History of Segregation and Racist Policy in Greater Rochester

Shane Wiegand
shanewiegand22@gmail.com
“Individual- and group-level processes and structures that are implicated in the reproduction of racial inequality.” **Systemic racism** happens when these structures or processes are carried out by groups with power, such as governments, businesses or schools.

- Racism differs from **bias**, which is a conscious or unconscious prejudice against an individual or group based on their identity.
- Basically, racial bias is a belief. Racism is what happens when that belief translates into action.
De Jure Segregation and Racism in Rochester

- Real Estate Industry
- Restrictive covenants/racial covenants
- Redlining
- VA and FHA backed Mortgages
- Racist Suburban Zoning Policy
- Urban Renewal
Howard Coles
The Voice Housing Study 1938
Segregation and Slums

Frederick Douglass Celebration and 75th Exposition of Progress, June 6th, 5th, 10th, 1939

The Voice
Better Housing Conditions for Our Growth

Vol. 22-No. 41
Rochester, N.Y., Wednesday, May 31, 1939

Phone 4523

Home Office
466 Clarita St.

Voicel Pollis!
The right of all people to be equally the owners of their homes is a right that must be preserved.

In the section where the majority live, there are numerous apartments and houses which they cannot rent, because certain real estate agencies set the example of refusing to rent to Negroes.
1939 Rochester Housing Survey

Blight Caused by Cheap Methods, Survey Holds

BAD HOUSING REPORTED IN TRACT STUDY
Half of Dwellings in Ormond Area Held Unfit

-Harold Rand
“The housing situation always has been an enigma to the Negro. In Rochester only two areas have been gracefully made available for him. If any attempt is made to move out of the black ghetto the attempt is met with opposition.”

-Rev. Charles Boddie
Mt. Olivet Baptist Church
1946
For more than 30 years, the code read: "A realtor should never be instrumental in introducing into a neighborhood a character of property or occupancy, members of any race or nationality, or any individuals whose presence will clearly be detrimental to property values in that neighborhood."
Dr. Walter Cooper

“I then confronted the housing segregation in Rochester. In 1954, the wife and I answered ads for sixty-nine apartments and were refused at all of them.”
In 1957, a black couple, James and Alice Young, attempted to buy a house on Millbank Street in the 19th Ward. After a real estate agent would not arrange the sale, they had a white person buy it and transfer them the deed.

Shortly thereafter, they received a letter threatening to burn the house down. It was signed, "KKK of Millbank Street."
The Meadowbrook neighborhood consists of 371 homes in the Town of Brighton, a first-tier suburb of Rochester, New York. Meadowbrook is bordered by Elmwood Avenue, Winton Road South, Danbury Circle South, Bonnie Brae Avenue, and Vernon Place. Its origin as a carefully-planned development and its favorable location adjacent to Twelve Corners, the heart of modern Brighton, have combined to create an especially beautiful and well-loved home to Meadowbrook’s families.
Restrictive Covenants in Brighton Written by Kodak

XII. No lot or dwelling shall be sold to or occupied by a colored person.

XIII. No intoxicating liquors or beverages shall be manufactured or sold.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, Kodak Employees Realty Corporation has caused this instrument to be signed by its Vice President and its corporate seal to be attached this 2nd day of May, 1929.

(KSAL) Kodak Employees Realty Corporation

By Harry D. Haight

-Monroe County Clerk
Liber 1479 Page 314
Photo by Shane Wiegand
1910-1970: The Great Migration

Sanford FL
To help restart the economy after the depression and to help soldiers coming back from WWII buy houses the government (FHA and VA) helped the banks give out millions of mortgages to Whites and financed massive suburban tract housing.
social groups are present, to the end that an intelligent prediction may be made regarding the possibility or probability of the location being invaded by such groups. If a neighborhood is to retain stability it is necessary that properties shall continue to be occupied by the same social and racial classes. A change in social or racial occupancy generally leads to instability and a reduction in values. The pro-
“To be most effective, **deed restrictions** should be imposed upon all land in the immediate environment of the subject location.... Recommended restrictions should include provisions for the following... **Prohibition of the occupancy of properties except by the race for which they are intended.**"
“Time and again, powerful and brilliant men and women have produced racist ideas in order to justify the racist policies of their era”

-Ibram X. Kendi, Stamped from the Beginning
Restrictive Covenants in Irondequoit as Stipulated by FHA

The dwelling shall be occupied by persons of the Caucasian race only.

