

SUBTEXT

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WCT

Women Changing Transportation (WCT) began in 2019 as an effort to foster community among women in the transportation field, recognizing the shared challenges of misogyny faced in a field dominated by men and masculine-normative ideals of success. We envisioned WCT as a space where the power of shared experiences could be recognized, healing could occur, and shared solutions and actions could be developed.

As the program grew, we recognized that its goals and parameters also required growth. The program needed to acknowledge the context in which we live, how identities shape experience, and how that forms a basis for relationships.

In our initial desire to create a space for women, we overlooked the need to start by listening to the experiences of the women in the group. We needed to explore how their experiences were defined by differences, and to ground the group in a shared understanding. We particularly missed the need to center the voices of Black and brown women, who cannot extricate those identities from what it means to be a woman working in transportation, and moving in the world. As driven as we all were to fix a flawed field, interrogating how our group was complicit in advancing ideologies—particularly relating to work—that establish racial and social hierarchy

and “masculine-normative” ideas needed to be the foundation of any collective action.

2020 came and threw us for a loop, forcing us to interrogate these larger questions, and what it means to be “othered”. When we started the year, we hoped to rectify what we had missed in setting the foundation of the 2019 cohort, but we now had to navigate creating a virtual community during a global health emergency. The murder of George Floyd in May 2020 brought the legacy of America’s structural racism into full focus and accentuated the importance of centering the voices of Black and brown women in our own group.

This project is an effort to hold space for those voices. We were inspired by the zine tradition, rooted in counterculture and social justice, and grounded by low-fi DIY style. This project attempts to honor and respect that tradition by creating space for women to share stories of/experiences in/reflections on the field in their own words, through the mediums that most resonate with them.



ASHLEY PRYCE



STEPHANIE LOTSHAW

MY FRIEND
MY FRIEND
MY FRIEND
MY FRIEND
MY FRIEND

MONICA G.
TIBBITS-NUTT

DOROTHY MAE RICHARDSON
5/3/1922-4/28/1991

Dorothy Mae was a woman of color whose work and life focused on protecting her neighborhood on the North Side of Pittsburgh. During the 1960s, she created a model of community investment meant to combat the detrimental impacts of redlining and so-called urban renewal. She fought for the right of residents to be able to live in adequately maintained dwellings, arguing that the blight of the slums was due to landlord neglect and not a reflection on the residents themselves.

In her work, Richardson made connections between housing, transportation, and economic development, noting that white communities received unequal investments in their housing and transportation infrastructure. Even as the transit options increased in Pittsburgh, those options rarely served to connect communities of color to the broader region—instead, those communities were repeatedly dissected and isolated by both highway and rail expansion projects.

Throughout her work, Richardson shows a deep understanding not just of policy issues, but of the impact that policies and prejudice have on the lived experiences of the individual tenants for whom she fought.

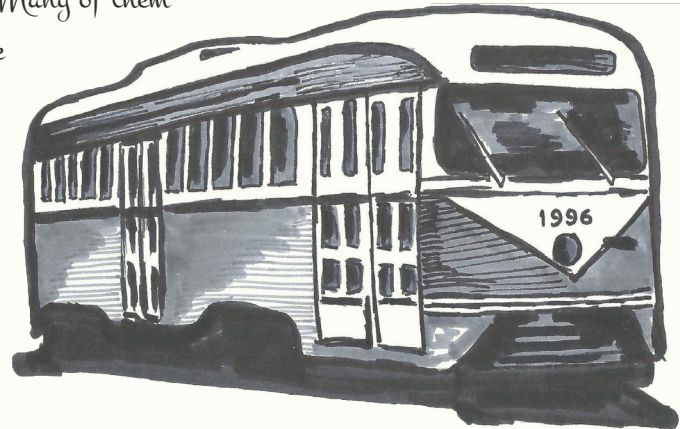
OCTAVIA HILL
12/3/1838-8/13/1912

A white Englishwoman, Octavia Hill spent her life attempting to genuinely improve the living conditions of the British poor and working class. At a time when such an approach was quite unusual, Hill focused on concretely addressing both substandard living conditions and available infrastructure. She recognized the extent to which residents of the ‘slums’ were cut off from employment and educational opportunities, and were living in (literally) the waste of new transportation innovations to which they had no access. In addition to working to improve tenants’ physical spaces, she was also working with the individual residents to connect them with essential services and to fight for better access to the transportation services that might take them to those services. In doing so, Hill improved innumerable lives among a population oppressed by bureaucratic decision making.

