

“Medicine as Resistance: The First Black-Owned Pharmacy in Maryland and Its Fight for Racial Justice in Segregated Baltimore”

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ABSTRACT

Existing accounts of Old West Baltimore under Jim Crow often highlight pervasive urban blight, systemic segregation, and the turbulence of so-called “urban renewal,” casting Black-owned businesses as peripheral and easily undermined. In contrast, Dr. Howard E. Young—Maryland’s first Black pharmacist—offers a more nuanced perspective. His pharmacy at 1100 Druid Hill Avenue transcended the conventional role of a dispensary: it catalyzed a localized economy, incorporating a pressing shop, a shoemaker, and a haberdasher, thereby forging interdependent networks of financial stability.

Within a medical landscape dominated by white-controlled institutions that routinely excluded Black residents, Young’s Pharmacy pioneered community-based healthcare delivery, forging vital social bonds amid structural neglect. To further complicate this narrative, Dr. Nellie Louise Young—Maryland’s first Black female physician—extended her family’s legacy, advancing healthcare advocacy that particularly benefited Black women. By centering on the intertwined histories of the Young family’s pharmacy at 1100 and 1140 Druid Hill Avenue, this paper draws on archival materials, municipal records, and periodicals to contest reductive urban renewal narratives. Further, utilizing the empirical and theoretical frameworks established by historians and sociologists such as Antero Pietila and Samuel Kelton Roberts, which examine the interplay of race, class, health policies, segregation, and community organizing in Baltimore, this paper situates Dr. Young’s pharmacy within broader patterns of structural inequity. Instead of viewing Black-owned businesses as marginal or under-resourced, it illuminates them as sites of strategic resistance, civic engagement, and public health innovation. In revisiting this overlooked story, we recognize these institutions as indispensable agents of empowerment and racial justice.

Keywords: History of Baltimore, medical humanities, Jim Crow era, urban renewal, public health, community resilience, civil rights, racial justice

INTRODUCTION

The weathered sign hanging above the door of Dr. Howard E. Young’s pharmacy bore a simple yet powerful message: “H. E. Young’s Drug Store:

OPEN TO ALL” (Maryland Center for History and Culture, 1915, 1919, 1920, 1945). The three-story building, characteristic of mid-twentieth century Baltimore, seamlessly blended into its surroundings with its weathered and unadorned appearance. Located in the present-day Old West Baltimore Historic District, the building bears visible signs of age, with cracked bricks and warped floorboards hinting at years of wear (Housing Authority of Baltimore City, 1938d, 1938c). The building housed Maryland’s first Black-owned pharmacy, alongside three other Black-owned businesses—a pressing shop, a shoemaker, and a haberdasher—emanating a stark yet unyielding presence (Housing Authority of Baltimore City, 1938d, 1938c). However, beneath its worn exterior, the Young’s Pharmacy at 1100 Druid Hill Avenue was no ordinary pharmacy. It was the first Black-owned pharmacy in Maryland, providing essential healthcare to Black Americans excluded by Jim Crow laws and standing as a beacon of strength for Black Baltimoreans against the pervasive forces of institutional racism (Maryland Center for History and Culture, 1915, 1919, 1920, 1945).

By the mid-twentieth century, Baltimore’s urban renewal policies targeted neighborhoods like Druid Hill, uprooting Black communities and threatening indispensable institutions—among them Dr. Young’s pharmacy (Pietila, 2010, 2018; Gaspaire, 2017; Roberts, 2008; Gomez, 2015). For Dr. Young, this confrontation was both professional and personal: as a caregiver and neighbor, he resisted policies designed to fracture the network of services his community depended on. Under the weight of Jim Crow and deliberately inequitable development strategies, Black Americans were denied basic healthcare, medicine, printing, and gathering spaces (Williams, 2004; Pietila, 2010, 2018; Gaspaire, 2017; Roberts, 2009; Gomez, 2015). His pharmacy, now in the crosshairs of systemic discrimination, became a frontline symbol of both the community’s vulnerability and resilience (Williams, 2004; Pietila, 2010, 2018).

Figure 1. Dr. Howard E. Young, Pharmacist – Maryland Center for History and Culture. Maryland Center for History and Culture (1915).



Note. Photograph of pharmacist Dr. Howard E. Young in Young’s Pharmacy at 1100 Druid Hill Avenue in Baltimore, Maryland. Repository: H. Furlong Baldwin Library,

Maryland Center for History and Culture. Language(s): English. Collection Number: PP283. Dimensions: 9.25 x 7.25 inches (14 x 11 inches mounted). Object ID: PP283.28. Extent: 1 print. Resource ID: 1038.

It is crucial to understand the intertwined history of 1140 Druid Hill Avenue and 1100 Druid Hill Avenue, as they both played pivotal roles in the legacy of Dr. Howard E. Young and his family. The Young family resided at 1100 Druid Hill Avenue, which was also where Dr. Young initially operated his pharmacy (Maryland Center for History and Culture, 1915, 1919, 1920, 1945). By 1938, the flourishing success of the business enabled him to expand the pharmacy to a new location within the same block, at 1140 Druid Hill Avenue (Maryland Center for History and Culture, 1915, 1919, 1920, 1945). While the family continued to live at 1100, the move to 1140 symbolized the growth and impact of the pharmacy, cementing its role as a cornerstone of community care and empowerment (Baltimore's Civil Rights Heritage, 2011). Additionally, by 1938, Dr. Young's daughter had started her medical practice at 1100 Druid Hill Avenue, further emphasizing the family's commitment to serving their community ((Maryland Center for History and Culture, 1915, 1919, 1920, 1945). This profoundly interwoven connection between 1140 and 1100 Druid Hill Avenue underscores the Young family's dedication to fostering both healthcare and community resilience, setting the stage for a deeper examination of the contrasting perceptions surrounding 1140 Druid Hill Avenue's significance (Baltimore's Civil Rights Heritage, 2011).

