# Painting a Picture with Census Data: Displacement in Columbia Heights, D.C. 2000-2020
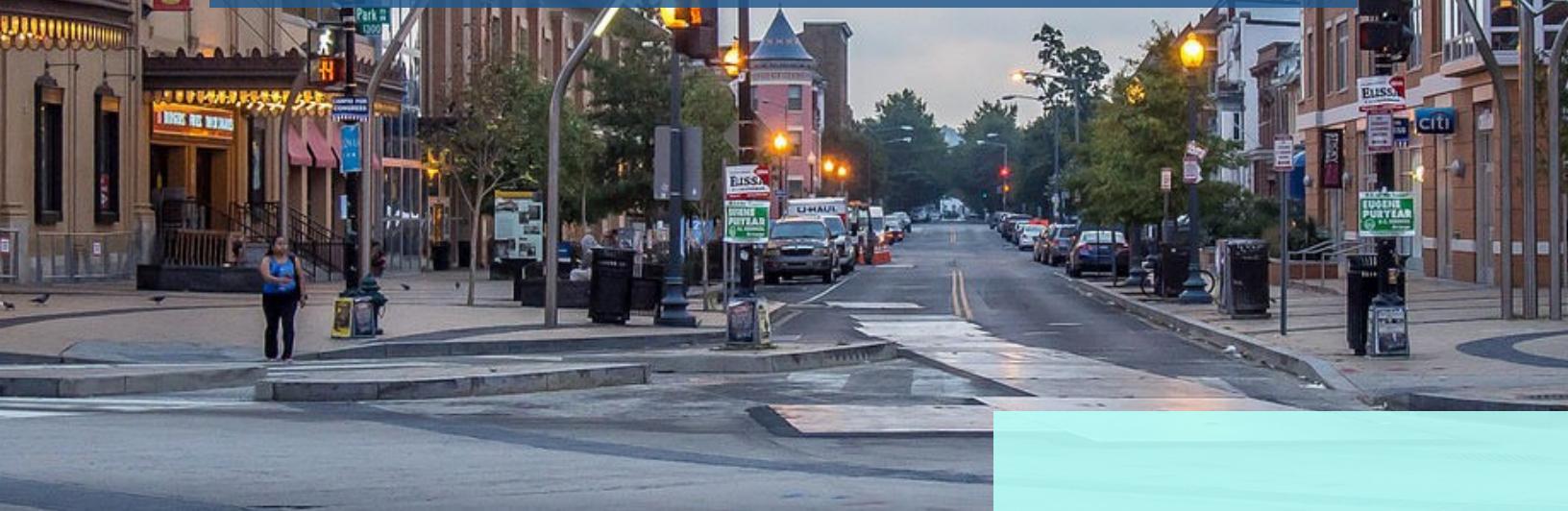
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# Foreword

## Who We Are

Change All Souls Housing Corporation is a D.C.-based nonprofit organization that has been committed to promoting affordable housing to the Columbia Heights neighborhood and beyond for over 45 years.

# Introduction

## Why We Conducted This Report

According to a study from the National Community Reinvestment Coalition, between 2000 and 2013, the District of Columbia had the highest percentage of gentrifying neighborhoods.

With the release of new Census data from 2020, Change All Souls Housing Corporation put together a report measuring displacement in the Columbia Heights neighborhood of D.C. using Decennial Census data from 2000, 2010, and 2020.

# Methods

## 🖥 The Data We Used

To look at demographic changes in Columbia Heights in terms of race, we used Decennial Census data. After 2009, income data was collected using the American Community Survey rather than the Decennial Census, so we used data from the American Community Survey for 2010 and 2020, while looking at income data from the Decennial Census in 2000.

## 🌐 Measures

To measure displacement in Columbia Heights, we looked at how populations of different racial groups changed between 2000, 2010, and 2020. We measured the percentage of families below the poverty line to assess wealth in the neighborhood.

## 〰 Analysis

To analyze the data, we looked at the changes from 2000 to 2010 and compared that to the changes from 2010 to 2020. We hypothesized possible factors contributing to these changes and made predictions about how the neighborhood will continue to change in the future.

# Key Findings from Race Data

In Columbia Heights between 2000 and 2020, the number of White residents increased, while the number of Black and Hispanic residents decreased. Black and brown individuals were displaced at alarming rates. As seen on the graph below, the Black population was the largest racial group in Columbia Heights in 2000, while the White population was the largest racial group in 2020.

**Columbia Heights Population by Racial Group**

| | 2000 | 2010 | 2020 |
|---|---|---|---|
| White Population | 16% | | 39% |
| Black Population | 55% | | 31% |
| Hispanic or Latino Population | 36% | | 26% |

