

Democratizing Development through Creative Collaboration

Blights
Out

Blights Out

CURRENT RESEARCH

The distressed houses left behind are not eyesores; they are heirlooms of New Orleans' collective history and seeds for the future

A majority-black, working class neighborhood and home to an abundance of creative energy, Lower Mid-City/Upper Tremé of New Orleans has battled disinvestment by the city for more than five decades. Generations of population decline, business closures, and falling property values have worsened after Hurricane Katrina left a deep scar of blight, and the neighborhood stands facing "urban renewal strategies" by top-down development schemes that are rocking up property values and alienating people from the decision making process. Led by Lisa Sigal, Imani Jacqueline Brown, and Carl Joe Williams, Blights Out is a collaborative and creative initiative to unite residents, artists, architects, and organizers in the design of a new, inclusive model for development. By pulling together resources and reconciling communities, Blights Out hopes to provide an effective model for ethical investment and preservation of the cultural heritage of New Orleans neighborhoods, equipping people to lead rather than be led or pushed by the development.

Therefore, Blights Out's research can potentially reverse the negative impact of gentrification and create solutions for permanent and affordable housing. Allowing people to sit with abandoned houses, photograph them, and experience the sensory environment, Blights Out's experiential method of "performing architecture" brings people together to understand the region's history and how development actually functions in the city, so that blighted properties will not become merely renovated, modernized structures that will uproot historically black neighborhoods, but respectable architecture full of potential life true to the region's indigenous ecosystem. Drawing on New Orleans' traditions...

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AFFILIATION

 Tulane University

AWARDS

- Exhibition at Newcomb Art Museum at Tulane University, Spring 2017
- Collaboration with artist Jan Mun, A Studio in the Woods Artist Residency, Tulane University professor Howard Mielke, and A Community Voice, Spring 2016
- "Controls and Counteractions", exhibition at Antenna Gallery, November 2015
- Workshop at National Organization of Minority Architects Annual Conference, October 2015
- Featured non-profit beneficiary, The Foundation Gallery, September 2015 Exhibition
- and 5 more...

RESEARCH AREAS

Humanities, Law / Ethics, Performing Arts, Political Science

FUNDING REQUEST

Blights Out unites people and pulls together resources to create healthy, thriving, and collaborative development processes in the blighted properties of New Orleans. Donations will help fund the \$162K needed for property acquisition in 2015-16, for the cultural resource center that will involve cultural events, media, personnel, and artist fees; and the \$75K required for the subsequent years post purchase of property and construction. Help revive the homes of Upper Tremé and keep their stories alive!

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