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Minnesota Constitution, Article XIV: Public Highway System

I'm from Minnesota, which is currently a predominantly progressive state. In presidential elections it has voted essentially always on the progressive side. So, republicans from its inception in the 1860's to ideological flip during the Roosevelt presidency and democratic ever sense. However, it has also experienced its fair share of racism. The race riots and lynchings of the early nineteenth hundreds to the community splitting in the mid nineteenth hundreds to the killings of Jamar Clark and Philando Castille to police brutality. Now our constitution may not blatantly discriminate nor prohibit this behavior but in certain cases it certainly allows it. The one I would like to focus on is the unfair treatment of the African community, Rondo neighborhood in St. Paul that was cut in half during its time of prosperity to create a highway between the industrial cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Up to the 1940's, the residents and businesses of the Rondo Community enjoyed tremendous economic prosperity. This was then uprooted by the introduction of Highway 94. This freeway essentially cut the neighborhood in half displacing 600 homes and countless businesses. Ever since then the area has been unable to recover economically. I used to live in this area and have witnessed this firsthand. I believe there were certain parts of our constitution that allowed this malicious event to take place and a justification to be argued. In article XIV of the Minnesota Constitution it states, "There is hereby created a trunk highway system which

shall be constructed, improved and maintained as public highways by the state”. Another section that connects states, “The definite location of trunk highways numbered 1 through 70 may be relocated as provided by law but no relocation shall cause a deviation from the starting points or terminals nor cause any deviation from the various villages and cities through which the routes are to pass”. These sections allowed for the government to legally do this to this community and justify it. The most egregious part is that one of our own constitutional rights were ignored. The 13th provision in our constitution stated, “Private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation therefore, first paid or secured”. However, these people were not rightly compensated for their property. Although there are no parts of the Minnesota constitution that might not be deliberately racist, there were certain opportunities and times these provisions were either exploited or broken especially when it concerns black people and their community and can discriminate against them.