

The Story and Implication of Seizing LA's Bruce Beach from its Black Owners

Links: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6EpUuR7ejy8> [May 3, 2021 (8 mins)]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dzVmdjExc6E> [August 10, 2021 (10 mins)]

Roman Bebotch, narrator and interviewer: "What this park symbolizes to me is a system used to demolish, to rob Black people of their wealth, whatever little amount of wealth they managed to build over the years, system and laws used against them to rob 'em of that wealth. It only makes me wonder how many more Bruce's Beaches are out there? They might not necessarily be by the beach in a rich area, might not be resorts, might not be hotels, but it is the fact that a government used a law to hold back a group of people..." She goes on to point out how systemic racism is the law—in this case eminent domain that allowed L.A. to take the land—that ends up being applied differently depending on your race.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lj_1HNNtv1w [Oct 1, 2021 (4 mins)]

Today's topic focusses on a single case that serves as an example of how land and businesses have been systematically seized from Black Americans by whites, and how "making it right" often ignores how generational wealth would have changed the trajectory of ancestors going forward. Bruce Beach is a premier ocean front tract of land on Los Angeles' Manhattan Beach. Almost 100 years ago, Charles and Willa Bruce created a business resort—complete with a dance hall and beach house. Bruce Beach allowed many Black families their only access to the beach and became a thriving and unique place for families to be able to vacation. White business owners wanted to keep the beach white; in an effort to close the resort, the family was harassed and terrorized, and their property was damaged. In 1924, the land was seized by the city government through eminent domain; the "reasoning" was that the land was needed by the city for a park. However, the land remained undeveloped for the next three decades. While the land has—as of October—been returned, questions abound regarding racist systemic practices, generational wealth lost, and where we go from here.