My Friend,

Transportation and it's availability or lack there of continue to plague the slums and any effort for those neighborhoods to rise up above the poverty and prejudice that they experience. Housing and transportation are linked and so is the continued barring of access for those in low income communities. We are plagued by transportation costs and unequal access to that transportation. Our community wasn't always like this. Our neighborhoods were more integrated. They were well kept and were valued and invested in. Then the city wanted change, wanted a new vision, wanted a modern place for its residents. This led to the suggestion of clearing out the Lower Hill. Over 8,000 families were removed. People were forced from their neighborhoods and their homes so the city could have a new civic arena. Where did those families go, what happened to their neighbors? They were displaced to neighborhoods that reflected their race. All of the white families left. Many of them

to the suburbs where investments were made to improve these new neighborhoods. For the communities of color, they were left with neighborhoods that were forgotten and neglected. Those



with a choice left, those of us who chose to stay were faced with renewed segregation that in no way reflected the places we grew up. This exodus, this abandonment, created the segregation we are fighting to this day. Our transportation costs are higher, we have unreliable transit options, and the new highway system to better connect white suburbs to jobs and education runs right through our neighborhoods. Through not to. That traffic flow operates in one direction and white suburbanites made sure that transit would not allow that one way trip to bring the "others" back to their communities. We have been walled in. While the world moves around us, we are stuck. Stuck in the physical embodiment of segregation. As more and more of the way we move caters to these suburbs, gone are the bus routes taking our kids to better schools. Gone are the buses connecting my neighbors to jobs. Instead of more transit, we get highways. We get cars many can't afford traveling to places we aren't allowed. Transportation investment and disinvestment are our Jim Crow. Policies and practices meant to increase segregation not encourage integration. All I can do is continue to work for my neighbors and for my neighborhood. Our group will continue to fight. Continue to push with the hope of a future better world. A better world for our communities. A world connected to all of the opportunities and experiences that every human should be afforded. That world is what we fight for. That world is what we dream for our people.

Dorothy

My Friend,

We are being displaced. As London pushes into the modern age, they build roads and rails to address the issues of constipated roadways. These new paths run through the slums and the shantytowns throughout the city. It isn't just the roads or the rails that divide, it is the infrastructure to accommodate these new railways. They need land to run their trains and they need places to house and maintain their growing fleets. The easiest and most cost effective way to do this is clear out the slums to make room for better transport options for the middle and upper class citizens. They use these transportation improvements as a reason to remove neighborhoods and cut them off from the modern comforts that these advents enable. These great inventions and drivers of increased prosperity come at the cost of the slums and the shanties. It comes at the cost of tens of thousands of men, women, and children. Tenants who have been evicted because their rights are not as important as the needs of a modern growing city. Now what was once an unintended effect of railway needs has become an exceptional tool to use to rid the city of undesirable neighborhoods. Slum clearance has become more and more prevalent in the push towards modernization and increased prosperity. They clear these properties not only to benefit wealthier residents, but to erase slum dwellers. The slum dwellers are left with nowhere to go and nowhere to belong.



They can neither afford the rents of safer dwellings and will have forever been blocked from the neighborhoods built on top of their tenements. All we can do is work. Build upon previously dilapidated properties to give tenants a safe, clean place to live. Instead of destroying these properties and building anew, we work to fix them. We work to manage them. We train the tenants how to care for these homes. To care for themselves. All we have is each other and the hope of a better world. One in which we all have the opportunity to create a better life. The opportunity to want more and have a sliver of hope in attaining it. This is the world we all deserve.