The contrasting narratives surrounding Young's Pharmacy at 1140 Druid Hill Avenue reveal a stark divide. The Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) dismissed the pharmacy as unremarkable, categorizing it as part of a deteriorating slum and undervaluing its significance to the community (Baltimore City Directory, 1914; Baltimore Emergency Relief Commission, 1934). In sharp contrast, Black Baltimorean communities and local historians celebrate Dr. Young as a central figure of the Black professional class, emphasizing his pivotal role in providing healthcare and fostering socioeconomic empowerment. Despite the Housing Authority of Baltimore City's dismissal, Dr. Young's unwavering commitment to his community and the vital services his pharmacy offered demonstrate that this second view from the Black Baltimorean communities holds far greater merit (Baltimore City Archives, 1968,). By providing essential medical care and serving as hubs for community solidarity, spaces like the pharmacy and 1140 Druid Hill Avenue became anchors of resilience for their community, further challenging the prevailing narrative.

This essay delves into the contrasting narratives surrounding Dr. Howard E. Young's Pharmacy and its significance within Baltimore's Black community. It examines the depiction of the pharmacy by the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) as an underfunded and unremarkable establishment, juxtaposed with the community's recognition of its role as a hub for resilience and empowerment. By challenging the HABC's reductive perspective, the essay highlights how Dr. Young's Pharmacy fostered economic independence, community solidarity, and activism during an era of

systemic racism. It further explores the broader implications of urban renewal policies that threatened the socioeconomic autonomy of Black neighborhoods, emphasizing the pharmacy's enduring legacy in the fight for justice and equality. Understanding the history of Young's Pharmacy (located at 1100 Druid Hill Avenue) and 1140 Druid Hill Avenue is essential because it underscores how systemic discrimination can dismantle vital community spaces, all while underscoring the resilience of Black Baltimoreans in resisting these injustices. By preserving its legacy, we honor not only the resilience and solidarity forged within its walls but also the broader fight for justice and equality that continues to shape our collective history.

Figure 2. Photographs of 1140 Druid Hill Avenue (Left) and 1100 Druid Hill Avenue. The Young Family lived in 1100 Druid Hill and their pharmacy originally operated there. They later expanded their business and relocated the pharmacy to 1140 Druid Hill.



Note. BRG48-39-4-17-1, Baltimore City Archives: Department of Housing and Community Development records; Housing Authority of Baltimore City Survey Photographs, 1938-1941. Housing Authority of Baltimore City. (1938b and 1938d, October 28). Housing Survey for 1100 Druid Hill Ave. January 17, 1938. Record Group 48, Series 39, Box 4, Folder "1100 Druid Hill Ave." Housing Survey for 1140 Druid Hill Ave. May 11, 1938. Record Group 48, Series 37, Box 6, Folder "1140 Druid Hill Ave."

SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES: URBAN RENEWAL AND THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON HOUSING IN BALTIMORE

The 1934 Joint Committee on Housing in Baltimore offers a vital lens for understanding the systemic challenges faced by Black communities in West Baltimore, highlighting the intersection of urban renewal policies, racial segregation, and economic disenfranchisement. At its core, the Committee framed urban blight as a growing threat to Baltimore's economic and social stability, using this framing to justify discriminatory rehabilitation plans targeting Black neighborhoods (The Joint Committee on Housing, 1934). Through its report, the Committee painted Black communities as vectors of urban decay, casting residents as the root cause of declining property values, overcrowding, and public health crises, such as tuberculosis (The Joint Committee on Housing, 1934).

The report identified six areas, most of which were Black-majority neighborhoods, as zones requiring rehabilitation (The Joint Committee on Housing, 1934). Rather than acknowledging the structural inequities that led to deteriorating housing conditions, such as redlining and disinvestment, the Committee pathologized Black residents and their communities (The Joint Committee on Housing, 1934). For instance, the report described areas like Druid Hill Avenue as “usable only for Negro habitation” due to supposed health hazards, sidestepping the systemic neglect that fostered these conditions (The Joint Committee on Housing, 1934). It went further to recommend the displacement of Black families from certain neighborhoods under the pretense of improving health and safety, while simultaneously proposing investments and redevelopment exclusively for white residents (The Joint Committee on Housing, 1934). This racialized strategy was not only deeply inequitable but also perpetuated existing disparities, ensuring that Black residents remained economically marginalized and socially stigmatized.

Figure 3. Exhibit B: Six Blighted Areas in Baltimore, Maryland, dated January 1934.