Liber 1960 page 300
1938 Brooklea Heights in Gates, 250 Houses

Builders Built Up Big Appetites at Their Outing

... didn’t know what we

to this housing developed. We planned 250 houses,

and when things are

omaries are made possible

in materials, in equipment,

why we can offer these

60-foot lots, near a golf

prices.

BUY UNDER THESE SIMPLE F.H.A. TERMS

Brooklea Builder Norman
Huyck at the Microphone

7: No lot shall ever be occupied by a colored person. This

restriction, however, shall not prevent the employment of a
colored person as a domestic servant by an owner or occupant.

- Monroe County Clerk
Liber 1501 page 106
Photo by Shane Wiegand
I would say that there were probably four black families that lived anywhere west of Genesee Street at that time.

The owner refused to sell to us. Because we were black. There was a restrictive covenant in the deed that these houses when built were not to be sold to the colored and Italians.”
HOLC
Residential Security Map
Rochester 1935
HOLC Residential Security Map Buffalo
HOLC Residential Security Map Each Borough of NYC
The government created the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) to survey and rate neighborhoods in several northern cities, including Rochester.

Rating Scale

- A "Best"
- B "Still Desirable"
- C "Definitely Declining"
- D "Hazardous"
Areas shaded red and yellow indicated that the government was less likely to back mortgages because those areas were potentially dangerous, polluted, or had residents of color.
HOLC Assessor’s Report on the Corn Hill Neighborhood

AREA DESCRIPTION
Security Map of Rochester, New York

1. POPULATION:  
   a. Increasing ___________________ Decreasing ___________________ Static Yes
   b. Class and Occupation Daily workers & laborers with incomes of $1000-1500
   c. Foreign Families 10% Nationalities Italian ________
   d. Negro 75%

PREDOMINATING 100% OTHER TYPE ______

- Medium & large sized 1-family
- 2-4 stories, 7 rooms & up
- Frame & few brick
- 60+ years
- Poor
FHA only backed mortgages for white people in blue and green parts of the city and for white people buying and building houses in the suburbs (Henrietta, Webster, Brighton, Pittsford, etc.). The majority private lenders/insurers also adhered to these maps.
The FHA and VA insured half of all new mortgages nationwide and gave out over $119 billion in mortgage insurance.

1947 Chief Rochester FHA Underwriter Alfred C. Gertis breaks ground on whites only veteran housing in Brighton.
Homeownership increased from 44% in 1934 to 63% in 1972.
Over 35 Million families benefited from FHA backed loans. **98% of them were white.**
1958 NYS Commission Against Discrimination

Governor Harriman

Negroes in five New York cities
A Study of Problems, Achievements and Trends

Inside Rochester's SLUMS
In 1950 80% of people of color in Monroe County lived in the 3rd and 7th Wards.
Mr. and Mrs. Ingram

“It was hard to get out of your neighborhood into another one—different one.”

“You couldn’t rent outside of that area, they just didn’t rent it to you.”
These ‘Ghettos’ contained 20% of all dwelling units with no private baths and 30% of all units with no running water.
No person of color in Monroe county was given an FHA or VA Loan for a mortgage in any new suburban development.
In 1950 only 57 families of Color owned a home in a predominantly white neighborhood through straw men, private deals, and personal friendships with realtors.
“16 families of color that moved into white neighborhoods faced abuse, ostracism and defacement if property.”

Henrietta offered safe haven in tense times

Though many chose Henrietta, others say they really had no other choice. Real estate agents and developers wouldn’t show black families homes in most other towns, black residents say.

