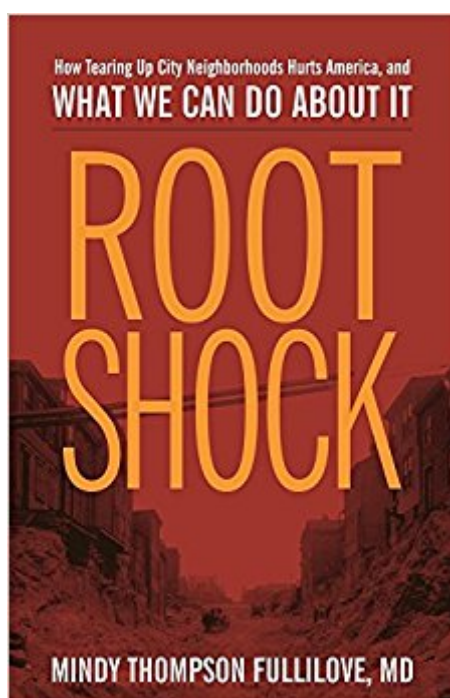


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Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, And What We Can Do About It



Synopsis

Like a sequel to the prescient warnings of urbanist Jane Jacobs, Dr. Mindy Thompson Fullilove reveals the disturbing outcome of decades of urban renewal projects to communities of color. For those whose homes and neighborhoods were bulldozed, the urban modernization projects that swept America starting in 1949 were nothing short of an assault. Vibrant city blocks—places rich in culture—were torn apart by freeways and other invasive development, blatantly devastating the lives of poor residents. Fullilove passionately describes the profound traumatic stress—the “root shock”—that results when a neighborhood is demolished. She estimates that federal and state urban renewal programs, spearheaded by business and real estate interests, destroyed 1,600 African American districts in cities across the United States. But urban renewal didn’t just disrupt black communities: the anger it caused led to riots that sent whites fleeing for the suburbs, stripping them of their sense of place as well. It also left big gashes in the centers of cities that are only now slowly being repaired. Focusing on the Hill District of Pittsburgh, the Central Ward in Newark, and the small Virginia city of Roanoke, Dr. Fullilove argues powerfully against policies of displacement. Understanding the damage caused by root shock is crucial to coping with its human toll and helping cities become whole. Mindy Thompson Fullilove, MD, is a research psychiatrist at New York State Psychiatric Institute and professor of clinical psychiatry and public health at Columbia University. She is the author of five books.

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Customer Reviews

Fullilove (*The House of Joshua*) looks at the effect of urban renewal on black neighborhoods across the country and finds a well of emotional pain in this engagingly written but uneven book. According to Fullilove, the federal Housing Act of 1949 and its bulldozing of neighborhoods to make room for malls, freeways and parking lots left African-Americans at an enormous social, economic and emotional disadvantage. The experience of losing one's roots, she notes, "does not end with emergency treatment, but will stay with the individual for a lifetime." To illustrate this point, Fullilove, a professor of clinical psychiatry and public health at Columbia University, travels to gutted neighborhoods in Philadelphia; Pittsburgh, Pa.; and Roanoke, Va., and intersperses her analysis with before and after photos and testimony from displaced residents. "What must be heard in these stories of urban renewal-their emotional core-is the howl of amputation, the anguish at calamity unassuaged," she writes. She laments the disappearance of the overlapping networks that once existed in small black communities: the corner stores, shared gardens and neighbors who "automatically came." Urban renewal may have allowed some black families to move to nicer homes or neighborhoods, she concludes, but "the buffering effect of the kindness was lost." Fullilove is at her best conveying the emotions of displaced residents and their mixed feelings about relocation, gentrification and the loss of community ties. She is less successful in bringing in citations from her own studies in health policy, as well as the work of historically various urban planners such as Michel Cantal-Dupart, Georges-Eugene Haussmann and Jane Addams. The result is a somewhat disjointed examination of a complicated subject that isn't quite for general readers and isn't quite for academics, either. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Starred Review As a professor of clinical psychiatry and public health at Columbia, Fullilove brings a perhaps unconventional but ideal resume to an understanding of the cultural devastation, or "root shock," that urban renewal has brought upon the African American community. By the author's estimate, some 1,600 black neighborhoods nationwide were demolished by urban renewal in the 1950s and 1960s. In their place were erected interstate highway networks, sports stadiums, office towers, woeful public housing, and vast public-works projects--which wiped out black neighborhoods altogether, split them apart, or isolated them from the rest of their communities. Focusing on specific black neighborhoods in Pittsburgh, Newark, Philadelphia, and Roanoke, Virginia, the author brings together a patchwork of oral histories, aerial photographs, charts, and personal narrative to connect the dots between a prewar black community that was richly complex and mutually supportive and a twenty-first-century community at violent odds with itself. "How easy