		1	2	3	SECTIONS			6	Entire City
					4	5			
Areas from Bureau of Plans and Surveys	Total area—in acres	35.61	41.38	48.88	46.75	47.81	58.41	58835	
	Total area—in sq. feet	1551171	1802513	2129213	2036430	2082604	2544340		
	Net Taxable Area in acres	24.375	24.497	26.174	30.257	31.090	35.487	25190	
	Net Taxable Area in sq. ft.	1070587	1064911	1140397	1318287	1354393	1544059		
	Tax Free Area in acres	1.114	1.487	4.556	—	—	1.204		
	Tax Free Area in sq. ft.	48456	6456.4	198083	40486.3	37779.1	52217.7		
Public Property	Acreege of Sts. & Alleys	9.90	11.39	15.35	15.19	14.94	19.77		
	Acreege of Public Bldgs.	—	3.9956	—	—	—	—	1.9923	
	Acreege of other Pub. Prop.	—0.021	—0.067	2.3827	—	—	—0.0545		
Population	Predominating Race	N	N	N	N	N	N		
	Total Population—1930	3195	4210	3150	3300	4126	3094	804874	
	Total Population per Assessed Acre	120.0	172.0	120.3	109.0	132.7	87.2	31.8	
	% Increase or Decrease in Population, 1920-30	-9.3	-20.2	-21.1	-11.4	-17.2	-31.8	-9.7	
	Genus	738	1053	837	820	1006	851	193991	
	No. of Families Per Assessed Acre	29.9	43.0	31.9	27.1	32.0	24.0	7.6	
	Size of Average Family	4.3	3.9	3.7	4.0	4.1	3.6	4.4	
Rents from U. S. Census	Average Value of Owned Homes	2000.00	2500.00	2000.00	2000.00	2100.00	2000.00		
	Vacancies	\$15-29	\$15-29	\$15-29	Under \$15	\$15-29	\$30		
From B & H. Plans Phys. Conditions	Estimated Age of Bldgs.-Avg. Condemnations by Bldgs. Dept. From Bldg. Dept.	50 yrs.	70	60	60	60	90		
		1	10		5	7	3		
Tax Data from City Tax Dept.	Total Asses.-1933 (\$)	1708095	2415520	3082175	3388530	2504415	2708790		
	Avg. Asses. per Bl. Ft.-1933	1.88	2.26	3.49	3.57	1.91	1.81		
	Inc. of Dec. 1% 1920-1933	32.4	19.7	32.7	38.4	33.6	28.0		
	Tax Sales—Assessed Values								
Health from City Health Dept.	Cases of T. B. 1920-33 Incl.	143	115	77	83	108	138	3633	
	Cases of T. B. per 1000 Asses.	9.8	4.8	23.9	25.7	2.3	3.9	—1.5	
	Cases of T. B. Per Thousand	44.7	27.3	24.4	25.1	26.4	44.9	4.0	
	Rate of Infant Mortal-1921	112.7	111.4	114.4	132.3	131.4	124.1	74.5	
	Juvenile Delinquency-Cas. 1929	18	101.0		18	33	37	3401	
	Major Crime Cases 1920-31-32	42	100	33	46	52	123	9866	
	Major Crime per. of Pop.	18.1	24.9	10.8	12.8	13.3	43.8	8.7	

January, 1934

Note. The Joint Committee on Housing, 1934. “Report of the Joint Committee on Housing in Baltimore.” recorded by Baltimore City Archive & University of Baltimore | Bickford Building, 4 to 8 West Fayette Street, Baltimore, Maryland. March 19, 1934. Annotation: The figure provides a breakdown of various urban data across the six most blighted sections of Baltimore. The main information includes areas and properties, population, rent and housing, physical conditions, health data, and tax data.

Pathologizing Public Health: Tuberculosis as a “Black Disease”
 The 1934 Joint Committee on Housing report’s pathologization of public health in Black-majority neighborhoods deeply affected institutions like Young’s Pharmacy. By labeling tuberculosis as a “Black disease” and emphasizing infection rates in areas such as Druid Hill Avenue (Area 6) and Dolphin Street (Area 5), the Committee shifted the blame for public health crises onto the residents themselves rather than addressing the structural inequities they endured (Sanborn Map Company, 1952; Gomez, 2015;

Gaspaire, 2017; Roberts, 2009). Overcrowded housing, lack of sanitation, and limited access to healthcare—rooted in discriminatory housing policies—were ignored in favor of racialized narratives that cast Black neighborhoods as inherently diseased (Maryland Department of Health, 2019; Cummiskey, 2014). This stigmatization not only dehumanized Black residents but also framed their communities and businesses as undeserving of investment or preservation. The pharmacy, like other Black-owned establishments, became entangled in a narrative that disregarded its vital contributions to community health and resilience (Gomez, 2015; Gaspaire, 2017).

Young’s Pharmacy, located on Druid Hill Avenue (Area 6) and serving residents of neighboring Dolphin Street (Area 5), directly challenged the Committee’s harmful framing. As Maryland’s first Black-owned pharmacy, it provided essential healthcare access to neighborhoods deliberately excluded from public health infrastructure. By offering affordable medications, informal consultations, and reliable care, the pharmacy addressed health disparities exacerbated by systemic neglect. During tuberculosis outbreaks, it became a community lifeline, countering the Committee’s portrayal of Black neighborhoods as irredeemably unhealthy (Sanborn Map Company, 1952; Gaspaire, 2017; Roberts, 2009).

Figure 4. Full Illustration drawn by Real Estate Appraisers of Etting Street (Area 2).



Note. Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC), Housing Survey for 1122 McCulloh St. October 28, 1938. Record Group 48, Series 39, Box 1, Folder “1122 McCulloh St.” Baltimore City Archives. Annotation: This illustration depicts Etting Street which is a major part of Area 2, highlighting the tightly packed arrangement of housing units in the form of row houses. The dense clustering reflects the overcrowded conditions resulting from urban segregation and constrained land use faced by African American communities.

However, the pathologization of these neighborhoods cast a shadow on the pharmacy’s legitimacy and contributions, leaving it vulnerable to the displacement policies that sought to reshape areas like Druid Hill Avenue and Dolphin Street under the guise of public health improvement (Gaspaire, 2017; Roberts, 2009). The Committee’s proposed displacement of Black residents from areas like Druid Hill Avenue and Dolphin Street heightened

the vulnerability of institutions like Young's Pharmacy. By prioritizing white families and industrial redevelopment, the report not only failed to address the structural causes of health crises but also undermined the sustainability of businesses providing critical services (Sanborn Map Company, 1952; Jacobson, 2007).

Economic and Social Marginalization: The Consequences of Displacement

The Committee's urban renewal proposals not only marginalized Dr. Howard E. Young's pharmacy but also devastated the other businesses housed within 1140 Druid Hill Avenue, including the pressing shop, shoemaker, and haberdasher. These businesses, much like the pharmacy, served as vital economic hubs for the Druid Hill neighborhood, offering services and goods that were essential to the daily lives of Black residents (Boger, 2009; Halpin, 2015). Together, they fostered a localized economy that helped to circulate wealth within the community, creating pathways for financial independence in a system designed to exclude Black entrepreneurs from broader economic opportunities (Boger, 2009; Halpin, 2015). However, the Committee's racialized narrative disregarded these contributions, framing Black-owned businesses as symbols of urban blight rather than recognizing their significance in sustaining economic resilience and social cohesion. This dismissive attitude left the businesses at 1140 Druid Hill Avenue vulnerable to displacement under the guise of urban renewal.

