

Speaker connects social justice and public housing

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A professor at Roosevelt University in Chicago, Bradford Hunt gives the keynote lecture on during the City, Culture and Community Graduate Student Symposium at Tulane on Thursday (March 5). (Photo by Cheryl Gerber)

Social scientist [Bradford Hunt](#) has spent years researching public housing, its impact on communities and the implications of its successes and failures on housing policies. At a symposium at Tulane University on Thursday (March 5), he addressed some of the “big questions” about the relationship between social justice and public housing in various cities.

“As part of the social contract of democracy and equality in the U.S., we need to produce and distribute housing in a socially just way,” Hunt said. Public housing initiatives that address social justice through authentic engagement of community members achieve this goal and ensure quality housing for individuals and families, he added.

Hunt, professor of history and social science at Roosevelt University in Chicago, gave the keynote lecture on “Social Justice and Social Order in the City” during the [City, Culture, and Community Graduate Student Symposium](#).

He referred to [B. W. Cooper Development](#) in New Orleans as a public housing initiative that addressed housing as a human right, which local organizers brought up as they protested lack of community outreach in plans to redevelop B. W. Cooper.

“New Orleans has challenged housing authority structure as well as the notion of mixed income housing in its movement for greater community input in these policies,” he said. Mixed-income programs can make communities feel safer but do not necessarily recognize the values of all residents, he said.

According to the researcher, many public housing projects in his hometown of Chicago give the appearance of community input but often neglect it in efforts to align with neoliberal models of housing reform.

Hunt said that the development of public housing in a socially just community needs to account for the values, desires and priorities of the community it aims to provide for, and that failed public housing initiatives can often be explained by a lack of profound, intentional community engagement.

Hannah Dean is a sophomore majoring in Latin American studies and political science at Tulane University.

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