

The Idea of Home

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The day before I left for this workshop, my conception of home changed dramatically; my parents and I found ourselves saying goodbye to our family dog of 14 years, the one who I had said was my brother when people asked me, an only child, if I had any siblings. The one who I remember seeing shaking, curled up in a ball at the back of his crate the night we picked him up at the airport, the same night I turned back to my parents as we were leaving the house and said, *things will never be the same, will they?* The one who always seemed to be perpetually smiling.

Each and every one of us can think of a time in which they felt the ground shift beneath their feet, watched as the familiar and comfortable slipped quickly away. Sometimes, such changes are part of personal choices made, of a need to explore and experience things new and unknown. To find one's own space before sharing it with others.

Yet other times, it is not. Sometimes the decision is not yours, and homes and spaces built carefully over decades can fall into the hands of those oblivious to their past. Over the last decade, residents of the Third Ward have seen changes take place beyond their front porches, yet not beyond the boundaries of what they call home.

I still have not been home since that day after Dexter passed. I still have not felt how my home has changed, how this vital part of its spirit is now absent. I spend these days imagining it, thinking of it, anticipating what it might feel like while photographing here in the Third Ward. While seeing how this community is changing, listening to the stories of those who may have seen their neighborhoods shift overnight, their neighbors or themselves forced from their homes in the name of development. As we grapple with this idea – of what one of the most fundamental parts of our lives means, and what it means when it begins to change – I wonder, how does the memory of a home that once was linger, how does it shape the spaces we inhabit currently? How can we keep those memories of the past and weave them into our lives at present? And how is a home created and shared by an entire community?

These photographs are my conversation with these questions, as well as with others that have emerged while walking the streets of Third Ward, speaking to its residents and being welcomed into this community. It is an ongoing search, an endless one, one that we all know well, and yet hardly ever know where it will lead next.