The unequal treatment of neighborhoods by the Committee further compounded the challenges faced by these businesses. While white-occupied areas were slated for redevelopment with significant public investment in housing and infrastructure, predominantly Black neighborhoods like Druid Hill and Dolphin Street were neglected or targeted for industrial conversion (Boger, 2009). This disparity stripped Black business owners of both their customer base and their properties, undermining their ability to sustain operations. For the pressing shop, shoemaker, and haberdasher within 1140 Druid Hill Avenue, the lack of equitable investment meant not only financial precarity but also the loss of their role as community anchors (Halpin, 2015). These businesses were not simply economic enterprises; they were spaces where residents could connect and support one another in the face of systemic oppression. By disrupting these networks, the Committee's proposals dismantled the social and economic infrastructure that held the community together.

For Young's Pharmacy and the other businesses within the building, the consequences of displacement were profound. The pharmacy's ability to provide affordable healthcare and the pressing shop's tailoring services were essential to the daily survival of the Druid Hill community, particularly as many residents faced poverty and limited access to resources (Housing Authority of Baltimore City, 1938d, 1938c). However, as the Committee prioritized white interests and industrial redevelopment, the businesses at 1140 Druid Hill Avenue were rendered expendable in the city's redevelopment plans. This economic and social marginalization not only

destroyed individual businesses but also fractured the collective resilience that had allowed Black communities to persist and thrive in the face of systemic racism (Housing Authority of Baltimore City, 1938b, 1938c). By erasing these vital institutions, the Committee's actions deepened the inequality that it purported to address, leaving a legacy of displacement and disenfranchisement.

Figure 5. Photographs taken by Real Estate Appraisers of Dolphin Street (Area 5) and Druid Hill Avenue (Area 6).

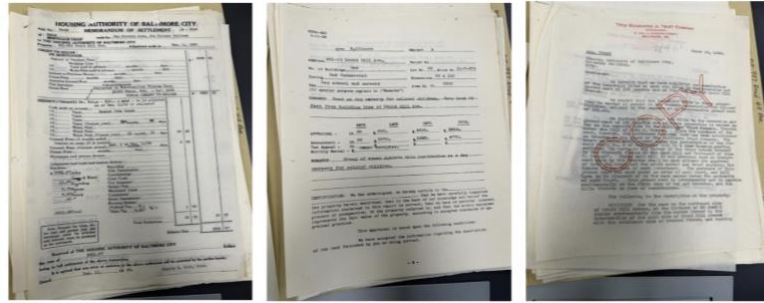


Note. Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC), Housing Survey for 1122 McCulloch St. October 28, 1938. Record Group 48, Series 39, Box 1, Folder "1122 McCulloch St." Baltimore City Archives.

Rethinking Urban Renewal: Equitable Alternatives

The failures of the 1934 Joint Committee on Housing in Baltimore highlight the need for more equitable approaches to urban renewal. Rather than displacing Black residents and businesses, the Committee could have invested in improving housing conditions, reducing overcrowding, and enhancing access to healthcare and sanitation. Comprehensive interventions in neighborhoods like Druid Hill Avenue and Dolphin Street could have addressed the root causes of urban blight without further marginalizing Black communities. For example, targeted housing upgrades, combined with investments in public health infrastructure, would have alleviated the overcrowding and health crises that the Committee used to justify displacement. Such measures would not only have improved living conditions for Black residents but also fostered long-term socioeconomic stability across Baltimore. By centering the needs of marginalized communities, these interventions could have created a more inclusive model of urban development, challenging the systemic inequities that continue to shape cities today.

Figure 6. Memorandum of Settlement Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC).



Note. Housing Survey for 1113 Etting St, October 27, 1938. Record Group 48, Series 39, Box 3, Folder, "1113 Etting St." Baltimore City Archives.

DR. HOWARD E. YOUNG'S PHARMACY AS AN "UNREMARKABLE" DRUGSTORE

The Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) offered a mixed evaluation of Dr. Howard E. Young's property at 1140 Druid Hill Avenue, but they ultimately downplayed the importance of both his business and the property itself. On the surface, the appraisers acknowledged favorable aspects of the property, such as its "good business location" and modern amenities like "heat and water, separate, gas and electric meters" (Housing Authority of Baltimore City, 1938a, 1938b, 1938b, 1938d, 1940). These features were relatively rare for the neighborhood, suggesting that the building stood out in a predominantly under-resourced area. Furthermore, the appraisers also highlighted the \$40.50 in weekly rental income generated by the property, which exceeded the costs of many comparable properties in the area (Housing Authority of Baltimore City, 1938a, 1938b, 1938b, 1938d, 1940). Compared to neighboring properties, the appraisal of Young's building was more generous, which could reflect its active use as both a residential and commercial space (Gaspire, 2017; Fletcher, 2016). However, even with these favorable remarks, the overall tone of the appraisal diminished the property's significance, framing it as unremarkable and undervaluing its true economic and social contributions.

Despite these favorable features, the financial appraisal revealed significant undervaluation, rooted in systemic racial biases. The property was appraised at \$9,500, a figure that fell far short of what Dr. Young would have expected given the investments he had made (Housing Authority of Baltimore City 1938a, 1938b, 1938b, 1938d, 1940). Just a year earlier, Dr. Young had purchased the property for \$5,000 and made substantial improvements worth between \$7,000 and \$7,996. Yet, the appraisers' valuation not only failed to account for these enhancements but also left Dr. Young with less than what he had originally invested (Housing Authority of Baltimore City, 1938b, 1938d, 1940). This undervaluation reflected a broader trend of dismissing Black-owned businesses as economically insignificant amongst appraisers in Baltimore City at this time.