● = Percentage of total population
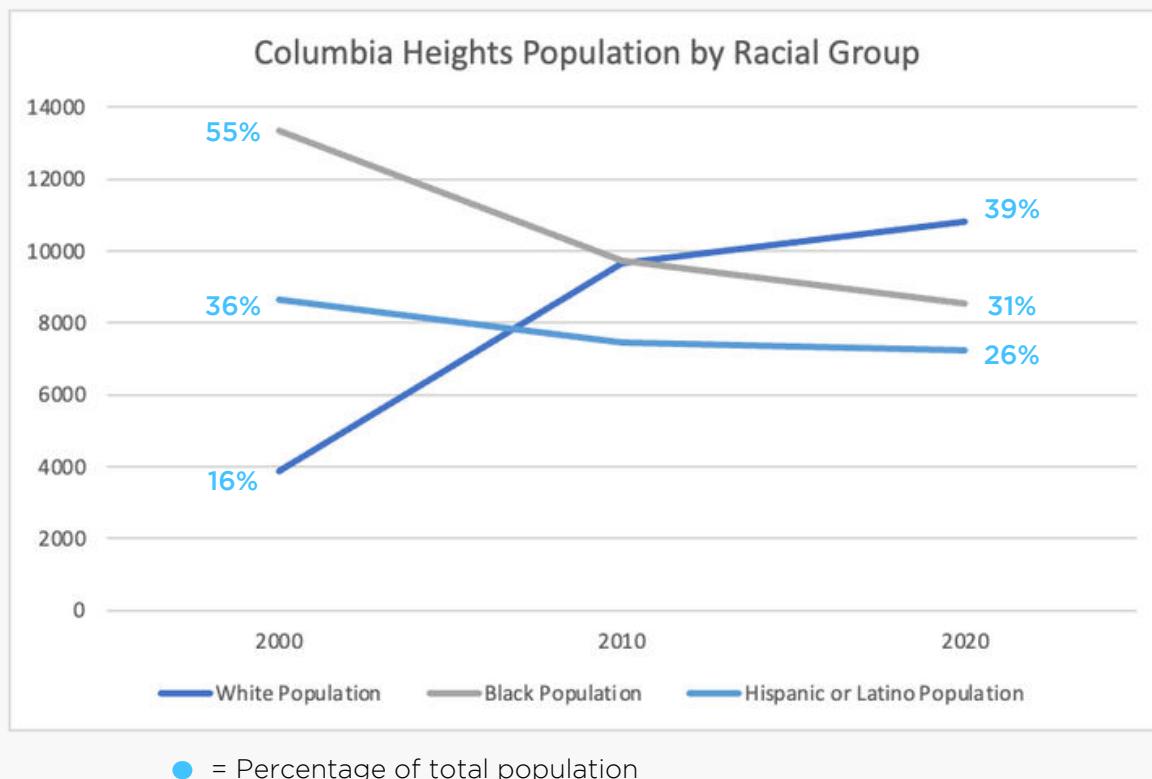
# 1 White Population

The White population in Columbia Heights increased from 3,887 in 2000 to 9,664 in 2010 and 10,802 in 2020. This resulted in a 149% increase in the White population between 2000 and 2010. There was also a 12% increase between 2010 and 2020.

| Year | White Population |
|------|------------------|
| 2000 | 3,887 |
| 2010 | 9,664 |
| 2020 | 10,802 |

# 2 Black and African American Population

The number of people in Columbia Heights identifying as Black or African American decreased from 13,332 in 2000 to 9,739 in 2010. This was an over 26% decrease.

The population decreased again to 8,541 in 2020, falling by over 12%. Although the change from 2010 to 2020 was less drastic, the Black or African American population still decreased by over 1,000 individuals.

| Year | Black or African American Population |
|------|--------------------------------------|
| 2000 | 13,332 |
| 2010 | 9,739 |
| 2020 | 8,541 |

# 3 Hispanic or Latino Population

The percentage of people in Columbia Heights identifying as Hispanic or Latino decreased from 8,638 in 2000 to 7,450 in 2010 and 7,247 in 2020. This resulted in a 14% decrease from 2000 to 2010. The Hispanic or Latino population stayed relatively stable between 2010 and 2020, seeing only a 3% decrease.

Although the changes in this population are not as dramatic as those seen in the White and Black populations, they represent over 1,000 people possibly displaced.

| Year | Hispanic or Latino Population |
|------|------------------------------|
| 2000 | 8,638 |
| 2010 | 7,450 |
| 2020 | 7,247 |

# Income Changes

## More Wealth, but at What Cost?

In addition to race demographic changes, we found that Columbia Heights became wealthier from 2000 to 2020. Less families in the area fell below the poverty line each year. This could be due to displacement or existing families gaining wealth.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Percentage of residents below the poverty line in 2000 | **27.68%** | |
| Percentage of residents below the poverty line in 2020 | **22.50%** | |

# Possible Influential Factors

## Metro

The Columbia Heights Metro station opened on September 18, 1999. This may account for some of the displacement observed between 2000 and 2010. A metro station may have made the neighborhood more desirable, increasing displacement.

## Target and DC USA

Target at the DC USA mall opened in February 2008, providing shopping resources that may have made the neighborhood more desirable, causing new people to move there.

# Conclusions

In 2000, Columbia Heights neighborhood was a predominately Black and Hispanic neighborhood. The White population experienced a 178% increase between 2000 and 2020, while the Black population saw a 36% decrease during that same time period. Similarly, the Hispanic or Latino population saw a 16% decrease during that same time period. By 2020, the White population was the largest racial group in the neighborhood.

When looking at what may have catalyzed displacement between 2000 and 2020, we found two possible sources: the construction of the Columbia Heights Metro station and the opening of the Target at the DC USA mall. These developments may have made the neighborhood more desirable, encouraging new individuals to move in.

After looking at the Census data, it appears that most of the recent displacement in Columbia Heights occurred between 2000 and 2010, as that was the period where we saw the greatest decrease of black and brown populations. However, there were still decreases in these populations between 2010 and 2020, suggesting that the displacement is ongoing.

Each person displaced from the neighborhood represents someone losing their home, their history, and their heritage. We should work to prevent further displacement of black and brown individuals in our neighborhoods.

# Sources

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