it is to hurt each other," one interviewee explains, "because we are not that close anymore. We are not family anymore." Solutions are not easy, of course, but Fullilove puts forth an aesthetic of true "urban renewal" from which urban planners and thinking citizens can draw inspiration.

Notwithstanding its shortcomings of East Coast bias and loose organization, *Root Shock* brings transformative insights to this American dilemma. Alan Moores
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We were given this book to read for summer reading before school started this fall. I wasn't sure what to expect when I got the book. I was afraid that it was going to be a typical text book snooze fest, but I was pleasantly surprised with what I found. It's a book about people. People with stories. Stories of how their lives were affected by urban renewal. The author gives you a look at these people through a psychological perspective, and from the get go helps the reader understand root shock in a very practical way. I was waiting for her to cover the city of Detroit, but maybe that'll be in a future book that she writes. Roanoke, Pittsburgh and parts of Jersey are the cities she covers. Very well worth the read. Thumbs up.

This is a very moving and highly informative discussion of a phenomenon often ignored by city planners and developers. I highly recommend it for social scientists, city planners and developers, as well as laypeople.

A beautifully written book that provides new and profound perspectives on "displacement" of peoples. In this case, the black population of certain cities where, under the name "urban renewal", whole swaths of cities were destroyed and the people "relocated". Touching and wise.

I started reading the book for a school requirement. I must say I found it very enjoyable, the language is easy to follow and understand, and Dr. Fullilove has a great way of getting you to understand how the American population felt during urban renewal and what urban renewal did to many people on a more personal level. She also reaches deep to help the reader understand the importance in communities and community relationships.

I moved to Roanoke and am working in nonprofits. To have this background information is invaluable.

This Book goes far to explaining why there seems to be a lack of a sense of community among too many of our young inner-city youths and young adults. We have destroyed a lot more than "Slums." We have divested millions of people through Eminent Domain of that spirit of togetherness that makes a grouping of people a distinct neighborhood, where self-pride, dignity, and group identity can thrive, and cause future generations to aspire to become like the great members of their society. "Urban Renewal," is a misnomer, a social monster, that must be stopped. I have written a similar Book: "In The Streets of Vinegar Hill, 2007." (Get it at .com.) I'm dealing with the same problems in Charlottesville, Virginia that Fullilove dealt with in Roanoke, Virginia. My hat is off to Fullilove. She is a great, inspirational writer and thinker. Her Book is a must-read for anyone wishing to understand the multiplicity of problems facing poor people in contemporary American society.

this is a great book. seriously, everyone should read this book. it's informative, smart, easy to read and incredibly interesting.

The reason I like this book is because it is different from other books on urban planning and urban 'renewal'. If you have read more than 2 books on urban renewal, you notice they start to sound the same! So Fullilove, being a psychiatrist and not an urban planning professional, brings a different, fresh perspective to the issues. That being said, I do question some of her assertions, which is why I don't rate the book with more stars. For one, referring to the 1967 Newark riots as 'insurrections'. It was a riot! Also, she sidesteps the positive affects of urban renewal. Lastly, I question whether it was urban renewal that lead to the downfall of the inner city communities, as Fullilove asserts, or the breakdown of the family. The issues are all intertwined, but I personally don't buy her arguments that urban renewal was the main cause.

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