The unfavorable elements of the appraisal extended beyond numbers to the portrayal of the building itself. The appraisers described the building as cramped, with nine small rooms, a single bathroom, and a stone

cellar (Baltimore City Archives, 1939, 1940, 1967a, 1967b). They noted that the property contained Dr. Young’s pharmacy, three Black-owned businesses, and eight tenants—all operating and living in extremely close quarters. These conditions were cited to reinforce the appraisal’s framing of the property as functional but not economically viable, reducing its perceived value despite the diverse services it offered to the community. Although the rental income from tenants provided a steady source of revenue, the appraisers neglected to factor in how this arrangement supported the building’s economic sustainability and its contributions to the local Druid Hill economy (Baltimore City Archives, 1939, 1940, 1967a, 1967b). Further, the HABC’s dismissive framing of the property as “fair” underscored their broader tendency to downplay the significance of Black-owned spaces in Druid Hill. The appraisers’ inability to capture the intangible importance of Dr. Young’s pharmacy reflects a systemic failure to recognize the value of spaces central to Black socioeconomic life (Baltimore City Archives, 1939, 1940, 1967a, 1967b). Ultimately, despite acknowledging the building’s various characteristics, the HABC’s reductive framing significantly reduced the property’s perceived value and significance to the community by focusing on its physical constraints rather than its significant contributions to the neighborhood’s economic and social vitality. This erasure of the property’s true impact reflects the entrenched racial biases that shaped urban development policies in mid-twentieth century Baltimore.

Despite being undervalued, Dr. Young’s Pharmacy at 1140 Druid Hill Avenue exceeded its modest appraisal by serving as an indispensable node for community care and economic activity. The building housed not only the pharmacy but also a pressing shop (clothing and tailoring), shoemaker, and haberdasher, collectively generating a monthly rental income of \$190 which is equivalent to approximately \$3,587 today) (Housing Authority of Baltimore City 1938b, 1938d, 1940). This diverse set of services—which appraisers Robert Hoffman and Eugene Casey failed to acknowledge—offered in just one location highlights the building’s significance as a hub for both service provision and economic independence to Black residents.

Figure 7. Photographs taken by Real Estate Appraisers of Dolphin Street (Area 5) and Druid Hill Avenue (Area 6).



Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC), Housing Survey for 1122 McCulloh St. October 28, 1938. Record Group 48, Series 39, Box 1, Folder "1122 McCulloh St." Baltimore City Archives.

CHALLENGING THE NARRATIVE: COMMUNITY RESILIENCE, ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT, AND GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM

Dr. Howard E. Young's lifework and the significance of 1140 Druid Hill Avenue can be understood through its role in fostering community resilience, promoting economic empowerment, and supporting grassroots activism. Far from being just another business impacted by institutional neglect, Young's Pharmacy was a site of active resistance against such systematic discrimination. This analysis will reveal how 1140 Druid Hill Avenue served as a pivotal bulwark against the forces of racism and segregation for both the residents of Druid Hill and the broader Baltimore City community.

Community Resilience: A Lifeline for Healthcare Access

Dr. Howard E. Young's pharmacy at 1140 Druid Hill Avenue was a vital anchor for Baltimore's Black community, providing indispensable healthcare in a city where segregation barred African Americans from access to equitable medical services (The Baltimore Afro-American, 1939, 1942, 1945). As Maryland's first Black licensed pharmacist, Young filled a void left by systemic racism, using his education from Howard University and \$100 of his savings to establish his first pharmacy (The Baltimore Afro-American, 1939, 1942, 1945). By 1900, he expanded to the larger location at Druid Hill Avenue, turning it into a dependable resource for affordable medications and informal medical consultations to substitute for White-owned hospitals (King et al., 2019). This role was particularly significant during the tuberculosis crisis in 1910 when institutional neglect left Black neighborhoods vulnerable to disease and untreated illnesses (Charles R Young in the 1950 United States Federal Census, 1950). Thus, although Young's Drug Store was modest in scale, it was a pioneering service for the Black community deprived of access to fundamental rights like healthcare and medicine.

The Young family's physical residence within the pharmacy building also deepened its role as a trusted community hub. During this period—it was rare for business owners, particularly those in medicine—to reside in the same building as their business (Cummiskey, 2014). This unusual arrangement enabled Dr. Young to cultivate deeply personal relationships with his customers (Cummiskey, 2014). Further, the proximity created a space where neighbors sought medical care while gathering to share local news and strengthen community bonds. Thus, the pharmacy was not just a business but also a safe haven in a neighborhood where struggle and survival were synonymous.

Returning to 1100 Druid Hill Avenue, where The Young's Pharmacy was initially established, the property's role extended well beyond serving as the family's residence and the original site of Dr. Young's pharmacy. The Young family strategically utilized 1100 Druid Hill Avenue to generate

additional revenue by renting to lodgers and leasing space to smaller Black-owned businesses (Lassiter, M., & National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, 2024). This enterprising use of the property likely provided the financial stability necessary for Dr. Young to expand his operations to 1140 Druid Hill Avenue and to support the advanced education of his youngest daughter, Dr. Nellie Louise Young (Housing Authority of Baltimore City, 1938b). As Maryland's first Black female physician, Dr. Nellie Louise Young embodied the family's dedication to breaking barriers and uplifting their community (Housing Authority of Baltimore City, 1938b). The income generated from 1100 Druid Hill Avenue not only sustained the family's ability to manage multiple properties but also laid the groundwork for their lasting contributions to healthcare within Baltimore's Black community.

The pharmacy's role in advancing community resilience was carried forward by Dr. Howard E. Young's youngest daughter, Dr. Nellie Louise Young, who became Maryland's first Black female physician. Recognizing the unique healthcare barriers faced by Black women, she established a Planned Parenthood clinic in 1938 at 1140 Druid Hill Avenue before relocating it to 1100 Druid Hill Avenue, fully staffed by African Americans (Jr, 1997). This clinic provided reproductive healthcare to underserved women in Baltimore, directly addressing critical gaps in access to care (Gardiner, 2022; Jr, 1997)). Dr. Nellie Louise Young's Planned Parenthood clinic represented a tangible extension of Dr. Young's Pharmacy and its mission to deliver essential services to the Black Baltimorean community that has been systematically excluded from mainstream healthcare (Gardiner, 2022; Jr, 1997). Through their collective efforts, Dr. Howard E. Young and Dr. Nellie Louise Young transformed 1140 Druid Hill Avenue into both a powerful symbol and a functioning hub of healthcare and empowerment, bolstering the community's resilience against deeply entrenched systemic inequities.

