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A Black Family Won Back Its Beach. The Law Remains Broken.

It took the Bruce family nearly 100 years to win back land seized under eminent domain, but never developed. That's so wrong.

During the 1920s, the city of Manhattan Beach, California, used the power of eminent domain to seize the only seafront resort in Southern California that welcomed Black beachgoers. The owners received a small fraction of the market value, and together with other Black property owners were essentially run out of town. In a ceremony last week, the deed to the land known as Bruce's Beach was finally restored to the family. What happened in between is a tale not only of racism and theft, but also of the risks that arise when government can act without scrutiny.

Bruce's Beach was established in 1912 in Manhattan Beach; a decade and a half later, the city took the land by claiming they planned to develop it into a park. But the vaguer the limits on government power, the easier it is to wield that power for a malign purpose. And the limits of eminent domain are vague indeed.

Continue reading.

Bloomberg Opinion

By Stephen L. Carter

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