Housing Quality, Stability, and Economic Integration. The study capitalizes on the redevelopment of New England's oldest public housing development into a mixed-income community and residents will be exposed to systematically-varying housing and community contexts. They will be using an innovative multi-methods, quasi-experimental design that will combine longitudinal child and parent surveys, biological data, direct environmental assessments, in depth qualitative interviews and observations, and local and national administrative data to follow 600 households (including children, youth, adults, and older adults). They are interested in hiring a

postdoctoral fellow with a clearly articulated portfolio of research aimed at racial and economic equity, housing and neighborhood contexts, health equity, and/or community-engaged research. Check out more about this fascinating opportunity [here](#).

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