Figure 8. Photographs of Dr Nellie Louis Young.



"Dr. Young was born in Baltimore on June 7, 1907, and attended what is now Frederick Douglass High School, graduating in 1924, and from Howard University in 1927. She went on to graduate from Howard University's School of Medicine in 1930."
The Baltimore Sun. (2022, February 24). N. Louise Young, MD.

Economic Empowerment: Building a Localized Economy

The significance of Dr. Young's Pharmacy also lies in its economic impact. Alongside the pharmacy, the building housed a pressing shop, a shoemaker, and a haberdasher. Together, these Black-owned businesses formed a small yet vital local economy, circulating wealth within the Druid Hill community and creating opportunities for economic advancement. Notably, Dr. Young and his family made a bold and strategic decision to purchase the ground rent for the property, a move that was almost unheard of for Black entrepreneurs at the time due to widespread discriminatory practices in property ownership (Gardiner, 2022; Housing Authority of Baltimore City, 1940). This act not only ensured greater financial security for their pharmacy and the other businesses within the building but also stood as a bold declaration of the strength and resilience of Black-owned enterprises. sharing and pooling resources within the shared space, these businesses reduced operational costs such as monthly leasing and renting prices (Pietila, 2010, pp. 20–336, 2018). This approach showcased the ingenuity of Black entrepreneurs who did not have access to loans or credit and instead relied on one another to share resources and reduce costs (Pietila, 2010, pp. 20–336, 2018).

Dr. Young's strategic decision to house these businesses also helped promote Druid Hill's economic interdependence, ensuring that resources remained within the community. Thus, this shared space offered pathways to modest financial stability for the tenants and business owners of the property at a time when systemic barriers excluded Black residents from the larger economic activities. Ultimately, more than providing medications, Young's Pharmacy became a cornerstone of economic resilience and community empowerment, embodying a vision of collective progress and self-reliance amidst systematic exclusions.

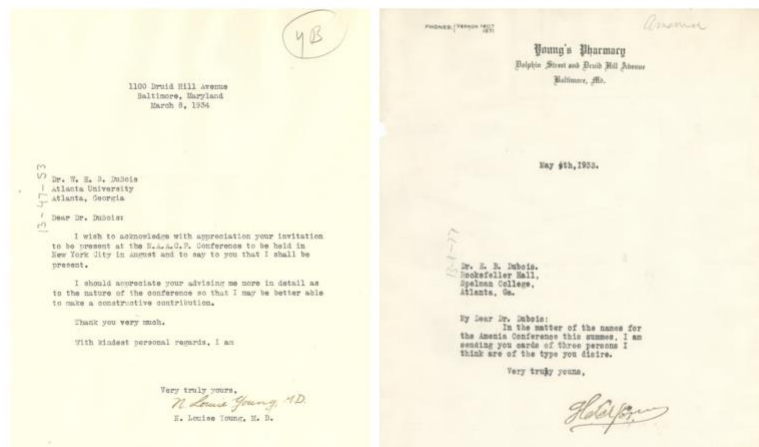
Grassroots Activism: A Hub for Civil Rights Advocacy

Beyond its role in supporting the community and empowering the local economy, Young's Pharmacy became a cornerstone of civil rights advocacy in segregated Baltimore. As the son of Reverend Alfred Young who was formerly enslaved, Dr. Young transformed his pharmacy into a vibrant hub for community organizing and resistance against systemic racism (Arnold-Garza & Gadsby, 2017). The pharmacy served as a meeting place for the Niagara Movement, a civil rights organization founded in 1905 by W.E.B. Du Bois and other Black intellectuals (Arnold-Garza & Gadsby, 2017). This influential group sought to demand racial equality and challenge systemic oppression in the Southern United States (Arnold-Garza & Gadsby, 2017). As Secretary-Treasurer, Dr. Young hosted meetings within the pharmacy's walls, where he strategized with other activists to combat segregation in the Southern United States (Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., 2016). These efforts highlighted the pharmacy's pivotal role in advancing the broader struggle for institutional racism. In addition to the Niagara Movement, Dr. Young used 1140 Druid Hill Avenue as a base for his work on the Baltimore City Jail Board, advocating for better conditions for Black incarcerated individuals (Ira De A, 1935). It was here at the pharmacy that plans for

systematic prison reform took shape (Ira De A, 1935). These roles demonstrated how 1140 Druid Hill Avenue was not only a space for community healthcare but also a platform for challenging injustices.

Estelle Hall Young—Dr. Howard Young’s wife—shared his unwavering commitment to civil advocacy, utilizing Young’s Pharmacy as a central base for her advocacy in women’s suffrage and civic activism. A former student of W.E.B. Du Bois at Spelman College, Estelle Young founded the Colored Women’s Suffrage Club in 1915, mobilizing Black women to overcome both racial and gender barriers to voting (Elfenbein et al., 2011). Weekly meetings held at the pharmacy helped register Black women to vote as soon as they gained the right in Maryland in 1920, despite persistent legal challenges to the 19th Amendment and systematic disenfranchisement efforts (Elfenbein et al., 2011). Beyond her work in suffrage, Estelle Young also organized anti-lynching campaigns at the pharmacy, where she mobilized efforts to combat racial violence enacted upon Black businesses (Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., 2016) Her dedication later earned her the NAACP’s Maryland State Conference Award of Honor for “meritorious service in the cause of obtaining justice and full citizenship rights” (Jr, 1997). The DuBois Circle, another organization in which Estelle Young was active, also held meetings at 1140 Druid Hill Avenue, where prominent Black women discussed public policy and planned demonstrations to advance civil rights (Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., 2016). Through her various advocacy work, Estelle Young reinforced the pharmacy’s role as a center for grassroots activism while mobilizing the Black community to challenge systemic oppression in Baltimore (Jr, 1997; 1930 United States Federal Census, 1930). Together, Howard and Estelle Young made 1140 Druid Hill Avenue an enduring symbol of resistance and progress.