Octavia Hill

My Friend,

How do I make people understand that my neighborhood is worth saving? When they look at our neighborhoods, all they see are slums. They don't see all of the people who deserve a safe and clean place to live. When leaders and decision makers see the slums, they blame those of us who live here. Every bad thing is thrown on us, and it isn't fair. They don't blame the landlords. They don't see that they are taking advantage of poverty and prejudice. The slum dwellers aren't just poor; they're black. You cannot imagine the hatred they face because of their skin color. This racism makes our neighborhoods not just ignored like those you worked with, but targeted because they see us as undeserving of better neighborhoods. They see us as lesser. They will not help us, so we must help ourselves. We both know that change has to come from the residents. I held a block party last week to help teach younger residents how to clean. I want them to understand



that after you scrape grime and grease off baseboards and haul rubbish away, you begin to have a place you can be proud of. I realized that we need to teach residents how to maintain their properties. So many of these residents don't know any better because no one has

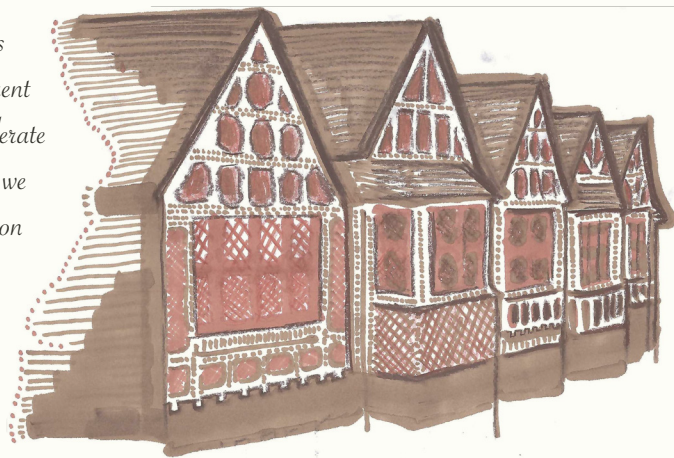
taken the time to teach them. Despite all of this, we can't get officials to take our problems seriously. I need them to force the landlords to make needed repairs. These landlords are exploiting the outside views of our neighborhoods to continue to do nothing. It must sound very similar to the fight you had in saving your neighborhood. Maybe we can't force the landlords; perhaps we need to manage the properties as you have done. Instead of working with slumlords, build and maintain properties where tenants are seen as human. I know that you worked with a benefactor to fund your properties, but we do not have that option. We are beginning to focus on obtaining loans for tenants to buy homes. Now we need to find partners willing to lend. I am meeting with some banks to see if they might consider loaning money to the residents. I know that many of them think that the residents are too high risk and that they won't pay back their loans. We need to show them that they can and will make those payments. You've shown that working class people can and will pay for these properly maintained homes. We need a chance to prove it can work here as well.

Dorothy

My Friend,

The burden of the problems before you has been heavy, and the constant need of the job has required so much of you and your time. Shedding light on a forgotten group of people is difficult if you do not recognize that the conditions of these properties is a set of not only physical conditions but more importantly of human conditions. Our members of Parliament focus their efforts on planning and building what the ideal property could be. It is a much easier task than what is before us. The harder work is understanding what tenants face now and what needs to be done to improve their lives. I have tried to find housing for the slum dwellers but none exist. The only solution was to become the landlord myself. We have spent much time removing the vermin, cleaning filthy walls, and clearing all plumbing issues. As we repair these buildings, it is important to repair the tenants themselves. It is important for tenants to take responsibility for their circumstances and

their homes. The tenants must be diligent in their rent payment. We do not tolerate arrears and through this we have been able to return on the investment made by our benefactor. This continued return while modest has enabled us to attract new backers



and obtain additional properties. This is not the design of the existing poor relief system that the Poor Law Boards have employed, but a recognition that every individual has a contribution to make to the common life and is immeasurably poorer if they are not enabled to make it and that therefore the only cure for the ills of society lies in the conversion and education of the individual. The tenants need training, access, and opportunities to improve their lives. Every new

innovation of this modern age makes the lot of the slum dwellers more bleak. These unskilled laborers do not have the luxury of model industrial dwellings that the artisan class enjoy. Without this type of housing, tenants have few options for employment. Without transport they must find employment in or around the properties. The advent of the single horse-drawn omnibus did much to provide those in the middle class suburbs access to the city and all of the jobs located there. This service was built for the middle and upper classes and the slums are where they dumped the dung of the horses that pull these new buses. This forgotten population not only suffered from every possible disadvantage, but are blocked out of this new and modern way of moving through the city. My greatest fear is that at best this new bus service will continue to divide the slums and the tenants from the rest of decent society and at worst further displace those with no where else to go.

Octavia Hill

**JOIN THE
MOVEMENT,
SHARE
WIDELY
AND OFTEN**



**JOIN THE
MOVEMENT**