“What sold me on Henrietta was the fact I had no other place to go,” said Walter Cooper, whose family lived in Henrietta nine years before moving to Penfield.

Barriers of bias

Henrietta had its share of racial barriers, black residents say.

“The developers didn’t want to sell it to us,” said Ermine Byas of the lot her family eventually bought in Henrietta.
Black Public Housing in Rochester

Hanover Houses Built 1952 as part of a Federal Urban Renewal Grant
Whites Only Fernwood Housing Project (Norton Village)

Mayor Dicker, Central Trust
President Elmer Milliman, and
FHA Underwriter Alfred Gertis

WORKING THE SWING SHIFT

Because there are 248 youngsters among the tenants at Fernwood Park housing project, officials of the development decided to install a playground of their own. Recently completed, it is 100 by 75 feet, surrounded by a fence, other paraphernalia, left, include William, 1, bahm, gives...
Affordable housing in the suburbs non-existent

Affordable rental housing in the suburbs, Doherty writes, "is nearly non-existent." There is almost no public housing in the suburbs, and most of it, writes Doherty, "is limited to seniors or disabled persons."

‘Our Crisis of Poverty, Racism, and Segregation’ by: Mary Anna Towler City Newspaper

This is typical of shabby structures that came down to make way for Baden-Ormond redevelopment.
Church of God in Christ and Pepsi on Ormond Street

Colored Folk Build New Church

16 Nov 1940, Sat

Eddie Meath, Mayor Frank Lamb, Alec Otto of American Airlines and Frank Staropoli, President of Pepsi Cola Rochester Bottlers pick the winners of Pepsi’s “Win Your Dream Trip” contest. (WHEC Newsphoto)
4. **FIGHT** wants to know what unique plan the City has to prohibit the same kind of "black folk removal" that occurred in Society Hill, College Hill, and Georgetown from happening in the 3rd Ward Preservation District.

In the 3rd Ward, McCuller said, all this means low-income blacks will be forced out and higher-income whites will move in. The entire 3rd Ward is more than 75 per cent...
1989 Study on Riots: Strong correlation between housing conditions, displacements and people arrested for rioting

-Vacca 1989
“As long as the Fair Housing Act is enforced individually rather than systematically, it is unlikely to be effective in overcoming the structural arrangements that support segregation and sustain the ghetto. - Massey & Denton
"The strong attitudes and policies that encouraged racial and ethnic segregation had, and continue to have, a profound impact on our community."

-Ed Dougherty ACT Rochester
Population in Redlined Areas Today is 92% Minority

HOLC grading and race/ethnicity.
HOLC examiners also graded neighborhoods by their racial/ethnic composition. The presence of minority communities resulted in downgrading under their system. Today, 64% of the communities identified in the 2010 Census as having majority-minority populations were graded “Hazardous” in the HOLC system. Here is the ranking for the city of Rochester, NY.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades/Minority</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Minority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Best</td>
<td>99.4%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Desirable</td>
<td>68.05%</td>
<td>31.95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Declining</td>
<td>56.34%</td>
<td>43.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Hazardous</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>92.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The National Community Reinvestment Coalition 2018
Owner Occupied Homes
Wealth Gap

In 2011, the median white household had a net worth of $111,146, compared with $7,113 for the median black household.
“African American children in our region are more than four times as likely as whites to live in poverty.

“Median household incomes of African Americans in our region are less than half that of Whites.

Both African Americans and Latinos are less than half as likely to own their homes as their white counterparts.”
City Roots’ mission is to permanently preserve housing affordability in Rochester, New York through community owned and managed land. Our goal is to empower neighbors and to bridge socioeconomic divisions.
De Jure Segregation and Racism in Rochester

- Real Estate Industry
- Restrictive covenants/racial covenants
- Redlining
- VA and FHA backed Mortgages
- Racist Suburban Zoning Policy
- Urban Renewal
Interested in learning more?

Contact me:
shanewiegand22@gmail.com