Figure 9. Letter from N. Louise Young to W. E. B. Du Bois, March 8, 1934 (Left). Letter from Howard E. Young to W. E. B. Du Bois, May 9, 1933 (Right). Robert S. Cox Special Collections. (1933).



W. E. B. Du Bois Papers Overview. Concerning Young’s suggestions for persons to invite to the Amenia Conference. Written on letterhead of Young’s Pharmacy. Amenia Conference (1933). Recipients: Du Bois, W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt),

1868-1963. All rights for this document are held by the David Graham Du Bois Trust. Requests to publish, redistribute, or replicate this material should be addressed to Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

Dr. Nellie Louise Young, Howard and Estelle's daughter, extended her parents' legacy by championing civil rights and healthcare equity directly within the walls of 1140 Druid Hill Avenue. As the first Black female physician in Maryland, she established her medical practice above her father's pharmacy, where she not only provided essential healthcare but also spearheaded critical civil rights initiatives (Jr, 1997). Louise served on Baltimore City's Hospital Integration Subcommittee under Mayor Theodore McKeldin, using the pharmacy as her base of operations to advocate for the integration of Baltimore's healthcare system (Robert S. Cox Special Collections, n.d.). Additionally, she chaired Maryland's Committee to Prevent Passage of Voluntary Sterilization Laws, organizing and strategizing this campaign within 1140 Druid Hill Avenue (Maryland Women's Heritage Center, 2024). This initiative was a direct response to proposed eugenics-inspired legislation that sought to allow involuntary sterilization of Black women (Maryland Women's Heritage Center, 2024). Louise's leadership galvanized public support to oppose this policy, successfully preventing its passage (Maryland Women's Heritage Center, 2024). Through her work at 1140 Druid Hill Avenue, Dr. Louise Young not only reinforced her parents' vision for justice and equity but also cemented the pharmacy's role as a hub for resisting systemic injustice at both the local and state levels.

Through their combined efforts, the Young family transformed 1140 Druid Hill Avenue into more than just a pharmacy; it became a center for grassroots activism and community empowerment (The Baltimore Afro-American, 1921, 1927, 1939, 1945). Their leadership in civil rights, healthcare, and suffrage initiatives challenged the structures of institutional racism, offering a powerful example of how Black institutions and businesses could act as catalysts for systematic change.

Figure 10. Photographs of Dr Nellie Louis Young.



“Louise Young was a Baltimore native and the first African-American woman to practice medicine in Maryland. She specialized in obstetrics and gynecology and served in

numerous city and state medical capacities during her career.” Simpson, T. (2021, February 15). Dr. Nellie Louise Young: Maryland’s First African American Female Physician. A Girl in a Museum World.

By examining these three aspects—community resilience, economic empowerment, and grassroots activism—it is evident that Dr. Young’s Pharmacy and 1140 Druid Hill Avenue was far more than a building considered “fair” by the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (The Baltimore Afro-American, 1942). This designation, suggesting it was unremarkable, fails to capture its profound significance as a vibrant hub of resistance that shaped the social, economic, and political landscape of West Baltimore’s Black community, challenging discrimination and championing civil rights at every turn.

URBAN RENEWAL’S IMPACT AND THE LEGACY OF 1140 DRUID HILL AVENUE

The importance of Dr. Young’s Pharmacy to the community underscores the profound impact of its eventual closure on the Druid Hill neighborhood. From 1912 to 1934, Dr. Howard E. Young’s pharmacy at 1140 Druid Hill Avenue served as a focal point of resistance against Baltimore’s urban renewal initiatives, which aimed to dismantle Black neighborhoods under the pretense of redevelopment (The Baltimore Afro-American, 1909, 1913). Notably, Dr. Young actively opposed housing segregation and displacement, as demonstrated by his 1913 attempt to purchase a home on a predominantly White block in the Upton neighborhood (Louise Howard in the 1940 United States Federal Census, 1908, 1940a, 1940b). Although he lobbied for financial support to challenge segregation laws in court, his efforts were ultimately unsuccessful (The Baltimore Afro-American, 1921, 1927, 1939, 1945). More importantly, despite persistent efforts by the City Real Estate Department and urban renewal leaders to displace the pharmacy, it remained standing along with the other three businesses in the mixed-used property (Louise N Young in the 1920 United States Federal Census, 1920). Public housing records reveal that even after Dr. Young’s passing, the property at 1140 Druid Hill Avenue continued to be identified as Young’s Pharmacy into the 1960s (Louise Young in the 1930 United States Federal Census, 1930). By this time, however, operations had transitioned to Dr. West, who took over management of the pharmacy (Housing Authority of Baltimore City, 1938a, 1938b). The document also recounts a unique incident involving Dr. West vacating the premise—which left behind a stranded cat named “Tom”—further illustrating the building’s layered history and its connection to the people and stories that passed through its doors (Hopkins and the 19th Amendment, 2024). The systemic efforts to remove the pharmacy from the Druid Hill community reflect a targeted attempt to dismantle key spaces of Black socioeconomic life, undermining the legacy of resilience and empowerment the pharmacy symbolized for generations.

Though Dr. Howard E. Young’s passing brought an end to his personal work at the pharmacy, his enduring mission to serve Baltimore’s

Black community was carried forward with great dedication and impact by his daughter, Dr. Nellie Louise Young. As Maryland's first African American female physician, Dr. Young established her medical practice above her father's pharmacy and later relocated to other areas of Baltimore as urban renewal forced changes to the family's original space (Baltimore Heritage, n.d.). Specializing in obstetrics and gynecology, she addressed critical healthcare gaps for Black women in the city, carrying forward her father's legacy of community empowerment (Maryland Center for History and Culture, 1915, 1919, 1920, 1945). Over the course of her 50-year career, she moved her operations to other locations, including Garrison Boulevard, as urban renewal projects overtook the original Druid Hill Avenue location (Louis Gates Jr., 2014). Her relocation to Garrison Boulevard effectively marked the conclusion of the Young family's ties to the Druid Hill Avenue community (Louise Young in the 1930 United States Federal Census, 1930). However, although the physical pharmacy and its original location at 1140 Druid Hill Avenue no longer exist, Dr. N. Louise Young's continued advocacy for equitable healthcare ensured that her father's vision for serving Black Baltimoreans remained influential for decades.

CONCLUSION

Through the layers of analysis and historical context explored in this essay, 1140 Druid Hill Avenue is not a simple building caught in an era of segregation but an active space of resistance against such discrimination. Young's Pharmacy, along with the pressing shop, shoemaker, and haberdasher housed at the same address, exemplifies the determination of a community that fought to carve out spaces of hope against the systematic discrimination pitted against them. The story of 1140 Druid Hill Avenue unveils the long-overlooked interplay of community resilience, economic empowerment, and grassroots activism in combating the forces of urban renewal.

Far more than a pharmacy that dispensed medicine to those denied care elsewhere, Young's Drug Store symbolizes the unyielding spirit of Black Baltimoreans who mobilized and united for a vision of shared progress amid the Jim Crow era. By extension, Dr. Howard E. Young was both a brilliant pharmacist and a steadfast community leader who committed his life to championing the betterment of Baltimore's Black community. His pharmacy served as a lifeline for Black Baltimoreans, offering not just medical care but a space for community mobilization. By attempting to remove Young's Pharmacy from Druid Hill, the urban renewal authority sought to dismantle the socioeconomic autonomy, solidarity, and prosperity that Black neighborhoods had built and relied upon. Though 1140 Druid Hill Avenue no longer stands, the stories forged within its walls continue to live on. In the hard work of Dr. Howard E. Young, let's remember the legacy of countless Baltimorean leaders before and after him—the strongest people we know: social advocates who never gave up and tirelessly advocated for our rights so that future Baltimoreans might someday unimaginably prosper.

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- The Baltimore Afro-American. (1927, December 3). Mayor Names Dr. H. E. Young On Jail Board: DR. H. E. YOUNG APPOINTED ON JAIL BOARD Mayor Broening Names Local Pharmacist And Council Confirms OTHER PLUMS ARE EXPECTED TO FALL Wallis T. Lansy Slated For Place On Board Of Charities. (1927, Dec 03). Afro-American (1893-). The Baltimore Afro-American. <https://proxy1.library.jhu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/mayor-names-dr-h-e-young-on-jail-board/docview/530675061/se-2>. One of the expected plums of the Broening administration fell this week when the name of Dr. Howard E. Young, local pharmacist, was sent by the Mayor to the City Council and confirmed by that body Mon...
- The Baltimore Afro-American. (1939, February 11). Trot Given to Grandpa: Dr. Howard Young Gets Custody of Son's Child. (1939, Feb 11). Afro-American (1893-) . The Baltimore Afro-American. <https://proxy1.library.jhu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/trot-given-grandpa/docview/531210002/se-2>. A Howard University romance with a 16-yearold bride, a young scion of a wellknown Baltimore family, and a fight of a young mother for her baby, was aired in Federal Court this week, when Dr. Howard E. Young was given temporary cus...
- The Baltimore Afro-American. (1942, October 20). Final Rites Held for Dean of Baltimore Pharmacists. (1945, Oct 20). Afro-American (1893-). The Baltimore Afro-American. <https://proxy1.library.jhu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/final-rites-held-dean-baltimore-pharmacists/docview/531507092/se-2>. Dignity. sincerity and simplicity marked the final rites for Dr.Howard E. Young, 70, dean

- of Baltimore more pharmacists, held Saturday, at the home of his sister, 2401 Madison Ave.
- The Baltimore Afro-American. (1945, October 13). Dr. Young, Veteran Pharmacist, Dies at 70. (1945, Oct 13). Afro-American (1893-). The Baltimore Afro-American.
<https://proxy1.library.jhu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/dr-young-veteran-pharmacist-dies-at-70/docview/531516841/se-2>. One of the city's pioneer pharmacists, Dr. Howard E. Young, 70, Lather of Dr. N. Louise Young, died at the home of his sister, Miss Lillian Young, 2401 Madison Ave., Wednesday after an illness of over four months.
- The Baltimore Sun. (2022, February 24). N. Louise Young, MD. Blogspot.com. <https://medchiarchives.blogspot.com/2022/02/n-louise-young-md.html>
- The Joint Committee on Housing. (1934, March 19). Report of the Joint Committee on Housing in Baltimore. The Baltimore Engineer Published Monthly by the Engineers Club of Baltimore; recorded by Baltimore City Archive & University of Baltimore | Bickford Building, 4 to 8 West Fayette Street, Baltimore, Maryland.
https://archivesspace.ubalt.edu/repositories/2/archival_objects/141841
- Tsucas, J. (2019, June 3). A Tale of Two Cities. Baltimore Magazine. <https://www.baltimoremagazine.com/section/historypolitics/a-tale-of-two-cities-west-baltimore-before-after-freddie-gray/>
- Vaughn-Hall, J. (2023, December 4). Preserving the civil rights history of Old West Baltimore, one renovation at a time. The Baltimore Banner. <https://www.thebaltimorebanner.com/community/local-news/west-baltimore-justice-thurgood-marshall-PIVPLXE2AJDKHE3ZXWSMCLLJSE/>
- Williams, R. Y. (2004). The Politics of Public Housing. Oxford University Press.